Article

Organising for Change? Group-Analytic Perspectives on a Feminist Action Research Project[1]

Erica Burman

Drawing on my experience of managing a research project on domestic violence service provision to women from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, I elaborate three examples to illustrate the relevance and application of group-analytic concepts and interpretations. First, I outline some striking resonances between the research topic and process within the research team, focusing on the negotiation of similarities and differences within this team arising from its commitment to feminist antiracist work, and how tensions between these two foundational 'group illusions' were realized when convening support groups. The third example addresses how dilemmas around safety, secrecy, containment and entrapment came to figure within the research team process, and describes strategies to resolve these difficulties. The paper ends by reviewing the relative compatibility between group analysis and other frameworks for the analysis of, and intervention within, social change projects.

Key words: research team, minoritized women, violence, refuge, group analysis

The focus of this paper is upon exploring the relevance of group analysis as an interpretive resource for the conduct and management of research, as a particular kind of organizational analysis. Reflecting my own political commitments, I identify some specific conceptual compatibilities and political continuities between

processes involved in socially-committed action research and in group analysis. While attending to process, including systemic and psychodynamic, issues have a longstanding tradition within social research (from Kurt Lewin's gestalt-influenced theory of the 1930s onwards, Argyris, 1997, to debates in feminist and anthropological research on reflexivity, e.g. Stanley and Wise, 1993; Steier, 1991; Wilkinson, 1988), my account illustrates additional critical perspectives afforded by drawing on both group-analytic and social research frameworks.

I offer some indications of the relevance of group-analytic perspectives by referring to a recently completed research project conducted under my co-direction (Batsleer, Burman et. al, 2002). While my role as project co-manager was informed by my training as a group analyst, I did not set out to apply group analysis to its process and functioning. Rather my comments have been assembled retrospectively to explore connections with group analysis.

Group analysis as an interpretive resource

I suggest that a group-analytic approach is useful for the analysis of research, as well as therapeutic processes because of its primary emphasis on communication and interconnection: both between groups operating at different levels within institutional systems, and between socio-cultural, political and personal dimensions.

I was particularly struck by Pines's (2002) comment, concerning what he regarded as a key legacy of the influence of the sociologist Norbert Elias on Foulkes. According to Pines, Elias identified the specific aim of group analysis (and its challenge) as maintaining a focus on introjection, rather than the more traditional psycho-analytic priority accorded projection (Pines, 2002: 16). This, as he indicates, offers a corrective to the individualising focus of traditional psychoanalytic approaches that abstract and posit the individual as an *a priori*, rather than explaining its constitution within social, historical and cultural conditions. Such key differ-ences have consequences for the model of the social, as well as of the psyche that it is connected to (Blackwell, 1998; Cooper, 1998). In this sense, current discussions within group analysis (e.g. Dalal, 1998) indicate compatibilies with constructionist approaches to subjectivity, and it is this outward-looking character that makes it particularly relevant for analyses that seek to go beyond individual psychic resonances in explaining institutional phenomena.

There are other contemporary connections, as in Stacey's (2000; 2001) recent reformulation of Foulkes's metaphor of the matrix as an anticipation of complexity theory, describing the intertwining network of historical and current communicational processes within groups. Like complexity theory, in group analysis the relative focus only comes to the fore according to the arena and topic of the analysis. Individual, institution and group are thus inseparable, so that concepts of identity can be treated as situated effects of broader processes, rather than distinct, inherent and static qualities. As with complexity theory, the concern with 'mirroring' or 'resonance' plus the key technical focus accorded consideration of questions of context, setting and organizational administration used to strengthen boundaries and promote integrity of group function (Nitsun, 1998) all invite a reading of organizational processes that grapples with shifting processes and tensions. They address the paradox, conflict, and possibilities informing the dynamics of a prefigurative action research project, where (as with therapy but at a different level) the struggle is as much to avoid only reproducing the old as it is to envisage the new.

The project design and the team

Domestic Violence and Minoritisation (Batsleer et al., 2002) was an 11 month project[2] that set out to research gaps and barriers in service provision for women from minoritized backgrounds (specifically African and African-Caribbean, South Asian, Jewish and Irish women) surviving and escaping domestic violence. We used the term 'minoritization' (rather than 'minority', or 'minority ethnic group') to highlight that groups and communities do not occupy the position of minority by virtue of some inherent property (of their culture or religion, for example) but rather they come to acquire this position as the outcome of a socio-historical and political process. Our description of women as 'survivors' follows current practice in highlighting women's strengths rather than victimization, emphasising survival as a process rather than an event. Our definition of domestic violence included emotional and financial, as well as physical, abuse perpetrated by an intimate partner or family member(s).[3] Our focus on service responses to women from the said cultural/community backgrounds was to explore what issues might arise by virtue of being identified with a minority cultural community in accessing and using services. Topicalising these

particular community groups was intended to be indicative of, rather than to document, the issues posed in designing and delivering appropriate services within a multicultural British post-industrial city like Manchester.

There were three main phases in the research design: generating accounts that documented (1) the perspectives of service providers, and (2) of (actual or potential) service uses i.e. minoritized women who had experienced domestic violence, while also (3) facilitating short-term support groups for women. There were two aspects of the project involving elements of active intervention, or action research. Firstly, beyond engaging service providers (through research interviews), we convened a steering group that crossed a number of dimensions of structural differences (voluntary/statutory; dedicated domestic violence vs. general health, housing and support; culturally specialist vs. mainstream). Secondly, the project sought to add to existing provision by piloting three short term support groups for women survivors of domestic violence.[4] The specific demand for this intervention arose out of a previous project we had conducted on service responses to South Asian women who had attempted suicide or self harmed (Chantler et al., 2001). Domestic violence was indicated as a key factor contributing to their distress, and survivors highlighted the need for facilitated self help groups as a resource that they would have found useful but was not on offer.

I should point out that my reference to 'we' refers principally to the research team. Nevertheless the analysis I offer is from my own perspective, and doubtless there are others.[5] The team was composed of seven women from different institutional, professional, and disciplinary backgrounds, some identifying as similar to the racialized/cultural backgrounds topicalized within the study, and others as white, English Christian (i.e. from majoritized positions). Three members of the team – significantly the three black women – were employed (half-time) specifically for the purpose and duration of the project (with shades of institutional racism being recapitulated here), while the other four (including myself) were already employed within the university, with differential responsibilities and amounts of time seconded to the project.

It was not unreasonable to anticipate structural tensions within a project that crosses so many institutional arenas (academic vs. applied, university vs. voluntary vs. statutory sectors, culturally specific vs. mainstream services). Nor should it have been surpris-

ing to encounter a felt tension between the service development/ practice work agenda (privileging innovative but safe practice) and the research agenda (privileging targets and timescales), that in turn mapped on to the elaboration of the primary responsibilities of 'workers' and 'managers' within the team. Simultaneously address-ing an area of exclusion in terms of gender-sensitive provision and making an antiracist intervention also made this a particularly ambitious project – especially as we aimed to challenge not only the implicitly culturally exclusionary practices of some gender-specialist provision but also the privileging of 'race' over gender within culturally-specialist provision that marginalized the position of black and minoritized women (Burman, 1998; Burman et al., 2002).

Further, the focus in our research design on minoritization disturbed the black/white divide that permeates discussions of 'race', racism and anti-racism, since we included not only women from backgrounds subject to racism typically organized on the basis of skin colour but also from (usually) white minority communities that in Britain are subject to racialized oppression on the basis of cultural and religious marginalization and discrimination (which also possibly included ambiguous visible identification).[6] On (psychodynamic) reflection, we could perhaps interpret the scope of this enterprise within what Zagier Roberts (1994) terms a 'self assigned impossible task', or as omnipotence driven by persecutory internal objects. I prefer to think of it as motivated by political commitment, and arising out of the fruitful and dialectical relation-ship between developments in theory and practice.

Topic and process

Luc Michel (2001) draws on group-analytic and psychoanalytic ideas in his account of a research project exploring service responses to migrant communities in Lausanne, Switzerland. He describes how, unwittingly, the multidisciplinary research team in its process recapitulated aspects of the migrant experience they were researching. From an analysis of difficulties and resolutions of problems, Michel articulates both a methodological principle of flexibility and continuous reassessment of the process:

> Since our research was in a state of flux, then its framework needed to be constantly modified. At this state we were in a true situation of 'action research'. (Michel, 2001: 216)

At the end he commented on the importance of the research team being prepared to reflect upon such difficulties as a resource:

> The necessary reflection by the research team to overcome its crises is a normal part of the processes operating in this kind of action research, that is to say it modifies and enriches the very process of the action research itself. (Michel, 2001: 218)

Similarly, we subscribed to notions of reflexivity that inform both qualitative and feminist research (Banister et. al., 1994; Burman, 1997; Burman, 2000; Wilkinson, 1988), looking beyond our immediate personal circumstances to consider in what ways these reflected broader features of our topic, and so determine our subsequent responses. To take one example, our greater problems in identifying women survivors of domestic violence – especially Jewish and Irish women – were predictable in the sense that (unlike African, African-Caribbean and South Asian women) there were no local dedicated specialist domestic violence services to provide a network of possible contacts for us to liase with.

We could have interpreted the absence of self- (or professional) referrals as indicative of lack of demand for domestic violence services (or even that domestic violence did not exist as a problem within those communities),[7] or treated this as our failure as researchers. But, acknowledging that such gaps reappeared also within our research material enabled us to explore how to model the further steps that domestic violence services could take to engage previously unidentified minoritized women.

We drew on our various identifications. Here the position of women with 'no recourse to public funds' came to the fore – women subject to the 'one year rule' (currently being extended to two years) who have uncertain 'leave to stay' in Britain (because their marriage to a British citizen, with residency rights, has broken up) and whose entitlement to welfare benefits or claim on public funds is therefore disallowed. This often excludes such women from all systems of support. We therefore used our engagement and positions as researchers to intervene within usual discourses of shame around abuse and violence for minoritized women and cultures, and to write an account of organizational (rather than only survivor) shame at being so helpless and ineffectual in making and sustaining changes. In doing so, we were also challenging prevailing discourses around both abuse and minoritized women.

We went on to identify institutional and policy strategies to

rectify these inequalities. Through the process of the project (via the convening of the steering group and the service intervention of the support groups) we were able to facilitate links between generalist and specialist organizations across different sectors and in different regions, brokering partnerships that are likely to provide and improve services beyond the life of the project.

Hence we interpreted the general difficulties we encountered *as research resources*. Moreover we could also use our positions to change the landscape of interagency relations. A further indicative example was how we were able to link existing services through constituting a steering group as our consultative reference group. This steering group was composed of participants drawn from, but functioning as an arena outside, prevailing partnership fora. While the latter are typically dominated by competitive resource agendas, as a temporary project, we had no stake in this, and so the steering group made it possible for organizations to forge new or different relationships.

Similar analyses could be made of the ways we linked our responses to the distress of the survivors interviewed with the accounts of workers within the various services they had attempted to access. Here our experience accords well with other discussions (e.g. Featherstone, 1997), such as being overwhelmed, becoming numbed and desensitized; with further interpersonal and organizational effects in terms of processes of splitting and rivalry, including victim/rescuer dynamics operating between services (Blackwell, 1997).

Similarities and differences

Michel drew on a narrative of group formation to account for the shifting process and progress of his research team.

> The element of cohesion of the group became the actual object of the research – 'the migrant' – and its occupation of the centre stage pushed into the wings – indeed, excluded altogether – the focus of interest and other factors which gave to each individual his own identity . . . This cohesion was above all based on the elimination of our differences and the creation of a 'group illusion' (Anzieu, 1981). (Michel, 2001: 213)

He described an initial and over-hasty cohesion which, as an idealization, soon fragmented into sectarian conflict and 'a dialogue of the deaf' (Michel, 2001: 214). Resolution occurred through a

joint process of reflection that enabled the team to acknowledge differences based on expertise rather than power, and giving rise to a shift from a pseudo-democracy based on the denial of difference to differentiated roles, whereby the group was able to return with renewed vigour to its task.

While I am wary of developmental models due to their regulatory and normalising effects (Burman, 1994; 1996), I admit that such a model could apply to the chronology of our research team. More interesting to me though were the links made by Michel between researching migrant experiences and the submergence and re-surgence of institutional and professional differences within the team.

> We were like a group of siblings without parents. No reference was made to our original cultures, either professional or institutional. (Michel, 2001: 214)

Clearly such issues are relevant to research around minoritized women, many of whom are also immigrants.[7] There were moments when the functioning of the team seemed to be at the cost of either denying cultural, professional or specific disciplinary positions and differences or, highlighting them as insurmountable obstacles. But here two further socio-political and group dynamic factors came into play.

Our research project functioned at the interface of two competing 'group illusions' (following Anzieu, 1984) or (using Foulkes) 'foundation matrices' (Foulkes, 1964: 292). While commentators vary in their interpretations, there is (as Dalal, 1998, also notes) scope within Foulkes's own later writings (E. Foulkes, 1990) for a cultural-historical, rather than evolutionary-biological reading of the foundation matrix: that is, as the political and cultural assumptions drawn upon and unfolding within a developing group process. Further, connecting Foulkes's ideas to the organizational sphere, Nitsun (1998) has put forward the concept of an organizational matrix, claiming that this 'has similar qualities of containing and holding to a group matrix but also similar propensities for malignant and destructive processes' (1998: 251).

Applying this to the research team, it is noteworthy that feminist and anti-racist commitments typically generate different working cultures or organizational matrices. Four indications of the tensions between these working cultures emerged. Initially, the feminist commitment, including the commitment around domestic violence,

seemed to be the resource to bring us together as a team. Secondly, as an all-women team, we reflected our topic in the sense that all our research participants (survivors and providers) were women, although – as an interesting reflection of the ways professional roles either intersect with, or obscure, gender (c.f. Burman, 2001; 2002; Dutton Conn, 1995; Featherstone, 1997) – as at least one team member noted, we talked only of the survivors as 'women', referring to the others via their professional titles.[8] This collective slip also indicated something of our own ambivalences about our institutional roles as women. Thirdly, all this underscores the history of second wave feminism as inadvertently[9] white, middle class and Eurocentric – thereby ignoring or devaluing the positions and experiences of black, minoritized and working class women (Carby, 1982).[10] Against all this stood the fourth tension, a commitment to anti-racist work which threw all assumed commonalities around relationships between women and between feminists into question in terms of research relationships and within the team.[11]

In terms of the group matrix or (conscious and unconscious) core beliefs underpinning these two 'illusions', each ethos worked in opposing directions. For, while an assumption of 1970s and 1980s feminisms was that all-women spaces were safe, orthogonal to this was the ethos of antiracist work, which typically generates anxiety between participants – out of the fear of encountering racism, or being (accused of being) racist (Cooper, 1997; Treacher, 2001/2). This context of 'race' anxiety (Burman et al., 2002; Batsleer et al., 2003; Chantler et al., 2001) could therefore be seen to function at an organizational level in terms of elaborating antithetical group dynamics to the presumed 'safety' of women's groups. In this light the subordination of 'women' to 'worker' or professional identities can be seen to mediate the shift from collusive collaboration to more nuanced and discriminating alliances.

Conceptualising the conflict between these different organizational matrices is useful in understanding why our research team found itself in such difficulties. Perhaps unsurprisingly, these problems coalesced around the constitution of the support groups. This, significantly, was the site of three key structural tensions that also brought to the fore the differences within the research team: firstly, between research and service provision (highlighting different areas of strength, skill and responsibility within the research team); secondly, between the definition and self definition of (the

salience of) racialized positions – both for participants and for research team members; and, thirdly, between culturally-specialized vs. mixed/mainstream provision. These tensions, prompted by the enormity of the task of composing and conducting these groups, at times seemed to grip us with such intensity and paralysis that this key third phase of the project nearly had to be abandoned. It was only with a lot of extra work on the part of the team that this vital part of the project was carried out.

Thus, unlike Michel, I would not see the resolution of these difficulties as only lying within a reassertion of role specializations and acknowledgement of professional differences. Instead I would point to the marked development and change made possible within research team members by holding on to the 'group illusion' of joint, *but then renegotiated*, feminist anti-racist commitment and responsibility for the project. Notwithstanding the differential contributions made by each member, and the gaps between expectation and reality, this commitment enabled each of us to develop confidence, experience and skills: in working inter-culturally (one team member described this shift as 'from a bone of contention to a bonus'), in working with groups, and in writing; as well as seeing a complex research process through to its end. As a manager, I learned much about the structure and intersections of institutional cultures and bureaucracies, and their impacts on individual and group relations.

Refuges or prisons?
The third area of resonance (Foulkes, 1975) between topic and process concerned the dynamics of refuges themselves. Refuges are supposed to be places of safety, retreat and secrecy. Yet the practices maintaining them as safe places can also work to make them separate, isolated and stigmatized arenas. Women surviving domestic violence have typically already been subject to extreme isolation, as both a condition for, and an effect of, their abuse (since – as we documented – abusers deliberately prevented women from contacting friends, family or agencies, or even entering public arenas where such contact would be possible). As with other research, our project highlighted how minoritized women, who have often lost links with family and community in making their escape (or have been ostracized when they disclosed the violence), are even more likely to be isolated and marginalized.

The vast majority of refuges maintain secret locations as a strategy to ensure the safety of women escaping violent relationships. Although almost unquestioned as a tenet of refuge provision, this secrecy is now undergoing some critical scrutiny from analysis of US-based provision (Haaken, in press) on the grounds, firstly, of reproducing the separation between the refuge and (especially minoritized) communities and, secondly, potentially making it more difficult for (especially minoritized) women to access the networks of relationships and resources that would help them to make the transition to independent living. The penalty for transgressing the rule of secrecy is eviction.[12]

This climate of secrecy produces very intense relationships within refuges, exacerbated by the states of distress of the residents (including possibly ongoing harassment), the lack of resources available,[13] cramped conditions and inevitable tensions arising over domestic arrangements. Notwithstanding the fact that refuges often emerge as providing the only gender-sensitive anti-racist support to survivors, our interview material indicated intense (and often conflictual) relationships between residents, between residents and refuge workers, even between refuge workers. All this can be understood in terms of structural conditions alongside the effects of abuse and of working around abuse (Dutton Conn, 1995; Featherstone, 1997), as well as indicating key psychological features of the contemporary organization of relations between women (Ernst, 1997).

In terms of our research process, some such resonances crept up upon us, including the team being used as a refuge to cope with the unbearable feelings generated by interviewing survivors, which produce a sense of enclosure or secrecy about its meetings. When the research appeared to be foundering, the dynamics of 'shaming' and 'blaming' associated with domestic violence also arose in terms of projected splits within the team – between the 'abusive managers' and the 'exploited/victimized workers'. There was an ethos of 'take it to the research team meetings', as if the rules of communication between research team members were bound by a therapeutic group contract. This group norm, or defence, could be seen simultaneously to mask and to covertly challenge the operation of power relationships. The very elaboration of a 'therapeutic' orientation to support each other, now threatened to overwhelm the team with individual worker needs appearing to be in tension with

research goals, or indeed with the well-being and functioning of the team as a whole.[14]

Like refuges, the team boundaries seemed rigid and stuck, by virtue of the same sense of ownership and commitment to the work that had sustained it earlier; but now seemed to prevent it from moving on. A group-analytic approach enabled understanding, if not direct intervention. Foulkes (1964) regarded interpretations as only required when needed to dismantle blocks in communication, and more recent approaches have downplayed this technique further (Dalal, 1998; Pines, 2002). But through careful 'dynamic administration' in the form of convening business meetings with team members that addressed structural differences being avoided between the funded and unfunded workers, some of the defensive polarizations were softened and projections defused.

Some changes of circumstances helped to mitigate the climate of distrust and defensive introspection that (like refuges) had gripped the team. Firstly, two members of the team (one of whom was me) who had been away gradually returned, and so brought new perspectives prompting review and re-evaluation.

Secondly, commitments to make presentations about the project to outside professional audiences fostered different configurations of relationships and alliances, and broke up polarized positions. The steering group fulfilled this role – although at times perhaps it also represented a hostile superego, an arena calling forth the covering up of shameful fantasized inadequacies or (in fantasy) of exposure and humiliation.

Thirdly, and crucially, one of the research team took time out and returned with a new-found commitment and energy to complete the work, and helped to enable new alliances – both within the team and bringing new members into the team.

These included, fourth, shifting what had seemed to be an intractable resistance on the part of the team to involving new people by delegating some work outside the research team. Perhaps this resistance arose from fear of being shamed as inadequate researchers. However (like women first disclosing their abuse) from plucking up courage to 'talk to outsiders', this move to 'trusting outsiders' conceded that, as women, we did not have to be superwomen[15] – in the sense of managing to do everything without outside support – a particular dynamic that Featherstone (1997) identified.

Experiencing the enthusiasm and commitment of these new

('outside') members was also (reminiscent of the dynamics of a slow-open group) a reminder of what we had been like at an earlier stage. Once the isolation and defensive secrecy of the team had been acknowledged and addressed and we gradually got a sense of getting somewhere with the work we felt much better, more able to be open, and so to establish a better balance of communication between inside and outside team meetings. Here we can make links both with Stacey's (1996) concept of a 'shadow system' and with how Blackwell (1998) links this with the group matrix to argue that the matrix (or unconscious) is not just destructive but also a source of creativity.

Conclusions

I have drawn on group analysis as well as feminist analysis to re-politicize apparently individual dynamics; by situating them spa-tially (within their broader political, cultural and institutional contexts), temporally (within a chronology) and exploring part-whole relations (between individual and group, and between groups, institutions and cultures). These are all key strengths of group analysis, as Nitsun argues:

> I consider the following group-analytic principles to be the most relevant to the study of organizations: levels of the group, the group matrix, the internal-external relationship, location, the setting, communication, the individual-group relation, and mirroring. (Nitsun, 1998: 250)

Clearly there are other relevant psychodynamic perspectives that could be drawn upon to explain organizational processes, including those of research. Group-analytic approaches may better help in illuminating the structural paradoxes mobilized within research processes that draw on (and feeling the need to draw upon, c.f. Parker, 1997) psychodynamic concepts and analyses, while warding off therapeutic analysis[16] or interpretation at the level of individual psychodynamics.[17] Writing of the limitations of current Tavistock-oriented open systems theory approaches, Andrew Cooper (1998: 286) highlights as his own concerns that I share about current efforts to combine psychoanalysis with organizational analysis:

> It is the value neutrality of this model with respect to the social, political and ideological dimensions of this environment which renders it unable to do the job I am interested in. I am interested in what might happen, what new possibilities

could emerge within the way of thinking and working, if the view of the boundary were opened to new sorts of influences reflecting a view of the world as less self-regulating or harmonious.

In action research the goal is not stable functioning of, or exchange between, organizational units. It is a time-limited enterprise to transform *via its process as well as its outcomes*, including transforming relationships with research participants, also within the research team. Change is therefore not something to be managed into equilibrium, but rather to be harnessed and directed so as to use, as well as manage, its disturbing aspects.

It may be rather far-fetched to suggest, as Pines (2002: 17) has done (although he attributes this to Ben Davidson) that group analysis is a 'technology of empowerment' – not least because this leaves unspecified who is being empowered, who wields the technology, and crucially what power relations are recapitulated within relations of 'empowerment' (c.f. Bhavnani, 1990). Yet I hope that I have illustrated how group analysis can be a useful ingredient to socially-oriented psychodynamic analysis of organizational, and specifically research, processes. Far from insisting on the specificity of group-analytic perspectives, I would rather highlight their convergence with, or, complementarily to, others – such as feminist approaches. So that, without reducing one to the other – we are provided with multiple frames from which to generate further critical analysis, and so resist the closure of any single interpretation.

Acknowledgement

Notes

1 An earlier draft of this paper was presented at the ESRC Seminar 'The Psychodynamics of Organisational Change', Manchester Metropolitan University, November 5, 2002.

2 The project was funded under strategic objective, 5:2, dossier number: 91164NW3, match funded between the European Social Fund and Manchester Metropolitan University, carried out between September 2001 and July 2002.

3 Where families are joint rather than nuclear, parents, parents-in-law or siblings

may be implicated in the abuse – if not as active perpetrators – but few of our provider accounts included this within their definitions of domestic violence.

4 The process and implications of the support groups convened for the project are discussed more extensively in Chapter 8 of Batsleer et al. (2002), and in Batsleer and Smailes (in press).

5 My account was circulated to the research team for comment.

6 Both our Irish and Jewish research participants discussed ways they were identified by others in negative ways on the basis of their appearance and behaviour.

7 Typical responses we documented could be characterized within the familiar refrains of: 'It doesn't happen here' alongside 'They look after their own' – both of which add up to legitimize a lack of engagement. However the British Crime Survey (1996) indicated that there is no reason to assume that rates of domestic violence differ between classes and communities.

8 I have since observed that this is also a widespread practice.

9 Clearly feminists did not set out to do this but, especially in terms of institutional practices and influences have functioned in these ways (c.f. Burman, 1998).

10 This representation has also worked to obscure so-called Third World Feminisms, whose equation and sometimes coincidence with nationalist agendas has also bolstered this (see Heng, 1997).

11 I am not sure that any of us consciously subscribed to the notion that 'all women together' would be similar, safe or comfortable. My own conscious beliefs are certainly otherwise, and elsewhere I have discussed feminism as a political movement coming into being precisely because women typically have so little structural interest or incentive to identify with each other (Burman, 2001).

12 On the basis of anecdotal evidence – including some further indications encountered within the research project – it would seem that it is especially young women, and within mainstream refuges black women, who are particularly liable to eviction on these grounds.

13 Few women in refuges are in paid employment, and so are dependent on state benefits. Some refuges in our study were supporting women who were totally destitute 'with no recourse to public funds'. The British benefit system discourages women in paid work from accessing refuge provision, since rentals (usually paid by public funds and needed to resource refuges) are prohibitively high for an individual to pay. This contributes to the image of women surviving domestic violence (as identified by their use of refuges) as both victims (as required by current systems governing entitlement) and dependent on the state.

14 We discuss this further in Burman and Chantler (in press).

15 This is especially important for minoritized women.

16 Elsewhere (Burman and Chantler, in press) we discuss how the very 'speech act' of naming organizational processes in therapeutic terms can be regarded as implicitly doing the therapeutic work of 'containing' the difficult feelings but *without* embarking on an explicitly therapeutic analysis which would have been an inappropriate task for the group.

17 Diego Napolitani (2001) makes similar points in relation to the project of group analysis generally.

References

Anzieu, D. (1981) *Le Groupe et l'inconscient: l'imaginaire groupal*, 2nd edn. Paris: Dunod.

Anzieu, D. (1984) *The Group and the Unconscious*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Argyris, C. (1997) 'Field theory as a basis for scholarly consulting: Kurt Lewin Award Lecture 1997', *Journal of Social Issues* 53(4): 811–827.

Banister, P., Burman, E., Parker, I, Taylor, M. and Tindall, C. (1994) *Qualitative Methods in Psychology: A Research Guide*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Batsleer, J. and Smailes, S. (in preparation) 'Groupwork for Minoritized Women Surviving Domestic Violence: Issues of Group Composition and Process'.

Batsleer, J., Burman, E., Chantler, K., McIntosh, S., Pantling, K., Smailes, S. and Warner, S. (2002) *Domestic Violence and Minoritisation: Supporting Women to Independence*. Manchester: The Women's Studies Research Centre.

Batsleer, J., Chantler, K. and Burman, E. (2003) 'Responses of Health and Social Care Staff to South Asian Women who Attempt Suicide and/or Self-harm', *British Journal of Social Work Practice*.

Bhavnani, K. K. (1990) '"What's Power Got to Do with it": Empowerment and Social Research', in I. Parker and J. Shotter (eds) *Deconstructing Social Psychology*. London: Routledge.

Blackwell, D. (1997) 'Holding, Containing and Bearing Witness: The Problem of Helpfulness in Encounters with Torture Survivors', *Journal of Social Work Practice* 11(2): 81–89.

Blackwell, D. (1998) 'A Response to "Psychoanalysis and the Politics of Organisation", Commentary on article by Andrew Cooper', *Group Analysis* 31(3): 296–303.

Burman, E. (1994) *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology*. London: Routledge.

Burman, E. (1997) 'Developmental Psychology and its Discontents', in D. Fox and I. Prilleltensky (eds) *Critical Psychology*. London: Sage.

Burman, E. (ed.) (1998) *Deconstructing Feminist Psychology*. London: Sage.

Burman, E. (2000) 'Method, Measurement and Madness', in L. Holzman and J. Morss (eds) *Postmodern Psychologies, Societal Practice and Political Life*. New York and London: Routledge.

Burman, E. (2001) 'Engendering Authority in the Group', *Psychodynamic Counselling* 7(3): 347–370.

Burman, E. (2002) 'Gender, Sexuality and Power in Groups', *Group Analysis* 35(4): 540–559.

Burman, E., and Chantler, K. (in press) 'There's No Place like Home: Researching "Race" and Refuge Provision', *Gender, Place and Culture*.

Burman, E., Chantler, K. and Batsleer, J. (2002) 'Service Responses to South Asian Women Attempting Suicide or Self-harm', *Critical Social Policy* 22(4): 641–668.

Burman, E., Gowrisunkur, J. and Sangha, K. (1998) 'Conceptualising Cultural and Gendered Identities in Psychological Therapies', *European Journal of Psychotherapy, Counselling and Health* 1(2): 231–256.

Carby, H. (1982) 'White Women Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood', in University of Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural

Studies (ed.) *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in '70s Britain*. London: Hutchinson.

Chantler, K., Burman, E., Batsleer, J. and Bashir, C. (2001) *Attempted Suicide and Self-harm, Report of a HAZ Funded Research Project*. Manchester: Women's Studies Research Centre, the Manchester Metropolitan University.

Cooper, A. (1997) 'Thinking the Unthinkable: "White Liberal" Defences against Understanding in Anti-racist Training', *Journal of Social Work Practice* 11(2): 127–137.

Cooper, A. (1998) 'Psychoanalysis and the Politics of Organisational Theory', *Group Analysis* 31(3): 283–295.

Dalal, F. (1998) *Taking the Group Seriously: Towards a Post-Foulkesian Analysis*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Dutton Conn, J. (1995) 'Autonomy and Connection: Gendered Thinking in a Statutory Agency Dealing with Child Sexual Abuse', in C. Burck and B. Speed (eds) *Gender, Power and Relationships*. London: Routledge.

Ernst, S. (1997) 'Group-analytic Psychotherapy: A Site for the Reworking of the Relationship between Mothers and Daughters', in W. Hollway and B. Featherstone (eds) *Mothering and Ambivalence*. London: Routledge.

Featherstone, B. (1997) '"I Wouldn't Do Your Job!" Women, Social Work and Child Abuse', in W. Hollway and B. Featherstone (eds) *Mothering and Ambivalence*. London: Routledge.

Foulkes, E. (1990) (ed.) *S.H. Foulkes: Selected Papers: Psychoanalysis and Group Analysis*. London: Karnac.

Foulkes, S. H. (1975) *Group-analytic Psychotherapy: Methods and Principles*. London: Karnac.

Foulkes, S. H. and Anthony, E. J. (1964) *Group Psychotherapy: The Psychoanalytic Approach*. Harmondsworth: Pelican.

Haaken, J. (in press) 'Stories of Survival: Class, Race and Domestic Violence', in Nancy Holstrom (ed.) *Feminist Projects*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Heng, G. (1997) '"A Great Way to Fly": Nationalism, the State and the Varieties of Third World Feminism', in M. Alexandra and C. Mohanty (eds) *Feminist Geneologies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. New York: Routledge.

Michel, L. (2001) 'Group Dynamics of a Research Team Working in the Field of Migration', *Group Analysis* 34(2): 211–220.

Napolitani, D. (2001) 'Group Analysis Today. Interview with Diego Napolitani by Maria Luisa Tapparo', *Journal of European Psychoanalysis*, 12 & 13, URL. http://www.psychomedia.it/number12-13/napolitani.htm

Nitsun, M. (1996) *The Anti-Group*. London: Routledge.

Nitsun, M. (1998) 'The Organizational Mirror' (Part One), *Group Analysis* 31(3): 245–267.

Pines, M. (2002) 'The Coherency of Group Analysis', *Group Analysis* 35(1): 13–27.

Stacey, R. (2000) 'Reflexivity, Self-organisation and Emergence in the Group Matrix', *Group Analysis* 33(4): 501–513.

Stacey, R. (2001) 'Complexity and the Group Matrix', *Group Analysis*, 34(2): 221–240.

Stanley, L. and Wise, S. (1993) *Breaking Out Again: Feminist Consciousness and Feminist Research*. London: Routledge.

Steier, F. (ed.) (1991) *Research and Reflexivity*. London: Sage.

Treacher, A. (2001/2) 'Ethnicity: Recognition and Identification', *Psychoanalytic Studies* 3(4): 325–332.
Wilkinson, S. (1988) 'The Role of Reflexivity in Feminist Psychology', *Women's Studies International Forum* 11(5): 493–502.
Zagier Roberts, V. (1994) 'The Self Assigned Impossible Task', in A. Obholzer and V. Zagier Roberts (eds) *The Unconscious at Work: Individual and Organisation Stress in the Human Services*. London: Routledge.

Erica Burman is Professor of Psychology and Women's Studies based in the Department of Psychology and Speech Pathology, Manchester Metropolitan University, where she co-directs the Discourse Unit and the Women's Studies Research Centre. She is also a group analyst. *Author's address:* The Manchester Metropolitan University, Hathersage Road, Manchester M13 0JA, UK. Email: e.burman@mmu.ac.uk