THE PSYCHODYNAMICS OF LYNCH MOBS:

GROUPING, GANGING OR LYNCHING

Abstract

This article engages with human groupings when they are operating at their very worst. These are human groupings enacting a particularly insidious, enduring and specific set of 'othering' dynamics that occur within and between in-groups and out-groups. This is known as lynching and these vicious and destructive human groupings are known as 'lynch mobs'. I attempt to bring a psychodynamic lens to explore the complex issues that constitute the particular group dynamics enacted by 'lynch mobs' that usually target members of marginalized communities. I consider the meaning of the assault in the context of white supremacy and, whilst foregrounding race in the discussion, recognising that members of other marginalised groups such as gay men and women are often lynched. The article shows how psychodynamic ideas can contribute to our understanding of this most horrific and inhumane phenomena, and can provide clinicians with some conceptual tools to manage the myriad of complex issues related to lynching and how it presents currently. Can lynching dynamics be compared and contrasted with bullying and scapegoating dynamics and, if so, can they be paralleled and operate more subtly and interpersonally in our psychotherapy groups and within our organisations and work teams? If so, do we have the theoretical and conceptual skills to work with them? I argue that there is now more than ever a need to remain relevant to the diverse and often-marginalised communities we serve and that we must develop our theories and practices to address such phenomena. To do this requires group analysts and, indeed, all clinicians to urgently scrutinize and develop theories and techniques in working with these very dangerous othering dynamics in our practices and clinics. A lack of intervention equates to by-standing or turning a blind eye, which is a significant factor in lynching dynamics, and a complicit collusion with the traumatisation of marginalised communities.

Key Words:

Lynching, White Supremacy, Racism, Group Dynamics, Homophobia, Rape, Gangs, Mobs.

Introduction

In the middle of Main St in a Southern American town there stood a majestic tree. It held a sacred place in the hearts of the town's people …It blocked traffic…It was the potential cause of many accidents… And yet it could not be cut down. It was the local lynching tree, and it was performing its duty to perpetually and eternally remind the black town's people of whom among them had last been hanged from its limbs and who could be next. The tree was awaiting its appointed hour, and the white townspeople were willing to risk inconvenience, injury, and death, even to themselves to keep the tree and the subordinate caste in their places. The tree bore silent witness to black citizens of their eternal lot, and in so doing; it whispered reassurances to the dominant caste of theirs.

Isabel Wilkerson (2020:pp; 90-91)

1

The method of force which hides itself in secrecy is a method as old as humanity. The kind of thing that men are afraid or ashamed to do openly, and by day, they accomplish secretly, masked, and at night. The method has certain advantages. It uses Fear to cast out Fear; it dares things at which open method hesitates; it may with a certain impunity attack the high and the low; it need hesitate at no outrage of maiming or murder; it shields itself in the mob mind and then throws over all a veil of darkness which becomes glamor. It attracts people who otherwise could not be reached. It harnesses the mob.

W. E. B. Du Bois, pp., 677.

The 'mob mind' and 'the method of force that is as old as humanity' and the groups dynamics that 'harnesses the mob' of which Du Bois talks in the above quote is the subject of this paper. At this time of Black Lives Matter and the Me Too movements my motivation for writing this article is due to the huge amount of hate crime and murder at the hands of individuals and groups that is happening currently. Crimes driven by hatred and consequent violent enactments often represent the culmination and crystallisation of decades, perhaps even centuries, of painful attacks on marginalised communities who are attempting to negotiate a place of dignity and equality and power within the broader community

I, along with many others, watched with horror the police publicly murder an African American man, George Floyd, in the U.S despite his plea for mercy and a voice of another African American man, on and off camera, also pleading with the police officers to stop, only to be met with what seemed to be a response of deadened eyes from the white police officer with his knee on George Floyd's neck. I return to the eight minutes forty-six second that it took to murder George Floyd at the very end of this article, as at that stage I hope to have demonstrated the 'lynch mob state of mind' of the police officer and his colleagues and the group dynamic operating at the time of the lynching. Confronting the legacy of lynching and understanding the psychodynamic processes that drive it is critical to our understanding of racist, misogynist and homophobic violence when it occurs within a group, or indeed, 'mob' or 'gang' context.

When does a 'work group' of police officers, whose primary task (Hirschhorn, 1999) is to 'protect and serve' in the case of George Floyd, different from a group of drunken adolescents, transform into a 'lynch mob' that murders a black man?' What constitutes the binding force of a lynch mob in terms of its exclusively destructive and harmful function? What type of destructive group dynamics are we experiencing? The level of dehumanisation during this public lynching was sickening, but I believe that the dynamics that enabled the dehumanisation to lynch and the more subtle manifestations of this phenomenon are commonplace and need to be understood.

I am a gay man of colour, born and raised in Liverpool, a city in the northwest of England, that has a significant slave trading history and a very old black community descended from enslaved Africans, slave traders, and African sailors pre dating the larger UK black community who arrived from the Caribbean in 40s, 50s and 60s. Indeed, I am a descendant of this black community. Belonging simultaneously to two very marginalised groups, being a man of colour and, also, a gay man, I grew up all too well aware of violence toward people of colour, women and gay people. 'Paki bashing' and 'gay bashing' were almost a right of passage for the adolescents in some communities (Hobbs, 2016). The police in the U.K have had a very poor reputation in responding to hate crime against certain marginalised groups, preferring to criminalise, rather than protect them (Macpherson, 1999; Akala, 2019) which, I suspect, is a tacit collusion with the violence toward these groups.

I vividly recall as a child being told by my parents about an incident of lynching in my hometown of Liverpool. The victim of this particular lynch mob was a black man named Charles Wootten. In 1919 a lynch mob through the streets chased him, down towards the city's docks where he jumped into the River Mersey to escape them. Whilst struggling in the cold sea, he was stoned, and eventually drowned. For weeks later there were lynch mobs marauding the streets of Liverpool attacking groups of African sailors and black families, to the point that many black people had to be taken into police protection.

Additionally over the years I have personally known many gay men who have been seriously hurt and at least two murdered in similar circumstances. I do not know a gay man who has not suffered physical or verbal attacks by hate groups at various points in their lives. The same extends to gay women who are simultaneously vulnerable due to being women and also being gay. I recall recently reading about a night bus attack by a mob of 4 teenage boys on a lesbian couple, in November 2019. There is a picture of the two traumatised women covered in blood in the newspaper. Being bullied is in my experience a significant part of being gay. So, as well as there being racist terrorism there is also homophobic terrorism with both communities living in constant fear of violence as an everyday part of their lives, often victimised by groups or mobs who specifically hurt and murder people who are considered different.

I was also reminded of my recent clinical work with people who have witnessed, or have been the victim of, racist violence, sometimes at the hands of a group, and the trauma this has caused. In one case, an Asian woman in her 70s was standing at a bus stop. A young white woman in her early 20s was also at the bus stop with her 3-year old child. The Asian woman was set upon by a group of white youths. She was verbally and racially abused, spat at, punched in the stomach and head and kicked in the genital area before they ran off, laughing. Meanwhile, the young white woman and her child stood, frozen. The child did not make a sound during the attack, which lasted less than a minute. I have often wondered about those young men and their state of mind when they attacked the Asian woman and I have written about the impact of this racist violence previously (Stevenson, 2019).

History of Lynching

In the US, slavery was prohibited in 1865 and formerly enslaved Africans, at least in in principal, were granted full citizenship, the right to vote, and under the 14th Amendment, of the US constitution protection from racial violence. However, the lived reality was somewhat different as this level of emancipation angered many white people in the southern states who did not want African Americans to have the same rights and many turned to violence as a response. Across the U.S resistance to racial equality resulted in the re-establishment of racial subordination, through biased laws, disenfranchisement and terrorism, most dramatically enforced through the public murder of African Americans by lynching. At this time lynching was directed at African Americans to enforce compliance with racial hierarchy and white supremacy and ensured racial segregation and denial of equal rights. These prejudices are still embedded in society and institutional structures (Wilkerson, 2020). A deeper examination of the history of racial violence and a more honest and reflective understanding of the history of racial injustice is essential for us to engage issues like police violence, excessive punishment in the criminal justice system and even harsh and punitive treatment of children of colour in schools and on streets. (Ifill, 2018).

Although lynching has not always been exclusively directed at African Americans, they soon became the focus of the lynch mobs that became the unofficial execution and assassination squad of white supremacist ideology. 5,000 lynchings took place in the United States between 1885 and 1960 and part of this function was to enforce white supremacy by instilling terror into African Americans and was a response to the threat of African American advancement, independence and citizenship. The burning and destruction of African

American businesses and homes and African Americans being chased out of economic communities were often accompanied by the lynchings of individuals (Ifill, 2018).

Lynching is one of the most violent aspects of 'racist erasure' in a white supremacy. It is used to reinforce white supremacy on an interpersonal, group and societal level. Racist erasure ranges from subtle micro aggressions, like rolling ones eyes when a person of colour starts speaking of an experience racism, to the public lynching of George Floyd in the US, by a police officer who put his knee on his neck until he later died, whilst the other police officers, standing by, looked on. Within this systemically and structurally racist context, the projections and projective identifications directed toward those that have been racially othered will receive powerful institutional and group reinforcement and drive the dehumanising perceptions of the lynch mob.

Projective identification (Klein, 1959; Segal, 1957) is a defense mechanism used to maintain psychic equilibrium. It is an unconscious mechanism in which aspects of the self or an internal object are split off and attributed to an external object. When malignant it is used to evacuate unwanted parts of the self or control the object rather than communicate states of on mind. That is, the phantasy of who the "other" unconsciously represents dominates and organises behaviour toward the other, and this was well described by the African American psychoanalyst Kirklands C. Vaughans in the documentary Black Psychoanalysts Speak (Winograd, 2014). He gives the example of his work in a school when the white teaching staff described it having to take four adults to hold down an angry and upset 10 year old African American old boy. Vaughans points out that is was in fact "the four adults having to hold their unconscious phantasy of this 10 year old child and not the child himself". This symbolic equation(Segal, 1957) demonstrates a tendency of the unconscious phantasy, when dominating, driving the dehumanisation, leading to excessive and dangerous responses and clearly parallels the behaviour of the police that lead to the death of George Floyd and other black people due to police brutality.

Here in the UK 'Paki bashing' and 'Gay bashing' were common growing up in Northern England and in the East End of London(Hobbs, 2016). It had a degree of respectably in some areas and these communities remain vulnerable today. The high-profile lynching of a young black man, Stephen Lawrence, by a group of white youths put a painful mirror to British society. Investigations and public enquiries have severally criticised police responses and found them to be institutionally racist, which is the collective effect of bias that marginalises people who are not white and who suffer a structural disadvantage in the way that they are treated by the authorities, who prefer to view them as criminals even when they have clearly been victimised (Macpherson, 1999).

A report titled 'LGBT in Britain: Hate crime and discrimination: 'Stonewall' (2017) reported 21 per cent of Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people have experienced a hate crime or incident based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity in the last 12 months. 81 per cent who experienced a hate crime or incident didn't report it to the police. 29 per cent avoid certain streets because they do not feel safe there as an LGBT person. 58 per cent of Gay men and women say they don't feel comfortable walking down the street while holding their partner's hand (Bachmann and Gooch, 2017).

The Psychodynamic Structure of a Lynch Mob

> Racism and homophobia are real conditions of all our lives in this place and time. I urge each one of us here to reach down into that deep place of knowledge inside herself and touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lives here. See whose face it wears . . .

<p align="right">(Audre Lorde, 1983: 175)</p>

The group phenomenon that drives a lynching is the product of an extremely complex and horrifying combination of external and internal events. It reflects all levels of the matrix which become condensed and exacted in a violent assault or murder of an individual who is identified as belonging to one group –usually a marginalized and hated group- by a group of individuals or a gang who belong to, or represent, another group and who believe they have an unofficial mandate to exact justice for a perceived transgression. This 'justice' can go as far as a public execution. Lynching is related to bullying and scapegoating but has a number of different and additional aspects. The first is that lynching takes part in a mob or gang so requires bystanders. It happens intermittently over frequencies that are difficult to quantify, but often relate to happenings in the social unconscious at a given time. For instance, politicians might use racist rhetoric to cynically gather support by exploiting insecurities in society, which bolster ignorance, racism and scapegoating of marginalized groups. "If you want a N*gger for a neighbour vote labour" was reported to be the Conservative party's unofficial slogan in a 1964 British general election(Deakin, 1965). More recent examples are the election of Trump in the US, based on blatant racist assertions, and are arguably powerful drivers for the public lynchings and racist murders in the US.

What relationship is there between the lynch mob and the formal power structure in society that turns a blind eye to it? The lyrics of a song by the pop group The Police below talks to a lynch mob state of state of mind and how the mob enacts the wishes of those in power.

> Once that you've decided on a killing
> First you make a stone of your heart
> And if you find that your hands are still willing
> Then you can turn a murder into art
>
> Now if you have a taste for this experience
> And you're flushed with your very first success
> Then you must try a twosome or a threesome
> And you'll find your conscience bothers you much less
>
> But you can reach the top of your profession
> If you become the leader of the land
> For murder is the sport of the elected
> And you don't need to lift a finger of your hand

<p align="right">Murder by Numbers, The Police (1983)</p>

The lynch mob enables its members to more readily "*make a stone of your heart*". It must have an object or person to lynch and this is anchored in structures of race, gender sexual orientation, and ethnicity – indeed in any oppressive group which, by means of power, violence, cruelty or perversity persecutes another (Waddell, 2007). We are talking, in other words, of a dynamic relationship in which, aggravated or

fuelled by external circumstances, negative aspects of the personality and group dynamics are played out with usually tragic consequences, as we have just witnessed with the death of George Floyd in the U.S and previously here in the UK with the murder of Stephen Lawrence. These group dynamics are part of the "social unconscious" and are aggravated or fueled by external and internal circumstances.

Clearly, lynching cannot be separated from wider social, cultural and political issues. It is often sanctioned by a set of tacitly socially accepted perverse ideals, and those lynched are perceived to be outside a defined space and are accused of having transgressed a social taboo. Tacitly licensed, the lynch mob operates outside of a legitimately governed space, exacting a punishment for a perceived transgression, which could simply involve being different or having ideas and aspirations that might attract envy.

> *Total depravity, human hate . . . do not explain fully the mob spirit in America. Before the wide eyes of the mob is ever the Shape of Fear. Back of the writhing, yelling, cruel-eyed demons who break, destroy, maim and lynch and burn at the stake, is a knot, large or small, of normal human beings, and these human beings at heart are desperately afraid of something. Of what? Of many things, but usually of losing their jobs, being declassed, degraded, or actually disgraced; of losing their hopes, their savings, their plans for their children; of the actual pangs of hunger, of dirt, of crime*
>
> W. E. B. Du Bois pp 677

Therefore, the lynch mob speaks for, and enacts, a split off and projected parted of society that wants to punish and even destroy those who are considered other. The other that represents potency on the one hand or dirt and deprivation on the other, that needs to be erased at all costs. This is known but denied by society; the mechanism of turning a blind eye to the suffering and the dehumanization of those lynched is in operation (Steiner, 1985). Paradoxically, at the same time racial terror lynchings of African Americans, although denied by the government, often had the atmosphere of carnivals, with postcards depicting lynchings advertising the event and food vendors and souvenir stands. Hundreds, or thousands, of white people including their own children would often gather to watch and take part in the lynching of African Americans (Wilkerson, 2020; Ifill, 2018). At present, a 'symbolic parallel process' operates throughout the world with many hundreds of monuments honouring the memory of slave traders and colonisers littering the landscape of major industrial cities.

In a white supremacy, lynching and micro aggressions operate at different ends of the racist spectrum. The lynching of people of colour is an extreme enactment of white supremacy and racist erasure(Stevenson, 2020). How and why do such 'groupings', 'gangings' and lynch mobs occur and what factors determine a move from one state of mind or grouping to another? The terms 'group', 'gang' and mob' can be related to Klein's (1959) description of the depressive and paranoid-schizoid positions and the group or gang reflects such states of mind. In adulthood at times of regression the paranoid-schizoid (egocentric and paranoid) and depressive positions (concern for others) still operate and are not just located in infancy and childhood. Although they are ordinary/normal states of mind in infancy and early childhood, they become dangerous when they dominate in adulthood, such as in a regression to the paranoid schizoid position, which is a characteristic of lynch mobs. The structure of human groups, gangs and lynch mobs can relate to the states of mind displayed by these two constellations from a descriptive and theoretical point of view. Bion (1948) challenged Freud's view of groups as a family and introduced a 'work group', that is functional and approximated to normality (Depressive) as opposed to a group formed by a pathological organization (Paranoid schizoid) led by psychotic mechanisms. The latter offers a false stability with paranoid fears and a lack of genuine stability at the nucleus of such a group.

6

It is its nucleus of ordinary men that continually gives the mob its initial and awful impetus. Around this nucleus, to be sure, gather snowball-wise all manner of flotsam, filth and human garbage, and every lewdness of alcohol and current fashion. But all this is the horrible covering of this inner nucleus of Fear.

W. E. B. Du Bois pp 677

Gangs, or mobs, operate internally and externally. Rosenfeld (1964) talks about the internal gang, which is an aspect of the mind that corners the most constructive parts of the psyche and keeps them hostage, preventing psychological growth**.** This is paralleled in society, preventing social change and a more equitable distribution of resources and liberty. The gang or mob needs a scapegoat, an 'other' outside of itself that is to be blamed and punished for the sins or grievances of the in-group and to create a sense of binding that holds it together.

A depressive state of mind equates with a work group and the individuals within the group can tolerate different states of mind and explore differences and operate outside of the psychotic (Bion, 1948; Klein, 1952; Segal, 1957). Their minds can be emotionally flexible; they can manage tension and creativity, although these abilities are not static and there will be periods of splitting off and projecting aspects that are felt to be intolerable even in a functional work group. None the less such a group values difference and diversity. It can bear dissension and conflict. This is in contrast with the regressive pull that drives the gang or the lynch mob, which is dominated by symbolic equations(Segal, 1957) and paranoid schizoid thinking. This means seeing the world in a very split way in terms of people who are good and the same and people who are bad and other, with no nuances or concern for welfare, and even hatred of the people who are felt to be different and an idealisation for those consider to be same. A lynch mob is a destructive and violent gang imbued with, and bonded by, hatred as opposed to a work or social group bonded by creative impulses (Segal, 1957).

It is these psychodynamic processes that help us understand how and why a social group of young men on a night out, or after a soccer match, turn in to a racist hate mob or gang rape a girl. Why a work team turn into a bully mob targeting team members who are different in some way forcing them out of the organisation. Why a group of police officers, who have a duty to protective and serve, turn into a racist mob that murders a black man.

The Lynch Mob as Anti- Group

When individuals come together in a group all their individual inhibitions fall away and all the cruel, brutal and destructive instincts, which lie dormant in individuals as relics of a primitive epoch, are stirred up to find free gratification.

Freud, 1921, p. 79

Nitsun (1996) critiques the notion of groups as being only benign and positive and advocates 'realism', recognising the group's potential for healing as well as destruction. He emphasises the need to understand and manage both aspects of these complex dynamics. There is a social context to any group that can represent a wider social pathology. This applies to all groups, ranging from a task focused work group to a lynch mob. The latter is in the thrall of anti-group phenomena. The group members may find themselves pulled towards anti-social behaviours as well as towards benign activities.

What constitutes a crime might not be guided by morality but by the law. Rules can be set down by the powerful, outside universal parameters or justice. We need not remind ourselves that the chemical castration of gay men (Nadin, 2020), 245 years and 12 generations of slavery, apartheid, Jim Crow, a man's right to rape his wife, were all legal at one stage of very recent history(Akala, 2019) so an individual would not be to be considered to be deviating from the group norm if they indulged in these activities. The group norm, therefore, is not static and is anchored in societal and cultural values at any given time in history, which could reflect very oppressive forces for some communities.

The anti-group is generated from a yearning for an ideal relationship with a primary carer and harks to an imagined time of purity and un-contamination. A third term, such as the father, is seen as a threat to this relationship(Nitsun, 1996). This is the "other" who needs to be attacked and destroyed. This attack could take place in a therapy group or a lynching. An anti-group is saturated with symbolic equations(Segal, 1957) and the members' malignant projections and projective identifications. The conscious and unconscious dynamics of a constructive work group make it holding and nourishing, whilst the dynamics of an anti-group make it undependable, unsafe and persecuting.

A lynch mob is Mafia like (Rosenfeld, 1965) and dominates and persecutes its members; it binds them into a lie of 'sameness: "We are white and superior", "We are not gay or sexually deviant", "We are secure in our gender identity" etc. This is a pathological organisation that offers the promise of stability. It is at one and the same time same time infantile and adolescent, as both immature states of mind are imbued with a great deal of psychic instability that leads to an aggressive need to split off and project. These mental states feel unbearable, due to the lack of a mature psychic apparatus to process them. Instead, the infant or adolescent resorts to evacuation and action, which contributes to group destructive forces. During adolescence anxieties about identity arouse an acute intolerance of difference either in the self or in the other and there is a need to bolster the ego at the expense of others, often in a very cruel way(Waddell, 2007).

This fiction of 'sameness', belonging and stability of identity in a lynch mob is a paranoid schizoid defence and the containment it offers is very fragile. The group members, who are relating in anti-group attitudes sense this unconsciously and find themselves in the thrall of a compulsion to attack and destroy. This can be directed at the group from within (Anti-group) or something outside of the group (Lynch mob as Anti group). This is a weak and dangerous container that leads to a vicious cycle; the group members are anxious and insecure, generating a malignant form of projective identification that binds them together in a most destructive and hateful way. This paranoid-schizoid state of mind characterized by an excessive operation of splitting and projection drives the mob that aggressively deploys a projective and splitting frenzy of denial and attribution. Within this is a wish for a world free of difference and an idealised pre-oedipal history, uncontaminated by the *other* who is imbued with negative attributions, located in an out-group. The lynch mob as Anti Group "*reflects underlying fears of annihilation and in particular, deprivation. In the foetid psyches of the lynch mob is a terrible fear of deprivation that makes the 'other' not just a threat (the powerful, potent black other) but the one onto whom are projected intense associations of shameful deprivation (the dirt-poor, shameful black other) and both have to be eradicated*" (Nitsun, M-personal correspondence).

Additionally, there is wish for a revised, perfect history that involves a denial of psychic reality and a paranoid fear of the return of what has been repressed and projected. Also active are a hatred of thinking, doubt and concern, a lack of curiosity and a need to exclude and triumph violently. Human commonality is denied. There is also a retreat into omnipotence and an attraction to violence and even murder. The gang or mob promises protection to its members but its intention is to do damage. A lynch mob gives its members a sense of intoxicating power; a promise of safety from the most persecutory and primitive anxieties. It

panders to the gang members' sadomasochistic fantasies and allows an enactment of the most destructive fantasies without remorse (Bell and Novakovic, 2013; Keval, 2018). The lynch mob feeds lies and promises that cannot be delivered outside of the realm of the psychotic and perverse.

Concluding Comments

Southern trees bear strange fruit
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root
Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.
Pastoral scene of the gallant south
The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth
Scent of magnolias, sweet and fresh
Then the sudden smell of burning flesh.
Here is a fruit for the crows to pluck
For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck
For the sun to rot, for the trees to drop
Here is a strange and bitter crop.

Strange Fruit (Meeropol, 1937)

This paper aims to show that an understanding of group dynamics can have a meaningful and specific contribution to make to the understanding of the psychological causes and effects of lynching. It examines some of the psychoanalytical and group analytic concepts—in particular, the importance of the regression from the depressive position and the mobilization of paranoid-schizoid mechanisms, splitting and projection and anti-group phenomena—present in lynch mobs.

Group functioning in some respects is more vulnerable to psychotic phenomena than the individual because certain behaviours are tolerated in groups that would usually be considered to be unacceptable and even mad when enacted by an individual. This sort of madness can occur and be enacted in a group situation much more easily than by individuals on their own. There is a dynamic psychotic group experience that parallels the psychotic in the individual. In this enactment, the group members are sharing and co-creating experiences, which is a specific set of phenomena directed at a target. Lynch mobs are, therefore, transitory groups composed of people who are active and others who are engaged onlookers. Each person modifies the form and actions of the group but in this psychotic process individuals can lose their boundaries. The emotional force is so powerful that there is a compulsion to share extreme experiences. This involves a particular use of projective identification, which is used to control group members and at the same time evacuate and eradicate awareness of self and object. This leads to a weaponizing attack on difference.

In a lynch mob what is evacuated are the irksome parts of the self that are denied, are felt to be unacceptable and need to be located in something different, other, outside the self. The other is simultaneously the object of fascination and hate. This projected part of the self is then attacked. This is the terrible bond between the lynch mob, its members and those selected to be lynched. This type of scapegoating and bullying requires one group blaming another individual or group; it also requires external validation and support, even if this is tacit.

A lynch mob promises the potential to split off and disavow unwanted and deeply disturbing states of mind without remorse and a world free of difference. It is a road to the psychotic or perverse and in this regard

deceitfully promises a way to evade uncertainty, ambivalence, difficult and painful knowledge and knowing the truths of life. There is no connection with remorse or a sense of the suffering of the subject, or indeed object, who is selected to be lynched. This is the driver for the essential dehumanisation required for lynching that enables *'a stone to be made of your heart'*, and an omnipotent and intoxicating sense of triumph and grandiosity over who is lynched. A lynch mob, and/or a corresponding part of the personality in the individual, is not amenable to atonement or connection with the real; it is in the thrall of the psychotic and totally out of touch with empathy and humanity. This drives cruel and cold blooded murder and, as discussed earlier, explains the expression on the face of the police officer who had his knee on the neck of George Floyd and the by- standing of the other police officers, who despite Floyd's plea that he could not breathe showed him no mercy by not recognising his humanity which was totally erased in the eight minutes and forty-six seconds that this lynching took place. This eight minutes and forty-six seconds graphically and explicitly demonstrated a horrifying enactment of the lynch mob state of mind for the world to see.

References

Akala. (2019) *Natives: Race and class in the ruins of empire*: Two roads.

Bachmann CL and Gooch B. (2017) *LGBT in Britain: Hate crime and discrimination*: Stonewall.

Bell DE and Novakovic AE. (2013) *Living on the border: Psychotic processes in the individual, the couple, and the group*: Karnac Books.

Bion WR. (1948) Experiences in groups: I. *Human Relations* 1: 314-320.

Deakin N. (1965) *Colour and the British electorate 1964: six case studies*: Praeger.

Freud S. (1921) Group psychology and the analysis of the ego. Standard Edition. *London: Hogarth Press* 18: 67-143.

Hirschhorn L. (1999) The Primary Risk. *Human Relations* 52: 5-23.

Hobbs D. (2016) *Mischief, morality and mobs: essays in honour of Geoffrey Pearson*: Routledge.

Ifill SA. (2018) *On the Courthouse Lawn, Revised Edition: Confronting the Legacy of Lynching in the Twenty-First Century*: Beacon Press.

Keval N. (2018) *Racist states of mind: Understanding the perversion of curiosity and concern*: Routledge.

Klein M. (1952) The origins of transference. *The International journal of psycho-analysis* 33: 433.

Klein M. (1959) Our adult world and its roots in infancy. *Human Relations* 12: 291-303.

Macpherson W. (1999) Inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence. Cm.

Meeropol A. (1937) Strange Fruit.

The Police (1983) Murder by Numbers,

Nadin J. (2020) *A Life Story: Alan Turing*: Scholastic UK.

Nitsun M. (1996) The Anti-Group, London & New York. Routledge.

Rosenfeld H. (1965) On the psychopathology of narcissism: a clinical approach In Psychotic States. London: Hogarth Press.

Segal H. (1957) Notes on symbol formation. *The International journal of psycho-analysis* 38: 391.

Steiner J. (1985) Turning a blind eye: The cover up for Oedipus. *International Review of Psycho-Analysis*.

Stevenson S. (2019) A racist attack managing complex relationships with traumatised service users – a psychodynamic approach. *Journal of Social Work Practice*: 1-11.

Stevenson S. (2020) Psychodynamic intersectionality and the positionality of the group analyst: the tension between analytical neutrality and inter-subjectivity. *Group Analysis* 0: 0533316420953660.

Waddell M. (2007) Grouping or ganging: The psychodynamics of bullying. *British Journal of Psychotherapy* 23: 189-204.

Wilkerson I. (2020) *Caste (Oprah's Book Club): The Origins of Our Discontents*: Random House.

Winograd B. (2014) Black psychoanalysts speak. *PEP Video Grants* 1: 1.