4

Constructing a theoretical lens

> I have no doubt that, for me, theory does not come from my comprehensive brain. Rather it comes from some subterranean force that has a rhythm of its own...So this chapter contains both the reasoned arguments and also the flow that demands apprehension before comprehension (Yvonne Agazarian in Agazarian & Gantt, 2000, p. 221).

4.1   Introduction

It has become clear that, if we want to explore the forces involved in being a member of a small group from a postfoundational research perspective, we will have to develop a method for conducting the exploration that will allow us to maintain the creative tension between the need to understand within context and the need to explain across contexts (Van den Berg, 1972; Van Huyssteen, 1990). Constructivist grounded theory, as espoused by Charmaz (2007) was adopted as the mould within which to develop the desired methodology with which to conduct this research project. However, the first attempt at applying grounded theory to the process of data analysis led to the realisation that a more structured approach to analysing the data was required and the need emerged for a lens, constructed from theory, through which to analyse the data.

The purpose of this lens would be to add more structure to the coding process. Accordingly, although the principle of a dialogical relationship between data (induction) and theory (deduction) will be maintained, this relationship will be less open-ended and more structured. The risk in adapting the approach in this way is the fact that structure simplifies, while we are actually trying to achieve a deep understanding of an enormously complex process. This means we could lose some insights along the way. On the other hand, the possible reward for adopting a more structured approach is the fact that it can prevent us from descending into a bottomless pit of interpretation and reinterpretation of endless layers of meaning upon meaning upon meaning.

Chapter 3 laid the theoretical foundations from which this chapter will proceed. The purpose of this chapter is, thus, to develop a theoretical lens through which to look at and make sense of the data. It is essential that this lens be able to help capture as much of the complexity of group membership as possible and, thus, not oversimplify. On the other hand, the lens would be of no use if it was so complex that it could not be applied to the data in order to assist with the data analysis process.

This chapter will now proceed to first formulate a definition for the terms 'group' and 'being a group member'. This will be done by examining the definitions of various theorists, apart from Lewin, Bion, Foulkes and Agazarian. After the main components of the working definition to be adopted for this research have been stipulated the chapter will provide an honest account of how the theoretical lens came into being. I will adopt a narrative tone for this section. Once the framework has been put on the table, its logical implications as well as its congruency with the work of Lewin, Foulkes, Bion and Agazarian will be discussed.

4.2   Being a group member: Towards a definition

In their seminal work charting the field of group dynamics in the 1950s and 1960s, Cartwright and Zander (1968) discussedthe approaches of various theorists in terms of defining the terms 'group' and 'group member'. They concluded that a group is best defined as any collection of interdependent people and that one or more of the following characteriseall groups:

   a) They engage in frequent interaction;
   b) They define themselves as members;
   c) They are defined by others as belonging to the group;
   d) They share norms concerning matters of common interest;
   e) They participate in a system of interlocking roles;
   f) They identify with one another as a result of having set up the same modelobject or ideals in their superego;
   g) They find the group to be rewarding;
   h) They promotively pursue interdependent goals;
   i) They have a collective perception of their unity;
   j) They tend to act in a unitary manner toward the environment(Cartwright & Zander, 1968, p. 49).

Martin Ringer (2002) supportsboth the Lewinian definition that a group is constituted by members who experience themselves as members of the group as well as that of Agazarian. As described in the previous chapter, Agazarian defined a member, in terms of a systems-centred group, as someone that is able to interact in the group as a reflective, systems-centred (as opposed to self-centred) member (Agazarian & Gantt, 2000).

If we add to these definitions Bion's assertion that, without a goal, there would be no group (Bion, 1961), then it seems safe to define a group in terms of both interdependence as well as its goal, or task. Accordingly, for the purposes of this research, the following definitions are adopted for 'group' and 'group member'.

a) *Group*: a collection of individuals who have joined together − and are, therefore, interdependent − with the aim of attaining a specific goal or performing a specific task.

b) *Group member*: an individual who belongs to a collection of people who are joined together with the aim of attaining a specific goal or performing a specific task.

It would appear, from the definition of the term group member above, that there are three main elements that are of central importance, namely, a group member is:

a) an individual

b) who belongs to a collection of people

c) to attain a specific goal or perform a specific task.

Agazarian stressed the process of becoming a group member by means of her technique of contextualising − as described in chapter 3(Agazarian & Gantt, 2000), while Foulkes saw the members of a group as people in the process of becoming effective communicators (Foulkes & Anthony, 1984). This alerts us to the fact that 'being a member' can, perhaps, be better understood if it is perceived not as a static state, but rather as a dynamic process that allows for movement. However, as stated before, the empirical data that will be observed and analysed through the lens being developed in this research study, emanated from a training group consisting of nine individuals who were allocated to the group from a larger student class of twenty-seven students. These nine individuals, thus, comprised the membership of this group. This fact seems to contradict the notion of membership as a dynamic process of becoming or being. However, it is at this point that we, once more, turn to Cartwright

and Zander (1968, p. 49): "It follows from our definition of group that anyone who belongs to a particular group is affected in some way by the fact of membership."

Accordingly, if this research focuses on the dynamics of being a group member, and a group member is defined as an individual who belongs to a collection of people who are joined together to attain a specific goal or perform a specific task, then it follows that the focus of the study will be on the dynamics of being an individual who belongs to a collection of people who are joined together in order to attain a specific goal or perform a specific task. In Lewinian language it is possible to translate 'dynamics' with 'forces' and still retain the notion of movement, or process. The research thus focuseson the forces involved in being a group member, or, to be more specific, the forces involved in being an individual who belongs to a collection of people who are joined together for a specific task. Accordingly, the moreorless _static_ fact of being formally included in the group places the member in the _dynamic_ situation of being a group member.

4.3   The emergence of an idea: A narrative account of how the theoretical lens came into being

The scientist in me wishes that I were, at this point, able to report a logical stepbystep process in terms of which I developed the framework that will serve as the theoretical lens for this research study. However, the truth is that I am not sure exactly how it happened. All I know is that, at one moment, I was reading Foulkes in the Northwestern University library and, the next moment, I had scribbled a picture on my notepad. Looking at it I immediately knew it could work and, the more I played with it, the more I was able to frame it in the language of logic and existing theories.

It happened as follows. In 2007 we started training groups as the experiential component of the group dynamics module of the I/O Psychology masters students at the University of Pretoria. During that programme, and especially during the programme we ran for the 2008 cohort, I became acutely aware that some students found itextremely difficult to be members of the training groups. This awakened my interest in researching the forces involved in _becoming_ a group member. I wondered what made it so difficult to 'join' the groups on a psychological level and I hoped that an understanding of the forces involved in _becoming_ a member would enable us to facilitate this process of psychologically joining the training groups. This, of course,

required me to distinguish between physical and psychological membership, asserting that it is possible to be physically part of the group, but not psychologically.

I found the theoretical framework of Shannon and Weaver (1964), as described by Agazarian (Agazarian & Peters, 1981; Agazarian & Gantt, 2000)and discussed in chapter 3, extremely helpful in conceptualising the process of *becoming* a group member. I equated the process of becoming a group member with the twoway process of 1) the person-system boundary becoming more permeable with regard to communication inputs from the group-system and 2) the group-system boundary becoming more permeable with regard to communication inputs from the person-system. This, in turn, enabled me to position my observational focus on the forces that made these boundaries either more permeable or more rigid. In order to operationalise my data analysis process I was, at that point, considering Agazarian and Gant's System for Analysing Verbal Interaction (SAVI) (Agazarian & Gantt, 2000; Agazarian, 2001; Beck *etal*., 2000) but, although all of this made sense, there was still something that was bothering me.

I realised that there were three questions regarding membership that could not be answered satisfactorily by taking this approach:

a) What about the group's task?

I was in discussion with Greyling Viljoen (long-time friend, mentor and colleague and one of the facilitators of the training groups)about my research, when we realised that taking into account the boundary between the individual and the grouponly, meant that not sufficient conceptual space is created in which to study the member's relation to the group's task. It seemed possible for the member to be in open communication with the group, but not working towards the group's task, as stated in Bion's work on the basic assumptions. However, would this make him/her less of a member?

b) Are they not all members from the inception of the group?

After a fervent exposition of my research focus on the process of *becoming* a member, and my use of Shannon and Weaver's model to Barney Straus, an A.K. Rice group relations colleague in Chicago, he confounded me with this question. I then realised that it was essential that I take seriously the physical fact that, once the group comes into existence, all those who are formally included in the group, are already members

and that the distinction between physical and psychological membership could be complicating the matterunnecessarily.

c) What about free-floating communication?

Foulkes's notion of free-floating communication in terms of which all verbal interactions are allowed and regarded as grist for the mill (S. H. Foulkes & Foulkes, 1990a), made me doubt my requirement of communication to 'cross the boundary' and to 'be integrated into the system' in order for membership to be established – particularly in view of the fact that Foulkes saw the purpose of the group as helping its members to become effective communicators over time(S. H. Foulkes & Anthony, 1984). Surely it is not possible to regard someone as a member only once he has become an effective communicator?

I realised these questions were forcing me to reassess my position in a significant way and perhaps to change my entire research focus from *becoming* a group member to *being* a group member. This realisation sent me into "flight" mode, away from my research to all sorts of fascinating reading, including Larry McMurtry (*Lonesome Dove*), Albert Camus (*TheOutsider*) and Carl Jung (*The Undiscovered Self*).[25]

Carl Jung! For the first time in a very long while I read a psychologist who was arguing for individuality amidst a popular trend towards the societal mass (Jung & Jung, 1990; 1958). Of course, his argument made perfect sense. However, what about Dalal (Dalal, 1998), whose arguments for seeing people primarily as group members also made sense? Suddenly the tension between individuality and belonging dawned on me, not merely as a widely discussed psychological and group dynamic, but as an essential dynamic for understanding what it means to *be* a group member. I was suddenly jerked back into "working mode" with the goal of revisiting my definition of what it means to *be* a group member. Thus it happened that, sitting with a notepad and pen and a pile of books in the Northwestern University library, I reopened some old-old conversations …

Bion: "the group-as-a-whole…"
Agazarian: "the member as subsystem…"
Bion again: "no task, no group…"
Foulkes: "to become effective communicators…"

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[25] Note the underlying theme in these titles of which I was totally unaware at the time.

Agazarian: "from self-centred to systems-centred…"

Foulkes: "free-floating communication…"

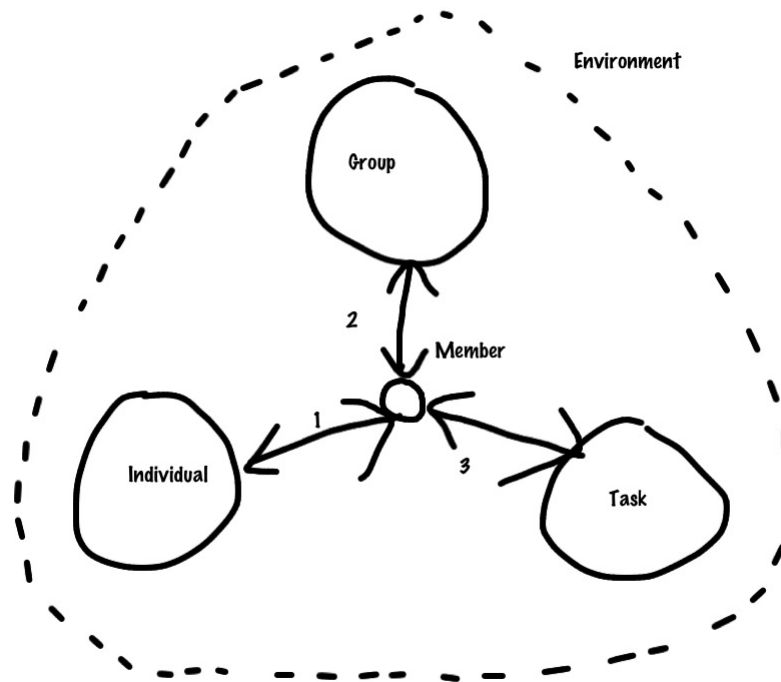Suddenly: Idea… Pen and paper …Scribble and… The result:

Figure 4.1: The initial idea scribble

Could it be so simple asto depict the member in a field of forces between 'group'[26], 'individual[27]' and task? If so, it would mean that, just by virtue of being formally included into the group, all group members found themselves in a dynamic tension between these three 'poles', so to speak.

And so an idea was born…

I started to play around with the idea, testing it against various theoretical concepts. The more time I spent with it, the more I became convinced that not only could this framework be used as the theoretical lens through which to look at the data, but there can also be wider practical and research applications…

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[26] This later became belonging.

[27] This later became individuality.

4.4 Formal discussion of the theoretical lens

4.4.1 Level of focus

Firstly, the member is conceptualised as a system within a hierarchy of systems (group-as-a-whole, subgroup, member, and individual) (Agazarian & Gantt, 2000). This, in turn, means that the member system is hierarchically and isomorphically linked to the systems of which it is part of as well the systems of which it is composed.
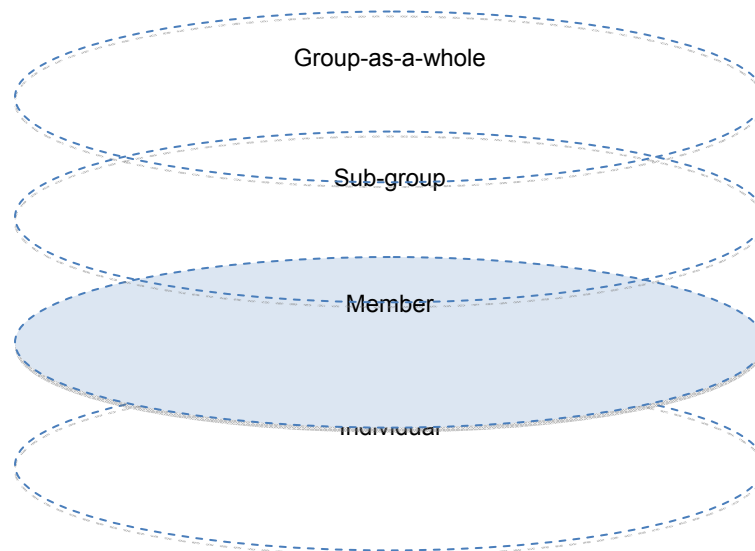

Figure 4.2: The member as a system in a hierarchy of systems (Agazarian, 2000)

However, the fact that the research focus is on the membership level does not mean that what is happening on the other systemic levels is not taken into account, although it does mean that, with regard to dynamics on the other systemic levels, the question will always be how those dynamics affect the forces that are playing out on the level of the membersystem.

4.4.2 The member as a system in a field of forces

The member, however, is not only seen in a hierarchy of systems, but also as an individual who belongs to a group of people who have joined together to perform a specific task. Accordingly, the member, by virtue of being formally included in the group, finds him/herself in a simultaneous relation with his/her own individuality, his/her belonging to an interdependent collection of people, and with the group task.
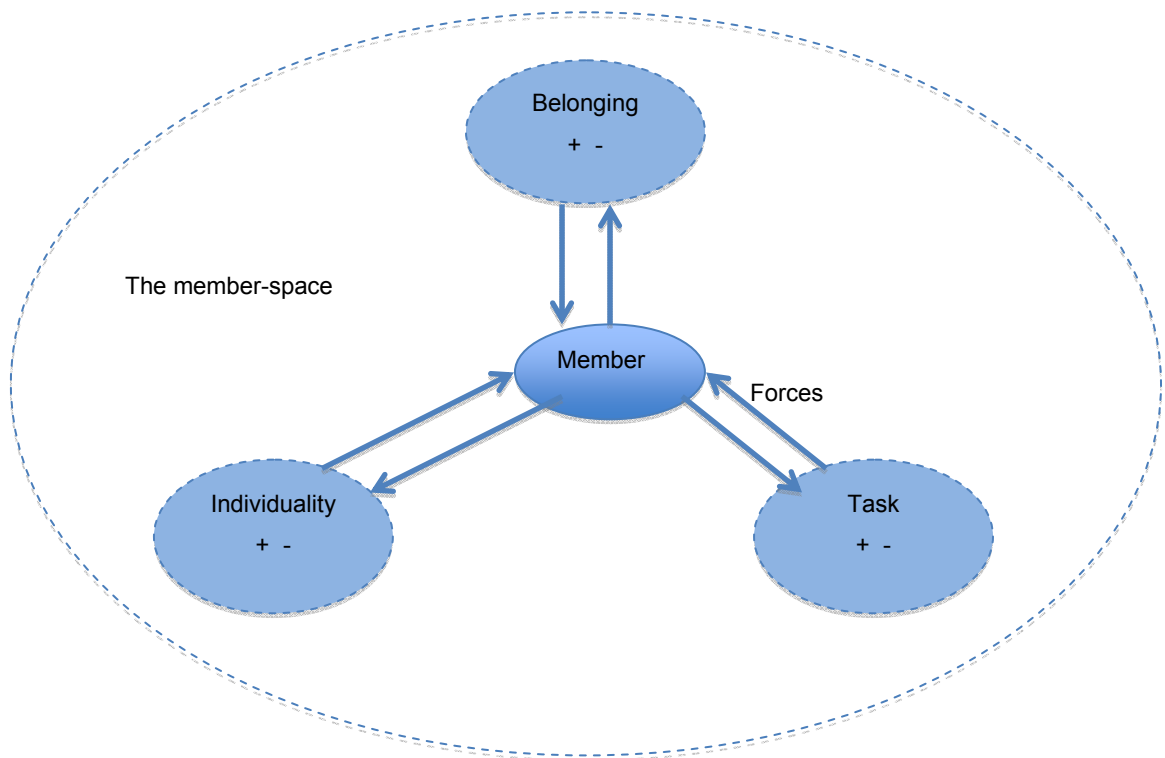
Figure 4.3: The member as a system in a field of forces

When the observational focus is on the systemic level of member, the membersystem is seen as existing in a field of forces operating between three 'goal region complexes' termedbelonging, individuality and task. These are, in turn, conceptualised as 'goal region complexes' because, in Lewin's language (Lewin, 1951), they harbour both goals (with positive valences for the membersystem) and aversions (with negative valences for the membersystem). These goals and aversions are conceptualised as being both positive and negative sub-goals of the goal region. Another way of conceptualising the goal region complexes is by means of a metaphor of magnetic polarities with the member somewhere in the middle of the forces both towards and away from the 'poles' of individuality, belonging and task. However, for the purpose of uniformity of language, I will use the concept of goal regions as it is used by Lewin (Lewin, 1951) in his conceptualisation of the life space.[28]

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[28] The only difference between this conceptualisation here and Lewin's field theory is the fact that the member's relation with each of these goal region complexes is seen as a combined function of his/her *experience* of the goal region complex as well as the *physical reality* of the goal region complex itself. I agree with Lewin's focus on the psychological experience, although it must be emphasised that it is not possible to see the psychological experience in isolation from physical reality, as this would, ultimately, result in a delusion. We are, thus, looking at both the map and the reality (Korzybski, 1948).

In this schema, it seems appropriate to speak of 'memberspace' rather than 'life space'. Accordingly, the memberspace refers to the life space as described by Lewin (1951), although, in this case, it is focused specifically on the membership situation as it exists as a result of the fact of membership. Thus, the memberspace represents the totality of the situation as it exists for the member and it includes the elements and regions in the life of the person-as-member as well as the member himself. The member's behaviour can, thus, be seen as a function of the member space while it is possible to infer the member space from observing his/her behaviour (Lewin, 1951).

It may seem odd that the idea of the life space in this context is limited to the memberspace. It may also seem as if factors from the individual's personal life are not allowed into this schema. However, this is not the case. The individual's personal drama, as it unfolds in his/her life space (which, of course, goes beyond his/her membership of this specific group) forms part of the individual system that is both hierarchically and isomorphically related to the member system (Agazarian & Gantt, 2000). This, in turn, means that patterns of forces and behaviour that operate on the level of the individual system affect the membersystem in accordance with the systemscentred notion that the outputs of one system become the inputs of another (Agazarian & Gantt, 2000). This is also valid for the dynamics of transference, projection and projective identification as derived from psychoanalytic theory and as discussed in chapter 3. The systemslanguage of the outputs from one system to another can also include intangible and covert outputs such as the transference of previous group experiences to this group, or, to use the language of Bion (Bion, 1961), projections of internalised objects originating from the primary group (family) onto the members of this group or the group-as-a-whole.

4.4.3   The goal region complexes: Belonging, individuality and task

4.4.3.1 Belonging

Belonging in this schema refers, in essence, to the fact that, in the group, the member is interdependent on others for the realisation of the group's goals. Of course, there are aspects of being interdependent that are attractive, for example, the meeting of the need to belong, or the increased likelihood of attaining the group's goals, but there are also aspects of being interdependent that are daunting, for example, having to sacrifice some of one's own expectations and needs, or the fear of relinquishing or, at

least, sharing control. Accordingly, the construct belongingin this context encapsulates both the positive and negative valences associated with it.

However, the question arises as to the reason why this component of the schema was termed belonging and not 'interdependence'? The answer is that all behaviours within the group that are directed at interdependence are positively connected to the attainment of the group goal, while all behaviours directed at belonging are not necessarily positively related to the group goal. As a construct 'interdependence' encompasses the entire interplay between individuality, belonging and task, with the need at this point being to dissect and analyse this interplay. One aspect of interdependence is, thus, the aspect of belonging to a collection of people. However, in order to belong 'interdependently' it is essential that some degree of control be relinquished, although not all, as this would result in 'dependency'.

In Bowlby's language (Bowlby & Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1969; 1980) we could, thus, refer to a healthy attachment to the group,[29] meaning not too little − as in resisting the need to belong − and not too much − as in total fusion with the group. According to Hopper (Hopper, 2003b), healthy attachment or interdependence refers to group cohesion as opposed to aggregation (acting as if the group does not exist and as if there is no requirement that members behave interdependently), on the one hand, and massification (acting as if total fusion and non-differentiation are required) on the other.

There is, thus, in the member a need to belong. This, in turn, can result in behaviour which either supports or obstructs the group's path to the goal. However, there is also a fear of belonging on the part of the member or, as Anzieu (Anzieu, 1984) puts it, a fear of being swallowed by the 'group-as-a-mouth'. This fear of belonging can also result in behaviour which either supports or obstructs an interdependent working towards the group goal. On the one hand, the individual's fear of being swallowed by the group can result in a total resistance to opening up and 'joining' in interdependent membertomember relationships but, on the other hand, when the group-as-a-whole is in basic assumption mode it can be highly constructive if a member's fear of being swallowed up forces him/her to access his/her own unique ability to reflect critically on where the group is going. Thus, it can be seen how, although the main focus is on the

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[29]The notions of 'healthy' and 'pathological' will be dealt with later. At this point I will retain Bowlby's (1969) language but, as our understanding of this schema increases, we will see how it becomes unnecessary to refer to normal/abnormal or healthy/pathological.

member-level, it is not possible to ignore the group-as-a-whole level when interpreting member behaviour.

In the preceding paragraph I referred to the need to belong and the fear of belonging as existing as a tension system within the membersystem (Lewin, 1951). When this is translated from the membersystem (intramember) to either the member's environment, or the memberspace (intragroup), it is possible to refer toboth the goals (aspects of belonging with positive valences for the member) and aversions (aspects of belonging with negative valences for the member). There will, thus, be forces towards the belonginggoals and forces away from the belongingaversions that will impact on the member. Also, once a goal has been attained or, in the terms of the tensionsystem, once a need has been fulfilled, the goal/need loses its valence for the member (Lewin, 1951).
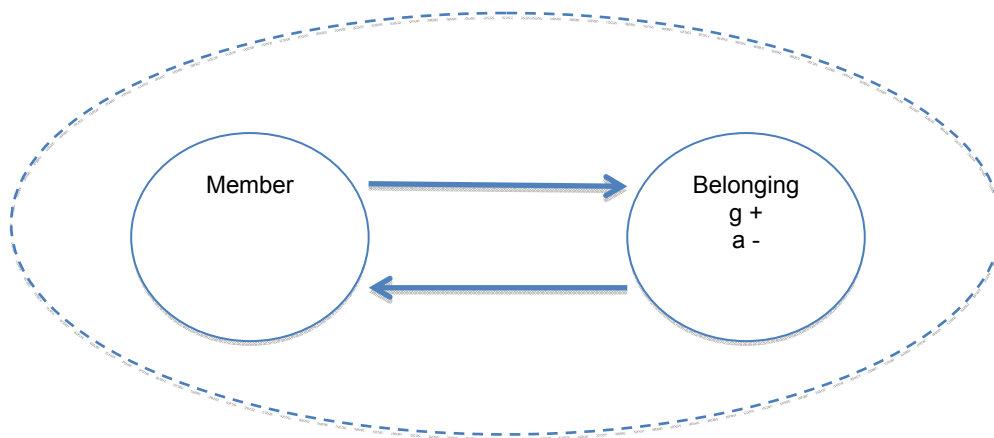

Figure 3.4: The forces between the member system and belonging

At any given moment, there can, thus, be simultaneous forces operating, with the point of application being the membersystem (m), originating in the goal region complex termedbelonging (B), driving the member towards a goal (g) in the complex and also driving the member away from an aversion (a) in the goal region complex of belonging. If the resultant force, (f_R), between the forces 'towards' (f_{mg}) (referred to as positive forces, not in the qualitative sense, but in the directional sense) and the forces 'away from' (f_{am}) (referred to as negative forces) is greater than zero, there will be locomotion, which can be observed as behaviour, by the membersystem towards the goal of belonging.

For instance, if, in the group-as-a-whole system (of which the membersystem is a subsystem) a basic assumption state of dependency is operative:according to Bion's (1961) theory, this means that the members will act 'as if' they wereboth incompetent and totally dependent on the leader. A feeling of shared dependency will, thus, dominate, emphasising the group boundary or a sense of 'togetherness in our dependency'. In the membershipsystem, which is isomorphically related to the group-as-a-whole system (Agazarian & Gantt, 2000), there will, thus, be forces driving the membersystem towards the belonginggoal of 'playing along with the group myth of dependency'. If these forces are stronger than the forces driving the membersystem away from the anti-belonging aversion for, for example, group mentality, then the membersystem will locomote in the direction of the belonging complex. This, in turn, will be apparent in forms of behaviour, for example, a statement such as: "But how can *we* be expected to learn if the leader just sits there and does nothing? *We* have no experience in this type of learning, he is the expert, why can't he tell *us* what to do?"

Furthermore, in order to illustrate the application of Lewin's (1951) notion of goal accomplishment in the memberspace or needsatisfaction in the intra-member tensionsystem, let us assume that the group enters a dependency basic assumption state as a result of the fact that the group members suddenly feel paralysed by the complexity of the task confronting them. It can be that the valence towards belonging for member A is the sense of security that he/she expects to gain from joining the other members in a state of dependency. If, after a while, his/her initial need for security is met, the valence that the belonging sub-goal of 'sense of security' had for him will decrease. This, in turn, means that the force towards 'sense of security' will diminish in power, resulting in a dynamic change in the combined effect of the forces impacting on member A. This will change the resultant force and, thus, also member A's behaviour.

4.4.3.2 Individuality

In this schema individuality refers to the much writtenabout aspects of being an individual separated from other individuals by your skin (Mahler*et al.,* 1975). On the one hand, there are aspects of being a separate individual that are attractive, for example, exercising your own free will, creativity and autonomy. However, on the other hand, there are aspects about individuality that are daunting, for example, the fear of isolation and loss of love (Mahler*et al.,* 1975).

In the group the member is, thus, simultaneously drawn towards certain aspects of individuality while pushed away from others. Or, in the language of field theory, there are forces impacting on the member that either drive him/her towards those aspects of individuality for which he/she has positive valences (goals) and away from those aspects for which he/she has negative valences (aversions). Again, this is a dynamic tension and the satisfaction of one need can release tension that might lead to other needs becoming more dominant.

As a result of the fact that the essential dynamic interaction between the member and the goal regioncomplexes are the same, it is not necessary to repeat the discussion presented in the section onbelongingat this point. Instead, this section will focus on the interaction between individuality and belonging.
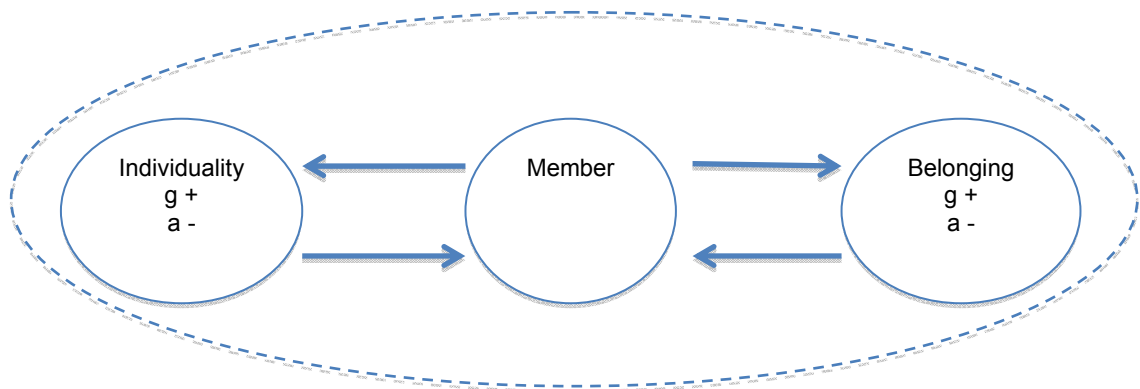
g = goals

a = aversions

Figure 4.5: The member in a dynamic tension between 'belonging' and 'individuality'

The dynamic tension illustrated in this figure refers to the tension that the member experiences as a result of the fact that the group situation has placed him/her both in relation to his/her own individuality and his/her belonging to a larger collection of people. Accordingly, there are forces which are simultaneously driving the member towards and away from both the goal region complexes of individuality and belonging. This is a result of the fact that there are aspects of belonging and individuality that are attractive while there are other aspects of both that are daunting. The way in which the valences either for or against these respective aspects, goals and aversions, will affect the membersystem's behaviour, or locomotion through the field, will either support or obstruct the group's movement towards its goals.

For instance, imagine the group experiences a sudden eruption of unacknowledged fight behaviour in a ba fight/flight stage. Member B can find herself caught between her need for a safe place in which to hide and her simultaneous need to join the group in destroying itself. The need for a safe place in which to hide creates a positive valence and a concomitant force towards belonging while the need to destroy the group creates both a negative valence and a concomitant force away from belonging. Simultaneously, Member B might also experience a driving force towards individuality corresponding with her need to prove that she is different from the 'rich, privileged group members'. However, she can also harbour a fear of revealing too much of herself lest she is caught in the crossfire of the current, antagonistic sentiments. Her subsequent behaviour (locomotion) would then be as a result of the forces towards and away from belonging and individuality. One option can be to engage in stereotype subgrouping (Agazarian, 2000) with someone who shares certain characteristics with her, for instance, not being from a rich, privileged background. This can serve the purpose of a safe place in which to hide − the subgroup − where she could become visible in terms of her difference. It can also protect her from being caught alone in the crossfire whilst still contributing to the fragmentation and destruction of the group through the dynamics released by stereotype sub-grouping.

It is significant to note that a force away from belonging does not necessarily imply a force towards individuality, and vice versa. A force away from belonging can, of course, correspond with a force towards individuality, but the one does not automatically imply the other. This, in turn, means that individuality and belonging are not seen as two extremes on one continuum, but rather as separate constructs.

4.4.3.3 Task

In this schema,task refers to the fact that, by virtue of being formally included as a member of the group, the member finds him/herself in some relation to the group's task. Of course, a subcomponent of the overall group task or group goal is the member's own formal role or tasks that he/she has to fulfil as part of being a member of the group.

With regard to psychoanalyticallyinformed training groups, Anzieu (1984) comments on the dilemma that the task creates for the member. On the one hand, the member is told that he/shecan talk about anything but, on the other, the member is aware, albeit

unconsciously, that the only meaningful thing to talk about to which everyone in the group has access is the shared experience in the here and now. There are, thus, aspects of the task that appear simultaneously easy and inviting whilst other aspects can be both daunting and highly complex.

All people in all groups stand in some relation to the group's task, not only the members of psychoanalyticallyinformed training groups and also not the members of formal groups only. There is also a task or goal in a social group. For example, a group that meets socially to play poker on a Wednesday night. Cartwright and Zander (1968) use the example of a pokergroup to illustrate the limited impact that one group can have on anindividual's life versus the extensive impact that other groups, such as therapy or training groups,can have. If the goal of the members of the poker group is to get out of their houses and have some light-hearted conversation over an informal game of pokeronly, then this goal or task is the reason for the group getting together and, once the need for social interaction with the other group members no longer exists, the group will cease to exist. However, this goal or task can also have aspects with positive and negative valences. For example, for one member any social interaction can be daunting and, thus, carry negative valences. On the other hand, the pokergame and the whiskey that contribute to the overall task of 'socialising over a game of poker' can facilitate the socialisation through the positive valences it carries for a particular member. Another member might love socialising but dislike gambling or drinking. Again, it will be the resultant of the forces either towards or away from the task that will determine the behaviour of the group member. However, it can also be that the goal of the poker group is to gamble for big sums of money. Such a goal will, again, have different sets of positive and negative valences for different members.

If we now add the goal region complex of task to the dynamic interplay involved in being a group member, it becomes even more complex:
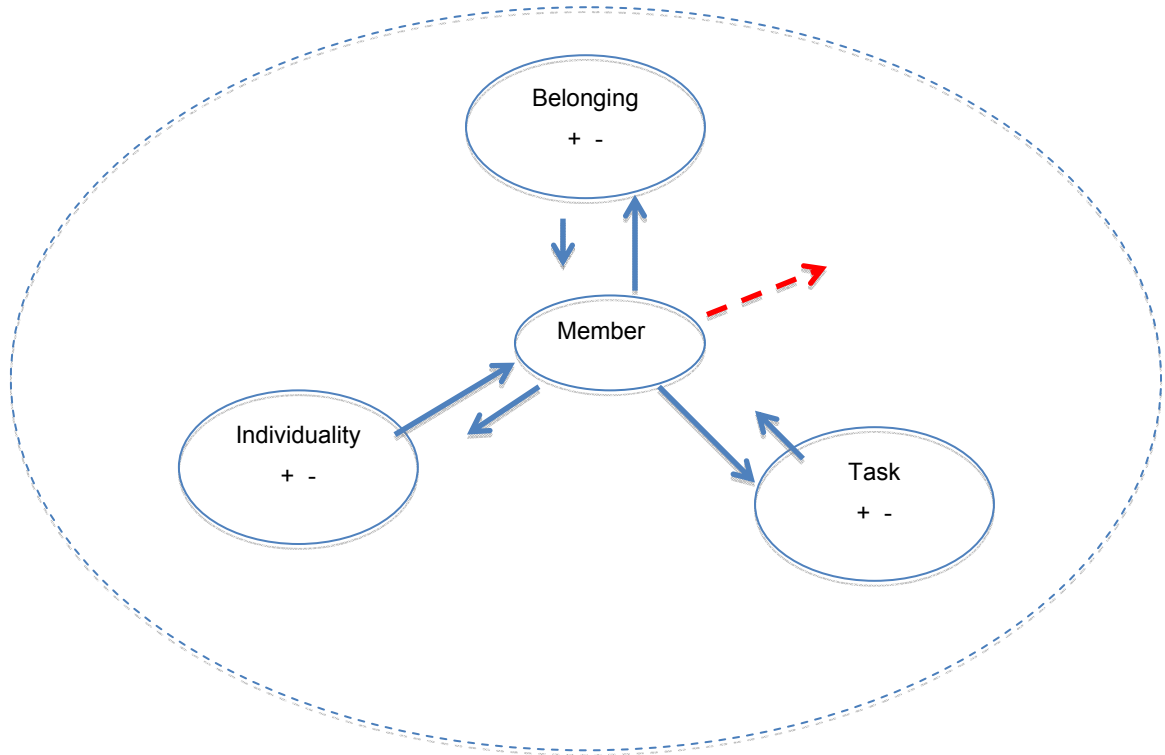
Figure 4.6: Adding task to the dynamic force field

The figure depicts the following sets of forces:

a) strong forces (as indicated by the arrow lengths) towards task and belonging and away from individuality

b) weak forces away from task and belonging and towards individuality

c) the resultant force (in red)

This implies that the resultant force and, thus, the locomotion which is observable as behaviour, would be more or less in the direction of the red arrow towards a position in the field that lies between belonging and task and far away from individuality. In a training group this can refer to Member C, who experiences a strong sense of responsibility for the value that her fellow group members will gain from the group at the expense of her own needs. It may be that Member C would rather downplay her own needs and concerns in the group in order to not take up too much time that other members could have used to discuss their feelings and needs. In organisational terms the classical example of the "company man" would fit this example − someone who sacrifices his own needs and wellbeing for those of the group and its members.

The classical study conducted by Sherif (1988) also emphasises the influence of task on the overall dynamic of being a group member. He divided a group of boys into two subgroups. These subgroups engaged in competitive tasks in a wilderness setting. He

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then combined the two groups, who did not want to relinquish their subgroup identities, until they were faced with new tasks in terms of which they were forced to cooperate if they were to have any chance of completing these tasks. Sherif, thus, used task as an intervention strategy with which to redefine the group's outer boundary from two mutually exclusive subgroups to one group with a common goal, external boundary and membership. Although the Sherif (1988) study does reveal information about the impact that the forces towards a task can have on the integration of subgroups into one group, the findingdoes, in our schema,also appear to be a logical possibility on the member-level:
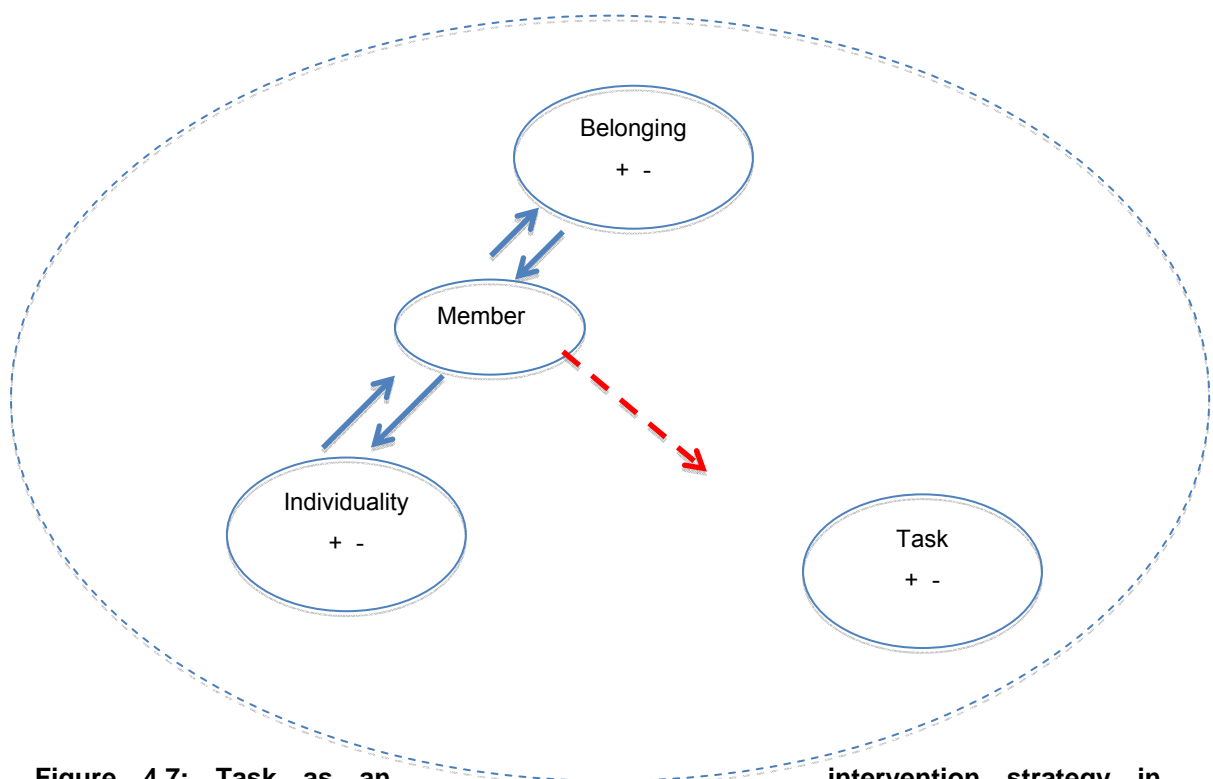

Figure 4.7: Task as an intervention strategy in the struggle between individuality and belonging

For instance, in a group in which the forces impacting on the member reach a state of equilibrium which leaves the member in a position in the field between the goal region complexes of individuality and belonging (as was the case with Sherif's subgroups with the struggle between retaining the identity of the subgroup vs. taking up the new identity of the larger group), an intervention on the part of the leader that can create a net force towards task, could change the overall equilibrium offorces and enable the member to find a more balanced position in the field between individuality, belonging and task.

Both the perceived and the real competency level of the member with relation to the group's task will also affect the valences for or against involvement in the task. In a case in which the member feels incompetent he/she can experience forces away from task in order to protect him/her from either embarrassment or from failure. In such a case either the group leader or the group can assist in helping the member to gain confidence in his/her ability to perform his/her share of the group's task. In other cases, however, it can be that the group member is, in fact, not sufficiently competent to achieve the required results as part of his/her formal role in the group. In such a case the leader's interventions will be of no avail if they are aimed at the perceptions regarding competence but, instead, they need to be targeted at either training the member or simplifying the task. It can also be that the member perceives him/herself to be competent when this is not actually the case. Again, the leader's intervention should take this into account. In addition, such a scenario emphasises how important it is for the group leader, and for the group members, to try to align their maps of reality with reality itself. This echoes Korzybski's (Korzybski, 1948)theory of man as a map-maker and the reason why it is vital not to focus on the psychological dimension only.

4.4.3.4 Positions in the field

As described in chapter 4, Lewin's field theory postulates positions in the field as psychological spaces occupied by the individual in relation to force fields, where the forces impacting on the individual are in equilibrium (Lewin, 1951). When this notion is applied in the theoretical schema being developed in this research study, it means that, in the field between the goal region complexes of individuality, belonging and task, there are a potentially infinite number of positions of equilibrium that can be taken by the individual, while each of those positions can again be taken up in a potentially infinite number of ways. In addition, in view of the fact that we are talking of a group as a highly dynamic system, it seems unlikely that a member will occupy a static position in the field for a prolonged time, if that position is defined in its finest and most specific sense. However, in terms of this schema, it can be helpful to describe seven broad areas within which specific positions can be taken up. Of course,these are not the only possible areas, but they are used as examples of one way, although not the only or even the most effective way (see discussion later) that this schematic lens can help to observe and make sense of member behaviour:
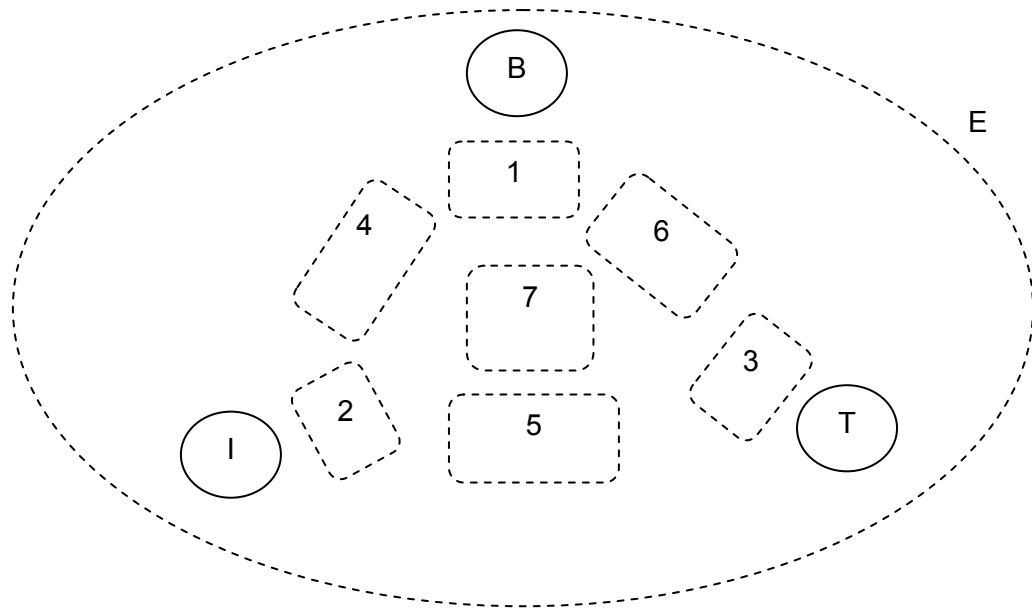
E = Environment
B = Belonging
I = Individuality
T = Task

Figure 4.8: Positions in the field

The figure above depicts the three goal region complexes of individuality, (I), belonging, (B), and task, (T), as they exist in reality and are experienced by the member of the group existing in the environment (E). The positional areas can be described as follows:

Area #1:   Here the member occupies a position in the area of closest proximity to the goal region complex of belonging. According to the field theory principles that we are applying, this means that a point of equilibrium has been reached between the forces towards and away from belonging, individuality and task that resulted in the member being located close to belonging. According to this schema, this would mean that this member is far more concerned about belonging to the group than about asserting his/her own individuality or with being involved with the group task. There can be a myriad reasons for this state of affairs although it is possible to understandthem only in the context of a specific group at a specific point in time. For example, members within a group caught up in a basic assumption state of oneness or

massification (Hopper, 2003b) can be expected to be located in this area and they will manifest behaviour that emphasises concern for their groupness over and above their individuality and their relation to the group task. It can, for example, be that the complexity of some aspect of the task is sufficiently anxietyprovoking to precipitate the move into basic assumption functioning on the group-as-a-whole level with its concomitant effects on the behaviours of the group members.

Area #2:   For a member occupying a position in this broadlydefined area in the field, the equilibrium of forces have played out in such a way that, at that particular moment, the member is far more attracted to individuality than to either belonging or task. In its most extreme form − a total 'slide' towards individuality − this would mean that the member leaves the group. It is for this reason that the goal region complex of individuality can also be seen as the 'gate' through which the individual enters and exits the group. Firstly, the member enters the group as an individual with no relation to either the other members or the task. Once in the group this member finds him/herself between the three polarities and, finally, the member exits the group as an individual. There may be various reasons for exiting the group, for example, 1) the task has been completed or the timeboundary for the group's existence has been reached and the group has had to terminate. In such a case it is incumbent on the team leader to try to facilitate closure with regards to the separation from the group and its members; 2) the member decided to leave the group of his/her own volition. It may be that the member lost interest in the group's task relative to other tasks and other groups that can be joined, 3) it maybe that there were dynamics at play on either the interpersonal or the group-as-a-whole level that made it more attractive for the member to leave the group than to remain in the tensionsystem between individuality, belonging and task; 4) the member was reallocated to another group as a result of circumstances external to the group. It should be borne in mind that, in such a case, it may be that the member was still feeling attraction to the belonging and task goal region complexes,5) the member was ousted by the group either by means of scapegoating or as a result of non-performance relating to the group's task, violation of group norms, etc. Nevertheless, whatever the reason, the fact that the member finds him/herself near

the individuality pole does not mean that he/she is disconnected from the need to belong or to participate in the task as, even at this extreme position in the field, the member still is in the field and is still affected by the forces towards or away from belonging and task. Theoretically it should, thus, be possible to help the member move closer to belonging and task by trying to decrease the forces away from belonging and task in order to release the inherent driving forces towards belonging and task. However, this would only be possible if it were known what the restricting forces were, while this, in turn,would be possible only within the context of a specific group and by taking into account the systemic levels of group-as-a-whole, subgroup, member and individual.

Area #3:   A member occupying a position in this area as a result of the equilibrium of forces towards and away from individuality,belonging and task, would be far more concerned about being involved with the group's task than about his/her own needs or the needs of his/her co-members. At its most extreme such a situation would imply a total fusion with task in terms of which there would be little or no differentiation between the member and the group's task or, at least, his formal role as part of the overall group task. A total identification with the formal role and possible alienation from fellow members are possibilities in such a situation. An example in daily organisational life may be the 'workaholic' who pays little or no attention to anything or anyone beside the tasks at hand and where workplace illnesses such as burn-out become a real risk. At this point it mustbe mentioned that,despite the fact that all of the possible positions described here can, at times, be problematic, not one of them should be classified as categorically negative or categorically positive − it always depends on the specific group context. For instance, in a crisissituation in a commercial bank in which the IT systems were failing, the IT technicians would display perfectly normal, and expected, behaviour if they spent 24 hours over a weekend trying to fix the problem, without thinking of their need for sleep and without their usual banter with their co-members. Thus, if the task, which is the very reason for the existence of the group, is threatened, it makes sense for the members to sacrifice other needs temporarily. This, however, is not sustainable over a prolonged period of time.

Area #4:   When an equilibrium of forces between individuality, belonging and task is reached in the area furthest away from task and between individuality and belonging, this may mean that the member's struggle between his/her own individuality and belonging to a larger collection of people is so prevalent that he/she loses sight of the group's task.[30] If that were the case, it can be hypothesised that a strengthening of the positive valences with regard to certain aspects of the group's task and a weakening of the negative valences with regard to other aspects, can move the member out of this area and into another area in the field which may be closer to task. Sherif's experiment with boys in a wilderness setting that was mentioned earlier is one example of the way in which the task was used as an intervention in order to release the group members from their struggle between holding on to their old identities and adopting a new one (Sherif, 1988). On the other hand, it may also be that the reason for the group member being strongly attracted by aspects located both in individuality and belonging has to do with the tensionsystem in the member which candiminish once the member's goals, with regards to aspects of individuality and belonging, have been attained. It is to be expected that all members in groups move through this area as an integral part of the group's development. In fact, it can be hypothesised that all members in all groups will move through a number of these areas during the life of the group.

Area #5:   One reason for a member occupying a position in this area can be that he/she is experiencing extremely strong forces towards both individuality and task,possibly combined with a strong force pushing away from belonging. This can be true of a highly ambitious member who is more concerned with his/her own needs for growth and achievement with regard to the task than with maintaining good interpersonal relations with the other group members. It can also be that, during a basic assumption state of fight in the group-as-a-whole,

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[30] This is a dynamic often experienced by members at Group Relations Conferences in the Tavistock tradition. I have certainly experienced this myself. For me the best example was during the Institutional Event of the 2008 Leicester Conference where I had almost no sight of the group's task as I was caught up in my own dynamicof me-not-me in an on-going struggle between my own individuality and the pull towards fusion with the group.

the member finds the structure and security provided by the task attractive and decides, albeit unconsciously, to distance him/herself from the group members and protect him/herself by 'hiding behind' the task or by explicitly aligning him/herself with the group's task.

Area #6:   In this case the group member finds him/herself in an area in which the forces towards or away frombelonging and task are exercising a much stronger effect than the forces towards individuality. This would possibly fit a situation in which the concern of the group member is strongly focused on the wellbeing of the group, including both the fellow members and the task, to the detriment of his/her own needs and wellbeing. The metaphorical "company man" to whom reference was made earlier would fit this description. Again it must be emphasised that, depending on the situation, this can be both positive or negative. However, it does not seem as if a prolonged functioning by a group member in this area would be sustainable. This area suitsthe metaphorical description, often used by Anzieu (1984), of the member being swallowed by the group and its task. A group that is engaged in 'groupthink' can also find that most of its members are operating in this area where the group and its values, ideology and outward image, together with a lack of conflict amongst its members, can lead to a situation in which the critical thinking on the part of its members is either not allowed or is nullified.

Area #7:   It feels instinctively as if this area should be the ideal position for a group member as this represents a situation of equally strong forces towards and away from individuality, belonging and task.[31] In theory, this would be the ideal position, but theory oftenomits the real world from the equation. In the real world, the group is in a continuous interaction with various situational forces emanating from its broader organisation/institution, for example, the University of Pretoria as the institution where the training groups were hosted, and beyond, for example, the economic, political, technological and legal environment.

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[31]Later in this chapter, Nitsun's (1996) concept of the anti-group will be discussed in relation to this framework. It is interesting to note that, as a function of the anti-group, Area #7 could also be the area within which the member would be located if he/she is being pushed away from the three goal region complexes with equal force.

In order to 'sail through these winds of change' on an oceanic mass of variables the group and its members will have to take up various positions on an on-going basis in order to maintain the overall balance between the group and its environment. It is, thus,completely inaccurate to state categorically that, for all groups in all situations and for all members, *Area #7,*as depicted by this framework, is the ideal/healthy position and that the other areas carry a degree of pathology. The following metaphor comes to mind: imagine that the three polarities of this framework were painted on a circular wooden disc, which was balanced on a single metal coil right beneath what would be *Area #7.* Imagine the disc were large enough to support 4 people − the 4 members of the Balance-The-Disc Group. If member 1 climbs on the disc, surely she would need to stand in the position right in the middle, above the metal coil. However, as soon as member 2 climbed up, both of them would have to move to positions where they would 'balance each other out'. Similarly, for each additional member climbing on the disc, the other members would need to move around the disc until they all found a place of equilibrium where the disc would not tilt. Now, if one member decided to walk over to the other side of the disc, all the other members would be forced to move around, changing their locations in order to reach a point of balance again. In addition, if the ground underneath the coil shifted, the members would also have to move. Likewise, if a force from outside impacted on the disc, the members would have to move. Thus, occupying *Area #7*, as with occupying all the other areas in which the member system can be located as a result of an equilibrium of forces, is a function of the forces towards and away from individuality, belonging and task, as these forces are played out in the situation in which the group finds itself.

Although the principles of field theory make it possible for us to stipulate what certain positions in the field can look like, the schema being developed would be still more useful for research purposes if the focus were not on the positions, but on the movements within the field or, in other words, the movements between positions. In fact, as will be shown in the next chapter, when applied for the purposes of research, the framework will focus explicitly on observing behaviour as locomotion in the field that is possible only as a result of forces. However, the positions that members take up in the field may yet serve as data with regards to what might be taking place both

inside and outside of the group − particularly as a qualitative self-reflection tool for the group. Members of a work team could, for example, be asked to position themselves in the field in relation to individuality, belonging and task. These public statements about where members experience themselves to be located in the field can then be used to stimulate honest discussion about the group, its members and its environment.

4.5   Comparing the schema with existing theory

4.5.1   Introduction

I decided to describe the development of the schema, not as a logical step-by-step process in terms of which I systematically worked through existing theories, but as a narrative account of the way in which, after months of reading, trial and error, the schema emerged in a moreorless organic fashion. This I did in section 3 of this chapter. At this point, however, I would like to subject the schema to the scrutiny, firstly, of the main theorists whom I have chosen to provide the theoretical base for this research and then, secondly, to various grouptheoretical concepts as developed by various researchers in the social sciences.

This section will, therefore, proceed to outline a general comparison between this schema and the theoretical traditions pioneered by Lewin, Bion, Foulkes and Agazarian. The section will then discuss a selection of popular grouptheoretical concepts not yet covered in this dissertation.

4.5.2   Field theory

At this point it is helpful to refer back to the concepts of two field theories as described by Gold (1990) and discussed in chapter 4. From the discussions above it should be clear that the constructs that formed part of Lewin's specific field theory were used in much the same manner as initially described by him. The next section will examine these constructs and then subject the schema to the five rules emanating from Lewin's meta-theory, as distilled by Gold (1990) and as discussed in chapter 4.

4.5.2.1 Constructs from Lewin's specific field theory

a) *Life space:*The life space as used in this schema was redefined as the memberspace, according to Lewin's (1951) principles except that,in this schema, life space is limited to the person's membership of the group and is, thus, demarcated by the group's boundaries. It has already been discussed that the other areas of a person's life that impact his/her behaviour in the group enter the schema, in this case, through the 'individual system' − a subsystem of the 'member system' and, thus, isomorphically and hierarchically linked;

b) *Forces, goals and valences:* These concepts are used in this schema exactly as described by Lewin (1951). However, one adaptation that was made was that of naming the three main 'polarities' of individuality, belonging and task goal region complexes in order to signify that these goal region complexes harbour both positive and negative valences for the member. Certain aspects of each of the three goal region complexes are, therefore, perceived as 'carrots' and others as 'sticks' − both coexisting within each goal region complex. With regards to forces, I have adopted Agazarian's adaptation of the notion of forces and resistances as driving and restraining forces, or as 'forces towards' and 'forces away from'. Although forces are also conceptualised as having a point of application,− the member-system − as per Lewin (1951), they were not represented in this way in the schematic representations above for the sake of simplicity. The representation in figure 4.9 below should be the same as in figure 4.10 further below in order to reflect accurately the notion of the member as the point of application. However, something is then lost in terms of conveying the notion of a set of opposing forces between the member and the three goal region complexes:
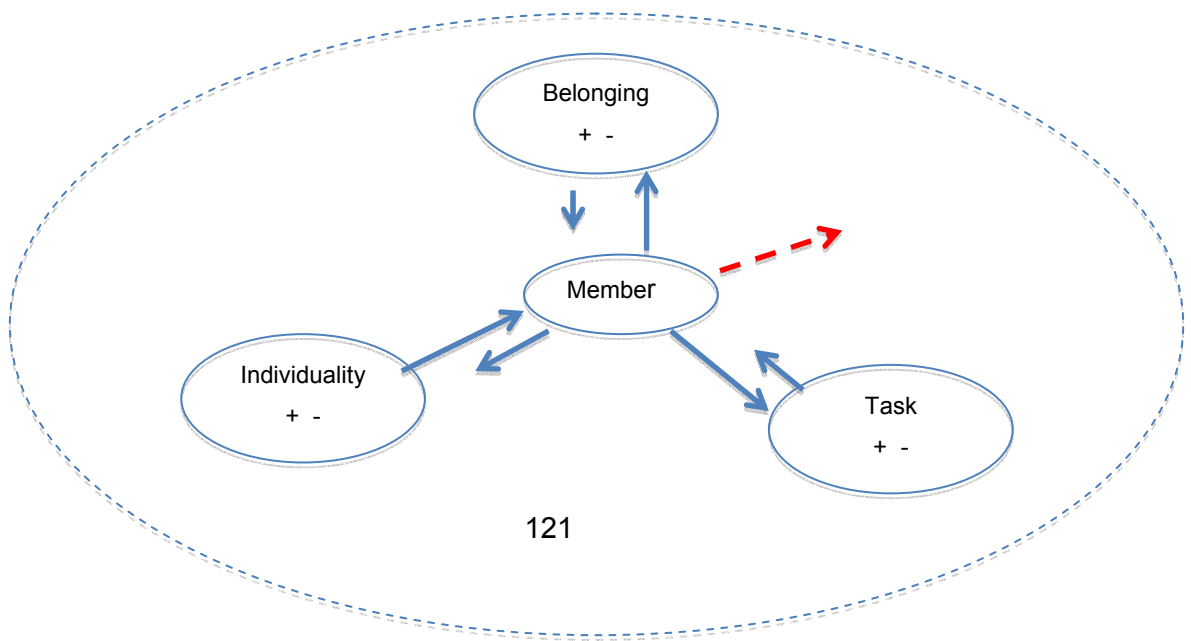
Figure 4.9: The member as the point of application of the forces - A

The figure above depicts forces of differing strengths (lengths) and directions (as depicted by the arrows) between the membersystem and the goal region complexes as well as the resultant force (in red), which indicates the direction of locomotion that can be expected. If the fact that all of these forces have the membersystem as the point of application, as depicted in the Lewinian format of the point of the arrow touching the point of application of the force, then the figure would resemble the figure 4.10 below:
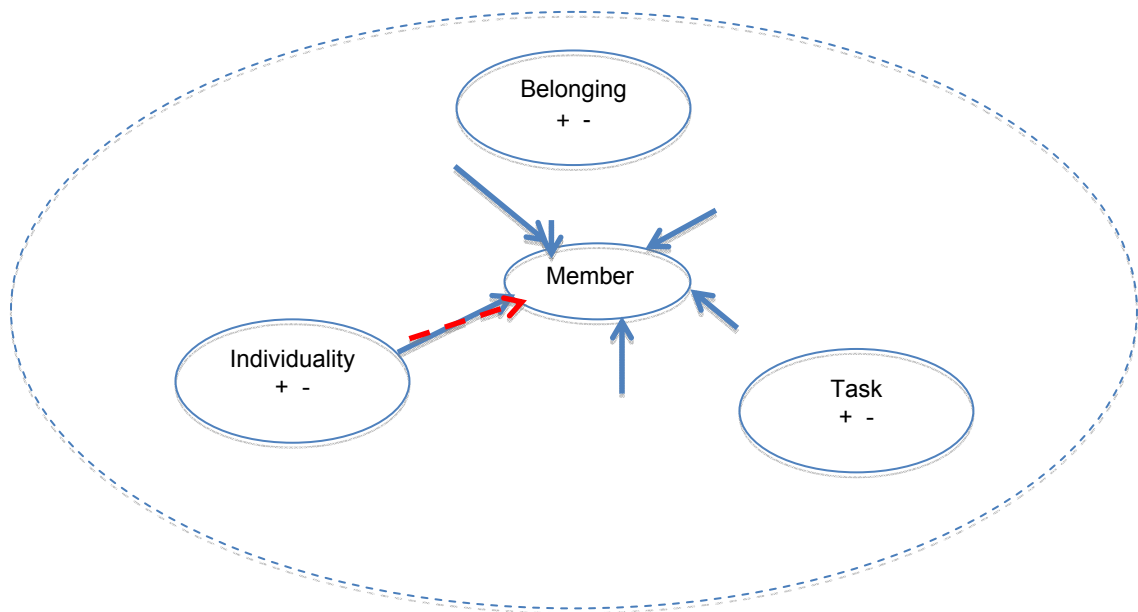

Figure 4.10: The member as the point of application for the forces - B

The decision to depict the forces as in figure 4.9 is, therefore, based purely on elegance of representation and not because it is not believed that the forces have, as point of application, the membersystem.

c) *Locomotion and positions in the field:*As in Lewin's work, locomotion is seen as movement through the various positions, relative to the goal region complexes in the field. In addition, locomotion is also seen as a result of forces. In terms of a group, all behaviour is seen as locomotion and, thus, as a result of forces in the member space.

d) *Elements in the life space:* In this schema, the only elements that are broadly shown are the goal region complexes. However, the various attractive and daunting aspects (goals and aversions) of each of the goal region complexes have not been specified and neither have any other elements, including the behaviours of other members in the field, authority, physical location, and so on. All these elements and more are seen to exist in different ways for different members in different groups at different times with different effects on the behaviour of the members. When the way in which this schema will be applied as a theoretical lens is discussed in the next chapter, it will become clear how it is possible to use the schema inductively in order to identify the elements in the member space that impact on the member's positive and negative valences for certain aspects of individuality, belonging and task.

4.5.2.2 Field theory as meta-theory

It is quite clear that Lewin's (1951) concepts, as used in his specific field theory,constituted a critical cornerstone in the representation of this schema. However, the question arises as to how this theoretical schema would stand up to his meta-theory, that is, the set of rules for the development of good theory.Each of the five rules that were discussed in chapter 4 will now be applied to the assessment of this schema:

a) *Rule 1: Psychological phenomena must be explained by psychological conditions.*

A deliberate decision was made, and has already been discussed, to not only bring the psychological experience, or perceptions, of the membersystem into the schema, but also to create space for reality, as it exists 'out there'. Korzybski's (1948) notion of man as a map-maker and Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance, as described by Agazarian (2000),were used to include the notion that it is essential to be able to distinguish between the member's perception of reality and reality itself, especially with

regard to the possibility of using the schema developed in this research study for interventionpurposes. If, for example, we allow for the fact that a member's behaviour is both a result of his perceptions of the task of the group and the task itself as it exists in reality, then this implies that the leader's interventions which are aimed at strengthening the forces towards the task can be focused both on the member's perception of the task − taking pains to help the member perceive the alignment of group goals with personal goals in order to render involvement in the task more attractive − or the task itself − changing the member's formal role which represents the formal requirements of the member in relation to the overall group task. This rule has, thus, not been negated, but rather augmented by adding real events to the psychological perceptions of events.

b) *Rule 2: Theory building must be constructive.*

This theoretical schema was not developed by only observing empirical data, but mostly in order to observe empirical data. Accordingly, it is focused on uncovering the forces or the laws underlying memberbehaviour. In addition, it required creativity and the imagination of, for example, the 'magnetic polarities', in order to formulate the schema. This is exactly in line with the requirement that theory building must be constructive, as posed by Lewin's meta-theoretical thinking.

c) *Rule 3: We must take the totality of conditions into account when framing our explanations.*

This schema takes into account the group as a hierarchy of systems within its environment. In addition, despite the fact that the focus is on the systemic level of member, the influences of all other levels as open systems are recognised. It is not possible to understand any movement in the field (i.e. behaviour of the member) if not viewed against the background of both the specific situation of the group at that particular time and the context of the member in the group and in relation to the behaviours of the other members in the group. In this sense this schema is, in effect, a field theory of membership in terms of which the totality of conditions are seen as impacting on the member's movements between the three goal region complexes of individuality, belonging and task.

d) *Rule 4: The rule of contemporaneity: elements and conditions are able to influence behaviour in the present only.*

The schema developed here is seen as a dynamic schema in terms of which change is happening continuously over time. Exactly as postulated by Lewin (1951), it is in the present only where behaviour is influenced. Where past events, for example, the story of the team as developed in the dynamic matrix (Foulkes, 1975) play a role, it is always the way in which these past events are either experienced or relived in the present that is taken into account. Psychodynamic constructs, such as transference in this schema, have validity as they help us to understand the way in which the member's current experience of past events is being acted upon in the group.

e) *Rule 5: The rule of formalisation: good theory should be an effective hypothesis machine.*

Although this schema will not be used to generate hypotheses in this research project − it will be used as an observational and descriptive framework −it is, nevertheless, possible that various hypotheses can be formulated and tested in future research projects. Although one or two hypotheses to be tested in future research will be discussed in more detail in the conclusion chapter of the dissertation, I will cite a few examples of possible hypotheses in order toillustrate the way in which this schema complies with Lewin's rule of formalisation (Lewin, 1951). The possible hypotheses mentioned here are not fine-tuned for immediate use as research aims in experimental work, but are mentioned only in order to illustrate how the framework can be used to generate hypotheses that can be either accepted or refuted by means of rigorous empirical research:

i. *Hypothesis 1:* When a member moves from Area #1 to Area #2, this is as a result of the fact that the equilibrium of forces towards and away from individuality and belonging has shifted towards 'individuality.'

ii. *Hypothesis 2:* A member will move from Area #4 to Area #7 if the forces towards task involvement become stronger and/or the forces pushing away from task involvement become weaker.

iii. *Hypothesis 3:* A group member's locomotion to Area #1 is indicative of the group's need to strengthen its outer boundary.

iv. *Hypothesis 4:* A group member's locomotion to Area #2 is indicative of the member's need to strengthen the boundary between the individual and the group.

v. *Hypothesis 5:* A group member's locomotion to Area #3 is indicative of the member's need to strengthen the boundary around the group task.

vi. *Hypothesis 6:* A group member's locomotion from one position to another can be understood in terms of a change in the equilibrium of forces in the force field between the three goal region complexes.

vii. *Hypothesis 7:* A prolonged fixation in a specific area can be changed by weakening or strengthening other forces in the force field.

viii. *Hypothesis 8:* The behaviours characteristic of the various areas are a normal consequence of the interaction of forces with regards to group membership and need not be seen as pathological.

ix. *Hypothesis 9:* Once the need for being located in a specific area has been fulfilled, the strength of the force towards that goal will weaken and the member will move to another location within the field.

As illustrated above, this framework adheres to the basic requirements for a good theory, as described by Lewin (1951), and it can, in effect, be termed a field theory of membership.

4.5.3 The Tavistock tradition

Although the main ideas underlying the Tavistock tradition, as it was influenced by Bion (1961) and expanded upon by several others, were not used as explicit building blocks in the framework, as were Lewin's fieldtheory constructs, these ideas did, nevertheless, act as an ever-present compass with which to judge and evaluate whether the schema developed here was able to accommodate and describe them. These ideas will now be discussed individually.

4.5.3.1 The group-as-a-whole

The first major contribution of Bion (1961) was the fact that he alerted us to the group-as-a-whole as a distinct entity that should be analysed if we are to make sense of the behaviours within the group. The way in which the group-as-a-whole enters the thinking in terms of this schema is not that there is an explicit focus on it− the explicit focus is on the member-level − but that a key underlying assumption of the framework is that it is not possible to interpret memberbehaviour without taking into account the dynamics in the group-as-a-whole. Agazarian's (2000) systemscentred framework makes it possible for the dynamics of the group-as-a-whole system to influence the dynamics of the membersystem. Accordingly, the group-as-a-whole and the member-level are never seen in isolation, but always in interaction.

4.5.3.2 The work group vs. the basic assumption group

If we compare this schema with Bion's (1961) contributions regarding the work group and the basic assumption group, it is necessary to make a number of comments before testing whether the framework is capable of providing answers to the several useful questions posed in Bion's (1961) work. Firstly, as regards Bion's (1961) differentiation between the work group and the basic assumption group the following should be noted: In Bion's (1961) schema, the work group is perceived as the healthy − rational, sophisticated − functioning of the group in terms of attaining its goal while the basic assumption group is perceived as the pathological − irrational, primal − regression to primitive states by the group-as-a-whole in order to defend against the anxieties evoked in the course of the group's life. However, the terms "healthy" and "pathological" are seen as problematic when viewed from the perspective of the schema being developed.

In this framework, it is not possible to answer the question as to whether the group's behaviour is either 'normal' or 'abnormal' − healthy or pathological − by taking into account the group's, and subsequently, the group members'relation to the group's task alone, as it is essential that it also is viewedagainst the group's situational context. I am sure Bion would have agreed with this view, although references to the basic assumption states are, all too often, couched in pathological terms. For example, the case of the first meeting of a small study group in a Group Relations Conference:in the schema being developed here, the group's possible move into dependency or flight would appear asa normal and healthy response to the conditions existing in the overall conference structure. In fact, it would be rather abnormal if a group immediately engaged in the task of exploring the relations and relatedness as they unfolded in the here and now, except perhaps in a group whose members wereexperienced in being members of group relations conferences or training groups. The task of the consultant, according to the framework I am developing here, would, thus, be to allow the group its movement, including a reasonable amount of time spent inbasic assumption mode,as a result of the fact that this could allow for important work with regards to the group members' needs for security, affiliation, creating common ground, acceptance, etc. Thus, in this context, the basic assumptions are seen as important developmental 'spaces' in which the group is allowed topursue its 'as if' goals before being ready to resume its focus on the group's task.

It is possible to detect some very important links between the present framework and Bion's (1961) work, for example, if the group has dealt sufficiently with its 'as if' goals − its implicit goals − which exist in the goal region complexes of individuality and belonging, then the forces towards those goals willdecrease as the valence of the members for these goals decreases. This, in turn, will result in a change in the resultant of forces and, possibly, in a locomotion in the direction of the goal region complex of task, that is, towards a work group state on the group-as-a-whole level. As in the case of Bion, it is not necessary for the leader, or, in a Small Study Group, the consultant, to intervene if the group is moving towards 'working' mode by itself (Armstrong, 2005). However, should the leader gain the impression that the group is spending a prolonged and superfluous amount of time, given the restricted overall time available, in basic assumption mode, then there will be an intervention that will be aimed at bringing the group's basic assumption functioning to the attention of the group so as to enable the group to address it consciously and, thus, to move into working mode again. In this case the assumption of the present framework, namely, that all members are influenced by forces towards and away from all three of the goal region complexes at all times, becomes important. It implies that, even in the most severe cases of basic assumption functioning, for example, when the group is in a severe state of ba-oneness, the forces towards individuality and task and away from belonging are still present, albeit much weaker at that moment than the forces towards belonging and away from individuality and task.

If the intervention on the part of the leader helps to shift the balance of forces, by helping either to weaken or strengthen the forces towards or away from the goal region complexes, so that the groupsystem, and its membersubsystems, are able to take up, or move through, new positions in the field, then the intervention can be regarded as effective. However, it is significant to note at this pointboth that the leader is not able to control the movement of the group and also that there is no guarantee that a disturbance in the equilibrium of forces that caused an extreme position close to belongingas a result of basic assumption functioning, will result in the group moving to a position closer to task. It can be that the disturbance of an equilibrium in one extreme, that is, belonging, can lead to a new equilibrium being reached in another extreme, that is, individuality.

4.5.3.3 Defences: Pathology or normal human behaviour?

At this point it is important to discuss in more detail one of the themes in the paragraph above, namely, whether group defences are to be seen as pathological or not. In the previous paragraph, I make the statement that defences are normal responses to circumstances and that they not be seen indiscriminately as pathological. I then used the example of a Group Relations Small Study Group to show that it appears perfectly normal that, under such conditions, the basic assumption defences would be evoked. However, later in the paragraph, I imply that, when a group exceeds the 'normal' time required to deal with its reasons for defending, the leader should intervene. Does this mean that the behaviour at that point is no longer normal and, thus, pathological? Also, where does one draw the line between allowing time for employing defensive strategies and intervening? In order to address these issues it is necessary to turn, first, to Armstrong (Armstrong, 2005), and then to Agazarian (2000).

Armstrong (2005), working from the Tavistock's systems psychodynamic tradition, points out that the defensive pattern becomes problematic only when the situation no longer requires it. For example, the infant, being small and vulnerable, has to be dependent on nourishment from the mother and exerts pressure on her, for instance, by crying, in order to provide for its needs. On the other hand, according to Armstrong, the adult member of a work team, or a Small Study Group, is not really dependent on the leader for his/her survival, although the said adult member can act 'as if' he/she were dependent. In such a case, the early relationship is transferred to the current situation, or else the internalised part-object of the withholding mother is projected onto the leader and pressure is exerted on the leader to provide direction and guidance. Of course, the adult group member is not, in fact, dependent on the leader for survival and the strong anxieties experienced when guidance, protection and spoon-feeding are withheld can be seen as irrational. Nevertheless, does it help to label these behaviours as 'pathological'? Not according to Agazarian (2000), and I agree with her way of describing defensive behavioural patterns as 'old-old roles' that have served the individual well in the past.

When seen as old-old roles, rather than as pathology, we are allowing for the fact that the defensive patterns are not emanating from the individualonly, but are a dynamic consequence of various factors such as the ongoing responses, within a societal culture, towards an individual's behaviour in various group settings. In a training group, as well as in a therapy group, we are given the opportunities to explore these old-old roles and defences in order to come to a better understanding of where and why we use these defences and in what ways they are either helpful or not and also to

experiment with new ways of being members of the groups in which we find ourselves. Thus, for the group leader, this means that defensive behaviour need not be labelled as pathology, but rather that it be seen as a response to the cumulative effect of various interactional experiences of both the group and its members. Accordingly, the leader needs to help to create an atmosphere in which the group is able to identify which patterns of behaviour are helping them to perform the group task, and which are not.

In a systems-centred group these interventions are carried out immediately while, in a psychoanalytically informed group, they are timed in order to provide the group and its members with sufficient material upon which to reflect to enable them to discover and to ponder on the behavioural patterns. However, despite the above, according to the framework developed in this study, all behaviour is seen as a function of forces towards and away from individuality, belonging and task on various systemic levels and the labelling of behaviour as healthy or pathological is deemed not necessary in order to work with behaviour according to this schema.

4.5.3.4 The impact of the group's basic assumption behaviour on its members

The three basic assumptions described by Bion (1961) as dependency, fight-flight and pairing will now be revisited. In this schema, one would expect to find the balance of forces towards and away from task to be strongly away from task with regard to all three of the basic assumption states. In ba dependency there may be stronger forces away from than towards individuality as members abdicate their unique, personal competencies, power and authority to the leader and blend into invisibility together with the rest of the group. However, this togetherness in dependency mayalso signify stronger forces towards than away from belonging as the group may be concerned with emphasising the group boundary rather than the individual member boundaries. On the other hand, during a ba fight-flight stage, the member can experience strong forces away from belonging to the group-as-a-whole together with strong forces towards belonging to factions or subgroups within the group. Similarly, strong forces towards individuality, especially in flight, and away from individuality − the need to not be caught in the crossfire −can be experienced while in a ba pairing phase the forces towards belonging and away from individualitycan predominate as members join in

placing their hopes on what may come out of the magical union of the pair and, thus, abdicate their own critical abilities and possible contributions.

In order to code and analyse the data, it is essential that cognisance be taken throughout the process of what is occurring on the group-as-a-whole level as these group-as-a-whole patterns, as identified by Bion, exert strong forces on the members and it is not possible to interpret their behaviour in isolation from the group context within which they are operating.

4.5.3.5 Authority

In the Bionian framework (Bion, 1961), as assimilated into the Tavistock tradition, special emphasis is placed on the group's relation and responses to authority as well as the roles that members take up as a function of both the group-as-a-whole and their personal valences. This was discussed in chapter 4, but the question now arises as to where does authority and role fit into this framework?

In terms of the framework, authority which is related to leadership forms part of the myriad of factors inherent in group life that will influence the way in which a member will relate to his/her own individuality, to his/her belonging to a larger collection of people and to the group task. The way in which authority is enacted by the leader and perceived by the member will exert an influence on how the member is willing or unwilling to show and act with regard to his/her own individuality, form connections with other members and become involved in the group's task. On the other hand, the member's personal authority will be the result of the degree of autonomy, as a function of individuality and task,which has been achieved in the group in such a way that the other members will accept his/her authority. Thus, although the dynamics associated with authority can be explained in terms of the forces towards and away from individuality, belonging and task, this framework places less emphasis on authority as a special contributor to group dynamics and places it on the same level as various other potentially influencing factors. Of course, this is the deductive or predefined component of the framework. Once the framework has been applied to the empirical data emanating from the dynamics of real groups, it may well be that the way in which authority is enacted and perceived can be seen to actually exert a more significant influence than other factors within the group. Nevertheless, this is not a presupposition of the framework and it will need to come to the fore through the inductive component of applying the framework. This will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

4.5.3.6 Role

The member's role in this schema is perceived as the way in which a specific position between individuality, belonging and task is taken up in the field and the way in which this is being employed by the group-as-a-whole. However, this 'way of taking up a position' can only be ascertained inductively, that is, by looking at the data in order to see how it plays out in the group. The deductive component of the schema, namely, classifying behaviour either as towards or away from individuality, belonging and task, will help to identify the position being taken up in the field, while the inductive component, namely, describing what is happening on the basis of the data, will help to describe the way in which it happened.[32] The role of flight leader as described in the group relations literature (Miller*etal.*, 2004), can be dealt with as follows, using the theoretical lens developed here: According to the literature, the flight leader is the member who leads the group in its flightmode away from the group's task. Naturally this happens against the background of a group in a ba fight/flight state, as described by Bion (1961). In order to be labelled the flight-leader, the member's behaviour should indicate strong forces away from task while, in terms of the pattern of communication within the group, it should be obvious that the member's behaviour is precipitating flight behaviour on the part of the other members. For example, if one member continuously introduces new topics, that are unrelated to the group's explicit task, and invites others to join in the discussion *and the other members respond to this,* then this member can be regarded as a leader in the group's flight away from its task. It is important to note that responding in accordance with the role of the flight leader does not necessarily entail joining in the discussions and, thus, overtly supporting the flight although it may entail supporting the flight covertly by remaining silent and, thus, by not confronting the flight leader, colluding with the flight leader in taking the group away from its anxietyprovoking task.

4.5.3.7 The organisation-in-the-mind

The way in which the group organises itself can provide helpful clues as to the way in which the group is held in the mind of its members. Hirschorn (1988)and Obholzer (Obholzer & Roberts, 1994)focus our attention on the way in which groups employ social defences, while Armstrong (2005) emphasises that these social defences

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[32] The way in which the schema will be applied deductively and inductively will be discussed in detail in chapter 5.

happen in response to what he termed the organisation-in-the-mind of the group members − seechapter 3. Our schema will help in mapping out the behavioural patterns of the group's members both towards and away from various aspects of individuality, belonging and task. This will, in turn, through the systems principles of hierarchy and isomorphy,reveal something of what is happening on the group-as-a-whole level as well as on the level of the individuals within the group.

The ways in which patterns on the member-levelare played out, can, thus, provide an insight into the way in which the group is being perceived and experienced in the minds of its members. There is also a link between Armstrong's theory and the present schema in the fact that both take not only the experience seriously but also the reality as it exists out there. The organisation in the mind of the member with regards to his/her membership can, thus, be seen as an internal mental model of the member's relation to individuality, belonging and task, and influenced both by the member's perceptions and subjective experience as well as the real emotional resonances within the group.

4.5.4 The group analytic tradition

4.5.4.1 The group as an abstraction

The schema developed in this research study assumes that, by virtue of a person's formal inclusion in the group, he/she finds him/herself in the field of forces between the goal region complexes of individuality, belonging and task. Of course, as did Foulkes (Foulkes & Anthony, 1984), it is necessary to define which group we are talking about as the individual is, simultaneously, a member of various groups. In addition, the fact that the schema refers to formal inclusion does not necessarily mean that the schema can be applied to formal groups only as opposed to informal groups such as families or social groups. In fact, various examples of informal groups have been used in this chapter in order to explain some of the aspects of this schema. Nevertheless, the fact remains that this schema has been developed specifically to observe and analyse the data emanating from a formal training group and, therefore,it is essential that the focus remain on formal groups. However, people are members of various formal groups at the same time and this schema, in line with Foulkes (Foulkes & Anthony, 1984)as well

as Agazarian (2000), acknowledges that the group is an abstraction that should be demarcated and defined before being studied. Accordingly, the schema works only when the group to which the member belongs has been clearly defined. This, in turn, means that the member's relations to individuality, belonging and task can be mapped out either for his/her immediate work group, the cross-functional project team to which he/she belongs, or for his belonging to the organisation as a whole. Different interpretations of member behaviour will be made for each of these cases in which the focus is on different demarcations of the boundaries of the group.

4.5.4.2 The group matrix

The question arises as to the way in which the notion of the group matrix is taken into account.As described in chapter 3 the group matrix represents the entire pool of meanings, interactions and communications, both consciously and unconsciously (Foulkes & Anthony, 1984; Stacey, 2001)that evoke, sustain and diminish the valences which the member has for the various aspects of belonging, individuality and task. However, the group matrix is also more than this: each behaviour and communication, thus, each locomotion through the field, by each member contributes to the group matrix and has an impact on the forces towards and away from the goal region complexes for each member of the group. With regard to the metaphor previously used of the group on a balancing disc, where each additional member, as well as each move by each member,wouldrequire of each other member to assess and adjust his/her own position, we now come to the notion of the group matrix as the pool of meaning that makes up the group and to which each member contributes throughout the group's life and by which the members are permeated.

The matrix can also be seen as a web of communications comparable to a neural network (Foulkes & Anthony, 1984; Stacey, 2001) and where each interaction by each member is seen as a function of the network as a whole and where a focal point can become a nodal point again − through which communication is able to flow freely −only through the collective functioning of the entire network. In terms of this schema this means that the forces towards and away from individuality, belonging and task that are impacting on a specific membersystem, are also caused by each locomotion of each of the other membersystems in the groupsystem which are in turn caused by the forces towards and away from individuality, belonging and task.

4.5.4.3 Levels of exchange

While this framework does not provide a predefined conceptual space for distinguishing between the different levels of exchange as identified by Foulkes (1975)and as described in chapter 3, the inductive application of the framework (which will be discussed in the next chapter) does allow for observing communication behaviour on different levels of depth including the current reality, transference, projective or primordial levels. The framework will, thus, allow us to identify communication towards and away from individuality, belonging and task on the different levels of exchange, as described by Foulkes (1975), and as they emerge from the data.

4.5.4.4 Mirroring and resonance

Both these Foulkesian concepts are dealt with in this schema through the systemsperspective that the outputs of one system become the input of the next system. In other words, as one membersystem communicates within the group, that communication becomes the input for all the other membersystems. In this way emotional states can reverberate through the different membersystems and the group-as-a-whole (resonance) and, thus, one system can become aware of the way in whichits outputs are being received by and responded to by another system (mirroring) (Nitsun, 1991; 1998) − see chapter 3.

4.5.4.5 Free-floating discussion

Free association in the group in terms of which the one discussion by one member leads to associations for other members (Nitsun, 1996) is also congruent with the principles of isomorphy as described above. This process also happens hierarchically while, over time, the free floating communication does not only tell us about the association of individual membersystems, but also about the associations of the group-as-a-whole and, thus, the unconscious themes that are operative within the group. When viewed in conjunction with the patterns of communication behaviour towards and away from the goal region complexes of individuality, belonging and task, these unconscious themes can provide access to what is happening in the group unconscious.

4.5.4.6 The anti-group

Another concept from the Foulkesian tradition that needs to be taken into account at this point is Nitsun's notion of the anti-group(Nitsun, 1996). As described in chapter 3, the anti-grouprepresents the group's destructive tendencies towards itself. However, this anti-group has both a destructive and a self-destructive connotation and, according to Nitsun (1996), can become beneficial only when acknowledged and worked with. If ignored, it can literally result in the self-destruction of the group, as opposed to the concept of group therapy as therapy of the group by the group, as described by Foulkes (Foulkes & Anthony, 1957). This is one aspect of the present schema which is potentially troublesome: if a movement towards or away from individuality, belonging or task cannot be seen as 'good' or 'bad' in itself, then it means we cannot merely say that simultaneous strong forces away from individuality, belonging and task constitute the anti-group – we will have to weigh each movement, towards or away from the three goal region complexes, against the group context before we will be able to ascertain whether the movement (and its underlying force) worked towards or against the development and growth of the group.

4.5.5   Systems-centred theory

The systemscentred approach by Agazarian was one of the critical ingredients in making this schema work. Like field theory, systems thinking is built into the very essence of this schema. Accordingly, the following section will re-emphasise some of the main concepts of a systems approach to groups.

4.5.5.1 The visible and invisible group

In her theory of the visible and invisible group Agazarian (Agazarian & Peters, 1981) distinguishes between individual psychodynamics and group dynamics − see chapter 4. The framework that I am developing here allows for the distinction to be made based on the broader tenets of Agazarian's (Agazarian & Gantt, 2000) thinking on groups as systems – a distinction that was adopted in this schema. Both the invisible group-as-a-whole and the visible individuals are present in the focus on the membersystem as the member systemrepresents the interface between the individual system and the group system.

4.5.5.2 Hierarchy and isomorphism

Several aspects of Agazarian's (2000) thinking are woven into this framework, including the entire notion of open systems that are hierarchically and isomorphically related. It was shown that, although the focus in this schema is on the level of the membersystem as a subsystem of the group, influences from the other systems within the hierarchy are taken into account through the isomorphic principle.

Another notion that was described above regarding the way in which the group matrix could be reconciled with the thinking in this research study, is that of the effect that behaviours on the part of various members have on each member. In systems language this would refer to the outputs of one system that become the inputs of the next and, thus, the locomotion of one membersystem in the field serves as communication inputs to the other membersystems and these will, in turn, affect their locomotion through the field.

4.5.5.3 Subgrouping

Another of Agazarian's concepts that can be easily reconciled with this framework is her distinction between functional and stereotype subgrouping (Agazarian & Gantt, 2000) − see chapter 3. In this framework, functional sub-grouping will encompass forces towards belonging as well as forces towards task that will be dominant, while in stereotype sub-grouping the interaction will,as described earlier, be predominantly between forces towards and away from individuality and belonging. The way in which the framework has been operationalised for research purposes will be discussed in the next chapter. One specific aspect to be discussed will be the way in which the formation of subgroups will be treated in the analysis of the behaviours (locomotion) towards and away from individuality, belonging and task.

4.5.6   Other group dynamic concepts

It would not be possible to provide a detailed discussion of each concept in the literature on group dynamics and how each concept could be described by the schema developed in this research study. However, the concepts of group development and group norms will be discussed as they are especially significant both in terms of the group dynamics literature and the data analysed through this theoretical lens.

4.5.6.1 Group development

As discussed in chapter 3, there are a number of different theories about group development. Various scholars identify different phases of group development while others, such as Bion, do not see the group as developing through phases. The way in which this conceptualisation could account for group development is to be found inthe fact that the members' valences for certain aspects of belonging, individuality and task will change as the group moves from one stage in its development to the next. It can, thus, be said that, according to this framework, the equilibrium of forces will be disturbed as the needs of the members on a certain level of group development are met − in other words, the valences they had for certain goals return to zero. This, in turn, sends the members locomoting through the various positions in the field again until a new equilibrium on a new level of group development is achieved. Accordingly, it isnot true, according to this framework, that the more mature the group is, the closer the members will be to Area #7 in the middle of the field. The group is faced with new challenges on each level of development and the members are, therefore, forced to deal with new anxieties and, thus, new defences in order to deal with these anxieties. For example, in a training group the group could move from one level of depth in terms of personal sharing and honesty regarding the emotions experienced in the here and now to the next level. This, in turn, can again send the members in different directions − towards and away from individuality, belonging and task − as they struggle to come to terms with the new, deepened task and what it requires of them. Some members may flee from the task and make jokes in order to relieve the tension, some members may join other members in subgroups while some members may fall into dependency, hoping that someone will rescue them from having to confront the new challenges of the task.

4.5.6.2 Group norms

In this schema group norms will become visible as patterns of behaviour that are met either with approval or disapproval by the group. If, for example, one member takes a step in the direction of the group task in order to discuss her experience of the group in the here and now, in a group that has established a norm of frivolous communication in defiance of the leader, this towardstask behaviour can be met with awayfrombelonging behaviour, that is, scolding, belittling or ignoring the member, and awayfromtask behaviour, that is, redirecting the conversation to superficial topics. This underlines the importance of interpreting the behaviour in the group against the contextual background of the group itself, as created through its lifetime − the dynamic matrix (Foulkes, 1975).

4.6 Conclusion

It became clear in this chapter that it is possible to conceptualise the forces involved in being a member of a small group as forces towards or away from the three goal region complexes of individuality, belonging and task. Conceptualising the member in a field of forces between these three polarities not only corresponds with the working definition of 'group member', as developed from various group dynamics theorists, but it is also congruent with the main theoretical foundations laid by field theory, psychoanalytic group theories and systemscentred group theory. Various grouptheoretical concepts can also be explained and interpreted by this schema. The next chapter will show that, although it can be that this schema could have broader application possibilities, it certainly can be used as an effective research tool for coding and analysing the data for this research in both a deductive and an inductive manner. The way in which the framework and its underlying principles have been operationalised for the purposes of the research will also be discussed in the next chapter and practical examples will be given with regards to the way in which the coding and data analysis were conducted.

5

Revised method

There is nothing so practical as a good theory. (Lewin, 1951, p. 169)

5.1 Introduction

As mentioned in chapter 1, one of the aims of this research study was to develop a methodology in terms of which to conduct an exploration of the dynamics of being a group member. Chapter 2 commenced with a description of the process of developing a research methodology based on Van Huyssteen's postfoundational approach as the

guiding philosophy for this research study. The essence of this research philosophy is the fact that truth is perceived as something worth striving for, but that it is essential that we acknowledge the human fallibility inherent in our search for truth. Knowledge is, thus, seen as tentative. This implies that, as social scientists, we must apply ourselves fully in striving to explain by means of general laws whilst remaining cognisant of the possibility that the individual case can elude our attempts at general explanations – hence, the simultaneous focus on both explanation based on theory (deductive reasoning) and understanding based on an exploration of the individual case (inductive reasoning).

Chapter 2 then proceeded by considering constructivist grounded theory as a research design,based on its congruence with the postfoundational perspective. However, with regard to the analysis of the data, the realisation dawned that, in our application of constructivist grounded theory, a more structured approach was needed as opposed to the initial openended approach that was adopted. Chapters 3 and 4 then embarked on developing a schema/framework that could serve as a theoretical lens through which to look at the data.

In this chapter, the focus will be on showing how the schema that was developed in the previous two chapters was operationally applied to the research data as an observational and analytic instrument. Schematically, the revised data analysis methodologies that were applied can be represented as a process that unfolded as follows:
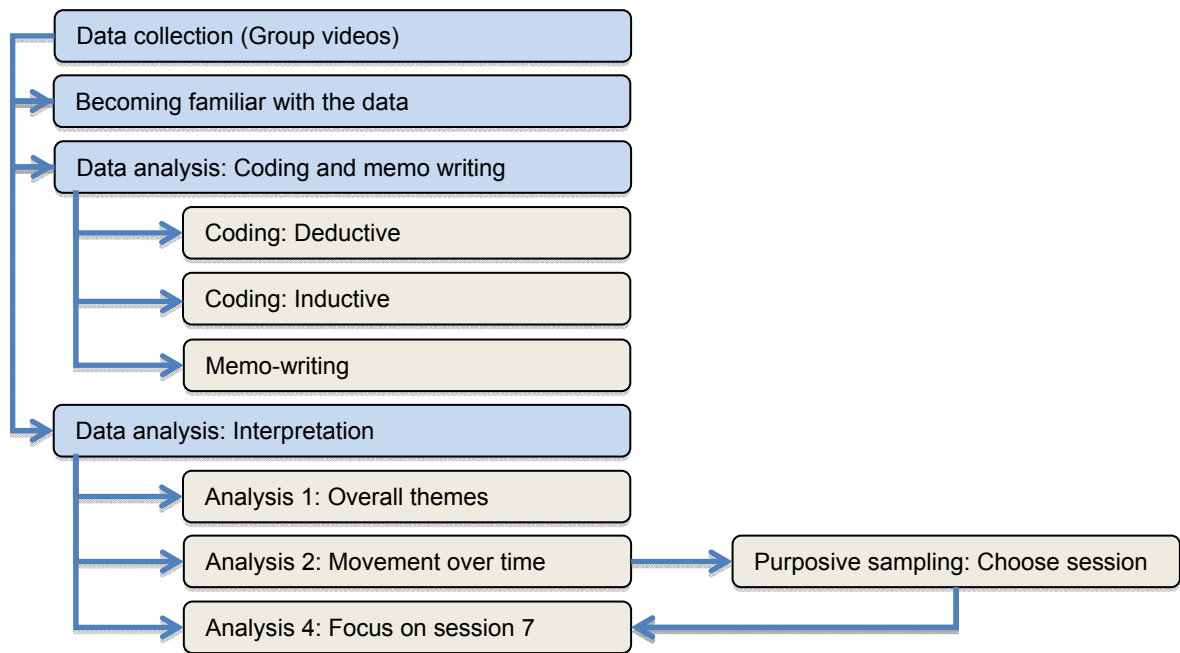
Figure 5.1: Overview of the revised data analysis process

As a result of the fact that there were no changes to both the data collection process and to the process of becoming familiar with the data, these two steps in the overall process will not be discussed at this point as they have already been discussed in chapter 2. This chapter will proceed, firstly, to provide a detailed account of how the data was coded in a way that was simultaneously deductive and inductive. Following this, the way in which the data was interpreted on various levels of depth will be discussed, together with the additional and finer sampling that became necessary as the interpretation of the behaviourcodes became increasingly more in-depth and 'closer' to the data.

5.2   Revised data analysis: An abductive approach to coding the data

The fact that the data analysis wasconducted in a deductive-inductive (abductive) manner, influenced both the coding of the data as well as its subsequent analysis and interpretation. The coding phase wascarried out deductive-inductively while the analysis and interpretation phase was alsodone using both these types of logic (Charmaz, 2006)[33]. In this section the coding phase will be described.

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[33]Due to the sheer amount of data, it wasn't possible in this study to have another person to also do the coding in order to check the codes. In the final chapter it is recommended that

As mentioned in chapter 2, AtlasTi was used as the qualitative data analysis software for this research study. The video recordings and transcriptions of all ten sessions of the training group were imported as primary documents for analysis. After the transcriptions had been imported into AtlasTi, deductive codes were generated and stored in the system to be applied to the communication behaviours of the group members. The deductive codes were generated based on the theoretical framework developed in the previous chapter. They categorised all communication behaviour in the group as either towards or away from belonging, individuality and task.[34]

a) *Towards belonging:* Any act the result of which could be expected to increase the sense of belonging between group members. Also any act of which the result can be expected to emphasise the psychological boundary around the collective as opposed to emphasising the psychological boundary of a single member. This can be on the memberto member-level, for example, one member inviting another member to join the group, the subgroup-level, for example, two or three members who support each other's points of view as opposed to other opinions in the group or on the group-as-a-whole level, for example, a statement differentiating the group from other groups or indicating affinity for the group. It can also include both the attempt to facilitate the belonging of others to the group as well as the attempt to be included in either the group or a subgroup of the group. It is important to note that it is the act itself not the result of the act that is considered. It can, thus, be that the act − of which one would normally expect the consequence to be inclusion into the group − has the ultimate effect of exclusion from the group. For example, in the case of a group member who makes concerted efforts to be included in the group by means of attention-seeking behaviour. This attention-seeking behaviour would be coded as "Towards belonging" type behaviour, even

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another research team work on the same data in order to see how their codes differ or not from the codes generated here.

[34] This can be done legitimately according to the Lewinian principle of behaviour as locomotion (Lewin, 1981). The focus will, thus, be on communication as behaviour (Agazarian & Gantt, 2000) and the behaviour, as per our schema, will always be a result of the forces towards and away from the three goal region complexes. Accordingly, all behaviour in the group may be expected to contain elements of at least one, but most probably more than one, of the six possible movements towards or away from the three goal region complexes.

though it might evoke "Away from belonging" behaviour from other members which can, in the end, result in the member being pushed away or isolated from the group. The focus here is on behaviours acknowledging both the fact and the importance of everyone in the group belonging to the group.

b) *Away from belonging:* Any act of which the result can be expected to decrease the sense of belonging between the group members. Also any act of which the result could be expected to be the weakening of the group boundary in order to strengthen either an individual or a subgroup boundary. This means that one act which is aimed at inclusion in a subgroup based on shared features such as gender or language, would be coded as both "Towards belonging" to the sub-group and "Away from belonging" to the group-as-a-whole behaviour. At this juncture, the point made in chapter 4 should be emphasised, namely, that 'away from belonging' behaviour is not equal to 'towards individuality' behaviour. If one act by a member aims to separate the member from the group-as-a-whole through a critical comment about the group's functioning, this act should be coded as both "Away from belonging: differentiating herself from the group" and "Towards individuality: using critical ability". The descriptive tags to the codes will be discussed below in more detail as part of the inductive use of the schema, but are used here to show that the two movements involved in the same act are, indeed, two movements − one towards individuality and one away from belonging − and not one movement only. In fact, in this example another code would, in fact, be added, namely, "Towards task: critical reflection on group functioning".

c) *Towards task:* Any act which is aimed at involvement in the group's primary task or that is aimed at making it easier for the group or its members to engage with the group's task. In the training group the explicit task, as printed in the material to the group members, was to "learn about how groups function by studying your own functioning as a group in the here and now". All behaviours that display this can be regarded as towards task while all that do not, are not. Examples of 'towards task' behaviours include critical listening; self-reflection; reflection on the group-as-a-whole; reflection and feedback on actions by fellow members; and comments regarding feelings, emotions and thoughts in the here and now. A statement that invites a fellow member to become involved in the group task would be coded both as 'towards belonging' and 'towards task'. Also, behaviours that are aimed at enhancing the group's ability to be involved in its task are also coded as 'towards task', for example, maintenance behaviour in terms of which the group reorganises itself, with regard to setting

boundaries and norms, in order to achieve better taskinvolvement. Another type of behaviour that was coded 'towards task' was behaviour aimed at keeping the group atmosphere 'light and experimental'. This was based on the idea that a light and experimental mood increases the group's ability both to learn and to take risks, which is exactly what the group is supposed to do. However, 'joking' in order to flee from the group's task was coded as 'away from task'.

d) *Away from task:* Any communication act that appears either to block or to resist other members working on the group's task would be coded as away from task activities, including any communication act that is directed away from the group's task or the anxieties associated with it.

e) *Towards individuality:* Any act by any member that underscores the notion that the member is a separate individual with unique attributes, a unique history and unique wishes and opinions and abilities. Behaviours that emphasise this are seen as indications that the member values being seen, recognised and respected as an individual.

f) *Away from individuality:* Any act by any member that appears either to hide or undermine the notion of the member as a separate and unique individual is coded as 'away from individuality' behaviour. For example, to 'hide' in the group −amember could either hide 'in the corner', thus no or limited participation, or hide 'behind the group or a subgroup' by repeatedly agreeing with the group or uncritically following the group, or hide 'behind the task' by, for instance, acting like an interviewer who places considerable focus on other members' reflections on their experiences in the group while comfortably hiding behind the 'microphone'.

However, in accordance with the principles of constructivist grounded theory and postfoundationalism, the coding was not done in a deductive fashion only. Instead the framework provides a theoretical outline only and requires inputs from specific cases in order to describe specific dynamics. For example, it is not possible to predict exactly how the basic assumption states will affect a member's behaviour although we are able to make certain suppositions based on the possibilities provided by the framework. Similarly, with regard to an issue such as 'authority', we can only statethat, based on this framework, the way in which authority is enacted and perceived will have an impact on the forces towards and away from individuality, belonging and task, but we are not able to say how this will play out. However, it would be possible to show how it played out by looking at the specific data from a specific group within a specific

context, that is, using inductive reasoning. The framework was, thus, specifically designed to provide a space that is congruent with current theoretical thinking, but that, simultaneously, allows us to take into account the uniqueness of a specific case.

We will now look at the following example from the group transcriptions:

> *Erna*   *Did you guys hear the story of my brother's wedding?*

In this case the speech can be coded as "Away from task" as it is not connected to the primary group task of examining the group as a group in the here and now. This, however, is not enough as it does not take into account the background to what was happening in the group as well as not allowing an analysis of what was happening 'within' each of the goal region complexes.

It is in such a case that the need for an inductive component to the coding process arises. Accordingly, in each case of coding, the coding wascarried out against the background of what the research team believed was happening in the group at that time. In addition, every effort was made to make as few inferences as possible during the coding process so that the way in which the coding was carried out couldbe as close as possible to the way in which the data would have been coded by anyone else who had watched the videos and read the transcriptions. An inductive descriptor will, thus, be added to each deductive categorisation of the six possible directions of locomotion. With regard to the example cited above:

> *Erna*   *Did you guys hear the story of my brother's wedding?*

If an inductive approach is added to the deductive approach, then more possibilities for coding open up. One code can, thus, be "Away from task: Introducing external discussion topic". If we view this communication act in the context of the fact that the group, at this point,had adopted a strong pattern of engaging in superficial discussions regarding topics outside of the group, then it also becomes necessary to code for the 'groupness' of this communication act in terms of which Ernahad joined the group in its non-task directed actions. Another code could, thus, be added to the first, namely, "Towards belonging: Joining the group in topic discussion". In addition, there is a slight difference between someone who only joins in the topics as introduced by others, and someone who actually introduces the topics. In the case cited above the speaker did not merely "addon" to a topic which had been introduced by someone else, but took

the initiative to introduce a topic and, thus, become more visible in the group than those members who weremerely tagging along with the topics that had already been introduced. Accordingly, it is possible to add another code to this speech, namely, "Towards individuality: Becoming visible by introducing discussion topic".

Thus, with regard to this single speech act, it was possible to allocate the following codes:

    a) Away from task: Introducing discussion topic;

    b) Towards belonging: Joining the group in topic discussion;

    c) Towards individuality: Becoming visible by introducing discussion topic.

When all the speech acts of all the members over all ten sessions were coded in this way, patterns started to emerge for analysis. It is important to note at this point that, when I carried out the inductive part of the coding, it was essential that theoretical inferences was avoided at all cost. The inductive descriptors described, as closely as possible, only what was observed in the data − nothing more and nothing less. For example, it would be counter to the principles of grounded theory to frame the inductive descriptorcomponent of the "Away from task" code as "Leading the group in flight". If Erna had, indeed, led the group in flight, then this wouldbecome evident during the analysis and interpretation of the patterns that emerged throughout the life of the group. However, to jump to theoretical descriptions at this stage, aside from the categorisation between individuality, belonging and task, would be to deny the data the opportunity to speak for itself.

5.2.1 Coding examples

A few examples will now be given to illustrate the way in which the coding process described above was applied to the research data.

5.2.1.1 Example 1: the pair with the secret

The first example is that of a pair who emerged in the group towards the latter half of the group's life. In an earlier session, there had been a moment where the two main characters, Francis and Debbie, had been involved in an interpersonal exchange during which Francis had indicated to Debbie that she had often wished that the two of them could be friends, but that she had never managedto take the initiative to telephone Debbie as she had felt that Debbie was 'a little above' her, that is, very

clever, mature, and so on. The example cited here had taken placein the seventh session, which had started on the third day of the group. Until this point, the group had had two evening in-group sessions, followed by a full day which had consisted of two in-group sessions, one out-group session[35] and two more in-group sessions. This interchange had taken place towards the end of the session, directly after issues regarding being judged in the group had been discussed. The discussion on judgement in the group had come up as a reflection on a conflict that had arisen in the group on the Thursday evening and which had focused on whether it is morally acceptable for homosexual couples to adopt children. One memberapologised to another member, this member did not reciprocate, a silence followed, eye contact was made between Debbie and Francis, Debbielaughed, became silent, and laughed again…

DEBBIE   (laugh) We were just having a moment … nothing specific … it's cool. I'm going to leave it up to you to worry about.
FRANCIS   No, it's not that.
DEBBIE   We went for a drink yesterday afternoon.
FRANCIS   Ja, and then we just … ja.
DEBBIE   (laugh) … just things that we saw, that is something that lingered with us, I guess, but for which the group is definitely not ready. Ja. So.
STEPHAN   So, the whole thing about Thursday evening was not complete? At least for some more than others?
DEBBIE   Ja, but it is now. Ja, it's like … ja, for us."

The following codes were allocated to this section:
   a) Towards belonging: Pairing between Debbie and Francis
   b) Away from belonging: Pairing between Debbie and Francis bywithholding from the group
   c) Away from individuality: Debbie and Francis hiding in the pair and not willing to become visible as individuals in the group
   d) Away from task: Shying away from discussing material relevant to the group's task within the group
   e) Towards task: Here and now comment on the group's readiness with regard to discussing sensitive material

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[35]As discussed in chapter 3, the programme was structured around in-group sessions − the group was busy with its here and now task − and out-group sessions − the group moved to another room and the facilitators took up different roles. During these out-group sessions, the focusshifted from the here and now to the there and then and the group used the outside space to reflect upon what had happened in the group during the in-group sessions.

The reasoning behind allocating these codes included the following: Firstly, the basic principles for coding were adhered to in that the section was coded both deductively (as behaviour/movement towards or away from individuality, belonging and/or task) and inductively with the inductive descriptor describing what had occurred in the group without making reference to theory. In this case the first and obvious movement was 'towards belonging'[36] as the pair had made a connection with each other, thus emphasising the psychological boundary of the pair as opposed to the psychological boundaries of the two individual members.

In this interaction Debbie and Francis were, essentially, informing the group that they had made a special connection over drinks outside of the group and they had a secret that they are not going to share with the group as the group was not ready for it. So, while on the member-to-member-level this interaction could be seen as 'towards belonging', when seen on the level of the group-as-a-whole, it was actually an 'away from belonging' act as a result of the fact that the boundary of the pair was emphasised over and above the boundary of the group. The group was, according to the pair, not ready to share in their secret and, thus, they had moved away from the group and into the pair where they could fulfil their need for belonging.

However, the interaction was also coded as 'away from individuality' as both members had chosenrather to hide in the pair than to stand up and become visible as unique individuals within the group that are separate from the other members and the group-as-a-whole.

In addition, the code 'away from task' was allocated as the pair had not openly discussed their experience of the group within the group, except for the statement "for which the group is definitely not ready". This is a here and now statement of the member's perception of the readiness of the group with regard to what she had to share and,thus, the 'towards task' code.[37]

5.2.1.2 Example 2: an apology not reciprocated

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[36]Although the full code name is "Towards belonging: Pairing between Debbie and Francis" I use the first section of the code names only here for the sake of brevity.
[37]Note that this discussion is on the coding process only. The way which all of this was analysed and interpreted will be discussed later in this chapter.

The following excerpt is taken from the same session as the excerpt above. It happened approximately halfway through the session. In this excerpt Maggie is referring to the conflict on Thursday night, although she says "Friday night" in her speech. As background to this interaction: during the conflict about same-sex couples adopting children, considerable emphasis had been placed on the fact that the Christian faith perceives homosexuality as a sin. A strong subgroup had emerged of members who aligned themselves with a conservative strand of the Christian belief. However, Maggie, who had identified herself as a Muslim, had been the first person to challenge the conservative Christian subgroup. After Maggie's contribution that Thursday evening, several other silent members with more moderate views had been included into the conversation. Before we proceed with the coding, it is also necessary toindicate that Maggie's tone, for which she apologises here, had not been at all judgemental. The judgemental stance within the group during the conflict had, in fact, been taken by the anti-adoptionbysamesexcouples subgroup, led by Shelly. So, in the excerpt below, Maggie apologises to Shelly, but, in fact,opens the door for Shelly to apologise for her (Shelly's) judgemental stance − possibly a strong contributing factor to the pair in the previous example not wanting to share their 'secret':

JOEL	You wanted to check something with the group.
MAGGIE	I actually wanted to say something. After Friday night and the conversation about gay couples adopting children … I just thought a lot about it and I just wanted to say to Shelly that I understand entirely your religious beliefs and I didn't want to make you feel that I was making a judgement of you by telling you to not judge them. I just needed to say that.
SHELLY	Okay. (dismissive tone)
MAGGIE	Did you feel like I was judging you?
SHELLY	No, there was a time when you looked at me and you looked at me and you gave me this look and you said "Don't judge other people", and I was, like wow! All I'm saying is the only thing that was my personal beliefs were, I'm not saying that they were incapable of loving a child. I just didn't think it was fair to put a child in that situation where a child has to explain from early on … …I'm just saying that's me − how I feel.
MAGGIE	… I understand entirely what you're saying, but like you have your beliefs, I have my beliefs as well. Maybe sometimes you just have to agree to disagree and do so respectfully. Maybe if I didn't do it respectfully, then I apologise. I understand your perspective, at the end of the day, I'm still going to feel about the situation the way that I feel, and you're still going to feel your way.
SHELLY	Well, I think we've parted with 'agree to disagree'.

When this interaction had started, a 'pregnant' silence had fallen on the rest of the group, almost in expectation that something really meaningful was about to happen

within the group. However, sadly, this did not happen. Judgement, being judgemental and fearing to be judged were still hanging in the air and it was not possible to address the issue directly. The following codes were allocated:

For Maggie's interactions:
 a) Towards belonging: Being apologetic
 b) Towards belonging: Opening up and becoming vulnerable
 c) Towards belonging: Direct question regarding other member's feelings
 d) Towards individuality: Taking a personal stand/risk
 e) Towards task: Open and honest reflection
 f) Towards task: Direct question regarding interpersonal relationship within the group

For Shelly's interactions:
 a) Away from belonging: Not meeting the level of vulnerability displayed
 b) Away from individuality: Not taking the stand/risk to assume responsibility for her actions in the group
 c) Towards individuality: Not willing to relinquish her initial position
 d) Away from task: Shying away from deeplevel honesty

The 'towards belonging: being apologetic' code was allocated to Maggie's interactions fairly frequently during the life of the group. She often started her interactions with: "I am sorry, but I just wanted to say…" In this case she had not apologised specifically for speaking, but she had been fairly apologetic − in the latter portion of the text that was not included here − about how judgemental she had been during the initial conflict. The irony is that the interaction to which she is referring was not judgemental at all − in fact, it was the exact opposite. This allocation of the code also echoes Foulkes' notion of the group matrix (Foulkes, 1975) − the pool of meaning developed by the group over time. The coding of any piece of interaction is, thus, never seen in isolation due to the fact that it is done from the different systemic perspectives as described in chapters 3 and 4. In fact, coding happens against the history of meaning that has been created by the group and its members over the lifespan of the group.

The next two 'towards belonging' codes that were allocated to Maggie's interactions appear to be fairly similar although, at the time of coding, it was felt that they should rather be kept separate. The act of "opening up and making vulnerable" is seen here as an act of making oneself available for the group, while the act of asking a direct

question regarding another member's feelings is seen as an act of asking another member also to become available for the group. With regard to the coding process it is important to note the following: Firstly, codes were also created for each speaker. These weretermed 'speaker codes' and were allocated to each speech by each member. This made it possible to use the computer program(AtlasTi) to indicate all those instances where a specific behaviour code, for example, towards belonging: making vulnerable, was allocated to a specific member − in this case, Maggie. Secondly, it is preferable to generate codes that are more specific rather than codes that are more general. This means that, instead of coding the above two codes together as 'towards belonging: promoting vulnerability in the group', they were coded separately according to the more specific meanings they hold. The computer can be used to facilitate merging specific codes into more general codes if, during the analysis, it emerges that the more specific codes do not add extra insights. However, although codes can easily be merged, it is not possible to split a code automatically into two or more specific codes. Thus, if more specific codes are needed,it becomes necessary to redo the coding process.

This act of Maggie's can also be seen as an act towards individuality, as she took the risk of becoming visible within the group by opening herself up for feedback. Through this interaction, she differentiated herself from the group as she discussed her feelings and invited another member to comment on that member's feelings towards her (Maggie).

With regards to the 'towards task' coding the option was again taken rather to code more specifically rather than more generally. It can be that during the analysis no distinction will be made between "asking a direct question" and "reflection" in taskmode, but it can also happen that, throughout the life of the group, certain patterns emerge regarding these different nuances in the ways of interacting within the group. It is clear that both these acts are acts in the direction of the group's task of learning about groups by looking at itself as a group. Accordingly, these acts can be seen on the individual member-level as Maggie reflects on her own emotions, and also on the member-to-member-level as Maggie appears to be trying to make sense of what was happening between her and Shelly and of the way in which she was experienced by Shelly. On the group-as-a-whole level, the interaction stemming from Maggie created an expectation that it can be possible both to discuss openly one of the group's dilemmas − Are we going to be judged in here and is it safe to be honest? –and that the conflicting emotions could be contained within the group.

Let's now turn towards the codes allocated to Shelly's interactions:

a) Away from belonging: Not meeting the level of vulnerability displayed
b) Away from individuality: Not taking the stand/risk to assume responsibility for her actions in the group
c) Towards individuality: Not willing to relinquish initial position
d) Away from task: Shying away from deep honesty

With regard to Shelly's interactions, a different set of codes was generated. The 'away from belonging' code refers to her refusal to meet Maggie in the step Maggie had taken in apologising to her, with a step towards Maggie by either saying that there was no need for Maggie to apologise or by apologising to Maggie and the group for her part in the judgemental tone of the conflict. This may have contributed to a containing environment in which the group was able to deal with both its fears regarding being judged and its guilt regarding having judged.

This interaction stemming from Shelly was coded both as towards and away from individuality. On the one hand, she was not prepared to stand up in the group as the one who had played a part in the creation of a culture of judgement but, on the other, she maintained the stance she had initially taken and, in the interest of preserving that selfimage,she stood her ground as an individual within the group. This alerts us to the fact that it is not only the movement between positions or the taking up of positions in the field that are important, but also the way in which this is done. Plotting movements in the field only means only half the story because – as is shown in this example − there are various ways of moving towards or away from individuality, belonging or task. One move towards individuality can contribute to the overall interdependent functioning of the group while another can obstruct it.

Shelly's interaction was further coded as 'away from task' as she had resisted exploring the dynamics between herself, Maggie and the group regarding blame and guilt. Once again the focus is on the coding process and not on the interpretation/analysis. However, when interpreting the codes we have asked questions in an attempt to ascertain what may have contributed to the behaviour and what the results of the behaviour may have been, but the focus at this point was on both categorising the behaviour in terms of the direction of movement and describing it as accurately as possible based on the data.

5.2.2   A summary of the coding principles as illustrated above

During the discussion on the examples above, reference was made at times to the reasoning behind coding the behaviour in a specific way. In fact, these reasons constitute the principles that guidedthe entire coding process. These principles can be summarised as follows:

a) Code both deductively and inductively.

b) One action canencompass multiple movements towards and away from the goal region complexes. Code for all of these movements.

c) When coding inductively, describe only what is happening without using descriptions from theory.

d) When coding deductively, focus on the coding only and do notattempt any analysis or interpretation.

e) Take the history of the group into account.

f) Take the systemic levels of individual, member, subgroup and group-as-a-whole into account.

g) Pay attention to the boundaries between the different systemic levels.

h) Take the group's physical, institutional and cultural contexts into account.

i) Rather create too many specific codes than too few general codes.

j) Take the feelings evoked (countertransference) in the facilitator pair and the research team into account.

k) Code for the act in itself, and not for the effect that the act actually had on the group.

5.3   Data analysis: Interpretation of the codes

This section will explain the interpretation of the codes that were allocated. As indicated both at the beginning of this chapter as well as in the schematic representation below, the interpretation was carried out in a funnel-like fashion, starting off with an overall analysis and progressing to increasingly fine-grained and detailed analyses and interpretations:
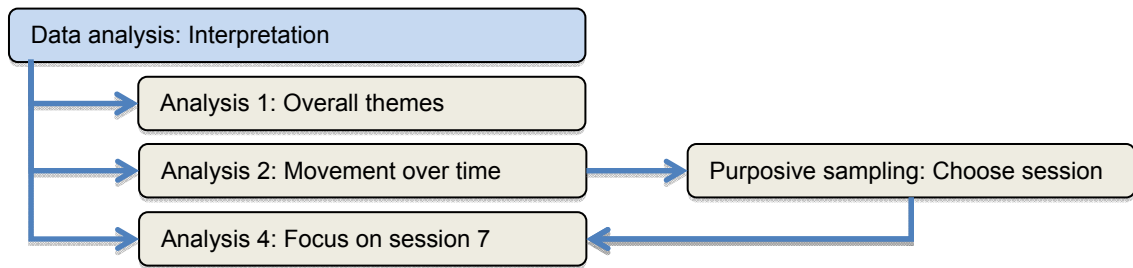
Figure 5.2: Overview of the data analysis process

Each of the steps followed in this process will now be discussed in order to show why and how each analysis was conducted. In the nextchapter − Chapter 6: Discussion of results − the results of each analysis will be discussed and interpreted.

5.3.1   Analysis 1: Overall code themes after ten sessions

The first analysis comprised a clustering process in terms of which all the codes that had been allocated were compared and grouped together so as to enable clusters or families of codes (that is, themes) to emerge (Charmaz, 2006). The purpose of this process was twofold: Firstly, it was used as a 'code clean-up' process in which duplicate codes were merged and missing codes created and, secondly, it served as a firstorder analysis so as to allow patterns to emerge from the data.

The network-function in AtlasTi was used for this first analysis. This networkfunction allows the user to create a network view of all the codes − or selected codes − that were created. In this case, three networkviews were created, namely, belonging, individuality and task. All the 'towards' and 'away from belonging' codes were imported into the belonging networkview, the 'towards' and 'away from individuality' codesinto the individuality network view and the 'towards' and 'away from task" codes into the task network view. In each specific networkview, each code appears as a 'node' on the screen. It is possible to move these around, group them together or link them to other codes or memos. Where duplicate codes exist, they can be merged by using the 'merge codes' function which involves dragging and dropping one code onto another.

Once two codes have been merged in the network view, they are also automatically merged throughout the text documents. Where two or more codes are not exactly the same, but may refer to the same behaviour, the user is able to doubleclick on each node and read all the quotations in the text to which the codes were allocated. If it

becomes evident from this review process that two or more codes are actually referring to the same behaviour, despite the fact that they were coded slightly differently, then these codes can be merged.

It can also happen that, as a result of this code review process, one realises that a code has been omitted. In this case the new code can be allocated to the text and also imported into the network view. This process entails a thorough checking and comparison of all the codes with each other, with the data and with the memos that were created throughout the coding process. Memos can also be imported as 'nodes' into the networkview or else new memos can be created in the network view and linked to those codes that were clustered together in order to describe the reasoning behind the clustering process. At the end of this process there was a total of 289 codes, all of which had been compared with each other, with the data to which they referred and with the memos that had been created as the coding process had unfolded.

It must also be noted that, by end of this process, I was extremely familiar with the data. By this time:

a) I had watched the group live over the TV monitor and made field notes.

b) I had checked the transcriptions and formatted them (for importing into AtlasTi) over all ten sessions in line by line comparisons with both the video and the audio material.

c) I had coded each session line by line by working through the transcripts in conjunction with watching the videos.

d) I had worked through each node (code and memo nodes) in the networkviews, checked the quotations to which it was linked, compared it with the co-occurring codes that had also been allocated to the same quotations in order to ensure that I had been consistent throughout. I had also compared each node with all the other codes in each networkview.

The advantage of such close familiarity with the data is that there is less risk of 'abdicating' responsibility with regard to making sense of the data to the computer program. This has often been quoted as one of the pitfalls of making use of qualitative analysis software in a code-and-retrieve fashion (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Charmaz, 2006).

The clusters that emerged from this process provided interesting insights that will be discussed in the next chapter. However, it will also be shown in the following chapter that it is essential that an emergent clustering analysis such as the one in this research study be interpreted with great care in view of the fact that this investigation was aimed at data that had developed over time and not at static data about a specific phenomenon.

5.3.2   Analysis 2: The group's movement over ten sessions

In order to obtain a more dynamic view of the group's behaviour over the ten sessions, this analysis focused on the codes that had been allocated per session. Thus, although this view ignored the movements within sessions, it provided a view of the movements between sessions.

This was achieved in AtlasTi by creating a 'family' for each of the ten sessions. Each session's transcription comprised a separate primary document in AtlasTi and, once designated as a 'family' − in this case, a family of one member only − with the titles Session 1, Session 2 and so on, it was possible to use these primary document families as filters in order to generate outputs from the software per session. It was now possible, for each session, to ascertain exactly how many times a specific code had been allocated to a section of text. In addition, if all the 'towards belonging' codes were grouped together, it was possible to ascertain the number of times 'towards belonging' codes had been allocated to the session and this could, for example, be compared to the 'away from belonging' and 'towards task' codes. In order to provide an overall view over the ten sessions, a bar graph was created which showed the total number of times that 'towards' or 'away from' belonging, individuality and task codes had been allocated for each session. In order to make this bar graph easier to read, the 'away from' codes were given negative totals so that their corresponding bars displayed below the *x*-axis.

The results of this analysis are presented and discussed in the next chapter. An important factor that was borne in mind when these results were interpreted was the fact that it is not possible to equate the strength of a psychological force to the number of times that the force had resulted in observable behaviour. It was highly likely that a strong, underlying emotional current would manifest once or twice only or, inversely, that it would manifest through silence. The latter makes it difficult, if not impossible, to observe and categorise such an emotional current. In addition, the sheer density of the

data made it impossible to carry out a detailed analysis of the movements between sessions for the whole group over the entire lifespan of the group. It was, therefore, necessary to select a smaller section from the group's life in which the movements within a session and their underlying forces could be observed and interpreted in more detail.

5.3.2.1 Purposive sampling: Choosing a specific session on which to focus

The overall analysis of movements between sessions made it possible to decide on which session to focus for the purposes of a more detailed analysis. For this purpose it was deemed necessary to choose a section in the group's life that would enable us to perceive meaningful movements between the various codes and categories. In order to do this, the lifespan of the group was divided into four sections from which one sessionwas chosen for the purposes of the third analysis to follow. These four sections were as follows:

a) Section A: Sessions 1 – 4. The start of the group until the first break when the group went to another room to reflect on what had happened so far.
b) Section B: Sessions 5 – 7. The group's willingness to work, based on what they had come to realise during the out-group reflection, and countered by their resistance to work and the gradual resolution of this resistance in favour of working.
c) Section C: Sessions 8 & 9. The group's continuation of work, interrupted by another out-group reflection session, followed by further work and preparations for closing.
d) Section D: Session 10. Closing.

It was decided to choose Section B (Sessions 5, 6 and 7) as a result of the strong movements towards work, away from work and the gradual movement towards work again. Both sessions 6 and 7 would provide good examples of intra-session movements, while session 7 was chosen as a result of the fact that there were a greater variety of movements as opposed to the one or two big movements in session 6.

5.3.3   Analysis 3: The group's movement in session 7

The purpose of this analysis was to obtain an in-depth understanding of the behaviours of the group and its members as they occurred within a specific session in order to be able to make plausible inferences regarding the forces involved in being members of the group. Whereas the first analyses had progressed from broad descriptions of the behaviour to more abstract inferences regarding forces, this analysis aimed at an interpretation that moved extremely close to the data from where it would be possible to observe and interpret patterns by viewing the data against the external and internal contexts of the group as well as against existing theory on groups.

Accordingly, the sessions were first divided into meaningful sections or units. This was similar to the process used by Beck et al (Beck et al., 2000) to break sessions up into units through her TopicOriented Group Focus Unitising procedure. The aim of Beck's procedure was to provide as objective as possible a way in which to distinguish between units or segments in the transcript based on the group's process rather than arbitrary segments such as time, the number of lines or pages. In terms of Beck's procedure, the units are identified by looking at meaningful wholes in the text, for example, the group would take up a topic, elaborate on it and then move onto another topic. Such a demarcation of units is then made more objective by the fact that two researchers demarcate the data and then come together to reach consensus with regard to any differences. For the purposes of this study, it was not regarded as critical that the units be 'objectively accurate', as the study was not trying to prove anything by looking at the movements between units. Instead, the aim was simply to create units in order to explore and learn about the movements that had happened within the sessions as opposed to the movements between sessions. The sections are, thus, created only so as to render the analysis more manageable by focusing only on smaller units at a time in order to not to become lost in the analysis and interpretation of the entire session.

After the text had been divided into smaller segments, or units, I proceeded from segment to segment in chronological order and considered the codes that had beenallocated to the statements in that segment. By looking at the codes and comparing them again with both the text and the video to which they had been allocated within the context of the group, it became possible to make plausible inferences regarding the forces at workwhen these inferences were tested against the rest of the data and against group theory.

This process was clearl intersubjective and interpretevist as it provided the opportunity to work in an open-ended fashion in order to arrive at a deep understanding of the data (Van Huyssteen, 1990). Again, it is not possible to elevate this deep understanding to the status of 'absolute truth' about the group but I was, at this stage, able to state with confidence that the results from this analysis were the most rigorous that I could possibly have come to, within my context and the limitations of the study, whilst still allowing for the context of the data to be taken into account.

In the next chapter, sections of the text will be included and discussed. In addition, the way in which the forces towards and away from individuality, belonging and task played out will also be explored.

5.4   Ensuring the quality of the research

In order to ensure the quality of the research, it is essential that the research beboth intelligible (Van Huyssteen, 1990) and trustworthy (Babbie& Mouton, 2001). Intelligibility would be achieved if a person from outside of the context of this research would be able to make sense of the research findings within this context in order then to be able to translate the research findings to his/her own context. The postfoundationalist stance of the research has forced me continuously to make tentative use of the work of other theorists, thus, carefully evaluating their work against their context. I was also forced to be tentative in the extent to which I made truth claims based on my research, thus knowing and acknowledging the fallibility of human reason and empirical methods, whilst still endeavouring to maintain rigour and quality in my own work – in other words, being rational as a human being within context (Van Huyssteen 1990; Muller, 2007). In addition, throughout the study I have taken the issue of context extremely seriously − not only the context from which other theoretical works were born, but also my context, namely, the context of the groups under scrutiny and the contexts to which this research should be able to add value.

I also took certain basic and widely agreedupon measures aimed at enhancing the quality of this qualitative research study. For example, I adopted the triangulation of theory, method and data. Accordingly, in the revised method section above I discussed the various data analysis strategies that had been triangulated (Denzin& Lincoln, 2008), as well as the triangulation of data that was used. I also indicated the way in which extensive memos were taken throughout the research process (Babbie& Mouton, 2001; Charmaz& Henwood, 2008) and then used as part of the grounded

theory analyses. Furthermore, the fact that the data collection, coding and data analysis were conducted by a team of researchers comprising the co-researcher, the research supervisor and me, enabled us to check our assumptions, decisions and interpretations on an ongoing basis. Experts in the field were also included in the process and were consulted at various stages of the research. These include:

a) Yvonne Agazarian − founder of the systemscentred approach to group therapy. We corresponded regarding my initial conceptualisation of the group member in a field of forces between individuality, belonging and task.

b) Ariadne Beck − researcher and writer on group development as well as group research in general. We met twice to discuss issues pertaining to my theoretical lens and data analysis.

c) Vivian Gold − member of the A.K. Rice Institute and director of Group Relations Conferences. We briefly discussed my initial conceptualization of the group member in a field of forces between individuality, belonging and task.

d) Leopold Vansina − author, researcher and member of the International Society for the Psychoanalytic Study of Organisations (ISPSO). We met once to discuss our views on the Group Relations 'movement' and corresponded a few times during my initial process of formulating a research idea and then again regarding the problem of the psychological experience of an event and the event itself.

e) Morton Deutsch − co-worker of Kurt Lewin and founder of the International Centre for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution. We corresponded about my understanding of Lewin's work and my postulation of the group member in a field of forces between individuality, belonging and task.

f) Morris Nitsun − group analyst and author. We corresponded about my initial ideas regarding the anti-group in my first attempts to formulate a research goal.

g) ISPSO Annual Meeting June 2011. At this meeting I presented my ideas regarding the group member in a field of forces as well as my data analysis method, and received valuable feedback from the participants.

Trustworthiness is another way in which tomeasure the quality of qualitative research (Babbie& Mouton, 2001). Trustworthiness refers to the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of both the research process and the research findings. Credibility refers to the "compatibility between the constructed realities in the minds of the respondents and those that are attributed to them" (Babbie& Mouton, 2001). In other words, credibility answers the question "Does this ring true?" In this study, in addition to the triangulation and peer debriefing that have been discussed

above, I tried to achieve credibility by adopting the following procedures derived from the work of Lincoln and Guba (in Babbie& Mouton, 2001):

a) *Prolonged engagement*: In terms of the grounded theory collection/analysis pattern I worked with the data long enough for data saturation to occur. Of course I had to maintain a balance between a prolonged study of the data and placing a tentative analysis on the table. However, this is in line with the postfoundationalist notion that all research findings are tentative;

b) *Persistent observation*: I consistently pursued different interpretations of the data from different vantage points. Accordingly, I made use of various theoretical schools of group theory as well as using various methods of data analysis. In addition, in my abductive reasoning I remained tentative with regards to interpretations of the data and comparisons between data and theory.

Transferability refers to the extent to which the research is transferable by the reader of the research to other contexts (Denzin& Lincoln, 2008). Thus, if research is to be intelligible in the postfoundationalist sense, it should also be transferable, albeit tentatively. In order to ensure transferability, I made use of the following techniques in accordance with the language of Lincoln and Guba (Lincoln and Guba, in Babbie&Mouton, 2001):

a) *Thick description*: I collected and described information pertaining to the context of the study in a rich and detailed way so as to enable the reader to decide how the research can be of value in his/her own setting;

b) *Purposive sampling*: As described in the data collection paragraph of the method section, I carried out purposive sampling in this research in order to ensure that I had good data with which to work.

Dependability refers to the fact that the reader must be left with the sense that, if this research were to be repeated with the same, or similar, respondents under the same, or similar, circumstances, the findings would be similar (Babbie& Mouton, 2001). In this research study the use of a training group as a well-known type of group for research purposes, enhances the dependability. However, if the research is found to be credible and transferable, thisusually also means that the research is dependable.

Confirmability refers to the degree to which it is possible that the research findings can actually be confirmed from the research data, and are not merely the result of the biases of the researcher (Babbie& Mouton 2001). The fact that the theoretical lens is rooted in theoretical works extending beyond my own biases, plus the fact that the

inductive component of the coding process attempted to be as close as possible to the data, increases the confirmability of the research. It is also possible for another researcher to verify my results by checking it against the data, due to the thorough audit trail that was kept in AtlasTi. In addition to this the following steps werealso taken:

a) All raw data has been kept in safe storage and is available for scrutiny.

b) All field notes, memos and journal entries were kept.

c) The resultant themes and categories which emerged from the data analysis were kept as well as all the notes regarding the data analysis process that had been followed and the decisions that were taken during the data analysis.

d) All material relating to my personal intentions and biases, including personal notes and memos, were kept.

5.5   Ethical considerations

In terms of research ethics, I made sure that participants provided me with their informed consent, that no harm was done to the participants and that anonymity and confidentiality were maintained at all times. I also subjected myself to the ethical standards as laid down by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (Babbie& Mouton, 2001).

The most critical ethical aspect of a psychological study of empirical data probably relates to whether the participants gave their informed consent with regard to taking part in the research. The values underlying the notion of informed consent are, firstly, the protection of participants' welfare and, secondly, the protection of participants' self-determination (Thompson, 1996). In line with these values, the following elements comprise aspects of informed consent, namely, voluntary consent; adequate disclosure; and the competency of the participants (Stanley B. 1996). I will now discuss each of these elements in detail and then test this research project against the required standards of each.

Voluntary consent means that the consent must truly come from the participant's own free will. This, in turn, has both a legal and a more subtle ethical dimension. From a legal perspective there should be no coercion or duress involved (Grisso, 1996). From a psychological perspective, however, there are more subtle threats to self-determination that should also be considered (Grisso, 1996), especially if the research takes place within an institutional environment. It can be that, as a result of the

institutional context, participants feel obliged to take part in the research. Accordingly, the voluntariness of consent can not be seen in a vacuum. In other words, the act of handing out, reading, signing and collecting consent forms always has a specific history, it happens in a specific way against a specific institutional backdrop with all of these subtle factors contributing to whether the participants took part in the research willingly and whether they felt that they did not actually have a choice. This is certainly one of the critical questions that should be asked of this research: How have I ensured that the consent of the participants was truly voluntary? This is particularly important in light of the fact that the empirical component of the research is situated within a university setting, and within the lecturerstudent relationship and powerdifferential. However, the issue with this study was not the participation in the training groups per se, as this formed part of their Masters programme anyway. The issue was whether they had giventheir consent for the material to be used for research purposes. To address this matter, I also included in the consent form a clause that, should any participant, during or after the training group, wish to withdraw his/ her consent to participate, they would be free to do so. It has already been mentioned in chapter 2 that one of the membersof one of the 2009 groups did not give her consent for the data emanating from the group to be used for research purposes. This group was, therefore, excluded from the research. However, the student was not penalised for not giving her consent and, in fact, she received an 'A' grade for herexcellent final paper that formed part of the academic course which made use of the training groups as part of its educational objectives.

The next element pertaining to informed consent is the issue of adequate disclosure of information (Stanley, 1996). There are currently three different standards with regards to determining the 'adequacy' of the disclosure, namely, the professional standard, the materiality standard and full disclosure (Thompson, 1996). The professional standard asks what the norm is for research of this type within this profession, the materiality standard asks either that which the prudent person would want/need to know in order to give consent (objective materiality) or what the specific individual would want/need to know in order to give consent (subjective materiality) (Thompson, 1996). Both objective and subjective materiality are not concerned with the norms of researchers, but rather with disclosing whatever information regarding the research can be deemed necessary to enable the participants to make their decision regarding either participation or nonparticipation. In this study, the third standard was adhered to, namely, full disclosure: The attached consent form, the letter to the participants prior to the group sessions, and the study guides all contained information on exactly what the

participants could expect. There was also an information session prior to the course where the two facilitators and me as course coordinator and researcher, explained the process and what they can expect. Their prescribed textbook, namely, Martin Ringer's Group Action (Ringer, 2002),which contains a discussion on training groups, was also available to them prior to the programme.

The third element contributing to informed consent has to do with the participants' competency to give consent (Thompson, 1996). In this case the participants were Masters students in Industrial and Organisational Psychology. This implies that one could safely assume that they were competent both with regards to reading and understanding the information disclosed, as well as making informed decisions for themselves.

In terms of anonymity and confidentiality (Stanley, 1996), I have kept all the information emanating from the data confidential and it was dealt with openlybetween myself, my coresearcher and my research supervisor only. I have also not disclosed any information on any of the participants when reporting the research in such a way which may have made known to whom I was referring. In order to do this, I made use of pseudonyms when discussing case narratives and I also changed identifiable information in such a way that it was still possible to communicate the research essence without the participants being either exposed or jeopardised in any way (Babbie& Mouton, 2001).

Also, in terms of analysing and reporting the research, I have endeavoured to remain rigorous and honest, whether or not my analyses supported my theoretical conjectures (Babbie& Mouton, 2001).

5.6   Conclusion

In this chapter I described how the theoretical lens was operationalised for data analysis purposes. The coding strategy was discussed as well the way in which the analysis and interpretations had focused on different levels of data. Finally, strategies aimed at ensuring the quality of the research and maintaining high ethical standards were discussed. The following chapter will present, discuss and interpret the results that emanated from the data analysis process.