INTERSUBJECTIVITY AND LARGE GROUPS:
A SYSTEMS PSYCHODYNAMIC PERSPECTIVE

A thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Doreen Harding
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Statement of Original Contribution

I state that:
this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution;
and to the best of my knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Wendy Harding
Abstract

This thesis argues the importance of the quality of relation between the individual and the large group in work organisations. The main thrust of this argument is that where relations between the individual and the large organisation are mutually recognising both the individual and the large organisation benefit.

The research explores three unstructured large groups through experiences of participants. The conceptual framework underpinning the research follows system psychodynamic traditions. These traditions support in depth exploration of both conscious and unconscious aspects of group life.

A multi case study design allows analysis of each of the case studies of the large groups, first separately and then together. Each of the single case analyses reveals patterns of interaction that are thought about as defense against the difficulties of being in the particular large group. The findings of the single case studies then become data for the multicase analysis. In the multicase analysis intersubjective theory is introduced. These theories, along with traditional system psychodynamic theories, allow opportunity to deeply consider the way in which individuals relate to the large group, and the impact of this relation on the formation and development of the large group.

The multicase analysis shows the difficulties group members had in asserting themselves and finding recognition in each of the large groups. The analysis also shows that despite these problems members continued to seek a recognising relation to the large group. This type of recognition, 'large group recognition', is distinguished from recognition found within interpersonal relations.

The multicase data suggests group members found large group recognition through direct and representative relations to the formal authorities and through subgroup competition. However, this recognition appeared to be characterised by dynamics of domination and submission rather than by mutual recognition. In intersubjective terms this is the dialectic of the master and slave. Recognition garnered through a master slave dynamic is understood to be compromised and
deplete of the self-affirming qualities of mutuality. Consequently, where large group culture and structure are characterised by, and perpetuate master slave dynamics, the large group and the individual do not function optimally. This is proposed as the circumstance in the large groups of this study. Specifically, it is argued that the large size of the groups, along with tendencies towards patriarchal structure and culture, were instrumental in fostering master slave dynamics in each of the groups.

To conclude the thesis the research findings are considered with respect to large work organisations. This discussion explores the value of organisational contexts informed by mutuality, most particularly as organisations face the challenges of the post industrial era.
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SECTION ONE
1. Chapter one - Introduction

1.1 Outline of the chapter
The purpose of this chapter is to acquaint the reader with the background and intentions of the study. The chapter begins with a general introduction to the research. This aims to convey the significance of relations between the individual and the large group. This is followed by exploration of the genesis of the research from my past experiences in large groups. Next, the intentions of the study are explained. The chapter concludes with an overview of chapter arrangements.

*The human longing for and unconscious creation of connectedness means that our lives as individuals cannot be considered apart from the contexts in which they are lived* (Shapiro and Carr 1991, p60).

It is the central proponent of this thesis that the quality of the relation between the individual and the large group matters. It is argued that where relations between the individual and the large group are mutually recognising (Benjamin 1988, 1995a) the individual is more able to locate him or herself in the world of work, community or society, enhancing inner and outer resources (Wells 1980; Miller 1996; Jarrar 2003). Equally the group, work organisation, community or society, benefits through increased participation and agency of the individual. Mutual recognition between the individual and the large group implies reformation of master-slave (Hegel 1979) power relations in large groups to one of recognition of interdependence; the subject becomes a citizen, the street becomes a neighbourhood, and the workplace becomes a site of affiliation and collaboration (Crossley 1996). The mutual relation is the context within which anxiety and aggression, inherent in group relations, can be metabolised and integrated (Benjamin 1988, 1995a). This mitigates against destructive evacuation of anxiety and aggression through scapegoating, splitting and other such defenses that are hallmarks of contemporary large work organisations, communities and society (Wells 1980; Krantz and Gilmore 1990; Lawrence 1995; Miller 1996).
Large groups are intrinsic phenomena of human existence. We are members of large groups throughout our life in schools, universities, workplaces, communities and society. As Bion says *not even a hermit can escape an ultimate relatedness to a group – and the inescapable group is society* (Khaleelee and Miller 1985, p378). Relation between the large group and the individual is fundamental to our perception and experience of ourselves, and to the state of the world we inhabit.

Despite this the study of the individual’s psychological relation to large groups, and vice versa, has received far less attention in mainstream and psychodynamic thinking than small group, interpersonal and individual dynamics (Khaleelee and Miller 1985). Perhaps this unconsciousness is a defense against the ubiquity and intractability of problems of large groups. The very largeness of the group and the perceived distance (literally and/or psychologically) to the centre of issues may render us overwhelmed and impotent. Or perhaps it is the desire to keep our collusive involvement in the dynamics unacknowledged that obstructs greater attendance to the psychodynamics of large groups. Khaleelee and Miller (1985) attribute the lack of inclusion of large group psychodynamics in organisational literature to its threat to the illusion of organisations as rational entities, and to the difficulties of ‘proving’ the insights that psychodynamic theory can offer within rational, scientific paradigms. Maintaining the illusion of rationality and distance reinforces defenses against our irrational and frightening inner worlds.

The consequence of not attending to the relation of the individual to large group dynamics is present in obstructive and destructive relations in and between our communities, organisations, institutions, countries and global society. For example, Volkan (2004) explores the relation of the individual to the large group, large group identity, and how societies under threat regress. Volkan argues that when a large group regresses it is vulnerable to manipulation by leaders’ intent on gaining power over others. He contends that the importance of protecting and maintaining large group identity becomes pre-eminent and all manner of deeds are done in *blind trust* (2004, p14) to ensure that this identity is protected. Volkan illustrates how these dynamics have led to the plethora of inhuman and unspeakable acts that have occurred within and between countries throughout
history, and to the issues of terrorism that we currently face. He contends that exploration of the nature of the relation between the individual and the large group redirects attention from ‘them’ and ‘us’ to the commonality of the problems we all experience in large groups.

I agree with this assertion of Volkan’s. The act of exploring the psychodynamic relatedness between individuals and the large group immediately allows for a reframing of thinking from ‘Who is right or wrong?’ to ‘How do we as humans manage our relationships with each other, and how do we create large group structures and cultures that support rather than impede humanity?’

The focus of this research is on large work organisations. People in large organisations, whilst generally not engaging in the extreme acts that we have seen in global society, have their own problems of contending with regressive dynamics resulting from the threatening experience of being in a large group itself, and in contending with ever increasing turbulence in external environments. Because they are large, and because they are threatening, large groups are difficult to relate to in healthy ways. The large work organisation is renowned for cultures of domination, alienation even workplace violence (Lawrence 1995, 1998; Miller 1996; Eisold 2001; Young and Goricanec 2001). People flee, literally and psychologically, to the safer havens of organisational subgroups and or smaller and more intimate organisational settings (Khaleelee and Miller 1985; Huffington, James and Armstrong 2004).

In some large organisations, management has recognised that an alienated workforce obstructs, even actively sabotages task performance. For example, in the 1980’s and 1990’s creating a ‘learning’ organisation with shared vision and mission was the antidote to redress this problem (Senge 1990). However these orientations did not adequately attend to the unconscious forces that prevail in large organisations. Forces which if excluded from the change equation inevitably obstruct development efforts (Long and Newton 1997).
This research seeks to attend to the psychodynamics of interrelation between the individual and the large group. By examining the creation and ongoing development of three large groups, the connection between people’s experience of the large groups and the structure and culture of the large groups is established. Through this examination it is argued that the characteristics and quality of the relation between the individual and the large group is critical in the effective functioning of group members and the large group itself. The research entwines psychodynamic large group theory (Freud 1913, 1921, 1930; Turquet 1975; Main 1975; Girard 1979; Alford 1989; Kreeger 1992; Carr 1993; Segal 1995; Hopper 2003; Shaked 2003; Volkan 2004) with intersubjective theory (Benjamin 1988, 1995a, 1995b, 1998).

Large group theory enhances understanding of the defense mechanisms that large groups employ to protect people from the vicissitudes of the large group experience. Intersubjective theories enhance understanding of interrelating in large groups and the ways that people create and utilise group structure and culture, not only for defensive purposes, but also to facilitate recognition in large groups. The findings from this exploration are then considered in relation to large organisational settings where it is argued that intersubjective theory is a useful inclusion to traditional large group psychodynamic theory in designing and working with, and in, large organisations.

1.2 The genesis of the study
The overt genesis of the study began in 1994 when I commenced my university teaching career in a subject called ‘Organisations and Management’. This was a first year core component of an undergraduate business degree. It ran across a semester with classes held once a week for thirteen weeks. There were approximately eighty students in the class with two lecturers, one of who was myself. The class time was divided into a first hour, when all students were together in a lecture theatre, and the second and third hours where the students worked in groups of twenty.
The first hour was taught in traditional didactic teaching style with the staff members at the front of the lecture theatre. Whilst student participation was encouraged, the lecturers predominantly ‘lectured’ and the students took up relatively passive ‘listening’ roles. I was new to lecturing. I found it an inordinately nerve racking experience. What I recall most tangibly is the degree of hostility that washed over me. This hostility seemed to emanate from the student body. It felt murderous.

After three years of teaching this subject I strongly questioned the didactic format of the first hour. In particular, the passive dependency it seemed to reinforce was incongruent with the experiential orientation of the other elements of the subject, and in my mind, with learning. In the smaller groups, in the second and third hours, the primary task was for students to explore their experience of the formation and development of their group. Whilst the staff were available for consultation, each group of twenty worked in their own room and took responsibility for the ways in which they carried out their tasks.

My colleagues and I initiated changes to the first hour to facilitate congruency with the experiential nature of the other parts of the subject. The task of the large group in the first hour became to explore the culture, strategy, structure and external environmental forces of the group as the group developed. The intention was to provide students with an opportunity to learn about large group dynamics through participation and then reflection on the dynamics of the large group. This, we believed, would support students in understanding more about the large group of their current or future workplaces. The staff members, after an introduction in the first week, retired to the body of the lecture theatre, sitting amongst the students. The staff role was based on Tavistock group relations staff member roles of attention to task, time and territory (Rice 1971).

The subject was taught in this format for the following seven years. During that time I developed a passion for large group dynamics. For students the large group time was significant. Students tended to either love it or hate it (Taylor 1998). It was difficult for students to accept the changed role of the lecturer, and the
increased responsibility for resourcing their learning. It was also difficult for students to accept that the subject required them to be both objective and subjective; to be in the experience and then reflect on the experience. Equally hard was understanding the here and now nature of the experience, i.e. that no other particular outcome was required than attention and reflection on the group’s developing structure, culture and strategy.

I taught in many groups over the years, each one was unique. Notwithstanding, universal patterns of experience were identifiable across the groups. I came to expect degrees of hostility towards the staff members, masking feelings of deprivation. The hostility was a similar experience to that in the traditional lecture setting however in this forum there was opportunity for discussion about the hostility and its origins. Some groups took up this opportunity, others stayed stuck in their feelings of deprivation and anger.

Usually groups attempted to recreate their current or previous educational or workplace experiences. These were typically hierarchal with a leader or leaders providing information for the masses. Many groups entered depressive phases as they recognised that they had created something that didn’t engage or satisfy them. In some groups the depression stayed and the groups became stuck and immobilised. Other groups took risks to communicate without a leader at the front of the lecture theatre.

Whatever the structure, all groups faced great difficulties in making decisions and acting on those decisions. Participation, i.e. how to speak and how to be heard, in the large group, was a dominant issue. The speakers/non speaker dichotomy was very often a perplexing theme throughout the semester. For example, if group members didn’t speak did that mean they were part of the group or not? Was ‘not speaking’ a sign of irresponsibility, dullness or laziness? Trying to understand these issues was a pivotal emotional and intellectual task for many groups; how do you understand when the non-speakers cannot or will not share their experiences? Reflection on these issues, where this occurred, seemed to make a great deal of difference to the students.
There were many occasions when I experienced the students struggle to understand as very moving. At times the room would go silent, with a pervasive atmosphere of thought and engagement. These times were wonderful. At other times the group was so fractured, so angry, so frustrated, or so bored that it seemed hard to even stay in the room. These times were awful. Sometimes I would question what we had created and whether it really did have any learning value for the students; and then someone would say something that resonated with others experience, understanding would seem to move tangibly around the room. These were grounding, energising moments.

The experience in this subject was a privileged opportunity to observe the creation of culture, structure and strategy in large groups. The work engaged me and sparked a thirst for understanding more about large group dynamics.

Concurrent to working in the undergraduate program I was also teaching organisation dynamics subjects to MBA students. The emphasis of my work in the MBA was in supporting students in developing greater insight and theoretical knowledge about their workplace experiences. Consequently I listened to many hundreds of organisational stories. My large group experiences in the undergraduate program held many resonances for me in listening to the MBA student’s stories. This reinforced my understanding that structure, culture and role authority masked similar issues of the anxiety of belonging, participating and communicating that I observed in the undergraduate course.

Many MBA students struggled to maintain a strong sense of self in their organisational roles. This was manifest in both self-defeating and self-important behaviour. There seemed so much energy expended in keeping going against many complex organisational elements that were often only rudimentarily understood. More often than not the issues of concern appeared, at least partially reflective of the broader organisational structure or culture, even though students, at least at first, tended to understand difficulties as failure of self or failure of particular others. In the student’s stories problems of identifying with and feeling a part of the organisation as a whole were a common theme. Their relationship to
the larger organisation was very often suffused with a great deal of hostility, frustration and feelings of impotence. I wondered about the loss in this relation and its impact on people and task.

These experiences are the overt genesis of this research. However at a deeper level they sparked questions in me of my own relation to large groups, to the organisations I worked in, and to society. I remember moving from a small provincial town to a city when I was nine years old. In the town everyone knew everyone else. I was always someone else’s sister, daughter or relative. In the large city I knew no one. The sense of anonymity was wonderfully freeing. The space enabled a strengthening of my sense of identity. I could stand alone in the midst of the unknown many. In my experience of the large group of the third case study I found not being named freeing, others found not being named terrifying.

In my later life my relationship to society is somewhat distant. The idealism of youthful optimism towards the world we live in has been eroded by the reality of the difficulties that human beings create for each other. I have progressively emotionally and practically retreated from belonging and participating. My work in this thesis has led me to understand this withdrawal as a defense mechanism against the difficulties of being participant and involved. It has led me to consider what I have lost in this relation. There are echoes of this loss in my relation to the organisations I work in. As the years have passed I have withdrawn from the struggle of being involved in broader organisational life. I have chosen instead to restrict my emotional and skill involvement to include only the direct application of teaching. This thesis has stimulated thinking about what this retreat from the larger organisation means to me. And if there are chords of universality in my experience what does this mean for people, for society, for organisations, and for task?

1.3 The intentions of the study
The intentions of this study are: 1) to develop further understanding about people’s relations to large groups; 2) to explore the impact of this relatedness on
the functioning of the individual and the large group system; and 3) to add to the body of knowledge about the psychodynamics of large groups.

It is anticipated that these intentions will be realised through research of group member’s experience of the creation of, and involvement in three large groups. Systems psychodynamic concepts inform both the research design and act as the conceptual frame for consideration of people’s experience in the large groups. As will be evidenced throughout the study the use of systems psychodynamic concepts facilitates a deep understanding of the interconnection between the psychology of individuals and the social structures of large groups.

1.4 Chapter arrangements

The chapters of the dissertation are arranged as follows.

Section one: Chapter one - Introduction; Chapter two - Theoretical concepts; Chapter three - Research design.

Chapter two - Theoretical concepts

In this chapter the main theoretical concepts used through the dissertation are described. The chapter moves from definitions of group psychology and large group dimensions, to an outline of the systems psychodynamic research orientation. Systems theory is then discussed. This is followed by an exploration of the psychodynamic concepts relevant to the research. In particular the origin and manifestation of common large group social defense mechanisms are explained. Finally intersubjective theory relevant to the research is introduced.

Chapter three - Research Design

In this chapter the research proposal and its philosophical framework are described. Next, discussion of the research design and methodological orientation is undertaken. In this, the case study approach adopted in the research is outlined. This is followed by description of clinical methods that are the methodological stance of the research; including descriptions of the interviewing and observation methods used. A comprehensive account of the experience in the research of the
methods used in data gathering is then provided. The chapter concludes with description of the analytic methods used to explore the data.

Section two: Chapters four; five; and six - Single case discussions

Chapters four, five and six - Single case discussions
These chapters discuss the data emerging from each of the three case studies. The structure of each of the chapters is identical. First a narrative of the large group of the case study is told. This is followed by discussion of the salient themes that emerged from the data of each of the large groups: in Chapter four feminist object relations theories (Dinnerstein 1976; Mayes 1979; Bayes et al 1985; Long 1992) are utilised to explore the impact of female authority in the large group; in Chapter five Rene Girard’s mimetic theories are used to explore a dominant theme of scapegoating in the group (Girard 1979; Grote and McGeeney 1977); and in Chapter six Turquet’s theories of the threatening dynamics mobilised by the large size of the group, are the primary conceptual frame (Turquet 1975; Main 1975).

The place of the single case discussions in the thesis is in beginning the process of finding meaning in the data of the large groups. The themes that are identified in the single case discussions contribute to the central arguments of the thesis developed in section three, Chapters seven, eight and nine.

Section three: Chapter seven – Multicase discussion; Chapter eight – Links to Organisations; Chapter nine – Concluding remarks.

Chapter seven – Multicase discussion
The multicase discussion begins the development of the central ideas of the thesis. The themes from the single case studies are combined with the raw data from each of the studies. Intersubjective theory is used in exploring the combined data (Benjamin 1988, 1995a,b). The usefulness of intersubjective theory as a conceptual framework for considering large group dynamics is also examined.
Chapter eight - Links to Organisations
In this chapter connection is made between the intersubjective large group theory ascertained in Chapter six and large work organisations. Examples are given of organisational analysis using intersubjective theory. Following this the usefulness of intersubjective large group theory as an adjunct to contemporary systems psychodynamic thinking is explored.

Chapter nine – Concluding remarks
This chapter brings the thesis to conclusion. The chapter considers: 1) the findings of the research; 2) the relation between intersubjective theory and traditional systems psychodynamic large group theory; 3) limitations to the research; and 4) further research recommendations arising from the study.
2. Chapter two - Theoretical concepts

2.1 Introduction
This chapter aims to orient the reader to the theoretical concepts that have informed the research. First, the definition and scope of group psychology relevant to the research are introduced. Second, the large group is defined. Third, the systems psychodynamic orientation of the research is described. The two dimensions, ‘systems’ and ‘psychodynamics’ of the research orientation are then explored. This involves consideration of various conceptual parameters that comprise systems thinking. These parameters include: input, output and conversion processes; the system as a whole; primary task; and boundaries and their management (Miller and Rice 1975; Roberts 1994). An outline of the psychodynamic dimension of the research orientation follows. In this the centrality of projective processes to the formation and perpetuation of large group structure and culture is explained. Klein’s theories of projective processes are then described (1959). These are followed by an outline of Freud’s seminal theory of large groups (1921). This theory describes the identificatory bonds that Freud conceptualises as the ties that bind a group. Following Freud the work of Turquet (1975) and other contemporary large group psychodynamic theorists (Main 1975; Alford 1989; Kreeger 1992; Carr 1993; Segal 1995) are presented. These theories trace the impact of projective processes arising from the large size of a large group on the formation of large group social defenses. Finally intersubjective theory is introduced (Benjamin 1988, 1995a). When viewed alongside traditional social defense theory, intersubjective theory facilitates exploration of the significance of relational dimensions to large group functioning.

2.2 Definition and scope of group psychology
In this research the definition and scope of group psychology are adopted from Freud’s writing in Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (1921). Freud defines group psychology as phenomena pertaining to individual man as a member of a society, institution, or wherever a group of people comes together for a particular purpose. He intrinsically connects individual psychology to group psychology:
In the individual's mental life someone else is invariably involved, as a model, as an object, as a helper, as an opponent; and so from the very first, individual psychology in this extended but entirely justifiable sense of the words, is at the same time social psychology as well (1921, p3).

Our internal world is thus created in context with others, and inversely our internal psychology shapes how we perceive and create the external world. Therefore society, institutions, organisations and groups can be understood as projections of our internal world. Group psychology is not irreducible phenomena, or constituent of separate instincts, but is collective manifestation of individual psychology (Freud 1913).

2.3 Large group dimensions

The definition of a large group, for purposes of this research, is a group where the number of group members makes it impossible for face to face interaction, and where it is unrealisable for group members to take in the whole group at a single glance. These parameters are met when a group has 20 or so members. This definition accords with a generally understood view of what constitutes a large group (Kreeger 1975; Turquet 1975, 1985; Khaleelee and Miller 1985; Alford 1989). There is also agreement that there is no upward limit to the size of a large group. The dynamics of groups are understood to change from small and median group dynamics to large group dynamics when the group size reaches 20 or more. From this point, as group member numbers increase, the type of dynamics are understood not to alter, rather their character become increasingly amplified (Freud 1921; Khaleelee and Miller 1985; Alford 1989).

The definition of large group used in this research includes a continuum of forms of organisation ranging from unstructured through more structured forms of organisation such as an enterprise or institution. Large group dynamics are understood to exist in the large group regardless of degree of structure and organisation. However, the dynamics are more likely to be experienced and observable in less structured large groups or in structured large groups where
system breakdown results in regression; structure and organisation serving to
defend organisation members from the experience of overwhelming large group
dynamics (Kernberg 1985; Khaleelee and Miller 1985; Alford 1989; Wilkes
2004).

The large groups under study in this research are examples of different
organisational form. The large groups of cases one and two were large groups that
were sub systems within the larger system of the university course and the
university. The formal authorities in these large groups were university staff and
teachers. The role taken up in the large group fluctuated between being
consultants to the group and university teachers with management and
administrative tasks. The large group of case three was a Group Relations model
study group with the consultants taking up this role exclusively. Using the
definition of large group I have adopted for this research it is assumed that
underpinning each of these large groups are common large group dynamics
manifest uniquely in each of the groups pertaining to the degree of clarity about
task, role, structure and culture. Following this, it is then argued that the findings
from each of the large groups are able to be compared and contrasted to each other
given this common basis (with references to their differences). Further, using this
same argument, it is argued that the findings from the multicase analysis are then
able to be considered with respect to institutional forms of large groups i.e. work
organisations.

2.4 Research orientation

2.4.1 Introduction to systems psychodynamics

The research is oriented by systems psychodynamic traditions in studying groups
and organisations that emanate from the Tavistock Institute in the UK. The
institute dates back to post World War 1, Britain. At this time a group of medical,
anthropological and psychoanalytic oriented professionals voluntarily came
together to explore the nature of shellshock experienced by soldiers in the war.
This group became pioneers of an action-oriented philosophy that conflated
psychiatry with applied social science. The group were influential in human
aspects of the military in the Second World War, and in transitions for the British
community in the post war period. Since then the Tavistock Institute has been inspiration for a whole discipline of systems psychodynamic work in organisations, and in small and large groups (Mosse 1994; Trist and Murray 1990; Fraher 2004).

The systems dimension of the research orientation speaks to the structural features of the large groups. It articulates interdependent relations between system elements and the system as a whole, and the system and its environment. Systems' thinking provides a framework for understanding the way in which the positioning of system elements support or obstruct the survival of the system (Angyal 1978; Katz and Kahn 1978).

The psychodynamic dimension of the research orientation adds great depth to understanding system interactions through incorporating conscious and unconscious rationale for system behaviour. By inclusion of the unconscious in thinking about the large group system the research inquiry extends into hidden motivations that profoundly influence the group’s structure and cultural form, and the ability of group members to work to task (Miller and Rice 1975; De Board 1990; Gould 2001).

These two dimensions, systems and psychodynamic thinking, are not mutually exclusive but interact to create a research space different from, but informed by both conceptual frames. As Gould states: It is precisely the conjunction itself (of systems and psychodynamic thinking) that creates the emergent but not yet fully articulated field of systems psychodynamics (2001, p5).

2.4.2 Systems theory
The concept of a general systems theory relating to the biological world was developed by Von Bertalanffy in 1950. Von Bertalanffy differentiates inanimate systems which exist independently from the environment, to living systems that are reliant on a transactional relationship with the environment for survival. He conceptualised this distinction with the terms ‘closed system’ and ‘open system’ (Von Bertalanffy 1968). Human systems, with their survival dependent on
exchanges with the environment, are predominantly open rather than closed systems (Maturana and Varela 1980).

Open systems concepts were adopted by The Tavistock Institute and applied and extended to the understanding of group and organisation systems. Kurt Lewin (1947) was one of the earlier thinkers in this area. Others, notably Miller (1975), Rice (1958), and Trist and Bamford (1951) followed.

*Input, conversion, output processes*

In open systems the dynamic processes of input, transformation and output work to maintain the system in a state of equilibrium. Where this balance is unable to be reached the organism or system will become malformed and die. Animate or living systems take in materials from the environment, transform these materials into elements that are utilised in the maintenance of the organism, and excrete what is left over as wastage (Roberts 1994). While groups and organisations have different intake and conversion processes, they are equally reliant on transaction with the external environment. The group members in each of the large groups in this study can be viewed as the input to the large group system; the learning process - conversion; and the more learned individual - the output.

Systems theory dynamically links the large group to other systems in the environment. Group member’s societal, cultural and family affiliations are present consciously or unconsciously in their relations within the large group (Khaleelee and Miller 1985; Schneider 2003). Lawrence contends that the collective manifestations of group members’ external affiliations are present in the dynamics of any group: *The implicate order of the large group, if you will, contains the implicate order of society* (1993, p4).

Similarly the large group system’s output, i.e. the individuals changed understanding, is carried into other systems. Thus systems' thinking dynamically connects the individual, the family, groups, organisations, institutions and society.
The system as a whole

Systems thinking regards system parts as not significantly connected with each other except with reference to the whole (Angyal 1978). This rejects the idea that to understand an organism or a social system is to understand causal relations between its parts. All system elements are linked through a superordinate factor, which is the system (Gould 2001). The interdependence of system elements orients the inquiry of this research to understand people’s experience of the large group, and the interactions that occur, as representative dynamics that contain meaning about the whole system. This leads us to understand behaviour of group members not as idiosyncratic to the individual but, at least in part, resulting from interaction between the individual and the large group (Wells 1980). Through these connections deep inquiry about the meaning of phenomena in the large group becomes possible. As examples: What does the phenomena symbolise for the large group? What feelings do the large group evoke in group members?; Is the individual or the subgroup expressing anxiety, incompetence or hope on behalf of the group?; How does it serve the group for this group member/subgroup to take on these feelings or roles? (Wells 1980)

The system as a distinct phenomena

The concept of the ‘system as a whole’ links all system elements through their relation to the larger system. This supposes the large group system as separate, though intrinsically related, to its constituent parts. While individuals are implicit in the creation of the group, the group becomes an external reality, relatively independent of the individuals. Stacey describes this:

*The system is then thought of as a bounded entity consisting of individuals who are its parts. The system is formed by the interaction of the individuals and exists at a higher level than the individual following laws of its own, which might be thought of as emergent properties* (2003, p327).

The individual is then impacted by the system and so on. Conceptualising the large groups of this study in this way contributes to understanding differentiation
of group member’s relation to the entity of the large group, as distinct from interpersonal and subgroup relations. Evidence of group member’s desire for a recognising relation to, and of, the separate entity of the large group, and the ways in which this is achieved, are central findings of the research.

**Primary task**

Groups of people, by virtue of coming or being together in the pursuit of a particular task, are identifiable as a distinct system with a boundary that separates and differentiates them from other elements in the environment. Miller and Rice developed the heuristic concept of primary task to describe the central organising task of a system: *We postulate that at any given time an enterprise has primary task - that task it must perform if it is to survive* (1975, p62). The extent that system members understand and engage with the primary task of the system impacts the survival and capacity of the system (Turquet 1985).

Miller and Rice identify a number of constraints that systems face in working effectively with the primary task: 1) the interpersonal and group relationships directly involved in the activity system; 2) the harmonies and disharmonies of these relationships with other group members; and 3) the satisfaction or depravation experienced in the activities themselves (1975, p66). These constraints directly relate to the propositions emerging from this research. The nature of the primary task of each of the large groups was problematic for group members. The primary task of each of the groups required exploration of the dynamics of the large group as they occurred. This necessitated attention to one’s own feelings and experience of the group. The task aroused strongly ambivalent feelings in group members. The data indicates group members desired to be a part of the group, and desired not to be part of the group for fear the group would abandon or attack them. To explore this ambivalence took great courage. Group members tended to avoid reflection of the painful reality of being in the group. It was often as though the group had come together for many other reasons than to reflect on their own behaviour.
The concept of the primary task also provides a parameter through which exploration of the behaviour of group members can be explored. This enabled learning about what supported or obstructed capacity to attend to the primary task in each of the groups. For example, in the large group of case one, I argue that the threat inherent in female management rendered the group psychologically unsafe, obstructing work on the primary task. In contrast, in the large group of case two it appeared work on the primary task was more able to occur (by degrees) within the relative safety of a male dominated, patriarchal management system.

**Sentient and community systems**

Miller and Rice (1990) distinguish task systems from sentient systems in groups and organisations. The task system relates to the activities that must be performed in the execution of the primary task. The sentient system constitutes group member’s affiliate relations within and to the system. The task and sentient systems are understood to be interdependent:

> An effective sentient system relates members of an enterprise to each other and to the enterprise in ways that are relevant to the skills and experience required for task performance; it also provides its members with some defense against anxiety (Miller and Rice 1990, p259).

Miller and Rice’s statement implies that within the sentient system there is a necessity of accord of values and purpose to facilitate system relations. Long (2005) furthers this concept to incorporate an ethos of equality and respect for difference as a requirement of an effective sentient system. Long proposes a community system level in organisations that intersects subjectivity with role and purpose:

> One of my working hypotheses is that there is a systemic community level in any organisation. That is, a level of interaction and relatedness affected by and affecting task (and other systems) yet different to task systems. I think it is a system of values and purposes where people within the organisation interact around values and
beliefs – community or communitas. In this sense it underlies the task system where task is driven by purpose with implicit or implicate values. The community level system has the flavour of a system where roles are focussed around intersubjective equalities (2005, p11).

By exploring group member’s emotional relation to the large group this research can be understood as focussed within the sentient and community system level of the three large groups of the study. The outcomes of the research affirm this position, in that the research findings illustrate the profound influence of intersubjective relations between the individual and the large group system on the functioning of both.

**Boundary management**

The system as a whole has a boundary or ‘skin’ surrounding it separating it from the environment. Boundaries define the system in the context of its environment. Subgroups and individuals within the system can also be thought about as separate systems each with their own boundary and boundary properties. Systems maintain a steady state only as long as they continually adapt to, or influence outside forces. This requires capacity to transact externally between systems and their environment, and internally between system elements. To facilitate optimal transaction all system boundaries must be permeable enough to allow the flow of materials in and out of the system but not so permeable that the system is not adequately defined, risking collapse into the external environment. Optimal boundary permeability is not an absolute state but depends on management of the particular requirements of the tasks of the system in the context of particular environmental conditions (Alderfer 1980). In groups and organisations consideration of boundaries is multidimensional:

* time boundaries; task boundaries; territorial boundaries; role boundaries; and between different roles that might be taken by the same person at different times; between person and role; and between the inner world of the individual, or the group, and the external world (Gould 2001, p9).
One of the characteristics of open systems is that they can achieve the same state of equilibrium from different starting points and in different ways. Von Bertalanffy refers to this concept as *equifinality* (1968, p75). For human systems this implies choice. Management of boundaries is the enactment of this choice. It requires understanding and consideration of what is ‘inside’ and what is ‘outside’ the boundary, and ability to mobilise emotions, skills, strategy and structure towards furthering the task (Miller and Rice 1975; De Board 1978; Roberts 1994).

In the large groups of this study boundary management was first the responsibility of the formal authorities; in cases one and two being the Divisional Managers, with authority delegated by the University; and in case three, the Consultants, with authority delegated by the Workshop Director. Authority for aspects of boundary management was then delegated to the group members. In case three agreements were signed by participants to work in the study group style with staff. These agreements underpin the authority in this system.

For the individual, boundary maintenance is managed through the ego (Rice 1967). Boundary maintenance in large groups is highly significant when considering the impact of unconscious projective processes. Projection blurs the boundary of what is inside and what is outside, resulting in distortion of reality (De Board 1978). Without attention to projective processes the system is liable to regress and lose capacity to function effectively towards task.

In this research, an individual’s maintenance and management of a boundary around the self was understood to be a critical factor in much that followed in the development of each of the large group’s structure and culture. The individual’s reaction to the threatening environment of the group tended towards either collapsing or closing the boundary around the self. When these dynamics were manifest collectively they resulted in a range of defensive cultural and structural mechanisms that obstructed the group in furthering task. In the large group of case three the issue of naming or not naming oneself illustrates this concept. To name oneself was experienced as leaving oneself open to danger of what the group could do to you. To not name oneself meant to not join the group and risk being
isolated. As a member of this group I had to consider whether there was real
danger located in the group or if this was fantasy and the danger lay instead inside
me. Equally I had to consider what resources I had inside myself to cope with
potential hurt and weigh this against the imagined or real risks in naming myself
and joining the group. At the group level members seemed fixated on this issue of
naming. It became a parameter around which subgroups formed and through
which exercise of power occurred. As example, the subgroup for not naming was
identified as being made up of females. The subgroup for naming was identified
as being made up of males. The not namers (females) charged the namers (males)
as attempting to exert gender dominance through the issue.

Systems' thinking provides a dynamic conception of group life. It explains the
entwinement and fate of the group in the interactions that occur across boundaries
within and without the system. Systems’ thinking describes a systematic process
that intrinsically links all parts of the organisation to each other. These relations
originate deep in the psychology of individuals. The data of this research
constitutes people’s raw experience of their relation to the large group of which
they are a part. The data at times contains powerful expressions of the experience
of chaos and threat. Systems thinking concepts provided a containing structure
that supported the researcher’s attention to the depth and breadth of this data. It
provided a stable conceptual framework that facilitated the detection of patterns of
interactions between the system as a whole and its constituent parts through the
life cycle of the large groups.

2.4.3 Systems psychodynamic theory of large groups
This section aims first to orient the reader to the psychodynamic dimensions of
the systems psychodynamic research orientation, and second, to provide the
reader with an introduction to the literature of large group systems
psychodynamics applicable to this research.

The psychodynamic dimension of systems psychodynamics has its origins in the
traditional psychoanalytic context of the analysand and the analyst. The purpose
of the psychoanalytic setting is to allow the patient's problematic unconscious
phenomena to be surfaced, explored and integrated in a healthier way in the individual’s psyche. The work of the Tavistock Institute has been to adapt the theories of psychoanalysis to exploration of social systems. This has allowed for deep inquiry into conscious and unconscious behaviour in systems, and system implications of this behaviour.

*Primitive anxiety in groups*

A psychodynamic approach to the study of groups is premised on the idea that the experience of being in a group mobilises primitive anxiety held deep in the psyche of group members. On joining or becoming a part of a group, individuals experience dual fears of being at once engulfed by the group or of being isolated and abandoned by the group (Bion 1961; Turquet 1985; Shapiro and Carr 1991; Lawrence 1995).

These fears are understood to mobilise deep-seated primitive anxiety originating in infancy. The experience of utter dependency on the mother or primary carer, and the infant’s primitive emotional state, engender enormous dread of being engulfed or suffocated by the mother, or alternatively of being left to die (Klein 1959; Benjamin 1988, 1995a).

At the same time human beings are social or group animals. As Bion said *the individual is a group animal at war, both with the group and with those aspects of his personality that constitute groupishness* (1961, p163). At a fundamental level people have powerfully ambivalent feelings about group experiences.

Because of its size, the large group compounds issues of joining and participating for group members. These experiences can be felt to be persecutory, triggering intolerable levels of primitive anxiety, which the individual and the group must confront and/or defend against to survive. (Bion 1961; Wells 1980; Lawrence 1995). Systems psychodynamics assist in understanding and working with the way that defenses against primitive anxiety manifest, and impact, in group and organisational settings. These defense mechanisms are analogous to individual defenses but take social or collective form.
Projective processes

The literature on the systems psychodynamics of large groups since Freud wrote Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego in 1921 acknowledges the connective relation between the individual and the large group as a primary determining factor in the formation of large group structure and culture. In psychodynamic terms this relation is formed through projective identification. It is understood that Ferenczi first termed the concepts of projection and identification as early as 1909 (1916). As will be discussed (p23), these concepts informed Freud’s (1921) understanding of the ties that bind groups. However, it was Klein (1959) who markedly developed the concept of projective identification in her psychoanalytic work with patients. The following first explains Klein’s psychological processes of projective identification and related defense mechanisms, then moves to description of the influence of these processes in large groups (Freud 1913, 1921, 1930; Redl 1942; Turquet 1975; Main 1975; Kreeger 1992; Carr 1993; Segal 1995; Hopper 2003; Shaker 2003; Volkan 2004).

Klein

Melanie Klein does not directly discuss group phenomena; however her concepts have been incorporated pervasively in understanding group relational processes. The following outlines the origins of projective processes in the infant-mother dyad. The description also illustrates the origins of other defense mechanisms including denial and idealisation.

Klein sees the infant’s psychic world comprising solely of the mother’s breast. She argues that the infant experiences extreme fears of annihilation associated with the death instinct. As the only object in its realm, the breast becomes the persecutory object. Paradoxically the breast also provides feelings of immense satisfaction during feeding. In the infant’s mind the breast is split into the ‘bad’ object and the ‘good’ object. The good object is internalised or introjected into the ego and the bad object is externalised or projected outward. Simultaneously the breast is experienced positively as the source of all fulfilment and goodness, and negatively, as a depriving external threat and as an internal threat within the ego. This is the infant’s first experience of good and bad. Klein calls this binary
state the **paranoid schizoid** position. These experiences are also related to the defenses of **idealisation** and **denial**. The more the infants wishes are frustrated, the greater the persecutory anxiety. To compensate, the good breast is **idolised** and phantasised as ever flowing, and correspondingly the bad breast and the related feelings of frustration and persecution are **denied**. This is denial of a part of the self.

Klein proposes that sometime after six months of life the infant becomes aware of the mother as a separate person. This facilitates the integration of the good and bad breast, leading to a reduction in the splitting processes. The infant realises that they can both love and hate the same person. This brings about feelings of guilt for the damage that may have been done, and desire for reparation. Klein calls this the **depressive** position. Where the infant is well cared for the ego is strengthened and hope reinforced, lessening the need for splitting and other defense mechanisms. Where the infant is not well nurtured and faces continual deprivation the ground is layed for paranoia and schizophrenia in later years.

Even with nurturing carers, Klein believes as adults we are never rid of paranoid schizoid anxiety. When faced with situations that give rise to feelings of deprivation or frustration we relive remnants of this early infantile anxiety and related defensive mechanisms. We may split off good or bad parts of ourselves, projecting them onto others. Where the other takes up/introjects our projection we are then able to identify with them as they contain parts of ourselves. This is the process that Klein terms **projective identification**. Inversely when we introject another’s projection we are then able to identify with the other as we have parts of them within us. This is called **introjective identification** (Czander 1993; De Board 1978; Halton 1994; Klein1959).

Alford (1989), using Klein’s projective concepts, discusses the importance of large groups in protecting the individual from paranoid schizoid and depressive anxiety. Alford describes the large group as a blank screen upon which individuals project unwanted parts of the self, protecting them from their own destructiveness. In this way the large group acts as a receptacle for containment of the individual’s
paranoid schizoid anxieties. Jaques contends that individuals who are unable to project their anxieties into social systems are at risk of being overwhelmed by psychotic symptoms (Jaques 1974). The group ‘holds’ or ‘contains’ the individual’s paranoid schizoid anxieties through its splitting processes, which are projections and symbols of those anxieties (Menzies Lyth 1988b). The group’s structure and culture gives the anxiety name, locus and meaning (Alford 1989, p64) protecting the individual from having to manage his/her anxiety alone.

Alford’s arguments lead into the next section of this chapter that traces the influence of projective processes on large group behaviour. First Freud’s (1921) seminal work on the identificatory ties that bind groups is described. This is followed by an outline of the theories of Turquet (1975) and other contemporary large group theorists (Main 1975; Kreeger 1992; Carr 1993; Segal 1995; Hopper 2003; Shaker 2003). This selection of literature is included to convey the problematic impact and consequences of the size of the large group on projective processes.

2.4.4 Projective processes in large groups

Freud

In Group Psychology and Analysis of the Ego (1921) Freud proposes that groups are held together through identificatory and libidinal ties to the group’s leader (or in leaderless groups, the leading idea). Through these ties, the leader becomes idealised. The commonality of the ties to the leader between group members results in identificatory bonds from group member to group member:

A primary group of this kind is a number of individuals who have put one and the same object in the place of their ego ideal and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego (1921, p61).

Freud argues the profound effect of idealisation and identification on the behaviour of the large group. He explains, with extensive reference to Le Bon's work on large groups (1920), the ways in which impoverishment of the ego,
resulting from idealisation of the leader, regresses the functioning of the group. Freud describes the group member's relation to the leader as akin to the relation between the hypnotist and subject, and similar to being in love. Group members project their rational, mature faculties onto the leader leaving them susceptible to contagion of group feeling. Emotion is exaggerated and truth holds little value. Omnipotence reigns, there is no possibility of failure. At the same time the group is highly dependent and wishes to be forcefully controlled by an autocratic leader.

Group member libidinal ties to each other are formed through the renouncing of rivalrous hostility in their desire for the leader. This carries an edict that the leader must be shared equally, no one is to have what one cannot. Thus differentiation or risk taking is not tolerated. Action is driven by collective rather than personal interest. Undischarged hostility is split off from the group and projected onto the external world. Group sanction relieves the individual of guilt over behaviour, enabling group members to act in ways unthinkable alone.

Where the ties to the leader are broken group members panic. The individual loses the group as a buffer against the dangers of reality: *A gigantic and senseless fear is set free* (Freud 1921, p36). To illustrate this Freud gives the oft quoted example of the Aryssian army:

> A soldier cries out ‘The general has lost his head’ and thereupon all Aryssians take flight. The loss of the leader in some sense or another, the birth of misgivings about him, brings on an outbreak of panic, though the danger remains the same; the mutual ties between the members of the group disappear, as a rule, at the same time as the tie with the leader. The group vanishes into dust (1921, p38).

Through projective identification the leader is inside each group member and so they too have lost their head (Jaques 1974). Freud differentiates panic as a response to increased levels of actual danger, and panic that exists as a result of the breaking of libidinal ties that hold a group together. The latter he calls neurotic anxiety (1921).
Freud (1921) links earlier work on the myth of the primal horde (Freud 1913) to his theories of large group behaviour. He regards the large group not as being driven by a herd mentality (Trotter 1916) but as a ‘horde’ presided over by a chief. He claims the father’s sexual jealousy and intolerance, and his requirement that all his sons be abstinent as the genesis of group psychology. While the father had sexual freedom and consequently no ties, the sons were forced into ties that were inhibited in their aims. These, Freud says, are the ties that bind the group (1913).

In ‘Civilisation and its Discontents’ (1930) Freud develops his work on the death instinct, including it into his theories of groups. He argues that the breaking of libidinal ties were not enough to account for the extent of neurosis and destructiveness present in society. Freud retained the idea that the life instinct, or libidinal drive, sought harmony and cohesion in groups, adding that the fantasies and impulses of the death instinct worked to continually disrupt that harmony.

Followers of Freud built on his work about groups. For example, Redl (1942) proposes various types of group formation that occur around a central person rather than a formally authorised leader. Through projective identification the central person becomes the focus of the group’s development. This may occur through processes such as the central person acting in ways that express group member’s prohibited desires, or through the central person providing group members an example to follow.

Volkan 2004 centres his theories of large groups on the significance and maintenance of group identity for and by the whole group. He contends that leader-follower behaviour is just one aspect of the effort by the group to maintain the integrity of the group’s identity. Volkan’s work concerns large groups with which individuals have specific historical identification i.e. ethnic, racial, national or religious groups, rather than large groups per se. He argues the large group’s coherence is a product of identification between group members via commonly held symbols socialised across generations.
It is Freud’s conception of the primacy of the individual’s relation to the group’s formal authorities that is the most relevant of these theories to this research. In each of the three large groups of this study, it is argued that group member’s projective material led to a desire for patriarchal management structure and culture to protect against primitive anxiety. Whilst the impact of this desire was enacted differently in each of the groups, the significance of relations to the formal authorities, and the significance of the impact of this relation on the structure and culture of the group, was common to each. This evidenced in chapters four to seven where discussion of the three large groups occurs.

The following large group psychodynamic literature further develops the systemic implications of projective processes in large groups. The literature has been selected to augment Freud’s theories with consideration of the impact and consequences of the large size of the group on projective processes. In particular it explores the creation and effect of social defenses that large groups commonly employ to defend against anxiety.

The work of Turquet (1975) is included in some detail as the framework for this section. In my view Turquet’s comprehensive description of the problems of projective processes in large groups remains the pre-eminent source in contemporary psychodynamic literature of large groups. Turquet’s theories are further explored and applied in the discussion of the large group of case three in Chapter six.

**Turquet et al**

Turquet (1975) argues that the central issues facing individuals in large groups are problems related to projective fit. Whereas in small groups there is reasonable probability of projective material being received and responded to by other group members, in the large group this does not so easily occur. In the large group the large number of group members makes it difficult, if not impossible to have communications directly acknowledged. For example, a response may have come from behind and/or may be attributable to any number of unknown individuals.
Turquet maintains that in the absence of projective fit confirmatory feedback about the self is unable to be obtained; leaving the individual in an isolated state with no way of locating themselves in the group. This engenders feelings of boundlessness; a vastness external in the group and then internal within the psyche. Simultaneously the individual has to contend with bombardment of other’s unlocatable responses. Reality testing is obstructed and fantasy flourishes. Cycles of depletion of self, surging anxiety and aggression build upon each other; Main calls these cycles *malignant projective processes* (1975, p63).

Problems with finding projective fit makes joining the group difficult for group members. Turquet describes the process of joining as moving from a *Singleton* state (1975, p94); not yet part of the group but attempting to find relations with other singletons, to being an *Individual Member* (IM) (p94); a state where the individual is both oneself and part of the group. To make the transition to IM contact needs to be made with other group members close enough to provide assurance of the other’s continuity, and distant enough to enable recognition of each individual. Where this process is unsuccessful the individual either fuses with other group members and loses their individuality, or withdraws from the group. Turquet calls these states *Membership Individual* (MI) (p95). The impact on the group’s resource base according to the capacity of members to become IM’s is considerable. The IM state is the only state where the individual is able to offer the group their unique capacities.

The struggle to maintain oneself in the large group is understood to be extremely frustrating and anxiety provoking. The multiplying effect of multiple cycles of malignant projective processes result in dangerous levels of potential violence. In addition the large group has characteristics of what Turquet calls *errancy* (1975, p132) where fearfulness results in the exaggeration of dynamics. In the large group the fantasy of the possibilities of violence take on fantastic proportions.

Management of violence is imperative for the group’s survival. If member’s independence is not controlled the ubiquitous fear is that violence unleashed through envious murderous impulses would kill the group. Envy is often denied,
resulting in fear of being envied. This deters group members from differentiating themselves (Main 1975, Kreeger 1992).

Cultural censure of differentiation was identified in the data of each of the large groups explored in this study. It is one of a number of collective or ‘social’ defenses that were hypothesised to protect large group members from the threatening capacities of the groups. Other forms of social defense mechanism identified include scapegoating and polarisation. Prior to exploring these specific defenses, social defense theory will now be introduced.

2.4.5 Social defense theory
Social defense mechanisms are a collective form of individual psychological defense mechanisms. They are understood to evolve where members unconsciously agree to enact common ways of containing or avoiding anxiety (Menzies Lyth 1988b). Social defense concepts were first discussed by Jaques (1955). It is Jaques contention that one of the elements binding individuals into institutionalised groups is commonly held defenses against psychotic anxiety. Jaques proposes that group members attempted to rid themselves of paranoiac and depressive anxiety through socially developed and sanctioned defense mechanisms. For example, Jaques writes about how in times of war members of a community may project into their army their own destructive impulses. The army then deflects these impulses against the enemy. Jaques suggests that through these processes levels of paranoiac anxiety in the community may be alleviated. The civilian community is bonded in a common struggle against individual sadistic impulses. The struggle, originally individual and internal, becomes shared and ‘objective’ against a tangible enemy.

Menzies (1988b) further developed the concept of social defenses in her study of nursing in a British Hospital. She found that the intimate nursing of patients, and working with the life and death issues of patients and their families, aroused disturbing primitive libidinal and aggressive anxieties for the nurses. To reduce or evade anxiety the nursing service developed a vast array of procedures and ways
of functioning that dissociated nurses from patients. Menzies terms these organisational elements ‘social defenses’.

The social defenses in the hospital included: depersonalisation of patients by referring to them by disease or bed number; regimented procedures that related to medical categories rather than as response to individual patient need; and rotation of nurses from ward to ward. A punishing hierarchal authority system in the hospital also supported dissociation; taking independent action carried significant organisational risk. The quality of care of patients, and the working life of hospital staff were severely impacted by the social defense. Additionally the hospital system was eroded through high staff turnover, particularly of the most mature and skilled nursing students and nurses.

Social defenses take a number of forms with varying degrees of visibility and durability (Hirschhorn 1988). These range from basic assumption modes of defense, namely dependency, flight-fight and pairing which Bion (1961) observed in small groups, through to institutionalised social defenses in organisations and society such as that described by Menzies Lyth. (1988b).

2.4.6 Social defense mechanisms in large groups

Social defenses in large groups are a result of unconscious collusion between group members to protect themselves from the anxiety that is brought into the group, and anxiety mobilised by the experience of being in the group. Social defenses in large groups are very often highly durable and visible. The potency of threat inherent in the experience of being in a large group requires defense mechanisms with commensurate strength to adequately contain anxiety. The study of the three large groups of this research shows social defense mechanisms in the structure and culture of each the groups. These defenses include scapegoating, polarisation and homogenisation.

In scapegoating the group’s anxieties are relieved through projection onto an individual or subgroup. Group members who dare to differentiate themselves are laughed at, ostracised, attacked, or otherwise humiliated by the group. These may
include people who attempt to think for themselves, or who make statements of support for the group authorities. This social defense was evidenced as the organising theme of the large group of case two. The discussion of the scapegoating dynamics in this large group (Chapter five) is informed by the work of Rene Girard on mimetic processes in large groups (Grote and McGeeney 1977; Girard 1979).

Through polarisation opposite sub groupings exist and balance each other. This encompasses individuals within indistinct, stereotypic groupings ensuring differentiation does not occur, thus containing violence. For example, men/women, speakers/non speakers, those for the authorities/those against the authorities. According to Turquet (1975) subgroups regress the group’s culture to a simplistic, primitive state. Carr (1993) is more optimistic. He believes that the temporary safety of the subgroup may help the group member to make a transition to membership of the group, or at least enable individuals to be a participant member of a subgroup of the large group.

Manifestation of both the supportive and obstructive effects of subgroup affiliation and competition is explored in some depth in the discussion chapters of this dissertation (Chapters four-eight). These discussions illustrate the significance of intra and inter subgroup dynamics to the relation between the individual and the large group.

Polarisation of a subgroup or subgroups can act, on behalf of the whole group, to contain the group’s unwanted psychic elements. Segal writes of this in the larger context of society:

A large group, such as a state or nation, can also delegate such psychotic functions to subgroups, which are kept under control by the group as a whole, for instance the army. The military mind and military training are based on paranoid assumptions. Our sense of dependence on omnipotence and messianic grandiose delusions can be vested in churches or religion in general (1995, p195).
These dynamics are also evidenced in each of the three large groups in this study. For example, in the large group of case three it appeared the group projected reflective characteristics into the females in the group and then, through a subgroup of dominant males, shut down the female contribution to the group. I argue these splitting and domination processes protected the group from reflecting on intolerable feelings. An alternative or additional viewpoint can be taken of these same dynamics, i.e. the group could be understood as projecting aggressive elements into the dominant males, then adopted a passive submissive role to protect themselves from their own aggression.

Polarisation is also understood to be manifest in large intergroup social defense mechanisms. In this dynamic the group seeks to protect itself from its anxiety by projecting goodness onto its own group and projecting badness externally. Segal (1995) contends that almost without exception large groups are self idealising, grandiose and paranoid (p194). She gives example of how the French believe absolutely that they are the most cultured race on earth, the Poles that they are the most heroic, the English the most just and fair, and the American just all round great. Alford (1989) adds to these ideas stating the best indication of a group’s paranoid schizoid behaviour is not the amount of hatred and aggression towards other groups (which he says is often denied) but the degree of idealisation it practices. Degrees of idealisation are believed to carry inverse degrees of persecutory anxiety. In this study the three large groups did not appear to relate with outside groups, or at least the data did not indicate a relation. The absence of an ‘other’ may have increased the levels of anxiety and resultant defensive processes within the groups.

Homogenisation

Along with Turquet (1975), Main (1975), Hopper (2003), and Shaker (2003) discuss tendencies towards absence of differentiation in the large group. Where generalisation abound individuals and their hostility remain anonymous, protecting the person from attack. The hostility is then projected into the group creating spirals of paranoia. Whilst homogenisation has protective components it mitigates against creativity, understanding of difference, and the possibilities of
making decisions and moving forward. Unique needs or requirements are unable to be acknowledged or responded to, depleting all members, and further marginalising those already on the periphery of the group (Main 1975). The dangers of being scapegoated, along with the repression inherent in subgroup affiliation and competition, were salient features in each of the three large groups of this study. To stand out and be different invited the wrath of the group. These structural and cultural characteristics ensured a defensive culture of homogenisation in each of the groups.

**Institutionalisation**
Turquet (1975) identifies institutionalisation as another ubiquitous structure used to defend large groups against unbounded violence. An institutional structure implies rigid hierarchal roles, inflexible communication patterns and autocratic control. This separates the formal authorities from the members, making them less available to help members work through the transition from singleton to IM status. The impersonal monolithic culture of an institution also creates its own anxieties for the individual; anxiety for fear of being taken over by the group. In the large groups of cases one and two the educational context appeared to mobilise an institutionalised, hostile dependant relation between group members and the Divisional Managers. In case three the ‘Consultant’ relation seemed to be more confused. Arguably this relation was less familiar to members and therefore perhaps a more difficult repository for group member’s projections about authority. Still, this relation was too difficult to discuss in the group.

The psychodynamic theory presented so far illuminates how the problematic relation between the individual and the large group gives rise to collective mechanisms of defense that protect group members from primitive anxiety but also result in regressed functioning of the individual and the group. These theories enabled observation of social defense mechanisms in the three large groups of this study.

The final set of psychodynamic theories I introduce illuminates the intersubjective realm of large group behaviour. Intersubjective theories have their origins in
philosophy of the self (Hegel 1979; Merleau-Ponty 1985; Husserl 1991). The particular orientation of intersubjectivity used in this research is expounded by Jessica Benjamin (1988, 1995a). Benjamin’s theories are briefly introduced here. The theories are outlined further in Chapter seven where intersubjective theory is used to explore the data and the themes emerging from the three large groups of the study.

Intersubjective theories contend that selfhood is found through recognising, or ‘mutual’, relations with the other. These are reciprocal relations of assertion and recognition through which the subjectivity of the self and the other is affirmed. Mutuality implies the subjectivity of the other is required for one’s own self to be recognised. This means it is in our own interest for the other to be real, not solely a projection of our inner world. Mutual relations facilitate agency and creativity. Within the relational space of mutuality, aggression and anxiety are able to symbolised and integrated. This mitigates against the evacuation of anxiety through projective means.

Without mutuality intersubjectivity is lost. Instead relations are characterised by domination and submission. In intersubjective terms this is the dialectic of the master-slave (Hegel 1979). The master-slave relation is understood to hold within it degrees of recognition that enable survival. The slave gains recognition through the mastery of the master, and the master through dominion over the slave. To facilitate recognition the slave must resist the master’s dominance elsewise their capacity to recognise the master doesn’t exist. The master-slave relation posits the other as an object, subjectivity is not affirmed. Persecutory anxiety and aggression saturate relational space. Aggression is turned inwards and then projected outwards creating internal and external world of persecutors and victims.

In the multicase discussion, Chapter seven, the individual’s relation to the large group system is explored through intersubjective theory. The discussion shows the problematic nature of gaining and proffering recognition in the large groups. It illuminates how the formation and perpetuation of the social defenses that emerged in each of the groups can be understood as both arising from, and as
channels for, gaining and extending large group recognition. The discussion shows the significance of large group recognition, as distinct from interpersonal or subgroup recognition, for the functioning of the individual and the large group.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter locates the research in the combined theoretical areas of systems thinking and psychodynamics. Through exploration of the concepts of each of these disciplines the large group is conveyed as a site of complex interactions influenced by conscious and unconscious motivations of its members.

Inclusion of systems thinking in the research facilitates understanding of intrinsic connectedness between the large group system, system elements and the external environment. It illuminates the importance of boundary management at all system levels of the group to further survival of the individual and the group. Systems’ thinking enables the research to be located within theories of sentient and community system levels of the large group. This allows for understanding the emotional nature of interrelation between the individual and the large group as important to the individual, and also as a contributing aspect in the systems execution of its primary task.

Inclusion of psychodynamic theory in the research deepens knowledge of the essence of the connectedness of system relations. Psychodynamic concepts link our behaviour in large groups to the unconscious, the recesses of our psychology. This makes more understandable seemingly irrational defensive aspects of structure and culture in large groups. Psychodynamic theory points to problematic projective processes as the origins of defensive social structure in large groups. Freud’s conceptualisation of the large group depicts how projective processes of idealisation and identification coheres groups. Turquet’s theories of large groups explore the impact of the large size of the group on projective processes. His work illustrates the cascade of effects that problematic projective processes have on the formation and perpetuation of large group structure and culture. In particular, Turquet links the violent capacity of the large group to failed projective processes. In turn, threat inherent in the violent capacity of the group is linked to
mobilisation of collective or social defenses, such as scapegoating, polarisation and homogenisation.

Inclusion of Benjamin’s psychodynamic theories of intersubjectivity extends understanding about the nature of the relation between the individual and the large group. They allow for exploration of the significance of large group recognition, as distinct from interpersonal or subgroup recognition, for the functioning of the individual and the large group. Intersubjectivity theory also importantly provides a relational model within which anxiety and aggression can be metabolised, thus mitigating need for the extent of defensive structures in large groups.
3. Chapter three – Research design

3.1 Introduction

The chapter begins with a brief outline of the large groups that comprise the research setting, along with rationale for their inclusion in the research. This is followed by explanation of the philosophical persuasion brought to the research. Next a ‘case study’ approach, the framework of the research design, is introduced. Description of the ‘clinical’ methodological stance of the research follows. This stance conceptually underpins the choice and use of the data collection methods: observation; in depth interviewing; and participant observation. The evolution and enactment of the data collection methods make up the next section of the chapter. This section also serves to convey a more detailed description of each of the three large groups of the study. Finally the analytic methods used to explore the research data are explained.

3.2 Introduction of the research setting

The research setting comprised three large groups. All three large groups were situated in tertiary education contexts. The first and second case studies were of large groups that existed within an undergraduate business degree course. In both of these large groups, members met together for one hour per week, for one semester (twelve weeks). The large group of case study one met between March and June 2000, and the large group of case study two met between July and October 2000. The two large groups were held in the same room and had the same formal tasks; however the membership of each group was different. In both studies research methods included weekly observation of the group, and in-depth interviewing of eight group members between two and four times each across the semester. Case study three involved the researcher in participant observation of a large group. The large group of this study was specially formed to facilitate the research. This large group was also situated in a university setting however its membership was drawn from broader circles. The large group of case three met for two hours each week for six weeks between August and September 2001. Detailed description of each of the large groups is provided later in this chapter: case one, p46; case two, p65; case three, p71.
3.3 Selection of the groups
The primary reason for selecting the three groups for study was their ‘unstructured’ nature. By unstructured I mean that usual organising features of large groups such as specific roles and role relationships, procedures and recognised standards of behaviour (Rice 1971) were minimised. Each of the large groups had single primary tasks that pertained to all members of the group. The primary task of each of the groups involved exploring the dynamics of the group as they occurred. There was no specified requirement as to how this was to happen. In the large groups of cases one and two there were three dimensions of formal role differentiation: Group Members; Student Consultants; and Divisional Managers. In the large group of case three there were two dimensions of formal role differentiation: Group Members and Consultants.

By selecting unstructured groups for study it was anticipated that a deeper level of group life would be accessible. This is premised on the belief that group structure serves a defensive function against recognition of underlying processes. It is understood that by limiting structure the primitive mechanisms of group life are more able to be experienced by group members, and are thus more available for study (Rice 1971; Main 1975; Khaleelee and Miller 1985; Kernberg 1985; Alford 1989).

Opponents to this view argue that dynamics observed in unstructured large groups are predominantly a result of the unstructured nature of the groups rather than an inevitable response to the large group per se (Mumby 1975; Agazarian 1993). For example, Agazarian states:

*The structure of psychodynamic groups, in which the group is largely left to structure its own ambiguity as best it may, induces regression by arousing the terror of the unknown. Facing the unknown in a group before reality testing mechanisms raises still more anxiety, which is then defended against* (1993, p229).
Other’s experience (Jaques 1978; Menzies Lyth 1998a,b; Lawrence 1999a; Collie 2005) and my own experience run counter to these arguments. Recall the genesis of this research was based in identification of common dynamics and concerns between unstructured and structured large groups (pp4-8). In addition, later in this research, the findings from exploration of the unstructured large groups of the study are considered with respect to large structured organisations. Arguably these considerations demonstrate the similarity of defensive mechanisms in both unstructured and structured large group systems (Chapter eight).

The groups were also selected to provide opportunity to study large group systems from beginning to end. This allowed for exploration of the individual’s relation to the large group and impact on formation, development and termination of the structure and culture of the group. However, this choice meant each group had a short life span. Consequently large group dynamics that emerge over longer time spans are not available for study. For example, De Mare argues it takes more than ten years of ongoing contact for a large group to establish truly collaborative relations (Agazarian and Carter 1993). This is a limitation noted in the research findings (p258).

3.4 Philosophical frameworks

My philosophical beliefs informed each stage of the research project and provided the research with implicit coherence. They were fundamental to the selection of the research project, the nature of inquiry, interpretation of the data, and development of the working hypotheses. These links will become evident as of each of these areas are addressed in this chapter.

The philosophical concerns that are represented are my belief systems about the nature of the social world. Social scientists have created categories or ‘paradigms’ to help describe, differentiate and communicate different philosophical persuasions (Burrell and Morgan 1979; Guba 1990). The paradigm that best conveys my beliefs is called the ‘interpretive’ paradigm. This paradigm is defined by antipositivist beliefs about the nature of being (ontology) and the nature of knowledge (epistemology).
Within the interpretive paradigm the social world is understood to be created through emergent social processes. Social reality is regarded as a network of shared assumptions and intersubjectively shared meanings context by history and culture. The social world exists only through the interpretation of individuals, it is not independent of, or prior to, the individual. Therefore knowledge of social phenomena must include the perspective of those who are participant in the activity under study.

3.5 A case study approach

The research design specifies the structure chosen to frame the inquiry. In this research a case study approach has been adopted to fulfil this function. Case study is regarded as most appropriate for in-depth exploration of a particular bounded or ‘whole’ situation or entity (Berg 1990; Hamel 1993; Yin 1994). The holistic approach of systems thinking, along with the in-depth inquiry facilitated by psychodynamic thinking, are congruent with these attributes of case study design.

Evidence for case study as an appropriate research design can also be found when considering three parameters Yin (1994) has identified to assist the matching of research situations to research strategies. He links question type, degree of need for control over behavioural events, and whether or not the research has a historical or contemporary focus to the following research approaches: experimental; survey; archival analysis; history; and case study. Figure 1 shows the linkages between situation and strategy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Form of research question</th>
<th>Requires control over behavioural events</th>
<th>Focuses on contemporary events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>how, why</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>who, what, where, how many, how much</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archival analysis</td>
<td>who, what, where, how many, how much</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes/no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>how, why</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study</td>
<td>how why</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Relevant situations for different research strategies  SOURCE: Yin 1994, p6
As the following evidence shows, consideration of these parameters illustrates a case study strategy as appropriate for this research.

In regard parameter 1; **question type**, the research explores the individual’s experience in large groups and the impact of this on the functioning of the group. The research questions that arise take ‘how’ and ‘why’ form. For example: How do people experience the large group? Why do they experience it in this way? How are individual dynamics manifest in the large group? How is the functioning of the large group affected by individual dynamics? Why?

In regard parameter 2; **the degree of need for control over behavioural events**, the large groups of this research exist in natural settings with no experiential intervention or control over the behaviour of group members.

In regard parameter 3; **whether or not the research has a historical or contemporary focus**, the research focuses on current rather than past events.

### 3.6 Case study style

Berg (1990) identifies five different styles of case study: **illustrative** - illustrates particular concepts or theories; **representative** - shows how a theory found within one case is generalisable to other cases; **interpretative** - reinterprets a previous case through a differing set of theories; **anomalous** - examines in depth a very unusual phenomenon, i.e. one not usually found in the general population; and **hypothesis generating** - an inductive study that aims to develop hypotheses about a situation that holds interest for the researcher but that has not been fully explored.

It is the latter style – the hypothesis generating case study - that best describes the style of case study of this research. The research aims are exploratory. They focus on developing working hypotheses about the experience of the members of the three large groups and related functioning of those groups. This discounts the illustrative and interpretative case study styles.
The anomalous case study style is also discounted. The concern in the research is with understanding an ‘ordinary’ group, rather than a group that at the outset is considered extraordinary or unusual. Because the study deals with emergent phenomena it may eventuate that the ordinary group has extraordinary or unusual experiences, however the large groups were not selected for this possibility.

The multi-case component of the design means that the research could also be considered a ‘representative’ case study type. The aim of the research is to consider similarities and differences in individual and group phenomena within and across the three studies. In other words, generalisability across the large groups is explored.

Yin (1994) in fact argues exploration of generalisability, or in his terminology ‘replicability’ as the main justification for a multi case design. He says that selection of cases for study must yield the capacity for either ‘literal’ replication where similar results are discovered across the cases, and/or ‘theoretical’ replication where contrasting results are found but for predictable reasons. This he says provides possibilities of developing more robust and compelling theory than would be derived from a single study.

3.7 Multi case design

In multi case designs each case is regarded as an entity in itself (Judd, Smith and Kidder 1991; Hamel 1993; Yin 1994). It is only following analysis of each case that comparison across the cases occurs. Yin provides a chart that shows the structure of a multi case research design (1994). This is included as Figure 2.1 (following page).

The main differences in the design of this research as compared to Figure 2 related to a decision to delay the selection of case studies two and three until the earlier studies were completed and preliminary analysis of their data had occurred. This is as compared to having a predictable research design from the outset. It is believed that having design flexibility optimised the meeting of the requirements
of the research aims, i.e. exploration of large group dynamics. This flexibility
enabled a repeat of the setting of case study one for case study two. This was in
response to a desire to further explore and refine working hypotheses discovered
in case one (discussed later in this chapter, p65). The flexibility also enabled a
quite different approach to be taken by the researcher for case study three. A sense
of not fully grasping the large group dynamics in case studies one and two led to a
decision for the researcher to become more fully immersed in a large group
through a participant observer role (discussed later in this chapter, p71). Both
these decisions have supported the research aims and provided greater
opportunities for exploring large group dynamics. It is unlikely that the same
decisions would have been made at the outset of the study.

Additionally, the design Yin proposes in this chart is deductive, whereas this
research is inductive. The theory in this research is developed as the study
proceeds rather than theory being developed at the outset, tested, then modified at
the conclusion.
3.8 A clinical methodological stance

The case study approach, outlined in the last section, frames the research design. In itself though it does not dictate choice of data collection methods. In this research these aspects are addressed by a ‘clinical’ methodological stance.

Clinical methodology is a methodological framework utilised in systems psychodynamic research traditions (Berg and Smith 1988). The stance provides supportive parameters relevant to meeting the challenges of human beings studying human systems (Newton 1999, p36).

Clinical methodology has concordant philosophical underpinnings with this research. In both, centrality is given to the intersubjective nature of knowledge and social phenomena. Thus phenomena does not have its genesis in one person or discipline, instead it emerges in the spaces between the various research relations. In this research those relations include the researcher and the researched, the researcher and her peers, and the researcher and the research that has gone before. As Margaret Chesney describes in declaring the legitimacy of the researcher in the analysis: It is not the unmediated world of others but the world between ourselves and others that adds reality to the field (2001, p2).

Berg and Smith identify the characteristics of clinical methodology as follows:

1) direct involvement with and/or observation of human beings or social systems, requiring personally openness (emotional and intellectual) to the experience of the research;

2) commitment to a process of self scrutiny by the researcher as he or she conducts the research;

3) willingness to change theory or method in response to the research experience during the research itself;

4) description of social systems that is dense or thick and favours depth over breadth in any single undertaking; and

5) participation of the social system being studied, under the assumption that much of the information of interest is only accessible to or reportable by its members (1988, pp25-28).
Some of the characteristics described above are built into this research through structure. For example, point 3 - **flexibility in research design**, and point 4 - **a preference for depth over breadth**, are included by adoption of the hypotheses generating case study approach. Similarly point 5 – **participation in the system under study** is included structurally through the data collection methods of observation, in-depth interviewing and participant observation. These methods are described in detail later in the chapter, pp49,56,73.

In contrast, point 2 – **researcher self scrutiny**, and point 1 - **personal openness to the experience of the research**, are human rather than structural components. Whilst they must be supported through structure they are predominantly individual capacities taken up in the researcher role.

However, attention and openness to one’s own experience is not an easy task. Symington, a veteran analyst and researcher in this style speaks of the difficulties he has found:

\[
\text{I fight a hard battle against coming to know what I think and I feel. There are powerful forces which prevent me. There is a strong pull against doing that. I may replace it with a substitute. I slip cannily into the shadows of another and speak his thoughts, his idea and thoughts. How do I become my own subjective self?} \quad (1990, \text{p}283).
\]

And Shapiro and Carr write that experience can be difficult to fully grasp because of its enmeshment within relationships:

\[
\text{Internal experience provides the primary data for the interpretive stance. But such experience is not simply engendered from within. Rather relationships constitute the crucible within which internal experience is forged. The notion of isolated experience is inconceivable, since we all live in an interpersonal swirl of projections from others that affect our internal lives. The practical skill that the interpretive stance requires is differentiating those}
\]
feelings that arise from without from those that arise from within. This is a complex task. We are caught up in, and contribute to a profoundly interdependent world. As a result final and assured differentiation is impossible. ‘I’ cannot be defined apart from its interaction with ‘not I’. Since we exist in a dynamic interchange with ourselves and one another, to claim personal certainty is to deny an essential uncertainty about life (1990 p82).

A struggle, a tension of not knowing but of seeking to understand, is evident in these quotations. In this research the struggle to attend to and understand my own experience was continuous, and is woven throughout the written paper. This is not regarded as problematic but, in psychoanalytic traditions, is considered a legitimate and important aspect of data collection. The host of data in this research then becomes that which is observable in the group, the experience of group members, and the experience of the researcher.

3.9 Data collection
3.9.1 Introduction
The following sections detail the selection and use of data collection methods in the research. This is described separately for each of the large groups. First, the particular group is described. Second, rationale is provided for the selection of research methods. And third, the experience of implementing those methods is conveyed.

3.9.2 Case study one
Description of the large group
The large group that I selected to study for case one was an iteration of the same group setting that was the primary inspiration for the research (p4).

The group under study was a first year university student group who undertook an experiential subject, ‘Organisations and Management’ in first semester 2000. The subject was ‘core’ to the business degree, meaning that all business students were required to complete it. The subject was experiential. It offered students the
opportunity to learn about organisations and management by being in an organisation and managing its activities. The organisation comprised the students and staff members. Each week the students worked in differing groups. In the first hour of the three-hour class all organisation members met as a large group known as the divisional meeting. In the second and third hours the students worked in medium size groups known as workgroups, and in small groups known as syndicates. Syndicates were subgroups of the workgroup. The research is only concerned with the large group.

The large group met twelve times across the semester, once a week, for one hour. The large group was held in a lecture theatre at the university. Rather than a traditional lecture hall of straight rows of seats, this room was a ‘U’ shape with four rows of seats rising upwards, all facing the lectern. In total there were one hundred seats in the room.

At the outset there were eighty-six students in the group, two staff members, one Student Consultant, and myself as an observer. Throughout the semester the number of people attending the large group meetings (including the staff, Student Consultants and myself) ranged from ninety to forty-one. The primary task of the large group was:

for members to self-manage their learning about (the) four core concepts (structure, strategy, culture and external environment) by exploring their roles in a large group (meaning the same large group) (Syllabus Outline 2000a, p3).

The staff or 'Divisional Manager' role was cited in the syllabus outline as:

being responsible for design and implementation of the learning program, the management of the learning process, and the evaluation of student work. The outline also stated that the Divisional Managers may take up a variety of roles such as consultant, adviser, process observer (Syllabus Outline 2000a, p4).
The Student Consultant was a third year business student who had previously completed the subject. The Student Consultant role was defined as:

A helping role, (to) make their own experiences available to workgroup members, and encourage and guide in a non-directive manner (Syllabus Outline 2000a, p4).

And finally, specification of the Student role included:

Active, self-managing learner; responsible group member; reflective thinker; non competitive researcher; and effective time manager (Syllabus Outline 2000a, p5).

In the large group the students were required to take up responsibility for the way in which the primary task was carried out. This included decision-making for structuring the group, and for determining the strategies to be taken to perform the task.

In week one a person independent to the study briefed the students and staff about the research. Group members were invited to be participant in the study in two ways: first through agreement for the researcher to observe the group; and second through volunteering to be interviewed about their experience in the large group. By a show of hands the group agreed to being observed throughout the semester. Those interested in being interviewed placed their names on a list.

The evolution and experience of the two separate methods of data gathering in case study one, observation and interview, are discussed below.

Developing the observer role

The characteristics of the observation method employed in case one are articulated by Bion (1970) in his understanding of the state of ‘reverie’. In accord with a ‘clinical’ methodological stance, this state facilitates capacity to experience the research as a part of the observer’s role. As previously stated (p46) the observer’s
experience, along with other observable phenomena then become potential data for the study.

Bion describes reverie as a very specific and rigorous state of mind that in the psychoanalytic clinical setting facilitates transference and countertransference. It requires maintaining an internal stance of no memory, no desire and no understanding (1970, p35). This is believed to open up psychic space within the analyst for receptivity to dynamics that cannot be sensed, those that are ‘pre-conception’. This is a state of being in touch with ‘O’ – or truth, in what is called an ‘act of faith’:

The act of faith has no association with memory or desire. It has a relationship to thought analogous to the relationship of a priori knowledge to knowledge. It does not belong to the K (knowing) system but to the O (truth) system. It does not lead us to knowledge ‘about’ something, but knowledge about something may be the outcome of a defense against the consequences of an act of faith. A thought has a realisation in a ‘no-thing’. An act of faith has as its background something that is unconscious and unknown because it has not happened. Receptiveness achieved by denudation of memory and desire (which is essential to the operation of ‘acts of faith’) is essential to the operation of psychoanalysis and other scientific proceedings (Bion 1970, p35).

Symington describes the ephemeral nature of his understanding of truth:

At the moment of truth I glimpsed something new. A minute later this had been categorised and became part of my habitual way of thinking. Two minutes later the truth would be a different one and I would have to be ready to abandon that preconception (1990, p18).

And later he refers to truth’s naissance in intersubjectivity:
From my description so far it may sound as if truth is grasped in a moment of insight within the individual. Yet I am actually saying that truth is grasped in dialogue with another or others: it emerges in between. It may seem as if an intellectual truth may be grasped just by the individual in relation to data of the physical universe: even here the truth arises between the thinker and the data (Symington 1990, p18).

Whilst ‘reverie’ is traditionally related to the analyst’s state in clinical psychoanalytic settings, it has also been applied to other contexts. These include infant observation practices undertaken by trainee psychoanalysts (Miller et al 1995), workplace observation for management training (Willshire 1999), and other psychoanalytically influenced research where the researcher’s internal experience is regarded as an important component of the data (Hinshelwood and Skotstag 2000). The method of reverie articulated in these applications has influenced the development of the observer’s role in this case study. This is detailed in the following.

**Infant observation**

The tradition of infant observation used in psychoanalytic training programmes employs states of ‘no memory, no desire, no understanding’ in observing the infant and the infant’s relations to its carer/s and environment. Miller et al. state the aim of this work is to: *provide the observer with an opportunity to encounter primitive emotional states in the infant and his family, and indeed in the observer’s own response to this turbulent environment* (1995, p7). The observer records are *factual and literal* (p52), containing only those things that are occurring before them: the baby’s activities; records of conversations; and record of feeling states (including the observer). Observers are required to resist forming interpretations until well after the observation has ended. It is believed that early interpretation is likely to be a defense against emotional experience, or ignorance, rather than a means of real understanding.
Workplace observation

Based on infant observation concepts Willshire (1999) developed an approach to workplace observation. Students undertook workplace observation as part of their post-graduate management education. The process and the content of the observation experience were understood to enhance the students’ capacities in their workday managerial roles through increased ability to tolerate uncertainty and ambiguity. By mastering observation from a position of not knowing (p1), by tolerating the confusion and anxiety of this, it was contended that opportunities for creative or ‘new’ learning were enhanced.

Research

Hinshelwood and Skotstag reiterate these characteristics in their description of observation roles in psychoanalytically informed research. They list aspects of this type of role as:

1) observing with ‘evenly hovering attention’ and without premature judgement;
2) careful employment of the observer’s subjective experience;
3) capacity to reflect and think about the experience as a whole; and
4) recognition of the unconscious dimension (2000, p17).

Drawing from this range of experiences I came to an understanding of the observation role I believed appropriate to this research. I aimed to attend, as exclusively as I could, to the here and now detail of experiences both external and internal to myself. Importantly this meant sitting with tension and anxiety without resorting to premature judgement as a defensive mechanism. It was also important to be attentive to the peripheral detail of the experience, as well as the most salient.

This was my cognitive understanding of the observation role yet was I less sure of how to enact the role. What should a state of ‘no memory, no desire and no understanding’ feel like? Symington (1990) in his writing about the mother-baby relation addresses this. He likens the state to when a mother in ‘reverie’ is able to engage with her baby, is able to ‘tune in’ to the baby. He says that it is when the
baby looks at the mother, gestures, or gurgles and the mother is able to respond in such a way that allows the baby to feel contented and satisfied. Bion (1970) says that the state is one that is always present but is hidden by other phenomena. From my own experience of mothering I have a sense of what Symington meant.

The experience of observing
In each of the large group sessions I sat in the corner seat of the back row on the extreme edge of the U shape. This allowed me the most coverage in observing facial expression of group members without undue influence on the group processes. Its limitations were that I sat behind the group members in the section beneath me. This obscured my view of their facial and body language.

In a reference in my observation notes I show how I experienced the observation role. The notes show a link between role clarity, work, and what I understood to be a state of reverie.

Preface to the note- In previous weeks I had felt drawn to the Divisional Managers, B and L, as colleagues:

I must say I am feeling much more in role, more content in role than I have formerly. I had no need to make any eye contact or any contact with B and L (the Divisional Managers). I had it in my mind that when I see them I would be nice and friendly and that feels good, but I feel much more in working mode within the observer role. At the outset of the session today I was struggling with what was going on here, and I thought, I said to myself to relax to sit back, to take it in, and I was able to do that, and sitting with that, and starting to let that process. There is a whole lot more here than I really know.

At times such as that described above I believed I was observing in a state where I was open to experience in the large group. However, littered throughout my observation notes are my attempts to make sense of the experience I was within. I tended many many times towards interpreting what was occurring and making
hypotheses that spanned across the meetings. These cognitive activities took me away from the immediate experience. Examples of these efforts at interpretation include:

1) **Seems that** questioning undermines leadership;

2) **I made some hypotheses** that D in particular, that D had been in control of a lot of dynamics;

3) **I wondered if** they were creating this quadrant to oppose the power of B, L, Z and myself;

4) **I revised my hypothesis** on what, and decide not only was it about shutting down the power of women but it was around their representation; and

5) **I pondered** a lot the relationship between D and his wife.

Thinking back now, to the observation of case one, I feel claustrophobic. I feel as though there never could have been enough order and space in the experience to control the way I was in the observer role. It feels tiring as though I was being ‘done to’. Fragments of my observation notes reflect this:

- As though too much and nothing happening. I feel subsumed with detail, tired;

- Very difficult to attend to everything, or even much, in the large group;

- I don’t quite understand what was happening there; and

- I feel quite tired towards the end and quite strained.
At times I was struggling with being overwhelmed by the large group dynamics. In response I believe I retreated to a more familiar self of the Divisional Manager; interpretation of data and development of working hypothesis within the group time is appropriate to the Divisional Manager role. Bion stated that reverie, the state I was trying to maintain, mobilises defense reactions. By moving into reverie, painful emotions previously defended by the states of memory, desire and understanding are understood to be accessed. Bion identified receptivity to the pain the patient is experiencing, and the analyst’s own pain of not understanding and not knowing, as aspects the analyst is liable to defend against (1970). I believe that I defended against those same aspects in the large group context.

My defenses against the large group experience undermined the observer role to some degree, affecting the collection of data. However, I do not believe this rendered the data invalid, rather depth and breadth were decreased as compared to what otherwise might have been.

**Rationale for interviewing**

The decision to interview members of the large group reflects epistemological concerns outlined earlier in the paper (p39). In particular seeking ‘insider’ views concurs with beliefs that meanings about the social world are subjective and understanding of those meanings can only be found within the context under investigation.

Group members were interviewed in role i.e. as a part of the group as a whole. Their contribution was understood as representative of aspects of the whole system. When considered in conjunction with the researcher’s observational experience this allows for better representation of the whole system dynamics as compared to solely using the researcher’s experience.

**The interviewees**

In planning the research I proposed to undertake individual interviews with at least six students and the two staff members in the group. Decisions about the projected number of student interviewees were based on past experience of the
usual number of volunteers (approximately ten percent) to be gained from a group of sixty to eighty undergraduate students. If a greater number of students volunteered this would be a bonus and the research design would be adjusted accordingly.

To increase complexity in the data I hoped to interview a range of culturally diverse students. For example: males and females; local and international students; younger and older students; full and part time students etc. This however depended upon who volunteered to be interviewed.

I planned to interview each person four times across the life span of the group (twelve weeks). The decision to interview the same person four times rather than once or twice was to assist possibilities of a deeper understanding across time of individual’s experience in the group.

The length of interview was set at thirty minutes. This time span was planned as a length not too onerous for the students but still with enough time to allow for deep exploration of the individual’s experience in the large group.

With similar intention to maintain student interest, the interviews were planned to occur within class time. It was anticipated two separate interviews would be held each week following the large group meeting. Whilst this would interfere with the students work group time, I believed this would be more manageable and appealing to students than scheduling interviews within their free time. The interviews with staff members were planned to be held outside the class, at times to suit the staff members and the researcher.

In the first meeting of the large group circulation of a list asking for student interest in being interviewed showed twenty-one student names. In following up these students the following week, the list was reduced to six students. Of those who gave reason for a change of mind the most common was that they were finding the subject very challenging and were concerned about what they would miss if they took time out from their workgroups to attend interviews.
The six students who volunteered to be interviewed were:
BD, male, 24 years old, Australian born, full time student;
S, male, 18 years old, Australian born, full time student;
TL, male, 19 years old, Australian born, full time student;
KF, female, 18 years old, Australian born, full time student;
RB, female, 19 years old, Australian born, full time student;
and GN, female, 22 years old, Australian born, full time student.

The two female staff members or ‘Divisional Managers’, B and L, had previously agreed to be interviewed. L was 50 years old and Australian born, B was 45 years old and Australian born.

The number of student interviewees equalled the projected number. As the student demographics show the national cultural mix of the students was homogenous, which is not what I had hoped for, however an even gender balance existed.

As identified previously, it had been planned that each interviewee would be interviewed four times across the twelve week life span of the group. In actuality one student was interviewed four times, three students, three times and two students, twice. One of the Divisional Managers was interviewed three times, and the other, four times. The discrepancy between planned and actual was due to interviewee absence and to difficulties/reluctance for some students in being released from the workgroup time.

The interview style
A ‘focused’ interview style was adopted. May (1933) describes this style in the following:

The focussed interview provides qualitative depth by allowing interviewees to talk about the subject in terms of their own frames of reference. This allows the meanings and interpretations that individuals attribute to events and relationships to be understood (p93).
This orientation supports the research focus where interest lies in the emergent dynamics of the large group as experienced by those within the setting. A focussed interview has an open-ended character with room for the interviewee to express their opinions and take the conversation in the direction that they wish. By comparison a structured or semi-structured interview style constrains the interviewee in answering questions according to predetermined categories (Minichiello et. al 1990; May 1993).

Creating an environment conducive to the development of trust is regarded as very important in the focussed interview style. Some researchers call this development of ‘rapport’. For example, Spradley (1979), in theorising ethnographic interviewing, proposes a four stage process that occurs in establishing rapport. He named these four stages, ‘apprehension’, ‘exploration’, ‘cooperation’ and ‘participation’. The first stage, ‘apprehension’, addresses the early anxiety that he contends both interviewer and interviewee feel at the outset of the interview process. Spradley suggests that by asking the interviewee to describe their day, their thoughts about the topic, or some other aspect that is very familiar to them, may help in dissipating anxiety. Descriptive questioning, he asserts, leads to the second stage of establishment of rapport, ‘exploration’. In the second stage, through further questioning, the interviewer and interviewee are thought to come to understand more of what each other are like. In this phase the background to the interview and the interview procedures are also discussed. This facilitates the third stage of rapport establishment, ‘cooperation’ where each party is comfortable with what to expect of one another and the interview proceeds smoothly. The fourth and final stage, ‘participation’ occurs where the interviewee is so at ease and so knowing of the goals and direction of the research that they are of additional support and assistance to the researcher. In this stage the interviewee may bring new information to the attention of the researchers about the topic, and/or they may add their insight and opinion about the topic over and above the researcher’s expectation. Spradley believes this stage is not always reached even in very successful interview situations (1979).
Other researchers who use focussed interviews, particular feminist researchers, reject notions of ‘rapport’ building as part of masculine hierarchal relationships. Controlling the social distance between interviewer and interviewee is considered counterproductive to respectful interviewee-interviewer relationship (Oakley 1990). Rather, entering into dialogue with the interviewee and/or answering their questions honestly are regarded as essential in building respectful relationships. As May says: To expect someone to reveal important and personal information without entering into dialogue is untenable (1993, p103).

Feminist interviewing techniques value active rather than passive interviewee-interviewer relations. In this the interviewee is free to influence the direction of the interaction. The feminist argument also decries other aspects of traditional research relations. As examples, when an interviewer acts as though they hold status above the interviewee, or when the interviewer mechanises and depersonalises the interviewee through treating them as an object or data producing machine, if, when handled correctly, will function properly (Oakley 1990, p37).

I agreed with the feminist arguments. They prompted me to think about the interviewer, interviewee relation in a political way. For example, to not unknowingly perpetuate oppressive or unequal social relations: to be attentive; to proceed gently rather than loudly or aggressively; and to sit with silence. Through incorporating these aspects into the interviewer role, I aimed to create an environment where there was enough space for individuals to reflect in their own way on their experience. The feminist tenets also cautioned me to be open to, rather than dismissive of questions that arose for the respondents, even if these seemed irrelevant to the research. In fact I was asked only two questions throughout all of the interviews of both the first and second case studies. These were questions clarifying names of particular people in the group.

I had prepared a list of areas to help, if needed, to prompt interviewees in thinking about their experiences in the group. Burgess (1982) calls this list an ‘aide de
memoir’. I didn’t plan to necessarily use the list, it was to be a back up should people need reference point/s for thinking about their experiences.

The areas listed in the aide de memoir covered interviewee experience of the staff, of other students, and the most salient aspects of their experience. The list was designed to cue entry into thinking about experience rather than to constrain responses.

_Aide de memoir_

For the first interview:
- initial experience of the large group;
- thoughts, feelings about the group members;
- thoughts, feelings about the staff members;
- degree of comfort, discomfort the person experienced in the large group and why;
- other aspects of the experience that impacted on the interviewee.

For later interviews:
follow up development of issues raised in previous interview/s;
further exploration of the interviewee’s experience of the large group including:
- highs/lows;
- degree of comfort/discomfort;
- aspects of the experience that were useful/not useful to the learning task;
- thoughts and feelings about other group members/staff members;
- other aspects of the experience that impacted on the interviewee.

_The experience of the interviews_

Each person’s first interview began with a preamble designed to provide clarity in the interview process and goals. The preamble covered the following points:

1) description of the research. Emphasis was placed on how valuable the student/staff involvement would be in the research;
2) assurances of confidentiality. Interviewees were told that there would be no identifying data used in the thesis or any resulting publications. They were also told that identifying data would be securely stored and would be known only to the researcher and thesis adviser;

3) audio taping of the interviews. A request was made that the interview be taped to aid the researcher in retaining data. Once again, confidentiality of data was assured;

4) orientation to the general style of the interview. The interview was explained to be about exploration of the person’s experience in the large group; their thoughts, feelings and opinions all being welcome within the setting.

From the preamble each interview was found to proceed in a common pattern. The interviewee spoke of their experiences and then the interviewer would ask questions that either clarified what had been said or that probed for further meaning. The following extract from one interview gives example of this.

Interviewee: Yes and another person and the Divisional Managers behind me.

Interviewer: What did that feel like with the Divisional Managers behind you? (Probing question based on the interviewee’s previous statement)

Interviewee: I was sort of hoping that they wouldn’t sit there. I like to be able to see them more than having them behind me.

Interviewer: Did you feel like you were being watched? (Checking and clarifying interpretation of what the interviewee means).

Interviewee: No, because they are watching so much I don’t really think that they are watching me. But I definitely knew they were there and I heard them whispering to each other and that helped me because it kept me on the right track of what they are thinking.
Interviewer: So you liked that?

Interviewee: Yes I did.

The aide de memoir came into use in the interviews when the interviewee had concluded discussion of their salient experience/s and seemed to be blank in their minds. It was successfully used as a backup, rather than being central to the structure of the interview.

I was conscious of time, task and territory boundaries in the interview, i.e. shutting doors, ensuring no telephone interruptions, keeping to the thirty minute time allotment, and focusing on the task. Attention to these boundaries aimed to assist the provision of a secure, predictable and reliable space within which the work of the interview could occur. This was important because of likelihood of chaotic dynamics from the large group entering the interview space through the telling of the large group experiences.

Whilst it is impossible to fully know, it seemed that the interview environments were at least ‘safe enough’ for people to speak openly about their experiences. In the main I stayed within the role characteristics that I had planned, i.e. attention to the task, time and territory, gentle manner, respectful of silence. Overall I found managing the boundaries of the interviewer role much less difficult than I had in the observer role.

There were, however, two separate interviews that challenged my role boundaries. On both these occasions I responded to what I perceived as interviewee distress. The first occasion occurred in one of the earliest interviews with S. S had attempted to take a leadership role in the large group and had been ignored by the group. In the interview when S talked about this I very quickly jumped in to rescue S by trying to explain what had happened in the group as a large group response rather than as a personal issue. This was despite S not asking me for assistance or showing visible signs of distress.
Examples of S’s statements

S: I thought I didn’t want to force any more opinions, my opinions, because they just would be rejected straight away, my opinions had no worth, they were just like I didn’t know what I was talking about.
S: Today had a big impact on me, like I am not going to be as confident now with voicing my opinions.

My response

W: Some of the things that you talked about are more about the way that people would respond to anyone, not to you personally but to anyone who got up the front. Large groups are very complex things. You know that was a very gutsy thing to do. And I would suspect that a lot of their reactions were simply to do with that you were the first one to get up there and say something. People struggle with that, they have a conflict with that internally, yes they want someone else to do it but they also don’t.

The second example that challenged the interviewer’s role boundaries was in the third interview with B; B was one of the two Divisional Managers. The interview was held after the conclusion of all of the large group meetings. B was very distressed about comments that students had made in the subject evaluation sheets. Some of the comments were extremely negative and condemning of the large group experience, and the behaviour and attitudes of the Divisional Managers. Thinking about these comments seemed to mobilise experiences in the large group where B had felt threatened and scared. Throughout this interview I sought to alleviate B’s distress through framing her experiences within my understanding of large group dynamics. As with S, my aim appears to be to rescue her from her pain through depersonalising her experiences.

The following four transcript extracts show some of the distress B was experiencing, and the way that I attempted to support her.
1) B: I have been needing debriefing. I’ve felt devastated, I’ve felt completely devastated for a week and it stayed, it lingered.

2) B: In the interchange with that student I started to feel really scared. I felt threatened. I didn’t want them to think that I was feeling threatened because if they did maybe they would come in for the real kill.

3) B: I guilt about that. I could have done something different that would have made it better. I have gone through all of that stuff and at the same time I know that it is not me, it's that they are really unconscious processes that are there, that you just can't control.

W: I've just looked at them as a response to what happened in the divisional meeting, not as a response, as a part of the experience that these people were having. It was a very strong reaction, or there are a lot of very strong feelings there of hostility. What is it about that divisional meeting that created this? Or what are the aspects that brought about this sort of outpouring of aggression? It is part of the group life?

B: Look I don't know. I have been thinking on that too and I don't know what it is. The week before when L (the other Divisional Manager) wasn't there I remember that, you know that incident right at the very beginning, I was really scared.

4) B: Is it any wonder that I always feel so drained, because you get so much projected onto you, that because you don’t own it. I find it very difficult to make sense of. So you spend a lot of emotional energy trying to make sense of it all, and I am probably not feeling. I don’t think that I am very good at recognising and putting it back where it belongs. That could be it, like I tend to sort of, I tend to brood over it and really get caught into the emotive side before I can put it back.
W: Is that sort of personalising it?

B: Possibly, yeh, like I am not very good at putting that sort of.

W: Seeing it as something that the group is experiencing.

B: Yeh.

W: Not because of you personally, possibly because of the role, but that is quite different for a personal statement of what you value or otherwise.

B: Yeh.

The first example with S suggests that it was not S’s pain or distress but my own inability to cope with what I projected he was feeling that caused me to ‘rescue’ him. I have concerns about my response here and potential affect on the research. This relates particularly to links between the interviews and the large group. These links leave open possibilities for the interviewer to have undue influence on the large group dynamics through giving opinion and advice in the interview setting. (Using the word ‘undue’ is to accept a level of influence on the large group through the very existence of the interview process). Evaluating the effect on S in this situation is difficult, if not impossible. In the following week S did not go to the front of the group. However, he was very active in trying to influence from within the body of the group. Did what I say influence him to keep pursuing his ideas in the group?

The situation with B was different, B showed real distress that I responded to. This began in the interview with Bs’ first words: I have been needing debriefing. I’ve felt devastated. I’ve felt completely devastated for a week and it stayed, it lingered. From there, the research interview became a debriefing session. In this example I have little concern with my response. First, the large group had finished so I could not influence its future dynamics. Second, concordant with
personalising the interview setting (p58), I believe this was a situation where it was important to respond in a compassionate way. Still, I wonder if my response to depersonalise B’s experience was compassionate, or whether it was more a defense against my inability to tolerate B’s pain. Perhaps it is not either/or but both.

Inclusion into the interview design of supportive listening techniques, such as active listening, may have provided a container for interviewee and interviewer distress. Active listening is a technique where the listener does not give their own opinion but supports the person in their exploration (Rogers and Farson 1995). In distressful situations it may then be more possible to respond supportively without offering opinion and risking undue influence on the large group dynamics.

3.9.3 Case study two
Selection of the case
My experience in researching in case one had been challenging. By its end I felt the overall research task was at a very early stage. In planning the second case study I became drawn towards replicating the first. I anticipated refining and substantiating the findings from the first study with the second. I also wished to gain a greater sense of mastery and understanding of the data collecting methods, especially observation. I decided for the second case study, the forum and the methodology would be the same as the first case study, except that the membership of the large group would be new.

Description of the large group
As with the first case study the large group of the second study was one part of a first year tertiary business subject, ‘Organisations and Management’. Recall this was an experiential subject where students learn about organisations and management via the experience of their class as a real life organisation. The primary task of the large group component of this subject was for members to self-manage their learning about (the) four core concepts (structure, strategy, culture and external environment) by exploring their roles in a large group (meaning the same large group) (Syllabus Outline 2000b, p3). This offered an experience for
the students to be both involved in the development of the large group and to reflect on this involvement.

The large group met twelve times across the semester, once a week, for one hour. They met in the same lecture theatre that had housed the large group of case one. Recall this room was a ‘U’ shape with four rows of seats rising upwards, facing the lectern. In total there were one hundred seats in the room.

At the outset there were sixty-four students in the group, two staff members, two Student Consultants, and myself as an observer. Through the semester the number in the group (including the staff, the Student Consultants and myself as observer) ranged from sixty-eight to forty-five members.

The research methods used in the first case study were replicated in the second. The researcher undertook to observe the group meetings through the semester and to interview volunteer students and staff members about their experience within the large group.

At the outset of the first meeting a person independent to the research and to the subject, briefed the group members on the nature of the research and invited their participation. Agreement was reached about the researcher observing the large group for the duration of the semester. Students interested in being interviewed placed their name on a list.

*The experience of observing*

As with case one, the observation method in case two aimed to align with Bion’s understanding of the state of reverie. This, as previously outlined (p49), is a state of *no memory, no understanding or desire* (1970, p35).

The researcher observed the large group meeting each week for the twelve weeks. Once again I sat on the back edge seat at the extreme end of the U shape for the duration of the large group.
I felt more at ease than I had in the observation role of case one. This is evidenced in my observation notes. The notes are qualitatively different from those of the first case study. Whereas the case one study notes were tentative and fractured, the case study two notes read more easily. The notes flowed through what I saw occurring in the group, my feeling state and my thoughts.

I also began reading my internal experiences of observation differently. I became more adept at being aware of parallel process between what I was experiencing and what group members may be experiencing. Berg and Smith define ‘parallel process’ as the tendency for two or more social systems that have significant contact with each other to show similar affects, behaviours and cognitions (1988, p31). At times it was ‘as if’ I was in the shoes of the students or the Divisional Managers. For example, in identifying with the students:

But what on earth this class is about? I have got no idea, and this is me I guess feeling, being, taking up the role of the student. Very difficult to comprehend what was being said, and I have been in these things for six years and I know what is going on. But I cannot tell you what was said, and I felt frustrated anyway and that, like if you (the Divisional Manager) are saying that we have to manage ourselves, let us bloody well manage it, don’t come in with your views on it.

Identification with the Divisional Managers occurred, in similar ways to case study one, through persistent, ongoing interpretation and hypothesis development during the observation time. Rather than chastising myself for inattention to the observation role I came to understand these phenomena both as defensive and as potential data about the experience of being a Divisional Manager in the group.

The interviewees
In week one, as part of the briefing about the research to the students, a list was circulated asking for volunteers to be interviewed about their experiences in the large group. Twenty students responded. However, on follow up, the number of students agreeing to be interviewed reduced to six. This was exactly the same
number as in case study one. Students were given the option of being interviewed during class time or outside hours. Adding this option was due to reported difficulty in the previous study for some students to attend interviews during class time. One student wished to be interviewed outside class time, the other five expressed their preference to be interviewed during class time.

The six students who volunteered to be interviewed were:
MN, female, 18 years old, Australian born, full time student;
DI, male, 19 years old, Australian born, full time student;
T, female, 21 years old, Australian born, full time student;
K, male, 33 years old, Australian born, full time student;
O, male, 18 years old, Australian born, full time student; and
RP, female, 18 years old, Australian born, full time student.

The two staff members or ‘Divisional Managers’, V and L, had previously agreed to be interviewed. V was male, 69 years old and Australian born, L was female, 50 years old and Australian born.

Once again there was not apparent national cultural diversity in the range of interviewees. However, the mix did contain equal gender representation.

It had been planned that each interviewee would be interviewed four times across the twelve week life span of the group. However confusion around enrolments in the class resulted in the loss of one week available for interviewing. This necessitated a reduction in the number of times I planned to interview each interviewee, from four to three.

In actuality three students were interviewed three times, and three students were interviewed twice. One of the Divisional Managers was interviewed twice and the other three times. Absenteeism and difficulties in taking time off from class were the reasons for the discrepancy between planned and actual. As had been in the first case study, the interviews were one to one with the researcher, were half an hour in length, and explored the interviewee’s experience of the large group
The experience of the interviews
The interview methodology replicated that of case one (pp56-59). A focussed interview style was used. This included the use of the aide de memoir as a prompt when the interviewee seemed to run out of thoughts. The preamble was also re-employed. The preamble began the interviews and was designed to provide clarity in the interview process and goals. Time, task and territory were attended to. Once again I aimed to be respectful, viewing interviewees as partners in the research rather than subjects.

I experienced the interview environment in the second case study as bounded and settled. As in the first study, interviewees seemed able to share personal feelings and thoughts quite openly. Fragments of interview data attests to this:

*I have never liked big groups; I’m actually claustrophobic so a room like that does put a lot of pressure on;*

*Excited, sometimes quite moved, there is a sense of, there is that lump in the throat thing of where I have achieved something important to me;*

*I was actually a bit hostile towards them because I personally couldn’t understand.*

In reviewing the transcripts, the interviews again followed a pattern of the interviewee discussing their experience and the interviewer either checking understanding of what had been said and /or using probing questions to extend the exploration. For example,

**DI: The past two weeks has been, the energy has been lost since mid semester break. We are just getting at that, really working at it. We just lost it during the break.**
W: So you found last week had very low energy. How does that affect you in the divisional meeting?

DI: The effort of trying to speak in here, speak in the group was lost; I am not even trying now. I am only observing now. I don’t know how it is going to end up later on. I think it is going to be pretty down at the moment because we have finished the profiles and are just working on the exam questions. I will be focussing on that rather than the meetings.

W: So you are just sitting in the meetings are you? Are you listening or are you bored?

DI: Well boredom does come into it every now and then, but really I think the interest has gone. It is too long.

W: We are up to week eleven now aren’t we?

DI: And it is just starting to be very repetitive.

With few exceptions the transcripts show blocks of interviewee speech intermittently broken up by one or two sentences as the interviewer checks for understanding or asks a probing question. This suggests the interviews were about group member’s experience in the large group, not about proving or disproving arguments or theories predetermined by the interviewer. The issue of rescuing did not become apparent in the interviews in case study two. This does not mean that interviewees did not express pain or anxiety in their recounting of the large group experiences. Rather a desire to rescue or defend, as had occurred in case study one, was not mobilised.
3.9.4 Case study three

Selection of the case

The data from the first two case studies was extensive and rich. Despite this, I felt I did not have an ‘under the skin’ understanding of my observation experiences, and the experiences the interviewees had talked to me about. In the main I felt emotionally and cognitively distant to the large group experiences. I wondered if immersion was a state that would help me in ‘coming to know’ (Willshire 1999) about large group dynamics.

I wondered if this feeling of distance was related to the boundaries around the interviewer and observer roles. Whilst these boundaries had served a purpose of filtering the mass of data in the observation role, and enhancing the hearing of other’s experience in the interview role, paradoxically they may have also been a barrier to a fuller understanding, a ‘knowing’ of that same data.

Alternatively, or additionally, it may be that the feeling of distance was related to my defenses against the group’s primitive emotional life experienced in the observer role; that somehow these absent parts were blocking the capacity for the ‘whole’ to emerge from the experience. Alternatively again, it might simply reflect the imperfection of human understanding.

Consequently I decided to take on a participant observer role in case study three. By saturating myself in the life of a large group as a member, I aimed to see if this absence of understanding could be addressed.

Description of the large group

To find an unstructured large group to facilitate a participant observation role proved difficult. I deemed the ideal group to be a large study group in an existing Tavistock style Group Relations conference. This type of conference usually contains a series of large unstructured study group sessions. However in Australia, Group Relations conferences tend not to have the number of participants needed to constitute a group large enough for this research. Conferences overseas were ruled out due to family reasons. Therefore, my thesis advisor and I resolved to set
up a large study group in the Group Relations style, to enable the research to take place. My thesis advisor took up the role of Director of the workshop.

In designing the event we decided to parallel a ‘connections’ workshop with the large study group. The primary task of the connections workshop was to explore links between what was experienced in the large study group and what may be happening in organisations and/or in society. The connections workshop had the same membership as the large study group. The inclusion of the connections workshop was to provide a container (Symington 1988, p291) for the experience of the large study group. By this, it was anticipated the connections workshop would provide a safe, reflective space for people to think and speak about their large study group experiences. In Group Relations conferences, the small study group, review and plenary sessions generally act as this type of container for the large group experience (Rice 1971).

The focus of the research was on the large study group rather than the more structured connections workshop. The large study group took place for one hour each week, over a six-week period. The connections workshop followed the study group, after a fifteen minute break, and was also of one hour duration. This was with the exception of the final week when the connections workshop was held for half an hour, with the closing plenary taking up the other half hour.

Membership was sought from interest groups associated with psychoanalytic and organisational thinking. This included tertiary education faculties related to psychoanalysis, organisation dynamics and business, and interest and educational groups affiliated with other areas of psychodynamics, including Gestalt. Membership was open, in that that no prior experience of study groups was required. There were forty-one members of the group, thirty females and eleven males. Additionally there were three Consultants to both the study group and the connections workshop. These numbers satisfied the criteria for what constitutes a ‘large’ group in this study (p12). The same three Consultants worked with both events. The Consultant role was to work to the primary task, drawing on their
experience in each event. My thesis adviser, who as previously mentioned was the Director of the workshop, took up one of these Consultant roles.

The setting of the large group was a room at a university. The room was square and was just large enough to hold the arrangement of forty-four chairs required to seat members. The chairs were arranged in a spiral. This enabled group members to be closer to one another than one large circle would allow. (Weinberg and Schneider 2003). The spiral represents the infinite in the group. It symbolises there is more to the large group than the institution you are in (Lawrence 1993). Further, as compared to the more traditional concentric circle arrangements of large study groups, it also allows for a way in and a way out of the group, rather than being in ‘or’ out (Newton 2005).

The primary task of the large study group was to study the processes of the group as they occurred. The primary task of the connections workshop was to explore links between what was learnt in the large study group and what may be happening in organisations and/or in society.

After the initial planning and marketing of the events I withdrew from the development process. I enrolled and paid for my membership of the group in the same way that other members did. The intention was for the events to be public, existing in their own right, separate to the research.

Developing the participant observer role
Denzin’s statement about participant observation as attempts to find ways of feeling our way into the experiences of self and other (1997, pxviii), expressed my intentions for a participant observer role, and correlated with notions of intersubjectivity embraced by the research orientation.

Qualitative research theorists argue participative observation as the only real method of understanding a given situation (Spradley 1980; May 1993; Maykut and Morehouse 1994). Maykut and Morehouse quote Polyani in voicing their beliefs about participative observation: How do we understand problems, the
actions of persons, or the meanings of institutions or rituals? Polyani’s answer is by indwelling (1994 p31). ‘Indwelling’ meaning to live between, within (p25). Similarly May (1993) contends: It is argued that people act and make sense of their world by taking meanings from their environment. As such, researchers must become part of that environment, because only then can they understand the actions of people who occupy cultures (p112).

Savage (2000) complements these ideas saying that researchers who bodily place themselves in the same physical space as informants have the opportunity to move together with those persons either physically or through the trajectory of their experience. Moving together, in Savage’s view, enhances the researcher’s understanding in a deep, sense-filled way.

A number of researchers have developed categories that classify degrees of researcher involvement with people and activities (Gold 1969; Spradley 1980; Adler and Adler 1994). There is significant overlap in the categories each theorist describes. All range a continuum between full participation to complete observer. Gold developed the original classifications in the 1950’s. He describes four categories of researcher involvement: complete participant; participant as observer; observer as participant; and complete observer.

In the first category, ‘complete participant’, the researcher is fully engaged in the setting in a covert way. Gold argues this style produces the most accurate information and a level of understanding not available through any other means (1969). Spradley in an equivalent category he also named complete participation (1980, p61), says this is the most difficult of all participative research stances because the researcher’s high level of familiarity with the setting makes it more difficult to see implicit cultural elements.

In the second category, ‘participant as observer’, the researcher makes explicit his/her role. In this style interaction occurs and relationships develop, however the researcher does not attempt to act as one of the people within the setting. Gold
identifies field research into deviant or illegal activities as examples of this level of involvement.

The third category, ‘observer as participant’, decreases contact and relationship. The observer is in the same physical space as people in the study, and may interact and participate in activities, but only to a minimal extent (Gold 1969). The interaction in this category is described by May as *more of an encounter between strangers* (1993, p118).

The fourth category, *complete observer*, totally removes the researcher from interactions. Gold uses the example of studying behaviour through a one-way mirror in laboratory experiments (1969). Spradley offers the study of cultural themes in television programs as another example (1980).

My intention was to immerse myself as fully as possible in a large group. I wanted to add this experience to my observer and interview experiences with the aim of deepening my understanding of large group dynamics ‘from the inside’ (Spradley 1980). In this I wanted to be open to possibilities of experiencing more fully the deeper, primitive level of group life.

Gold’s *complete participant* (1969) seemed to be the research role that best fitted my intention. Recall that in this category the researcher is a fully engaged member in the setting under study.

That the research was to occur in a Group Relations style study group complemented the taking up of a *complete participant* research role. Rice, in describing the impact of the unstructured nature of a study group on group members, illustrates the correlation between member and the research role. As will be discussed, this correlation provided ethical and institutional support for taking up of the complete participant research role in this research:

*This* (the group’s minimal internal structure) *permits examination of the forces at work. The method consists therefore of lowering the barriers to the expression of feeling, both friendly and hostile; of*
providing opportunities for a continuous check of one’s own feelings, and for comparing them with those of others about given situations (Rice 1971, p25).

In this statement Rice implies participant’s subjective involvement in the large group and objective involvement through reflection of one’s own and others experience. These characteristics equate with the complete participant role described by Gold (1969).

This correlation meant that studying the group experience as a researcher was not necessarily different from what anyone else in the group was doing. This meant that it was ethically possible to undertake the research as an ordinary member without bringing formal attention to the research role.

The correlation also seemed to support a freedom and ease not experienced in the observation or interview role. The participant observer role felt less encumbered. I felt my energy was more able to be spent exploring the experience in the large group rather than doggedly maintaining the research role. I suspect this was because the purpose and design of the large study group supports exploration and reflection of experience. Thus the correlation of research and member roles meant I had institutional support in taking up the research role (Miller 1990).

An additional support, or containing function, in taking up the participant observer role was my involvement in both designing the workshop, and in my relation to my thesis adviser, who took up the Workshop Director and a Consultant role in the large group. In regard my involvement in developing the group; I felt this was, to some extent, ‘my group’, my territory. This familiarity gave me a feeling for the boundaries of the group, supporting, to degrees, a sense of encompassibility. In regard to my thesis adviser and me; this relationship was long established. For me, then and now, the relationship is a safe bounded space within which I am compassionately encouraged to explore my experience. The data attests to the importance of this relationship to me, and to its influence on my capacity to involve myself in the group. For example, in the discussion of case three I identify that G (my thesis adviser) was the most prominent of the
Consultants in my mind (p135). I also give detail of how the Consultant’s interventions in the group enabled me to think and speak in the group (p155). On three of the five occasions identified, my thesis adviser was the Consultant whose intervention preceded my contribution.

However, I recognise a potential for loss of the self through identification and idealisation, i.e. that desire to meet my perception of my thesis adviser’s approval may have added anxiety to my experience. For example, adding performance pressure to make clever statements to the group, or to experience the group in a particular way. However, if this occurred it was beneath my consciousness.

What I believe may have occurred that is linked to my involvement in setting up the group, and to identification with my thesis adviser, is an amplification of defensiveness in regards what I experienced as group member challenges to the method and to the Consultants. For example, when one of the participants presented the group with a scroll with readings that had helped her thinking about the group, I experienced this ostensibly innocuous act as an enormous betrayal of the method and thus the Consultants (p160). In juxtaposition there was not one occasion where I questioned or critiqued the method of the workshop.

In sum, my identification with the workshop design and with my thesis adviser, appears on the one hand, to have provided me with degrees of security in the group, arguably enabling work, and on the other hand, to have impacted on the group dynamics through my taking up of a defensive posture in relation to the method and my thesis adviser.

The experience of participant observation
The experience of the participant observer role in the large group of case three was much freer and less encumbered than had been experienced in the observer and interview roles in case study one and two. I felt more able to be myself; a robust, ‘whole’ feeling, a confidence that this was a ‘good enough’ (Winnicott 1971) enactment of the research role. By this I don’t mean being a group member was always comfortable or easy. Particularly in the study group it required intense
concentration to attend to the group. At times this was confusing, emotionally painful, and even disturbing. My notes show examples:

_The prospect of sitting in the middle is terrifying to me, sense of being exposed and vulnerable;_

_It felt very hostile for me, the group, not hostile, yes, I was really, really worried about what I would say and whether or not it would sound all right;_

_I have really blocked thinking about the large group; it is very difficult to think about. I do recall I made an intervention and that was around feelings I had of panic; it is like coming back into a trauma site;_

_I felt numbness for quite a while, sort of unable to think very complexly._

The feeling though of robustness and confidence related to the enactment of the research role and to its outcome; the unequivocal knowledge of being in touch with some of the raw emotions and anxieties in a large group. I felt like I had experienced a large group and that that knowledge, though relatively unprocessed and unexplored, gave me confidence that I had found redress to the feeling of absence I identified earlier in the research (p70).

3.10 Data analysis

3.10.1 Introduction

The analysis of the research data comprised four separate parts. The first three parts were analysis of each of the single case studies. The fourth part was a multi case analysis that explored the combination of raw data from the three case studies as well as the findings from the individual case analyses.

3.10.2 The data

The research data comprised the following:
case study one - weekly records of the observation of the group, transcripts of interview data from staff and students, end of semester student evaluation sheets of the subject;
case study two – weekly records of the observation of the group, transcripts of staff and student interview data;
case study three – weekly records of my experience of participation in the large group;
the multicase analysis - the raw data from each of the cases, the narratives and case discussions from the single case analyses.

3.10.3 The analytic method
In accord with the exploratory nature of the research, analysis of the data was undertaken inductively. Inductive analysis means that the researcher develops hypotheses from patterns emerging out of the data rather than collecting data to assess preconceived hypotheses or theories (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Bogdan and Taylor 1984; Judd, Smith and Kidder 1991).

Identification of patterns in data requires the researcher to have an intimate knowledge of the data (Bogdan and Taylor 1984). In this research the act of transcribing the tape recordings of the interviews was an important part of becoming very familiar with the data, of getting the data ‘inside me’.

The process of pattern identification in the data of the single case studies occurred within systems psychodynamic concepts identified in the research orientation (pp12-35): individual and group defense against anxiety (Klein 1959; Jacques 1978; Menzies-Lyth 1988); the dynamics of containment, aggression and fellowship (Turquet 1975; Main 1975; Alford 1989); systemic concepts such as primary task, authority and role; together with system interaction with the environment (Miller and Rice 1975; Wells 1980; Roberts 1995). In identifying patterns in the multicase analysis, systems psychodynamic concepts were augmented with concepts from intersubjective theory. These include the dynamics of assertion, recognition, domination and submission (Hegel 1979; Benjamin 1988, 1995a)
Blumer (1969) calls this type of referent parameter a *sensitising* concept. He says that sensitising concepts provide a researcher with a *general sense of reference and guidance* (p148). Blumer distinguishes the general nature of *sensitising* concepts from *definitive* concepts, which prescribe what is to be seen. He favourably compares the utilisation of sensitising concepts in social research for allowing the unique characteristics of the researched situation to emerge.

The experience of identifying patterns in each of the single case studies was an iterative process. With reference to the sensitising concepts outlined above, I tentatively identified working hypotheses and followed these across the life of the group. The working hypotheses were modified and developed as the weeks passed. Literature was introduced throughout this process to assist with conceptualising the meaning of the data.

In the multicase analysis the process was somewhat different. The data for the multicase analysis was established from the outset of the analysis rather than building across time. Ordering the mass of data was problematic. Through immersing myself in the data I discovered the way that I wished to work with it. This resulted in a decision to expand the theoretical base of the research to incorporate intersubjective concepts. Intersubjective concepts then became the sensitising parameters through which the data was ordered. In turn this ordering enabled new theory about the nature of relating between the individual and the large group to emerge.

Developing the presentation of the analytical sections of the dissertation was also a part of the analytic method. At the outset of the chapters discussing the single cases a narrative of the large group is presented. This became a dynamic part of the analytic process due to decisions made to include or exclude phenomena (Bogdan and Taylor 1984).

Congruent with Yin’s multi case study design (1994) as previously discussed (p42), analysis of the single cases occurred independent to each other. The discussion of each single case was written at the conclusion of that large group.
The single case discussions, Chapters four, five and six, are included in this dissertation as they were written at that point in time. This is to display both the development of the focus of the thesis, and the development of my learning across the candidature.

3.10.4 The impact of the researcher’s subjectivity on the data and analysis
Theorists discuss a researcher’s impact on their research as an inevitable consequence of human beings being involved in research activity (Peshkin 1985; Kracke 1987; Hunt 1989). Researcher’s conscious and unconscious motivation is understood to affect the whole of the research from selection of what to study, through design, to interpretation of the findings.

In this study the researcher’s influence on the study is readily acknowledged as multifaceted, affecting all areas of the research, consciously and unconsciously. However, there are two aspects of the researcher’s impact that seem particularly significant to the research; the first affecting the data of case three, the second affecting the analytic process as a whole.

The researcher’s impact on the data of case three
The data of case three was self reported experience within the participant observer’s role. The analysis of this data did not have other’s data through which events could be cross-checked. For example, the analysis of cases one and two were composites of the interviewee’s experience and my own. The analysis of case three was written solely from my own experience of the group. This degree of subjectivity has led me to question the validity of this data. Peshkin’s theory of the difference between ‘subjectivity’ and ‘subjectivism’ informed this thinking.

Peshkin (1985) argues ‘subjectivity’ as a circumstance where the researcher recognises their potential impact on the research. This recognition enables the researcher to be circumspect about their interpretations, and to take measures to mitigate against undue prejudice. Peshkin proposes that these measures may include: additional emphasis on the exacting use of raw data to substantiate interpretations; finding external substantiation for perceptions and interpretations
through other researchers’ perceptions; and comparison to literature. In contrast Peshkin argues ‘subjectivism’ as a circumstance where the researcher indulges in passion and prejudice (p280), where the belief is that individual feeling... is the ultimate criterion of the good and the right (p280). Subjectivism is understood to result in invalid research outcomes.

The methodological decision to be a participant observer in the large group of case three shut down possibilities of interviewing other participant’s about their experience. To do so would have compromised the integrity of the ‘complete’ participant observer role (Gold 1969). However, this means the data for case three is comprised solely of my experience; with my prejudices, conscious and unconscious, framing my experience. The absence of other’s perceptions and interpretations is recognised as a limitation of the research (p255).

However, I believe adequate validity for this data is found through the analytic process of working with the data through theory. The analytic process showed significant congruence between my experience and the experience of others as reported in the literature. Thus, with due reference to the limitations of subjectivity, I have written boldly the narrative of the group as I experienced it.

The researcher’s impact on the analytic process as a whole
Recognition of the impact of the researcher on the design and execution of research was no more apparent than in the analytic process of this study. The analysis of the case studies has been argued as pattern identification in the data (p79). In part this is true. However, it is also important to acknowledge that what I was drawn to in analysing the data was also a product of my own interests and intrapsychic phenomena. Viewed in this way the trajectory of the research is linked interdependently with my own intrapersonal trajectory.

The issues I experienced through the analytic phases of this research were both technical and personal. These were worked with in an oscillating fashion, each affecting the other.
The work of the analyses and my own development are symbolically represented in the sectioning of this dissertation, particularly in the differentiation of section two and section three. Section two contains the single case analyses. The dilemma I faced with these analyses was in how to bring them into a whole. Each single case discussion was written separately at different phases of my understanding of large group dynamics. Each is quite different, despite the commonality of the sensitising concepts used in thinking about the data. After having written them I experienced the single case analyses as fractured and disconnected from each other, and from the research as a whole. I have come to understand these feelings of dissonance as symbolic of fracturing in myself as a researcher and in myself intrapersonally at that time.

Section three, which includes the multicase analysis brought the broken pieces together. The decision to incorporate intersubjective theories into the analysis of the research came about through experiences related to my mother’s illness and her death. These events occurred in the time between the single case analyses and the multicase analysis. Through the twelve months of her illness I came to develop a mutually recognising relation, in Benjamin’s terms (1988), with my mother. This changed the inside of me. I felt that fractured pieces of me fell into place. In turn this affected how I understood psychodynamic work. Previously psychodynamic theory had been for me a way of deciphering a complex internal and external world. In the moments of experiencing a recognising relation with my mother I perceived that the purpose of psychodynamic work is not only about understanding with the intent of negating obstruction but to positively enhance and further capacities to live. Benjamin's work, which I had previously read briefly, became meaningful to me. Through incorporating intersubjective theories the single case analyses found a purposeful developmental place in the exploration of intersubjectivity in large groups, which is the focus of the thesis.

Section two, which follows this chapter, contains Chapters four, five and six. This section presents to the reader the case narratives and case discussions of each of the large groups. Section three follows the single case discussions. This section comprises Chapters seven, eight and nine. In Chapter seven intersubjective theory
is introduced to explore the combined data of the three case studies. Chapter eight considers the findings of the multicase discussion in relation to large organisations. Chapter nine, the final chapter, concludes the dissertation with reflection on the experience and the findings of the research.
SECTION TWO

4. Chapter four - Case study one

4.1 Introduction
The chapter begins with a narrative of the first large group of the research. The narrative arises from the researcher’s experience observing the group. The narrative is included to honour case study traditions of presenting the case as a whole entity (Yin 1994). It also allows the reader opportunity to enter the discussion with a sense of the large group and events that took place. The narrative is limited by the partiality inherent in relaying one person’s experience, and by decisions made to include and exclude phenomena.

The discussion of the large group of case one follows the narrative. In the discussion the data of group member’s experience and the researcher’s observations build to support a working hypothesis about the group dynamics. The working hypothesis proposes that the experience of female management in the group mobilised threatening levels of anxiety in group members. Further, it is argued that group members employed a range of social defense mechanisms to protect themselves against being overwhelmed by this anxiety.

4.2 The narrative of the first case study
Week 1
90 people present: 45 females and 45 males.
The room was full by the time the class began. Five latecomers sat on the floor at the front on the side near the door. The Divisional Managers, L and B, stood together at the centre front of the room. They faced five layers of seating rows. The rows were in a semi circle rising in a gentle slope to the back and sides of the room. I sat on the extreme edge of the back row. I counted ninety people including the Divisional Managers, myself, and my colleague J, who was there to introduce my research, and invite student involvement in the interviews.
L introduced B and herself to the class, and then introduced J and me. J was invited to explain my research to the class. No questions were asked by the group about the research. J asked for a show of hands agreeing to my observing the group, about half the group raised their hands. Then J asked for anyone not agreeing to my observing the group to raise their hands. No hands were raised. A form was then circulated for people to indicate their interest in being interviewed about their experiences in the large group.

As L introduced the subject I progressively became more unable to hear what she was saying. I felt overloaded with information. Even though I had been involved in the subject for many years the language of the subject i.e. *syndicates, workgroups, the division* was confusing to me. I felt lost in the information swirling around me, numb. Most others in the room were looking at L as she spoke. Their looks were intent; however there seemed a vacant feeling in the air.

L asked about people’s experience in organisations. A tentative response from one student preceded seven other responses. L then gave a long personal anecdote of her early experiences in sporting and educational organisations. I presumed this was to help the students with little work experience to understand that they also had prior knowledge to bring to the subject. While L spoke B was walking backwards and forward across the front of the room. B seemed anxious. I felt exposed and anxious. I didn’t want L to be so personal with the group. Her disclosures mobilised fear of what being in the group may require of me. I wondered if the student’s felt similarly.

After 45 minutes, there was an increase in movement of limbs and paper shuffling. The atmosphere was restless. In looking around the room, I had what felt like comfortable eye contact with the late students sitting on the floor. I also caught the eyes of two other students who looked away quickly. It was as though I would see what they didn’t want me to see.
When a male group member asked whether the group works out various roles for people, someone sighed loudly and wearily. I experienced the sigh as an expression of claustrophobia, as though there would not be enough room for something like that to occur.

The session ended with students being allocated to their particular workgroups. I watched as they searched for their names on the overhead. L called out that the session had concluded.

**Week 2**

78 people present: 35 males and 43 females.

The Divisional Managers took seats amongst the students. Even as the group members entered the room, one of the male students, S was standing alone at the front of the class. He was tall, gangly and had acne marked skin. The group became quiet as S presented a proposal to create a ‘Democratic Director’ position. His words fell over each other clumsily as he outlined his reason and vision for this position. S told the group he had failed the same subject the previous semester. He spoke about how in that large group a few members had dominated the meetings with many people, including him, feeling unable to contribute. He argued the Democratic Director position would protect against this happening again, and would encourage broader contributions from the group. A number of times S said it need not necessarily be he taking up this role.

S attempted to get the group to take a vote on his proposal. I didn’t understand the voting parameters. Students were to vote for either ‘50/50’ or ‘2/3’s’. I had no understanding of what these two parameters represented. A question from one member to the group of *What are we doing?* was ignored. The volume of muttering and discord rose. Amidst the noise the vote didn’t proceed and S sat down in the front row with his head bowed.

Immediately another young male, AP stood up and went to the front of the room. AP led the group in a discussion of what had occurred in workgroup
activities last week. AP spoke confidently and with a sprinkling of humour about his experiences. The group responded eagerly with a number of contributions. B (Divisional Manager) questioned AP on the relevance of this discussion to the group’s primary task. B said *There might be some confusion in your mind as to what you need to be doing in this hour.* AP answered *Tell us what to do, you are assessing us* and then continued with the previous discussion. Again B questioned the relevance of the discussion to the primary task. AP and the group ignored B and continued with their discussion.

My gaze wandered to the youth and beauty of many of the students, particularly many of the young women. I reminisced about my own experience as a first year university student where my preoccupation was with thoughts of other students, not the task the lecturers were presenting. I tried to observe whether this may be occurring in this group at this time but I could not see any direct evidence. I wondered if the deposition of S and the heralding of AP as leader, was as much to do with their perceived attractiveness as with the content of their words; S a halting dour figure, AP witty, confident and more physically attractive.

**Week 3**

75 people present: 37 males and 38 females.

AP began the meeting at the front of the room. He tried to find someone to write on the board saying *Girls are better at board writing than boys.* A young woman finally came to the board. As with the previous week AP began with discussion about the workgroups. Again B intervened questioning the relevance of the discussion to the primary task. ER referred the group to the writing of the primary task in the subject outline. She then proceeded to interpret it for the group. B said she understood what the interpretation meant, but did the group? D, in the front row, answered this question seriously. The group became silent. It seemed the whole group was engaged. The silence felt profound.
L (Divisional Manager) said she thought the role of ‘knowing’ was being taken up by AP. She then asked the group to explore the role that S may have taken up the previous week. S looked uncomfortable, his head was down. L asked S why he sat down the previous week. S responded saying the group did not agree with him so he sat down. L asked *Did mutiny occur?* S said he didn’t understand what she meant. Five males in succession then spoke up saying S had not set himself up to be leader. AP was one of these. When AP spoke he began a discussion with L about his (AP’s) leadership role. L said *It’s scary isn’t it?* AP agreed. I felt the room was scary. I was subsumed with detail and very tired.

The discussion jumped from one idea to another. AP agreed to everything put to him, regardless of the content of the request. For example, someone said to AP, *Can we finish what we started before?* AP responded *Yep.* And then said *What were we doing before?* S asked why the group was allowing AP to take up a director role when the previous week the group had disagreed with the idea of a director. A male member said that the group had vetoed a formal director but that AP was operating informally, and that this was acceptable to the group. AP nodded his head approvingly; there were murmurs of agreement from the group. L stated that AP seemed to have considerable authority in the group. S followed this saying he thought L and B (the Divisional Managers) were the ultimate authority because when either of them spoke the group became silent. M agreed, adding that when he spoke he looked to B and L for their approval.

People were sitting with raised hands, indicating their desire to speak. AP pointed to each person in turn. However AP was not part of this queue, instead interspersing his opinion at will. A discussion took place with four males speaking one after another. The discussion was about S’s leadership efforts the previous week. It was asserted by the first speaker, and agreed to by the following three, that what had occurred was *nothing personal.*
Following this, the group took a decision to structure the four next weeks with one key concept being worked with each week. The meeting ended as an older woman declared that in the previous week she had suggested exactly what had just been agreed to but that it had been strongly rejected. There was some laughter. As she rose from her seat to leave, the older woman looked impassive.

**Week 4**

69 people present: 29 females and 40 males.

AP stood at the front. M listed an agenda from his seat. A female board writer was found. L asked M why he wasn’t out the front considering he was leading the direction of the group. He replied he was more comfortable *behind the screen*. AP said the group had *gone round in circles* last week. B suggested he may need to explore this assumption with the rest of the group. She said it was easy to fall into negativity without exploring the truth of something. I felt like I was being asked to choose between B and AP. Hands went up around the room. AP pointed first to one male who stated he thought it was *quite good* last week. Then to an older lady who said *last week we created an organisation*. B then talked in a didactic manner about the unknowingness of experiential learning. I felt inertia come over me. I was not listening. I looked around the room. By their inattentive body positions it seemed that a great majority of people were also not listening. There were smirks on the faces of five people. I counted only three people who seemed to be attentive to B. AP attempted to interpret what B had said for the group. B screwed up her face derisively as he spoke. I noticed others noticing B’s expression.

AP directed the board writer to write a definition of strategy on the board. B said *Fifty percent of people like me don’t know what you mean*. AP and the board writer were walking backwards and forwards across the front of the room. A voice came from the group saying *We are looking for answers but we sort of don’t have any questions.*
The discussion turned abruptly to exploring AP’s role. AP asked *Was the role a gatekeeper or an information giver?* Four people responded. AP challenged the opinion of one female member. She retorted sharply, *Regardless of whether it is right or not, that is how I see your role.* AP was not agreeing with everyone as he had in previous weeks, nor was the group accepting everything he said.

M went to the board and began writing the primary task of the meeting. The female board writer sat down.

AP began talking about his role as an employee in a fruit and vegetable shop. He told of how the old Italian men he works for argue all the time. He then began, mysteriously to me, talking about types of dog food his dog liked. The group was giggling. AP then asked the group *Do any of you play any sport?* As he spoke B’s face and body was cringing. B said to AP, *What is happening here? Do you feel like the need to fill space?* AP replied *Yes.* B responded *So what does this say?* M answered *Because nobody cares. You raised it, nobody else raised it.* A male group member then suggested a return to the discussion on strategy. Another said he liked the discussion of the fruit and vegetable shop because it related strategy and structure to the real world. There was much giggling in the group. AP then suggested talking about part time jobs. B responded *I’m wondering AP if we are avoiding the primary task. If we can create laughter perhaps we can fool ourselves that we are doing the primary task.* A conversation then ensued about the difficulty of the task for the group. A statement was made by one younger member that she preferred being lectured to, and that self managing was too difficult. There was a chorus of voices of approval at this statement. B then answered questions and explained the tasks of the division. During this time the three dominant males in the group were silent. S had been silent for the whole session. AP maintained his stance at the front of the room but said nothing. M, also at the front but sitting on a chair to the side, was also silent.
Week 5
63 people present: 26 males and 37 females.
In the previous week the group had decided to begin this week with fifteen minutes of small group discussion about the concept to be explored. AP was sitting with S. The room was alive with voices. After fifteen minutes both AP and M went to the front of the room. Before either of them spoke B said to the group *What are AP and M taking on for the Divisional Meeting?* The question sounded combative. From there a discussion took place centred on B. Speakers came from new quarters in the room, particularly from younger students. It seemed M and AP were deposed. B’s demeanour in answering questions was authoritative. Hands were raised, B selected who would speak. One after another, until twelve people had spoken, expressions of irritation and feelings of betrayal were aired. The betrayal was explained as being due to L and B not taking up a traditional teaching role. B nodded her approval as each person spoke. L then said *I am one of the silent ones today.*
_I fear speaking today._ As she said this my anxiety rose. AP laughed. The laughter felt inappropriate. A young woman said *I am not being judgemental, but it is the Divisional Managers who interrupt the flow of what we are doing._ B responded saying *I am confrontational. I may sound judgmental._ At this the room felt dense and airless. I heard B’s statements as punitive, as though nothing that could be done would be good enough.
L then responded to a male member who asked for the definition of strategy to be explained, L’s voice was sharp with irritation as she said *I’ve noticed that you have asked a number of times for others to explain strategy to you. Are you reading, or are you waiting for divine intervention to drop this stuff on your brain?*_ The group was silent. I felt shocked at L’s aggression. The meeting ended.

Week 6
68 people present: 32 females, 36 males.
Four strangers stood at the podium, one spoke to the group announcing that this was an OB2 group (another business subject) and that they were going
to observe the class. M said *Are you asking us or are you telling us?* Then B said *That was just the question I was going to ask.* The speaker defended himself saying he was going to ask for any objections later. He then asked for objections to the group of the four observing the large group. There were no objections. The observers sat on the back row. I felt offended. The decision was made uncritically, as though observers were of no meaning.

M and D were talking together from their seats. AP then went to the front and announced that group was talking about strategy.

D is married to Q. In each week to date they have sat together, separate from other people. Q has not spoken in the group. She watches closely as D speaks. She appears proud when what he says is taken up positively by the group and impassive when his words are ignored or not positively responded to. D is very wordy. He states his opinion quite slowly, but strongly. He refers from text books regularly. There often seems to be a sigh of ‘no not again’ from the group when he begins to speak.

D began a discussion about strategy. D asked questions and there were two responses from the group. D seemed to become progressively more frustrated by the absence of a greater number of responses. S then stood up and said he wanted to offer the group a role for himself. He went to the front and placed an outline of his ‘Democratic Director’ role on the overhead. Three people asked questions of the outline, one of these people was M. There was a lot of muttering and grumbling. D asked the group *Did they want S there or not?* AP tried to continue with the discussion on strategy but M overrode him with a question to S about whether he would take up the Democratic Director role. M read the outline out loud. S asked that it be voted on. After some discussion in the group it was decided to have two votes: one to vote for the role; and the other to vote for a person to take up the role. At this AP was jumping up and down in his seat, wiggling and wobbling. The voting began with M counting the votes. In the first vote the group were clearly in favour of the ‘Democratic Director’ role. In the
second vote it was decided to vote for a Director only for that day. S, D and AP were nominated; M was also nominated but declined. As S, D and AP were walking out of the room so the vote could take place, D said *Vote for me, vote for me.* M coordinated and counted the vote. It was very noisy in the room. It was clear that D had the majority vote. When the three came in M said D had won with 28 votes and S and AP had both received 27 votes.

D went up to the front and once again began the discussion about strategy. After each person spoke D gave his opinion. S said loudly he believed the contract was broken; that D was not to have an opinion but was to coordinate the responses of others. S referred to a particular page of one of the text books to illustrate the kind of communication he was suggesting. D, in a very derogatory manner, described the page in detail. One of the female members asked him in an equally derogatory tone *Did you memorise the text book?* A male from the back of the room said it was the biggest waste of time of all the meetings he had been to and he had learnt nothing. This was responded to by a young woman who said *Well what have you contributed?* Another male said he had learnt quite a lot about culture. He used an example of D and the power that he was exerting over the group. D very quickly defended himself saying that was not so. Another male said he thought it was interesting that there were no women nominated to be director. This provoked an animated discussion about why this could be. The feeling and process style in the room was changed. People were speaking who had never spoken before. D was not having an opinion but was pointing to people to speak. One person asked D did he know that after he made any statement he always looked to the Divisional Managers for their reactions. D said yes, he added that he was seeking their approval. At this B giggled and put a piece of paper up in front her face, L had a big grin on her face.

**Week 7**

78 people present: 38 males and 40 females.

M and D were in conversation. D seemed poised in readiness to go to the
front as soon as the conversation finished. Before this could occur a young
woman, X, went to the front. X began by saying she was there because she
and a number of other women were interested to see if having a female
leading the group would make a difference. She asked *Did people think that
it was going to make a difference?* There was a range of response: *Yes; No;
Perhaps.* X asked open ended questions. People put up their hand and X
pointed. The talk seemed to flow freely. I felt there was space in the room.
At times X gave her opinion but it did not seem excessive. By twenty
minutes into the group time ten women had spoken and six males. It seemed
more women than usual were speaking. The group was reflecting on what
was occurring and offered various opinions: X being female had made a
difference; X being X had made a difference; and the time of the semester
had made a difference. X argued it was because she was female that she had
made a difference. She stated that any female would have had the same
impact on the dynamics. There was giggling from an area of the room where
a group of young males were sitting.

A number of group members identified that the environment felt safer, less
scary to speak in. They considered this to be related to absence of
competition that had occurred amongst the prominent males: AP; S; and D;
competition that had resulted in people being cut off and argued down,
rather than being listened to. In the midst of the discussion S asked in a
childish demanding voice if he could come up the front instead of X and
experiment with his Democratic Director role. The group seemed confused
at this request. I was confused. The request seemed against the flow of the
conversation. A male member responded saying to S *Look let's just say you
do it next week so that we don't have to discuss it anymore.* M clapped
silently. Another member asked S whether or not he thought that X was
doing anything different than what his Democratic Director role was. L
responded to this question by making a statement about the group’s
acceptance of AP, D and X as leaders and non acceptance of S. She said she
thought AP, D and X had been more inclusive in discussions but that S had
been dictatorial. People agreed with L, saying that they didn't like the rules
that S had created.

Twice B put up her hand to speak, each time I reacted negatively to her. It was as if B was making statements that were minutes behind what was actually going on. I blamed her for this. I was sick of B speaking. As I looked around the room it seemed that about one third looked quite disengaged and two thirds engaged. Twenty people had spoken in the meeting, which seemed more than ever before. Those speaking seemed to be a majority of females. The content was congratulatory about what had been achieved with X as leader. Yet I was wondering about the one third that seemed not to be engaged. What did they think about the group now? D was one of those who spoke, however contrary to usual, he spoke very quietly, and it was hard to hear him. I felt tired by the end of the session, quite strained by the effort to concentrate. I thought about D, S and AP. They seemed irrelevant. Just prior to the end of the meeting S said he had been really happy with the day’s leadership and therefore he would not lead the next week. A request was made that X continue leading the group. X responded that she may or may not. She said she thought a lot could happen in a fortnight between now and the next meeting (Easter break the next week).

**Week 8**

I was unable to attend.

**Week 9**

41 people present: 18 males, 23 females.

For the first fifteen minutes the group chatted in small groups, the noise was first loud then became softer. At fifteen minutes there was silence. It seemed as though the group was going to convene. In a moment or two there was a renewal of the small group chatter. AP and two women left the room, returning about ten minutes later just as a whole group discussion began. M initiated this discussion by saying that given nobody was starting then perhaps S could go to the front and lead the group. S nodded acceptance. He
went to the front with a wide smile and asked the group what they wanted to discuss. AP began talking about his birthday party and where it had been held. This was greeted with laughter and chatter amongst the group. The chatter stopped when a young woman said she would like the group to talk about the exam. S then proceeded to outline the exam question. A question was directed to B and L that asked whether it was normal for there to be so many absences on the day that the Syndicate reports were due. B responded saying that not with every group, but that it had happened in the past. This began question and answer communication between B and L and group members. I was angry and sleepy. I didn’t want B and L to control the discussion. During the discussion S returned to his seat. His face was drawn.

R addressed B saying that she felt her comments sometimes took the group in tangents. B asked R what she meant, B sounded defensive. R’s tone then became defensive. B seemed intent on disproving that she had altered the direction the group took. Looking at R, M intervened. Though I didn’t hear what he said, M seemed protective of her. M then directed the conversation away to a theoretical question about structure and strategy. L intervened and said she wanted to explore the interchange that had just occurred. She suggested that M had acted to protect R, but also to ensure that hostilities didn't occur. M agreed that that was exactly what he was doing. L asked R how she had felt. R said she hadn't felt defensive but that she was confused as to how to explain to B what she meant.

A young male who had never spoken in the group said he thought the interaction was related to the Divisional Managers being the bad guys and the group always trying to find ways to paint them in this light. He said if it had been anyone else querying what R had said it would not have been taken by the group as attacking.

**Week 10**

58 people present: 26 females, 31 males.
During the first ten minutes people wandered into the meeting and chatted to their neighbours. After ten minutes, a young male, TL, went to the front. From the gazes and words of support, it seemed he was representative of a subgroup of about five young males and five young females, including X. TL asked what the group wanted to talk about. There was some discussion about the exam question. During the discussion X talked continuously to the people around her. The sound of their voices was quite audible and made concentration difficult.

A conversation about the exam took place. I look around to see where the key male players were. M was participating in the discussion. AP was sitting in the front row surrounded by young women. S was near to AP, in the centre of the third row. AP was sitting opposite D, with D’s wife Q next to him. I wondered about the relationship between D and his wife. Their relationship seemed to make them different from everyone else in the room. They always sat together and seem to have the support of each other. Q is unnamed in the room whereas D is quite prominent. They seemed a traditional pairing. I wondered what fantasy they elicited in the group. For me they were a representation of sexuality and mobilised daydreaming about my partner and myself.

The conversation had moved onto exploration of the culture of the different workgroups. AP and the young women surrounding him were discussing their workgroup 505. They described themselves as a *lovely, highly bonded group*. One of the young women tried to speak; AP cut her off and reinterpreted her words. L asked whether it was such a comfortable bonded group considering she had just observed AP undermining one of its members. She asked the young women if they all felt comfortable in 505. X, who is in another work group, said that she certainly wouldn't answer that question because it might be offensive. L asked X if perhaps she might be doing the same thing as AP by talking all the time and disregarding other members involvement. X didn’t answer L. Then a female member said *Isn’t it interesting that M has had his hand up for ten minutes and we have*
AP and the young woman sitting directly behind him seemed to be a pair. She seemed very attentive to him for most of the session. AP had a bag of chocolates and shared them with her.

**Week 11**
53 people present: 26 males, 27 females.

L (Divisional Manager) was unable to attend the group. For the first fifteen minutes there was chatter and activity between small groups and pairs across the room. I felt a sense of intimacy in the room. Twice M went down to the front and then back to his seat. Both times as M reached the front the group fell silent. On the third time M stood at the front and made comment that it only took someone to stand at the front for the group to focus. B was sitting in the middle of the room at the back. Z, the student consultant, sat by her side.

M directed a question to B asking where L was. A male sitting next to M then asked in quite an aggressive tone how B felt about L not being there, and why B and L always sat together. B responded saying it was to do with the support of working in a team. To this the male, still with a very aggressive tone, said he thought B was only able to attack the group when L was there. B opened her mouth but no sound came out. She looked stunned.

As this was occurring there was loud talking and noise from three different groups of females. In total there were sixteen females in these groups and one male, nearly two thirds of the total female presence. I felt this as a further attack on B.

Then a male member directed a question to B about how the relationships between the different groups in the division should be written about in the exam question. This seemed to rescue B. For the remainder of the meeting a long question answer session occurred with B in the centre. The content of this discussion was the exploration of authority in the group. The group...
considered how individuals authorised themselves in the group and how the group authorised people’s action. B asked questions in a very measured tone. Group members answered thoughtfully from their experience. The group as a whole seemed to listen to the person speaking. The earlier noisy small groups of females had quietened. The usually dominant males held a low profile: AP sat quietly through the meeting; S spoke often but did not dominate; D made only one comment; and M, apart from his opening query about the absence of L, didn’t contribute to the conversation.

**Week 12**

58 people present: 30 females and 28 males.

As I walked in the door D and his wife Q were there. Immediately I had a rush of sexual excitement. I went in and sat two rows behind CP, one of the young group members who, before knowing her name, I was confused as to whether she was male or female. CP was sitting next to a very feminine young woman with long blonde hair. I looked up at B, L and Z (the Student Consultant) sitting side by side. Z seemed like a baby, L and B's baby. I wondered about how the group had been influenced by the female leadership. The question felt very dense. When I looked at the female/female pairings I had an empty feeling, not life giving, not authoritative.

Questions about the exam dominated the discussion. B took the lead in answering questions. B and L giggled and smiled a lot. The student’s questions were serious and worried. B and L appeared to be enjoying the student’s discomfort. There seemed to be sadistic element to the Divisional Managers behaviour.

The group moved from this discussion to subgroup chatting. B and L continued answering questions without the whole group’s attention. It took M to go to the front for the group to focus together again. TL asked what had just happened *Why did M go out the front?* The group ended with M looking at the clock and walking backwards to his seat.
4.3 Case discussion

4.3.1 Introduction

The case discussion is a result of consideration of phenomena observed and experienced in the large group by the researcher, experience of group members conveyed in the interviews, and student evaluation sheets completed at the end of the semester. This data was considered with respect to the psychodynamic sensitising concepts identified in the analytic method section of Chapter 3 (p74).

From the first week the group’s struggle with management was evident. The case discussion forms around the working hypothesis developed about this struggle. The working hypothesis proposes that the experience of female management in the group mobilised threatening levels of anxiety in group members. The discussion explores the way in which the group sought to manage this anxiety, with particular focus on social defense mechanisms created and utilised by the group.

4.3.2 The discussion

The group from its first moments struggled with their experience of the Divisional Managers absenting themselves from traditional lecturing roles. This mobilised distress, frustration and hostility in group members toward the Divisional Managers. The Divisional Manager’s responses to the group’s struggle were experienced by group members as harsh and uncaring. It is these circumstances that facilitated development of the hypothesis about the threatening nature of female authority to group members.

The following quotes provide evidence of the difficulty group members experienced in the way the Divisional Managers took up their role:

KF: I was angry towards them (Divisional Managers) because I wanted them to get up front. As I saw that’s the role of the lecturer, and I wanted them to do that role, so I was really
distressed that they weren’t actually doing that role, they were sitting amongst us;

GN: I think a lot of people, conversations I have had, people get frustrated when they (Divisional Managers) say ‘I feel like I am being attacked’ and all that. The Divisional Managers feel like they are being got at, and you just want to say to them ‘Shut up, if you told us what to do maybe we wouldn’t be’;

and RB: They (Divisional Managers) are someone who if we are getting off track, they are going to pull us back. But they are not going to say ‘This is what you are meant to be doing’. They are going to ask us. That is a bit frustrating. I think if you word, it is all about wording I feel. And when you are speaking to them if you word it correctly then they will answer you with what you want to hear.

The discussion that follows explores the possibility that the existence of a female only management team significantly influenced the way the group experienced and responded to management. This in turn is argued as primary to the development of the group’s structure and culture. Recall that the management team, comprising the two Divisional Managers and the Student Consultant, were all female. As well, the observer (I) was also female.

The existence of gender issues in the group’s relation to management were not only held consciously in my mind. B, one of the Divisional Managers, also articulated this possibility in one of her interviews. She contended that hostile behaviour towards herself and the other Divisional Manager existed because they did not provide the group with wished for nurturing ‘mother’ behaviour:
Well it, I am sure that if it was a male and female management team we would not have got anywhere near that amount of hostility. I am sure that the hostility, a lot of it, was directed around the fact that they saw L and I as their mums, and that we would act as their mums would, and that we consistently did not act as their mums, and did not act in that nurturing role that they had just simply assumed that we would have to be that way. We didn't behave like that, and in the end they were completely totally pissed off about it.

Theorists interested in female authority have considered reasons why groups have difficulty in coping with strong female authority. For example, Long in a study of group member’s perception of female leaders (1992) reveals a conceptual gap for a dominant feminine position in group members’ perception of leaders. Long found that female leaders were either conceived as masculine or hysterical (p115). To understand these findings Long suggests a number of possibilities: members may have colluded to avoid such leadership occurring; members may have been unable to see strong, stable female leaders, tending instead to perceive them as more masculine or emotive; and that particular group members may not have had the characteristics to fill the dominant feminine position. Long suggests that these possibilities may be interrelated and may reflect an interrelatedness in broader society. She suggests that symbols of sexual difference may lead to perception of female authority as only masculine or neurotic; that there is a cultural equation of masculinity and authority.

A study by Mayes (1979) observes similar responses to male and female leadership in a series of Tavistock style Group Relations conferences. Mayes found not only were female leaders generally marginalised and regarded with suspicion, but that the presence of female leaders mobilised hostility in both men and women. The findings show that the majority of both male and female group members perceived male leaders as sexually attractive, potent, competent and deserving of their position. In contrast
female leaders were generally experienced as incompetent, ‘mannish’, sexually unattractive, and depriving.

Mayes argues that women leaders who act authoritatively threaten both men and women:

*If these leaders had shown any normative traits of female authority they may have been showered with affection or put on a pedestal and worshipped as supermom (p567).*

Feminist theorists provide a way of thinking about the origins of these problems. For example, Dinnerstein (1976) proposes that female authority threatens us at a deep, primitive level. She explains this as a result of the defensive handling of infantile anxiety. In this, Dinnerstein argues the absolute dependence of the infant on the mother brings about a complementarity of an intense loving experience on the one hand, and intense fear that the mother will engulf us or abandon us and leave us to die, on the other. As a consequence the mother’s independent power, her will, her sexuality (Dinnerstein 1976), her authority (Bayes et al. 1985), and her aggression (Mackinnon 1982) must be contained.

Similarly Chasseguet-Smirgel (1970) writes that all children must free themselves from their mother’s omnipotence in order to obtain a sense of autonomy and independence. In traditional Freudian theory the oedipal process is understood to be significant in bringing about this separation. It also establishes stereotypic masculine and feminine behaviours that serve to continue to protect individuals and groups from unconscious, feared maternal images (Weeks 1985). The Oedipal process, through triangular relations between the mother, the father and the child, establishes behaviour that is thought to defend, to degrees, against the mother’s omnipotence. The Oedipal process is brought to conclusion for boys when the mother-son dyad is broken by the father’s implied threat to castrate the boy (the father jealous of the intensity of the mother-son union). The boy while retaining desire for his mother identifies with the father. The son through this process
of separation establishes heterosexual masculinity. The girl’s oedipal process begins with her envy of the boy’s penis. She blames the mother for her absence of a penis and transfers her desire to the father. The presence of the father, facilitating intervention in the intense mother-child dyad, protects the child from the feared maternal image. Identification with one parent arises out of the oedipal process. In this, the child’s ongoing gender character is confirmed. Through the Oedipal process, traditions of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ are understood to be perpetuated; traditions that have a common base for both females and males in protection from the powerfully experienced mother (Weeks 1985).

It is argued that as reminiscent and representative of the original mother, all women are associated with our own fears of regression and powerlessness (De Beauvoir, 1952; Bayes et al, 1985). Thus, in fantasy at least, all women must be contained, controlled and subordinated.

In the large group the rise in the first six weeks of four males in leadership roles can be understood as attempts by the group to counter threat associated with the three females in the management team and the female observer. The following establishes the male leadership dynamic, identifying in particular the competitive nature of group member relations between themselves and towards the Divisional Managers. Meaning about these competitive relations is then connected to the working hypothesis about the threatening nature of female authority in the group.

The emergence of the male leaders: S; AP; M; and D began at the outset of week two with S attempting to lead the group to take up his Democratic Director role. S’s ideas, and S as the leader, were soon rejected by the group. Immediately S sat down AP took up the front position. In the following weeks AP, and then D took up leadership from the front of the room. M in contrast led from ‘behind’, either staying in his seat or standing at the front of the room in an auxiliary role to one of the other males. S, whilst retreating from an obvious leadership role, intermittently interjected
with his Democratic Director ideas. In week six who was to be ‘the’ leader amongst these males came to a head in a vote. M administered the voting; AP, D and S were the candidates in the election. Whilst D was the victor, the win seemed symbolic rather than purposeful. The outcome of the vote was for the winner to be leader of the group for the remaining time of that meeting, which meant for fifteen minutes.

L used analogy to describe the rivalrous nature of the quest for leadership between the males:

One of the books I read was a Harold Robbins book. I think it was ‘The Ambassador’ or something like that. It was set in South America. The boy’s father was the dictator of the country and he had been overthrown, and this young lad worked his way up to become the Dictator. In the closing scenes we saw him wandering down street corners followed by a huge black dictator who was trying to get rid of him. So there was this continual dictator rising, believing he has got the people on his side, and when he gets there they kill him. Somebody else will come along. And that seems to me in the division. S, great, he is going to lead us, and when he started whistling at them and treating them like a dog; someone actually said, ‘Don’t whistle we are not dogs’. And finally he sat down and AP came up. I felt that M and a few of the others in the group, and that Anglo Saxon male section in the back, was where the power lay in the group. AP and S are both side by side, the group up the back, they have also got D, one boy down the front. I think he is a bit of a sacrificial lamb as well because he just waffles. He is really frustrating. He has got some really good things to say, but last week he just went on and on.

Also seemingly competitive were relations between the male leaders and the Divisional Managers. For example, in week four B challenged a statement
made by AP about the group’s progress going round in circles. B questioned AP’s right to making absolute statements on behalf of the group. In my reflections I wrote: *It seemed a battle was lining up between B and AP.* A second example occurred in the same week when B screwed her face up, seemingly in disdain, at one of AP's interpretations. This was openly provocative towards AP.

In other examples competitive relations between the male leaders and the Divisional Managers seemed to provide a vehicle for the group to challenge management. For example, again in week four, B repeatedly contested the relevance to the primary task of AP’s talk about the role he took in a fruit and vegetable market. The group show their support for AP in the following account.

C to AP: *What is happening here? Do you feel like you need to fill in space?*

AP: *Yes,*

C: *So what does this say?*

AP: *Because nobody cares. You (B) raised it, nobody else raised it.*

Male student: *I liked the discussion of fruit and vegetable and dog food because it related strategy, structure to the real world.*

For the remainder of this meeting there were questions and answers centring on B. The group moved their focus from AP to B. This question and answer style is not aligned with the Divisional Managers role, their role being to support the group in their own processes, not to direct.

Another similar example occurred in week five when M and AP went to the front of the room to lead the group. Immediately B said to AP *Lets have a*
B then went on to say to the group *What are AP and M taking on for the divisional meeting? What role are they taking on?* There was a combative feeling in the air. From here, as with the previous example, B became the focus of the group’s attention, with B asking questions and group members answering her. In my observation records I wrote: *M and AP deposed, feels (in me) nothing is going to be good enough.*

In both these examples the Divisional Managers comments could be seen as exploratory and well within the bounds of the Divisional Manager’s role of supporting the group in keeping on task. However the group and I responded as though being questioned by the Divisional Managers was an act of persecution. Also in both examples the Divisional Manager appeared to act from the group’s hostile projections by retreating to a traditional teaching role.

Group member’s experience of the group as hostile and attacking was blamed primarily on the Divisional Managers. It was thought the Divisional Managers enjoyed attacking group members, and that they consciously manipulated the group to create conflict as part of their role. As S stated:

*I know the Divisional Managers like to kind of attack people. I mean I think that they are doing it on purpose because outside the divisional meeting they are nice people, but inside the divisional meeting I notice that they attack a lot, so I think it is on purpose not part of their personality.*

And R talked of how the fear of being attacked by the Divisional Managers prevented her speaking:

*But she (B) said one thing about; we were talking about people being afraid to speak up because they are afraid of what people will say. At one point they said ‘Well you shouldn’t be afraid*
because we won’t pick on what you say’, and then someone actually said something, and it was about, he wanted to learn about structure again. And she just said out in front of the class, ‘You haven’t read the book’, she kind of attacked him for what he said. ‘Hang on you have just told us to speak up because we won’t get attacked’ and then he got attacked for speaking. So it was like that made me not speak at all, I haven’t spoken much in divisional meeting. It did scare a lot of us. We are getting attacked for what we are saying.

It is hypothesised that threat related to female authority underpinned the emergence of a competitive male leadership quadrant whose unconscious task on behalf of the group was to counteract the power and agency of the female management team. It is argued that this dynamic was enacted through a cyclic pattern of defense/attack between the Divisional Managers and group members, resulting in a hostile group culture. Furthermore the Divisional Manager’s retreat to more traditional patriarchal teaching roles after challenging the group (which the group experienced as attacking) can be understood as part of the group’s defense against the threat of female authority. By this I mean that it is possible that B as representative of female authority competes and wins the battle against the males, but then cannot take up her own authority because to do so would be unable to be tolerated by all present in the room.

Annihilation of the Divisional Manager’s role was arguably a significant loss to the group. The capacity for the group to work with the Divisional Managers in the difficult task of understanding their own group processes was undermined. Paradoxically through attempts to limit and contain female agency and authority the group was left uncontained. The efforts by the group to provide alternative containment through the male leadership dynamic appeared to saturate the group’s experience. There was little evidence to suggest that this assisted group members in taking up the task.
The example of the Divisional Manager’s defensive retreat to a traditional teaching role leads to consideration of other related defense mechanisms that appeared operative in the group. Protective alliances and withdrawal from group participation will be discussed as two such defenses. Splitting or displacement of aggression, unable to be expressed towards management, is another identified group defense. The final defense that is discussed is also an example of splitting, whereby it is suggested that the group developed some mastery over the threat of female authority through the elevation of a young female into a leadership role. It is argued that this young woman acted on behalf of the female management team to provide leadership that the group could not tolerate from the female managers. In so doing it hypothesised that the group was able to allow some measure of female authority within the group. The consequences of this latter example about the group’s culture are explored in the final section of this chapter.

Protective alliances

Workgroup affiliations appeared to provide refuge for group members from the hostile nature of the group. Members generally sat with other workgroup members. In the large group discussion workgroup members supported each other, with difference in opinion being experienced as workgroup versus workgroup. BD reflected these sentiments in one of his interviews:

*If you see a face that you know from the workgroup you go and sit with them. Our workgroup has done that. I don't find the divisional meeting to be as loving as that workgroup, or as friendly. I think it is workgroup against workgroup almost. It is amazing all the opinions that get thrown about almost are reflective of each workgroup. You could almost say our one seems to agree all the time. Is it by chance that we are genuinely unified in our approach to the subject? And there are other workgroups that seem to be competing with us.*
The management team also sat together for most of the semester in what seemed to be a protective alliance. Z, the student consultant, moved to be with L and B. L stated this was to protect her from the group:

*We've been protecting Z from the group; she has been sitting next to us. That has been happening for a while because she felt very isolated away from us, like she wasn't part of the group, she wasn't getting recognition.*

L also identified that she was very protective of B:

*I don't know whether it was because I knew B was anxious that I was very consciously trying to smooth the way for her. And so I wanted her to go up first, because once you have done that, once you have had your first bite it is easier. So I don't know if I would have come to the fore anyway, but I was very conscious that I wanted B to do the first little bit to get her blooded on it. I think this is really strange because we have both had the same experience, and the same amount of time in these sessions, so perhaps I took on the mother role.*

Issues of protection by L of B continued in another interview with L:

*I drew a diagram where B was wanting to intervene and I was wanting to hold back.... I think my concern was that that if B puts her head up she is going to be swamped by the bullshitters. Maybe it was a bit of a protection thing.*

**Withdrawal**

Withdrawal was another defense mechanism that existed in the group. For example R describes finding refuge in an observer role:

*R: Sometimes I feel like I am sitting in a completely different room kind of, like no one can see me there, like I am a ghost.*
Everyone around and I can see what is happening but people who are actually involved in the talking at the time can’t see anything that is going on at all. Maybe that is why I keep quiet a bit. I like that feeling in another room. It provides me with an ability to watch what is going on a little better without being influenced by someone disagreeing with me.

W: So do you choose to be in the other room or does that just happen?

R: That is just what happens.

W: Is it a nice feeling or a scary feeling or an empty feeling, or a comfortable feeling?

R: Probably comfortable, with that whole attacking thing here, some people are attacking, I feel kind of when I am in that room that people cannot attack me because I have nothing to do with what is going on. They can’t attack me and what I believe. It is only when I hear things and I really believe in what I say that I will speak out and get involved in stuff.

W: So you come into the group then?

R: Walk out of the room kind of thing.

Splitting/displacement

The data also suggest splitting and displacement was used by group members to manage the hostile group environment. Arguably aggression towards the Divisional Managers could only be taken so far as the assessors of the subject. To relieve hostile feelings and perhaps to obtain some mastery over anxiety the group appeared to displace hostility onto a middle-aged woman called U. L described this:
U, the lady who sat next to M on the first day. While she was sitting with M she had some, she was listened to, now the last two weeks she has been sitting well away from him, still at the back, but she hasn't been able to sit next to him. When she opens her mouth people tune off. I look around and people are, as soon as she has finished speaking, whatever she has said they ignore it.

W: What do you make of that as far of the feelings associated with? What are the feelings that they are having that they are doing that?

M: Well last week I thought perhaps it is because they see her as a mature age female. B and I are mature aged females, branded her in that bracket, so that when she speaks they can ignore her, because she is not going to mark their exam papers, and that is a big thing in their mind. So they can display to her what they would like to do to B and me.

W: How do you feel towards her, towards U?

M: I feel sympathy in a way because I think that she is taking some slack. I am feeling frustrated with her too. Because, I don't know why. I know I did feel frustrated with her the first day because she was saying, 'I am a mature aged student', she was really ramming that down my throat, 'I am finding it very difficult to cope with these very young students'. I remember thinking at the time ‘Well this is the setting you are in and you really have to adapt yourself to this setting’. You have to talk their language, there is no good coming in and being the know all.

U, in the first two weeks, was quite vocal but her comments were ignored.
In the ten weeks following she ventured no further opinion. She was effectively silenced by the group.

Further displacement/splitting appeared to occur in the emergence of a female leader, X. The group’s response to X differed from their response to U. As will be described it seemed the experience of X’s leadership enabled the group to go some measure in mastering their anxieties about female authority. In week seven X went to the front of the room. She offered a leadership style more inclusive and nurturing than the male leaders. X asked people what they wanted to talk about. She followed this up by supporting people in exploring their ideas. The group, in particular the female group members, responded with far greater than usual participation in the discussion. While X’s leadership style was more involving of the group, it was underpinned by competitiveness, X herself stated, *Oh we’ll show them, show the males what we can do.*

S described his experience of X’s leadership:

*In week seven what happened a lot different to every other week was that a female was out the front, that was X, and it has been very interesting since then. X’s style of leadership was very, like it was much different. She was more open to allow people to speak and she seemed more comforting. Where with before you got AP and D and M constantly putting in their opinions into, controlling the group very, or trying to control the group with more authoritative. Whereas X took a more open, more questioning like she’ll question, she’ll invite the group to kind of control her rather than trying to control the group, which I think was very. I was very impressed by her leadership style.*

It is possible X provided the group with the leadership experience they were unable to accept from the Divisional Managers. That X was acting on behalf of the Divisional Managers is supported by a slip S made in one of his
interviews when he confused X's name with B's name. Perhaps the group’s experience of X became a vehicle for mastery, to some degree, over the threat symbolised by the Divisional Managers. Menzies Lyth (1988b) describes the process of mastery over primitive anxiety in her study in a British hospital. She argued that for the nurse, her relation to the patient resonated with infantile phantasy situations. In the nurse’s mind that relation contained both its external reality and the projected phantasy. To the extent that the nurse mastered the symbol in the here and now, she mastered the anxiety associated with the phantasy situation. For this to occur the symbol and the object must not be too closely equated. Otherwise the anxiety associated with the phantasy will not be contained.

Compared to B, L and U, X was a young woman, perhaps less authoritative and less ‘motherly’ in the mind of group members. Perhaps her difference and her similarity, to the female management allowed the group to authorise her to lead the group, providing them with some degree of mastery over the threat associated with female authority.

X spent two weeks at the front of the room. In the first week the group enthusiastically worked with X’s open style of leadership. In the second week the group regressed to more dependant behaviour. The next week X did not take up the lead role, despite the group’s wish that she would. GN, in the following passage talks of the dependency in the second week:

*The first week everyone was really excited and the way she (X) was leading. People were a lot more ready to put in suggestions and work towards a goal. But I think the next week we were more reliant on her, and because things had worked so well the week before we were expecting her to get up again. We expected that she would be able to get more done than we had previously again. I think that you find something that works, but you are so concerned about what might happen the next time, that you*
forget exactly how it worked the first time. And then people just
got in there and were so, and thought, 'Oh well she is really
good as a leader' and sort of sat back and wanted her to lead.

In the subsequent week X (not out the front) talked in a small group right
throughout the meeting. Even, as S described, while the Divisional
Managers were speaking, something not done in the division before.

S: There was still small groups as in X was not (sic), I've noticed
X within her own subgroup. It was obvious to me that she was
the central person because everybody was facing her, basically
because everybody was facing her. I noticed that she was the
central person because she was the only person that turned
around and faced the back. Everybody was facing her and she
was talking the most... and X kept on, she didn’t join with the
central conversation, she was still within her own subgroup, the
whole workgroup.

W: How did you feel about this?

S: Hostile, because she didn't like the way it was, she didn't want
to be part of the group. It is a bit insulting to the rest of the
group that she didn't want to participate.

And later S: ... because when the Divisional Manager talks
nobody talks except X because she always stays in her subgroup.

The Divisional Managers were ambivalent about X speaking throughout this
meeting; this is exemplified in the following quote by L:

I actually felt strongly about bringing that up last week with X
but there was one part of me saying I would like to stop you
(talking all the time). There was a part of me saying 'Stop it
because you are being disrespectful to S. You are being disrespectful to other people who are speaking’. So there was that frustration towards her, but I also feel a bit like her as well, in that I don't want them to keep on going on and on about this dribble. So I can understand why she is doing it.

The data show X had turned her back on the group. Speaking while the Divisional Managers speak also suggests her leadership experience enabled her to ignore the Divisional Managers, casting off some of the anxiety related to them. This is the first incidence of anyone speaking while the Divisional Managers spoke in the group. Perhaps this was able to occur, because in contrast to the male leaders, she wasn't competing with the Divisional Managers but acting on their behalf, in competition with the male leaders. This may have released X from, or altered, her student role. L indicates her understanding and her desire to act with the freedom that X exhibited. This further supports the idea that X was acting for the group in place of L and B. The freedom of X’s actions, and L’s thoughts of possibilities other than being controlled by the group, may also be evidence of the group experiencing some mastery over primitive anxiety associated with female authority.

X’s leadership role also mobilised other females. R commented on her version of why females were able to become more vocal when X was up the front. What she says supports the idea of breaking of bounds created by traditional male-female relating.

W: There were certainly a lot more females talking today.

R: Yeh, I noticed that.

W: There were also a lot less males talking. I’m wondering why that would be?
R: I definitely think that a female up there did kind of encourage girls to talk more. We do feel more comfortable if they are up there. I think with men up there girls feel very intimidated because they are supposed to be the stronger sex and all that. Although we don’t believe that, subconsciously we still do have that kind of view and that we do it not to please them but meet their requirements kind of thing. So maybe today, with the girl up the front, we didn’t have to worry about that. We could say what we liked. Who cares if she disagrees with us. If a male was up there and disagreed with us we would take it more to heart.

W: Have you got any opinion on why there would have been fewer men talking, fewer blokes talking?

R: Maybe it just works exactly the same around sort of thing. Guys don’t want to sound like idiots in front of girls, although girls are there all the time, you more directly speak to the leader at the front, so guys don’t want to say anything. They are more aware of the girls when there is someone out the front, they are very aware of what they are saying.

Pairing
These experiences link into issues of pairing and sexuality that emerged over the following three weeks, the final weeks of the group’s life. Perhaps at this point in time the nascent freedom afforded to the females in the group opened up some space for them to feel or exhibit their sexuality more. Previously, posturing by some males had seemed to be the most salient feature of the sexual life of the group. Also it might be that this freedom initiated, or made more conscious, pairing as a new hope in managing the fearfulness in the group. However, the discussion that follows show that pairing did not resolve the group’s problems. Rather, it illustrates pairing as another vehicle around which the group’s fears of female authority were enacted.
In my observation records of the three weeks following X’s leadership, and in interviews during those weeks, there were many direct references to different pairs within the group, previously I had not been aware of any.

The first reference to pairing was about a tussle over protection. In this, R, one of the female students made comment to B that she (B) had, in the past, obstructed the student’s strategies, leading them in tangents. S’s version of the events that transpired is used as description and then other’s view and implications follow.

S: I noticed there was a bit of an issue between R and the Divisional Manager, B. R was speaking out about what she doesn't like a few weeks back and the Divisional Manager kept on questioning that. So I spoke representing her, but then B quickly attacked me for representing her. I wanted to help R, but then she (B) quickly attacked me, and so I went back and just started protecting myself. B went back to R, and then M stuck up for R. Then after M we went to D where he started talking about a subject totally different from what went on.

In reflecting on this incident in the group, R said she hadn't felt defensive towards B, but had felt confused as to how to explain to B what she meant. In this discussion the group didn’t accept that she (R) hadn’t felt defensive. This suggests the group was projecting onto R their desire to be in conflict with the Divisional Managers, perhaps to release some of their hatred and anger towards the Divisional Managers through R.

Additionally or alternatively, and in line with thoughts about pairing, the lack of acceptance by the group that R hadn’t felt defensive may relate to justification for disallowing female pairing. At the time this was my experience of the incident. I experienced the actions of S, M and D as attempts to prevent B and R interacting. I thought the purpose of this may have been to shut down possibilities of emotional interaction in the group. It
may also have been that the actions by the males were related to ongoing protection from the threat associated with female authority; the 'saving' of R from B who symbolised this threat, by S, M, and then D.

So it seemed the group continued in its efforts to suppress and defend against female authority. In this instance through denial of female pairing, and oppression of possibilities of intimacy.

The next reference to pairing in my observation record was again about protection. In the second last week of the group’s life L was absent. At the outset of the meeting B was aggressively confronted by a student asking how L's absence affected her. B found this a fearful experience. Her description of the incident illustrates how the absence of L exposed B to the group’s hostility. The incident also shows the group’s desire to not completely kill off female authority.

C: *The week before when L wasn’t there I remember that, you know that incident right at the beginning, I was really scared. The first question was directed about where was L, which I was pleased about, then it was ‘Well how do you feel about not having her there?’ In the interchange with that student I started to feel really scared, I felt threatened. What I picked up was, so how does it feel you not having her here, does it make you feel more threatened? Yes, and I thought, fuck yes, but I wasn’t expecting to feel threatened but his comment made me feel threatened. I realised that I was completely on the defensive with the next question that he asked. I think that, in defense of me, I was trying to cover up that because I didn’t want to. I don’t know it is my defense against feeling threatened. I didn’t want them to think that I was feeling threatened, because if they did, maybe they would come in for the kill. And I remember writing a note to Z, and I just said be careful, and I thought*
what a stupid thing to write, like making her feel uncomfortable, and then I scrubbed it out and just smiled at her.

It was at that time that other questions came from the left side of the room, and they were questions that were directed at me in my position. They were as a Divisional Manager "What do you think?" I felt like they were saving. I felt like they were letting this person know that you can’t attack her. You might say these things but you can’t attack, and I felt quite safe, and I think the next three questions were for me to answer as a Divisional Manager, to answer in my authority. So that kind of like brought things back to that normality, and it was at that point that I really noticed, I felt comfortable again.

Out of the corner of my eye, Z was telling me later that somebody actually tapped the guy who was asking those questions, actually was tapped on the head, 'Why are you talking so aggressively?' like don't be so aggressive. But that was really awful and I was surprised that M didn't come to my aid, that it came from the other side of the room. I think that Z said that AP came to my aid, I don't remember it, but she was very clear that he did, which was interesting because the week before he got his syndicate report and he was very angry with me.

I identified in my notes that through the remainder of this meeting B managed herself with more measure and calm than her normal style. In this B took on a traditional teaching role, directly answering group member’s questions. This was reminiscent of B’s response to hostility from the group in the early weeks of the group’s life.

The discussion was concentrating on the notion of authority; however there was also chatting going on, particularly amongst the females in the group. More than two thirds of the females were talking to each other. I wondered
whether this was an attack on B. Despite this, the discussion moved around
the room with a number of people who hadn't spoken before joining the
conversation. The atmosphere seemed intimate; talk was based in the
experience of group members, with people seeming to listen to each other.

As the meeting progressed there seemed to be a taking up of the task. It may
be that guilt related to the initial attack on B led to reparative actions. It is
significant the attack on B occurred when L was absent; suggesting a pair of
female leaders may be more threatening to the group than an individual
female leader.

The married couple, D and Q, were another pair that preoccupied me in my
observations over the last three weeks of the group. In the group D was
vocal and Q quiet. Q seemed to hang onto D’s every word – seeming to live
and die by the group’s reaction to his contributions. In this, D and Q gave
the appearance of a couple in public with traditional heterosexual gender
relations; the active male, the passive, vicarious female. To me they seemed
to symbolise energy and sexuality, and provide possibilities of new life that
could save the group from its struggle with survival. Their traditional
heterosexual relations seemed to offer a symbol of hope amidst the
oppression of female authority.

In the final group meeting I was struck by images of B, L and Z, the Student
Consultant. Z seemed like B and L's baby, a mute, clinging baby; smiling
and giggling, not speaking. I did not experience the life giving possibilities
that I had in relation to D and Q. Rather I experienced sinking hopeless
feelings and thoughts about how does a group form around female/female
management. I also wondered about my own avoidance across the semester
of thinking about Z, the Student Consultant, ‘the baby’. On the one hand
part of me envied Z's relation to B and L, on the other, the quality of the
relation between B, L and Z felt sickening. I wondered if this ambivalence
was also present in group members. Perhaps joining with the managers
meant in part becoming infantile, something the group may have both
craved and felt sickened by.

### 4.3.3 Conclusion

The subject evaluation forms, which were a 'letter to a friend' about the subject, were anonymously completed at the conclusion of the semester. There were forty-eight forms returned to the Divisional Managers. Of these thirteen were positive, twenty-five were negative but reasonably polite and thoughtful, and ten were very negative with much crude and angry language. Typical comments in the positive group were:

> I enjoyed the self learning part of the DM. I explored a lot about my ability to communicate in a large group. Previously I would have withheld my comments in such a situation;

> at times it was difficult and painful. However, at other times it was good. It helped me to build new friendships, and explore the wonders of self learning.

Typical comments in the negative but thoughtful group were:

> There was no guidance on what to learn and in what context, what extent and how it related to anything. With no formal method of checking if what your ideas and learning was right, it was easy to go off on a tangent;

> the inclusion of the Divisional Managers in all of the meeting was ineffective as the students were constantly answering to them rather than to the group.

Of the crudely negative group, typical comments were:

> The foul stench of smugness given off by the 'Divisional Managers' was repulsive. The idea of jeopardising our degrees by throwing us in a maze like mindless rats was ridiculous. It
was a fucked subject to begin with, as the 'so-called' lecturers were bitches and decided that they would get paid for nothing, as they didn't teach us a thing.

One final comment illustrated the profound impact of primitive emotion on large group life. The comment illuminates the desperate need, the absolute need, to defend individually and socially within the large group experience.

Basically I thought it was one of the more frustrating subjects I've ever experienced. Fellow students became enemies as we looked for a target to take out our anger and frustration on. Good people became savages, relations became strained and punches were thrown. Kaos (sic) ruled. We were relegated to the level of animals, or at least primitive homosapiens. We are all lesser people because of this subject and we will possibly be scarred for life.

This chapter has introduced and begun exploring the large group of case one. The discussion of this chapter aimed to consider some of the possible meanings of the phenomena observed in the group by the researcher, and relayed through group member’s experience in the interviews. The discussion is focussed on consideration of the issues of female management in the group. A hypothesis is developed that the group struggled throughout its life with managing threatening levels of anxiety associated with the female only management team. To manage this anxiety it is argued that the group employed a range of defense mechanisms. These defenses included: protective alliances; splitting; displacement; and withdrawal. The discussion illustrates the significant extent to which the group’s structure, culture and capacity to work on task were influenced by the defensive dynamics.

The arguments from this chapter, along with those from the two other single case discussions, link into the main thesis arguments through their inclusion
in the multicase discussion, Chapter seven. The next chapter, Chapter five explores the second large group of the research.
5. Chapter five - Case study two

5.1 Introduction
The chapter begins with a narrative of the second large group of the research. As with case one, the narrative arises from the researcher’s experience observing the group. Once again, the narrative is limited by partiality inherent in relaying one person’s experience, and by decisions made to include and exclude phenomena.

The discussion of the large group of case two follows the narrative. In the discussion the data of group member’s experience relayed in the interviews, and the researcher’s observations build to support a working hypothesis about the group dynamics. The hypothesis proposes that the experience of patriarchal management in the group mobilised anxiety and aggression in group members. It is argued that because group members could not direct this aggression at management they instead scapegoated a surrogate victim. The evolution of these dynamics are explored in the discussion, along with the profound impact these events had on the formation and development of the group’s structure and culture, and on the group’s capacity to work to task.

5.2. The narrative of the second case study
Week 1
68 people present at opening, 57 at close: 43 females and 25 males.
The group sat quietly for ten minutes as members entered the room. V and L, the Divisional Managers, were standing at the front of the room; V in the centre front, L to the left. V told the class that he was acting as convenor of the whole subject rather than as the Divisional Manager of the division. He then went on to say that there was an administrative need to move some of the students to a class on another day. He asked for volunteers. Six students left the room. V then introduced J, my colleague, who spoke to the students about my research. The students agreed by a show of hands to my observing the large group for the semester. A form was then circulated asking for volunteers to be interviewed about their experience of the division. J then left.
V introduced L, himself, and MK, the student consultant. Each spoke briefly about themselves. V briefly described the organisation, the workgroup and the syndicates. After a few minutes, he moved into explanation of assessment. V was explaining the assessment pieces in detail when L, snatching papers from V’s hand, interjected loudly saying *I'm sick of this*. V, looking bemused, stopped speaking. L then talked to the students about structure, culture and strategy of organisations. While V and L were speaking people were looking around or reading notes. I struggled to understand their faces. They appeared expressionless. There were no questions asked. Although the group was quiet, it seemed a restless, pent up quietness. I was feeling anxious. I wasn’t keeping up with what V and L were saying. The information seemed fragmented. I was also taken aback by the way the subject was presented. I hadn't previously seen an introduction with so much emphasis on the assessment tasks and so little on what experiential learning might mean. I thought that in this V and L had erred.

The presentation by V and L took fifteen minutes. The group was then broken into workgroups. To do this students identified their names on workgroup lists presented on an overhead. Again I thought that V and L were wrong. I didn’t agree with breaking up the group after so short a time together. I wondered if this had happened because of fear of working with the large group. People not allocated on the list of workgroups lined up to speak to V and L. More people were leaving the room. I presumed they were changing classes.

When the group broke into the four workgroups the quietness was replaced with a hum of conversation. In each group there seemed a nucleus of people interacting with each other, and one or two people sitting on the margins.

Five minutes before the end of the meeting V began speaking. This mobilised the group back together. V spoke about the problem of enrolments, interpreting the problems through the subject theory. He spoke clearly and warmly. I felt comforted by his words. He identified the mess and was comforting about it. He then asked for questions. There were two. One was from a young woman who asked what her role would be in the next two hours. V responded in a very
soothing, authoritative style. I relaxed. I thought about how much more comfortable I already felt in this group than I had for the whole of the large group of case study one. I recalled what L had said to me about working with V as we walked to the class: *I have got my father back.* This resonated with my feelings of comfort and safety.

**Week 2**

63 people present: 24 males and 39 females.

People were talking in groups of two, three or four. Spaced here and there was a person sitting alone. There was movement as people walked across the room from group to group. At twelve minutes after the start of the meeting a student walked across the front of the podium and the room suddenly became silent. The chattering noise began again as it was realised the young woman was not staying at the front. L (Divisional Manager) then spoke, advising new people to get course outlines from V (Divisional Manager) or herself. Following this she introduced the new student consultant, NU. The group was silent as L spoke, and then went back to talking in informal groups.

A student was standing talking to NU, V leaned over to them. I imagined he was saying it wasn’t an appropriate time to engage in one to one discussion. At twenty minutes, two students, an Asian male and a Caucasian female, went to the front and wrote on the board. The writing was about stages of group development. They wrote *This is the forming stage of the group. This is about development of relationships and clarification of tasks.* Then on the top part of the board a question was written *Who is next?* The two group members then sat down. Another young woman went to the board and wrote *Each workgroup should take one of the concepts each week and discuss it.* I felt puzzled as to why the group was writing but not speaking. It felt as though the group was physically unable to speak. There was absolute silence as the writing took place. The silence seemed to hold a sense of expectation. Two or three minutes after the last young woman sat down V said he was interested that the group was not engaging in direct conversation but was sending messages on the board. He said that conversation seemed only able to occur in small groups. A young woman responded to V. I
didn’t understand what she said. No one responded to her. V then asked why the group ignored the young woman. Again there was no response. V said he also was being ignored. A member asked V to repeat what he had said. Then the young woman, who had previously been ignored, presented her idea that each week one workgroup should present a topic. There were murmurs of agreement around the room. To my surprise people immediately stood up and moved into their workgroups. I didn’t hear this as a suggestion. It just seemed to occur. I was feeling bored, hoping for something exciting to happen.

There were three young male members who stood up together. Fleetingly, I thought they were going to leave the room. I fantasised the beginnings of a mass exodus. Instead they moved into their workgroups. The atmosphere seemed more settled. The oldest looking male in the room (excepting V) spoke about his thoughts on options for the following week. L responded to him pointing out what would be lost by doing things the way he was proposing and suggested another way. I was surprised at the directiveness of L’s intervention. I felt tired.

L then spoke saying that she had seen students looking at V and herself angrily, and she was wondering if that was because they weren’t standing up the front telling the class what to do. One young woman responded saying You are putting words into our mouth. L said she had seen faces looking at her in an angry way. A member asked why the Divisional Managers had put them in such a difficult position. L responded. The discussion moved into exploring the group structure. The older man, K, dominated. He put forward an idea of developing a board structure which would take responsibility for coordination of the class. The young male, who had initially written on the blackboard, took up this idea. It was challenged by another young male who wondered about the need for a formalised structure. The idea of the board as a think tank was taken up by the group. It was planned that two members of each work group would be selected to be board members. The task of the board members was to think about the divisional meeting agenda. V intervened stating the meeting time had finished.
Week 3

57 people present: 36 females and 21 males.
I sat in my usual seat on the corner of the back row on the side. L and V sat beside each other in the middle of the back row with a student consultant at each side of them; MK next to V, and NU next to L. For thirteen minutes as people entered the room the group chatted amongst itself. The atmosphere felt very relaxed. Most people were in pairs or groups of four or five. In contrast there were six international students each sitting separately, staring straight ahead with expressions that seemed pained.

One of the young males came to the front and talked about external environmental factors that may be affecting the group. He then asked for thoughts from the group. The group ignored this question and proceeded to have a forty-five minute discussion about the structure and strategies for the coming weeks. During this discussion fourteen people spoke; eight males and six females, including L who spoke three times. K, the older male member seemed to coordinate the discussion with questions being put to him and he asking others questions. I found most of the discussion difficult to hear, and difficult to keep in a cohesive form in my mind. The conversation jumped from idea to idea. I felt overwhelmed by tedium. My energy was bound up inside me. I looked around to see what the group members might be feeling. There were twenty-nine out of fifty-seven people who seemed to not be engaged, either sitting with their heads down or eyes closed, or arms folded looking into the air. The other twenty-eight were either those who spoke, those who were leaning forward with obvious engagement, or those with expressions that conveyed obvious interest in what was occurring.

It was only towards the end of the meeting that some clarity emerged as to what were the options for the ongoing structure of the group. There was a vote to decide between two options. K outlined the two options. Then L said there was a third. I was annoyed by L’s intervention because I thought she was not giving the students the space to manage themselves. V was silent throughout the meeting.
**Week 4**

54 people present: 18 males and 36 females.

On entering the room I walked past students standing outside around the door. My entry seemed to instigate the entry of them to the room. I felt as though I held hierarchal authority.

The students entered the room. Later V, L, MK and then NU arrived. They sat up in the centre back row on the left hand end with the Student Consultants placed between L and V; NU next to L, then MK and V. I fantasised them as a jury sitting in judgement.

There was chatting amongst small group members. After 10 minutes there was movement. What had previously been informal groups of two, three, four, five, and seven became the three workgroups. I remembered then that it had been decided to move into workgroups for the first half an hour of the meeting. In the workgroups they would prepare what was going to be presented in the next half an hour.

L was in conversation with MK, then with NU. V sat silently. I was so weary that I wondered if sleep was going to overtake me. I wasn’t relaxed. The atmosphere seemed close and felt incredibly boring.

After half an hour in the workgroups people turned outwards to the large group. A feeling of not quite knowing permeated the room. There was liveliness, anxiety, people looking around, searching, waiting. Two representatives of one of the groups went to the front and proceeded to deliver a lecture style theory presentation for the remainder of the meeting. I was feeling very bored. The atmosphere was flat and disinterested.

**Week 5**

51 people present: 19 males and 32 females.

For twenty minutes there was much laughter, chattering and happy looks on faces. A few people moved seats. Three people went out of the room, one came back.
The atmosphere was bright and energetic. L and V, MK and NU were sitting in the same seats as last week (the centre back row on the left-hand side) and I was sitting in the same row as L and V but in the side block, on the edge. The Student Consultants sat interspersed between L and V; V at the end, then MK, L then NU.

I enjoyed observing the first twenty minutes. People were talking in groups of two’s and three’s within their workgroups. There was a feeling of joy in the room.

Waves of apprehension seemed to break through this mood when one of the females asked the whole group a question about what were they doing and where were they going. The conversation moved into a discussion of structure in the various workgroups. People from one workgroup described their structure. This was challenged by another workgroup. The discussion was hostile. The workgroups demanded justification of each other for decisions made. It felt like nothing said would be deemed good enough.

I felt angry, irritable, bored and very sleepy. I kept wondering what the aggression underneath my sleepiness was, and where it was in the room. I didn’t have any answers as my mind kept straying from any one thought. The discussion about the structures in the workgroups moved to exploration of the structure of the divisional meeting. This discussion was friendlier with twenty different people speaking and giving their opinions. Fourteen of those speaking were women. The conversation style was feminine. There were pieces of theory woven with experience, all said in a very courteous and gentle way. The group was slipping in and out of my mind. I tried to think about why that was happening but again my mind wouldn’t concentrate. There was talk about how well this meeting had progressed. The group decided to continue with the same structure for the next week with ‘culture’ as their new concept. Group members then returned to chatting in informal small groups. This was until a person from the back suggested starting the discussion on culture.

A question was put to NU about what she thought the culture of the group was. She answered by asking the same question back of the group. There were the
beginnings of a discussion about the constituents of the group culture when two minutes before the end of the meeting V intervened. He wondered about whether the group didn’t know what its strategy was and consequently didn't follow any strategy, or whether the group had strategy but didn't give it due credence because it was created by students rather than by lecturers or text books. V spoke about this in a complex way that I found difficult to understand. There were quick responses from two people. They conveyed a sense of bewilderment. They expressed their belief that the group had developed strategy and followed it. There seemed a lot of anger in the room towards V. The end of the meeting came very quickly after V had spoken. I was left with feelings of frustration towards V.

Week 6
51 people present: 30 females and 21 males.

Group members chatted for ten minutes in pairs and in small groups. After ten minutes, GF, a young male, jumped up from his seat and went to the front of the room. The room went silent. GF asked the group Why does I being up here make a difference? After one response from the group L interrupted. I felt she was trying to wrest power from GF. The conversation became focused around L. V then attempted to investigate reaction to what he had said at the conclusion of the previous meeting. Apparently V had said something about the group being thick. V had heard that some group members were very unhappy with this remark, but were not saying so to him directly. There seemed to be a strong resistance to what V was saying. When GF first went to the front there was a lot of liveliness in the group. However when L and V took over the direction of the discussion the energy seemed to depart. I entertained the idea of losing my own control in the room, shouting or screaming. I felt great terror in being there.

While V was speaking GF wrote down the structures of the group on the board. It felt like he was wrestling control back from V. The group ignored V. It felt extremely hostile in the room. K was outlining his view of the structure of the division and its impact; he included structures outside the division, other divisions, the school of business, and the university. As he was speaking there was freshness in the atmosphere. One young woman said she didn't understand and
could he explain it in *baby language*. K repeated his explanation of what he meant. V asked him to go and draw it out on the board. V looked gleeful at the way the conversation was heading. I knew he loved having diagrams drawn on the board. I felt the dynamics were very male: GF was out the front; then K went down the front to draw on the board; V was quite vocal; N, who wrote on the board in the second week, was also vocal; N was questioning; V was answering. Then V and L questioned N extensively about his opinions of the structure. V suggested that perhaps he was a fair way down the track and that the others may not be. L responded to some questions; however to me she seemed marginal in the group. I thought that she knew questions were being directed at V but that she was going to answer them all the same. I wondered about the traditional masculine interest in the external world. It seemed the group was avoiding any introspection. It was as though reflection was too heavy. There was lightness in the room, excitement and pleasure. This lasted to the end of the class.

**Week 7**

45 people present: 29 males and 16 females.

L and V were more than five minutes late. Some members waited outside the room for L and V to arrive. Others entered the room up until thirty minutes into the hour. N was one of those who were thirty minutes late. GF went to the front of the class and attempted to open discussion. There was little contribution by group members. GF identified the lack of participation, and then he initiated a question, answer type process. He went back over the previous week asking questions from the discussion about structure. Soon L became the centre of the discussion, first conversing with K, then with GF. I was intensely bored. I closed my eyes. I was close to sleep. Group members looked bored. Five minutes before the end of the hour N made a comment that he hadn't learnt anything and that the group needed to take a different direction.

In response to this L loudly and passionately said she was very angry with N for presuming that what had happened had had no meaning for anybody, particularly when he had not been there until half an hour after the session had begun.
The subsequent discussion took the meeting over time by twelve minutes. There was condemnation of N by females in the group. Two young women spoke who had never spoken before. Both said they were upset by what N had said because they felt they had learnt something that day. As part of N's response to these comments he said he thought people should be pointed at to speak; that people needed to be forcefully involved. There was very negative reaction from many members of the group to this suggestion.

In closing the meeting V said the group should be thankful to N for maintaining his composure under attack. He said he thought N had given the group opportunity to express some of its hostility. N responded saying he had professional experience in being attacked and that it was all right for L to have said the things she did. L asked him how he had felt at the time she had made her statements. N once again responded that he had professional experience in being attacked, and it had been fair enough.

**Week 8**

46 people present: 30 females and 16 males.

The week began with L, V and MK being five minutes late. When they arrived they sat in the front row. This was a change from their usual position in the back row. After three or four minutes N went to the front and started asking the group about their experience of the last week. With the management team in the front row a protective cloak seemed to be cast around N.

N asked the group what they thought of his actions of the previous week: *What had they remembered? What had affected them? What had they thought of L’s comments to him? How had that affected them?* It felt very confrontational. After five minutes of no response K started speaking. Soon N and K were debating an assertion of N’s that he was responsible for eighty percent of the group's marks in their exam. N's justification was that as he was taking up so much time talking he was responsible for the marks that members got in their exams. K strongly resisted the idea that anybody other than himself was responsible for his performance. There was intense discussion for the next forty minutes. A number
of comments were made that N seemed either not to understand, or perhaps weren’t of interest to him. Feelings expressed by group members about his comments were met by him with indifference. The comments came primarily from female members of the group.

Another dominant part of this discussion was V’s view on the culture of the group. V spoke angrily. He said that the group asks questions and does not listen to answers, or listens to questions but ignores them, and then goes onto the next question without answering the initial one. V spoke autocratically. Following these statements V intervened three times in the middle of other’s conversation. He stated his intent was to stop people asking questions about questions, i.e. clarification of questions were not allowed. This came to a head where the group was voting on whether or not they wanted a leader. In amidst discussion of the voting parameters V announced that the vote was about whether N was to remain out the front of the room or not. There was no clarity over what was being voted for, and no one was allowed to ask clarifying questions; Was the vote about N staying there for this session or for the semester? Was there an option of others taking up the role? The terms of the voting were announced as Who wants N to be at the front? V very loudly said Yes. There was a straggle of hands raised. K argued that the voting was not legitimate because of V’s sanction on questioning its terms. As far as I could determine an outcome was not finally decided for leadership of the next or subsequent weeks by the time the meeting had finished.

At the end of the session N said that he felt that he had taken a battering. He said he had spent much time preparing for the session during the week and that that preparation had been wasted. He said his idea had been that the exploration of the previous week should take ten minutes, whereas it had taken the whole hour. N said that he felt the work had been wasted and unappreciated. As N spoke the group began leaving the room.

**Week 9**

49 people present: 19 males and 30 females.

L, V, MK and NU were all sitting in the front row of seats. V introduced two
RMIT staff members he had invited to observe the group. A female said *Wasn’t N supposed to be here organising the group? What are we going to do?* Just as discussion was beginning about what to do, N arrived. There were audible sighs of relief.

N walked to the front of the room and took off his overcoat. He raised issues about what he thought the group could discuss about external environment. He asked L and V whether this was what the group should be discussing. L didn’t answer. V answered affirmatively. I was feeling jealous and hostile towards MK and NU (Student Consultants). They were smiling and writing in their books. I imagined they were making judgements with no credibility. They seemed to occupy a cosseted privileged position without the tension of responsibility. I felt hatred for them. I was also irritated by V affirming N’s question. It seemed V was determining the direction of the group.

N asked for someone to come to the front to write on the board. CZ volunteered. CZ asked the group to identify external environment factors affecting the group. There were many responses that she wrote on the blackboard. Identification of factors turned into discussion of leadership in the group. How leadership had developed then moved to discussion of the group’s relationship to L and V. This included discussion of hostility towards L and V. The group also discussed their developing acceptance of N as the group’s leader. As they spoke I wondered about N’s capacity to have weathered the aggression and anger directed toward him in previous weeks. He now seemed to be viewed by the group as a worthy leader. The room felt calm and relaxed. It felt more possible than any of the other meetings to be interested, and to think about what was occurring.

T, one of the young females said *So we have accepted N as our leader.* No one responded. Five minutes later T repeated the same statement. This time the group heard her and acknowledged N as their leader. At that moment there was a poignant silence in the room. It was a silence that seemed to contain every member of the group. A number of people who had their heads down on their desks, or who had been chatting, became attentive.
N responded saying he didn’t feel comfortable being called a leader because he didn’t believe the group wanted a leader. He said he would rather be called an initiator. L asked N to talk about why this was. She asked him what in his experience had led him to this place in the group today. After N responded, L asked the group the same question, i.e. *What in their external environment had led them to being the way they were in the group?* The discussion that followed included almost all group members. I noticed three international students who looked disinterested; all other group members seemed engaged. L said that sometimes during semesters she gets this warm feeling that the group is finally ‘clicking’ and that is what she was feeling. V said that it amazed him that the group was able to hear compliments from L and yet hadn’t been able to hear him when he talked about strategy four weeks ago. V said this as though four weeks ago he had also been complimenting the group. He said he thought that may have been because L was a woman. He also said it seemed that the group was more comfortable with N and CZ as their leaders than with L and himself. V then closed the meeting saying it was time.

**Week 10**

49 people present: 19 males and 30 females.

For the first five minutes the group chatted informally as people entered the room and took their seats. V, L and the Student Consultants sat in the middle, rather than the front row of seats. The change of seats revealed again to me how supportive the management team sitting in the front row had seemed. I felt a loss of support both for the person out the front and for the whole group. It felt as though having the managers sitting in the front row relieved the group of suspicion or paranoia of being observed from behind. I had a feeling of death, of a void at the end of something. This feeling dissipated when five minutes into the session N went to the front and asked the group what they wanted to do. He said he suspected that people had expected him to have planned the hour and that he was not comfortable with that. Someone said they would like to address the exam question. There were murmurs of agreement. N read out the exam question and then discussion began about the structure of the various groups in the division. N pointed to people and asked them what had happened in their syndicate or
workgroup. He seemed intent on trying to work the responses into some sort of theory. There was a frustrated tone to the voices of people when they responded. A restless feeling was in the air. I wondered about the stability of N’s leadership, whether the group still wanted him as their leader. V asked had they ever really defined the structure of the division. First K went to the board to draw his view, and then another male went to the board to draw his. N sat to the side of the front when K and the other male were talking.

The discussion became more and more focussed between L and K, and V and K. The group’s interest lapsed; this was evidenced by increased levels of informal chatter. V called the end of the meeting time for the group.

**Week 11**

47 people present: 17 males and 30 females

N was at the front for the whole of the meeting. He framed questions to the group, which they answered. There was a sense of ease and comfort in their answers. V and L both spoke a considerable amount. I felt the atmosphere of the group move between hostility, irritation, boredom, and some interest. Movement across these states seemed freer and easier than at any other time in the life of the group. There were many 'we' statements made. Once when V spoke, L smiled at him adoringly. Males were dominating; N, V, K, GF, AO, in particular. There was calmness in the room.

I had an image of forty-one minds floating together in the room. As the image took shape I became frightened and stopped myself imagining.

The calmness continued for the entire meeting.

**Week 12**

46 people present: 30 females and 16 males.

L and V and the two student Consultants sat in the back row in the middle section of the room.
N went to the front and fired questions at the group one after another. He bombarded people with questions about their experience of the division. People either did not respond or gave very clipped answers. N affirmed some answers and ignored others. The questions didn’t seem to be related to each other. The group seemed fractured and out of control; mad and awful. V stood up and very aggressively said that he was going to bring attendance sheets to the workgroups at 4pm, 4.15pm and 4.30pm. This meant people would not be able to leave the workgroups early if they wanted their attendance recorded. V was asked to repeat what he had said. He refused. N asked the group to extend the time of the divisional meeting from 3.30 to 4pm. This was ignored.

Three minutes before the end of the meeting a young woman spoke who had been silent for the whole semester. She said that she was enjoying the meeting and had for the previous few weeks. Energy seemed to return to the room. N responded saying that gave him a warm, comfy feeling. As N spoke the energy seemed to depart. V said that time was up.

5.3 Case discussion
5.3.1 Introduction
As with case study one the discussion is shaped by a working hypothesis that the experience of being in the large group mobilises primitive anxiety held deep in the psyche of group members. It is suggested that the ways in which people manage this anxiety is through the employment of both conscious and unconscious defenses at individual, group and system levels. The discussion concentrates on individual and group defenses and is focused on consideration of the particular threats and the consequences of those threats observed in this large group. Whereas case study one explored the way female authority was experienced and managed in the group, this discussion explores the way patriarchal authority is experienced and managed. Specifically the discussion explores dynamics that link defensive mechanisms of scapegoating to the group’s leadership, and management of its own violence.

To preface the discussion Girard’s (1977, 1986) mimetic theory is outlined. This
theory explains in some depth the scapegoat dynamic that is proposed in the case discussion.

5.3.2 Theory
Girard (1977, 1986) developed an all-encompassing set of concepts that explain the development of culture. He called this mimetic theory. Girard identified mimetic desire (1977, p145) as the genesis of the violence triggering the scapegoating mechanism (Burket et al 1987.) He argued that human beings have a fundamental sense of insufficiency and to compensate we learn how to be through the mediation of others’ desires. This is called ‘mimesis’ or ‘borrowed desire’. Girard believes that no one purely desires anything. Desire is always mediated through someone else's desire. His construct of mimetic desire is triangular: the desired object; the subject who desires the object; and the model who initially elicited the subject’s desire (Grote and McGeeney 1977). Immediately the model injuncts ‘imitate me’, a corresponding injunction of ‘don’t imitate me’ is commanded. We want others to want to be like us but also don’t want them to be like us, and condemn them for not being themselves. Girard calls this the double bind (Grote and McGeeney 1977, p45). It places the subject in a no win, despairing situation. Mimetic desire is only superficially a desire for the object that the model possesses, more profoundly it is the desire to possess the others qualities, to be the other. This Girard calls metaphysical desire (Webb 1993, p97).

Mimesis usually implies conflict. Desire for the object can be quickly overtaken by rivalry between the subject and the model. Girard argues that mimetic conflict is contagious in societies. Uncontained conflict quickly escalates to a point where it is intolerable and the society's existence is threatened. If it is unwise or impossible for the community to discharge their discomfort on the real or perceived source of the problem then scapegoating occurs. Girard calls this point the sacrificial crisis (1979, p93). With the continuity of the community at risk it is imperative the violence be contained. Through scapegoating the violence of the mob is transferred to one person. This person is held responsible for all the difficulties and frustration’s that the community is experiencing. The victimisation of the scapegoat exorcises and cleanses the community of its impurities.
scapegoating act turns baneful violence into beneficial violence (Fiore 1993, p5).

The sacrifice is understood to unite the community: the moment when the fear of falling into interminable violence is most intense and the community is therefore most closely drawn together (Girard 1979, p120).

Girard identifies four stereotypes of the scapegoating mechanism. The first stereotype is that the community is experiencing a period of crisis and disorder. In this the normal structures and institutions of the community are weakened, leaving people feeling insecure, powerless and frightened. Differentiation decreases as people become similarly overwhelmed by their fears. This perpetuates disintegration of culture. As the system breaks down conflict is unable to be contained. Mob mentality takes over with escalating conflict, shortened time sequences and thoughtless decision-making. The reasons for crisis may be internal or external to the system; the consequences of both are understood to be the same.

The second stereotype concerns the selection of the surrogate victim. Victims generally display characteristics different to the mob. Girard contends outsiders threaten the group’s tenuous security with the act of scapegoating purging this threat: Difference that exists outside the system is terrifying because it reveals the truth of the system; its relativity, its fragility, and its mortality (1977, p21). Anyone with characteristics that are extreme or different is vulnerable to be a surrogate victim. This includes: the rich and powerful; the very poor; people who have great beauty or ugliness; great successes or great failures; and the weaker in the community, including the disabled, children and the elderly.

The third condition or stereotype is that the community must believe in the evilness of the victim. Whether real or cultivated, the person must be perceived as wrongful (Grote and McGeeney 1977, p60). This means that potential scapegoats who are closely related to the perceived source of the problem are at even greater risk of being victimised (Ushedo 1997, p5). Evil can be attributed to people without proof. The person’s involvement in the evil needs no tangible evidence; participation can be purely spiritual (p7). The transformation of the person into a
monster is both justifications for choice, and part of the process of projecting the community’s impurities onto the person (Girard 1979, p107). For example, in Ancient Greece an annual ritual was held where scapegoats or pharmakos (Fiore 1993, p6), as they were known, were paraded through the city. As the parade progressed, the pharmokos were beaten with fig branches. Through this practice it was believed the pharmokos drew all the evil of Athens towards them. On the city outskirts the pharmokos were either killed or expelled (Fiore 1993).

Whilst the violence towards the victim is made justifiable by their evilness there is still guilt and shame for the murderous actions taken by the mob. This cannot be faced for fear of having to cope with one’s own violence:

> To acknowledge the deed as arbitrary and the victim as surrogate would plunge the group back into the terror of reciprocal violence. Only by retaining a fictional or mythic account of the event can the community avoid the truth about itself, which would kill it. These myths become so deeply buried in the mentality of the community that they are unconscious and the truth is uncontactable (Mack 1985, p9).

The fourth stereotype is the violence itself, and the consequences that follow. The violence unleashed on the scapegoat relieves the community of its pent up hostilities. The system is then calm and ordinary life is able to take place, at least for the moment. On some occasions those scapegoats who exhibit bravery and courage in the face of victimisation may attain hero status. As Becker wrote:

> We admire most the courage to face death, we give valour our highest and most constant adoration; it moves us deeply in our hearts because we have doubts about how brave we ourselves would be. When we see a man bravely facing his own extinction we rehearse the greatest victory we can imagine. And so the hero has been the centre of human honour and acclaim since probably the beginning of specifically human evolution (Fiore 1993, p5).
Similarly Girard states:

*The universal execration of the person who carries the sickness is replaced by universal veneration for the person who cures the same sickness* (1977, p44).

Girard argues that from time immemorial communities have employed scapegoating rituals to manage their own violence. In primitive times the sacrifice of the scapegoat was usually fatal. In modern time the mechanism is understood to exist as pervasively but usually in less violent forms.

Girard links modern day mimetic processes to the oedipal conflict. He believes structures in groups and communities reflect desire for orientation towards the father and are therefore inclined towards certain forms of order and stability (1977). In this orientation the father becomes the model-rival, the mother symbolises all objects valued by the model, and mythic mentality replaces the unconscious. Mimetic theory inverts the oedipal progression from desire for the object leading to rivalry with the model, to imitation of the model-rival leading to desire for the object. The inevitable conflict generated through this mimetic process triggering defensive scapegoat mechanisms.

The following discussion of the large group of case two explores the way in which patriarchal authority is experienced and the related mimetic effects. In the first section of the discussion data from the researcher’s observation and the group member interviews builds to provide the context to exploration of the scapegoating events that follow in the later section.

**5.3.4 The discussion**

From the outset the group had traditional patriarchal management orientation with the male holding higher formal standing than the female. Whilst L and V had equal Divisional Management status, V in donning his ‘convenors hat’ in the first few minutes of the first meeting took up a superior hierarchal role to L. V did not articulate a return to the Divisional Manager role. This may have confused his
status in the minds of the group. Additionally, patriarchy was directly referred to by L saying that in teaching with V: *I have got my father back.* I also mused about V as a *comfortable fatherly presence.*

Indeed, in the first meeting V behaved in reassuring and supportive ways. Whenever he spoke I felt warm and safe. These feelings of safety left when L snatched V’s notes from his hand and took over speaking to the group. V, in interview, indicated that L’s action threatened his control of the setting. This action was the first trigger of what was to become an ongoing struggle by V to maintain his dominance and, arguably, the patriarchal order.

In the second meeting, when the group could only manage to communicate with each other through writing on the board, it seemed V displaced his anger with L from the first week onto the group.

> V: *Instead of being amused by that (by the group members writing on the board) I became very serious and judgemental and I thought why can’t they speak. I thought, ‘What is this writing messages business?’ I was immediately condemning that.*

Evidence that this was displaced anger is revealed in an interview with V where he slipped in responding to a question posed about the group by answering about L.

> W: *Were you irritated because they (the group members) weren’t able?*

> V: *It wasn’t what I wanted them to do.*

> W: *What did you want them to do?*

> V: *Yes I wanted L to be more co-operative, to take the stage when I give it to her. Like when I say L would you like to do this? It is a huge*
control thing. I know. I can make myself be very participatory and egalitarian and all that sort of stuff but in fact.

After the initial introductions, V spoke little in the first weeks. Instead he spent much time observing and writing. This frustrated L. She expressed, in an interview, how V’s silence furthered a traditional patriarchal culture in the group:

This is what I see happening. I get so frustrated with him. He’s got so much knowledge. He gets over in the cafe and he talks and talks and all this information comes out, but he doesn’t share it with the students. I wonder what we are doing here? We are modelling behaviour of withholding information. We don’t release it to the division. It is something that does need to be worked on, but I am not sure how to do it. He is like the Victorian father. He doesn’t give anything to the students; V comes home, disappears in to the study and stays there. So anything that he says goes through me.

Some group member’s experience of L and V in the early weeks also reflected the patriarchal orientation that has been identified. In this V was encountered as a persecutory judge and L in an opposite nurturing role. DI reflecting on his experience of V stated:

I don’t write notes I just remember things said, but when I am just listening and observing in the meeting you sometimes have eye contact with the management team and the eye contact feels like he (V) is about to write something really nasty about me.

O expressed his view of L’s role in the group:

I see L as more the, I am not sure why because I have no sort of evidence to say this or that, it just seems that she is more the idea giver. When V, like today, sort of wasn’t criticising what we were doing but sort of saying that is wrong. She (L) was sort of more giving
us an idea; maybe we should think about this. Whereas V was sort of saying that is wrong. It was almost, I wouldn’t say harsh but sort of critical of us.

Other group members found both Divisional Managers depriving and persecutory. The large size of the group and the difficulty of the task precipitated and compounded these feelings. T described her experience:

I just sort of watched, just sat back and watched. I find the large group intimidating. Maybe it is just the intimidation of the whole room. Intimidated by the large room plus you have various Divisional Managers sitting there as well. You have sort of mixed feelings because on the one hand it’s like ‘Get up and teach us’ sort of attitude, not strongly because this is about change, and I think it is good sort of to be adaptable and not so regimented. I feel like that when I get frustrated. I get frustrated and think, ‘Oh God I can't be bothered with this. It would be much easier if you (V and L) got up and spoke about it’.

And MN: I was actually a bit hostile towards them (L and V) because I personally couldn't understand, as quite a lot of people have said, why they weren't saying anything.

As the weeks progressed the group appeared to begin to work through some of these problems, albeit with some difficulty. As K described:

I felt as in the whole room there was this sort of relief as such; suddenly a few people were talking and then something was happening. I think that the difficulty that we do have is that we have all these different people with all these different concepts and ideas about how it should be done, and each person is willing to offer to a different level that thought or that opinion.
MN also indicated development of the group:

We had a good open conversation and I really liked that one that was happening. It was frustrating at the start but later we were all presenting ideas, with ideas coming from all sides of the room, and I think that is what we are trying to achieve because the whole group was participating.

At the end of week five a significant event occurred when V challenged group members about not having confidence in their own strategies. As a result of V’s assertions, group members seemed to doubt their own thoughts and experience. The group’s embryonic self-confidence appeared fractured. The following statements by group members provide evidence of this.

O: I thought he was right the whole way. But to start with I couldn’t grasp what he was saying, but to start with, as you know he was sort of saying we didn’t sort of meet our objectives for that divisional meeting, or the things that we set out to do. That made me feel it was like I had a different idea of what our objectives were, and it almost made me feel like I was wrong in what I thought our objectives were. He said that we didn’t meet them and I thought we did. So I thought maybe I am incorrect in what meeting them sort of means.

And K: I felt that this week we started going on it and we started operating but it frustrated (sic) that irrelevant of whether it was on target or not on target, we had the Divisional Manager butt in as such. I use the word butt in, halfway through it, and make a statement that then suddenly had everyone doubting all this work that they had done.

The significance of V’s intervention is in its articulation of the double bind the group was placed in. On the one hand the group was attempting to take up the task of self management by request of the Divisional Managers, and on the other V is
experienced as criticising their interpretation of the task against his own. This is the *Imitate me, don’t imitate me* of Girard’s double bind (Grote and McGeeney 1977, p45). It corresponds to the competitive aspects of the oedipal crisis where the son must copy his father in order to develop, and simultaneously he must not copy his father in order to develop. The double bind engenders despair of never being able to succeed:

\[
\text{Mimesis is both a force of attraction and a force of repulsion – thus the double bind. Imitation begins in innocent apprenticeship, progresses to obsessive rivalry, and graduates to violence (Grote and McGeeney 1977, p45).}
\]

As the group’s frustration with V progressively built, the group allowed males to become more and more dominant: GF and K were at the front; N and V dominated the discussion; the group asked V many questions, at times L would answer but the group looked to V.

Then V attempted to investigate the reaction to his intervention of the previous week (about the group’s strategy). He had heard that some members were angry with him. He asked the group *Who's angry with me?* There was no response. In her interview T said:

\[
\text{When V asked ‘Who’s angry at me? Just the way he said it, was in a very defensive way, in a defensive tone. And ‘Who’s angry at me?’ Nobody is going to put their hand up and say 'Yes I am angry at you'. I thought that was a bit silly.}
\]

In that moment I had feelings of terror in the room and felt like losing control and yelling out. There was almost overwhelming frustration and anger that could not be spoken about.

*The scapegoat*

The dynamics seemed to have reached a critical point. Emotion was threatening to
breakdown the boundaries around role. I feared the institution that contained us was disintegrating. These are the events that I argue led to the condition of the first stereotype of scapegoating, the collapse and disorder of the system (p142). Girard speaks about just such as moments of sacrificial crisis (1977).

It was in the following week that a potential scapegoat was found to provide a repository for the group’s aggression. N admonished the group about what they were doing. By this he separated himself from the group. As well, V publicly identified N as different to the group. This meets the second stereotype of the scapegoating mechanism, i.e. N is different to the mob (p142). When reflecting on these events in the interview setting V noted the similarities of N to himself. It makes sense that N could be a potential scapegoat for the aggression that the group cannot direct towards V.

The third stereotype of scapegoating, that the surrogate victim is guilty of crime (p142), was fulfilled when N’s negative judgement of the group was met by L’s passionate outburst condemning him for his arrogance in presuming other's experience. L's parading of N's impurities in front of the group can be seen as legitimising N as a scapegoat for the group’s hostility. For L this may have been hostility related to her frustration at V’s dominance over her. The group was initially shocked by L's passionate anger. Her anger seemed contagious with members realising the significance for themselves of N's arrogance. The group's hatred and frustration were mobilised and directed towards N. He was crucified. In particular female group members, previously silent, admonished N. The female body seemed to find voice through identification with L. This may have been the point of unification for the group where frustration and hatred is transformed from benign to beneficial (Fiore 1993, p5); from being individual and destructive to collective and protective.

V was shocked by L's outburst. V stated he was protecting N however contrary to this he excitedly responded to GF’s suggestion that N be out the front the next week. By this V seemed to promote N into the eye of the storm. N’s role as the scapegoat continued to be supported by the legitimate victim, V. The public
display of promotion from V toward N can be understood as a further part of the scapegoat or pharmokos parade that increases the contagion of desire, envy, frustration and hatred towards N. V had previously been experienced as the ultimate authority in the group, the critical judge. He had also been experienced as unchallengeable. But now N had become the surrogate victim for the group’s experiences of V. The following two quotes from interviews give depth to these events. The first from L conveys her actions to challenge N occurring on behalf of the group, and the second, a lengthy quote from an interview with V, shows the deeper dynamics of V’s relations to L, including his ambivalence about her asserting her opinions, and his feelings of concern and fraternity towards N.

L: And I guess I was frustrated with N because he was one of the voices and I could see that if he got his way the voices would be saying it all and all the rest of the group would be devalued. Their experiences wouldn’t mean anything. And I guess that group also would be comfortable with letting that happen because they don’t even value their own experience. So I was getting frustrated because he was trying to race ahead without looking at what was there. And not building a solid foundation on their knowledge and getting them involved as well. So I guess that was where my anger came from.

And V: I was totally unaware of L, and in retrospect could have seen that she was getting to the point of boiling over. I was totally unaware of it, so when she hoed into N I was literally shocked. I think I must have turned to her and my mouth must have dropped. It just took me totally by surprise, accompanied by that was a sinking feeling in my stomach, and I thought ‘Oh shit L what are you doing? Why are you hoeing into him? What must this poor guy feel like?’ I felt literally, physically sick, my stomach, I was really pissed off with L, ‘You’ve lost control’. So watching her, watching him, I became totally engrossed in it. Then that changed quite quickly. All that raced through my mind, and then I started breathing again, and I kind of felt okay. And I thought ‘Now hang on this is just a storming phase, a critical incident, what is the positives in all this?’ And I thought N must be
feeling terrible, but he has got Mr Supercool on the outside. I am very good at doing that feeling, absolutely shattered inside but no one would notice. So I thought he is coping very well, he has got coping mechanisms for handling this sort of stuff in public. Don’t rush in with a band-aid just yet.

What happened next was that some of the silent ones on my right started talking. They had never talked before. I thought hang on, there are some good things beginning. Then I became concerned suddenly. The men have stopped talking. One of the men is in a very vulnerable position here, is the, no the scapegoat, or maybe the scapegoat, but the one that you take pot shots at. So these quiet ones are taking courage from the woman, from the angry woman, some gender thing. Is it some gender thing now? Some of these quiet women who have been sitting on a bit of frustration, maybe with me and maybe with N, started taking pot shots at him and I wanted to stop that dynamic from happening.

So I then thought to myself what’s happening here is that L has spat the dummy, my role as my co-leader is to be the nurturing father. There is the tyrant mother. I need to be the nurturing father. So you know very often with L and me I am the tyrant and she becomes the nurturing mother. So I needed to look after N and that is why I ended up saying ‘I think what is happening here is positive because all this sort of stuff is happening but I am concerned about N - 'How do you feel?' And I put that on thinking I hope that L doesn’t feel that I am protecting him and anti her because I didn’t feel that at all. I had got over that shock. When N said something like ‘I think what is happening to the structure here and the strategy here’, I cut him off and said ‘That is not the question I asked you’. I asked you how you feel. Mixed messages there I think. Am I the nurturing parent? But phew you missed that, answer my question. So I think I felt at that time that he was pretty strong and could be confronted. And when I asked a question like ‘How do you feel N?’ and he evades it or misunderstands
it, I could chop him off and bring him back. He is a guy that can be confronted and that must have been what L sensed. She (L) been pissed off with him for two weeks at least, whereas I hadn’t, he was my bright eyed boy. And so I, he said, yes he was, he was feeling okay now. I thought he’s feeling okay now, that is good.

I like N, I think he rushes in where angels fear to tread, his arrogance gets up people’s nose, I see myself saying ‘Ooh N tone it down’ when he says something smartarse about how many books he has read or how he is way ahead of everybody else. Be careful you are going to upset people. Why I like him and why I approve of him, he’s the good student, he does the reading, he takes the subject on board, works hard, contributes and is a sort of lone wolf, somehow, he is like me. He is a lone wolf, not a group person and sort of puts his own agenda right out the front, and sort of misses the cues that other people are getting a bit iffy about his pushiness or his smartarseness or whatever.

V’s commentary evidences the bond between V and N and their difference to the group. They are the lone wolf, the one/s who sort of misses the cues that other people are getting a bit iffy about. In turn this supports the argument that N became a scapegoat for the group’s aggression, a surrogate victim in place of V.

The next week the parade of the pharmakos continued with N at the front inviting the group to comment about his part in the previous week. In the discussion that followed N stated he was solely responsible for eighty percent of the group’s exam marks. The group responded aggressively. K angrily challenged N’s right to make such a statement. K later said he did not know why he reacted so aggressively. Others followed, expressing their anger at N’s arrogance in the previous week. It seemed like N was implicit in his own sacrifice; that he was actively drawing the group’s hostility towards himself.

This was the end of the period of violence. In the next meeting N was championed as the group’s leader. The accursed now rose as the sacred. This meeting was
entirely different from all that had preceded it. The atmosphere was calm and relaxed. The conversation was open and feelings were talked about. N was explicitly acknowledged as the leader of the group. The group talked about their acceptance of him, their guilt from having attacked him, and their respect for his capacity to have coped with their attack. Also significant was the group’s discussion of their feelings of hostility towards L and V. The meeting concluded with a statement by L that sometimes during semesters she gets a warm feeling that the group is finally clicking, and that that was what she was feeling: Peace suddenly and mysteriously emerges out of the chaos of all against all (Marr 1998, p2). K commented on the shift in N being accepted as the leader of the group in the following statement:

 Well they didn't look at him so negatively because suddenly he was not just put in his place, but to a certain extent totally demoralised in front of everyone. I would say possibly even to the extent that he was put too much into his place. And suddenly then everyone then saw him as a person. Not just as a person, but someone who has got the potential to help the group, but suddenly a hurt person.

Over the following two weeks the group’s relation to management and leadership seemed far less conflicted than had been the case. The group supported N’s leadership. V shared his thoughts warmly with the group. L on one occasion looked adoringly at V as he spoke, and I mused that she was finally satisfied with him. Arguably hostilities had been contained and managed by N on behalf of V. DI expressed his changed feelings about V in the following:

 I feel that V is now part of the group. He used to; I guess it is the way, the body language and his facial expressions. When he speaks about something and he seems like he really means it, as everyone should be, as he says it and you listen to it, and you can't do anything else but listen to it. It sort of draws you to it. And nowadays he is actually cracking jokes every now and then, which is very good. The intimidation level just goes away. I have always been drawn to what
he says but a lot more now because I find him very interesting.

In the final meeting N stood up at the front for the whole hour. He unemotionally asked the group question after question about their experience of being in the group. He stated he wanted data for answering the exam question. I experienced this as a narcissistic display of arrogance. I wrote the room felt mad, quite mad. Perhaps these disturbing dynamics were distorted expressions of grief at the end of the life of the group. Whatever, they felt primitive and seemed to indicate the group’s lack of learning from its experiences. This is in accord with generally understood beliefs that unconscious primitive defense mechanisms, such as those described in this discussion, promote survival but not creative learning (Turquet 1975; Alford 1989; Segal 1995).

5.3.5 Conclusion
The discussion of case two has explored and evidenced a scapegoating dynamic that, in my view, was a dominant theme in this large group. The discussion has shown how a patriarchal management dynamic mobilised anxiety and aggression in group members that was unable to be directly expressed to management. Instead it is argued that the group’s aggression was directed towards one group member, N. N had identified himself as different to the group through his particular personal characteristics, and by taking up a leadership role. N survived the group’s attack. Subsequently he was publicly lauded as the group’s leader. The discussion shows the powerful affect of primitive anxiety in large groups. It illustrates how the struggle group members have with issues of psychological survival profoundly impact the formation and development of the group’s structure and culture. This in turn was shown to significantly affect the capacity of the group to work towards task.
6. Chapter six - case study three

6.1 Introduction
The chapter begins with a narrative of the third and final large group of the research. The narrative arises from the researcher’s experience of full participation in the group. As with the narratives of cases one and two, the narrative is limited by partiality in relaying one person’s experience, and by decisions made to include and exclude phenomena.

The discussion of the large group of case three follows the narrative. The discussion explores the uncertainty and difficulty of maintaining identity in the face of large group dynamics. In this, social defensive structures employed to protect against the threat of the dynamics are examined, along with consideration of their impact on the group’s functioning.

6.2 The narrative of the third case study
Week 1
The chairs were organised in a shell like spiral. At its widest point there were three layers to the spiral. Forty-three group members were present, including three Consultants. Twelve group members were male and thirty-one were females. There was one female consultant, G, and two male Consultants, P and C.

Prior to the group I was both excited and nervous. I had fears of being very anxious in the large group and was preparing myself for that possibility. I came early to the first meeting to be able to choose where I wanted to sit. As I looked around the room the thought of sitting in the middle of the spiral arrangement was terrifying; the thought elicited feelings of being exposed and vulnerable, so I sat on the edge of the spiral, near to the door.

When the meeting began there were four vacant seats, all were in the middle of the spiral. The Consultants were seated amongst the participants: C on the outer layer of the spiral; G in the second layer; and P in the second layer but on the opposite side of the room to G. Someone came into the room late and C moved from his seat to close the door after them. The latecomer took C’s seat and C took
an alternative seat in the middle of the spiral. This unsettled me. I wanted to alert the person that they had unseated one of the Consultants, but I didn't.

There was discussion about the terror of the middle seats. OR, an older male went and sat in the chair at the very end of the spiral in the middle; YH followed and also sat in one of the middle chairs. I felt liberated that people weren’t immobilised by the physical structures. There was chatting and laughter. Reference made to how hot it was in the middle, like a crater in a volcano someone responded Did that mean it was going to erupt?

E (male) suggested that before we spoke we should name ourselves. Another man supported this idea. I became fearful. I was comfortable hiding namelessly behind the person in front of me. I felt inviolate and somehow proud of not speaking. Someone said they felt resistant to naming themselves, and resistant to E for trying to control the group by making group members all the same, i.e. all named. Another member (female) agreed saying said that it was a gender domination issue with the men trying to take control of the group. I embraced this idea, a familiar angst against males. G (Consultant) reflected that perhaps not naming oneself represented a fear of becoming a part of the group. This was what I was feeling. I was scared the cost of saying my name would be the loss of my comfort. To the group I said that I was loath to speak because it felt like I was making a choice to join the group and I was frightened of doing that. In response the woman next to me took my hand and shook it. She said her name was MB. I reluctantly returned the gesture and said my name. I had chosen to speak but had felt coerced into naming myself. I felt violated and angry. A suggestion was made to move the chairs to face each other. Once again I felt my anonymity threatened, fear rose in my throat.

At times during the week between the first and second meetings I was filled with a joy of being a part of something shared with forty other people.
Week 2

After I had sat down but before the group had started SE, the woman next to me was talking about being *silly* and turning the chairs upside down. There were eight empty chairs. G was sitting somewhere in the middle of the spiral. She was the most prominent of the Consultants in my mind. I thought the group were waiting to see if other members turned up. I was worried that there were so many empty seats. The group felt unfinished, not whole. Four women arrived separately during the first five minutes. Their footsteps, hollow, clunking sounds of shoe heels, indicated their gender. Then there were four vacant seats. I was aware that Ian, the man who in the previous week had sat at the end of the spiral in the middle, now sat at the other end of the spiral, on the outside. Comments were made about difficulties in hearing. I silently agreed. I was also finding it hard to hear.

Discussion occurred about wanting to move seats, wanting to be silly, wanting to play. I didn’t connect to this discussion at all. To me the group seemed full of unrecognisable aliens. I had been joyful about belonging to the group during the week but when I came into the room I felt horribly isolated. There was talk of rebellion, somebody got up and swapped seats with somebody else. Two people began talking to each other and then somebody from across the room yelled out *That can’t be done, that is not allowed, that’s not right.* The person who yelled explained she couldn’t cope with the two people talking together and ignoring the rest of the group. P (Consultant) suggested it was unacceptable for people to have any alliances; that somehow we all had to be the same, all isolated within the group.

G (Consultant) wondered about the infantile nature of the group. The woman sitting next to her reacted negatively saying now she felt like a naughty child. Some areas of the room agreed that they too felt like naughty children. I didn’t have any relation to those feelings. I was struggling with the notion of participation and how I was going to enter the group. V named the group’s childish behaviour as a revolt against the Consultants.
I was worried about what to say and whether or not it would sound all right. Two or more people spoke of feelings of inadequacy in participating in the group. One of these was a woman who said that not having a degree made her feel that anything she said would be viewed as *dumb*. Someone else said they felt judged by the group. J spoke of struggling with her feelings of being judged and how during the week she had *worked through that* and had come to a space where she wasn’t so concerned. Other people said how they had enjoyed last week but still had really struggled to get here this week, and that now that they were here, they were hating it.

I was trying to think about my fears of being negatively judged. G spoke about the group coming to terms with what the task was, suddenly I realised that what I needed to do was to trust my experience. The thought was that I shouldn’t worry about putting something into the group but just sit with myself and trust that when I was ready I would be able to contribute. I felt relief flood over me. I felt more myself. I felt more able to hear, think and speak. I spoke about these thoughts to the group and I felt authoritative. The group listened silently and I was grateful for their attention. I felt connected instead of disconnected both to myself and to the group. It seemed that focusing on the task had freed me from worrying about connecting to the group, paradoxically I felt more connected.

**Week 3**

I came in and sat next to V. L was sitting next to V, and FL was sitting next to L. I was sitting next to three people that I knew. Someone said *How can it be we are up to week three of the six weeks? How are we going to do this in such a short amount of time?* E said that he had been thinking something quite different. He seemed to be implying how could we fill up such a large amount of time. A few people laughed. I thought they were indicating their dissatisfaction with the group. There was some talk of connectedness and disconnectedness to the group but I didn’t make sense of it all because I was being flooded by feelings of panic. I heard G’s voice commenting on whether or not the group was undertaking the task. Then I spoke to the group about what I was feeling. I said I didn’t think the panic was all mine but that it was also the group’s. I motioned with my hands to
give the panic back to the group. I asked whether others felt panic. H, who previously had sat on the outside of the spiral and who was now sitting in the middle, said she had felt panicked the previous week and that maybe sitting on the outside of the group you are holding that (panic) on behalf of the group. She said that it was much more comfortable for her sitting in the middle of the group. Another woman wondered if her wanting to go to the toilet was really finding a way to get out of the room. She seemed to imply this was her panicked escape. Another group member spoke to me soothingly although I didn’t follow what was said. P said the panic was about the fear of annihilation, a loss of individuation that can occur in large groups. He spoke as though my feelings were all right to have. I felt somehow patronised.

Then FL spoke about a large group she was involved in outside. She said how she felt she only had two choices; to be completely in the group and conform to the group’s ways, or be completely out. The hopelessness of this situation resonated with my feelings of panic. To be in this group felt as though I had to succumb to the group acting on me.

I felt really good that I had talked about the feelings of panic. I felt comfortable and clear. I felt like nothing could go wrong now, that nobody could refute or deny my experience.

After the group L came up to me and said Well, have it back, have the panic back. She said that as I had motioned the panic away from myself, she had felt it in herself. She said she didn’t even know it had been inside her. The implication seemed to be that now she knew it had been there all the time.

Somebody in the room said This is like a Greek theatre. I imagined hearing a whispering echo of anxiety, anxiety, anxiety, over and over.

Week 4
It was Melbourne Cup Day, a public holiday. I had been slightly delayed in getting to the meeting. When I arrived the Consultants were going into the room. I
felt flustered. I sat on the outer rim of the spiral again. My first impression was of a lot of empty seats. There were twenty-six people present including the Consultants. This was only five more than half the group. I was very conscious that two older male members weren’t there. In particular I noted the absence of OR, the man who had held the ends of the spiral in the first two weeks.

BQ came to the group for the first time this week. He sat in the chair next to the central chair of the spiral. After a few minutes H said I’ve been dying to find out who you are? BQ responded with his name. There was talk then about what BQ might represent to the group. Some thought he might hold the magic secret to our difficulties. G later referred to him as our possible Messiah. I was annoyed by what I experienced as BQ’s desire to be the centre of the group’s attention.

Of the four or five people who came into the room late, the latest was one woman who arrived approximately half an hour after the start of the group. When she arrived she said that she really had not wanted to miss the group, even though she was aware of how late she was. She said this very reverently. Her facial expression implied the import of what she was saying. I felt beauty in the room.

There was conversation occurring about what it felt like to be in a smaller group, some people saying that they didn’t like the spaces, others, like me, saying that it was much easier to hear. People spoke about how they were feeling. Someone said the feelings being expressed were not genuine. I didn’t agree. I thought the group was in a state of being able to express their experience far more than in previous weeks. C said he wondered if the group atmosphere was a bit ethereal (Ethereal was the horse who had that day won the Melbourne Cup). I said that it seemed that people in the group were quite beautiful, that there was beauty in the room. G linked beautiful with beautification (the dead person in bliss), and asked whether this felt like some sort of religious experience. This was interpreted by some group members that G was saying we were avoiding the task. At the time I didn’t think we were, and I didn’t think that was what G meant. She did mean this however; as she went onto say that perhaps it was difficult to experience the pain and the difficulty of being in the group. A woman sitting at the end of the spiral
on the outer rim said that she had hope that this group offered her the possibilities of answers, and this was very important to her. She also said that she was worried about the group ending and was already grieving this inevitability. I was struck by this and felt she held for me feelings about the group ending. I felt grateful to her for feeling what I didn’t want to feel. I felt like she had given me a gift that left me free to experience other aspects of the group rather than being filled by grief.

Group members made links between people speaking their mind and breaking the beauty, as well as experiencing the pain and breaking the beauty.

Then H began speaking about herself and the other (the group). A woman said that the use of that sort of language made her feel dumb. H said it upset her that someone might feel dumb by the language she used. A black haired woman with glasses said she was concerned about people not taking responsibility for either what they say or what they feel, I could not hear which. It was a very hard patch of speaking to hear and understand. There were three rows of chairs between the speaker and the spoken to and people blocked my view. E, in what I experienced as an autocratic manner, spoke about what was needed to be put into the group. There was talk about feeling clever in the group, in all groups. The dark haired woman said yes that is what she wanted, to feel clever in social settings.

V then said that maybe we had broken the beauty and comfort in the group solely because G had suggested that feeling the beauty may be us avoiding the difficulty of the task. V said he was not happy about losing the comfort. G wondered what could be dismantled and what could be mantled in the group and why. A question was asked by someone about the consultant’s impact in determining what we discussed. Then G, C and P stood and left, signalling the end of the allocated time.

I had felt more connected to the group this week than I had previously. I thought there was a common language being spoken which was more emotional and inclusive.
Week 5
I sat in what was now my normal chair on the outer rim of the spiral. I tried to sit at the very end of the spiral, the outside end, but I couldn’t stay there, I felt too exposed. The end chair seemed to hold a responsibility for the group that was intolerable to me. There was conversation occurring around me about where people were sitting. A man was asking a woman to come and sit next to him. There was already a woman on the other side of this man. Another person said *Oh, look at him, he is surrounded.* I understood that to mean that he was arranging a safety zone around himself.

There were nine empty seats when the Consultants came into the room. I was worried about the high number of absences. I had a need for the whole group to be present. As the first five minutes passed a group of three people came in, and then two further people arrived. G announced that there were two people who had rung to say that they were not going to continue with the group. I thought the Consultants had removed chairs. I tried to count the chairs but gave up in confusion.

A woman spoke first, talking about what she had experienced when she had woken that morning. She had been dreaming and then thinking about H’s statements of ‘self’ and ‘other’ from the last week. She had wondered if H was the ‘other’ to/for the group because she was bound to a wheelchair. My eyes were on H. To me she seemed crestfallen. I imagined she was thinking/feeling *not again, not this.* Comments were made by other people. I don’t know what was said but they seemed to ignore that H was in the room. I was thinking about what I could do or say to support H. Then H said *Why are people talking about last week? Why is it difficult for you to be thinking about this week?* Then the women with the dream repeated in detail exactly what she had previously said. I found this iteration excruciating. I was screaming silently for her to stop. H said that she didn't want to talk about that.

Y announced that she was going to be brave. She told how she had left the group the previous week feeling despondent. She said she had gone to her book of
sayings for inspiration and had opened the book to the world. The book fell open to a passage about honesty and truth. Reading this she said had really helped her, so she had photocopied the passage to share with the group. The copies were each rolled up and tied with a red ribbon. They were bundled together in a wicker basket. I found the visual effect powerful, like a holy religious artefact. Y said she wanted to offer the scrolls to group members. She said it was up to each of us whether or not we wanted to take one. I was horrified. I felt Y was breaking sacred ground. To me she had done a trite, ‘Woman’s Dayish’ thing in a holy temple. Y was stilted in the way she presented the scrolls. I thought this indicated nervousness. I was shocked, angry, numb and unable to think. I thought P looked at me and I felt he was communicating to me What is happening here? I thought G looked bemused. L went and took the basket of scrolls and offered them to group members. Some people took them, some people didn’t. I was looking at a woman across the room (It was the woman who in the previous week had dreamt about H). I felt like we were colluding in our disgust of what was occurring. I felt like the woman and I were superior to Y and others who seemed to be taking the scrolls seriously.

The group’s silence was broken by E expressing his pleasure about how courageous Y had been. V agreed that Y had been brave. He went on to say that this was the first action the group had taken. E then reinforced V’s view. J said she had appreciated Y’s gift but the words on the scrolls hadn’t done anything for her. I was sitting silently, full of anger. I felt Y’s action had gone too far in challenging the method of the study group. There was then a long conversation about whether people took a scroll and read it, took a scroll and didn’t read it, didn’t take a scroll and didn’t read anyone else’s, or didn’t take a scroll and read someone else’s. P said how difficult it seemed to be able to belong to the group as a whole.

I spoke saying that I thought a challenge was occurring about whether or not what the Consultants were offering was acceptable. G responded saying something about the Consultants. A man with glasses quickly said he felt patronised by P’s
comments about the difficulty of belonging to the group as a whole. Then V exploded saying things like:

I’ve been sitting here feeling this, this, this, for this long and this is the wimpiest group that I have ever been a part of. Why is it that the group cannot think about this issue of Consultants? It is obvious that it has been there since week one. And the group is unable to think about it and the three Consultants just sit there and we do nothing about that. And yes they make us angry. What has happened in this group has been boring and useless and passive.

V sounded fired up and went on for quite a few minutes about the incapacity of the group. There were multiple conversations occurring after V spoke. From one conversation I heard P (Consultant) referred to as the grey haired man in the middle. It was hard to hear. The room felt full of energy.

I was frustrated the conversation seemed more cognitive than emotional and that men were doing most of the talking. I thought even V’s outrage seemed to have emanated from his head rather than his heart. I felt distant and empty of sensation. I felt surrounded by men. The men all seemed to be sitting in a block. There was a group of three men sitting together, with a male sitting in front of them. Then there was me and two males behind me. I felt surrounded. I became aware of how different it was from the previous week when I felt people were in their experience. Then OR, the man who had held the ends of the spiral in the first two weeks spoke about himself and his feelings. I experienced his words as emotional and inclusive. I became confused because all men weren’t communicating in the same exclusive way.

I spoke up saying I had been happy last week but this week was different because I felt surrounded by men. I said there was so much aggression, and then said No, not aggression. I said it seemed like the men wanted to beat the shit out of each other. G said that she wondered if what the men really wanted to do was to beat the shit out of the grey haired man in the middle, meaning P. I thought this was a
wonderful intervention. After this the room felt vital, full of sexual energy. Then
time ran out.

Between weeks five and six I was worried and remorseful about having made all
embracing statements about men in the group.

**Week 6**
I sat in the back row on the other side to where I usually sat. I felt scared in
making this change. L sat next to me. There were a lot of chairs missing but over
the first five minutes quite a few people wandered in. Three or four chairs in the
middle of the spiral were empty. By the time the latecomers arrived there were
four empty chairs. I found the conversation occurring about times of significance
in the group, dull and lifeless. I was wondering how this could be stretched to last
the whole hour. E commented how the group had stimulated him. He thanked
everybody for their participation in that. A few other people made similar
comments. The previous week was talked about. There was a lot of comment
about how the group had failed. E said that it seemed we were all *picking over a
carcass*. Two people said they felt nauseous. To my mind men in particular were
very negative about what the group had offered them.

The details of their comments escaped me because I was struggling with whether I
would apologise to the males for my making of stereotypical statements in the
previous week. My struggle was because I was confused. I couldn’t work out how
I could have made a statement and not make it universal. How I could have made
a truthful statement when the truth seemed to move around? My experience of the
men was universal, a group thing, however, paradoxically I also experienced that
some males didn’t fit my accusations. I was confused and frustrated by this
paradox and my desire to be fair. I wanted to apologise for including people who
did not warrant inclusion, and I wanted to talk about the complexity of making
fair judgment in a large group. But I couldn’t because, ironically, at that time I felt
overwhelmed by the dominance of men in the group. I felt grey. I felt no
animation.
About twenty minutes into the group time a man who I had never seen before walked through the door. He was wearing an orange shirt and white pants. He came in and said *Oh, will I shut the door?* He walked in and put his bag down to the side and came and sat in the centre seat of the spiral. The group went silent. It seemed the group was in shock. I was thinking the man must be at the wrong place. There were three to four minutes of nothing, silence, absolute silence. There were a host of looks between people going back and forward across the room. The looks seemed to be questioning; *Is this a set up? What is happening? Who is he? Is anybody going to say anything? What is going to happen now?* I felt like I was sitting on the edge of a precipice. AU asked the man who he was. He said his name was XR. AU asked one question then another. XR answered in monosyllables. XR sat in an exaggeratedly casual manner, his tone of voice suggested he was enjoying himself. It emerged he had been in the group in the first week. Nobody claimed to recognise him. He said events had transpired that had not allowed him to attend after the first week and he had wanted to be there on the last session. He said he was late today because of bad traffic on Glenferrie Road. I didn’t believe this because I had travelled Glenferrie Road and the traffic was moving freely. The men in the group made jokes about the name of the intruder.

XR commented on how engaged everybody was in the group. He said how powerful the group was and that there were no bounds to what the group could do. I felt strongly that XR had no right to make statements about the groups functioning. I thought he was pompous and arrogant.

XR was questioned by a male about why he was here. P wondered if instead of picking over the group’s carcass we were now picking over XR. I felt in shock. The men had taken over with their humour. I didn’t speak for the whole session. Neither did many other women. I felt like only men were speaking. I felt numb and very isolated. I felt the whole session had been a conspiracy to shut the women down.
Later, after the group had finished, MF came to me and said she had found out that the PhD student who she had heard was observing the group, was me. She wondered if the suspicion that was placed on XR was displaced, undisussed suspicion about an unknown observer in the group.

6.3 Case discussion
6.3.1 Introduction
As with the discussion of case one and case two, the discussion of case three is shaped by a working hypothesis that the experience of being in a large group mobilises primitive anxiety held deep in the psyche of group members. It is suggested that the ways in which people manage this anxiety is through the employment of both conscious and unconscious defenses at individual, group and system levels. The discussion concentrates on individual and group defenses and is focused on consideration of the particular threats and the consequences of those threats observed in this large group. The discussion of case one focussed on the way female authority was experienced and managed in the group and the discussion of case two explored the emergence and impact of patriarchal authority. The discussion of this large group, case three, explores the difficulties inherent in maintaining individual identity whilst becoming and being a large group member, and the profound effect this struggle has on the group’s functioning.

The discussion highlights defensive structures including projection, scapegoating, polarisation (splitting) and homogenisation. The theories of Turquet (1975) are used to frame this discussion. Turquet’s theories provide a comprehensive analysis of the problems of projective processes in large groups. Turquet’s theories were introduced in Chapter two (p28). Those theories are reiterated and extended in this chapter, before being exemplified in the discussion about this large group.

6.3.2 Theory
Turquet (1975) identifies projective processes as central to survival of the self in groups. He argued that individuals need confirmatory feedback to function
effectively, particularly when communication contains affective projective matter such as *I feel...* (1974, p105). Turquet considers possibilities of a fit, or congruency of projections, between group members (projective identification) as more likely in small groups than large groups due to the availability of familiar family models to communicate and respond within. In small groups if there is not a projective fit there is possibility that through direct communication feelings of incongruence are able to be acknowledged, and recovery of projection and the development of insight may occur. Both fit and recovery of projection are understood to establish relatedness in the group and affirm selfhood of both the sender and receiver.

Turquet argues that the ‘large’ size of the group obstructs its projective processes. When aspects of the self are projected into a large group, response is often difficult to locate. It may be that there is a bombardment of responses, or responses which have no identifiable source. For example, the response may have come from behind and may be attributable to any number of unknown individuals. In any case, the projection is not usually experienced by the sender as received or rejected by another. Instead it is as though a part of the self is lost, unlocatable and therefore unrecoverable inside the group. This engenders feelings of boundlessness; a vastness external within the group and then internal within the psyche. As individuals seek unsuccessfully to find internal models to bound experience of the external vastness, prior experience of helplessness in early life is easily mobilised. These dynamics are projected back into the group, and then introjected by the individual in a circular and exponentially reinforced pattern. Simultaneously the individual is being bombarded with other’s unlocatable projections. Fantasy flourishes and through projection members lose ever increasing parts of themselves. The group remains in a collusive system dominated by mutual projective fantasy. A cycle of depletion of self, surging anxiety and aggression continues. Main calls this cycle *malignant projective processes* (1975, p63). The outcome of this malignancy threatens release of psychotic violence and consequently risks the sanity of the individual and the group.
Turquet argues that failed projective processes obstruct the individual from moving from being a Singleton (1975, p94); not yet part of the group but attempting to find relations with other singletons, to being an Individual member (IM) (p94); a state where the individual is both one self and part of the group. To make the transition to IM contact needs to be made with the skin of my neighbour (p96), close enough to provide assurance of the other’s continuity, and distant enough to enable recognition of each individual. If the transition from singleton to IM is unsuccessful the individual either withdraws from the group or fuses with the group, losing the self within the group’s momentum. This latter state Turquet calls a Membership Individual (MI) (p95).

The pattern of group life is thought to be determined by the individual’s capacity to struggle with, and make the transition to Individual Membership. IM is the only state where differentiation of individuals is possible. The availability of individual’s unique capacities is imperative in the group to enable capacity to think, create and learn. In contrast, a homogenised group where everybody is the same does not foster thought or creative possibilities. In this fused state the ‘mob’ acts in unison. This conjures images of primitive violence, of mob mentality and rule.

Despite this violent potential, large groups tend towards homogenisation rather than differentiation. Paradoxically homogenisation enacted through defenses including polarisation/splitting and scapegoating is one of the primary structures through which the violent capacity of large groups is understood to be managed. These defensive structures are discussed later in this section (p171).

The genesis of violence is understood to be located in the struggle engaged in maintaining the self in the context of the large group; violence erupting from the extreme frustration and anxiety experienced in trying to manage the bombardment of responses and projections. The disturbing experience of a fractured self who has lost the capacity to think, express oneself, and take up a role, results in an atomic explosion with a consequent release of enormous destructive forces, directed against all that the situation contains (Turquet 1975, p130). The violence
in the group is an aggregate of each members struggle for survival. In addition the large group has a characteristic called *errancy* (p132) where fearfulness results in the exaggeration of dynamics. In the large group the possibilities of violence take on fantastic proportions.

Management of the group’s violence is paramount in safeguarding the group’s survival. If member’s independence is not controlled the pervasive fear is that violence will be unleashed through envious murderous impulses (Main 1975; Kreeger 1992). Thus large group social defense mechanisms are understood to exist to ensure the group maintains a non-differentiated, protective structure. These defenses include scapegoating, polarisation/splitting and institutionalisation. These defenses are briefly described in the following and illustrated in the discussion.

In scapegoating, as was evidenced in case two, members who are identified as different to the mob are vulnerable to attack from the group. The scapegoat serves the purpose of deterring others from venturing away from the status quo, and as a receptacle for the groups aggression.

In polarisation/splitting, members take refuge in subgroup formations. Opposite subgroupings such as the *men* and the *women*, the *speakers* and the *non-speakers* exist to balance each other out. Subgroups also tend to collapse individual distinctiveness into groupthink, once again protecting the group from dangers of differentiation.

In institutionalisation, rigid hierarchal structuring, inflexible communication patterns and autocratic control require individuals to repress non-conformist tendencies.

The lack of differentiation inherent in each of these defensive structures, whilst protecting against violence, obstructs creativity, understanding, and the possibilities of making decisions and moving forward. As well, each of the
defenses paradoxically mobilise fearfulness, anxiety and violence, for which they were created to defend against.

Turquet also identifies that the Consultants are often used as receptacles for the group’s violence. In this, the Consultants are perceived by the group as responsible for the plight of the members. The Consultants may be thought to be all knowing. They are also thought to be actively using knowledge to manipulate and create difficulties for the members. The experience of the Consultants by group members is described as the *talionic crushing weight of authority* (Turquet 1975, p132). Consequently group members must band together against the Consultants to survive. This opposition entrenches destructiveness in the group by denying the opportunity to name and work with the experiences of violence, and obstructs other opportunities for support for members in making the transition from singleton to IM. According to Turquet the Consultants, if they can maintain their role in the face of the group dynamics, and only then if the group allows their role, offer the only reliable location within the group for containing, mediating and working through the difficulties members are experiencing between themselves and the group.

6.3.4 The discussion
The following explores my experiences of the large group of case three through the lens of Turquet’s theories. It illuminates the struggle to maintain a coherent sense of self in the light of the powerful large group dynamics. The exploration also proposes ways in which this struggle impacts the functioning of the group, and the group’s capacity to attend to task.

The path I forged through the course of the group meetings fluctuated between singleton, IM and MI status. The vastness and terror described about large group life (Le Bon 1920; Freud 1921; Turquet 1975) existed in my mind even before the group began. I feared in advance what the experience could hold. And then in the first moments of the group a metaphor of a volcano was spoken of; the chairs in the middle of the room were likened to the volcano’s crater. I absorbed these
images of abyss-like depths and the fury of eruption. I felt I was amidst primitive chaos.

These fears fuelled my reluctance to join the group. Like the sentiments in the following passage, I arrogantly held onto my silence defending against what could happen to me if I spoke:

So too, at the beginning of a session, it seems as if the member of the large group, no longer singleton, but not yet fully an IM – in fact an I – perceives himself as surrounded, therefore bounded, by his own silence. While remaining within his own island of silence he is a singleton. The temptation to remain there is great, since omnipotent mastery seems still within his grasp. To step off into relatedness with others, hence to build up his IM status, may be worth attempting, but the move carries a risk of an I turning into a MI or worse. The content of this risk is not only to step from the known singleton state into the yet unknown I state, but because the unknown has an unencompassable vastness, there is the further risk of an endless disappearance (Turquet 1975, p119).

In weeks one and two, whilst I was anxious about joining the group, I managed the anxiety well enough to experience being in the group as tolerable. However in week three I experienced anxiety that almost overwhelmed me. I felt there was nothing inside me, I panicked. Turquet (1975) describes surges of anxiety occurring as due to the experience of external vastness in large groups. As a result people’s internal boundaries of continuity become threatened and the past becomes lost. Consequently what is me present is unknown and the self is discontinuous and collapses. In these circumstances it is understood people quickly seek others for reassurance of continuous existence and survival of the past. I understand this is what I did by speaking out from the panic and making contact with group members. The panic immediately left me and I felt relieved. I believe the trigger for the panic was the absence of members; the empty chairs mobilising feelings of loss, discontinuity and fracture. The missing members were
not mentioned in the large study group. It might have been that their absence was too painful for the group to acknowledge and discuss.

Returning now to the beginnings of the first week, it was an issue of names that first tested my and seemingly other members’, singleton states. Still only minutes into the first meeting this issue revealed the operating of multiple group defense mechanisms. First the group split into those who named themselves and those who didn’t. Then the statement that this was a gender domination issue polarised the males as the namers attempting to coerce the females, the nameless. In reality only two males of the twelve in the group said they wished people to name themselves before they spoke. The fantasy of the separation of the genders encircled me in the familiar comfort of opposition. This demonstrates splitting or polarisation as a defensive mechanism.

Second, it was stated that the attempt to have all members name themselves when they spoke was an act to make the group all the same. This illustrates homogenisation, the primary defense against violence in large groups.

Member’s investment of parts of themselves onto the physical structures of the room also acted as a defensive mechanism. For me determining where to sit was an important decision. In each session I sat in the outer curve of the spiral. I avoided the inner curves because I had vested my insecurities onto the inner chairs. I could not even think of those chairs without feeling exposed and vulnerable. The group also had endowed the middle curve with animism, as in the analogue of the volcano crater. I could not sit at the outer end of the spiral because I conferred that seat (and the end chair in the middle) with additional responsibilities for the group. Similarly H expressed her view of what the different curves of the spiral represented. When I spoke of my experience of panic H responded saying she had also felt panicked in the previous week when she was sitting on the outside curve of the spiral. She associated her seating position to possibilities of the outside curve holding or containing panic on behalf of the group. This type of phenomenon reflects attempts by the members to separate and
bound experience into encompassable entities. The delineation of the room, and of
particular chairs, decreasing feelings of being lost in the vastness of the group.

The polarisation of gender as a defense, described in the earlier issue of naming,
existed at other times in my experience of the large group. It was particularly
evident for me in the final two weeks of the group when I experienced being
surrounded and dominated by the men. I had great difficulty in thinking through
this issue because even though cognitively I knew that not all the men were acting
in the same domineering way, I felt like they were. I tried a number of times to
speak to the group about the confusion I was experiencing, however I did not
speak. My feelings of being dominated by the men rendered me speechless, and
overwhelmed my capacity to work. This lack of feeling and connection to the
group continued for the remainder of the sessions.

Stereotypic labelling and behaviour can be understood as a response to the
absence of familiar internal models to facilitate successful projective processes. In
the large group, because of its size, projective material becomes lost. As a
consequence large categorisations of familiarity are mobilised that members can
belong to and communicate within and from. These categories are usually
stereotypic and exaggerated, with little differentiation or personalisation.
Difficulties occur for individuals in identifying with such broad categories, and
also in the group’s common understanding of what each category constitutes.

Since the I cannot recover his projections, self correction behaviour
becomes impossible as does consequent responsive behaviour. As an
attempt to recover balance and remain an IM, the threatened I
perseverates, either by repetitively stating his point of view or attitude,
or by acting out a stereotypical role regardless of the circumstances
in which he finds himself (Turquet 1975, p13).

I could only express the defensive stereotypic aspect of my experience of the men
donating. The more mature differentiated aspects, i.e. that it was not all men
acting in the same way, and the guilt I felt in making false all-embracing
statements, were confusing to me and were unable to be expressed in the group. I wanted to participate in the group in a meaningful task orientated way, however I was dominated by the fantasy that men were acting all the same. My non-actions were that of a stereotypic passive female wherein I had lost my individuality. The group can be understood to be acting on me in its own interests of survival. Consequently I became an MI, dominated by the group and rendered senseless. In this example I can see how differently this might have been played out in a small group. I can imagine at least expressing my confusion in the context of a containing relation to the consultant, and with a greater knowledge of expected responses of group members. However the experience in the large group, imagined even now, conjures no image of predictable support for my speaking, nor of a predictable response of any group member. Instead when I return to the scene in my mind I feel anxiety and nothingness, an absence of relation.

At a group level the polarisation of women and men also exemplifies group/antigroup dichotomies (Turquet 1975, p134). In this, opposite groupings for example, talkers-silent ones, men-women, feelers-thinkers etc. balance each other out ensuring that nothing distinctive emerges. Recall that the group has an unconscious presumption that autonomy and activity will always be violent. The group/anti group dichotomy, through negating activity, ensures the violence is contained, but at the cost of limiting the group’s creative and active capacities.

The most dominant and enduring dichotomy in the group’s life I experienced was between the men and the women. The namers and the nameless, also discussed earlier, were another group/anti group, and another was those who supported the Consultants versus those who didn’t support the Consultants. The latter grouping emerged when Y presented her scrolls to the group. I experienced the presentation of the scrolls as anti task and as such in opposition to the Consultants and the method. I fantasised that a covert group, including at least one of the Consultants, concurred with me that this was an untenable action. It was us against Y and her supporters; those for the Consultants and the methods they offered, and those against. Similarly, on other occasions when the purpose and legitimacy of the
method of study was scrutinised or jokingly put down, I felt a member of a covert grouping of pro-Consultants and pro-method.

My strong reaction to Y’s giving of the scrolls, ‘as though it was a terrorist activity’ is an example of how I was experiencing and contributing to the violent and persecutory culture of the group. I was powerfully threatened by this independent act of Y’s. I felt that Y’s actions were attacking of the methods of the group and in response I silently attacked her. The scroll occurrence was just one example of the paranoid and persecutory culture. Another example occurred in session two when a woman yelled at two people talking across the room to each other. This was a strong attack on what could only be seen objectively as an innocuous, placid conversation. And another similar event occurred in the final session in the group’s response when the unknown ‘XR’ entered the room. This event evoked strength of suspicion and feelings of invasion, akin, once again, to terrorist infiltration. Whilst each of these responses seems out of kilter with the actual events that took place, in the context of the group, they felt utterly valid. This is an example of errancy, the experience of amplified feelings in the large group. Turquet (1975) links this exaggeration to the absence of location of responsibility in the group. He says that without anyone taking responsibility to bound violence it is experienced as free floating, ubiquitous and with limitless proportions.

These examples illustrate the persecutory culture that dominated the large group. However, at least superficially, in contrast, there were times when the affect in the group was positive. This was particularly the case in week four when the atmosphere in the group was quite different than it had been before. I felt beauty in the room. Discussion was had about whether people were having religious experiences. ‘Otherworldly’ terms including beautification and ethereal were used. G suggested that the group might have been finding it difficult to experience the pain and difficulty of being in the group; she was implying that we were avoiding the task by basking together in comfortable feelings. Similarly Turquet refers to a paradise myth in large groups. The wish is not to know, never to return and would that he had never been there (1975, p103) to the disturbing reality of
the large group experience. The beauty and comfort identified in the group considered through these concepts is yet another attempt to make all members the same, to be as one as a defense against violence.

Scapegoating as a social defense mechanism was also apparent in the group. For example, in week four a woman sitting on the outer end of the spiral said she was already grieving the group’s end. I was grateful that the woman was carrying the ending and associated emotions for me. I thought this was a positive occurrence because it liberated me from what I imagined were formidable emotions, to experience other aspects of the group’s life. I also thought it was positive as it showed that the group was able to allow a member to take up a role on its behalf. However at the closing plenary the same woman questioned the adequacy of the number of sessions of the large group. The woman was bombarded with other people’s experience justifying the number of sessions. I believed that of any group member this woman had the right to question and work with issues of ending, so that she could manage the emotions she had been experiencing on our behalf. The group did not allow her this. Instead it seemed that she was being left with the emotion of ending, and simultaneously disbarred from exploring that in the group’s context. It seemed she became a scapegoat for the group’s unbearable grief. I felt depleted and angry and spoke up defending the woman’s right to hold an opinion. In retrospect I believe I colluded with the scapegoating by originally splitting off my own relation to the group’s ending and never taking it back, and then by not further challenging the group in the closing plenary. I suspect I also did not want too much discussion because then I also may have had to feel my own grief for the group’s ending.

Another example of the group attempting to scapegoat a member occurred in week five. However in this instance the member who was being victimised was able to contain the group’s projections and avert the scapegoating attempts. The event occurred when a woman bought her dreams to the group about H, a group member bound to a wheelchair. She said she had dreamt that H was the ‘other’ in the group. The ‘other’ had been a part of a discussion in the previous week. I felt the woman’s intent was to focus the group on H, and for H to disclose how it
felt to be the crippled other. H challenged the woman saying *Why are people talking about last week? Why is it difficult for you to be thinking about last week?* The woman then repeated exactly her previous statements about H, as though H wasn’t in the room. H said she didn’t want to talk about it. The group then went on to other things. At the time H’s responses seemed complex to me, as though she had absorbed the woman’s statements and their intent, worked with them, and responded to the group in a thoughtful way. The attempts to make H the ‘other’ can be understood as efforts to project onto H the crippled parts of the group. H would then become a scapegoat for the group’s inability to deal with its own incompleteness. However H was able to contain the projections, locate them as outside the task boundary and persist with her work on the task. This event also showed me the robustness needed to work with the power of large group projections.

I do not know specifically what personal or group dynamic enabled H to work with the group’s violent capacity. However Turquet identifies the Consultants as the primary catalyst in the group in working with large group hostility. If the Consultants are able to stay in role they can help the group locate and work with the violence.

*Their (the Consultants) presence helps to locate it (violence) and, being no longer errant but now located, violence becomes aggression, for understanding, hence for further control and mastery* (1975, p133).

This I believe occurred on a number of occasions in the large group. One of these was in week five. I said that it seemed that the men wanted to *beat the shit out of each* other. G then said she wondered if what the men really wanted to do was to *beat the shit out of the grey haired man in the middle*. G’s intervention named the possibility of the group’s violence against the Consultants. A similar incident occurred in the last week of the group’s life when XR, the man who had made the dramatic entrance, was being interrogated by the group. P asked the group if instead of picking over the group’s carcass (as had been previously spoken about)
that now the group might be *picking over XR*. P was alerting the group to its attack on XR, making available to the group the possibilities of exploring its violence rather than unconsciously acting it out. Whilst neither of these interventions was publicly explored they provided opportunity for members to externally locate the violence, and to take responsibility for their own collusive part in it.

Considering further the concept of containment in the group, the data revealed a pattern that suggests the Consultants acted as a container for my anxieties that enabled me to both think and speak. There were six occasions across the six weeks that I spoke, on five of these I have identified a consultant intervening in the group immediately preceding my speech. It seems that I identified with the consultant’s capacity to work with the experience of being in the group and this enabled me to manage my anxiety enough to think and work on the task. As discussed in Chapter three (p81), this dynamic may have been enhanced by an established containing relationship between one of the Consultants ‘G’ and myself; G being my thesis adviser.

The five occasions when I spoke are as follows:

in week one, G reflected that perhaps not naming oneself reflected a fear of becoming part of the group. This was what I was feeling. To the group I said I was loath to speech because it felt like I was making a choice and I was frightened of doing that;

in week two, G spoke about the group coming to terms with what the task was and suddenly I realised that what I needed to do was to trust my experience. The thought was that I shouldn’t worry about putting something into the group but just sit with myself and trust that when I was ready I would be able to contribute. I felt relief flood over me. I felt more myself. I felt more able to hear, think and speak. I spoke about these thoughts to the group;
in week three, there was some talk of connectedness and disconnectedness to the group however I didn’t make sense of it all because I was being flooded by feelings of panic. I heard G’s voice commenting on whether or not the group was undertaking the task. Then I spoke to the group about what I was feeling. I said I didn’t think the panic was all mine but that it was also the groups. I motioned with my hands to give the panic back to the group;

in week four, C said he wondered if the group atmosphere was a bit *etereal*. I said that it seemed that people in the group were quite beautiful, that there was beauty in the room; and

in week five, P said how difficult it seemed to belong to the group as a whole. I spoke saying that I thought a challenge was occurring about whether or not what the Consultants were offering was okay.

By being able to work with the group’s projections, rather than losing the projections inside of them, it is understood that the Consultants bound the experience in the group for members. This boundedness interrupts the cycles of inner/outer vastness. Responsibility is taken for location of violence. Consequently, both by imitation and by being able to work with the Consultants, group member’s capacity to bound and work with their own experience is supported. The data suggests that this occurred for me. It shows that the Consultants work with their experience provided the springboard to my own capacity to transform emotion into thought and speech.

### 6.3.5 Conclusion

Group members and I struggled through the six sessions of the large group to manage potentially overwhelming emotional experience. The nature of this struggle has been shown through the examples in this discussion. The discussion reveals the obstructive character of some of the defensive mechanisms that were apparent in the group, i.e. the group/antigroup dichotomies that shut down balanced discussion, and the attempts at homogenisation that resulted in a dearth of representative leadership and limited diversity. The defensive routines were
shown to be a product of, and to perpetuate, a paranoid and persecutory culture. Conversely the discussion reveals the way interventions by the Consultants and some group members supported work on the task. These interventions were shown to interrupt cycles of destructiveness, offering possibilities of transformation of the overwhelming emotional experience of the group into thought and action. At times the group displayed this transformative ability. This occurred when group members were able to contain the group projections and maintain focus on task.
SECTION THREE

7. Chapter seven - Multicase discussion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter begins development of the central ideas of the thesis. The three preceding chapters, the single case discussions, have focused primarily on the defensive aspects of the experience of being in a large group. This chapter moves the emphasis of the research towards the intersubjective dimension of relations between the individual and the large group, and the impact of this relation on the formation and development of the group’s structure and culture.

In accord with multi case study design (Judd, Smith and Kidder 1991; Hamel 1993; Yin 1994) the single case discussions, whilst analyses in their own right, now take their place in the thesis as data for the multicase discussion.

The first section of the chapter introduces intersubjective theory. This includes rationale for selection and use of the theories in exploring large groups.

The second section of the chapter examines the experience of group members in asserting themselves, recognising, and being recognised in each of the large groups. Assertion and recognition are fundamental concepts in intersubjective theory. Assertion and recognition are shown to be difficult in the groups by reason of the experience of, and fear of attack from other group members and the formal authorities in the groups. The idea of ‘large group recognition’ is introduced. This type of recognition is distinguished from interpersonal or small group recognition. The data suggests that group members found large group recognition through subgroup competition and through direct and representative relation with the group’s formal authorities. The dynamic of this relation in each of the groups was understood to be dominant submissive, in intersubjective terms, ‘master-slave’. Recognition gained within this type of dynamic is regarded as
compromised. It does not have the affirming elements that are associated with mutual recognition. The exploration in this section begins to show the profound influence of the nature of the individual’s relation to the large group on the formation and development of the group’s structure and culture, and on the individual themselves.

The third and final section of the chapter builds upon the findings of section two. In this section incidents of master-slave dynamics are explored particular to each group. The exploration illuminates similarities and differences between the groups and provides opportunity to explore the relational dynamics in some depth.

7.2 Intersubjective theory


The span of intersubjective theory is broad. Philosophers (Hegel 1971; Merleau-Ponty 1985; Husserl 1991; Buber 1992), sociologists (Habermas 1973; Adelman 1980), economists (Smith 1952; Lukacs 1975); political thinkers (Avineri 1973; Shklar 1976); psychoanalysts/psychologists (Suttie 1988; Aron 1996; Stolorow et al 1995) and many others have developed and used intersubjective theories in their particular disciplines. Jessica Benjamin developed an area of intersubjective theory that reflects feminist psychoanalytic ideology. Benjamin’s writings differentiate the subject - subject relations of intersubjectivity from traditional Freudian ego drive theories of subject - object. Benjamin posits intersubjectivity alongside, rather than instead of, traditional Freudian orientations. Intersubjectivity implies more than defensive processes binding a group – *an ‘out there’ bind that embraces the otherness of the other* (Benjamin 1988, p24).

The theories and arguments I have incorporated so far in this thesis emphasise ego drive theories with the objectification or instrumental use of the other as a means of securing individual and group identity. As examples:
in the discussion of case two, Girard’s (1979) scapegoating concepts focus upon the survival of the group at the cost of the victim/s; and in the discussion of case three Turquet (1975) illustrates multiple ways the individual and the group use members as projective receptacles for unwanted psychic elements in order to maintain individual and group identity. The emphasis of intersubjectivity is somewhat different to this. Intersubjective theory contends that selfhood is intrinsically found in mutual relation with others. In this the other is experienced as a separate, independent self.

_Self consciousness exists in and for itself when, and only by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged_ (Hegel 1979, p11).

Through asserting oneself and being recognised by the other the self is affirmed. This is a reciprocal or mutual process. Intersubjectivity requires recognition of reliance on others and simultaneous recognition of our own distinctiveness. Inherent in the theories are many paradoxes: dependence and separation; destruction and creativity; likeness and difference; otherness and togetherness. Balancing the tension within these paradoxes is one of the challenges of enacting intersubjectivity. The definition of paradox I am using is Hegel’s, articulated by Stacey:

_Paradox means the presence together at the same time of contradictory, essentially conflicting ideas, none of which may be eliminated or resolved...that conflict gives rise to transformation_ (2003, p328).

The ‘wholeness’ of the intersubjective concepts attract me. Part of this is their congruence with the philosophical underpinnings of this research. Philosophically I am aligned with articulation of possibilities arising between individuals or between the individual and the group, rather than being wholly attributed to or ‘owned’ by one or the other. Part of this is the
sense of richness I experience when I read intersubjective theory. This is similar to my sensations about large groups that led me to select this area of work for my thesis. Recall in the first chapter I wrote about a complex of feelings about large groups that drew me to the research (pp4-8). Part also is the possibilities and hope that intersubjective theory embraces in the potential for learning together, of being transformed by and transforming each other (Benjamin 1995a, p25).

It is also the centrality, and the exploration of, the quality of the mother-infant/child relation that draws me to these concepts. In Benjamin’s theory of intersubjectivity the mother-infant/child relation is viewed as a causative factor in how people experience others in interpersonal and group settings throughout their lives. Intersubjective theories give importance to the selfhood of the primary carer (will hereafter be referred to as the mother) in her relation with the infant/child. This differs from Freud’s explication of infant/child development where arguably the mother is predominantly portrayed as an objectified ‘other’ in service of the child’s quest for identity (Benjamin 1988). In intersubjective theory it is the mother-child relation that underpins the capacity of individuals to experience contact with a ‘real’ other. This is not only to experience but to potentially gain from contact through a mutual process of change and growth.

Benjamin writes about intersubjectivity predominantly as an interpersonal process. There is little precedence for detailed consideration of large group dynamics through her intersubjective lens. However there are references to cultural outcomes of intersubjective processes particularly in regards effects on gender relations (Dinnerstein 1976; Chodorow 1978; Benjamin 1998). These provide some affirmation in transposing intersubjective dynamics into broader systems but do not address the detail I need to use the theories to explore the large group settings under study.

Note: Whilst there is little precedence for the use of Benjamin’s ideas about intersubjectivity in group contexts the broader area of intersubjective
thinking is located strongly in social and political spheres. See Hegel 1979; Habermas 1973; Husserl 1991; Crossley 1996. In anticipation of my discussion it can be noted that Benjamin’s concepts of assertion and recognition are found in the large group in representative form mediated through structural and cultural features of the group.

The first question in this transposition is whether it is possible for these predominantly interpersonal theories to be intelligently thought about in the large group context? For example, are the dynamics of assertion and recognition relevant to people in large groups? In large groups is this what is sought? Are the dynamics of assertion and recognition even possible in a large group given the size and chaos of the setting? Does a large group assert itself? Can it recognize individuals/subgroups? Can an individual/subgroup assert themselves and be recognized by the group? Can an individual enter a relation with a group and allow for possibilities of mutual change and development? Is there correlation between mutual relation and task effectiveness in large groups?

My immediate personal response is to answer positively to these questions; in asserting myself I have felt a group’s recognition and other times I have felt its lack of recognition. I have felt recognition in a subgroup and simultaneously an absence of recognition by a larger group. I have seen large groups and individuals, and large groups and subgroups be affected, altered by each other. I also suspect that where there is mutual recognition there is increased possibilities of work on task. An increased agency of self would feasibly increase resources available to the group for work.

Theoretically my response is to turn first to Bion’s idea that everything that occurs in the group is the group reflecting on itself (1961). This allows for dynamics to be understood as representative, i.e. the same dynamic can be understood as related to both individual and group levels. And second I turn to the work of theorists including Tryst (1950), Wells (1980) and Foulkes (1976) who contend it is possible to understand what is personal in groups
as also collective. In this, Tryst cautions that at different system levels different forces come into being. Thus, albeit tentatively, the dynamics of assertion and recognition can be considered and explored across all the system levels in the group; between individuals and subgroups, and individuals and the large group.

Implicit in these ideas is of the group having a life of its own apart from any one individual. In this the group has an identity that is different to individual identity. While, in my view, it belies logic that a group mind exists outside the mind of the group members, experience within groups is that the group behaves ‘as if’ it has a mind (Dalgleish 2003). Extending this there are then possibilities that a particular type of group identity (culture), one where the group is able to assert itself, recognize and be recognised by an individual or other group, could be called group selfhood.

Benjamin uses the term *complementary* (1995b, p3) to denote structures that have contrary characteristics to mutuality. In complementary relations difference is split from likeness, the ‘other’ contains the opposite polarities of the subject, ‘I am not like you’. Connection is lost. In mutual relations ‘I am not like you’ exists alongside, in tension with, ‘I am like you’. The assertive, aggressive element of mutuality on the one hand seeks to negate the other and have selfhood inviolate, and on the other hand requires recognition from the other for their own selfhood to be affirmed. This is the paradox of independence and dependence inherent in mutual relation. Simultaneously the other is engaged in the same processes of assertion and recognition for their own self. The others survival of the subject’s assertion is significant because if the other does not survive, the self cannot be recognised. It is in the processes of mutual recognition that the possibilities of experiencing the real other exists. In complementary structures fantasy of the other replaces the real other. There is no struggle of recognition instead there is domination, idealization, submission or related defenses.
Mutual recognition is not understood as easily attained: *The discontents of civilization can be fully comprehended in terms of the escape of lazy subjects from the demands of mutuality* (Horowitz 1990, p2). Rather it is a process of continual risk taking (in assertion) and consciousness in accepting, even venerating, difference despite the threat that difference holds. Mutual recognition challenges us to simultaneously manage the tension associated with experiencing our dependence on others, and our independence. Nor is mutual recognition regarded as linear or constant phenomena; rather it is a process of destruction and creation. Inevitably mutual relations rupture and complementary structures take hold. It is the efforts to re-establish the mutual relation that is important rather than that the breakdown occurs. Benjamin states this saying *destruction is the other of recognition* (1995b, p9)

In mutual relations aggression is metabolised or held within the relation. In garnering aggression to assert oneself, and in breaking through the others boundary, there is discharge of aggression and this is returned in kind. Mutuality also engenders relational space between people where emotion can be symbolised and expressed. This does not occur in complementary structures and consequently aggression is unable to be metabolised in a healthy, creative manner. Instead it becomes internalised resulting in inner and outer worlds of persecutors and victims. This internal state is the pre-condition for what in intersubjectivity is termed the dialectic of the master-slave (Hegel 1979).

The master-slave dynamic is understood to be a ubiquitous phenomenon, an inevitable result of relations not informed by mutuality. In the following passage Hegel dramatically relates its centrality in human relations:

*Firstly in order to be human and to be recognised as such, one must place, and be seen to place one’s human desire above all animal desires, particularly the animal desire for self preservation. Secondly, this implies that one must risk one’s life*
for one’s humanity. Thirdly, this is expressed in a contest in which each risks his or her life and this is a fight to death. One proves oneself in the fight to death. One possible ending to this fight involves one contestant killing the other. This is not satisfactory for either party. The loser dies whilst the winner loses his or her only source of recognition. Another possible ending involves one party surrendering to and fully recognising the other, without enjoying such recognition for him or herself. They succumb to their animal desire for self-preservation and become a slave to the other, thereby giving rise to a relationship of master and slave. Historically, both of these outcomes may have been realised. But the former can only give rise to human extinction, whilst the latter can and does give rise to a historical dynamic. History in this view is a succession of sets of social relations which are animate by a way of struggle for recognition (Crossley 1996, pp18,19).

When the tension between assertion and recognition fractures, then, as Hegel so incisively describes, there are two options, first that one kills the other, and for both there is nothingness; no possibility of recognition only the intolerability of abandonment. And second, that one wins and the other becomes his/her slave.

The master-slave dynamic is understood to have within it, though problematic, the possibilities of self. It is understood to hold a deep longing for wholeness (Benjamin 1988, p81). For the slave, the mastery of the more powerful one provides containment within which the self can be freed. Recognition is attained through identification with this mastery. The act of submission recognises the dominion of the master. However the dynamic must involve resistance. Without resistance, by being completely dominated, the slave loses the capacity to recognise the other, leading once again to the intolerable state of deadness, numbness, abandonment. There is pleasure and gain for each in the master’s mastery. The master-slave
dynamic is the dynamic of complementary structures. Recall that in these structures:

> difference is split from likeness; the ‘other’ contains the opposite polarities of the subject. ‘I am not like you’. Fantasy of the other replaces the real other. There is no struggle of recognition instead there is domination, idealisation, submission or related defenses (This chapter, p188).

Recognition gained in this way is compromised when compared to that found in mutual relations. The master-slave dynamic does not hold within it the self-affirming characteristics of mutual recognition. Relational space becomes saturated with persecutory anxiety. This stunts emotional growth, creativity and agency. One would expect where groups have cultures dominated by the master-slave dynamic the group’s human resource capacities are crippled. As well there is strong tendency for these dynamics to perpetuate. The antipathy of domination and submission easily triggers reactive dynamics with similar characteristics.

Just as intersubjective theory locates the origins of mutuality in the infant/child’s primary relation with the mother so is the origin of the tendency towards the master-slave relation. Where the mother is able to exercise her will as an independent person and respond lovingly to the needs of the baby there is the possibility for the child of experiencing and enjoying the mother interdependently. Where the mother either subjugates herself in service of the infant/child, or does not recognise the child, she ceases to be a viable other and the child’s capacity for mutuality is harmed. Instead the fearful uncontained capacities of the infant/child permanently ties him/her in a wholly dependent way to the mother, manifest as master or slave, controlling or subservient within that relation. Neither state offers the child possibilities of developing agency of its own (Dinnerstein 1976; Chodorow 1978; Benjamin 1988; Suttie 1988).
Viewed through the ideas of intersubjectivity the large groups in this study can be understood as contexts within which the drive towards mutuality is enacted in collective ways. The working through of iterations and reiterations of anxiety, frustrations and conflicts held individually and within the collective, existing, obstructing, but also with possibilities of transformation.

The following discussion incorporates the data of the three case studies with the themes that emerged in the discussion of the single cases. The combined data is explored with respect to the intersubjective theories that have been outlined.

The discussion will illustrate how at interpersonal and group levels the potential for complementary, master-slave relations reside in the dynamics of assertion and recognition. The negation element of assertion sets the stage for enactment of this relation.

Potential for mutuality seems obstructed by many elements. Group culture of negative judgement is shown to be one significant factor. The large size of the group and commensurate difficulties in recognising member’s assertions being another. These difficulties create propensity to seek recognition in subgroups. However subgroup recognition does not seem to satisfy needs to connect to the larger group. It is hypothesised that competition between subgroups provides one avenue for this desired ‘large group’ recognition. An alternate or additional source of large group recognition is suggested via direct or representative relation with formal authorities. This relation imports into the group all manner of individual and cultural issues of dependence and independence, domination and submission. The way the system enacts and manages issues of competition between subgroups, and issues related to formal authority, is shown to critically determine whether a master-slave dynamic is endemic in the group. The particular tasks of the large group and its context also affect this potential. For example, in the educational contexts of cases one and two,
traditional paradigms of teaching, imported culturally into the group, increase potentiality of a master-slave relation.

The discussion shows how the problematic nature of the individual’s relation to the large group resulted in group culture and structure that in each of the groups had a commonly held propensity towards complementary, master-slave relations. This illustration is developed across two main parts. The first considers the experience of group members in asserting themselves and finding recognition in the large group. The second explores the existence of master-slave dynamics in each of the large groups.

7.3 Assertion and recognition in the groups

Speaking/not speaking

Without a voice you become nothing, you become just another face in the crowd (BD-case one).

People would not even be there and I would never know. If people are missing I should realise they are missing...we are only getting people with big strong opinions (GN- case one).

To facilitate recognition by the large group means somehow becoming visible to the group. The data shows that the primary means of gaining visibility was through speaking. Speaking or not speaking in the context of the whole group held significant meaning for members.

The struggle of speaking

In the large group of case two, DI epitomised the struggle of a number of members in their experience of trying to assert themselves:

Mostly frustrated at myself for not saying anything, afterwards when I leave. I mean I know I am supposed to say something, I know I have good ideas, but I still feel really uncomfortable, it is
just because I don’t know the group. And as I said last time I still feel like I am outside of the group.

In the same group V described the physical consequences of his desire to speak:

I struggle, I know I have got something good to say and I know what happens to me when I am about to speak in a large group. I am very anxious I get a tightness in my chest and my breathing changes. I feel like I’ve got a hot flush and I know what I am about to say is going to be a good intervention. But probably nine times out of ten, I stop myself, or I wait just long enough for someone else to say it, or someone else to cut in.

In this group the first communication across group members occurred by students writing on the blackboard. The members wrote comments about theoretical concepts, then messages to each other, eg. Who is next? It seemed too difficult to speak.

The data of case three echoes these difficulties of assertion. In its early stage this large group seemed fixated on the question of naming oneself before speaking. It was identified in the group that being nameless represented safety in anonymity and a way to avoid joining the group. The requirement to name oneself was experienced as trying to make us all the same. This push toward homogeneity was experienced as a threat to uniqueness and thus, self. Being named meant handing over control of oneself to the group. Speaking was linked to naming, it too symbolised the dangers of losing the self in the group. During the discussion of this issue in the group I expressed that I was loath to speak or name myself. I didn’t want to strip away my anonymity. Immediately a group member took my hand and shook it. She introduced herself to me by name. I automatically followed her lead and introduced myself by name. I felt coerced and angry.
This experience felt like the group acting on me, to which I submitted, despite my wish not to. This is a contrary dynamic to how Benjamin describes assertion as a component of mutuality. Benjamin says acting on the world (assertion) also means being able to change one’s own feelings in the desired direction (1988, p24). What I experienced was the opposite. I felt ‘acted on’, not ‘acting on’. My feelings were altered but not in the direction I desired. In the connections workshop the awesome power of the large group was discussed: It (the large group) ‘makes you feel all sorts of things.

In case two, DI described an experience with similar elements of coercion:

*It feels kind of like if you start speaking, it feels like you are being cornered into a room, just in the corner and you can’t really break away from that because once you start speaking they expect you to finish.*

W: *When you say the things, like you have said you have spoken a few times and there has been twice when you felt cornered and wanted to stop, the other times you have said things you have been happy with, have you had that experience of being cornered?*

DI: *The feeling of being cornered. Yes it is still there. Normally when I feel like I am doing just fine. The pressure I just sort of break away from it, and just walk through into the group. As I give ideas I feel like I am a part of the group which is really good. Because then after you start feeling like you are in the group you can say anything. You don't feel any of the pressure, and sometimes you know you have those awkward silences, and it just breaks away, and then we are back to square one, and then we break away again, difficult.*
W: So the awkward silence happens and you are back to square one and that means not feeling a part of the group?

DI: Yes sort of like back to. The group sort of crumbles and goes back into its own place again; it sort of rises all together and then sort of just goes uhhh. It has to try and build itself up again. Like they come up with a good (sic), sometimes about the fourth week we did that, it sort of just fell down, because of an awkward silence and then someone said something that was really got us back onto that level again. It is just a matter of just one word that actually makes you go back to the place you were in before.

Both examples (DI’s experience in case two and mine in case three) can be understood as responding to the group’s assertion. Both illuminate experience of the negating elements inherent in assertion. I felt violated, my immediate wishes negated. In DI’s example being cornered also conjures negation, of being ‘done to’. For DI the experience was ultimately enabling. Despite a desire not to speak, through speaking he expressed himself and connected to the group. The negating elements of these experiences are the very fear that surrounds the issue of speaking or asserting oneself. In intersubjective terms this fear is of abandonment, of utter aloneness and paradoxically the fear of being engulfed, consumed. Negation represents both these things. Given that in intersubjective theory the self is reliant on the subjectivity of other for survival, withdrawal from the other means annihilation of the self as surely as being engulfed by the other.

What this implies is that the act of assertion - the essential component of reinforcing self - innately initiates the possibility of complementary structures. It is the response to assertion, the responding dynamics that determine whether this is a complementary (‘me or you’) or mutual (‘me and you’) interaction. In groups the most pervading or dominant response would reflect in the culture of that setting. The data of the large groups of
this study revealed culture where assertions were not recognised. Instead group members reported being attacked or experiencing others attacked for their contributions to the group. Attack meant negative judgement of that contribution. In cases one and two attack was experienced and feared both from other group members and the Divisional Managers. In case three attack from group members was the explicitly identified fear. Group members also spoke of fractured circular communication in the large groups that meant contributions to the group were of little value. The data shows the culture of the groups were complementary rather than mutual. The following substantiates these claims:

**Negative judgement - attack by group members**

In case one S’s experience of asserting himself was of being attacked:

> **In the larger group I got a negative response...** it wasn’t overall negative but questions flying everywhere at me. I have to deal with this person; I have to deal with this person. I didn’t actually want. It was very hard. I imagined more of a response, more of an agreeing response, the workgroup (the smaller group where he had presented the same concepts) where there was a very positive response. The larger group yeah, what happened there was pretty scary. I thought I didn’t want to force any more opinions, my opinions, because they would just be rejected straight away, my opinions had no worth they were just like I didn’t know what I was talking about.

BD identified these elements as pervasive in the group’s culture:

> **What I find really interesting is these people who seem to find arguments in anything and maybe I am misreading it but someone would come up with a good idea but there is always someone who has to contest it.** They were resenting people's
opinions; there was a low tolerance to other people's opinions, people having their say.

In case two a group of dominant members were experienced as censoring other’s contributions.

L: Those six people they had on the board are the voices of the group because they are the only ones that will speak consistently. Others will put in a little bit here and there but it has to be approved by the voices before they can continue. And I guess I was frustrated with N, because he was one of the voices, and I could see that if he got his way the voices would be saying it all, and all the rest of the group would be devalued. Their experiences wouldn’t mean anything, and I guess that the group also would be comfortable with letting that happen because they don’t even value their own experience.

L, one of the Divisional Managers, also expressed fear of B, the other Divisional Manager, being attacked and engulfed by the group:

I saw what was happening was that this knowing part with people who had read the syllabus from the week before, they were coming up with some really good points, but it was being ignored and taken over by the people who were all bullshitting. So it was this sort of thing and I think my concern was that if B puts her head up in here she is just going to be swamped by the bullshitters.

Negative judgement - attack from formal authorities

In case one and two, alongside concerns about attack from group members there were many expressions of concern about the attacking nature of the Divisional Managers. RB (case one) spoke about this:
We were talking about people being afraid to speak up because they are afraid of what people will say. And at one point they (the Divisional Managers) said ‘Well you shouldn't be afraid because we won't pick on what you say’. And then someone actually said something. It was about; he wanted to learn about structure again. She (the Divisional Manager) just said out in front of the class that you haven't read the book, she kind of attacked him for what he said; ‘Hang on, you just told us to speak up because we won't get attacked’, and then he got attacked for speaking. So it was like that made me not speak at all. I haven't spoken much in the divisional meetings.

KF attributed attacks by the Divisional Managers in the large group of case one as their desire to dominate group members:

They get their back up too easily, and today I was sort of thinking that this is a bit of a ego place for them. In the divisional meeting when they say like they are not on top and everything. No I really think that they do put you down because it makes them feel bigger.

And T summed up many views about the Divisional Managers in case two. These views are similar to the comments about the Divisional Managers in case one:

There was no praise or positive feeling from them; do you know what I mean? You walk in not knowing whether you are doing the right thing. There was no encouragement or nothing.

Attack from formal authorities and a generalised sense of lack of safety in the large groups of cases one and two may also have been felt by group members as a result of the way in which the environment was constructed and enacted by the Divisional Managers.
The large group of case three was constructed as a traditional Group Relations ‘study group’. Such groups are designed with careful attention to time, task and territory, along with very clear role specifications for Consultants to facilitate optimal levels of psychological safety for group members.

The environments of the large groups of cases one and two were not constructed or enacted with this same emphasis. The role of the staff or ‘Divisional Managers’ described in the subject outline was: *to be responsible for design and implementation of the learning program, the management of the learning process, and the evaluation of student work. The Divisional Managers may take up a variety of roles such as consultant, adviser, process observer* (Syllabus Outline 2000a, p4).

In group relations terms this is a jumble of roles that Consultants may take up in the large group, resulting in the blurring, and at times, fracturing of the clear boundaries required to enhance psychological safety for members’.

*Negative judgement - attack on the self*

In case three negative judgements of others was a pervasive theme throughout the group’s life. In this large group immediately following submitting to name myself I became caught up in a judgement element of group members words and responses to each other, ‘good enough’, ‘not good enough’ seemed everywhere, and seemed apt. The premature naming of myself seemed to make me vulnerable as I immediately became filled up with doubts about my capacity to contribute. I worried about what I would say and whether or not it would sound right. At that instant there seemed to be a commonness of this quandary in the group. Others spoke of their feelings of inadequacy, of not having a university degree like others had, of not being clever or smart enough. Reflecting on this at the time the judgement of others seemed to be about filling the gap inside myself. Not trusting my own experience I wanted others experience, but paradoxically judged their experience negatively. I struggled to speak into the group and
envied others who could. However, another’s experience can never fill gaps that are intrinsically your own. Reflecting on this later I wrote:

_It came to me that this thing of experience, when you do actually share your experience, it feels to me like not much can go wrong then. You are not actually playing with fire. Nobody can refute or deny. Immediately I thought this I felt more able to be myself in the group, more able to hear the group because my internal struggle was not quite so ferocious. And then I spoke and I felt different. I felt good when I spoke. I felt I spoke with authority, my own authority, and I felt too that people heard me; there was a silence that, I was really grateful for that, as though people were listening._

The revelation of the value of my own experience instantly altered my experience of the group. In recognising myself, I was able to speak, and in turn I experienced the group’s recognition of me.

If negative judgement of others is related, at least in part, to people’s experience of an internal absence, then the importance in group member’s minds of the Divisional Manager’s judgement of group members in case one and two cannot be underestimated. The educational context, with its traditional paradigm of teachers filling vacuous students with expert knowledge, and then assessing the students uptake of that knowledge, would legitimise and entrench a dependency culture in the group (Smith and Waller 1997). Benjamin suggests that we attribute to authority figures the power to know us, to know our innermost selves, and that that gives rise to reactive polarised (complementary) relations where the self is lost:

_The other becomes the person who can give or withhold recognition, who can see what is hidden, can reach, conceivably even violate, the ‘core’ of the self. The attribution of this power in the transference may evoke awe, dread, admiration or adoration as well as humiliation or exhilarating submission._
Once transference is unleashed, the problem of idealisation, submission, humiliation and the corresponding resistance to those states becomes endemic. The attitude of adoration or submission is, of course, constituent of the relation to authority figures (1995a, p149).

Fractured communication

As well as the issues of attack through negative judgement there were other cultural elements that resulted in group members feeling their contributions were not valued by the group. In both cases one and two the circular nature of discussion, where idea or opinion followed idea or opinion in a fractured, non-developmental way, meant member contribution was felt to be unacknowledged and the task, directionless. In case one, G described this experience:

Last week I was quite vocal, this week I was very passive and didn't say anything. And I probably got more out of the session last week that I did today. But I think that I got sick of saying something and then us going onto another topic, then someone else saying something and then someone else saying something and really not getting anywhere. Which is why I didn't say anything today because I just thought there is no point because it is not furthering us towards a particular achievable goal. We are just sort of, instead of working towards something, we are just sort of going backwards and forwards in the same place.

And in case two, K linked lack of leadership to this disjointed communication:

Last week was a classic one where we had so may ideas come out and each idea was responded to by another idea. I think that is where I question to a certain extent a lack of leadership sort of plays, where if we did have someone who was more leading
us, but they should stop everyone at a certain point and take note of certain comments.

The fractured circular communication reminds me of the difficulties Turquet raised in having projections received in large groups (1975). Given the size of the large group when communication is to an open forum, who has responsibility for acknowledging or recognising that contribution? If recognition is understood as critical for member’s selfhood, and selfhood is related to capacity to work on task, then a consciousness of the necessity for mutual recognition needs to be active and influential in the group, in leadership and as a critical mass amongst group members. In these groups however, the striving seemed to be for recognition of oneself, not for recognition of the other. This reflects once again the difficulties of managing the tension between dependence and independence. The self’s need for absolute independence conflicts with the self’s need for recognition from the other (Benjamin 1995b, p 4).

To date the data show how asserting oneself in the large group and gaining recognition was fraught. The data has shown how group members faced a range of difficulties in asserting themselves and gaining recognition in the large groups. These included threat of annihilation by the group, present in the negating aspects of assertion; threat of attack through negative judgement; and difficulties in receiving recognition in a group where communication was fractured and directionless.

The pervasive response to group member’s assertions in each of the large groups was to devalue rather than recognise the contribution. The dominant culture of each of the groups seems to be complementary, not mutual.

Despite these difficulties further data show that group members found access to recognition in the group through ways other than attempting to assert themselves as individuals to the whole group. Exploration of the experience of group members suggests recognition was facilitated within
pairs, subgroups and via representation to the formal authorities. The following data depicts these occurrences.

**Pairs**

Members sought comfort in and recognition from other individual group members:

**Case one**

DJ: *I always sit with one of my friends; he is always next to me. Everyone else I know where they are, I know where to look. It feels sort of lonely, you know you need someone there at least you can just turn to and say something. I don’t want to say out loud to the meeting. I just sort of talk to the person next to me about my idea and then they say that that is a pretty good idea, and then that is it. I don’t need to say anymore, I am contributing;*

**Case two**

RP: *Yeh, yeh, like if I have a particular thing that maybe I don't want to express to everyone else I will say it to YM, next to me, that sort of thing;*

and in my reflections of case three I noted every occasion when I sat next to somebody I knew. I noted this but did not consciously think about it in the reflections. In retrospect it was notable due to the comfort and sense of security that being physically close to friends gave me in the threatening large group environment.

In another example in case three a man was asking a woman to come and sit next to him. There was already a woman sitting on the other side of this man. Another person said ‘Oh look at him, he is surrounded’. Whilst there are a number of possible interpretations of this statement, at the time I understood it to mean that the man was arranging a safety zone around
himself.

**Subgroups**

Members also sought recognition in subgroup affiliation. Subgroups recognised the individual, this supported assertion of themselves to the large group. Subgroups also provided representation for individuals to the larger group:

**Case one**

RB: *Occasions where someone is attacked by, or if someone expresses their opinion you find kind quite often that people in the workgroup or even the syndicate group will stick up from them because they feel loyalty this kind of thing;*

**Case two**

K: *Now I notice when GF stood up the front it was very much a case of he stood up the front as a member of this family (the smaller workgroup who meet in the second and third hours of the subject) as such. And the family endeavoured not to let him fail. I noticed a lot of people who spoke up more so. I noticed a lot of people from my workgroup who spoke up, some who hadn’t spoken before and a lot of them aimed to fill in time as such. There was a gap, there was nothing happening, so they just aimed to chuck in a comment or something so that he wasn’t left in the lurch sort of thing;*

MN: *In our workgroups especially we have spoken about ideas and a lot of people say ‘Oh can you represent this idea next time for the whole group’. It gives me a lot more confidence in presenting ideas knowing that I have the support and encouragement and knowing that the group (the workgroup) has condoned what I am saying; and*
DI: I know they look at K (in the workgroup) he is sort of our leader. Because I still think in the big meeting we are still broken into three groups (the workgroups), even though it is probably not supposed to be that way. We can suggest anything that we want. Still I feel that if I want to say anything, I feel K can take it on my behalf, and even though I am not near him, I feel that he would say something. Sometimes I have no idea of what to say and I am always looking at K seeing whether he is going to answer the question.

The data show limitation to this form of recognition. At times subgroup recognition was conditional for individuals. S’s experience in case one is an example of this.

S: AP, R and Y, AP and Y were sitting next to each other. We usually sit close to each other, but this time I was sitting on the opposite side. It was interesting that I felt a bit of a negative attitude from AP. Maybe he likes to think of me as his right hand man, or his general type person. He probably felt that I was betraying him by going over to the other side and being more of an individual. But I never look at myself as anybody’s right hand man. I am an individual. He probably thinks of me as his right hand man, his general or whatever. Where I am, where today I was on a different side. He probably perceives that. He probably got insulted by that. Like he lost a lot of power.

In case three I struggled to speak to the men in the group because simultaneously I experienced them universally as an oppressive force, and recognised individual men behaving differently to this experience. The subgroup, as groups can do, seemed to collapse individuality. This confused and paralysed me.
Subgroup membership was also limited in that it did not appear to adequately compensate for recognition from the large group. Instead it seemed subgroups were vehicles for the gaining of the large group’s recognition. Subgroups took up either dominant or submissive positions. Recall that both the dominant-master and submissive-slave position hold the promise of selfhood. Selfhood is gained in the submissive or slave position through the mastery of the master, and in the dominant or master position through recognition by the slave. I suggest that through this dialectic subgroup members gain large group recognition. The competition between subgroups is evidenced in the following data:

In case one

GN: *Yeh it has been the last few weeks, we seem to stick together and I think it was like a concerted effort today, although I wasn't there. But the plan was that a few people would get up and congregate together from our workgroup because we don't like the way that it has been run and so sort of like, power in numbers, whatever;*

In case two

O: *I don't find the Divisional meeting to be as loving as that workgroup or as friendly, I think it is workgroup against workgroup almost. It is amazing all the opinions that get thrown about almost are reflective of each workgroup; you could almost say our one seems to agree all the time. Is it by chance that we are genuinely unified in our approach to the subject? And there are other workgroups that seem to be competing with us;*

and in case three the large group held a number of subgroups that seemed in opposition to each other. These subgroups included: ‘the namers’ and ‘the nameless’; ‘those for the Consultants’ and ‘those against the Consultants’; and ‘the men’ and ‘the women’. The dynamics of opposition rendered one subgroup dominant and the other submissive.
Group member relations to the formal authorities

I suggest that large group recognition is also found in relation to the formal authorities of the group. The data that follows show group member’s relation to formal authorities characterised by dependency. The data also show amplified significance of group member’s relations to the formal authorities when compared to significance of relation to other group members. When this relation is understood as connection to the group as a whole then its dependent dynamics can be though of as a way of gaining large group recognition through the master-slave dialectic.

The significance of, and the dependent quality of group member relations to the formal authorities is evidenced in the data that follows:

In case one

W: What did that feel like with the Divisional Managers behind you?

KF: Yeh, it was a bit different. I was sort of hoping that they wouldn't sit there I like to be able to see them more than having them behind me.

W: Did you feel like you were being watched?

KF: No because they are watching so much I don't really think they are watching me. But yeh, I definitely knew they were there and I heard them whispering to each other and that helped me because it kept me on the right track of what they are thinking.

W: So you liked that?

KF: Yeh, I did. But a guy from our workgroup was sitting behind me seeing what they were writing which is even better;

In case two
O: One girl not far from me spoke to them both (the Divisional Managers) and she felt really proud and honoured that she said something right. Some of the things that they were saying I had actually written down already and I was very proud of that. I had had it written so I sat there with a bit of a grin on my face; and

DI: I guess it is the way, his body language (V-Divisional Manager) and his facial expressions, when he speaks about something and he seems like he really means it, as everyone should be. As he says it and you listen to it, and you can’t do anything else but listen to it, it sort of draws you to it.

In the large group of case three my relation to the group was critically influenced by my relation to the Consultants. As noted in the discussion of case three, on five of the six occasions that I spoke in the large group a consultant had intervened immediately preceding my speech. The consultant’s interventions seemed to provide a way for me to be able to think and assert myself.

Representative relations to the formal authorities
Relation to the formal authorities was also mediated through representation. In this way recognition from and of the formal authorities was gained through identification with the conduit. This was particularly pronounced in N’s role in case two. MN: N is kind of a connection between the Divisional Managers and us, and so N is like the link, and that is why we speak to N and he speaks to them. It was also seen in M’s role in case one where M took up a mediation role between the Divisional Managers and group members. This occurred a number of times but was most notable in an exchange between RP and B (Divisional Manager) that L described in the following.
L: RP said something and B (Divisional Manager) challenged her, and she challenged her in a fairly forthright way. RP seemed to go on the back foot and became fairly defensive and then attacked B, or that is how I saw and felt it. He (M) said he wasn’t protecting B when I challenged him on that, but I still felt very strongly that he jumped in for B.

W: He actually said he was protecting RP.

L: And I felt that with what he had said that the pressure was taken off B as well.

7.4 Large group recognition
The data suggests group member’s desired a form of recognition in the large group beyond the interpersonal or subgroup. The data show exploring the difficulties of asserting oneself pertained to the whole group, not to interpersonal or subgroup relations. This suggests the importance of making contact, finding recognition with the ‘large group’. As well, interpersonal and subgroup relations were portrayed as refuge or retreat from the vicissitudes of asserting oneself and finding recognition in the whole group. If contact with the large group was not desired refuge would not be needed. The opening quotations in this chapter also reinforce the importance of this connection:

Without a voice you become nothing, you become just another face in the crowd (BD-case one);

People would not even be there and I would never know. If people are missing I should realise they are missing...we are only getting people with big strong opinions (GN- case one).

The data does not suggest that finding large group recognition is a quest to gain face-to-face recognition with every member of the large group. Rather
it seems directed towards connecting to features that define the structure and culture of the whole group, i.e. formal authorities and through subgroup competition. The connection seems to be toward the large group as an entity rather than to individual members. In the following quotation Stacey describes how organisations emerge from, but are different to, their constituent parts. This is the concept I am attempting to describe.

_The organisation system is a bounded entity consisting of individuals who are its parts. The system is formed by the interaction of the individuals, following laws of its own, which might be thought of as emergent properties_ (Stacey 2003, p327).

Through connecting to the entity of the large group, conjunction between the individual and the structural and cultural form of the group is gained (Selznick 1957; Stacey 2003; Huffington et al 2004). This affirms and makes meaningful the individuals unconscious and/or conscious connections to the system and to the system environment (Alford 1989).

However, large group recognition gained through subgroup competition and through direct and representative relations to the formal authorities in the three large groups of this study can be understood as a compromised form of recognition. It is compromised because it is not contextualised within a mutually affirming relation. The master-slave dialectic that has been demonstrated as the predominant culture of the groups is a primitive means to facilitate recognition for survival. It does not require its participants to take up the challenging task of managing the paradoxes implicit in mutual interrelating. Recognition gained through the effort of the backward and forwards of assertion and recognition of mutual relation has possibilities of genuine emotional connection and learning from the other. This affirms the self in a real way. The master-slave relation undermines independence and agency of the other. The ‘real’ other is not recognised or supported.
The discussion to date indicates that the three large groups had a commonly held propensity towards complementary, master-slave relations. The potential for this dynamic was found in the negation aspects that are inherent in assertion. This was furthered by cultures of negative judgment in each of the groups where group members experienced and feared attack on their contributions. The large size of the group and commensurate difficulties in recognising member’s assertions also appeared to contribute to the group’s orientation towards complementary structure and culture. The data suggested that group members found refuge from the vicissitudes of the large group in interpersonal and subgroup relations. However this did not compensate recognition from and of the large group. It was proposed that large group recognition was gained through direct and representative relation to the formal authorities within the group and through subgroup competition. However, these relations were predominantly complementary in structure, their dynamics master-slave. Consequently the recognition that was gained and proffered was not mutual in character rather it was a partial and compromised form. Such recognition does not have the affirming elements that are associated with mutual recognition.

The master-slave dynamic perpetuates the same difficulties that originally existed in the groups. It does not allow for negotiated outcomes through which member’s fear of being engulfed or abandoned by the group may be lessened.

The impact on the capacity of the large group to optimally work on task is diminished where recognition is partial and compromised. Recognition of the other in large groups is inclusive of recognition of the other’s involvement in task. Where recognition is partial and compromised, as in the master slave dialectic, the slave’s contribution to task is hidden by the dominance of the importance of the master’s contribution. Further, the slave’s sense of self and agency is diminished, decreasing capacity to work creatively. And further again, the absence of the subjectivity of both the master and the slave diminishes creative collaboration. This aspect of the
master slave dynamic is very important in considering effects of intersubjectivity in large organisations, undertaken in Chapter eight.

The following section explores the nature of the complementary structures unique to each of the three groups. The purpose of this exploration is: 1) to illuminate the similarities and differences in the incidents between each of the groups; 2) to show how these incidents contributed to the unique culture of each group; and 3) to further develop understanding of how intersubjective theories of domination and submission relate to large groups.

7.5 The dialectic of the master-slave

Case one

In the discussion of the large group of case one I suggested a dominant theme of the group contending with threat associated with a female management team. I hypothesised that there was an emergence of a group of males (numbering the same as the number of females in the management team, plus the female observer) who were engaged in competitively wrestling leadership of the group from the female managers. The managers and the young men appeared to engage in battle; at least the group’s perception was that a battle was occurring, with group members interpreting what the managers thought were exploratory comments as hostile and attacking. I argued that the group used various defense mechanisms to discharge and protect themselves from their aggressive feelings related to the managers, including displacement and the creating of protective alliances (pp101-123).

The aggressive tendencies of the group were considered by B (one of the Divisional Managers) to originate in the way the group consistently related to L (the other Divisional Manager) and herself as mums who were there to unconditionally satisfy the group’s needs. In intersubjective theory the particular threat that female authority and independence evokes is understood to originate in the symbolic representation of the oedipal phase.
This was explained in the discussion of case one (pp103,104), i.e. separation from mother for all children, and for boys; de-identification with mother, results in repudiation of women in order to protect against the mother’s frightening capacities. Benjamin writes:

The blocking of identification reduces the mother to the complementary other who easily turns into the enemy, the opposite in the power struggle between the sexes. This view of mother meshes with the defensive stance assumed in reaction to the paradox of recognition when the power of the one we have depended on may begin to appear threatening to the vulnerable self. When this defensive stance is institutionalised in a coherent symbolic system of gender- as in the Oedipus complex- it cancels direct access to the other. The symbolic system locks into place the sense of the mother’s dangerous but alluring power and the need for paternal defense against it. The more violent the repudiation of the source of nurturance, the more tempting it begins to appear (1988, p175).

In the battle for leadership the group oscillated between male domination - female resistance and female domination - male withdrawal. The data does not show occasion where the gender polarities were held in tension, i.e. one ‘and’ the other, not one ‘or’ the other. The omnipotence of each polarity seemed to be transferred back and forth. It was not dissolved within the relation through a struggle with the other for recognition.

The data that follows builds chronologically to substantiate these contentions. Interspersed in the data are comments relating to particular aspects as they are described. However, the main discussion occurs at the conclusion of presentation of the data.

In the first week L consciously worked towards creating an environment where the students were ‘recognised’. She identified recognition as an
important element in supporting the students in beginning work on the task:

L: When I first asked the question I felt 'Oh dear'.

W: The question being?

L: If anyone had worked in an organisation. And they sat there. It was like ‘You want me to do it; you want me to front up and put my hand up in this group?’ So I noticed that only three or four hands go up immediately and then I got a few more and I tried to relax things at the time, give some little quip about the organisation that they worked for.

W: So you are relaxing them by relating to them?

L: Yes because wherever they said that they worked I tried to say some experience that I had had or something about them.

W: So in that are you saying that by being more personal that that is relaxing or by being...? How is it in your mind that that relaxed them?

L: I think for me that once you start to engage with them or recognise what their world is they are more in tune with what is going on between the two of you. You almost get a relationship build up and that degree is short, but there is some sort of. It is like ships that pass in the night. We come together, we meet, we have a brief exchange and we go on, but when people who are having that brief exchange meant no harm, no intimidation, no put down or anything like that, people tend to come to the fore, to respond.
However, before long the group was dominated by a series of males, all of whom by degrees behaved autocratically. Whilst group members expressed great concern about this leadership style in the privacy of interviews, in public group members allowed the males to continue their leadership roles for the majority of the group’s life; going so far as to vote the most autocratic of the males as their formal leader in week six:

RB: *Today the person* (D) *who was standing up there, he believed he was the leader and what he says goes. Like a lot of things that were said he disagreed with them completely and then it was like that was the end of that project. Forget what you are saying, who cares if the whole room agrees with you, I don't agree with you so it doesn't go kind of thing;*

and GN: *I just get frustrated, I get really frustrated that also AP and S have to push and I don't mean to just pick on them but they are the ones that are doing it, that they perceive that their ideas are more important than everyone else's because they are standing there.*

The emergence of the young males in leadership roles signalled competition between the Divisional Managers and the group. For example, after an emotion charged exchange between B (Divisional Manager) and AP I wrote: *It seems a battle is lining up between B and AP.* And after another confrontational interchange with B, I wrote: *S and AP deposed, feels nothing is going to be good enough.*

One of the casualties of this battle appeared to be the oldest of the student group members, U. In the second week U offered what seemed to me to be thoughtful opinions, based on her work experience, as to how the group could address the task. U was ignored. In the following week the male leaders made the same suggestions, the ideas being enthusiastically taken up by the group. U did not speak for the remainder of the group’s life. U being
silenced was an event commented on a number of times in interviews. It was conjectured by L (Divisional Manager) that U was attacked in place of herself and B (the other Divisional Manager); the group not able to openly attack the Divisional Managers, targeting instead the woman closest to their age.

The combative culture resulted in the managers not continuing the recognising style L had begun, instead, a war of complementarity was taking place, with the males leading and the Divisional Managers resisting.

However, in week seven a differing dynamic occurred with X a young woman taking up the leadership of the group. When X led she adopted a participative style with female group members responding enthusiastically.

The next week X continued in the leadership role however there was very limited participation from group members. GN believed this was due to the group becoming dependent upon X.

GN: *I feel maybe it was because she (X) was a, the first week everyone was really excited and the way she was leading, people were a lot more ready to put in suggestions and work towards a goal, but I think the next week we were more reliant on her. I guess expectations, different people had different expectations. I think that you find something that works but you are so concerned about what might happen the next time that you forget exactly how it worked the first time. And then people just got in there and were so, and thought ‘Oh well she is really good as a leader’, and sort of sat back and wanted her to lead…I guess once you find a leader that works I guess you feel more comfortable and feel that the pressure is off me now, and they can now lead, they can look after us and they can guide us through.*
In the following weeks the male leadership was reinstated. Female participation in the large group was low. There were significant levels of disruption to the large group from females talking loudly in small groups.

The battle between the male leaders and the Divisional Managers continued. This culminated in an attack on B (Divisional Manager) in week eleven. In this week L (the other Divisional Manager) was absent. A male student challenged B asking what it felt like for her with L not there. B experienced this as a threat. She stated:

*What I picked up was, ‘So how does it feel you not having her here, does it make you feel more threatened?’ Yes, and I thought fuck yes, but I wasn't expecting to feel threatened but his comment made me feel threatened. I realised that I was completely on the defensive with the next question that he asked. I think in defense of me I was trying to cover up that because I didn't want to, I don't know it is my defense against feeling threatened. I didn't want them to think that I was feeling threatened because if they did maybe they would come in for the real kill. I remember writing a note to Z (Student Consultant) and I just said be careful, and I thought what a stupid thing to write, like making her feel uncomfortable and then I scrubbed it out and just smiled at her.*

*It was at that time that other questions came from the left side of the room and they were questions that were directed at me in my position. They were as a Divisional Manager ‘What do you think?’ It was like, I felt like they were saving. I felt like they were letting this person know that you can't attack her. You might say those things but you can't attack and I felt quite safe. I think the next three questions were for me to answer as a Divisional Manager, to answer in my authority. So that kind of like brought things back to that normality and, and it was at that*
point, that I really noticed, I felt comfortable again.

For the remainder of this group meeting the young male leaders were silent. Other sections of the group (predominantly females) listened to each other considerately and thoughtfully worked on the task.

The data suggests that the group invoked the work role (both teacher and student) to protect from being engulfed or deserted by the mother. This recognised B-in-role and in turn she was able to recognise the group. This enabled some work in the sub group of women. However the ‘group as a whole’ environment was not mutual as the males were silent and withdrawn.

The battle between the Divisional Managers and the young males occurred throughout the majority of the life of this group. The overt intent of the battle appeared to be to create a patriarchal leadership structure and culture. In this, to silence the female authorities, to make them withdraw as U (the older woman) did. This is congruent with the ideas briefly explored in the discussion of case two, viz. Girard’s view that structures in groups and communities reflect desire for orientation towards the father and are therefore inclined towards certain forms of order and stability (1979).

Intersubjective thinking adds further dimension to this. The backwards and forwards of the master-slave dynamic, domination and resistance, is understood as having within it possibilities of redemption of the self and continuity of the group’s life. When the males led there was always resistance from the Divisional Managers and particularly later from other female group members. When a woman led the males withdrew until opportunities existed for them to take up the leadership again.

The master-slave relation is relevant in describing the phenomenon of the males dominating and the females resisting. The withdrawal by the males in the face of female leadership, in contrast, is for the group to enter a state of aloneness, deadness, no sensation (Benjamin 1988, p64). An intolerable
state for the group to bear, perhaps evidenced by the short life span of female leadership in the group.

In the master-slave relation the slave through their resistance holds the possibilities of progression for the group. Whereas the master is wholly dependant on the slave and can only dominate, the slave, through their submission and resistance, holds the potential to experience the self and subsequently transform the possibilities of experience for the master. In contrast, withdrawal, not resistance, by the males as response to female leadership has only discontinuity as a historical prerogative.

*It is only the slave who encounters in the master, as his alter ego, a fully autonomous human being. But this otherness must be overcome; the self must recognise itself in its other. The master must acknowledge his dependence on the slave, and the slave must recognise his own mastery. In fact, it is the slave who, by means of his labour, may eventually achieve satisfaction and recognition. The slave alters and reshapes the world through his work and therefore realises and embodies his own subjective agency in the world (O’Neil 1996, p229). Without the slaves work, the first fight would be reproduced indefinitely, nothing would change in it, it would change nothing in the master; hence nothing would change in man (p59).*

I argue that in this large group, master-slave, complementary dynamics, previously discussed as already present in the group (p211), were reinforced due to the threat associated with female management and the way that this was managed. Further I argue that this resulted in chronic difficulties in assertion and recognition, with consequent depletion of resources available for work.
Case two

The Oedipus complex crystallises the child’s triangular relation with the parents. The boy loves his mother and wishes to possess her, hates his father and wishes to replace or murder him. Given the father’s superior power (the threat of castration) the boy renounces his incestuous wish towards his mother and internalises the prohibition and the paternal authority. The incestuous wishes towards the mother are repressed, that is their sexual and aggressive components, leaving civilised filial affection or competition. Internal guilt has replaced fear of the father. In this view the father is seen as the only possible liberator and way into the world (Benjamin 1988, p138).

In case two the tasks and the physical context of the group were the same as they were in case one however the culture of the group was different. From the outset V’s male gender along with his convening role in the subject appeared to provide comparatively greater psychological safety for the group. In my notes I wrote how much more comfortable I was in this group even by the first week than I had been the whole time in the large group of case one. And L stated before the group even began I have got my father back (referring to V). The father as the liberator from the threat of being engulfed or abandoned by mother resonates with these experiences. However, a patriarchal context does not necessarily imply mutuality. Rather, traditionally it implies the opposite, with separation and individuation being revered over connection and interdependence, and domination and submission as prevalent cultural characteristics (Dinnerstein 1976; Gilligan and Wiggins 1988; Benjamin 1995).

At the outset, tension in managing the gender polarities was experienced and modelled for the group by V and L. In the first week V was speaking to the group introducing the subject. L intervened by snatching paper from V’s hand, saying I’m sick of this and then proceeded to continue the introduction. L explained this as wanting to also be recognised by the group:
Hey look at me I am still here...I am equal here and part of the Divisional Manager team. I want the students to see that I am here and not like V is the guru.

V struggled with L asserting herself:

*I wanted L to be more cooperative, to take the stage when I give it to her. Like when I say L would you like to do this? It is a huge control thing I know. And I can make myself be very participatory and egalitarian and all that stuff but in fact.*

V was unsettled and preoccupied with processing L’s assertion and he carried this over to irritation with the group members.

Over the next weeks L was experienced as part of the group, supportive of the group. V, in contrast, was experienced as outside the group and punitive. Recall L described V as acting from a traditional patriarchal role:

*It is like he is the Victorian father; he doesn’t give anything to the students. V comes home, disappears into the study and stays there. So anything that he says goes through me. When he did say something it was like ‘Wow, if only you could do this more often’, and he said so you want me there and you want to be in the background and I said no I want us out there together, so they see us as a team not one of us to the fore and the other one back.*

This quote displays the differences between L and V’s thinking at that time. For V it was either ‘you’ or ‘me’, for L it was ‘both of us’. There was nothing dramatic in the group over the early weeks. The group was grappling with issues of assertion and recognition and their relation to the managers as described earlier in this chapter. There were periods where the group seemed engaged in the task and others where there seemed boredom and disinterest. L was significantly involved in the group member’s discussions in a supportive manner. V silently wrote. Each week I
experienced almost overwhelming sleepiness. I wondered where the aggression was. At the end of week five V challenged the group about their strategies. He contended they either didn’t know what their strategies were, or did know but weren’t adhering to them. He gave no clue as to what these strategies were. The implication was that the group should know V’s mind. This unearthed hostility in the room and can be viewed as the point of surfacing of the group’s oedipal identification issues. As I wrote in the discussion of case two what V invoked in his comments was the double bind of the fathers oedipal injunction ‘identify with me, be like me, desire what I have’ and simultaneously ‘don’t be like me because you can’t have what I have’ (p129). This throws issues of recognition into a whirlpool of complexity. How can one gain recognition and affirmation in the face of such contradictory directions. Who is valued as the recognisor? The father? The mother? Other group members? It did seem that it was the father that became the central focus of the group’s desire. In the following week the dynamics were openly ‘male’. L (female Divisional Manager) felt more marginal in the group, males dominated the discussion and the discussions were oriented strongly towards the external world.

The oedipal conflict continued in the events surrounding the rise of N as the group’s leader. Recall that N attacked the group. L then attacked N for attacking the group. The group, particularly female group members vocally agreed with L. V identified with N and became protective of him against L and the group. Then N placed himself in the eye of the group’s anger. In the chapter discussing case two I likened this to N being implicit in his own sacrifice, actively drawing the group’s hostility towards himself (p153).

N’s arrogance towards the group placed him as the master in relation to the group however simultaneously he is the slave of V (and the group), deflecting the group’s anger about V towards himself. Benjamin talks about what matters in the father son oedipal conflict is not the conflict itself but is in the father’s capacity to recognise himself in the son:
The key to overcoming the dangers of this power lay in identification, in a form of tutelage that sustains authority by passing it on, as in the oedipal promise of becoming like the father. But the factor that determines whether the path of identification with the ideal ends in self respect or in submission is whether the identification and the recognition are in some sense mutual – the father must say not only ‘You can become like me’ but also ‘I was once like you and I remember how that feels’...without the father’s loving recognition, the project of self-governance cannot be freed from the axis of submission and defense (1995a, p151).

V likened himself to N and was aware of and monitors the danger N was in. This correlates Benjamin’s requirements for mutuality contained in the previous quotation. However, in V and N’s relation to the group there seems an absence of similar empathic relation. Instead the orientation tends toward a narcissistic desire for N to be leader of the group as the winner of the battle than for any thoughtful consideration of whether N was the most capable person to lead the group. This was evidenced in V actively shutting down K’s questioning of the parameters of the vote for a leader. The group appeared to resist the dominance of what was now open pairing between V and N. The group refused to acknowledge N as the leader.

The anger towards N reached a crescendo then subsided with the group members feeling remorseful. K encapsulated this:

I think because of how aggressive it all was it actually helped N in the long run because the group, when suddenly he had been given so much negativity towards him that there was some sort of compassionate side of the group started to develop or something.
This can be understood as the moment where the ‘real’ other survives. The group comes to know that N exists outside them. This allows for intersubjective space within which group fantasy and feeling can be processed, and agency realised. The group was then able to speak directly of their anger towards V and L. Communication was deeper and more open and was inclusive of many people, male and female, who had not asserted themselves previously. Tahlia twice softly said *N is our leader* and the group agreed. L spoke of a *warm glow* and V identified this moment as *synergetic...a felt experience that you can’t really ignore, everybody sort of knows it*. V spoke of this as the point of him becoming redundant, where the group takes over. This is a statement of independence not interdependence and reflective of complementary rather than mutual relation. N led the group. The group, including L and V, seemed less conflicted and more able to communicate ideas and feelings to each other. Over the following weeks openness and participation progressively deteriorated to a point where N stood at the front firing questions at the group. He did not appear to listen to answers but continued asking questions. The group, including L and V, did not participate or challenge N.

The data suggest the group, through its conflicts established generational succession in maintaining patriarchal structures in the group. This is in contrast to case one where in the example of X, a female lineage was not allowed. In case two it was ultimately a female who identified N as the leader to which the group agreed. This symbolises the master’s dependence on the slave and the common dependence on the patriarchal structure. Very often large groups choose narcissistic leaders (Bion 1961, Alford 1989). This type of leader, through their narcissistic characteristics, is best able to give internal anxieties external locus. In the dialectic of the master-slave this is understood as a retreat from mutual relation. The dynamics of domination and submission explored in both case one and case two illuminate the complexity and difficulty in deviating from deeply held collective defense mechanisms.
Case three

As in case one and case two, I contend that the large group of case three was also oriented toward patriarchal structures. This occurred despite, or perhaps, as in case one, in spite of the female Workshop Director acting as a Consultant to the group, along with far greater attention to the boundaries of the consultant’s role as compared to the Divisional Managers role in cases one and two. The patriarchal characteristics I refer to include a tendency towards judgement separated from care, cognitive discussions excluding emotional experience, and a reliance on males for psychological safety (when the older males held the end of the spiral, and through humour). Whilst at times, particularly in weeks three and four there seemed greater possibility to share experience and be heard, my predominant experience was of a group that became shut down by a male dominated culture. By week five I experienced being surrounded and dominated by male group members. I had difficulty sharing my experience or even connecting with experience inside myself. I accepted this subjugation.

The culture was punctuated by acts of aggression. It seemed the group lurched from one object to another in attempting to discharge unwanted feeling. We moved through the antipathy experienced between subgroups of ‘namers and nameless’, ‘men and women’, ‘those for the Consultants and those against’, to aggression against pairs and individual group members. Recall from the narrative of case three the aggression towards two group members who dared to speak to each other across the group (p158); and the attack on H who was wheelchair bound (p163); and the experience I had of Y presenting the group with her ‘scrolls’, how I perceived this ostensibly innocuous act as though it was akin to terrorism (p164); and R, the man who entered the group in the last week, being subject to the groups aggressive questioning (p167); and in week six in ‘picking over the carcass of the group’ a number of group members feeling nauseous (p166). As I wrote in the discussion of case three (p176) the group culture seemed a persecutory and retaliatory world of control, a repetition of aggressive acts without an acceptance or thoughtful working through of issues of difference. In
intersubjective terms this is a negative cycle of recognition. The dynamics of this cycle are complementary, master/slave. In mutuality, aggression is understood to be metabolised with relations with others. Connection with the other allows for aggression to be discharged within the relational space:

*When the other survives confrontations over assertion and difference, when aggression is ‘caught’ by the other, then there is a space of symbolic communication between subjects in which disappointment or excitement can be contained. With the emergence of this space between the person and the action, between action and reaction, it becomes possible to symbolise feeling in fantasy and words* (Benjamin 1995a, p202).

In contrast, omnipotence creates barriers to contact with the other and consequently aggression is always held within the system and repetitively revisits, or haunts, the self. Without connection, aggression is turned inwards where an internal world is created of tyranny and subjugation. This is then discharged into an external world now populated by objects and things.

It is this aspect of intersubjective theory that I am coming to consider the most significant for large group behaviour. It illuminates the importance of connection for healthy group functioning and the consequences for cultures that are domineering. By this I mean that without connection our aggression can only dehumanise others and ourselves. And in large groups aggression is mobilised so easily and with such force. With mutual connection possibilities are opened for aggression to be channelled usefully.

Through this discussion it is clear that the large groups did not have dominant cultures of mutuality. However as identified in Chapter one there are many theorists, including Turquet (1975) and Girard (1979) who believe the defensive nature of large groups is purposeful in itself. Alford writes about this:
Aggression against one’s own group – on which the adult often depends as much as the infant does on his mother - in a complex society must require the constant cooperation of others - is split off as aggression against other groups in order to allow a more secure, dependant attachment to one’s own group. It is to defend against his own aggression that the individual binds himself more closely to the group. This is, of course, ironic, as it is the group in the first place that threatens the individual (1989, p67).

Whilst acknowledging the significance of defensive functions within and of large group life, and certainly the data of these three large groups suggest this function, I want to understand and enact behaviour that furthers the capacity of large group experiences. Intersubjective thinking, theoretically at least, provides these possibilities. As we have seen, because face-to-face recognition is not always, or often, possible in connecting to the organisation of the large group, group members must find ways of mediating recognition through other sources. Mediation of large group recognition has been shown in this discussion to occur through subgroup competition and through direct and representative relation with formal leaders. In this, recognition in the large groups can be seen as a compromise. The degree of this compromise depends on the particular quality of the mediating influence and the way in which the large group manages issues of difference. In leading large groups Alford (1989) specifies an imperative of having what he terms ‘reparative leaders’. In this type of leadership the leader recognises the fear that people experience in large groups both of their own aggressive impulses and those of other groups. In answering the question of who is the reparative leader Alford says:

(the reparative leader is) one for whom the opposition, no matter how intensely fought, remains part of a moral or ethical whole to which all people belong. As part of this whole, the opposition partakes of the good; it is simply not the evil other. Such a leader also recognises that his own group’s claim to goodness is
incomplete. The reparative leader does not protect either his leadership or the unity of the group by demonising others. Rather his leadership is based on his ability to interpret the group’s moral tradition in such a way that includes the opponent, without utterly remaking the opponent and denying otherness (1989 p90).

Recognition of the difficult experience of group life for all individuals is a form of holding. By recognising the group’s deepest anxieties potential is created for relational space in which the vicissitudes of managing anxiety may be experienced and transformed (Alford 1989, Greene and Johnson 1987). There were a number of examples in the three cases where a well timed interpretation or statement enabled group members to identify for themselves what was real in the group, difficult though that was. This promoted experience of the ‘out there’ reality of the group paving the way for possibilities of real connection. For example, in case one BD experienced sadness when B reflected on her experience of the competitive nature of the group:

_I think that B bought it up, about competition, and someone saying about grades and high distinctions and stuff. I really thought that was a sad moment because all of a sudden it became clear that people’s thinking, people’s expectations of themselves and their own ambitions were detracting somewhat from the purpose of that class. I think that that is sad that that guy up the back behind me said I’m here to get the best mark, better than everyone else. If there is a group environment and you have got something to say then it is necessary that it be said._

And in case two, after T’s identification of N as the group’s leader resounded through the group, a group wide frank and open discussion about the difficulties relating to the Divisional Managers occurred. In case three there were many examples of interventions by the Consultants that spoke to
what may have occurring in the group at that time. As identified in the
discussion of case three (p180) these interventions freed me to be able to
assert myself. In the next chapter these ideas are furthered through
exploration of what might constitute an organisational context informed by
mutuality.

7.6 Conclusion
The discussion of this chapter has highlighted the difficulties group
members experienced in asserting themselves and in gaining large group
recognition. Through this a common tendency of the groups to develop
complementary, patriarchal culture and structure was illuminated. In case
one it was proposed that complementary structures already present in the
group were reinforced due to the threat associated with female management
and the way this was managed. It was suggested this amplified difficulties in
gaining large group recognition with consequent depletion of resources
available for work. In case two the discussion illustrated the way the group
experienced and perpetuated a patriarchal structure in the group. As with
case one this reinforced complementary dynamics in the group and
negatively affected the group’s capacity to work. In case three once again a
tendency for patriarchal structure and culture was evidenced. It was argued
that patriarchal structure and culture perpetuated a negative cycle of
recognition in each of the groups. The structure of this cycle is
complementary, its dynamic master/slave, and its intent is to protect the self
from the group:

In complementary structures aloneness is only possible by
obliterating the intrusive other or attunement is only possible by
surrendering to the other (Benjamin 1988, p28).
8. Chapter eight - Intersubjectivity and organisations

8.1 Introduction

This chapter contains thoughts about the relevance of intersubjective theory to organisations. In this, the chapter elucidates the profound effect the character of the relation between the individual and the large group has on the functioning of large organisations and on the individual in their workplace. First, ideas emerging from the multicase discussion are linked to an organisational case study. This provides an opportunity to show the validity of transposing the theory emerging from the relatively unstructured large groups of the case studies to structured organisational settings. Second, organisational structure and its impact on mutual relations are explored. Following this, consideration is given to what an organisational context ‘informed by mutuality’ may constitute. And finally, the relevance of intersubjective processes to organisations in the post industrial era are elaborated and argued.

8.2 Intersubjectivity and organisations

Large group dynamics exist regardless of whether the whole group is in one room together. The large group and its attendant dynamics are held in the mind of group members (consciously and/or unconsciously) (Kernberg 1985; Khaleelee and Miller 1985; Alford 1989). Structure and bureaucracy can be thought of in part as existing as a result of, and to defend against, large group dynamics. Structure protects the individual and the group from the barrage of responses and projective elements so strikingly seen in the case studies (Alford 1989). Organisational structure and cultural form can also be thought about as collective ways members seek to assert themselves and gain recognition. This was also evidenced in the data of the case studies which show large group recognition mediated through structural and cultural elements, i.e. through subgroup competition and through direct and representative relation to formal authorities. Understanding of large group dynamics is therefore essential in understanding organisations of more than 20 people.

Exploration of the following organisational case study by Menzies Lyth (1988b) is included at this point to: 1) link large group theory emerging from relatively
unstructured groups to structured large group settings; 2) transit from the 
exploration of intersubjectivity in the multicase discussion to consideration of 
intersubjectivity and its relevance in organisations; and 3) begin analysis of 
organisations using intersubjective language and concepts.

Menzies Lyth’s study of the nursing service of a general hospital in Britain in 
1959 is a profound example of bureaucracy as a social defense mechanism 
(1988b). It is also striking when considered from an intersubjective viewpoint. 
The study was conducted to help a general hospital develop new methods for 
nurses in executing task. The hospital had 700 inpatient beds and a number of 
outpatient services. It was also a nurse training centre. The study became a 
seminal work on social defenses and their deployment in organisational settings. It 
was hypothesised that close contact with ill and dying patients mobilised 
threatening levels of primitive anxiety. To protect organisation members from this 
contact a variety of structural and cultural mechanisms existed. These included: 
continual rotation of nurses from ward to ward; regimented, ritualistic procedures 
that occurred because of the patient’s medical category rather than as a response 
to the patients individual needs or wishes; and the identification of patients by 
disease or bed number rather than name.

A culture of deindividuation existed for nurses and patients. Individual skill and 
competency was collapsed into categories of nurses, the ethos being that nurses 
were interchangeable within that category.

To some extent the reduction of individual distinctiveness aids 
detachment by minimising the mutual interaction of personalities, 
which might lead to ‘attachment’. It is reinforced by an implicit 
operational policy of ‘detachment’: ‘A good nurse doesn’t mind 
moving’. ‘A good nurse’ is willing and able without disturbance to 
move from ward to ward or even hospital to hospital at a moment’s 
notice’ (Menzies Lyth 1988b, p53).
Also apparent was a culture of emotional repression. Expression of emotion was unsupported, despite emotionally demanding responsibilities and events. Junior nurses felt unsupported by senior nurses. However, in the privacy of the research interviews senior nurses expressed their sympathy and empathy for the junior nurses, remembering upsetting times in their own training experiences.

The study also reveals a dominating hierarchical culture that reinforced alienation and dissociation from the self and others. Authority relations were characterised by punishment, scapegoating and mistrust. At management levels roles were obscure with line management accountabilities and responsibilities poorly defined. Authority in the wards was fluid. Responsibility for other’s work fell on the person with the most years of nursing experience. This meant that the same person in the same situation but at different times was both ‘senior’ and junior. To cope with accepting the heavy responsibilities of the nursing role irresponsibility was split off from responsibility. The irresponsible ‘other’ was always the junior to your current position. The responsible ‘other’, the strict authoritarian, was always the senior. This social defense was legitimised and reinforced as the split off irresponsible elements of the self (the juniors) were justifiably admonished by the harsh discipline of the ‘responsible’ senior. This defense also affected level of work responsibility. Menzies Lyth found that most people in the organisation were working on tasks well below their capacities. Nurses when subordinate were very dependent on their superiors, allowing them to take on their tasks and make decisions for them. Nurses when superior felt they could not fully trust their irresponsible subordinates, this legitimised taking on the subordinate nurses' tasks.

Menzies Lyth reports that while the social defenses protected nurses from anxiety, this was at a cost of reduction in the quality of patient care and task effectiveness. Additionally, the defenses themselves were shown to cause stress and guilt. Nurses were frustrated by their limited care of patients, and from feeling uncared for themselves. Secondary anxieties were also experienced where the nurses felt trapped and unstimulated within the service’s regimentation. At a system level the social defenses were limiting opportunities for overall development of the nursing
service. The regimentation of the nursing service provided little scope for nursing training. The most mature and skilled of nursing students, those who across time were identified as more likely to develop and change the service for the better, exited the system because of frustration with its limitations.

Menzies Lyth links the development of the social defense system to threatening levels of primitive anxiety mobilised by working with ill and dying people. The strength and characteristics of the defenses can also be understood as defenses against threatening large group dynamics. The defense mechanisms Menzies Lyth discusses correlate with the key large group defenses identified by Turquet (1975) and seen in the data of the case studies, i.e. subgrouping, splitting, scapegoating, homogenisation, and institutionalisation.

In intersubjective terms this is a study of complementary dynamics. Capability to assert oneself as a unique individual was systemically denied. As a consequence recognition of the other as ‘real’ was obstructed. Instead the other was fantasy formed by projection of unwanted parts of the self. The structure and culture of the hospital rendered human relations in the hospital ‘master-slave’. Recognition was available in the system through identification with the mastery of the master. The chameleon levels of master-slave described in the downwards projection of irresponsibility and the upwards projection of responsibility pointedly illustrate the master is at once the slave and the slave the master. However, this was unable to be reflected or acted on from within the system. Recognition of the self in the other was only possible elsewhere, outside of the system. This was evidenced in the senior nurses being able to express empathy and care for the junior nurses in the privacy of the research interview but not in the workplace.

*In the father son-oedipal conflict it is not the conflict itself but it is the father’s capacity to recognise himself in the son that frees the son from submission and defense* (Benjamin 1995a, p151)

Recognition may also have been found through subgroup affiliations, i.e. in the same category of nurses. However, the degree of conformity within the
subgroups, reinforced through system punishment and control, obstructed assertion. Consequently recognition would, at best, be partial and compromised. The obscurity of line accountabilities at management level would arguably also compromise an individual’s capacity to use direct or representative means in gaining organisational recognition.

The study reveals no reliable means of mutual recognition in the hospital system. Recognition is only available in a partial and compromised form. The implications of this are considerable. Connection to the hospital is lost for all organisation members, as is connection to organisation members by the hospital. Neither patients nor staff were supported by the system in maintaining coherent sense of self, or in developing and supporting agency. For patients, this would reduce their own capacity to help themselves in gaining health. For organisation employees this correlated with the reportedly high frustration levels staff, the high sick levels of leave, the low retention rates of student nurses (approximately thirty percent) and the unusually high levels of staff transfers out of the hospital. For the hospital this meant loss of human agency at all levels. It depleted the capacity to provide quality care to patients and obstructed development and innovation.

8.3 Organisational structure and intersubjectivity

In this section organisational structure and its impact on possibilities of mutual relations is considered. Benjamin states that *it is not power difference that obstructs mutual relations; it is whether or not the context is informed by mutuality* (1995a, p185). When I think about large organisations I am filled with doubt as to whether this could ever hold true in that context. By this I mean I doubt that large organisations with differential power structures could ever operate as contexts informed by mutuality; the power structure itself seeming to embody non-mutual relations. The following explores Benjamin’s statement.

Since the industrial revolution Western organisations have been constructed on military ideology and principles of scientific management (Morgan 1997). Up until the 1970’s the majority of organisations were designed strictly hierarchically with execution of task being a highly determined and ordered process. As external
environments have become more complex and less stable, shifts towards greater flexibility have occurred. Requirement to increase responsiveness to the external environment has seen many organisations devolve degrees of authority to lower level workers. Diversified structures such as matrix design, the flattening of hierarchies, and emphasis on team work have evolved to address the changing needs. Attitudes to authority in society have altered and this has been replicated in organisations. Respect and compliance towards formal authorities has become progressively more conditional. Despite these changes, fundamentals of scientific management and military style thinking, such as top down control, still permeate organisational thinking and design (Lawrence 1999a).

*It is not power difference that obstructs mutual relations it is whether or not the context is informed by mutuality* (Benjamin 1995a, p185). The question is whether ‘a context informed by mutuality’ is possible in a hierarchically structured organisation, or whether this type of context implies quite different structural design.

Power difference in organisations is institutionalised through hierarchy. Hierarchy is a ubiquitous structure that is evident in all of the major organisations of society: the family; religious and educational settings; government and business. The way in which people enact, and respond to, hierarchy is deeply embedded in societal culture.

Chattopadhyay (1995) identifies two definitions of hierarchy that he contends have been internalised by human beings. First, that hierarch means a sacred ruler, the president of sacred rites, a division of angels. The hierarch gains authority from divine sources making his/her authority unquestionable. Second, hierarchy as defined in the biological sciences. Single cell species are at the bottom of the hierarchy, with the hierarchy moving upwards as species becomes increasingly complex. Each level is considered superior to the one below. By these definitions a hierarch is one who is superior to, and unquestionable by subordinates. Hierarchs are expected to be all-knowing and infallible. Subordinates devolve their authority upwards creating dependency. Hierarchy is also a gendered
concept: The Christian, Muslim, Hindu gods are male; in 1999 males made up 91.7% of organisational boards and 98.7% of CEO’s in Australia (Bergin 1999). As referred to in Chapter four (p103), Long in her research of leadership and gender reveals a conceptual gap for a dominant feminine position in group member perceptions of leaders. Long found that female leaders were conceived as either masculine or emotional (hysterical) (1992, p115). Conception of stable, strong female leaders did not occur. The data from the case studies of this thesis add an imperative for large groups to be protected by patriarchal structures, and that recognition from the formal authorities, either directly or through representation, equated with the much desired and arguably required, large group recognition. The need for patriarchal structuring was argued as resulting from the defensive handling of infantile anxiety, collusively protecting individuals from unconsciously held feared maternal images. Hierarchy is thus a deeply embedded cultural phenomenon. It is defensive in its orientation. It separates rather than incorporates. It stands in opposition to the inclusive philosophy of intersubjectivity.

Hierarchal position is a scarce commodity in organisations (relative to numbers of employees). To subordinates, particular those who regard themselves as upwardly mobile, the hierarchal position often has a myth of power and prestige surrounding it. Hierarchy creates desire. Crossley explains how objects of desire mediate recognition:

> Human beings don’t just seek out what they need they seek recognition from each other. They desire to be desired and this desire is often mediated through things, which in turn become valuable and precious. Objects are desirable because they represent the desire of others (1996, p6).

In this explanation need for recognition links to Girard’s mimetic processes. As was described in the discussion of case two (p141) the mimetic dynamic contains inherent danger for escalation of rivalrous conflict and the subsequent search for a scapegoat (Grote and McGeeney 1997, pp44-46).
These are broad cultural arguments that lend weight to my doubts about hierarchal organisations as potential sites for mutual relations. The following is a specific example of problems that occurred in an organisation where drive for recognition from hierarchs undermined work task. Inclusion of this example also furthers opportunity to explore and validate the use of intersubjective language and concepts in organisational analysis.

In a large organisational setting where I worked a number of years ago, a senior manager acted in, what appeared to be, quite disturbed ways. His behaviour, in my view, was rude and bullying to subordinates, egoistic to his peers and sycophantic to his hierarchal superiors. Professionals, with many years of competent experience in the organisation were stood down by the manager, with little reason given. He exerted formal power idiosyncratically, ignoring practice boundaries, always towards increasing control of his work territory. I learnt quickly not to provide information to this manager because inevitably it would be contorted and used against me. The manager had a quality that intruded into people. This was evidenced when on three occasions organisation members talked about disturbed nights sleep because of recurring images of this man in their mind.

The section of the organisation the manager had functional responsibility for became fractured with peers increasingly expressing feelings of isolation from each other. The managers behaviour was concerning but what perplexed me even more were the responses of other organisation members. The manager’s behaviour was named but then excused or diluted. He was treated politely, even deferentially. People relinquished valued areas of their work with little resistance. This created suspicion as to who was aligned with whom. It seemed that organisation members were colluding to maintain a fantasy of the manager as competent, despite the cost to themselves and their work. I came to believe that this was, in part, about trying to have a relationship with the manager in the hope that he would recognise the staff member’s capacities and work. This would also serve to minimise risk of conflict. It also seemed to be related to a need for the manager to be worthy of recognising them, and the manager to be worthy of their
recognition. A strong enough need to create a fantasy about him and his behaviour.

In my view the situation became, as Long (2002) describes, a perverted system dynamic. This is where an organisation or parts of an organisation collude by their silence in the activities of the perverted. Collusion may have been reinforced through the intrusive behaviour of the manager. Violation of an individual’s boundaries is a characteristic of domination and submission that is thought to create a form of excitement for both master and slave. Boundaries are not actually dissolved because that risks psychic death. The excitement is in the risk of death. The violator must stay in control and maintain their boundary; the violated allows their boundary to be broken and loses their self. One must stay in control otherwise both selves would be extinguished. Connection to a defined ‘other’ guards against nothingness (Benjamin 1995a).

Fantasy of the competency of the manager may have also occurred to retain system links to the higher authorities. In this way the gaining of representative recognition from the organisation is protected. It may be that facing the reality of behaviour of the manager would obstruct taking up a slave position through which identificatory recognition was available. Facing reality may also mean questioning the worth of the more senior authorities, those whom employed and supported this manager, as figures to be recognised or recognised by. Facing reality could mean being in a large group with the frightening nothingness of no recognition, of abandonment, the only option.

This example of narcissistic leadership, along with understanding of the significance of the defensive functions of formal authorities to group members, suggests that where management enacts complementary dynamics organisation members lose connectedness to the organisation, to others and consequently to themselves. Inversely the organisation loses contact with its members, decreasing its resource capacity. In this example, the emotional life of the organisation was too painful to experience. It was split off into individual members to re-experience in the isolation of the night. Aggression became problematic, it was unable to be
expressed upwards, and so was discharged through projection into other aspects of
the system, towards peers. This may also have occurred as a result of subordinates
identifying with the aggressor and acting on the manager’s (and their own) behalf.
Intersubjective space in the organisation was saturated with persecutory fantasy.
Not only did the punishing behaviour of the manager stunt the possibilities of
creative work, so too did the response of the employees. Peer resources and
support for work suffered along with morale. The organisation became
preoccupied with its own conflicts and difficulties, the primary task and its
relation to the internal and external world diminished in importance.

As previously identified (p225), narcissistic leadership is common in large groups
as a way of providing individuals with external locus for internal anxieties (Bion
1961; Alford 1989). In hierarchically structured organisations, desire, or arguably
need, for a ‘heroic’ leader (Krantz and Gilmore 1990; Eisold 2001) both attracts
and reinforces this psychology (Shapiro 2000; Lawrence 1998).

A ‘context informed by mutuality’ would have as a fundamental premise the
ability of organisation members to hold the organisation in their mind (Hutton
2000). The splitting nature of defensive functions mitigates against this. Rigid,
segmented structures, hallmarks of large organisations, protect against threatening
large group dynamics and provide channels for members to attain large
group/organisational recognition. However, these structures fracture and segment
the organisation in the experience and minds of organisation members. The data
and the discussion of the case studies showed that for most people in the large
groups, sub group membership was the locus of their experience. Subgroup
membership provided some degree of recognition and supported them from the
vicissitudes of the larger group, both consciously and unconsciously. The large
group was experienced as aggressive, competitive and dominating. In large
hierarchal organisations this is also often the case. Much is written on the difficult
and alienating experiences of organisation members in contemporary
organisations (Lasch 1979; Lawrence, Bain and Gould 1996; Dolan 1971). These
experiences extend to all individuals in large hierarchal organisations, including
management (Krantz and Gilmore 1990). Difficulties are increased manifold in
identifying with and belonging to the organisation, as compared to identifying with and belonging to a sub group of the organisation. Denial, avoidance and repression of these difficulties result in the large organisation being kept out of mind. There is great loss in this for the individual, for the subgroup and for the organisation. Each of these systems does not have the ability to relate to any other of the systems in a way that progresses both. Each system loses connection and becomes entropic. The loss is so common in large hierarchal organisations as to be below awareness for many people and organisations (Stacey 2003). For individuals the loss is most profound, as it is loss of an important connection between themselves and who they might be in society. For the subgroup, the loss is in being able to work proactively in collaboration with the organisation. For the organisation, it is the loss of human resource potential.

This discussion suggests ‘a context informed by mutuality’ is unlikely in hierarchal organisations that are made up of 30 or more people. The power structure is so utterly collapsed into the context that it is almost indivisible. Thus I would say that Benjamin’s statement ‘it is not power difference but whether the context is informed by mutuality’ is essentially true but cannot be asked of hierarchal organisations.

Exploration of the case studies and the discussion to date has tended towards the problems that emerge in contexts not informed by mutuality. This next section considers what does constitute an organisational context informed by mutuality. How could this be created and led?

8.4 Organisational contexts informed by mutuality: leading and containing
The central function of effective leadership is to define and maintain the primary task of the organisation in relation to the environment. Leadership requires a capacity to support organisation member’s observation and participate in the internal processes and dynamics of the organisation as well as the external world (Turquet 1986). Organisations need to be able to reformulate themselves in ongoing ways to be optimally responsive as particular aspects of their primary task emerge. Internally a decision making culture based of negotiation is required
to support this adaptation and reformulation. This is the antithesis of the rigid structuring and culture of organisations dominated by defenses against the anxiety of the large group. Menzies Lyth (1988a) contends that change in organisations always means the restructuring of social defense mechanisms. This means the freeing of underlying anxieties until new adaptations or defenses are developed. Thus, leadership is needed that can recognise and contain the surfacing of dread and aggression that is embedded in institutionalised structure and culture (Alford 1989). This is a containing or ‘holding’ function that gives rise to and supports selfhood and agency of organisation members. In turn this enables learning, negotiation and collaboration around task.

The characteristics of the containing function can be more deeply understood by reflecting on the first containing relation between the mother and the infant. It is understood that it is within this relation that capacity for mutuality originates. Whilst this was briefly articulated in the multicase discussion (p186), because of its centrality in creating a ‘context informed by mutuality’, I wish to reiterate and expand understanding of this concept. In her earlier writings Benjamin refers to the creative container of this relationship as ‘transitional space’ or ‘intersubjective space’ (1988, 1995a, 1995b, 1998). In her later writings, where she articulates these concepts more fully, she refers to the ‘third space’. The following is sourced from Benjamin’s later work, *The Rhythm of Recognition. Comments on the Work of Louis Sander* (2002).

Where the mother is able to tune into the babies particular need, when she recognises the rhythm of the baby and is able to ministrate to the baby without rancour, then the mother and the baby seem to be in synchronicity. Benjamin talks about the mother and baby moving together in a ‘third’ state that is neither one nor the other but an experience created by them both. The third state, is analogous to Winnicott's *potential space* (1971, p128). Benjamin says this is a state that accesses rhythm and natural law. It is a state where responding to the baby’s needs is not a capitulation to demand but recognises the limitations and abilities of the baby.
Now when mother makes the attempt to get a pattern going she is not merely accommodating to the baby. Even though she may experience the baby’s demand as opposed to her deeply felt need for sleep, she sees it not as an expression of his will against hers, but, rather, as an objective property of the system. Her accommodation therefore is the first, most incipient model for thirdness, which appears when we tune into the music as something not merely self produced but having a quality of necessity. That her behaviour produces behaviour on the baby’s part that accords with a more or less objective pattern is indeed a striking illustration of what might well be a deeper principle. It is her recognition of the other and of necessity that seems to open a channel for the synchrony of the third (Benjamin 2002, p50).

Synchronicity means interaction that is not demanding or coercive. This enables the baby to experience an authentic sense of agency. The baby experiences that its actions can alter its own state in a desired direction. The third state provides possibilities of creative disengagement (Sander 1988, p73) where the baby can develop his/her sense of creativity and agency within a safe and dependable environment. Independence is developed in the context of a recognising dependence rather than as an autonomous state.

Aggression is metabolised within the relation through the mother’s capacity to tolerate the frustration of the baby. The mother’s survival of the baby’s frustration breaks the baby’s mental omnipotence. It also provides reassurance against fantasies of the omnipotence of the mother (both the baby’s and her own). Where this does not occur, where the mother fails to contain the baby’s frustration, the baby is left with irreducible, unmetabolised rage that remains as aggression. As well, the absence of the mother’s subjectivity is experienced as loss. Intersubjective space becomes saturated with aggression and grief. This combination is thought to be the basis of sadistic fantasy. Problems of competing wills occur where the agency of one is obstructed by the agency of the other (the master-slave dynamic). Development of self-regulatory control is diminished. Internal and external reality, instead of being discovered and created, becomes
frightening. Benjamin acknowledges Bion’s (1977) discussions of the container mother and the need for mental digestion as the primary influence in her thinking about the metabolising function of intersubjective space.

Intersubjective space provides the baby with a sense of coherence and opens possibilities of the baby developing the capacity to recognise the other. In being recognised both the baby and the mother have potential to unite as separate individuals, this is the paradox of dependence and independence. The capacity to depersonalise the demands of the infant is the key characteristic provided by the mother in this relation: *She sees it (the babies demands) not as an expression of his will against hers, but, rather, as an objective property of the system* (Benjamin 2002, p50). In organisations this is imperative quality in a leader in promoting mutuality. (As it is a quality desirable for all those involved in mutual relations.) Organisation members are not babies. However, the anxiety and aggression that we hold within us at times, returns us to states of helplessness reminiscent of infancy. To integrate new realities people need protected space to re-experience their own capacities of self-regulation. To even think about creating and structuring reflective space into the organisation, the leader needs to have a well-developed understanding of her/his own defensive disposition to withstand appeals to deny the vicissitudes of reality (Lazar 2003). As referred to in Chapter seven (p228), Alford exemplifies this in his writing about political leadership (1989, 2004).

*Responsible political leaders will recognise that the public is scared to death: of its own aggressive urges, as well of the enemy. Responsible leaders will therefore not exaggerate the goodness of their own group and the badness of the other. A political leader who recognises ‘the only thing we have to fear is fear itself’ expresses deep insight into the political psychology of the group. By calling the enemy by its right name - not only some evil group, but also our own anxiety - such a leader may help the group minimise its use of paranoid schizoid defenses. In so doing, he or she might turn the group’s*
attention toward the restoration and protection of its own goodness-
that is the restoration of threatened group values (Alford 1989, p90).

Leading towards mutuality means understanding in a deep way the dynamics of
intersubjective relating and creation. Creation occurs through the joining of
subject’s experiences and thoughts. This is a process of working with agreements
and disagreements to arrive at outcomes that are inclusive of, and recognising of,
the contribution of all parties.

Gilligan writes about this as the sharing of narratives: *If the process of coming to
know others is imagined as a joining of stories it implies the possibility of
learning from others in ways that transform the self* (1988, p6). She gives an
example where two four year olds were playing together and wanted to play
different games. The girl wished to play next-door neighbours and the boy,
pirates. Rather than play one game instead of the other, or to takes turns of
different games, the girl suggested an inclusive option that the boy could be the
‘pirate next door’. This provides entry for each into the world of the other.
Innovation occurred in the context of relationship.

Matusov (1996) explores intersubjectivity as a process of agreement,
disagreement and disjunction. He looks in detail at the creation of a play by a
group of young girls. In the course of developing the play the girls agree and
disagree. At one point disagreement masked power and ownership issues. Some
of the children acted as if they had an alternative for what was being proposed
(even though they didn’t) and were included into the group creation process ‘as if’
they were stating and resolving a dispute over different ideas. This allowed for
greater inclusion and ownership was extended to all members. The development
of the play was not linear or sequential; instead the process was marked by
periods of disjunction and elaboration. Matusov contends that intersubjective
dynamics are diverse, fluid and disjointed. He argues emphatically that
intersubjectivity extends far beyond simple arenas of agreement.
An alternative example of intersubjective process is found in the Israeli Sabra culture. In this culture there is a tradition of dialogue known as ‘dugri’. The purposes of dugri are to foster acceptance of others ideas and strengthen harmonious relations within the community. There is no expectation of agreement or reconciliation of ideas then or later. The dialogue is preceded by one or another of the contributors announcing *I’ll tell you dugri*. This indicates that the communication is to be the sharing of each contributor’s ideas with acceptance that the ideas are likely to be different. Dugri reinforces respect of difference thus legitimising diversity within the community (Katriel 1986).

These examples illuminate how mutuality occurs as a result of interdependent relations. Not ‘one or the other’ but ‘one and the other’. Leading intersubjectively requires this recognition of interdependence. Mutual relations mean that both the manager and the subordinates assert themselves and recognise the other. This necessitates openness and risk taking on both sides. This can be difficult as it alters the myth of the manager as invulnerable and the subordinate as passive. This is not to mean disintegration of role (Krantz 1998) but instead implies separating the role from the person (Hirschhorn 1990, 1997). Where role is separate from person the intersubjective edict of the commonness of each of us in all is satisfied. Where role is primarily defensive, person and role become undifferentiated. The master-slave dynamic may result in organisational classes of ‘superior’ and ‘inferior’ people. Separation of person from role also allows greater potential for discussion of role relatedness and role impact at all levels of the organisation. It also allows for the uniqueness of the person to be brought to task less encumbered by the defensive positions than what the collapsing of person into role inevitably implies.

All organisation members including leader/s are responsible for creating intersubjective containment. The structure of the organisation would need to provide for adequate amounts of protected, reflective space that allowed for the working through of direct and representative assertions of all parts of the organisation. From this would flow patterns, that when coordinated, would create
and recreate the culture, structures and strategies of the organisation as the organisation narrative continued.

The type of structure and culture outlined in this section would lend itself to a greater potential for organisational recognition to be attained through mutual processes rather than through the dialectic of the master and slave. This type of structure and culture locates members in an interdependent relation to formal authorities. The emergent organisation symbolises this interdependence and as such organisational recognition would be embedded in everyday work. The recognition is intersubjective as the individual, the subgroup and the organisation engage in an ongoing process of transformation; of being transformed by and transforming each other (Benjamin 1995a, p25).

8.5 Post industrial organisations

The work of this thesis is now increasingly converging with contemporary organisational writing and practice. As organisations are faced with unprecedented levels of uncertain and shifting dynamics in the environment, organisational analysts, consultants and practitioners are thinking about, writing about and enacting new ways to enable organisations to survive and prosper (Emery and Trist 1965, 1972, 1977; Trist 1979; Morgan 1983; Hirschhorn 1990, 1997; Marris 1996; Krantz 1998; Lawrence 1998, 1999a, 1999b; Shapiro 2000; Huffington et al 2004; Gertler and Izod 2004) Their work enables me to think about the realities of organisations contexted by mutuality.

Post industrial global society has heralded fundamental system changes for organisations. The advent of global telecommunications has created unknowable and infinite external environments. Cause and effect have become difficult if not impossible to decipher in a complex mass of interactions. Previous ways that organisations have responded to environmental conditions are becoming ineffective (Lawrence 1999a, 1999b).

As far back as 1965 Eric Trist and Fred Emery argued new organisational form would develop as a result of changing environmental conditions (Emery and Trist
Emery and Trist identified four chronological typologies of environments. 1) placid randomised; 2) placid clustered; 3) disturbed reactive and 4) turbulent.

They argued hierarchal organisations as a form appropriate to type two and type three conditions where the environment, though increasing in complexity, was still able to be deciphered. In this type of organization, managers or strategy specialists located environmental cause and effect and attempted to position the organisation for optimal exploitation of resources, and to prevent other organisations accessing those same resources. The bigger, the stronger, the more powerful the organisation, the better it is able to capitalise on the environmental conditions.

In turbulent environments dynamic processes arising from the environmental field itself, unpredictable points of amplification, and resultant inability to determine cause and effect, render the large hierarchal organisation defunct. Emery and Trist predicted the imminent demise of bureaucracies and their narcissistic striving for competitive edge. In their place they foresaw interactive and collaborative organisations that pro-actively create the future. The interdependence of organisations would enable survival. Emery and Trist called this a paradigmatic shift from hierarchal to socio-ecological systems (1965, p527). Over the 40 years since this first visionary work their future has become our reality.

Emery and Trist went on to develop ideas exploring socio-technical arrangements in organisations to facilitate successful engagement with the external environment. They have worked with organisations in implementing structure and cultural change to this end. Key elements of these changes include: 1) increase in an organisation’s internal differentiation, or requisite variety (Trist 1979, p526), to facilitate multiple engagements with complex and dynamic external environments; 2) increase in an organisation’s multi functional ability, or redundant capacity (p526), to be mobilised in a variety of ways as needed and; 3) alteration of strategic focus from predetermined and static outcomes to an open-unfolding (Emery and Trist 1965, p524) process. Lawrence (1999a) describes this
as movement away from detection of cause and effect towards listening to ‘associations’ between experiences. Emery and Trist argue that only through participant democratic processes could organisations achieve optimal engagement with turbulent environments. To enable this, strategy development becomes a process of ongoing participation by organisation members and stakeholders. By sharing experience at all levels the organisations ensures greatest coverage of the forces acting on it.

Many contemporary organisational writers and practitioners support the main thrust of Trist and Emery’s arguments (Lawrence 1998, 1999a, 1999b; Huffington et al 2004; Hirschhorn 1990; Krantz 1998; Shapiro 2000; Hirschhorn 1990,1997). Lawrence (1999a) contends that where organisations have previously contained the organisational task it is now the task that will need to contain the organisation. Lawrence uses Bion’s concepts of container and contained (these informed aspects of Benjamin’s articulation of the intersubjective space (p248). In Bion’s concepts the container takes up that which needs to be contained. Through this process both the container and the contained are altered and a third element emerges. The container must be able to take in and be with the experience of that which needs to be contained. The container models the managing of experience and may also be able to return that experience to the contained in a way that is able to be tolerated. Where previously organisations, in relatively static form, have been able to provide conditions to contain and meet the demands of task, in increasingly complex environments the task will be the site of determining emergent organisational form. This alters the locus of organisational recognition in the organisation. The reliance of the organisation on its members is made explicit in this organisational form, shattering myths of one way upward dependence so often found in hierarchal organisations. Instead relationships between individuals and between subgroups are interdependent, and tasks and relations must be negotiated in an ongoing way.

Huffington et al (2004) explore the impact of this devolution of decision making in organisations. They illuminate the vicissitudes involved in what they term distributed leadership (p68). They argue that through distributing leadership the
organisation loses the defensive function of the CEO in protecting members against anxiety. Without such recourse individuals are required to exercise much greater degrees of personal authority. This transition would likely leave organisation members vulnerable as they contend with those aspects that they have previously projected onto the CEO. In exploring the ambiguity of leadership and accountability in such a system, Huffington et al (2004) caution need for ongoing negotiated relations to monitor and develop distributed leadership throughout the organisation. They characterise these relations as progressive and regressive. In intersubjective terms these characteristics correspond with the relation itself as the container for anxiety. The negotiated aspect Huffington et al speak of is the capacity to assert oneself and be recognised by the other, and vice versa. The progression and regression, aligns with oscillation between mutual and complementary structures that Benjamin (1988, 1995a) identifies as implicit in mutuality. The transitional space within mutual relations creates possibilities for the expression and metabolism of aggression and anxiety.

Krantz (1998) and Shapiro (2000) advise that in a distributed leadership model of organisation, teamwork and collaboration cannot substitute for the defensive functions of the CEO. However, the characteristics of the CEO they describe are the antithesis of the narcissistic heroic leader of traditional hierarchal form. Instead, the CEO may provide a healthy containing function through their capacity to be in touch with the internal and external dynamics of the organisation, and with their own experience. The CEO must resist introjecting and acting out idealised projections from organisation members, returning them to the organisation in ways that allows the experience of authority to be able to be tolerated. Shapiro also describes the function of the CEO as providing organisational mission as the locus for member’s connection to each other. He contends that attempts to create teamwork, collaboration and positive feeling for their own sake are likely to increase anxiety mistrust and suspicion. *Mission, which incorporates ideals and values, is the meeting place for passionate connections around work* (Shapiro 2000, p135)
Consideration of a ‘context informed by mutuality’ has led me to the work of Emery and Trist (1965, 1972, 1977); Trist (1979); Krantz (1998); Lawrence (1998, 1999a, 1999b); Hirschhorn (1990); Shapiro (2000); and Huffington et al (2004). These writers have provided me with concepts to think about the realities of organisations that might embrace such ideology. The substance of their arguments supports me in believing that there are real possibilities of creation of such environments. However, constructing such a reality would require much conscious work. The success or otherwise is clearly contingent on the organisation’s leadership. The case studies showed the tendencies of large groups to create traditional patriarchal structures. If the leader fails to contain anxiety in the organisation then the inevitability of master-slave relations would occur. Where leadership is containing then the organisation may be able to create a context where mutuality can take place. Just as defensive mechanisms perpetuate further defensive mechanisms so mutuality may perpetuate mutuality. This would allow for organisations where containment is diffused throughout, arguably decreasing the projective dynamics that the leader must contend with.

This type of organisational structure and culture has potential for organisational members to ‘hold’ the organisation, and thus organisational recognition, inside themselves. The connection this implies may mitigate against the threatening large group dynamics, and provide leverage against need to withdraw, dominate or render ourselves submissive. Being able to hold the large group in our mind links us to ourselves, the organisation and its tasks, and systems beyond the organisation, through our relations with others.

Lawrence (1999a) argues that psychoanalytic thinking about organisations is well placed to support organisations through transition to new ways of working. Psychoanalytic methods of embracing and working with the unknown correlate to the organisations need to move away from detection of cause and effect towards listening to ‘associations’ (Lawrence 1999a) between experiences. I argue that theories of intersubjectivity are also relevant to working in the new age. Mutual relation is a container within which the new thought can emerge. It offers ideology that embraces difference and decries the idealisation of denigration of
the other. This supports collaboration and cooperative work. Not only does the organisation require a container but so does an unbounded external environment. This links with Emery and Trist’s (1965, 1972, 1977) view of the need for collaboration between organisations to create the future. Without containment the organisation and the external environment are most likely to result in lowest common denominator outcomes. I am mindful of the catastrophic potential of uncontained large group dynamics. An uncontained cyberspace holds even more terrifying possibilities.

8.6 Conclusion
The type of organisation that has been discussed is one that takes us beyond the oedipal. Slowly social conditions are developing that reframe our experiences of separation and connection: mothers have become more equally symbolic of the outside; women and girls more greatly accept rights to selfhood; the mother infant pair is less saturated with maternal dependency; separation from the mother has become more possible without fear of destroying her or being destroyed; and rebellion against the father is an accepted stage of life rather than a mortal transgression. These are conscious developments that slowly impact on our more primitive unconscious selves. Perhaps the future holds the promise of greater connection and coming to terms with difference (Benjamin 1998).
9. Chapter nine – Concluding remarks

9.1 Introduction
The concluding remarks address four areas: 1) consideration of the findings of the research; 2) consideration of the relation between intersubjective theory and traditional systems psychodynamic large group theory; 3) limitations to the research; and 4) further research recommendations.

9.2 The findings of the research
The findings of this research affirm what are generally understood difficulties that people experience in large groups. The research shows how the large size of a group creates great difficulties for individuals in joining and being a participant in the group. The research also shows how the structure and culture of the large groups were fundamentally determined by the ways in which group members collectively protected themselves from anxiety brought into the group, anxiety mobilised by the large size of the group, and anxiety mobilised by the characteristics, particularly management characteristics, that were unique to the group. These findings about large groups are not new. However, what this study has offered that is new is the perspective gained through considering those same dynamics through the lens of intersubjective theories.

Intersubjective theory contends that a sense of self is found in mutual relations with others. Through asserting oneself and being recognised by the other the self is affirmed. Mutuality is understood to facilitate the agency and creativity of the individual.

In this study, intersubjective theory was utilised to explore the relational dimensions of the experience of being in a large group and the way in which this impacts on the structure and culture of the group. This has been considered alongside, not instead of, traditional systems psychodynamic large group theories.

What was shown in this exploration were the difficulties group members had in asserting themselves, and in finding and proffering recognition in each of the
groups. The large size of the groups, and the hostile culture that, to degrees, was evident in each of the groups, meant asserting oneself was fraught with risk and difficulty. However, the exploration also showed that despite these problems group members still sought a recognising relation with the group; denoted in the study as ‘large group recognition’. This type of recognition was distinguished from interpersonal recognition through its links to features that defined the structure and culture of the group. Examination of the data suggested that large group recognition was gained through either direct or representative relations to the formal authorities of the group, and/or through subgroup competition. It was argued, however, that these relations were not mutually recognising rather their dynamics were characterised by domination and submission. In intersubjective terms this is called the dialectic of the master-slave.

The master-slave relation is understood to be a collusive dynamic whereby the master gains recognition through dominion over the slave, and the slave through the mastery of the master. It was argued that the large size of the groups, along with their tendency towards patriarchy, were instrumental in the formation and perpetuation of structure and culture characterised by dynamics of domination and submission. A significant problem of this dynamic is that relational space, which in mutual relations provides context for the metabolising of emotion, becomes saturated with aggression and fear, resulting in inner and outer worlds of persecutors and victims. In this way, as was illustrated in the large groups of this research, the master-slave dynamic is prone toward self-perpetuation.

The implications of these findings were considered with respect to large organisational work settings. The question was asked whether or not large hierarchal work organisations are likely to be environments where mutual relations could flourish. It was argued that this was unlikely due to the institutionalisation of power difference in the cultural meaning of hierarchy. A central tenet of this opinion was that hierarchal organisations very often promote and support narcissistic, ‘heroic’ leadership; this type of leadership being symbolic of, and perpetuating the master-slave dynamic as a dominant structural and cultural form in organisations.
The discussion then turned to consideration of what might constitute an organisation context informed by mutuality. One core element identified was organisational leadership that recognised and was able to ‘contain’ the inevitable anxiety of the large group. Also regarded as essential was recognition of the reliance of the organisation on its members. This discussion converged with ideas in contemporary organisational literature that address challenges affecting organisations in the post industrial era. It was argued that intersubjective thinking has a valuable contribution to make to these deliberations.

The intention of this study was to explore the significance of the quality of relation between the individual and the large group. I contend that the findings of the study illuminate this importance. The findings have shown that it matters to the individual that they are recognised by, and can recognise the large group. It matters in terms of what energy organisation members have available for the work of the organisation and their understanding of, and commitment to that work. Equally, for the organisation it has been shown that the quality of the relation to the individual matters. If the organisation system does not keep in mind its constituent parts it is liable to create conditions where its human resources base is under-utilised and where it loses capacity to interpret and influence its external environment.

9.3 The relation between intersubjective theory and traditional systems psychodynamic large group theory

I believe that this research has demonstrated that intersubjective theory is a valuable adjunct to traditional systems psychodynamic large group theory. As the study has shown traditional systems psychodynamic theory allows clear articulation of group level dynamics in large group life, particularly with respect to the creation and ongoing nature of defensive routines in large groups. This type of inquiry particularly facilitates understanding of why individuals, at times behave in seeming irrational ways in large groups. It illuminates the almost deterministic effects of the powerful large group dynamics that exist wherever large numbers of people come together to engage in group activity. However traditional large group psychodynamic theory is primarily pathological in its
focus. Within these theories the ‘other’ in the large group is, in the main, spoken about as an extension of a single or collective other's pathology.

I agree with Wilkes (2004) that it is time to question the negative dialectic between the individual and the large group that is so predominant in the literature on large groups. By this I do not mean that we should gloss over the regressive nature of large groups. This study is case in point that large groups can be hostile, uncivilised environments. However, inclusion in the theory of the possibilities of large groups might inform ways of thinking and behaving that may, even in small ways, constructively alter the experience of being in the large group. I contend that this is what intersubjective theory can offer traditional psychodynamic large group theory.

Intersubjectivity goes beyond understanding the ways in which we instrumentally use others to manage our own pathology, or even of recognition of the interdependence of our selves with the other. Intersubjective theory is value laden. It not only links the capacity for self hood to recognition of the other, but also implies a respect for the subjectivity of the other; respect emanating from acknowledgment of the commonness of humanity.

In fact, connection between intersubjective and traditional large group theory already exists: complementary, master-slave dynamics are defensive structures; the capacity for mutual recognition is reliant on mastery of projective processes; and the oscillation inherent in mutual relations - from mutual to complimentary dynamics and back, is symbolic of the interconnection between the two sets of theories. It is not a matter of having to create artificial connection between the theories.

In sum, I contend that the findings of this research has demonstrated that intersubjective theory can add helpful detail and emphasis in understanding and working with the relational dimensions of traditional large group psychodynamic theory.
9.3.4 Limitations to the research

The following lists a range of issues that limit the findings of the research:

1) life span of the groups
As discussed in Chapter three (p38), each of the large groups that were selected to study each had a relatively short life span. Consequently large group dynamics that develop over longer time spans were absent to the research. For example, De Mare argues it can take ten years of ongoing contact before large groups are able to establish relations that are collaborative (Agazarian and Carter 1993);

2) interviewee characteristics
There were only a small number of interviewees who displayed dominant or extrovert characteristics in the large groups. With the exception of the Divisional Managers of cases one and two, and S in case one, all other interviewees (eleven people) did not regard themselves as dominant members of the large groups, nor in my experience as an observer did they appear to take up dominant or leadership roles. Similarly in data of the large group of case three, my experiences in the group were reflections of an introvert. Inclusion of data from more dominant group members would likely have provided different perspective to group member’s experience of assertion and recognition in the groups;

3) number of people interviewed
The research was also limited by interviewing only a small percentage of group members in cases one and two (less than ten percent). In case three the decision to become a full participant of the group mitigated against interviewing any other group members. To some extent the small number of interviewee experiences was balanced by the observation of all group meetings by the researcher. However a greater coverage of group members in each of the groups would no doubt have added further richness and complexity to the data; and

4) the researcher’s subjectivity
The research interpretations and arguments are my own. In this they are subjective and thus limit the research.
In designing the research methods for cases one and two consideration was given for including discussion of the interpretations of interview data with respective interviewees; the aim being to enhance the validity of my interpretations and to gain further insight into the data. However, this was decided against due to issues of confidentiality, i.e. interpretation of the interview data was not separate to each interview but was a part of broader consideration of data emerging from all the interviews and the observation of the group.

The data for the narrative and the analysis of case three is solely the self reported experience of the researcher. This is acknowledged and discussed in Chapter three as a particular limitation of the analytic work in this case study (p81).

9.4 Further work
I believe there are a number of areas of inquiry stimulated by this research:

1) exploration of the findings of this research in large organisational settings;

2) exploration of an organisational setting where it is thought a ‘context informed by mutuality’ existed. I would be particularly interested in what constituted large group recognition in this type of setting;

3) research that explored intersubjective dimensions horizontally in large organisations. The data from this study drew the focus toward vertical, group member-management relations. Understanding the influence of group member to group member relations may be of value in respect to movement taking place in organisations towards flatter structures. Mitchell’s (2000) work on the impact of sibling relations may be a useful reference for informing this work; and

4) investigation of transformation in large groups and organisations from cultures of domination and submission to mutual relation. For example, Crossley (1996) discusses the slave’s capacity to find selfhood through labour and transform the master. Similarly Benjamin (1998) writes about the revolution of the slave. A study exploring these aspects of intersubjective theory in
organisations that have experienced such types of transformation may add to understanding organisational change.
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