

A group-analytic formulation of an incident of disruptive behaviour in a school

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Abstract

One way of approaching disruptive behaviour in schools is to pathologise the miscreants. Working within this paradigm, schools seek to discourage misconduct via concrete mechanisms such as control, discipline and exclusions. While sometimes helpful, these strategies fail to consider other less obvious dynamics and group processes complicit in precipitating misbehaviour. Reconceptualising disruptive behaviour from a group analytic perspective can offer an alternative formulation and suggest alternative strategies for promoting cooperative behaviour. This article, structured around an incident of mayhem in a school, demonstrates how concepts borrowed from group analytic theory can illuminate other hitherto unconscious dynamics contributing to disruptive behaviour. The paper illustrates the utility of group analytic theory in educational settings and contributes to the ongoing debate about the legitimacy of applying psychoanalytic concepts to understand socio-cultural phenomena.