The Large Group & The Social Unconscious

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Large Group Presentation

• The purpose of this lecture
• Large Group Defined
• Purpose of the Large Group
• Focus of LG
• Processes in LG
• Defense Mechanisms
• Benefits
• 4th Basic assumption
Introduction

• Our coming experience
• What can we learn from the seating arrangement?
• What can we learn from the number of participants?
• What can we expect from the experience?
Definition

- **Number of members**
- **The problem of defining by numbers**
Structural definition

Any group with such a large number of participants that they cannot be encompassed in a single glance
Purpose of the LG

• To explore the conscious and unconscious forces that mobilize social, organizational and systemic processes.
• The Large Group reflects the society or organization
Focus

- Not on individual dynamics but on citizenship, belonging to society, role and identity formation, authority and leadership, inter-group relations.

- Socio-therapy, not psychotherapy.
There & Then
as well as
Here & Now
• Provides the experience of being an “individual” in the “mob”
Benefits

- Learning about society, especially the Social Unconscious
- Exploring the meaning of inner authority
- Developing a sense of belonging to a Large Group
- Understanding social conflicts
- Enhancing acceptance of diversity and multi-culturalism
Typical Challenges & Processes

- Alienation
- Threats to and loss of identity
- Regression, frustration and aggression
- Role suction
- Sub-grouping
- Difficulty expressing one’s voice
- “Ego training in action” - Foulkes
Defense Mechanisms

- Projection
- Splitting
- Projective identification
The fourth basic assumption

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctMty7av0jc
Hopper:
The 4th basic assumption

‘Incohesion: Aggregation/Massification’:

‘Aggregation’ and ‘Massification’ refer to the processes through which the group becomes either a mass or an aggregate
2nd Large Group experience
Introduction to The Social Unconscious
What is “The” Social Unconscious?

People are unconsciously influenced by society and its history just as they are impacted by their personal history.
Definitions

**Foulkes**

"... the group-analytic situation, while dealing with the unconscious in the Freudian sense, brings into operation and perspective a totally different area of which the individual is equally unaware. ...One might speak of a social or interpersonal unconscious" (1964)
"The concept of the social unconscious refers to the existence and constraints of social, cultural and communicational arrangements of which people are unaware. Unaware, in so far as these arrangements are not perceived (not ‘known’), and if perceived not acknowledged (‘denied’), and if acknowledged, not taken as problematic (‘given’), and if taken as problematic, not considered with an optimal degree of detachment and objectivity" (2001)
Definitions (cont.)

**Haim Weinberg**

The social unconscious is the co-constructed shared unconscious of members of a certain social system such as community, society, nation or culture. It includes shared anxieties, fantasies, defences, myths, and memories. Its building bricks are made of chosen traumas and chosen glories (2005)
The Social Unconscious - Misperceptions

• It is not the superego
• It is not just the social in the unconscious
• It is not the collective unconscious (SU is specific to a certain society, CU is beyond)
• It is not just hidden cultural norms
chosen trauma

- Shared mental representation of a massive trauma that the group's ancestors suffered
- When society regresses, its chosen trauma is reactivated in order to support the group's threatened identity
- Chosen traumas reside in the Social Unconscious, maybe even constructing it just as archetypes construct the collective unconscious
Clinical Vignettes

• The group who refused translating the discussions to the dark stranger

• (Symbolic enactment of historic events)
Q & A
Thank You

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