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The dynamics of fear in the workplace: The contribution of attachment theory to leadership training and behaviour

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Abstract

This paper will take an evolutionary perspective on the dynamics of work relations and focus on the way in which change and creativity can be fostered or inhibited by organizational dynamics. It will focus on the kind of leadership necessary to support exploratory peer relationships amongst staff at all levels of the organization. It will introduce the reader to ideas developed by two English Psychoanalysts, Dorothy Heard and Brian Lake, and expanded and developed by Una McCluskey on the nature of creativity and wellbeing and show how their ideas can inform relations between people in the workplace. Their work builds on the work of a colleague of theirs John Bowlby, the founder of Attachment theory. We will introduce McCluskey's research on the processes involved in the effective assuagement of the fear system within individuals which inhibit exploration and creativity. In addition, we will present a training and development program developed by José Miguez based on McCluskey's work, and effectively implemented at the University of Porto. We signal several insights which result from the research that José Miguez and Catarina Brandão conducted on that program and which contributes to understand the dynamics underlying training and leadership processes in organizations. One of the key findings is the influence of fear on a person's capacity, competence, performance and wellbeing. Since many organizations these days exist in a culture of fear, this analysis is both timely and important.

Key-words

Attachment theory, organizational dynamics, training, leadership.

Introduction

Work impacts the way we see ourselves and the value we attach to our lives (Böckerman, Bryson, & Ilmakunnas, 2012) with our mental and physical wellbeing being influenced by the various inputs found in the work environment, namely at the level of physical agents, ergonomics, work times and workplace violence (Pouliakas & Theodossiou, 2013). Globalization with its increasing competitiveness and productivity pressures, a world that is always awake due to the ever fast advancing technologies, the labour market flexibility and changes in the workforce (Burke & Cooper, 2006; Gauld, 2015; Rousseau, 1997), are some of the phenomena in the today's work organizations that require psychology's attention.¹ Organizations are pressed to change and adapt to the rapid environmental changes, which generate uncertainty that can lead to anxiety (Böckerman et al., 2012). Considering this rapid changing environment, which represents a change in the nature of work and puts strain on individuals, we will focus two main processes in this paper. One of them is leadership; the other is training and development in a context that is permanently changing at different levels, namely organizational and group.

In this paper we understand organizations as social systems made of human beings interacting together. In this sense, leadership refers to an influential process that develops between people as well as being hierarchically organized and authorised. In this case we are specifically considering leadership existing in organizational hierarchical relationships. One of the most interesting ideas we have found regarding leadership was presented by Knowles, one of the most influential authors on andragogy. He states that the highest function of leadership is «releasing the energy of the people in the system and managing the processes for giving that energy direction toward mutually beneficial goals» (Knowles et al., 2011, p. 262). Literature has stressed the impact that hierarchical relationships may have on individuals' psychosocial health (e.g., Pouliakas & Theodossiou, 2013), being an important source of occupational stress (Offermann & Hellmann, 1996). Following the perspective underlying Knowles' definition, we believe that effective leaders must develop their self-awareness and understand who they are in relation with others in different situations, the impact that others have on them, how they impact others, and how each one's early experiences influence those dynamics.

In a time where organizations face diverse pressures and the concept of work is changing, leadership is seen as fundamental. Similarly, training and development have been considered two of the main strategies that organizations should use in order to address constraints. Just recently Kraiger, Passmore, Santos and Malvezzi (2015) reiterated that training and development is considered by many as *the* way through which organizations can

¹ Ageing, feminization and different generations simultaneous at the workplace are some of the characteristics of our modern organizations.

stay competitive. The authors take this idea further and turn to Salas, Tannenbaum, Kraiger and Smith-Jentsch (2012), for whom «continuous learning and skill development is now a way of life in modern organizations» (Kraiger et al., 2015, p.1).

Some authors propose that attachment theory is a powerful framework to understand processes at work in organizations, namely group dynamics and relations between leaders and followers, which can «be viewed as forms of emotional attachment» (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007, p.433) or, as will be proposed in this paper, of enactments of transference phenomena from earlier in life. In the next section of this paper we will discuss the ways in which Attachment theory can contribute to the understanding of organizational processes through the dynamics of the *self*.

Does Attachment Theory have anything to offer in terms of understanding organizational processes?

Attachment theory, as we know, was developed by John Bowlby after he turned to the science of ethology to account for the processes involved in early development between the young and those who looked after them. Along with colleagues that he worked with at the time, he was convinced that the early pattern of relationships remained constant and inalienable into adult life. Research by Ainsworth and others (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Main, 1991; van Ijzendoorn, & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 1996; Lyons-Ruth, Yellin, Melnick, & Atwood, 2005) have provided evidence for this observation. Researchers have shown that we carry these expectations of others and the way we relate to them into our romantic relationships and choice of partner (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). It seems perfectly possible to us that a person also brings their early experience and expectations of relationships into their work relationships and that this has a powerful influence on relationships at work.

Bowlby understood that the mechanism by which this happens is based on the way we make internal representations of significant people in our early lives, how they treated and responded to us and the behavioural responses to them that we devised to cope with our experience. As most psychotherapists know, it is extremely difficult to change how these early representations impact relationships in adult life.

With these basic concepts in mind, let us consider what attachment theory has to offer in terms of creating good leadership processes in organizations that facilitate and develop each individual employee's potential competence, creativity and wellbeing. Also of concern is what attachment theory can offer in terms of enabling effective inter-personal relationships between those in leadership positions and the people in the teams that they manage or for whom they provide training or consultation.

First of all let us bring the reader's attention to developments in the field of attachment theory made by two English psychoanalysts, Dorothy Heard and Brian Lake (1986, 1997), and Heard, Lake and McCluskey (2012). Heard and Lake developed Bowlby's

model to take account of how adults relate to one another. Their work goes beyond that of Bowlby as their focus is on what motivates adults to achieve wellbeing in their lives. The concepts that they developed will help us to think about what is going on in the workplace when people experience enjoyment and pleasure in the workplace or find themselves stressed, distressed, angry, dismissed, and unable to influence their colleagues for the better. An attachment perspective can help us to understand how those in management positions, at middle and senior levels, can sometimes experience unexplainable fear, refusal to co-operate, truculent belligerence, and constant sabotage from particular members of their team or other organizational members. At the other end of the continuum, they may experience unusual idealisation. Sometimes they may be aware of members of the team who constantly over-work, who are always willing to take on extra work mindful of the health and welfare of their manager, but often at the expense of their own wellbeing.

The concepts that Heard and Lake (Heard et al., 2012) bring to the table help us understand how human behaviour is based on biological goal-corrected interpersonal social systems that are located within each one of us that are necessary for our health, survival and which if unassuaged can impact well-being. These systems are separate and distinct from each other, they have discreet and distinctive goals and when the person fails to reach the goals of these different interpersonal systems, the person experiences distress. There are seven of these systems; six remain active until they reach their goal. For some of these systems to reach their goal it requires an effective co-operative supportive relationship with another person. The systems work together as a single process to maintain a level of wellbeing. A person's wellbeing is significantly increased if all the seven systems are reaching their biological goal. Heard and Lake refer to this dynamic as a Restorative Process and have called their theory The Theory of Attachment-Based Interest Sharing (TABEIS). Clearly, the more enhanced the level of wellbeing of employees and managers in the workplace, the greater their level of effectiveness and level of contribution to the organization.

How the way a person is organized internally, based on childhood experiences, influences the way they relate to others at work

One of the concepts that Heard and Lake talk about is the internal system which is akin to what we referred to earlier as Bowlby's concept of representational models of how relationships between self and other have developed and progressed over time. Located within our internal environment will be a critical mass of either negative or positive attributions made by others about us as children. So for instance, we will have a sense of generally being ok, reasonable, conscientious, generous, loving, capable, competent people – all derived from what people have said to us as we were growing up – or we will have the reverse at greater or lesser levels of toxicity. This internal sense of who we are and how we

expect others to see us and relate to us will remain our default position in our work relationships as in every other relationship we have.

This, coupled with whether we feel secure in the world, again based on early experience, or whether we feel insecure based on early rejection in our lives, affect our expectation of being valued or found wanting in the workplace on the one hand, or expectations of success and promotion, on the other. Some people can hold both positions at once having multiple and diverse experiences of attachment figures in their younger lives.

It is a wise, capable and secure manager or person in authority who can negotiate this minefield of internal worlds that a team or group of people bring to their relationships with each other and to the “boss” who, without asking for it, by the very nature of their role attract the transference of early experience of authority figures.

Going for help when one needs it (careseeking) and providing help when it is required (caregiving): How these basic early processes manifest in the workplace

In any organization, whatever the nature of the business, it is important that employees are able to say when they are out of their depth, don't understand something, have hit a problem they can't manage or are feeling overwhelmed or bewildered. However quite a number of people, based on their early experiences with parents, teachers or early authority figures, will find asking for help extremely difficult and would rather carry on getting deeper into trouble emotionally or practically than cope with the feelings of vulnerability or shame that seeking help can arouse. The fact of not going for help is also likely to arouse the employees fear system (system for self-defence) which in turn will trigger either avoidance of the problem (flight), acting out aggressively (fight) or disorganization (becoming blank, incoherent or disorientated). Again, if a leader can understand the dynamic processes at work they are much less likely to attack the person, and instead work to enable the employee to get back within their zone of competence. In other words, if an organizational leader can access this level of understanding of early dynamic processes; then when they relate to an employee who is out of their zone of competence or window of tolerance (Siegel, 1999), who is relating as if they have forgotten everything they knew (disorganization), or who becomes aggressive when challenged about their performance (fight), they will be less likely to go into self-defence themselves and more likely to adopt an exploratory problem solving stance that does not seek to shame or belittle the other, but attempts to understand the other's response from a dynamic point of view.

Interest-sharing and sexuality in the workplace

The other system that Heard and Lake brought to our attention was that of the interest sharing system. This system is built into all of us. We have a strong desire to find others with whom we can share and develop our interests. This is where our vitality resides

and where our potential creativity is likely to flourish. Organizations that can capitalise on this innate human desire are bound to be successful, creative and have contented employees. There are also complications that can arise in the workplace due the arousal of interest-sharing between peers. Finding somebody who has the same interest as oneself, with whom one is able to take this interest further than one could on one's own, can be a very exhilarating experience and can in some cases arouse the sexual system leading to some confusion for those concerned. It is important for managers and workers who may have a creative pair in their team to be able to understand some of the nature of these complicated dynamics, particularly if they become prey to them themselves.

Any organization has to be aware of the way in which sexuality enters the workplace in both positive and negative ways. For example, early experience of having one's sexual system aroused in the context of a dominant-submissive relationship could affect how one uses one's sexuality at work to bully others or to be overly anxious in relation to potential sexual encounters or advances. Most organizations are beginning to recognise this and set procedures in place for dealing with sexual harassment or unwanted sexual approaches. Whilst policies and procedures deal with the negative aspects of sexuality in the workplace, we are in need of a much more complex understanding of the way in which sexuality enters the workplace in positive and negative ways.

The external environment and its importance in the workplace

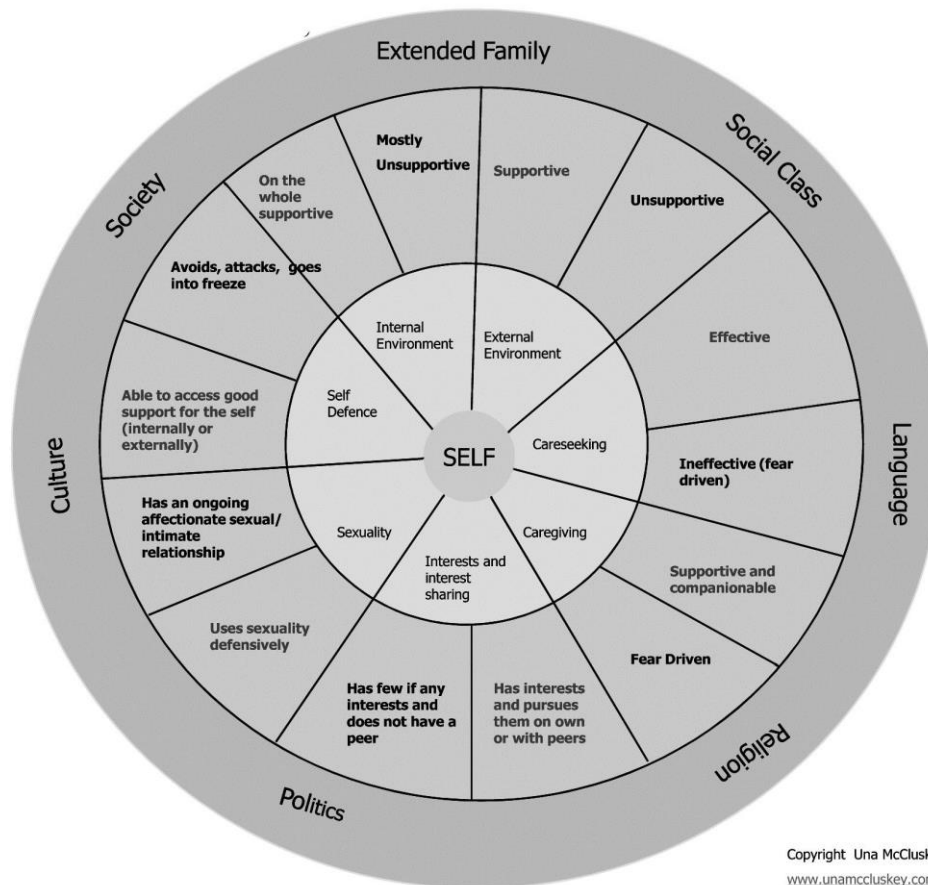
The final concept that Heard and Lake brought to our attention was that of the "personally created external environment". Again, this has applications in the workplace. This concept refers to the fact that we have an inbuilt system for making a supportive environment for ourselves out of "found" material that has positive emotional connotations. This means that whatever our circumstances, we will do what we can, with the resources we have, to create an external space that we can inhabit that reflects our values, what we like, what is important to us, what makes us feel good about ourselves, what reminds us of our aspirations and desires and which supports our potential creativity.

Allocation of space in the workplace, allocation of furniture, whether the office has windows, whether a person has to share a desk with 10 others (hot desking), whether there is space to have photographs, flowers, a poster, books, instruments of your work that give you pleasure. Whether a person has any choice in the decoration of their space are all of fundamental importance to how a person feels about themselves and how they feel they are regarded by those more senior to them in the workplace. This makes us think about the possible implications of some continuous improvement programs that many organizations are adopting, which stress normalization (among other principles), namely at the level of the working space. Programs such as Kaizen (developed by the Japanese Masaaki Imai, 1997) require the removal of personal items from the working area, allowing only those items

considered to be essential to do the work. These types of program tend to limit the freedom of workers to create a positive external environment. It seems therefore clear to us that it is fundamental that managers acknowledge the importance of being able to impact the space allocated at work, and the importance that this may have for the success of the organization. Managers may need to see beyond the promises of success that are made by many of the continuous improvement programs that stress normalization and frequently neglect the positive impact of individuals' freedom to affect their surroundings.

This paper can only attempt to scratch the surface of how attachment theory can account for adult experience and aspirations, and how it can be used as a framework within which to understand some of the relational problems that happen at work. The ideas put forward in this paper have been shaped and developed into a model of practice by McCluskey. Recently a colleague of McCluskey has applied the model with some success within a university context (Neath, 2016, in press). The following figure (Figure 1) depicts the seven interpersonal systems that can be used as a framework within which to understand some of the issues that come up at work.

Figure 1. The McCluskey Model for “Exploring the Dynamics of Attachment in Adult Life”.



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Developing and rating the concept of Goal-Corrected Empathic Attunement (GCEA)

During a series of experiments on attunement in adult psychotherapy (McCluskey, Roger, & Nash, 1997), Una McCluskey developed the idea that the offer to treat aroused the dynamics of attachment and found some supporting evidence for this which she published with colleagues in a paper entitled Goal Corrected Empathic Attunement: Measuring and Rating the concept (McCluskey, Hooper, & Bingley Miller, 1999). The importance of this work was that it showed that under stress, the biological systems for survival that are deeply embedded in all of us get aroused and for some people can override their exploratory systems. This means that for some people, when they feel their survival is threatened (and in a work setting this could mean where they feel their job is threatened or they are personally under scrutiny) they are unable to think clearly, explore options and contribute productively to the workplace. If there is a climate of fear in a work organization, this is going to mean that those members of the organization who have an early history of attachment insecurity may be vulnerable to performing at a much less competent level than they are capable of.

What McCluskey and others discovered was that in order to release the creative potential of individuals, the survival systems of careseeking and the fear system, once aroused, need to be assuaged. This can usually only be done in a relationship with another person who is able to offer an exploratory perspective. Only then can a person access their competence and creativity. McCluskey devised a programme that enabled this assuagement to happen which is described in her book (2005). In the next section of the paper we describe how students in a higher educational institution have been trained to become effective exploratory caregivers and draws attention to how it can be applied in other work situations, where we see the role of leadership as proving fear free exploratory caregiving (McCluskey, 2010).

A training model in GCEA

We will now present a project developed in a higher educational system, a relatively competitive environment which shares many similarities with work contexts.

Following the Bologna Process, which created the European Higher Education Area, the second author devised a course at the University of Porto integrating the various requirements of that reform process² (Brandão & Miguez, 2015). What started as a project whose main goal was associated with the implementation of a new desired paradigm at the higher educational system provided us with interesting data regarding training processes in

² The law established «the transition from an education system based on the transmission of knowledge to a system based on the development of students' skills, where the components of experimental work or project, among others, and the acquisition of soft skills should have a decisive role». It also introduced the «European system of credit (ECTS - European Credit Transfer and Accumulation system)» which is based on the work by students (law 49/2005; decree-law 107/2008; decree-law 74/2006).

general and particularly in organizational contexts. We will briefly present that course³, which was structured as a developmental program, and then focus on the issues that are most relevant to training processes for leaders in organizations.

The course adopted as a fundamental framework first, the Theory of Attachment Based Exploratory Interest Sharing – TABELS (Heard et al., 2012) and second, Goal Corrected Empathic Attunement (McCluskey, 2005). At the end of the training process students were expected to exhibit Empathic Attunement competencies with themselves and with others (peers) in a dynamic of attachment care seeking - caregiving. The program comprised several events and different types of activities, inside and outside the classroom. Classroom based activities involved teachers overseeing debriefings, micro analysis of students' videos, lectures on GCEA and TABELS, and training in editing video and video analysis. Outside the classroom participants were involved in laboratory based interviews. For this, they worked in groups of three (using scenarios involving the expression of emotions). They then had the task, not only of reflecting on the interaction taking place in the interview but also to complete measures of performance and learn the skill of synchronizing video data from two cameras, one camera focused on the interviewer and the other on the person being interviewed. The reflection on their performance that participants did at different points in time was collected using an instrument called SISDAT. This instrument was adapted from SDSLD, used by Agazarian (2004), and presents six themes to explore: Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction, Surprises, Discoveries, Learnings, and Applications. In this paper we will focus on the data regarding Satisfaction (Am I happy with how I participated in the session? What did I do that satisfied me and helped me to learn something new?); and Dissatisfaction (Am I dissatisfied with how I participated in the session? What did I do that prevented me from learning something new?).

We will discuss data gathered from 30 participants who attended the program, collected at eight points in time during the process (e.g., T1, T2...) ⁴ using SISDAT. At each point in time the participants had to reflect and provide on a particular input that they had experienced on the training program e.g., at T3 they reflected on their experience of the first debriefing session). We will use this project to explore and discuss the difficulties that trainers and trainees tend to face during training programs that aim to develop or change personal and interpersonal skills. These situations require trainees to expose their skills and knowledge in a potentially non secure environment. This can activate their biologically based fear system, producing strategies for defending the self learned in childhood that are more or less effective. We will organize our discussion around the main insights which we believe

³ Readers interested in the program in more detail please see Brandão & Miguez (2016), Brandão & Miguez (2015) and Miguez, Brandão, Pinto, Grande, & Saraiva (2013).

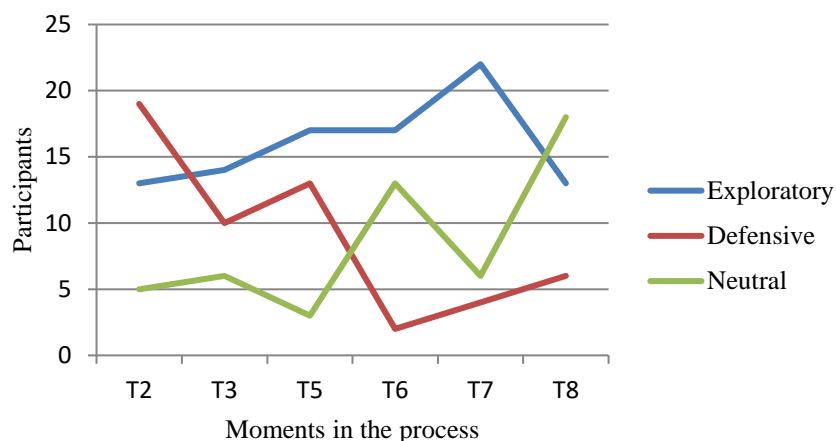
⁴ Gathering data moments in the program: T1= introduction to the program (1st and 2nd sessions); T2=1st interview; T3=1st debriefing; T4= lecture and training in video editing and analysis; T5=2nd interview; T6=2nd debriefing; T7=3rd interview; T8=3rd debriefing.

are fundamental for training and development in work organizations. The first one has to do with the psychological processes identified throughout the program.

The evolution of trainees' psychological processes during the developmental program

When we considered the psychological processes participants exhibit during the training program we could see that when expressing dissatisfaction regarding experiencing the task participants could do it through distinctive psychological processes: defensive, exploratory and neutral. Defensive psychological processes were present when participants had a self-centred and punitive attitude toward the self when reflecting on their performance or made external attributions, that is, justified their behaviour with an unspecified external cause or by blaming their activity on peers or the trainer. Exploratory processes were present when they explored their dissatisfaction with curiosity, noticing without critic that they acted differently from the desired behaviours or objectives. Finally, neutral psychological processes were present when participants acknowledged the non-occurrence of dissatisfaction regarding the program's situation, when they considered they had no development or the time available for the task (i.e., debriefings) was not enough. Neutral processes also involved participants making suggestions in relation to the program's design.

As Figure 2 shows, the majority of participants exhibit defensive processes when reflecting on the first interview, conducted in the laboratory. They were confronted with an unknown situation and a physical setting which could arouse their system for self defence (considerer, for instance, the presence of the cameras). As the program unfolds, defensive processes are less present. We can associate the dynamics of these specific processes' with the dynamics of the training program – higher presence of defensive processes is associated with experiencing interviews (along the training); a decrease in the presence of defensive processes is associated with debriefings. So, at T3, T6 and T8 (debriefings) trainers acted in a way to provide a secure and non-threatening context to participants, which allowed them to explore their experiences. Trainers were able to normalize and validate participants' difficulties and "errors" felt during the interviews, decreasing the activation of the trainees' self-defence system activation and allowing them to enter an exploratory mode. By the end of the program participants seem to felt sufficiently free to reflect on the program's design itself, presenting suggestions on how the training situation could be improved (e.g., using different materials). As mentioned before, these suggestions reflect neutral psychological processes.

Figure 2. Defensive, Exploratory and Neutral processes along the program (N=30).

Note: Figure adapted from "Using NVivo to Assess a Program of Goal Corrected Empathic Attunement Skills: A Case Study in the Context of Higher Education", by Brandão and Miguez (2016, doi 10.1007/s10209-016-0476-x, Copyright 2016 by Springer).

We could also see that participants react differently to the same situation. Some exhibited defensive processes and others exhibited exploratory or neutral processes when facing the same context. This tells us that the same situation can be perceived as a challenge or as a threat by different trainees. This signals the importance of identifying the specific way individuals react to situations when in training (and at work in general, for that matter), in order to develop adequate conditions to support those that tend to appraise situations as a threat. We will return to this idea in the next section of the paper, which presents a new insight from the program.

Integrating individual idiosyncrasies

Organizational training processes seldom consider individual differences, often implementing collective processes with a reduced capability of adapting to trainees idiosyncrasies. However, as Kraiger et al. (2015, p.2) recently stated «people are different and those differences matter in the training environment». Our results show that it is important to be attentive to these idiosyncrasies and that if it is true that the program's design (especially the debriefings) had the potential to reduce the fear system of some participants (facilitating the arousal of the exploratory mode) who then became exploratory, it is also true that others remained in a defensive mode throughout all the program. This means that for the same level of insecurity in a given context, participants may react differently, or in another perspective the level of security/insecurity it's a subjective perception that depends of the style of attachment of each participant. Hence, it is fundamental to remain attentive to the individuals' profile, despite some participants

remaining defensive no matter the strategies implemented. Fortunately, these are exceptions. These results support the importance of adopting a supportive approach during training programs that create a context sufficiently secure to reduce the arousal of the fear system.

Assuming that an effective (secure) training or development context has the potential to facilitate learning as a process of change that requires the trainee participation, our project draws attention to the importance of trainers having resources (capacity and competence and who themselves do not go into defence in relation to the presentation of some students) to implement support strategies according to each trainee's profile (Brandão & Miguez, 2016; Gauld, 2015). During the program we had a participant (number 10) who maintained a defensive attitude from the first phases of the training. It can be argued that trainers were not able to detect this particular case⁵, understanding his profile at an early stage of the training and adopting individualized strategies that could allow him to reduce his defensive processes. Of course, this requires time and specific competencies; it is not easy to develop and implement individualized strategies when training 30 individuals. But it is important and it may be accomplished in a favourable context – smaller groups of trainees and trainers available (i.e., time) and possessing specific competencies to do so.

The use of exploration and normalization

Literature on training in organizations and other organizational processes⁶ shows that the focus tends to be on individuals when inadequacies are identified rather than on the methods employed by the organizations to enable people to learn and that organizations seldom have «processes or mechanisms for reflection and review that take the burden of making mistakes away from individuals» (Vince, 2004, p.71). At the same time, people will not be motivated to learn if they feel threatened (Gauld, 2015). One of the features of the program described was that the design allowed for the development of a secure environment. The analysis showed that participants became able over time to explore errors in a non-self-punitive way. This is extremely positive and informative for organizations when designing training and development programs and when dealing with errors at work.

Adults learn best in secure settings (Knowles et al., 2011). Our results show that at the debriefings trainers were able to regulate [most] students' self defence system, promoting the number of participants with psychological processes of exploration. Indeed, literature stresses that the good trainer attends to learners' social, emotional and comfort needs (Gauld, 2015). This is to say, according to an attachment theory framework, that good trainers act as effective caregivers. This stresses the importance of trainers understanding the dynamic processes at work during training tasks, which can trigger individual's previous

⁵ Despite the use of the SISDAT, as we will explore later on the paper.

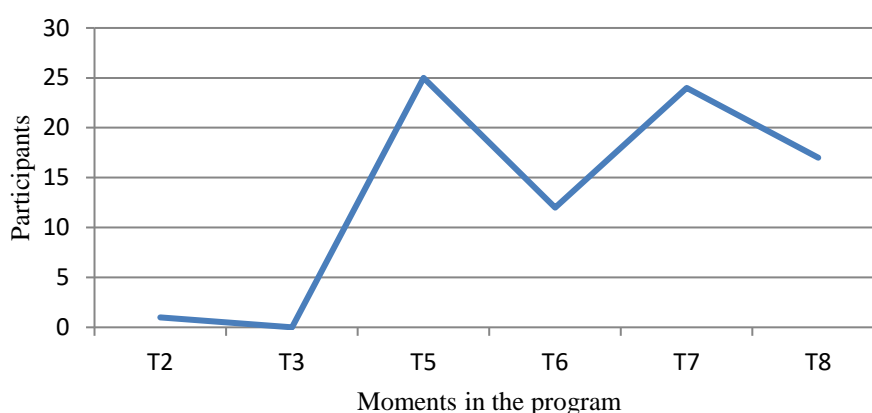
⁶ Consider, for example, literature on performance appraisal and feedback.

experiences which are then transferred to the new context. Clearly, leaders in all positions in organizations require the same knowledge and skills.

Personal development

All participants ($N=30$) at some point of the process referred to their own personal development over the course of the program. When we consider Figure 3, which shows the number of participants that express this perception of their own development⁷, we can identify a pattern.

Figure 3. Participants who perceive having personal development in the program ($N=30$).



As the figure demonstrates, we have more participants perceiving personal development with the second interview (T5). This development had to do mainly with the way they saw their performance in a comparative way, expressing it in global terms («*the main thing to stress is the development between the two interviews*») or being more specific («*it was nice to have another opportunity to conduct an interview, this time with a greater awareness of what we were doing*). They also referred to how they experienced the context («*I felt more comfortable in the situation*»). It's interesting to see that despite the expression of perceiving personal development decreasing when participants experienced debriefings (T3, T6 and T8, when participants are confronted with their experience in the interview, as already said), the sense of improving remains present in the data. And we also see that with the third interview and the debriefing which followed it seems that more participants acknowledge their own development, with more of them referring to it even after the final debriefing. Data from one participant at T8 clearly shows how debriefings (in this case, the third one) seem to boost participants' awareness regarding their own position in the process: «*By now, after a new debriefing and listening to the experience of the others, I see*

⁷ We identified this idea in the data regarding the participants' satisfaction (one of SISDAT's dimensions).

that all of this is a very enriching experience, and that these interactions open our mind and that is very positive; we gain a greater openness to life, we become more efficient in dealing with others, in a helping context or another context. And that gives a great satisfaction». This data demonstrates that the way the program of training was organized with all the activities that the participants had to engage and in particular, the way they were related to by the trainers in the debriefings allowed participants to move from a position of self defence to becoming exploratory and reflective. This also stresses the importance of conducting several interviews and debriefings, in other words, the importance of repeating activities along the program.

The importance of having access to the trainees' experiences

The project provides some evidence that building in to the design of the training an analysis of the experience of the training is an essential part of the methodology. Before being introduced to the program's theoretical framework participants in our project had two experiential events – the first interview and a debriefing (T2 and T3), where the skills that the program prioritised were put into action. It was only after these two first experiences that participants were introduced to theory, which was discussed using the participants own experience at T2 and T3 as well as their own personal experience in different contexts (e.g., relations with friends). So, we used participants' experience as a base for theory and for integrating the theory with experience. Also, we observed a progressive proficiency regarding the use of the program's theoretical framework by participants and that when they referred themselves to the concepts of caregiver/caregiving they tended to refer also to careseeker/careseeking. These concepts represent the relationship at the centre of the training program (Brandão & Miguez, 2016). These results show that experience is in fact the richest resource for adult learning (Knowles et al., 2011) and support our consideration of having designed a program with a proper sequence of learning events⁸ (Kraiger, 2003). We were able to foster a safe context for participants to develop and elaborate on their development and improve conceptual skills (and others).

It seems crucial that trainers in organizations validate the trainees' experience, using those experiences as a base for development. Knowing that there is a tendency for the workforce to have a higher median age and that greater experience is associated with the tendency to «develop mental habits, biases, and presuppositions that tend to cause us to close our minds to new ideas, fresh perceptions and alternative ways of thinking» (Knowles et al., 2011, p.65), it seems to us that it is particularly important to develop trainers' skills in

⁸ Some participants did, however, referred they needed more time to conduct a specific task on the program – literature review, which was somehow extensive and in a different language. As Kraiger (2003) refers, it's important to present new information to trainers in a way that is consistent to their own skills. At this point we think that participants could have had access to more time, in order to better integrate the theory associated with the tasks.

reducing the workers' fear system, for them to be able to explore their own experiences without fear.

SISDAT as a support for the learning process

Our project also demonstrates the importance of using SISDAT as a way of regulating the developmental process, encouraging participants to develop self-awareness and build their own learnings. Individuals learn from reflecting on their own experience (Knowles et al., 2011) and it is fundamental that trainees can access learning aids along the training (Noe & Colquitt, 2002). These tools support the learning process, helping to organize and retrieve the contents of training. The data on our project showed that by prompting participants to register their reflections, SISDAT encouraged them to slow down and focus, elaborating on their experience in the different activities along the program. Hence, we believe that SISDAT configures what Noe and Colquitt (2002) refer as advanced organizers, which enhance the impact of training. On the other hand, SISDAT enabled the trainers to access longitudinal data regarding how participants experienced the learning process. This supported the monitoring of the program and has the potential to support the design of strategies specific to those participants who struggle at training programs, helping the trainers' to devise particular strategies according to each trainee' or group of trainees' profile.

Trainers must engage learners to access their own learning needs (Gauld, 2015). SISDAT emerges as a support tool to do this, enhancing the trainees' reflective activity and thus becoming aware of the skills they need to develop. This is the case particularly with Dissatisfaction, one of the SISDAT's six dimensions, especially when participants explored their error without pain. Once again, data from a participant clearly demonstrates this process: *«my biggest dissatisfaction was perhaps when I tried to solve the problem of my caregiver, because as mentioned by a colleague in the session⁹, I continue to feel discomfort in not knowing how to do it, if it will be well received»* (participant at T8). We see that this participant reflects without pain or an internal critic of the self on his performance at the task and identifies the areas where he needs to improve.

The use of SISDAT is also important because it allows us to assess how motivated participants are. According to Gauld (2015, p.118) people «learn when they are motivated to learn». It's often difficult to adequately assess in organizations if individuals are in the training because they perceive it as really important and necessary or instead as "a day away from the office". Our project allowed us to see that SISDAT gives this information to trainers. This assessment was possible at T1 and throughout the program. SISDAT allows trainees to assess if participants understand the goals of the program and the results to be achieved, which is fundamental to the impact of training (Noe & Colquitt, 2002). The analysis of the data at T1 (Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction), the first data gathering moment, when

⁹ The participant here is referring to debriefing.

participants were introduced to the program and did SISDAT for the first time, showed we could assess this information regarding 27 participants; only three participants didn't provide data on this aspect (see Table 1). It's important to note that, despite considering satisfaction and dissatisfaction, what matters here is to see if participants when facing a given stimulus (i.e., SISDAT) were able to make explicit what their understanding is regarding the program they are starting to attend¹⁰. And, in fact, the data supported this premise.

Table 1. References to the goals and results of the program at T1 (N=30).

	Satisfaction	Dissatisfaction	<i>n</i>
Understand the program's goal	16	3	16
Skills on GCEA	5	2	6
Skills on Qualitative research	7	1	8
Related to professional future	5	0	5
Understand the program's design	9	15	17
Don't understand the program's goal	0	2	2
	<i>n</i>	24	20
			27

Note: Participants per category. *n* refers to participants that referred the idea along the program.

Data shows that participants tend to understand the program's goal and design (i.e., activities, time, and form of assessment), with seven participants referring both to the program's design and goal. Regarding the purpose of the program, participants refer to the development of GCEA skills (*«relational skills and the way we interact in helping situations»*), and qualitative research skills¹¹ (*«We have already learn how to analyse quantitative data, it is also important to complement our training, to acquire skills in qualitative data analysis»*); others associate it with skills that will be used in the professional activity (*«I think the interview will have a strong impact (...) this will allow me to train unexpected situations and experience the different roles to which we are subject»*). Also of note is the fact that two participants stated that they didn't completely understood what the program involved (*«At this early stage, although it has been talked about and outlined the work we have to do, I have a certain natural dissatisfaction for not yet really knowing what I will experience»*). This data is important for two main reasons. On one hand we see that not only can we access if participants do in fact understand why they are in the training and what is going to happen (i.e., activities, procedures, times), but we can also see if they do not understand that. On the other hand, it presents us with negative cases, that is, participants that by presenting data that contradict our research premise and expectations (which is that the program has a positive impact - what we which to demonstrate), we are able to present cases that differ from it, which supports the idea that participants gave candid responses when completing

¹⁰ Remember that by T1 participants had had two sessions.

¹¹ The program had a twofold objective: the development of skills in qualitative research and Goal Corrected Emphatic Attunement. See Brandão & Miguez (2015) and Miguez, Brandão, Pinto, Grande, & Saraiva (2013).

SISDAT. This data proves that participants felt that SISDAT was a way of expressing themselves without negative consequences, informing us that the data was not subject to social desirability.

The role of trainers

We have already made references to the role of the trainer in the learning process, but we would like to reflect on this organizational actor in a more systematized way, considering our project. Trainers should be able to communicate that they trust the trainees' ability to learn, empower learners in the learning process and de-power themselves (Gauld, 2015). This is not easy and research shows that novice trainers place a greater emphasis on content expertise than on process.

It is fundamental that trainers reflect on their own experience and learn from one training to the other and from the idiosyncrasy of each trainee. This requires trainers to be able to work on themselves. Our project shows the importance of facilitators' sharing their own experience, namely their fears and their mistakes. Let us consider the interventions made by two participants: «*The real surprise was (...) when the teacher (...) told us of his professional experience and himself; what he told was very useful because we could see how really the theory applies to the "real life"*» (participant at T4); «*we could access experiences that [the teacher] shared (...) we could see that anyone¹² can make a mistake and all we have to do is try to overcome it and give our best*» (participant at T6). These interventions show us the importance of trainers having skills regarding the process at training and the ability to lower their own system for self-defence system in order to share experiences with trainees, given the impact that this sharing has on the participants' interpersonal systems. It normalizes what the trainees (novices) feel during the program and this has the potential to empower them. On the final SISDAT one participant made a reference to the trainer's performance at the debriefing (T8), stating that he had felt that the trainer had forced him to speak. This demonstrates (besides SISDAT's usefulness as a tool), the importance of the trainers skills, namely regarding their own individual and interpersonal systems. It can be speculated that the trainer's behaviour was a consequence of having his own self-defence system aroused in the debriefing, which made him more dominant in relation to the trainee in contrast to his more normal style of being supportive and companionable.

Conclusion

This paper presents a new way of thinking about attachment phenomena and how it is alive and well in the workplace. We accompany these insights with a detailed account and analysis of a training programme within a University setting. The main insights, which we highlighted, are fundamental for training and development in work organizations and show

¹² The participant here includes the teacher/trainer.

the importance of making learning contexts into safe contexts so development can be enhanced.

Today's organizations are characterized by several phenomena, which activate different organizational actors' self-defence system. Training situations are often one of those situations. As Vince (2004, p.65) stated «sometimes learning sets are safe places where it is possible to explore feelings, and sometimes they are not. Sometimes the anxiety that underpins learning promotes insight; sometimes it promotes “willing ignorance”».

Attachment theory is a theory of interpersonal relationships and offers a fundamental framework for the study of various processes at work, namely relations between leaders and subordinates (Game, 2008) and training and development. In this paper we specifically demonstrate that TABELIS and GCEA enable us to understand the dynamics associated with training and the individual and interpersonal systems of trainers and trainees'. We believe this framework represents an adequate model to understand trainees and trainers in context and enables the development of both these actors. Specifically regarding the trainer, it may represent the appropriate model regarding their competences, processes and characteristics, a model which is considered to be fundamental (Gauld, 2015). Leadership in today's organizations demands complex interpersonal skills. The focus of this paper is on how we acquire the skills to move from self-defence to exploration in our relations with our peers, and with those to whom or for whom we are accountable. For better or for worse, the workplace triggers the dynamics of relationships formed in earlier times. Having some idea of what these dynamics are is essential for fear free caregiving which we see as an essential component of leadership.

This paper addresses the dynamics of fear in the workplace from an attachment perspective and outlines theoretical concepts and skills that we consider could be of crucial value to those in leadership positions in organizations. We conclude with a detailed presentation of a training program conducted at Porto University which links with the theory and practice outlined in the paper. An analysis of this training program shows that in new training situations people system for self-defence is aroused and this often takes the form of the fear aspect of the self defence system which encourages flight fight or freeze in relation to the task. The other aspect of this system which is “care seeking” can be encouraged by the way in which the trainer or facilitator responds to the trainee and it is when this dynamic gets going that learning and exploration can take place. This is important information for those seeking to understand what enables people to work in cooperation with others in a way which supports the wellbeing and creativity for all.

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As dinâmicas do medo no local de trabalho: O contributo da Teoria da Vinculação para o treino e desenvolvimento da liderança

Resumo

Este artigo adota uma perspetiva evolutiva sobre a dinâmica das relações de trabalho. Foca a maneira como as dinâmicas organizacionais podem estimular ou inibir a mudança e a criatividade e o tipo de liderança necessária para apoiar relações de exploração entre pares em trabalhadores de todos os níveis na organização. Apresenta-se ao leitor ideias desenvolvidas por dois psicanalistas ingleses, Dorothy Heard e Brian Lake, e que foram posteriormente expandidas e desenvolvidas por Una McCluskey, acerca da natureza da criatividade e do bem-estar. O artigo mostra como as suas ideias podem contribuir para a compreensão das relações entre as pessoas no local de trabalho. O trabalho destes autores baseia-se no trabalho de um colega seu, John Bowlby, fundador da teoria da Vinculação. O artigo também apresenta o trabalho McCluskey sobre os processos envolvidos na intervenção eficaz para permitir a desativação do sistema medo dos indivíduos, que inibe a exploração e a criatividade. Para além disso, foca-se um programa de formação e de desenvolvimento de competências que foi desenvolvido por José Miguez a partir do trabalho de McCluskey, e implementado com eficácia na Universidade do Porto, sinalizando diversos insights que decorrem de uma investigação levada a cabo por José Miguez e Catarina Brandão sobre esse programa e que contribuem para a explicitação das dinâmicas da formação e da liderança em contexto organizacional. Um dos resultados principais que decorre desse trabalho é a influência do medo na capacidade do indivíduo, na sua competência, desempenho e bem-estar. Uma vez que muitas organizações dos dias de hoje apresentam uma cultura de medo, esta análise é simultaneamente oportuna e importante.

Palavras-chave

Teoria da Vinculação, dinâmicas organizacionais, formação e desenvolvimento, liderança.

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