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## Editorial

I have very recently attended a Suzuki Violin (and Cello and Viola) workshop weekend for children and parents. I attended two talks for parents in which two French musicians talked about methods of fostering creativity and development in children: not a million miles from our own enterprise, surely.

What was apparent at these workshops was that musical creativity needs to be based on a solid base of technique: how to hold the bow; how to feel the weight of the arm; where to play on the string; when to use a certain tone, finger or bow technique and when not to do this; which bow stroke to use at a specific point in the music, etc. etc. Technique, in music, is the ability to exert optimal control of instrument or vocal chords in order to produce the precise musical effects that are desired. Technique is the necessary basis for creativity, for going beyond technique.

Where is our own discipline compared to the discipline involved in string playing? Are our techniques as robust or specific? In supervision, do we hone in on the problems that an individual or group may display, so that our teaching is specific and individual? In violin teaching, the results, for a pupil, of suggesting and teaching a certain technique are immediate and aurally demonstrable. I guess that only research will enable us to answer question about our own clinical techniques: but, where is the research? Quite reasonably, we are required to demonstrate our effectiveness with numbers, evidence, and statistics. Technique, and being able to demonstrate that we apply these techniques to specific situations, is necessary. Theory hopefully engages with technique and practice but, unless we are able to demonstrate that our techniques produce specific results our theory will be worthless.

On a separate note (!), research undertaken by the AHRC Research Centre for Musical Performance as Creative Practice suggests that musicians may be at their most creative when they are not playing their instrument or singing. By studying musicians and asking them when inspiration struck them, researchers found that breakthrough moments often happened when players were humming to themselves or tapping out rhythms on the table or imagining dance moves inspired by the music. "What we are finding is that even fairly mundane activities can

feed in to the discovery of new insight, new knowledge and new means of expressing ideas in all sorts of ways," said John Rink, professor of musical performance studies at Cambridge University. "The potential is infinite." The researchers concluded that musicians began to make a piece their own when they felt free and flexible enough to be spontaneous and take risks rather than simply rely on external validation from, say, a teacher.

There may indeed be a place for abstract theory. In music, the validation of these abstract ideas always needs to be tested by the meeting of bow on string, finger on keyboard, or lip on trumpet. What is our own instrument in Group Analysis, where the ideas of the mind can be tested against reality?

In part, this is a plea for more clinical papers.....

The articles published in this issue of Contexts may hopefully illuminate aspects of these questions for the enquiring reader. Further contributions about the questions raised in this issue are always welcome and sought after. Please write.

**Terry Birchmore**

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## **President's Foreword**

The first International Group-Analytic Student workshop has taken place. Belgrade's Group Analytic Institute hosted this event, Marina Mojovic (who will be a key-note speaker in the Lisbon Symposium next summer) offered us her wonderful location, and finally we were all submerged in the exciting events of this "Summer School". Everything we did there was a first effort to organize, conceptualize and go through complicated processes, in which every move, every part of the program and every approach could be regarded as a pioneer suggestion. A fantasy came true, and hopefully we can learn from this first summer school and make it even better in the next gathering in 2015 (probably in Prague).

In Belgrade, students and staff from Serbia, the UK, Germany, Finland, Greece and Israel met, in the midst of inter-cultural differences, conflictual political heritages and professional tensions on the one hand and the optimism of a successful young dialogue on the other. The way I saw it, the young ones were the great success of this conference. In the setting of small and large groups, lectures, discussion groups and supervision sessions, an enormous amount of learning and experiences took place. Both during as well as after the event a lot of digestion of an unforgettable gathering happened. The hosts, the Serbian IGA, who invested a lot in this event, were worthy of every praise, and secured their place in the map of European Group Analytic Societies. We have met in Serbia colleagues who are not only learning and practising Group Analysis but also combine their vast knowledge with great enthusiasm together with a new liberalism and social consciousness, which may these times be enviable in other parts of our world.

Our next aim is the Winter Workshop in Vienna, which GASi organizes together with the Austrian Group Analytic Society between the 21-24th of November 2013. The theme of the workshop will be: "Intersubjectivity and Group Analysis". Group Analysis has a very close relation to this modern psychoanalytic approach, starting with S.H.Foulkes' concept of "transpersonal"(1966) phenomena, by which he meant the unique permeable way in which participants of a group analytic group relate among themselves. Foulkes called it: "an endo-psychic common union between two people". In the matrix, our mental field of operation, transpersonal connections are processes which "go through the individuals – similar to X rays in the physical sphere" (Foulkes 1973, p. 229). This permeability of the Mind has a strong affinity with intersubjective/relational approaches.

This may be considered as being intersubjective long before Steven Mitchell (1988) and others even thought of such a term. Many other Group Analytic concepts, including resonance, mirroring, etc. are moved by the same possible relational dynamic. My own Dreamtelling approach and the Relation Disorders may be considered "intersubjective" (Friedman 20011, 2012). In this conference, which will be held (in English) in a wonderful European capital, will be represented the essence of internationality and hopefully significant clinical issues will be discussed. For Group Analytic conductors, the great challenge will be to answer the questions which relational theory asks: to what extent do we take into account reciprocity and conscious and unconscious

influence in the group? We will again question the meaning of being the "conductor in the group". We are looking forward to an interesting workshop in a great setting.

Last but not least – we are in the final stages of planning the tri-annual Group Analytic Symposium in Lisbon. Please look it up and register(<http://www.lisbon-symposium2014-gasi.com/>). It will provide the best opportunity to witness presentations of state of the Art Group Analytic thinking, together with social meetings with new and old friends and colleagues, and finally – to meet Portugal at its best. Such a beautiful city! Such a great music! Well – those registering will soon help our shared GASi and the local Portuguese organization to make sure we'll have the best possible professional gathering.

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**Robi Friedman**

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**Be a Contexts Writer!**

*“Substitute “damn” every time you’re inclined to write “very”; your editor will delete it and the writing will be just as it should be”.* **Mark Twain**

Contexts welcomes contributions from GAS members and non-members on a variety of topics: Have you run or attended a group-analytic or group psychotherapy workshop? Are you involved in a group-analytic or group psychotherapy project that others might want to learn about? Would you like to share your ideas or professional concerns with a wide range of colleagues? If so, send us an article for publication by post, e-mail, or fax. Articles submitted for publication should be between 500 and 10,000 words long, or between one and eight A4 pages. Writing for Contexts is an ideal opportunity to begin your professional writing career with something that is informal, even witty or funny, a short piece that is a report of an event, a report about practice, a review of a book or film, a reply to an earlier article published here, or stray thoughts that you have managed to capture on paper. Give it a go!

Articles are welcome from all those who work with groups in any discipline: whether practitioners, trainers, researchers, users, or consultants. Accounts of innovations, research findings on existing practice, policy issues affecting group therapy, and discussions of conceptual developments are all relevant. Group therapy with clients, users, professional teams, or community groups fall within our range.

Length: Full length articles; of up to 10, 000 words, should show the context of practice and relate this to existing knowledge. We also accept brief contributions which need focus only on the issue at hand: brief descriptions, reviews, personal takes of workshops or events attended, humorous asides, letters and correspondence..

Presentation: articles, letters, etc. should ideally be in Word format and forwarded as an email attachment to the Editors.

Please don’t worry about language, grammar and the organisation of your piece. We, as editors, receive many pieces from non-English speaking countries and it is our job to work with you to create a piece of writing that is grammatical and reads well in English. This help also



extends to English speakers who may need help and advice about the coherence and organisation of a piece of work.

Writing for Contexts is an ideal opportunity to begin your professional writing career with something that is informal, even witty or funny, a short piece that is a report of an event, a report about practice, a review of a book or film, or stray thoughts that you have managed to capture on paper. Give it a go!

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**Disturbed Development and  
Group Psychotherapy with Children:**  
*The human experience of brain organization*

## Summary

*Quoting Piaget, Vygotsky, Freeman, and Foulkes, the article suggests a format of dynamic group psychotherapy rooted in research on the "Dialogic Organization of a total social-psychosomatic Self". The proposal is illustrated by cases of disturbed children playing in groups with a trained group analyst, in which are focused children's initiatives and the adult's systematic reciprocally contingent responses.*

## Introduction

According to the classical theory of "Psychoanalysis", dynamic psychological therapy is based on the assumption that all emotional disorders and disturbed interpersonal relationships are produced by repressed and unconscious aspects of primal forces: oral, anal, and sexual impulses. Rehabilitation should result from retrieval of repressed aspects of those impulses which are revealed by free-association phantasies while the natural expression of emotions is expanded and understood in the context of the "transference relationship".

Though acknowledging that only a small part of experience is exposed to awareness at any one moment and is capable of being put into words, “Psychotherapy” built on the theory of “Steps in the Development of the Dialogical Self” does not centre action on unconscious hidden impulses to be uncovered but relies on the observation of changing aspects of communication during the life-cycle - understood as pointing to an evolving social brain. Pre-symbols and symbols evolve, as emotion links perception and act through expressive co-action (an interpersonal reality) basically geared to self-contingency analysis - opening space for personality organization.

Psychotherapeutic intervention in terms of the theory of “Steps in the Dialogic Development of the Self”, so-called dialogic relationship proposal, is initially rooted in Pestalozzi’s and Herbart’s, “active education”, though standing on more recent research on the characteristics of the development of communication. It centres exclusively on the search for personal meaning by each child or adult. In this account, ‘in-out-in-out’ manipulations of things (or narrated event sequences) is used as an analogue of turn-taking behaviours, constituting a back and forth game metaphor to be worked through in the relationship - as an “analogue” of the basic “metabolising” play activity of the two year old.

The mystery of things that go in and flow out of containers, as they are being manipulated, is easily understood in psychosomatic terms being a metaphor of alternating communication - showing or hiding contents, accepting or refusing the other.

**Case:** *One little girl, almost six years old, is brought by the family with a request for psychological evaluation, the report being required for admission to primary school before having attained legal age (at full six years). Tests reveal an adequate level of I.Q., but her imagination seems obstructed by feelings of: “that is not for me to do” (Personality Test: “Era uma vez” - ‘Once upon a Time’, by Teresa Fagulha, 1986). Extremely well behaved during testing, informal observation had revealed sudden bursts of agitation in which she jumps around laughingly in seeming isolation - till softly restrained by the authoritative adult.*

*In recommended psychotherapeutic play sessions which follow, imaginative play with miniature toys disposed in a large box (“World*

*Play" material) is not observed, but only compulsive kneading together of coloured plasticine rolls, till they are transformed into one brown soft mass.*

*Pounding and wetting this (from a nearby jug of water) but never spilling, she now produces a sticky glue-like paste. In the beginning, her back to the therapist, she had peeped as if to see what she was doing, finding her smilingly attentive - She then turns to her, and continues face to face, all the time talking to herself (but not responding in any form to echoes or comments, or permitting alternating enactment of a sequence). She then asks to wash her hands.*

*In the third play session, the brown mass (retained under her orders from former meetings and now dry) is again wetted till it becomes an almost liquid paste. Almost the rest of the hour is joyfully occupied with playful acts of water made to flow from jug to container and back - while the therapist just underlines happenings: ..."now in; now out; now in; now out." At one moment the therapist is instructed to knead some paste, which she does - but little reciprocal exchanges ensue. When excitement bursts out of limits, it is easily contained.*

This is an example of how a cognitively well-developed five year old had efficiently hidden her emotional immaturity and perplexities - here expressed in non-imaginative play-like activity reduced to energetic compulsive kneading, as well as repetitive 'in-out-in-out' manipulations, with no opening for real reciprocal intercourse.

Emerging in an accepting, non-directive play situation, behaviour could have been described immediately in psychoanalytic terms as "anal" - but may also be looked at in terms of evolving communication.

### **The Intentional Structure of Personality**

Communication is observed when the «*proprius*» searches for meaning for himself of everyday experiences and at the same time analyses the consistencies of interpersonal dynamic exchange movements, which become significant for the experiencing human when his spontaneous gestures are recognized and responded to - thereby laying down a matrix of reciprocal relatedness through mutuality in a critical social encounter. Understanding this in terms of the theory of a psychosomatic whole of personality organization leads to the need of

unravelling the classical opposition between two relatively well defined lines of research on mental development and their distinct propositions:

- a) Jean Piaget's perceptual-cognitive line of questioning was centred on the individual as he "operates with things" (the "Umwelt" of Ethologists). His interests lay in the discovery of the universal mechanisms that underlie knowledge acquisition and reasoning as it moves through distinct cognitive stages toward maturation. Piaget's "symbols" are direct 'representations' of factual things and events, building blocks for mental integration of sensory-motor images seen as independent of language meaning structure (semiosis). His later work does not contradict this basic tenet, though he states that «reality construction» occurs separately and in parallel to «personality organization», i.e. a field of understanding he delegated to Freud and psychoanalysis. (Genetic Epistemology, 1968)
- b) Lev Vygotsky claimed that Piaget ignored the role of social exchange. He proposed that (cognitive) reasoning emerged through interaction in a social environment and argued that it was semiotically mediated, relying on cultural exchange and on language. Though having previously studied mostly behavioural response mechanisms, after 1924, he centred his inquiry on understanding how meanings are organized in personal experience seen as hinged on social communication in a specific group culture. (Thought and language, 1934).

(N.B. Recent research presents many objections against elements of the classic 'stage' theory: For instance, Esther Thelen and colleagues (among other things), found that small weights added to babies' arms during the first phase of an experiment affected their understanding of object permanence, proposing that observations could be better explained using a dynamic systems theory approach, pointing to the importance of the whole body image. (Child Development 77 (6): 1521–1538 - Retrieved from e-mail, 29 October 2011)).

Through exchanges between partners in mutual intercourse, language results as a meeting-point of reality (made up of things, events, people) with intentions. Thus, in his terms, subjective experience may be said to be "embodied" in a relationship, people, things, events (while also coded in sensory-motor terms) is moulded in the mind in terms of arousal, activation and evaluation of 'interpersonal' happenings carrying implicit meaning, i.e., being socially communicated, taking on implicit metaphoric or symbolic form.

Vygotsky provided the example of a 'pointing a finger':

Initially, this behaviour seems a meaningless grasping motion; however, as people react to the gesture, it becomes a communicative signal carrying meaning, serving as the context of language development.

Clarifying this observation, Vygotsky later stated: "With the passing of time, it is not so much the functions which change (as we mistakenly studied before): their structure and the system of their development remain the same. What is changed and modified are rather the relationships, the links between the functions. New constellations emerge which were unknown in the preceding stage" (1931 - Vygotsky's letters to co-workers. In: R. W. Rieber & J. Wollock (Eds.), *The collected works of L. S. Vygotsky*). - Vol. 3. N. Y.: Plenum Press.).

Putting this into the modern context of neuroscience research, Walter Freeman states in 2001 that each brain has a private language, but each is also a unit in society, having what he calls an intentional structure - by which he means "the process of a brain in action, having the properties of unity, wholeness and intent, which is the tension of taking in by stretching forth". (*How Brains Make up Their Minds*, 2001).

Researchers continue deepening our understanding of the all-encompassing realities of intrapsychic and interpersonal communication of personal meanings, held together by social brain structures, when studying psychosomatics anew (including more recent research on the dynamics of systemic exchange between brain structures, actively shifting in childhood, teen-age and still in adulthood (Freeman and Holmes, 2005) with their respective evolving pre-verbal or analogical (motor, visual and oral) and verbal languages (clothed in cognitive, socio-emotional, and immaterial changes). (See debate between theories that emphasize connectedness with and interdependence of particular systems to the entire brain. (<http://sulcus.berkeley.edu/>. - Access July, 2013)).

Communication is a given, which goes beyond mere interaction, and must be confirmed for the growing infant as well as in later situations: it is a two-sided signalling of behaviour revealing that an implication of mutuality is involved. An expectation seems to be signalled that the other shall complete one's own actions. (J.S. Watson, 1979; Leal, 1975;

1980; 1982) Setting a pause between each behavioural utterance, the characteristic turn-taking behaviour emerges as dialogue found at least from the second month of birth, in the baby's turning away rhythm.

It may be observed how communicative interaction is structured when an adult conforms to these rhythms, and accepts the meaning-giving potentialities of contingent responses, "thickened thin data" (K. Kaye, 1979) through the exercise of thing-word exchanges. Later, in time, children's repetitive play with material forms reveals their innate skill in taking up things and events as metaphoric material for interpersonal exchanges or "conversations". (Shands, Harley, 1980).

Referring to observations of the development of primeval symbolic structures, Stein (Leopold Stein, 1957) coined the word "metabole" (from the Greek Metabolon, i.e. 'thrown together') to signify a 'pre-symbol' formation, designating the most primitive equation of feelings and fact encountered in interpersonal relationships, reality being transformed mentally as organizer of ex-changed experience.

### **Mediating Mental Organization**

Going back to psychotherapy and communicative structures of the brain, a specific form of action may be envisaged when planning any form of rehabilitation, as illustrated:

**Sérgio** - *Born in Anoxia, he presents light symptoms of cerebral palsy and immature EEG, at seventeen months. He was never accepted by his father, parents being separated; mother is over-protective and at the same time rejecting (as is current in these cases of cerebral palsy). Suffering the ordeal of contradictory hospital treatments, the anguished mother now brings him, at 3:4 years of age, to the «Calouste Gulbenkian Rehabilitation Centre for Palsied Children», Lisbon. He presents a functional age of eight months on the Denver Development Scale (D.D.S). Unstable when sitting without support, he may stand for brief instants but then let's himself fall flaccidly (even when supported). Grasps playful objects that are extended, but does not explore them either manually or visually. Smiles indiscriminately to all people; makes gurgling sounds not oriented to anyone or anything; does not recognize his name, but does discriminate familiar voices.*

*Twelve play-therapy sessions at the 'Psychological Intervention Unit' follow (11-1973 to 5-1974), based solely on "contingent responses" to Sérgio's gestures and movements - in accordance with the theory of "Steps in the Development of the Dialogical Self".*

*Dramatic changes are seen: Sérgio starts crawling freely, and may remain standing without support; handles playful material emitting different sounds, communicates gestually addressing people, and points out things or places to them. (Unplanned interruption of sessions sees no further change in the following year).*

*In March 1975, a second series of meetings are made possible, and he is now placed in a group setting with four other children suffering global retardation. Sérgio soon starts walking more freely, this making him very happy.*

Psychotherapy in an adequate peer group setting was indicated, to mediate meaning formation, multiple mutual exchanges being stimulated, to be understood as the basis for spontaneous personality growth.

More than "cerebral-palsied", so called "atypical" children awaken a feeling of incongruence in the attending staff. Theory underlying work with these at the 'Psychological Intervention Unit' (led by Nurse M. Janeiro, 1979), was based on the information that those children had experienced early development disturbances in some format, though signs of neurological insult were negligible at the time. In theory, it was stated that they might have lost the opportunity for experiencing reciprocal exchange in communication - because caring adults had difficulty in responding contingently to their unusual formats of expression, thereby inhibiting the possibility of an intentional dialogue and thwarting personality organization.

**An instance transcribed:** *A group of «atypical» children meet irregularly, once a week, to play for forty-five minutes with two or three professionals (the numbers depending on circumstances), in a large room containing play-materials which offer many alternatives for manipulating and imagining. Supervision of sessions, carefully recorded, aims at clarifying the formal characteristics of each child's expressions, and to prepare 'psychotherapists' for intervention at the exact moment in which repeating the gesture or event permits mutually contingent exchanges, thus initiating communication - with*



*the intention of eliciting a thing/person reciprocal and alternating dialogue.*

*On one occasion, two adults and three (of the five) members of the group are present, all of them with motor deficiencies.*

*Suzy (4 years and a half) stands on one side, both arms wide open in a rather stereotyped gesture, advances slowly and hesitantly in direction of Nurse Maria, nearing, she recedes again, while M. opens her arms wide. She approaches again, and the game is repeated (after two years of contact, and one year of school integration, having formerly rejected any relationship, reacting even to being looked at). In the meantime Telma and Paula (both 5 years) take up miniature kitchen utensils and come together. Telma watches M. and Suzy as they exchange gestures (Telma presented profound retardation and mutism, two years ago, when first seen, but no symptom of cerebral palsy. Integrated in the group six months ago, she now communicates though in a rudimentary form).*

*Paula now sits near T., her back to the group. (Three years ago, Paula refused participation in any interpersonal context. Being immersed in the symbiotic relationship pattern, she accepted contact with one adult but only in terms of being cuddled).*

*Telma approaches M. with a mixer in her hand, showing clearly her need for attention by pulling her face to look in her eyes. Suzy then pulls M.'s face back in her own direction. Both start playing with the mixer with M.'s active participation. In the meantime, one can see Paula and T. beginning a 'conversation'.*

*Both sub-groups sustain animated exchanges in which everyone seems involved. Telma fetches a baby doll and feeds her with the bottle (Telma had been compulsively fed and formerly vomited her food systematically). One can see that T.'s hands are also holding the baby doll (at Telma's request), sort of supporting Telma's gesture.*

*One may observe that the three children are, in a certain fashion, resonating to each other in their respective play: as preparing food and giving food are complementary activities, and the group play atmosphere is emotionally gratifying.*

*This feeling is echoed by T. in so many words.*

*The group now risks new activities, and multiple contingently alternating exchanges evolve - with corresponding evidence of individual global development.*

What some psychotherapists have called “acting out” has been designated as resistance to cognitive mental development, thereby eliminating interest in emotional meaning structures (in turn depending on the use of body image and phantasy, as distinct from reasoning). On the contrary, in groups, action is considered an important form of communication to be reflected and understood as an indicator of messages wanting to be understood - not expecting to be set aside as having little to do with the scene of enacted emotional relations.

**Illustration** - *Four to five six year old children meet twice a week with a group analyst in a large cellar prepared for multiple play. Children belong to a nearby school serving underprivileged children.*

*During the last three meetings, children had been occupied producing various coloured thick paints (washable) with the ingredients furnished, then decorating large posters. The activity soon evolved to spreading big brown blobs, varying in consistency and tone.*

*On one of those occasions, the Group analyst underlines: “This always turns into something brown”. Immediately the setting changes. One of the children declares she wants to leave and starts putting her coat on. The Group analyst echoes the child’s need and then (observing a change in her intention) follows up, helping her to take the coat off, and mediating a return to the scene. The sequence is repeated three times, without any form of criticism, while the others just look on. She shall remain in the group till the end of the session, occupying herself with drowning human figures (miniature doll family) head down, in small receptacles (yoghurt cups which she fills with liquid colours, some vivid, others dubious. While playing, her lonely game her back to the others, she peeps sideways, seemingly watchful of happenings. Two other children begin playing ball. After a few moments, these two boys leave the room and play football outside very energetically (anxiety is expressed in the form of fight/flight?).*

*The Group analyst remains inside but visits them from time to time, speaking of the threshold which limits the play-room and separates it from the outside territory and the other building. She underlines that*

*they play outside because inside brown things always appear anew. One of the boys contradicts her, saying that here they have more space to play. The Group analyst answers she does not agree and gesturally compares the two areas in detail. After this short dialogue, the Group analyst accepts the fourth child's non-verbal request, to help her in putting a little order in the play-room. The other two come in, look around, and go out - then come back to play freely in the room, probably expressing non-verbally that family disorder and life space impositions were their real problem of inner control. (Though also seemingly preoccupied with "brown stuff", in view of her training, the Group analyst always centred her attention on mutual communication, thus holding the group together, and contributing to mental organization). One of the boys makes an attempt to begin painting again, but is called upon lightly by others to continue to play the ball - which they do with relative subtlety due to constriction in space. The meeting nears and attains its end without more ado.*

The session, chosen from many others, describes a moment of non-verbal decision: the theme being "to leave the situation behind", a criterion that gives a new substance to the term 'acting out' - clearly expressed and accepted in the described situation.

In the said example, it became clear that children were not ready to confront their expressed needs for gratification - seen as forbidden and dirty by their real mothers (here the group analyst), to be retained forcefully. Psychotherapy became dangerous because painting materials were made available which awaken banned dirty impulses - consequently, the room had to be abandoned. The autonomous initiative of their small companion (supported by the mother/group analyst), to clean up and put the room in order, makes them feel safe again.

More than the ambivalent fight/flight reaction seen as an "acting-out" resistance to growth, expressiveness here evolves as a feeling of the group: "We are capable of controlling the situation!... Dr. (so and so) understood!.. We are not forced to grow yet - and, thank God we are safe!

Perhaps that is why this play-session was followed by great progress in integrative mental organization of these four children (found mainly in three of them).

In play, the child projects emotional meanings on things and persons, attempting to master the perplexities, confusions and conflicts witnessed in the world of grown-ups. In phantasy play the child uses his gift of continuously experimenting with his intuitions of an inner self, handling pseudo-reality situations through manipulating miniature imaginative miniature materials which may be used to display events and people in a relatively carefree and not involved context. He may discover himself when acting with things, led by its exploratory impulse, learning to review and reconstruct his image, "as if", and experiencing new forms of relating with others outside the stereotypes he has learned and their repetitive sequences.

*A group of four nine to ten year olds coming from disrupted families are invited to meet with the group analyst once a week in a large play room: a big table in the middle of the room; a carpet on one side depicting a city with streets and gardens and a drawing board on the other side. At their disposal are varied large building blocks, a collection of miniature play figures including a family, soldiers and vehicles, outside clay, drawing and painting materials.*

*Several activities succeed each other. Communication is mostly one-to-one or with the group analyst - who echoes movements and emotional expressions, as required, and often participating in activities.*

***First session, in September 2012, after summer vacation. Three of four children are present, one girl, I. and two boys, P. and N. The group analyst comments N.'s former absences stating the others had asked for him. He seems embarrassed, while P. and I. laugh. They proceed to show him their former work, saved in their box. The group analyst cooperates, pointing out they had made gardens. Inviting them to go on, they immediately explain that one garden is evil - showing the place of the dangerous rat - while the other is good and has butterflies. Both gardens, they say, have little baskets with food and water to feed all of them. The group analyst comments that probably there have to be two gardens, because sometimes we need bad forces for the battle in defending the good garden.***

*After this, I. and N. begin painting on paper, while P. goes to the white board and paints people, two girls and two boys standing on grass, and lighted by a large sun, a huge butterfly floating over them under the blue sky. Standing between the three children, the group analyst underlines it is a beautiful scene, and says that she is going to copy it on paper. P. comes to sit at the table and takes up a sheet, doubling it up: on one half he draws a boy in a garden and (having asked the group analyst to paint his open hand), he presses it on the other half of the sheet. I. who had been experimenting with colours on her sheet, now becomes animated and draws animals and hearts, while N. also experiments with blobs of colour. Most of the time he tries to rob paint from the others and to spoil their paintings. The others tell him several times to stop. I. exchanges N. and P.'s names but admits this when confronted.*

*Observing N.'s concentration, the group analyst smilingly comments that when N. juttet his fingers into the other's paintings he seemed to have been saying that he is back - maybe meaning that he had felt their loss. At the end of the hour, drawings to be kept in their box are selected consensually, it also being agreed that the rest may be taken home.*

Starting from the general hypothesis on the modifiability of personality structures, and given the relative flexibility of systemic brain organization, when describing distinct play formats, Eric Berne (1964) was specially centred on what he designated as the «borderline» personalities of our time, describing cases in which a solid core regulator is lacking to deal with fluctuations in the inner world between "self" and object representations (Malcolm Pines, 1978; 1980).

All too often, today, the classical three of "inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity" are being pointed out for help by burdened teachers, repeatedly receiving from psychiatrists the title of ADHD - a disorder in neuro-development held to be rooted in biology, which focuses on traits assumed to have lagged behind in their central organization since early childhood. (N.B. – In spite of refined diagnostic procedures, key observations are difficult to place, because it is hard to draw the line where normal levels lie, or where clinically significant levels of disorganization begin to require medical intervention, in parallel to educational investment).

To accommodate observed “bipolarity”, S.H. Foulkes’ concept of “ego-training-in-action” may be quoted here anew offering psychotherapy as an alternative instrument to medication. Both in individual therapy (instituted as early as possible) and in group analysis, intense oscillations of humor may be held in a network of communication in which an opportunity is offered for experiencing reciprocal exchange between involved partners and needed space and time is furnished for cerebral integration to evolve, as the triad of self-regulation is modelled (... giving time for oneself; pausing to predict outcomes; opening the mind to alternatives in phantasy. – (D.J. Leong, E. Bodrova, 2008)).

In one such case, psychotherapeutic intervention was proposed to the medical practitioner, and circumscribed as an educational project, advancing that spontaneous communication of acts and things between persons in a relationship setting becomes instrumental in furthering systemic brain organization - if and when it takes on a form of accepting exchanges in which reciprocity may be experienced time and again.

*G. is a nine year old child of divorced parents, apparently presenting learning difficulties without cause. Living with his grand-mother, he had been sent to a psychological unit by the school with the request for evaluation and possible medication - indicating alternating signs of deep sadness and impulsiveness, accompanied by violent behaviour. Psychotherapy is initiated and taken up anew after the summer vacation.*

**2012** - *A large room is prepared for multiple group-play. Two children (G. and Nu.) are present and move about in association with the group analyst. On entering the room, Pe. had taken refuge in the city (drawn on the carpet) on one side of the room and had announced different ways of playing jokes on others in the city and at home - while Nu. builds various constructions with block material on the table in the middle of the room. The Group analyst stays in the area between, and occupies herself as if arranging the furniture in the doll house. Nu. asks her to start wars with him (on the table) but G. asks her to play with him in the city, wanting to create a zoo. (Not knowing exactly what to do, and feeling the need to find a common ground for communication, the Group analyst decides to give herself time). She says aloud: “Gee! Now I don’t know what to do, whether to go to the battle, or to go to organize the city and the zoo.” Nu. grabs some*

*soldiers and builds the battlefield on the table (non-verbally furnishing an adequate tip and the Group analyst decides to contribute a phantasy): "What if the war were between the soldiers who defend the city and the other ones from a neighbouring country? In this fashion, one of us would be staying in the city to organize things and the other two would be going into battle, to attack or to defend it..." Both show great enthusiasm, and occupy themselves in deciding who is going to do what. It was decided that the Group analyst and Nu. would go to the battlefield while G. guarded the city. After the first battle, won by Nu., G asks for a change in roles, the Group analyst now defending the city, while Nu. and G. compete among themselves to see who wins most battles. While they move around throwing things, the city is often the target, everything ending upside down and being put in place again by the Group analyst, while Nu. and G. laugh uproariously.*

*Toward the end of the session, all three begin building towers on the table, each one trying to make a tower higher than the other. At the end of each construction, participants throw objects from a distance, trying to hit it and throw it down, enjoying this immensely. (The Group analyst takes part, but, at the same time remains outside, by putting actions into words: "now the tower is being built" - "now we destroyed it"). After this, having repeated the whole scenario various times (each time being underlined by : "built – destroyed"), the group analyst asks what had been more fun, building or destroying. Surprisingly, both children answer: "building!"*

*The hour having reached its end, goodbye takes on the form of: "See you next week, maybe with the others who are absent today."*

CONCLUDING REMARKS: In the last part of this paper I am presenting the more important element of my reasoning, namely, the suggestion that systemic brain organization and behaviour regulation evolve when intra- and inter-personal communication circuits become enriched as impulsive behaviours are integrated in reciprocal act sequences.

Applying this rationale, psychotherapeutic intervention may be centred solely on the functioning psychosomatic whole of persons, new meaning construction and a new beginning becoming set in a network of reciprocally contingent responses.

**Rita Leal**

Retired Professor of Psychology, University of Lisbon. Group Analyst.

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**The Nordic Matrix**  
**8th Nordic Group Psychotherapy Symposium**

***- three days at work with the group in the Nordic Matrix***

This year the 8th Nordic Group therapy Symposium was held from the 6<sup>th</sup> - 8th of June in Moltes Palæ, Dronningens Tværgade 2 in the heart of Copenhagen. With over a hundred participants and a well organized programme it turned into three intense and rewarding days with the Nordic Matrix in the centre.

It is with excitement and expectation that I signed up for this year's symposium. I looked forward to exchanging thoughts, feelings and fantasies, and concrete experiences in the group psychotherapeutic field. I also sensed a basic joy that Copenhagen would host the Nordic Group Therapy Symposium this time around. As always on these occasions I was motivated by the special combination of professional exchange, inspiring theoretical and professional sessions with workshops and papers, plus median and large group experiences. In the moments when the ingredients are mixed in the right combination something meaningful happens – something I know I would not miss.

The programme really indicated that a big effort had been put into the organisation of the event. It was dense and the items were promising.

The two plenary lectures were given by Christian Bjørnskov and Finn Skårderud respectively. Two substantial contributions, which each in their own way, explored the power of cohesion in Nordic societies. Christian Bjørnskov showed that the Nordic countries have a very high degree of social trust. The lecture discussed the implications of this in relation to themes such as welfare, integration and social and societal power of cohesion. Finn Skårderud focused on the dynamics that arise



when humans fall outside the framework of the Nordic welfare states – illustrated by an analysis of Anders Breivik's extreme actions.

Apart from the lectures there were three paper sessions including eight papers plus eight different workshops. The paper sessions had three main themes: culture, crisis and identity plus methods of treatment and research and special patient groups. The presenters were: Svein Tjelta, Helle Ø. Andersen, Per B. Knudsen & Randi Luggin, Johanne Stentoft, Per B. Knudsen & Annette Møller Jensen, Per Sørensen, Steinar Lorentzen, Eva Rosenlund, Marie Anter & Lena Wennlund og Pia Litzell Berg & Eeva Espalani. The eight workshops backed up the overarching themes very well. Steinar Lorentzen conducted a workshop with the focus on short-term Group Analytic Therapy with the title "Short-term group analytic therapy for out-patients with mixed diagnosis". Fransisco Alberdi tuned in on Scandinavian self knowledge, taking as his starting point the headline "Scandinavian Dynamic Matrix in Perspective". Catarina Asklin Westerdahl, Lena Wennlun & Ann Orhammer addressed the central challenges in ensuring that Sweden in the future has sufficient well qualified professionals in group analytic psychotherapy. Teresa von Sommarug Howard let culture speak through the workshop "Images from Let the culture Speak", her experiences from a Median group, which has existed for 17 years. Michael Munchow offered his perspective on the "we", pointing out how today's understandings of groups and society is informed by, among others, Søren Kierkegaard and Pat de Mare. Tove Mathiesen & Peter Ramsing demonstrated how dream telling can be used as an informative and transformative source for the investigation of the individual and common perspective. Lars Bo Jørgensen & Søren Aagaard focused in their "Workshop on Group Analytic Concepts - project for a group analytic dictionary" on basic group analytic concepts through their project of a group analytic dictionary. Finally Goran Ahlin & Ulrika Segerkrantz focused on the Swedish and Finnish training model for group analysts.

There were a lot of other reasons to look forward to the symposium. In common with previous symposia a gala dinner was arranged, which took place at Borup's High School and I, like most people, signed up for everything.

The main lectures surprised me, positively. Christian Bjørnskov was the first speaker after Hanne Larsson's welcome and introduction. In contrast to Finn Skårderud, he chose to communicate his research

results in English. It was annoying, however, that the sound-system was not tested before starting as the acoustics were abominable. Nevertheless, Christian Bjørnskov succeeded in getting his message across due to his strong charisma and clear way of speaking. A central point in his lecture was that social trust is a phenomenon which is transferred and established in the first years of life. In a time marked by relativism and constant accentuation of the discursive processes of negotiated meaning for our perception of reality this point seems provoking and reassuring. If we are to believe the research results, the degree of social trust changes minimally over time. Bjørnskov further showed us that there is a correlation between a high degree of social trust and wealth. On the other hand the high degree of social trust restricts our capacity to take in and integrate new perspectives. The explanation of this paradox is that the high level of social trust is accompanied by a high level of expectation. In other words, we are at risk of switching off because we are disappointed when our expectations of other people are not met. I was interested to see how Bjørnskov's points would resonate in our symposium. With so much social trust gathered in one place it could, so I expected, only go wrong. As Bjørnskov emphasises we are, due to our high social trust leading candidates towards disappointment and its potential destructive effects. (How and why?) the last sentence is not clear.

I left Bjørnskov's lecture inspired by the thought that we always talk about the value of good attunement of our mutual expectations, but seldom realise this state in practice. Maybe part of the explanation is that we suppose it is not necessary, because we trust that we can count on each other. This dynamic could mean that we often neglect meaningful differences and nuances in our mutual exchanges. This, in turn, results in us being disappointed by others and we lose the capacity for empathy.

When I sat in the first of two large group sessions, it became clear that Bjørnskov's lecture had made an impression on all of us. Contrary to many of my former large group experiences this experience distinguished itself by a remarkably high level of activity. There were not many silent moments and it seemed that everybody was eager to have a go. Most of the energy of the group was directed towards the question of ; which national language would dominate communication in the group. It was as if the whole group's energy was directed towards answering the underlying question of how the group can clarify how to

find enough mutual empathy in order to increase further contact and common understanding. The many remarks about the importance of national language for an authentic experience of one's own feelings gave me a feeling of being alone. Maybe this experience tells us something important about the Nordic foundation matrix. We may have a tendency to take the Nordic fellowship for granted. We have maybe a basic trust, that we are so much alike, that we understand each other in spite of the differences in our National languages. Maybe that is why I sense a sneaking frustration that the group prefers to keep exploring which national language dominates, instead of asking what motivates this apparent need.

Just before our large group conductor said that time is up, it struck me that once again I had been part of a meaningful group analytic group process. I felt my own and maybe also the group's frustration about the difficulty of connecting the global to the national level without losing the creative potential of the group.

On the second day median group sessions, papers and workshops filled our programme. After the first median group, which turned out to be a quite intense and rich experience, I chose to listen to Michael Munchow who conducted a workshop with the title: "Thinking about groups in relation to society, culture and spirituality against a background of theoretical and practical transitions in today's Group Analysis." A long title for a thought provoking and ambitious workshop.

Michael's angle of incidences run along two axes. The one focused on the group as model for interpersonal relations, the other focused on the "we" that characterises a group or a society. The intention was to throw light on how for instance philosophy and other more spiritual discourses in the future can enrich group psychotherapy.

I noticed that Michael both invited us to think further about the potential for development and future directions underlying the development of the thoughts in the group analytic discourse, as well as reminding us that group identity and affiliations contain also essential spiritual dimensions.

It turned out to be a lively but also intellectually demanding time. First, we engaged in an etymological process, where we together went jointly on an archaeological exploration of Pat de Mare's reading of the Greek concept koinonia, which can be paralleled to the Danish concept of

"fellowship" or the Anglo-Saxon concept of community. Thereafter, we explored Tom Ormay's reading of the Latin "nos", which can be seen as a parallel to the Danish "vi" or the Anglo-Saxon "we": Truth as a concept was also explored – "Truth is subjective and inter-subjective."

I am getting aware of the importance of never forgetting that truth in the group analytic process is woven into complex inter-subjective processes, which both are of importance for how we perceive and interpret a situation and play a central role for the feelings and understandings we put into our experiences of fellowship in a group.

We also got around to Kierkegaard. In his work the truth concept plays a central role and subjectivity emerges through the special polyphonic narrative style of Kierkegaard. It is not a long way from Kierkegaard's chorus of voices to life in the group, where it is mirroring and dynamic processes which shape our experiences of understanding the individual in the group and the group in the individual. When we rounded off the workshop I caught myself being ready to establish a reading circle - knowing that my own programme realistically does not leave any room for more appointments.

The paper-sessions took place immediately after lunch, which by the way is very good. I chose a paper-session with the headline: "The Large group in between dynamic and cognitive group psychotherapy". After the intense philosophical workshop by Michael Munchow I needed to hear more about experience, the practice, which characterises daily clinical work. Per Knudsen and Randi Luggin from the psychotherapeutic unit at the Psychiatric Centre in Amager told us about their experience with a group model, that has been formed through a period of 11 years.

It is interesting because the presenters were capable of presenting a series of vignettes that described the experiences with a therapeutic method that builds on a combination of dynamic and cognitive thinking. At this moment I felt we were in the middle of something very essential. The circumstance that there is more that connects than separates the two psychological orientations is a pleasurable experience.

The next papers were a proper continuation of Per Knudsen's and Randi Luggin's introduction focusing on "Resilience Focused Psychotherapy: A clinical focus on strengths and resources in the treatment of personality disorders in hovedstadens psykiatri." We were introduced to a

qualitative analysis, that takes as its starting point the experience of 4 patients in a treatment package that also contains a group aspect. The basic substance in this method of treatment however builds on a design that is developed by Christine Padesky. The method is cognitively based and revolves around the use of case formulations. One operates with a sharp focus on understanding and encouraging the strengths and resources in order to promote resilience.

I especially noticed parts of the analysis which described the patients' experience of resilience and strength in handling challenges and their experiences of the group therapeutic aspect of the course of treatment. Johanne Stentoft, Per B. Knudsen & Annette Møller Jensen delivered a clear Analysis that raised my interest and animated me to think more about the reductions in our contemporary treatment services.

The last presenter was Per Sørensen who asked "Does MBT Group therapy differ from Group analytic Therapy? Theoretical reflections and clinical experience." Here too the starting point was clinical experience. The treatment method is the mentalization-based group therapeutic approach formulated by Sigmund Karterud (MBT-G). The patients are severely disturbed Borderliners. In spite of my tiredness, at this stage of the day, I got engaged in those aspects that touch on deliberations concerning what the specific clinical basis and the specific clinical model mean for the way one understand one's patients the clinical work and not least the way you handle your interventions in the group.

The Day was rounded off by a median group session and a joint dinner at Borup's Highschool. It turned out to be a lively evening with rich opportunities to study the Nordic Foundation Matrix in a new way.

The third day started with a very inspiring lecture by the Norwegian psychiatrist Finn Skårderud. The heading was: "Safety and Rage – the Norwegian Tragedy 22nd July. Afterthoughts about terror in the Nordic welfare state" I looked forward to this lecture. I had been told that Skårderud is intending to have a book on the way, which from all accounts will be based on the extreme terror actions which took place on that day at Utøya. I could not help thinking how my Norwegian colleagues would put up with this lecture. Everything pointed to this lecture being anything else but daily fare, which turned out to hold true.

Breivik, in Skårderud's optic, is a person that could not cope with the complexity of the present time. Breivik is also a person who didn't fit in with the framework of the welfare state and who ended with being the agent of a tragedy of incomprehensible dimensions. From there Skårderud took us on a journey, in which we lived through Breivik's life story, his ambitions, his defeats, the countless failures from his environment and his crusade. All this was followed by an original and gifted analysis of the present age: our relation to solidarity; our conceptions of a successful life ( the goal is to be special); the monstrous masculinity; etc. Even if I could not quite follow all Skårderud's points, because of my difficulties in understanding the Norwegian language, it was clear that extensive work had been put into understanding, preparing and delivering this lecture.

When Skårderud rounded off his lecture we had heard so many facets and looked at Breivik from so many angles that a distant figure now had become a person, who attracted attention and help from the surrounding world, a society – and welfare system, that was not able to respond before. I was affected and most of all burdened by a feeling of powerlessness. How could we let this happen? Skårderud pointed to a basic human condition. We have to live with and understand that there is something we cannot understand – and that this is also the case with Breivik.

Skårderud's lecture belonged to one of the more rare experiences. I felt both enlightened and touched at the same time. Not only do I know more about Breivik and the present time, but my engagement in Society has also been corrected. I do feel myself more bound to and integrated into the community.

Later on when I sat in my median group I sensed a markedly different contact to the group. I felt grateful and privileged that we could share Skårderud's lecture and share thoughts, feelings and fantasies. It is in moments like this that the group finds a common focus driven by a feeling of being united in something beyond our profession and our National language.

In the large group, which marked the end of our symposium, I had almost the opposite feeling. Whereas the median group was subdued and caring there was a latent tension and aggression in the large group. A few people spoke several times and for a long time. Some of the

voices were preoccupied with the way the police handled the Breivik assassinations – “The police should have acted earlier”, other voices were preoccupied with the question of what National language we are going to be communicating in at the next Nordic symposium. Others reflected on whether or not they were going to come next time.

I was thinking that by saying good bye we have to deal with the feeling of powerlessness and who is going to save us? Those three days at the Nordic Symposium offered a wealth of impressions. We had solved many different tasks together and each one by him/herself. What we missed maybe to share more collectively was that there is something we cannot understand and this is good enough.

**Franz Sjøes-Cybulski**

Board Member of IGA Copenhagen

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## **First Group Analytic Society Summer School in Belgrade**

I wish to share with you my thoughts and feelings about the first GASI Summer School - from a student's point of view.

The Summer School took place in August in Belgrade, Serbia. It was the first time I attended an international convention outside Israel and I was the only student from Israel, so it was very frightening for me at the beginning, but from the moment I landed until the very end, Marina Mojovic and all of the staff and local students were so warm, welcoming and caring - they immediately made me feel at home.

We were about 40 – both foreign and local students and staff, a large group that is not too large, so we had the opportunity to talk and get to know most of the people, and it felt great. The students were from Serbia, of course, and also from England, Germany, Finland, Greece and Israel. The school lasted four days. Every day we had a small group, a lecture, a discussion group and a Large Group. In addition, we had two sessions of a supervision group. It was a very intense and exciting

experience. I learned a lot, mainly through "emotional learning". At night we had so much fun with our hosts – a cocktail party, a walk through Belgrade and a gala dinner.

What I found most interesting and exciting in the Summer School was to feel so Israeli. I had two strong and moving experiences where I felt myself as an Israeli – it was a unique event for me, because at home I don't feel my own Israeli identity so strongly. I think I had to travel far to have the opportunity to touch, feel and learn about my Israeli Social Unconscious. I felt like a fish, seeing for the first time the water surrounding it...

The first experience of this kind occurred when I presented my analytic group in the supervision group. It was the first time I shared a session of the group I conduct with people I didn't know before. I never thought of my group as "Israeli", but the international supervision group helped me see the cultural context of my own group – i.e. the Israeli social unconscious. My group members are young people who strive to have relations and intimacy but can't do it. Many of them were rejected as children and now they reject each other. They are cynical, use a lot of "black humour", they use the word "SHOA" (holocaust) when they talk about semi-trivial stuff, they bring memories from terrorist attacks into the room, and in between they attack themselves and each other. I couldn't see the direct link between their violence, their disconnections and the cultural atmosphere we – they and I – all live in. The international supervision group helped me listen to my group with "fresh ears". It was moving and painful to realize how I too take our cultural-national situation as a given fact, as a normal, as natural, as "this is how it is and has to be".

The second time I felt Israeli was more confusing and complex for me, and had to do with the Dynamic Administration of the school. First, I have to explain that it was extremely hot in Belgrade during the days of the Summer School, and some of the rooms in the venue didn't have air conditioning. My small group took place in the "Red Room" and another small group was in the "Blue Room" next to us.

The Red Room – as implied by its name – is a beautiful room furnished with heavy red antique arm chairs, and red carpet over a wooden floor. It has large windows opened to the impressive garden outside. It was very beautiful, and extremely hot.



During the first day we were told that because our Red Room is hotter than the Blue one— we can open the door and "drink" the cool air coming from the air conditioning in the corridor. But for this to happen the Blue Room must stay with a closed door at all times. It took a while, but I started to feel discomfort with the idea that I can enjoy free cool air and as a result, the members in the other room are suffocating. I started to think how lucky I was to be "born" to the Red Room – and couldn't help but see the equalization between this situation and the political situation in the Middle East – me on the Israeli side, who has the resources, the "air", and the Blue Room as the Palestinians. This uncomfortable feeling of mine became unbearable after a day, when the conductor of the Blue Room group came to us and asked us to share the air with them. My conductor didn't answer her at all, and my group members told her that there is nothing they could do, because "this is how things were decided". She gave up and went away. At that point I lost my temper, and later in the Large Group I opened the "air" issue again, and started to cry... It was a very embarrassing moment for me, but I was also happy that I could speak in the Large Group about that, and was even happier when, in the next day, things were arranged so both rooms could take turns and "shared the air". It made me a bit more optimistic about the chances of Peace negotiation efforts...

As you can see, it was a very important and meaningful experience for me to come to Belgrade, especially coming from my country. I felt we share a similar destiny. I could feel the Serbian's pain and wounds, combined with courage and enthusiasm to live, work and achieve for themselves. Belgrade is so beautiful, but it still bears the ruins from the bombing. It is very difficult to live there, because of the economic situation and the terrible memories everybody has. I know, as an Israeli, how you can be proud and shameful at the same time about your country – how hard it is to struggle with so many different feelings inside you. I felt it was an opportunity for me to come to Belgrade and cope with my own difficulties through the mirroring effect ...

I want to use this stage and thank again Marina, Tija, Ivanka, Vida and all the Serbian students and staff for this touching, moving and exciting experience. I feel I learned a lot, professionally and personally, and made good friends in this Summer School. I hope it will become a tradition and I will be very glad if we had the opportunity to host one of the future Summer Schools in Israel.

**GASI International Summer School in Group Analysis**

**- Learning Across Borders -**

*Belgrade 6th to 9th August 2013*

Nine tutors and 34 trainees from Serbia, Greece, Israel, England, Germany and Finland spent four days divided into small groups, supervision groups, discussion groups, and a large group to explore ways to get in contact with each other overcoming national and personal boundaries. It was such a multi-faceted learning process; it seems impossible for me to write a report on the Summer School Belgrade without involving my own emotions and considerations as well.

Is there a possibility of learning without giving up the security of one's own personal borders? On a very practical level I was confronted with this question as I travelled to a city I hardly knew anything about, except for my memories from the news of its civil war and atrocities. However, from the very start the care and hospitality of the Serbian Group Analytic Institute created a climate which helped us to enter into this venture, to get in contact with each other despite our national and personal boundaries and to learn together. Not only was each participant picked up at the airport by a Serbian trainee, their hospitality provided

complete culinary care and even went as far as the purchase of an electric fan to provide a good solution for two small groups competing for fresh air at almost 40 degrees.

Boundaries already began to show within the first group: old and young, women and men, the use of English as someone's first or second language. At first encounter we ask about someone's nationality or introduce each other as Serbian, English, Greek or Finnish. First contact is about national affiliations, but those boundaries between us also provide us with a subject we can use to start communication. Quickly, we become conscious of the sensitivity the issue of national identity inherits. Which subjects are appropriate or even possible to discuss in a country, which was troubled by civil war only 20 years ago and where peace was only achieved by national borders established between different ethnic groups? How does a Jew and a German meet in a country where war and destruction is visible in so many places? How can we deal with the fact that GAS has initiated the International Summer School in a country whose national self-esteem and identity must be re-established? The task on hand is to overcome insecurity and develop confidence to discover that in the end we all do have the same concerns. We approach each other cautiously and slowly find a personal language that may resonate in all of this.

When the Yugoslav civil war is carefully mentioned, I become aware of a common issue Serbs and Germans share. A thought I have never had before. Serbs had to change their nationality - Yugoslavia / Serbia. Us Germans had to do the same - East and West Germany / Germany. In

Yugoslavia new borders divided the country and its people, in Germany introducing the concept of Easterners and Westerners had the same effect. This suggests that people have difficulties if they cannot define boundaries. But neither can we stand discrimination and exclusion as being without the familiar makes us feel afraid and insecure. In subordinate clauses, the question is raised of how Serbia is perceived abroad - or Germany or Israel. In any other situation I was ever so aware that I have a national affiliation and how it can make me feel uncomfortable to be the only German in the different groups.

The first day of the seminar starts with a small group and very quickly the differences show: the five participants from Serbia are much younger, there are eight women and two men, and English is the native language for three participants. Within the small group, the work atmosphere becomes familiar and personal during the four days. Is it possible that this intimacy could happen just because time and place are clearly limited and because it liberates us to be in an unfamiliar place and to speak a foreign language when it comes to openly talk about ourselves? A young Serb mentions an important experience: we tell stories about our lives, and at the same time from the first moment in every movement and every utterance - of whatever kind – this history is contained and can be experienced. We talk about our private lives to give us an outline and an identity. But in every encounter we make an experience of ourselves. That happens automatically and there is nothing we could do about it as every gesture and every utterance will tell something about us more than words and stories.

In the large group anxieties to speak about national affiliations became more visible. Caught between fear of rejection and criticism, the ambivalence between the history of one's own country and the inner necessity of national belonging and identity, it is not easy to participate at the beginning. Nevertheless most students became able to express themselves in the large group. The challenge to progress from the safety of being the listener only to participating in communication and therefore allowing oneself to become vulnerable had been resolved in favour of the latter. In one lecture we listened to what we had just learned for ourselves: in large groups the risk of inferiority, frustration and rivalry is increased. But to get involved also strengthens the ability to orient and engage oneself in daily life despite fear and uncertainty.

Then we have the experience that each small group is embedded in a larger social unit and boundaries can never be absolutely defined, because the same people are in both, the small and the large group. A conflict that could not be held in one of the discussion groups becomes the subject in the large group despite initial considerations, that the group's boundaries could be violated. In the group analytic sense, there is a consensus always to protect the boundaries of a group, but in this situation we find the need to manage these borders flexible in order to recognise the need for mutual speaking and reflecting, understanding and processing. We find it not easy to sustain and manage this conflict: our aim to solve the developed uncertainty according to our group analytic rules on one hand, and the personal necessity to feel confident and safe in the large group on the other. We break the group analytic rule by not respecting the boundary between the discussion and large

group, and at the same time we experience that the current large group becomes the safe place where we are able to hold our emotions and to reflect.

There are no easy solutions, but there is the possibility to maintain communication until an understanding for the thoughts and reactions in the context of one's own or national history begins to develop. In the four days of the Summer School we are living through the uncertainty of the initial contact, the secure feeling of belonging within the protected boundaries of a group, conflicts in us as members of different groups, conflicts between members of different groups - and the satisfying experience that we, as a group, were able to contain all of these facets.

I very much hope that GASI Summer School will become a permanent institution. The experience of these four days will always be an essential part of my group analytic training. Looking from Belgrade to Zurich the structures of my own training in Switzerland and SGAZ became more conscious. I learned a lot giving up the German-Swiss security and drove to Belgrade for the first Summer School. Learning is challenging because old ways of thinking have to be abandoned and new ways of thinking must be allowed to come from the outside. Learning disconcerts if the own boundaries are exceeded and they are opened for different aspects. I was able to learn about myself with the help of the Belgrade Summer School group.

**Ulla Häusler**, working in Munich as a therapist, group analyst and supervisor for social or therapeutic institutions, has been occupied with

different therapy methods e.g. Transactional Analysis, Art Therapy, Family Systems Therapy. Now she is in her sixth year of studying Group Analysis in Zurich.

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### **First Group Analytic Society Summer School in Belgrade**

How can one possibly describe and reconstruct an experience that one has lived through and survived? I am one of the survivors of the 1st Group Analytic Summer School which was held in the Serbia of 2013, the Serbia which for a brief five days came closer and actually bordered and connected to Britain, Greece, Germany, Finland, and Israel.

We came to Serbia not certain of what we would encounter. A large group still in the process of beginning to understand that it has to learn how to contain the fear, the anxiety, the hate, and even the madness. Isn't that what human kind is?

We stood firm. There were many challenges. We faced living in the ruins - running at times to avoid the falling bombs, yet at others steering towards them in order to secure a sense of who we are. We danced manically on bridges, uncertain that they would hold. We held each other and wept over rivers that seemed to be at once toxic yet nourishing.

It was a civil war. We are the same people after all. All were touched, many were wounded, no one will ever be the same.

**Nicholas Cassimatis**

IGA Athens

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## **My experience as a trainee in the EGATIN Study Days, Lisbon 2012**

As a Group Analytic Psychotherapy first year student, I was very interested in getting a wider picture of the super-structure that includes a great deal of the theoretical concepts of the master's degree I'm studying in Barcelona. I was also particularly attracted to the topic of the Study Days' seminar: Love, Passion and Intimacy, as well as to the city where it was held, from which I treasured lovely memories. That is why I finally decided to attend this year's EGATIN Study Days in Lisbon in April 2012.

The city welcomed me radiantly. I found it changed, more cosmopolitan, not so spring-like and sunny. The beautiful building that was home for the congress, the Julio Matos Hospital, seemed to bring us back to past times, when assisting the mentally ill was dignified with this type of building: high ceilings, large windows, gardens... although that also excluded mentally ill patients, separating them from the rest of the patients in the General Hospital.



As to the course, I was surprised by the profound reflections evoked by the theoretical discussions and by the interaction of the participants. I am not used to such warm and close debates, but rather to lectures where there is a round of questions but no real interaction with the lecturers. There was here, and that experience was very enriching.

The small group sessions were also very edifying, as I got a view of how the different schools and institutes are organized around Europe, but I missed a truly close interaction and an open debate on the congress' theme. Maybe language difficulties and the brevity of the study days make it difficult to achieve the necessary amount of intimacy to be able to discuss such topics honestly, rather than to stick to the familiar theorizations and rationalizations. In any case, it was an enriching experience.

I found the large group surprising. At first, the general feeling was of a certain chaos and detachment that decreased as the weekend went by.

There was a minor aspect of the organization I didn't like: the idea of the representatives of the small groups sitting in a small circle inside the bigger circle that was the large group. I think it didn't help interaction and it somewhat reminded me of a parliamentary structure.

Another aspect I would highlight is the continuous presence of social reality and of crisis in all groups. Even if it is inevitable for the group to be affected by the social macrosphere in which it is integrated, this fact

could also be thought of as a defence to avoid talking about intimacy, love or passion, which was the actual set topic.

In any case, and in conclusion, I found it a very recommendable experience that has allowed me to glance over my countries borders and share with other colleagues the passion we all feel for the group phenomenon.

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### **Beyond Words:**

#### **A discussion examining the recent flag protests in Northern Ireland from a psychodynamic perspective**

*“Whatever you say, say nothing.”* **Seamus Heaney.**

Northern Ireland is a split society, characterised by distrust. These splits exist in terms of Catholic/Protestant, Nationalist/Unionist, Republican/Loyalist, middle-class/working- class, educated/uneducated, the “haves” and “have-nots”. In Northern Ireland , the flag has a live

political meaning and is a visual statement that Northern Ireland is a part of the United Kingdom. In the Northern Irish context, there is also a split from the remainder of Ireland, politically, legally and constitutionally and from mainland U.K., geographically and in mindset. The British and Irish governments have historically been enemies and split regarding the jurisdiction of the area. This has resulted in an anxious, inward looking and insular society, which feels the need of defences in the form of armies, e.g. UDA, IRA, and politicians representing aspirations either for the Union or the Nation. I was born in Northern Ireland and have lived here all my life and so am a participant in the societal dynamic. I intend to examine the recent flag protests in December 2012 and January 2013 with this background in mind and in the light of articles (academic and press) studied this year. (See References).

A recent referendum in the Falkland Islands, whose purpose was to ascertain whether the population wished to remain British resulted in a demonstration of patriotism. Despite an anticipated almost 100% “yes” decision, media coverage showed many of the population draped in Union flags, as were shop windows and community buildings. Even the Mayor was filmed wearing the bespoke Union Jack suit he had ordered for the occasion of the vote. This issue of identity is one of the core challenges in Northern Ireland today. How can two political identities survive, even thrive, after many years of violent conflict and despite differing political aspirations? The Good Friday Agreement’s commitment to equal treatment for the identity, ethos and aspirations of both communities is now being questioned

(1) in the violent acting out in some areas, as reaction to the decision by Belfast City Council to limit the number of days the Union flag will fly to 20 per year, mostly national holidays and royal birthdays. This is evidence of how intertwined the Union flag is with Protestant identity. It is also an indication of the inability of sections of the community to express themselves verbally in a manner that may elicit a reasoned response. It is, I think, also a nod to the past when it was felt unsafe to express a political opinion and these were acted out instead. Since December 3rd 2012, when the council voted on this issue, flag draped protesters have rioted and disrupted transport services. The riots and disruption affected the City Centre but mostly the protester's own areas. Newspaper headlines used words such as Schism, Tribalism, Mobocracy. One Sunday newspaper headline in January was, B'Day in Belfast Again, Bust Up Battle, Barred, Bitter, Bottled and Bricked. Graeme Archer, writing in the Daily Telegraph in January, comments that " Every community is defined by that which it is not and when times are hard, the allure of negative definition ( "We are not them" ) increases.....Easy and correct to condemn them; that doesn't mean we shouldn't wonder why."(26)

Bion uses the term Basic Assumption to refer to the primitive impulses that drive the group to act negatively. Slavson in an article The Nature and Treatment of Acting Out (1956), describes parathologic forms of acting out of primitive drives are often reactions to real or fantasied danger and threat to one's biological and psychological survival. Proneness to physical fights is described as a form of acting out of primitive emotions, where early patterning of the personality has not

achieved sufficient subliminal modes of expression or adequate repression and control by the ego.

(2) The majority of the rioters in Belfast appeared to be young people, many children, directed by older gang/paramilitary leaders from their areas. It is interesting that the disruption occurred in areas previously less affected by this type of conflict, e.g. East Belfast, Carrickfergus and on roads leading from the poorer to the more prosperous areas of East Belfast and could be considered a communication to politicians previously regarded as "on their side," now viewed as having let them down. Slavson writes that in ordinary life, acting out of feelings, especially among the more educated and cultured is taboo. Those who indulge in it are looked upon with suspicion and are frequently excluded from their social set.

(3) Newspaper headlines and politician's statements at the time confirm this view. This abandonment by their political representatives and fear of abandonment by the British state has led to acting out of feelings of rage and shame and led observers to note that this issue is about much more than being let down by the politicians over the flying of a flag. My own observation as someone working in all areas of Belfast, would be that many Nationalist prisoners became educated, some becoming politicians. Young people in Nationalist areas, despite living similar lives to their Unionist neighbours, feel someone speaks on their behalf and is aware of their needs. This is not the case in working class Unionist areas where it seems the loss is greater. This is because historically Protestant children in these areas could expect to find employment in the shipyards and trades as their better educated

upper/middleclass politicians ensured the status quo. This has changed and a number of political commentators have observed that,  
*"It is widely accepted that the cause of the problem is far more complex than a flag and has its roots in social exclusion. Increasingly mainstream Unionist parties are being blamed for failing to engage with the working class Protestant communities in Belfast."* John Mooney,

(4). Ed Curran in discussing middle-class Unionist politicians says,  
*"fundamentally they have a problem in 2013 dealing with the protesters because their respective parties live on a different social planet"*

(5). And Eamon McCann as part of the same discussion writes,  
*..."the idea that a shared Britishness could give people without a penny in their pockets a feeling of involvement in ownership of the state....take that away and what's left is anger at betrayal and an enhanced awareness of being on the wrong side in an unequal set up"*

(6) A Guardian editorial on the 8th January, 2013 comments,  
*"The political reality is that in each community there is.....tension between militants and moderates in which popular fears allow militants to prevail. On the Unionist side in particular, sectarian resentments interact with a class divide between leaders and led, which on the Nationalist side, leaders have been more careful to avoid"* (27) and as part of the same debate, Roy Greenslade in The Guardian, writes,  
*"...one insistent theme is the feeling of being marginalised, of losing out in the peace process to the Nationalist Catholic population."* (28)

The Chief Constable, Matt Baggott, who was scapegoated over his management of the disorder, “Baggott the Whipping Boy” 25/01/13, commented on the issue of contagion. Hopper, quoted in the article, Hall of Mirrors, Weinberg and Toder, 2004, says that *“affect contagion may be connected with mirroring processes”*

(7). Matt Baggott, quoted in the Sunday Times states, *“These people have a very restricted view of life Many of them have no idea why they are rioting. They are wrapping themselves in a flag, but don’t know what they are doing. If you look at where the violence is taking place, they are areas of deep seated social need, with disproportionate suicide rates, health inequalities and low educational attainment...”*

(8) While Northern Ireland remains in this paranoid-schizoid position, there remains an unconscious atmosphere of the idealisation of aggression (21). Zinkin, quoted in Weinberg and Toder considers the dangers of mirrors and comments that a person’s inner world, his/her feelings and experiences are seen, perceived and reflected through the eyes of the observer.

(9). The article discusses Sartre’s comment that “hell is the other” meaning that a person sees in the other observing him a mirror of his own ugliness. The hero of Sartre’s *Le Mur*, behaves in a disgusting, immoral way. When he perceives how he is seen by the other, he kills the other. The aspirations of the Good Friday agreement would concur more with Levinas, quoted in the same article, that when a person sees the other’s face, he becomes responsible for the other. This is translated by Levinas into a responsibility to dialogue

(10), a challenge in Northern Ireland where people are often afraid to do so. Seamus Heaney's words at the beginning of this discussion illuminate the challenge. That said, it seems to me that dialogue has occurred since the agreement but the Protestant//Unionist working class have not found their voice or spokesperson. What is mirrored back to the young, uneducated Protestant has been the lack of interest of their representatives and this relates to Winnicott's description of the process of mirroring as a primary developmental milestone. *"The mother is looking at the baby and what she looks like is related to what she sees there."*

(11). Kohut describes mirroring as a basic primary transference, influencing the child's sense of self worth. His attitude can be paraphrased as "I am reflected-therefore I exist". He believes narcissistic personality disorder is a result of a primary failure of this reflection.

(12). Finola Meredith, writing in the Belfast Telegraph, says, *"In spite of the intervening years of (imperfect) peace, it doesn't take a great deal to return us to a similar state of mass anxiety."*

(13) I was surprised when writing about these issues to find myself becoming anxious that the discussion should appear balanced and frequently rechecking that I had correctly capitalised all the separate groups. Kapur and Campbell, in *The Troubled Mind of Northern Ireland*, state that *"persecutory anxiety is at the heart of paranoid-schizoid functioning. Exposure to unpredictable terrorist attacks leaves people with a deep fear that it may happen again"*.



(14) Weinberg and Toder discussing the Mirror in the large group, comment that a herd is often intolerant of diversity, that unity strengthens the power of survival but creates dangerous conformity.

(15) They cite Hopper, who argues that society and large group might use the fourth basic assumption of aggregation/massification, especially societies that underwent trauma. In times of crises, survival can overrule differentiation. A variety of mirrors is a privilege kept for those whose survival is assured.

(16) There has been plenty of criticism in the media of our politicians, particularly the First Minister, Peter Robinson regarding their inability to contain the protesters. e.g. "We have been let down by the self serving lot of them. By all our leaders."

(17) Perhaps the politician's inability to contain the situation is not too surprising given our history of terrorism and trauma, of "them" and "us". Our politicians have been created out of that climate and most present themselves to their voters in the paranoid- schizoid position. Finola Meredith writes, "*Peter Robinson, himself a prime product of this competitive locker room climate, has struggled to take charge of the flag row. A provocateur by training, his default instinct was to side with the tribe, as DUP leader, not as leader of the people of Northern Ireland.*"

(18) Kapur and Campbell write that a great deal of fear and anxiety is carried around unconsciously in troubled minds, and phantasies of retaliation are part and parcel of the destructive processes within the

paranoid-schizoid position. “Our time will come” is a phrase carried around in the mind of many Catholics who look forward to the time when old scores will be settled.

(19) The inclination to be troublesome represents the expression of hope by the core of the self. An alternative may be the development of the potential for creative living.

(20) How can we learn to ask for what’s needed in an acceptable way? Winnicott’s theory of holding, discussed by Shields in *Hope and the Inclination to be Troublesome*, emphasises the depth of mutual inter-subjective exchange that is required to promote change and a new recognition of the self in relation to others in the real world.

(21) This “holding” refers to a broad range of provisions by the facilitating environment of which the containment of projection in Bion’s sense might be one.

(22) This holding and containment is described by Shields as the hopeful equivalent in the adult environment of the healthy response of the parent in healthy child development. Here the “hot-blood” of the anti-social gesture does not elicit a hot-blooded response in return. Instead all may join in finding a new perspective.

(23) Colin Hassard, a performance poet, (“We who have no flags”: see You tube), comments in the *Belfast Telegraph*. “Perhaps people like myself are able to express our dissatisfaction and frustration through

creativity, whereas others choose to feel angry and lash out on the streets. But this is much more than an issue over a flag.”

(24) Kapur and Campbell write that *“what is so evident in day to day disclosure in Northern Ireland is how these strong feelings are lurking omnipresent beneath the surface. For Catholics it is the fear of being dominated by the external objects of Unionism. For Protestants it is the fear of being dominated by the external object of Nationalist Republicanism.... both fears carry their own vulnerabilities. It is only when such vulnerabilities can be addressed that more depressive positioning functioning can take place.”*

(25) Jenny McCartney writing in the Daily Telegraph in January, poses the question “What Is Britishness?” and with reference to the changing demographic in mainland U.K. feels it is in the process of redefining itself. Discussing the pageantry surrounding last years Jubilee and Olympics, she comments that, “perhaps mainland Britons no longer find the Union flag and the Royal family mildly embarrassing, but rather reassuring. It is as if they instinctively recognise that an identity in flux needs something tangible to grab on to and on that single point at least, they may inadvertently have inched closer to understanding the Ulster Unionists.”

(26)        Given its history and current climate, what hope is there that Northern Ireland can move to the depressive position? I am encouraged, because despite the recent unrest, when I trawled the many articles and opinions in the local newspapers, for the purpose of this discussion, I found only one suggesting that

Westminster become involved in sorting out the issues. Perhaps we are moving through a painful adolescent individuation into a mature adult, capable of dialogue and with something to say.

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25. Graeme Andrew, The Daily Telegraph, 11/1/13
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**Rosie Johnston**

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## **Book and Review Corner**

### **Citations and Abstracts of Articles from Other Journals**

**Begovac, B and Begovac, I (2012).** Dreams of Deceased Children and Countertransference in the Group Psychotherapy of Bereaved Mothers: Clinical Illustration. *Death Studies, Vol. 36 Issue 8, p723-741.*

This article presents, in the form of a clinical illustration, a therapeutic group of bereaved mothers with special reference to their dreams about their deceased children. The article presents descriptions of the emotions of these mothers and countertransference feelings, a topic that, to our knowledge, has not been frequently studied. The group was small, analytically oriented, slow-open, comprised of women bereaved by the death of a child, and conducted by a female therapist. Over more than

three years, the group included 20 members in total. This article describes a number of dreams recorded during a period when the group included seven members. Dreams helped the group members access their emotional pain, helplessness, yearning for a relationship with the deceased, guilt, and feelings of survival guilt. The transference-countertransference relationships were characterized by holding. Countertransference feelings of helplessness predominated. The therapist and the group as a whole contained various emotions, allowing the group members to return to the normal mourning processes from the parallel encouragement of group development and interpersonal relationships.

**Braun, Gabriella. (2011).** Organisations today: What happens to attachment? *Psychodynamic Practice, Vol. 17 Issue 2, p123-139.*

Attachment theory has been largely overlooked in the systems-psychodynamics approach to understanding organisations, yet it illuminates important aspects of organisational life. We all bring to our organisations our attachment patterns; these become part of what happens unconsciously between people, in relation to tasks, creativity and innovation. Using case material from consultancy to organisations, group relations conferences and interviews, this article explores attachment in organisations. Our attachment patterns have a profound effect on our sense of security and capacity for trust, which then shapes our responses to others and our environment. As children need to feel secure enough in the family, in order to carry out their developmental tasks, we need to feel secure enough in our organisations, in order to work productively. Such security is difficult to achieve now, as organisations are affected by the acute insecurity of the wider environment; employers have become increasingly transactional in their dealings with employees; technology reduces the need for personal interaction and physical space defining an organisation is less tangible. Alongside constant change and loss, the level of complexity increases stress and insecurity. Some implications for working in and with organisations are considered.

**Cairns, E (1994).** A Welling Up of Deep Unconscious Forces, Psychology and the Northern Ireland Conflict. *University of Ulster, Coleraine.*

Available in Full Text: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/csc/reports/forces.htm>

**Canham, H and Emanuel, L (2000).** 'Tied together feelings' Group psychotherapy with latency children: the process of forming a cohesive group. *Journal of Child Psychotherapy*, Aug2000, Vol. 26 Issue 2

In this paper we describe our experience of running a psychoanalytic psychotherapy group for six children, ranging in age from 4-8 years old. The group ran for a year, with sessions held weekly for an hour. The rationale for group work, selection criteria and the treatment setting are discussed. The paper charts the evolution within the children of the concept of an internal 'work group' (Bion, 1961), as opposed to a 'gang', as their self-awareness and capacity to relate to each other improved. This reflected a corresponding shift in their relationship to the two group leaders, moving from their initial perception of us as neglectful and in conflict with each other, towards recognizing us as a therapist couple who could work together thoughtfully for their benefit. The children's relationship to the group leaders, representing a 'parental couple' in the transference, was the focus of much of the work group. The positive outcomes for most of the children, resulting from this treatment, are reported.

**Devi, A and Fenn, E (2012).** 'Make sure you keep our house safe!' Thematic analysis of a children's psychotherapy group. *Journal of Child Psychotherapy*, Vol. 38 Issue 3, p318-334.

This paper describes a systematic thematic analysis of one particular latency-aged children's group and includes a discussion about potentially helpful outcomes measures. The impetus for our small, practice-based qualitative research project came from the two papers by Reid (1999) and Canham (2002) about children's psychotherapy groups, particularly Canham's (2002) paper, 'Group and gang states of mind'. Canham and Reid used Bion's theories of group functioning as the basis of their technique with children's groups. We felt that it would be an interesting follow-on from Reid and Canham's findings to explore in some detail the specific therapeutic factors involved in a shift from paranoid-schizoid to depressive functioning in group therapy. We hoped that this might give us some helpful clinical indications as to the circumstances in which group rather than individual psychotherapy and parallel parent work should be considered as the treatment of choice. The paper concentrates exclusively on group work with latency-aged children, therefore referring mainly to the limited number of papers published about psychoanalytic group therapy with this age group.

**Gallagher, A.M (1987).** Psychological Approaches to the Northern Ireland Conflict. *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 2, pp. 21-32.

**Reid, S and Kolvin, I (1993).** Group psychotherapy for children and adolescents. *Arch Dis Child*, 69(2).

Full text article: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1029470/>

**Reynolds, D (2003).** Mindful Parenting: a group approach to enhancing reflective capacity in parents and infants. *Journal of Child Psychotherapy*, Vol. 29 Issue 3, p357-374.

Fonagy (1998a) has suggested that the core of prevention of psychopathology in early childhood should be the enhancement of mentalizing. To that end, this paper introduces Mindful Parenting, an innovative psychotherapeutic group designed to promote reflective functioning in parents and their infants/toddlers. The interdisciplinary underpinnings of this group work, including the utility of applied infant observation, is followed by exposition of the structural components of Mindful Parenting. Evocative moments from the group experience are interwoven, in an effort to make plain the ways that Mindful Parenting seeks to restore, cultivate, and sustain the most basic, verbal and nonverbal, affective contacts between parent and child. The paper concludes with clinical material on the birth of a thinking couple.

**Sayder, Suzan (2008).** Joining up with 'not us' staff to run adolescent groups in schools. *Journal of Child Psychotherapy*, Vol. 34 Issue 1, p111-126.

The author describes the development of a model for working with staff members from non-psychoanalytic backgrounds to run therapeutic and therapy-like pupil groups in schools. She draws on her experience of co-facilitating groups at a London-based secondary school and uses examples from recent group work with Year 10 pupils (aged 14-15). Child psychotherapists who have shied away either from doing group work in general, or more specifically taking on group work in schools, may be encouraged to see that the underlying principles are essentially no different from those of individual therapy. Worrying and troublesome young



people tend to have difficulties in their external relationships, often exhibited at school and contributing to their underachievement. Psychoanalytically informed groups such as the kind portrayed here can address this difficulty by offering a safe setting for interactions with other group participants and with the leaders to be observed, examined and challenged in the here and now. Attention is paid to primitive anxieties and the defences employed to keep them at bay, including the tendency to place individual needs before group needs when sense of self and sometimes survival itself are felt to be threatened. The aim is for participants to learn about themselves by sharing a group experience and, if successful, integrate some conflicting aspects of themselves. This model for doing group work demonstrates how child psychotherapists can make a unique and valuable contribution, provided the school environment is conducive and there is a member of staff who is open to learning a new way of working.

**Shechtman, V** (2002). *Child Group Psychotherapy In The School At The Threshold Of A New Millennium. Journal of Counselling and Development, Summer 2002, 80(3), p293.*

Full text article: [http://healingattention.org/documents/doc\\_shechtman.pdf](http://healingattention.org/documents/doc_shechtman.pdf)

**Terry Birchmore**

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### **Group analysis and eating disorders: a study of the therapeutic impact of group-analytic psychotherapy on women suffering from anorexia and bulimia nervosa**

*The therapeutic evolution of two women, one with anorexia nervosa (AN) the other with bulimia nervosa (BN), which took place for three and two years respectively in a heterogeneous once-a-week slow-open group-analytic group, was analysed. The group was conducted following modified group analysis by integrating cognitive-behavioural, psychoanalytic and object relations perspectives. Results indicated the elimination of two patients' anorexic and bulimic episodes and a better integration of their bodily image and self due to the introjection of the group conceived as a good enough mother or selfobject mainly on its archaic and projective stages on pre-*

*Oedipal level. However, both patients had difficulties with the group's mature reality stage and the phase of termination on Oedipal level, linked with separation-individuation processes and mourning, and terminated early by preparing a brief farewell (BN) or by interrupting (AN). The implications for further investigation of the group analysis of eating disorders were discussed.*

Although their diagnostic criteria and status as autonomous clinical entities have been well defined from a psychiatric perspective (American Psychiatric Association, 1980, 1987, 1994), neither AN nor BN present a clear-cut clinical picture. Both diseases usually co-exist with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), borderline personality disorder (BPD) and especially depression, which interfere with their diagnostic evaluation, therapeutic approach and outcome (Thornton & Russell, 1997; Meyer, Leung, Feary & Mann, 2001; Casper, 1998). The reasons why AN and BN afflict both sexes but much more women than men (Fombonne, 1995; Steiner & Lock, 1997), remain likewise perplex and controversial, as they range from childhood abuse (Waller, 1992; Rorty, 1994) to socio-cultural factors (Garner & Garfinkel, 1980; Simpson, 2002). The aetiology of both AN and BN, considered from a psychodynamic viewpoint, is also extremely complicated and inconsistent. Klein (1952) considered anorexic and bulimic tendencies as symptoms of an infantile neurosis when a regression/fixation of the subject to the paranoid-schizoid position (Ps) takes place in an effort to get rid of the mothering object that was introjected mainly as "bad" object during the oral stage. Lacan (1956-1957) regards anorexia as a psychotic-like symptom rather than as a disease precipitated by the overwhelming prevalence of an omnipotent imaginary mother over the symbolic father (the Name-of-the-Father). Mahler, Pine & Bergman (1975) conceived of eating disorders as adaptive responses to disruptions of the late symbiotic or early differentiation sub-phase of the separation-individuation process leading to an impairment of self-object differentiation. Kohut (1971) considered eating disorders, strictly linked with the development of an archaic "body self", as behaviour that acts as a substitute for a mothering object conceived as a bodily rather than idealized selfobject. All theories would agree that, in order to be effective, any kind of psychotherapy of eating disorders, should first re-constitute the above deficiencies on the pre-Oedipal level mainly by transforming the internalized "bad" object into "good" in terms of a sufficient negotiation between the Ps and the depressive position (D) (Klein, 1937, 1946; Palazzoli, 1978) or into a "good enough" one (Winnicott, 1965) or a "container" (Bion, 1963) leading to the patients' identification with the mother as an idealized selfobject (Kohut, 1971) and later address deficiencies linked with identification with the symbolic father/Name-of-the-Father on Oedipal level.

However, given the perplexity of both diseases, not only psychoanalysis but also even modified psychoanalytic psychotherapy of AN and BN is counter-indicated as ineffective (Bruch, 1970; Palazzoli, 1978). Anorexic and bulimic patients in individual analytic therapy, when they do not negate or interrupt it, mainly develop an archaic selfobject transference which can only assiduously be transformed into (and elaborated therapeutically as) an idealized selfobject transference, through their fear of devouring the therapist(s) or being devoured by them, often counterbalanced by their splitting tendency and/or their psychic emptiness projected on the therapist(s)

(Geist, 1989). This, in turn, incites strong counter-transference feelings, which would undermine continuation of therapy and/or outcome (Bruch, 1978; Zerbe, 1992; Farrell, 1995). Yet, some positive results in terms of transformation of the patients' archaic selfobject into an integrated/idealized selfobject during analytic psychotherapy have been referred (Dellaverson, 1997). By contrast, individual and/or group cognitive-behavioural therapies (CBT), although they present high rates of drop-out (Waller, 1997; Steel, Jones, Adcock, Clancy, Bridgford-West & Austin, 2000), have proved the most effective therapeutic approach especially to BN (Fairburn, Cooper & Cooper, 1986; Thompson-Brenner, Glass & Westen, 2003). Psychoanalytic/psychodynamic groups with eating disorders present insignificant outcomes (Harper-Giuffre & MacKenzie, 1992), while individual/interpersonal psychodynamic psychotherapy has been proved considerably effective (Gabbard, 2004; Shedler, 2010).

The group-analytic psychotherapy of eating disorders has been only partially explored. Hudson, Ritchie, Brennan and Sutton-Smith (1999) refer to the progress made by bulimic women, in terms of a better integration of their dissociated body image into the self, mainly on the projective level of the group (Foulkes, 1964), through the mutual mirroring developed between them in an inpatient short-term homogeneous group, the latter conceived as the therapeutic method of choice. Segercrantz (2006) also highlights mirroring due to homogeneity in outpatient short-term groups with bulimics as the most effective factor in recreating their Self. Willis (1999) and Gold (1999) verified that the "bad" object as internalized by AN and BN patients can be transformed into a "good" one by using short-term heterogeneous than homogeneous inpatient groups. The heterogeneous groups deter the fusion of the members with the group which, mainly on the group's archaic or oral level according to Foulkes (1964), is experienced by these patients as a "bad" object. According to Gold (1999), heterogeneous groups also permit members of different sexes to interact with each other and with the group therapist conceived as the Name of the Father, and thus to better negotiate Oedipal issues. Valbak (2001) refers to the complete therapy of nine out of ten severely bulimic patients with serious BPD that took place in an inpatient slow-open homogeneous group-analytic group following an eclectic group-analytic method. Valbak (2003) suggests that the outpatient heterogeneous group-analytic group may also be a promising specialized treatment for bulimic women.

However, the group-analytic models and research proposed above, in their modified form as either long-term or short-term, inpatient or outpatient, homogeneous or heterogeneous groups, inevitably undermine the "naturalistic" setting of the original group-analytic group, with the result that it is impossible to differentiate the group-analytic factors and processes that favour or hinder the therapeutic benefit. Furthermore, the research focuses on the generalizability of the therapeutic outcomes, thus missing the step-by-step analysis of single cases and their therapeutic progress in relation to the therapeutic evolution of the group. Thus, a lot of questions that are critical to the effectiveness of group analysis as defined by Foulkes (1964) in the treatment of eating disorders remain unanswered. In what sense does the group matrix – which, mainly on the archaic/oral level of the group, is experienced by bulimic/anorexic patients as an "empty matrix" governed by a "bad" Dragon Mother (Weston, 1999) – impact on the AN and BN treatment? How can the matrix be re-activated to

foster the patients' emotional connectedness with the group and negotiate their passage from the archaic/oral to the projective or bodily images level of the group strictly linked with Klein's Ps? What mirror reactions and multiple transferences are produced on the projective level, how do they differ from relevant phenomena engendered during individual psychotherapy and what is their impact on the therapeutic outcome? To what extent can anorexic and bulimic patients achieve a good enough passage to the mature reality level of the group or D according to Klein? In order to provide some answers to these questions, we decided to investigate the impact that group analysis could have on the treatment of eating disorders by analysing the therapeutic progress of two single cases, a woman with AN and a woman with BN, which took place in a heterogeneous slow-open outpatient group-analytic group conducted following a modified version of Foulkes's group-analytic principles and method.

## Method

### Therapy Group

The group was an outpatient slow-open group-analytic group that met once a week for an hour and a half at the writer's private practice in Athens from 2000 to the present. The treatment of both patients with AN and BN took place between 2000 and 2005. The group was scheduled to include members suffering from neuroses, BPD and psychoses excluding the acute ones as defined by Foulkes (1975). The once-a-week group was estimated as a good enough therapeutic dose in order to avoid a massive incorporation of the group as "bad" mother especially by the bulimic, anorexic and psychotic patients. Treating in common neurotic and psychotic patients in long-term psychotherapeutic groups has been testified as leading to favourable outcomes (Smith, 1999), and the same was expected to be achieved by treating anorexic/bulimic patients in a group-analytic group with neurotic and psychotic patients.

The group was initially made up of five founding members.<sup>1</sup> George, 32, teacher, suffered from melancholic depression. Fotini, 30, bookkeeper, suffered from BPD and depression leading to panic attacks and agoraphobia. Mary, 55, housewife, suffered from mild depression. Nikos, 24, electrician, suffered from trichotillomania, a consequence of severe BPD, depression and OCD. Antonis, 26, mathematician, suffered from paranoid psychosis. He had been hospitalized twice and was constantly under medication. A year later Anna, 25, fashion model, suffering from AN entered the group, and a year after that Dimitra, 28, speech therapist, suffering from BN joined the group. Eight months later John, 23, unemployed, suffering from schizophrenia entered the group. John had been hospitalized twice and was under medication. All members had finished a once-a-week individual psychotherapy provided by me for 6 months to 3 years approximately. Antonis, John, Anna and Nikos continued their individual therapy parallel to the group therapy for about one to two years.

The main target for the bulimic/anorexic patients was for them to progressively introject the group as a sufficiently "good" object and later to effectively cope with separation from it by preparing some farewell. This is also considered as the main

target in the group psychotherapy of patients suffering from psychosis (Caparrós, 1999; Skolnick, 1998, 1999). The patients could sufficiently experience all three group stages given that the latter, as mutually permeable phenomena with flexible duration, are repeated in cycles at both the individual and the group level, each time on a more advanced level (Foulkes, 1975). This is on condition that a patient drop-out, defined as quitting before six months, can be avoided through the conductor's continuous efforts to translate and resolve the malignant mirroring and negative transferences developed in the group (Zinkin, 1983). The group was conducted following Foulkes's group-analytic technique, which is likewise indicated for the group psychotherapy of psychoses (Urlić, 1999), with the therapist being a leader following a directive and/or interpretative stance during the first stages of the group and on its archaic and projective level, thus diminishing the group's influence, and a conductor at the later stages of the group and on its mature level by leaving the group to take the place of the therapist through members' mutual support. Cognitive and behavioural elements as well as directions regarding the members' medications were also included in conducting the group.

## Subjects

Both patients with eating disorders were referred to me by their psychiatrist. They went through an in-depth psychiatric and psychodynamic evaluation and were given a diagnosis of severe AN and the purging subtype of BN respectively as defined in the 3rd Revised Edition and the 4th Edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III-R and DSM-IV; American Psychiatric Association, 1987, 1994). The average BMI of Anna and Dimitra was 19.6 and 26 respectively. Both patients were diagnosed on DSM-III-R axes I, II, IV and V (GAF). Both had a diagnosis in axis I and II, indicating depression and BPD respectively, which was more severe in Anna than in Dimitra. Anna was prescribed anti-depressant medication which she continued taking throughout the period of her individual and group therapy. The GAF score (60-51) suggested that both were candidates for outpatient care.

## Design and Measures

The design was a single-subject study in a group-analytic context with assessment measures before and during treatment. The patients completed the Eating Attitudes Test (EAT; Garner & Garfinkel, 1979) and the Bulimia Test-Revised (BULIT-R; Thelen, Farmer, Wonderlich & Smith, 1991) and were interviewed following the Eating Disorder Examination (EDE; Fairburn & Cooper, 1993). They were also administered the Eating Disorder Inventory-2 (EDI-2; Garner, 1991), the EDI Symptom Checklist (EDI-SC; Garner, 1991), the Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ; Cooper, Taylor, Cooper & Fairburn, 1987) and the Multifactorial Assessment of Eating Disorder Symptoms (MAEDS; Anderson, Williamson, Duchmann, Gleaves & Barbin, 1999). The measures indicated a more severe depression and a greater level of restrictive behaviour (Drive for Thinness, Body Dissatisfaction) for Anna than for Dimitra. A disturbance in body image (believing that she is fat while weighting 49 kg) was present only in Anna.

The patients' motivation for therapy and level of introspection were evaluated and accepted as inclusion criteria. However, their individual therapies – Dimitra's for one year and Anna's for two – despite the higher levels of attendance and therapeutic alliance, were extremely difficult. Dimitra developed a superficially idealized selfobject transference linked to her fear lest she devours the object/therapist or be devoured by it. Anna's transference was established as an overwhelming tendency to represent the therapist as an omnipotent mother or bodily selfobject. Any mirroring that favoured a relation with him as separate/idealized selfobject was tenaciously hindered by Anna's emptiness of feeling and/or frigid stance which she permanently projected on the therapist. At the very end, both therapies presented mediocre success since, just before entering the group, Anna had only gained 0.5 kg. Her menstruation cycle was re-constituted but she continued to consider herself fat and to complain about depression. Dimitra had just reduced her binge-eating and vomiting from 3 to 2 incidents weekly. In order to achieve a better outcome, it was decided that both should continue their therapy in the group.

#### GROUP TREATMENT

##### a) Archaic level

Both patients experienced the group on the archaic/orals level, which lasted approximately six months, in an effective way. The group had already entered the projective (Ps) stage. The active but calm leadership model, the smooth development of verbal inter-communications and interactions, and the heterogeneity of the group as hindering massive regression or fusion phenomena helped them to experience the group matrix as a container and holding environment rather than as a devouring Dragon Mother (Weston, 1999) or as an engulfing hall of mirrors (Foulkes & Anthony, 1957).

Anna, who was usually silent, developed a good enough emotional link especially with Mary, Nikos and Antonis, who represented calm mothering objects or siblings for her, and the group as a whole mainly through her non-verbal communication. She attended the group uninterruptedly and achieved the introjection of it as a bodily selfobject, which though was least threatening as sustained by the therapist/leader. "Unlike my mother, the group does not control me, and it is supported by a therapist who is a God", she said in one session. At the same period, Anna begun to gain some weight more, although her disturbance in body image persist.

Dimitra had serious difficulties in developing a bond with the group and persistently avoided it through pleasant yet superficial talking. However, she also attended the group regularly and progressively made a good enough attachment especially with the neurotic members with whom she felt safer and with Anna in whom she saw an alliance. In order not to "vomit" the group as an introjected bodily selfobject like food, she took care to maintain an attitude which meant a gradual adult connection with it. Toward the end of this stage, she had lost weight and stopped vomiting.

##### b) Projective level

By the end of the archaic level, Anna's attitude to the group changed greatly. "I feel as though the group is chasing me", she said in a subsequent session. The experience of the group on the projective (Ps) level, which lasted about one year, had begun and the group had become persecuting by being conceived as "bad" rather than "good" object. Although Anna's persecutory anxiety was mediocre, she could not quite respond to the benign mirroring provided by the neurotic or borderline group members (interestingly, malignant mirror phenomena were absent during this period of the group). When in one session, Mary, Fotini and George insisted that she was beautiful, Anna resisted by replying: "I feel very fat, I weighed 49 kilos and now I weigh 50". However, she accepted with pleasure the same remarks when expressed by the psychotic members Antonis and Nikos. Later, Anna arrived at a deeper realization. She said that she did not feel for the group "a nothing" as she felt for her mother (who never looked at her), which indicated that she assimilated new images of herself provided by the benign mirroring of the group as a whole.

Dimitra experienced a much deeper paranoid anxiety because of which she had great difficulties at the mirroring level. When the members told her that she was beautifully dressed, Dimitra replied that they were "making fun" of her, like her mother: "My mother would say that I'd be really lovely if I weren't the size of a horse". The only mirroring that seemed acceptable to Dimitra was that which developed with Anna. Owing to this, they arrived at deeper levels of insight. In a session Anna said and Dimitra agreed: "We both want to get rid of the bodily presence of our mother inside us, so you try to vomit it, I even refuse to eat because I'm afraid I'll expel it and then I'd be lost". This helped both Dimitra and Anna to accept the group as a "good" rather than "bad" object and to introject it as an idealized rather than bodily selfobject.

### c) Mature group reality level

After about 3 and 2 years of group analysis respectively, both patients following the group's evolution entered the mature/reality level linked with D. Both women were constantly without symptoms. Dimitra had stopped binge-eating and purging behaviours. Anna had gained one more kilogram and she didn't consider herself as fat. New assessments were administered showing that depression had considerably diminished in both patients. With the agreement of the psychiatrist, Anna had also discontinued her medication. She had likewise completed her individual therapy. All members had exhibited impressive improvement, including the psychotic members who had had no relapse.

In this period, major events took place in the group at the Oedipal level. Mary stated that the conductor was a model father like her father. George openly expressed his envy of the fact that Mary felt this way about the conductor. Surprisingly, Antonis said the same thing. Whereas Fotini complained to Antonis that she was jealous because whenever he spoke, he addressed either Mary or the conductor. Both Anna and Dimitra resisted to the group's tendency to address Oedipal issues. Anna declared that she sees the conductor exclusively as a mother. Dimitra said that she simply considered the conductor a friend. The conductor tried to counterbalance the Oedipal dynamics just expressed with the pre-Oedipal qualities of the father/therap-

ist and the group. He feared that an immediate exposure of the anorexic/bulimic patients with the idea of the Oedipal father would lead them to regressive states with the danger of relapse and/or drop out. He maintained in the form of a group intervention that the father figure is as good enough as the mother figure and proves to be a strong figure as long as he follows the deeper mindedness of the mother, without directing her and/or being passively subjected to her, as the conductor follows the group. The intervention pleased Anna especially, and the conductor's unconscious fear that some of the AN and BN patients would drop out was momentarily reassured.

Later the group dynamics became interwoven with mourning processes related to separation/differentiation from parents. This was further corroborated by the fact that John lost his mother to cancer. With the help of the group, John coped adequately with his mother's death without relapsing. Anna began to be absent systematically. In one session she stated that she wanted to withdraw from the group, and only wanted to live close to her mother "until she dies". All members unanimously replied that she needed to stay in the group a little longer, and linked Anna's wish to leave the group with the deep fear that she too might lose her mother. The conductor linked Anna's wish to leave the group with the difficulties that the group as a whole had to cope with in mourning the immature infantile part of self. This occasion was provided by the evolution of the group at this level of its development and is a critical and difficult moment. However the members were able to deal with this experience by sharing it. Furthermore, the conductor, using a cognitive-behavioural approach (Heesacker & Neimeyer, 1990; Leung, Thomas & Waller, 2000), said that Anna had mistakenly linked every separation processes with her mother's loss, which was a maladaptive parental bonding schema. Anna asked for an individual session and the conductor agreed. However, she did not come to the individual session and gave no notice. But she was present at the next group session and kept coming to group after this. She did not feel depressed and she said that she had no need to return to medication.

Dimitra tried to experience the depressive feelings aroused during the mature phase of the group. She expressed her sorrow to John and wept a little. However, in the next session she announced that she had decided to accept a job she was offered in another town. She said that this was a real reason and it was not due to the difficulties in her therapy she really tried to cope with. All members, and the therapist, asked Dimitra whether other alternative solutions were possible and expressed their willingness to help. However, Dimitra had definitely decided it. Before she left for her new job, she wanted to have just one farewell session with us (normally the termination of group therapy lasts for two months, meaning that two months beforehand, the member who is completing therapy pre-announces their last farewell session). Dimitra's farewell was based on a deep emotional climate and interactions between the members. All members were present including Anna who said goodbye to Dimitra very warmly. Interestingly this kind of farewell resembles the farewell performed by some patients with psychosis when their therapy is relatively completed (exceptionally Antonis and Nikos, when they left the group four years later, were to leave one month to prepare their farewell).



In the session after Dimitra's farewell, Anna was absent. After the session she called me saying that she would prefer not to have a farewell, and that she was going to discontinue therapy. For some months after her farewell Dimitra continued her contact with the group by writing about life in her new home and sending cards. Anna did not re-appear until three years later when she phoned me to say that she was fine. Today she is married and has two children. Dimitra lives alone, she has no symptoms, and work in a Children's Hospital Centre in her new town.

## Discussion

This study analyses the therapeutic evolution of two women patients suffering from AN and BN which took place in a once-a-week heterogeneous group-analytic group in outpatient setting. The group consisted of patients with neuroses, BPD and psychoses and was conducted by the writer following Foulkes's (1964, 1975) group-analytic method combined with cognitive-behavioural elements, psychoanalysis and object relations theories. A continuous re-assessment of anorexic and bulimic patients during group treatment was combined with individual psychotherapy and medication control. Patients were assessed before individual treatment by the psychiatrist who referred them and the individual/group therapist for precise diagnosis, motivation and anticipated treatment outcome.

Avoiding dropping out, defined as quitting therapy before six months have elapsed, and achieving a good enough long-term attendance in the group, leading to reduced symptoms was the first target in the group-analytic psychotherapy of both patients. Given that the minimum duration of group therapy for anyone individual is one year (Foulkes, 1975), that group therapy lasted 3 and 2 years for the AN and BN patient respectively, and that the patients' symptoms had fully receded from the beginning to the end of their presence in the group, their therapeutic progress was undoubtedly successful. This result is consistent with Gold's (1999), Willis's (1999) and Valbak's (2003) view that modified group analysis could be effectively used with eating disorder patients not only in homogeneous but also in heterogeneous inpatient or outpatient group-analytic groups.

The second major target was that both the AN and the BN patients would transform the mothering object which they had introjected as "bad" into a "good" one (Klein, 1937, 1946) by first introjecting the group as a good enough mother and holding environment (Winnicott, 1965) or as container (Bion, 1963) sustaining, in terms of an idealized selfobject (Kohut, 1971), the differentiation of the infant's self from the mother's self through mutual mirroring and recognition. This was largely achieved: a) during the group's archaic/oral stage through the patients' experiencing the group matrix of inter-communications as a reassuring rather than a Dragon Mother (Weston, 1999); and b) during the group's projective (Ps) level, which, through the multiple mirroring phenomena that developed, provided the patients, – unlike their individual therapy –, with valuable self-images that were progressively assimilated leading to a better integration of their body image into their self structure. Both aims were further supported by the fact that the heterogeneity of the group deterred fusion states following Gold (1999) and Willis (1999) view, that the patients' persecutory anxiety incited during Ps was mediocre and that the therapist during these

two group pre-Oedipal stages functioned as a leader rather than as conductor as provided during the third mature (D) group's Oedipal level.

The last, less ambitious, target was that the patients would experience adequately the reality-based stage/level (D) of the group, which is linked with identification with the mothering object and the group conceived as preponderantly "good" (Klein, 1937, 1946) thus leading to separation from it or to the last phase of the separation-individuation process according to Mahler et al. (1975) and also marks the patients' passage to the Oedipal situation (Foulkes, 1964). This aim was minimally achieved by the BN patient, who prepared a one-session farewell before leaving the group, and was completely avoided by the AN patient, who preferred to interrupt rather than prepare a farewell. Both patients, especially the patient with AN, avoided following the mourning processes developed in the group; nor did these two members consistently develop a transference on the Oedipal level with either the therapist as conductor or symbolic father (Name-of-the-Father) or the men of the group that could be elaborated, which refutes Willis's (1999) and Gold's (1999) relevant views.

The above results have considerable implications for the further investigation of the group-analytic approach to eating disorders. By revealing both the strong (oral-archaic and projective Ps level) and weak (mature D level) points of this approach, they suggest that both AN and BN would be effectively treated by systematically elaborating the patients' psychotic part of the self (Bion, 1957) on the group's pre-Oedipal level of oral gratification, need for mirroring and inter-communication provided by the mothering qualities of group matrix and the supportive role of the group therapist rather than their non-psychotic part of the self on the Oedipal level linked with separation-individuation processes and identification with the group therapist as symbolic father. Foulkes (1975), although he generally considered group analysis as a suitable means of treating psychosomatic illnesses, has left completely unexplored these factors as well as a series of factors, specific and not specific (Foulkes, 1964; Foulkes & Anthony, 1957) that this study has not investigated. These factors would be systematically explored. Group analysis, as this study indicated, could also be used as a means of a minute step-by-step diagnosis of eating disorders especially as regards their psychotic parameters.

However, the applicability of the above results has certain limitations. First, they are based on a very small sample of single cases, which excludes any possibility of generalisation. Second, the results cannot be compared with other relative findings or be considered to replicate them, since there is no other study investigating the therapeutic progress of eating disorder patients in a slow-open heterogeneous group-analytic group in the literature and it is not the dominant paradigm. Third, a follow-up study is also missing, since the patients, although remarkably improved, abruptly prepared a farewell or avoided it and interrupted. Finally, the present study was not able to adequately investigate the degree to which the group was effective in reducing the patients' BPD and depression thus improving their eating disorder symptoms indirectly, or whether the reverse is true. Similarly, the study was unable to investigate whether, as shown in the different quality of the patients' termination phase, group-analytic psychotherapy would be more effective in the treatment of

bulimia than of anorexia or whether group effectiveness depends on the different level of severity of the patients' eating disorder symptoms, on their different restrictive characteristics or the level of their BPD and depression. Studies on group CBT with bulimic women have verified that the higher drop-out rates are not due to the severity of the patients' bulimic behaviours but to higher rates of their secondary psychopathology such as depression (Steel et al., 2000), restrictive tendencies (McKisack & Waller, 1996) or BPD (Coker, Vize, Wade & Cooper, 1993). The present study seems to support the same conclusion but with regard to anorexic rather than the bulimic patients. It would be extremely valuable for this issue, together with the other themes opened up in this discussion, to be further investigated.

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**Anastassios Koukis**

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## **Request for Foulkes Letters and Documents for Society Archives**

We are appealing for letters, notes, and correspondence from Foulkes that Society members may possess. This will add to our already valuable society archive that contains much interesting material, papers and minutes and that is a significant source of information on our history and development.

Please contact Julia in the GAS office if you would like to donate any original or copied documents:

Group\_Analytic Society  
102 Belsize Road  
London NW3 5BB

Tel: +44 (0)20 7435 6611  
Fax: +44 (0)20 7443 9576  
e-mail: [admin@groupanalyticsociety.co.uk](mailto:admin@groupanalyticsociety.co.uk)

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## **Events**

**GAS International Management Committee announces the  
creation of a  
Quarterly Members Group**

**for all members**

The dates for the second year's sessions, to be convened in London, are:  
5<sup>th</sup> January, 12<sup>th</sup> April, 5<sup>th</sup> July, 25<sup>th</sup> October 2014

Each Saturday, there will be three 90-minute sessions with a 90-minute  
break for lunch; the day will run from 9.30am - 4.30pm with the first  
group starting at 10.00

The conductor for the group will be Ian Simpson.

The venue will be the Guild of Psychotherapists, 47 Nelson Square,  
London SE1, three minutes walk from Southwark Underground  
station. In addition to the large group room, we will have the use of a  
kitchen; morning refreshments will be provided. For lunch, the Guild is in  
an area where there are many good, inexpensive places to eat.

The fee for the group will £25 per day or £80 for the year.

You can pay on the day by cash or cheque  
or in advance to the GASI office  
at 102 Belsize Lane, London, NW3 5BB,  
+44 20 7435 6611

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**38<sup>th</sup> Foulkes Annual Lecture**

**Intimacy and Social Suffering in a Globalized World**

**Speaker: Elizabeth Rohr**

**Respondent: To be announced**

**Study Day: May 17th**

*Friday 16th May 2013 at 8:00pm  
Venue: The Brunei Gallery  
University of London  
Thornhaugh Street  
Russell Square  
London, WC1H 0XG*

Contact the Group Analytic Society International office for further information.

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## **16<sup>th</sup> Triennial European Symposium in Group Analysis 2014**

**“Art Meets Science: Exploring Challenges and Changes”**

**28th July – 1st August 2014**

**Portugal – Lisbon**

For further information please visit: <http://www.lisbon-symposium2014-gasi.com/>

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## **EGATIN Study Days & AGM 2014**

Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the Local Organizing and Scientific Committee, I would like to announce the 2014 EGATIN Study Days, and invite all of you to take part in this event which will take place in Belgrade, Serbia on April 25-27th 2014.

In October 2013, it will be 25 years from the official founding of EGATIN and the signing of its constitution. The theme of the 2014 EGATIN Study



Days is “Group Analytic Identity and Training” and it reflects this, 25th Anniversary Year. We, IGA Belgrade’s group analysts are happy to host this important event, and celebrate it together with respected and dear founding members, as well as colleagues who develop group analytic institutions in their own countries, or founded it in others by overseas training, and contributed to the development of EGATIN. We invite trainees from different countries too, to share experience of learning about ourselves through common group analytic language.

When Foulkes held his first group analytic session and described it as an historical event, the core of group analytic identity was established. Today, when group analysis has been in existence for more than half a century in its own essentials, we rather think about group analytic identity as an ongoing process over time (and space) than something completed. As in an individual, identity is an entity that remains incomplete, always being formed. It arises from lack of wholeness which may be filled with new theoretical sources and fields, or experiences that enrich the group analytic field and broaden its scope, but basically remain in its boundaries. Is that possible? What are the challenges of these processes?

The richness of Group Analytic identity was worked through by many interesting papers, discussions, large group experiences during the EGATIN Study Days held in the last 25 years, including identity of Group Analysis; diversity of group analysis in different cultures; different models of training; comparison of block and weekly training in GA; the importance of median and large groups in training; understanding leadership in GAT; the unconscious in training institutions; questions about diversity of theoretical framework of group analysis; gender issues; issues concerning Democracy in training; future direction of training; history about different institutions; questions about GA becoming an academic discipline; applied group analysis; foundation matrix; Groups in Individual psychoanalytic Training; New approaches in GA theoretical training; capacity of group analysis to adapt to changing times; group analysis as a first choice treatment; issues about power in group analytic treatment and training; and many more.

In the course of the Study Days 2014 we will attempt to enlighten the complexity of group analytic identity today, and its influence on training.

The venue will be at the Serbian Medical Society, a nice, old building that is in the center of Belgrade (George Washington str.) and our IGA Belgrade (Palmoticeva 24) that is across the street.



Please circulate and display the enclosed announcement to your members. We would like to encourage trainees to attend as well. There will be a special meeting for all participating trainees during the meeting and reduced fees for them.

Further information with the program will follow. Our e-mail address is: [egatin.belgrade.2014@gmail.com](mailto:egatin.belgrade.2014@gmail.com)

Looking forward to welcoming you in Belgrade,

**Tija Despotovic,**  
Chair of the Local committee.

## **Information About Conference Accommodation in London and Donations to the Society**

Please see the GAS Website at:

<http://www.groupanalyticsociety.co.uk/>