

CHAPTER 2

GROUP DYNAMICS

Chapter 2 represents the first part of the literature review and takes the form of a discussion concerning group dynamics from the psycho-dynamic paradigm (as mentioned in 1.4.2, p.7). The aim of this chapter is to conduct a review of the relevant literature that explores the dynamics manifesting in groups.

2.1 THE NATURE OF GROUP DYNAMICS

According to Cilliers and Koortzen (1997 p.15), *group dynamics* is the term used to describe the psycho-dynamic phenomena in groups. Cartwright and Zander (1968, p. 19) define group dynamics as “a field of inquiry dedicated to advancing knowledge about the nature of groups, the laws of their development and their interrelations with individuals, other groups and larger institutions”. They make the point that the study of group dynamics began in the United States towards the end of the 1930s with the work of Kurt Lewin (discussed below) and they categorise the various approaches to group dynamics in the following way.

2.1.1 Field theory

This approach arose as a result of the work of Kurt Lewin (1952). He used the term *field* to describe all the forces that determine the behaviour of people in what he called their “life space”. Lundin (1991, p. 249) makes the point that “field theories in psychology consider that an organism is affected by factors in the field which surrounds it”. Lewin (1952) makes the point that motivational forces in the field are the key issue in that behaviour is a function of the field or life space.

Lewin (1952) also directed his attention to groups. He is said to have developed the concept of group dynamics, which “was an application to the group that was

borrowed earlier from the psychology of the individual” (Lundin, 1991, p. 260). Lewin advanced the notion that as a person and his or her life space comprised the psychological field, so does the group and its environment make up the social field (Sofer, 1972). He is said to have had a greater impact and influence on group dynamics than any other theorist or researcher (De Board, 1978, p. 12). Miller (1993) concurs by saying that Lewin’s field theory had a significant influence on the study of groups and group processes.

2.1.2 Interaction theory

This approach sees a group as a system of interacting individuals. The greatest influence in this area has been Bales (1950), who developed a methodology for analysing individual verbal contributions to groups. These contributions are then categorised and related to behaviour and personality. Bales (1950, p. i) describes interaction process analysis as a term that has “been adopted to designate a body of methods . . . [that] all have in common some kind of first-hand observation of social interaction in small face to face groups”. Bales (1950, p. ii) contends that face to face interaction takes place in all groups and that these interactions are similar in any group situation and may be relevant in answering problems relating to values and ethics.

2.1.3 Systems theory

De Board (1978, p. 12) asserts that General Systems Theory has influenced most scientific disciplines. General Systems Theory emerged under the influence of Von Bertalanffy (1968), who distinguished between open living systems and closed physical systems. Rice (1963) describes living systems as being able to maintain their existence only by exchanging materials with their environment. The system has to import, convert and export materials in order to live. By contrast, closed physical systems are self-sufficient and have no need of importing or exporting. In

terms of group dynamics, Rice (1969) wrote that an individual may be seen as an open system as he or she can only exist through processes of exchange with his or her environment. Hence, many workers at the Tavistock Institute have used systems theory to describe organisations, groups and individuals (De Board, 1978, p. 12).

2.1.4 Sociometric orientation

This approach is primarily concerned with the interpersonal choices that bind groups of people together. It originated with Moreno. Lindzey and Borgotta (1954) reviewed related research and found that little systematic theory had evolved.

2.1.5 Psychoanalytic theory

This theory was first applied to groups by Freud (1921) and then advanced by various others, most notably Bion (1961). The main concepts dealt with include identification, anxiety, defense mechanisms, and the unconscious. This work mainly involves theories and concepts, rather than experimentation, and these ideas have permeated much of the work done around group dynamics (De Board, 1978). Psychoanalytic theory will be further explored in 2.2 below.

2.1.6 Cognitive theory

De Board (1978) states that cognitive theory is, perhaps, the most influential of the major theories of human behaviour that have been developed in general and then applied to groups. It is said to be less a theory and more a “point of view” that concentrates on the way in which information is received and integrated by the individual, and how this influences behaviour. A good example of this is the work of Festinger (1962), who advanced the theory of cognitive dissonance.

2.1.7 The empiricist-statistical orientation

This approach attempts to discover group concepts from various statistical procedures, for example, factor analysis, as opposed to *a priori* theories (De Board, 1978). Individuals working in this field make extensive use of psychometric techniques, as used in personality testing. This orientation is successfully demonstrated in the work of Belbin who has used it to construct effective management teams (Belbin, Aston & Mottram, 1976).

2.1.8 Summary of group dynamics

Cartwright and Zander (1968) believe that, despite the number of different approaches, theories and orientations, practitioners in the field of groups and group dynamics share four fundamental premises:

- a) Groups are inevitable and ubiquitous.
- b) Groups mobilise powerful forces that produce effects of importance to individuals.
- c) Groups may produce both favourable and unfavourable consequences.
- d) A correct understanding of group dynamics permits the possibility that desirable consequences from groups can be deliberately enhanced.

2.2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF GROUP DYNAMICS

A presentation of the relevant theoretical foundations of psycho-dynamic theory as they relate to groups and group dynamics is supplied below. It takes the form of a brief discussion of the group-related literature pertaining to Freud, Ferenczi, Klein, and Bion.

2.2.1 Freud on groups

In his writings, Sigmund Freud devoted little attention to social or group issues (Gay, 1989). However, in 1921 Freud wrote a book entitled *Group psychology and the analysis of the ego* (De Board, 1978). In this text he attempted to answer questions regarding the formation of groups and group cohesion (Czander, 1993).

2.2.1.1 Group cohesion

Freud (1921) proposed that the dynamics relating to group formation and cohesion evolve from psychological factors as opposed to instinctual drives. He thought that there is continuity between the dynamics of individuals and the dynamics of groups, that is, he thought individual and social psychology to be exactly the same (Gay, 1995). According to Bion (1961, p. 168) Freud said that individual and group psychology “cannot be absolutely differentiated because the psychology of the individual is itself a function of the relationship between one person and another”. Freud theorised that the psychology of groups may be explained on the basis of changes to the psyche of the individual mind and asserted that the extent to which “a person is emotionally bonded to a group is a function of the degree to which the individual is psychically altered” (Czander, 1993, p. 25). The key to understanding the bonding phenomenon in groups is found in the concept of identification that Freud defines as “the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person and a basic force in group life” (Czander, 1993, p. 25).

Freud (1921) postulated that the basis of group formation lies in the emotional ties between people and suggested that the cohesion between members of a group is based on “substitution by the members of an actual person, the leader, for the internal ego ideal” (Czander, 1993, p. 25). De Board (1978) describes Freud’s position on group cohesion as original in that he introduced the concept of libido as the cohesive force. Freud (1921) writes that the libido is the energy of those

instincts to do with all that may be categorised under the word “love” and he argued that the binding force of a group comes from the emotional ties of the members that are expressions of the libido.

Freud (1921) used the church and the army as examples to illustrate this. He explained that both the church and the army have a head, Christ in the church and the commander-in-chief in the army. Thus, he thought that each individual had a libidinal tie with the leader and consequently a similar tie with every other member of the group. He illustrated this by citing the example of the Assyrian tribe that takes flight when it learns that its leader has been beheaded. Not only has the tribe lost its figurehead, but also with the leader having lost his head literally, every follower experiences a figurative loss of his head and behaves irrationally. Czander (1993) makes the point that this is apparent in all organisations and groups where the leader is suddenly terminated, resulting in chaos. Lundin (1991) explains that the leader becomes, at least temporarily, the object that binds the members of the group together. This also becomes a substitute for the ties between parents and children and helps to form the superego.

Freud (1921) used the term “identification”, which he defined as the process whereby a person wants to be like someone else, in the same way as a small child wants to be like his or her parent. He asserted that identification in psychoanalysis is the earliest indication that a person has an emotional tie to another person. Möller (1995) describes identification as a process whereby a person makes another’s traits part of his or her own personality in order to gain self-esteem, prestige or power, which the person cannot gain on his or her own. During identification, the person wishing to be like the other person *introjects* that person, or the positive aspects of that person, into the ego. Therefore, the common tie in a group is referred to as *introjective identification* with the leader by every member (De Board, 1978, p. 18).

Freud (1927) also hypothesised about how the ego dealt with the introjected object, which in the case of the group is the leader. He said that the ego splits into the ego and the ego ideal. The ego ideal is there to deal with issues relating to self-observation, moral conscience and the censorship of dreams; it is the chief influence in repression (De Board, 1978). It is the *ideal* by which a person measures their actual ego (Gay, 1995). In order to deal with the introjected object, it is introjected into the ego ideal, either adding to it or replacing it. In summary then, Freud stated that “a primary group is a number of individuals who have submitted one and the same object for their ego ideal and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego” (De Board, 1978, p. 18).

2.2.1.2 *The primal horde*

Freud (1950) looked at what he called the “primal horde”, a kind of prehistoric family group in which he suggests that there may have been a murder of the father by the sons in order to form a community of brothers. He describes a group that is led by a despotic leader whom the members of the group eventually kill and eat in order to incorporate the leader’s strengths into themselves.

Freud (1950) illustrates how the leader’s strengths, or those strengths that the leader has that are attractive to members of the group, are incorporated into each member of the group, not by eating, but by the process of introjective identification. Thus, Freud hypothesised that the leader of a group is like a leader of a primal horde in that the leader is able to exercise his or her authority in the group. He or she is able to do this because he or she is now the ego ideal for each group member and each member has replaced his or her own ego with that of the leader (De Board, 1978).

Freud’s writings regarding group psychology are not prolific and, in comparison to all that he wrote regarding individuals, his group and social psychological writings

are sparse and have been heavily criticised as being grossly incomplete (De Board, 1978). However, he did make the following salient points upon which other theorists have built:

- a) The major force that operates within a group is the libido, which is the normal state and usually finds its expression in a union between a man and a woman. However, if this is not possible the sexual instincts may have to be diverted or prevented from achieving this aim.
- b) Groups are bound together by libidinous ties to the leader and thereby also to other members of the group.
- c) Identification is the process by which the emotional bonds in the group develop and it is the earliest expression of an emotional tie between one person and another.
- d) The leader of the group is like the leader of the primal horde.

Freud provided rich, albeit few, insights into the field of group dynamics and group psychology and paved the way for other theorists like Klein and Bion to further develop, explore and build upon the work that Freud began. However, before examining their theories, it is important to acknowledge the contribution that Sándor Ferenczi made to the study of groups and group dynamics.

2.2.2 Ferenczi on transference and projection

As mentioned previously, central to Freud's (1921) theory is the concept of identification by introjection. However, this is essentially a one-way process and does not account for situations where the movement is in the reverse direction.

Ferenczi was both an analyst and a hypnotist who was greatly influenced by Freud's ideas; indeed, they enjoyed a long-standing friendship (Haynal, 1988). Ferenczi did not write about groups or group dynamics but he was concerned

primarily with the nature of relationships, trying to understand the basis of bonding between people (De Board, 1978).

Ferenczi (1952) expanded upon Freud's idea of transference, saying that it is a process that not only takes place in therapeutic analysis but also happens in everyday life. He thought that people are continuously transferring their own repressed feelings onto other people. This thinking then allowed him to put forward a theory that combined Freud's idea of transference and his own idea of projection (Haynal, 1988).

Ferenczi (in Ferenczi & Rank, 1986) theorised that people rid themselves of their unpleasant feelings by projecting them onto the world external to them. In an antithetical manner, people accumulate pleasant feelings by introjecting that part of the outer world that they find pleasant into their ego (Aaron & Harris, 1993). Ferenczi (in De Board, 1978, p. 23) is quoted as saying, "We came to the conclusion that the paranoid projection and the neurotic introjection are merely extreme cases of psychical processes, the primary forms of which are to be demonstrated in every normal being. Besides projection, introjection is significant for man's view of the world".

Ferenczi (1952) also applied the processes of projection and identification to the behaviour of a newborn baby in the way that the child slowly learns to distinguish between what is part of his ego and subject to his will and what is separate from him. Ferenczi (1952) called this early process "primordial projection" and he used this process to explain the formation of good and bad in the infant. He said, "the first object-love and the first object-hate are, so to speak, the primordial transferences [projections], the root of every future introjection" (De Board, 1978, p. 24).

Although Ferenczi wrote nothing about group behaviour, his contribution to the study of group behaviour lies in his identification of the concepts of projection and introjection, which become pivotal concepts in the study of group dynamics. He showed that organisational life can be the expression of the individual's unconscious impulses through the processes of identification. Ferenczi (1952) also advanced the theory of the beginnings of object-relations in the infant that result in the identification of *good* and *bad*.

Ferenczi greatly influenced Melanie Klein, who in turn has contributed a great deal to the study of groups and made great strides towards an explanation of group behaviour (Sayers, 1991). Klein's theories as they relate to groups and group dynamics are therefore discussed next.

2.2.3 Klein's contribution to the study of group behaviour

Melanie Klein embraced motherhood and thereby brought about a revolution in psychoanalysis, which was traditionally more concerned with the patriarchal relationship (Jones, 1948). She focused on relationships in that she advanced the theory that instincts are always related to other instincts and are most influenced by the initial relationship with the mother, who is at times both loved and hated (Sayers, 1991).

Klein also emphasised that to understand the effect of experience on people one must first understand their internal state, including the anxieties to which they are susceptible and the types of external influences that are likely to cause them pain or pleasure, depending on what stage of their development they have reached (Czander, 1993). For example, for an infant to be hungry for two hours is a completely different experience from that of an adult being hungry for two hours.

Czander (1993) suggests that the most significant aspect of Klein's work is her conceptualisation of how one perceives. Klein suggests that one sees the outside world in terms of internal concerns and one's experiences in the world reinforce certain anxieties and diminish others.

Klein's (1923) ideas resulted from her analytical work with babies and young children and she developed a new technique, play therapy, to analyse their anxieties, fantasies and behaviour. Although initially strongly influenced by Freud's ideas, Klein's experience with children led her to develop new ideas that differed from those of Freud (Jones, 1948). For example, Klein proposed, contrary to Freud's thinking, that the superego is very active in toddlers as young as two and three years old, sometimes expressing itself in the form of very savage characteristics. This differed from Freud's theory, which hypothesised that the superego developed, as a result of the Oedipal complex, around the age of three or four. Klein thus concluded that the superego developed during the first six months of life (De Board, 1978).

Klein (1923) attempted to conceptualise and describe the mental processes that take place in the mind of the baby from the first days of its birth (Klein, 1945). She maintained that the world of the child comprises one object only, the mother's breast. And this may be a source of complete satisfaction or, if withheld, a source of complete frustration and anger.

Klein worked with babies and children and she observed their play. The children she observed often represented their feelings through various characters and animals that they either invented or derived from stories. Examples include: the good fairy, the wicked witch, the jealous sister and the sly fox. Klein called the process of dividing feelings into differentiated elements "splitting" (Halton, 1994, p. 13). She thought that by splitting children gained relief from internal conflicts, for example, the painful conflict between love and hate for the mother can be relieved by splitting the mother-image into a good fairy and a bad witch. Splitting is,

according to Klein (1929), often accompanied by projection and these processes are the predominant defenses for avoiding pain in early childhood. This Klein termed the paranoid-schizoid position (Halton, 1994). Projective identification and the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions are discussed.

2.2.3.1 Projective identification

Central to Klein's theories is the process of projective identification, defined by Hirschhorn (1993, p. 44) as "a psychological interaction in which one person deposits unwanted feelings into another person's feeling system. The first person, wishing to get rid of unwanted feelings, treats the other as if that person were experiencing the feeling state". Klein used projective identification to describe the processes by which the earliest object-relationships are formed (Riviere, 1970).

Czander (1993) writes that there are two possible positions regarding the evolution of projective identification. Klein's position is that projective identification evolves as a result of the internal experience of a dangerous impulse, or it may begin with the experience of frustration, as a reaction to a dangerous external object.

Klein acknowledges Freud as the source of her ideas on projective identification (Riviere, 1970). As indicated above, Freud used the process of introjection to describe how members of a group bond with the group leader and consequently with each other. Although Ferenczi (1952) also worked with the concept of projective identification and made projection and introjection twin processes in the development of the normal person, Klein did not acknowledge Ferenczi in this context (De Board, 1978).

2.2.3.2 *The paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions*

Klein (Lawrence, Bain & Gould, 1996) hypothesised that early development comprises two distinct but overlapping stages, the *paranoid-schizoid* position and the *depressive* position. The paranoid-schizoid position occurs during the first three to four months of life and the depressive position then occupies the remaining months of a child's first year (Segal, 1973). These positions will be discussed below.

a) *The paranoid-schizoid position*

Hirschhorn (1993, p. 205) described the paranoid-schizoid position as “the position of fundamental splitting and alienation” with “paranoid” referring to the “badness” that feels to the individual as if it is coming from outside the self and “schizoid” referring to splitting (Halton, 1994). The paranoid-schizoid position is a normal developmental stage that occurs during childhood and can recur throughout life (Klein, 1970b).

De Board (1978) makes the point that, in terms of Klein's theory, the origins of personality involve three basic concepts:

- i) *The ego*. This is the central part of the self and mediates between the external and internal worlds. Klein thought that the ego was in existence from the start of life.
- ii) *The libido*. This is the life force that includes all positive emotions as well as love.
- iii) *The morbido*. This is the death instinct, the opposite of the libido and the most controversial of the three.

Klein hypothesised that at the beginning of life the infant experiences anxiety as a result of the death instinct (Sayers, 1991). The infant identifies these feelings of

persecutory anxiety with the one object present in its world, the mother's breast, and projects these unpleasant feelings onto it. This results in the infant experiencing the mother's breast as a persecutory, external uncontrollable object (Klein, 1970a). This object is then introjected into the ego (which is still very rudimentary at this stage) where it becomes an internal persecutor. However, the contrasting reality is that the breast provides the infant with feelings of satisfaction and bliss during feeding. Thus, Klein supposed that the breast provides the infant with two opposing feelings that then evoke the splitting process that was spoken about in the above. That is, the ego splits the object (the breast) into the "bad" breast that it projects outwards, thereby getting rid of it, and the "good" breast that it introjects into the ego, thereby retaining it (Czander, 1993).

Klein believed, however, that the problem with this process results from the fact that when the object is split into "good" and "bad", the ego is also split (Klein, 1970a). She thought that the end result of this process is that feelings and relations are cut off from one another. De Board (1978, p. 30) summarises this as "a primal fight between life and death" that takes place within every infant. The death instinct is deflected away from the ego by splitting and projecting and life, in the form of the libido, is reflected in the way the good object is internalised and results in loving feelings being projected outwards.

Thus Klein called the first six months of life the "paranoid-schizoid position". Segal (1973, p. 67) summarises what happens in the paranoid-schizoid position as follows:

As the processes of splitting, projection and introjection help to sort out [her] perceptions and emotions and divide the good from the bad, the infant feels [herself] to be confronted with an ideal object, which [she] loves and tries to acquire, keep and identify with, and a bad object, into which [she] has

projected [her] aggressive impulses and which is felt to be a threat to [herself] and [her] ideal object.

b) The depressive position

The depressive position has been described as one of Klein's greatest achievements, and it occupies a central position in the development of her theory of psychic structure and the person's relations with external reality (Czander, 1993). Klein said that over time, the infant begins to recognise his or her mother and begins to see her as a whole person. This implies that the child begins to integrate the parts into a whole and he or she also begins to recognise that the good and bad experiences he or she has had emanate from the same source, one mother, and not from two separate mothers (Klein, 1940).

As this begins to happen, the infant also realises he or she can love and hate the same person (De Board, 1978). As a result of this realisation, he or she begins to feel depression, despair and guilt because he or she believes he or she has or may have damaged his or her loved object. Sayers (1991, p. 233) says that Klein attributed self-reproach to the "love of others and despair at feeling unable to restore the harm done by hatred to them". This is the origin of the drive for reparation that is the primary mechanism by which the person learns to reduce depressive anxiety or guilt (Czander, 1993). Just as the infant believed he or she had destroyed his or her loved object, so he or she now believes he or she can restore and make all well and this results in a constant struggle between destructiveness and loving reparative impulses (Klein, 1940).

Although Klein, like Ferenczi, never wrote specifically about groups and group behaviour, she focused on relationships and she added much richness and depth to psychoanalysis. Klein's theories have shown that the formation of the earliest relationship involves the processes of projective and introjective identification, as

well as splitting and denial, as a defense against anxiety, and this is relevant for the study of groups. Bion, discussed below, drew heavily on the theories of Melanie Klein (Miller, 1993).

2.2.4 Wilfred Bion's influence on the study of groups

De Board (1978) writes that Bion's theory of group and organisational behaviour is possibly the most original of all and that the theory has proved a major source of theoretical influence. Bion is credited with having "founded the psychoanalytic study of group life" (Hirschhorn, 1993, p. 57). He began studying the processes that take place in small groups while in the army during World War II and then later, while he was a member of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in London, he conducted his most important work and developed his theory of group behaviour (Stokes, 1994). Bion's theories had a very strong influence on the Tavistock Institute (Miller, 1993).

Bion's seminal work is contained in a collection of seven papers that were published between 1943 and 1952 in *Human Relations* (De Board, 1978; Miller, 1993). He then turned his attention to the study of psychosis, cognitive processes and mental development, and this work has also contributed to the understanding of groups and organisational processes. Later in his career he wrote very little about groups and preferred to concentrate on the internal world of the individual. However, the relationship between the individual and the group is a central theme that runs right through Bion's work (Stokes, 1994). The following paragraphs are a discussion of some of the work that Bion conducted before and during his tenure at the Tavistock Institute as well as a discussion of the theory that he developed.

2.2.4.1 Experimentation during World War II

De Board (1978) provides some detail as to Bion's early work. He explains that during World War II Bion served as a psychiatrist in the Army and was stationed at the Northfield Hospital where he was placed in charge of the training wing. The Northfield hospital was a military psychiatric hospital that had about 100 male patients. He found that the soldiers' neuroses manifested as low morale, dirty wards, apathy and continual complaints about administrative problems. This also came from the staff. Sofer (1972, p. 203) describes these problems as "neurotic problems of persons writ large in organisational terms".

Bion (cited in Sofer, 1972) makes the point that his task was to produce self-respecting men who were socially adjusted to the community and willing to accept their community responsibilities. It was their problems in this area that had brought them to the hospital. He asked himself what common danger they faced and what common danger could unite them (Bion & Rickman, 1943). He reasoned that the common danger was their neuroses and that the situation could be resolved if members worked in collaboration to overcome them. Thus, a disciplinary framework was established in terms of which every man was required to join a group such as map reading or handicrafts and every man had to attend a daily parade. The parade became a fairly therapeutic session where the men could discuss the activities of the training wing objectively. Bion says that the parades "had developed. . . very fast into business-like, lively, and constructive meetings" (Bion & Rickman, 1943, p. 20).

After one month many changes had taken place in the ward (Bion & Rickman, 1943). Initially it was extremely difficult to find ways of employing the men but, by the end of the month it was difficult to find time for all the work they wanted to do. Morale improved, more groups developed and there was a marked increase in the general cleanliness of the wards. The essential changes were that the men

became increasingly concerned with their ability to make contact with reality, to regulate their relationships with others, and to work cooperatively and efficiently at a common task (Bion & Rickman, 1943). Bion said that, although the six-week experimentation period was not enough to thoroughly explore some of the issues that had come to the fore, there were certain valuable lessons to be learned from the experiment. Some of these lessons raised doubts as to whether a hospital was indeed the most suitable place for psychotherapy. Bion envisaged an organisation that “would be more aptly described as a psychiatric training unit” (Bion & Rickman, 1943, p. 22).

The implications of this experiment include the following (De Board, 1978, p. 36):

- a) Individual psychology is fundamentally group psychology and the behaviour of one of the group’s members influences and is influenced by all the other group members.
- b) The rational working of the group is deeply affected by the emotions and irrational feelings of its members. The full potential of the group is reached only when this fact is realised and dealt with.
- c) Administrative and management problems are simultaneously personal and interpersonal problems that are expressed in organisational terms.
- d) The group develops when it learns by experience to gain greater contact with reality.

Rickman (Bion & Rickman, 1943) reports on an application of group therapy for patients at the same institution. Patients attended a group discussion that included topics such as the handling of newcomers to the ward, factors causing discontentment and personal versus group needs. As a result of his observations at these group discussions, Rickman (Sofer, 1972, p. 205) developed the concept of “the good group spirit”. He compared this to good health in individuals and attempted to define some of its qualities (Bion & Rickman, 1943, p. 25):

- a) A common **purpose**. This is essential for the group no matter in what field the group exists or what the task of the group is.
- b) Common recognition by members of the group of the group's **boundaries** and their position and function in relation to those of other or large units or groups.
- c) The capacity to absorb new members and to lose members without fearing a loss of group individuality. That is, the group character must be **flexible**.
- d) Freedom from internal subgroups with rigid boundaries that become **exclusive**. If a subgroup exists it must not be centred on any of its members or on itself and the value of the subgroup as a function of the main group must be generally recognised.
- e) Each group member must be valued for his or her contribution to the group and must have freedom of movement within the group. This freedom must be limited only by the generally accepted conditions that are devised and imposed by the group.
- f) The group must have the capacity to face and deal with its own discontent.
- g) A group must consist of three or more members. Two members merely have a personal relationship. With more than two members there is a change in the quality of the relationship that then becomes interpersonal.

This early work of Bion and Rickman at the Northfield hospital showed the structure and operation of a group situation to be charged with meaning for participants, of which they may be only partly cognisant (Sofer, 1972). This gave theorists and researchers much material to work on regarding the nature and character of group behaviour and group dynamics. Rickman (Bion & Rickman, 1943, p. 26) said that these experiments "suggest the need for further examination of the structure of groups and the interplay of forces within the groups". For Bion this led to the emergence of a theory of group behaviour.

2.2.4.2 Towards a theory of group behaviour

In 1948 Bion (1961, p. 29) was asked by the Tavistock Clinic to “take” various groups. He confesses that he did not really know what they wanted him to do but conceded that they must have known what they were doing in that he had taken therapeutic groups before. He describes his experiences in these groups as negative, and at one stage he even lost his position at the Institute because he did not seem to be delivering what the groups expected of him. He would walk in to the group setting with the eight or nine other group members and would sit among them, not saying anything. They would carry on their discussions for a while and would then fall silent. On one occasion, when Bion admitted to them that he wasn’t sure what he needed to be doing with them, they got angry with him (Bion, 1961).

In general, it seems that there was a great deal of boredom, apathy, and unfocused conversation in these groups, indicating that the group members felt that they were not getting what they had expected and that Bion was not behaving in the way that they had hoped. The group provided him with information regarding their expectations including the fact that they thought the session would be a kind of seminar or lecture (Bion, 1961). There was a sense that he was behaving this way out of spite and that he could behave differently if he wanted to.

It is important to understand Bion’s behaviour within the group. In essence he played the classic role of psychoanalyst, providing interpretations of behaviour in order to make what was unconscious conscious and bringing fantasy into the light of reality. However, what was innovative and unique about Bion’s methodology was that he treated the whole group as the patient, giving interpretations to the group and not to individuals (De Board, 1978). Bion (1961, p. 77) said of his position as the leader of the group that he took “advantage of this position to establish no rules of procedure and to put forward no agenda”.

De Board (1978) says that initially Bion's behaviour caused confusion and bewilderment among the group and this led him to isolate two interesting aspects of group behaviour:

- a) *The futile conversation of the group that is almost devoid of intellectual content or critical judgement.* This, he hypothesised, was due to the powerful emotions existing in the group that nullify any effective work. Bion (1961, p. 39) says the "situation is charged with emotions which exert a powerful, and frequently unobserved, influence on the individual. As a result, his [or her] emotions are stirred to the detriment of his [or her] judgement".
- b) *The nature of Bion's own contributions to the group.* Bion (1961) says that his contributions and interpretations of group behaviour often seemed incidental to his personality. However, he assures us that they were quite deliberate even if they seemed to be concerned with issues that were only important to Bion himself.

As Bion persisted with this method and gained more experience in group behaviour, he gradually perceived various patterns of behaviour that emerged in what he had previously thought to be random activity. These gave rise to a theoretical formulation of social processes occurring within groups (Sofer, 1972).

2.2.4.3 *Bion's theory of group behaviour*

Shaffer and Galinsky (1974, p. 178) describe Bion's theory as "sometimes difficult to understand very precisely," partly because the theory is highly abstract and conceptual and is "several steps removed from the concrete data of everyday group life". Bion (1961) hypothesised that any group, like an individual, functions at two complementary levels, which he called "work" and "basic assumption". A basic assumption is defined as "a tacit assumption; and members of a group behave as if they were aware of it even though it is unconscious" (Rice, 1965, p. 12). The corresponding levels for the individual are "rational activity" [work] and

“irrational and unconscious motivations” [basic assumptions] (Shapiro & Carr, 1991, p. 67). Stokes (1994, p. 20) said of these two levels that “they can be thought of as the wish to face and work with reality [the work group], and the wish to evade it when it is painful or causes psychological conflict within or between group members [the basic assumption group].” Rice (1963, p. 182) summarised Bion’s hypothesis by saying:

He distinguished [the characteristics of] group life as the work group, the group met to perform its specific task; and the basic group, the group acting on basic assumptions. He showed that the performance of the specific task was made difficult by the effect of the emotions associated with the basic assumptions.

Thus, at any point in time a group’s behaviour is expressing some sort of balance between the two kinds of groups and these two levels are in “uneasy tension” (Shapiro & Carr, 1991, p. 68).

a) *The work group*

Bion (1961, p. 143) says that “every group, however, casual, meets to ‘do’ something; in this activity, according to the individuals, they cooperate. . . . Since this activity is geared to a task, it is related to reality [and] its methods are rational.” The more a group is functioning towards the work-group end of the scale, the more it is rational and mature and focused on the performance of its overt task in as efficient a manner as possible (Shaffer & Galinsky, 1974). Lawrence, Bain and Gould (1996, p. 2) describe the work group as:

a group in which all the participants are engaged with the primary task because they have taken full cognisance of its purpose. They co-operate because it is their will. . . . Essentially the [Work] group mobilises sophisticated mental activity on the part of its members which they demonstrate through their maturity. . . . They strive to manage themselves

in their roles as members of the [Work] group. . . [and] use their skills to understand the inner world of the group, as a system, in relation to the external reality of the environment.

Shaffer and Galinsky (1974) write that if a group were to function only at the work-group level then the frequency and content of the group's meetings would depend solely on the nature of the task. The group's leader would be chosen, not by virtue of charisma, but solely on his or her ability to do the job and his or her tenure would last only as long as the task remained to be completed. Members of the group would have a strong sense of personal autonomy and individuation, enabling them to co-operate without fear or loss of self and without undue competitive feelings. And because their interest in, and identification with, the task would outweigh their interest in and identification with either the leader or one another, they would not permit either emotional gratification or emotional deprivation to interfere with effective task performance.

If groups with such a strong work-group culture really did exist, they would comment on their own behaviour and the task would be more effectively and efficiently completed. Groups that act in this manner are rare, and are possibly simply an idealised construct (Lawrence, Bain & Gould, 1996). Bion (1961, p. 146) says that in reality "work-group activity is obstructed, diverted and, on occasion, assisted by other mental activities that have in common the attribute of powerful emotional drives". This is what Bion termed "basic assumption" behaviour.

b) *The basic assumption group*

If a group is functioning towards the basic assumption end of the scale, it is behaving in a regressive manner, taking on primitive, familial connotations for its members and being used for emotional gratification and tension release (Shaffer & Galinsky, 1974). Bion recognised that people in groups collectively behave in a psychotic fashion at times in that the group mentality drives the group processes in a manner akin to temporary psychosis (Lawrence, Bain & Gould, 1996).

When a group is in a state of emotional regression - and, according to Bion (1961), it is always in such a state to a greater or lesser degree - it acts as if it believes certain things to be true that are not really true. Bion (1961) described various group meetings in which two people became involved in a conversation and the rest of the group appeared to be listening to them in attentive silence. In such instances, Bion suggested that the pair and the group held the basic assumption that the relationship was in some way a sexual one. This assumption is unspoken and unconscious and may be quite unrealistic but it is held by everyone to be true and is the unconscious basis for their behaviour. This was the cornerstone on which Bion developed his theory; the hypothesis that when a group is working it can behave as if a basic assumption is held by all its members and this will directly influence the activity of the group (De Board, 1978, p. 38).

Rice (1965, p. 13) writes that where a group is behaving simultaneously as a work group and as a basic group, there will be conflict between:

- a) the basic group and the individuals that comprise it
- b) the work group and the basic group
- c) the work group charged with the emotions associated with one basic assumption and the other repressed and denied basic assumptions

In the typical task-group situations that exist in everyday life, several factors tend to obscure these basic assumptions to a point where they are hardly noticeable and are partially disguised. According to Shaffer and Galinsky (1974, p. 179) the following factors apply:

- a) People tend to be unaware of the more infantile aspects of their emotional life.
- b) As basic assumptions are essentially shared fantasies, they belong to a group's unconscious more than they belong to an individual's unconscious, and as such, they form a collective unconscious.

- c) Task group leaders do not usually encourage their groups to pay attention to the more subtle aspects of their fantasy life, and instead direct their attention outwards.
- d) The fantasy needs of the typical task-group leader are similar enough to the fantasy needs of the rest of the group for him, the leader, to collude with the group's fantasy expectations of him. As he usually tends to go along with these expectations, the discrepancy between fantasy and reality is less obvious and therefore the group members have less chance of gaining insight into the infantile nature of their attitude towards authority.

In summary then, the work group and the basic assumption group are critical components of Bion's theory of group behaviour. Also central to his theory are the basic assumptions that characterise and describe behaviour in the basic assumption group. Below is a discussion of the three basic assumptions that Bion proposed. The additional basic assumptions that were later added by other theorists are also discussed.

2.3 BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

According to Bion (1961), groups display distinct emotional states from which three basic assumptions can be deduced. Only one basic assumption will be evidenced at any one time, although it may change three or four times in an hour or persist for months. Shaffer and Galinsky (1974) concur by stating that a striking feature of the basic assumptions is the rapidity with which they are taken up and displayed by a group. Bion (1961) argues that the ease of producing these behaviours means that members have unconscious feelings and can reinforce each other's sentiments without being aware of them. These feelings are, in turn, related to feelings of anxiety (Hirschhorn, 1993).

Hirschhorn (1993, p. 57) lists the basic assumptions that groups typically make. They assume that the group has been brought together for one of the following reasons:

- a) to be dependent on a powerful leader
- b) to oversee the marriage of a pair who will produce a powerful saviour or messiah
- c) to either fight an enemy or flee from it

To identify a basic assumption as it manifests in a group is to give meaning to the behaviour of the group and to elucidate on what basis it is not operating as a work group (Lawrence, Bain & Gould, 1996). These assumptions, identified by Bion (1961), are referred to as dependency (baD), pairing (baP) and fight/flight (baF) and are discussed in detail below. Hirschhorn (1993, p. 63) explains that:

Like dreams, basic assumptions are created effortlessly, expressing people's wishes to have a collective life without working for it. The basic assumption, which emerges from the matrix of nonverbal communication and unconscious projections, holds the group together while helping its members contain the anxiety of facing one another directly.

2.3.1 Dependency (baD)

When a group is working on the basis of the dependency basic assumption it behaves as if "the group is met in order to be sustained by a leader on whom it depends for nourishment, [both] material and spiritual, and protection" (Bion, 1961, p. 147). Consequently, the members of the group behave as if they are inadequate and immature, knowing nothing and having nothing to contribute. At the same time, they act as if the leader is omnipotent, omniscient and can solve all their problems as if by magic (De Board, 1978). They look to the leader for protection and sustenance and require the leader to make them feel good and not

to present them with the demands of the group's real purpose (Stokes, 1994). Bion (1961) says that with this basic assumption, the group leader is idealised into a kind of a deity who will provide the group with exactly what it needs. This basic assumption group is therefore hostile to scientific methods and acts as if power flows like magic from the leader (De Board, 1978). Such a leader is thought not to need information as he or she is able to divine it (Lawrence, Bain & Gould, 1996).

The group behaves as if its primary task is solely to provide for the satisfaction of the needs and wishes of its members, who become more and more deskilled as information on realities becomes less and less readily available (Lawrence et al, 1996). The group is characterised by feelings of helplessness, powerlessness and depression and it presents a picture of hierarchical, non-symmetrical leader-follower relations (Lawrence, 1997). Thus, the leader serves as a focus for a pathological form of dependency which inhibits growth and development (Stokes, 1994). Shapiro and Carr (1991, p. 68) make the point that dependence recalls the unconscious human search for the assurance that our "psychological selves are secure enough to allow us to take risks" in an environment that contains our anxiety. However, they caution that the dependence necessary for collaboration may become irrational and then some institution, idea or individual may unconsciously be elevated to the status of an "ultimate resource for gratification". This is when group members may surrender any sense of their own responsibility. The primary axis of relatedness for each member of the group is between himself and the leader and it is only in the context of the leader that group members have significance for each other (Shaffer & Galinsky, 1974).

The situation in which the leader is seen to be all-powerful can only exist while someone is willing to play the role of leader in the way the group desires. The group may also idolise an idea, an object, or the like. When these things occur, no learning or growth can be achieved because this basic assumption effectively defends the group against reality. The question is, however, what happens to such

a group when its leader fails to live up to the group's expectations? De Board (1978) insists that this will inevitably happen as no member of the group can possibly live up to the expectations of the group and anyone brave or foolish enough to attempt to play this role will sooner or later arouse the group's disappointment.

Bion (1961) says that when the group rejects its leader because he or she has failed to meet their expectations, the group will appoint another member to fulfil the role and this will be the group's weakest member. In this way, a person who is weak or sick may be used by the group to force a show of nurturance from the leader (Shaffer & Galinsky, 1974). This leader will again disappoint the group and they will attempt to reinstate the former leader. This process of believing at one time that a leader is great, then bad, then a genius again results in a potentially explosive situation that it may not be possible to contain within the boundaries of the group (De Board, 1978). Another phenomenon associated with this kind of group culture is that "one person is made into the really stupid one, the 'dummy' who has to be taught everything by the others" (Lawrence et al, 1996)

Cilliers and Koortzen (1998) sum up the basic assumption dependency group by saying that the group member, like the child, unconsciously experiences dependency on an imaginary parental figure or system, the role usually played by the group leader. However, because the leader is not the parent, the group member experiences frustration, helplessness, powerlessness and disempowerment. The typical feelings that evolve relate to wanting more attention from the group leader, and needing to be told what to do and what to expect. These feelings are a manifestation of the group member's own anxiety and insecurity. Within the group situation, this anxiety manifests itself in a need for structure and/or a manipulation of the leader into a more parental-type role so as to cater to the group's fantasy that they are cared for and safe.

Lawrence (1997) mentions that there are occasions and situations in which the anxieties, affects and defenses of the basic assumption dependency group are adaptive for the group and can be used in sophisticated support of the work group. The performance of various tasks is facilitated by appropriate submission to authority. The ability to learn from others, the capacity for dependent relationships without losing self-esteem, and the ability to collaborate are all related to sophisticated basic assumption dependency group processes.

2.3.2 Pairing (baP)

The second basic assumption Bion (1961, p. 150) termed “pairing” and this occurs when the group behaves as if its members have met in order for two of the group’s members to pair off and create a new, and as yet unborn, saviour. This saviour may be a leader, it maybe an idea, it may be a future event, a solution, or a more favourable economic climate (De Board, 1978; Shapiro & Carr, 1991; Stokes, 1994). As such, pairing is described as an intensified form of dependency (Shapiro & Carr, 1991).

The act of creating the saviour is essentially sexual, although according to Bion the gender of the pair is of no consequence (De Board, 1978; Lawrence et al, 1996). The pairing assumption group is characterised by the unconscious fantasy that the pair will produce a new leader or that a Messiah will be born to deliver them from their anxieties and their fears, and around which they can cohere (Lawrence et al, 1996). Bion (1961, p. 151) says “the feelings thus associated with the pairing group are at the opposite pole to feelings of hatred, destructiveness and despair”. An atmosphere of attentiveness, hopefulness and optimism gradually permeates the group and there is a sense of a “Utopia-about-to-be-born” that will save the group from its present uncertainties and frustrations (Shaffer & Galinsky, 1974, p. 181). Stokes (1994) makes the point that in a work group the saviour may take the

form of an idea, for example that moving to a new and improved premises would provide an answer to the group's problems.

The real problem with the pairing group though is that it is not interested in working towards this better future in a practical way, but only in sustaining a vague sense of hope as a way out of its current difficulties. Typically, decisions are either not taken or remain extremely vague and group members are left with a sense of disappointment and failure, which is quickly supplanted by the hope that the next group meeting will be better (Stokes, 1994). As Bion (1961, p. 151) states “. . . the Messianic hope must never be fulfilled. Only by remaining a hope does hope persist.” In so far as the group succeeds in creating a leader, hope is weakened. This is because the saviour will inevitably fail to deliver the group from its fears because these arise from within the group. That is, if a new saviour for the group emerges he, she or it will inevitably be rejected and hope will be killed. This is because the “complete solution” that the group hopes for exists only in fantasy and nothing real must be created in actuality as this will cause hopefulness to vanish (Lawrence, Bain & Gould, 1996).

Shaffer and Galinsky (1974) provide two indicators for the existence of the pairing basic assumption. These are:

- a) The atmosphere of hopefulness. Even without direct evidence of a direct member-to-member pairing, feelings of hopefulness are almost always a clue to either the existence of or the imminent emergence of a basic assumptions pairing group.
- b) The way in which the group allows a particular dyad to become prominent. It would seem that at some level, the group expects, however subtly, that this interaction will produce something different, and something better, for the group.

Pairing, like dependence, is a defense mechanism because it keeps the group away from reality by keeping it a closed system. The dynamics arise entirely from within the group, allowing fantasies of what may occur to obscure what is actually happening. This allows the group to deny and avoid any difficult actions that facing reality may necessitate (De Board, 1978). For the group to maintain this view, many aspects of each individual's experience must be split off, deflected, repressed or denied, especially those impulses related to rivalry, competition and sexual jealousy (Lawrence, 1997).

When a group uses pairing in a sophisticated manner, it allows for the possibility of mobilising productive and creative forces in the service of the work group by selectively reorganising and supporting special relationships. When such relationships are permitted, pairing can provide hopeful, realistic and creative solutions to work group problems (Lawrence, 1997).

2.3.3 Fight/flight (baF)

Of the third basic assumption Bion (1961, p. 152) says: "The group has met to fight something or to run away from it. It is prepared to do either indifferently. I call this state of mind the fight-flight group." The assumption here is that there is a danger or an enemy that the group should either attack or flee from (Stokes, 1994). Fight and flight seem to be the only two techniques of self-preservation known to the group. These stem from the same motivational dynamic, a defensive escape into activity for its own sake. Lawrence (1997, p. 4) says that the essential cognitive structure of a [fight/flight] group is that of "undifferentiated members who are either loyal or traitorous, accompanied by an idealisation of the in-group, and a splitting off of all aggression and hostility onto a despised out-group that is feared and hated" (Lawrence, 1997, p. 4). The fight/flight group can be ruthless in regard to the welfare of its sick and weak members, as the group needs to be strong to fight

or flee from the enemy. As a result, there are many times when a group's fight is directed at one of its own, scapegoated members (Shaffer & Galinsky, 1974).

Bion (1961) implies that the selection of fight or flight appears random and may relate more to incidental factors than to the basic dynamics of the group; it is as if the group is ready for action and will seize on whatever comes its way (Shapiro & Carr, 1991). In order for the fight/flight basic assumption to exist, there needs to be some degree of group coherence and cohesiveness. Once aroused, this group spirit is mobilised and the members struggle to preserve the group at all costs. It will ignore all other activities, or, if this is not the case, it will attempt to suppress or run away from them (De Board, 1978). The leader in this group is extremely important because action is essential to the group's on-going existence. The group is responsive to a leader who rallies it against a common enemy, like a group captain, but is unresponsive to a leader who embodies the values of intellectuality, introspection and understanding (Shaffer & Galinsky, 1974). Members look to the leader to devise some appropriate action and their task is merely to follow (Stokes, 1994). The person who accepts the role of the leader must accept that he or she will have to lead the group against the common enemy and, where this does not exist, will have to create one. He or she will have to recognise danger and enemies and spur on his followers to courage and self-sacrifice (De Board, 1978). However, this leadership is spurred on by paranoia. Once the danger has passed, any statement made by him or her that does not have to do with fight or flight is ignored.

A group operating from this assumption, like the other two assumptions, cannot develop nor do useful work because all its energies are concentrated on the group's fantasies. Its concern with its own survival is primarily irrational (Shaffer & Galinsky, 1974). Reality is kept at bay otherwise the group would have to deal with the frightening realisation that the enemy that threatens it is not outside the group, but within (De Board, 1978). However, Shaffer and Galinsky (1974, p. 181) point

out that most groups “need not survive beyond the rather limited purpose that has called the group together e.g. the development of a marketing plan, the writing of some legislation. Should the group decide that it is not achieving its purpose, its most adaptive response would be to disband.

The fantasy element of the fight/flight group culture is the individual’s belief that his or her survival and the survival of the group are absolutely linked and that if the group dies, he or she will die. Fight reactions manifest on a physical level in illness, active aggression, scape-goating, resignation or physical attack or they may manifest on a emotional level in the form of withdrawal, passivity, avoidance or ruminating on past history (Cilliers & Koortzen, 1998; Sandigo, 1991). In a group meeting these may manifest as talking about issues that are outside of the here-and-now (Cilliers & Koortzen, 1998).

If the basic fight/flight assumption is linked to the work group in a sophisticated manner, it can provide the basis for action, commitment and loyal followership in achieving task performance. It can also provide the basis for appropriate defensive measures when a group is faced with realistic external threats (Lawrence, 1997).

By combining the concept of the work or task group with the basic assumptions group, Bion (1961) was able to formulate a unique and comprehensive theory of group behaviour. This theory demonstrates that a group is able to function as a work group in which the members cooperate to achieve a common task, and, because they are in touch with reality, the group develops and changes as they succeed. However, Bion’s theory also shows that the same group can operate as a basic assumption group, behaving as if the group had come together for dependency, pairing or fight/flight. In the basic assumption mode the group uses its energy too avoid its own fears and anxieties and as a result, it fails to face reality, so it neither develops nor achieves any effective output (De Board, 1978).

Subsequent to Bion's (1961) formulation of the three basic assumptions detailed above, two additional basic assumptions have been added; these are known as 'we-ness' and 'me-ness' and were alluded to by Bion (1961, p. 91) when he said ". . . the group is often used to achieve a sense of vitality by total submergence in the group, or a sense of individual independence by total repudiation of the group . . .".

2.3.4. We-ness

In 1974 Pierre Turquet (as cited in Cano, 2002) described a fourth basic assumption that he termed *Oneness* and which has now come to be known as *we-ness* (Cilliers, 2002). In a basic assumption we-ness group, the group members seek to join in a powerful union with an omnipotent force or to become lost in strong feelings of unity (Cano, 2002). They surrender the self in order to feel existence, well-being, wholeness and inclusion (Lawrence et al, 1996). This wish for inclusion can be seen in a group that is striving towards cohesion and synergy, as it is believed that problems will be solved by this strong, united force (Cilliers, 2002).

2.3.5 Me-ness

As the opposite of we-ness, Lawrence, Bain and Gould (1997, p. 3) propose a fifth basic assumption group that emphasises separateness and that hates the idea of *we*. They termed this basic assumption *me-ness* and stated that "baM equals ba not-O". They propose that this basic assumption is becoming more salient in today's industrialised societies and that it is a cultural phenomenon engendered by conscious and unconscious social anxieties and fears, and refers to the risk of living in the contemporary, turbulent society in which the individual is driven more and more into his or her own inner reality in order to exclude and deny the perceived disturbing reality of the outer environment. Thus, the inner world becomes a comforting place to be where well-worn clichés such as "a man's home

is his castle” and “England is a green and pleasant land” can be held onto and rehearsed without fear of their being tested (Lawrence et al, 1997).

The group works on the tacit, unconscious assumption that the group is a non-group, and the people that are present are to be related to only because their shared construct of what the group is about is of an undifferentiated mass. They therefore act as if the group has no existence, because if it did exist, it would be a source of persecuting experiences (Lawrence et al, 1997). They unconsciously experience the group as contaminating, taboo, impure and all that is negative. The group members behave as if the group has no reality, and can never have a reality. The only reality that does and must exist is that of the individual (Cilliers, 2002). It is a culture of selfishness in which individuals appear to be conscious only of their own personal boundaries, which they protect from any incursion by others. In such a group there is no room for affect. This is too risky given that one would not know where the feeling may lead (Lawrence et al, 1997).

Me-ness is different from the other four basic assumptions (dependency, pairing, fight/flight, and we-ness) in that in me-ness it is the group that is invisible and unknowable, whereas in the other four it is the individual that is invisible and unknowable. In the basic assumption me-ness culture, the overriding anxiety is that the individual will be lost in the group. It is as if the individual is a self-contained group acting in its own right. This basic assumption group cannot tolerate the collective activities of the work group because it only has individualistic preoccupations. The paradox, however, is that while the overarching belief is that only the individual can come to know anything, this belief causes the individuals to co-create and co-act in the basic assumption group. So they enter the group despite their efforts to avoid the experience (Lawrence et al, 1997). Cilliers (2002) makes the point that the resistance of individuals to becoming part of the group may affect the group’s performance negatively and the leader may need to explore related feelings, processes and dynamics in order to achieve more cohesion.

Cano (2002) adds to this by saying that we-ness and me-ness seem to function alternately and indifferently, and fantasies of total union or total independence take the place of achieving the realistic interdependence necessary for successful work group performance.

In conclusion, Bion's theory of group dynamics, incorporating the work group and the basic assumption group, as well as his three basic assumptions (dependency, pairing and fight/flight), has been presented above. In addition, the fourth and fifth basic assumptions (we-ness and me-ness) have also been discussed. Bion (1961, p. 165) says that "the more disturbed the group, the more easily discernible are . . . primitive phantasies and mechanisms". Bion's basic assumption theory can thus be viewed in general as elaborating the various patterns that these deep psychotic levels and part-object relationships can take on in group situations (Lawrence, 1997).

2.4 RELEVANT GROUP CONCEPTS

There are numerous other concepts that affect and relate to group behaviour and group dynamics. For the purposes of this study, the following will be discussed:

- a) anxiety
- b) defense mechanisms
- c) counter transference
- d) boundaries
- e) roles
- f) task
- g) representation
- h) authorisation
- i) leadership
- j) relationship and relatedness
- k) group as a whole

2.4.1 Anxiety

De Board (1978) says that there is no doubt that anxiety is central to all psychoanalytic theory and is probably the most important unpleasant feeling that human beings experience. Anxiety is also an extremely important concept in Freud's view of motivation. Anxiety serves as a danger signal to the ego, warning individuals that if they continue to behave or think in a certain way they will be in danger (McMartin, 1995). An individual experiences anxiety as so discomforting that the ego is motivated to avoid the danger and thereby reduce the anxiety (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 1995). Freud identified three types of anxiety relating respectively to the id, the ego and the superego (Hjelle & Ziegler, 1992; Möller, 1995). These are objective anxiety, neurotic anxiety and moral anxiety.

2.4.1.1 *Objective anxiety*

Objective anxiety is a response to a known cause of danger and is nothing more than normal fear where the threats come from the external world (Hjelle & Ziegler, 1992). In other words it is caused by real, objective sources of danger in the environment (McMartin, 1995). This is therefore a justifiable state of anxiety that performs a useful function in protecting the person. A person deals with or avoids objective anxiety by the typical fight/flight response with concomitant physical symptoms relating to a pounding heart, sweating palms, and rapid breathing (De Board, 1978; Möller, 1995).

2.4.1.2 *Neurotic anxiety*

Neurotic anxiety occurs in response to subjective, frequently unconscious feelings and memories. Freud says that this type of anxiety relates to threats that come from the id (De Board, 1978). The person experiences anxiety as a result of the fear that he or she might give in to his or her urges, especially the sexual and

aggressive urges (Hjelle & Ziegler, 1992). Thus, anxiety results from a conflict between the id and the ego (Möller, 1995). The ego experiences these threats as either “free floating” (not knowing why one is anxious), phobias or panic reactions. The normal actions that a person takes to deal with, or avoid, objective anxiety are not appropriate to deal with neurotic anxiety. Consequently the ego develops “ego defenses” (see chapter 1, p. 14) as ways to protect itself from these internal threats.

Neurotic anxiety can develop in childhood when a child fears that he or she may lose control over their instincts and thus be punished for the result (Möller, 1995). This form of anxiety is initially experienced as objective anxiety and thus ego defenses are used. However, when the instinctual impulses of the id threaten to break through the ego controls then neurotic anxiety occurs (Hjelle & Ziegler, 1993).

2.4.1.3 Moral anxiety

In this type of anxiety the conflict is between the ego and the superego and it refers to the fear that an individual will do something contrary to the superego and will thus experience guilt (Hergenhahn, 1994). The conflict is the result of the superego warning the ego that some thought or action is unacceptable (McMartin, 1995). The id-instincts seek gratification in a way that conflicts with the person’s conscience and this causes guilt feelings and anxiety in the superego (Möller, 1995).

This type of anxiety stems from a fear of parental punishment for doing or thinking something that is contradictory to the perfectionist ideals of the superego and indicates that there is conflict between the id and the superego (Möller, 1995). It represents the emotional response of the ego to being threatened by punishment from the superego (Hjelle & Ziegler, 1992).

Thus, anxiety plays an important role in the life of the individual. It is a warning signal that motivates the personality to protect itself by fleeing the situation, or by behaving in such a way that the libidinal impulse is inhibited or by following orders from the conscience (Mayer & Sutton, 1996). Individuals use defense mechanisms to cope with anxiety (Meyer et al, 1995).

2.4.1.4. Anxiety in groups

According to Menzies (1993), anxiety is regarded as the basis for all organisational behaviour. To cope with anxiety the system, either the individual, the group or the organisation, unconsciously needs something or someone to contain the anxiety on its behalf. Defense mechanisms are thus used to assure the individual or the group that the environment is safe and accepting (Cilliers & Koortzen, 1998). For example, a group might blame management in order to contain its anxiety over potential job losses; the system might expect existing structures such as policies, procedures, processes, job descriptions and performance contracts to contain its anxiety. Cilliers and Koortzen (1998) make the point that when the levels of anxiety rise in a system, the need for structure is heightened and this may be manifested in instructions like “why don’t you put that on paper”, “let’s create a project plan”, “we need a policy to cover that issue”.

Czander (1993) states that a lack of clarity and direction is one of the most prevalent reasons for organisational (and by implication, also group) conflict and failure. This lack of clarity causes either a considerable amount of anxiety among subordinates or increased projections. When subordinates have unclear expectations and responsibilities, the political and informal social system will prevail to harness the competitiveness and the manoeuvring that will emerge under conditions of ambiguity (Czander, 1993).

2.4.2 Defense mechanisms

Defense mechanisms are “strategies which the ego uses to defend itself against the conflict between forbidden drives and moral codes, which cause neurotic and moral anxiety” (Meyer et al, p. 51). When individuals unconsciously develop ways to distort reality and exclude certain unpleasant feelings from their awareness, they do not feel anxious and their reality is thus made more acceptable to the ego (McMartin, 1995; Pervin, 1993). Defense mechanisms share two common characteristics. These are (Hergenhahn, 1994; Hjelle & Ziegler, 1992):

- a) They operate at an unconscious level. Thus, individuals are not conscious of the fact that they are using defense mechanisms.
- b) They distort, deny or falsify perception of reality so as to render anxiety less threatening to the individual.

Freud (as cited in Möller, 1995) said that a certain degree of defensiveness is necessary for the normal functioning of the individual but when these defenses develop into typical, regular response patterns they can interfere with normal functioning and may become harmful. Some of these defense mechanisms will now be discussed.

2.4.2.1 *Repression*

Repression refers simply to transferring unacceptable drives, wishes or memories into the unconscious (Meyer et al, 1995). Repression also keeps material that has never been conscious in the unconscious (Möller, 1995) and is referred to as the primary defense mechanism because it serves as a basis for more elaborate defense mechanisms and it involves the most direct approach to dealing with anxiety (Hjelle & Ziegler, 1992). Repression is not totally effective as repressed material remains in the unconscious and may reappear in the conscious. If this occurs, it is followed by anxiety and thus a continuous expenditure of psychic

energy is required to prevent repressed material from emerging into conscious awareness (Hjelle & Ziegler, 1992; Möller, 1995).

2.4.2.2 Projection

Projection is defined as “attributing one’s thoughts, feelings or motives to another” (Weiten, 1992, p. 429). It is an attempt by the individual to keep unconscious psychic material from entering awareness by subjectively changing the focus to the drives and wishes of other people (Meyer et al, 1995). Projection enables a person to blame someone else for his or her shortcomings and allows an individual to repress anxiety-provoking truths about themselves and see them in others instead (Hergenhahn, 1994; Hjelle & Ziegler, 1992).

2.4.2.3 Identification

Identification is defined as the “tendency to increase personal feelings of worth by affiliating oneself psychologically with a person, a group or institution perceived as illustrious” (Hergenhahn, 1994, p. 37). The motive for identification is usually to gain self-esteem, prestige or power that an individual cannot achieve alone (Möller, 1995). Identification is viewed as an individual’s desire to be like somebody else (Meyer, Moore, & Viljoen 1995). By joining or identifying with groups or another person, an individual tries to make other people’s traits part of his or her personality (Möller, 1995).

2.4.2.4 Projective identification

Projective identification is an anxiety reducing process (Czander, 1993; Kets de Vries, 1991; Obholzer & Roberts, 1994). It refers to a process whereby one part of the system (the subject) projects material into the other part of the system (the object) and in this process, the object identifies with the projection (Cilliers, 2002).

In projective identification, the subject experiences anxiety, for whatever reason, and attempts to reduce the anxiety by externalising it, splitting off parts and internal objects of the self, leaving the self less aware of the whole and diminished by the projective loss of important aspects of itself. The subject requires that the object receives, identifies with and contains these aspects of the self but still retains a closeness to the subject (Cilliers, 2002).

2.4.2.5 Rationalisation and intellectualisation

Meyer et al (1995, p. 53) define rationalisation as “a person’s attempts to explain his or her behaviour ... by providing reasons which sound rational, but which are not . . . the real reasons for his or her behaviour”. Rationalisation is a type of intellectualisation or justification of behaviour as the individual justifies his or her behaviour by attributing it to motives or causes other than the real ones (Möller, 1995). With rationalisation and intellectualisation, the behaviour is perceived but the underlying reason for the behaviour is not (Pervin, 1993).

2.4.2.6 Fixation

Fixation occurs when an individual’s psychological development becomes stuck at an earlier stage. This means that too much energy remains invested in the objects of a particular stage, energy that should have been cathected in objects appropriate to the next developmental stage (Meyer et al, 1995). A fixation can therefore be seen as having a retarding effect on development as the child will develop personality characteristics appropriate to the stage of development at which the fixation occurs (Meyer et al, 1995). Thus the individual does not develop effective ways of coping with the more complex problems of subsequent developmental stages and this results in a weaker ego (Möller, 1995).

2.4.2.7 Regression

Regression is defined as “a partial or total return to the behaviour of an early stage of development (Meyer et al, 1995, p. 54). In regression an individual returns to the type of behaviour that he or she knows has been successful under those conditions (Möller, 1995). By retreating to an earlier period of development that was more secure and pleasant, anxiety is alleviated (Hjelle & Ziegler, 1992).

Regression and fixation are closely related in that when regression occurs, the individual will regress to the stage at which he or she was previously fixated (Meyer et al, 1995).

2.4.2.8 Defense mechanisms in groups

De Board (1978) makes the point that in the same way that defense mechanisms are important in determining individual behaviour, they also directly impact on group life. Menzies (1973, p. 10) wrote:

The needs of members of the organisation to use it in the struggle against anxiety leads to the development of socially structured defense mechanisms, which appear as elements in the structure, culture and mode of functioning of the organisation. An important aspect of such socially structured defense mechanisms is an attempt by individuals to externalise and give substance in objective reality to their characteristic psychic defense mechanisms. A social defense system develops over time as the result of collusive interaction and agreement, often unconscious, between members of the organisation as to what form it shall take. Socially structured defense mechanisms then tend to become an aspect of external reality with which old and new members of the institution must come to terms.

This means that traditional working methods frequently result from the operation of defense mechanisms and therefore constantly require mental energy for their operation. The energy needed for this activity means that there is less energy available for productive work (De Board, 1978).

Projection is thought to be the most important ego-defense mechanism from a group perspective. De Board (1978) makes the point that the effectiveness of the system lies in knowing the boundary between the self and what is external to the self. Projection blurs this boundary and distorts reality by making what is within the system appear to be outside. Thus, the internal state of the system remains unaffected but action is based on unreality and facts are distorted.

Bion (cited in De Board, 1978) explained that the effective group is one that is in contact with reality and knows the boundary between what is inside and what is outside. The group becomes ineffective when, through projection techniques, it blurs this boundary and projects its own internal problems onto others. As long as this happens the group's energy is dissipated and it only regains its effectiveness by realising that the source of its anxiety is within the group and not outside.

Czander (1993) makes the point that identification lies at the root of all relations between the leader and the group. Intra-group relations are established through identification of the follower's ego with the leader (the object). This process involves the introjection of the leader or some admired part of the leader which is incorporated into the follower's ego ideal. Freud (1927) maintains that cohesion is found in a group when all members introject the same object into their ego ideal and then identify with each other. Halton (1994, p.16) talks about "projective identification" as referring to an unconscious inter-personal interaction in which the recipients of a projection "react to it in such a way that their own feelings are affected; they unconsciously identify with the projected feelings".

Cilliers and Koortzen (1998) say that two other defense mechanisms, rationalisation and intellectualisation, are used to stay emotionally uninvolved in order to feel safe and in control within the group environment.

2.4.3 Counter transference

Counter transference is a state of mind in which other people's feelings are experienced as one's own (Halton, 1994) and is closely linked to the concept of projective identification. For example, if the staff of a group are depressed, they may project their depression onto the leader and he or she may feel this depression as if it were his or her own.

Moylan (1994) provides the example of the mother of a crying baby who may or may not be able to respond accurately to her infant's communication. Nevertheless the baby projects its feelings onto its mother and she then processes them on the baby's behalf and experiences some of those feelings as her own. Miller (1993) talks about transference and counter transference as concepts that come directly out of the psychoanalytic model and states that in a therapist-client relationship, the therapist's feelings may provide valuable insights into the underlying feelings within the client. Shapiro and Carr (1991, p. 111) refer to counter transference as "the management of unbearable pain". They illustrate this by examining the reasons for hospitalising psychiatric patients. One of the main reasons is that the people involved with him or her (his or her family and caregivers) cannot stand their reactions to him or her and to his or her behaviour. Thus, the institution is used by society as a place to send unacknowledged or uninterrupted problems of unbearable human responses to ill people.

Cilliers (2002, p. 11) provides a succinct summary of the meaning of counter transference by saying that "projective identification frequently leads to the recipient's acting out counter transference deriving from the projected feelings". In

terms of its relevance to group behaviour, through projective identification, one group on behalf of another group or one member on behalf of another member may serve as a receptacle for all the anger, frustration, guilt or depression of the one system towards the other. An angry group member may thus be used to attack the leader or a weak member may unconsciously be manoeuvred into breaking down and thus leaving the group and taking the unwanted weakness out of the group for the group (Cilliers, 2002).

2.4.4 Boundaries

According to Cilliers and Koortzen (1998), the individual, group and organisation, as interactive parts of the total system, all have boundaries. Schneider (1991) confirms this by saying that the notion of boundaries is a key concept in the psychology of individuals, families, and groups. McCaughan (1978, p. 15) defines a boundary as “a system that is permeable in terms of admitting the ideas, attitudes and feelings which the members carry with them from other meaningful groups”. Bion (1961) listed task, time and space, role, personal and group boundaries and mentioned that a clear-cut appreciation of boundaries and limits is important for effective group functioning.

2.4.4.1 The functions of the boundary

Schneider (1991) made the point that boundaries separate a system from its environment and delineate the parts and processes within that system. Czander (1993) confirms this by saying that the boundary of the system has many functions, first among which is to delineate what is inside the system versus what is outside. The boundary functions as an entry point for all the system's inputs, members, materials, information and so on. It is also at the boundary that the system meets its environment, including those constituents and significant others who formulate impressions and views regarding what occurs inside the system and where they

get information about the system (Czander, 1993). Stapley (1996) says that contact is the point where the boundaries of one system meet other boundaries. The boundary is at the location of a relationship where the relationship both separates and connects.

Critically important is the fact that organisational boundaries are set to contain anxiety so as to make the workplace controllable and pleasant (Cilliers & Koortzen, 1998). Stapley (1996) added the observation that boundaries help people to make sense of their world. He said that the “ambiguity that exists at the boundary is a source of anxiety, and it is the boundaries that matter. We concentrate our attention on the differences, not the similarities, and this makes us feel that the markers of such boundaries are of special value” (Stapley, p. 69).

Bion (1961, p. 184) made a very similar statement, namely that, “effective functioning of the work-group depends on clear-cut appreciation of boundaries and limits”. Bion (1961) said that task boundaries are important to remind the group of its purpose. Time and space boundaries are important to remind the group that it has a finite amount of time and space at its disposal. Role boundaries are important to remind the group members why they are members of the group and what they need to contribute to the achievement of the group’s purpose. Personal boundaries are important so as to remind the group that its members are individual identities and group boundaries exist to ensure that the group is able to function as an entity in the pursuit of the work-task. Stapley (1996) talks of psychological boundaries as the most important boundaries of a group. These boundaries define who belongs to a group and who does not and the acceptance or rejection of group members is related to the development of inner psychological boundaries.

Organisations establish regulatory boundaries by defining and clearly maintaining performance standards, rules and regulations, requirements for participation and closeness of supervision (Czander, 1993). According to Miller (1976), boundaries

are not only a barrier or encapsulating device but they also serve as a space in which vital regulatory functions are carried out as the organisation receives its imports from and dispatches its exports into the external environment.

2.4.4.2 Boundary management

Schneider (1991) states that “boundaries need to be managed for the individual vis-à-vis the group and for groups vis-à-vis other groups” (p. 173). Boundary violation, when something uninvited or unwelcome crosses the boundary, has the potential to escalate into a major event if it significantly affects the integrity of the system’s core. It is the task of management to work to support the efforts taking place within the core and to protect the integrity of the system’s boundary. However, Czander (1993) states that this is often not the case and the opposite is often witnessed in contemporary organisations. This means that the effectiveness and efficiency of the organisation or group is limited.

Roberts (1994) argues that the management of boundaries is crucial to the effective functioning of the system. He says that boundaries need to be both separate from and related to what is both inside and outside the group. Cilliers and Koortzen (1998) make the point that failure to manage boundaries effectively seems to create a lot of anxiety and confusion for employees. This confusion and anxiety may lead to a breakdown in individuals and to inefficiency and failure in organisations (Rice, 1969). Stapley (1996) concurs by saying that it is as important for the group to protect its boundaries as it is for the individual. The group must control its external boundaries and regulate transactions across them to protect and facilitate the maintenance of the primary task.

Boundaries are therefore important realities in terms of group behaviour. A consideration of the boundaries that exist for the group may assist in explaining certain aspects of the group’s behaviour as well as certain aspects of the group members’ behaviour.

2.4.5 Roles

In organisations and in groups people occupy or play certain roles in order to achieve certain aspects of work for the organisation or the group to which they belong. Czander (1993) says that roles potentially have enormous power over the individual. For example, learning, perception and motivation are influenced by the person's role. Roles influence the kind of behaviour and the required level of motivation that the person is required to display. They also influence the person's satisfaction and emotional well-being (Czander, 1993). That is, roles serve to define and reinforce familiar and accepted behaviours or cause an individual to develop new repertoires of behaviours (Czander, 1993; McCaughan, 1978). Rice (1976) argues that taking up a role requires the individual to carry out certain specific duties or activities and export certain specific outputs. Therefore in taking up a role the individual sets up a task system that requires relevant skill, experience, feelings and attitudes.

2.4.5.1 Definition and meaning of roles

A role is defined as "a mode of adaptation to authority, structure, culture, duties and responsibilities. It defines behaviour (actual, implied or potential) subsumed under a formalised title which is recognised and more or less valued by others" (Czander, 1993, p. 295). Stapley (1996, p. 72) defines roles as "claimed labels from behind which people [or groups] present themselves to others and partially in terms of which they conceive, gauge and judge their past, towards which and partially in terms of which, people [or groups] likewise conceive, gauge and judge others' past, present and projected action". Roles are thus critical as they are considered to be the substance that holds the system together in that they prescribe for individuals what is expected of them and how they are expected to conduct their relationships with others both internally and externally to the organisation (Czander, 1993).

Roles also connote status. Thus, the function of role “is to define or delineate status differentials and how the occupant of one role relates to the occupant of another” (Czander, 1993, p. 296). Role labels are also extremely important when considering status as role labels have social significance. This is as a result of the fact that a label can alter the expectations that others have of an individual and the consequent options available to him or her (Czander, 1993).

Psychoanalytic theory holds that a person chooses a role because it serves a particular defensive function and the particular activities within a certain role serve as a vehicle for gratification of instinctual impulses (Czander, 1993). The role allows for utilisation of the defenses of projection, sublimation, reaction formation, and repression.

2.4.5.2 Stepping out of role

Because of the significance attached to taking up a role, both professionally and psychologically, uncertainty and risk are implied (Cilliers & Koortzen, 1998). If the anxiety that a person feels about work is too great, he or she could turn away from his or her work realities and thus step out of their role. In so doing, they create a surreal world in which challenges can be met with phantasies of omnipotence, dependence or defensive denial (Hirschhorn, 1993).

In a group or organisational setting, it is difficult to contain such anxiety as people depend on each other to do effective work. Thus, one person’s anxiety may trigger an anxiety chain through which people deploy collective fantasies to deny risks (Hirschhorn, 1993). This process happens via projection and introjection and psychological violence “may happen inside the individual as a result of the interplay between anxiety created by real uncertainty and anxiety created by threatening voices within” (Cilliers & Koortzen, 1998, p. 12). This anxiety chain leads people to violate the boundaries of others. Thus, they step out of their role and in so doing,

they step away from others. They experience others not as they are but as they need them to be so that the others can play a role in their internal drama (Cilliers & Koortzen, 1998; Hirschhorn, 1993).

Thus, as outlined above, the issue of roles and the taking of a role within a group is extremely important. Role is related to status and determines for the individual how he or she should act but also how others will respond to him or her. This is tremendously risky and anxiety provoking for the individual, as this may dictate what other options may be available to him or her. When anxiety is too great for the individual to handle, he or she may step out of the role and influence others to play certain roles. Thus the concept of role is extremely important for a study of group behaviour.

2.4.6 Task

Organisations may be defined as open systems and, as such, have many different kinds of inputs and outputs as well as a variety of different task-systems (Roberts, 1994). Roberts (1994) cites the example of a factory. The factory takes information from its environment and uses this information to produce financial budgets and marketing strategies. The factory will also have various different internal departments, or subsystems, such as production, marketing, finance and human resources, all of which need to be coordinated. The tasks of these subsystems may, at times, conflict or compete and the way in which resources are allocated and prioritised among the organisation's various activities is determined by the organisation's primary task. Rice (1963) defined the primary task of the organisation as the task it must perform to ensure its survival.

Roberts (1994) stresses that this is more complex than it may appear as different subsystems within the organisation may have different definitions of the organisation's primary task. Again, Roberts (1994) uses the example of the

factory. It may seem that the primary task of the factory is to produce motor vehicles. However, members of the research and development department may define the primary task of the factory as remaining at the forefront of new technology, or the sales department may define it in terms of achieving sales targets. When the primary task of the organisation is defined too narrowly, or in terms of its members' needs, then the survival of the organisation may be jeopardised (Roberts, 1994).

Roberts (1994, p. 30) makes the point that the concept of the primary task "can seem to be an oversimplification, given the complexities with which most organisations have to contend". Lawrence (cited in Roberts, 1994) developed the idea that the primary task is a tool for examining organisational behaviour and proposed that people within an organisation pursue different kinds of primary tasks. Lawrence (cited in Miller, 1993) offered a helpful clarification that makes explicit the distinction between the following kinds of primary task:

- a) The normative primary task. This is the task that people in the organisation should pursue. This is usually defined by the chief stakeholders. This is the formal or official task and constitutes the operationalisation of the broad aims of the organisation.
- b) The existential primary task. This is the task that the group members believe they are carrying out and is the meaning or interpretation that they give to their roles and activities.
- c) The phenomenal primary task. This is the task that it is hypothesised that the group members are engaged in and of which they may not be consciously aware. It is the task that may be inferred from their behaviour.

Such a clarification may prove useful in that it may assist in highlighting discrepancies between what an organisation says it does and what is actually happening. It can therefore serve as a tool for individuals and groups to clarify and understand how the activities, roles and experiences of individuals and sub-systems relate to each other and to the enterprise as a whole (Roberts, 1994).

Roberts (1994) also talks about the anti-task that is typical of groups affected by basic assumptions. The primary task relates to the survival of the group in relation to the demands of the external environment while basic assumption activity is driven by the demands of the internal environment and anxieties about psychological survival.

2.4.7 Representation

Cilliers and Koortzen (1998) assert that representation occurs whenever one of the system's boundaries is crossed by an individual or a department from within that system. The crossing of individual (micro) system boundaries occurs when two people communicate with each other. The crossing of meso system boundaries occurs when two people from different departments communicate or when there is a meeting between different departments. The crossing of macro system boundaries occurs when an individual or group meets with an individual or group from another organisation (Cilliers & Koortzen, 1998). Cilliers and Koortzen (1998, p. 13) thus define representation as "the authority given to the person crossing the boundary on behalf of someone else, the department or the organisation."

Mosse and Roberts (1994) argue that effective work requires differentiation that is defined as having a clear task and work that is allocated according to skills and resources. If the group is unable to differentiate internally, it becomes impossible to empower anyone to speak or act on behalf of the group, as this implies their taking up a differentiated role. Consequently negotiation with outsiders becomes impossible. It may be possible to have a spokesperson, someone who transmits a prepared message, but this is all the spokesperson can do, as the group cannot delegate sufficient authority to anyone to engage in dialogue with others on their behalf. Cilliers and Koortzen (1998) concur with this by saying that unclear authority boundaries seem to immobilise and disempower representatives to another part of the system. Mosse and Roberts (1994) also say that there may be

an unconscious need to ensure that the negotiations fail, as the more dangerous the outside world is demonstrated to be, the more likely the group is to maintain its solidarity, which it regards as critical to its survival.

Thus, effective representation requires some thought about the best person to take up the role of representative. Criteria to consider include being articulate, diplomatic, and senior enough to be taken seriously by the other people or parties involved in the negotiation. Representation also requires that the group delegate sufficient authority to its representative so as to enable the representative to pursue the task entrusted to him or her. This implies being able to trust the representative to act responsibly and with the group's best interests in mind. However, often group representatives are selected in a random way so as to avoid rivalrous feelings towards the selected person as well as anxieties about differentiation, thus ensuring that nothing significant will happen (Mosse & Roberts, 1994).

Guereça (1979) observed that the process of delegation and of briefing representatives is fraught with anxiety both for the delegator and for the representative. The delegator who can accept nothing less than what he or she deems to be perfection and who is unable to tolerate individual differences will generate high levels of anxiety in the representative and concomitant decreasing levels of performance. The delegator may well project his or her own anxieties onto the representative and thereby sow the seeds of failure. Guereça (1979, p. 107) said, "Many organisations no doubt have their quote of casualties whose only misfortune was to work for a boss who could not tolerate the uncertainties and anxieties that go with delegation."

It can therefore be seen that the issue of representation can be extremely important in effective group functioning, especially when a group needs to traverse its boundaries and negotiate outside of the group for something. Ineffective

groups, intent on avoiding reality, may be the ones that use representation as a means of ensuring that negotiations are not successful.

2.4.8 Authorisation

Czander (1993) states that authority has a very special place in psychoanalytic consulting because of its profound influence on the relationships that are both formally and informally established and maintained in the organisation or group. Authority is the only legitimate instrument for the promotion and maintenance of obedience and conformity within the organisation. According to Obholzer (1994a, p. 39) “authority refers to the right to make decisions which are binding on others”. Czander (1993) says that authority involves the right to issue commands and to punish violations.

Obholzer (1994) differentiates between power and authority but says that both are necessary for organisations. He says that authority without power leads to weak and demoralised management and power without authority leads to an authoritarian regime. Czander (1993) says of power that it may exist only with the perceiver. In addition, he argues that power can only be present when the observer attributes power to another. Thus, if power is a perceptual phenomenon then the individual projects power onto another as a function of meaningful attributes (Czander, 1993).

2.4.8.1 Types of authority

Obholzer (1994a, p. 40) lists three different types of authority. These are:

- a) Authority from above: This is formal authority that is derived from one’s role in a system and is exercised on its behalf. Authority derives from a system of delegation and usually there is some kind of formal system that lays down terms of office and other mechanisms for delegating authority.

- b) Authority from below: Members who join an organisation on a voluntary basis are, by virtue of their membership, sanctioning the system and by the act of joining they are delegating some of their personal authority to those in formal authority.
- c) Authority from within: Apart from the delegation of authority from above and the sanctioning of authority from below, there is the vital issue of authorisation of confirmation of authority from within individuals. This largely depends on the nature of their relationship with the figures in their inner world, especially past authority figures. It may be that a person who is given formal authority fails to exercise that authority as a result of “an undermining of self-in-role by inner world figures” (Obholzer, 1994a, p. 41). The opposite is also found, where inner world figures play into a state of psychopathological omnipotence, which causes an inflated picture of the self as regards being in authority and is likely to produce authoritarian attitudes and behaviour.

It is important to note that Obholzer (1994, p. 41) differentiates between the concepts *authoritative* and *authoritarian*. He defines authoritative as “a depressive position/state of mind in which the persons managing authority are in touch with the roots and sanctioning of their authority, and with their limitations”. By contrast, authoritarian “refers to a paranoid-schizoid state of mind, manifested by being cut off from the roots of authority and processes of sanction, the whole being fuelled by an omnipotent inner world process”. Obholzer (1994, p. 40) also introduces the concept of “good-enough” authority that implies a state of authority in which there is ongoing acknowledgement of authority and of the limitations of that authority.

Cilliers and Koortzen (1998, p. 13) mention three levels of authorisation. These are:

- a) Representative authority. This implies giving and sharing sensitive information about the system across the boundary (also discussed in 2.4.4).

- b) Delegated authority. This refers to more freedom in sharing but with a clear boundary around its contents.
- c) Plenipotentiary authority. This gives the person freedom to cross the boundary on the strength of his or her own responsibility in decision-making and conduct.

2.4.8.2 Authority relations

Czander (1993) says that authority has a profound effect on the psychic life of subordinates. This is primarily apparent in very structured, bureaucratic organisations where subordinates and their corporate superiors are cut off from each other by various hierarchical layers, rules, policies and regulations. From a distance the role of authority will produce what psychoanalysts call transference reactions in the subordinate. Thus, when the authority figure is so far away from the subordinate that the subordinate fails to see the authority figure as a real individual, then the subordinate will have a greater tendency to project onto the authority figure feelings, fantasies and wishes that are often experiences of earlier relationships with authority in the subordinate's life (Czander, 1993).

Thus, all authority relations can be seen as psychically based on the projection of fantasies (Czander, 1993). Miller (1993) makes the point that there are times when individuals operate as if they are seeking dependency upon an omniscient and omnipotent authority figure who will satisfy their needs and this may seem like an expression of the wish to return to the security of the womb. As a result of the vulnerable nature of authority positions, those role occupants wish to pursue projections of praise from their subordinates. By seeking this adulation such authority figures are able to reduce the anxiety that is inherent in the demands of the position (Czander, 1993). These relations have extremely powerful fantasy components.

In organisations where authority is protected at the expense of creativity, innovation and spontaneity, authority relationships can go awry, “they become pathological and ultimately destructive to those involved” (Czander, 1993, p. 280). Instead of creating an optimal, co-operative system, the system becomes competitive and dogmatic and status is protected at the expense of others. Contributing factors to authority dysfunction are located in two areas. These are (Czander, 1993, p. 280):

- a) in the structure of the system and its motivation for control and dominance
- b) in psycho-dynamics of an interpersonal and intrapsychic nature

If the motivations and dynamics around authority dysfunction are not uncovered, these potentially destructive relationships will be repeated again and again, multiplying the damage to the organisation and its employees. Czander (1993) argues that the most problematic relationship occurs where the superior uses his or her position to psychologically play on the emotional vulnerabilities of a subordinate in order to increase his or her psychological gratification.

In organisations, authority acts as a distinguishing characteristic between superior and subordinate. In the life of the adult, characteristics like size and age, that distinguished the child from the parent, now no longer apply (Czander, 1993). Adult subordinates experience authority as alienating as a result of the fact that those characteristics that were functional in the past are no longer functional (Miller, 1993). Thus, in situations where individuals are uncomfortable with authority they often substitute the more primitive drama of their revolt as children against their parents or the drama of sibling competition (Hirschhorn, 1993). In addition, individuals may create a paternalistic milieu with authority where the manager may take on the role of mother or father (Hirschhorn, 1993).

Authority relations are therefore capable of producing powerfully debilitating emotions as a result of subordinates' expectations. Employees unconsciously wish

to replicate the love, protection, rivalry and hate which were present or wished for in early relationships (Miller, 1993). This wish is never realised, however, and the subordinate reacts to this fact in one of two ways (Czander, 1993):

- a) A splitting phenomenon may be present, where the subordinate protests the lack of gratification through the manifestation of unconscious rage that is acted out within or against the organisation.
- b) There may be a defense against this rage where the subordinate quietly suffers and assumes a position of obedience and compliance and fears the wrath of authority and the loss of love.

Thus, the importance of authority in groups cannot be overlooked. Authority and authority relations have the power to shape the group dynamics and to influence the success and/or failure of the group. Such authority also has the power to impact profoundly on the lives of the individuals within the group.

2.4.9 Leadership

Selznick (cited in Rice, 1963) defines leadership as the “responsibility for defining the mission of the enterprise, or building the special values of the enterprise which reinforce the drives towards fulfilling the mission, and for developing a distinctive competence of the enterprise to carry out its mission” (p. 203). Lapierre (1991) defines leadership as the “part of executive action that may be directly attributed to the person exercising authority, and more specifically, to the projection of the deep-seated elements of [his or] her personality” (p. 71).

2.4.9.1 Leadership and management

Obholzer (1994a) distinguishes between the terms *leadership* and *management* by saying that *management* generally refers to a form of conduct by those in authority that is intended to keep the group functioning and on-task, while *leadership* implies

looking into the future and pursuing an ideal or goal (p. 43). Rice (1965) states that leaders must be able to carry their followers with them, inspire them and make decisions on their behalf, with or without their collaboration and communicate the decisions to others. Leaders must act in ways that further the primary task of the group but that also enlist the cooperation of followers by mobilising the appropriate basic assumption. On the other hand, a manager must get the best results out of the resources available and must display the qualities of leadership but use the techniques of management.

Thus, Rice (1965) says there are “no clear boundaries between leadership and management at the manifest level” (p. 20). However, leadership can also be applied at the unconscious level but management cannot be applied at this level. Lapierre (1991) states, however, that his definition of leadership is in complete contrast to management, which he says sees the direction of an organisation or group in more situational terms. For Lapierre (1991) leadership is about transforming external reality consistently with the personal inner theatre of the leader, with projections playing a major role. Leadership is also about action that is the result of transactions between different external forces, orchestrated by the person in authority. Management, on the other hand, is about the analysis of information and compromise. Zaleznik (1991) concurs by pointing out that leaders and managers are different in that “managers focus on process, leaders focus on imaginative ideas” (p. 109).

2.4.9.2 The functions of leadership

Rice (1963) states that the primary task of leadership is “to manage the relations between an enterprise [or a group] and its environment so as to permit optimal performance of the primary task of the enterprise [or the group]” (p. 15). He adds to this by saying that the function of leadership must therefore be located at the boundary of the system so that he or she can distinguish between and integrate

the different leader-follower patterns appropriate to the different parts of the system.

Leadership and management also share a boundary-regulating function which requires relating what is inside and what is outside the group (Miller, 1993; Obholzer, 1994a; Rice, 1963; Rice, 1965). The leader must always be looking both inside and outside the group, which is a difficult position and one that exposes the leader to the risk of criticism by people on both sides for neglecting their interests. Concentrating on one or the other is a more comfortable position but it undermines the role of the leader and thus the strength of the group's representation to the outer world (Obholzer, 1994a).

Leadership is also directly related to the pursuit of the aims and of the primary task of the group (Obholzer, 1994a). Rice (1963) states, "at the manifest level, the leader of the group, formal or informal, has the job of helping the group to perform its specific task" (p. 203). Thus leaders must monitor the direction and functioning of the group and must effect necessary changes to this course and functioning where necessary. The leader's authority to carry this out derives ultimately from the primary task and it is only through consistent monitoring of the primary task that it is possible to develop and maintain on-task leadership, to avoid the abuse of power and to keep to a minimum the presence of basic assumption activity in the group (Obholzer, 1994a).

Rice (1963) says that the leader also has an extremely important role to play at the unconscious level of the group. At this level, the leader, who may not be the same person as the formal leader, expresses, on behalf of the group, the emotions associated with the prevailing basic assumption. At the unconscious level "the ideal leader of the group behaving as if it had made the pairing assumption is messianic; the leader of the dependent group is omniscient and omnipotent; and of the fight/flight group, destructive or uncatchable" (p. 204).

Rice (1963) says that difficulties arise because the prevailing basic assumption excludes the other two, and the emotions associated with them are suppressed. If this occurs, then the prevailing emotions may no longer be containable and the basic assumption will change. It is then that new leaders may emerge who will express emotions that are opposed to the specific task of the group and hence who oppose the formal leader. The more a group manages to maintain a sophisticated level of behaviour, the more it does so by using the emotions associated with one basic assumption to suppress and control the emotions associated with the others. Thus, the leaders of groups must have some understanding, however intuitive, of group processes and be able to mobilise the basic assumption appropriate to the situation in which the group finds itself (Rice, 1963).

Another important function of leadership is that of delegation. Hirschhorn (1997) states, "in a rational system of delegation the leader is supported by followers who take up leadership roles protecting parts of the organisation [or group] so that the leader can attend to the whole" (p. 58). Thus, the leader becomes dependent on followers and vulnerable to their mistakes because he or she is confident in the group or organisation's capacity to uncover errors before they become major disasters. However, if a leader is concerned about the risks that the group or organisation faces, or feels he or she lacks the capacity to do the job, he or she may over control followers as a substitute for controlling external reality (Hirschhorn, 1997). In such a situation, the leader may fail to delegate or may build a fantasy of a "participative culture" (p. 58) so as to share the group's risks with the followers without acknowledging his or her dependence on them. These may represent ways for the leader to deal with his or her own feelings of vulnerability.

2.4.9.3 Leadership and followership

Leadership clearly implies followership (Obholzer, 1994a). Within a group, task performance requires active participation on the part of both the followers and the leader. A passive, accepting, basic assumption state of followership is quite different from a state of mind of exercising one's own authority to take up the followership role in relation to the completion of the task (Obholzer, 1994). Thus, leadership of followers applies when an individual – not necessarily the designated leader – acts on behalf of others in the group (Cilliers & Koortzen, 1998).

Zaleznik (1991) describes the leadership compact as binding “those who lead and those who follow into the same moral, intellectual and emotional commitment” (p. 103). The leadership compact dictates that group members should cooperate with the leader in order to ensure the success of the group. Of central importance to the group, therefore, along with how to lead, is also how to follow. When the leadership compact is in place, leadership is straightforward in that leadership progresses from followership (Zaleznik, 1991). It is accepted for an individual selected for a formal leadership role to expect dedication and support from subordinates so that they work together to further the goals of the group. However, a critical component of the leadership compact is that the elected leader uses his or her power in the best interests of the subordinates and of the group.

Kets de Vries (1995, p. 71) makes the point that the leader becomes a symbol to his or her followers of the “long-sought-after, and for common mortals never attainable, state of final independence”. The leader appears not to need anybody and therefore seems to possess the ability to achieve mastery over his or her environment. Followers thus reactivate a tendency towards idealisation, a characteristic that is essential in the early development of the self. Leaders and followers then have a regressive experience that resembles a return to a childlike

state of bliss in which fantasies of omnipotence play a major role (Kets de Vries, 1995).

2.4.9.4 Types of leaders

Understanding the nature of a person's leadership requires an understanding of the core of his or her unconscious fantasy life and this leads to an understanding of the group he or she leads in that the group's unconscious dynamic is personalised in the figure of the leader (Lapierre, 1991). Kets de Vries and Miller (1991) have identified various unconscious fantasies underlying leadership. These are:

- a) The paranoid leader who believes he or she is threatened by external danger and must be ready to attack and defy.
- b) The obsessive-compulsive leader who does not wish to be at anyone's mercy and thus exerts tight control over his or her surroundings.
- c) The dramatic leader who needs to be at centre stage in order to attract attention or to impress.
- d) The depressive leader who feels incapable, unworthy or powerless.
- e) The schizoid leader who wishes to maintain distance in relationships with others in order to avoid pain and conflict.
- f) The narcissistic leader who is reactive, self-deceptive or constructive. The reactive narcissist believes that he or she has been disappointed and deserves to be compensated. The self-deceptive narcissist believes that he or she must be perfect and the constructive narcissist has a realistic understanding of his or her talents and limitations.
- g) The new version of the organisation man believes that by not putting words to feelings he or she can live his or her life as if these feelings don't exist.
- h) The impostor who believes that he or she does not deserve his or her success and that if anyone discovered how little he or she knows, he or she would then fail.

- i) Later, Kets de Vries (1995) added the charismatic leader to his taxonomy of leadership styles. He says that charismatic individuals seem to distinguish themselves by their strong need to influence their followers and their ability to do so. They seem to hold on to infantile wishes of all-powerfulness.

Lapierre (1991, p. 75) recommends that all manifest leaders uncover their desires and fantasies as these will be projected onto the group and onto their followers. Sometimes, the group members will use the leader as a “mirror that reflects their own expectations”. The leader thus becomes the receptacle into which the group members project all their fantasies and demands.

Thus, from the above it can be seen that leadership is a crucial construct in the study of groups and group dynamics. The leadership function in a group is primarily to manage what is inside the group’s boundary in relation to what is external to the group. It is also necessary for the leader to manage the pursuit of the group’s primary task, but of equal importance is the leader’s ability to give cognizance to the underlying group processes and dynamics that may advance or hinder task achievement and to understand how to use these unconscious processes effectively. The leader also needs to understand his or her own unconscious drivers and how these will impact on his or her followers.

2.4.10 Relationship and relatedness

Organisations or groups are said to be collections of people with experiences. They may use their experiences in the direct service of work but their experiences are also indirectly related to work. For example, the introduction of technology has often caused people to have powerful fantasies about their dehumanisation. These feelings are often displaced and projected, leading to feelings of alienation between subgroups (Shapiro & Carr, 1991). These collective defenses constitute significant aspects of the “internal life” of the group and problems with these

phenomena are often presented as problems involving communication. However, Shapiro and Carr (1991) emphasise the fact that communication is often only a small part of the problem and even more important are the issues of relationships and relatedness.

“Relatedness” describes the quality of connectedness that individuals have with notions that are only in the mind and this is different from “relationship”, which indicates at least some actual personal contact (Shapiro and Carr, 1991, p. 83). An individual’s relatedness to aspects of a group, whether this is from a limited perspective within the group or from the outside, may have a profound effect on his or her feelings and emotions. An example of relatedness may be seen in a large, multinational organisation where the board of directors never meet or interact with the staff members in one of the organisation’s many departments. However, the behaviour of the board members will impact on the lives of the staff members in the department and vice versa. Thus a connection exists between these two groups of people although there is no personal relationship between them and they may never actually meet. This connection is what is meant by relatedness (Shapiro & Carr, 1991). Even when no discernable relationship exists, significant shared relatedness exists and relatedness exists everywhere where there are projections at work.

Relationship and relatedness are therefore key concepts in the study of groups and should be borne in mind when examining projections and internalisations and when considering people’s connections to each other, to their roles and to society. Shapiro and Carr (1991) state that individuals and groups tend to focus on issues that they are directly involved with (i.e. in relationship) and lose sight of those issues that they are related to but not in a relationship with. These issues may, however, be extremely important and may exert enormous influence over the individual or group.

2.4.11 The group as a whole

Wells (1980) referred to the fact that one part of a system may act, carry or contain emotional energy on behalf of another part of the system. This implies that no event happens in isolation and that there are no coincidences to be found but rather synchronicity in the behaviour of the group (Cilliers, 2002). An example of this collectivist approach is cited by Cilliers and Koortzen (1998) where they refer to the differences in the organisational environment in which blue and white collar workers must operate. The blue-collar workers work under appalling and dirty conditions and thus “carry the filth” so that the white-collar office staff may have plush, air conditioned offices, “carrying the cleanliness and order” on behalf of the total system” (p. 14).

2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter various issues, theories and concepts relating to group behaviour and group dynamics were discussed. Initially the concept of group dynamics was presented and defined and the history of group dynamics was briefly considered from various relevant theoretical viewpoints.

Thereafter, various relevant theories relating to group dynamics within the psychodynamic school were presented. These include the contributions of Freud, Ferenczi, Klein and Bion. Bion’s theory was dealt with in some detail as were the basic assumptions and the concepts of anxiety, defense mechanisms, counter transference, boundaries, roles, task, representation, authorisation, leadership, relationship and relatedness and the group as a whole.

Thus, in terms of the aims of this research as stated in chapter 1, step 1 of phase 1 has been achieved.

A discussion of relevant research on concepts related to group dynamics follows.