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Minding the group: Group process, group analytic ideas, and systemic supervision—companionable or uneasy bedfellows?

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To what extent should supervisors take responsibility for being group facilitators and can they ever avoid this role? Can the dynamics that inevitably arise in group contexts be ignored or left to supervisees to work out, or is it essential to address these explicitly? Group supervision is not, after all, group therapy and there is also the constraint of available time. If group process, that is, the pattern of interactions and exchanges between group members, between the group and the supervisor, and the group and the outside world, is not attended to, does this matter? My experience thus far suggests that attention to these questions is important, not just when difficulties arise in a group, but in order to promote a context where development is maximized and a link between the personal and clinical practice is made in a live context. Attending to and making group process more explicit can offer particular opportunities for learning and development. It is an additional tool for addressing anxieties about performance and evaluation and an aid to developing reflexivity and collaboration. It can aid "group relational reflexivity" (Burck, this volume). I also suggest that an essential component of the demanding and complex activity involved in being a supervisor/group facilitator, is to explore the interactional

nature of this role and the powerful expectations that come with this position.

Writings that connect to group experience in family therapy have tended to be those that touch on self and emotion, and address therapists' stories and areas of self-doubt (White, 1997; White, 2002; Clifton et al. 1990). Parry and Doan (1994) refer briefly to experimenting with these ideas in training groups. They and Proctor (1999) develop the use of reflecting teams specifically in relation to the trainee therapist. Proctor (1999) considers the group process in supervision and highlights the inner conversations of self-doubt that can take place during a supervisory group. Ratliff et al. (2000) look interestingly in their research study at examples of lack of consensus in supervision. Despite these, there seems to have been a dearth of systemic writing that addresses group experience specifically in relation to training and supervision groups.

Given this paucity, the questions I explore in this chapter are, first, the extent to which ideas from within the extensive psychoanalytic/ group analytic literature could help facilitate thinking and practice in running live supervision groups and, second, how such ideas might fit with systemic thinking and approaches and the particular challenges within clinical supervision groups.

The individual and the group: influences from Foulkes, Dalal, Foucault, and Bion

There is generally a tension for each individual in a group between the sense of self as individual and as a group member. This will shift in emphasis over time and within particular group sessions. Questions might include: Will my individual needs, skills, resources, value, and uniqueness be recognized and acknowledged? How do I fit in with this group? Am I a part of it, or am I marginal, or even outside? At times an individual may feel a connection, a sense of comradeship, and belonging. Being in a group can be a comfortable, comforting, and cosy experience and/or a fractious, challenging, argumentative, embattled one.

Foulkes

S.H. Foulkes sees individuals as essentially social with their personality and psychic structures fundamentally influenced by their social

relationships (family and community). "Each individual—itself an artificial though plausible abstraction—is basically and centrally determined, inevitably, by the world in which he [*sic*] lives, by the community, by the group of which he forms a part" (Foulkes, 1948 cited in Pines, 1983: 268). This sits rather comfortably with a systemic understanding of the social construction of identity and realities. Foulkes' understanding of the importance of communication and especially language in groups relates to his idea of how a communication within a group will make the individual's mental distress more ordinary and allow them to feel more adequate (Dalal, 1998: 57). Foulkes sees a "sick" person as like an isolated, injured part of the social organism and a "symptom as a disturbed expression of the patient's conflicts. … This leads, inevitably and logically, to the fashioning of a situation in which people can communicate better—more freely—to the small group as a therapeutic framework" (Pines, 1983: 269). Foulkes saw each individual as part of the group to which they belonged, defining the group norms collectively, their uniqueness being their variation from the norms thus created, "within a group, individuality manifests itself as variations upon a common ground" (Pines, 1983: 271). Foulkes explains the way that a group can help with individual struggles and difficulties. "The process of communication moves individuals and the group as a whole from the exchange of autistic un-understandable experiences, communicated by symptoms and by neurotic behaviour patterns, to shared, articulate, understandable communication, so there is a freeing of individual energies and potentialities which can now be used in the creative development of the group process itself and of the individual's own personal growth and change" (Foulkes cited in Pines, 1983: 271). There is a labelling here of individuals, and their communication and behaviour as "sick", "neurotic", or "autistic", language that powerfully pathologizes. It contrasts with systemic perspectives that would see "problematic" communication and behaviour more as serving a function within relationships or the system and as constructed between people. However, the key idea of exploration and process between people as a means to render individual experience more understandable, ordinary, and manageable fits comfortably with a systemic/social constructionist perspective.

In applying this to a supervision context, the experience of sharing struggles and self-doubt within a group can be seen as performing

a service on behalf of the group. The resonances for others in the group, of fellow feeling or difference, can be drawn on to enable members to experience their individual issues as both unique and shared. There is a flow between the experience in a group of feeling commonalities and belonging, identification with the group, and an acceptance that all are separate and different.

Dalal

Farhad Dalal (1998), in his book on groups, develops ideas about belonging and identity that, I think, help with an understanding of some experiences in supervision groups. For Dalal, the group is, par excellence, somewhere that notions of the self and identity are socially constructed. Dalal discusses questions of group identity and the ideas of self and other, "us" and "them". He writes, "First, identity is a name, the name of a category. Second, identity is an internal sense of belonging to a name" (Dalal, 1998: 173). Dalal then points to the problem of whether a person identifies him or herself or is identified by another. In particular, how individuals position themselves or are positioned, in relation to the socially constructed dimensions of, for example, race, culture, gender, class, sexuality, and so forth, categorizing that is both more and less visible and open for attention, would be especially pertinent to consider. Dalal discusses the choosing of categorizations from a mass of available similarities and differences, which become identities that position "self" in relation to "other". He discusses how ideology, discourses, and, most importantly, power, influence which categorizations and identities become essentialized and viewed as natural (Dalal, 1998: 201–7). This positioning of self and of others on a multiplicity of dimensions happens in a group from the very outset, although it may get renegotiated and may shift as people get to know each other, show different aspects of themselves, form alliances and oppositions with each other at different times and on different issues.

Dalal goes on to say, "Given that there are a multitude of potential identities, there must be a constant danger of slippage from one to another. In other words, there is a constant danger of 'loss of identity'. Any such threat is indeed an existential crisis. Suddenly, one sort of an 'us' might transmute into another sort of an 'us'. Suddenly and perhaps terribly, one might find oneself belonging together with one

of 'them'" (Dalal, 1998: 173). In the context of group supervision, the issues of judgement and evaluation, exemplified in the very term "supervision" itself, I think strengthens this sense of potential slippage that Dalal describes. For example a trainee who has received feedback about an aspect of their clinical skills that may not be at the required standard, may find themselves suddenly feeling apart from the group in which they were only just before very much at home. The spectre of a fall from grace into the category of "failure" looms large, whether realistic or not, and there is the threat of a loss of identification with and belonging to the "us" of the group. I am interested in the way in which inner and outer conversations may influence this and whether this could be explored more explicitly in a supervision group.

To apply these ideas within a systemic training group context, one avenue could be to draw on Peter Rober's (2005) approach to identifying and exploring therapists' internal dialogues during therapy through video review. This could equally helpfully be applied to a review of supervision group discussions to tease out group members' responses, thoughts, choices, identifications, and personal resonances, not only to the work with clients but also to the process in the supervision group itself. Bringing these concerns and themes into the group arena from the private sphere of internal conversation can help to render them more "ordinary" and more "shared". As Foulkes discussed, the group context[1] "simply brings back the problems to where they belong. … Valuations and norms are restated and modified by comparison, contrast and analysis. Communication leading to a shared experience and understanding is in terms of the group" (Foulkes, 2004: 155).

Foucault

In systemic trainings and therapy the visibility of the work and the person of the therapist as they work, the "goldfish bowl" of live supervision where the therapist is viewed from all angles, heightens the possibility for Dalal's "slippage in identity". The use

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[1] Foulkes refers mainly to psychotherapy, but also applies the same approach to other groups, such as the family, work, and teaching groups.

of screen and observing team carries with it the potential for this to be experienced as a powerful gaze, exercising what Foucault (1991) describes as normative or modern power, exemplified in the system of the panopticon. Observation and supervision can be a technique of shaping and moulding the developing therapist to fit a variety of norms. Panopticism, argues Foucault, is a system that gets the individuals to "police" themselves to conform to these norms. "The judges of normality are present everywhere. We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the 'social worker'-judge; it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based; and each individual, wherever he [*sic*] may find himself, subjects to it his body, his gestures, his behaviour, his aptitudes, his achievements" (Foucault, 1991: 304). In Foucault's formulation, the separation of the individual is an important component of the disciplinary system. I find that engaging in an externalizing of this through the group process is a way to "detoxify" and undermine the judgemental potential of so much observation. Thus conversations about doubt, evaluation, and the positions taken and given in a group will create opportunities for a diversity of alternative narratives to emerge and the possibility to challenge more oppressive stories.

Bion

The ideas of Bion, in my view, offer further valuable ways to understand and facilitate the process of supervision in groups. Bion (1961) in his seminal writing on groups theorizes the relationship between the individual and the group. He sees the group in a sense as an idea or fantasy rather than as an objective entity in itself. His ideas, in contrast to those of Foulkes, tend to see the group as less a psychological entity and perhaps in a less benign light. However, I am struck again by the ease of fit here with social constructionist ideas. Bion sees the group as representing an "aggregation of individuals all in the same state of regression" (Coleman and Bexton, 1975: 11). While the rather pathologizing language of regression may not fit comfortably with a systemic framework, the idea of the group tending to co-construct ways to be a group together does. Bion talks of the tension between individuals and the group when the "group" becomes aware of individual distinctiveness. This, he suggests, gives

rise to anxiety and panic. Bion posits that the individual believes that the group has an "attitude" towards them, and that the group has an "attitude" towards both individuals and the group leader. These "attitudes" are seen as unconscious, as influencing group process and behaviour, and as open to interpretation. Bion describes these as basic assumptions that he thinks groups often labour under.

In contrast to the basic assumptions, Bion developed the idea of a particular mode of functioning in a group, which he called the "work group" (1961: 12). This represents the group behaving in its most functional manner. Bion's concept of the "work group" refers to mental activity by the group members that relates to the task that is the agreed purpose of the group. "Since this activity is geared to a task, it is related to reality, its methods are rational and, therefore, in however embryonic a form, scientific. … This facet of mental activity in a group I have called the Work Group. The term embraces only mental activity of a particular kind, not the people who indulge in it" (Bion, 1961:12). In other words, a group is in work group mode when the activity taking place, the thinking and talking, are based on the "realities" of the situation and context, and face the dilemmas and anxieties of the task of the group. The concept of the work group describes the *quality of the group functioning*, rather than the nature of the group per se, its members or particular tasks.

In a supervision group the agreed task may vary depending on the context but in general will be a combination of providing a good quality, ethical, clinical service to clients/families in combination with developing the practice of the group members. This may include an evaluative component relating to the group members developing to a set standard of qualifying practice and a judgement as to whether this has been achieved.[2] A question therefore is, "What would work group mode look like in supervision groups and how could one maximize this way of functioning?"

A supervision group in work group mode might, for example, be developing a range of thoughts and ideas about a particular intervention with a family. The group could be thinking about how the family would have experienced the therapist, what alternative

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[2] A supervision group may also encompass elements of line management depending on the context. However, I am not going to be considering this aspect here.

interventions there might have been, what might be the rationale for these and their advantages and disadvantages. In work group mode, the therapist and the group might reflect on the therapist's development in relation to the piece of work under discussion, what was going well, and what developments the therapist, group members, and supervisor might like to see. There would be perhaps some differences and struggles and an acknowledgement of the difficulty in changing ways of working and resonances between group members in relation to this. I think this would encompass exploration of complexity, the struggle to manage anxiety in the absence of simple solutions, awareness of both similarities and differences, being able to bear difficult responses as well as comforting and comfortable ones and the hard work of really putting one's mind to the issues at hand.

A supervision group that was in comfortable agreement, where the main flow of conversation was to reassure and validate the group members, swapping praise for each other's work and minimizing the struggle, difficulties, or moments when the therapeutic work and engagement was less helpful, is not in work group mode. This is not to say that, for the group to be functioning productively, it must be a difficult place to be. Indeed there are certainly times when the group and individuals will need to focus on positives, connections, and similarities. However, for the task of the group to be moved forward, it must be possible to tackle differences, areas of discomfort, and the struggle of learning and change, which will be different for different group members over time.

Bion identified a number of ways in which groups respond to anxieties and escape the task of the group. These "basic assumptions" (BAs) of the group can be defined as those assumptions which underlie behaviour, so that a group might at particular times be operating "as if" such and such were true (Rioch, 1975). Perhaps in systemic terms this might be seen in more conscious terms as the beliefs underlying behaviours. So, for example, there may be a basic assumption that the leader will solve difficulties and nurture the group without the group needing to do anything. The group members will take a position of inadequacy, knowing little, being powerless. This would be what Bion called Basic Assumption dependency. In BA dependency the leader is seen as omnipotent and ultimately bound to disappoint, leading to hostility and perhaps the seeking of

an alternative leader. For example, a group might see their supervisor as wonderful or dreadful.

At this point I want to consider how, as a systemic supervisor, these ideas might be put into operation. The examples from practice that follow are an attempt to draw on the ideas from a group analytic frame and to apply them within a systemic approach. For instance, rather than relying on analysis and interpretation, the ideas inform hypothesizing about process and the development of questions and exercises.

Example
An example of BA dependency might be of group members emphasizing how little they know, how they worry about the work, and how they want the supervisor to tell them exactly what to do. Another example might be of group members feeling that there is a right way to do the work and that the supervisor should be more forthcoming in passing on this knowledge. There may be feelings of anger or resentment when this is not taken up. As a systemic supervisor these polarizations in the relationship to the supervisor could be explored by posing them as semantic polarities (Campbell and Groenbaek, 2006). For example,

> *Supervisor's ideas and knowl-_____ Trainee's ideas prioritized*
> *edge essential for learning.   and privileged in learning.*

This would give trainees the opportunity to identify their responses and understand those of others as positions with meaning, emotion, and history attached to them. The potential for movement and flexibility is thus increased.

Bion talks of people having a "valency" towards particular basic assumptions, a tendency to be pulled towards a particular form of functioning. For myself, I recognize as a group member the wish for a supervisor/teacher/mentor to tell me the way and to tell me I'm doing ok and so on. As a supervisor, I have recognized a tendency to accept invitations to take up a position as a wished-for (perhaps both by supervisees and by me) all-knowing, all-giving supervisor, too readily wanting to, or feeling I should, provide answers and solutions. Flattering or gratifying though it can be to be seen as holding expert knowledge in an idealized way, in reality there is always the

sense that one cannot meet such high expectations and that such a position undermines supervisees' development of, and trust in, their own thinking and development. Being able to recognize one's valency in one's self as supervisor is helpful in avoiding the pitfalls associated with taking up these unhelpful positions.

Bion described two other basic assumptions: Basic Assumption pairing and Basic Assumption fight/flight. BA pairing is in operation when two people take centre stage and the group looks on. Bion suggests that there is a feeling of hope that something wonderful will emerge from this pairing, that something new will be brought forth that will "save" the group. Bion emphasizes that this is a messianic position where the saviour, whether a person, idea, or utopia, is "unborn" and must remain a hope: "only by remaining a hope does hope persist" (Rioch, 1975: 17). This defends against feelings of hatred, destructiveness, and despair. A leader in a pairing group is required to be potentially marvellous, on the verge of coming to fruition. The hope for something to come is the key point here.

Examples in systemic practice
In the supervision group context the structure of consulting partners, a common practice where trainees pair up to support and feed back to each other over a period during clinical training, can become caught up in this. A particular pair of trainees may become very allied with each other which can both be validating for that pair but can also exclude others or leave them feeling somehow envious or spoiling, perhaps not as good, skilled, or creative. A supervisor may also find him or herself engaged more intensely with a particular group member because of a sense of affinity, appreciation, similarity, and so forth. The rest of the group may feel like spectators to that exciting and sparky relationship but ultimately disappointed or excluded. Talk and ideas generated between a pair may seem as if they will lead to some transformation of learning and practice, a new way for the supervision group to be that will somehow make it fantastic or successful. However, these overblown expectations do not in reality materialize and disillusion can ensue.

In BA fight/flight, the group is operating as if it has met in order to fight something or run away from it in order to survive. The leader is called on to provide opportunities for fight or flight. If they do not provide these sorts of opportunities they will be ignored. A leader of a group in fight or flight mode is required to be, respectively, unbeatable or uncatchable (Rioch, 1975).

Examples

In a supervision group an example of fight/flight basic assumption might be when a group becomes focused on the perceived shortfalls of an individual member seen as not pulling their weight or persistently arriving late. Despite significant concerns that this will impact on a group, a focus on this to the exclusion of other issues can become scapegoating. Group members could be avoiding anxieties inevitably experienced by all about their abilities to manage the work and the learning. The person who is attacked has in a way been elected to represent this on behalf of the group. An exercise on polarities around expectations of participation, challenge, and support in the group, interviewing each other on the meaning of lateness, success, and failure in family of origin, work, and personal contexts would explore this within the systemic frame. A further example is when a group resorts to an idealized assertion that they are a "great group" or "the best group". This can be pleasurable but avoids the anxiety that might be provoked by acknowledging differences, competition, or areas of difficulty in their developing practice. Mapping ideas about what they appreciate in this or other group contexts and what they find more challenging would be a way to encourage a more realistic "work group" mode of thinking.

As a supervisor I have felt tempted to fall in with group members in engaging in a battle with the institution about organizational issues such as fees, communication, and consultation. There is comfort in feeling the strength of the group identity in the face of an external threat or enemy. While comfortable it does not, however, facilitate dealing with issues that need to be negotiated and resolved realistically.

In one supervision group, the members talked often about the specialness of the group and put a lot of effort into being positive and reassuring with each other. As the supervisor, and a relatively inexperienced one, at the beginning of the group I was also keen to make sure that all felt supported and that I was seeing and acknowledging their strengths and capacities. However, there was a risk that this way of being as a group could be difficult to challenge and could restrict the stretching, challenge, and acknowledgement of the struggles involved in development. This cosy warmth and appreciation could be understood in Bionic terms, at least partly, as a flight from the discomforts of both giving and receiving more challenging feedback necessary in order for development to take place.

In Bionic theory, the BA group mode is seen to be present in groups both fleetingly and persistently at different times. Work group mode

similarly is seen as coming and going within groups and operat-
ing alongside the basic assumptions. In BA mode there may be a
cosy feeling of oneness, but it does not put great demands on the
individual. Rioch describes work group function being related to the
real task of the group. "The group takes cognizance of its purpose
and can define its task. The structure of the group is there to further
the attainment of the task." The work group members co-operate
as separate and discreet individuals. The work group "seeks for
knowledge, learns from experience and constantly questions how it
may best achieve its goal" (Rioch, 1975: 23).

The position of the supervisor

In the systemic and group analytic literature, a number of terms
are used to name the role: group leader, conductor, facilitator, and
supervisor. These terms construct the identity and activities of the
supervisor in terms of directiveness, influence, and observation
versus exploration, facilitation, and participation. Group analytic
writing suggests that the facilitator's role is to create an "analytic"
stance where what is communicated, through language and non-
verbally, is available to be explored and understood—"work in com-
munication" (Foulkes, 2004: 156). This seems to be akin to what in
a systemic frame could be called a "reflective space", one where, to
use Mason's (1993: 189) term, a context of "safe uncertainty" is cre-
ated that enables openness and trust to develop recursively with a
willingness to take risks and try new things (Mason, 2005).

   A group analytic facilitator might take a communication expressed
by an individual and understand this in terms of a function or com-
munication on behalf of the whole group. To use this in a systemic
frame is not a great distance to travel. Rather than an interpretative
response, introducing a possible hypothesis, bringing individual
dilemmas into the arena of the group to be considered collectively,
to map members' relationships to an issue is a systemic activity that
makes the group an ideal location to recognize and accept a whole
range of responses to a particular issue.

   I think, from an ethical position, the supervisor has a responsibility
to do what they can to make the group experience a learning one for
all, where it is possible and "safe enough" to explore, experiment, and
extend development. However, exploration of group dynamics has the

potential to be an unhelpful distraction from the primary tasks at hand. In Bion's terms, could it be a flight from the anxiety of being a work group? There is the potential to lose sight of the main aims of supervision if the group gets over-involved in exploration of their internal relationships. A supervisor would need to be mindful of that possibility, and be prepared to move the group on in order to resume a work group mode, the supervisor moving between explanation and challenge of basic assumptions and promoting work group functioning.

Example

I have suggested that a group sculpts their relationships using a basket of beach pebbles, with members sculpting the group relationships over time. This activity was suggested at a point of transition in the group and was in my mind an opportunity to identify some of the risks and constraints that might be influencing the trainees and the alliances and affinities that flowed between the group members as well as stirring up some creative energy. Sculpts using objects or themselves can be a useful active tool for exploration of areas such as risk-taking, self-disclosure, certainty, emotional expression, theoretical positions and any number of themes around which groups may split or coalesce.

Some deconstruction of group members' experience of being in a group, how they see this group, how they individually and collectively interact with issues such as competition, success, criticism, or feedback, how they see their own, the supervisor's and the group style, would provide the opportunity to understand some of the influences at play and promote the work group functioning through the deconstruction of potential splits.

Contexts that influence positioning in groups

As a final thought, I briefly want to raise the way in which people bring their previous experiences to the groups that they are in. For both supervisors and supervisees, it is helpful to use the opportunity to explore group members' preferred or habitual positions in groups in general and in this particular group. A supervisor can provide the context in which to consider how this reflects patterns and scripts from other systems such as family of origin, social, educational, and professional contexts. Burck (this volume)

explores this further. Aggett's (2004) work on supervisees' relationship to experiences and preferences about learning offers a wealth of ideas for this. The supervision group can be a venue to explore the relationship to authority, leadership, and followership and the relationship to challenge, exploring similarities and differences in the group around these. As an example of a relevant context, one could helpfully suggest discussion of sibling relationships, position in family of origin, or experience of being an only child, and how these might influence ideas about the self in groups.

The following are some questions it might be helpful to pose about sibling experiences. They could form the basis of individual thinking, mapping, and group discussion.

What are group members' experiences with brothers and sisters?

What was it like as an only child?

What are the narratives in your family about sibling relationships? In your family how much value was attached to individual or family needs and desires?

How does this influence your expectations of being in a group? For instance, did/do you fight for attention/approval/things? On a continuum about the relative prioritization of others' views and your own, where do you tend to find yourself? How do you make decisions with others?

How have these experiences constructed or invited feelings and ideas about being in the limelight, or one of the gang?

How do you relate to competition and rivalry, being special or not standing out?

What is your relationship to authority figures, to hierarchy, to being told what to do?

Conclusions

Systemic psychotherapy training is a uniquely transparent and visible form of clinical training in the psychotherapies. In live supervision or video review the minutiae of our practice is open to scrutiny. The level of feedback we receive about our work and ourselves is

potentially huge and can be reassuring as well as discomforting and at times disturbing to our beliefs and sense of ourselves. In groups, informal, non-therapeutic, and family groups as well as in formal group psychotherapy, we give and receive feedback on how we come across to others, and how this may coincide or differ from our overt intentions. In a group context, our interactions and the conscious and unconscious thoughts and feelings that influence our ideas about others and ourselves and construct our identities, can be explored. The ideas from group analytic theory provide a rich source of understandings and insight into these processes. Drawing on them from within a systemic frame and practice provides a coherent way to explore process in a systemic group within systemic training.

Yet, how important is it to enter into this arena of group process and how does this fit with the debates about personal and professional development in family therapy? There needs to be a reasonable balance between the focus on the actual therapeutic work, personal development as a practitioner, and the process within the supervision group. I would argue that, as a therapist, to have personal experience of a therapeutic process, in the broadest sense, within a group context, enables greater empathy with the position of a client coming for therapy. The experience of risk-taking, sharing intimate aspects of the self, and exploring interactions with others in a group, offers an important preparation for the experience of offering these opportunities to others. Experiencing change in oneself as a result of such experiences is likely to support a developing therapist in the project of helping others to change during the therapeutic endeavour. Having a systemic group process focus would perhaps offer trainees an opportunity to address the impact of the work on themselves and to experience the vulnerability and openness to new insights and experiences of the self in relation to others that is akin to a therapeutic encounter.

The disadvantages are that, unlike personal or training therapy, a supervision group is not a confidential space. In a training context the exploration is taking place in a context where how an individual "performs" could form part of their evaluation for fitness to practice. This is bound to constrain. In addition there is the factor of time constraints. The multiple tasks of a supervision group are considerable and perhaps this extra dimension could be an overload that would

mean that group process could only be addressed in a superficial way and would therefore add little.

Overall, however, I believe that the use of a group process lens, can, and has, enhanced learning and development within my own supervisory practice. Do we need to import another theoretical framework? I have certainly found that some of the ideas have helped and changed my thinking and practice. I have been surprised at how well the ideas of Foulkes and even Bion sit with a social constructionist approach. The ideas can enrich our thinking, without us becoming too reverent, and can be incorporated into systemic exercises and conversations that open up learning. When a group is going well, the group aspect enhances the opportunities to move between positions, to develop capacities to work with similarities and difference. Using the group process facilitates working with, and understanding the power of, the inner narratives of doubt, matching up, and competitiveness. Attending to group process can enable anxieties to become exterior, interpersonal, and held collectively by the group, rather than being held internally by an individual. Groups, at the moments when working at their best, provide tremendous opportunities for creative exploration, cooperation, and dynamic thinking. Attending to the group process can, I think, only enhance this.

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