

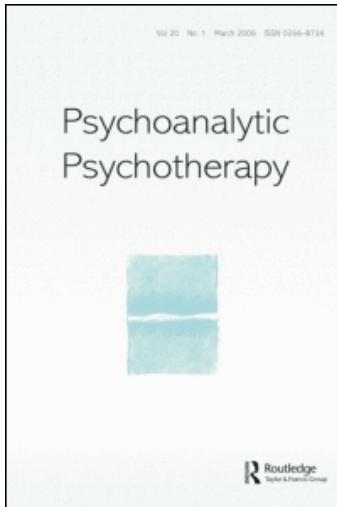
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The dance of dissent: Managing conflict in healthcare organizations

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In this paper, I will suggest that healthcare institutions are intolerant of dissent, and use scapegoating as a defence. When dissent involves criticism of the organization, including whistle-blowing activities, the dissenter is likely to be punished and excluded. I will suggest that this process represents a paranoid defence in which the organization acts as an antigroup.

Keywords: scapegoating; dissent; groupthink; whistleblowing; organizational dynamics

Introduction

Dissent is a healthy aspect of social life and decision-making. It is also an important way for shortcomings of policy or operations to be revealed and repaired. Yet those who dissent may be attacked and excluded by the group to which they belong. In this paper, I review this process, which is most commonly known as ‘scapegoating’, and its application in organizational contexts. Specifically, I will apply it to ‘whistle-blowing’: a particular form of dissent, and discuss how this might operate in healthcare settings.

The scapegoat: Bearing the burden of sin

‘Scapegoating’ is described as a defence against psychological distress in groups. However, this social process goes back to ancient times. The scapegoat is first introduced to the Israelites in Leviticus 16 as a part of the old covenant between Yahweh and his chosen people. The detailed instructions for the Day of Atonement expand on the already-familiar Passover lamb concept.

This atonement ritual required two flawless goats: one to be slaughtered and one to be the scapegoat. In Hebrew, ‘scapegoat’ is *azazel*, which literally means ‘goat of removal’. After the high priest slaughtered the first goat as a sin offering and sprinkled its blood on the mercy seat (covering the Ark of the Covenant), he was to lay his hands on the head of the living goat and ‘confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites, “all their sins” and put them on the goat’s head’ (Leviticus 16: 21 NIV). The goat was then sent into the desert to carry away the sins of the people. Note that atonement requires not only the

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shedding of innocent blood, but also the expulsion of the innocent, who takes onto himself all guilt of the people and carries it away.

Christian symbolism identified the scapegoat with Christ crucified for the sins of the whole world. The Gospels make direct links between Christ's teaching and the prophecies of the Old Testament: for example in Isaiah, where the Messiah is described as being 'despised and rejected by men' and later 'The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all' (53: 6).

Scapegoating as a group dynamic process

Kraupl Taylor & Rey (1953) first described scapegoating in relation to small therapy groups; although it had also been recognized as occurring in family groups. The manifest process is that all the problems of the family or group are located in one individual. That individual may be the weakest in the group or have leadership qualities or both: it is the specificity and the individual focus that should alert observers to the process.

In a family, the scapegoat colludes with other family members to take the blame for family distress, so that the rest of the family feel secure and appear to be stable. By assigning the scapegoat role to one individual, the family can avoid examining emotional fault lines and anxiety about change. The dynamic operates similarly in small therapy groups and arguably in work groups. The core belief is the same: that if only the scapegoat can be 'fixed' or removed, all problems will go away and the group system will run effectively.

Such a belief has a magical quality about it, and may thus qualify as an immature or psychotic defence (Vaillant, 1992). Elmes and Gemmill (1990) describe scapegoating as involving both conscious and unconscious processes. The conscious rationale is cognitively driven, using rationalizations that oscillate between negative and positive. Unconsciously, the group will be struggling with fears of disintegration, helplessness, envy or rage with the leader.

Typically, the process begins in the differentiation stage of the group, i.e. after initial bonding and a sense of togetherness is established. Alternatively, it may begin at a time of turbulence for the group, such as the breaching of a group boundary. Idealization of the leader begins to fade, and competition for the leadership may emerge. Fear and sadness at the loss of idealization, or ordinary competitiveness, may make the leader of a group the point of the scapegoating process. Alternatively, another member of the group may 'take the heat' for the leader. Any individualizing feature can be an unconscious 'hook' for the attack: hence the usual advice not to have a singleton of any sort in a therapy group (Foulkes & Anthony, 1957). Skin colour or ethnicity may be obvious hooks; but others may be more subtle, such as previous history of victimization or particular political beliefs.

A sense of helplessness in the group can be transformed by initially 'supporting' the scapegoat in almost a perverse cheerleading role. Through reaction formation, the aggression is hidden and the helplessness disappears. It is almost as if the scapegoat is nurtured or groomed and invited to bloom;

which makes other group members feel powerful. The split here is between positive transference object and the negative. Any leader in the group (which may include the therapist) at once becomes the repository of positive transference because he is all-powerful and all-containing, and the scapegoat the negative transference object. However, if the leader appears weak in some way, then the balance of power may switch from a positive object to a negative one; and roles are reversed. The 'leader' may then be the scapegoat, and vice versa.

This rapid oscillation of feeling (from positive to negative) is an indicator of psychological insecurity in the group mind. In such groups, the leader is always tottering on the brink of being the scapegoat; which takes the form of attacks in the form of 'you'. The scapegoat responds with 'I', unaware at all times that it is not so much 'I' as it is 'we'. The interaction described above then arguably protects the leader.

Defence mechanisms in the scapegoating process

Projection is the key psychological mechanism; usually of aggression but of any negative affect. The unconscious aggression may or may not have a conscious manifestation. Just as the leadership role may be projected onto a potential scapegoat, so may the sick role be projected. The 'care' for the scapegoat is then a reaction formation to the hostility to that person. If the scapegoat fails to conform to the allocated social (and role) expectations, the powerful unconscious group hostility will stimulate an alternative defence, such as denial, splitting and acting out. Indeed, it might be argued that all these mechanisms are activated in the scapegoating process.

Projective identification is also essential, i.e. the process by which the potential scapegoat identifies with the projections of the others. It has often been noted that scapegoats may unconsciously 'volunteer' for the role, through either conscious or unconscious personality characteristics. The scapegoat may in reality possess some negative interpersonal features, such as undue shyness or arrogance; they may well have held the role of scapegoat before, either in their family or origin or in previous groups.

However, the rest of the group take part in what Gemmill (1987) calls the 'collective' projective identification process. He suggests that this process not only alters the group members' perception of each other, but also alters their self-perceptions, which are then manifest in their behaviour. In short, what the group dislikes about the scapegoat is what they dislike about themselves. As a consequence what the scapegoat therefore says or does is the product of what the group members wanted to do or say, but were unable to articulate and unwilling to address. The collective delusion is therefore in believing that the acting out by the scapegoat is due to his individual attributes rather than group dynamics.

Finally, it is important to consider the scapegoat as a social defence, i.e. as a group phenomenon. I will return to this theme below in more detail: the link I wish to make here is with Menzies' (1961) notions of defences in organizations. In her classic study of nursing staff, she does not name 'scapegoating' *per se*; but the process can be identified in the 'blaming' process she describes (older staff criticizing juniors, day staff criticizing night staff). A key point here is that this process in healthcare workers is a group defence against feelings of hostility to *patients*: to their neediness and dependency. In caring organizations, scapegoating may be powerful defence against staff realizing how much they hate the patients they are required to care for.

The scapegoat as the mirror

Another way to consider projection and scapegoating in groups is to look at it as a form of mirroring, or more accurately, malignant mirroring (Zinkin, 1983). Mirroring is that process whereby group members see themselves in others members. It is an important part of social learning and is also the basis for empathy and other therapeutic group factors (Yalom, 1985). Malignant mirroring assumes that this process has become distorted and exaggerated; usually in response to affective distress.

Before assuming the scapegoat role, the scapegoat was an ordinary member of the group. With or without his conscious co-operation, he then becomes the container of all the negative emotions that other group members cannot process. They 'see' in him that which they cannot bear to look at in themselves, so that the scapegoat becomes the distorting mirror that bears a distorted image.

The scapegoat reveals the covert intrapsychic agenda of the group and reflects it back to the group, which is a 'seeing' space. However, the distorting effect suggests that the scapegoat acts as a 'two-way' mirror. It is a popular misconception that such mirrors act as a mirror on one side, and as a window on the other side; which would mean that the glass or 'mirror' is letting light in through both directions. However the two-way mirror lets in light on the 'seeing' side, but reflects on the other side. The misconception arises because those who are looking through the 'seeing' side are in the dark.

In a group, the group members only see the reflecting side of the scapegoat: they see the mirror with the distorted image, which is too disturbing to look at. It becomes impossible for the group to 'see through' the mirror, as the window it really is. However those observing the group process are in the dark as far as seeing the reflections go. By definition, those on the 'window' side cannot see the mirror, and vice versa.

The metaphor of the two-way mirror is particularly important for work groups and those involved in organizational conflicts. The 'scapegoat' mirrors something in the organization, which the organization cannot bear to look at. Those who are doing the observing may not be able to see that the scapegoat is

also a window into how an organization works. The observers may be in the dark in terms of really understanding how perceptions are being distorted.

The concept of the two-way mirror is also useful for understanding how the scapegoat comes to take on the role for the group. The scapegoat's view of himself is also distorted: he 'sees' something that he thinks he recognizes in the distorting mirror which the group offers up for him to look at. Individuals with unresolved guilt and shame feelings may be particularly at risk of becoming scapegoats because they struggle with unconscious internal accusation all the time. In the conscious world, such individuals often take leadership roles, trying to make good their inner sense of failure. They are then targets for scapegoating; but may feel unconsciously that the attacks and exclusions are justified, because they have failed to be perfect leaders.

What the scapegoat brings to the process is (1) an exaggerated sense of his own failings and strengths; (2) an intolerance of any sense of vulnerability or distress; and (3) a need to be in control of situations and people for whom he feels responsible. Commonly, such individuals are controlling in response to their own anxiety that all shall go well. However, since it is rare for everything to go well all the time in large organizations that manage complex products and processes, any controlling perfectionist is a potential target for scapegoating.

Alternatively, the group or organization may impose a task on the scapegoat that they may not be equipped to deal with in the first place. Both the group, and the scapegoat himself, set him up to fail and then deal with the failure by excluding him. As a result, the other group members and the organization become immune from any discomfort or anxiety at the price of a scapegoat.

Group mind and group mindlessness

So far, I have discussed scapegoating as the interaction of individuals within groups. I want now to discuss scapegoating as a group phenomenon: as a defensive function for a group as a whole.

Freud (1921) took the view that individuals in groups become willing to subjugate their individuality and act as though they were of one mind. He believed that this regression to primitive thinking in groups was so powerful that individual emotions and cognitions could not be expressed. He went so far as to say that there was little original or personal courage that can be fostered in a group setting.

The extensive literature on group therapy and its effectiveness makes it clear that Freud overstated the case. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that anxious and insecure groups can act in antisocial ways that stifle individual experience. Nitsun (1996) called this the 'antigroup', and Waddell (2007) reviews the distinction between well-functioning groups with pathological 'gangs'. 'Gangs' (as opposed to groups) work on strict dominance hierarchies that focus on the person of the (often antisocial) leader; and are highly punitive to those who are seen as traitors. A group that becomes a 'gang' will not be therapeutic; will scapegoat its members and is likely to fragment under any new pressure or stress.

Bion (1952) described a defensive manoeuvre in groups which he termed the 'dependency basic assumption'; by which group members act as if they are helpless and inadequate, know nothing, do no wrong, and rely entirely on the leader for protection. Becker (1973) goes one step further in suggesting that in such defensive groups, the tendency to take risky decisions is based on their collective illusion of invulnerability to failings or depression rooted in the group's denial of death and destruction.

Elmes and Gemmill (1990) discussed regression (unconscious) and suppression (conscious) as defence mechanisms pervasive in groups. These defences are employed to ward off against the anxiety of letting any affect surface. This is true of negative as well as the positive affects. When acting in tandem, these two defence mechanisms effectively rule out dissent, either overtly or covertly. Individuals regress (usually into silence and passivity) and conscious suppression may be seen as preferable to painful rejection.

Research from social and organizational psychology has demonstrated that when the individual does not conform to the group views (or is not subsumed by them), they stop actively thinking and process information automatically on the basis of existing script or schemas when confronted by the majority (Nemeth & Kwan, 1985; Nemeth & Wachtler, 1983). Janis (1972, 1982) coined the phrase 'groupthink', an example of this group mindlessness that involves defence mechanisms such as rationalizing, stereotyping and 'mindguarding'.

Janis postulates that highly cohesive (and closed) groups tend to become 'mindless' because of the effect of 'groupthink'. There is an obvious link here between 'mindlessness' (in terms of being devoid of mind) and mindlessness as 'senselessness'. A mindless and senseless group will not make good decisions, and therefore is likely to take senseless action. The process of 'groupthink' condones inappropriate and ineffective action in a crisis. The opaqueness afforded by the group becomes the dominant dynamic and individual responsibility is apparently removed. Risky solutions, which an individual would not have pursued in isolation, are therefore taken in the name of group cohesion. Both risk and responsibility are diluted by the collective, and therefore justified. Examples of this come from the study of brutalizing and tyrannical behaviour in groups (Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973; Milgram, 2004).

The problem with group mindlessness is also evident from the way in which a group handles dissent. Argyris (1990) hypothesizes that the greater the dissonance within the group, and greater the incidence of contradictory data, the greater the energy the group members expend on defensive routines. Consequently what appears to be the lethargy and mental sluggishness seen in the group members is nothing but the consequence of exhaustion of nervous and positive energy, having spent it all on massive denial of unpleasant and contradictory data.

Two recent examples of the tendency of mindless groups to ignore critical evidence, with fatal consequences are given by Elmes and Gemmill (1990) and Surowiecki (2004). Gemmill (1986) describes how the decision was made to

launch the doomed space shuttle *Challenger* in January 1986 at launch temperature of below 40°F even when the manufacturers of the booster rocket repeatedly presented hard evidence that there was a danger of breakdown at launch temperature below 53°F. Surowiecki describes a similar problem 17 years later when decisions about how best to land the shuttle *Columbia* ignored relevant evidence that might have saved lives. Both are examples of how group mindlessness leads to sluggishness of thinking, lack of critical perspective and an overall shared illusion of group infallibility and leader omniscience.

Work groups as families

The dominance (vertical) hierarchies are inevitable in early stages of groups, which then mature to a more cohesive or horizontal hierarchy. If we see the group as similar to a family unit, it is easy to see how intrafamilial tensions (especially sibling rivalry) are played out. Competitiveness and envy towards each other or simply vying for the attention of the mother (or being the top gun) is commonplace in families and groups. Freud suggests that the apparent submission to the egalitarian principle is nothing but a reaction formation against the feelings of envy and jealousy about not being the mothers' (leaders) favourite. Freud said (1921) – 'members of a group stand in need of the illusion that they are equally and justly loved by their leader'. This explains the lack of dissent or intolerance of dissent in some groups. As the leader becomes more depersonalized and deified, the group becomes more rigid and their frame of reference becomes codified in an unspoken way. Mature groups, however, tolerate dissent and therefore have no need to either worship or denigrate leaders.

Whether expressly designated as such or not, every group has a leader. The leader serves a number of useful, if not totally healthy functions. In the early stages of a group, members project onto the leader all their negative and uncomfortable emotions and surrender to him the ability to think critically or usefully. This degree of infantile surrender fosters the attachment to the leader and by extension to the rigid frame of reference of the group. It is as if the individual identity or individual responsibility is traded off by belonging to the group who then serves as a collective of individuals tuned to the same agenda, as opposed to individuals with strong feelings and thoughts.

Ideally, group members then develop a more secure individual sense of identity as the group progresses. However, highly insecure individuals or groups will tend to persist in regressed and childlike attachments to the leader. Any individual anxiety about loss of identity is relieved by identification with the leader and the group. The pain of discordant thoughts, or intragroup envy and competition is therefore tolerated with much more ease. Having divested all the negative feelings on to the leader and the other group members, the individual member justifies belonging to the group in the name of fostering group harmony. Pines (1985) has called this 'cohesion' as opposed to 'coherence' in groups; and as described above 'cohesiveness' contributes to the development of group mindlessness.

Organizations, bureaucracies and authoritarian states

These processes are well recognized as occurring in small groups. They happen so frequently that one would think that organizations (which are made up of small groups) would be aware of them, and have mechanisms for dealing with them. Unfortunately, the unconscious 'feeling' part of any organization tends to overwhelm the 'thinking' part; especially at times of anxiety.

An important aspect of any organization is its bureaucratic nature. Weinstein (1977, 1979) argues that bureaucracies are political as well as administrative structures, because their operation normally involves power, conflict and domination. History would also strongly support this view. Weinstein suggests that bureaucracies cannot be solely administrative because not all goals of the organization are shared. Hence, action within organizations requires the exercise of power, which in turn entails a dominance hierarchy. Within organizations, managers are not always 'rational' with respect to achieving publicly-stated organizational goals. Their choices will be affected by a variety of influences, so that each has his or her own agenda. In traditional organizations, control is exercised by elites through a hierarchy, with little or no popular participation in organizational governance.

Accordingly, Weinstein (1979) draws an analogy between traditional organizations and authoritarian states. Both employees and citizens lack freedoms. Just as there can be opposition movements within states, whether permitted or not, there can be oppositions within organizations and its power. One major difference between authoritarian states and large bureaucracies is that the latter usually do not have overt control over employees by means of physical violence. In authoritarian states, the police and military will be mandated to control or curb dissent in a variety of ways: restriction of liberty and free expression, and occasionally physical violence.

Healthcare organizations and bureaucracy

In healthcare settings, service managers now exercise authority over clinicians in some domains of healthcare. Clinicians, however, are expected to work in a flattened hierarchy, regardless of role or training. There is often an apparent culture of worker involvement in governance (e.g. clinical governance, teaching governance and research governance to name a few), but actual governance is driven from the top rather than built up from below. We would expect scapegoating to be more common in those groups where there is both a lack of reflective processing space and a multiplicity of dominance hierarchies.

Further, there are now increasing numbers of policies and procedures that reify and give quasi-legal structure to scapegoating processes. Obvious examples are bullying and harassment policies that provide no room for dialogue between offended and offending parties. Observers/investigators of the process will not be able to 'see' the projections and distorted mirroring that goes on in work/staff groups; and the group itself cannot 'see through' the distortion process.

Without being able to see two sides of the mirror, it is likely that the same process will take place repeatedly.

Within the health service, mental healthcare services tend to resemble authoritarian states in relation to the control of dissent or rule breaking because of their role of social control within wider society. Psychiatric patients are seen as being a threat to the safety and pleasantness of the wider social group; and there is a strong public belief that if all such patients are detained and controlled, the society will be safe. At present, there is heavy public criticism of any healthcare professionals who fail to control these psychiatric scapegoats. Therefore, emotional, verbal and even physical violence will be tolerated in psychiatric organizations in the name of risk management; because these processes are licensed with the patients, they inevitably become licensed in relation to other organizational matters. Scapegoating is likely to be much more common in secure organizations: where violence is both the norm – but it is also the task.

Challenging the organization: Dissent and whistle-blowing

Organizations such as large corporations or healthcare trusts must include subgroups that challenge the organization, much as political groups challenge the ruling government. Zald & Berger (1978) suggest that social movements within corporations, such as boardroom coups and bureaucratic activism, are akin to mass movements of a non-violent nature. Dissent is likely to be organized by sub-groups within the organization, and may reflect a crucial aspect of good quality decision-making by groups (Surowiecki, 2004).

Dissent

Kassing (1998) defines dissent as a multi-step process that involves feeling apart from one's organization. He suggests that dissent is driven by (1) the recognition of wrongdoing, (2) the need for intervention, (3) perceived responsibility, and (4) the screening of alternatives. Dissent is essentially an individual's expression of disagreement with an organization's practices, policies, and operations (Kassing, 1998). The majority of literature on dissent focuses on whistle-blowing (Dozier & Miceli, 1985), which is arguably an extreme case of dissent (Kassing, 1998).

One particular kind of organizational dissent is the expression of points of view from members that contradict other members' points of view, especially that of the top manager's position on the organizational operational policies and corporate culture. Hirschman (1970) addressed the conflict between personal autonomy and organizational loyalty and termed it 'exit-voice-loyalty'. His theory was that exit and voice are the two options available to the employee who is dissatisfied with the organization. What the employee will do depends on the employee's loyalty, where higher loyalty would lead one to choose voice over exit.

Research has shown that superior-subordinate relationships influence work experience and organizational effectiveness (Sias, Heath, Perry, Silva, & Fix, 2004; Sias, Krone, & Jablin, 2002). Kassing (2000) found that a high quality

relationship with one's supervisor led to more upward dissent (directed to superiors), while lower quality supervisor relationships would lead to more lateral dissent (directed to co-workers). He does not discuss, however, any potential interactions between the dissenter's message and the dissenter's audience.

Whistle-blowing

Whistle-blowing (i.e. a public criticism of an organization by an insider) can be seen as a form of political non-violent resistance, or civil disobedience, but on an individual basis. The spirit of civil disobedience (i.e. a challenge to the law as it is, and the pursuit of the law as it ought to be) is at the centre of whistle-blowing actions. Whistle-blowing often involves the disclosure of unethical practices to people both inside and outside of the organization that can initiate change (Miceli & Near, 1985; Redding, 1985; Stewart, 1980). This might be reporting unsafe practices to managers, or reporting corrupt practices to journalists or regulatory bodies.

However, while dissent is usually met with non-aggressive challenge by organizations, whistle-blowing usually stimulates 'violent' or punitive retaliation, in the same way that governments of authoritarian states respond to peaceful civil disobedience. All organisms (and organizations can be seen as a large and complex organism) react to external threats in various ways. Primitive organisms can retreat, more advanced organisms display the 'fight or flight' response. It is likely that whistle-blowing stimulates more punitive responses because the organization feels attacked rather than challenged. Whistle-blowing also involves speaking out of turn and violating group conventions about who may speak in a hierarchy.

Punitive responses to whistle-blowing take a variety of forms. One concept is that of 'political jiu-jitsu' (Sharp, 1973). This includes discrediting the argument of the whistle-blower; or refusing to concede that the whistle-blower is using approved methods of dissent in liberal democracies. These include critical speech often made publicly, letters of opposition or support, signed public statements, petitions, newspaper advertisements, internet blogs and talking to the media. Since these sorts of action are routine in liberal democracies, any other actions of explicit criticism, such as whistle-blowing, tend to be stigmatized by the organization as a 'violent attack' on the organization's integrity or threats to national security to justify the retaliation that follows. On the other hand, it is not the case that the whistle-blower is always right and the organization is always in the wrong. Organizations do not always react in the way described and dissent can also be 'malignant'.

However, more commonly the organization attacks the individual, not the argument. Organizations threatened by whistle-blowing action often respond with personal reprisals such as harassment, ostracism, threats, punitive transfers or demotion and dismissal (Hunt, 1995). Another popular way of discrediting the dissenter is branding the action as 'madness' and referral of the individual for

psychiatric opinion. It is not without irony that Foucault, Szasz and Kittrie have all talked about political dissent or simply being different being seen by society as madness.

In professional settings, such as law or medicine, organizations often reframe the criticism as unprofessional behaviour, and report whistle-blowers to licensing bodies (Pilgrim, 1995). They may also use the network of information among similar organizations to disseminate their view, thus essentially robbing the whistle-blower of a livelihood.

Somewhat perversely these kinds of response, when perceived as excessive, can sometime generate sympathy for the whistle-blower. An alternate definition of the whistle-blower thus could very well be that the individual is exposing something that needs to be exposed with the proviso that the organization is not acting appropriately. Neutral observers may then see the injustice when a lone individual reports a problem that needs fixing or investigation, and authorities responding with a massive attack on the credibility, working conditions, and livelihood of the individual. This sadly, however, is not always the case.

The dance of dissent

When a group member dissents, i.e. expresses thoughts and feelings different from others in the group, he challenges the group's frame of reference. In rigid or cohesive groups, this will be seen as a challenge to the leader's omnipotence, his powers and wisdom. To maintain the integrity of the group, both physically and psychologically, other group members will try to isolate and destroy the dissenter. The degree of conscious effort to amputate the dissenter from the group is proportional to the degree of unease the group faces (due to the dissent) and how much negative affect they can tolerate before the dissenter is removed. Although the entire group does this, it is often done in the name of the leader whose power and omniscience the group sees as being challenged (Foulkes & Anthony, 1957).

In well-functioning groups (and especially in therapy groups) the leader will recognize the scapegoating process for what it is; and will urge the group to consider the dissenting view as an aspect of the group as a whole. However, in work groups in organizations, this may be much harder to do. The leader may well collude with the rest of the group to exclude the dissenter; and this collusion may be driven by a conscious identification with the group, and an unconscious response to the group's need to preserve him symbolically.

There is good evidence that dissent and dissenters have a valuable role in maintaining the group process. Dissenters frequently hold valuable information or perspectives that will aid decision-making. Research suggests that persistent and consistently voiced dissent can change the group view and enhance the problem-solving ability of the group as a whole (Surowiecki, 2004). As we have seen above the dissenter role represents an initial attempt within the group to express intellectual and emotional differences, which is a basis for psychological growth.

Gemmill (1987) uses the Jungian concept of 'shadow personality' and coins this as the 'group shadow'. Just as members of therapy groups do with the identified 'scapegoat', so work group members disown their own anxiety by dumping it all on the dissenter by use of powerful unconscious projection. No matter what the individual member is feeling, whether it is being creative, negative, critical, rebellious, all is well as long as it can be attributed or projected onto someone who has taken the role of dissenter or had the role of dissenter thrust upon him. Gemmill (1987) quotes Jung (1970, p. 225) to state it succinctly – 'you always become the thing you fight the most'.

The dissenter thus functions as the 'out-person' or in small group dynamic terms, the enemy or the out-group. Even with this degree of externalization of the group shadow to the out-group, it is not the end of the struggle, as the members tend to smoulder and intensify the massive denial. This often goes out of control and requires further attribution to an 'outsider'. It is important to note that this internal struggle of the group members or the struggle of the group members inside the group is believed to be outside their control. The locus of control has to be vested outside the group, hence the externalization. This process of attribution to others while maintaining total denial is almost delusional in nature.

The dissenter as a container

Bion described the mother's role as a container for her child's negative emotions, and containment as the processing of all negative feelings are processed. In the case of the dissenter in a group, he becomes this container. Criticalness towards life, existential doubts, opposition to a particular agenda, envy, jealousy, competition and to a large extent the denial associated with bad judgement taken for a 'good cause' are among these negative emotions which the dissenter helps to 'digest'. The dissenter therefore has a useful role by at least providing a repository of toxic matters and containing them while the group goes about its ordinary business, maintaining the illusion of group omnipotence.

I have talked earlier about the two types of dissenter roles, the scapegoat who bears the burden of negative, disowned feelings and the positive dissenter who is a strong-willed and articulate person who by some act not only challenges the fixed frame of reference but actually improves it: a 'Messiah' figure. If we accept that the views expressed or harboured by the dissenter in a scapegoat role are the unconsciously accepted, but consciously disavowed negative emotions of the group, then it is easy to see why the dissenter in a scapegoat role is seen as the troublemaker or misfit. Perversely, although through the scapegoat the members with negative views maintain anonymity, it is the scapegoat who is 'outed'. Once solidly cast in this role, the only option left to the group is to banish the scapegoat to wilderness, in order to restore the equilibrium or group harmony.

In contrast, the Messiah dissenter serves as the repository of the positive attributes, the unexpressed and unactualized positive feelings that need not

be in unison with the rest of the group or the group agenda. These dissenters tend to be articulate, persistent, persuasive and consistent in expressing their divergent views. The expression of their views can therefore be liberating to the group in finding new ways of framing and accepting reality. Much like (but opposite of) the group seeking solace in silence, this group finds courage in the voice. Research has shown that such a powerful and articulate dissenting voice lead the group to think more actively and creatively than before. Forward looking and progressive organizations therefore not only tolerate dissent, they actively encourage it. Reverting back to the earlier analogy of the dissenter as the two-way mirror, how much light reflects from the glass is contingent on how dark the room is and of course which side of the glass you are on.

Conclusion

Scapegoating is inevitable in groups; especially anxious groups. Healthcare organizations are prone to scapegoating (1) because they are anxious rigid bureaucracies, and (2) because they employ an incoherent mixture of rigid dominance hierarchies and flattened 'team' approaches that favour consensus over dissent. Until there are improved managerial structures in the NHS and more reflective capacity, unconscious scapegoating processes are likely to fuel an increase in claims of bullying and harassment and reduced capacity for positive change.

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