A case of "acting out the missing leader": Understanding aspects of the psychodynamics of group identity

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Abstract

This article revisits a previously published case study of group dynamics that related to when a leader dies (or is absent). The conceptual lens used to re-read these group dynamics, is one derived from psychoanalysis and specifically features the notion of the death instinct and the work of C. Fred Alford. The paper frames its discussion of the case study using Alford's five dramas of "acting out the missing leader". Like a drama, the paper locates the case study as a series of acts and scenes with a specific psychodynamic script that is being played-out. The paper has broader implications than simply "When a leader dies" as the discussion speaks to an understanding of larger leader - follower behaviour.

Prologue

In 2003, the journal *Human Relations* published an article authored by Paula Hyde and Alan B. Thomas entitled "When a leader dies". In a broadly psychoanalytic manner, they investigated and describe "the reactions of followers after losing a leader" (Hyde & Thomas, 2003: 1005). A study of leadership loss has much to commend itself in as much as leadership change is one effective and affective agent of followers' and concomitantly, groups' change defense behaviors. In this paper we analyze the same case study to highlight and to augment Hyde and Thomas' important contributions. Our re-reading of the case study has its foundations in the more recent work of C. Fred Alford (1991; 1994) in conjunction with object-relations (Klein 1975a-d), which we see to be strongly influenced by Spielrein (1912/1994) and Freud (1920/1984; 1923/1984). The purpose of our paper is to put these theorists to work to uncover behavioral expressions constituent of the death instinct, which need to be predicted and interpreted, if the 'organization' is to regenerate healthy attitudes toward leadership change and, indeed, understand group dynamics during organizational change more generally. Before we examine the case study, it is instructive to first outline the conceptual framework we intend to employ.

The setting: Conceptions of the death instinct in primal human relations

Melanie Klein accepted much of Sigmund Freud's orthodoxy including the vision that under the superego's rules and regulations, the ego is responsible for mediating the demands of the id, in which instincts are housed (Freud, 1923/1984). In Klein's rendering of primal human relations, the mother or object represents the superego, the newborn's or ego's first attachment. Klein believes that the release of instincts from the id always presupposed the object interacting with the ego such that objects and memories or fantasies they trigger are sources of reassurance and persecution.

Klein's aggregate view of human experience (see Klein, 1975a-d) is based upon two primitive dispositions of relating to the world: one is adoring, caring and loving or reassuring; and the other is comprised of destructiveness, hatred, envy, spite or persecution. The former parallels *Eros*, the class of instincts comprised of life (sex) and self-preservation; and the latter, the class of

instincts embodied by destructive behaviors, known as *Thanatos* (see Jones, 1957: 295) or the death instinct (Freud, 1920/1984; 1923/1984; Carr, 2003a-b). It is in the child's all important first year of development that Klein views the death instinct as purely a destructive force summoned forth by fears of dissolution and imminent annihilation, when the infant, in its Manichaean world, cannot adequately resolve ambiguity and conflict posed by the mother's breast.

The primal relationship is one comprised of mutual causalities. The infant projects love onto the breast as this 'good' object is *idealized*: it generates feelings of contentment that are absorbed or introjected by the infant because they represent the mother's reassurance, as through the transfer of milk (Suttie, 1935). The good object also confounds the infant because it inspires a degree of *envy* from the emphasis of the infant's need and dependence upon it - the infant experiences the good object as being outside its control, when the infant cannot have it.

The breast is simultaneously reminiscent of the 'bad' object that is hated when reassurance is disrupted. These disruptions are terrifying and frustrating so the infant also views the bad object to be a powerful persecutor that can destroy both the infant and the good object, causing separation anxiety in these periods of isolation. This anxiety becomes acute; it threatens to transform isolation into total dissolution, which becomes synonymous with the fear of death. *Thanatos* emerges through destructive defense mechanisms of splitting and projective identification.

To increase clarity, the infant uses splitting to exaggerate differences between good and bad objects, so part of the defence is somewhat schizoid. This early stage of development, characterised by fear and suspicion of the breast, Klein termed the *paranoid-schizoid position*, highlighting "the persecutory character of the anxiety and ... the schizoid nature of the mechanisms at

work" (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1988: 298).

In the paranoid-schizoid position, destructive urges emanating from hatred and envy are projected and contained in the 'bad' object as a way to also develop the good object, which is supposed to emerge from the split as a place of refuge and core for ego development. The death instinct does not yield to the split and in the form of envy, becomes a damaging force. It seeks to eliminate the good objects around which the ego attempts to develop and in so doing, destroys hope. Klein declares that of the seven 'deadly sins', envy is "unconsciously felt to be the greatest sin of all, because it spoils and harms the good object which is the source of life" (Klein, 1975c: 189).

Beyond mere projection of bad breast feelings is the simultaneous process called projective identification. Its purpose is to induce in the mother, the feelings toward the bad object for which she must take responsibility. In this way, the infant attempts to make the mother feel guilty:

> … a relationship to the original bad object has been created from the destructive force of the death instinct for the purpose of containing the threats posed by that instinct. There is a malevolent breast trying to destroy me, and I am trying to escape from and also destroy that bad breast. (Mitchell & Black, 1995: 93)

As early as the third month of life, the infant may come to the realisation that it both loves and hates the same breast which Klein refers to as the *depressive position*. The infant may, as another defence mechanism for this less developed ego, seek to deny [or as Freud (1940/1986) terms '*disavowal*'] the reality of the persecutory object. It is the 'good breast' that becomes the core around which the ego seeks to develop as if it were the grain of sand that yields the pearl (see Klein, 1975c: 178-180). Thus

> The frustrating whole object who has been destroyed is also the loved object toward whom the child feels

deep gratitude and concern. Out of that love and concern, reparative fantasies are generated, in a desperate effort to heal the damage, to make the mother whole once again. (Mitchell & Black, 1995: 95)

Klein's rendering of development posits that without progression to the depressive position, aggressive impulses will push the individual toward eventual and complete dissolution. Klein's version of the death instinct can be characterised as an anxiety theory generated by the ego's determination to split off and project aggressive impulses, thereby recreating the experience of the persecutory 'bad breast' in and around the individual. While in normal development we pass through this phase, the paranoid-schizoid position is a constant threat because in the sense of always being available to us, it is never truly transcended.

When adults are non-reflexive or unable to reside in the depressive position, perceptions of persecution may become such that others are not experienced as 'whole' integrated objects but only as reminders of the 'bad breast': "The regression (to babyhood) under fantasy leads to a great deal of infantility of character in adult life …" (Suttie, 1935: 32). C. Fred Alford provides an explanation of adults' regression to the paranoid-schizoid position resulting in manifestations of the death instinct during transitions from single to many-object relations.

THE SCRIPT:
Conceptions of the death instinct in adult human relations *-Acting out the missing leader*

C. Fred Alford has explored the nature of the death instinct in the therapeutic group context, when adults are confronted with the anxiety of immigrating to and participating in (joining) what are perceived to be unstable human interrelationships, specifically as a result of leadership change. Leader-follower

stability develops if individuals and the group are able to simultaneously curb this anxiety and reach the depressive position by using projective identification to stimulate 'good breast' memories. Alternatively, projective identification of only 'bad breast' reminders along with the schizoid compromise results in dedevelopment from acute fear of either dissolution or engulfment when it is fantasized that the leader refuses to lead. The death instinct is then played out in the *five dramas* of "acting out the missing leader" (Alford, 1994; see also Carr & Lapp, 2006).

Background

Eros, drives individuals' needs to participate in combined efforts to accomplish something that could not otherwise be achieved through individual performance. The primal group is infant and mother or representation of mother, ostensibly in which mother is leader and infant follower. In as much as the infant continually changes with and because of its environment, transformation is required to maintain self-esteem or love "between the child and the mother and later to its substitute relationships with its whole social environment" (Suttie, 1935: 29; Gabriel, 1999).

Alford contends the basic adult group is comprised of one subject and one object, in physical or perceptual contiguity that use interaction to achieve some purpose. In the context of the leader follower relationship, *Eros* is comprised of both pleasure seeking and object seeking states and with mutual causality: "The mother gives the breast, certainly, but the infant *gives the mouth*, which is equally necessary to the transaction of suckling. The fact that there is a transfer … is immaterial to the child's mind, *if the milk comes willingly*" (Suttie, 1935: 27 italics original emphasis). An unstable group is indicative of one in which this transfer in some way has been disrupted.

Joining an unstable group conjures ambiguity. There is a constant need to be a part of a group, continually tempered with the individual's fear of identity loss, "which means to accept that within each individual is the desire to be an autonomous individual, the desire to submerge oneself in the group, and a perpetual conflict between these two desires" (Alford, 1994: 5). Many human behaviors including expressions of psychological illnesses are ambivalent in nature as they often have, simultaneously, two antagonistic tendencies. The whole notion of individual becomes "dividual" (Spielrein, 1912/1994: 160; Carr, 2003a-b).

In translation, joining an unstable group can be a destructive-reconstruction or a 'nothing ventured, nothing gained' event: "Death is horrible; yet death in the service of the sexual instinct, which includes a destructive component, is a salutary blessing since it leads to a coming into being" (Spielrein, 1912/1994: 183). In unstable groups, the willingness to risk identity loss or partial dissolution in the wake of creating something new may be based on the ambivalent relationship between *Eros* and *Thanatos*. However, if the personal sacrifice is perceived to come at too great a cost, *Thanatos* expresses itself as an "instinct of destruction" (Freud, 1923/1984: 381).

In diametric opposition to the individual, "the group seeks first of all its own security. The creation of a less threatening environment is the group's paramount task. Everything else, including the recognition of its individual members, is subordinated to it" (Alford, 1994: 27). Fantasies associated with impending identity annihilation recur during change in groups and set the stage for heightened anxiety from the group's "unlimited power and an insurmountable peril" (Freud, 1933/1985). Joining an unstable group can be likened to a life and death situation.

The death instinct, like the life instinct, while seeking expression is subject to repressive psychodynamics, which are culturally shaped (Freud 1920/1984; 1923/1984; Carr, 2003a-b). The group can be perceived to be an ego ideal aspect of the superego that has the co-responsibility of defining and recognizing the 'bad breast' and the 'good breast' with the view to achieving the depressive position, in partnership with all egos, so group members learn to turn to one another. In as much as humans are involved, residence in the depressive position is always in a state flux so *Thanatos*, like *Eros*, requires repression to the extent that it does not harm or destroy neither the self nor others.

Relational combinations and permutations are positively correlated with the number of group participants: the more people in the group, the more confusion and anxiety generated, as each ego seeks to protect to its own egoism and to defend against the needs of many, rather than only one other. The subject's need to protect the self against group threats to amass identities and diminish or even annihilate any differentiation, invokes extreme anxiety of identity death, thereby necessitating the requirement of the formal leader. As Alford notes from his studies of groups:

"*Group development requires leadership, a fact that political theory has worked hard to ignore, evidently because the need for leadership is experienced as humiliating and dangerous.* Humiliating, because the need for leadership questions the autonomy and freedom of individuals, and dangerous, because leadership so often seems to connote the *Führerprinzip*". (1994: 5, italics is original emphasis)

We revisit the Hyde and Thomas (2003) case by presenting key facts regarding organizational structure and primary players' activities, characteristics, and perceptions relating to leader follower relationships when Anne Evans, the core group's leader dies. Then, we analyze these salient factors against theoretical conceptualizations of the death instinct. The

last segment of our presentation includes important implications for organizational studies and practise in light of the death instinct.

The Hyde and Thomas (2003) case study: Death instinct manifestations and leadership change

Thanatos outweighs *Eros* in mortality salient situations that threaten identity. Alford argues that the simultaneous resolve of the individual and the group to eliminate death fear anxiety results in the use of a mutated form of the paranoid schizoid position, the schizoid compromise, which in partnership with projective identification, invokes individual egoism that underscores the play of *Acting out the Missing Leader.* The following synthesis of theory and analysis indicates that the first drama played out is *leadership and identity* (Alford, 1994: 37-38, 63), in the three scenes of: the case of the missing leader; cases of missing leaders; and the missing formal leader.

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE:
Leadership, identity and the case of the missing leader

The following is our summary of some of the case study presented by Hyde and Thomas (2003) :
Marjorie, the Service Director of Service Managers Paul and Anne, suggested that Hyde and Thomas use Anne's group for their study. Anne was allowed to radically restructure part of the larger health care organization to form the newer, smaller Northern Community Mental Health Team (NCMHT) because of complaints regarding the very 'union' militant community psychiatric nurses (CPNs) and social workers' (SWs) inefficiencies surrounding patient care. Theoretically, the new group was to ensure that each patient would be serviced by a one-stop-shop or a one worker: one patient ratio. Instead, patients were passed from one worker to another or they were referred elsewhere. Five months before Anne was diagnosed to be terminally ill, a further restructuring was to take place that would effectually reverse Anne's efforts - psychiatric nurses and social workers were to be repatriated resulting in a larger CMHT. Anne's response was to spend as much time as she had left at NCMHT, in physical proximity to her core team, where she was cared for primarily by Stella.

Before restructuring was contemplated, Anne, an experienced middle manager, was likely in the feeling state of wisdom (Erikson , 1980). Contiguousness of the individual/group relationship precipitated proleptic fantasies of joining an unstable collective long before reaching physical proximity to any others: especially if negative experiences were carried forward from past, non-esteemed interrelationships (Napier & Gershenfeld, 2004). It is likely Anne experienced high levels of separation anxiety, while intuiting or understanding that she would also be creating unstable groups in which she would have to survive.

Anne placed herself in the autistic-contiguous position (Ogden, 1989) where Alford's first lamina of the schizoid compromise occurs. We consider this to be *primordial* splitting, which is of particular significance because it helps determine why gaps in wisdom - that were not in prior existence - suddenly appear at the mere thought of joining an unstable group. Primordial " … splitting off the true self is an alternative to suicide …" (Alford, 1994: 55): it is instrumental in protecting the individual from diffusion and dedifferentiation or identity annihilation, suggesting existence of some degree of masochism.

Anne was schizoid compromised because she was chosen to restructure: a masochistic task seen to feed a narcissistic need to do a good job, while simultaneously building perceptions of terror and

mortification. Her self-esteem was deflated more than inflated, which induced her to put into "cold storage" (Alford, 1994: 55), some of the best parts of herself, thus giving life to the zombie, a psychologically downsized, fragmented self whose:

> current identity structure is being disequilibrated. The person may feel confused and scattered, behave impulsively, look for support in inappropriate places, become 'irresponsible,' 'unreliable,' and 'unpredictable'. (Marcia, 2002: 15)

Subsequent fears resulted in Anne's regression or dedevelopment all the way back to memories of early childhood and infancy constituted by mistrust, hopelessness (Erikson, 1980), and envy of the 'bad breast' (Klein, 1975c: 189), hanging the backdrop for Anne's subsequent actions. While love and hate are viewed as a reflection of the antagonism of life and death instinct, sadism is an instance in which the two classes instincts had become fused and in which primary masochism is outward-directed (Freud, 1920/1984; 1923/1984; Carr, 2003a-b):

> Part of Anne's reengineering implementation was to deport CPNs and SWs to other units within the larger organization, including Susan, one of the social workers. Anne allowed the entry of three, experienced outside hospital staff but to join the team, they paid the price of demotion. (Summarizing Hyde & Thomas, 2003: 1011-1012)

In mortality salient situations, diminutions of self-esteem enhance death fear anxiety, which lead to punitive, outward acts of aggression that are severe (Solomon et al, 1998). Anne was becoming dissociated (Kets de Vries, 2001b): she became more attached to process and task than to relationship. Anne defended against death fear by separating perceptions of good aspects of both distal and proximal group experiences from the bad, thereby activating the remaining two layers of the schizoid

compromise. This is the phase of *primal splitting*, our renaming of Klein's original word. Anne split and projected 'bad breast' representations so CPNs and SWs were exiled because they were perceived as untrustworthy incompetents. CPNs' militancy was threatening and powerful giving rise to competitive authority. Fear and envy were particularly evident in Anne's decisions to demote new members, although their service experience could have helped NCMHT development. Outwardly expressed sadistic acts, among other harmful death instinct manifestations, had ensued to protect the "ordinary masochist" (Lind, 1991). Defense mechanisms, especially early in the group development lifecycle, seem to be unavoidable because adults "… would rather be 'bad somebodies' than 'weak non-entities' - to be human and weak is felt as if it were on the way to loss of identity" (Holbrook, 1971: 199).

We interpret act one, scene one of *The case of the missing leader* to be indicative of the individual's loss of self-leadership, or what is akin to the leader's self-mutilation of identity. Alford's therapeutic group setting presupposes that the formal leader has a healthy psychological organization and is thus capable of mentoring the newborn group to become working group. This may not always be the case when self-leaders allow themselves to be schizoid compromised, a new manifestation of the death instinct. Scene two discusses other such cases of missing leaders.

ACT ONE, SCENE TWO:
Cases of missing leaders

In as much as the schizoid compromise creates holes in the ego to allow instinctual impulses to spill out, the gaps also allow various aspects to seep in. In contrast to Klein's rendition, Alford (1994: 48) assimilates Spillius' (1983) version of projective identification to say that it has the power to virtually project ego parts into others in both highly overt and subliminal

ways:

to infiltrate others' containers or cases and control them in what is unconsciously and consciously felt to be a coercive process.

Anne was considered to be an authoritarian who was revered, feared and competitively inclined. In three years, Anne pushed 29 staff members to strive for and win two service quality awards, which were prominently displayed. More restructuring resulted in two additional units specifically created in the image of Anne's successful NCMHT. Outsiders resented these achievements. They cynically referred to Anne's team as "Evans' angels". (Summarizing Hyde & Thomas, 2003: 1013)

The death instinct becomes outwardly-directed and transposed in the form of seeking control over externality or the will to power (Freud, 1920/1984; 1923/1984, Carr, 2003a-b), reinforcing masochistic and sadistic expressions, which can be amplified by narcissism and transference (Schwartz, 1990; Noer, 1993; Kets de Vries, 2001a-b). In Solomon et al (1998) it was shown that defense mechanisms manifested themselves after some period of time had elapsed between the inducement of mortality salience and the manifestations of its effects. As long as Anne was recognized and rewarded for her efforts, and especially in a temporally punctuated manner, a repetitive compulsion that focused on competitive award achievement was reinforced.

Individuals support the values of the person who elevates their self-esteem; individuals feeling highly esteemed are less likely to experience death fear anxiety (Solomon et al, 1998). It is in the context of ameliorating death fear that we recognize forms of transference, mirroring, and repetition compulsion. This explains why, even under such oppressive conditions, the core group remained so attached to Anne and

her processes even when knowing it was being alienated by other organizational members. The core group was also seen to be supported in working against the primary service process, for which restructuring, ostensibly, was implemented. Anne's narcissistic state and the group's need for propping (Holbrook, 1971) may have shielded them from the realization that resizing objectives were being ignored.

The more diffused group members' cases, the easier and faster the penetrations of Anne's perceptions of 'bad breast' reminders because primordial splitting helped each individual bury 'good breast' commemorations. Anne's core group members allowed persecutory dumping of guilt and would have felt shame for not following Anne's authoritative and dictatorial rules. They allowed themselves to be ruled through an inferiority complex: "Mother *is* good and kind; if she does not love me, that is because *I* am bad" (Suttie, 1935: 32). Anne had an easier time of projecting what she fantasized to be 'good breast' images of restructuring, such as conferring self-esteem to her core group by forming and strengthening libidinal ties with awards, which was supported by group members' willingness to use transference to reinforce Anne's narcissistic tendencies - to ensure the milk would keep flowing (Suttie, 1935).

In order to survive Anne's organizational structure, group members needed to reach the depressive position or seek a core around which development could occur. They did so by convincing themselves that Anne's decisions were akin to the 'good breast' thereby disavowing Anne's negatives to preserve the "lovability of the first loved object" (Suttie, 1935: 31). Negatives were projected to other cases in and outside of the core group which were reflected by the core's unwillingness to perform the service correctly and by outside groups' open disdain or 'bad breast' perceptions of the NCMHT's achievements. Thus, the NCMHT is the premature group that is paranoid schizoid and in the "autistic-contiguous position" (Ogden,

1989 in Alford, 1994: 29). Without transcendence to the depressive position, or without the development of collective reflexivity, the group ego was punctured and its identity fragmented to the extent that:

> … the group itself, through pervasive projections, embodies a process akin to the death instinct. Here, the group as a whole becomes a poisonous container, acting as a siphon for the self-destructive process. (Nitsun, 1996: 151).

Alford would describe Anne's group as a collection of digressed, regressed part individuals, meaning neither group members nor the group itself were whole objects. Alford's (1994: 16, 58) theory is a fragmented-group theory that speaks to the premature group, a group that does not have the reflexive power to self-determine whether it will live to become a more mature group or any of those classified as a whole or basic assumption group (Bion, 1961). Consequently, act one, scene two has resulted in many non-reflexive *cases of missing leaders* filled with fantasies of misleading 'good breast' images, a hatred of outsiders and perhaps even envy because non-cores were not shackled to approved and lauded dictatorial processes. The next scene outlines the group's expressed representations of the death instinct.

ACT ONE, SCENE THREE:
The missing formal leader

The true missing leader is Marjorie. Nowhere in the case does anyone refer to Marjorie as anything but a benign, legitimate leader who, by other group members, was not perceived to be downsize affected, even though it was she who effected the restructuring. By ignoring Marjorie's role in their own identity annihilation, a subliminated and repressed form of the death instinct was expressed in competitive strategy to achieve awards (Freud 1920/1984; 1923/1984, Carr, 2003a-b) and to attract the missing formal

leader's attention; especially during the feeling state of envy. The formal leader is both revered and hated for what the group does not have (Alford, 1994: 39; 59-60), which is the power to keep from identity dissolution. Reflexive circumvention generated by the schizoid compromise, helps receivers fantasize they are being coercively controlled by the formal leader or what must be an "aggressive imaginer" (Alford, 1994: 29, 61-62). To protect her individual egoism, we see Marjorie defending her attachment to her mother, the organization, by using projective identification to not disallow Anne from further continuance of destruction. True to Alford's theory, Anne perceived Marjorie to be too "brutal and sadistic" (Alford, 1994: 73) because by selecting Anne to complete the restructuring, she was alienating Anne from the larger group without giving Anne the time or support to mourn this loss (Gabriel, 1999; Kets de Vries, 2001b; Carr, 2003a-b; Hyde & Thomas, 2003).

Marjorie becomes the creative sadist who is necessary to confer the masochist's desires: "But these desires entail a large measure of frustration: the conductor is there to understand dependency, transference and other longings towards him, not to gratify them" (Nitsun, 1996: 135-136). Marjorie was the entire group's missing leader, but for the wrong reasons. In what may have been an unconscious or conscious Machiavellian political parry, Marjorie may have killed off Anne.

The schizoid position along with projective identification ensures that rage, hatred, and humiliation trigger group members to rip the formal leader into manageable, controllable pieces (Alford, 1994: 28). Even though Anne has died, she and that which she embodied, Marjorie, is hated and loved at the same time. Reminders of the formal leader as 'good breast' are introjected and 'bad breast' projected according to each group members' individualized needs: to patch a self-esteem hole in each ego's punctured boundary and to spear other cases with persecutorial images to better control the

experience of deindividuation. Although considered to be abnormal or infantile responses for a developed or mature individual, projective identification as embodied by envy, coerciveness and manipulation becomes the norm of individuals in the undeveloped premature group that without collective reflexivity has turned into the primal horde (Alford, 1994: 59). It is likely that Anne would have been sacrificed by the core group at some point. However, to protect individual and group vestigial identity, we believe Anne and her group sacrificed Marjorie well before Anne's somatic death, and in retaliation for Marjorie's willingness to do away with them all. Ambivalence generated by the contemporaneity of love, hate, and envy (Suttie, 1935) necessitates the removal of the formal leader (Alford, 1994).

ACT TWO:
The sacrifical drama

Ambivalence is intolerable and the "love relationship must be preserved as a matter of life or death… so an alternative is to abandon the mother, *as she now appears in reality* …" (Suttie, 1935: 31). Group members act out what they do not have and that is the formal leader: "In this drama, the group is enacting the conflict between its fantasy of the consultant leader as aggressive, intrusive sadist to whom all must submit and its fantasy of the consultant leader as one whom the group must destroy to save itself" (Alford, 1994: 62) creating three missing leader roles to be filled; the aggressive, the sadist, and the scapegoat. These roles can also be filled by as many as three or one group member, the latter being a more efficient yet just as an effective choice.

One of Anne's appointments was her second in command, Andrea, a first line manager who upheld Anne's views and actions ensuring that: The staff had little discretion and were checked upon and disciplined regularly for minor infractions. (Hyde & Thomas, 1994: 1012)

Alford believes that aggressive imaginers are also those who are most able to use projective identification to influence others because others who are dependent upon the leader are more likely to accept these subliminal and overt signals so as not to be rejected by the leader. In regard to the core group, at least one member, Andrea was also masochistic. At the risk of being alienated by the core group and outsiders, she mirrored Anne's values in the form of mimicking her management style, using transference to identify with Anne. Strong interpersonal relationships are more likely to diminish death fear anxiety in mortality salient situations (Milkulincer, Florian & Hirschberger, 2003). The emergence of a co-dependent relationship between Anne and Andrea is evident which also brings to mind the master-slave connection.

The group may have been deluded in perceiving Anne to be even more omnipresent because the illusion of there being *two of her* could have easily been invigilated. Solomon et al's (1998) conclusions state that in high mortality salient situations, it is more likely that heroism will be rewarded with greater rewards than in low mortality situations. This might be why Andrea's character seems not only to be similar to that of Anne but also an amplification stemming from her courage to be like Anne. The conspicuous absence of reasons for Andrea's appointment might also be explained in terms of this likeness.

In an interesting twist, it seems Andrea is swept up in the generality of the discussion about the group dynamics. Without asking for clarification from the authors, this might just be an oversight. Alternatively, Alford's contention that the powerfulness of his theory lies in covert influences and psychological communication used in projective identifications is strengthened. This parallels Freud's suggestion that the death instinct may be sublimated, as in the case of one's competitiveness in working relationships (Freud, 1920/1984; 1923/1984; Carr, 2003a-b). Subliminal reminders of

mortality salience are indeed more powerful than overt manipulations: "Although many people are unaware of, or seem to deny, their concern with death, the evidence from these and other recent studies suggests that it is precisely when people are unaware of this fear that it has the strongest impact on their behavior" (Arndt et al. 1997: 379). In the case of sacrificing the missing leader one finds that Andrea, while introduced at the start of the Hyde and Thomas article, is never heard of again. Is it possible that the researchers themselves were subliminated into sacrificing Andrea, the person whose container was most like that of Anne's?

> Sacrifices had a double purpose: on the one hand man participated in the creative process, at the same time paying back to the gods contracted by his species; on the other hand he nourished cosmic life and also social life, which was nurtured by the former. Perhaps the most characteristic aspect of this conception is the impersonal nature of the sacrifice. Since their lives did not belong to them, their deaths lacked any personal meaning. (Paz, 1961: 54-55)

In acts three and four, the core group shows the first signs of having potential to come back to life or to reattaching themselves to something meaningful so "values, disassociated from the body of the object can then be carried forward" (Hyde & Thomas, 2003: 1006).

ACT THREE:
Despair, deadness and hopelessness

To control shame and guilt at the sacrifice of one them, despair, deadness, and hopelessness all need to be incorporated by up to three group cases, respectively, the mourner, the murderer, and the dead formal leader. Smaller groups have a tendency to mourn, which is the first sign of reparation or the core group's awareness that something

less destructive might be done to act out the missing leader.

> During Anne's illness, some core team members tended to her home garden. Less than three months after being diagnosed, Anne passed away. Some male team members were pallbearers at Anne's funeral. (Summarizing Hyde & Thomas, 2003: 1012)

The mourning process requires consideration of competence and temporality: it is reparative if all group members are able and given time use it to reach the depressive position. Larger groups have more cases to project and introject only 'bad breast' reminders and are more likely to become enraged murderers, "which involves aggression, coercion, anger and love protests on the part of the child" (Suttie, 1935: 31) that leads to hopelessness when the leader cannot be resurrected:

"It was a huge disgusting place with more disgusting staff. It was the norm to sit with a fag in their hand, drinking coffee and doing nothing all day. Everything was a chore, especially if patients asked for anything … I'm lucky Anne just left me to get on with it. She'd ask you to do a job and expect you to do it" [Stella, personal assistant] (Hyde & Thomas, 2003: 1013)

"What's the point now? I want to be here, it suits me for childcare" [Stella, personal assistant] (Hyde & Thomas, 2003: 1014).

"In general, however, the tone of this drama is dominated by the experience of deadness, the group's identification with the dead leader" (Alford, 1994: 62):
"Anne sat in her wheelchair in the office waiting to die and making sure that her legend lives on" [Marjorie, service director] (Hyde & Thomas, 2003: 1015).

With Anne and Andrea no longer in the scene, only remnants of Marjorie remain. This is the dissociated aggressive imaginer who is in no position to lead the entire core

group through the mourning process, so the group continues to seek yet another method for reviving the leader, in the next drama.

ACT FOUR:
Sex and death

In this drama the group resorts to having real or metaphorical sex split into life giving and life taking potential of respectively, positive revivification or further destruction. We see this as an attempt to transform the group or re-eroticize the environment (Marcuse, 1955; 1970):

> A series of extramarital affairs sprung up between members of staff who had formed the loyal core of original team members. (Hyde & Thomas, 2003: 1018).

The core group created their own processes that stressed assessment completion and interventions to their award winning service such as communicating with patients' relatives or their doctors rather than the patients themselves. Instead of maintaining the one-stop-shop service concept;

> … paperwork substituted for emotional work, it was used increasingly to facilitate withdrawal from wider society. (Hyde & Thomas, 2003: 1017)

Real and metaphorical sex was the means to seek a "'good' substitute for the 'bad'" (Suttie, 1935: 31) and to re-manufacture identity. Sex and death can regenerate some reflexivity in potential space: the place between fantasy and reality where creativity or the need to "play" (Ogden, 1989: 199-200) resides and, which initiates movement toward the depressive position. In this sense, striving for something new substantiates that; "Close to our desire to maintain our present condition, there lies a desire for transformation" (Spielrein, 1912/1994: 163). Positive transformation manufactures cases of the chaste and beloved (Alford, 1994: 63), to supply the group with resources to project 'good breast' memories.

Potential space cannot be created if case boundaries have been fortified to the extent that no one can ever escape their paranoid schizoid fantasy. The consequence is generally, the male abusive lover's dominance that atomizes self-esteem: "the sexual predator, who uses sex as a tool to dominate or control others…" (Alford, 1994: 63), which further dedifferentiates the group. Death in sex can lead to both positive (Spielrein, 1912/1994; Carr, 2003a-b) and negative transformation. In the case of the latter, reversion to the previous drama of despair, deadness, and hopelessness is likely to ensue when revivification fails. The death instinct may assume the form of repetition compulsion with an intended conservative effect on what otherwise might be the case if the life instinct were to exert its forms of expression (Freud, 1920/1984; 1923/1984; Carr, 2003a-b). Although sex and death have not transitioned the group to the depressive position, in the interest of parsimony, we move to the fifth act.

ACT FIVE:
Tribal warfare and superficial ideologies

Group members now seek to blame others for this resuscitative impotence and through further projective identification act out the fifth drama, "tribal warfare and superficial ideologies" (Alford, 1994: 63). This drama is characterized by group splitting into new, smaller untested collectives or good and bad tribes as similarly posed by Freud in *Totem and Taboo*: "Recall that the real enemy is one's own group and the demands on the member's individuality it makes" (Alford, 1994: 64). Tribal warfare can be seen as the primordial regressive state of leadership identity and sacrifice acts that the group itself has developed - "…warring tribes are not just fighting each other; they are fighting each other to sacrifice themselves" (Alford, 1994: 64):

> The core group was resentful of anyone from the 'enemy camp' or those who were outsiders, such as CPNs and SWs and "appeared to be torn between

feelings of disloyalty if they accepted any benefits of the new regime, and wanting to preserve the positive acknowledgements of their work" (Summarizing and quote from Hyde & Thomas, 2003: 1016**)**

Group splitting by the group pushes itself, and the individuals within it, further toward engulfment and isolation that eventually results in group suicide or a form of slow death (Quinn, 1996). This helps define the process of mortality and identity entropy in the group. In tribal groups, death instinct manifestations push individuals farther toward the pole of submergence or engulfment (Carr, 1994). Splitting gives the options of turning into one or the other; projective identification helps the group member choose. Alford's argument in the NCMHT holds true: "If all can't be leader, then none shall be an individual" (Alford, 1994: 63) so group members remain in fragmented states. The best the group can do is split itself into an 'us against them' mentality.

The non-reflexive individual perceives that the continued refusal to lead is an act of persecution so 'good breast' reminders are more deeply hidden thereby eliminating progression to the depressive position. To defend against introjection of the warring tribes' projections of only 'bad breast' reminders, the ego fortifies its boundaries as a stop gap measure to protect the "unstable entity within, albeit at the cost of learning from without: from experience and from the consultant" (Alford, 1994: 29; see also Ogden, 1989: 47-82):

> This represents a superordinate defense in which psychological pain is warded off, not simply through defensive rearrangements of meaning (such as projection and displacement) and interpersonal evacuation of endangered and endangering internal objects (projective identification); in addition, there is an attachment on the psychological processes by which meaning itself is created. The outcome is a state of "non-experience" in which the

individual lives partly in a state of psychological deadness - that is there are sectors of his personality in which even unconscious meanings and affects cease to be elaborated. (Ogden, 1989: 199)

Without group development, there can be no individual development so the "depressing thing about these dramas is that they just go on and on" (Alford, 1994: 64).

After Anne died, the last known restructuring took place. Management in general, was looking for change because they disliked Anne's results, which negatively impacted other parts of the larger organization. Marjorie promoted Susan from social worker to Service Manager; with the job description to lead Anne's core group along with others who had recently joined the larger CMHT: "… from my point of view, we have a new manager who maybe doesn't understand the nature of the service that was created. She maybe wants to mould it into something completely different and doesn't care that you know this work was done and this was achieved" [Jackie, CMHT nurse]. (Summarizing and quote from Hyde & Thomas, 2003: 1014)

The purpose for our discussion is to develop awareness of death's potential: "The paradox is that the more people become defended against death, and inevitability of their own death, the more it becomes possible for death to be manufactured and split off from life" (Lawrence, 1979/2002: 242) and the more likely it is group members will be unconscious of their own and others' death deflecting behaviors. The following section provides a brief summary of our primary theoretical framework on the death instinct that we used to review the case study.

Summary of the death instinct in theory

Alford's conceptualization of group dynamics includes Freudian and Kleinian

perspectives on the death instinct's manifestations on the individual group member's psyche. However, his renditions of these perspectives are primarily based on influences of schizoid compromise interrelationships with projective identification, or a synthesis of splitting, projection, introjection, projective identification and transference. Alford's undeveloped group is de-differentiated, premature, and based on part-object relations theory or fragmentation of individual and group. This view is in contrast to Klein's whole object relations theory and Bion's whole group theory. Whereas Freud and Klein's renditions of the death instinct are grounded in destruction, Alford's depiction of the "sex and death" drama indicates a Spielreinian influence as group members engage in real or metaphorical sex leading to something new but with potential results of positive or negative transformations. Spielrein and Alford's theories are both destructive and expansive in nature. While Alford's theory recognizes the danger of group politics it does not go as far to cover fragmented human interrelationships in multiple groups, nor does it speak to fantasies of many formal leaders or 'skip level' formal leaders, which makes for a much more complex and intriguing read of death instinct manifestations. The synthesis of this group of theories outlines a progression from individual to collective expressions of the death instinct.

Epilogue: Discussion of the death instinct in organizational studies and practise

In as much as organizations are currently occupied and controlled by humans, theories about development and degeneration of personality and human behavior are relevant to the field of organisation studies (Crowell, 1998; Christensen & Raynor, 2003). Issues related to mortality and deaths acted out in interrelationships are important because they frame life, itself. Our unconscious motivation can be so strong that we may act in a manner unthinkable to the conscious, yet we remain unaware of the underlying psychodynamics. The following discussion considers some important implications for further understanding of human relations in organization studies and practise, which is framed from the synthesis of many theorists' works on the death instinct.

Acting out the missing leader: The death instinct and organizational leaders and followers

Manifestations of the death instinct during battles of "leadership and identity" (Alford, 1994: 37-38, 63) inform us as to why followers, to their detriment continue to follow. Sievers (1990; 1994) noted that leadership deification is followed by the re-manufacture of workers as production means or things contributing to identity annihilation, which, in the case study, is consistent with Marjorie's ability to isolate Anne and the core group for the sake of protecting organizational productivity (Solomon et al, 1998). Fear of identity loss is synonymous with mortality salience brought forward when leader-follower, and therefore group identity (Alford, 1994), has not reached the depressive position (Klein, 1975a-d) or is not equilibrated for any meaningful period of time.

Referent power matched with other power bases, such as legitimate or formal and expert power inflates the perception of the leader's total power base (Hinken & Schriesheim, 1989 cited in Shermerhorn, Hunt & Osborn, 2003). At the same time, one should appear to be "warm, friendly, and dynamic" (Robbins & Hunsaker, 2003: 29). Because of the schizoid compromise and projective identification, reaction transference (Glenn & Bernstein, 1994) becomes most persuasive in the premature group or in one that is about to experience disruptions of transfers of the mother's milk (Suttie, 1935) such as those resulting from continuous restructuring and threats of downsizing (Noer, 1993; Allen et al., 2001). This indicates that trait theory needs to be revisited for its temporal influence as well as for its

constituents and its projected purpose: leaders using restructuring as the means to knowingly scramble identity are invoking the death instinct (Freud, 1920/1984; 1923/1984; Klein, 1975a-d; Carr, 2003a-b) and the pathological organization (Bakan, 2004).

Leadership and identity wars from restructuring, lead to the practise of sacrifice (Alford, 1994) in organizations. However, these sacrifices are now more commonly hidden in the putative need for the reconstitution and then deflation of the labor force in guises of contract workers and other temporary employees. If leader-follower relationships are stratified as the means to protect each other from death fear anxiety (Milkulincer, Florian & Hirschberger, 2003), it follows that recruitment and selection practices will be based on hiring in one's own image. Sacrificed group members are those who are fanaticized to most resemble their leader. Consequently, a value matching exercise (Jaffe & Scott, 2003) feeds the fantasy and so may be hazardous to one's working health.

Alternatively, a stable of contract workers creates safety in numbers. In the premature group context, the informal leader is the least vulnerable group member relative to others and is therefore perceived as master, and who in a regressive state taps into the death instinct in an aggressively outward manner "as a wish for self-annihilation in the face of unendurable frustration and suffering" (Segal, 1993 in Nitsun, 1996: 151) to end the longing for the mother's holding or her protection from persecutory anxiety. In this sense, the informal leader is the group's fantasy of the most infantile member who, in competitive terms, is the best schizoid compromised projective identifier or the dialectically twisted, sickest, strongest weakest member who, by the schizoid compromised, has been promoted to a level of incompetence (Peter & Hull, 1969). In its many guises, the death instinct's role in the reiterative interchange and development of a group's informal leader, adds new dimensions to leadership, group relations, and political discourse (Marcuse,

1955; 1964; Alford, 1991).

Clearly an understanding of the synthesis of theories framing the death instinct, by all in the organization, helps put the 'I' back into team so individual, group and organizational identity and effectiveness are not sacrificed for the sake of efficiency. Reflexivity and human praxis (Chessick, 1989) can lead to *thanatospraxis* (Sievers, 1999) in the workplace as the means to predict, interpret, and curb detrimental death defense behaviors. Most importantly, recognition of the death instinct is necessary to understand how we frame organizational life.

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