



## 6

### Discussion of results

#### 6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss the results of this research study. However, before embarking on this task it is important that we remain cognisant of the intellectual journey that we have taken thus far in order to ensure that we remain true to the direction that this dissertation has taken. We started by considering an argument in favour of an in-depth focus on the forces underlying group membership (chapter 1). We then considered the challenges regarding the accumulation of knowledge on groups as infinitely complex entities. This, in turn, enabled me to design a research process to help realise the objectives of this study (chapter 2). During this process of considering the dilemmas involved in researching groups, we realised that it was essential that we find creative ways in which to embrace the tension between our need to know and explain (episteme) and our need to understand deeply within context (hermeneutics). This led to the decision to adopt an approach to the research that would allow us to maintain a qualitative perspective, thus a focus on in-depth understanding and analysis within context, but also to structure this analysis according to predefined theoretical parameters. In order to set these parameters, various group-theoretical traditions were explored and integrated (chapter 3) in order to construct a robust theoretical lens that would provide structure, but without compromising the ability to make sense of the complexity of the data (chapters 4 and 5).

The challenge with regard to this chapter is, thus, to proceed with the analysis and discussion in a way that is congruent with all that we have achieved thus far. However, this proved to be no easy task. On the one hand, there is the inclination to quantify results<sup>38</sup> and to conduct quantitative analyses that will provide clear, albeit misleading, results. This, in turn, would also lead us into a positivist philosophical space and away from the postfoundational path chosen in chapter 2. On the other hand, there is the problem that an in-depth qualitative analysis of the interactions of the group-as-a-whole as well as each of the nine members over all ten sessions would be impossible. Firstly, it would be impossible to capture in words all the levels of meaning and complexity inherent in a social interaction and, secondly, it would be a task so ambitious and mammoth that we would not have sufficient space in a single dissertation to address it.

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<sup>38</sup> AtlasTi makes it relatively easy to count the number of times a specific code has occurred over the ten sessions, and also to count the number of times specific codes co-occurred over the ten sessions. However, once there was a number next to a code I found it required immense self-discipline not to limit the meaning of the code within its context to the number of times it had occurred.

Accordingly, in order to deal with the latter problem, it is essential that we be selective in terms of the scope of the analysis, that is, how wide (in terms of the section of the group's life to be examined) and how deep (in terms of depth of interpretation) should we go in order to attain sufficient outcomes pertaining to the core research questions, namely, What are the forces involved in being a group member and how do they operate? Furthermore, these questions exist within the broader context of a study that aims to be exploratory in nature. In other words, the objective of this study is not to provide definitive answers but to conduct a preliminary charting of the map that future researchers can use as a foundation from which to conduct further explorations and experimentations.

We will now proceed to examine the results pertaining to the second research objective, which was to explore the forces involved in being a member of a small group. During this analysis and interpretation we will, implicitly, also be busy with the results pertaining to the first research objective, which was to develop a method for the exploration of these forces. This is as a result of the fact that we would not have been able to obtain the results that we will be discussing here, were it not for the fact that we had, indeed, developed a method. There are, however, specific aspects pertaining to this method that merit separate reflection. This, however, will comprise part of the next chapter, in which the final conclusions and contributions of this research study will be discussed.

As described in the previous chapter, the discussion of the results will follow a funnel-like pattern. Accordingly, we will first examine an overall summary of the behaviourcodes in the group as it stood at the end of the ten sessions. We will then look at the progression of the group over the ten sessions, again from a bird's eye perspective in order to gain a general overview of the movements in the group over time. Based on this overview of the group's progression, we will select a period in the group's life and examine this period in more detail so as to enable us to examine more closely the forces that can be inferred from the behaviours towards and away from belonging, individuality and task.

It is important to note that each analysis will be carried out against the background of the group's external environment as well as its own specific culture as it developed through the group's history.

## 6.2 Analysis 1: Interpretation of the overall code themes after ten sessions

### 6.2.1 Introduction: Analysis 1

In terms of this analysis and interpretation, the codes that have been allocated to member behaviours over the ten sessions of the group's existence, will be considered and analysed collectively. Specific strengths and weaknesses of this interpretative perspective will be discussed, and the foundation will be laid for proceeding with the next level of analysis.

### 6.2.2 Results

The following table presents the results of the comparison and clustering process that was undertaken during the first level of data analysis. The codes were clustered together, first according to their deductive code categories, namely, towards and away from belonging, individuality and task, and then according to the inductive code-descriptors. It is also important to note that the code families listed below comprise clusters of behaviours that emerged over all ten of the group sessions. It is, thus, possible to state that the forces underlying these behaviours, although we do not name them at this point, were present at various times during the group's life.

**Table 6.1: Overall behaviour themes after ten sessions**

<b>Code family: Towards belonging</b>	<b>Code family: Away from belonging</b>
Group emphasis: similarities, harmony, and participation	Pairing – on group-level
Member to member inclusion behaviour	Excluding others
Group-level: Hiding/fleeing	Stereotype sub-grouping on group-level
Member-level: Personal need for inclusion	Resisting participation
Pairing – on pair-level	Avoiding meaningful connection
Self-disclosure for cohesion	
Group-level: Sorting out relationship with leaders	
Stereotype sub-grouping on subgroup-level	
Belonging: All aboard?	

Functional subgrouping Group-level: Creating an external enemy	
<b>Code family: Towards individuality</b>	<b>Code family: Away from individuality</b>
Self-disclosure Struggle with own value from group Passing moral judgement Pairing – individuality dynamic Distancing 1 up Challenge/conflict Defending him/herself Non-verbal signifiers: I am here! Differentiating self from others Promoting own agenda Tending to own needs and expectations Critical and independent thinking Assertiveness Isolating him/herself Personal struggle with diversity	Hiding in a pair Devaluing own contribution Not prepared to take a risk
<b>Code family: Towards task</b>	<b>Code family: Away from task</b>
Reflecting on group value – time drags Reflecting on group process Critical reflection and feedback Reflecting on emotions from topic discussion Compliance with direct expectations for response Playfulness and naive curiosity, experimental mood Clarifying structural boundaries and content Critical presence in discussion Reflecting on own emotion in the group Reflecting on emotions of other member	Covert fleeing/hiding Overt fleeing from task Fear of honesty and conflict Task disconnect – does not have a clue Resisting efforts to pull towards task

### 6.2.3 Discussion

The codefamilies above are listed in rank order from those with the greatest number of codes and quotations connected to them, to those with the least number of codes and quotations. If it were possible to infer the strength of the underlying psychological forces from the number of times a specific behaviour occurred, or from the amount of time (which, in practice, could be approximated only to the number of words spoken) spent on a specific type of behaviour, then we would, literally, be able to compare the relative strength of the forces in order to indicate in which direction the resultant force in the group-as-a-whole would lie. However, it is not possible to equate the strength of

a psychological force only with the frequency or duration of the resultant behaviour (Lewin, 1981). It is, for instance, possible that a single verbal utterance can be the result of extremely strong, underlying psychological forces.

When further considering this table of results, one is, firstly, forced to admit that it has serious limitations in terms of answering the research questions. The level of abstraction at this point is such that little sense can be made of specific codeclusters and their possible underlying forces. This is as a result of the fact that we do not have the context in terms of which to conduct the analysis. Although we do have the context of the external environment, we do not have the context created internally by the group as it progressed through time. Based on the fact that this table is, in essence, a snapshot taken right at the end of the group's life, it is too static to provide us with sufficient insights into the movements, forces and dynamics as they played out throughout the life of the group and its members, within context. However, there is at least some value that can be derived from this table, provided that we proceed with caution.

The first and most obvious observation is the fact that the 'towards' code-families have more codeclusters listed under them than the 'away from' code-families. In fact, when we look at the unclustered total of 289 codes that were allocated, as well as the number of quotations in the text to which they were allocated, a similar pattern emerges:

**Table 6.2: Number of codes and quotations per code family**

<b>Code family</b>	<b>Number of codes</b>	<b>Number of quotations</b>
Towards Belonging	121	2552
Away from Belonging	13	184
Towards Individuality	62	862
Away from Individuality	4	94

Towards Task	70	1928
Away from Task	19	1705
<b>Total</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>7325</b>

It is possible to draw a number of inferences regarding the numbers presented in tables 6.1 and 6.2, for example, the high number of ‘towards belonging’ behaviours that are clustered in table 6.1 could refer to the need of both the group and its members to find security in an anxiety-provoking situation; or the more or less equal distribution of quotations between the ‘towards’ and ‘away from task’ codes in table 6.2 could be telling us that the group struggled with its task. Nevertheless, I would be hesitant to ascribe too much importance to these numbers in isolation, as a result of the fact that they raise the level of abstraction even higher, thus making it risky to make inferences regarding the forces in the group.

The summaries provided by Tables 6.1 and 6.2 will only become intelligible when viewed alongside results that are ‘closer to the data’. However, it is probably worth reflecting on the process of code allocation and the mechanics of the theoretical framework. Could it be that both the way in which the coding was carried out, and the way in which the forces towards and away from belonging, individuality and task have been conceptualised theoretically, contributed to the overwhelming difference in, for example, the frequency with which ‘towards’ vs. ‘away from individuality’ codes were allocated? Firstly, there might be factors present in the application of the theoretical framework that could have contributed to the skewed distribution of codes between the ‘towards’ and ‘away from’ codes. Secondly, it might be that the assumption – which was based on existing theory and reason – that guided the process of coding the data, namely, that the group member finds him/herself in a field of forces towards and away from individuality, belonging and task, was incorrect.

With regard to the first possibility, if we assume that the theoretical framework is valid, then there are various possible explanations for the significant difference between the number of ‘towards’ and ‘away from’ codes allocated. It may be that the subjectivity of the researcher influenced the process to such an extent that behaviours were incorrectly interpreted and coded. However, it seems unlikely that one researcher would have a vested interest in observing behaviours ‘in the direction of’ over observing behaviours ‘moving away from’. It seems more likely that it could be more difficult to observe the ‘away from’ behaviours than the ‘towards’ behaviours, or that

movement is more easily conceptualised as having a positive direction (towards something) than having a negative direction (away from something). It is, therefore, possible that some 'away from belonging' behaviours could have been coded as 'towards individuality' behaviours, or that one behaviour that resulted from simultaneous 'towards individuality' and 'away from belonging' forces were coded as 'towards individuality' only.

Nevertheless, this raises an important question: Is it at all possible to carry out an *objectively accurate* coding? Of course, from our qualitative perspective and postfoundational stance we can easily say that the aim was not to arrive at objective, absolute truths, but rather to show how we can arrive at a valuable understanding, based on our best efforts to carry out qualitative research that is trustworthy. However, this question also brings us to the following important caveat regarding the analysis and interpretation of this data: The coding was carried out based on the observable behaviour in the group, and not on the underlying forces within the group. Accordingly, in order to keep the coding as close to observable behaviour as possible, we were forced to stay as far away as possible from making inferences while carrying out the coding. However, the underlying forces that resulted in the observed behaviour can be 'known' only as a result of inference. It is, therefore, possible that, although the behaviour was observed as mostly being 'towards' either individuality, belonging or task, this behaviour could still have resulted from a dynamic interaction between the forces that operate both towards and away from the three goal region complexes, as described in chapters 3 and 4.

Also, as mentioned earlier, this first analysis did not prove helpful in terms of interpreting the forces involved in being a group member as a result of the fact that we were working with a static view over ten sessions, a view that was removed from the internal context of the group. Therefore, as seen from this angle and from this level of abstraction, it is impossible to make any inferences regarding the forces within the group. It is, thus, at this stage, still possible to accept that the coding process, together with the constant comparisons, was sufficiently trustworthy for the purposes of this research. Also, with regard to the theoretical framework, we could, for the same reason, argue that the mere fact that behaviours were more often observed as working 'towards' rather than 'away from' the goal region complexes does not imply an error in the theoretical conceptualisation, based on the fact that the codes were allocated to behaviours and not to forces.



Another reflection on a methodological level involves the process of clustering codes according to emergent meaning that is often used in qualitative studies, in general, and in grounded theory studies, in particular. In this connection, it must be borne in mind that, when working with a moving target such as a group over its life span, it is possible to miss certain extremely important meanings by adopting an emergent clustering approach only.

On a content-level, when looking at table 6.1, it is interesting to note how the codefamilies, especially with regard to the 'towards belonging' codes, are clustered around different systemic levels within the group. There are clusters of codes that focus, respectively, on behaviour on the systemic levels of group, sub-group and member:

- a) Group-level: Group emphasis: similarities, harmony, participation; Group-level: Hiding/Fleeing; Group-level: sorting out relationship with leaders; Belonging: All aboard?; Group-level: Creating an external enemy.
- b) Subgroup-level: Pairing; Stereotype subgrouping; Functional sub-grouping.
- c) Member-level: Personal need for inclusion; Self-disclosure for cohesion.

This corresponds with Agazarian's notion of psychological forces operating on different systemic levels (Agazarian & Gantt, 2000).

Another question that arises from table 6.1 is how it is possible for behaviours associated with pairing to be allocated to both 'towards' and 'away from' belonging as well as to both 'towards' and 'away from' individuality? This will become clearer when we look at the more fine-grained and 'closer-to-context' results presented below, but for now, a brief discussion on this matter will suffice. When I looked at pairing from a group perspective, I saw how the act of pairing can serve to differentiate and, sometimes, even isolate the pair from the group. Accordingly, it was possible to code this act of pairing as an 'away from belonging' behaviour. However, simultaneously, for the group member an act of pairing also refers to his/her need for belonging, albeit not to the group, but to either a pair or a subgroup. This corresponds with Agazarian's concept of 'stereotype subgrouping' (Agazarian & Gantt, 2000).

Furthermore, there were a number of instances in the group where pairing or subgrouping was used not only to demonstrate that one is different from the rest of the group, and, hence, the 'towards individuality' codes, but also to hide one's uniqueness by, on the subgroup-level, merging with another and, therefore, becoming more

'invisible' in terms of one's own individuality. Thus, where pairing was used as an act away from belonging to the group and, therefore, was an act that had shifted the focus away from strengthening the group boundary, I was forced to acknowledge that the pairing had also been used simultaneously as an act towards belonging on a different systemic level, namely, that of the subgroup and, therefore, that the act had shifted the focus to strengthening the boundary of the subgroup, or pair. Also, where the pair had been used on the group-level in order to demonstrate difference, it had also been used on the subgroup-level to hide difference.

#### 6.2.4 Conclusion: Analysis 1

The value resulting from this analysis was more on the level of the process than the outcome of the analysis. On a process level, this analysis required us to compare all the codes, quotations and memos and this resulted in the final list of 289 codes. In terms of the clusters that emerged, the greatest value was to be found in the fact that this analysis prompted us to ask critical questions of the process as a whole. In fact, it highlighted the fact that we should be cautious with regard to considering the link between the strength of a psychological force and the number of times a behaviour code had been allocated; it alerted us to the fact that it is not possible for a code clustering process – as it is often applied in qualitative research – to provide a dynamic view of the data if the data itself had developed over time; and it also raised a question regarding both the theoretical framework that had been applied to the data and the process that had been followed in applying this theoretical framework by highlighting the differences in the number of times which codes had been allocated to the different families, namely, towards and away from belonging, individuality and task. However, in an attempt to come closer to answering the research questions, the second analysis, namely, the analysis of the behaviour codes as they were allocated to the group over time, was carried out in order to obtain a dynamic overview of the group's progress.

### **6.3 Analysis 2: Interpretation of the group's movement over ten sessions**

#### 6.3.1 Introduction: Analysis 2

Where the previous analysis encompassed the entire collection of codes that had been allocated up until the end of the tenth session, this analysis will show the way in which these codes were allocated over time, on a session-by-session basis. Thus, despite the fact that this analysis will not provide us with an understanding of the

movements that took place within sessions, it will show the movements between sessions. With 'movements' we mean shifts in the number of codes that were allocated to the six respective categories, namely, towards belonging, away from belonging, towards individuality, away from individuality, towards task and away from task, from one session to the next. The purpose of this analysis is, thus, to provide an overview of the group's behaviour over the ten sessions. Although this analysis will not enable us to make inferences regarding the forces underlying these changes in behaviours between the sessions,<sup>39</sup> it will help us to:

- a) Choose a smaller section of the group's life for a more in-depth analysis, for example, a section in which major changes took place that we wish to examine more closely.
- b) Gain an overall understanding of the group's existence through time in order to be able to conduct the more detailed analysis of a smaller section within the overall context created by the group.

In order to achieve these objectives, this section will be structured as follows:

- a) The results, as they emerged from AtlasTi, will be presented in both table and chart format. These results will be accompanied by clarifying comments in order to facilitate the reading and interpretation of both the tables and the charts.
- b) A verbal description of the group's overall movement will be provided. This will be in the form of a report of the group's movements as observed through the group's life. No analysis or interpretation will be conducted at this point as the only goal of this section will be to provide an account of the group's life, as observed and captured on video, in order to provide the reader with a better understanding of the context against which the interpretations will be made.
- c) An interpretation of the group's movement over the ten sessions will be carried out. This interpretation will be informed by both the data as discussed up to that point, existing literature and the theoretical lens that was developed in chapters 3 and 4.
- d) In conclusion, a decision will be made as to the section on which to focus in the subsequent, more detailed analysis. The strengths and weaknesses of this analysis will be evaluated and guidelines will be provided for the next analysis.

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<sup>39</sup>At this level of observation, we have only a broad overview of groups of behaviour which may indicate patterns but we would be hesitant to describe underlying forces as based on these aggregates.

### 6.3.2 Results: Tabular and graphic description of the group's movement through time

#### 6.3.2.1 *The group's behaviour over the ten sessions (in table format)*

**Table 6.3: Number of code occurrences per session**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Towards belonging	446	391	249	268	66	702	232	49	33	116
Away from belonging	33	45	15	12	0	0	45	4	28	2
Towards individuality	102	121	150	83	23	82	204	60	28	9
Away from individuality	28	33	15	13	0	0	2	0	0	3
Towards task	25	25	98	323	322	298	338	91	383	25
Away from task	283	289	55	193	12	416	53	9	0	3

The table above illustrates the number of times that a code from each of the six main categories was allocated to speeches made by group members in each session. In actual fact, this table is a summary of the full co-occurrence table, as generated by AtlasTi, and as displayed in Appendix C. In the complete table it is possible to see each code under each main category as well as the number of times that each code was allocated to speeches made by each individual member.

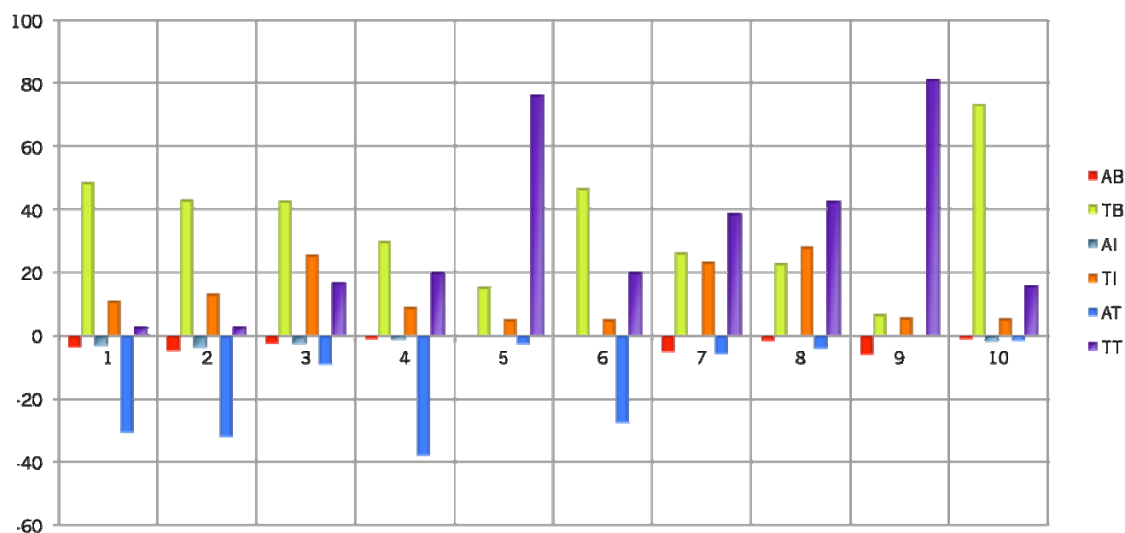
**Table 6.4: Code occurrences per session as a percentage of the total**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Towards belonging	49	43	43	30	16	47	27	23	7	73
Away from belonging	4	5	3	1	0	0	5	2	6	1
Towards individuality	11	13	26	9	5	5	23	28	6	6
Away from individuality	3	4	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Towards task	3	3	17	36	76	20	39	43	81	16
Away from task	31	32	9	22	3	28	6	4	0	2
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

As a result of the fact that the total number of individual speeches per session differed quite significantly, the table above was drawn up in order to demonstrate the number of speeches connected to each code category relative to the total number of speeches per session. The reasons for the significant variation in the number of speeches per session include the following: Firstly, the time allocated to each session differed slightly. This training group was not conducted according to the Tavistock model in terms of which the group leader (consultant) leaves the room at the predetermined time boundary. Instead, the facilitator pair allowed the group between 60 and 90

minutes per session and the session was terminated at the point at which a natural break or opportunity to conclude the session occurred. Secondly, as a result of the fact that the length or duration of specific members' contributions differed in each session, it happened that certain sessions were characterised by several shorter member contributions while others, in turn, were characterised by fewer, albeit longer, member contributions. Thirdly, in some sessions there were more periods of silence than in others. The purpose of depicting the behaviours per category over time as a percentage of the total coded behaviours per session was to enable us to compare the sessions in terms of the relative prevalence of certain behaviours over others so as to enable us to move closer to an understanding of the underlying forces involved.

### 6.3.2.2 The group's behaviour over the ten sessions (in graph format)



**Figure 6.1: The group's behaviour over ten sessions (1)**

In order to provide a graphic representation of the six main categories to which the codes that had been allocated to speech behaviours belonged, it was decided to make use of a bar chart so that the changes over time would be visible. For the sake of being able to represent the 'towards' and 'away from' codes on one graph in a way that made sense, it was decided to make all the 'away from' code-numbers negative so that they would be displayed below the x-axis of the graph. The code categories in the legend next to the graph are abbreviated AB for 'away from belonging', TB for 'towards belonging', etc.

### 6.3.3 Results: Report of the group's movement through time

As mentioned in chapter 2, this group was the second of three training groups that were conducted over three consecutive weekends as part of the Group Dynamics course for the Masters students in I/O Psychology at the University of Pretoria in September 2009. The course was structured in such a way that it started with the training group, as the experiential component. This was followed by a theoretical session about a month after the group experience. Other than the study guide and introductory letter, which explained the purpose of the training groups as well as the administrative arrangements pertaining to the training groups, the students had very little, if any, prior theoretical or practical exposure to this type of group work.

The group assembled in the seminar room adjacent to the group room at 18:00 on Thursday evening for an introductory session. During this session the facilitators were introduced to the group and the method of group training that would be followed was discussed. The long-standing tradition of using this type of group for group training was highlighted as well as what the group members could expect when they walked into the group room. There were clearly mixed emotions amongst the group members during this introductory session: they had no accurate prior experience to which to link their expectations and anxieties with the nearest type of experiences being the problem-solving activities in which they had participated as part of classroom-based or outdoor team building programmes. However, despite the fact that the anxiety in the room was palpable it was hidden behind frivolous banter and light-hearted conversation. This was aggravated by the fact that one of the group members, the only male member of the group, arrived late because he had ‘forgotten’ about the group session and was scheduled to travel abroad on the following day. However, this member, Joshua, cancelled his flight and participated in the entire group experience. Accordingly, the group started with a full complement of nine members – randomly selected from the overall Masters group of 27 – plus the two facilitators, Stephan and Joel<sup>40</sup>.

We will start with giving each member a chance to introduce him/herself through an excerpt from their personal reflections focusing on their initial experiences and expectations of the group:

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<sup>40</sup>Pseudonyms

- Debbie<sup>41</sup>: I was scared that I might say or do something completely wrong... Fear of being judged by the other members in my group made it difficult for me to join the group.
- Pam: On Thursday evening... the atmosphere was not stressful or uncomfortable. Feelings of doubt may have been felt, when the group noted that the session was unstructured, therefore, no rules or outcomes were stated or enforced.
- Shelly: Joel (one of the facilitators) told us that we could discuss anything we wanted to once we entered the discussion room. My honest thoughts were "Yeah, right!" I thought that Joel could not possibly be serious.
- Joshua: The lack of deep social connection with the group and any of its existing members lets one almost feel at the start as just being one of the group and a bit like an outsider...I (also) wondered how it was going to be being the only male in the group.
- Erna: My interest of learning about other people was more on a social level, and more on the outside of the group, and I was therefore not prepared or my mind-set was never set on the deeper emotional psychological thinking processes of people. This caused some difficulty for me to stay within the group.
- Aimee: I experienced the Thursday evening with various thoughts and emotions. Before the session started, I was relaxed. When we went into the other classroom for our first in-group session, I felt anxious and uncomfortable when I saw the camera and the seating. As we sat down and started talking, I felt more comfortable.
- Linda: Just the mention of an entire weekend with only a small group of unknown people seemed to make me quiver. What is it about the unknown that makes us react so defensively? Honestly, this must have been the one weekend I dreaded most. Nevertheless, I decided that I might as well make the best of it.
- Christa: As the first evening of discussions approached, a somewhat nervousness came upon me. I will admit that some of the nervousness may have been caused by the previous week's members, as I had heard from the members that participated in the week before ours that the sessions were going to be very intense. I was also told that I should not be scared and that all my truths were bound to be released...
- Maggie: Before class convened on Thursday evening, I found myself studying the group allocation of the Masters class in the study guide. I found myself pondering over all the different personalities of group 1 and group 3. Strangely enough I did not do this for my group, group 2. Instead, I looked at the names of the people in my group and thought back to specific interactions I had had with the people in the group, and reassuring myself of relationships I had built. I found myself preparing myself for the evening.

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<sup>41</sup>All the names mentioned below are pseudonyms.



In the main, the first two sessions followed the same pattern: One member, Erna, would start talking about a topic outside of the group's goal – to study themselves as a group in the here and now – and the rest of the group would sit in silence while Erna would continue for long stretches of uninterrupted monologue. It often happened that when she stopped, one of the other members would prompt her with a clarifying question or a comment that would set the pattern in motion again. In the field notes taken while observing the group for the first time from the adjacent video room, I made the following note: “The Erna juggling show.” I had the impression that the group had hired a juggler to entertain them and each time she dropped a ball, one of the members would pick it up and toss it back to her to continue the show. However, there were undoubtedly also traces of frustration with this pattern, which emerged from remarks made by members during the session, for example, sarcastically pointing out the pattern to Erna, as well as in the post-group reflection papers. Nevertheless, the pattern persisted for the entire first two sessions and resurfaced every now and again up until the seventh session.

Another pattern that formed from the start was the splitting up of the group into pairs. This started right at the beginning when the group decided to share what they had been working on in their assignments for another module, namely, diversity management. That project was carried out in pairs, which facilitated the pairing dynamic as the assignment pairs, who had formed voluntarily for that assignment, shared something about their assignments in this group. In addition, the mere topic of “diversity” brought cultural and language diversity to the table and the members, on a process level, also formed pairs and subgroups according to language, culture, religion and gender.

Content themes that surfaced during the first two sessions and retained significance throughout the entire life of the group included cultural diversity, competition between females, sexual harassment and moral judgement. The theme of judgement reached an important moment during the second session when the group was discussing homosexual couples adopting children. An anti-gay-adoption Christian subgroup formed and this led to conflict between the subgroup spokesperson, Shelly, and a Muslim member of the group, Maggie. Maggie argued that an individual's sexuality had no bearing on his/her ability to raise, love and provide for a child. When asked whether she, as a Muslim, was not also supposed to be anti-gay, the following scene played out:



- MAGGIE According to my religion, we don't believe in homosexuality, but my religion also says ... uhm ... don't judge. They will answer for themselves. We believe in a day of judgement. And each person is going to answer for all of their own sins ... they're going to be there on their own... it's not my case to say... that they're wrong ... you know I'm not saying that I'm completely liberated and that I don't have personal judgements. I mean I am human and I do, but on this particular subject I just think don't judge.
- GROUP Nervous laughter ...silence
- CHRISTA I don't think anybody wants to judge now.
- GROUP Laughter
- GROUP Silence

This moment also marked the start of a process of differentiating Maggie as a leader within the group, especially with regard to the group's task. However, the underlying theme of judgement and being judged remained with the group until the very end.

The third session, which started on the Friday morning after the group members had some time to reflect on their group experience of the previous night, saw an initial repeat of the communication pattern of the previous night – the juggling show – although this pattern was now being pointed out by the facilitators. Nevertheless, whenever the mood within the group became tense during this session, Erna would embark on a new topic and stay with it for minutes on end. The main work done during this session commenced with the members starting to share personal, mostly biographic, information about themselves in an overt attempt “to get to know each other better”. This evolved into an exploration of one of the members' responses to being asked about her cultural background. The enquiry, which was carried out in an extremely naïve and bona fide way, sparked a strong response in Shelly, the same member who had led the ‘judgemental’ subgroup in the previous session. The group worked with this response, the perceptions regarding race and accent, predefined “boxes” and the issue of freedom and responsibility with regard to asking each other questions within the group. However, the group became bogged down at a point at which the overall mood indicated that one should be careful what one asks or says in this group:

- MAGGY I don't feel like it is Christa's fault that Shelly was asked that question a lot in her life. Christa was only responsible for herself and her own curiosity and Shelly is responsible for her experiences and how she perceives that and how she accepts that or doesn't accept that.
- SHELLY Can I speak? I'm just saying, it's more like 'okay, here we go again'. It's not ... I'm not angry with you, I'm not upset with you ... this was just dejavu – do you

hear what I'm saying. I'm not concerned – don't ask me any questions ... don't ask me why I can't speak the language or not, or why I can't speak a language – I'm not ... I don't have ... I'm not offended ... I don't have ... I'm not going to look at you differently ... I'm not going to look at anybody else differently, I'm still Shelly. I'm not saying I'm not going to ... don't ask ... don't ask me not ... I'm not saying don't be scared to ask me any questions. It's more just about being sensitive towards certain differences that people have and also being open-minded about what you think and what you expect is not always the same.

STEPHAN But that's the stuckness again.

When the group returned after a 15 minute break following session 3, they started by blaming the facilitators for steering them in a direction of reflection on and conflict about the dynamics within the group while “the agreement was for the group to be unstructured and for “us to talk about whatever we like”. The group then spent almost the entire first half of the session talking about the goal of the group as “reflecting on deep emotional stuff vs. just talking about random topics” before embarking on actually using the latter half of the group for “just talking about random topics”. A significant moment in this session was when one of the members for the first time addressed the facilitators directly and asked them to join in the group's sharing about their New Year's Eve celebrations.

The transition between sessions 4 and 5 was fairly significant as this was when the group assembled in the seminar room to reflect on what had happened in the group room. During this session the facilitators assumed different roles to their roles in the training group as they led and directed the discussion. I also took part in these reflection sessions and, at times, made comments based on my observations of the group. On the one hand, this served the purpose of adding an external perspective to the discussion but, on the other, it also served the purpose of checking my observations with the members and also being transparent about my thoughts and ideas from a research perspective. During this specific reflection session, attention was paid to the relationship between the content of the group's conversations and the underlying group process. As can be seen from this excerpt from Francis's reflection, some of the group members were clearly surprised and impressed by the links made during this reflection session:

When the two psychologists started to explain why we spoke about the topics we did and what meanings it had for the group, I felt excited to see what was going to happen next. After our first

outgroup session, I thought to myself “now I know what is going on, but where do we go from here”. Only after our first outgroup session I really felt as if I belonged to a group and, more specifically, ‘my group’.

Session 5, which commenced after the lunch break that had followed the outgroup reflection, started off uncomfortably as the group struggled to make the transition back into the group. However, the group moved into working mode fairly quickly as one of the members, Debbie, started to explore the perceptions that the group members had of her and the impact this had both on the group and on her position within the group. This discussion lasted almost the entire session, with Maggie ending the session by voicing concern over where “these kinds of group discussions might end”.

If the pendulum in session 5 swung towards “work”, then it definitely swung back to “avoid work” during session 6. When the group entered the room for the start of this session, the last session of the Friday, the group members moved the chairs and sat on the floor. One facilitator, Stephan, decided to sit on a chair while the other facilitator, Joel, decided to join the group sitting on the floor. Debbie, the member around whom the previous session had mainly revolved, was the only member who also chose to sit on a chair. The group started to talk about frivolous topics and continued to do so for two thirds of the session. Then, two thirds into the session, the following occurred, starting with this question by one of the facilitators:

STEPHAN<sup>42</sup>      What do you make of all of this?  
 DEBBIE            Can I start? I felt like this is kind of – it’s cool, but kind of a missed opportunity to explore deeper. It’s like we all made a conscious effort to keep things light and to avoid any sort of ... I don’t know.  
 JOEL                Uhm. Missed opportunity and avoiding?  
 DEBBIE            Uhm.  
 STEPHAN         Somebody else? Okay.  
 PAM                 What do you mean missed opportunity?  
 DEBBIE            I don’t know – to learn more.

The rest of the session was then spent on discussing how far and how deep the group was prepared to go, and on how the boundaries of the levels of depth could be managed. The fear of being judged was again raised as the main obstacle preventing the group from moving on towards deep and meaningful work. Erna’s pattern of

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<sup>42</sup>Stephan and Joel were the facilitators.

communicating and her ambition “to just talk” was briefly reflected upon before the group adjourned for the day.

Session 7, the first session on the Saturday morning, saw the group exploring new communication patterns as they tried to work out how to be a group with their specific task. It started with Maggie apologising for “holding the group back” as a result of the comment she had made at the end of session 5. Pam, a member who had remained fairly silent until that point, challenged Maggie and Debbie – the pair in whom the towards work/afraid for what might happen dichotomy had become locked – to say what exactly it was that they wanted because they were always giving double messages about wanting the group to learn and explore, but being afraid that things might get out of hand. The group was still busy trying to work with this challenge, and the renewed debate of how deep or shallow to go, when Pam jumped in with a reflection on how she experienced herself in groups – first her workgroup at the office and then this group. This prompted Maggie to reflect on her role thus far in the group and the fact that she tried to take sole responsibility for the group, for both its learning and its safety. When these discussions subsided, the feeling arose that someone else could now step forward and explore his/her role within the group. However, this again brought the group up against its now well-known nemesis – the feeling of being judged...

DEBBIE	I just sense that there are people that are annoyed with me and ...
STEPHAN	Okay.
DEBBIE	... and I sensed it yesterday, and I sense it today again. So ... ja.
STEPHAN	Do you want to check that first, maybe? Are you annoyed?
DEBBIE	Christa, are you annoyed with me?
CHRISTA	No, Debbie.
ALL	Laugh
DEBBIE	Ja. Yesterday I felt distinctly that you were very annoyed with me at a stage.
CHRISTA	No.

However, this issue of “feeling judged” was not resolved at this point, and so Maggie returned to the conflict between her and Shelly of the first evening – the point at which ‘judgement’ had arisen for the first time. This, however, was not resolved here either, as will be discussed in the detailed analysis of session 7 to follow. The session ended with one of the facilitators, Joel, checking, in vain, with Erna, who fell silent, both verbally and in the way she was sitting, whether she is still on board or whether she had experienced herself as being silenced.

Session 8 started with Maggie and Debbie urging the other group members to make use of the opportunity for learning presented by this group experience. After some initial resistance, one member, and then another, shared stories about motor accidents that had left people close to them physically disabled in some way or the other. This continued until a quarterway into the session when Maggie suddenly used a statement made by Shelly as an opening for another attempt to make amends – she complimented Shelly and the compliment was gracefully received. Shelly then continued to explore with the group her own experience of being in the group and being perceived by the group. By this time the group was actively co-exploring these issues with each other and it became less necessary for the facilitators to do much during the periods when the group was ‘working’. The session ended with the group members checking with Erna whether she was still OK as she had, by this time, withdrawn totally from the group.

Another outgroup reflection took place between session 8 and session 9. This time the focus was on roles within the group and the group norms that were starting to emerge. The pattern of the previous session that had followed the outgroup session was repeated in session 9 with the group spending a considerable amount of time during session 9 in workmode. The group concentrated mainly on exploring members’ roles within the group and, specifically, on Joshua’s experience of the group and the impact he had on the group and its members. The work around Joshua’s role started out in rather a peculiar fashion with Joshua specifically asking the group to give him negative criticism and feedback regarding how they had experienced him in the group – in other words, to judge him and to judge him negatively. This, against the backdrop of the shadow of judgement that had been hanging over the group since the first session, was something of which I specifically took note in the field notes.

Session 10, the last and final session, was used mostly as a final wrap-up session and as a bridge between the training group experience and the academic and professional careers lying ahead of the group members. Members reflected on their professional identities as psychologists trained in an HR department. Care was taken to provide time for resolving issues that may still have been unresolved for the group and its members. Members were also encouraged to make use of an offer by the facilitators for individual consultations to help work through parts of the experience should the need arise. When compared with the Tavistock Group Relations format, session 10 (as well as the two outgroup sessions) was mostly reminiscent of a Group Relations Conference Review and Application Group, with the facilitator roles changing towards

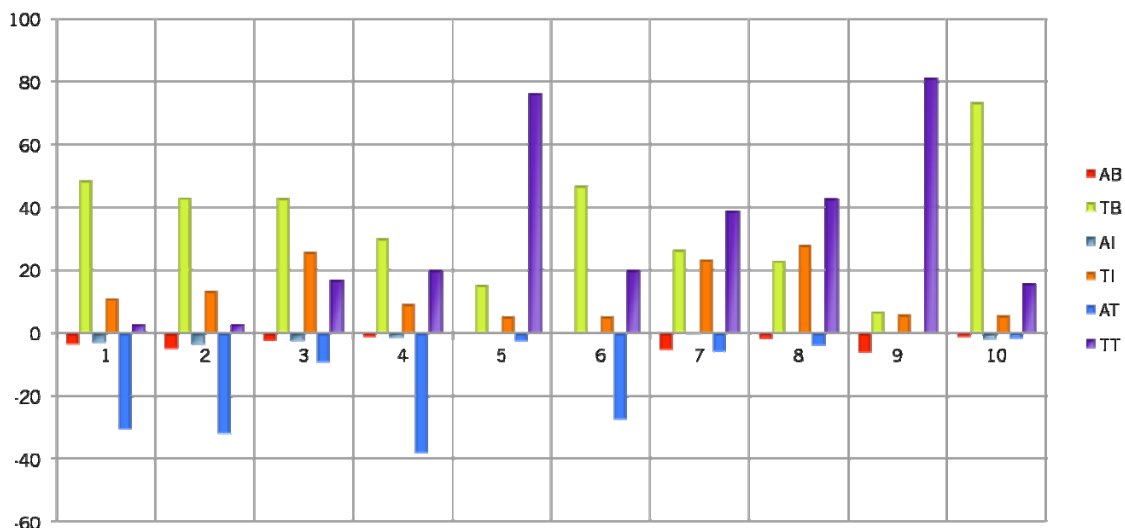
more participatory and also somewhat more directive than in the previous group sessions. When the group ended, the feeling that remained was one of incomplete satisfaction – satisfaction with regard to what had been achieved, but incompleteness because of the knowledge that there were still so much with which to work. In the words of the group members:

- Maggie: All in all, my experience of being part of this group was largely positive...I, too, had developed a fondness for the group by the end of the weekend. What I really appreciated is that it was clear to see our individuality still coming through within the group setting- but I still did feel 'part' of something.
- Christa: This definitely was 2½ days of continuous circles of fear and suspense. The group experience as a whole was one that I believe everyone should go through at some point in their lives... Although I did not manage to open up, my boundaries were tested and I was, therefore, able to learn something about myself.
- Linda: Again, what an experience, practical situations like this are much more effective in learning than just a theoretical class.
- Pam: Being part of this group made me realise that I must not assume or judge group members, but allow the opportunity to relate and recognise commonalities between one another. Each group member functions differently at his/her own pace and should be given the opportunities to take his/her responsibilities to challenge him/herself.
- Debbie: No one in the group wanted to say it directly, but we were all, somehow, trying to say that we would like to see where this group experience could take us, but we were each scared of being evaluated negatively by each other.
- Shelly: I found this experience to be psychologically and mentally draining. Although I did learn from this experience, I would not be in a hurry to participate in a similar type of exercise soon.
- Joshua: How the group reacted towards me in the sense that the comments they made about myself and my role etc. was perhaps the most important factor contributing to feeling part of the group.
- Erna: I don't like being psychologised...
- Francis: The two and a half days were really an amazing experience and it is very difficult to put in words the feelings and thoughts I had. I do not think that an opportunity like this will come along again very soon (or maybe never) and, therefore, I am very grateful to have had this opportunity and be part of the group or rather 'my group'.

#### 6.3.4 Analysis and interpretation: The group over ten sessions

As mentioned above, this analysis will look only at the major movements that occurred over the ten sessions. The information provided in the sessionbysession report in the previous section will serve as background information only so as to provide context. In order to illuminate the discussion, the graph will be presented again to facilitate the process of following the discussion while referring to the graph. However, before we proceed, it is important to bear the following in mind: the graph shows only the number of occurrences of a behaviour code category as a percentage of the total per session. This means that:

- a) The graph does not show psychological forces per se, it depicts behaviours only. In order to move from ‘behaviour’ to ‘force’ it is essential that we infer within context. We will, therefore, exercise care when speaking about underlying forces as a result of the fact that we are not dealing with the detailed codes but with the main code categories only;
- b) The graph does not claim to show the *strength* of the psychological forces. Although a high number of occurrences can tell us something about strength, it does not tell us everything about strength. The interpretation will, thus, be tentative with regard to the strength of forces;
- c) Accordingly, the only type of “safe” interpretation that is open to us based on the data before us in this section, is an interpretation of the overall patterns that we observed over the ten sessions and, even then, we will remain tentative in our assertions. It is only in the next section that we will be able to deal more boldly with our interpretations and analyses.





**Figure 6.2: The group's behaviour over ten sessions (2)<sup>43</sup>**

If we take an integrated view at the movements from sessions 1 to 5, the first obvious observation is the shift in pattern in session 3. Where sessions 1 and 2 exhibit very similar distributions of behaviours between the six broad code categories, session 3 shows a clear increase in 'towards individuality' and 'towards task' behaviours with less 'away from task' behaviours. Then, in session 4, the 'away from task' behaviours are more prevalent than before, but disappear in session 5, which is dominated by 'towards task' behaviour. The question, thus, arises: What happened there?

The first idea that comes to mind is Bion's notion of the group oscillating between work group functioning and basic assumption functioning. Through Bion's lens it is possible to observe the group in basic assumption fight-flight mode, especially during sessions 1 and 2. Not only did the group members immediately form pairs or subgroups, namely, the brown/black pair; the Portuguese pair; the Christian subgroup; the Afrikaans subgroup, but they also immediately adopted a pattern in terms of which one member was allowed to rescue the group from its anxietyprovoking situation by her entertaining monologues on everything except the task of the group. This flight behaviour was, thus, very easily observable through the group's effort to keep the 'Erna-juggling show' going. Fight behaviour was not as obvious, but it was, nevertheless, there: apart from the obvious conflict that emerged around polarising topics such as homosexuality, adoption, parenting and religion, there were also numerous references to competition between females for rewards (remember the group had one male member only plus two older, male facilitators) as well as long discussions on sexual harassment by older men with higher authority in the workplace. The pattern of forming alliances in pairs also alludes to the perceived danger in the group against which an individual should protect him/herself. We also saw the rise of the 'judgement' issue and the concomitant paranoia that is usually associated with a fight-flight, as described by Bion (1961).

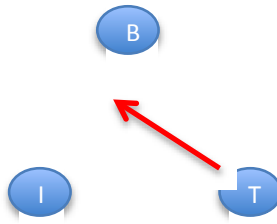
Of course there is still much that can be done in terms of interpreting the sessions, but the purpose here is not to carry out a Bionian analysis of the group. Nevertheless, I want to draw specific attention to the movements:

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<sup>43</sup>This is the same graph as in Figure 6.1. It is repeated here to make it easier to refer to the graph while reading the text.

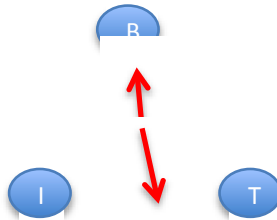


- a) First, mainly away from task and towards belonging with a slight tendency towards individuality (sessions 1 and 2)



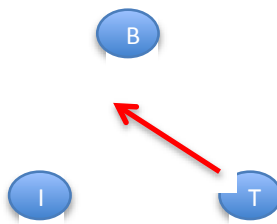
**Figure 6.3: Movement away from task**

- b) Then a slight increase towards task and individuality, with the behaviours towards belonging more or less remaining constant (session 3)



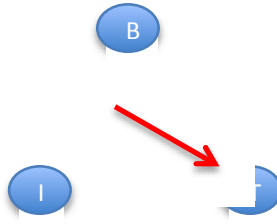
**Figure 6.4: Slight movement towards task**

- c) This is followed again by a predominant movement away from task (session 4)



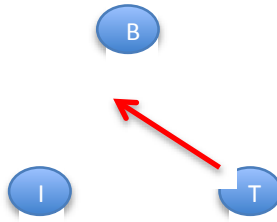
**Figure 6.5: Movement away from task, again**

- d) Then back towards task (session 5)



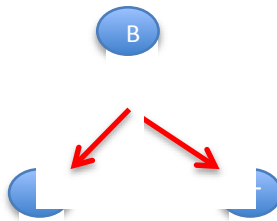
**Figure 6.6: Movement back towards task**

e) Again, away from task and towards belonging (session 6)



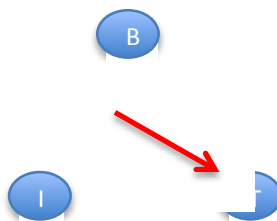
**Figure 6.7: Once more away from task**

f) This was followed by a steady increase in towards individuality and towards task behaviours (sessions 7 and 8)



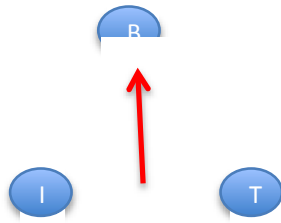
**Figure 6.8: Back towards task and individuality**

g) Then a final spike in towards task behaviours (session 9)



**Figure 6.9: Away from task, again**

h) Followed by towards belonging behaviours (session 10).



**Figure 6.10: Final movement towards belonging**

The Bionian representation of a pendulum oscillating between two poles – work on the one side and basic assumptions on the other side – is evident in this data, thus leading me to agree with him tentatively with regard to his observation of the group as always moving between the states of basic assumptions and being workdirected.

However, Bion's view of oscillation did not leave room for group development, which I do in fact think can be observed in this group. The following significant developmental shifts took place in the group:

- a) The break between sessions 4 and 5: The result was that the group operated on a totally new level in session 5.
- b) Session 6: a rebellion against the group and its work.
- c) Session 7: the working out of the tension between working or not.

Accordingly, what we are observing in the group is not merely an oscillation between two group states, but an oscillation that continuously takes place on a higher level of group development. From session 6 onwards we are able to see a progression with regard to the group taking ownership of its own development and security, as well as an increased ability to differentiate that is, seeing similarities in the apparently different and difference in the apparently similar. This, according to Agazarian (2000), is one of the key characteristics of living human systems that have an inherent drive towards maturation (moving from simple to complex organisation).

In addition, the movements observed here link up with Nitsun's formulation of his theory of the anti-group (Nitsun, 1996), in which he sees the group as containing two opposing drives: one towards survival, growth and development and another towards selfdestruction, or antigrowth. According to Nitsun, when the anti-group forces in the group are acknowledged and contained, the danger of possible destruction makes

space for potential creativity, restoration and growth. The link with the psychoanalytic notions of the life and death instincts is clear as are the links with Bennis and Shepard's (1956) notion of the barometric event in the group's development and Beck's notion of the boundary between the second and third phases of group development (Beck *et al.*, 2000). It would appear that these second and third phases of group development were between sessions 6, 7 and 8 in this group.

If this is the case, it seems that we are dealing with forces that are working either towards or away from the group's own development and that these forces are in opposition to each other. But how does this relate to the present schema of belonging, individuality and task? It would appear that both the pro-group and the anti-group forces are arranged as either towards or away from belonging, individuality and task. In other words, a force that is directed towards belonging can be either a pro-group or an anti-group force, depending on the impact which the force has on the group's overall movement either in the direction of development, or in the direction away from development. For example, the 'towards belonging' behaviours in sessions 1, 2 and 6 had, on the whole, a significantly different quality as compared with the 'towards belonging' behaviours in sessions 7 and 8. In sessions 1, 2 and 6 the 'towards belonging' behaviour predominantly served the purpose of creating an undifferentiated mass behind which to hide, whereas in sessions 7 and 8 the 'towards belonging' behaviour was mostly aimed towards creating a supportive environment in which to carry out work. The following table presents a breakdown of the 'towards belonging' behaviours for sessions 1, 2, 6, 7 and 8, as well as the number of speech quotations that each code was allocated to. Of course, it is possible to see a mix of these behaviours in all the other sessions and, of course, the behaviours in sessions 1, 2, 6, 7 and 8 are not exclusively either pro-group or anti-group. Nevertheless, this is still a pattern that emerged in general and which cannot be ignored:

**Table 6.5: A breakdown of 'towards belonging' behaviours in sessions 1, 2, 6, 7 and 8**

**Session 1**

<b>Towards Belonging</b>	<b>446</b>
Towards Belonging: Accept me and respect me	3
Towards Belonging: Accept me! Say I'm good enough!	18
Towards Belonging: Active listening behaviour	22
Towards Belonging: Activating Erna's initiating role	1
Towards Belonging: Agreeing	2
Towards Belonging: Approaching the group as a pair	29
Towards Belonging: Asking fellow member to elaborate	11

Towards Belonging: Asking for safe self-disclosure	1
Towards Belonging: Asking permission to ask	1
Towards Belonging: Attempt to include Erna on a different level	1
Towards Belonging: Checking on other member's attendance	2
Towards Belonging: Clarifying contents of current discussion	3
Towards Belonging: Confirming the existence of a subgroup as a protection against feeling exposed	2
Towards Belonging: Creating expectation for other's contribution	1
Towards Belonging: Drawing the group into her story with more detail	4
Towards Belonging: Emphasising her presence in order to belong	1
Towards Belonging: Emphasising similarities	4
Towards Belonging: Encouraging others to join her subgroup outside	1
Towards Belonging: Encouraging others to join in the current discussion	2
Towards Belonging: Erna's audience	17
Towards Belonging: Explaining herself	4
Towards Belonging: Relating a story in support of fellow member	3
Towards Belonging: Giving advice	4
Towards Belonging: Including member in current discussion	3
Towards Belonging: Introducing safe topic for discussion	7
Towards Belonging: Joining a new discussion	5
Towards Belonging: Joining the subgroup in fleeing from the group task	9
Towards Belonging: Joking	7
Towards Belonging: Making it easier for new group member to join the group	5
Towards Belonging: Participating in current discussion	244
Towards Belonging: Positive feedback with regard to other member's contribution	4
Towards Belonging: Reaching out to Afrikaans subgroup	2
Towards Belonging: Responding to direct question	1
Towards Belonging: Responding to Linda's attempt to console her	1
Towards Belonging: Seeking common ground	1
Towards Belonging: Setting up initiation ritual for Joshua	1
Towards Belonging: Sharing personal history in order to explain	1
Towards Belonging: Showing empathy and interest in other group member	7
Towards Belonging: Soothing behaviour in order not to deal with task	1
Towards Belonging: Supporting other member	1
Towards Belonging: Trying to make amends again after competitive behaviour with Debbie	1
Towards Belonging: Trying to shift attention to Debbie	1
Towards Belonging: Trying to understand other member better	1
Towards Belonging: Wanting to become part of the group	6

## **Session 2**

<b>Towards Belonging</b>	<b>391</b>
Towards Belonging: Accept me! Say I'm good enough!	7
Towards Belonging: Accepts help from Debbie	1
Towards Belonging: Agreeing	1
Towards Belonging: An inclusive and non-judgemental approach to group norms discussion	1
Towards Belonging: Approaching the group as a pair	33
Towards Belonging: Being apologetic	2
Towards Belonging: Belonging by participation	7
Towards Belonging: Building the bridge to resolve the conflict	3
Towards Belonging: Collective nervous grappling for something to do	20

Towards Belonging: Creating subgroup to which to belong	11
Towards Belonging: Erna's audience	3
Towards Belonging: Explaining herself	2
Towards Belonging: Frivolous participation	1
Towards Belonging: Giving Erna an opportunity to enter the conversation again	1
Towards Belonging: Giving new direction to current discussion to include more members	1
Towards Belonging: Including member in current discussion	1
Towards Belonging: Inclusion by translating	2
Towards Belonging: Introducing safe topic for discussion	4
Towards Belonging: Joking	15
Towards Belonging: Let us agree to disagree	1
Towards Belonging: Participating in current discussion	262
Towards Belonging: Positive feedback with regard to other member's contribution	1
Towards Belonging: Reaching out to Afrikaans subgroup	1
Towards Belonging: Sub-grouping with Maggie around not judging	1
Towards Belonging: Suggesting activity to alleviate anxiety	1
Towards Belonging: Supporting other member	2
Towards Belonging: Trying to get new discussion going/Who's who in the zoo	4
Towards Belonging: Trying to resolve conflict between Christian subgroup and group	1
Towards Belonging: Trying to understand other member better	1

### **Session 6**

<b>Towards Belonging</b>	<b>702</b>
Towards Belonging: Challenging leaders by creating solidarity by sitting on the floor	172
Towards Belonging: Group participation in open reflection	135
Towards Belonging: Introducing safe topic for discussion	1
Towards Belonging: Joking	2
Towards Belonging: Participating in current discussion	392

### **Session 7**

<b>Towards Belonging</b>	<b>23</b>
Towards Belonging: Affirming fellow member	2
Towards Belonging: Asking fellow member to elaborate	28
Towards Belonging: Asking permission to ask	2
Towards Belonging: Asking permission to ask	1
Towards Belonging: Being apologetic	2
Towards Belonging: Building on other member's contribution	26
Towards Belonging: Checking in – reporting on last night	11
Towards Belonging: Direct question regarding other member's feelings	2
Towards Belonging: Feelings of togetherness placed above feelings of conflict	7
Towards Belonging: Joking	1
Towards Belonging: Opening up and making vulnerable	8
Towards Belonging: Pairing between Debbie and Francis	6
Towards Belonging: Safe self-disclosure of personal information	58
Towards Belonging: Showing empathy and interest in other group member	38
Towards Belonging: Supporting other member	1
Towards Belonging: Trying to get a new discussion going	33
Towards Belonging: Trying to give other group members a chance to participate and not hide behind Erna	2

Towards Belonging: Trying to include member in the discussion	1
Towards Belonging: We like this group	5

### **Session 8**

<b>Towards Belonging</b>	<b>49</b>
Towards Belonging: Affirming fellow member	3
Towards Belonging: Are you OK?	1
Towards Belonging: Asking fellow member to elaborate	4
Towards Belonging: Being apologetic	1
Towards Belonging: Building on other member's contribution	6
Towards Belonging: Giving advice	4
Towards Belonging: Invitation to come and join the group on its level	3
Towards Belonging: Participating in current discussion	4
Towards Belonging: Rescuing the group from the awkward silence	8
Towards Belonging: Responding to invitation to join group on its level	3
Towards Belonging: Safe self-disclosure of personal information	9
Towards Belonging: Showing gratitude	1
Towards Belonging: Trying to persuade member to participate	1
Towards Belonging: Trying to understand other member better	1

In these tables it is clear that the overall quality of the towards belonging behaviours differed quite dramatically between sessions 1, 2 and 6 on the one hand and sessions 7 and 8 on the other. Again this reinforces the sense that, although seeds of the other were always present, the sessions were dominated by either pro-group or anti-group towards belonging behaviours.

In the following analysis, which will focus specifically on session 7, we are able to conduct a fine-grained and contextualised analysis to enable us to make inferences regarding the forces within the group.

#### 6.3.5 Conclusion: Analysis 2

To summarise: from observing the movement of the group over the ten sessions, we are able to see how the group follows a to and fro pattern between what I, in alignment with Nitsun (1996), call pro-group and anti-group behaviours. This is also in accordance with Bion's (1961) conceptualisation except that the pro-group and anti-group conceptualisation of Nitsun also allows for group development as the group progressively contains and works through the anti-group tendencies. This is also in

agreement with Von Bertalanffy (1968) and Agazarian's (Agazarian & Gantt, 2000) work on systems as well as the work of Beck (Beck *et al.*, 2000) and Bennis and Shepard(1956) on group development. The most interesting point which emerged from the discussion above was the fact that these pro- and anti-group movements can be discerned in the 'towards and away from individuality, belonging and task' categories with which we have worked here. This seems to indicate that the group member finds him/herself in a field of forces that operate either towards or against the development of the group and that it is possible to observe all these forces, whether pro-group or anti-group, as following patterns towards and away from individuality, belonging and task. We can, of course, through our in-depth analysis of session 7, be able to explore this further in order to ascertain whether the same pattern emerged there.

## 6.4 Analysis 3: Interpretation of the interplay of forces in session 7

### 6.4.1 Introduction: Analysis 3

For the purpose of conducting the in-depth analysis of session 7, the session has been subdivided into smaller sections. In accordance with Beck et al (Beck *et al.*, 2000), it was decided not to demarcate sections based on either the number of lines or the number of pages, but on meaningful units within the text. Each unit constitutes a section in the group's life that appeared to carry its own meaning. The result of this process was, thus, a subdivision of the session into seven different sections. In the following table the seven sections are listed, each with a concise heading referring to what the section mainly consisted of. The table also presents a list of the behaviour codes that were allocated to each section. The codes are listed as they appeared in the text in chronological order. This means that one code may occur more than once in the table.

**Table 6.6: Codes allocated per section in session 7**

<b>Section 1</b> Main theme: Checking in	TB: Checking in – reporting on last night
<b>Section 2</b> Main theme: Norms and boundaries	TT: Reflecting on group boundaries and norms in terms of depth AB: Silence from members who are not willing either to participate or to contribute AT: Grappling for alternative group task TB: Trying to get a new discussion going TT: Trying to get the group to participate in a common theme





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<b>Section 3</b> Main theme: Erna's role	AB: Silence from members who are not willing either to participate or to contribute AT: Grappling for alternative group task TB: Trying to get a new discussion going TT: Trying to get the group to participate in a common theme TB: Trying to involve members and not hide behind Erna TB: Trying to include member in the discussion AB: Resisting participation in the group
<b>Section 4</b> Main theme: Pam's role	TB: Safe self-disclosure of personal information TI: Self-disclosure of facts and biographical information TI: Self-disclosure of feelings connected to personal/private material TB: Asking fellow member to elaborate TB: Safe self-disclosure of personal information TI: Self-disclosure of facts and biographical information TI: Self-disclosure of feelings connected to personal/private material TT: Reflecting on member's behaviour in the group TB: Joking
<b>Section 5</b> Main theme: Being judged	TT: Reflecting on judgementalness in group AT: Shying away from conflict TB: Feelings of togetherness placed above feelings of conflict TT: Reflecting on judgementalness in group AT: Shying away from conflict TB: Feelings of togetherness placed above feelings of conflict TT: Reflecting on judgementalness in group
<b>Section 6</b> Main theme: Maggie feeling responsible	TB: Affirming fellow member TB: Building on other member's contribution TI: Self-disclosure of here and now emotion TT: Reflecting on member's behaviour in the group AT: Directing conversation to there and then TT: Self-reflective/ disclosure behaviour TI: Self-disclosure of here and now emotion TT: Reflecting on here and now emotion regarding interpersonal TI: Self-disclosure of here and now emotion TB: Opening up and making vulnerable TT: Checking perceptions with other members AB: Not meeting the level of vulnerability displayed AT: Christa shying away from level of honesty manifested in the question TI: Self-disclosure of here and now emotion TT: Open and honest reflection TB: Supporting other member TB: We like this group TB: Opening up and making vulnerable TI: Taking a personal stand/risk TT: Open and honest reflection TT: Self-reflective/opening up behaviour (making self vulnerable) TB: Direct question regarding other member's feelings TT: Direct question about interpersonal relationship in the group AB: Not meeting the level of vulnerability and directness in the question

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**Section 7**

Main theme: Judgement

AI: Not taking a stand/risk out there  
 AT: Shying away from deep level honesty  
 TB: Being apologetic  
 TB: Opening up and making vulnerable  
 TI: Taking a personal stand/risk  
 TT: Open and honest reflection  
 AB: Not meeting the level of vulnerability displayed  
 AI: Not taking a stand/risk out there  
 AT: Shying away from deep level honesty  
 TB: Being apologetic  
 TB: Opening up and making vulnerable  
 TI: Taking a personal stand/risk  
 TT: Open and honest reflection  
 TB: Affirming fellow member  
 TI: Self-disclosure of here and now emotion  
 TT: Self-reflective/opening up behaviour (making self vulnerable)  
 TB: Affirming fellow member  
 TB: Feelings of togetherness placed above feelings of conflict  
 AT: Shelly refusing to be honest  
 TT: Group moving towards honesty  
 TB: Direct question regarding other member's feelings  
 TT: Direct question about interpersonal relationship in the group  
 TI: Not willing to relinquish the initial position taken  
 AB: Pairing between Debbie and Francis, thus withholding from the group  
 TB: Pairing between Debbie and Francis  
 TT: Reflecting on judgementalness in group  
 TB: We like this group

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Table key: AB = Away from Belonging  
 AI = Away from Individuality  
 AT = Away from Task  
 TB = Towards Belonging  
 TI = Towards Individuality  
 TT = Towards Task

Each of these sections will now be analysed and interpreted in detail. For each section, the following pattern will be followed:

- a) First, the transcript of the section will be given so that the reader is able to grasp the exact context in terms of which the interpretation will be done;
- b) Following the transcript, a tabular representation of the codes that were allocated to that section will be presented. For each section, the table presenting the codes allocated will show the codes in the exact same order that they were allocated to the original transcript. Where codes were allocated twice, both occurrences will be shown in the table. The reason for this is to enable us to see movement in the group. The purpose here is not to cluster,

but to interpret behaviour as movement (or, in Lewin's terms, locomotion (Lewin, 1951)) so as to bring us to a position where we will be able to infer forces;

- c) Next, a discussion of the section will take place. This discussion will be based on the transcript, the codes that were allocated and the literature. During this discussion the context of the group - both its external and dynamic internal context - will be borne in mind. The purpose of this discussion is to 'comb through the data' in such a way that it will become possible to identify the forces at work;
- d) Following this discussion, another discussion of the section will take place, this time focusing only on the forces at play;
- e) Finally, a summary of the forces in each section will be presented in tabular format.

#### 6.4.2 Section 1

##### 6.4.2.1 *Transcript*

###### **Session 1: Checking in**

JOEL Good morning, everybody.  
 ALL Good morning  
 JOEL Okay. This is the start of our – how many?  
 STEPHAN Seventh.  
 JOEL Seventh session. Okay.  
 STEPHAN Anyone want to go?  
 JOEL Your thoughts? Maybe your thoughts?  
 LINDA Well, I was really tired last night and I am not going to say much.  
 MAGGIE Do you feel better today?  
 JOEL Better than yesterday?  
 LINDA I feel better, ja, but I was still very tired last night. Yesterday was quite draining.  
 JOEL Draining? Is there anybody else that also felt entirely drained?  
 SHELLY Very. I hardly spoke (indistinct 03.36).  
 JOEL Is it?  
 SHELLY I didn't want to speak.  
 JOEL Okay. (indistinct 03.46)  
 ERNA Ja, I also ... well, I find it essential to be a bit tired, you know, because we were all tired at the end, but I told myself that I'm going to have fun, so I did. I went out.  
 FRANCIS You went out?  
 JOEL Really?  
 ERNA Yes. I took a bath and ... ja, I took the (indistinct 04.08) and we went out ... had fun, so I'm tired now.  
 JOEL But we would like you to be here today.  
 ERNA I would be.  
 JOEL Are you starting with ... would you say what you want to say?

- MAGGIE Uhm ... I think I was feeling like Shelly last night as well. I just didn't want to talk. I think sometimes you just need to be alone with your thoughts, so that you can work through them and I feel like I did that last night and I just feel that its (indistinct 04.56).
- DEBBIE Say more. (laugh)

#### 6.4.2.2 Codes allocated to section 1

**Table 6.7: Codes allocated to section 1**

<b>Section 1</b>	TB: Checking in – reporting on last night
Main theme: Checking in	

#### 6.4.2.3 Discussion of transcript and coding

As can be seen in the text, section 1 had both a clear pattern and a goal, namely, checking in. Members took turns to talk about what they had done the previous evening, how they felt and what they expected from the day. The only code that was allocated to this section was TB: Checking in – reporting on last night. At this point it is important to remember that, on the previous day, the group had ended with session 6, in which they had first 'revolted' against the work done and the momentum created during session 5, and then, towards the end of session 6, they had started to grapple with the norms and boundaries of the group as well as the group's task: that is, what is expected of them, do they have a goal, and so on. Now, after the long and exhausting previous day, plus a night in which to deal with the emotions which had been stirred up during the previous day, the group decided first to check in and report on what they had done the previous night. This reportback seems to fulfil various functions: it provided a starting point for the group to create some common ground from which to proceed; it provided a relatively safe platform for the members to 'join' the group for the day in that the members were able to decide what, how much and in which tone to share their 'checking in' contributions and it also provided a 'bridge' between being outside the group and being inside the group – crossing this bridge could perhaps help the members to be present, here and now, in the group. Accordingly, it seems safe to infer that the underlying force to this checking-in behaviour may have been the group's need to establish its external boundary in order to proceed with the day's work. The effect of this force was that six of the nine members seized the opportunity either to

state openly something about where they stood in relation to the group, or to support the contributions from other members. One member, Erna, stated that she had gone out the previous night, after a very exhausting day, and that she had had very little sleep. The group responded that they would still like her to be present. The three members who did not participate in this check-in section were those two members who, early on in the group, had formed the 'Portuguese pair', namely, Pam and Christa, and Joshua, the only male member in the group. However, both Pam and Joshua joined in the discussion quite naturally during sections 2 and 3 of this session, thus giving the impression that, even although they had not verbally checked in during section 1, they were still very much present in what was happening. Christa, on the other hand, represented something different in the group. She remained quiet and detached until the end of section 3, at which point she was asked about her silence. However, she promptly resisted the request for her to join in the conversation:

DEBBIE            Okay. Christa, you haven't said a word.  
CHRISTA         I thought we were supposed to offer what one wants to say, not pinpoint who wants to say ... all of this.

In her personal reflection, Linda also made a reference to Christa's behaviour:

An example here is, of course, Christa repeatedly stating that there was no need to "psychoanalyse" us as this was just an unstructured conversation. She perhaps was just voicing what the group as a whole felt ... . As this is a personal reflection I must note that Christa made it hard for me to join, but also be in the group, at one stage. Her fidgeting made it look as if she had no interest in what was happening and, thus, I felt as though I'd rather keep quiet if she was so unamused by the conversations.

The reason for focusing here on the behaviour of one member who had been silent during the check-in section, is to make the point that, although there may have been a force operating towards belonging or towards establishing and monitoring the group boundary and making sure that everyone was on board, there seems to have also been a force present that was operating in the opposite direction, namely, away from belonging to and participation in the group's activities. Of course, this inference draws on the notions of Bion (group-as-a-whole) and Agazarian (invisible group and systemic levels) to the effect that the behaviour of individuals as subsystems of a group can reveal something about what is happening in the group and, indeed, also that

members of the group can take up roles on behalf of the group. Individual behaviour is, thus, viewed not only from the individual perspective, but also from the group perspective.

#### 6.4.2.4 *The interplay of forces*

We are able to discern two opposing forces at work here:

- a) Firstly, the force directed at facilitating the crossing of the boundary (between the group and its external environment) into the group and which manifested through the bridging conversation of checking-in. On the group-as-a-whole level, the point of application of this force is the membership-as-a-whole. In terms of 'being members of the small group' this force affected behaviour towards belonging in that it emphasised both the external group boundary and towards individuality as it resulted in the individuals becoming more visible in the group. On the member-level of systemic observation, this force can be seen as having, as its point of application, the individual members and as affecting their behaviour towards belonging as a result of the fact that each member showed his/her interest in belonging to the group and towards individuality by revealing something of him/herself in the group. In terms of the group's overall development, this force can be classified as a pro-group force – a force towards the group's overall growth and goal achievement.
- b) The second force that we are able to observe in this interaction is the force directed at resisting the crossing of this external group boundary when seen on the member-level (systemically) and also creating ambiguity about the external boundary (i.e. who is in and who is out) on the group-as-a-whole level. This force is manifested in Erna's declaration of tiredness and Christa's nonparticipation. On the group-level this force sets behaviour in motion both away from belonging as it undermines the general sense of cohesion within the group as well as away from individuality as the nonparticipation, or limited participation, potentially makes it more difficult for other members to show themselves freely in the group. On the member-level, the resultant behaviour can be seen as 'away from belonging' as members shun the invitation to join in the group activity and 'towards individuality' as the specific members choose to protect themselves and their interests rather than open up and show something of themselves for the benefit of the group. On the whole, this force can be seen as working against the overall growth and goal achievement of the group and, thus, it can be classified as an anti-group force.

### 6.4.3 Summary of the forces in section 1

**Table 6.8: Summary of the forces in section 1**

Force nr	Description of apparent force goal	Point of application	Manifested through	Direction of push/pull on membership	Pro- or anti-group
1a (Group-level)	To reaffirm the external group boundary	Membership -as-a-whole	Taking turns to check in	Towards belonging (Emphasising external boundary) Towards individuality (Individuals becoming visible)	Pro-group
1b (Member-level)	To facilitate the crossing of the boundary into the group	Individual members	Taking turns to check in	Towards belonging (Showing interest in belonging) Towards individuality (Showing the self within the group)	Pro-group
2a (Group-level)	To create ambiguity about the external group boundary (i.e. who is in and who is not)	Membership -as-a-whole	Erna's declaration of tiredness and Christa's nonparticipation	Away from belonging (Undermining a sense of cohesion) Away from individuality (Making it more difficult for others to become visible)	Anti-group
2b (Member-level)	To resist the crossing of the boundary into the group	Erna and Christa	Erna's declaration of tiredness and Christa's nonparticipation	Away from belonging (Resisting the invitation to join) Towards individuality (Self-protection)	Anti-group

#### 6.4.4 Section 2

##### 6.4.4.1 *Transcript*

###### **Section 2: Norms and boundaries**

- MAGGIE Okay. I might as well begin. So, I was telling Anon this morning that I realised that yesterday when I think we are starting to get interpreted and we did earlier work on (indistinct 05.31), but, at a certain stage, I was practically pleading with you not to go to the specific place that we weren't ready for. This was probably going to a specific place that I wasn't ready for and then later I rebottled it and I though okay, you know, I'm not used to being (indistinct 05.48) and I do actually want to cry, and I think maybe what it says is that sometimes you aren't always ready to talk about things at a specific time - you just need, at the time, to process things, to understand what is going on and then come back to it. So, maybe we should allow ourselves that we might be able to touch on topics that make us uncomfortable, but you don't have to completely let go. We can say, listen guys, I need a moment or we can say I don't (indistinct 08.16); we'll talk about something else. We don't need to put pressure on ourselves. We don't have to, you know ... we are in a sense imposing the rules, but if it gets uncomfortable, then absolutely nothing happens. We can just take it as it comes.
- STEPHAN What says the rest? Joshua, you shook your head?
- ALL Laugh
- STEPHAN Did you decide?
- ERNA We have. I have.
- JOEL With?
- ERNA No, I was saying ... let me not say we.
- JOEL I and me. And that I'm asking with those of you who agree?
- FRANCIS With what do you agree?
- ERNA With the fact that we must just let ourselves loose - don't take ourselves seriously and let's just talk without imposing rules. That's what she said.
- STEPHAN Is that what you said?
- MAGGIE In a sense. I did mean that as well, but I think more than rules; I mean pressure. I think that the mood is maybe something that we address or may ask later, like as it is happening we are not playing it against what is happening. If we are in a pressure situation like now, you know, we came in, we started, we won't exactly (indistinct 08.06), now we can or I don't know, maybe things are starting to turn uncomfortable. Maybe we should acknowledge that it's getting too pressurised and we just take the pressure off ourselves. We don't need to - it does not need to be stressful. It can be meaningful, but it does not have to be, you know. I mean, do you guys feel what I'm feeling as well?
- FRANCIS Ja.
- JOEL Tell me? Help me here? What is it ... what do you ... how much do I completely understand? Let me tell you, I understand the first part that you said earlier that you said you were redirecting the 'cleaning' part not to go there.
- MAGGIE Yes.
- JOEL Yes, that part I understand and that you maybe, you're inhibited or held the group back by doing that?
- MAGGIE Yes.



- JOEL Yes. That part I understand, but there's now another one just to take the stress off what? I am not sure I understand that part.
- FRANCIS I think what she's trying to say is we just push ourselves a little bit further, but not to the point where it is stressful for yourself.
- JOEL Okay, that's how you understand it.
- MAGGIE I think we, you know, in every situation we are going to ... the agreement won't have to be an exact outlay that a person takes someone else – his message. That message is to that person whatever it means to that person for whatever maybe it means, but it does mean that to me as well. I think my most important point about yesterday is that, even though (indistinct 10.02) feelings regarding, I really didn't want to go to a specific topic and afterwards I (indistinct 10.06). I didn't feel comfortable at that stage, you know, I didn't think that maybe we can go back to a specific place that you don't always feel ready at a specific moment and that's okay, you can come back to it, or you can deal with it later, or you can talk to the group and say listen, I'm feeling a bit anxious and I don't want to go forward. Let's just talk about this for a second. It does not, you know, go into a deeper level. It does not mean that you're going to take each other and (indistinct 10.32) ... redefine the ... uhm.
- JOEL Uhm. Okay. Take each other through the grinder.
- MAGGIE Ja.
- JOEL That was not necessary, you say.
- MAGGIE Maybe if (indistinct 10.53).
- PAM Ja. I understand what she's saying. Okay, so, you wanted to open up a bit, but give me an example what to open up to? What do you want to know or ... ?
- MAGGIE I think to whatever you want to open up about. Whatever you want to share and explore in the group, or, if something ... uhm ... check if something; you feel like you want to share something and you want to go, maybe you want to go to a specific place and talk to the group about it, then you should do that, but if you don't want to go or if you feel that you're getting too far in, simply you can say that's all I wanted to say about it and (indistinct 11.33). But that's just my feel, I mean.
- DEBBIE So, let's talk about the Pick 'n Pay scenario.
- MAGGIE In case (indistinct 11.48).
- DEBBIE Of course I did. (indistinct 11.51)
- MAGGIE Anyone else?
- DEBBIE No.
- INDV.? (indistinct 12.06)
- DEBBIE It's actually completely unrelated to go into the Pick 'n Pay element, but I'm thinking about is there really a right and a wrong? I mean, why should we be scared? There are no rules again. It's unstructured – just say it. Maybe we feel like saying and see where it goes. It's like we're sitting here now and we're resistant or scared – something horrible is going to happen and we're just sitting there in a group, talking.
- MAGGIE Okay.
- STEPHAN Getting back to what is something horrible and what is taken through the grinder of (indistinct 13.05), and what is there to be scared of? Is that what you refer to?
- DEBBIE Uhm. What's the worst possible scenario? Is it really that bad, you know – horrible?
- PAM I've just seen people that we struggle to bring up something, because I don't know what to bring up that's meaningful or, you know what to say and not talk

mom and dad, and I've been to Portugal – I've cried news. So, I don't know what else to give or to speak about. So, if somebody could give me something then maybe ...

#### 6.4.4.2 Codes allocated to section 2

**Table 6.9: Codes allocated to section 2**

<b>Section 2</b>	TT: Reflecting on group boundaries and norms in terms of depth
Main theme: Norms and boundaries	AB: Silence from members who are not willing either to participate or to contribute
	AT: Grappling for alternative group task
	TB: Trying to get a new discussion going
	TT: Trying to get the group to participate in a common theme

#### 6.4.4.3 Discussion

Following the initial checking-in to cross the boundary into the group, the discussion started to centre on boundaries with regards to the depth of conversation, and the way in which to control or manage these boundaries. We see an immediate shift in the group conversation towards task as Maggie, who by this time had started to play a strong, task leadership role in the group, started to reflect on her experience in the group and how she had projected her fear of going too deep onto the group by the comments that she had made the previous day. She started off by acknowledging that her concerns regarding going too deep had to do with her own discomfort but that this was something that she, and, probably, each group member, would be able to control in the future. She advocated self-regulation with regard to the boundary of depth of conversation on the part of each member concerned and stated that each member should take control of what he/she feels comfortable sharing, or not, and also make this known to the group so as to enable the group to respect that.

This first part of the conversation was, thus, coded “Towards task: Reflecting on group boundaries and norms in terms of depth”. It can be argued that Maggie fulfilled a function for the group by touching on this topic. It is then possible to infer that one of the operating forces within the group was the need to ‘test the brakes’ in order for both the group and its members to know how fast and far it could safely go. However, this does create a problem for the group as, until that point Maggie, together with Debbie, had been very active in ‘testing the accelerator’ of the group on behalf of the group, although they had done this in very different ways. Maggie’s towards task role had, in the main, been to open up and demonstrate ‘towards task’ behaviour. This



TI: Distinguishing self by providing 'therapy-like' interpretation	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
TI: Distinguishing self by moving to higher level of complex thought	0	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13
TI: Distinguishing self by showing personal, unique approach to the group	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3

Table key: TT = Towards Task; TI = Towards Individuality; C = Christa; D = Debbie; E = Erna; F = Francis; J = Joshua; L = Linda; M = Maggie; P = Pam; S = Shelly; T = Total

At this point in the life of the group a pattern was clearly visible to the effect that the responsibility for the group's task involvement was vested in the Debbie/Maggie pair. However, the differing ways in which the two members of this pair were dealing with this responsibility had created a difficult pushing and pulling dynamic within the group: On the one hand, there was the natural ambivalence created by Maggie's opening up behaviour (realising the potential value vs. the inherent fear of 'being in the spotlight') and, on the other, there was the resistance against Debbie's efforts to push or pull the group along whilst retaining her position of superiority within the group. It can be noted here that it was Debbie's reflection on her role in the group that had dominated much of session 5 and that the group had reflected on Debbie's attempts to be 'weird', or 'distancing' in session 5. Then, in session 6, when the group had revolted by sitting on the floor and deliberately discussing topics on which they had agreed during the lunch break, it was Debbie who had not joined the group on the floor and had remained elevated on one of the chairs.

The 'towards task' aspect of the ambivalence created by Maggie's initial reflection in this section is manifested by the fact that the group had allowed her to take the discussion in the direction of reflecting how they, as a group, could take control of the depth of their interaction. However, it is not possible for us to ignore the fact that the opposing force was present: Firstly, in the silence of the majority of the group – a silence that was characterised by a 'heavy' quality - and, secondly, in Erna's obvious misinterpretation of Maggie's contribution through which Erna opens up the possibility of the conversation going way off task again:

FRANCIS        With what do you agree?  
 ERNA            With the fact that we must just let ourselves loose – don't take ourselves seriously and let's just talk without imposing rules. That's what she said.  
 STEPHAN       Is that what you said?

Maggie then goes on to clarify what she said. This, in turn, arouses some interest in Pam, one of the group members who had been silent up to that point in this session, prompting Pam to engage with Maggie with regards to how they can proceed and what to focus on:

PAM                   Ja. I understand what she's saying. Okay, so, you wanted to open up a bit, but give me an example what to open up to? What do you want to know or?  
(The tone is one of genuine interest)

It would not be too farfetched to assume (in accordance with Bion, Agazarian and Foulkes) that Pam's behaviour in this instance can be perceived as fulfilling a role on behalf of the group, namely, to become involved and to share in the exploration of the possibilities available to the group, and maybe even to take over some of those responsibilities from the Debbie/Maggie pair. If this is, indeed, the case, then it can be possible to say that a force within the group towards development and taking control of its work may have been starting to emerge. This force, however, is set back temporarily when Debbie, true to the now established pattern in the group, tries to push the group towards working, or so it seems... .

DEBBIE               It's actually completely unrelated to go into the Pick 'n Pay element, but I'm thinking about is there really a right and a wrong? I mean, why should we be scared? There are no rules again. It's unstructured – just say it. Maybe we feel like saying and see where it goes. It's like we're sitting here now and we're resistant or scared - something horrible is going to happen and we're just sitting there in a group, talking.

MAGGIE               Okay.

STEPHAN             Getting back to what is something horrible and what is taken through the grinder of (indistinct 13.05), and what is there to be scared of? Is that what you refer to?

DEBBIE               Uhm. What's the worst possible scenario? Is it really that bad, you know – horrible?

This interaction created a similar resistance to that experienced in the group previously, thus strengthening the resistance to being pushed or pulled along and, therefore, heightening the complexity of the 'accelerator'/'break'dynamic that was vested in the Debbie/Maggie pair. This is illustrated by the fact that Pam immediately vents her frustration about what to speak about at that point:

PAM                   I've just seen people that we struggle to bring up something, because I don't know what to bring up that's meaningful or, you know, what to say and not talk, mom and dad, and I've been to Portugal – I've tried news. So, I don't know

what else to give or to speak about. So, if somebody could give me something then maybe ...  
(The tone here is one of irritation.)

This interaction by Pam immediately opens the door for Erna to rescue the group with another attempt to introduce a new topic for a monologue. This leads into the next section, in which the group actually calls a halt and reflects on Erna's role and the usefulness of this role at this stage of the group.

#### *6.4.4.4 The interplay of forces*

The forces that we have tentatively identified at this point include the following:

- a) First, we see a force in the direction of 'testing the brakes' – setting norms and boundaries –to enable the group to know how far and how fast it is able to go. This force is applied to the membership-as-a-whole when seen on the group-level and to Maggie, in particular, when seen on the member-level. It manifests through Maggie's behaviour when she reflects on her own ability to control what she says in the group and the group's ability to respect her wish. On the group-level this force can be seen as impacting on the membership-as-a-whole in the direction of the group's task as the group openly reflects on the norms and boundaries within the group, which is part of the group process. On the member-level we see this force having the 'towards task' effect on Maggie as she reflects on her own impact on the group process. This force can be seen as a pro-group force as it seems necessary for the group's overall development and sustainability that it should clarify issues such as norms and boundaries.
- b) However, the force discussed above is countered by a force in the direction of avoiding the 'testing of brakes' – setting norms in terms of the depth of conversation – in the hope that, if the braking issue remains unclear, then it could be that the group will be able to avoid working altogether and occupy itself with less threatening activities. This force is also applied to the membership-as-a-whole when seen on the group-level and to Erna, in particular, when looked at from a member-level perspective. It manifests through both the heavy silence and Erna's attempt to allow a misinterpretation of Maggie's words to be accepted by the group. This force, in turn, pushes the group-as-a-whole away from its task – through avoiding reflection on complex group issues –, away from individuality as individuals become less visible

within the group and towards belonging as the group assumes the quality of being a 'mass' behind or in which to hide. On the member-level, this force facilitates the avoidance of complex group issues. On the whole this force can be seen as an anti-group force – working towards the overall detriment of the group instead of its growth.

- c) The force towards avoiding boundarychecking is again countered by a force directed at the overall development of the group (pro-group), which manifests through Francis' critical question to Erna and strengthened by the facilitator's testing of Erna's summary of Maggie's initial contribution. On the group-level, this force is observed as being applied to the membership-as-a-whole and as acting as a driving impetus towards the group's task of focusing critically on checking reality. On the member-level, this force can also be seen as driving behaviour towards critical realitychecking, but also towards individuality as one of the members uses her unique critical faculties for the benefit of the group.
- d) Thus, resulting in Debbie's interaction, a now familiar force is set in motion. This force, which seems to be operating in the direction of the group's task and development, actually achieves the exact opposite whenever it is applied in this group: creating resistance both to becoming vulnerable and to engaging in the group's work. It can be that this force is actually (albeit unconsciously) set in motion as a defence against opening up, and is disguised as a prompting towards the group's work. This makes sense if we take into account that this force constantly manifested itself through Debbie, who also appeared to have a vested interest in siding with the facilitators and avoiding being seen as 'on the same level' as the group members. This could represent an outstanding example of Bion's(1961) notion of valence for a role. It would seem that there exists in Debbie a fear of being judged (refer to her opening statement about her expectations of the group) and, therefore, a fear of opening up. We see, thus, in Debbie, an unconscious wish either to play the psychologist and allow others to open up, or to push the group towards working in such a way that the group's natural resistance to being pushed will be activated and result in a move away from the group's work. This force is, thus, disguised as working towards the development of the group whilst, in actual fact, it is working towards activating the group's natural defence against being pushed by one of its members. It manifests through Debbie's behaviour and creates an away-from-task thrust as the group-as-a-whole avoids reflecting on complex group issues; an away-from-individuality drive as members become less visible and a pull towards belonging as the group becomes a safe place in which members



can hide in the 'safety of numbers'. On the member-level this force can be seen as being applied to Debbie, in particular, leading to a drive to lessen the risk of being asked to indulge in personal sharing herself (thus, away from task and away from individuality), but also to protect herself (towards individuality) and to distance herself from the group (away from belonging). The abovementioned force towards the group reflex immediately gives rise to a counter force which is, in turn, met with the actual reflex-force mentioned above. The countering force manifests in Pam's critical comment on the hidden double messages regarding 'acceleration' and 'breaking' while the reflex-force manifests through the reflex-reaction of both Erna and the group to activate the now familiar defence against work in Erna's role as flightleader. The countering force will be discussed under force number 'e' below, while the reflex force will be discussed under force number 'f' below.

- e) This force counters the stealthlike 'force-aimed-at-triggering-the-reflex' that was discussed under number 4 above in that it is directed at countering the double messages being given out by Debbie and Maggie. On the group-level, the force is applied to the membership-as-a-whole with the concomitant effect of pulling the group both towards critical realitychecking (towards task) and towards individuality as one member's becoming visible through critical commentary, without, however, leading to her being put down, potentially assists in establishing an atmosphere in which other members can become more willing to become visible themselves. On the member-level this force is applied to Pam and drives her both towards task, by checking reality, and towards using her unique individual competencies for the benefit of the group. Accordingly, this force can be seen as having an overall positive effect on the group's development and potential for goalachievement.
- f) As mentioned above, the force that was aimed at countering the potential reflexreaction to 'being pushed by one of our peers' was, in fact, met by the reflex force. Aimed at defending against working through difficult group processes, this force manifested in Erna's, by now familiar, flightleadership role. The force had an impact on the group-level in that the group-as-a-whole was pushed away from the group's task of reflecting on its own complex processes and towards becoming a safe mass behind which to hide. The overall quality of this force is that of an anti-group force as it appears that the force is aimed at undermining the group's development and also goalachievement.



#### 6.4.4.5 Summary of the forces in section 2

**Table 6.12: Summary of the forces in section 2**

Force nr	Description of apparent force goal	Point of application	Manifested through	Direction of push/pull on membership	Pro or anti-group
1a (Group-level)	To set norms in terms of managing depth of conversation	Membership -as-a-whole	Maggie's reflection	Towards task (Reflecting on group process)	Pro-group
1b (Member-level)	To set norms in terms of managing depth of conversation	Maggie	Maggie's reflection	Towards task (Reflecting on her own impact on group process)	Pro-group
2a (Group-level)	To avoid the setting of norms in terms of managing depth of conversation	Membership -as-a-whole	Heavy silence, plus Erna's misinterpretation of Maggie's reflection	Away from task (Avoiding reflection on complex group issues) Away from individuality (Individuals becoming invisible) Towards belonging (Group as a mass behind which to hide)	Anti-group
2b (Member-level)	To avoid the setting of norms in terms of managing depth of conversation	Erna	Heavy silence, plus Erna's misinterpretation of Maggie's reflection	Away from task (Avoiding reflection on complex group issues)	Anti-group
3a (Group-level)	To ensure realitychecking of the contributions made in the group	Membership -as-a-whole	The reflections of both Francis and the facilitator on Erna's contribution	Towards task (Critical reality checking)	Pro-group
3b (Member-level)	To ensure realitychecking of the contributions made in the group	Francis	Reflections of both Francis and the facilitator on Erna's contribution	Towards task (Critical reality checking) Towards individuality (Using her cognitive faculties for the benefit of the group)	Pro-group
4a (Group-level)	To trigger the group's defence against opening up in the group	Membership -as-a-whole	The style and result of Debbie's encouragement	Away from task (Avoiding reflection on complex group issues) Away from individuality (Individuals becoming invisible) Towards belonging (Group as a mass behind which to hide)	Anti-group
4b (Member-level)	To trigger the group's defence against opening up in the group	Debbie	The style and result of Debbie's encouragement	Away from task (Lessening the risk of being asked to indulge in personal sharing) Away from individuality (Lessening the risk of having to show herself) Towards individuality (Self-protection) Away from belonging (Distancing herself from the group)	Anti-group

5a (Group-level)	To counter the double messages being given out by Debbie and Maggie	Membership -as-a-whole	Pam's critical comment	Towards task (Critical reality checking) Towards individuality (Individuals becoming visible)	Pro-group
5b (Member-level)	To counter the double messages being given out by Debbie and Maggie	Pam	Pam's critical comment	Towards task (Critical reality checking) Towards individuality (Using her cognitive faculties for the benefit of the group)	Pro-group
6a (Group-level)	To defend against working through difficulties regarding the group process	Membership -as-a-whole	Erna's flight-leadership	Away from task (Avoiding reflection on complex group issues) Towards belonging (Groupas a mass behind which to hide)	Anti-group
6b (Member-level)	To defend against working through difficulties regarding the group process	Erna	Erna's flight-leadership	Away from task (Avoiding reflection on complex group issues)	Anti-group

#### 6.4.5 Section 3

##### 6.4.5.1 *Transcript*

#### **Section 3: Erna's role**

ERNA

Okay. Can ... is it possible that we can talk about work? Can we talk about like, you know, where you are at the moment, the company that you are working for, the activities that you are doing, uhm ... what would you like to do, because sometimes, I mean, you know, they always send me on jobs that we don't like or maybe there is something that you know of that you feel you wouldn't want to do – that you are doing at the moment – your aspirations – whatever that is of interest to you and related to work. Or maybe in your company what you are being exposed to, what you would like to be exposed to, the people that you work with, the department itself, how is it structured, how do you see yourself in that department? Something like that. I guess somewhere, somehow, we can also even help with the things that you are saying may be of interest in those type of things, I can learn from you, I will know, maybe, if for instance, I've got this form of some sort graduate, whether form; I can speak to you because you spoke about it. You told me that you are dealing with it. Maybe I can, you know, refer back to you and say, oh no, Debbie has got stuff like this, you know? We can talk, because I think somewhere, somehow, as a group, we are doing the same thing, we are in the same field, but we are separated in terms of the companies that we work for and, you know, we can assist one another, somewhere, somehow, in terms of the things that we're doing. It's networking. Ja, I think that's ... so, we can talk about that?

JOEL That's a suggestion. Any other suggestions or is that where you want to go?  
MAGGIE (indistinct 15.29) (I don't work)  
LINDA I don't work  
ALL Laugh.  
ERNA Say, listen. Yes, then maybe we'll listen and hear, and, you know, there has been a point at, and you know ...  
LINDA You listen and learn.  
ERNA And when we give you input in terms of, you know, like you're studying obviously, you are with us, in terms of the things that you would want to do once you complete it.  
ALL Silence  
DEBBIE Do we start with me?  
JOEL What's the ... what do you make of the silence ... the two people that are not working said no, they haven't got anything to talk about, but they can listen.  
JOSHUA But they can speak about what they, perhaps, wanted to do.  
ERNA Ja, like I said – what they would want to do. I mean, she has worked before as well. I mean, sometimes she does refer back to ... you know.  
JOEL I heard that part.  
ERNA Yes. So, she can talk about that experience and also talk about the future. And the other guys are quiet, so, basically, we agreed.  
ALL Laugh  
STEPHAN Or not.  
ERNA Or not, but she has agreed because ... and he has and she has, *Shelly* is forced to do it.  
JOSHUA Harass them.  
ERNA Harassed. Coerced into it.  
STEPHAN It's the same thing, but, psychologically, you have two directly opposed meanings - silence can mean, yes, I consent; but silence can also mean, no, I don't want to do it.  
JOSHUA Not really keen on it.  
PAM Well, who would like to speak all of that topic? Would you like to speak about it?  
MAGGIE Would you like to speak about it?  
SHELLY It's fine with me.  
ERNA Debbie?  
DEBBIE I have a reservation.  
ERNA A reservation? Does that mean you will speak to a certain point and as for you?  
DEBBIE Yes.  
ERNA Okay. It's acceptable. Uhm ... Christa?  
MAGGIE I don't know. We can say what we want to say, and, if the conversation takes us to different direction, then we should allow it to. We don't have to, you know, only talk about the ..., but I don't mind talking about that as well.  
ERNA True.  
MAGGIE But I am interested in that as well.  
DEBBIE Me? I don't mind. I have some experience, so ... (indistinct 17.58). Don't look at me.  
ERNA Just start with you?  
DEBBIE No, seriously, you don't want me to start.  
ERNA Why not?  
DEBBIE You just don't.  
ERNA Okay.

ERNA Okay. I'll say something – good point.  
 JOEL Maybe, Erna, can you try not to start? Because I think you always start?  
 PAM Not in a bad way.  
 ERNA Okay.  
 JOSHUA Jy's oraait  
 DEBBIE Okay. Christa, you haven't said a word.  
 CHRISTA I thought we were supposed to offer what one wants to say, not pinpoint who wants to say. All of this.

#### 6.4.5.2 Codes allocated to section 3

**Table 6.13: Codes allocated to section 3**

<b>Section 3</b>	AB: Silence from members who are not willing either to participate or to contribute
Main theme: Erna's role	AT: Grappling for alternative group task
	TB: Trying to get a new discussion going
	TT: Trying to persuade group to participate in a common theme
	TB: Trying to involve members and not hide behind Erna
	TB: Trying to include member in the discussion
	AB: Resisting participation in the group

#### 6.4.5.3 Discussion

This section describes one of a number of occurrences in the life of the group during which the facilitators created a moment for the group to reflect on the pattern that had been created around Erna's role. This session started with a silence which had been induced by Pam's remark about her frustration with the double messages regarding what to share and what not to share and how deeply to share. Then, following the pattern that had emerged right from the first session of the group's life, Erna broke the silence with a speech that was considerably longer than the speeches delivered directly before and after she spoke. In this case, Erna's speech was not, as so often before, an attempt to try to entertain the group with stories from her own life, but rather one in which she suggested and tried to motivate a plan for the group to move forward. In line with her earlier comment of "let's just talk about anything" she proposes an alternative task for the group, namely, to talk about work. This is rather ironic as the goal of her speech was to find alternative work for the group and the topic that she suggested for discussion by the group members was their respective work situations. However, something interesting happens next – her speech is followed by silence on

the part of all the group members, except for two of the members who indicate that they are not currently employed.

Four behaviour codes with opposing directions in terms of the belonging and task goal region complexes were allocated to this exchange: first, the attempt to create a common task or theme in which the group could engage, was seen as a 'towards belonging' behaviour as it is, clearly, an attempt to establish a way in which to include all the group members in the discussion. In terms of the role that Erna had been playing up to that point in the group, this attempt appears to be in line with her usual attempts to rescue the group whenever it seems unsure of how to proceed. However, the strong silence after her speech had the distinct quality of 'disengagement' with nobody indicating that they agreed with her suggestion. In fact, it was recorded in the field notes that the group resisted Erna's suggestion. In reality, the only voices heard were those of two members indicating that they were not employed and, thus, they would not have anything to contribute. It can be that this fact of unemployment made it easier for these members to voice their problems with the suggestion and that this fact was unconsciously 'employed' by the group to air the need of the entire group not to be drawn into another pointless discussion yet again. This silence on the part of the group was coded as 'away from belonging' behaviour and it can very well be the result of a force similar to the one that we encountered in the preceding discussion, namely, the resistance of the group to being dragged along or coerced by one of its members into something that the group members had not all agreed that they would do.

ERNA	Yes. So, she can talk about that experience and also talk about the future. And the other guys are quiet, so, basically, we agreed.
JOSHUA	Or not.
ERNA	Or not, but she has agreed because ... and he has and she has, <i>Shelly</i> is forced to do it.
JOSHUA	Harass them.
ERNA	Harassed. Coerced into it.
STEPHAN	It's the same thing, but, psychologically, you have two dimensionally opposed meanings – silence can mean, yes, I consent; but silence can also mean, no, I don't want to do it.

In order to be fair towards Erna's role here, one must not ignore the fact that she is trying to persuade the group to participate in a common theme, something that the group has found difficult to do. However, this behaviour which is aimed at the group's task actually ends up detracting from the group's task as a result of the fact that the attempt is misguided as it aims at generating discussion around something that is an

alternative to what the group is actually supposed to be busy with. These opposing 'towards task' and 'away from task' behaviours can be seen as resulting from opposing forces within the group with regards to its task. On the one hand, there is the force towards the actual task of the group – a force which, until now, has strongly manifested through the behaviours of Maggie and Debbie:

DEBBIE                      I have a reservation  
...  
MAGGIE                    I don't know. We can say what we want to say and, if the conversation takes us to a different direction, then we should allow it to.

On the other hand, there is the force away from task which, until now, has manifested strongly through Erna's behaviour.

Another incident that must not be overlooked is Joshua's instinctive reaction to Erna's assumption that the silence means that everybody agrees:

ERNA                      Yes. So, she can talk about that experience and also talk about the future. And the other guys are quiet, so, basically, we agreed.  
JOSHUA                    Or not.

It would appear that this behaviour is the result of an underlying force within the group that is directed at fulfilling the need for being critical about what is being assumed to be the truth in the group. The moment that Joshua responded, Erna responded with making the covert overt:

ERNA                      Or not, but she has agreed because ... and he has and she has, *Shelly* is forced to do it.  
JOSHUA                    Harass them.  
ERNA                      Harassed. Coerced into it.

The facilitator is quick to make use of this opportunity to strengthen the force directed at being critical about assumptions within the group:

STEPHAN                   It's the same thing, but, psychologically, you have two directly opposite meanings – silence can mean, yes, I consent; but silence can also mean, no, I don't want to do it.

Suddenly there is a new pattern emerging with Pam taking the lead in checking with the members whether or not they are in agreement with this. Eventually it is also Pam (see discussion in the next section) who comes forward and volunteers to talk about her own work situation. First we see a reluctant agreement to engage in this alternative task and then a strong resistance emerges to being the first one to actually engage in this alternative task.

DEBBIE            No, seriously, you don't want me to start.

ERNA              Why not?

DEBBIE            You just don't.

DEBBIE            Okay. Christa, you haven't said a word.

CHRISTA           I thought we were supposed to offer what one wants to say, not pinpoint who wants to say. All of this.

Of course, the fact that the facilitator had intervened by countering the group force that would simply allow Erna to volunteer herself, forced the group to adhere to its uncomfortable decision to embark on this alternative task whilst not all the members had agreed to do so. Accordingly, with the force towards safety and inclusion strongly present and working together with the force away from the group's anxiety-provoking task, it is the forces towards critical and honest reflection and towards efficient group functioning that are strengthened by the facilitator when he disrupts the old pattern and requests Erna not to start. This intervention by the authority figure in the group was different to any intervention thus far in that it was the first time that the facilitator had made a direct attempt to stop someone from speaking. When seen within the power relations in a university context one can argue that Erna, who is a student in a course, would, of course, immediately submit to such an intervention. However, in this case, it seems more reasonable to argue that the intervention was in line with the current mood within the group and, therefore, there were no objections triggered to the directness of their intervention. Why would the second possible explanation be more reasonable? Possibly because neither of the facilitators had ever been in any relationship to the group members other than being facilitators in this group experience.

In addition, the group had, at that point, had more than six sessions in which they had experienced the freedom to talk and to talk about whatever they chose to talk. Accordingly, it would appear that it was less a function of the external context and more a function of the internal context created by the group that played a role in the facilitator's decision to make the intervention, in Erna's decision to stand back and in



the group's decision not to challenge the facilitator, but to continue to try to find someone else to take a turn to speak. It is almost as if the group had been waiting for something like this to happen and was relieved when it actually did happen as the group itself had felt unable to deal with the situation effectively. It can, therefore, be argued that there was a force within the group that had allowed, or even asked for, such an intervention to take place. This force could be called a force towards the efficient functioning of the group (giving all the members equal opportunities) and, in this case, the result was that a new member, Pam, started to explore issues surrounding her role both at the workplace and within the group.

One more interaction that must not be overlooked is the final resistance on the part of Christa to being included in the group discussion when invited to do so by Debbie. It is essential that we look at this interaction between Debbie and Christa against the backdrop of the group's entire story thus far and, specifically, against the backdrop of one of the roles that Christa had been fulfilling on behalf of the group. There are three patterns that had strongly characterised Christa's involvement in the group up to that point, namely, her pairing up with Pam, her being a voice on the issue of competition between females on behalf of the group and her willingness to challenge the facilitators. However, we are not going to interpret this small interaction at this point as a result of the fact there was a more prominent playing out of these dynamics later in this session and it is at that point that we will take an in-depth look at the forces represented by Christa's roles within the group. Nevertheless, at this point, a prudent conjecture may be that her behaviour signified the force in the group directed at putting a hold on the group's progress because of a feeling of discomfort with the group's process.

#### *6.4.5.4 The interplay of forces*

The forces that emerged during this section of session 7 can be summarised as follows:

- a) The first force at play in this section is the resistance of the group to being dragged along or coerced by one of its members into doing something which they had not all agreed to do. This force seems to correspond with the force identified in the previous section, namely, the group's reflex resistance to being either pushed or pulled by a fellow group member with both referring to a reluctance within the group to move as a result of some form of discomfort with the group process at the time. In the previous section it seemed as if there was



discomfort regarding Debbie's role as pseudofacilitator while, in this section, the discomfort seems to have been with the communication pattern around which Erna's role had been constructed. It must, however, be pointed out that it was not necessarily the proposed movement itself by the peer, first Debbie and now Erna, that had caused the resisting force, but the way in which it was being proposed and the concomitant risk, as perceived by the group, should this way of operating be allowed to continue and perpetuate itself. This is reminiscent of Armstrong's notion of the organisation in the mind (Armstrong, 2005) with the risk here being that a specific system-in-the-mind be allowed to prevail and to continue to influence the way in which things were being done within the group. On the group-level, it is possible to see how this force is being applied to the membership-as-a-whole and manifested through the uniform joining in the silence on the part of the group in response to Erna's request. On the member-level we are able to see the force being applied to 'the silent group member' and creating a pull away from joining Erna on an interpersonal level. On the whole, this force can be seen as working towards the development of the group as it resists being pulled into a pattern that has been proved unsuccessful up to that point.

- b) However, this force is accompanied by a force that works subtly against the overall development and goal attainment of the group by keeping the group from voicing its concern openly about the group process. When applied to the membership-as-a-whole we are able to see the individual members becoming less visible within the group with the drive towards belonging as a way in which to hide behind the group and the drive away from the group's task of open and honest communication. When viewed on the systemic level of the group member, it is possible to see this force as being applied to 'the silent group member' and driving the member away from individuality and task as he/she refrains from taking a 'stand out there' and, in so doing, avoids open communication about the group's process. When seen in this way, it is clear that this force is acting as an anti-group force – driving the group to act out its resistance rather than verbalise it.
- c) On a different, more conscious, content focused level, we then also identified two directly opposing forces with regards to the group's task. On the one hand, there is the force directed at 'keeping things light-hearted and safe', as manifested through Erna's behaviour, which was aimed at helping the group to avoid open communication and ensuring that she feels more comfortable in joining the group in conversation.

- d) The force directed at keeping the conversation focused around the group's task of exploring its own functioning as it plays out, as manifested through Maggie's behaviour when she declares her willingness to talk about 'work' on condition that the group allows the conversation to take its own course and not limit it to frivolous talk about workenvironments. This latter force is directed at not allowing the group to lose sight of its goal. Accordingly, this force moves the group-as-a-whole towards task, individuality and belonging as it helps to keep the possibility for work alive, and allows the members to become visible while still emphasising a sense of togetherness within the group, albeit togetherness around a slightly off-task activity. On the member-level this force also has a towards task, individuality and belonging effect as Maggie keeps the door open for working towardstask, yet states her personal preference in such a way that she also shows her need to belong to the group at that moment.
- e) As described above, Joshua's comment "or not" can again refer to the first force discussed above, namely, the underlying force in the group that is directed at fulfilling the need to be critical about what is being assumed to be the truth within the group. However, where this force first manifested itself covertly as resistance to being dragged along with an untested 'organisation-in-the-mind', it now manifests more overtly with one of the members taking a critical stance towards the assumption that silence means agreement. This overt manifestation of the force then opens the way for the facilitators to use their role to strengthen both this force and its impact on the group's development. Agazarian (Agazarian & Gantt, 2000) recommend intervening by weakening the forces that work against the group's growth and development and, thereby, facilitating the inherent drive of the living system towards growth and development. This intervention on the part of the facilitators can be said to have a weakening effect on the force aimed at maintaining the status quo as it supported a critical reflection on the adequacy of certain of the existing roles and patterns within the group. It can, therefore, be seen as a pro-group force with the members, in this case, Joshua, becoming visible for the sake of the group moving towards its task.
- f) This critical reflection aimed at weakening the forces maintaining the ineffective group processes was then followed by a renewed expression of the force towards safety and inclusion, as mentioned under 'b' above, with the members taking turns to agree that they would join in the discussion about work. On a group-level, we see this force as working away from task and away from individuality and, on a member-level, we see the additional move towards

belonging as the members seek to hide behind the safety provided by the group.

- g) However, the forces towards critical and honest reflection and towards efficient group functioning, as strengthened by the facilitators' interventions, manifested yet again, this time with regard to the reluctance on the part of group members to embark on the now implicitly accepted plan to talk about something other than the group's task. This can be seen as an 'away from belonging' force on both the systemic levels of the group-as-a-whole and the group member with the overall quality of working towards the group's development.
- h) In reaction to this force, the opposing forces directed at maintaining the roles and communication patterns that create safety at the expense of group development, manifested through Erna's volunteering to start with a discussion of her own work situation. On the group-level, we are able to see how the group is moved away from task and towards belonging as the group again runs the risk of becoming a hiding place, and away from individuality as the individuals in the group become less visible. On the member-level, we are able to see Erna becoming visible as an individual, but in such a way that it takes the group away from its task
- i) This process was abruptly stopped by the facilitator, probably still being affected by the force towards being critical of the unhelpful patterns and roles within the group and towards the efficient functioning of the group by creating space in which new patterns can develop when someone else is given the opportunity to initiate discussion.
- j) Finally, we see in Christa's reaction the possible force against group progress (in this case, helping the group to progress by deciding to join the group in its work) as a result of unhappiness with some issue relating to the process of the group or, at least, with something relating to the members' experience of the group process. There is an important link here in terms of Nitsun's (1996) conceptualisation of the anti-group. According to Nitsun, anti-group behaviour encompasses important information about the group and its underlying process, behaviour which, when addressed and worked through, holds significant potential for the group's development. In this case, the anti-group behaviour encompasses Christa's refusal to join in. It is, therefore, possible that valuable information about the group and its process can be uncovered in this refusal of Christa's and, thus, one should perhaps ask: Why? Why the refusal to join? We will come back to these questions later on in this session when we explore Christa's behaviour in more detail. It is interesting to

note, however, the way in which this behaviour represents a towards individuality quality on the member-level – as she tries to protect herself – but an ‘away from individuality’ quality on the group-level as she makes it more difficult for others to become ‘visible’ and vulnerable in the group as a result of her refusal to join the group.

#### 6.4.5.5 Summary of forces

**Table 6.14: Summary of the forces in section 3**

Force nr	Description of apparent force goal	Point of application	Manifested through	Direction of push/pull on membership	Pro- or anti-group
1a (Group-level)	To resist being pulled into an unwanted group process	Membership -as-a-whole	Group silence as response to Erna's suggestion	Towards belonging (Together in resistance)	Pro-group
1b (Member-level)	To resist being pulled into an unwanted group process	The 'silent member'	Group silence as response to Erna's suggestion	Away from belonging (Not joining Erna)	Pro-group
2a (Group-level)	To refrain from voicing concerns overtly regarding group process	Membership -as-a-whole	Group silence as response to Erna's suggestion	Away from individuality (Individuals becoming invisible) Away from task (Avoiding open communication and exploring)	Anti-group
2b (Member-level)	To resist being pulled into something that has not been agreed upon	The 'silent member'	Group silence as response to Erna's suggestion	Away from individuality (Not taking a stand out there) Away from task (Avoiding open communication and exploring)	Anti-group
3a (Group-level)	To keep things light-hearted and safe	Membership -as-a-whole	Erna's suggestion to talk about work	Away from task (Avoiding reflection on complex group issues)	Anti-group
3b (Member-level)	To keep things light-hearted and safe	Erna	Erna's suggestion to talk about work	Towards belonging (Need to create a theme in terms of which to join the group)	Anti-group
4a (Group-level)	To focus the conversation on the group's task of exploring its own functioning	Membership -as-a-whole	Maggie's comments on allowing the conversation to develop	Towards task (Keeping possibility for work open) Towards individuality (Individuals becoming visible) Towards belonging (Emphasising togetherness)	Pro-group
4b (Member-level)	To focus the conversation on the group's task of exploring its own functioning	Maggie	Maggie's comments on allowing the conversation to develop	Towards task (Keeping possibility for work open) Towards individuality (Showing the self in the group) Towards belonging (Showing interest in belonging)	Pro-group

5a (Group-level)	To ensure realitychecking with regard to the contributions made within the group	Membership -as-a-whole	The reactions of both Joshua and the facilitator	Towards task (Critical reality checking) Towards individuality (Individuals becoming visible)	Pro-group
5b (Member-level)	To ensure realitychecking with regard to the contributions made within the group	Joshua	The reactions of both Joshua and the facilitator	Towards task (Critical reality checking)	Pro-group
6a (Group-level)	To keep things light-hearted and safe	Membership -as-a-whole	Group not suggesting alternative task	Away from task (Avoiding reflection on complex group issues) Away from individuality (Individuals becoming invisible)	Anti-group
6b (Member-level)	To keep things light-hearted and safe	Various members	Members agreeing to talk about work	Away from task (Avoiding reflection on complex group issues) Towards belonging (Groupasmass behind which to hide)	Anti-group
7a (Group-level)	To resist being pulled into something that has not been agreed upon	Membership -as-a-whole	Nobody volunteering to proceed with workdiscussion	Away from belonging (Resisting being pulled along)	Pro-group
7b (Member-level)	To resist being pulled into something that has not been agreed upon	Various members	Nobody volunteering to proceed with workdiscussion	Away from belonging (Resisting being pulled along)	Pro-group
8a (Group-level)	To maintain ineffective roles and patterns	Membership -as-a-whole	Erna's readiness to start the conversation	Away from task (Avoiding reflection on complex group issues) Towards belonging (Groupasmass behind which to hide) Away from individuality (Individuals becoming invisible)	Anti-group
8b (Member-level)	To maintain ineffective roles and patterns	Erna	Erna's readiness to start the conversation	Away from task (Avoiding reflection on complex group issues) Towards individuality (Individual becoming visible)	Anti-group
9a (Group-level)	To change ineffective communication patterns	Membership -as-a-whole	Facilitator asking Erna not to start	Towards task (Changing communication pattern)	Pro-group
9b (Member-level)	To change ineffective communication patterns	Facilitator	Facilitator asking Erna not to start	Towards task (Changing communication pattern) Away from belonging (Erna can feel reprimanded)	Pro-group
10a (Group-level)	To resist the crossing of the boundary into the group	Membership -as-a-whole	Christa's refusal to interact	Away from belonging (Undermining a sense of cohesion) Away from individuality (Making it even more difficult for others to become visible))	Anti-group

10b (Member-level)	To resist the crossing of the boundary into the group	Christa	Christa's refusal to interact	Away from belonging (Resisting the invitation to join) Towards individuality (Self-protection)	Anti-group
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## 6.4.6 Section 4

### 6.4.6.1 Transcript

#### Section 4: Pam and Maggie's roles

PAM (indistinct 18.38). I first worked in a company that was a very bad experience – a very new company. They started off, but treated very badly. I was treated like a tea lady. I had to make food for the bosses. I couldn't actually do recruitment because I was placed in different positions. I first went to *Anon*; they moved to Anon and then they asked me to do labour broking and I didn't get any training – nothing. And, ja, so the boss and I, we had a bit tip with one another. I actually was the first girl to tell him that I was not his maid and that he can do his own food and his own coffees. Uhm ... from that I was treated very badly; went to meetings and then said I am going to get a first warning for no apparent reason. So, in a big way, I decided to resign. So, it was a different start for me because we had finished Honours and I didn't get into Masters. Apparently I didn't get accepted and then again: no job, no studies and I was taking that very hard, which is okay. So, I went away for a month, but you know, in your mind, you always think okay, I want to come back, I want a job, no studies, what am I going to do? So, then I came back and I decided to look for a job, but now looking for a job is quite difficult, so? And I thought to myself, okay, well, I've got no inspiration and no motivation, because I've got no job here and I mean with my family you've got to have a job or you've got to do something – you couldn't just stay at home. And then there's pressure at home. So, you've got pressure at home and then pressure with yourself to find something. And I also thought to myself, my goodness, my first career was terrible. I mean, what's going to make me do, wow, in another career? Am I going to do better or am I going to be just as pathetic as my first one? Then, luckily I phoned my boss. We had five bosses, which was very weird. The third one was very nice. So, I asked him please, help me, I want to do the internship of psychometrics because I couldn't get into Masters, so I thought, let me do my psychometrics for the Board exam and then ... ja, and Christa and Anon went to their Master's group and then, very nice of them, they spoke to Prof. Anon and, luckily, there was a space opening and Prof. Anon phoned me because of them. They motivated me because I'm a good worker – hell, I thought I ... I didn't know if I was or ready for work, but ja, that was good news. And I went into Masters. I drove like a maniac towards the first class, so (**group laughing**), and then phoning my dad, my mom and then ... and I phoned my boyfriend, shame, but I was crying. And he's like, are you okay? Are you okay? Something happened to me. No, don't talk, it's Master, but it's (indistinct 21.15) ... So, I'm trying to get into Masters, which is quite nice, so, but I think I wasn't ready for it, because my mind was completely shut down, because I didn't know if I was ready for Masters or not, but I'm managing. It's just slow a little bit, because I don't think I'm in it yet, but I think I'm okay. And





then in May ... no, in March, I have definitely got a job in Anon to do assessments. So, ja. It's very interesting. I meet a lot of people. Actually during 1 week I did 155 people. We do different tests. So, I test them and also I used to be a very introvert, a very light person and the worst person to speak to people. I always prefer people say how are you and then. I'm like - okay, and yourself? So, actually, I was speaking to people, giving instructions, I actually build the self-confidence and then working since Anon ever until now and, ja, so, a lot of people – meeting lots of people there. We don't have a boss, because she has now moved to another department, so I consider myself my own boss, so I still do all the work and all that, and what else now ... oh, and I'm trying to apply for internship for Industrial Psychology in Anon. So, it's challenging. You meet a lot of people and what else? That's about it. So, it's getting there. Well, I don't get paid a lot though, but you know, I thought to myself, I'd rather grow into where I am now and then I get into the (**indistinct 22.39**) are we having ... am I becoming something that I want to become. For me, money was a big issue – like in my first company I made sure that they had to pay me my salary. I had to begin with R9,000 or R10,000, but now it's a bit of a drop, but I thought to myself, I actually feel much happier because I love what I do and I interact with people. So, ja, it's a learning process. So, money now for me, it is not a big issue. So, although I can't now spend on nice clothes and nice shoes, but I'll try to stay on as long as I can.

ERNA If I may ask, your HR Department, how does it work? You are doing assessments? Is it part of the training?

PAM Uhm-uhm. Anon actually has 10 HR Departments, because we've got different departments. You have your retail, you have your sales, you've got your med schemes and each department has their own HR person in it. I'm just doing my industrial psychology or my psychometrics for now. So, I thought to myself, let me first ... I don't want to be in a job where I can't get into my internship where, for now, I'm now bound by a contract – a permanent contract – (**indistinct 23.47**) 10. So, when my contract ended in February, hopefully, I can get an Industrial Psychology internship at Anon. We actually have quite a big division. We've actually got three: it's sales, retail and MMSA – they're very big. So, if I can get into one of those departments, then it would be quite cool. So, ja. Anything else?

DEBBIE Can I ask you something?

PAM Yes.

DEBBIE What do you want to do with your Masters? Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

PAM I want to open my own business. I want to ... my friend and I have been speaking a lot because she's doing clinical psychology. So, I would like to grow and get as much experience as possible within industrial psychology. I want to do industrial, especially OD and change and strategic, ja, and open my own business and have companies come to us and we consult for them. So, I would love to be my own boss. I don't want to work for a boss. There you are. I'm also hoping to get married and ...

DEBBIE And have your 2.4 children.

PAM Yes.

JOEL Who of you have seen that side – where she can say stuff you?

DEBBIE Never. Never.

PAM Really?

DEBBIE Really.

PAM I'm glad.



STEPHAN Glad? Glad that they haven't seen it all?  
PAM Ja, or something ... they see something new  
STEPHAN No, I think the question was ... sorry, maybe I can just check with you as well, but he asked how many of you have seen the side where you can say stuff you to the boss? Is that what you have asked?  
JOEL Yes. That was my question.  
PAM Uhm. I don't know. I think people think I'm a bit of a ... I don't know ... what did you think?  
DEBBIE Not a pushover, but you are just so nice and content, and, you know.  
PAM No, ag, ja, no. Because we actually we had a gentleman actually cheat on the assessment centre. He was doing a technical and I actually asked him to leave.  
DEBBIE I mean, when we were doing Honours, I never ever got the sense that you were that unhappy at work – at all.  
PAM Ja, or actually more at the end. In the beginning, it was okay, but then we had a new boss coming, and then I was like, no, I'm finished. And I gave my letter and look, I'm finished with you and I'm finished with the company and don't expect me to put a good word for your company and just left. Ja.  
JOEL And when does that happen?  
PAM What do you mean?  
JOEL That kind of a thing where you say?  
DEBBIE When is enough, enough?  
JOEL Ja.  
PAM Oh, I don't know. I think it was like again, I kept it all inside and then, that day, when he just did something, I'm like, that's enough. Because he had about six girls and only me – please, Pam, and make me coffee, please, Pam, make me food and I'm like no, ask someone else, just not me. Ja. I guess you have to stand up for yourself. I mean, I used to be a person that let people walk all over me, but I thought to myself no, what's this? Why do that? People might not like me, but so what. I can't choose people to not be my friend. If they don't want to speak to me, that's fine, but I'm not going to be this mean person. If you're nice to me I'm nice to you. So, don't piss me off.  
ALL Laugh.  
JOSHUA Why are you touching me?  
ALL Laugh  
PAM So, ja.  
MAGGIE Can I ask you something?  
PAM Uhm.  
MAGGIE Don't you feel like, even though you knew that resigning was the right decision for you, it was still a really hard thing to do?  
PAM Oh, ja, definitely. Because I'm actually at the point ... I actually spoke to him and I said, let me think about it, but, maybe, I'll also come back and he's like really? And I'm thinking to myself, actually not. Do I really want to? Do I actually want them to treat me like nothing?  
MAGGIE Then how long was your notice period?  
PAM Uhm ... it was a month. A month, ja.  
MAGGIE Because I went back and forth a lot during my notice month. He went at it and I thought again, actually, is he doing the right thing and I had to leave and there were times that I was thinking, you know, maybe I overreacted ...  
PAM Uhm  
MAGGIE ... maybe ... this is a, you know, it's a good job, it's a good company – maybe I need to stay here. And then on my last day I cried - the entire day at work. I



think ... they, you know, I wasn't expecting that and they weren't expecting it, and maybe I was in a rush to react because I've stopped their Saturdays meeting, and you don't realise, you know, with other people, you are concentrating on the bad parts, but you don't realise the relationships that you build ...

- PAM Oh, ja
- MAGGIE ... and the people that you are to leave behind and the routines that you have to leave behind.
- PAM But now, for me, I thought to myself, yes, I made good friends, but they're not going to help me get where I want to get. If I see them, I'm going to say hi, I remember you, how's it going, but, for myself, I have to determine where my route goes, but luckily, actually, I wasn't there for a month. I actually asked if I could actually be at home for that month and he said yes.
- MAGGIE Okay.
- PAM So, there wasn't, like, yes, fine, bye and then I just left. So, I wasn't there to see things happening and I wasn't there on my own, so I could leave them.
- MAGGIE You know I found out through that period that me and my boss would talk about things that were still coming out, because there was a lot coming out before I left him and I felt terribly guilty – like I'm a debtor in this place now and I had to get used to ... in the beginning, I still kept on saying we still have to do this and we're going to do this, and you know, as in real life, and then afterwards, you know, I said you want, and it was sort of as it all go wrong, but do you have to say anything, you know, (**indistinct 30.04**) or are you just going to be turned inside yourself. And then after that, I felt like I needed to say you're going to be doing this just to get myself prepared to be able to leave.
- DEBBIE I noticed that struggle when you went through it.
- MAGGIE Ja.
- DEBBIE And I remember we're talking outside – we were talking about, you know, you were like in two minds – am I doing the right thing, you know, should I be doing this, is this right – *jay* or *nay*?
- MAGGIE Constantly. It's actually quite an exhausting thing.
- JOEL And one of the struggles was that you still felt a little bit responsible and do you still have that, you know?
- MAGGIE Ja, I was getting a lot out of it. I was getting a lot out of it. Some stuff I didn't want to, but I don't know. I think, you have this pressure, like am I going to find a job and am I going to have, you know, as much responsibility and when I got to Anon they introduced competency management there and it wasn't a day case, my boss would do that, so my boss was going to be in charge of that as part of her portfolio. And as time passed I became more and more responsible for that and, when I left, she told me she actually does not know as much about competency management at Anon as I do and I need to train her before I leave, you know and (**indistinct 31.35**). And I think when you have a dedicated function and people recognise you as responsible for something and you get so much of ... I know it sounds like a very short time, but you get so much of proficiency in one specific area, it's hard to let go of that. I'm actually a bit worried about how they deal with that now. I know small things that other people won't know because of my experience, like if someone is struggling to complete an assessment, then I must pick up why. It's a whole thing.
- MAGGIE Ja, resigning is a hard thing to do.
- ERNA If I may ask but then why did you resign? What were your reasons to do so?
- MAGGIE It was just too much.
- ERNA With the Masters and your work?



- MAGGIE You know with the Masters I felt like, because my job demanded so much out of me, that there wasn't a me anymore. I mean, there were times where, you know, I wouldn't do stuff for myself. I just didn't have time to do anything for myself. I couldn't fall asleep at night because I just had so much, you know, going on in my mind. So, I switch off the news and I switch off my lights and I go and sleep and (**indistinct 33.00**) – that's the only way that I could sleep. And my friends stay like two or three streets away from me – I wouldn't see them in months. I didn't get a chance to talk to anyone and I didn't want to spend time with my family. It was just too, too, too much and then, like Pam said, you get to a point where that obviously breaking point where you know, okay, you know, now I have to go.
- ERNA And once you completed the Masters will you go back to the same situation or are you aspiring to do something else different maybe?
- MAGGIE I don't know. You see, because I had such a good relationship with my boss and it looks like she's headed toward being the boss of, you know, of the (**indistinct 33.51**) of the department that I was in, she did tell me and I've heard other people telling me that if I want to come back and I met her and say okay, I'm ready to come back, all I need to do is contact them, but, you know, when things are different in retrospect, now I see things that, maybe, I wasn't satisfied with all along. I don't know. I think I have to resolve this one issue in my life and then make a decision.
- ERNA Okay.
- SHELLY So, how long were you at Anon?
- MAGGIE Uhm ... for nine months in total. It felt like nine years.
- JOEL But I'm wondering now, so it's almost like you took on/you couldn't/you took the work home?
- MAGGIE Ja.
- JOEL Yes? And then you couldn't get ...
- MAGGIE I couldn't let it go.
- JOEL You couldn't let it go?
- MAGGIE Ja. I'm just saying like, if you had to ask me who am I, I'll tell you I work for Anon. That's who ...
- JOEL That's who you were?
- MAGGIE Ja.
- JOEL Okay. Is that something that you do/that you struggle with that?
- MAGGIE I can throw myself into something completely, ja. I don't know. I don't feel like it is something that I have to work on and I don't know, maybe that's a bad thing. I like that part of myself where I can fully and wholeheartedly commit to something. Maybe it's a bad thing in certain circumstances, but, you know, when I'm in it, it feels right. I think, maybe, I didn't realise how much it was until I couldn't not realise it anymore. Like you're swimming and the tank just keeps on ... like you're swimming in a tank and one can see you in that tank and the tank just keeps on filling with water; you can still swim, but you know, after a while you sort of try not to ...
- ALL Laugh
- JOEL Run out of oxygen.
- MAGGIE I don't know what the psychologists are thinking now, (**indistinct 36.05**).
- ALL Laugh
- JOEL No, I'm actually wondering about something different, if that relates in any way, a little bit, to what is happening here.
- MAGGIE You mean that I get myself into something and then I'm not so sure whether I want to be in it or not?



- JOEL Just to say that you're not so sure?
- MAGGIE Whether I want to be in it or not.
- JOEL Uhm ... ja.
- MAGGIE I don't know.
- JOEL The thing where you almost take responsibility now with Anon – it's months after you've left and then ...
- MAGGIE I left at the end of July.
- JOEL Oh, only end of July. Okay. So, it's actually quite recently.
- MAGGIE Ja. I feel like I'm still adjusting to it.
- JOEL You're still adjusting. So, there is still part of you that still feels little bit responsible for what happens there, but it's a job; you've left it. And they're not paying you ... you're paying ... you don't feel like it.
- MAGGIE It's like that's something that I have to teach myself almost. I didn't just feel like, you know, this is a job and, when I go home, I'm at home. Maybe that's one of the biggest (**indistinct 37.23**). Maybe, you know, I (**indistinct 37.24**), that's a problem that I'm going to need to look at in the future that I could have just said this is my job and when I'm at home, then I'm just here, I'm no just (**indistinct 37.36**). I couldn't do that.
- JOEL But what you came back with this morning is that in any way/can we see a ...?
- MAGGIE By feeling responsible?
- JOEL Uhm.
- MAGGIE I do feel responsible.
- JOEL For who do you feel responsible in this group?
- MAGGIE I felt responsible for myself, I felt responsible for Debbie and then, ultimately, I started feeling responsible for everyone.
- STEPHAN And what does it do to you – that feeling of responsibility?
- MAGGIE It's like an extremely heavy thing to carry, you know. I only tell myself that, anytime, I've actually talked about this, that if someone else have been put in this fairly pressurised situation, I would have been judging them, and I would have probably, like the rest of the group, came to the decision that, that is heavy for everyone. Maybe everyone needs to sit and relax. You know, that I don't need to take it up on myself and say, I may, if you want me, you know, talk about puppies in the second session, because we all made that decision. I can't help it though. I feel like, maybe, you know, maybe we were going okay and then I intervened and I steered the whole time now. But I do work on that, I do.
- JOEL Well, you worked on it this morning, didn't you?
- MAGGIE Ja. I suppose.
- JOEL You suppose?
- MAGGIE That is the way I see ... I think that if there are people in this group that, at the end of today, still feel like their expectations haven't been met, then I'm probably going to feel responsible for that. You see, that's the thing, I think you don't realise how much you're about to reveal until you, you know ... it's almost like ... I don't know if you guys feel this also and then, maybe, you can tell me, but it's like you're talking and you're not entirely in control of what you're saying; you're hearing yourself speak. I'm hearing myself speak.
- DEBBIE That's good. We seldom do hear ourselves.
- MAGGIE I don't know. How do you cope with that?
- STEPHAN Good question. She takes responsibility for you or she feels responsible for you and it leaves her with a burden, it sounds like, but she don't want to get by 5 o'clock this afternoon and feel we'll, you've messed up everything. That's how you feel?

- MAGGIE Ja, but I don't want everyone else to feel like now they have to do something meaningful so that I don't feel guilty, because then I would be responsible (**indistinct 40.30**) ....
- STEPHAN But that's a bit of a double bind to be in.
- MAGGIE Ja. Maybe it's a (**indistinct 40.46**) sort of thing, you know, this is you and there's certain things that I agree with and there's certain things that I need to work on, and maybe, and I think about this a lot, maybe there is certain things about myself that I don't need to work on, I just need to accept, but that's a hard thing to do, so I mean ...
- STEPHAN Things like?
- MAGGIE Like? I don't know, but ... but I ... as difficult as it can be sometimes, I like sharing, you know, I like putting things out there. Maybe, sometimes, I can say that's okay, you know, even in a conversation with my friends and when I help them; things are how they need to be and how it is interpreted, I don't need to go back and think about it and say, oh, this is what I said and I wonder what everyone thought about what I said and how did I actually say it, and how did you make the other person see it. Maybe you can just ... it can be out there. It's okay.
- STEPHAN Would you want to try it here? Just to say some things and not prepare the way, and make sure that afterwards they have to think about it - just put it out there and see what happens to it?
- MAGGIE Maybe, if everyone wants to. Now I feel like I'm taking over the meeting.
- ALL Laugh.
- MAGGIE I actually now really understand what you're feeling here today, not about the awkwardness, but about the fact that, and, I suppose, we all feel like this is a group thing and the whole group should get something out of it, not just, you know, one person should, because (**indistinct 42.27**)
- DEBBIE Okay, I'll tell you. I was really, really okay with it yesterday, thinking about it yesterday, because I felt I didn't get to know myself, the me and the us kind of thing, you know, thinking about the construction of things.
- JOEL So, can you ... how does that (in between)
- DEBBIE Meaning, I want to kind of tell her it's perfectly fine to share them and throw things out there because, in the end, all ... well, I think and what Christa might think and anyone else, it's just their opinions. In the end you have to go with me; you have to go with Maggie.

#### 6.4.6.2 Codes allocated to section 4

**Table 6.15: Codes allocated to section 4**

<b>Section 4</b>	TB: Safe self-disclosure of personal information
Main theme: Pam and Maggie's roles	TI: Self-disclosure of facts and biographical information
	TI: Self-disclosure of feelings connected to personal/private material
	TB: Asking fellow member to elaborate
	TB: Safe self-disclosure of personal information
	TI: Self-disclosure of facts and biographical information
	TI: Self-disclosure of feelings connected to personal/private material
	TT: Reflecting on member's behaviour in the group
	TB: Joking

### 6.4.6.3 Discussion

With regard to this section it is interesting to note, that by looking at the pattern of the conversation, it is possible to break it down into two parts that, broadly speaking, followed similar movements:

**Table 6.16: Pattern of the group's conversation around Pam's and Maggie's contributions**

Part A: Pam	Part B: Maggie
1. Pam sharing about her job from which she had resigned	1. Maggie sharing about her job from which she had resigned
2. The group, mainly through Erna, asking for more details about the job itself	2. The group, mainly through Erna, asking for more details about the job itself
3. The group, mainly through Debbie, asking for more details about her personal experience	3. The group, mainly through Debbie, asking more details regarding her personal experience
4. The facilitators linking the story to experiences within the group	4. The facilitators linking the story to experiences within the group
5. The protagonist, namely, Pam, interacting with the facilitators and the group about this link with her role experience within the group.	5. The protagonist, namely, Maggie, interacting with the facilitators and the group about this link with her role experience within the group.

Firstly, Pam responded to the group's expectation that someone take the lead and start sharing about his/her job, as per their decision that was discussed above. Pam, who, earlier in the session, had expressed her frustration with the double messages in the group regarding moving forward and holding back and what was to be shared or not, provided some clear direction to the group by initiating this discussion. This appears to be in line with a role that Pam seemingly played within the group, namely, to be critical about the group's inability to choose a direction or a plan and then follow through on it. On a content level this underlying dynamic is also played out as Pam goes on to relay a story about her telling her boss that enough is enough and then taking further action by resigning from her position. The way in which Pam responded to the group's need for someone to start talking about his/her work experience, is also significant in that she does so in a way that is not totally removed from the personal. Thus, although sharing stories about workplaces is not part of the group's task, an implicit component of the group's task is that the members become visible to each other, not only on a cognitive, academic level, but also on a personal level.

Yalom (1985) discusses the interplay between the disclosing of personal information by individual members, the feedback that members give each other based on this sharing and the level of cohesion within the group. Based on all the previous references about whether the group is a safe place in which to share or not, it can easily be argued that, in this group at that moment, there was a need for greater cohesion which could help facilitate the process of managing the boundary between deep and meaningful contributions towards the task of the group, and the need for a mechanism to protect the members from going where they were not prepared or ready to go. Yalom (1985) also alerts us to the importance of group cohesion if therapeutic work is to be carried out within the group. Although the purpose in this case was not therapy, it was still necessary that members become vulnerable in order to learn about themselves within the group. The decision then taken by the group to start sharing more personal information can, thus, be seen as being in line with the group's need to develop to a level on which they would be able to engage in the task of 'exploring their functioning as a group in the here and now'. The 'towards belonging' and 'towards individuality' behaviours that were coded here could, therefore, refer to the underlying force in the group to develop cohesion that would support the group in accomplishing its task.

When we examine the way in which, as indicated in the table above, the movements in this section repeated themselves we are able to make further inferences with regards to the forces that may have been present in the group. Firstly, as discussed above, we see a force towards developing group cohesion through the sharing of personal information and providing feedback. However, the fact that this happened covertly, that is, it was not a conscious decision on the part of the group to share personal work experiences and relate these back to the group's task in order to foster the development of cohesiveness within the group, opened the way for the forces opposing the group's development and task achievement to impact on the group's functioning in the following manner: Erna, the initiator of this task of 'let's talk about our jobs' did so in order to provide the group with an alternative task, one that, as discussed in the previous section, would be less threatening than their stated task. In both these cases of Pam and Maggie's sharing, it is, thus, Erna who initiates the follow-up questioning by focusing on work-related details of the stories rather than the personal, and this is, in each case, first taken up by Debbie, also in line with her pseudofacilitator role. From this it is possible to infer that two members with role valences, as per Bion's (1961) theory, that had, at that point, become very clear within



the group, were responding to the underlying forces in the group by behaving in ways that are both in accordance with their hitherto roles within the group as well as with the immediate forces at work. In Erna's case, her 'towards belonging: asking fellow member to elaborate' behaviour can be interpreted as a response to the now familiar underlying force in this group towards driving conversation 'outside' of the group boundary as well as towards topics that are lighter, easier and, possibly, safer to explore. In Debbie's case, it would appear that the underlying forces at work were working both towards and away from the group's development and task achievement. Firstly, a force towards taking the group conversation to emotions experienced outside of the group instead of within the group and, secondly, an opposing force that can be labelled 'need for creating cohesion' as she focuses, specifically, on interacting on the personal level. Accordingly, it seems as if the pro-group drive of the system incorporated the anti-group directed behaviour of discussing matters outside of the group into its own agenda by utilising this anti-group behaviour for the important maintenance function of creating group cohesion.

Next, in the case of both Pam and Maggie, it is the facilitating team that intervenes to direct the communication to the 'inside' of the group by creating the link for the members to ponder on the way in which their behaviour, as related through the stories, were also playing out in the group. This is a well-known group technique that is used primarily in Yalom's interpersonal approach to group training and group therapy. In terms of this technique the group is plunged into the here and now by creating a specific focus within the group on how behaviour that manifests outside of the group, also plays out inside the group (Yalom, 1985). In so doing, the facilitators weaken the forces towards the external, safe topics by moving the group's attention to matters inside the group. In addition, the facilitators also strengthen the force towards group cohesion through personal disclosure and feedback by creating the space for such conversations to take place within the group, rather than in the removed realm of the members' workplaces. By positioning both the discussion and the feedback within the boundaries of the group, the possibility that the group will develop and grow is enhanced. However, although it is clear from both the video material and the quality of the silence of the non-participating members that they were, in fact, involved through absorbed listening, the fact remains that, in both these cases, the final discussion regarding the parallels between Pam and Maggie's outside the group behaviour vs. their inside the group behaviour are, by and large, led as dialogues between the facilitating pair and the member, first Pam and then Maggie. This non-involvement on the part of the group in its task could perhaps be seen either as resistance to or

perceived incompetence with the type of interaction that is closer to the group's task. Both of these could then be labelled as 'away from task' forces.

There was, thus, a progression in the intimacy of the conversation from dealing with facts to personal sharing to personal reflection on behaviour within the group although, as we progress along this continuum, there was less and less active involvement on the part of the group members other than the facilitators themselves. This can lead us to infer that the force towards the outside, safe and light material took a different form that, in turn, led to silence and nonparticipation with regard to the active reflection on the group process. Accordingly, although the group had developed to an extent where it was willing to allow the facilitators to model the type of interaction behaviour that would be helpful in this type of group, it had not developed sufficiently for the members to be able to take full responsibility for their own work and progress.

Finally, this section ends with Maggie expressing the feeling that she may have taken over the conversation and she expresses the hope that the other members will also receive the same type of value from the group that she has received. Debbie immediately supports this statement of Maggie by adding that she has gained some value from the opening up and that the others should not be afraid to do the same. This again reminds us of the role-duo of Maggie and Debbie with Maggie feeling responsible for the group members' ability to meet their needs and Debbie pushing and encouraging the other group members to 'let go' and not to be afraid. This encouragement from Debbie to the group is received in silence from the group members, again reminding us of both the unwillingness to be dragged into something and also maybe the need within the group to be left alone and to be allowed to progress at its own pace without feeling pressurised by one or two of the members. Of course, it is essential to see the behaviour of the member not only as an individual dynamic but also as a dynamic of the group-as-a-whole. When perceived in this way, it then seems like a dialogue that the group is having with itself regarding wanting to move forward and take risks – and voicing this need through the medium of Debbie and Maggie – but, on the other hand, there is also the awareness that there are issues within the group that make it difficult to take those risks. Once again, we see the forces towards risk-taking and the forces towards self-protection.



#### 6.4.6.4 *The interplay of forces*

- a) In this section, we first seem to encounter an underlying force in the group that is directed towards developing the cohesion that would support the group in accomplishing its task. It appears that this force has been activated by the group's realisation that it is not possible for the group to go back to occupying itself with frivolous talk, but that it also struggles to move forward as a result of feeling that there is a lack of safety and security within the group. Accordingly, an increased sense of group cohesion appears to be a valid goal for the group to be seeking at this stage of its life. In this case, even though it is not possible to code the behaviour as being definitively directed towards the group's task, the behaviour does still seem to spring forth from an underlying force thrusting towards the ultimate growth and development of the group. We are, thus, able to see the force playing out as a drive towards belonging (cohesion) and greater individual freedom to become visible in the group on the group-level and also towards belonging and individuality (showing of the self in order to become part of the group) on the member-level. Of course, if this 'opening up' and making vulnerable behaviour is not channelled back towards the group's explicit task at some point in the future, the group would run the risk that this potentially positive force may lead the group astray from its task and that the group would become either a 'career support group' or a therapy group. Accordingly, if this force is not monitored by the facilitators, the inherent sense of meaning it may have for the participants can become a distraction from the group's task, while the behavioural patterns emanating from this force can prove difficult to break if they should become entrenched in the group's behavioural norms as well as its sense of identity<sup>44</sup>.
- b) Together with the force thrusting towards group cohesion through open sharing and feedback, the, by now familiar, underlying force in this group that is directed at ensuring safety through avoidance is activated. This force, which has manifested itself several times before in flight behaviour, is again manifested through attempts within the group to steer the conversation to the small, impersonal details in the personal stories and, thus, ensure that the

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<sup>44</sup> I remember this happening in an intergroup event at the Leicester Conference, where the group of which I was a member derived great fulfilment from reflecting on itself as a group, but, in effect, in that way, defended against fulfilling its task, which was to explore the dynamics between itself and other groups.

conversation stays 'outside' the group and, possibly, rather in the domain of career advice and academic thinking than personal vulnerability, feedback and cohesion. This defence against cohesion does, however, not seem to constitute what Hopper (2003b) termed the basic assumption state of aggregation/massification. As described in chapter 3, Hopper draws our attention to the group's resistance towards cohesion through either pretending that it is not a group, or pretending to be so closely enmeshed and uber-cohesive that it is not possible ever to achieve real cohesion. However, it does appear that neither of these two states are present here. Firstly, the group is clearly not trying to act as if it were not a group, as the group does seem to be trying various ways in which to initiate group interaction. Secondly, the group is also not pretending that the group members are all the same and that they are in agreement all the time as we have witnessed several differences in opinion within the group with regards where to go and how to get there. In light of what has been discussed thus far this, of course, makes perfect sense as this force, that is resisting the move towards greater cohesion, is definitely not either the only nor the most prominent force at work at that point. On the contrary, it is only one of a number of forces that are directed both towards and away from the group's growth and development. In addition, this seems to be a fairly natural and normal force in the group as it develops towards greater cohesion.

- c) Another force that also works in the direction of focusing on the 'outside' of the group, rather than on the here and now, is the force towards discussing personal feelings related to the external world as opposed to personal feelings in the here and now. However, in this case, this force appears to be employed in the favour of the group's overall development as it is closer to the essential task of the group than the previous force that was discussed above. Even though the force is not aimed at the here and now, it is aimed at sharing feelings (towards individuality) and this, in turn, strengthens the move towards greater cohesion (towards belonging).
- d) At this point, the intervention by the facilitators is aimed at channelling the forces towards the task of the group. This has the effect that the forces towards the exploration of emotions are channelled into the group's immediate existence (towards task) and away from exploring emotions that are located outside of the group. On the member-level this intervention also helps the individual members to become more vulnerable within the group in order to be better understood by and accepted in the group by the rest of the group members.

- e) The facilitators' directing of the forces towards the here and now resulted in conversations pertaining to the outside and the past or future of the group no longer being pursued. However, this does not mean that this force towards the outside had disappeared. On the contrary, it seemed to reappear through the silence of the majority of the group members as an anti-group force. Furthermore, as we have seen previously, this thrust towards avoiding the group's work (away from task) can contain elements of fear in it: fear of opening up, fear of losing control over one's individual integrity and fear of being judged. These fears all have the quality of being directed 'towards individuality', as opposed to the pro-cohesion forces that are more 'towards belonging' in nature.
- f) This interplay between the forces towards greater cohesion and the forces against opening up can also reveal something about the level of group development. It would appear that, to a certain degree, the group had developed to a level where it was able to allow work on exploring personal roles within the group by some of its individual members, namely Maggie, Debbie and Pam at that point, to take place, but only to a limited degree and then also mainly within the 'safe' hands of the facilitators. This seems to be in accordance with the way in which the group had started out this session with Maggie leading the conversation about how to further the exploration within the limits of what would still feel comfortable for the group.
- g) Finally, this interplay between the forces mentioned above was again played out between, on the one hand, the pair of Maggie and Debbie, representing the thrust towards the group's task and the group, on the other hand, representing both the resistance to being pushed to move and the fear of moving forward. In terms of the resistance to being pushed to move, we are able to see this force working on the group-level away from task (avoiding open communication), towards belonging (hiding behind the group) and away from individuality as individuals become less visible within the group. On the membership level we are able to see this negative force pertaining to the group's development as a push away from task and away from individuality (not taking a stand/risk out there), but also as towards individuality as the member tries to protect him/herself.
- h) As mentioned above, it is possible to identify another force at this point the goal of which is resistance as a result of fear. This force, which manifested through the silence of the group, drove the group away from task (to avoid working) and away from individuality (becoming less visible) and towards belonging (to hide

in the group) on the group-level. On the member-level, this force also drove the individual members away from taking part in the group's task, although it also had an interesting effect on the individual members in terms of their individuality as it drove them away from taking an individual stand within the group and towards standing back in order to protect themselves. This force can also be seen as working against the group's overall growth and development.

#### 6.4.6.5 Summary of forces in section 4

**Table 6.17: Summary of the forces in section 4**

Force nr	Description of apparent force goal	Point of application	Manifested through	Direction of push/pull on membership	Pro- or anti-group
1a (Group-level)	To develop cohesion in order to support the group in fulfilling its task	Membership -as-a-whole	Pam sharing about her career	Towards belonging (Cohesion) Towards individuality (Individual becoming visible)	Pro-group
1b (Member-level)	To become visible within the group and more accessible to other members	Pam	Pam sharing about her career	Towards belonging (Showing interest in belonging) Towards individuality (Showing the self within the group)	Pro-group
2a (Group-level)	To ensure safety through avoidance	Membership -as-a-whole	Steering away from the personal by Erna	Away from task (Avoiding the personal)	Anti-group
2b (Member-level)	To ensure safety through avoidance	Erna	Erna steering the conversation away from the personal	Away from task (Avoiding the personal)	Anti-group
3a (Group-level)	To discuss personal feelings related to the outside of the group	Membership -as-a-whole	Debbie exploring the personal feelings of Pam, and then Maggie	Away from task (Steering away from the here and now) Towards individuality (Individuals becoming visible) Towards belonging (Cohesion)	Pro-group
3b (Member-level)	To discuss personal feelings related to the outside of the group	Debbie	Debbie exploring the personal feelings of Pam, and then Maggie	Away from task (Avoiding the personal) Towards belonging (Cohesion) Towards individuality (Making it easier for member to become visible)	Pro-group



4a (Group-level)	To channel the exploration of emotions to the here and now	Membership -as-a-whole	Facilitator's questions to Pam and then to Maggie	Towards task (Changing communication pattern) Towards belonging (Cohesion)	Pro-group
4b (Member-level)	To channel the exploration of emotions to the here and now	Facilitator	Facilitator's questions to Pam and then to Maggie	Towards task (Changing communication pattern) Towards belonging (Being accepted within the group) Towards individuality (Showing him/herself as a person)	Pro-group
5a (Group-level)	To resist the exploration of feelings in the here and now	Membership -as-a-whole	Silence from group	Away from task (Avoiding a deeper exploration) Away from individuality (Individuals becoming invisible) Towards belonging (Group as a mass behind which to hide)	Anti-group
5b (Member-level)	To resist the exploration of feelings in the here and now	Individual members	Silence from group	Away from task (Avoiding a deeper exploration) Away from belonging (Resisting cohesion on a deeper level) Away from individuality (Not taking the stand out there) Towards individuality (Self-protection)	Anti-group
6a (Group-level)	To openly discuss interpersonal and group processes	Membership -as-a-whole	Attempts by both Debbie and Maggie	Towards task (Open and honest reflection on group process)	Pro-group
6b (Member-level)	To openly discuss interpersonal and group processes	Debbie and Maggie	Attempts by both Debbie and Maggie	Towards task (Open and honest reflection on group process)	Pro-group
7a (Group-level)	To resist being pushed to move	Membership -as-a-whole	Silence from group	Away from task (Avoiding open communication and exploring) Towards belonging (Together in resistance) Away from individuality (Individuals becoming invisible)	Anti-group
7b (Member-level)	To resist being pushed to move	Individual members	Silence from group	Away from task (Avoiding open communication and exploring) Away from individuality (Not taking a stand out there) Towards individuality (Self-protection)	Anti-group
8a (Group-level)	To resist moving as a result of fear	Membership -as-a-whole	Silence from group	Away from task (Avoiding a deeper exploration of negative feelings) Away from individuality (Individuals becoming invisible) Towards belonging (Group as a mass behind which to hide)	Anti-group



8b (Member-level)	To resist moving as a result of fear	Individual members	Silence from group	Away from task (Avoiding a deeper exploration of negative feelings) Towards individuality (Self-protection) Away from individuality (Not taking a stand out there)	Anti-group
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#### 6.4.7 Section 5

##### 6.4.7.1 Transcript

##### **Section 5: Being judged**

STEPHAN But the worst that can happen is you can be judged?  
DEBBIE Basically.  
STEPHAN What else can we get out?What worse can there be than to be judged?  
ALL **(Silence)**  
DEBBIE I think the most horrible thing that can happen is you can die.  
ALL Laugh.  
JOSHUA You'll probably die anyway.  
DEBBIE Ja, you're not going ... ja, but not as a result of this, I mean ...  
STEPHAN Or you can be judged.That's as bad.  
DEBBIE For some people, ja.  
STEPHAN Just think how terrible it's going to be if you're going to be judged.So, we better be very sure that we're not going to be judged.  
DEBBIE Why?  
STEPHAN Because that's something that's the worst that can happen.  
FRANCIS And how can you make sure you won't be judged?  
DEBBIE You can't, because everyone has their own opinions.  
STEPHAN That's so.And, in the end, you're going to be judged anyway.  
DEBBIE In the end that is exactly what it means.  
LINDA I don't agree.  
DEBBIE What do you think?  
LINDA No, I don't think anyone in here is sitting with the mind and will to pick on you, if you say something wrong, you know.But I don't experience anyone in here as being judgemental.  
DEBBIE There is a difference, I think, between making an evaluation, you know, processing things for yourself and being critical and pulling something apart.I don't see any of us doing that, but I think to myself when she talks with me, when Pam talks, and you know?  
JOSHUA That's more evaluative.  
DEBBIE Ja.You make evaluation judgements.  
JOSHUA Not judgement in a negative sense?  
DEBBIE Ja.Because ... ja.*Nou kan ons woord ook praat* – 'judgemental' has its roots in *Latin*,  
JOSHUA Judge Mental?  
ALL Laugh  
DEBBIE Ja, so. Ja, I understand what you're saying as well.  
LINDA I think I experience it more as people trying to relate to each other and trying to understand because of your situation.I can't possibly imagine what it would feel like starting your first job and being treated as a tea lady.I don't think it would be (**indistinct 45.59**).I don't experience it as being that I'm judging because of

- that. It's more that I'm trying to feel or understand/construct. I don't know if anyone else is experiencing judgement from anybody. From my experience – no.
- STEPHAN So, it must be something else. If it's not judgement, it must be this evaluative or perceptions or whatever we want to call it, but it is not as harsh as judgement. It's something or learning/experiencing something about others and something about me. That's why I think that that's the worst that can happen, is you can feel that you can be judged or you can feel that your perceptions that other people have about you will be influenced, but they have that anyway.
- DEBBIE **(indistinct 47.00)**
- JOEL Did you want to respond to that?
- LINDA No, I'm just thinking it's true because I think everyone already has sort of an idea of everyone else and the worst that can happen is that you have to explain yourself so we can better understand you. So, I don't know, I have not once felt threatened or scared, or even resistant. I don't know ... it's just a question of something. I suppose you would feel in the spotlight, but I feel fine. Maybe it's just me, but ...
- STEPHAN And if we take that into account, what we've said before that it could be same thing that can be experienced differently, it could be that people have a completely different perception about who you are, what you do and what you think you are. You also could be in a position where you think well, but I thought I experienced/what I relate to people this way or that way, that that could be different than what some people feel on the other end of it.
- FRANCIS Which is actually a good thing, because ... ja.
- STEPHAN Why? Explain why you say it is good?
- FRANCIS No, because in the beginning when we walked in here everyone had a thought of everyone else and the more people talked the more you get to know them, the more you understand them for who they are.
- DEBBIE The less you're going to judge ...
- FRANCIS Ja, the lesser ... ja.
- DEBBIE ... in any case.
- FRANCIS Ja, the judgements that you have would be judgements or if you had, anyway.
- STEPHAN To illustrate it, Maggie, we can say, I judge you because you take responsibility for me, or I can say you know what I would, maybe, just want to change that perception because you don't have to take responsibility for me. And that's just a completely different ballgame in terms of what we relate to one another. **(silence)**. So what do you make of that?
- JOEL Yes?

#### 6.4.7.2 Codes allocated to section 5

**Table 6.18: Codes allocated to section 5**

<b>Section 5</b>	TT: Reflecting on judgementalness within group
Main theme: Being judged	AT: Shying away from conflict
	TB: Feelings of togetherness placed above feelings of conflict
	TT: Reflecting on judgementalness within group
	AT: Shying away from conflict
	TB: Feelings of togetherness placed above feelings of conflict



#### 6.4.7.3 Discussion

This section flowed from the previous section where the conversation had, again, started to hover over the issue of opening up and gaining value from the group. The facilitator verbalised the underlying fear within the group, which had been a recurring theme throughout the life of the group, of being judged. However, immediately after the facilitator had mentioned the possibility of being judged, an uncomfortable silence ensued within the group, and this was followed by a sombre consideration of how bad it was to be judged, whether it was just as bad as dying as well as the notion that you will, in any case, die, and be judged. Linda, who disagreed that there was any judgement present in the group, broke this trend in the conversation. The movement here had, thus, first been towards approaching and acknowledging the reality of being judged in the group, followed by a movement away from acknowledging this reality and, in fact, denying its existence altogether:

LINDA            I don't agree.  
DEBBIE          What do you think?  
LINDA            No, I don't think anyone in here is sitting with the mind and will to pick on you, if you say something wrong, you know. But I don't experience anyone in here as being judgemental.  
...  
LINDA            ... I don't know if anyone else is experiencing judgement from anybody. From my experience – no.

The codes that were allocated to this first section were, firstly, the 'towards task' code of reflecting on the judgementalness in the group, followed by the 'away from task' and 'towards belonging' codes of shying away from conflict and giving preference to feelings of belonging over feelings of conflict within the group. If we see these behaviours as emanating from underlying forces within the group, then we have to consider what the underlying forces could have been that resulted in these behaviours. Firstly, it seems plausible that the facilitator wished to activate/strengthen the potential underlying forces within the group towards its task and development by making the implicit explicit. The stunned, and even morbid, silence which ensued in the group when this was mentioned appears to support the possibility that this underlying fear of

judgement was, indeed, present in the group but that the group was not yet ready to explore it. Debbie, who, until that point, had been a reliable source of support for anything that seemed to be towards persuading the 'other' group members to open up and become vulnerable, especially when stemming from the facilitators, made an effort to interact on this topic but, even with Francis's help, it appeared to be extremely difficult for the group to move forward in exploring this issue. It is at this point that we become much more aware of the resistance within the group towards exploring judgementalness than we are of its willingness to do so. Was it perhaps only the facilitators who wanted to explore the issue? This possibility seems even stronger when Linda tries to rescue the group from this uncomfortable situation by denying the possibility that there was any judgement of each other present within the group. Accordingly, the force against exploring judgement and the fear of judgement within the group clearly manifests in the form of the solemn silence within the group, followed by Linda's denial of any possibility of the group being judgemental.

Interestingly Linda's behaviour, throughout the group experience, was much more oriented towards maintaining the peace within the group than towards exploring difficulties and differences. So, in this case, we are again able to see the way in which a member's well-established behaviour pattern within the group is employed by the group to fulfil a specific role on the group's behalf.

However, the presence of this force away from exploring difficult issues within the group and, thus, away from task, does not mean that the opposing force towards exploring difficult issues such as being judged, was not also present. This can be seen in the responses by Debbie and Joshua who both tried to find a way for the group to define what was meant by the word 'judgement'. One of the facilitators – Stephan – takes this exploration of the meaning of the word 'judgement' further by reframing it in such a way that it loses its perceived 'sting'. This weakening of the negative force immediately allows the positive force towards the group's development and growth to gain temporary ascendancy as the group, through some of its members, reconstructs judgements and the exploration of judgements within the group in positive language:

FRANCIS            Which is actually a good thing, because ... ja.  
STEPHAN           Why? Explain why you say it is good?  
FRANCIS           No, because in the beginning, when we walked in here, everyone had a thought of everyone else and the more people talked, the more you get to know them, the more you understand them for who they are.  
DEBBIE             The less you're going to judge ...  
FRANCIS           Ja, the lesser ... ja.

#### 6.4.7.4 *The interplay of forces*

The forces that were at play during this section of session 7 can be summarised as follows:

- a) The facilitator makes the implicit explicit by referring to the group's underlying fear of being judged. This underlying fear of being judged, in turn, acts as a force away from open and honest participation within the group as it appears safer to remain silent than to open up and be judged. This is manifested in the group's talking in circles, and avoiding the real issue of the fear of being judged. When seen from the perspective of the group-level, this has the effect on the group of pushing the group away from task (avoiding open communication), away from belonging (not opening up in order to connect with each other) and away from individuality (members becoming less visible.) On the member-level, this fear of being judged also drives members away from task and towards individuality in order to protect themselves.
- b) On the other hand, by making this fear explicit, the facilitator appears to be trying to tap into the possible underlying forces within the group towards exploring and reflecting on this fear of being judged. Accordingly, the goal, on the one hand, appears to be to try to weaken this fear and, on the other, to try to open up space for the positive, pro-group forces to be released.
- c) The force towards opening up and exploring the group's fears pertaining to judgement is, however, met with resistance. This resistance seems to spring from a force against exploring judgement and fear of judgement within the group and is manifested by the solemn silence, followed by Linda's denial of the possibility that any judgement at all exists within the group. This attempt by the group, through Linda, to deny the existence of judgement within the group is interesting when viewed against the recent attempts by the group to increase its cohesion through personal sharing and feedback. In addition, it shows that, in terms of its maturity, the group is still finding it difficult to acknowledge and contain conflict and disagreement. This denial of judgement within the group that follows closely on the personal sharing that had occurred in the previous section is starting to display a quality of the ba massification group to which

Hopper referred (Hopper, 2003b). Accordingly, if the forces towards togetherness and sameness continue to be emphasised at the expense of the forces towards apartness and difference, then the group will run the real risk of regressing in its development to a state in which it will need to pretend that it is a cohesive unit in order to protect its sense of identity as a group.

- d) However, it does seem as if the attempt to provide space for the release of the group's inherent drive towards development was successful. The forces towards the exploration of judgement within the group were released and were manifested by the group's attempts at reconstructing the meaning they had attached to being judged within the group. By reframing judgement as something normal and which is a part of everyday life, the group starts to see the possibilities inherent in exploring the judgements and evaluations they have of each other. This, in turn, is reminiscent of Agazarian's insistence on depathologising behaviour within the group and perceiving specific behaviour as part of the group's natural existence. In other words, there is no need to fear such behaviour but, rather, to seize the opportunity to explore it (Agazarian & Gantt, 2000). On the group-level, this pro-group force can be seen as driving the group towards its task, as it opens up a sensitive topic for exploration, towards belonging, as members join together to create a common understanding of the way in which the group wants to frame judgement, and towards individuality as individual members become more visible in the group.

#### 6.4.7.5 Summary of forces in section 5

**Table 6.19: Summary of the forces in section 5**

Force nr	Description of apparent force goal	Point of application	Manifested through	Direction of push/pull on membership	Pro- or anti-group
1a (Group-level)	To avoid open communication as a result of the fear of being judged	Membership -as-a-whole	Group talking in circles about the worst that can happen	Away from task (Avoiding open communication) Away from belonging (Not opening up) Away from individuality (Avoiding being visible in the group)	Anti-group
1b (Member-level)	To avoid open communication as a result of the fear of being judged	Individual members	Intellectualising the issue of either participating or not participating	Away from task (Avoiding open communication) Towards individuality (Self-protection)	Anti-group
2a (Group-level)	To open up and explore the underlying fear	Membership -as-a-whole	Intervention on the part of the facilitator with	Towards task (Opening up the sensitive topic for reflection)	Pro-group

			regard to the group		
2b (Member-level)	To open up and explore the underlying fear	Individual members	Intervention on the part of the facilitator with regard to the group	Towards task (Setting reflexivity around judgement in each member in motion)	Pro-group
3a (Group-level)	To resist the exploration of judgement within the group	Membership -as-a-whole	Silence from group and denial through Linda	Away from task (Avoiding open communication and exploring) Towards belonging (Group as mass is emphasised) Away from individuality (Individuals becoming invisible)	Anti-group
3b (Member-level)	To resist the exploration of judgement within the group	Individual members	Silence from group and denial through Linda	Away from task (Avoiding open communication and exploring) Towards individuality (Self-protection)	Anti-group
4a (Group-level)	To explore the issue of judgement within the group	Membership -as-a-whole	Discussion about reframing the meaning of the word judgement	Towards task (Opening up the sensitive topic for reflection) Towards belonging (In search of a common understanding) Towards individuality (Individual members becoming visible)	Pro-group
4b (Member-level)	To explore the issue of judgement within the group	Individual members	Discussion about reframing the meaning of the word judgement	Towards task (Taking part in discussion)	Pro-group

#### 6.4.8 Section 6

##### 6.4.8.1 Transcript

#### **Section 6: Maggie feeling responsible**

MAGGIE You look like you want to ask me something?

JOEL Yes.Okay.

ALL Laugh.

JOEL Do you still feel that you have to take responsibility for Debbie?

MAGGIE Little bit.Uhm ... I think, even though I have asked you if you're okay, and I can see that you're okay and stuff, I was just, like you know, when you speak about energies; I think I was caught up in your energy somehow yesterday.I think it is typically my process that if you and I didn't just speak to and come to some sort of result then we both left the conversation, however, no longer feel to be where I felt like we will eventually be okay with what happened, then I won't be able to let go myself then.But then you're not responsible for that.I'm responsible for that, I know.

JOEL About letting go?

MAGGIE Ja, of feeling responsible for her because I know, that on a mental sort of level, in a way, that (**indistinct 50.32**) like ourselves that, you know, that she can



take care of herself. I'm not judging her in that situation where I don't think that you can't take care of yourself. I just felt really bad that you would be put into a situation where you didn't know how you were ... that maybe you were experiencing the situation differently and I didn't ... I felt sort of protective towards her, you know.

JOEL  
STEPHAN  
SHELLY  
MAGGIE  
SHELLY

You did protect her yesterday  
Everybody. Not only her in particular.  
Can I ask you a question?

Hm **(yes)**.

So, listening to what you said and you said that in this group you have ... well, thus far, there was a time you felt that you have a certain level of responsibility towards the group.

MAGGIE  
SHELLY

Yes.

In your life, in general, are there other situations where you take responsibility for other people or feel the need to take responsibility, whether it be friends or family?

MAGGIE  
SHELLY  
MAGGIE

I do.

Okay. Have you always been like that?

No, but when I think about it, I don't know maybe this is possibly an issue that you guys can relate to, that a lot of people don't entirely understand all the distinctions and all the different scopes of application of industrial psychology and clinical psychology, and so it happens to me a lot that, whenever I told a person, you know, I'm studying to be an industrial psychologist, they just start telling me stuff – things that I don't think they would otherwise, say if I didn't tell them that because they feel like I can help them or I can explain things better, and, in a lot of cases, I do, but then when it's like they're giving this expectation to me that they want this from me and then I feel like I have to provide that for them. I have to make them feel better or I have to explain things to them or I have to help them solve their problem or whatever. And I think with a lot of my close relationships that that is becoming a habit – that I can feel with certain friends of mine that we're not friends on just an easy level and we can go out together and we go shopping and watch movies. We are, specifically, friends when they're having a problem and they need someone to turn to, then I become that person that has conversation until they **(indistinct 52.53)**.

STEPHAN  
MAGGIE

So, they take you to a place where you don't want to go?

I'm not so certain that I don't want to go there. I mean, I do feel responsible, but, at the same time, I do enjoy that as well. I enjoy exploring that with another person. I think maybe why the other business for yesterday became a bit difficult for me is because I'm not used to being the one in the spotlight. I'm used to being the one assisting the other person and, you know, the other person is going to be analysed, or whatever, and I'm there for that person. And yesterday I didn't entirely, you know, it was so weird when I was talking, because also I couldn't trust that space, so I guess someone else had to tell me and say okay, maybe this is what you're feeling and you know, I could be in control, I just wasn't in control. But I enjoy it. I do enjoy it **(indistinct 53.51)** ... Now I'm feeling like, I just, I sound just confused. But, if you guys are thinking that like, you know, shoe, I thought Master's was doing a number on me, then **(indistinct 54.10)**. I don't mind that.

JOEL  
MAGGIE  
DEBBIE  
JOEL

Master's is doing what?

Doing a number on me, you know?

A number on me.

Oh, okay.



- DEBBIE Master's was doing a number on all of us.(**indistinct 54.26**)?  
MAGGIE Ja  
DEBBIE Definitely.  
STEPHAN Okay, so what do you make of what Maggie said about taking responsibility, being forever in a position where she does not want to be in, being out of control, enjoying it still, taking responsibility for you here, as what she does in other spaces?Anything else?  
DEBBIE I'm wondering what in us prompts her to feel that way, because she does not feel that way for no reason at all, then I'm wondering what's/where's my part in this.Ja.That's what I think.  
MAGGIE I don't know.Honestly  
DEBBIE Not necessarily just me, you know.Because ja, now and again, I'm feeling you and I are ... ja, but I mean (in between)  
MAGGIE You know, I think the most honest thing that I can say, and I really hope you guys believe me, is that if I am thinking for whatever reason that I need to take responsibility for you I'm not doing it on a conscious level where I'm making a judgement and you're saying, oh, you look like you need help, so now I need to help you.I'm just feeling.  
JOEL (**indistinct 55.47**)?  
MAGGIE Ja.  
FRANCIS That's how you are in general in your life as well, so then you put it in the group as well.If you weren't like that with your friends and you wouldn't have felt the responsibility as well.  
STEPHAN And it's not a problem for anybody that hasn't heard, but the problem is that it can become a burden on you, because you feel now you have to protect everybody and where can I just help and protect even more, and then it becomes something that you now have to go process somewhere, but that time coming back to it maybe the moment has passed and you sit with a burden.  
MAGGIE Ja.That is something that I'm doing; that I did go home thinking (**indistinct 56.29**) ... and I think a lot about that afterwards.  
STEPHAN A part of that would be the fact that you have to prepare the way and make so sure that you help and that you don't make it worse and that you say things in the right way; that what you actually wanted to say gets lost in the process and, afterwards, you realise hey, I should have said that.  
MAGGIE Ja.  
STEPHAN Does that happen sometime?  
MAGGIE Ja.  
STEPHAN Like even yesterday and today?  
MAGGIE Ja.Can I just say something?I really feel like I'm hogging the conversation, but can I just say ... (in between)  
STEPHAN Say again?  
MAGGIE I really feel like I'm hogging the conversation, but can I say (in between).  
STEPHAN Okay, but can I just stop you for a moment.You said that just now – what's going to be so worse if you go hog the conversation?Why is it not an opportunity, because sometimes you have to take that and to be there, and to have the opportunity for other people to assist you guys hogging the conversation ... (in between)  
DEBBIE I just sense that there are people that are annoyed with me and ...  
STEPHAN Okay.  
DEBBIE ... and I sensed it yesterday, and I sense it today again.So, ... ja.  
STEPHAN Okay.Can we stop just ... or ...



MAGGIE Ja.  
STEPHAN Do you want to check that first maybe?Are you annoyed?Did they take the fall for (**indistinct 57.47**)?  
ALL **uncomfortable laughing and joking**  
DEBBIE Christa, are you annoyed with me?  
CHRISTA No, Debbie.  
ALL Laugh  
DEBBIE Ja.Yesterday I felt distinctly that you were very annoyed with me at a stage.  
CHRISTA No.  
DEBBIE Even Pam as well.Ja.  
PAM Laugh  
STEPHAN Same thing – different experiences.  
DEBBIE Uhm.  
STEPHAN She felt that, at least where ... they sit there and are irritated with me, but actually something different than what you thought.  
DEBBIE Okay.  
STEPHAN And you?What's so bad about (in between)  
DEBBIE Hogging the conversation?  
STEPHAN Hogging.Ja.  
MAGGIE I don't know if I feel like (**indistinct 58.35**). I feel like, maybe, as I'm talking that people are having their own thought and they have their own experiences that maybe they would like to share and they're not getting that opportunity to share, because I'm taking up that space.  
LINDA No, I think people would say if they wanted to add something.  
DEBBIE I think in the sense that we are so open and being ourselves out there, we create a safe space for anyone to jump in and comment.  
JOSHUA There is enough time in this 2 ½ days that if you really wanted to say something to say it.  
FRANCIS If you want us to come back tomorrow, it's okay.  
ALL Laugh (in between)

#### 6.4.8.2 Codes allocated to section 6

**Table 6.20: Codes allocated to section 6**

<b>Section 6</b>	TB: Affirming fellow member
Maggie	TB: Building on other member's contribution
feeling	TI: Selfdisclosure of here and now emotion
responsible	TT: Reflecting on member's behaviour within the group
	AT: Directing conversation to there-and-then
	TT: Self-reflective/disclosure behaviour
	TI: Self-disclosure of here and now emotion
	TT: Reflecting on here and now emotion regarding interpersonal
	TI: Self-disclosure of here and now emotion
	TB: Opening up and becoming vulnerable
	TT: Checking perceptions with other members
	AB: Not meeting the level of vulnerability displayed
	AT: Christa shying away from level of honesty displayed in the question

TI: Self-disclosure of here and now emotion

TT: Open and honest reflection

TB: Supporting other member

TB: We like this group

#### *6.4.8.3 Discussion*

This section starts with a short silence following the end of the previous section where the group reflected on whether it is really so bad to be judged. Maggie then picks up on Joe, the facilitator's, intention to ask her something. He does this by checking whether the matter discussed previously, of her feeling responsible for others in the group, has been addressed sufficiently. This immediately results in the matter being explored in greater depth by Maggie and also by other members of the group, first in the domain of a discussion of personal feelings in the here and now, before it is taken outside of the group by Shelly. The forces towards opening up and sharing personal information with the group regarding its here and now functioning are, thus, followed by forces aimed at exploring the personal material outside of the group boundaries of space and time.

However, even although the conversation is taken to the outside of the group by Shelly, it still serves the purpose of creating an increased awareness of whom Maggie is and this, in turn, facilitates the sharing, feedback and cohesion loop (Yalom, 1985) that was referred to earlier. However, once again it appears as if, even though the forces towards task (reflecting on role here and now), towards individuality (becoming visible in the group) and towards belonging (Maggie's sincere assurance that she does not underestimate the group's abilities) are 'countered' by forces directed slightly off task as the conversation moves to the there and then instead of the here and now, the group was not prepared to leave the space of both reflecting on its process and increasing the cohesion amongst its members. This is seen, firstly, in Maggie's sincere and personal response which, in turn, leads the conversation back to the group and, secondly, by the facilitator who emphasises the relevance to the group itself and invites participation in that regard. In addition, there seems to be special significance in the fact that it is Shelly, of all people, who poses the question about Maggie's behaviour outside the group. It is important to bear in mind that, at the very start of the group, when the issues around being judged first emerged, it was between Maggie and Shelly that the drama unfolded and between whom it can be reasonably expected that there would still be, at least, some form of a rift. It therefore seems as if the forces towards greater group cohesion, especially on the systemic level of the interpersonal

relations between members, are operative as it is Shelly who is participating in the sharing, feedback and cohesion loop with Maggie.

If we consider the codes that were allocated to this first interaction between Maggie, the group and Shelly, these codes support the assertion that the forces operating within the group at this point were pro-group forces, organised as towards belonging, towards individuality, towards task and away from task behaviours:

TB: Affirming fellow member

TB: Building on other member's contribution

TI: Self-disclosure of here and now emotion

TT: Reflecting on member's behaviour in the group

AT: Directing conversation to there and then

TT: Self-reflective/disclosure behaviour

Following closely on these actions of opening up, sharing and cohesion we see a very interesting turn of events. Maggie, true to her role of 'taking responsibility for others', tries to stand back to allow other members the opportunity to interact. This, in turn, leads to an exploration of why both Debbie and Maggie had been referring to themselves as 'hogging the conversation', albeit for very different reasons:

MAGGIE	Ja. Can I just say something? I really feel like I'm hogging the conversation, but, can I just say ... (in between)
STEPHAN	Say again?
MAGGIE	I really feel like I'm hogging the conversation, but can I say (in between).
DEBBIE	I just sense that there are people that are annoyed with me and ...
STEPHAN	Okay.
DEBBIE	... and I sensed it yesterday, and I sense it today again. So, ... ja.
STEPHAN	Okay. Can we stop just ... or ...
MAGGIE	Ja.
STEPHAN	Do you want to check that first, maybe? Are you annoyed? Did they take the fall for (indistinct 57.47)?
ALL	Uncomfortable laughing and joking
DEBBIE	Christa, are you annoyed with me?
CHRISTA	No, Debbie.
ALL	Laugh
DEBBIE	Ja. Yesterday I felt distinctly that you were very annoyed with me at a stage.
CHRISTA	No.
DEBBIE	Even Pam as well. Ja.
PAM	Laugh
STEPHAN	Same thing – different experiences.

The sense that I picked up from this while watching the group was that Maggie had suddenly become aware that she may have been taking possible value away from others within the group by taking value from the conversation herself and that there was, perhaps, also a tinge of guilt associated with this realisation. Debbie, on the other hand, clearly felt that it was incumbent on her to stand back, not because of a sense of responsibility for the others, but because she felt that the others were annoyed with her. Her statement to this effect is similar to numerous other statements which Debbie had made throughout the life of the group. However, it is interesting to note that, at some point during the field notes that I had made of the following session – session 8 – I had written down:

“I wish Debbie would be quiet now - Debbie, the psychologist”

I also drew a little picture in my field notes illustrating how I was experiencing the way in which she saw herself in the group as elevated above the rest:



**Figure 6.11: Picture from field notes depicting Debbie's position**

The aim of this interlude is not to digress to a discussion of session 8, but merely to show that even I, from the observation room, had also felt annoyed with Debbie. In addition, I am aware that this annoyance of mine had not been limited to session 8 only, but that it was something that I had experienced at various stages throughout the group's life.<sup>45</sup> The group, mainly through Christa, had also launched covert attacks on the position Debbie had taken within the group throughout the life of the group. In fact, her position had been the focus of the group's work in session 5 and she had been the only person not to be included in the group's plan of 'let's discuss puppies', a plan that they had made before entering the room and sitting on the floor during session 6 – the session during which the group had revolted against the facilitators and, maybe against Debbie, as they had transferred some of their feelings regarding the facilitators onto

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<sup>45</sup> I am aware that there is a part of me that also likes to be elevated above others. I do not like this aspect of myself. So the possibility exists that it is only my own projection that I was annoyed with. But the possibility also exists that there may have been a bit of both – my projection as well as a real feeling of annoyance within the group towards Debbie.

her. Accordingly, there is evidence for the assertion that the group had, in fact, been annoyed with Debbie and that Christa, perhaps as a result of the valence she had for competing with other females (as had manifested throughout the life of the group) may have been the person who had embodied this annoyance on behalf of the group. In addition, seen against the background of the strong pairing relationship that existed between Christa and Pam, Debbie voices her feeling that some people, especially Christa and Pam, are annoyed with her. However, what is the relevance of this long discussion regarding our current project of deciphering the forces involved in the membership experience during session 7?

The relevance is as follows: Until this point, the group had been making a strong move towards opening up, exploring relationships and creating cohesion – maybe to a point where Debbie had felt safe enough to voice the concern that she had been experiencing, perhaps for some time, about the group feeling annoyed with her. Again we see the underlying theme of judgement within the group. Accordingly, it seems as if the level of cohesion at this point was such that Debbie felt safe to point out that there were, perhaps, still other underlying forces present that should be addressed – named, explored, owned, and contained – if the group were to develop further. It may be that this opening up and honesty of Debbie was emanating from both a force driving towards the full acceptance of Debbie by the group, on a member-level, and also a force towards candour and increased cohesion on the group-level. The facilitator then attempts to elicit a further exploration of Debbie's sense that people were annoyed with her, but both Christa and Pam promptly deny any annoyance.

Accordingly, in reaction to the force towards opening up, honest feedback and increased cohesion, there is also an opposing force at work. This opposing force seems to be a fear of absolute honesty, which may lead to conflict and hurt feelings and, at least in the world of fantasy, the ultimate destruction of the group. Thus, the force that is activated by the force towards greater candour is aimed at protecting the homeostasis of the group. This force appears to be extremely strong, to the extent that everyone, even the facilitators, play along with it – by openly accepting the denial of annoyance and by allowing this to happen – by letting it slide. However, it may be that a moment of homeostasis was exactly what the group had needed at that point and that that was the reason why the forces towards homeostasis had successfully neutralised the forces towards honesty and candour. Nevertheless, it is evident from the group's continuous struggle with issues around judgement, that this choice of homeostasis above growth came at a price.

Directly after Debbie's concerns regarding causing people annoyance had been silenced, the conversation reverted to Maggie's concerns about 'hogging' the conversation at the expense of the other members' value. However, the group supported and affirmed Maggie and assured her that they had not been experiencing her as taking away value from them and that the value that they took from the group was the responsibility of the group and that it was a responsibility that the group was willing to assume. This turning away from Debbie's concerns towards dealing with Maggie's concerns, on a group-level, seems to indicate a turning away from conversations in which negative feelings towards the protagonist could be explored and towards conversations in which positive feelings towards the protagonist, as well as negative feelings from the protagonist towards herself could be explored. At this point it appears as if the forces towards the further growth and deepening of the group had been successfully neutralised by the forces towards 'keeping things safe and comfortable' and that, in fact, a ceiling with regards to the group's development had been reached which would have to be broken down by either weakening the restraining forces or strengthening the driving forces. In theory, Agazarian (in Agazarian & Gantt, 2000) would argue that weakening the resisting forces would be the best way in which to address this problem. However, as the group progresses from this point, we will explore how this played out.

#### *6.4.8.4 The interplay of forces*

The forces that played out in this section can be summarised as follows:

- a) Firstly, we see forces at work towards opening up and sharing personal information with the group regarding its here and now functioning as Maggie explores her feelings of responsibility for the group. These forces, which work towards group growth and development, are manifested through the various members taking part in this discussion, and can be seen as driving towards individuality (Maggie showing herself and, in effect, acting as a model of the learning behaviour that is the most effective in this group – Beck's emotional leader (Beck *et al.*, 2000)), towards belonging (caring for the group members and increasing a feeling of togetherness through open sharing and feedback) and towards task (reflecting on the group process in terms of roles within the group).
- b) Then, as a possible reaction to the here and now nature of the discussion, forces away from the here and now discussion are activated. However, these

forces appear to contribute to the sense of cohesion within the group in that they help the group to come to a deeper knowledge and understanding of one of the group members. Accordingly, these forces can be seen as being directed towards the group's development and driving towards belonging (as the group shows interest in one of its members) and towards individuality (as the member agrees to become visible within the group as a unique individual). The behaviour of exploring Maggie's behaviour outside of the group can also be seen as emanating from forces towards both peacemaking and enhanced cohesion within the group. In addition, these forces, which seem to be directed at the development of the group, especially on an interpersonal level, are manifested by Shelly's behaviour and can be seen as 'towards belonging' forces.

- c) An underlying force directed at the group's feeling a sense of togetherness and mutual care for one another is then manifested through Maggie's expression of concern that she is taking up too much space within the group and that she does not want to deprive others of the opportunity to obtain value from the group. This force can be seen as driving memberbehaviour 'towards belonging' and 'away from individuality' on the member-level (for Maggie) and, possibly, on the group-level, directed at blocking a deeper exploration of the personal experience within the group.
- d) Following directly on the heels of the forces mentioned above, other forces pertaining to 'taking up too much space' are activated. This time, however, these forces do not have the quality of a mother feeling more responsible for the needs of her children than for her own needs, but rather have the 'siblingrivalry' quality of a sister wanting to talk about possible negative feelings on the part of her siblings towards her for aligning herself too closely with the parents. Thus, for the first time, we have a force directed towards addressing rivalry in an open and honest way for the benefit of the group and this force, in turn, drives behaviour towards task, towards individuality and towards belonging on both the group and membership levels as a force that, on the whole, seems to support the development and task achievement of the group.
- e) However, there is also another quality to this action of Debbie: it alerts us to the existence of a force to retreat due to the fear of being judged and, thus, opposing the overall growth and development of the group. It is again possible to see how this force is manifested by Debbie on the member-level. In addition, we are also able to see how this force plays out in the direction of individuality



(self-protection) on the member-level and away from individuality on the group-level as members find it more desirable to be invisible.

- f) However, despite the multitude of factors within the group, including the resistance to Debbie's efforts that have, by now, become a habit within the group, forces towards maintaining homeostasis, or a 'sense of safety and security', are able to neutralise the forces mentioned above successfully. These forces may be seen as driving 'towards belonging' (maintaining a feeling of safety as well as other positive feelings), 'away from task' (avoiding a deeper exploration) and 'away from individuality' (individuals becoming less visible) behaviours on the group-level and away from belonging, individuality and task on the member-level as Debbie, by not being honest, refrains from taking a risk within the group by reciprocating the gesture shown towards her.

#### 6.4.8.5 Summary of the forces in section 6

**Table 6.21: Summary of the forces in section 6**

Force nr	Description of apparent force goal	Point of application	Manifested through	Direction of push/pull on membership	Pro- or anti-group
1a (Group-level)	To open up and discuss personal hereandnow experience	Membership -as-a-whole	Maggie's reflection on taking responsibility	Towards task (Reflecting on group process) Towards individuality (Individual becoming visible) Towards belonging (Cohesion)	Pro-group
1b (Member-level)	To open up and discuss personal hereandnow experience	Maggie	Maggie's reflection on taking responsibility	Towards task (Reflecting on personal process within group) Towards individuality (Showing herself as a person) Towards belonging (Reaching out to group members)	Pro-group
2a (Group-level)	To gain a deeper understanding of one of the group members	Membership -as-a-whole	Shelly enquiry about Maggie's life outside of the group	Towards belonging (Cohesion)	Pro-group
2b (Member-level)	To gain a deeper understanding of her fellow group member	Shelly	Shelly enquiry about Maggie's life outside of the group	Away from task (Away from hereandnow reflection) Towards belonging (Reaching out to Maggie)	Pro-group
3a (Group-level)	To avoid deeper exploration	Membership -as-a-whole	Maggie's apology for dominating the conversation	Away from task (Avoiding a deeper exploration)	Anti-group



3b (Member-level)	To increase a sense of togetherness as well as mutual care and respect	Maggie	Maggie's apology for dominating the conversation	Towards belonging (Showing respect for group members) Away from individuality (Avoiding being the spotlight)	Pro-group
4a (Group-level)	To address negative feelings openly	Membership -as-a-whole	Debbie's mentioning that she had sensed annoyance towards her	Towards task (Opening up the sensitive topic for reflection) Towards individuality (Individual becoming visible) Towards belonging (Inviting honest, interpersonal feedback)	Pro-group
4b (Member-level)	To address negative feelings openly	Debbie	Debbie's mentioning that she had sensed annoyance towards her	Towards task (Reflecting on hereandnow emotion) Towards individuality (Showing herself as a person) Towards belonging (Need for acceptance within the group)	Pro-group
5a (Group-level)	To avoid being judged	Membership -as-a-whole	Debbie's statement of dominating the conversation	Away from individuality (Individuals becoming invisible)	Anti-group
5b (Member-level)	To retract from possibly being judged	Debbie	Debbie's statement of dominating the conversation	Toward individuality (Self-protection)	Anti-group
6a (Group-level)	To maintain homeostasis as a result of a fear of impending change	Membership -as-a-whole	Christa, Pam and the group's refusal to explore these feelings honestly	Towards belonging (Maintaining a feeling of safety as well as other positive feelings) Away from task (Avoiding a deeper exploration of negative feelings) Away from individuality (Individuals becoming invisible)	Anti-group
6b (Member-level)	To maintain homeostasis as a result of a fear of impending change	Christa	Christa, Pam and the group's refusal to explore these feelings honestly	Away from task (Avoiding being honest) Away from individuality (Not taking a stance out there) Away from belonging (Not reciprocating the honesty shown)	Anti-group

## 6.4.9 Section 7

### 6.4.9.1 Transcript

#### Section 7: Judgement

DEBBIE Where were we before that?

JOEL You wanted to check something with the group.

MAGGIE I actually wanted to say something. After Friday night I had the conversation



about gay couples adopting children with my family because my family is also very religious and 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 not to judge them. I just needed to say that.

SHELLY  
MAGGIE  
SHELLY

Okay.

Did you feel like I was judging you?

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 are, 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 – everybody else has a mother and a father, but I have two mommies or I have two daddies. It is not always easy for ... yes, that's your norm as such, because that's what you know, but I'm just saying once they start interacting with the world and they've seen that there's other stuff out there that that is not the norm, so to speak, in society, so now they have to explain and justify. And, just like we said yesterday, sometimes other children can be mean. So, I'm just saying, why put that added pressure on a child. I'm saying if you want to be gay and that's how you want to live your life, fine, but I don't think it is fair to put that on a child. I was not inside ... if that's how you choose to live your life, okay. I have my beliefs. I'm not going to go there and *toi-toi* in the streets and say no gay people should adopt children. I'm not gonna go into stuff like that. I'm just saying that's me – how I feel.

MAGGIE

I'm thinking that maybe we should have a conversation where we didn't lead conversation that 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  
STEPHAN

Well, I think we've parted with 'agree to disagree'.

You felt so, but she didn't, because it lingered with her still. She wasn't, if I understand you correctly, you still weren't finished with it. Now, maybe, you want to clear it up again and finish it, or whatever.

MAGGIE

Ja. I feel like you know, we don't need to go into the conversation itself again, I just didn't want Shelly to feel like I was making a personal judgement of her, and I don't know, I think I would like you to understand that I get sort of, you know, like how your emotion got involved, my emotion got involved as well, but my emotions weren't involved because I was, you know, against you, it was just because I was for what I was saying. So, like arguments can also happen in a space and it can be locked in that space, and it does not have to be, or has one thing to do – maybe take away ...

DEBBIE  
MAGGIE  
DEBBIE

You have such a nice way of saying things.

When I make sense...

You do make sense.

MAGGIE  
STEPHAN

Ja.

Shelly, are you okay?

MAGGIE  
STEPHAN  
MAGGIE

Uh-huh. **(Yes)**

How did that feel? You just put it right in there.

It felt like I was taking a lot of the burden off my shoulders and leaving it in the circle and I can, maybe, walk out of the room without it.



STEPHAN You feel a little bit relieved?  
MAGGIE Yes.  
STEPHAN Although it happened two days ago, it's still lingered and lingered as if something unsaid sat here. Now it's a belief that has been there. Maybe it is an opportunity to check how did the other feel when you just put it up there or was it okay to just put things there or should she have said it a little bit nicer or a little bit better, or did she hurt someone while she judged ... maybe just checking how did they experience it?  
DEBBIE Part of reality.  
STEPHAN One of the others? How did you experience her interaction?  
LINDA I'm glad you asked it, because you feel better now and that's good and it's fine.  
MAGGIE I'm glad she feels better, personally...  
LINDA Ja, but I don't think she was like ... not mad – mad, just wondering though.  
LINDA Ja, but I think she felt funny about it, but you didn't know, did you? ...  
MAGGIE Uh-huh.  
LINDA Did you feel funny about Friday night – the conversation afterwards when you were at ... ?  
SHELLY No, I felt the same way it was like I was looked at and she said – don't judge other people. And I was like ... okay ...  
STEPHAN What? Wait. What's that? What's okay?  
SHELLY It was like I was just telling you what I felt and she looked at me with big eyes – she made her eyes big, something like that.  
MAGGIE So you did feel judged?  
SHELLY No, it's not about feeling ... I could sense that, like, you felt strongly about something, I felt strongly about something, and then you were just, like, don't judge other people. And I'm like okay I was just telling you how I feel about it, but it was like okay, it happened, it's over, it's finished, we went through, we went home and yesterday we still spoke. It wasn't like I had this, Maggie must stay away from me, I don't know how I'm going to greet you the next morning. Do you hear what I'm saying? It was like you felt that way and I felt differently, and it was okay. You understand what I'm saying?  
MAGGIE Okay.  
FRANCIS Sorry, did you think about it even after Friday night?  
SHELLY Thursday night?  
FRANCIS Ag, Thursday night?  
SHELLY Ja, I think it's more, like, in sharing my experiences than having ... it's like when I spoke to my husband and I said what are the different things we spoke about then, that those last ... it was like the last minute of that conversation. So, that stuck with me for that day, but, like I said, it was, like, we came back here yesterday, it was over for me.  
JOEL Was it over for the group?  
DEBBIE Uhm-uhm **(No)**  
JOEL Well, at least not for you, but I'm wondering about the others?  
DEBBIE Laugh  
FRANCIS Laugh  
STEPHAN And that was?  
DEBBIE (Laugh) We were just having a moment ... no 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.
- JOEL Why does the judging thing you think come up then so often, or is it just coincidence?
- DEBBIE It comes out because we're all judgemental by nature.We're brought up that way, you know to make judgements and evaluate and be critical and ... (in between)
- STEPHAN But those are two separate things.
- DEBBIE Ja, but we're raised to judge.To judge whether things are safe or not, or right or wrong, or ... ja.
- JOEL But you make the distinction between evaluate and judging?
- JOSHUA Ja.
- ALL Laugh
- JOSHUA I do.Ja, judging is more in a negative sense.
- DEBBIE It's so much like more stronger.It sounds negative.
- JOSHUA And it's more in a critical, like ... in a more in a critical negative sense where evaluate is more like, oh, okay and you place it into your own frame of reference, in your own perceptions and stuff, and how you perceive it and make sense of what you hear and of what you perceive, where judgemental is more, like, for me in a critical sense – in a critical, rejective sense.
- STEPHAN And is that where the problem comes when it becomes critical, negative or what did you/how would you call it?
- JOSHUA Ja, and I think that is when people started feeling uncomfortable when they feel as if, okay, you do not necessarily evaluate it and you, perhaps, even if you evaluate you can still disagree, but like ... it is sort of a condemness to judge me –
- JOEL Case closed.
- ALL Silence
- STEPHAN And are we raised like that?But I think that then comes back to your question.Are we raised to be judgemental, critical or evaluative, or accepting or ... and how does it relate to here or what happened here?What of those played out here?Were we more judgemental, were we more critical, were we more evaluative or were we more opening?How did you experience it?
- MAGGIE Can I make an observation?I think that it is really, really awesome that ends like the other day that Debbie looks like someone that she could care for and then the guys did go out for a drink, and that is something that came out of the group.I think that's awesome.I think as much as now we're concentrating about judging each other that that is a positive to come out of it, so maybe we don't need to go back to secure ourselves and we don't need to take this as making judgements.Maybe we are just learning and sharing.
- DEBBIE Ja. I think the point is when you tend to a group situation, any group situation, but I mean this ... especially this group or any group for that matter, but, since we are here, you bring with you your entire history, you know, and all your baggage and everything, and you sort of forget that the only thing you have currently is right now – is this moment.
- STEPHAN The issue is, we slap those baggage onto the group.
- DEBBIE Uhm.
- STEPHAN Now, that's the thing that we necessary need to relook in a meeting and where judging comes into play for you all, in particularly, very much so, is this only an opportunity to judge or is there are, maybe, other ways to view the world, as if

the world would be judging and as if people here would be judging you. And that's where the learning comes in to say, well, it just might not be that it wasn't a judging, maybe it was just evaluative or critical, or something, because that's going to happen anyway. Everybody has their own perceptions about who we are, who other people are and what the group is supposed to be, and that is happening everywhere, but what do I make of it, from where I come from. That's the thing to work on.

- JOEL Are we losing some people?  
 INDV.? Huh-uh.  
 JOEL Not yet.  
 MAGGIE I think we want to be in a reflective mood right now.  
 JOEL People?  
 MAGGIE Or I'm in a reflective ...  
 JOEL You're in a reflective ... okay. Have we silenced you, Erna?  
 ERNA No, not at all.  
 MAGGIE I am just really glad that we're doing this thing in our group of 9 or 11 (**indistinct 01.13.22**) and you're not with the whole class, because it's not that I have personal things against other people in the class, I just don't think that I would have opened up and shared as much in a bigger group, and I really have gotten to learn things about certain individuals in the bigger group than we would have (**indistinct 01.13.45**).  
 DEBBIE Maybe it wouldn't have been the same.  
 MAGGIE Ja.  
 STEPHAN So, some of you're nodding and you felt that it's the same – you are also happy that it is in this smaller group than in a larger group? Is it better here than whether it would have been the others?  
 DEBBIE Not necessarily the people *per se*, but the size.  
 JOSHUA Uhm. The size.  
 JOEL Okay. Shall we take a break?  
 DEBBIE Cool.  
 JOEL Good?  
 STEPHAN Good.  
 JOEL It's ten to now – fifteen minutes?  
 STEPHAN Fifteen minutes is fine.  
 JOEL Five past, please.

#### 6.4.9.2 Codes allocated to section 7

**Table 6.22: Codes allocated to section 7**

<b>Section 7</b>	TB: Opening up and becoming vulnerable
Main theme: Judgement	TI: Taking a personal stand/risk
	TT: Open and honest reflection
	TT: Self-reflective/opening up behaviour (making self vulnerable)
	TB: Direct question regarding other member's feelings
	TT: Direct question about interpersonal relationship within the group
	AB: Not meeting the level of vulnerability and directness in the question
	AI: Not taking a stand/ risk out there

AT: Shying away from deep level honesty  
 TB: Being apologetic  
 TB: Opening up and becoming vulnerable  
 TI: Taking a personal stand/risk  
 TT: Open and honest reflection  
 AB: Not meeting the level of vulnerability displayed  
 AI: Not taking a stand risk out there  
 AT: Shying away from deep level honesty  
 TB: Being apologetic  
 TB: Opening up and becoming vulnerable  
 TI: Taking a personal stand/risk  
 TT: Open and honest reflection  
 TB: Affirming fellow member  
 TI: Self-disclosure of here and now emotion  
 TT: Self-reflective/opening up behaviour (making self vulnerable)  
 TB: Affirming fellow member  
 TB: Feelings of togetherness placed above feelings of conflict  
 AT: Shelly's refusing to be honest  
 TT: Group pulling towards honesty  
 TB: Direct question regarding other member's feelings  
 TT: Direct question about interpersonal relationship within the group  
 TI: Not willing to relinquish the initial position taken  
 AB: Pairing between Debbie and Francis as withholding from the group  
 TB: Pairing between Debbie and Francis  
 TT: Reflecting on judgementalness within group  
 TB: We like this group

#### *6.4.9.3 Discussion*

This section follows upon the previous section where the group decided to occupy itself with work that was 'safe and comforting' rather than work that was 'threatening and potentially risky'. The section starts with Maggie wanting to address the unfinished business in the group pertaining to her, Shelly and the issue of judgement. It is interesting that this is the exact issue of judgement that had been avoided in the previous section when the group had decided not to explore the feelings of annoyance prevailing within the group. It is, thus, possible to infer that the force towards the open and honest exploration of the possible difficult feelings within the group was still at work, this time manifesting through Maggie, who was, perhaps, as a result of the two different roles that she and Debbie had been playing within the group until that point, a more suitable candidate for tackling a difficult issue within the group than was Debbie. In fact, Maggie, with her now firmly established role of emotional leader in the group also tapped into the underlying force within the group towards a sense of togetherness and



respect for each other. This became visible in the way in which she addressed the residue of any conflicting feelings that may still have been at play within the group. She does this by first acknowledging the possible part that she may have played in the 'don't judge other people' interaction which had taken place on the Thursday night (session 2). The irony here is that, in the actual incident, the judgement had come from Shelly and those who had supported her in her arguments against homosexual people adopting children. Nevertheless, the fact that Maggie starts by apologising to Shelly for 'judging her for judging', opens the door wide for Shelly both to reciprocate and apologise for her contribution to the conflict and also to admit to the fact that she had also judged. However, this does not happen. Instead, Shelly seizes this as an opportunity to hide behind Maggie's version of the story as retold here and in which she, Maggie, is made out to be the one who owes the apology.

Regarding the codes that were allocated to this section, it seems safe to assert that the forces towards and against the group's development and growth – the pro-group and anti-group forces – were pitched against each other through the two group members involved (Maggie and Shelly) with Maggie acting upon the pro-group forces and Shelly upon the anti-group forces. When interpreted in this way, this section can, then, be read as a tug-of-war between the forces towards open and honest sharing, becoming vulnerable and taking risks and the forces towards self-protection, shying away from honest feedback and refusing to take responsibility. In the table below the pro-group forces are depicted in green while the anti-group forces are in red in order to render visible the almost rhythmic pattern in which these forces played out. Despite the fact that, towards the end of this interaction, more group members started to pull in the direction of honesty, vulnerability and risk-taking, the forces resisting these efforts managed to hold out, as can be seen in Shelly's refusal to be honest and to relinquish the position that she had taken at the outset of this interaction. When we look back at the previous section, and see the interest that Shelly had shown in finding out more about Maggie, it makes sense that, on the interpersonal level, Maggie had taken that as an opportunity to make amends, although on the group-level, the fear associated with honesty and vulnerability had proven to be greater than the possible forces towards moving closer on an interpersonal level.

Following this interaction, an interesting interaction takes place between two of the group members, namely, Debbie and Francis. The facilitator's probing into whether the issues around judgement were still alive for the group caused these two members to start giggling and they admitted that they had shared ideas about the conversations on

homosexuality that took place in the second session “for which the group is definitely not ready”. There appears to be a force at work here which is operating away from belonging to the group-as-a-whole and towards belonging to the pair that is bound together by a special secret. This force away from the group may also have had an impact on the group’s sense of cohesion as the members of the pair, in effect, informs the group that they had judged the group from the vantage point of a special, outside meeting and had found the group lacking in terms of its capacity to contain whatever was now safely contained within the pair. Thus, instead of becoming vulnerable and taking a risk for the benefit of the group, the pair, just like Shelly a few minutes before, decides rather to protect its own interests even although this may be at a cost to the group. Again we see the forces against the group’s development being played out by members with a vested interest in protecting themselves.

Following this secret interaction, the facilitator sets in motion another reflection on the part of the group as to the reason why the issue of judgement keeps on coming up. This intervention can be seen as resulting from the underlying force within the group towards openly and honestly reflecting on its own process. The members then follow this train of thought and reflection to a limited, mostly academic, degree as it felt unsafe to refer to personal, interpersonal or group-level manifestations of the issue of judgement. The discomfort with regard to the possibility of addressing these issues openly is of such a nature that Maggie comes forward to rescue the group from this discussion by directing the group’s attention to something positive that had come out of the group, namely, the friendship between Francis and Debbie. This may be seen as emanating from a force away from open and honest sharing and towards a sense of togetherness and optimism about what the group had, indeed, achieved thus far. In a sense, what Maggie is doing on behalf of the group, is to remind the group that, although there were still unresolved issues, which were probably going to remain unresolved, there were still other reasons for being optimistic about the group, membership of the group and the possible value that may still be derived from participating in the group’s task.

This force towards reasserting to the group the value of membership is further manifested by the facilitator’s reaching out to those members who had recently remained very quiet. Two of the members, Christa and Erna, had shown evidence of the considerable difficulty they experienced in staying present in the group during the latter half of this session (session 7): Carol had drawn the hood of her sweater over her head in such a way that her face was barely visible, she had hidden her hands in

her sleeves and had sat slouched back in her chair with her arms tightly crossed while Christa's constant fidgeting and shuffling in her chair had given the impression that she was having great difficulty staying in the group. It was clearly not possible to ignore these behaviours, although it was difficult to pinpoint exactly what had motivated these withdrawals. At the very least, it could be that these behaviours were evidence of discomfort with the group, either on a personal, interpersonal or group-level, and that they had probably originated from underlying forces directed at escaping from the group, for whatever reason. In the case of Carol, it seems plausible to assume that the conversational turn towards deeper, more emotionally laden discussions had made her uncomfortable as she had stated in her personal reflection that these types of conversations made it difficult for her to be in the group. In a similar vein, Christa used a moment in session 9 to come forward and voice her discomfort with being 'psychoanalysed'. Accordingly, it seems that, although the group had turned towards exploring interpersonal and group-level processes in the here and now, the forces resisting these types of behaviours were, nevertheless, present in the group and were manifesting specifically through Christa and Erna.

#### *6.4.9.4 The interplay of forces*

The forces that were identified can be summarised as follows:

- a) In this section, we first see a force directed towards an open and honest exploration of the possible difficult feelings within the group, this time manifesting itself through Maggie. The manifestation of this force follows directly on the refusal of the group to work through the issue of group members' being annoyed with Debbie. Accordingly, where the group's behaviour had, just a minute previously, been primarily directed by forces against becoming vulnerable in the face of potential risk, the group's behaviour was, at that point, again directed at pursuing vulnerability and risk-taking for the benefit of the group's overall development, not only on an interpersonal, but also on a group-as-a-whole level. It is interesting to note here that the way in which this action on the part of Maggie, in which she, in fact, invites the group to interact around the issue of judgement, is congruent with the role of emotional leader that she had assumed thus far. Beck (Beck *et al.*, 2000) describes the emotional leader in this phase of the group's development – where the group must cross the boundary between establishing roles and embarking on cooperative work – as someone who is highly motivated with regard to the task of the group and who models task behaviour by making

him/herself vulnerable through opening up and carrying out significant personal work within the group. The fact that the group, in the language of Tavistock, had unconsciously recruited Maggie, as a result of her personal valences (Bion, 1961) for taking responsibility for group tasks and the emotional wellbeing of others, to take up the task of exploring the theme of judgement, makes sense: not only has Maggie proven herself to be willing to explore issues on a personal level, but she has also, on several occasions, shown that she cares and, in fact, unconsciously takes responsibility for, the emotional wellbeing of her fellow group members. Maggie assumes this role in the only way that is open to her, namely, exploring the issue of judgement on a personal level. However, for Maggie, exploring the issue of judgement on a personal level was always going to be problematic as she would have to refer back to the incident that had taken place on the Thursday night (session 2). The difficulty with referring back to that incident was, of course, the fact that it had been during that incident that her role of leader, or, at least, of significant group member, had been established. After she had been obliged by Shelly to explain her open attitude towards homosexual partners adopting children, especially in view of the fact that she is Muslim – this after a large subgroup had spent considerable time affirming and voicing their somewhat conservative Christian beliefs - she had given such an honest account of her belief in forgiveness, that the group had sat for a moment in pleasantly stunned silence. The important point here is the fact that Maggie was not judgemental during session 2 - in fact, she was the exact opposite and this had immediately earned her some form of respect from the group. The problem in the present situation was, thus, that she wanted to reach out to the person who had, initially, personified 'judgement', without making her feel judged because she had judged on behalf of the group. Maggie did this by apologising for her possible part in causing Shelly to feel judged. By doing this, the force towards opening up and taking risks for the sake of the group's development was manifested so gently and invitingly that a palpable sense of expectation rose in the group that Shelly would reciprocate.

- b) In addition, it seems as if the force we are discussing here comprised two distinct aspects, namely, the drive towards addressing the difficult issues within the group and, thus, organised towards the task of the group, and the drive directed towards taking risks and becoming vulnerable through opening up and becoming truly visible within the group. This latter drive can be seen as organised towards individuality and it is reminiscent of the individuation-

separation process in terms of which the individual becomes secure enough in him/herself to be able to stand up as a separate individual and take risks in the outside world. This type of membership behaviour is also what Bion (1961) is describing when he refers to the 'work group' – members are visible as individual entities who are able to bring their unique competencies to the group – as opposed to the 'basic assumption group' – where members are not easily distinguishable and hide in the group. In Foulkesian terms we speak of members who developed to become 'effective communicators' within the group, as discussed in chapter 3, and, in Agazarian's terms, we would talk of members between whom and the group an interdependent communication relationship has developed.

- c) It can also be possible to identify another force working together with the one just mentioned, namely, an underlying force towards a sense of togetherness and respect for each other. It can then be said that this force, operating in conjunction with the force towards openness, candour and risktaking, ensured that the attempt to address the underlying force of judgement within the group was conducted with an olive leaf, and not a sword, in hand. It is, thus, easy now to understand both these forces as working towards the development and growth of the group – one towards task and individuality and the other towards belonging.
- d) One force that has not been discussed specifically thus far is, of course, the force towards 'judgement', as it had become known in this group. This force carries with it a dark quality and all the potential energy required to destroy the group. Klein may have termed this force 'envy' or 'paranoia', – as described in the way in which she explains the paranoid-schizoid position, (Klein, 1962) and this is possibly what Bion (1961) perceived as operating in the ba fight-flight state of basic assumption functioning. It is also easy to understand that this dark force of 'shooting down others' in the group forms part of Nitsun's (1996) anti-group construct, and that it needs to be contained and worked through lest it becomes rampantly destructive within the group. This force has manifested itself throughout the life of the group in various forms and was often referred to when members reflected on their level of (dis)comfort in the group. On the group-as-a-whole level, we see how the group was split into fragments of different pairs and subgroups according to stereotypes (Agazarian & Gantt, 2000) and, on the sub-group- and member-levels, we see how the pairs and subgroups served as alliances from which to gain a sense of security and protection. This all-pervasive force is directed towards the destruction of the

group and driving towards belonging (on the sub-group or alliance level), away from belonging (on the group-level), away from task (on all levels), towards individuality (on the member-level of protecting self-interest above group-interest), away from individuality (on the pair/alliance level) and away from individuality on the group-level (where it contributed to the overall reluctance to become visible within the group).

- e) Of course, it is difficult for any group to acknowledge and work through these powerful and potentially destructive forces (Nitsun, 1996) and, thus, in defending against having to deal with these forces, groups, in general, (Armstrong, 2005; Hirschhorn, 1988) and this group, in particular, experience forces towards self-protection, shying away from honest feedback and refusing to take responsibility. These forces manifest in different ways in different groups as social defences. In this group we see the force towards self-protection and shying away from honesty manifest in Shelly's refusal to reciprocate the risk that Maggie has taken. On a group-level we can, thus, infer that the group, through Shelly, defends against addressing the difficult issue in order to protect itself from entering a level of personal depth for which it does not yet feel ready. Accordingly, this force plays out on the level of the group-as-a-whole, is manifested through Shelly and pushes away from the group's task. On an interpersonal member-to-member-level, it would appear that this force has a different quality in that it is not only organised away from the group's task, but also away from belonging on the interpersonal level. The effect of this force operating here is that it maintains the distance between the group members involved as it prevents Shelly from reciprocating Maggie's gesture. On a group level, this force away from deeper contact also hinders the development of cohesion on a new, more intimate level as one member, in effect, pushes the group away from her as she chooses to protect her self-interest rather than the interests of the group. It can also be inferred that, on the individual member-level, a force towards self-protection (organised towards individuality) was at work, possibly springing from a need within the member to defend the initial position that she had taken and also to protect herself from the judgemental tendencies within the group. It seems both plausible and natural for this force to be present within this group as the group has been aware of potentially dangerous forces at work since its inception and, clearly, these have not all been resolved. Accordingly, the perceived risk here for the individual is that an acknowledgement of his/her contribution to the judgement within the group may attract all the judgement energy to him/herself and the



individual can become the scapegoat for the group. This force towards self-protection, on the level of the group, can again be seen as organised away from individuality as the member does not take the risk of being both openly visible and vulnerable within the group for the benefit of the group.

- f) With the judgement issue still unaddressed, we can see the forces involved in pairing playing out as it may again be safer to approach the group as a pair and not as an individual. Accordingly, we see the force operating away from belonging to the group-as-a-whole as the Debbie/Francis pair isolates itself from the group through the secret which they admit to having but refuse to share. We also, on the member-level, see the force directed at safety and security creating a drive towards belonging to the pair. It is, thus, interesting to note the regression in terms of the group's development – a short while before one member had felt safe enough to take a risk by making herself vulnerable in terms of personal experiences with judgement within the group but, now, after the constellation of forces towards open and honest sharing and risk-taking had been neutralised by the constellation of forces against greater openness and intimacy within the group, it appears as if the forces of judgement are again rampant and the pair openly declares that the group is definitely not ready to hear what they had shared between the two of them.
- g) At this stage, the underlying force in the group to reflect openly and honestly on its own process appears to have been neutralised to such an extent that reflection on the group process and, specifically, with regards to judgement, is relegated to the level of academic/cognitive reflection instead of an exploration of personal experience. This force to avoid a deeper exploration is manifested in the behaviour of both Joshua and Debbie and has the overall effect of working towards the group's overall growth, albeit on a lower level of group maturity.
- h) Next we see an interesting new force being activated and manifested through Maggie – a force towards a sense of togetherness and optimism about that what the group has, indeed, achieved thus far. It is as if Maggie realised that the group's identity as a good group, to which it is worth belonging, is under threat as the group had just experienced its inability both to hold and to contain emotions that were being experienced as potentially destructive. This force, which appears to drive towards belonging on both the group- and member-level as it tries to increase the attractiveness of the group to its members, can, thus, also be classified as a pro-group force.



- i) This force towards reasserting the value of membership to this group is then further manifested by the facilitator's reaching out to those members who had remained quiet. This role of the facilitator can be seen as trying to facilitate the sense of being part of something worthwhile by initiating the process of making sure that everyone still feels part of the group. On the group-level, this force can be seen as driving towards belonging as the external boundary of the group is emphasised and, on the member-level, the force can also be seen as driving towards belonging as the group indicates to Erna that it wants her to be a part of the group again.
- j) The behaviour of Christa and Erna enables us to infer the existence of underlying forces directed at escaping from the group. These forces are working away from belonging (undermining cohesion) on the group-level and away from belonging (escaping), task (avoiding the group's task) and individuality (not willing to become visible), but also towards individuality (self-protection), on the member-level.

#### 6.4.9.5 Summary of forces in section 7

**Table 6.23: Summary of the forces in section 7**

Force nr	Description of apparent force goal	Point of application	Manifested through	Direction of push/pull on membership	Pro- or anti-group
1a (Group-level)	To address difficult issues openly	Membership -as-a-whole	Maggie's contribution and the group's feeling of expectation	Towards task (Open and honest reflection on group process) Towards individuality (Individual becoming visible) Towards belonging (Cohesion on deeper level)	Pro-group
1b (Member-level)	To address difficult issues openly	Maggie	Maggie's contribution and the group's feeling of expectation	Towards task (Open and honest reflection on group process) Towards individuality (Taking a risk by becoming vulnerable) Towards belonging (Inviting honest interpersonal feedback)	Pro-group
2a (Group-level)	To increase sense of togetherness and mutual care and respect	Membership -as-a-whole	The way in which Maggie approached the issue	Towards belonging (Creating a sense of mutual respect and tenderness)	Pro-group
2b (Member-level)	To increase sense of togetherness and mutual care and respect	Maggie	The way in which Maggie approached the issue	Towards belonging (A soft and inviting approach to fellow member)	Pro-group



3a (Group-level)	Judgement (To kill off fellow group members)	Membership -as-a-whole	Various manifestations such as stereotype sub-grouping	Away from belonging (Fragmenting the group) Away from individuality (Individuals becoming invisible) Away from task (Avoiding being honest)	Anti-group
3b (Member-level)	Judgement (To kill off fellow group members)	Various members	Various manifestations such as stereotype subgrouping Individual isolation	Towards belonging (Stereotype subgrouping) Away from task (Avoiding being honest) Away from individuality (Not taking a stand out there) Towards individuality (Self-protection)	Anti-group
4a (Group-level)	To shy away from deep level honesty	Membership -as-a-whole	Shelly's refusal to be honest	Away from task (Avoiding a deeper exploration) Away from belonging (Resisting cohesion on a deeper level) Away from individuality (Making it even more difficult for others to become visible))	Anti-group
4b (Member-level)	To shy away from deep level honesty	Shelly	Shelly's refusal to be honest	Away from task (Avoiding being honest) Away from belonging (Not reciprocating the honesty shown) Away from individuality (Not taking a stand out there) Towards individuality (Self-protection)	Anti-group
5a (Group-level)	To avoid being a part of this group (Destroy the group)	Membership -as-a-whole	Debbie and Francis subgroup	Away from belonging (Fragmenting the group) Away from individuality (Individuals becoming invisible) Away from task (Avoiding being honest)	Anti-group
5b (Member-level)	To avoid being part of this group (Destroy the group)	Debbie and Francis	Debbie and Francis subgroup	Towards belonging (Self-protection) Away from task (Avoiding being honest) Away from individuality (Not standing a stand out there as a separate individual)	Anti-group
6a (Group-level)	To avoid deep exploration of difficult issues	Membership -as-a-whole	Joshua and Debbie's academic reflection on judgement	Away from task (Avoiding exploring on the personal/affective level) Towards task (Trying to understand judgement)	Pro-group
6b (Member-level)	To avoid deep exploration of difficult issues	Joshua and Debbie	Joshua and Debbie's academic reflection on judgement	Away from task (Avoiding exploring on the personal/affective level) Towards task (Trying to understand judgement)	Pro-group
7a (Group-level)	To create a sense of togetherness and optimism	Membership -as-a-whole	Maggie's comment about something outside of the group	Towards belonging (Increase attractiveness of group)	Pro-group

7b (Member-level)	To create a sense of togetherness and optimism	Maggie	Maggie's comment about something outside of the group	Towards belonging (Increase attractiveness of group)	Pro-group
8a (Group-level)	To create a sense of togetherness	Membership -as-a-whole	Facilitators checking with Erna if she is still part of the group	Towards belonging (Emphasising external group boundary)	Pro-group
8b (Member-level)	To create a sense of togetherness	Facilitator	Facilitators checking with Erna if she is still part of the group	Towards belonging (Showing that the group needs Erna)	Pro-group
9a (Group-level)	To resist being part of the group	Membership -as-a-whole	Erna and Christa's nonparticipation	Away from belonging (Undermining a sense of cohesion)	Anti-group
9b (Member-level)	To resist being part of the group	Erna and Christa	Erna and Christa's nonparticipation	Away from task (Avoiding taking part in group's work) Away from belonging (Escaping from group) Away from individuality (Avoiding becoming visible) Towards individuality (Self-protection)	Anti-group

#### 6.4.10 Conclusion: Analysis 3

When examining the interplay of forces that were discussed above, it is interesting to note the way in which forces with a pro-group quality and forces with an anti-group quality alternated. This, in turn, corresponds with the broad pattern that was observed in Analysis 2. In the analysis above, pro-group and anti-group forces were defined very broadly and not necessarily strictly according to Nitsun's (1996) formulation. Nevertheless, the alternating pattern seemed to persist consistently throughout session 7. With regard to the pro- and anti-group qualities of the forces it was also interesting how these movements were not limited by the group's development, but played out regardless of whether the group had moved to a higher level of maturity or regressed back to a more immature level. Thus, on any level of development, the interplay between pro- and anti-group forces continued as an alternating pattern and, according to the way in which the specific interplay of two opposing forces worked out or were contained, the group either stayed on its developmental level, progressed or regressed, for the alternation to continue and affect the next movements in the group.

With regards to the different systemic levels on which this analysis focused Agazarian (2000) points out the fact that behaviour within the group carries different meaning when observed from different systemic levels. In the analysis above, where the focus

was on two systemic levels only, namely, the group-as-a-whole and that of the group member, we were definitely able to see this happening. Also, the systemic observation of the behaviours here forced me to interpret the dynamics on a different systemic level to the one that I had first observed. Thus, at times, the different systemic meanings emerged clearly from the way in which I had understood the data but, at other times, it was the theory of different systemic levels that made me take another look in order to discover what a specific behaviour might mean on a different level to that of my initial observation.

Finally, with regards to the theoretical lens – towards and away from belonging, individuality and task: The first observation was that, similar to the process described above pertaining to Agazarian's (2000) systems theory, this theoretical lens also made it possible to find a logical framework within which to observe the data, but it also prompted me to look at the data from various angles in order to test whether there are not meanings in the behaviours that I had overlooked. Indeed, it was possible to see how all the behaviours, and their underlying forces, could be logically and plausibly explained in terms of the theoretical framework. It is interesting to note that we did not take the initial codes that had been allocated as the starting point of Analysis 3 as we had done in Analyses 1 and 2. Instead, we took the raw data, transcript and the video itself, as the departure points and added to this the data from the field notes as well as the personal reflections. The codes that had initially been allocated served only as one of the inputs (together with existing theory) into the discussion and identification of the forces.

After the forces had been identified, we again arrived at an understanding of the triangular interaction of the forces between belonging, individuality and task. However, there was no effort made here to ensure that the inductive code descriptors were exactly the same as the initial codes, as this was not essential for our purposes here. On the contrary, the purpose here was to explore the forces at work only and any urge to give them exact names can be seen as an urge emanating from our positivist selves and, thus, not in line with our understanding at this point that these forces were complex, fluid, not easily identifiable, everchanging and context-specific. Accordingly, the descriptors behind each 'towards and away from' category above should only be seen as descriptors to convey the line of reasoning that had been followed.

## 6.5 Conclusion

This chapter set out to analyse and interpret the results from this study in a way that was both in line with the overarching research philosophy and also feasible. In an effort to do this, a funnel-like process was followed in terms of which emphasis was first placed on the group-as-a-whole at the end of its lifetime, then on the group as it moved through the ten sessions, and then on both the group and its members as they moved through one specific session. This way of structuring the analysis made it possible to look at both broad, overall movements within the group as well as specific movements richly situated within context. Most importantly, this analysis and interpretation facilitated the process of exploring the forces within the group as they impacted on the group member, both as an individual member and as a member of the collective.

In the next chapter, the study-as-a-whole will be considered in terms of the various outcomes it achieved and recommendations will be made with regards to the application of the research results as well as areas for future research.