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For the love of them : a theoretical study of the collective in the United States military through Freudian and Fornarian theory

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ABSTRACT

This theoretical study examined the experience of the collective in the United States Military through a psychoanalytic psychosocial developmental framework, while drawing upon case material from *War,* Sebastian Junger's (2010) documentation of a U.S. platoon stationed in the Korangal Valley of Afghanistan. Freudian group theory was used to examine the strength-based perspective of *libidinal bonds* developed in the military collective. Fornarian theory, rooted in the early Object-Relations school, was presented to critically examine the regressive qualities of collectivization in the military, characterized by the *paranoid-schizoid position.* This examination explored the potential impact of the collective experience on the individual service member, including commentary on the military institutional structure, implications for re-integration into individualized U.S. civilian society, and ways in which social workers may better serve returning military members in holding the implications of the collective experience in the treatment alliance.

FOR THE LOVE OF THEM: A THEORETICAL STUDY OF THE COLLECTIVE IN THE UNITED STATES MILITARY THROUGH FREUDIAN AND FORNARIAN THEORY

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"…fear of death stems in large part from [their] incapacity to love anything but [their] own body. The inability to participate in other's lives stands in the way of [their] developing any inner resources sufficient to overcome the terror of death."
- J. Glenn Gray, *The Warriors*

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

On January 26th, 1945, Second Lieutenant Audie Murphy and his Company were stationed in the woods around Holtzwihr, France. With German infantry rapidly approaching in an aggressive counterattack, Murphy ordered his soldiers to withdraw while he remained at the outpost in enemy fire. Beside him, a tank was fired upon and broke into flames. "Then I saw Lieutenant Murphy do the bravest thing that I have seen any man do in combat. With the Germans only 100 yards away and still moving up on him, he climbed into the slowly burning tank destroyer and began firing," recalls First Lieutenant Walter W. Weispfenning (1945). Despite significant injury, Audie remained fighting; he held off the assaulting forces, and significantly slowed German advancement. When asked why he so courageously and independently faced the attacking forces Murphy replied: "They were killing my friends," (Junger, 2010, p. 121). This theoretical examination is interested in the circumstances by which soldiers, like Lieutenant Murphy, develop deep affinity to their fellow service members to the extend that they are willing to risk their lives in protection of their comrades.

The Experience of the Collective of the Military

Military members are trained and immersed into a specific military culture, which in many ways diverges significantly from civilian culture. Part of this military culture is simply the shared experience, including the shared physical experience of space, resources, and training. Beyond sharing the intimacy of the physical space and time, soldiers also share a common

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enemy, a mission resolve, and most ultimately, a willingness to risk their life within a shared context.

The bonds developed in the military innately are imbued with the mortal nature of the context of these relationships. Soldiers are expected to defend each other's lives, even if it jeopardizes their own. Mutual trust, in potentially extreme physically and psychologically circumstances is vital for the success and maintenance of military success. Thus, the bonds developed within the group context are paramount in upholding the military institution (Grossman, 2009; Hanoch, 1997; Junger, 2010; Richards, 1986).

Freud (1921) identifies the study of groups as an examination of the individual within the context of the larger whole; a whole that has been specifically "organized in some particular time, with some definite purpose," (p.3). Within the military, that organizing group depends on a shared commitment to the described purpose; a commitment strong enough that it creates a culture comprised of "young men [people of all ages] who are prepared for total devotion, and of complete selflessness in risking their lives to save others," (Hanoch, 1997, p.14).

This study examines the questions of how these close bonds are formed, what are the emotional characteristics of the group? Implications for this study, and areas of further research include how social workers may utilize this perspective of military culture in their clinical practice and policy advocacy. This theoretical thesis will examine these questions through the phenomenon of the *collective in the military*; individuals organized within the military with shared purpose and interdependency. The intent of this focus is to expand the scope of the emotional and psychological bonds developed in the U. S. military from a psychosocial developmental framework. The examination will focus on two theoretical formulations of the

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group process; Freudian theory, namely the *libidinal bond*, and Fornarian theory, specifically focused on Kleinian and Bionian theory of groups and psychosocial development.

Research Gaps

Much of the research on the experience in the military focuses on the culture of the group experience and the phenomenon of *unit cohesion*. The general group experience in the military has been documented as a significant source of strength and resiliency through combat. When individuals possess an acute identification with their group, as opposed to when acting alone, they can tolerate higher levels of pain, are calmer in active combatant engagement, and are more willing to act on aggressive impulses (Watson, 1978).

Unit cohesion, is a phenomenon, portrayed as a source of resiliency for the various stressors of combat, (Briley et al., 2007; Grossman, 2009). Unit cohesion has been identified as, 'unit-helping behaviors,' accountability to each other's comrades, and familial love, (Ehrart et al., 2006; Grossman, 2009; Richard, 1986). Individuals and their peers, and individuals and their superiors have been delineated into two levels of relationships and referred to as the horizontal and vertical strata of cohesion (Brailey et al., 2007; Rosen et al., 2003). Brailey, Vasterling, Proctor, Constans and Freidman (2007) further, defines this stratified sense of cohesion as:

> The formation of trust by an individual in both his or her compatriots and supervisors… this trust is considered by military leaders as the emotional foundation that prevents the breakdown of problem-focused communication and problem solving under high levels of threat. (p.497).

Ehrhard, Bliese and Thomas (2006) specify that cohesion is a combination of 'intra-peer bonding," and "subordinate-leader bonding," (p.162).

Unit cohesion does not encompass the analytic derivation of that bond, the developmental perspective of these bonds, nor does it encompass the psychosocial perspective of the individual within the military as an institution or cultural entity. This study examines the individual psychosocial experience of the collective in the military. First, using Sigmund Freud's (1921) theory on group psychology, this paper will explore a theory of group experience rooted in *Oedipal dynamics* and *libidinal* relationships. The second theoretical perspective used is that of Franco Fornari (1974), drawing on early Object-Relations theory. Through the work of Melanie Klein and Wilfred Bion, Fornari's framework examines the characteristics of the group's developmental position and the characteristics of the group culture, termed *group assumptions*.

Freudian (1921) theory of the group experience, presented in this theoretical examination, focuses on the processes that unify the group members both between each other, and between members and the 'leader' figure, like those of the vertical and horizontal strata of group cohesion noted in contemporary literature (Brailey et al., 2007; Rosen et al., 2003). This theoretical examination documents some of the analytic notions of the group as well as the individual developmental experience within the group.

The second theoretical lens draws from the Object-Relations school of psychoanalysis, and will examine a different perspective of the group process with implications for the role of the state in collectivization in the military. The work of Franco Fornari (1974), integrates the work of Melanie Klein and Wilfred Bion, to discuss the role of Object-Relations in the course of the group process in the U.S. military, offering a critique of the military institution.

Collectivism in the Military and its Implications for Social Work

Care for military members, veteran, and their families is of vital significance in contemporary society. A recent report published by the Institute of Medicine (2013) documented

that forty-four percent of the returning military members report difficulty in adjusting back to civilian life following their deployment. Many are suffering from multiple psychological-related issues. "On top of contending with lingering health problems, returning service members had other difficulties readjusting to civilian life," (p.2), thus alluding to the generalized nature of the challenges veterans face in their reintegration. Treatment options, as well as legislature reform has been a focus of government attention through policy and funding, thus care for service members has increasingly become a political and partisan issue, (Cox, 2014; Zornick, 2014). Both in policy and clinical practice, appropriate and effective care for military service members, veterans, and their families, is vitally important with the country's sizable population of military personnel seeking services. This theoretical examination intends to dissect some of the potential psychosocial experiences of the collective in the military, with propositions to strengthen and diversify social worker's therapeutic alliances with the population, through policy or clinical practice.

The next chapter will document the methodology of this theoretical examination of the experience of the collective in the military. Chapter III will discuss, in depth, the specificities of the experience of the collectivistic group in the United States military. Chapter IV will discuss the Freudian conceptualizations of the group and the bonds that unify the group, specifically utilizing Freud's (1921) *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. Chapter V will present the work of Franco Fornari on the group process in the military, drawn from his 1974 work, *Psychoanalysis of War*. Finally, this paper will culminate with a discussion and analysis of both theoretical frameworks, their integration and deviation, strengths and limitations, and the implications for individuals in the service, veterans, and social workers who serve this population from both a clinical and policy perspective.

CHAPTER II

Methodology

This theoretical examination is focused on the formation of collective bonds within the

United States military, and the effects of those bonds on the individual and the state. In addition,

this piece also intends to address the significance of this collectivization in regard to the field of

social work, particularly those working with members of the US military, their families, or those

developing policy pertaining to service members, veterans, and their families. This chapter will

present a brief outline of theoretical frames chosen to examine the collective in the US military.

The case material used in the examination will also be briefly presented. Finally, the chapter will

present the author's potential biases and a description of the strengths and limitations of this

theoretical technique.

Conceptual Frameworks

This theoretical exploration intends to engage with this topic from two psychoanalytic

perspectives to examine the collective experience as it pertains to individual development.

Freudian Group Theory. In the first theoretical presentation, Freudian (1921) group

theory will be discussed as it relates to the development and sustenance of the collective

experience in the United States military. Freud's seminal work on the structure, function, and

most significantly, the cementing affective connections in groups, advances perspectives of the

affection and camaraderie developed in group frames and the nature of those affective bonds.

Freudian theory addresses the strength-based distinctiveness of the group bond through the

human capacity to love, care, and sacrifice oneself for the loved *object*. The chapter discussing this theory will focus on the characteristics of the Freudian group, and most significantly on the *libidinal bonds* of the group, rooted in Freud's Oedipal theory.

Fornarian War Theory. Fornarian theory, based in the Kleinian early Object-Relations school, examines the human instinct toward war as an institutional presence through which the soldier may navigate their individual *persecutory anxieties* evocative of early childhood development. This chapter will examine the collective experience in the military as a group manifestation of maternal attachment and the developmental experience of the *paranoid-schizoid position* in the group context. This theoretical examination is similarly rooted in a strength-based perspective, Fornari, notes that engaging in war and acting upon the impulses based in this developmental stage is *defensive*. However this theoretical examination includes space for a critique of the 'state,' the institution of war, through which regression is supported and sustained.

Analysis. Freudian and Fornarian theory will be discussed simultaneously in an analysis of collectivism in the United States military, and its strengths, limitation, and implications for the field of social work.

Case Material.

This paper will make reference to Sebastian Junger's (2010) documentation of his experience as a reporter embedded with a platoon of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, stationed in the Korengal Valley of Afghanistan between 2007 and 2008. This work explores the intimate relationships between the soldiers while also documenting the physical experience of the military engagement during that period. While Junger includes many interviews with soldiers from the platoon, he also includes reflections as a civilian. Therefore, this work is presented in this study

to ground the theoretical perspective while reflecting the position of a civilian in this theoretical exploration.

Author Biases.

The potential bias in this study is primarily associated with the author's socio-cultural and political identity. I have never been in the military, and have few social or familial ties with people who have been in the military. Politically, I am often critical of military engagement, and the violence which that institution propagates. While working with combat veterans suffering from combat-related PTSD in the course of an eight-month clinical internship, I was inspired to examine the group bonding experience more deeply. My brief clinical work with people from this cultural background, and my civilian perspective, may bias this examination and therefore, must be explicitly part of this discourse.

Strengths and Limitations of Methodological Technique.

This theoretical analysis has strengths and limitations as a methodology for engaging with this subject. This examination is focused on the analytic conceptualizations of the collective experience as formed through the U.S. military. A theoretical lens opens this discussion to span from the individual to the institutional, drawing on pivotal psychoanalytic theory. Utilizing this conceptual frame, one could apply this research in analytically informed clinical practice with military members, veterans, and their families. This theoretical framework also provides opportunity to propose critique of institutional capitalization on the individual experience of the military collective. Though empirical investigation of this topic has been examined through the lenses of 'group bonding' and 'unit cohesion,' I propose that this does not adequately encompass the individual psychosocial developmental perspective, which is vital for adequate, effective clinical practice and policy. This theoretical examination is a preliminary exploration of this

topic and, I propose, could support and frame future research in empirically based policy, and clinical practice theory. I suggest that a foundation of analytic theory of military collectivism will strengthen that examination.

CHAPTER III

Phenomenon

Each branch of the United States armed forces has its unique structure, culture, and both stated and unstated rules by which it functions. The culture of the military vacillates, in accordance with domestic circumstances, and the theater of wartime. This paper concerns the commonality of the military experience, and the strength rooted in that common involvement. Drawing on the similarity of experience, this chapter will explore the experience of 'the collective' in the military, first by examining the culture of the military structure, the process of becoming a member of the military, and the emotional aspect of the military belonging. The second part of this chapter will explore the experience of *the collective* in the military through both theoretical and empirical research.

The Military

This section will examine aspects of the military structure to demonstrate the some of the institutional experience of collectivism inherent in the organization of the United States Armed Forces.

Demographics and Development. According to the U.S. government published data, as of 2012, the United States Military active duty forces was comprised of 1,388,028 individuals, the vast majority (82.2%) of whom are enlisted members and 17.2% of whom are officers. The Army has the largest number of soldiers at 546,057 people, within which 472,562 are male, and 73,495 are female. Of the active duty members, 68% are identified as White, 18.3% identified as

African American, and 11.3% are Hispanic or Latino. Of enlisted members, 48.8% are age 25 or under, while 13.3% of officers are 25 or under. Among enlisted members, 0.7% have an Advanced degree and 5.2% have a Bachelor degree (Congressional Budget Office, 2007; Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, 2012). These statistics highlight both the racial diversity, general lack of higher education, and male majority of the enlisted community, thus providing a basis for the examination of the construction of the collective community.

Indoctrination. A hallmark of joining the military is the oath to which each soldier swears. The oath occurs well into the recruitment process, and a step before basic training (Military Advantage 2014), and has spanned across generations and locations of war (Holmes, 1985). Taking the oath is usually the first significant ceremonial procedure in formalizing one's military commitment, as it is an explicit demarcation of the formal commitment to the institution with its shared expectations and values (Shay, 1994).

The tradition of the military indoctrination as a formal oath encapsulates some of the emotional and social transformations in entering the military from the civilian world. The oath signifies the decision to pledge loyalty to the U.S. government. It marks the shift from civilian society and, with it, different (and sometimes opposing) rules of action and behavior. Holmes (1985) compares this experience to a "new baptism," explaining that this process marks, "the crossing a well-defined border within the fabric of society, and becoming a member of an organization which, in the last analysis, may require him to kill of be killed," (p.31). Glenn Gray (1970), documented in his *Reflections of Men in Battle,* that some soldiers experienced the oath as the point in their indoctrination when they realized were committed. Some found it made them feel trapped, while others felt the oath they swore freed them from civilian perceptions of acceptable behavior and the moral consequences of violence.

Basic Training. Basic training is the next step in the indoctrination to the military. Basic training is an intensive physical and emotional preparation regime in which soldiers are instructed or 'reprogrammed' to meet military demands. At the onset of basic training, each soldier is physically brought to a level of uniformity. This physically homogenizing process is exemplified in specific details such as, strict protocols for hair grooming; men's heads are buzzed one after another in very close proximity; uniforms are distributed and thereafter mandatory; living space becomes completely communal (Shay, 1995). This conformity helps to physically differentiate the culture of the military as distinct from that of civilian life. Karsten (1978) reflects on this process of unifying and indoctrinating the new recruits in training, "…among its objectives was the implanting of the military ethos, by which was generally meant subordinating the recruit's self-image to the collective identity of the group," (p.21).

This unifying process is institutionalized at military academies in which becoming a soldier, the process of 'breaking down and being re-created,' is established in the curriculum. Speaking of West Point, Gerald Goodwin (1951) stated, "[Basic training's] product was a soldier who could fight, who could submerge his individuality in prompt implicit obedience…" (Ellis and Moore, 1976). Reconstructing each individual in uniformity contributes to the quickly collectivized and reconstructed identity of the 'soldier,' (Ben-Ari, 1998).

Rhetoric. The terminology and normalized discourse of the military is formally introduced in this period of training. Aggressive, combative, short, loud, and abrupt language defines much of the military discourse. Drill often includes terse statements demarcating cultural norms concerning the identity of the individual soldiers, the military, and 'the enemy.' Harsh, and commonly gendered, phrases often focus on the soldier's 'manhood,' and 'strength.' and tend to include severe depreciating comments about the soldier's capability. Violent language becomes

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normalized and ritualized. Battle chants, marching songs, and jargon have been utilized by the military throughout time to confirm violent ideology reinforcing the propensity for aggression, retaliation and the omnipotent strength of the military collective (Grossman, 1995; Holmes, 1985; Shay, 1995; Watson, 1978).

Structure. The structure of the United States military is broken into units of soldiers. The broadest collection of soldiers is the *division,* comprised of about 10,000 people. The division is composed of smaller groups of soldiers arriving at the *company* of about 100 soldiers. The smallest defined group is the *firing squad*, consisting of four soldiers ("United States of America", 2009; Kadis and Walls, 2009).

Researcher Rodney Clark studied the psychological elements of soldiers in combat, examining group identification and cohesion within the squad. Clark found that, while soldiers are inter-reliant in many ways he identified five elements that he deemed crucial in making the squad the optimally effective. The squad must have delineated management, clear demarcation of acceptable behavior, clear modeling by squad leaders, and sustained emotional support between the soldiers (Watson, 1978).

Further research has found that squads composed of soldiers who were predominately sociable, confident in their physical abilities, generally homogeneous in their outlook toward themselves in their military career and society, and had a high level of respect for one another, performed most effectively (Watson, 1978). Soldiers with military experience are more productive squad members; therefore military career service members are considered a great asset to the team; people who are dedicated to the military are more effective at their job (Congressional Budget Office 2007; Lewis, 2007).

The psychological homogeneity of the squad is a measurable determinant of an individual's ability to contribute to the group as a 'good fighter,' the more unified the group—the more collectivized—the more successful they will be in fulfilling the military mission. These characterological predispositions, paired with the specific and targeted training, helps to ensure optimal military performance (Watson, 1978).

Aggression and Fear. Recruitment, and basic training are both experiences through which the emotional tone of the military experience is disseminated and normalized. Comprehensive training will help the recruit not only face the strenuous physical demands of the military but also allow them to endure the psychological strains of combat.

Training. A significant part of the military training is to coach the military code and unify soldiers' emotional and physical actions (Holmes, 1986). One aspect of military training involves systematically guiding soldiers to overcoming their personal or moral qualms about killing or being killed. Soldiers are taught to annihilate any hesitancy to place their life in danger. They are trained to follow orders and to do so without question (Grossman, 1995).

Three components in training soldiers to act lethally, Dave Grossman (1995) identifies are, the process of desensitization, conditioning, and denial. Holmes (1985) further cites consciousness as an enemy in training soldiers, the more detached and route the behavioral conditioning, the more successful the soldier will perform. Conditioning collective responses and uniform action through drill practices refines this instinct and routinizes behavior and reaction. The soldier is exclusively conditioned to, "do what you think is best, knowing you have to do what you have to do to win the fight," (p. 41). Conditioning responses to, otherwise overwhelming, fear ensures that the pressure of battle won't overpower the need to act in accordance with the necessary response as defined by the military mission.

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Military researchers have studied ways in which soldiers can be trained to overcome fear through dehumanization. Watson (1978) argues that there is an emphasis on minimizing physical distress in favor for the less tangible psychological distress. He notes that psychological torture has become increasingly commonplace in contemporary warfare. Further, the military institution has a long history of deprioritizing, or not acknowledging, the psychological wounds as compared to the physical 'battle scars'.

Narratives of strength and capability are qualities that the U.S. military, importantly, focuses on when armoring soldiers for the demands of war, while also promoting dehumanization of the *Other*. Through extensive physical and psychological training, the military inculcates a sense of omnipotence, of overwhelming and profound capability, which is more invincible than any possible threat (Shay, 1995). Through modern military technology and calculated training this has become more of a physical reality for the U.S. military in contemporary, technologically sophisticated warfare (Grossman 1995).

The Collective

The military is a highly structured organization comprised of specific, delineated groupings of soldiers. Labeling each subgrouping is emblematic of the institutionalization of military alliances (Grossman 2009; Lewis, 2007). As opposed to the individual acting alone, in a group the individual can both withstand and inflict more pain (Watson, 1978). Further, the group is a protective factor from physical and mental breakdown and even death (Gabriel, 1986). Aspects of the group experience have been extensively linked to the quality and efficacy of the military service.

This paper is focused on the culture developed around this unity, as presented as a collective, meaning a group of people working together, as equals, within a common culture and

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unified goal. Built on the structural unity inherent in the construction of the military and the solider, a sense of a collective is represented in feelings that are frequently ascribed to military experience, such as: "The communal experience we call comradeship, is thought…to be especially moral and the one genuine advantage of battle that peace can seldom offer," (Gray, 1959, p.39). This chapter will examine the experience of the collective as documented and researched from the perspective of unit cohesion, homogeneity of the unit, and the sense of the 'Other.'

Unit Cohesion. Military research has focused on the factors determining unit efficacy in accordance with the military institutional perspective. It has been documented that the more 'cohesive' the group, the more successful the performance.

Unit cohesion is documented as a source of resiliency for the various stressors of combat, (Briley et al., 2007; Grossman, 2009). Unit cohesion has been described as 'unit-helping behaviors,' accountability to each other's comrades, and familial love, (Ehrhart et al., 2006; Grossman, 2009; Richards, 1986). The individual and their peers, and individual and their superior have been defined as two levels of relationships, referred to as horizontal and vertical strata (Brailey et al., 2007; Rosen et al., 2003). Brailey, Vasterling, Proctor, Constans and Freidman (2007) defines this stratified sense of cohesion as, "the formation of trust by an individual in both his or her compatriots and supervisors… This trust is considered by military leaders as the emotional foundation that prevents the breakdown of problem-focused communication and problem solving under high levels of threat," (p. 497). Ehrhart, Bliese and Thomas (2006) also specify that cohesion is a combination of 'intra-peer bonding," and "subordinate-leader bonding," (p. 162).

Experiments have further focused on unit cohesion in isolation from the 'leader.' George Clay (1966) found that in the circumstance in which there was not a leader present in a firefight the soldiers' ability to fire in coordination, and with physical cohesion, replaced the significance of the leader in control of the unit. The specific size of the group has been tested as a relevant contributor to the inter-solider cohesion. A sense of cohesion is most pertinent at the smaller level of group, such as the squad. Harold Gerard (1968) found the optimal number for maximum cohesion was five, while the US Army has documented that groups of four were maximally effective, especially when the group was kept together at all times. Cohesion, as termed in military research, is a limited scope of study in that it generally refers to the relationships between individuals, and doesn't adequately encompass the emotional, cultural, and individual developmental experience.

Homogeneity. Homogeneity within the group is an essential factor in the efficacy of the unit. The sense of similarity contributes to the individuals' sense of belonging, which in turn strengthens their willingness to act in accordance to the group demand. The physical homogeneity of the group, as supported by the institutional military structure, provides a sense of unity and determination to contribute to the group cause.

Within the group of soldiers, cultural homogeneity contributes to a strong sense of unity and success. "When men were similar in their levels of aspiration (for life in general and in the army in particular) and where they had similar levels of confidence in their physical prowess, the units were better in combat," (Watson, 1978, p. 119). Further, another aspect to promote homogeneity and 'in-group' identity is to formulate a unique culture within the group that is shared exclusively by its members. This collectively defined code, Watson (1978) notes, transcends civilian differences by creating "their own words for familiar things, their own

idiosyncratic ways of doing routine procedures," (p.119). These strong tropes keep moral high, and maintain group solidarity.

The Other. The other side of homogeneity and group-identification is the conceptualization of the other. Defining oneself in opposition to a sense of 'other' can be a psychological force that both provides meaning and purpose while simultaneously cementing the group's internal identity. Directing aggression toward a common, unified construction of an enemy functions to keep soldiers fighting and banded together. The enemy is a way to hold blame and a rallying point to mobilize retribution (Shay, 1994). This "us against them mentality," is reinforced in rhetoric and group-identification (Shay, 1994, p. 23). A sense of strength and moral righteousness helps to delineate against, and denigrate the 'other.' *Military Times* research poll (2003) found that of service members surveyed, two thirds stated, "once in the military they are wrapped in a culture of honor and mortality," and that the moral standard of service members surpasses even their loyalty to their own nation (Lewis, 2007, p.380). In the military, this sense of the *Other*, is not just the physical enemy but people who could crudely resemble the enemy as well. The construction of the *Other* is reinforced through language, often by the reduction of the enemy to derogatory, and racialized slurs (Grossman, 1996).

The Collective, the "Mysterious Fraternity." The sense of cohesion, the homogeneity of the unit, and a sense of the common *Other* enemy, all contribute to a sense of a unified cultural construction of collectivism within the military. This collective experience is evidenced in a marked delineation between civilian and military culture. "Inculcate the military ethos in recruits, to ensure that the individual values which prevail in most civilian societies are replaced by the group spirit and group loyalties," (Holmes, 1986, p.36). This culture of loyalty, interdependence, and group spirit has been identified as the source of courage to confront the

overwhelming stressors of the military or (in more extreme circumstances) battle, which otherwise threatens to overwhelm the ego (Holmes, 1986; Junger, 2010; Shaw, 2007).

In wartime engagement, as the stressors of war cause increased psychological and moral stress soldiers draw the most strength and loyalty from their immediate unit, the soldiers whose behaviors are known and witnessed most intimately (Shay, 1994). "Men fight mainly for their comrades; this has become conventional wisdom even among civilians. Prolonged exposure to danger and the profound stain of battle compel this contradiction of loyalty to some degree in any war," (p.23).

Both scholars and soldiers have attributed their ability to endure the stress of war to the "mysterious fraternity," "brotherhood," or "family," or a love that transcends a civilian correlate (Holmes, 1986; Shay, 1994; Stein, 2007). Herbert Spiegel (1944) wrote:

What enabled them to attack, and attack, and attack week after week in mud, rain, dust and heat until the enemy was smashed? It seemed to me that the drive was more a positive than a negative one. It was love more than hate. Love manifested by regard for their comrades who shared the same dangers… and an urge to contribute to the task and success of their group and unit. (p. 382).

Through the intensity of the threat to life in warfare, Glenn Gray reflects that the bonds formed from that paramount interdependence are both unique and vital. "This confraternity of danger and exposure is unequaled in forging links among people of unlike desire and temperament, links that are utilitarian and narrow but no less passionate because of their accidental and general character," (p. 27). He elaborates, "We are able to disregard personal danger at such moments by transcending the self, by forgetting our separateness," (p.35). Gabriel (1986) underscores the strength of the collective:

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Interpersonal bonding is only one of the forces that keep men in battle. The weight of

bonding and its positive effect is highly dependent on the ability of the unit as a structure

and a set of ideas, a culture, to maintain men in their roles as soldiers. No matter how

strong personal attachments are, if they are not consonant with the structure of the

military unit, the role of the soldier, and the division of labor in the unit and mission

performance, they will not be enough to maintain men in battle. (p. 20).

Junger (2010) speaks to this collectivizing bond in the military, noting, albeit in the

gendered term of 'brotherhood':

As defined by soldier, the brotherhood is the willingness to sacrifice one's life for the

group. That's a very different thing from friendship, which is entirely a function of how

you feel about another person. Brotherhood has nothing to do with feelings; it has to do

with how you define your relationship to others. It has to do with the rather profound

decision to put the welfare of the group above your personal welfare. (p.276).

This paper will now explore theoretical conceptualizations of the nature of the collective,

through the perspective of individual psychosocial development, with implications for the field

of social work in both clinical practice and policy.

CHAPTER IV

Freudian Group Theories

This chapter will explore the theoretical components of Freud's (1921) group theory,

Massenpsychologie, and relevant commentaries on this theory pertaining to collectivism

developed in the military, while drawing upon case material from *War* (2010). First this chapter

will explore Freudian Group theory, as explicated in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the*

Ego (1921), including relevant theories that inspired this framework within the historical context

relevant to this theoretical formation. This chapter will touch on Freud's theories through

sociological and political lens, in conjunction with the psychoanalytic, to emphasize the

relevancy of this theory in examining the construction and maintenance of the collective in the

United States Military.

Freud in History and Context

Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, was published originally in 1921,

significantly a few years after World War I. Freud's preceding text, *Totem and Taboo* (1912),

was Freud's first theoretical analysis focused more explicitly on socio-cultural and

anthropological theorizations, demarcating a shift Freud made in his later years toward social and

philosophical thought (Thwaites, 2007).

This theoretical perspective is pertinent to the study of military collectivism in that it is

directly applicable to the construction of the military and the uniquely powerful bonds formed

within that structure. Freud's group theory continues to be a point of departure for theorists

examining group function, including political theorists who discuss the construction of collectivistic structural functioning in various settings (Laclau 2005; Parkin-Gounelas, 2012).

Freud drew primarily upon two theorists when positing *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, most directly was Gustave Le Bon's *The Crowd: a Study of the Popular Mind (1896)*. Le Bon's study provides a base for Freud's theoretical examination into the life of the group, however Le Bon's theory is widely critiqued as excessively harsh, demeaning, and used to legitimate fascistic repression of masses (Freud, 1921; Parkin-Gounelas, 2012). Freud summarizes many of Le Bon's theories of groups, adding theory of how the bonding occurs within the group. Both Le Bon's outline, and Freud's, essential and strength-oriented augmentation of this theory will be presented in this chapter.

Second, Freud drew heavily on William McDougall 's *The Group Mind: A Sketch of the Principles of Collective Psychology with Some Attempt to Apply Them to the Interpretation of National Life and Character*, published in 1920. McDougall, a British professor at Harvard University, published *Group Mind* in an attempt to document the mental life of groups, after previous theoretical publications on the general subject of social psychology. McDougall also notes in the preface, that though *Group Mind* was written before World War I, it is highly relevant to the experience of war.

Freud's study of group psychology was conceived from an evolution in psychoanalytic thought interested in examining the person in environment, as opposed to the predominant individual-focused analytic theories, which had previously been his focus. While Freud noted ambivalence about transitioning from the individual clinical lens to a more mass theoretical scope, he asserted that group theory was an important and inherent extension of individual theory, (Freud, 1921; Holowachak, 2012; Lawrence & Karim, 2007). In fact, he argues, group

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theory is an essential element in understanding holistically the individual psyche (Holowachak, 2012).

Group psychology, *massenpsychologie* as Freud terms it, is the investigation of the individual within their membership groups, such as their race, class, nationality, religion, or institution, (Freud 1921; Holowachak, 2012). The group is "a crowd of people who have been organized into a group at some particular time for some definite purpose," (Freud, 1921, p.3). A group of individuals collected around these conditions, Freud states, forms its own ethos unique to the circumstance around which these individuals are collected. The psychological experience of the individual is embedded in these systems to which they belong. And the theory of examining the unconscious upholds queries into collective experiences as well. "It is through representation of instinctual violent drives [unconscious processes] that human beings can live in a collective," (Lawrence & Karim, 2007, p. 226).

Freud's and US Military Structure

Le Bon and Freud both posit that the 'crowd' or 'group'—or, as this paper posits, the 'collective,'—is a unification of, often, broadly diverse individuals, united through at least one commonality to form a unified, and thusly empowered mass. Le Bon (1895) expounds on this theory, relating the group formation to that of a new organism and thusly containing new properties that were not previously possessed by individuals in isolation. He states:

> Whoever be the individuals that compose it, however like or unlike be their mode of life, their occupations, their character, or their intelligence, the fact that they have been transformed into a group puts them in possession of a sort of collective mind which makes them feel, think, and act in a manner quite different from that in which each individual of them would feel, think, and act were he in a state of isolation. There are

certain ideas and feeling which do not come into being, or do not transform themselves

into acts except in the case of individuals forming a group…exactly as cells which

constitute a living body form by their reunion a new being which displays characteristics

very different from those possessed by each of the cells singularly. (p. 29)

The new group formed, according to Le Bon, possesses characteristics apart from those

of the individuals of which it is comprised. Three new characteristics of the group, all of which

transcend the capacity of the individual alone, are a sense of *empowerment*, as aspect of

contagion, and a *susceptibility to manipulation*. These three characteristics of the group are

heavily relied on in the military collective formation, as they are crucial components to the

success of the military operations.

Three Qualities of the Individual in the Group

The first characteristic of the group, *empowerment,* Le Bon describes as an "invincible

power," which overwhelms the superego instincts. In the group, Le Bon postulates, the

individual has just enough anonymity to yield responsibility to the group, which provides

protection in relieving the inhibition of the superego. Freud describes this as the ability to shed

"repressions of his [their] unconscious instincts," (Freud, 1924, p.10). This group function,

Freud adds, is not a manifestation of a constructed empowerment so much as permissiveness of

one's innate is drive, which is otherwise kept unconscious, and contained (Holowchak, 2012).

Contagion, the second characteristic of the group, is the element of newfound individual

susceptibility to give oneself to the group mind. Le Bon exemplified this contagious nature as the

individuals' newfound willingness to "readily sacrifice his personal interest to the collective

interest," (Freud, 1920, p. 11; Holowchak, 2012). Junger (2010) documents willingness to self-

sacrifice for a comrade in describing a firefight during which two soldiers came to the rescue of a

third two fell in the midst of the fire. "Later I asked Hijar whether he had felt any hesitation before running out there. 'No,' Hijar said, 'he'd do that for me. Knowing that is the only thing that makes any of this possible,'" (p.69).

Finally, the third defining quality of the group is a *redefinition of the individuals moral foundation* based on the demands or requests of the group demand. Both Le Bon and Freud relate this state to one of being in 'hypnosis,' (a term which must be appreciated in its historical context). These acts contain some level of reciprocity, and each individual member is now compelled to the same impetuousness due to this mutual commitment (Freud, 1920; Holowchak, 2012).

These three traits of the group are interrelated and highlight the strength of the group to unify, collectivize, and achieve beyond the scope of the individual capacity. Freud further expounded upon these characteristics of to inquire into the nature of these individual experiences once collectivized through the group structure. Through these three characteristics, the individual ego is subsumed within the group, and the group itself is imbued with unique qualities and strengths, representative of this willingness to give one's ego in the service of the collective. Freud expands on the three characteristics of the group to posit how the group is formed and what maintains this level of cohesion.

Characteristics of the Collective

Freud's (1921) seminal expansion, on Le Bon's (1986) theory, is the addition of the *libidinal tie* within group membership. This love is present in the group both as a love for each other and a love for a leader, which is shared by the group. Before examining the formation of this bond, the characteristics of the group will first be explicated in support of the collective and the frame through which this profound bond of love develops.

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Freud (1921) theorizes that the group frame and structure is delineated and definite. The frame is clearly recognized and held by all members. Members are cognizant of the "definite idea [formed] of the nature, composition, functions and capacities of the group," (Freud, 1921, p.30). This frame, both McDougall and Freud suggest, facilitates and promotes the emotional bonding with the group, essential to the group function. This frame is upheld by clearly assigned roles, and specializations within the group (Freud, 1921). By this clarity, every person has their purpose and group belonging.

Within this established frame the group of individuals organizes themselves and begins to make unity though common bonds. The group innately, according to Freud, is inclined toward grouping and belonging, so much so that to express dissent from the group would undo the much-desired belonging. The group therefore demands homogeneity, and compliance with the homogenous code of the group (Freud, 1921). Through this collective instinct, even those who, in other circumstances many be divided—such as, in the military, the broadly socio-economically, religiously, racially, geographically diverse individuals—are quickly unified in the collective "Originally rivals, they have succeeded in identifying themselves with one another by means of a similar love for the same object," (Freud, 1921, p.87). And through this process of unification of otherwise dissimilar individuals, Freud notes, groups will choose to rally so fully in their identification, commonality, and 'group spirit' that they uphold the social duty defined within the group, choosing to ignore the history of social envy, rivalry, or antagonism present in the non-collectivized past.

The collective spirit of homogeneity, Freud posits, occurs only when the group collectively chooses to be equal and willing to identify with each other thus producing this new identity; that of the group, the collective creature (Freud, 1921). The group's ability to find

commonality is essential to the strength of their union and survival, "the higher degree of this mental homogeneity, the more readily do the individuals form a psychological group," (1921, p. 27).

The collective mind has new conscious and unconscious processes. The group is largely id driven, following impulse with "a sense of omnipotence; the notion of impossibility disappears for the individual in a group," (Freud; p. 15). This dis-inhibition contributes to extreme thoughts. As Le Bon describes, "if a suspicion is expressed, it instantly is changed to incontrovertible certainty; a trace of antipathy is turned into furious hatred," (Le Bon, 1895, p. 56). In the dissolution of individuals' conscious inhibitions, the id-driven mass therefore is easily influenced. "The impulses which a group obeys may be generous or cruel, heroic or cowardly, but they are always so imperious that no personal interest, not even that of self-preservation, can make itself felt," (Le Bon, 1895, p.41). Le Bon, here, taking a blatantly condescending stance, evoking the primitive nature of groups, while Freud instead cites the capacity for heroic altruism, "genius in intellectual creation," (p.25) derived from that same id-driven nature (Freud, 1921; Parkin-Gounelas, 2012).

The quality of contagion within the group facilitates intensified affective reactions, around which the group falls into synch. A single emotional experience pervades and defines the collective emotional experience. This also leaves the group vulnerable to suggestibility (this characteristic relates to the demand for a leader, which will be investigated further in the chapter), (Freud, 1921; Thwaites, 2007).

The extremity and impulsivity of the group mind contributes to a demand for extreme or "excessive" stimulus, (Freud, 1921, p. 17). The baseline may demand consistent, and highly intensive experience, repeated consistently. This is evocative of the military indoctrination

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rituals, such as boot camp and the nature of combat and the affinity some experience toward that process.

The collective utilizes unique symbols and signifiers, which the group adopts and defines themselves (Freud, 1921). The group expresses themselves through symbols, images, and associations, rather than long, reflective deliberation. Laclau (2012) further describes this component of the group as the "hegemonic linkages under and through common signifiers ie. Democracy or justice," (Parkin-Gounelas, 2012, p.50). He further explicates, "communitarian space [necessitates] constructing a unity by means of some symbols around which that unity is crystalized," (Laclau, 2012, p. 56). These symbols support the uniqueness of the group, the bond, the shared values and purpose. This symbolic emphasis is paired with a group respect for tradition. McDougall also espouses the importance of traditions, customs, and habits as defining characteristics of the group, (Freud, 1920). Through tradition and symbols, the group is capable of creating a new culture, producing folklore, and innovating language (Parkin-Gounelas, 2012). These traditions are further important in supporting the definition of roles, relations, values, purpose, and morale between the group members.

These qualities and characteristics of the group were primarily proposed by Le Bon's theorization of the group. Freud (1921) then notes, this leave the question of what is responsible for this collectivization? How do these individuals come together to form this new group? Freud turns to this question in the remainder of this theoretical formulation.

Collectivization through Love

Identification with group members. Freud's suggestion of the essence of the group bonding is the libidinal drive. This libidinal drive is not sexualization but the love-instinct, love for the other and love for the self (Freud, 1921; Frosh, 1987; Garbiel, 1983; Holowchak, 2012).

This is a bond that mirrors the love of one with whom there is a sexual connection, and this evocation is displayed in similar characteristics such as desire for close proximity, shared experience, identification, and willingness to self-sacrifice for the other, (Freud, 1921; Gabriel, 1983). In *War,* Junger (2010) describes this point noting, "Men [soldiers] form friendships that are not at all sexual but contain as much of the devotion and intensity of a romance," (p.155).

This powerful bond, Freud suggests, is the adhesive of the group, holding the group together and supporting the maintenance of homeostatic harmony within the group. Thus, making the powerful conclusion that each individual, on the most primary level contributes to the group "for the love of them," (p.40). "It is love which turns egoism into altruism, it is love which holds the group together," (Gabriel, 1983, p.35). This love and identification, becomes the substance of the group cohesion (1983). It is this love relationship, Freud (1921) states, which "constitutes the essence of the soul of the group, *massenseele*," (p.6). Junger (20120) exemplifies the power of this experience, stating:

> Medics are renowned for their bravery, but the ones I knew described it more as terror of failing to save the lives of their friend. The only thing they're thinking about when they run forward to treat a casualty is getting there before the man bleeds out or suffocates; incoming bullets barely register," (p.58).

Love for the leader. The second component of the libidinal tie, which Freud attributes to the reason the ties between members are capable of such strength, is the libidinal tie to the authority. The group desires a mastering force that is commanding and instills a sense of fear. These figures provide a model for their heroes, whom the group demands to be "strong or even violent," (Freud, 1921, p.17; Holowchak, 2012). The leaders of the group are looked to as forces of domineering authority. Freud, citing Le Bon's theory, speaks of the role of the leader stating:

He must himself be held in fascination by a strong faith (in an idea) in order to awaken

the group's faith; he must possess a strong and opposing will, which the group, which has

no will of its own, can accept from him… Leaders make themselves felt by means of the

ideas by which they themselves are fanatical believers (p. 21).

Thereby the leader is an *Object*, not so much an individual human as a signifier of a

cultural ideal, values, will, and symbolic rallying point. Thwaite (2007) elucidates this broader

conceptualization of the *Object* stating:

It may just as easily be something that is not a person at all, but has quite a different sort

of existence (the passion for trains which brings hobbyists together, or the idea of a

Nation that's sustains patriotism and is qualitatively different than any or even all of the

actual members of that nation. (p. 129).

The construction of the leader is through an illusion that there is a commanding force that

loves all the individuals within the group equally, (Freud, 1921). The illusion facilitates a

collectivism through which equality is quickly established. The collective is derived, therefore,

by the mutuality of the individuals' relationship to command, which is structurally akin to the

Oedipal dynamic, the love for the same 'parental' figure, (Brunner, 1998; Frosh, 1987; Hirst &

Wolley, 1982). The leader represents the same symbolic role as the primal father to which the

'child' wishes to destroy and to which the subject aspires, (Brunner, 1998; Holowchawk, 2012).

In Junger's *War* he notes that quite literally the men of his unit identified the sergeant through a

paternal nickname. "The men called him Pops... I never saw him look even nervous during a

fight, much less scared. He commanded his men like he was directing traffic," (p.21). Further,

Junger (2010) identifies the way the collective is unified and equalized in their relationship to the

commanding figure, "The best way to ensure that no one fucked up was to inflict collective

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punishment [from the Staff Sergeant] on the entire squad, because that meant everyone would be watching everyone else," (p.162).

The Oedipal drive to destroy, identify with, and love the primal father, leader, *Object*, represents the process by which the individual internalizes that *Object* as the ego ideal. The ego ideal is commonly identified in the sense of self to which the ego aspires, based on the demands of the environment, but to which it cannot itself alone meet. "The primal father is the group ideal, which governs the ego in the place of the ego ideal," (Freud, 1921, p.100). This ideal is often first represented in the individual's development, in the parent-object. The ego ideal is relevant to the experience of being in love, or loving; the object of love represents or "substitutes for some unattained ego ideal of our own," (Freud, 1921, p. 74). The Oedipal figure, the authority, represents the embodiment of the ego ideal, a combination of the primal father and the symbolic linkages which define the group, and to which the individual continually strives to achieve.

The libidinal drive to achieve the ego ideal is a constant pursuit. It is "a bond all the stronger for its impossibility: a possible bond risks dissolution once its conditions are met, but an impossible bond can never be met, and so its obligations and ties can only multiply," (Thwaite, 2007, p.125). Thus, striving to achieve the ego ideal qualities is a constant pursuit and therefore keeps individuals ever presently engaged with that desire, and committed to the mission. Every individual collectively sheds their individualized ego ideal and substitutes it for the ego ideal embodied in the 'leader figure, ' (Freud, 1921). The leader however is insignificant according to Freud (1921) in the absence of the libidinal ties between the group members and the leader *Object*

Concluding Remarks. Freud states it is love, libidinal ties, that maintain the collective, and with the libidinal ties, the representations of the common mission, goals, values, and unique cultural homogenous identification, (Freud, 1921; Gabriel, 1983). The libidinal tie between the group members is more powerful than the libidinal drive toward the primal father, the initial bond, (Thwaites, 2007), suggesting that the collective itself maintains the cohesion. The object of affection, the nature of the collective and all it stands for, i.e. the military, the mission, the group omnipotence, "can be immune from the sort of criticism the superego or ego-ideal usually offers of oneself, and even capable of over-riding the superego," (Thwaites, 2007, p.128). The combination of identification with the fellow members, and ego idealization, both through the symbolic linkages and Oedipal linkages, constructs and maintains the collective functioning. Junger (2010), in an interview with one solider notes the love-motivated, self-maintaining the military structure in the moment in which the collective experienced loss, "For a long time I hated God," O'Bryne told me. "Second Platoon fought like animals after that," (p.60).

Freud extends his argument stating that a consequence of this intense bonding is that there is a submission of individual freedom, a surrender of individuality to serve, with intense love the collective. The collective love, Freud argues controls the sense of imminent threat and danger, while also mitigating the sense of panic. It is only when the love-bond slackens that the sense of danger becomes more acute and panic sets in, thus underlying the mortal significance of actively maintaining the collective bonds (Freud, 1921). Further this underscores a weakness in the collective, in that if the bonds relax, the ability to be 'contagiously' afflicted by dread and panic can rapidly dismantle the function of the collective. The relaxing of the libidinal bonds, or the diffusion of the enemy/sense of danger can induce this dismantling, and therefore both these components must be securely shared within the collective.

The bond of love also evokes the bond of hate. The group is held together in the collective by a force of love, however, that love is in opposition to the *Other* outside the group, to which the collective is explicitly unloving, particularly as it is perceived to threaten the beloved. This illusive *Other*, who is located beyond the containment of the collective love, therefore easily transforms into the hated enemy (Freud, 1921).

If the United States military does form a group cohesion akin to the collective, a unique and powerful bond, complete with a cultural identity, then Freudian notions of libidinal bonds may elucidate the inter and intra-psychic experience of the group. The significance of that emotional experience is relevant for social workers examining the quality and nature of the bonds in the military experience, and the strength and resiliency in an experience, which can so profoundly threaten the ego. However, as noted, the bonds can serve to fuel opposition, anger, resentment, and violent rage. These potential corruptions of the libidinal tie will be explored in the discussion chapter at which point the implications of this theoretical frame will further be examined.

CHAPTER V

Fornarian Theory of War

This chapter will explore the work of Franco Fornari and his theorization of the group process in war, as presented in his 1974 work, *Psychoanalysis of War.* First this chapter will provide a background of Fornari, including a brief introduction of the work of Melanie Klein and Wilfred Bion, both of whom contribute significantly to Fornari's conceptualizations of the group process in war. Finally Fornari's theorization of the group process in war will be presented, with emphasis on both the individual experience and the role of the state. The chapter will conclude with comments about the relevancy to the field of social work, both from the perspective of policy and clinical practice.

Background and Historical Context

In Fornari's (1974) piece, *The Psychoanalysis of War,* Fornari investigates the psychoanalytic perceptions of the phenomenon of war while simultaneously holding sociological and ethnological theoretical frames (Broughton, 1991). Fornari explicitly notes the uniqueness of the psychoanalyst's role to perceive the dialectic between the individual and the system, particularly from the perspective of the unconscious experience of the affective relationship between the individual and the system. Fornari focuses on the institution of war, utilizing the Object-Relations school of psychoanalytic theory derived from the works of Melanie Klein and Wilfred Bion. Within Fornari's (1974) broad swath of intellectual investigation, Fornari includes

specific focus on the group experience (Broughton, 1991; Giacobbi, 1987). It is this portion of Fornari's work that will be examined and explored in this chapter.

Melanie Klein. Melanie Klein (1882-1960) deviated from Freudian thought, proposing that individuals search for specific *objects* with which to relate, that drives are relational. These basic theoretical formations represent the early establishment of the *Object-Relations* school of analytic thought. Klein emphasized that through life the individual repeats the early developmental organization, initially developed in infancy. As the individual relates to objects in the course of their development, the individual moves through two positions—the *paranoid-schizoid position* and the *depressive position*. These positions are emblematic of anxieties related to the individual's object-relations capacity and their developmental positions (Flanagan, 2008; Fornari, 1974; Mitchell & Black, 1995).

The *paranoid-schizoid position* is the less developmentally stable position of the two. The *paranoid-schizoid position* is marked by persecutory and annihilation anxiety, envy (the desire to destroy), and weak defensive structures (omnipotence, projective identification, denial, idealization). In their object-internalization, an essential component of individuation and healthy development in the Object-Relations school, the paranoid-schizoid position is characterized by the dominance of part-objects, a less complete and stable object internalization. This position is insecure, unstable, volatile, and less individuated than the *depressive position* (Flanagan, 2008; Mitchell & Black, 1995).

The *depressive position* is characterized as one of more stability than that of the *paranoid-schizoid position*. In the *depressive-position* the primary anxiety is depressive, and is thus associated with the depressive acknowledgement of integrating the fullness of one's aggressive capability. This position, therefore, is marked by guilt, associated with awareness of

one's capacity for aggression and hate. This position is also marked by its capacity for love and the ability to repair relationships. In the Object-Relations perspective, individuals in this position can hold and internalize whole-objects and the ambivalence of a whole object (Flanagan, 2008; Mitchell & Black, 1986). This chapter will explore Fornari's extension of Kleinian theory to discuss the experience of groups in the military and their Object-Relations capacity.

Wilfred Bion. Bion, iconic for his examination of both the psychoanalytic process and the sociological structure of groups, wrote on this subject in the mid twentieth century. Working at the Tavistock Clinic, in the U.K., Bion drew from his clinical work, along with his perceptions of institutions such as the Church and Army, which incorporated his reflections from his own military service in World War II, (Rioch, 1970; Stock & Thelen, 1958).

Drawing from Kleinian perspectives of psychological development, and particularly on the relationship between the mother and child as emblematic of psychosexual development, Bion utilizes this foundation to elaborate on the psychic life of the group (Giacobbi, 1987; Stock & Thelen, 1958). While other theorists, as noted in the previous chapter, discuss a *group mind*, Bion instead famously postulates that the group experience, and idea of the *group mind,* is one derived from mutual regression, in which the individual is attempting to balance their desire to assimilate into the group culture with the anxiety of holding individuality through the group. This mutual regressive process can resemble a psychotic organization. The process individuals experience in balancing their autonomy with the desire to join with the group's emotional ethos, this dynamic, Bion referrers to as a process of *valency,* the willingness of individuals to integrate into the group and *group assumptions* (Bion, 1952; Fornari, 1974; Giacobbi, 1987; Rioch, 1970; Stock & Thelen, 1958).

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Bion posits the group experience composed of two classifications. Within every group, he postulates there are two groups present, a *work group*, and a *basic assumptions group*. The *work group* pertains to the aspect of the group, which is orientated to the concrete tasks addressed by the group. Rioch (1970) elucidates this point noting, "The members of the work group cooperate as separate and discrete individuals. Each member of the group belongs to it because it is his will and his choice to see that the purpose of the group is fulfilled," (p.58). This is a defining quality of the group, essential to the development of the collective, provides a frame by which disparate individuals come together. In the context of the military, the work that is demanded of the group has a significant physically and emotional risk. Junger (2010) notes this reflecting:

> Society can give its young [people] almost any job and they'll figure how to do it. They'll suffer for it and die for it and watch their friends die for it, but it the end, it *will* get done. That only means that society should be careful about what it asks for. (p.154).

Bion's postulation of the *basic assumption* group is the second element of the group identity, and denotes the group culture. The basic assumption of the group signifies the emotional and theoretical frame within which the group is limited. "The basic assumptions of the basic assumption group are usually outside of awareness," noting they are usually held in an assumed and unconscious state, states Rioch (1970):

> Nevertheless, they are the basis for behavior. They are deducible from the emotional state of the group. The statement of the basic assumption gives meaning to and elucidates the behavior of the group to the extent that it is not operating as a work group. (p.59).

This component of the group defines the innate, unconscious, instinctual emotional frame, a notable factor in appreciating the emotional life of the collective and the affect of the of the group (Bion, 1952; Fornari, 1974; Rioch, 1970; Stock & Thelen, 1958). Fornari proposes two

prominent basic assumption groups operational in the military, which will be presented and explored in this chapter.

Fornari's Conceptualization of the Group Process in War

While drawing from the basic characteristics of the Freudian group process, Fornari conceptualizes the group in war through the developmental lens of Kleinian theory. To frame his inquiry Fornari (1974) defines the study of the group as, "the study of the formation and functions of the group aimed at clarifying the significance of the behavior of the individual as a member of the group, i.e., as a part of a collective unity," (p.133). He notes, the group is diverse, while also defined by its plurality. Fornari proposes, the substance of what holds the ephemeral qualities of the group experience together in such full collective unity, is attributed to the Kleinian notions of psychosexual development associated with the early relations to the maternal object, a process which is initially presented in early childhood development and then repeated through the course of the lifetime.

Group as a Recapitulation of the Early Caregiver Relationship. Fornari relates the group formation to that of a reconstruction of the early childhood relationship between the mother and child. He details both the process by which this experience occurs, and the qualities of the experience.

Fornari (1974) proposes that individuals, in forming a group, identify with the group through projective identification; every individual projects parts of themselves into the love object, the mother figure. In the case of the military group, Fornari notes that the maternal object is represented in the leader and/or state, the spirit of the group, the assumptions of the group. Like the construction of the individual ego, the construction of the group mirrors this process. The group collectively forms through internalization of the group's identity, values, culture, and

the mutual externalization of the individual's sense of their love for this identity; it's values and culture. Unlike the individual differentiation from the mother, these processes occurring within the group are not part of physical realities but "reified fictions," (p.137). Therefore, Fornari posits, there is an ephemeral quality to the group that is collectively formed through this complex network of individual's projections into the group.

Fornari notes that there is both a mystical essence of a group, and simultaneously, a pull to the leader, who constitutes representations of the love object, to which the group members identify and project. Both these aspects of the group represent symbolic totems of the mother. Fornari explains:

The participation of individuals in a collective experience would seem to rest on a relation to a fantasy presence, which constitutes the invisible presence, within the group, of the maternal imago as the illusory body of the group, which unites the individual members. (p. 134).

The illusion of the maternal figure, is both invisible and ephemeral, yet binds the members into a collective. Within the group, individuals relate to a non-bodily, "mystical body," which represents a psychic presence. This non-physical being is endowed with many physically associated properties such as historical perspective of the "feelings and anxieties, which were originally experienced by the individual in his concrete relation to his mother," (p.134). This bonding, group cohesion, evoking the early attachment to the caregiver, is the derivation of the strength by which individuals are attached to each other, and to the ephemeral group spirit.

Bion. Fornari's discussion of the mystical, maternal presence of the group is rooted in Bionian constructions of the *assumption group*. As noted previously, Fornari (1974) found two of Bion's assumption groups particularly relevant in the military group. These 'assumptions' are

qualities of a group demarcated by its *dependence*, and qualities of a group demarcated by a *fight-flight* quality.

The *dependent group* is reliant on nourishment from the leader who is seen as sustaining the group. The role of the leader is significant in the frame of this group. The leader is perceived as omniscient, however, like any human (and like the caregiver), fails to fully meet the needs of the group. The group then reacts to the failure of the leader by maneuvering the group to appeal to the leader to receive love from them. To do so the group will rally around the needs of one individual, who is particularly in need of support, and exhort the leader to meet the individual's needs, which in turn would prove the leaders love and devotion to the group, and thus the group will then regain a sense of security in the leader, (Bion, 1959; Fornari, 1974; Rioch, 1970; Stock & Thelen, 1958).

The second relevant group assumption is the *fight-flight group*, which Bion hypothesized as a natural pair to the *dependent group*. This is a group defined by self-preservation, not of the individual, but of the whole of the group, of the collective. Like the dependent group, the role of the leader is significant in this group as well as in the *dependent group*; the leader in this group is responsible for mobilizing the group, rallying the group to the 'cause', (Bion, 1959; Fornari, 1974; Rioch, 1970; Stock & Thelen, 1958). The leader, Rioch (1970) writes:

> Should have a bit of a paranoid element in his [their] makeup if he [they] wishes to be successful, for this will ensure that if no enemy is obvious, the leader will surely find one. He is [they are] expected to feel hate toward the enemy to be concerned not for the individual in the group but for the preservation of the group itself. (p.60).

Junger (2010) documents characteristics of the *flight-fight group* in the following description of a firefight in the Korangal Valley of Afghanistan:

Cortez, Jackson, and Walker assault up the hill but the enemy has already retreated and there's no one to fight, no one to kill. Cortez goes to one knee behind cover with his rifle up and glances to the right and sees a body lying face-down—An American. Walker runs up and shakes him to see if he's all right and finally rolls him over. It's Staff Sergeant Rougle, shot through the forehead and his face purple with trauma. "I wanted to cry but I didn't—I was shocked," Cortez says. "I just wanted to kill everything that came up that wasn't American. I actually didn't care who came up—man, woman, child, I still would've done something," (p.106).

These basic assumptions, Bion and Fornari, define as the "cementing valency" from which the group is able to spontaneously act, (Fornari, 1974, p.150). Fornari, drawing of Freud, notes that the military represents a specialized work group by which there is a concrete expression and institutionalization of the *basic assumptions* of the group. This, Fornari, notes is especially significant in the organization of the military in that the specialized basic assumption group is able to operate within its own basic assumptions while also trying to uphold, and not negatively impact, the basic assumptions of the main group, which in the case of the military, denotes the 'state'.

As cited previously, the individual in the group is in a vulnerable circumstance in which they may regress in an effort to connect to the emotional tone of the group. The desire to join in the collective ethos, and the consequential regression that occurs, can induce panic derived from the fear of loosing one's individuality in the collective. Panic, an insidious emotion in the military, demands a readily presented outlet through which the panic can be reabsorbed into the basic assumptions of the group and re-mobilized into aggression, attack, fight, or flight, (Bion, 1959; Fornari, 1974; Rioch, 1970; Stock & Thelen, 1958).

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Group as a Self-Contained Reality. Fornari elaborates on the regressive nature in the group, again drawing upon Klenian theory of developmental positioning. The relationship binding the group together, Fornari theorizes, is akin to the early childhood developmental process with the maternal attachment figure. Through early object-relations, the individual develops ego differentiation and reality testing. In the group process, this differentiation and acquisition of the ego function of reality testing, occurs in and is altered by, the group format. Fornari explains:

> What we call objective reality seems to take shape in an experience of single subjects who place themselves in relation to something separate from themselves, as a third element (the world) which must be verified as such, through what is commonly called reality testing, (p.142).

The social experience shared by the group creates an external reality, which is constructed and maintained by the group members in their internal world. The individuals' ego function of reality testing is altered and is "replaced by a particularly vigorous validation system governed exclusively by the interhuman relation," (p. 144). This source of validity is independent of external reality testing. Instead the *group mind* (evoking McDougall, 1920) becomes the source of reality testing (Fornari, 1974).

The construction of reality through the collective process mimics that of the transitional experience provided by the caregiver in early developmental differentiation, and the delicate time in which the child has not fully differentiated. The child and caregiver together hold a *transitional space* in which the child begins to hold a subjective reality, slightly divergent than that of the caregiver 's and the external world. Transitional space is governed in part by creative imagination and by the subjective needs of the individual, rather than the strict rules of society or

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external validity. Through this period the child begins to explore the grapple with the notion that their reality may differ from the caregiver's, and may, in its own way, conflict with the caregiver's needs (Flanagan, 2008; Fornari, 1974; Mitchell & Black, 1995). Like when the child finds themselves experiencing reality that may diverge or conflict with that of the caregiver 's, in the collective a similar persecutory anxiety and annihilation anxiety develops when the individual perceives their individualized needs as divergent from the collective assumption. This anxiety evokes the original loss of the caregiver 's love associated with the separation from the caregiver. The differentiation of the self, from within the group context, is felt by the group as abandonment "as an alien persecutory entity," (p.146). The sense of individual reality testing ego function threatens the group validity, (Fornari, 1974).

Individuals in the collective trade their differentiated ego function of reality testing for the group assumption. This endowment to the group creates the developmental anxiety within the group assumption that functions as "a sort of symbiotico-narcissistic bond," meaning is derived from the shared experience of the group, in a "narcissistic pluralism," (Fornari, 1974, p.145). The group's construction of reality and validating reality, overrides the individual sense of reality as separate from the self. Junger (2010) documents "There was a power and logic to the group that overrode everyone's personal concerns, even mine, and somewhere in that loss of self could be found relief from the terrible worries about that might befall you," (p.212).

When the self chooses to be differentiated from the group it is perceived to be incompatible with the group system of validation, truth "separate therefore different, therefore extraneous, therefore alien, therefore enemy," (p.146). Individual's egos are held within the group in part because the anxiety of fully separating from the caregiver induces overwhelming

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anxiety, and in part because to identify as separate from the collective is quickly perceived as an antagonizing force by the collective.

Group as a Psychotic Structure. The tenuously, but affectively close nature of the collective and its construction creates a characteristic of the collective reality suggestive of the Kleinian schizoid phase. Fornari argues that the group process, one that mimics the original relationship between the infant and caregiver—generated from mutual regression into the cultures of the basic assumptions of the group paired with the illusory paranoia of the 'other' enemy--evokes a mutual reality characteristic of psychotic processes, characterized by part-object relationships. The part-object, innately persecutory in its fragmentation, is easily transformed into the enemy, (Broughton, 1991; Fornari, 1974).

The enemy is a construction and externalization of one's own innate internal destructive drives, which are overwhelming for the group in a paranoid-schizoid state to hold internally. The guilt of holding loss and aggression necessary for the depressive state is naturally avoided and is readily mobilized into externalized aggression within the paranoid-schizoid position, perpetuating and supporting the military mission, the construction of the enemy and mobilization of aggression toward 'it.' The externalization of the enemy therefore, mitigates internal terror.

In Junger's (2010) *War,* we see the fluctuation between love and aggression, as a defense from the integrative *depressive* reality of sadness and guilt, characteristic of the paranoid-schizoid, polarized, position. Junger describes telling a platoon member, who had been on leave through a particularly costly firefight, about the resulting causalities within the platoon:

O'Byrne looked around the room. I tried to think what I should do if he started crying. He concentrated and gathered himself and finally asked home many enemy fighters were killed.

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"They killed a lot," I told him. "Like fifty. Thirty of them were Arabs. The A-10's really

messed them up."

"Yeah, kill those fuckers," O'Byrne said. He repeated that a few times and took another

drink. I asked him how he felt about going back.

"I got to go back there," he said, "those are my boys. Those are the best friends I'll ever

have," (p.129).

Fornari (1974) argues that through the assumption group ethos, most prominently *flight-fight* and *dependency*, the group has a propensity to regress into a mutual paranoid-schizoid state, mutually relinquishing their individual ego functioning to the group whole. In this state, dominated by part-objects, the group can promptly mobilize their aggressive impulse, perpetuating violence in a frame defined by the collective-defined reality. Broughton (1991) describes this externalization:

Fornari shows how the dramatic imagination required to envisage and plot modern

military action corresponds to the infantile psychodynamic experience that Klein

describes as both schizoid and paranoid. The fantastically sadistic and horrifying aspect

of nuclear warfare scenarios match in crude violence and pugnacious self-protection the

primitive fantasy life of the very young baby, who splits bad from good, disowns

malignant parts, launches them into orbit, and is then confronted with a terrifying

universe of evil forces that surround and threaten it, (p. 110).

Junger (2010) describes this splitting:

Nearly fifty American soldiers have died carrying out those orders. I'm not saying it is a

lot of a little, but the cost does need to be acknowledged. Soldiers themselves are

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reluctant to evaluate the costs of war (for some reason, the closer you are to combat the less inclined you are to question it), but someone must. (p.154).

War, therefore, is an ego defense strategy to channel the aggressive impulses, and keep in frame the otherwise chaotic world of unbounded part-objects in the paranoid-schizoid phase. However, as Fornari describes evoking Nazi propaganda, this defensive strategy is corruptible. The frame holding the group, if turned toward an excessively hostile nature, can capitalize on the developmentally fragile state of the collective to promote agendas that an individual, with their individualize reality testing in tact, may not be as likely to do (Fornari, 1974). Broughton (1991) extrapolates:

War is organized as a double security operation in which an implicit protective system underlies an explicit one. The hidden part of the war institution…acts to covert schizoid or psychotic anxieties generated by illusory internal dangers into perceptions of apparently real external dangers. (p.109).

In social work practice and policy, holding an Object-Relations perspective of the developmental experience of military group members, may help to inform the frame of the therapeutic alliance. While, this frame is not intended to be diagnostic, it could serve to inform interventions and suitable treatment goals in clinical encounters. Finally, there are social work policy implications to the perspective of the dominance of the paranoid-schizoid phase in military group culture. A institutional perspective, as well as further clinical perspectives will be explored in the following chapter analyzing the two theoretical frames presented in this theoretical examination.

CHAPTER VI

Discussion

This theoretical exploration first discussed the phenomenon of collectivism in the military, primarily through research on *military cohesion*, the organization of the U.S. Armed Forces and the sociological perspective of military culture. Freudian analysis of groups was then presented, through which this paper examined the ways in which the military collective is formed through *libidinal bonds* and *identification*. In the previous chapter, a Fornarian analysis of the group in the military was disseminated. Drawing upon theories of Wilfred Bion on groups and Melanie Klein on development, Fornarian theory focused on the ways in which the group evokes an early developmental phase, characteristic of mutual regression to a phase demarcated by psychotic features.

The intention of this chapter is to synthesize these concepts pertaining to the military experience, and present implications of this theoretical examination to the field of social work. First this chapter will examine ways in which Freudian and Fornarian theory relates to the United States Military. This chapter will explore the strengths and limitations of this theoretical examination, and will conclude with implications for social work practice and social policy.

Freudian and Fornarian Theories in Application

This research examined the concept of the collective in the United States military through the theoretical formulations of Freudian (1921) group theory and Fornarian (1974) theory of the group process in the war. These are both psychoanalytic theoretical inquiries to the possible

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experience of the individual, in psychosocial developmental terms, within the context of the military and include implications of the potential experience when separating from the military.

Strengths of Military Collectivist Experience in the Freudian Lens. While drawing on Le Bon's characteristics of groups, Freud (1924) extends his theoretical formation of the group experience to include a hypothesis about the binding factor in the group. Freud (1924) attributes the group *valency* to the process of *identification* and *libidinal ties*. Freud notes that the libidinal ties form in two connections, one between the group members and the leader and is evocative of the original *primal father* in Freud's Oedipal dynamic. Secondly there is a libidinal tie between group members, through the process of *identification*. These two uniting principles comprise the collectivizing developmental ties of the group.

In using this lens to inquire into the collective in the military, one overarching characteristic becomes clear; the group is held together through ties of *love*. "Love relationships constitute the essence of the group mind," (Freud, 1921, p.40). This bond, so often noted in military members speaking of their comrades, is rooted in a powerful emotional experience of deep intimacy and identification.

Group bond of love is a tremendous testament to the capacity to develop intimacy with a diverse group of strangers, joined through, potentially, very few unifying characteristics. This intimacy is so powerful; service members continually risk their lives for one another. If these bonds of love do in fact develop to the developmental extent that Freud asserts, service members, particularly in combat scenarios, face their mortality with a deep sense of attachment and belonging. Junger (2010) documents:

> Once they were clawing their way up Table Rock after a twenty-hour operation and a
> man in another squad started falling out. "He can't be smoked here" I heard O'Byrne

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seethe to Sergeant Mac in the dark, "he doesn't have the *right* to be." The idea that you're

not allowed to experience something as human as exhaustion is outrageous anywhere but

in combat. Good leaders know that exhaustion is partly a state of mine, though, and that

men [soldiers] who succumb to it have on some level have decided to put themselves

above everyone else. If you're not prepared to walk for someone you're certainly not

prepared to die for them, and that goes to the heart of whether you should even be in the

platoon. (p.77).

This becomes, as Freud (1921) notes, akin to the experience of being in love, an impetus

to sacrifice oneself for the safety of the beloved.

The group is clearly held together by a power of some kind: and to what power could this

feat be better ascribed than to Eros, who holds together everything in the world?

Secondly, that if an individual gives up his distinctiveness in a group and lets its other

members influence him by suggestion, it gives one the impression that he does it because

he feels the need of being in harmony with them rather than in position to them--- so that

perhaps after all he does it *'ihnen zu Liebe'* [for the love of them]," (p.40).

For the love of them, a relationship so strong it can incentivize self-sacrifice. Like a

parent risking their life to save their child, service members share their willingness to live their

lives, determine their behavior, for their fellow-soldiers. Junger (2010) speaks of witnessing this

bond stating:

 Among men who are dependent on one another for their safety—all combat soldiers,

essentially—there is often an unspoken agreement to stick together no matter what. The

reassurance that you will never be abandoned seems to help men act in ways that serve

the whole unit rather than just themselves. (p.124).

Along with the profound strength of developing deeply held love connections with their fellow unit members, Freud (1921) also notes that the Oedipal dynamic is re-experienced in the libidinal ties of the group. The lidibinal ties to the leader may encompass the individual unit or squad leader, or it may evoke the leader as the institution of the state, meaning the military institution, as emblematic of the nation and values of the state. These two delineations of libidinal bonds are attributed to the unifying characteristic of the collective as well as the efficacy of the collective. Junger (2010) cites a psychiatrist serving in the Tunisian campaign, Herbert Spiegel (1944), who noted:

> Whether this factor was conscious or unconscious is debatable, but this is not so important. The important thing was that it is influenced greatly by devotion to their group or unit, by regard for their leader and by conviction for their cause. In the average solider, which most of them were, this factor… enabled men to control their fear and combat their fatigue to a degree that they themselves did not believe possible. (as cited in Junger, 2010, p.122).

Love, Freud further argues is a civilizing force, a tremendous strength unifying human beings. The libidinal bonds are of vital strength and importance to all human beings.

> For experience has shown that in cases of collaboration libidinal ties are regularly formed between the fellow-workers which prolong and solidify the relation between them to a point beyond what is merely profitable. The same thing occurs in men's [people's] social relations…The libido props itself upon the satisfaction of the great and vital needs, and chooses as its first objects the people who have a share in that process. And in the development of mankind as a whole, just as in individuals, love along acts as the civilizing factor in the sense that is bring as change from egoism to altruism. (p.57).

Further, the repetition of the Oedipal dynamic with the primal father figure presented in the group process may serve to strengthen the ego's capacity. In the original Oedipal dynamic, the child develops through the Oedipal dynamic by internalizing the parental values, and the development of the ego-ideal and superego, to frame and organize the child's aggressive and sexual drives (Mitchell & Black, 1995). In this process in the military collective, the soldier may internalize the values of the 'leader, (physical leader or state value system), which may be stronger, more full, and more resilient than those ego-ideals originally internalized in the soldier's development. Thus, the military could be a deeply reparative process, one in which the soldier experiences a profound sense of belonging and identity, based on the experience of shared love.

Vulnerabilities of the Military Collectivist Experience through Fornari. Fornari (1974) hypothesizes that the group process in war is one formed around the premise of the Bionian *work group*, and one in which individuals mutually regress into *basic assumption* groups dominantly characterized by the *dependency* and *flight-fight group*. This regressive process shifts the group into a Kleinian *paranoid-schizoid position*. The regressive process is a defensive maneuvering in an effort to maintain the group stability, functionality, and operation.

The paranoid-schizoid position has both strengths and limitations to the collective's character and functioning. As Fornari (1974) notes, this mutual regression is a product of individual's sacrificing part of their independent ego function of reality testing, to internalize the reality defined by the group. This allows the collective to function largely unquestioned, rapidly mobilizing, acting upon the presented task with little digression and dissent. Mobilizing masses of individuals to act in unison, instinctively, is the bedrock of military training. The entirety of basic training is to ensure this process; one may argue that basic training is a process of

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establishing the frame for these work group perpetuated by the basic assumptions of the group. Assembling response systems, following command unquestionably and immediately reacting to any presented issue, particularly in times of combat, is vital for the unit's success, as Junger (2010) documents:

> Wars are won of lost because of the aggregate effects of thousands of decisions during firefights that often last only minutes or seconds. Guinta [platoon member] estimates that not more than ten or fifteen seconds elapsed between the initial attack and his own counterattack. An untrained civilian would have experience those ten or fifteen seconds as a disorienting barrage of light and noise and probably have spent most of it curled up on the ground…Giunta, on the other hand, used those fifteen seconds to assign rates and sectors of fire to his team, run to Gallardo's assistance, assess the direction of a round that hit him in the check, and then throw three hand grenades while assessing an enemy position. Every man in the platoon—even the ones who were wounded—acted as purposefully and efficiently as Giunta did.
>
> "I did what I did because that's what I was trained to do," Guinta told me. "There was a task that has to be done…I didn't run through fire to save a buddy—I ran through fire to see what was going on with him and maybe we could hide behind the same rock and shoot together. I didn't run through fire to do anything heroic or brave. I did what I believe anyone would have done." (p.121).

While these are defining behaviors, vital to the successful mobilization of the military, Fornari (1974) notes, they come at a profound sacrifice to the individual's ego capacities. The process of internalizing the group validity and reality reflects a disbanding of the individual reality testing, the proliferation of part-object relationships, and an inability to hold depressive reality.

Junger (2010) describes one soldier's construction of reality:

> I once asked O'Bryne to describe himself as he was then.
>
> "Numb," he said. 'Wasn't scared, wasn't happy, just fucking numb. Kept to myself, did what I had to do. It was a weird, detached feeling those first few months."
>
> "You weren't scared of dying?"
>
> "No, I was too numb. I never let my brain go there. There were these boundaries in my brain, and I just never let myself go to that spot." (p.64).

While the label, *paranoid-schizoid position,* is not innately as pathologizing as the label elicits, it does accompany ego weaknesses, particularly for the individual within the collective. This position is delicate, and characterized by lower-level defenses and part-object relationships. Continual occupation of the paranoid-schizoid position, dominated by part-objects, may lead to long-term ambivalent relationships, and splitting trust or distrust in others. Abiding inhabitation of this position could contribute to polarizing perceptions of the world, and development of ongoing hatred, suspicion, alienation, and splitting relationships (Mitchell & Black, 1995).

The transformation of individual's reality testing capacities in the collective may have behavioral implications for the individual's ego functioning outside of the collective. Fornari (1974) highlights this:

> This modification of the individual in the social experience seems to consist in the fact that reality testing (as a system, separate from, and independent of, the interhuman experience, of validating the world) *is replaced by a particularly vigorous validation system governed exclusively by the interhuman relation.* What is shared by a group of men [people] contains an autonomous source of validity, which is independent of reality testing in the world of reality. (p.144).

While within the collective, this mutually defined reality may induce an individual to act in ways incoherent with their own autonomous reality testing capability. Implications for engaging in collective activity—that the individual ego, alone, may not have permitted—could include tremendous guilt and shame. Larence and Karim (2007) present a particularly harsh perspective on potential consequences of this ego transformation:

Close relationships do not insure intimacy or safety so much as allow the possibility of greater violence that is the great for being under cover, since it is a violence legitimated by social norms as "private" and autonomous," and hence beyond the purview of any outsiders or the control of any outside agency. (p. 218).

The final vulnerability in the Fornarian collective pertains to the maternal bond, which the group re-creates. Fornari (1974) describes the profound belonging associated with this re-created bond:

Love developed through the re-experience of the maternal attachment, helps to defend against anxieties and mitigate feelings of loss and mourning. Profound unified experience evocative to the original "dual unity," between the mother and child but now reconsidered in the "pluralistic unity of the group experience," while still evoking similar emotional experience, including the safety, need gratifying, role of the mother. (p.145).

However, this bond is also described as misleading, it evokes the early developmental bond with the caregiver, and for a while may be perceived as the bond. Fornari (1974) notes that this is bond is an illusion:

Since the group's grand illusion is that it re-creates the dual unity of mother [caregiver] and child as an experience of perfect love, the group itself, though assuming many of its members' realistic functions, ultimately directs them toward illusory ends. (p.147).

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Though this process mirrors a momentous and developmentally ego-strengthening process, the illusory nature of the bond could instigate an enormously destructive loss, akin to the loss of the maternal love object, and loss of self as developed within the maternal space. This dissolution of the maternal bond will be explored further in relation to the implications of the collective experience in the process of reintegration into civilian life.

Strengths and Limitations of Methodology.

In concluding this examination with a proposition of the implications of this research, we will first revisit the strengths and limitations of this research methodology as well as final notes on the bias within the study.

Strengths. The dominant perspective in current research on strength-based inquiry into military group functioning is largely through a individualized behaviorist lens. This theoretical examination dissected analytic perspectives of possible group processes, meaning the psychosocial developmental perspective of the individual relational experience within the military collective. The commitment of social workers to examine person-in-environment experiences necessitates a theoretical lens rooted in the basic developmental process, which intends to provide a foundation from which to examine both the environmental perspective, behavioral components, all the while holding a longitudinal perspective of person-in-environment over the lifespan. Fornari (1974) comments on this issue stating:

> The psychoanalyst, analyzing persons experiencing political problems, finds himself [themselves] in a privileged position to observe the individual modes that is the internal mechanisms through which political and social experiences in general are elaborated. He is [they are], therefore in the best of positions to observe both the influence exerted by the unconscious on men's [people's] political preferences and the ways in which war is

fantasied in the unconscious. The psychoanalyst is particularly able to observe, through symbolic language and the affective dialectic (which has its own specific laws different from those of dialectic understood as a purely cognitive experience), that individuals' political preferences as well as their experiences in war –in addition to containing realistic motives—are influenced by systems of defense against psychotic anxieties (i.e., against obviously illusory fears). (p.viii-ix).

The analytic perspective, oriented toward psychosocial development, can be applied to interdisciplinary perspectives of behavior. This theoretical formulation intended to ground the experience of the collective in psychosocial development perspective, so as to propose further areas of policy and clinical engagement for the field of social work practitioners.

Weaknesses. While this study explores a range of foundational theoretical perspectives it is not an empirical study and therefore cannot claim to prove any one perspective of the psychosocial development experience of collectivism in the military. Much of the field of analytic theory is difficult to quantify in terms that could facilitate an empirical research project, though if possible, this theoretical grounding could be an important point of support for such an inquiry. This study, therefore, can claim no testable validity or generalizability. Further, these two theorists presented are white, European, male, psychiatrists and therefore may further marginalize other sociocultural, racial, and gender identities in this theoretical frame. The theoretical models cited are both psychoanalytic, and located in relatively early models of analytic theory. These theoretical positions and the case material cited in *War* (2010), present a dominantly white, male perspective with little mention of social, racial, gender diversity. Further investigations of this topic could include attention to more radical, progressive formulations of psychosocial development to include critiques of the ways in which already socially oppressed

people may experience further disenfranchisement by the military institution and the collective both while within the military collective, and in the transition back to civilian society.

Author Bias. In addition to the potential biases by the author presented in the Methodology Chapter, the content of this research may be biased by potential judgment by the author. While, attempting to present this information from a strengths-based lens, there is an argument presented concerning the exploitation of the individual military members; particularly the abuse of the love that is cultivated in the military collective. This implies a judgment of the military institution and their intention, which is biased by the author's perspective. The author's bias notes judgment positing that there is a systemic manipulation of the profound collectivistic bonds of love and attachment perpetuates oppression, powerlessness, psychological unrest, and is an assault to the individual's willingness to open oneself to this authentic human connection.

Implications for Social Work Practice

The intention of this theoretical engagement was to examine the experience of collectivism in the military through a lens less often considered in contemporary empirical research. As the United States culminates its recent participation in two international wars, research on the military is highly pertinent. In current research on the military, there is a particular emphasis in examining the strength of unit cohesion as a protective factor in both soldier's psychological health, and their ability the function of the mission (Briley et al., 2007; Grossman, 2009; Rosen et al., 2003).

Due to the contemporary military engagement, there is also an increase in the number of military veterans in the process of integrating into the civilian world. Similarly, the rate of veterans needing care, support, and services—particularly in the field of mental health—has risen exponentially in the last few years (Fischer, 2014). A 2009, Issues Report cited that of the

1.7 million military members who served in Iraq or Afghanistan, approximately "half a million are suffering from Posttraumatic Stress disorder, depression, or Traumatic brain injury," (p.17). According to statistics compiled by the American Psychiatric Association, many veterans who may be in need are not seeking treatment. "According to the Army, only 40 percent of veterans who screen positive for serious emotional problems seek help from a mental health professional," (*Mental Health Advisory Team IV: Operation Iraqi Freedom,* 2007). Statistics from the RAND Corporation are similarly bleak, finding that only 30 percent of veterans with PTSD or depression seek help from the VA health system (*Invisible Wounds of War*, 2008). The implications of not receiving care after stressful military experiences could be dramatic for the military member, their family, and the broader U.S. society.

Clinical Engagement with Military Members and Veterans. Integrating the findings from this theoretical examination, there are implications from both a Freudian and Fornarian perspective of military collectivism in clinical practice. Through a Freudian lens, clinicians may find it illuminating to attend to their client's developmental trajectory in conjunction with the *libidinal bonds* associated with the *primal father* figure and the process of *identification.* Examining their early childhood developmental attachment and their experience of these relationships through the course of their service, may present a rich entry point into examining current relationships.

Clinicians may consider the following questions: How is their unconscious internalizing their relationship with the *primal father* figure, with their squad or unit members? How do they experience their comrades; how is their sense of self within those relationships? The dissolution of the collective poses an experience of clinical inquiry: How is the individual experiencing the loss of the collective? How are they experiencing the loss of the symbolic *primal father*? How do

they experience the loss of their comrades with whom they may have internalized and identified? Are they experiencing a loss of love? How are their civilian relationships, is there adequate support that mirrors those collective bonds?

In the Fornarian framework, attention to the maternal relationship is relevant in the clinical context. Fornari (1974), noting the work of Melanie Klein, posited that the group may act as a surrogate for the maternal bond, and their object relational world may be dominated by the internalization of part objects. Further, drawing on Wilfred Bion, the assumption group states, often characterized by *flight-fight* and *dependency,* may leave the individual member in a regressed state emblematic of the paranoid-schizoid position even after they detach from the collective. How are the individual's reality testing functions? How are their ego capacities such as distress tolerance, impulse control, and how sophisticated are their ego defenses? Can the clinician recreate the maternal bond enough to facilitate full object internalization?

The movement between the *paranoid-schizoid position* to the *depressive position* is an integral therapeutic development for the individual's capacity, sense of self, and autonomous strength according to Kleinian theory. It is a shift by which the individual internalizes the complexity of the whole object, the ambivalent experience of the world, and most significantly, the individual learns to cope with their own complex and ambivalent aggression which includes guilt derived from the aggressive impulses toward their object of love (Flanagan, 2008; Mitchell & Black, 1995). Fornari (1974) exemplifies a the transformation from the *paranoid-schizoid position* to the *depressive position* within the military collective context:

We may affirm that the normal individual vacillates between the depressive and the schizoid-paranoid position. Group life, however, has until now tended solely toward the schizoid-position. It would appear that group must reach a new stage of maturity if they

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are to survive. We aim to replace the paranoid position of "I must kill you because you want to kill me," which… characterized the relations between groups, with the depressive position which states "*I understand that it is not you who wish to kill me, but rather that I myself wish to kill you because I have projected into you my own destructive wishes against my love object. However, I also realize that in killing you I may kill myself, so I voluntarily prohibit killing because I understand that by killing you I can no longer assure the survival of what I love, but rather hasten its destruction.*" (p.218).

Junger (2010) documents such a conflict between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions perceptions of reality:

The sheer weirdness of war—of any way—can never entirely be contained and breaks through at off moments.

"I went out to use the piss tubes one night," O'Bryne admitted to me one, "and I was like, 'What am I doing in Afghanistan? I mean literally, *'What am I doing here?'* I'm trying to kill people and they're trying to kill me. It's crazy…" (p.170).

Junger (2010) further documents the same soldier grappling with the a bifurcated, and dissociated reality testing concerning his capabilities, through the context of the bonds of love within the collective:

 O'Byrne thought he could protect his men, but behind that rock wall in Aliabad he realized it was all beyond his control.

"I had promised my guys none of them would die," he said. "That they would all go home, that I would die before they would. No worries: you're going to get home to your girl, to your mom or dad. So when Steiner got shot I realized I might not be able to stop them from getting hurt, and I remember just sitting there, trembling. That is the worst

thing ever: to be in charge of someone's life. And then if you loose them? I could not

imagine that. I could not imagine that day" (p.196).

A clinical perspective to consider in the therapeutic alliance is, how can you facilitate the

reconstruction of belonging, akin to that of the collective, to both help a healing process while

also assisting in the transition into civilian society (which in many respects holds divergent value

systems from the collective), and the transition to the *depressive position*. Klein posits that the

ability to hold one's own ambivalence, aggression and love, is crucial in development. Mitchell

& Black (1995) explain:

> To be able to keep her objects whole, the child has to believe that her love is stronger
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> than her hate, that she can undo the ravages of her destructiveness. Klein saw the
>
> constitutional balance between libidinal and aggressive drives as crucial…In the best
>
> circumstances, the cycles of loving, frustration, hateful destruction, and reparation deepen
>
> the child's ability to remain related to whole objects, to feel that her reparative capacities
>
> can balance and compensate for her destructiveness. (p.95).

The movement into developmentally more sounds state of the *depressive position* is not

static. Klein hypothesized that throughout the lifetime the individual vacillates between the two

positions; in moments of stress and threat, regression into the *paranoid-schizoid position* is a

likely defensive maneuvering (Fornari, 1974; Mitchell & Black, 1995). In clinical practice, after

a collective and presiding experience in the *paranoid-schizoid position,* the individual may

benefit from therapeutic intervention, alliance, and support in transitioning into the *depressive*

position with implications for, perhaps, residual and unprocessed mourning, grief, and loss from

the military.

Fornari (1974) compares the collective social experience to that of the *transitional phenomenon*, conceptualized by D. W. Winnicott (1896-1971), the space created by the child in the process of differentiation from their maternal object in which they integrate the illusion of their own subjective omnipotence into the external-world's objective reality. "Between these two forms of experience that Winnicott called subjective omnipotence and objective reality, lies a third form: transitional experience," (Black & Mitchell, 1995, p. 127). Fornari (1974) notes the likeness between the transitional phenomenon and the collective stating, that the collective holds the individual in the "original dual unity" between the mother and child, transformed into a "pluralistic unity of the group experience," possessing the same qualities of the subject omnipotence space created by the caregiver and child (p.145).

Given the perspective of the illusory maternal bond in the social experience in clinically treating the loss of that community, clinicians may consider the use of a clinical framework developed by Winnicott who proposed characteristics of the therapeutic alliance, which may be applicable to this population. Mindful of the maternal illusory bond once occupied by the collective, the clinician could incorporate a Winnicottian *holding environment* and filling the role of the *good enough mother*, from whom the client can individuate gradually, moving through the transitional space and, in time, individuate into the objective reality (Mitchell & Black, 1995). Further examination of this clinical framework and its implications of its use with service members, veterans, and this family could be a pertinent area of future investigation.

Comments on the Reintegration Process. The Freudian and Fornarian perspectives of the collective process both theorize a profound and deep bonding created and supported through the collective experience, which may arise in the course of one's military service. These unique relationships may not have been known in their previous civilian relationships and then may not

be recreated or replaced in civilian life. The movement between the individually focused US society, to the military collective, and then back to the individualized structure could be an affectively tumultuous transition. Thus, the dissolution of the collective may pose unforeseen psychological stress, which could be preemptively addressed when embarking on the reintegration process from a system or military policy approach.

Freud (1921) discusses the potential consequences for the individual's ego functioning and defenses in the dissolution of the collective bonds. The collective itself, he posits, controls the sense of danger and panic by redirecting the threatening energy into a defensive position against the enemy of the loved object (the collective). Slackening the love bonds, Freud proposes, may induce overwhelming panic, threatening the ego, the defensive structure, and threatening the collective. In the mutual termination of the group, or in the case of a physical loss, Freud (1921) notes the primary experience of the loss of loved object is one of depression or *melancholia*. When the individual separates themselves on their own volition from the loved object, such as upon willing separation from the military, their ego is tasked with quickly differentiating itself from the ego ideal embodied in the loved object.

Junger (2010) comments on two components of the challenges soldiers face when reintegrating into individualized, U.S. civilian society:

> O'Byrne is also worried about being alone. He hasn't been out of earshot of his platoonmates for two years and has no idea how he'll react to solitude. He's never had to get a job, find an apartment, or arrange a doctor's appointment because the Army has always done those things for him. All he's had to do is fight. And he is good at it, so leading a patrol up 1705 causes him less anxiety than, say, moving to Boston and finding

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an apartment and a job. He has little capacity for what civilians refer to as "life skills"; for him, life skills literally keep you alive. (p.233).

When [soldiers] say they miss combat, its not that they actually miss getting shot at—you'd have to be deranged—its that they miss being in a world where everything is important and nothing is taken for granted. They miss being in a world where human relations are entirely governed by whether you can trust another person with your life. (234).

While the loss of the collective itself poses a psychological stressor, the experience of loss on a more individual basis within the collective could also be an important theme noteworthy to clinicians using Freudian and Fornarian perceptions of the individual within the collective. Fornari (1974) writes extensively on the experience of mourning and grief in the military, rooted in his theoretical frame. Fornari emphasizes the significance of public displays of grief, which he proposes, help mitigate the guilt associated with loss of a loved object. Junger (2010) observed, "If you're willing to lay down your life for another person, then their death is going to be more upsetting than the prospect of your own, and intense combat might incapacitate an entire unit through grief alone," (p.237). Fornari (1974) comments on the positional implications of grief and mourning, "The socialization of mourning assumes the definite meaning of a control of the depressive and persecutory anxieties which the death of the loved person arouses in the unconscious," (p.140). Considering the Kleinian formation of the *depressive* or *paranoid-schizoid position*, the process of fully mourning facilitates an acceptance of the depressive anxiety associated with the *depressive position*, which the collective process in the military doesn't incorporate (Fornari, 1974). Junger (2010) documents a soldier's reaction to the first causality of the unit:

"It was the first time I'd seen one of ours like that," Sergeant Mac told me. "Besides Padilla, it was the first time I'd seen one of ours jacked up. When I helped him into the truck I could see the life was gone. To move a body around that is just not moving is really odd. He was almost…foreign. That kind of thing gets put someplace deep, to be dealt with later," (p.60).

Comments on the Military Institution. Both theoretical frames presented in this research document the profound relationships developed in the military collective, with potentially lasting resonance. This section will examine the implications of the collective bonds within the military institution, "the state," and offer a critique of the current military institutional structure on individual health through the theoretical lenses explored in this theoretical examination.

First, this research would like to conclude by proposing that the bonds in the military, while vital and effective when in war, perpetuate prejudice. While the libidinal bond is durable and, arguably a testament to the human capacity to love diverse individuals, people beyond the libidinal bond, the *Other*, are perceived within an entirely hostile perspective. To protect and maintain the libidinal tie, an aggression toward the other is propagated, towards those who do not belong to the group whom are perceived as innately threatening. Freud (1924) took a pessimistic perspective on the perpetuation of hatred and aggression, stating social group belonging will always support alienation of the *Other,* noting that religious and military belonging was a particularly heightened example of this hostility. The hope, Freud (1924) argues, lies in the potential softening the libidinal ties of belonging, which may help reduce intolerance.

The perpetuation of violence in the context of the collective, the willingness to alienate the *Other,* and attack in defense of the collective, could potentially only manifest in the group

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context. Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, notes in *On Killing,* "the primary factor that motivates a solider to do things that no sane man *wants* to do in combat (that is, killing and dying) is not the force of self-preservation but a powerful sense of accountability to his comrades on the battlefield," (p. 149).

The strength of the bonds in the collective has protective qualities, many of which have been previously discussed in this research. There are many ways in which the profound connections between individuals are unique and positive. However, this research suggests that the collective is intrinsic in the U.S. military institution. The military institution relies on and therefore exploits the bonds of love developed within the collective. The ability to perpetuate violence that one may not have done individually, the potential for long term prejudice, the manipulation of the protective instinct of love through which individuals in the military are encouraged to perpetuate violence and hate, could contribute to long term hatred, shame, alienation, isolation and paranoia, particularly as the individual losses their space in the collective and transitions into the highly individualized U.S. civilian society.

Further, the lack of adequate mourning ritual, according to a Fornarian lens, the absence of attention and acknowledgement of the profoundly divergent cultural bonds in the military, and abrupt loss of those bonds in the reintegration process are of vital importance to institutionally examine and critique. The alienation experienced in the loss of the collective, as supported by the Freudian and Fornarian lens, is ancillary to the alienation innate in the professional US military from certain demographics within American civilian population, thus further perpetuating isolation.

Summary

This chapter began with a presentation and summary of the Freudian and Fornarian theoretical perspectives of the phenomenon of the collective in the US military. Freudian theory was presented documenting the ways the collective may experience identification with fellow squad and unit members, internalization of the ego ideal as embodied as the 'leader' figure, be it a physical leader or/and the leader as representative of the state such as the 'United States,' 'Freedom,' or 'Human Rights.' This theory concluded that the bonds created and maintained by the collective are *libidinal*, they are deeply held bonds of love, creating a profound sense of belonging and connectedness. Fornarian theory was then presented which theorized that the process of the collective in war is characterized as one of mutual regression to the *paranoid-schizoid position*. While this process is necessary to complete the military mission, to 'find and destroy the enemy,' it comes at the price of individual autonomous ego strengths, and internalization of full objects, meaning it comes at a sacrifice to one's psychological stability.

Freudian theory is proposed as a testament to the potential strength of the human relationship, while Fornai's is one characterized by vulnerability. Both theoretical stances however propose that a profound connection is formed while in the collective. If this is indeed experienced by even some military members, what are the implications for the transition out of the collective, the loss of the bonds through the vital nature of combat, how does the ego cope with the love and loss? This paper proposes that, though the military seems reliant on these vital bonds, the destruction of these bonds may cause tremendous distress. Further, the seeming lack of any institutional support acknowledging the valiancy of the bonds, and assistance in mourning the loss of those bonds is a vital neglect on behalf of the institution and I propose should be addressed, on a policy level. Clinical practice with military members, veterans and their families could attend to these developmental implications of collectivisms, through awareness of these

process, and by facilitating and reparative experience of allying with the service member to

support them through their developmental experience of the loss of the collective.

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