

Group Dynamics

Bion (1952, 1961) discovered (rediscovered) a set of phenomena that operate at the level of **the group**. When people first come together, they establish a **group** very quickly. But in the early stages and particularly when there is a 'leader', the group will be immature and lacking in self confidence. From his observations he postulated a dual system of mental functioning. One part entailed a working group mode (*W*) characterized by conscious participation in and cooperation towards task achievement and individual development. It deals rationally in time bound reality using organization and structure. The second indicated a proto-mental system of basic assumptions (*bas*), assumptions which the group makes about its leadership. Participation in these requires "no training, experience or mental development. It is instantaneous, inevitable and instinctive" (Bion 1952: 235). Rather than conscious cooperation, a *ba* expresses an individual's 'valency', readiness to enter into combination with the group in making and acting on the *bas* (1961: 116). It has become accepted that the *bas* are inevitable in group life, but this can no longer be accepted. The *bas* are the consequences of DP1 structure and as such are avoidable.

People can hear and learn at a level different from the literal spoken words. This is the level of 'the music of the group'. This second level is concerned with the meaning of the **life** of the group when it is making basic assumptions. The ability to hear the music of a group as it sings stories about its nature and purpose represents an essential human skill, without which we would not have a group life. But today while that skill is clearly exercised it mostly remains at a level beneath consciousness.

Bion's dual system of mental functioning is almost identical to that proposed by Angyal (1965). One pattern, orientation or 'organized process' pushes towards health. It arises from perceptions of the world as positive and has as its hallmarks the features of confidence, hope, trust etc. The other pushes towards 'neurosis' which arises from perceptions of the world as foreign, threatening and unpredictable. As nobody ever has only positive experiences in the world, there will always be some experience of isolation or helplessness and the two tendencies will operate in each individual to varying degrees. Angyal's dual function, therefore, springs from individual accumulated experience. However, the orientation towards confidence and health, when it is securely dominant, is a relatively self consistent stable system. The neurotic pattern is not. It must use many devices or defence mechanisms to achieve the semblance of consistency. (Angyal 1965: 110).

Despite different hypothesized aetiologies, the two dual systems come together at the behavioural level with the grouping of the organizing process for health and the task oriented working mode. The organizing process for neurosis shares the assumptions of the *bas*. In the discussion below, it will become clear that DP1 structures will activate or strengthen and entrench *bas* and neurotic tendencies, while DP2 will bolster the orientation to health. Because DP1 is inherently maladaptive in terms of meeting human needs and providing for individual growth and development, it is inherently unstable and further contributes to the instability of the individual whose organization is predominantly neurotic.

Relation to Learning

Bion distinguished three *bas*: dependency (*baD*) where the group assumes it exists in order to be sustained by a leader, (*baP*) where the group assumes it has met for the purpose of pairing and thirdly, where it assumes it has met for the purpose of fighting or running away, fight/flight (*baF*). All three he saw as modes which preserve the possibility of the group, maintaining its identity. The basic assumption of 'pairing' (*baP*) is dealt with in more detail below.

The basic assumption of dependency (*baD*) is that there is somewhere a great and powerful being (leader) who exists to ensure that no untoward events will follow the irresponsibilities of individuals, to provide security. But in the dependent mode while the group is asking for this leader, cum teacher, cum expert, they show little inclination to learn from the leader. They act as if his/her knowledge of whatever it is that they need to know is good enough. They do not have to learn, it is only a question of letting the words flow and having faith.

The basic assumption of fight/flight (*baF*) is that the leader is inimical to the preservation of the group and must be either killed in battle or ignored. The subject matter or task must be ignored while the concern is with winning or losing. This basic assumption lends itself to health and learning more easily than dependency as there is at least an active orientation, even though the group is not capable of proceeding with the task. The fight aspect of this dynamic is usually easier to recognize than flight when it is predominant. Full scale flight is quite easily separable from dependency however by the different emotional expression in the two. Even in extended periods of flight, people will feel stirred up, with adrenalin flowing as in the prelude for a battle. These periods are usually described as 'chaotic'. None of this is evident in the dependent group.

The third basic assumption Bion called 'pairing' as he saw it arising from the group allowing two of its members to indulge in animated conversation towards the purpose of building a sexual relationship, and through the excitement generated by this process, allowing them to assume leadership of the group. We have had cause to query this reasoning as we have seen a phenomenon virtually indistinguishable from the superficial characteristics of *baP* but which serves the function of interrupting a period in basic assumptional mode. This is the subject of our further discussion below but it is clear that some expressions of pairing are full of learning.

There is, therefore, a continuum of learning implied in the three basic assumptions. Least learning occurs in dependency, more in fight/flight and more again in pairing.

Relation to Structure

The purpose of Bion's work was rehabilitation, a restorative process of the human ability to function maturely and holistically both as individuals and as group - his *W* or leaderless but purposefully task oriented group. The inhibiting presence of the basic group assumptions which he summarized as the 'hatred of learning' (Bion 1961: 86-91) represents the playing out of forces generated by structured configurations. In this he was intimately concerned with the structure and cohesion of the group as the following statement shows. "In D (dependency), the individuals do not have a relationship with each other but only with the D.L", the leader of *baD* (Bion 1952: 238). This describes a DP1 structure. As the audience in a DP1 conference has no responsibility for design, content or outcome so it can assume it "exists in order to be sustained by a leader on

whom it depends" (Bion as above: 235). The 'experts' know it all and will look after everything so the audience can show an unshakeable indifference to everything that is said (Bion 1961: 83). Energy and learning are low and the *baD* group "is quite opposed to the idea that they are met for the purpose of doing work" (p84). In addition, the emotional tone of the *baD* is negative, guilty, apathetic and depressed.

In fight/flight (*baF*) the leader or expert is seen as inimicable to the preservation of the group. The feeling of being stirred up represents energy which can produce learning but the learning primarily concerns winning rather than understanding. (Bion 1961: 160) The *baF* today is most commonly seen in the Mixed Mode, rather than in SCs, usually in its fight rather than flight form. We will adopt here a convention which distinguishes fight from flight where necessary, using 'F' for fight and 'f' for flight.

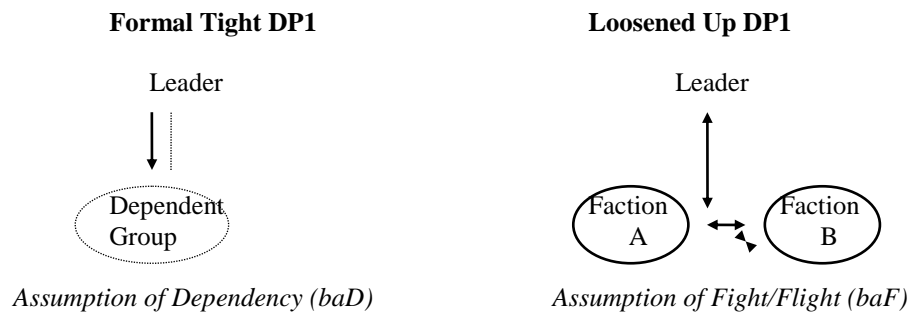


Figure 18. The Structure of Group Assumptions

SC designers and managers must understand the relation between the design principles and the group assumptions if their work is to produce cohesive learning planning communities. The 'hatred of learning' is no more than the playing out of forces generated by DP1 structured configurations. These may be simply visualized as in Figure 18. Here we see the relationship between DP1 and the two most common group assumptions. When coordination and control are strictly preserved by the level above the operator (organization) or participant (conference) level; ie, the leader or management runs a 'tight ship', the group assumption is that of dependency. If the grip of management slackens or cuts across the work of the others, there can be a two way fragmentation of the structure. Fight/flight develops and factions within the group and conflict between factions and/or group and management develop. Group assumptions and structure are two sides of the one coin. The concept of 'hatred of learning' can then be seen as a by product of attempting to learn creatively and adaptively in a structure which inhibits cooperative use of our multipurpose system capabilities towards creating shared desirable human futures. Its emotional products are inherently unpleasant and self defeating and initiate cycles whereby motivation to learn to change is reduced, producing dissociation.

If the conjunction of forces is appropriate, members of the group may initiate pairing and consolidate the group and its functioning, effectively rendering the formal leadership powerless. They replace this leadership, attempting to institute self management which abandons the group assumptions for the genuine working mode. The sequence here is *baD* -> *baF* -> *baP* -> *W* with an increasing level of learning being generated. But if the group is embedded in a larger DP1 structure or the process managers become anxious and attempt to stop the *baP*, there is every chance that it will be forced into further cycles of group assumptions. Given the learning and confidence

generated however, it would take a very harsh regime to return the group to dependency. More likely are fluctuations of *baF*, *baP* and *W*. We have seen many examples of groups fighting to retain their self managing status in the face of bureaucratic efforts to destroy it. The latest comes from the USA where Heinz has now decided to support self management at Topeka dog food after failing to reverse it (Kleiner 1996). The maturity and learning gained from self management are hard to destroy. When people can simultaneously cooperatively share and creatively learn from previous perceptions; and perceptually learn about human group learning as it happens, it is possible to capitalize on our unique capacity for learning and knowing.

Committees

Despite years of jokes about committees designing camels, forming a committee is the first thing that springs to the mind of many when things need to be done. When we draw up the structure of a committee (Figure 19), we see immediately that it is a DP1 structure producing exactly the same dynamics and communication problems as in an organization. Time and again, use of committees has killed implementation of SC action plans. This happens because people are unaware that there is an alternative.

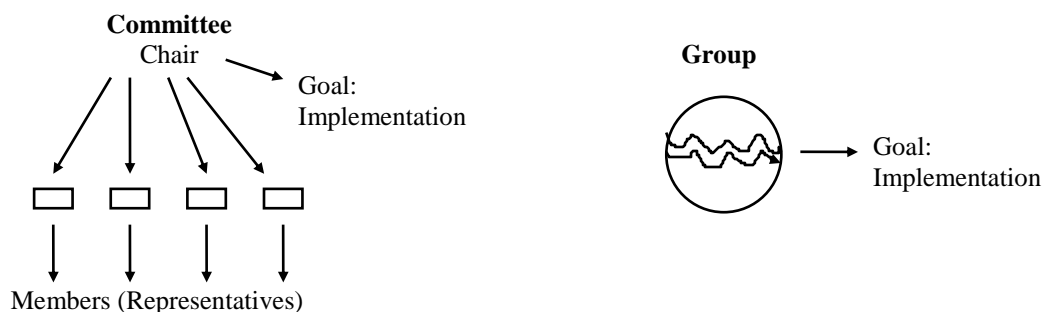


Figure 19. Comparison of Committee and Group Structures for Implementation

It is the chair who takes responsibility for the work and outcome of the committee and many committee reports are known by the chair's name, eg. the Jackson Report. Members are, therefore, absolved of responsibility for control, coordination and outcome and can adopt (*baD*). The stronger the chair and the more strictly and formally meeting procedures are followed, the greater the chance that *baD* will become entrenched. However, their behaviour as individuals, particularly if it is a 'representative' committee, is governed by their responsibilities to their constituents. Each representative uses the committee to gain as much as possible for their constituency and this competitive structure naturally produces (*baF*).

Committees are the preferred, if not essential, mode in which bureaucracies negotiate separate interests and boundaries. They 'continue war by other means' as Clausewitz said of politics. "What is of most consequence at the social level is that one does not see facts in their proper context, or that one does not face them or that one violently stresses certain events at the expense of others, operations which produce mis-structuring, or distortion in understanding and feeling" (Asch 1952: 604). By prolonged and sometimes ritualistic *baF*, committees prolong bureaucratic inertia and produce little by way of change (Table 6).

What happens to the parameters of effective communication in committee working? A brief analysis shows that they produce the opposite of Asch's conditions for effective communication. Members having individual responsibilities to their constituents means inevitably that these form the 'hidden agendas' which replace the overt agenda. This disconfirms 'an objectively ordered field open to all'. Things are not what they appear to be. The *baF* and its distortions exacerbate murkiness. Astute observers always stress the need to identify 'the hidden agendas'. One cannot be sure what expressed disagreements really mean, whether the stated explanations correspond to the other's subjective perception. One cannot even be sure whether subjective disagreements are being hidden. The tendency will be to verbalise and obfuscate, not to clarify.

Does committee working confirm 'the basic psychological similarity' of the members? That 'the others are all decent, honest, intelligent people like myself?' To further one's own interests, it is necessary to call into question, no matter how subtly, the integrity and contributions of the others. A competitive structure necessarily generates contrasts, exacerbates 'personality conflicts', rather than the required basic psychological similarity.

Table 6. Characteristics and Consequences of Committees

Characteristics of Committees	And Their Consequences
Negotiation from positions of different interest.	Striving for individual advantages.
Limited delegated authority, either to committee, or to the individual members.	Constant looking over the shoulder to source of delegation.
Rigid detailed structuring to contain conflicts of interest.	The structure itself becomes a major focus of committee work.
Search for simple structure of its business to facilitate negotiation and resolution.	Painstaking attempts to re-assert the differences by splitting of hairs and nit picking.
Competition for allies and committee time to strengthen one's negotiating position.	(a) Concern with gaining psychological dominance; (b) to 'fix the race' beforehand.

In terms of the third condition, 'the emergence of a mutually shared field', committees must and do achieve this in order to continue working at all. Each must include the other as a potential action centre but they do this to better understand the hand held by the other while attempting to conceal their own. The mutually shared fields are constantly juggled to preserve asymmetry. Members, therefore, cannot become more 'open', more motivated to act on behalf of others or to accept others' contributions as equivalent to or substitutes for their own. Members are forced to be suspicious rather than trustful and develop a **persona** to actively deceive. This will be necessary even with allies, or cliques as coalitions are subject to shift and realignment.

The evidence is overwhelming that the method of committee working contradicts three of the assumptions and cannot, therefore, develop the fourth of trust. Failure to achieve any of the four conditions renders committees unsuitable for tasks requiring creative work around shared purposes.

Some bureaucrats claim to have made committees work. How? When the chair and members of a committee feel strongly about and are committed to the resolution of a

particular problem, furthering a policy or producing a strategic plan, they will go into collusion against their appointers and constituents. Despite their status as representatives and the formal bureaucratic structure, they will further their collective interest by forming a group. They collectively agree to share responsibility for outcome. By agreeing to work as a self managing group, they have beaten the constraints and negative effects of DP1. They haven't made committees work at all. They have proven that groups work better than committees!

The Mixed Mode

Conference organizers must also resist the temptation to alternate the design principles. An alternation is called the 'Mixed Mode' and it is a reliable recipe for producing *baF* in particular. Sponsors today use it to accede to the growing demand for participation. This is to be welcomed as a step forward but can also be seen as having insufficient faith and confidence in people's knowledge, ability and willingness to work fully towards the conference task without 'experts'. We frequently end up, therefore, with a conference which alternates the design principles, speaker plus discussion groups. Time after time, conferences fail to optimize the outcomes of either principle because they lead immediately to the *bas*.

There is some ability to cope with and tolerate the incompatibilities but there are clearly limits to this. The 1980 *Future Directions* conference, the first **Multisearch**, was somewhat of a classic of the Mixed Mode as it had originally been designed from the first principle with commitments made for papers and presentations. When it was radically redesigned, many of these commitments remained. The design had to build around them. They were referred to as 'ginger' papers, which term had a more literal meaning than perhaps intended. At regular intervals, the Search process was interrupted by them. Some of these sessions were volcanic displays of *baF*. This was carried back to the Search groups. "The group rounds on the process manager...We resolve the flare-up by doing what he says. Nobody likes that much. We are...resentful if we get drawn away from our groups...And inevitably the blood flows. The night session (plenary)...is nasty, fraught with hostility, name-calling, tight faces." (White 1980: 71) This describes *baF* at both group and conference level, the resentment of interruptions to *W*. At this multisearch, "Many people felt that despite the ostentatious democracy of proceedings, someone, somewhere, was more in control of the conference than they were." (Hill 1980: 59) **They were under the control of the dynamic!** We are aware of the *bas* but rarely aware of our awareness (conscious) of them.

This propensity of the Mixed Mode to produce assumptional behaviour makes it perfect for conscious learning about dynamics. When we examine the design and function of the staff in classic 'process conferences' (Higgin & Bridger 1990; Bridger 1990) we find that they are Mixed Mode in the 'double task model'. Planning is done but in the context of the second task, observing the process. Staff act as managers **and** teachers.

While it is generally safer to add bits of DP2 onto DP1 than the reverse, the 1985 Adult Educators Summer School proved an exception. Participants expected the conference to be a mirror of their values and practices (DP2), and it wasn't. After an episode of *baF*, the conference split. One half followed the scheduled workshop activities, the other formed its own large group and won the day at the final plenary.

There are other examples where the addition of discussion sessions and workshops has been reasonably successful but it is vital that the DP2 components are meaningful and contribute to the overall conference purpose. Simply asking groups to have a discussion of presented material is neither particularly purposeful nor meaningful. Discussion often deteriorates into criticism of the papers rather than development of the ideas (Caldwell & Davies 1981: 8) and can increase rather than reduce frustration.

The borderline today between a safe and unsafe mixture of principles is very thin. A classic SC example is managers suggesting a framework for collapsing the list of strategic goals. The community immediately rebelled. (Emery & Purser 1996: 263). When people are controlling their own work and learning, it is not surprising that they will resist any attempt at a take over. Our tolerance for being kept in a state of dependency appears to be withering rapidly. The *Orillia* conference (below) consisted of an international group of social scientists. They managed to get themselves into a great deal of trouble with a consequently expensive waste of time and human resources. It appears difficult for many to accept that such seemingly simple matters as the design principles can have such effects on our behaviour. And it appears even more difficult to accept that the phenomena they generate are not always under conscious control.

The Asymmetricality of the Design Principles

There is one possible confusion here. A major component of the conceptual battle which took place within the *Orillia* conference concerned the question as to whether the design principles had to be either/or, or whether they could be mixed, ie whether they were compatible or incompatible. Herbst (1990) has shown that there is a third alternative, namely that DP1 is incompatible with DP2 but DP2 is compatible with DP1. This seeming paradox is quite simply resolved. In DP1, the source of control and choice of design principle is external. DP1 cannot include DP2. But in DP2, control is located within the group. If they choose for some particular task to organize themselves in DP1, they are still in control of the choice of design principle and, therefore, their own self management. DP2 includes within it the potential for DP1.

A Search Conference then is an environment which simultaneously incorporates the A_x^B model with the best conditions for maximizing its effect, the second design principle which accentuates development of health, and ecological learning. Every aspect of the design and management of this environment coheres towards an environment within which people rise far beyond the norm in terms of learning and creativity. Individually and collectively, they leap and bound towards wisdom. The Search is an **environment for developing wisdom.**

The Battle for Orillia

We have a fully documented example of a Mixed Mode conference which illustrates the interplay of design, management and dynamics. It proved that a basic group assumption at the large group level can apply to all of its parts (Bion 1961: 112) and it played a major role in solving the *baP* puzzle. As I listened to the taped record of this conference, I was also increasingly fascinated by the ingenuity with which people pursue their purposes. In the most classical Bionese sense, it was a confrontation

between the forces towards creative work and those which wished to inhibit it. Those who made the assumption that the leadership was inimicable to the life of the group were clearly ascendant.

I was not alone in this perception. It was clearly put on the final morning. "It's also a problem of breaking out in this conference, that we break out against the tradition established by the gurus, or it's a case of breaking out by students against their professors." The conference as a whole refused to produce a conference report, playing out *baf* to the end. There was no responsibility taken for a total outcome. The conference was held in the town of Orillia, hence my title.

The purpose of this conference 'Exploration in Human Futures' was to set an agenda for action research on work and societal change. The participants were known for their commitment to this field. This conference should have been designed as a SC. That it wasn't reflects some confusion, perhaps conflicting agendas within the design and management group. The management group wanted a "working, future oriented conference" to create the conditions for mutual learning, most work to be done in small groups and plenary. But they also thought it would be helpful "to have some stimulants or punctuation points ... not to invite people to give an academic paper", just personal observations. Each would be followed by a member of "the next generation." They were not traditional respondents "because its not that kind of academic structure". Regardless of the euphemisms, it contained both design principles. So in the space of three days we were to have eight papers, rest breaks, a boat trip, dinners, and an after dinner address by an elder of the tribe, plus a response, in addition to the work.

The design group wanted a 'working' conference but just as clearly did not have the courage of its convictions. There was insufficient faith in 30 plus 'high flyers' to creatively construct work for themselves with the space provided by the minimal critical specifications without stimulation artificially administered. A 'moderator' had been appointed but his role appears not to have been discussed. The formative phase generated a powerful mixture of forces towards both *W* and the *bas*, impelling us into a maelstrom of powerful human affects. The first two papers conflicted and the manager intervened in the content. The community recovered briefly but the next plenary showed both *W* and *baF*. To capitalize on a synthesis of the work required, the conference split into four groups, two of whom worked. One began in *baD*, moved to *baF* and eventually to *W*. The other went almost immediately into *baP*.

"We started... with a sense of frustration, alienation and powerlessness... abstractions (were distancing)... We spent quite a lot of time... (telling stories about our personal experiences) and ... we started feeling comfortable with ourselves and each other. We were legitimating and making authentic our own experiences and we began to feel some sense of power." "We were enjoying our discussion and getting something personal out of it but when it came time to present we were in a crisis about 'what are we going to say?', 'what are we going to do?'" . They had discovered the T group and used it as a flight from the task. Rather than accept their responsibility as a task force operating to further the task of the whole, they had split themselves off. "If a group wishes to prevent development, the simplest way to do so is to allow itself to be overwhelmed by basic assumption mentality and thus become approximated to the one kind of mental life in which a capacity for development is not required. The main compensation for such a shift appears to be an increase in a pleasurable feeling of vitality" (Bion 1952: 237).

Hope is the hallmark of the Pairing (*baP*) group but it is critical that the leader, either person or idea should be unborn. (Bion 1961: 151) Their leader was absent and being aconceptual meant little risk that an 'idea' could arise to threaten their *ba*. One said "(We are) keeping those ideas in mind", that is unborn. They were internally a *baP* group but their effect at the conference level was *baf*, the perfect vehicle for avoiding development and enhancing *baF*.

They reported first in the next plenary. It was a mime. By rejecting verbal communication understood only in *W* (Bion 1952: 244), they communicated commitment to the *bas*. It also prevented anxiety, maintaining the foetal status of their development and leadership by making it difficult for others to adopt a genuine questioning attitude. (Bion 1961: 162) They had already been implicitly criticized for irresponsible behaviour. When faced with further criticism (persecution) they chose schism. *baP* was dominant. (Bion 1952: 236) But at the conference level it brought *baf* into the service of prolonged and intense *baF* which was exacerbated by the manager who was under the control of the dynamic. Because the conference itself was split, no coherent opposition to the management could be brought into being. This session simply faded into desultory and fragmented **interactions**.

There was more group work. The *baP* group reported with a picture and some words. They held firm to schism again promoting *baF* at the conference level. Appeals for *W* failed. In the final plenary they presented theatre. Despite suggestions and appeals, *baF* won. There was to be a nonsynthesized report. Rather than the energy and joy which could have suffused the end of this conference, we had the debilitating consequences of dissociation.

Orillia showed how design, structure and the role of management produce dynamics. Throughout there were instances where the DP1 structure set up competition and interrupted *W*. It also illustrated that the inappropriate interpretation of the managerial role promoted the *bas*. Above all, it demonstrated that even professional action researchers and social scientists underestimate the power of these dimensions to affect our behaviour. The management group chopped and changed the design on the run exacerbating the *bas*. There were notably few conscious insights into the role of design and management. It was almost impossible to stay out of the *bas*.

The record also allows us to see ways in which the *bas* can relate at the conference and group levels and it illustrates some fundamental properties of these phenomena. They are 'emotional' **and** 'cognitive' as they use 'intellectual' content to produce additional levels of meaning. The critical difference between *W* and the *bas* is that the content of *W* is literal, expressed to further cooperative, explicit task achievement. Content in a *ba* has a tacit, assumptional meaning as well as a literal meaning. The assumptional meaning serves to further the *ba*. This second level of meaning, the 'music of the group' varies in distance from the literal content in direct correlation with the strength of the *ba*. Towards the end when the *baP* group began to disintegrate under the pressure, their 'music' almost merged with the literal content. This dimension of our group life is too often neglected (Shambaugh 1985) yet we can learn to consciously recognize the *bas*.

In terms of the relations of group to group and to plenary, *Orillia* shows that an intragroup *ba* can fulfil another *ba* at the conference level. Bion discussed intergroup relations briefly, observing that when "persecuted", there may be changes, not from one *ba* to another but into "aberrant forms". Extraneous groups may be provoked to invasion (*baD*), absorbed or invaded (*baF*) or subjected to separation (*baP*) (1952: 236). We saw

the originally observed form of *baP* rather than the more recently observed 'spark to *W*' form. The conference dynamics over time are shown in Figure 21.

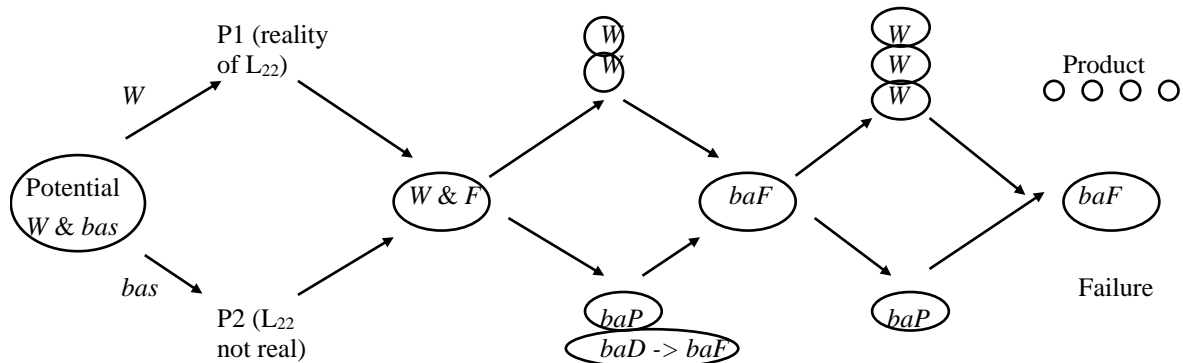


Figure 20. Orillia Conference Dynamics over Time

Figure 20 uses the concept of directive correlation to illustrate the dynamic progress of the conference over time. We started with a potential for both *W* and the *bas* but the first two papers (P1 & P2) took conflicting positions about reality. As it began, so it continued. The large circle is the dynamic at conference level. Smaller circles are the group's dynamics. Groups split in their choice of *W* or *bas* and brought both back to the next plenary which was predominantly *baF* although there were many who attempted to recreate *W*. This was blocked by the behaviour of the manager. When groups reconvened, all except one moved into *W*. The manager's valency for the *bas*, however, produced again a predominance of them in the final plenary and there was no collectively agreed product.

Had the design not mixed its design principles, would it have avoided the battle between *W* and the *bas*? The manager believed that all 'process conferences' must experience *baF*. "My own prediction had been that the explosion of frustration would not occur until tomorrow afternoon." But it was supposed to be a single task, not a double task 'process' conference. Design and management do not need to disrupt the "normal affirmations of the self system" (Sutherland 1990: 133) as innumerable Search Conferences show. Clearly part of the skill conference managers need is conscious appreciation of the *bas* and their relation to design and managerial behaviour.

The belief that 'process conferences' must experience *baF* or any *bas* is a dangerous mythology as it leads managers to fulfil their prophecies. It also denies that there are lawful relations between design, management and dynamics thereby denying the need to learn about them. It therefore reduces the chance that future participants will be provided with the conditions they require for the creative work they wish to do. If DP2 conferences are to reliably deliver on their promise, more conceptual and practical knowledge of design, management and dynamics is a must.

The Basic Assumption of 'Pairing'

The third basic assumption which Bion called 'pairing' has for many years now presented a dilemma. Bion clearly regarded it as an inhibition on development but he noted that in the pairing group there is a most unusual tolerance for people to get on

with their discussions, the relation has bonds that have a libidinous character and the group is cemented with 'messianic hope' as if it contained an unborn genius. (Bion 1961: 166, 176) He clearly suspected that psychotic anxieties of an oedipal type may be triggered off in the pairing state. One of the characteristic features of pairing was a tendency towards schism. But our culture today is far less anxious about the sexuality of its members and the conditions under which sexual bonding develops and is expressed. And while this phenomenon may contain overtones of sexual interest, it may also express simple innate human bonding as a necessary characteristic of our nature as group or social beings.

In the course of researching and developing the SC without a Freudian orientation, we have noted a quite different variety of what Bion originally observed as 'pairing'. Because the SC is designed to prevent the *bas*, we almost never see instances of *baP* in its schismatic form. Because all group work is self managing and the participants are wholly responsible for the content, we do not have a structure such as Bion's where he attempted to create a leaderless group through his behaviour as leader. In its content work, SCs are genuinely leaderless.

The phenomenon we have seen, however, is virtually indistinguishable from the superficial characteristics of *baP*. But instead of serving the insecure *bas*, it appears to serve as a prelude to the creative working mode, for the group as a whole. Pairing sessions are often remembered as particularly helpful (Sutherland 1990: 137). Two or more participants will come together in an animated or excited sequence, around a new idea or perspective, forming one or more little buzz groups. It can follow a slow or quiet phase in which the group appears to be considering its options or erupt from a particularly creative community phase. The idea itself can become the property of the community, sparking it into further creative work and learning. It can be seen, therefore, as part of the community exercising leadership of the learning process.

Because we so often saw *baP* in this form, we tended to believe for some time that Bion had simply got it wrong and that *baP* was merely the first phase of the creative working mode (*W*) and could be used synonymously with it. However, *Orillia* illustrated the interplay of design, management and dynamics leading to *baP*, 'pairing' in Bion's original sense. It **was** schismatic and in no way served the purposes of socioecological adaptation. Just the opposite. Its role in the conference was to prevent *W* and adaptation and the conference failed in its overall purposes. The result of the *baP* was maladaptation.

Nothing in *Orillia* could be further from that form of 'pairing' that has been observed in SCs, except its basic assumption. Observations and analyses of both phenomena concur that the original state of affairs is an assumption that 'pairing' or 'subgrouping' is necessary to secure the life of the whole. It is necessary to add 'subgrouping' to 'pairing' as in SCs, we have observed that the assumption is not confined to a couple. More than this, the assumption involves the necessity for some additional initiative of or spark for greater excitement, energy and creativity. In this sense it is an assumption that different or additional leadership is required if the group is to survive. The *baP* group at *Orillia* made claim to leadership and in their particular task avoidant way, were creative. Their creativity, however, served to further the schism and proved maladaptive.

There is a discussion of this *baP* behaviour in Burgess (1992) which stresses their creativity but neglects to note the context in which it occurred. Burgess rightly claims that their original report, the mime, had considerable impact. He also claims that

while some were quite moved by a non verbal report of a verbal process, others appeared threatened by this non traditional mode. The detailed record makes it quite clear that the objections arose not from the threat of their creativity or novelty but from their refusal to work, their irresponsibility towards the task delegated to them by the conference community and accepted by them as their contribution towards the whole. "When people reached the severe constraints on making the visions happen, one group created a vivid graphic showing a breaking out" (p412). His statement reads as if it was another group when in fact it was the same group (P & M) continuing to indulge in basic assumptional behaviour. Burgess' reporting is inaccurate as it entirely neglects the context within which this behaviour occurred. His paper also shows a deep misunderstanding as he refers throughout to the *Orillia* conference as a SC which it clearly wasn't.

The assumptional behaviour seen in SCs is, by a competent manager, integrated into the behaviour of the whole where it serves the purposes of adaptation. At *Orillia*, the manager did not attempt any integrative activity. (The original group synthesis was suggested by a participant.) The manager followed a model based on individuals and groups rather than community.

baP: One Assumption, Two Forms

There are, therefore, two forms springing from the same basic assumption. I call these *baP(S)* for the genuinely **schismatic** and maladaptive form and *baP(R)* for that form which is **regenerative** of higher levels of creativity and adaptation for the whole. In the (*S*) form, the leadership, genius or idea remains 'unborn' while in the (*R*) form, this embryo develops and is born as the child of the community.

The regenerative form, *baP(R)*, appears to coincide with the realization of the four universal tacit assumptions that underline human face-to-face interaction for effective communication as above: When these four conditions are realized, the predominant effect will be a fluctuation between joy and excitement, and the group members will be excited and enjoy the emerging genius of their own creativity. Essentially the phenomenon of pairing as a transformative step towards creative group learning involves the sharing of individual perceptions or knowledge towards an end or purpose which itself evolves as a group product. This product enhances the probability of the survival of the group through which development, meaning accrues to the individual contribution. Through the act of sharing knowledge towards newly created and creative common purposes individual contributions also merge into the new knowledge of the group. Group learning enlarges the intellectual and affective domain of the individual consciousness such that deeper perceptions and wisdom are freed to play their role in the creative process. Through such personal enlargement individuals themselves are in the process of creation.

What then makes a *baP* evolve into either its (*S*) or (*R*) form? If the system principle of the process of living is a double pattern, with trends towards increased autonomy **and** homonomy, (Angyal 1941a: 289) then the (*S*) form represents an imbalance of autonomy over homonomy. In fact, its schismatic quality decreases the probability of homonomy as at *Orillia*.

The *baP* can be seen as a stimulus which may act as a 'contravention' (threatens to break up the system) or as an 'opportunity', used for the realization of the system principle of the organism. *baP(S)* then becomes a 'contravention' while *baP(R)* becomes

an 'opportunity', "to fill a gap in the system or offer the possibility of expression for the basic trends of the organism in some special way" (Angyal as above: 281).

Awareness of the need for additional ideas, creativity, which *baP* represents should, therefore, result in its use as an opportunity. For a new idea to be treated as an opportunity, there must be a climate of openness to new ideas and a value placed on creativity and development. As discussed above, it is the second design principle and the conditions for effective communication which determine this climate and valuing. Failures of design and management of these can, therefore, produce *baP(S)*.

It is DP2 which provides the form of organization in which people can learn and develop, and management of this organizational form through Asch's conditions leads to spiralling openness and trust. Homonomy increases as individual or group autonomy and expressiveness develops. Where these organizational and management forms are in place, *baP* will be expressed and interpreted as *baP(R)*, be grasped as an opportunity for better expression of the community's intent and, therefore, can play its role as a prelude to the stable creative working mode (*W*).

When these conditions are not in place, *baP* can just as easily be interpreted as *baP(S)*, harden into it and rather than the spiral of trust and openness, lead to the vicious spiral of distance, mistrust and further distance. When this dynamic is in train, there is a single rather than a double pattern of evolution, producing the imbalance of autonomy and homonomy. There cannot be in this situation "a complete realization of the system principle" (Angyal as above: 284). When *baP(R)* occurs under conditions conducive to learning, its evolution into *W* lends a new creative thrust and even greater learning. We can, therefore, elaborate the continuum of learning (Figure 21).

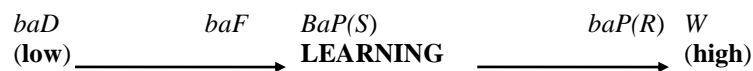


Figure 21. Relation between Dynamics and Learning

We can now differentiate *baP(R)* from *W*. There are identifiable differences between *baP(R)* and *W* and SC managers need to recognize and understand these. Table 7 summarizes these differences.

There is often a brittle, prickly feeling in the *baP(R)* which can be unmistakable. This arises precisely because of the insecurity of the group as an entity and the fact that *baP(R)* is a test of its ability to function as a creative unit. If well handled by the manager(s) it can flow smoothly into the *W* mode. But if the managers themselves are either insecure in their position or not genuinely enamoured of the conference being self managing, their insecurity or unwillingness will be subtly conveyed. The result is likely to be a more intense fluctuation of assumptions.

<i>Table 7. the difference between pairing, baP(R) and the creative working mode, W</i>	
PAIRING, baP(R)	THE CREATIVE WORKING MODE, W
Presenting phenomena	
<i>Emotional tone</i>	
Some are highly excited	Group is excited but controlled
Parallel monologues	Group conversation
Brief burst of energy	Increasing level of sustained energy

<i>Time frame</i> Relatively temporary and unstable	Relatively permanent and stable
<i>Maladaptive (Evangelica)</i> One with many bright ideas, tends towards dogmatism with priorities Asymmetrical relations between the initiators and the rest	<i>Active adaptive</i> Many bright ideas, not dogmatic, will negotiate Symmetrical relations within the group
Meaning for the group	
<i>Coenetic or starting condition</i> Expresses realization of Asch's conditions 1, 2, 3 and tests 4 (trust)	Expresses realization of Asch's conditions 1, 2, 3 and 4 (trust)
<i>A group ASSUMPTION</i> Testing assumptions of group and managerial status, is group allowed to be creative? Shows immaturity, insecurity of the group Does not trust manager with process, does not trust manager with content The question asked is 'can this group have a group life?'	<i>A working group REALITY</i> Accepts reality of division of labour between manager and participant Shows maturity and confidence of the group as entity Trusts manager with process until ready to self manage, trusts manager with some content in the interests of overall task The implicit message is 'we have a group life'
<i>Best Outcome</i> Sharing of perceptions towards a <i>possible</i> group purpose	Sharing of perceptions and work towards an <i>established</i> group purpose
Implications for management	
Very sensitive and vulnerable to managerial response Likely to lead to fight/flight or dependency if manager appears negative or to misinterpret Useful if manager can generalize and stabilize it as a contribution to the group task. Can lead to amplification of individual pathologies within the group Used in T group to magnify leader power and status. Easy to manipulate to manager's hidden purpose if any.	What a good manager hopes to achieve as part of their contractual obligation Group will work through differences between participants views and ignore manager if attempts to stop self management. Therefore no chance of fight/flight unless manager persists. Absorption/subjugation of individual pathologies to the purpose/task of the group Is inimical to managerial power and status Difficult to manipulate to manager's hidden purpose if any.

The last item in table 7 is a reminder that there are small and large group participative processes which use these dynamics for purposes other than active adaptive learning, planning and responsible self management.

I rarely see the *bas* in SCs these days. One of the keys to prevention is the introduction and handling of the first session. If the first two hours are designed and managed well, the probability of an outbreak of group anxiety and insecurity is very low. Beginning in *W* is a consequence of participants knowing that they are responsible for their work and its outcome and that they have the information and other resources to do the job well.

In summary, pairing *baP(R)* can be a creative spark to reignite a SC but it is not a recommended substitute for a quick entry into the creative *W* mode. Bion's theory of group behaviour is not only fascinating, it is of direct practical importance.

Forget Forming, Storming and Norming - Go Straight to Performing

Stating that an individual's groupishness, tendency to the *bas*, is an inherent property of a social animal did not further our understanding of these phenomena (Sutherland 1990: 124). Early work on the Search Conference and the Multisearch (Emery M 1992a) confirmed the existence of *bas* at the large group level. This led to improvements which better prevented their emergence, maximizing the time spent in *W*, and these improvements have shown that the critical variable governing the appearance of *W* and/or *bas* is choice of design principle. Search Conference managers need conscious skill in recognizing the *bas* but more importantly, they need the conceptual and practical knowledge to design learning environments uncontaminated by them. Once the *bas* develop, it can be difficult to return the group to *W*. Prevention is much easier than cure.

Since Tuckman's classic paper (1965), there has been widespread belief that every group must go through the stages of 'forming, storming, norming, performing'. To suggest otherwise in some circles is to commit an act of heresy or ignorance. And yet both theory and twenty five years of practice with Searching show that the sequence of stages held to be necessary for group formation was a product of its time, its history and the circumstances of its genesis. The experiences which formed the basis of Tuckman's conclusion were all, like Bion's work, the product of working in DP1 configurations. There was always a 'leader' like Dr Bion, someone to facilitate or 'help' the group into a mature state of 'leaderless' function. The double process model is simple a more complex form incorporated within a mixed mode. It confirms the 'stages' theory as it is intrinsically designed to do so.

Even those who like Kurt Lewin believed that democracy, responsible self management, was the key to the future could not remove themselves from the belief that people had to learn how to be responsibly self managing, had to undergo the painful process of learning how to do without a leader. Leadership was then and still is in the USA, a focus of concern. As we have seen above, the *bas* are a consequence of a DP1 structure with a leader. To prevent them you simply remove the leader and the whole problem by instituting a DP2 structure from the start. Then you get neither the *bas* nor the stages of group formation. They are both products of the same structure. The 'stages' theory is structure specific.

There is now solid evidence that the *bas* and the associated "hatred of learning" are a by-product of attempting to learn in a structure which inhibits cooperative use of all our capacities for coordination and control of our own destinies. As Sutherland (as above: 129) realized, the individual is a system, open to its environment. The 'stages' theory came out work by social scientists in constructed situations, not out of naturalistic settings. Observation of these shows that when groups meet voluntarily and informally around a task of their choosing, they usually begin work on the task immediately and without *bas*.

There appear to be two major determinants for group formation without the *bas*. The first is that there is a clear purposeful task, not a pseudo task such as 'have a discussion about what you have heard' or 'let us get to know each other a little better'. The second is the choice of design principle as above - it is the primary determinant of a system's task and learning environment.

A pure DP2 event such as a well designed and managed SC which is task oriented and where the participants are totally responsible for the content, goes immediately into *W* and stays there. "Organization and structure...are the product of cooperation between members of the group and their effect once established in the

group is to demand still further cooperation" (Bion 1952: 239). Because they are responsible as a group, it is in everyone's interest to complete the task creatively and efficiently. Energy is actually generated in *W* through the positive affects, the 'joy of learning'. There are still outbreaks of the *bas* in SCs but they are rare and almost always the result of a mistake in either design or management.

Exactly analogous to the 'leader' attempting to bring about 'leaderless group' function and the double process model are some of the practices in the current big fad towards self managing, high performing teams. For example, because so few really trust other ordinary people to be responsible, or they are unaware of the DP2 alternative, they opt not for self managing groups and a simple elegant democratic system but for a continuation of DP1 with a cosmetic change of name for the supervisors, usually a variation of trainer, leader or coach. The results are identical to the stages seen in group formation towards 'leaderless groups' (Emery M 1992b). Telling a group that it is responsible for its own work and at the same time appointing a 'leader' who is also responsible for the work of the 'group' induces a crisis of responsibility. **Who is actually responsible for coordination and control?** In a work organization the dysfunctional results are played out day by day and they are nothing more than the dynamics of the *bas*.

Summary of Design and Management of Learning

In the above sections the relationships between the core concepts of the design principles, group assumptional and affective dynamics and learning within the conditions for influential communication have been spelt out in some detail. Figure 23 summarizes some of these relationships illustrating their highly correlated nature.

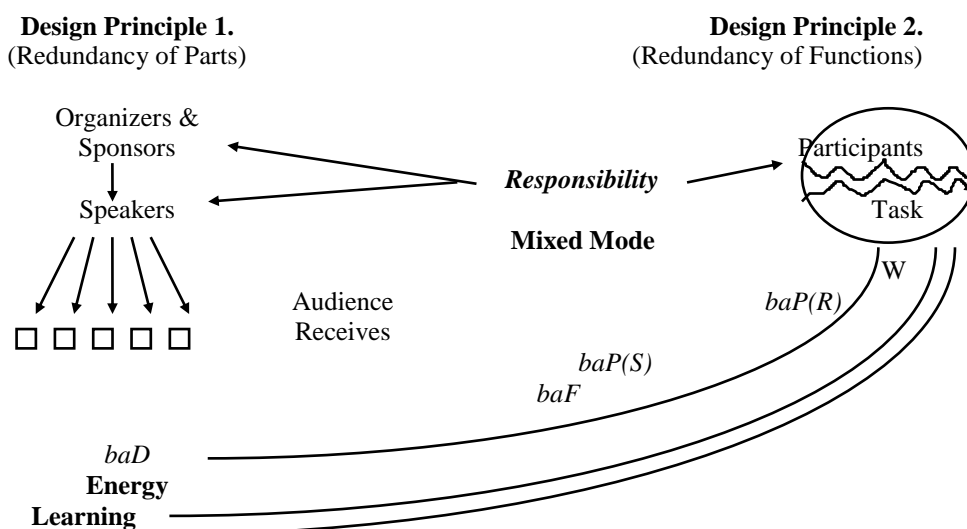


Figure 22. Design, Dynamics & Learning

On the left of Figure 22 we see the conventional 'talking heads', DP1 conference where lack of responsibility by the audience results most commonly in the group assumption of dependency, low levels of energy, often negative affect and certainly little learning.

On the right we see the pure DP2 case of the SC which is characterized by high energy, positive affect, a great deal of learning and the absence of the group assumptions. These phenomena develop with continuing openness and spiralling trust in the effectiveness of the community's perceptions and conversation. As this complex of correlated positive affects build up, so does the probability that the group will be prepared and have the resources of learning, energy and trust, to continue with implementation and also diffuse their learning to others. Suffice it to say for the moment that implementation and diffusion are a direct consequence of the preparation, planning and understanding which has gone into the design and management of any given event, the best guarantee of a successful outcome.

In the middle is the Mixed Mode. SC designers and managers must know that 'Mixed' cannot mean a synthesis. Without this understanding, it is possible to design examples like *Orillia*, quite unnecessary failures which not only waste resources but also reduce confidence in possibilities for the future. For SC managers who aim to produce learning, action and diffusion, the Mixed Mode like DP1 is something to be avoided.

Depending on its individual design and the quality of its management, a Mixed Mode conference elicits a greater or lesser degree of the group assumptions, something less than optimal positive affect and something less than possible energy and learning. However, it is possible for the *bas* to be converted into creative task oriented work. If at virtually any stage of the *Orillia* conference, the manager had had the conscious knowledge and practical skill to extricate himself from the *bas* and put the conference back on its task oriented track, I believe it would have been possible to convert $baP(S)$ into $baP(R)$ and subsequently to W . The assumptions of baF and $baP(S)$ are closely related because they share a structural base as above (Figure 24).

There is a much larger gap between $baF \rightarrow baP(S)$ and the coupling of $baP(R) \rightarrow W$. This follows from the definition of $baP(R)$ as the regeneration of interest in pursuing the task in the interests of the whole. The gap between the two couplings of dynamics is a function of the quality of management, its ability to create and constantly recreate the first three conditions for effective communication leading to the condition of trust.

We can sum up these correlations very simply (Table 8)

Table 8. Correlations of Design Principle, Management and (Mal)Adaptation

At the broadest level we have a flow as follows:

Choice of Design Principle --->Mode of Function --->(Mal)Adaptation

At the next level of detail we find the most probable outcomes:

Design Principle 1 (DP1) ---> *bas* ---> maladaptation

Design Principle 2 (DP2) ---> *W* ---> adaptation

In detail we find that the most probable outcomes are:

Design Principle 1 (tight control) ---> *BaD* ---> maladaptation (eg. dissociation)

Design Principle 1 (loose control) ---> *BaF* ---> no change, maladaptation

Design Principle 2 (DP2) ---> creative working mode (*W*) ---> adaptation

Mixed Mode (Alternation of design principles) ---> *BaF* (predominantly) ---> adaptation OR maladaptation dependent on management skill

Table 8 makes clear that the only reliable path to ecological learning and adaptation is to start from DP2. When conscious knowledge of the group assumptional mode and the conditions for influential communication are integrated with the second epistemology of direct perception and the design principles and practiced within the open systems framework, the major determinants of elicitation of the ideals and a successful Search or other DP2 Conference are in place.

The Question of the Adaptivity of the Basic Assumptions

We have in the above analysis followed the 'doctrine of necessary specificity', using the grain of description which makes best sense of the phenomena reported in the specific environments which pertained at the time. (Turvey and Shaw 1979: 212) Conversation is not simply a vocal activity. Meaning adheres within the group conversation and the human group is quite obviously a species specific environment which is as objective as is any physical environment. There can be little further doubt that we have extraordinarily acute powers to directly perceive and respond to communicative features of our environments, those provided by both individuals and the learning econiches and media they create.

It has also become obvious that a perceptual act in such an econiche as the human group does not necessarily invoke consciousness. "Perception works as an adaptive response because it permits the coordination of action in regard to a real environment" (Johnston & Turvey 1980: 166). People are constantly coordinating their behaviour in relation to the real human environments in which they find themselves. When in situations where one of the affordances of the environment is the assumption that the life of the group is under threat, it is adaptive to act on that assumption. The adaptivity of being a member of a basic assumption group can therefore be seen as another dilemma which can only be resolved by returning to the concept of conscious learning.

When the desired product and process is creative work towards a task, the *bas* are both adaptive in relation to the short term life of the group and maladaptive in relation to the longer term purpose and goal. Active adaptation is, as its name implies, a

long way from simply adjusting to the status quo. Only individuals who have expanded their total set of directive correlations, ie. have learnt to consciously recognize *ba* behaviour, conceptualize environments in terms of the design principles and the conditions for effective communication, will have the necessary effectivities to respond to the *bas* in such a way that they may restore the conditions for *W*.

The above set of correlations then for a designer and manager represent not only theoretical but also practical knowledge. Once the set of conscious learnings is in place, an individual will be able to not only design and manage but also change niches, environments such as conferences, so that they provide long term rather than short term adaptive behaviour at the level of the group.