GROUP RELATIONS TRAINING MODEL (GRTM)

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The aim of this section is to conceptualise the systems psychodynamic approach as it is operationalised in the GRTM. It starts off by providing the background to the GRTM. This is followed by an overview of the basic assumptions of group relations training and an exploration of relevant concepts.

1   BACKGROUND TO THE GROUP RELATIONS TRAINING MODEL

The GRTM was largely developed in clinical settings and is well known as a therapeutic perspective in Psychiatric circles (Menzies, 1993; Miller, 1976; Rioch, 1975a). It has been applied in working conferences by the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations since 1957 (Colman & Gellar; 1985; Miller, 1989). Because of the leading role that the Tavistock Institute played in the development of the group relations training model, the approach became commonly known as the 'Tavistock model' (Lawrence, 1999; Obholzer & Roberts, 1994). Since 1957, numerous group relations training events have been held in the UK, the USA, and many other countries. In South Africa, the Institute for the Study of Leadership and Authority (ISLA), the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology at the University of South Africa, and DCT Consulting are the best known hosts of group relations training events. The growth of the group relations training model in South Africa is also indicated by the number of publications that have centred around this approach in recent years (Bullen, 2003; Cilliers, 2000; Cilliers 2002; Cilliers & Koortzen, 2000; Cilliers & May, 2002; De Jager, 2003; Hammond, 2003; Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002; Rabichund & Cilliers, 2001; Struwig, 2003).

The roots of the GRTM can be traced back to the 1940s (Miller, 1989). The basic conceptual framework includes contributions from psychoanalysis, object relations and systems theory (Colman & Bexton, 1975; Hugg, Carson & Lipgar, 1993). It is primarily based upon the theories of Freud (1921; 1923), Bion (1961;1970), Klein (1985; 1997), Miller (1976; 1983; 1989; 1993) and Rice (1963; 1976).

 Group relations training is a dynamic field of study with its boundaries constantly being refined and redefined. An exploration of recent literature indicates that it is increasingly being applied in organisational consultation (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2000; Colman & Bexton, 1975; Colman & Geller, 1985; Driver, 2003; Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Kets De Vries, 1991; Krantz & Gilmore, 1991; Neumann, Kellner & Dawn-Shephard, 1997; Rabichund & Cilliers, 2001), team building (Cilliers, 2000; Cytrynbaum & Lee, 1993; Kets de Vries, 1991; Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002), and change management interventions (Baum, 1989; Hirschhorn & Gilmore, 1989; Kets De Vries & Balazs,1998). Group relations

training also offers exciting possibilities as an alternative mode for training and development in fields such as diversity (Cilliers & May, 2002; DCT, 2000).

The group relations training model accepts group behaviour to be both conscious and unconscious (Miller, 1993). Group relations training events explore the interaction between these conscious and unconscious aspects of group/organisational life (Colman & Gellar, 1985; Obholzer & Roberts, 1994). Conscious behaviour is clear and explicit, manifesting, for example, in the group's set rules and observable behaviour (Hircshhorn, 1993; Kets de Vries, 1991). The unconscious, however is filled with unknown, unwanted and sometimes threatening needs and feelings of the group. When this unconscious behaviour surfaces, the group defends against it by, for example, resisting change (Czander, 1993; Obholzer & Roberts, 1994).

The focus in group relations training is on the group as a whole and the collective unconscious interactions of the group (Rioch, 1975b). According to Bion (1961), the conscious functioning of groups can only be fully understood if the unconscious underlying assumptions that reinforce the ways in which the group relates, are explored. The aim is to foster recognition of unconscious forces and mitigate their negative effect (Colman & Bexton, 1975).

2   ASSUMPTIONS OF THE GROUP RELATIONS TRAINING MODEL

Bion (1961; 1970) contributed significantly to the understanding of groups by uncovering the emergence of primary mechanisms of relatedness which are driven by anxiety. The following subsections explore Bion's (1961) notion of work- and basic assumption groups as well as the different basic assumptions (Bion, 1961; Lawrence, Bain & Gould, 1996; Turquet, 1974) that influence group behaviour.

2.1   Levels of group functioning

Bion (1961) postulated that when any group meets to perform a task, there are in actuality two configurations of mental activity, or two levels of group functioning present, at one and the same time. The sophisticated *work group* functions on a manifest and overt level while the basic assumption groups function at a latent and covert level (Sandigo, 1991; Sutherland,1985).

The work group functions at a level at which members pursue an agreed-upon objective and work towards the completion of the task (Bion, 1961). Members are engaged in the primary task because they have taken full cognisance of its purpose and cooperate because it is their will (Lawrence et al, 1996). Although group members have hidden agendas, they rely on internal and external controls to prevent these hidden agendas from emerging and interfering with the announced group task (Bion, 1961). They pool their rational thinking and combine their skills to solve problems and make

decisions (Sandigo, 1991). In a work group, the members can comprehend the psychic, political and spiritual relatedness in which they are participating and are co-creating (Lawrence et al, 1996).

The problems is that groups do not always function rationally or productively; nor are individual members necessarily aware of the internal and external controls that they rely on to maintain the boundary between their announced intentions and their hidden agendas (Sandigo, 1991). Groups functioning in such a rational manner are rare, and perhaps, are merely an idealised construct. The combined hidden agendas of group members constitute the latent aspect of group life, which Bion (1961) called basic assumption behaviour. In contrast to the rational group, the basic assumption group consists of unconscious wishes, fears, defences, fantasies, impulses and projections (Brown, 1985; Sandigo, 1991).

Bion recognised that at times, people behave collectively in a psychotic fashion or rather, the group mentality drives the process in a manner corresponding to temporary psychosis (Pines, 1985). This 'psychotic' functioning, indicates a decline in the ability to make effective contact with reality (Menzies, 1993). In this state, despite their sophisticated and mature skills, group members can be caused to regress to and be temporarily caught up in primitive splitting and projective identification, depersonalisation, and infantile regression (Lawrence, 1999). It is characteristic of basic assumption behaviour that group members contribute to it without being aware of doing so (Miller, 1998). When the basic assumption group is dominant, behaviour is instantaneous, inevitable and instinctive. Rationality and memory are also precluded in the sense that factual mistakes go uncorrected and there is little sense of time (Miller, 1998).

The work group is focused towards the task, while the basic assumption group is focused inwards, towards fantasy and a more primitive reality (Sutherland, 1985). Basic assumption behaviour interferes with a group's capacity to sustain task-focused activity. In some instances, the thinking and behaviour of group members become totally unrealistic in relation to the work task (Brown, 1985).

Basic assumption groups often regress to a state where there is a loss of distinctiveness. In the work group, members remain individuals and co-operate, whereas in the basic assumption group they are swept away by identification into the undifferentiated unity of the group in which inner realities overwhelm the relation to the task (Bion, 1961).

2.2   Basic assumptions

Basic assumptions are states of mind into which the group gets. It constitutes the emergence of primary mechanisms of relatedness, and the intense anxieties associated with these mechanisms that

drive the group into the assumptions (Gould, 1997; Sutherland, 1985). 'Basic' refers to the survival motivation of the group, whereas 'assumption' underscores the idea that the survival motivation is based , not on fact or reality, but on the collective projections of the group members (Sandigo, 1991). On the basic assumption level of functioning, the group behaves as if certain assumptions are true and valid and as if certain behaviour is vital to the group's survival (Colman & Bexton, 1975).

Bion (1961) identified three types of basic assumptions namely dependency, fight/flight, and pairing. Turquet (1974) added a fourth called oneness, while Lawrence et al (1996) proposed a fifth assumption called me-ness. These assumptions act as the cornerstones of the study of organisational dynamics (Cilliers & Koortzen, 2000). The above-mentioned basic assumptions identified by Bion (1971), Turquet (1974) and Lawrence et al (1996) will now be discussed.

2.2.1 Basic assumption dependency

The aim of basic assumption dependency functioning is to attain security and protection, whether from an individual, subgroup or an idea/fantasy (Bion, 1961). The group behaves as if it is stupid, incompetent or psychotic in the hope that it will be rescued from its impotency by a powerful leader who will instruct and direct it towards task completion (De Board, 1978). The dependency group perceives the leader as omnipotent and omniscient while considering themselves inadequate, immature and incompetent (Sutherland, 1985). The leader is idealised and conceived as a 'god-like' figure. The feeling is that only the leader knows anything and only he/she can solve the group's problems. In such a group, the mentality and culture are such that the individual members become increasingly de-skilled as information on realities becomes less available (Brown, 1985). The cult of the all-powerful leader flourishes provided that someone is willing to play the role in a way that the group desires (De Board, 1978).

The demands the group places on the leader make it inevitable that he/she will at some stage fail to live up to the group's expectation. Anyone brave or foolish enough to attempt this role, must sooner or later, arouse the group's disappointment and hostility (Rice, 1963; Rioch, 1975b). The failure of the leader to live up to such an ideal of perfection is first met with denial, and then with rapid complete devaluation and the search for substitute leadership (Bion, 1961; Sutherland, 1985). The frustration and anger caused by this failure of the leader to live up to the ideal, results in the movement to a state of counter-dependence where the group decides "to do it for themselves" (Kets de Vries, 1991; Miller, 1993). The group can further develop to a state of independence and inter-dependence if it can keep working at its task, using its authority in a adult way whilst the authority figure facilitates the growth process (Wheelan, 1994).

2.2.2 Basic assumption fight/flight

The assumption is that the here-and-now of organisational life is filled with anxiety and in trying to escape from this, the worker unconsciously uses fight or flight as a defence mechanism (Bion, 1961). The assumption is that a group can only preserve itself through fighting against or fleeing from the people or things that threaten its survival (Brown, 1985). Fight and flight seem to be the only two options of self-preservation known to the group (Bion, 1970).

The leader in such a culture is of central importance, because action is essential to the group's preservation (Lawrence et al, 1996). The leader must be prepared to lead the group against the common enemy (Sutherland, 1985). The leader is expected to recognise danger and enemies, and to spur his/her followers on to attack or destroy the 'enemy'(De Board, 1978).

Fight reactions manifest in aggression against the self, peers or authority itself. Fight can take the form of envy, jealousy, competition, elimination, boycotting, rivalry or fighting for a position in the group (Grinberg, 1985). Flight reactions manifest physically in, for example, avoidance of others, illness or resignation. Psychological flight reactions would include defence mechanisms such as avoidance, rationalisation and intellectualisation.

A group operating in this mode cannot develop or do useful work, since all its energy is concentrated on the group's paranoid fantasies. Reality is not tested, or is deliberately kept at bay, otherwise the group would have to deal with the frightening realisation that the enemy that threatens them is not outside the group, but inside (De Board, 1978).

2.2.3 Basic assumption pairing

Groups working on the basic assumption of pairing behave as if the members have met so that two people can pair off and create a new and as yet unborn leader (Bion, 1961). The unconscious fantasy is that creation will take place in pairs. The act of creation is essentially sexual, although the gender of the two people constituting the pair is immaterial (Brown, 1985).

The ethos of the group is one of hopefulness and expectation. The crux, however, is not a future event but the feeling of hope in the immediate present. The group lives in the hope of a new creation - an utopia that will solve all their problems of existence and deliver them from their anxieties and fears (Grinberg, 1985). In this very hope lies the seed of future disappointment, for the hope only exists as long as the 'messiah' remains unborn. The hope only remains while it remains a hope - as soon as the messiah/leader is born, he/she will inevitably fail to deliver the group from its fears and anxieties (Bion, 1961).

2.2.4 Basic assumption oneness

Basic assumption oneness refers to a level of functioning at which members seek to join in a powerful union with an omnipotent force, unobtainably high and thereby experience well-being and wholeness (Turquet, 1974). The group views the union with this 'movement or cause' outside itself, as its salvation (Sandigo, 1991). Being part of this 'movement or cause' thus becomes a salvationist inclusion. This happens, when people say, give themselves totally over to charismatic religious movements. In basic assumption oneness, the group members are lost in feelings of unity with this movement or cause (Lawrence et al, 1996).

2.2.5 Basic assumption me-ness

Basic assumption me-ness, as the opposite of basic assumption oneness, emphasises separateness whilst avoiding any link with the collective. According to Lawrence et al (1996), basic assumption me-ness is a cultural phenomenon engendered by conscious and unconscious social anxieties and fears about living in contemporary, turbulent societies. The individual is increasingly pressed into his/her own inner reality in order to exclude and deny the perceived disturbing realities that are of the outer environment. The inner world thus becomes a comforting place while the outer world becomes a place to be feared and avoided (Lawrence et al, 1996).

In basic assumption me-ness, the implicit, unconscious assumption is that the group is to be a non-group (Koortzen & Cilliers, 2002). People act as if the group has no existence because if it exists it would be the source of persecuting experiences. It is as if the only reality that can exist, is that of the individual. It is a culture of selfishness in which individuals appear to be only conscious of their own personal boundaries, which they believe have to be protected from any incursion by others (Lawrence et al, 1996).

A major difference between basic assumption me-ness and other basic assumptions is that in the former, it is the group which is invisible and unknowable, whereas in the latter it is the individual who is invisible and unknowable (Lawrence et al, 1996). In basic assumption me-ness, the overriding anxiety is that the individual will be lost in the group if it ever emerges. Basic assumption me-ness only has individual preoccupations and can thus never tolerate the collective activities of work group functioning (Lawrence et al, 1996).

3   RELEVANT CONCEPTS OF THE GROUP RELATIONS TRAINING MODEL

In this section, the researcher explores anxiety and defences against anxiety, the use of different defence mechanisms, Klein's development positions, envy, the hierarchical nature of systems, collectivism, as well as boundaries and boundary activities. These concepts from the group relations training model were chosen after the research data had been analysed. These concepts help to illuminate the themes that emerged from the data analyses.

3.1 Anxiety and defences against anxiety

The significance that Klein (1985; 1997), Bion (1961; 1970), Jaques (1955), and Menzies (1993) attributed knowledge about anxiety and the defences against it led to the development of the so-called 'defence against anxiety paradigm' (Stein, 2000). From this perspective anxiety is accepted as the basis of all group behaviour (Menzies, 1993; Stein, 2000). Jaques (1955) and Menzies (1993) proposed that Klein's views on the nature of anxiety in the individual can also be applied to group and organisational functioning. Although it might be true that primitive feelings and anxieties may only occur within the minds of individuals, it is suggested that individuals can collectively, on an unconscious level, design defence systems and structures which protect them from such feelings (Jaques, 1955).

According to Jaques (1955), defences against psychotic anxiety can be seen as one of the primary forces that pulls individuals into institutionalised human associations. From this it follows that members unconsciously use institutions as defence mechanisms against these psychotic anxieties (Jaques, 1955).

Menzies' (1993) study on student nurses also illustrates the way that social systems defensively ward off anxieties which its members are unable to bear. Her study indicates how, to the detriment of nurse and patient alike, the nurse's training promoted a systematic avoidance rather than a working through of the anxieties implicit in the nurse's career (Bain, 1998). According to Menzies (1993), systems are thus structured and partly function as a way of evading anxieties. These social defences are "created" unconsciously by the members of the organisation as a method of coping with the demands placed on them in carrying out the primary task of the organisation (Miller, 1998). These defences become deeply ingrained in the system and may be evident in the organisational structure, in its procedures, information systems, roles, in its culture and in the gap between what the organisation says it does and what it actually does (Bain, 1998).

3.2 Defence mechanisms

In order to cope with feelings of anxiety and discomfort, groups need something or someone to contain these feelings on their behalf (Halton, 1994). Defence mechanisms serve this purpose. Through the use of defence mechanisms, groups gain relief from unpleasant feelings and attain a sense of safety, security and acceptance. For the purposes of this research, the defence mechanisms of denial, resistance, intellectualisation and rationalisation will be briefly mentioned before highlighting

splitting, projection and projective identification as the defence mechanisms most appropriate to this study.

Denial involves pushing certain thoughts, feelings and experiences out of conscious awareness because they have become too anxiety provoking (Brown & Pedder, 1991; Halton, 1994). Resistance is an emotionally charged refusal to accept or even think about something that might threaten or cause anxiety (Halton, 1994). Interpretations of the unconscious processes often meet with resistance. Rationalisation and intellectualisation are used to stay emotionally uninvolved and to feel safe and in control (Minsky, 1998).

Splitting is an unconscious process in which a person or object is split into two parts (Ogden, 1990). The split normally coincides with a division into that which is good and that which is bad (Allcorn, 1995). Through splitting of undesirable aspects of the self, people gain relief from dealing with internal conflicts or difficult emotions (Minsky, 1998). Splitting can also lead to idealisation where the good aspects of the object are exaggerated, while the bad or frustrating parts are denied. The bad objects are not only kept apart from good objects but their existence is denied (Klein, 1985).

Projection is an unconscious device for pushing both good and bad feelings in the inner world out onto someone or something in the external world (Minsky, 1998). Practically, it involves locating feelings in others rather than in oneself (Halton, 1994). A person may, for instance, deny his/her own feeling of inadequacy by locating it in a colleague. In essence, projection refers to the defensive process where one part of the system denies and rejects feelings of the self and then tries to alter the uncomfortable experience by imagining that part of it belonging to another part of the system rather than to the self. It then puts good or bad (unwanted) material *onto* the other, thus distancing itself from the discomfort. This has no effect or influence on the target. Projection may be used to blame management for what goes wrong without management being influenced.

3.3   Developmental positions

Klein (1997) described two developmental positions, the paranoid-schizoid position and the depressive position, to illustrate how an infant learns to integrate conflicting or painful experiences. The term 'position' emphasises that what Klein (1997) described was not simply a passing phase or stage, but a specific configuration of object relations, anxieties and defences which persist throughout a person's life (Likierman, 2001). There is continuous tension between the two positions with individuals moving to and fro between them (Minsky, 1998; Segal, 1973)

3.3.1 The paranoid-schizoid position

The paranoid-schizoid position is characterised by paranoid anxiety and splitting processes (Segal, 1973). During the paranoid-schizoid position, the processes of splitting and projection help the infant to cope with the anxieties experienced in the early months of development (Klein, 1997). According to Miller (1997, p. 190), the notion is that people make their lives more containable by conceiving a world with representations of good and bad, kind and cruel, and other idealized and denigrated or 'not me' manifestations. By projecting the feelings of badness outside the self, a state of illusory goodness and self-idealisation is created (Likierman, 2001). Schizoid splitting is normally associated with the splitting of and projecting outwards of parts of the self perceived as bad, thereby creating external figures that are both feared and hated (Czander, 1993; Halton, 1994). The infant also creates idealized external objects by projecting his/her 'good parts' onto these objects. The infant's world thus consists of ideal objects, which he/she loves, identifies with and tries to acquire, as well as bad objects, into which he/she projects his/her aggressive or unwanted impulses (Segal, 1973). The bad objects are felt to be a threat to the infant and his/her ideal objects (Minsky, 1998).

The defences (splitting and projecting) against intolerable anxiety remain a permanent part of a individual's psychic life (Likierman, 2001) and also manifest in groups in organisations. Projective identification forms one of the basic processes through which anxiety can be reduced (Obholzer & Roberts, 1994). It refers to the process where one part of the system (as the subject) projects material into the other part (as the object), who identifies with the projection, thus taking it on (Coleman & Geller, 1985; Kets de Vries, 1991). According to Cilliers and May (2002), the subject, through the process of projective identification, relieves itself of anxiety by externalising it, splitting off parts and internal objects of the self, leaving the self less aware of its whole and diminished by the projective loss of important aspects of the self. The object then receives, identifies with and contains these projections (split-off parts of the subject) as if it belongs to the object itself. Through the process of projective identification, changes result in both parts (subject and object) of the system (Czander, 1993). Through the defences (splitting, projecting and projective identification) a state of illusionary goodness and self-idealisation can be created and maintained.

The phenomenon of valence plays an integral part in dealing with projections and projective identification. Valence refers to the individual's or group's predisposition to attract or receive specific projections from other individuals or groups (Colman & Geller, 1985). On an individual level, a person could, for instance, have a valence to fulfil the role as a saviour in groups, while on a group level it might manifest through the group's valence to interact from a basic assumption dependency frame of mind.

The paranoid-schizoid position is a normal stage of development, and as a state of mind, can recur throughout life (Klein, 1997). Through play, natural maturation or treatment, previously separated feelings such as love, hate, aggression and sadness in the individual can be brought together into a more integrated whole. This stage of integration is called the depressive position.

3.3.2 The depressive position

In the depressive position, the infant starts to integrate the reality that often the same object is sometimes satisfying and sometimes frustrating (Miller, 1985). The depressive position is thus marked by the recognition of the mother as a whole person and is characterised by relationships to whole objects and by the prevalence of integration, ambivalence, depressive anxiety and guilt (Segal, 1996).

The depressive position entails giving up the comforting simplicity of self-idealisation and facing the complexity of internal and external reality (Klein, 1997). This process inevitably stirs up painful feelings of guilt, concern and sadness relating to harm done by previous actions, hatred, aggression, and rejection (Allcorn, 1995; Segal, 1973). These feelings give rise to a desire to make reparations for injuries caused through previous actions (Halton, 1994). The suffering inherent in the depressive position is bound up with an increasing insight into psychic reality which in turns contribute to a better understanding of the external world (Klein, 1997).

The depressive position thus entails the renouncing of the instincts, and releasing the pleasure principle in order to confront those aspects of the self which, up to that time, have been too difficult or anxiety provoking to deal with. According to Klein (1997), complete integration to the depressive position is never attained once and for all. Whenever survival or self-esteem is threatened, there is a tendency to return to the paranoid-schizoid way of functioning (Halton, 1994). The implication is that the individual at all times oscillates between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions (Segal, 1973).

3.4 Envy

In analysing the concept of envy, two key factors surface (Stein, 2000). Firstly envy involves the relation to another who is perceived to be more fortunate than the self, and secondly it encompasses feelings of ill-will and the active desire to damage or to see harm done to the more fortunate

party. Klein's concept of envy builds on the above-mentioned characteristics of envy. According to Klein (1997), these vindictive desires and feelings of ill-will are often unconscious. It implies that people are mostly unaware of the extent to which they feel envious of another whom they perceive as special or in some way advantaged. Hence studies of envy are often disconcerting because they create awareness of the depth of malevolence into which people and social systems may descend (Stein, 2000).

Envy involves a violent attack and is not concerned with self-preservation (Segal, 1996). In contrast with the 'defences against anxiety' approach, envious attacks are inspired by malevolence which has nothing to do with self-protection (Stein, 2000). While the 'defence against anxiety' paradigm focuses on defensive modes of activity, envy and its resulting dynamics enforce modes of activity that are attacking.

According to Klein (1997), envy is a primitive emotion that lies at the base of most organisational conflict. Envy in organisations is inevitable given the inequitable nature of organisational status, power, and reward systems as well as the allocation of scarce resources (Czander, 1993). Envy often arises from the sense of being a loser in a competitive struggle. The survival anxiety of the less successful section stimulates an envious desire to spoil the other's success. The spoiling envy operates like a spanner in the works, either by withholding necessary co-operation or by active sabotage (Halton, 1994).

Although the concept of envy has largely been neglected in the study of groups, it is clearly an important phenomenon in understanding group behaviour (Halton, 1994; Obholzer, 1994; Stein, 2000). According to Stein (2000), the ideas related to envy allow for a range of emotions other than anxiety in explaining human behaviour. The impact of emotions such as hate, greed and envy thus opens the door to new understandings of group dynamics.

3.5   Boundaries and boundary activities

Boundaries and boundary activities have been a vital field of study since the open systems perspective was conceptualised (Yan & Louis, 1999). The individual, group and organisation as interactive parts of the total system, have boundaries that separate and relate what is inside to that what is outside. Brabender and Fallon (1993) define a boundary as something that separates or delimits a system from other systems. It refers both to the physical and psychological borders that distinguish a system from its environment. Members interact within as well as across these boundaries (Hirschhorn, 1993; Kets de Vries, 1991; Miller, 1993).

The extent to which systems interact and influence each other is determined by the permeability of boundaries of each of the interacting systems. Some systems have highly permeable boundaries admitting much energy and information from other systems while others have relatively closed boundaries, isolating the system from its environment.

According to Yan and Louis (1999), alternative perspectives on boundaries have conceptualised boundaries as demarcations, perimeters, interfaces and as frontiers for transactions. Each of these approaches has a different perspective on boundaries and also stresses other aspects or characteristics of boundaries. The following serves as an overview of the four perspectives on boundaries (Ancona, 1990; Brown, 1983; Miller & Rice, 1967; Yan & Louis, 1999):

ℜ• *Boundaries as demarcations* view boundaries as demarcations that distinguishes one social entity from another. This stresses the point that boundaries differentiate and separate a system from its environment.

ℜ• *Boundaries as parameters* conceptualises boundaries as parameters that define the domains of a system and the world beyond the boundaries as a source of disturbance. Special attention is focused on the protective function of boundaries in closing the system off from its environment.

ℜ• *Boundaries as interface* focus on the interdependent relations and cross-functions between systems. The focus is on the interaction and conflict that arise at the interface where entities meet and interact with one another.

ℜ• *Boundaries as frontiers* focus on the transactions across systems and treat the environment as the origin of resources on which the system depends for survival. The interface between a system and its environment is seen as an essential factor underlying its viability. It stresses the pro-active way in which systems reach out to locate and acquire inputs as well as dispose of outputs.

The demarcation and perimeter perspectives thus emphasise the function of boundaries as differentiating systems from other systems and protecting them from the environment. In contrast, the interface and frontier perspectives focus on the interactive relationship and exchanges of resources across systems. The latter perspective is especially relevant in systems in which interdependence is critical.

3.6   The hierarchical nature of systems

Kernberg (1980) contended that any given system exist within a set of other systems, and that these systems are hierarchically and dynamically related to one another. The hierarchical aspect of the

relation refers to the view that systems are embedded both within subordinate systems as well as within superordinate systems (Wells, 1985). Among the systems there is an isomorphism, in which structures and processes that exist within a particular system are also reflected or found in other systems that are superordinate and subordinate to it (Brabender & Fallon, 1993). According to the group-as-a-whole perspective, behaviour (processes/dynamics) that manifests itself in one part of a system could be reflected in other parts of that system. Koortzen and Cilliers (2002) referred to the concept of parallel processes, which alludes to apparent resonance or similarities between systems. It implies that dynamics that develop collectively in systems can manifest simultaneously in different parts of the system. In practical terms, this would mean that the processes which are evident in one part of the system would be mirrored in the other super-ordinate and supra-ordinate systems.

3.7 Collectivism

The concept of collectivism refers to one part of the system acting, containing or carrying emotional energy on behalf of another (Wells, 1985). Practically, collectivism implies that no event happens in isolation and there is no coincidence in the behaviour of the system (Kets de Vries, 1991). Groups should therefore be studied in the context of the broader system with consultants aware of the fact that group behaviour may be the result of what is happening elsewhere in the system.

 With the assumptions and relevant concepts from the GRTM as the basis, the rationale for and hypothesis of the GRTM are now presented.