

# Group Dynamics

# Bion's Theory of Groups

- Basic Assumption Mentality
- Work Group Mentality

# Work Group Mentality

- The work group is in touch with reality
- Members of the group are able to co-operate
- Differences of opinion are valued and examined on the basis of rational discussion
- Thoughts and feelings are translated into behaviour which is adapted into reality
- The work group allows for evolution of new ideas
- Members feel safe from fears of being attacked and group fragmentation
- The work group leader is selected for his ability to achieve the task

# Basic Assumption Mentality

- Groups are difficult and provoke feelings of anxiety that generate defensive behaviour
- Groups often exhibit an *as if* way of behaving or basic assumption mentality which is out of touch with reality
- Bion identified three different basic assumptions - Dependence, Fight/Flight and Pairing
- In each of these mentalities the group behaves *as if* it has some ill-defined but passionately involving mission
- Groups do not always become basic assumption groups – they can work

# Basic Assumptions

- Fight/Flight
- Dependency
- Pairing
- One-ness (Turguet)
- Me-ness (Lawrence, Bain and Gould)

# Managing in Groups

- Groups survive and adapt through interaction with their environment including other groups.
- Inter-group relations need to be managed
- The sentient system; i.e. the needs of the individuals, feelings, beliefs etc should also be managed.
- The strength of the sentient system may mean that members seek to preserve it from change

# Inter- Group Behaviour

- Members of a group have a shared mental map. This may be based in reality or not.
- Groups may have ideas and feelings about other groups. These may be based in reality or not.
- People tend to idealise the groups which are important to them.
- Less positive characteristics may be attributed to external groups

# Inter-Group Behaviour Representation

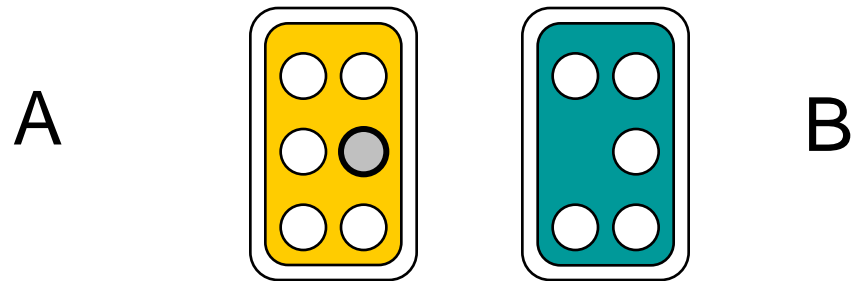


Fig 1

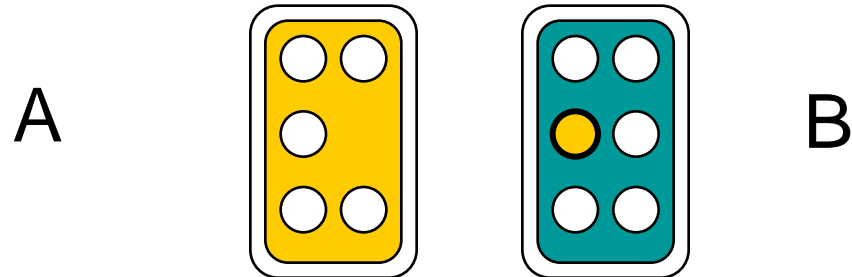


Fig 2

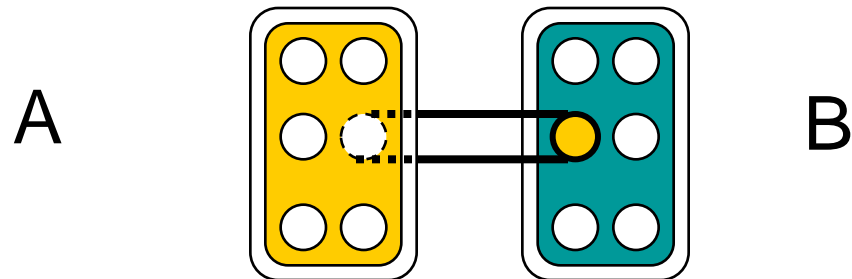
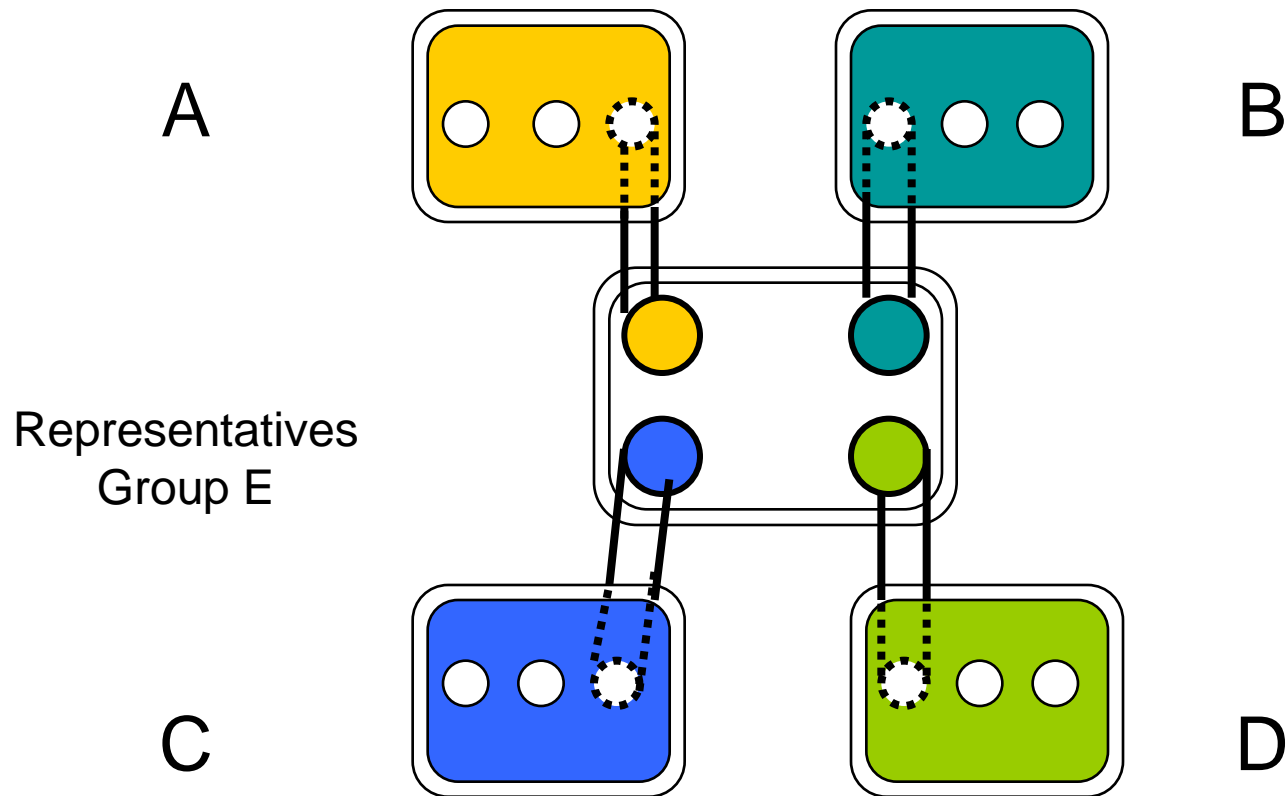


Fig 3

# Inter- Group Behaviour Representation



# Constructive Inter-group Exchange

Requires:

Tolerance of the anxieties of decision making

- Recognition of boundaries and authority
- Awareness of time
- Acceptance of change