

Digital Relationships

Its Residual Deposits in Orgnaizations - Implications and Potentials

Ledborg Hansen, Richard

Document Version

Final published version

Publication date:

2014

License

CC BY-NC-ND

Citation for published version (APA):

Ledborg Hansen, R. (2014). *Digital Relationships: Its Residual Deposits in Orgnaizations - Implications and Potentials*. Paper presented at The OPUS Conference, London, United Kingdom.

[Link to publication in CBS Research Portal](#)

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us (research.lib@cbs.dk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Download date: 28. May. 2023



**DIGITAL RELATIONSHIPS -
ITS RESIDUAL DEPOSITS IN ORGANIZATIONS – IMPLICATIONS AND
POTENTIALS.
EXPERIENCES FROM GROUP RELATION EXERCISES WITH STUDENT BODIES FROM A
DANISH UNIVERSITY**

Richard Ledborg Hansen

Industrial Ph.D. Fellow, Doctoral School of Management · External lecturer

Copenhagen Business School, (CBS)
Department of Management, Politics & Philosophy (MPP)
18B Porcelænsøen, DK-2000, Copenhagen, Denmark
e-mail: rlh.mpp@cbs.dk or richard@ledborg.com

Paper presented at OPUS
(Organization for Promoting Understanding of Society)

November 21th – 22th, 2014, London, UK

This is a draft. Please do not cite or quote without permission from the author.

Abstract

This paper presents the experience and observations gained under two group relation exercises (Miller, 1990) conducted as part of two university courses for graduate student at CBS (Copenhagen Business School). The paper suggests that despite a decidedly clear ability to present themselves as authentic members of temporary organizations the students also displayed a clear inability to connect to the presentations of each other. This apparent high skillset in presenting but low skillset in relating led us to formulate a thesis of Facebook behavior aimed at describing and suggesting the presence of residual deposits from technology in organizations and its effect on individuals ability to connect to one another. Based on the case study the paper describes indications and suggests potential implication hereof. Given the inherent enhancement possibilities of technology our expectation for entertainment-rich information and highly interesting communication are sky-high and rising. With a continuous increase in digitized communication follows a decrease in face-to-face encounters and our ability to engage in inter-personal relationships are suffering for it (Davis, 2013). The behavior described in this paper suggests a regressive behavior - one I suggest it is conditioned and legitimized by the use of technology. The risk is one of churning out callous members of society high on overt people skills but potentially incapable of building relationships. Since society is constantly looking to technology (Howard-Jones, 2011) for increases in effectiveness and efficiency we indiscriminately embrace digital communication and digitized information dissemination with enthusiasm – at the risk of ignoring the potentially dark side of technology. However, technology also holds a promise for better understanding precisely for the same reasons – that the growing amount of digitized communication “out there” represents data waiting to be sifted, analyzed and decoded.

In this paper “Facebook behavior” refers to a particular behavior characterized by presenting your self and representations of selected self in the hope of getting a response. The responsive behavior you in turn expose your self to, can oscillate between complete ignorance as one polarization or a Like and possible a short comment being the other end of the scale – neither of which constitutes a relationship but both ends are accepted as representations of such.

Keywords: Graduate students, Digital Relationship, Group Relations, Psychodynamics, Technology threats, Technology possibilities,

Prologue

While it may not be as acutely dangerous as texting while driving, texting while socializing can take its toll on relationships. We’ve all shaken our heads at families who go out to dinner only to huddle over their phones in silence instead of talking to each other, or couples who interrupt romantic dinners to check their smart phones by candlelight. Fifty-four percent of “Digital Natives” (people who were born in the age of the internet) agree with the statement, “I prefer texting people rather than talking to them. ”

The reference above are aptly taken from a website concerned with the influence of technology and which promotes the knowledge of personal and societal consequences of technology¹.

In today's world no company is without e-mail and almost any professional organization has a website. Indeed very few people in the western hemisphere are without at least one personal e-mail account and a Facebook presence. Many use chat programs like Skype, text messages like Twitter or pictures like Instagram to communicate with and the technology enhances our communication with pictures, colors, sound and above all speed and ease. In short our digitized communication and use of the Internet increased steadily on a daily basis.

¹ Digital Responsibility (<http://www.digitalresponsibility.org>) is a US based organization.

We also turn to the Internet for information, which is presented in a variety of ways. Utilizing the full range of inherent possibilities offered by technology, the aim of information providers is to be sufficiently interesting for attracting, luring or gaining the attention of a real live individual in order to suggest that their particular presented piece of information deserves more attention than all the others. Maybe its not even a unique piece of information or even different from all the rest, but it has to be presented as such in order to gain even the shortest attention.

Introduction

This paper address the issue of establishing-, developing and maintaining inter-relational communication as a prefix for building viable, sustainable and healthy working relationships in an organizational context as a basis for effective work group establishment.

While establishing- and developing relationships on an individual level requires communication, this communication has to be of a certain quality in regard to depth, range and intensity - especially if it is to add value to the organizational fabric. Such communication involves sharing, listening, commenting and reflecting to mention but a few characteristics- and these actions requires the presence of more fundamental traits of interest, involvement and identification.

In relation to organizational work this touched directly on what Bion refers to as work group characteristics; *“Every group, however casual, meet to do something; in this activity, according to the capacities of the individual they cooperate. This cooperation is voluntary and depends on some sophisticated skill in the individual”* and concludes *“It will be seen that the demonstration of work group function must include: the development of thought designed for translation into action; the theory, in this instance the need for friendliness, on which it is based.”* (Bion, 1952).

For effective work group behavior to manifest itself for the observer, the group has to communicate in relation to task, and the design of communication has to address the task related to reality in a process of cooperation. This cooperation is what generates connectedness and ultimately create and builds relationships.

In this paper I will present two cases in which we², as organizational staff found indications suggesting that the fundamental traits of connectedness; respect, interest and involvement seemed to be lacking in certain situations and between the members of the two separate student bodies of the cases despite clear work group behavior.

Given the fact that the two cases were Group Relations Exercises, the indications of the organizational behavior exhibited and its potential implications suggests some relevance for understanding organizational work.

In addition to observing and establishing these indicative patterns in the student bodies' behavior, the staff of the exercises also tried to establish a possible or credible explanation for this behavior, as I will introduce later in this paper.

Since the exhibited behavior had strong resemblances of Facebook behavior as initially described, we dubbed it accordingly.

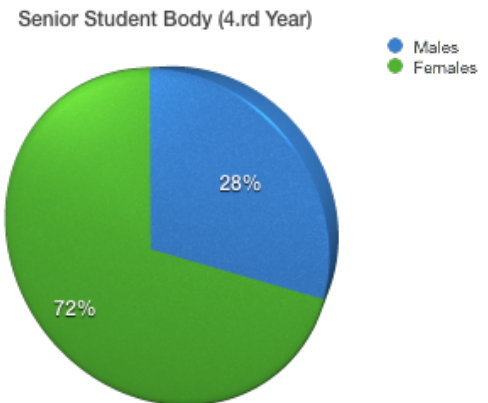
² Wherever I refer to “us” or “we” in this paper it encompasses the staff of the two exercises.

The Case study

The empirical case consists of two Group Relation Exercises (GRE) conducted with classes of university students at Copenhagen Business School. One class consisted of senior graduate students and the other of junior graduate students.

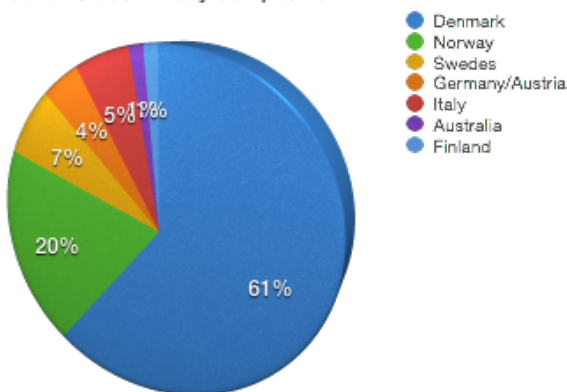
I have applied the terminology used in the US to distinguish between the student bodies in case. Students in their last year of graduate programs (4.th years) are labeled seniors and students in their third year are labeled juniors.

The senior class took the course as an Optional Course and consisted of 29 students (8 males and 21 females), all Danes and the Group Relations Exercise took place on the 22. October 2013 at CBS. The staff consisted of 5 – three males of which one was the author, and two females and the language the exercise was conducted in was Danish.

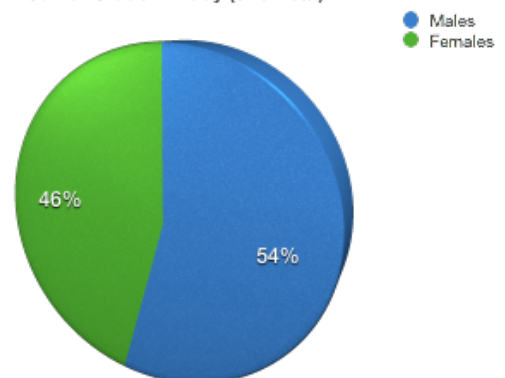


The junior class experienced the exercise as an integrated part of a Mandatory Course and consisted of 81 students (44 males and 37 females) and was nationally diverse consisting of 7 nationalities (46 Danes – 15 Norwegians – 5 Swedes – 3 Germans/Austrian – 4 Italians – 1 Australian – 1 Fin). This Exercise took place on the 6. March 2014 at CBS.

Junior Student Body Composition



Junior Student Body (3.rd Year)



The staff consisted of three males and two females – again one of the males was the author and the language the exercise was conducted in was English.

All staff members are trained in System Psychodynamics, Group Relations and hold a M.Sc. in Organizational Psychology from RUC (Roskilde University Center, Denmark). All staff members utilize their training in a consultatory capacity – either on a regular basis or in relation to their daily work.

Both classes were exposed to the same structure of exercise, which was molded from the original Group Relations model (Miller, 1990) with a strict adherence to a structure of time, task and territory.

To supplement the structure and in order to work with the experiential learning of the exercise, the staff subsequently conducted two sessions of 45 minutes each; the first one called Guided Reflection (GF) and the second one Practical Application (PA).

The purpose of the GF group was two-fold. One purpose of the session was to create a container for any anxiety among the students caused by the exercise. The other purpose was to guide the participant towards a state of reflection that encompassed the experience they have just had and possibly recognize the emotional response of it, in order to connect it to relevant or similar experiences elsewhere in their work-life experience.

The PA group session succeeded the GR group with the intent of connecting the dynamics exhibited and experienced – own and others, during the exercise to the curriculum of the course. The curriculum consist of article based theory addressing issues of change management (Bridges, 1986; Palmer, Dunford, & Akin, 2009) and leadership (Huy, 1999) on one side and systems psychodynamics (Bion, 1952) (French, 2001) on the other.

The timeframe of all three learning elements; Group Relation Exercise (4 hours), Guided Reflections (45 minutes) and Practical Application (45 minutes) took a total of 5 hours and 30 minutes.

Analysis

The observations I wish to share in this paper were those made by the staff members in one particular role; as organizational observers during plenary meetings and as observer(s) in the group discussions. The plenary meetings were all initiated by the members of the organization themselves without any instigation made by staff. The group discussion refers to activities that played out in the actual group work done by member constellations as part of the group experiential learning in the process of forming, evolving and finally dissolving (Miller, 1990).

In the case of the junior class two plenary meetings took place on the initiative of members in the role of delegates and/or negotiators with a professed purpose of the first meeting to find a leader among themselves and in the second meeting the declared (overt) purpose was to share each groups experience “so far” i.e. measure comparable progress and in that process unconsciously establish norms, structures of containment (Menzies, 1960) and identify/expel “deviant” groups and/or behavior.

The course and content of these plenary meetings did not divert significantly from similar meetings the staff had experiences with – neither in the way in which the meeting went through phases of orientation and temporary established structures (Krantz, 2006) nor in the group behavior patterns (Bion, 1952) that evolved during this work, oscillating between work group mode and interchanging BA behavior.

Except in one aspect that by its very repetition called for our attention.

In both plenary meetings the chairs were distributed in a circle and the delegates/negotiators took turns speaking. One part of the observation found to be significant, was the ease with which they were able to share their thoughts, present inner emotions and the fantasies of their respective groups and themselves as representation of said group. They expressed these phenomenons with eloquence and a somewhat surprising ease.

In fact they were able to present themselves in such a manner, that they exuded the impression of being in a predominantly work-group mode or as Miller refers to it “a sophisticated group”. Thus they appeared to be much more mature in organizational dynamics than their life experience would otherwise indicate or warrant, which gave the staff fantasies of high level of proficiency in the students.

A proud mother or father would have praised their [students] proficiency and ability to actually work given this confusing task and framework. A quote from staff about “Those kids are very good - and sharp!” presumably goes towards masking the staff’s own rise in anxiety (if-they-are-this-good-what-do-we-do-now)? As well as addressing a certain pride - individually in the course lecturer (the author) and collectively in the staff for “planning and executing” such a well-run group relation exercise. I will return and address the dynamics of staff in the paragraph of limitations and challenges.

They [students] displayed what we could best describe as a high level of emotional astuteness and awareness combined with the ability to convey these to each other with an ease we had seldom encountered - except in temporary organizations made up of members with extensive experience - either with the construct of GR or with organizational life - of which the students have neither.

However, despite a high level of emotional awareness and an ability to present it - their ability to connect to each other were almost non-existent.

The observation was - in both plenary sessions where staff members were present - that students took turn in presenting either their group work or themselves - and a more than a few in a sensitive descriptive manner that left them openly fragile.

Where we in other settings have experienced a certain degree of gentleness from the listeners, a respectful care for the vulnerability such a presentation exposes, these instances were devoid of that.

The impression we as observers got was one of ignorance from the listeners and this not only surprises us - it also deviated significantly in its form from previous experiences in similar settings. We summarized the experience described here as one in which the participants seemed extremely well versed in presenting themselves to others - but equally or correspondingly inadequate at relating to each other’s presentation.

This ability to present but not engage suggested to us a tacit perception that this was acceptable behavior within their peer group - that there was no obligation to react on emotional material of others - either explicit, tacit or perceived.

This is in our experience not wholly uncommon in Group Relation Exercises. However, it is usually reserved for representations that are devoid of personal fragility. In representations of self where a visible frailty is present others usually respond with some interest and/or respect and thereby display involvement and connectedness - all to a varying degree but nevertheless the fundamentals for relating to others are usually present.

During the group work of the GR exercise we observed similar behavior albeit in a slightly different form.

What played out in one observed group was the collective investigation of group members [individual] perception of the task and conscious move towards how the group as a whole

could possibly work towards an integration of these impressions – both as these impressions were obtained from each and their presentation of inner-world interpretations. This goes to address the tension between the position of individuality and group (Miller, 1990).

Again the reflected and sophisticated manner in which the group as a whole and the individual members worked with the primary task suggested an astute understanding of task and ability to bring their collective skills to bear by applying rational methods as characteristics of Bion's work group (Bion, 1952).

The staff member who took the role of observer in this group relayed this to rest of the staff and described both the manner in which the group could work sophisticated and simultaneously completely disregards each other's presented vulnerability suggesting the presence of BA behavior.

The members of the group in question took turns presenting their perception of the task by examining the here-and-now and with no discernible difficulty openly shared how it affected them as individuals trying to grasp the meaning, inherent expectations - of them as individuals and contributor to a collective task and how this actual representation of self might/might not influence the group.

As observed in the plenary session is was a dominant behavior in the group that once someone had shared their thoughts, feelings and fantasies they were largely ignored. Not in a way that matches any previously described behavior i.e. basic assumption behavior of dependence, fight/flight or pairing.

The staff examined this thoroughly among themselves and particular the fight/flight mode was suggested as ignorance could be a representation of a passive aggressive mode of the group to resort to; but having discussed it we decided that the group to a certain extend was in a work group mode taking turns in presenting (working on task and testing reality) and listening (cooperation). It was the lack of action and reaction (the connectedness) in response to the presentation we couldn't reconcile with our theoretic reference or previous experiences. The behavior was more disinterest then ignorance and we concluded that the representation before the group was not stimuli rich enough to warrant a reaction.

The identification of a certain behavior visible both in loosely formed plenary groups and in more firmly formed small group suggested to us that there were hints of a particular behavior none of us has encountered previously.

A behavior characterized by a high cognitive awareness and emotional willingness to present oneself in the most interesting fashion but a relative and somewhat surprisingly low ability to relate to the presentation of others. Not dissimilar to the behavior one could associate with Facebook; any presentation of oneself has an underlying purpose of obtaining "Likes" and if you don't get sufficient "Likes" you're apparently not interesting enough.

My suggestion is that this is not a conscious decision or cognitive process; that students evaluate each other's representation of self and insensitively dismiss or ignore these, but rather that the technology enhanced communication upbringing that dominate digital natives relationship building are suggesting that this kind of behavior is both productive and acceptable.

Indications

What these behavioral patterns indicated for us was a lack in the ability to relate to one another; a propensity for disregard of individuals' representation of self if that representation was not interesting enough. If it wasn't interesting enough it did not get afore mentioned "Like". In other words it didn't qualify to a level of quality that allowed for the self [of the receiver] to engage further through interaction and interest i.e. establish connectedness.

Hence the term Facebook behavior arose. The descriptive characterization and the norms of Facebook behavior suggest other mannerism that we as staff might have read into the behavior of students, something we have tried to be guarded against as you will see later, and as mentioned in the limitations.

As staff we might very well have introjected our own bias against Facebook behavior labeling it to be of a "certain kind" of behavior void of the ability to connect and relate, where in reality it could represent our own inability to connect with envy of youth etc.

However, it helped us in creating both a vocabulary for the behavior we encountered and possible also in identifying the underlying roots of the problem i.e. technology enhanced communication (TEC).

From a psychodynamic perspective we deliberated on a number of possible related aspects as described; one being that this apparent inability to relate to other, might stem from unconscious difficulty with the integration of aspects of self, i.e. the representations of self that we are presented with can be ones that we can identify with on an unconscious level, but which we find uninteresting, unappealing or even unwanted to a degree that we disown it totally and do not wish to engage it, and thus choose to ignore it or disregard it.

Another aspect is that of splitting. The university environment is competitive and business schools especially so. The inherent need to compete and win - or be perceived a loser (by self appreciation) - permeates the walls of the institution and the student exudes this in pursuit of task - whether in classroom participation, in assignments or in group-work. Conditioned by these circumstances and the tension is generated - both from the environment they engage with daily and from within (super-ego) suggest fertile soil for polarization. Presented with the opportunity to work with experiential learning might be cognitive comprehensible and even meaningful on a rational level but the tension from within push the student towards a reaction of "them or me". On an unconscious level he/she might be unable to mobilize the emotional awareness to integrate the aspect of the depressive position i.e. connect with others in acknowledgment of the usefulness of individual contributions to work task. Instead the reaction is one of splitting of the uncomfortable and threatening contribution of others and favor ones own representation of self. Again the ease- and naturalness with which this is done I suggest contributed to a "digital upbringing".

The final aspect we considered were that of the basic assumption of groups in fight/ flight mode.

The behavior we encountered in both scenarios (plenary and small group) was akin to work group behavior in as far as the group members *were* working on task and in that process they *were* cooperating only they clearly did not connect to one another. The absence of connectedness would indicate a state of anxiety that contrasted what we deciphered as obvious (apparent) work group behavior and suggested to us, that the Facebook behavior as a phenomenon was relevant to introduce. The anxiety present could have been brought forth by the actual process of working with task progressing to a natural next state of connectedness; a

connectedness of which the student were so uncomfortable and/or unfamiliar with to the extent that is brought forth anxiety – which in turn called for BA fight/flight behavior.

Either one of the suggestions hypothesized above would require further studies before anything conclusive could be put forward. My only purpose with this paper has been to share observations, introduce a behavior with characteristics that resemble those legitimized by technology enabled communication and finally suggest some implications should these hypothesis prove to be valid.

Colliding Worlds

The collision of worlds seemed to be an apt metaphor to use – both for the phenomenon we encountered in the case study presented as well as for the world of technology and the suggestive collision-like impact on relationships as we might hold certain preconditioned perceptions of.

I have drawn dominantly on theory that springs from Systems Psychodynamic understanding and which assisted the staff during these two exercises. Not only to be observant of the intra-personal, inter-personal and inter-group dynamics in action but also by applying its particular useful perspective to other areas. Thus we were able to identify and interpret influences other than the ones we historically draw from i.e. technology (Cabanero-Johnson & Berge, 2009; Howard-Jones, 2011; Various, 2008) and its pervasive impact on all aspects of life – and in this case our ability to connect and relate to others in a work task situation.

The behavior I have recounted in this paper I suggest to be a result of common use of technology in every-day digitized communication – not excessive use of certain technology i.e. violent games. A behavior suggestively molded by technology influenced upbringing that potentially propose that a superficial relationship is sufficient for creating and developing digital relationships with qualities that correspond real-life relationships.

The complementary scientific articles I have referenced are centered on some two distinctive themes, the relevance of which I will shortly describe below:

One is the concept of digital natives, digitized communication and the impact of technology on inter-personal relations, as it appears a central theme in this paper. To shed light on the impact of these influencers I have primarily utilized the findings of two reports and the research on which they respectively draw. One is the Ofcom³ report on “Social networking - its implications for attitudes, use and behaviors” and the other report is the “Impact of Digital Technologies on Human Wellbeing” (Howard-Jones, 2011)⁴. Especially interesting is the literature review on the subject of Social Consequences suggesting that the initial worries of causality between increase in internet communication and decrease in connectedness is repudiated (Valkenburg & Peter, 2009). This paper suggest this is not so and that causality might actually exist, only hidden from view and accessible through the lenses of systems psychodynamics.

The other theme, that enrich this papers perspective is the one put forward by a number of scientist in the field of social psychology. The argument put forward is gravitating towards a perception of Facebook users turning to the social media for self-affirmation and reaffirming

³ Office of Communication – An independent regulator and competition authority for the UK Communication industries.
<http://www.ofcom.org.uk>

⁴ Published by Nominet Trust <http://www.nominettrust.org.uk>

self-worth. What this paper suggests is not a rejection of this, but more that if it is so it may be to simplistic a presentation of the use and especially the derived consequences of usage.

The need for self-affirmation and ego repair might be fulfilled as there theories claim; however the requirement for fulfilling this need is dependent upon *“a positive and desirable self-presentation”*(Toma & Hancock, 2013). This would suggest a potentially disposition of presenting a self that fulfill the “interesting” criteria mentioned earlier, because the *“.. presence of a large audience who can scrutinize your profile should strongly motivate users to put their best foot forward”* (ibid). This paper suggests that might be so – and while self-affirmation is desirable it contains the potential of becoming tone-deaf to the voices of others when enhanced and assisted by technology.

Finally the threat and possibilities of technology is of interest – for behavioral scientists in general and for the discipline of system psychodynamics in particular. I believe we have both an obligation to partake in this and also a unique opportunity to contribute as I describe in my closing comments.

A collision of worlds is destructive in nature but it also entails the foundation of new beginnings, which I believe this to represent and the observations we made in these exercises is hopefully a testimony to this.

Some limitations

Generation Gap

One reflection of staff was the possibility of the phenomenon (Facebook behavior) was visible to us only because of difference in age. In both exercises four members of staff ranges from 40 – 50 years of age, whereas the average age of both student bodies is approx. 23 – 25.

Age difference itself may be insignificant but the difference in representations of self (young versus old) reflects life events and other defining circumstances in those intermediate and seminal years, which cannot be ignored or even downplayed.

The staff could collectively exchange private experiences with examples of younger family members that are capable of computing homework, chatting with a multitude of friends online while the television is on and some music is playing in the background. And equally impressive these younger family members can actually account for the plot on the television, who the singer is and what they have to do next in this or that assignment. In comparison with the “digital natives” the staff all favored concentration on any particular work-task at a time as being key to a job well done - possibly together with an exclusion of any and all disturbing distractions in the process.

While this may simply be a generational issue as stated, it does signify that the stimuli young people are exposed to are much more intensive than the ones we as staff encountered at a similar age.

With age the ability to discern between needs and requirement versus nice and distractive become more profound and one result is selection. We [staff as reference] adopt a selective approach in our activities whereas young people potentially have difficulty in selecting given a natural curiosity and presented with a cornucopia of information. Technology facilitates an endless fountain of information and instead of selecting everything is given a superficial

attention and evaluated on very few parameters, which I claim has little to do with quality of content.

Interestingly enough these parameters do not address whether or not the information *is able* to arouse you, but more to *what level* of arousal it can bring you. Because technology's ability to enhance and enrich information has reached an unprecedented level, all information can be presented in an interesting manner, with the consequence being that all data are interesting and deserve some attention.

Staff reaction

I mentioned earlier that the staff got caught up in an almost infectious-like euphoria during the observations of the behavior thematised in this paper.

However, the staff also constitutes a group in this exercise and I would be erring if I did not consider alternate interpretations of our subsequent enthusiasm when we observed the behavior we dubbed Facebook behavior. A psychodynamic interpretation could be that we as staff had abandoned our primary task; the facilitation of learning and succumbed to a BA behavior concerned with a dependency of "discovery". I will let the reader make his/her own conclusion on that.

Insufficient sampling

The final reflection concerning possible limitations would address structure. The Group Relations exercise itself holds a limitation, in as far that the consultants cannot be present and bear witness to all student inter-personal activity.

Paradoxically this could be solved through the application of technology. By creating a controlled environment with video and sound equipment to record the GR exercise as it unfolds one would capture excessively rich data for subsequent interpretation and learning albeit not in the here-and-now. I am not suggesting technology to be integrated into the Group relations' model for any use during the exercise, but more as a subsequent avenue to consider in some form or other. Just imagine if you will - what could we have learned today had we the opportunity to view the earliest conferences conducted at Leicester University?

So the data sampling in this case, although characteristic in itself, is limited in number of occurrences, which could point to a case of active over-interpretations on behalf of the staff in both indications and subsequently in implications for purposes of personal gratification.

With these limitation articulated I have kept an observant attention to influences, which most be taken into consideration when evaluating the findings suggested in this paper.

Potential Implications

With these limitations of the observations addressed the implications of the findings still warrants a review.

At present it would be unsubstantiated to claim that intensive Facebook behavior – actual Facebook usage – could potentially cause a decreased ability to connect with others and subsequently result in the inability to build viable, sustainable and constructive relationships with others.

What does fall within the realms of reasonable statements to make, on the basis of these observations, is that we as researchers need to look at the influence of technology in intra-

personal and inter-personal communication and the creation of relationships and not only the influence of technology but also the consequences of technology influence i.e. to go beneath the surface so to speak.

If the observations that we have made during these two Group Relations exercises bear any truth the implication could be dire.

For one, it would indicate that while we possibly try to educate future leaders and contributors to society, we miss out on a few facts. All the while technology works for us it also represent some rather unforeseen consequences.

While we praise technology as the key instrument to increase efficiency and effectiveness in organizations the exact same technology might cause the same leaders to be more callous in their way with people and the whole process might have a counterproductive- or even destructive element woven into its very fabric.

I would hypothesize that we might inadvertently legitimize a regression into a behavior similar to that which is established early on in life; a resemblance of Klein's paranoid-schizoid position (Hinshelwood, 1995) in so far as the presentations of self that you encounter are either interesting enough to warrant your attention – or not! Splitting in a new guise.

Final Reflections

The questions or reflections I would like to end with this paper follow the fact that technology and digital communication to a growing degree decreases human interaction and increases the digitized interaction. This has an impact on society that I believe we, as researchers cannot ignore.

Digitization reduces the opportunity to reality test the most basic requirement of human interaction and communication – to connect and relate in the here-and-now - and in an organizational context to understand and work constructively with the primary task. However, it [digitization] also holds the potential for working with the data generated in the here-and-now in the then-and-how.

One thing is the potential dangers that the dark side of technology represents as cautiously suggested in this paper. However, I also believe that there exist another progressive side and I would like to end this paper on a more experiential learning reflection true to tradition.

If our inter-personal communication to a large extend already is digitized, and that digitization continues to increase it follows that our overall inter-personal communication will shift towards digitization - both in personal life - as well as in organizational life.

Presently so much inter-personal communication is already sown and partially gathered in haphazardly distributed lumps in one organization here and one there. Albeit it is unstructured and exists in fragmented clusters, it only needs to be harvested in a manner appropriate to constitute valuable input for researchers.

Sifting through digital material of the magnitude that communication in its many forms, shapes and sizes represent has until recently been inconceivable - and technical impossible. But that is no longer so. With the introduction of Big Data and the ability to crunch data on a scale and at a speed unheard of previously the possibilities are potentially limitless.

I propose that we as researchers in the field of systems psychodynamics have to contemplate *how* we can utilize our understanding of human behavior in an increasingly digitized world to the benefits of society and at the same time *how* we make use of the technological possibilities available.

We should definitely not ignore the potential dangers technology poses – but nor should we overlook the potential it holds in assisting us in gaining new insights into human behavior - in the future.

- 0 -

- Bion, W. R. (1952). Group dynamics: A review. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 33(2), 12.
- Bridges, W. (1986). Managing Organizational Transitions. *Organizational Dynamics*, 15(1), 24-33.
- Cabanero-Johnson, P. S., & Berge, Z. (2009). Digital natives: back to the future of microworlds in a corporate learning organization. *The Learning Organization*, 16(4), 290-297. doi: 10.1108/09696470910960383
- Davis, K. (2013). Young people's digital lives: The impact of interpersonal relationships and digital media use on adolescents' sense of identity. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(6), 2281-2293. doi: 10.1016/j.chb.2013.05.022
- French, R. (2001). "Negative Capability": Managing the Confusing Uncertainties of Change. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 14(5), 480-492.
- Hinshelwood, R. D. (1995). The social relocation of personal identity as shown by psychoanalytic observations of splitting, projection and introjection. *Philosophy, Psychiatry & Psychology*, 2(3), 185-204. doi: 10.1353/ppp.0.0071
- Howard-Jones, P. (2011). The impact of digital technologies on human wellbeing - Evidences from the Sciences of Mind and Brain *Nominet State of the Arts Review* (pp. 98). <http://www.nominettrust.org.uk>: Nominet Trust.
- Huy, Q. N. (1999). Emotional capability, Emotional Intelligence and radical change. *Academy of Management Review*, 24(2), 325 - 345.
- Krantz, J. (2006). Dilemmas of Organizational Change A systems psychodynamic perspective. In L. J. Gould, L. F. Stapley & M. Stein (Eds.), *The Systems Psychodynamics of Organizations - Integrating the Group Relations Approach, Psychoanalytic and Open Systems Perspectives* (pp. 133-156). London: Karnac.
- Menzies, I. E. P. (1960). A Case-Study in the Functioning of Social Systems as a Defence against Anxiety: A Report on a Study of the Nursing Service of a General Hospital. *Human Relations*, 13(2), 95-121. doi: 10.1177/001872676001300201
- Miller, E. J. (1990). Experiential Learning in Groups I: The development of the Leicester Model. In E. L. Trist & H. Murray (Eds.), *The Social Engagement of the Social Sciences: A Tavistock Anthology Vol. 1. The Socio-Psychological Perspective* (pp. 165-185). Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press / Free Association Books.
- Palmer, I., Dunford, R., & Akin, G. (2009). *Managing Organizational Change - A Multiple Perspectives Approach*. New York: McGraw-Hill International.
- Toma, C. L., & Hancock, J. T. (2013). Self-affirmation underlies Facebook use. *Pers Soc Psychol Bull*, 39(3), 321-331. doi: 10.1177/0146167212474694
- Valkenburg, P. M., & Peter, J. (2009). Social Consequences of the Internet for Adolescents: A Decade of Research. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 18(1), 1-5. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8721.2009.01595.x
- Various. (2008). Social Networking - A quantitative and Qualitative research report into attitudes, behaviours and use (pp. 1-72). London: Ofcom - Office of Communication.