POSITIONING THE SUBJECT: A SOCIAL PSYCHOANALYTICAL ANALYSIS OF AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR.

ILANA KORBER

A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of Masters of Arts in Clinical Psychology,
Department of Psychology,
University of Cape Town, December 1992.

ABSTRACT

This research project addresses the question of aggressive and violent behaviour. It focuses on the experiences of a research subject whose behaviour results from his inability to resolve the anxiety arising from his positioning in contradictory discourses. The relationship between his behaviour and underlying aggressive instincts is also considered. This paper integrates the theoretical approach developed by the social constructionists with that argued by Melanie Klein and her successors. It posits that a psychoanalytic perspective augments the social constructionist exploration of the emotional investments which secure a subject's positioning in discourse. The theoretical argument is illustrated with clinical material which examines the subject's positioning within contradictory discourses and the unconscious mechanisms which operate to secure this investment.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks to Associate Professor Andy Dawes for his editorial comment, supervision, direction, encouragement, patience and good humour.

To my sister, Debbie, without whom I might never have studied psychology.

The financial assistance of the Centre for Science Development (HSRC SA) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at are those of the author and not necessarily to be attributed to the CSD.

INTRODUCTION

In a society wracked by escalating levels of violence, much of which appears to have little political motivation, it is tempting to view the situation as senseless. However, if violent and aggressive behaviour is ever to be contained its underlying causes have to be understood. For psychologists, who respond to the emotional distress of the perpetrators and violated alike, the need to comprehend is particularly important.

Numerous institutes and research projects have been established to address the political violence which, while endemic to township life, has begun to spread across all communities. Domestic violence is also rapidly on the increase with statistics of rape, assault, car hijackings and family murders growing annually. The economic and political pressures facing South Africans are often cited as causative factors. Psychiatric evidence of mental illness is frequently used in the courts as a mitigating factor in criminal behaviour. However, violence is perpetrated by vast numbers of people who are not mentally ill. In order to understand why ordinary people become involved in aggressive and violent acts it is necessary to explore the psychodynamic factors which support positioning within discourses which promote violent behaviour.

Previous research by this author (Korber, 1992) on the subject of military violence attempted to explain the relationship between the subject's positioning and emotional investment in a multiplicity of discourses. It adopted the social constructionist rejection of the notion of a unified, rational self in favour of a subject who is simultaneously positioned within a range of discourses. It examined the process of how the subject comes to be positioned within these discourses and the

emotional investments which make such positioning possible.

This paper extends the previous focus by incorporating a psychoanalytic framework. It suggests that emotional investments in discourse have both conscious and unconscious components and that unconscious dynamics should be examined in order to attain a more comprehensive understanding of the subject's positioning in discourse. It draws on the Kleinian concept of 'position' in order to expand the notion of 'positioning' as outlined by the social constructionists. It examines the unconscious mechanisms people use to defend against the anxieties which stem from unconscious positioning and which influence emotional investment in discourses and behaviour within those discourses.

Research material drawn from 23 therapy sessions is used to illustrate the theoretical proposition. The research subject's aggressive and violent behaviour is shown to relate both to his positioning in contradictory discourses of power and passivity as well as his underlying aggressive instincts.

The social constructionist approach adopted is drawn mainly from the work of Hollway (1984, 1989). The Kleinian theory referred to draws largely from Klein's post-1945 writing as well as that of contemporary Kleinian analysts.

THEORY

Social Constructionism

The importance of the social constructionist approach lies in its argument that the fundamental flaw in psychology has been the assumption of the individual-society dualism and the acceptance of the notion of a

unitary, rational subject. It suggests, rather, a multiplicity of subjectivities which fluctuate as they move between, and are produced by, potentially contradictory discourses (Burman, 1992).

Social constructionism emphasises that the concepts employed to understand the world are socially constructed (Frosh, 1989). In other words, meanings are not fixed entities within individuals' minds but are imbued with ideological values. The way in which the world is experienced is mediated through discourse which represents a particular 'reality' ie a social representation. Parker (1990) argues that discourses do not only provide descriptions of the world but 'categorise' it by bringing certain elements into focus, ie constructing objects. (The danger of reifying discourse is implied in Parker's argument and explicitly noted by Burman, 1992. For detailed comment on the functions and operations of discourse see Parker, 1990 and Burman, 1991).

The social constructionist approach suggests that personality development can be viewed as the process by which socially constructed meaning is internalised. Frosh (1989) notes that while some theorists argue that it is only the way that we understand the self that is socially constructed, others suggest that the very self is socially constructed. This suggests that the self is composed of fragmented components which arise from the experience of social practice. This experience is informed by the discourses in which subjects are positioned. The practices implied by such positioning are relative to the dominance of a particular discourse for the individual. Thus each individual is positioned in a unique way within a discourse and this positioning itself is in a constant state of flux.

Frosh cautions that this analysis alone would lead to a reductionist understanding of the deterministic relationship between the individual subject and the discourses in which s/he is positioned. He points out that a theory of discourse cannot in itself address the question of why subjects take up the positioning within a discourse. It is at this point that the inclusion of a psychoanalytic understanding becomes important in providing the unconscious motivation for the subject's emotional investment in discourse, or as Frosh (1989) argues, 'the unconscious structure for subjectivity' (p. 165). The usefulness of psychoanalytic concepts to the social constructionist approach has been demonstrated by Hollway (1984, 1989) who argues that psychoanalysis poses a fundamental challenge to the notion of a rational, unitary subject and any attempt to separate the individual from the social.

Hollway's position is an advance on many of her social constructionist predecessors who do not thoroughly investigate the unconscious mechanisms which operate in the subject's assumption of a position in discourse. She argues that 'the availability of a position in discourse which is positively valued and which confers power must be accompanied by a mechanism at the level of the psyche which provides the investment to take up this position' (p. 256).

Richards (1985) criticises the attempt to integrate social constructionism with psychoanalytic material for not adding much that could not have been argued from an existing psychoanalytic (and in Hollway's case, Kleinian) perspective. This criticism appears somewhat misdirected considering that the importance of combining these two approaches is that each contributes a focus on what the other emphasises insufficiently.

While the social constructionist contribution emphasises the centrality of social practice in the creation of meaning, discourse and subjectivity, the psychoanalytic component suggests the existence of certain universal processes which operate at an unconscious level and which influence the subject's capacity to take up available positioning within discourses.

The Kleinian Contribution

Frosh (1987) posits that unlike the object relations theorists who present a unified psyche which pre-exists social relations and which is subsequently split due to frustrating environmental conditions, Klein argues that the infant's psyche is fundamentally split and contradictory. Frosh suggests that this aspect of Kleinian theory has important elements of commonality with the social constructionist rejection of the rational, unitary subject.

The development of the infant's psyche can be seen to result from the dialectical relationship between the internal and external worlds, with the internal phantasy world mediating and shaping the experience of the external world. As Klein argues, there is 'a constant interaction between the internal object world, which reflects in a phantastic way the impressions gained from without, and the external world which is decisively influenced by projection' (1975a, p. 59). The double process of projection and introjection is the mechanism by which this dialectical relationship is established.

An additional aspect of this dialectic is the contradictory nature of the internal and external worlds themselves. Internally, there are the opposing forces of life and death, while externally, there are real, as opposed to phantasised, contradictions. As Frosh notes,

'the breast is in reality both gratifying and frustrating' (p. 128).

Klein (1975b) states that the experiences of the external world are of 'paramount' importance but much depends on how the child integrates these experiences. The process of assimilation is influenced by the degree of destructive impulses and anxieties of a persecutory or depressive nature that are present (Klein, 1975c).

Klein's approach throws light on the processes of social construction through its concern with the interrelationship between instincts and objects in the environment (Frosh, 1987). Klein's theory integrates both instinctual workings as well as object relating in that the infant first seeks out objects in order to project the persecutory anxieties arising from the death instinct. It is the infant's attempt to escape persecutory anxiety which results in the projection of its destructive impulses onto an external object. As Frosh (1989) explains, the external object is then symbolically substituted to prevent it from becoming overwhelmingly threatening. The infant constantly seeks new objects as symbolic substitutes which facilitates the process of symbolisation and interest in objects. Klein argues that symbolisation and the infant's developing ability to tolerate anxiety, are the infant's key link with reality.

One of the important points of theory that differentiates Klein's approach from that of Freud's is her emphasis on instincts being directed towards objects (Frosh, 1987). Frosh argues that this notion of instinct is critical in understanding the importance of Klein's contribution to a view of development which combines both biological and social aspects. He stresses the object orientation, as opposed to the biological reductionism, of the Kleinian concept of the instincts, and cites this aspect of the

theory as central to an explanation of how relationships structure the development of the psyche.

The Death Instinct

While a comprehensive review of Klein's instinct theory lies outside the scope of this project, it is necessary to comment briefly on the Kleinian concept of the death instinct as this project is concerned with a subject's aggressive behaviour.

The death instinct is a central tenet of Kleinian theory and is considered the first source of anxiety. In Klein's terms, the internal workings of the death instinct are manifest in annihilation anxiety. This anxiety is externalised through projection (initially onto the breast) and re-experienced in persecutory form.

Laplanche and Pontalis (1973) define the death instinct as that whose goal is to return the living being to its original inorganic state. This definition is based on the position adopted by Freud in 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle'. While the death instinct is initially oriented towards self-destruction, it later becomes oriented towards others and is then manifest in the form of the aggressive instinct.

Klein (1975d) refers to the death instinct and the aggressive instinct interchangeably. This could suggest Klein's emphasis on the externalised aggressive aspect of the death instinct, as noted by Gillespie (1971), which arises as a defence against the fear of death, rather than on the wish for death as attributed to Freud by Laplanche and Pontalis. This does not refute Klein's equal emphasis on the internal workings of the death instinct, but rather stresses that the subject defends against a fear of self-imposed annihilation rather than an instinctual regression towards an inorganic state.

Gillespie (1971) concludes that many analysts have opted for accepting the notion of the aggressive instinct while avoiding or rejecting the concept of the death instinct with its implication of self-oriented destruction. For the purposes of this project the concept of the death instinct as suggested by Klein is accepted and the aggressive activity which is examined is viewed as the outward manifestation of this instinct. This aggression is understood as resulting from the predominance of aggressive instincts which are defused from their Eros counterpart.

A major criticism of Klein's use of the death instinct is that it assumes that human interaction occurs as a consequence of instinctual drives, thus underplaying both ego-functioning and object relationships (Frosh, 1987). Klein's emphasis on the biological roots of the death and life instincts and their role in motivating behaviour raises several points which are difficult to reconcile with social constructionist theory.

Klein's examination of the relationships that the infant forms through the coexistence of the instincts with the environment implies a dichotomy between internal and external realms that the social constructionists seek to avoid. In adopting even a liberal reading of Kleinian theory, the social constructionists risk adopting the very dualism they critique. This is particularly evident when considering Klein's instinct theory which presents certain constitutional factors which interact with the external environment. This fundamental tenet of Kleinian theory raises a second contradiction for a social constructionist position. While Frosh stresses that Klein was not arguing from a biological determinist position, the theory of instinct remains fundamentally a constitutional factor. No matter the degree to which instinctual expression is constructed through object

relations, the very definition of the instincts is irrefutably biological. Henriques et al (1984) argue that a theory of subjectivity cannot totally ignore biological influences and that the dualism between the biological and the social should be avoided by emphasising the way in which they mutually affect one another. This conclusion is unsatisfactory in that it is not only reminiscent of the very dualism they critique, but it also fails to provide an alternative formulation of the psychic processes which provide the motivating force for cathexis.

It would appear that the theoretical tools needed to resolve these contradictions have not been developed within a social constructionist paradigm. Perhaps they have been insufficiently addressed due to the social constructionists' selective employment of Kleinian theory, whereby they focus on providing an explanation of the psychodynamic processes operating to secure and shift investment in positioning. This project, with its focus on aggressive behaviour, cannot avoid the contradictions raised. Beyond acknowledging their presence, however, it does not purport to offer solutions to what is perhaps an irreconcilable problem.

Positioning

The Kleinian usage of the term 'position' implies the subject's relationship to objects and the phantasies, anxieties and defences associated with the particular position occupied ie paranoid-schizoid or depressive (Joseph, 1989). Because of its focus on unconscious mechanisms, it enriches an understanding of the social constructionist notion of positioning, which suggests a location within a discourse.

Although the Kleinian concept of position refers to an explicitly psychological form of positioning, it can be

considered to share certain commonalities with that of the social constructionists - specifically the subject's capacity to move between positions and operate predominantly from one rather than another at different points. In addition, both imply some form of action by the subject, either at an unconscious level of defending against persecutory or depressive anxiety, or through the practice suggested by particular social positioning.

Hollway (1984) demonstrates how, when a valuable and powerful position in discourse is available, a psychic mechanism is needed, so that the emotional investment to occupy that position is provided. This mechanism often appears to be a defence mechanism, amongst which splitting, projection, introjection and projective identification are cited as important examples. Hollway stresses that these defence mechanisms are interpsychic. They are also the means by which the subject shifts between positions in discourse. A combination of Hollway's proposition and Klein's argument that the prominence of different defences relates to the unconscious position occupied, enriches an understanding of the capacity to take up positions in discourse. Specifically, the ability to position and resist positioning relates to the subject's unconscious positioning and the subsequent anxieties and defences which predominate.

Hollway (1984) cautions that the subject's capacity to move between various discourses and positionings assumes freedom from unconscious forces which might prevent such movement. This highlights the need to take cognisance of the existing defences against anxieties produced by the subject's unconscious positioning in order to understand the subject's ability to act in accordance with the practice suggested by his/her positioning in discourse.

The tendency towards reductionism must be guarded against at this point lest it be argued that the subject is ultimately governed by unconscious forces. Davies and Harre (1990) avoid the problem of reductionism by introducing the notion of agency, whereby it is suggested that individuals have choice and are not at the mercy of discourses within which they are positioned, nor of psychodynamic factors. Since the range of choices is presumably circumscribed by the meanings available within the discourse, their notion of agency should perhaps be modified.

Hollway suggests that the creation of meaning is dynamic in that positioning within discourses is not a fixed entity but, within the parameters of the discourse, is constantly in a state of flux, thus giving rise to ever changing and developing levels of meaning. In discussing the process of signification, Hollway (1989) departs from Lacan's notion of desire and argues that the expression or suppression of meaning is consequent upon the subject's experience of power and vulnerability. The subject attempts to gain power in relation to other subjects so as to avoid the exposure of his/her vulnerability. The expression of power, therefore, is related to the subject's need to defend against anxiety. The likelihood of a meaning being reproduced is increased if it offers the subject strength and protection from anxiety. If Klein's concepts of persecutory and depressive anxieties, as they occur in the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, are incorporated, Hollway's argument can be extended to suggest that the meaning created by the subject is partly consequent upon his/her unconscious positioning.

The process of signification and the effects of unconscious positioning on the creation of meaning can thus be seen to affect the choice available to subjects within discourse. In order to avoid reductionism, it can

be argued that, given the presence of anxieties that must be defended against, a range of choices still exist which could fulfil a defensive purpose. The concept of agency must therefore be mediated by an understanding of the subject's unconscious positioning which influences the range of possible meanings and choices and which motivates the subject in particular directions.

An additional factor which must not be overlooked is the interpsychic nature of positioning itself. The subject is positioned in discourses in relation to others similarly positioned, and in opposition to those positioned in alternative discourses. Harre and Van Langenhove (1991) conclude that people differ in their capacity to position themselves and others according to their technical mastery, intent and power to do so. They extend Hollway's concept of positioning in describing a range of different types of positioning, and emphasizing the dynamic aspect of positioning as discursive practice. They illustrate the mechanisms operating within positioning, relating both to the form and level of positioning as well as the conscious and unconscious power relationships involved. These power relationships, following Hollway, can be understood as relating to the subject's attempt to defend against anxiety.

Once again the interpsychic nature of the defence mechanisms must be taken into account as the subject attempts to position another person. The subject's ability to position another person through projecting unacceptable parts of her/himself in order to reduce anxiety, relies in part on her/his psychological and social power to do so, and in part on the object's acceptance of this projection. The acceptance of the projection depends in part on the recipient's own unconscious positioning and investment in the particular discourses in which s/he is positioned. An inability to successfully defend against the anxiety could weaken the

subject's investment in a particular discourse, thus contributing to the process of shifting of investment.

Resistance to being positioned has important consequences for the ability of the defence mechanisms to defend against anxiety. If, for example, a subject attempts to project her/ his own aggressive and undesirable impulses onto someone who resists positioning in an aggressive discourse, then the subject is unable to escape her/his anxiety through the mechanism of projection. This could exacerbate the perception of the 'opponent' as threatening and s/he might resort to acting out his aggression directly. S/he does not necessarily avoid the anxiety arising from her/his own destructiveness, but seeks relief in defending her/himself by attacking the persecutory objects.

It would appear then that the ability to position oneself and others and to resist positioning is related to both psychological and social power. Of course having the social power to position others does not necessarily imply a psychological need to do so. But the power to position oneself and others plays an important part in the subject's ability to defend against anxiety.

The relationship between power and anxiety is itself complex, as the attainment of the former does not necessarily result in the reduction of the latter. This dynamic will be frequently observed in this case study where the subject, in an attempt to avoid anxiety and assume a more powerful position, projects undesirable and anxiety provoking parts of himself. However, as the analysis will reveal, the subject's assumption of a powerful position can itself provoke anxiety of retaliation from perceived opponents. The subject then simultaneously attempts to position himself in a discourse of power as well as one of passivity and his

attempt to resolve the resultant contradictions results in a constant oscillation between the two discourses.

While the anxieties referred to above and described by Klein may be universal, their manifestation differs according to the subject's individual experience in the world and positioning within particular discourses. Lest the notion of positioning be reduced in the analysis to the microcosm of interpsychic interaction, it should be noted that these interpsychic relations occur in the context of broader positioning as defined by social norms. The subject's continued investment in discourses, however, cannot be fully appreciated without an examination of intra- and interpsychic processes.

METHODOLOGY

Harre and Van Langenhoven (1991), in discussing the need to position the research process, argue that the 'story of the research' should be made explicit rather than the 'sterile' approach which merely cites figures and statistics. This suggestion seems most appropriate in the context of this research project, which makes no attempt to satisfy the demand for generalizability, statistical sampling and other methodological practices required by positivist research. It makes no attempt to establish experimental controls nor does it claim any predictive capacity.

The research was conducted through the medium of therapy. Twenty three, fifty minute sessions were conducted with the research subject over eleven months. Each session was tape-recorded and transcribed. For the purposes of confidentiality the subject's name and non-essential personal details have been changed.

Therapy as research - the problem of dual positioning

Unlike the usual procedure where a client approaches a prospective therapist, an invitation to participate in therapy was extended to the subject on the basis of his having been a research subject in previous research (Korber, 1992). This research focussed on his involvement in violent activities in a military context. Right from the start the subject was positioned both as a client in a therapeutic setting as well as a research subject. This clearly had effects on the therapeutic interaction, as not only was the therapist inclined to explore certain issues which seemed to relate to the research topic, but the client also expressed concern that the therapist fulfil what he understood as the research requirements. Whereas it is not unusual for clients to voice concern about the adequacy of their performance in therapy, and while this can be interpreted in terms of the transference relationship, in the present situation the concern raised by the client seemed to relate largely to his positioning as research subject. Thus, the client and therapist's simultaneous positioning in the research and therapeutic discourses affected both the therapy and the research processes.

Models of therapy

One of the major problems which beset this research related to the style of the therapy. The research was embarked upon in an attempt to understand the psychodynamics of a subject who had been involved in violent activity. The intention was to pursue a strictly psychodynamic approach to therapy. It was stressed that the therapy would follow its course as determined by the client. From the outset it became clear that the subject was motivated to participate in therapy in order to address his aggressive behaviour and alcoholism. The

therapy therefore focussed heavily on attempting to reduce the subject's alcohol abuse, and the therapeutic approach had to be adjusted to benefit the client's needs optimally. Thus, a broadly cognitive style was adopted during much of the therapy.

Positioning the client

While an assessment of the client's positioning depends mainly on his/her experience of the world, the role of the therapist as listener and 'positioner' must not be underestimated. As Joseph (1989) explains, the Kleinian concept of 'position' provides a framework for the therapist whose task it is to listen to and understand how the client is experiencing the internal and external world. The therapist uses the theoretical constructs to assess whether the client is functioning predominantly from the paranoid-schizoid or the depressive position. This assessment has important consequences for the therapeutic work.

The 'position' which a client occupies is not a fixed or objective entity. It is rather, as Joseph describes, 'a constellation of conjoint phantasies and relationships to objects with characteristic anxieties and defences' (p115). Because these phantasies cannot be observed, the therapist's task, as Isaacs (1952) points out, is to infer that particular phantasies and resistances are present. The therapist's ability to form a therapeutic alliance with the client as well as his/her interpretative skills all influence the positioning of the client, as understood by the therapist.

The Kleinian concept of 'position', as defined above by Joseph, suggests that interpretations about a client's positioning should be based not only on an understanding of the client's defences and anxieties, but also on an appreciation of his/her unconscious phantasies. As access

to this level of functioning was difficult, both due to the level of training of the therapist, as well as to the therapeutic approach adopted (because of the client's needs), the discussion of the client's unconscious positioning is limited to an examination of his anxieties and defences. No attempt is made to interpret his positioning as paranoid-schizoid or depressive.

Positioning the subject in the analysis

Psychoanalysis has been widely criticised for being unscientific and, at best, speculative. In responding to the criticism of lack of evidence for psychoanalytic theories, Frosh (1989) argues that 'the theory of the unconscious ... is precisely a theory; more rigorously, it can be thought of as a set of hypotheses providing guidance for practice and research, and supplying a narrative integrity for material which would otherwise be random and meaningless'(p57).

Using a Kleinian model, the researcher analysed the material in terms of the subject's behaviour, defences and anxieties and attempted to illustrate certain theoretical constructs. Frosh's (1989) caution that all actions are over-determined and that the researcher can thus only speculate about the inner significance, underscored the analysis.

The researcher, guided by the material, decided how best to interpret the client's psychodynamics and hence was further involved in her role as 'positioner'. The client was positioned through being labelled, however informally, as passive, aggressive or other such descriptions. This process is similar to that described by Harre and Van Langehove (1991), who refer to it as forced self-positioning. This type of positioning occurs frequently in institutional settings where professionals are called upon to classify and make management decisions

about people. While the subject is asked to account for him/herself and thus could be said to be involved in self-positioning, the circumstances under which this process occurs implies the necessity of positioning him/herself and the forced aspect is thereby introduced.

The researcher's role as 'positioner' extends also to the labelling of the particular discourses within which the subject is seen to be positioned. The particular label given to the discourse must be carefully considered within the social context in which both researcher and subject coexist. The need for reflexivity on the discourse itself is argued by Parker (1990) who comments on the researcher's responsibility to make moral and political evaluations in choosing the terms employed to describe discourses. In this project the researcher chose not to use the term 'violent' as a label for discourse, although the subject displayed violent behaviour. The use of this term as a label was decided against largely because of the connotations of 'violence' within the current South African context.

While a subject might be positioned within a particular discourse, it should be understood as being used to investigate a particular positioning which does not negate the existence of other discourses within which the subject is simultaneously positioned.

Reflecting on the researcher's role and subjective approach to the material appears to be an accepted part of discourse analysis (Parker, 1990; Burman, 1991 amongst others). This approach, however, has a number of potential hazards. Burman (1991) lists four problems related to reflexivity. Firstly, the researcher's subjectivity can become an exercise in confessing his/her interference in the process; secondly, the subjective account can be submitted as a valid statement on what happened; thirdly, the analysis can be detached from the

real world through subjective interpretation; fourthly, there is a danger that the research will be seen purely as a fictional account. Burman concludes that the researcher must be aware of the potential of disengaging from reality by 'subordinating 'the real' to discourse' (p 332).

Burman (1992) comments on the power that the researcher has to construct the subject's account through the process of interpretation. She demonstrates how the power differential between the researcher and the subject influences not only what is allowed to be said, but also which interpretation becomes prominent.

In therapy a clinician positions the subject through the process of interpretation. Although there is no 'proof' that these interpretations are correct, the therapist is guided by the response of the client and his/her own countertransference. The research process, however, has no such 'reality testing' mechanism, aside from supervision, and the researcher must be aware of the pitfall of manipulating the material to illustrate what s/he set out to examine in the first place.

ANALYSIS OF MATERIAL

From the outset of therapy the subject, Karl, reported feeling increasingly aggressive and feared losing control over his behaviour. During the course of therapy a number of incidents occurred during which Karl expressed his aggressive feelings in a violent manner. One particular occasion, on which Karl assaulted an employee, is examined below. Several other situations in which Karl justified the use of violence are also investigated here.

This section explores Karl's positioning within discourses of power and passivity. It examines his investment in these discourses as well as the psychodynamic factors which operate to secure this investment. His aggressive behaviour is considered to result both from his attempt to resolve the conflict arising from his simultaneous positioning within contradictory discourses, as well as an underlying predominance of aggressive instincts. These instincts are explored as they manifest in his art and his violent fantasies.

The subject

Karl (30), a single male with a tertiary education is self-employed as an artist. He has a longstanding history of alcohol abuse and dependence. On entering therapy he reported concern about his increased aggression which he felt building up and which he feared losing control over.

Throughout the course of therapy Karl appeared to use the sessions to talk about his inability to resolve problems of a domestic, social and professional nature. While he often formulated possible solutions during sessions, he admitted forgetting about them as soon as he left. He displayed little ability to assume control over his affairs and seemed to require external structure in which

to operate. He was, for example, able to reduce his alcohol intake when closely supervised. However, he had ambivalent feelings about such structure as implemented, for example, in the form of an alcohol reduction programme. While acknowledging his need for such a programme he found it 'authoritarian' and 'intimidating'. This ambivalence was found to be indicative of his longstanding conflict with authority and power.

Karl's splitting off and projection of his life force was strongly experienced by the therapist during the course of his therapy. In relation to his addiction, it often felt as if he was incapable of helping himself and the therapist felt increasingly responsible for helping him overcome it. The more passive Karl felt, the more conscious the therapist became of her desire to 'save' him from himself. The more practical assistance was suggested, in terms of admission to an alcohol unit or psychiatric care, the more Karl withdrew from making use of what was on offer. In effect, his positioning within a 'passive' discourse was entrenched through projecting his capable, powerful part. He described the clinician as his 'conscience' in relation to his alcohol abuse which appeared to be a way of externalising the guilt he felt about his addiction.

Karl displayed an insecure sense of his own power in social relations and was very concerned about being rejected. It is possible that the extent to which Karl was able to reduce alcohol intake related not only to the structure provided but also to his need to perform successfully in order to secure the therapist's acceptance.

The family

The only child of a conservative, Afrikaans family, Karl experienced his father as a very strict, distant figure

of power who was rigid and not prepared to discuss or compromise. Karl felt that they had an unsatisfactory relationship. They never once had an intimate discussion. All communication with his father had to be relayed through his mother. This resulted in shared secrets with his mother who at times covered up Karl's misdemeanours, thereby protecting him from his father's wrath or disappointment.

His father expected outstanding performances in every sphere of activity and Karl lived in constant fear of not achieving sufficiently or of doing something that would meet with his father's disapproval. In addition to his father's expectations and the resultant anxiety experienced, Karl felt that his father never showed any personal interest in what he did. No matter how well he performed, he felt that he could never really impress his father or elicit his praise. He sensed an element of competition as his father always compared their achievements. Karl was never sure whether or not his father wished him to outperform his own efforts as a young boy.

Karl's mother, by way of contrast, was almost 'too perfect' and spent her time making sure that Karl and his father were well cared for. Although he had a closer communication with her, emotional issues were not really discussed. Karl felt that his mother had strict rules and conventions which added to the disciplinarian structures laid down by his father.

Discourses of power and passivity

Karl's positioning in the discourses of power and passivity is suggested by his concern with asserting authority and commanding respect while simultaneously experiencing himself as passive, unconfident and incapable of confronting and resolving problems.

The confusion resulting from positioning within these contradictory discourses can be seen in Karl's persistent insecurity about assuming authority roles and his questioning whether he must respect others or whether they should respect him. He appears acutely aware of the power differential in social situations and feels that he must either be in a position of authority (the 'power' discourse) or else be the lesser person (the 'passive' discourse).

Karl's simultaneous positioning in the contradictory discourses of power and passivity could relate to his childhood and adolescent experience when he was expected to be both powerful, in the sense of personal achievement and leadership over his peers, as well as passive, in the sense of complete obedience to the authority of the Father (whether his real father, the church, school or military).

As his father was always in a position of power, which Karl was unsure about whether to challenge, Karl could experience conflicting feelings about being positioned within a 'power' discourse. On the one hand he is emotionally invested in this discourse as it fulfils his desire to gain his father's recognition and maintains his positioning within the 'macho masculine' discourse in which many white, Afrikaans men are positioned from birth. On the other hand, however, his positioning within this discourse, which for Karl suggests assuming control and asserting authority, could give rise to unconscious feelings of guilt related to confronting his father's power as well as anxiety about his father's possible retaliation.

Karl's investment in a 'passive' discourse appears to relate to his desire to gain his father's acceptance by respecting the superior authority of those he describes

as people with 'strong personalities'. In according those, who could be seen to represent his father, adequate respect, he avoids the anxiety which could result from the punitive father. However, in being positioned as 'passive' he risks provoking the anxiety and guilt which relate to disappointing the father, both real and internalised, who expects him to be powerful.

Karl's use of splitting can be seen not only in his apparent inability to integrate both powerful and passive parts of his own personality, but also in his categorisation of others as powerful or meek. His conflict between his positioning in the discourses of power and passivity is typically played out in situations where Karl has contact with people who have 'strong' or 'meek' personalities.

When he is engaged in an argument with a strong, forceful personality he finds his self-confidence threatened and feels that he has to 'fight harder' to achieve status, acceptance and authority. Karl is aware that he is not really the 'lesser person' and that he imbues his 'opponent' with a false sense of authority. He thus creates a situation in which he feels frustrated and humiliated, and experiences himself as stupid and intellectually inferior.

It would appear from this scenario that Karl projects his power onto his 'opponent' and thus positions himself within a 'passive' discourse. It is possible that he projects this power as a defensive manoeuvre against the anxiety provoked by his positioning within a 'power' discourse. The defence can be seen to provide the psychic mechanism necessary to shift positioning and to take up positioning within the 'passive' discourse. His investment in the 'passive' discourse is a dual one - partly to avoid anxiety and partly the desire to gain recognition. It is also possible that Karl's investment

in the 'passive' discourse is increased by the anxiety which is aroused by his strong aggressive impulses. Positioned as 'passive' he perhaps gains protection from his own destructive potential.

However, as mentioned above, Karl also experiences anxiety due to his positioning in a 'passive' discourse. He projects his guilt arising from his inadequate performance onto his perceived opponent whom he now feels is 'to blame', and feels justified in using physical violence as a last resort if verbal persuasion proves insufficient.

He knows that he should stop the argument before it reaches this stage but is not always able to. He reports on one occasion feeling that his opponent was drawing the argument out of him. On other occasions the perceived lack of compromise leads to a rapid escalation of tension seeking physical release. It appears that his inability to resolve the anxieties arising from his positioning, results in violent acting out. His tendency to resolve the tension in this way should also be understood in the context of his underlying aggressive instincts.

Unlike his childhood experiences when he was powerless in the face of an omnipotent father, Karl now wields physical power. The people onto whom he projects and whom he assaults both verbally and physically, can be seen as replacements for his father towards whom he claims to feel no aggression. Such aggression, directly experienced, would presumably result in an unmanageable level of persecutory anxiety arising from his fear of retaliation. Klein argues that the child transfers the feelings projected onto the parent to other less-threatening objects. His possible aggression towards his father could be generalised to others in his environment. Karl's behaviour can also be seen as an attempt to provoke his silent father, now perceived opponent, into

action. As a child he remembers attempting to draw out the side of his father that would beat him when he was naughty. Perhaps this enabled Karl to feel that he had paid penance for disappointing his father rather than being left alone with his guilt. Provoking his opponent into a physical fight might fulfil a similar need as Karl struggles with the anxieties which arise however he is positioned.

Karl's use of aggression as a defence against anxiety appears to provide temporary relief. It is shortlived, however, as he is afraid of the destructive powers of his aggressive impulses. This increases his tendency to project his aggression onto others which can result in their feeling hostile towards him, thus serving to reinforce his persecutory anxiety.

Klein (1975e) argues that persecutory anxiety and aggression are mutually reinforcing as the need to defend against the persecutory object requires increasing amounts of projected hostility. This projected aggression, in turn, exacerbates the experience of persecution as the person fears retaliation. In positioning his colleagues as opponents in argument and thus experiencing them as persecutory, Karl has to continually defend himself. When he fails to do so verbally he resorts to physical attack as a means of defence against mounting anxiety.

Klein suggests that the fear of persecution is ultimately a fear of the victory of the death instinct over the ego. She argues that people who cannot cope with tension, frustration and anxiety have an ego which 'is weak in proportion to the intense destructive impulses and persecutory feelings it experiences'(1975c, p229).

Karl's awareness and concern about his aggressive impulses, coupled with his defensive use of aggression,

increases his need to justify his use of violence. His attempt at justification is indicative of his confusion and his inability to accept responsibility. He says that while he considers the use of violence to be wrong, he nevertheless feels that his actions are justified if the situation calls for violence. He feels that resorting to violence ensures that the problem is dealt with and resolved. This justification of violent behaviour is illustrative of Klein's (1975e) description of the relationship between persecutory anxiety and the defences protecting against being overwhelmed by guilt. She argues that guilt recedes in the face of dominating persecutory anxiety. As the guilt fades so does the love for the object. The object, now bad and unlovable, can now be destroyed without guilt and with justification. A vicious circle could be established as Karl attempts to escape the anxiety and guilt arising from his experience of his aggressive impulses. He projects his aggression onto others thus increasing his own persecutory anxiety, which, if strong enough, reduces his guilt and enables his aggressive impulses to achieve satisfaction without overwhelming anxiety.

Karl's precarious sense of his own power which causes anxiety and increases his paranoid feelings also has consequences in his work environment. He reports a measure of persecutory ideation in relation to those he perceives as attempting to humiliate him or strip him of what status he has acquired. He expresses concern about what might happen were he to be cornered or threatened in terms of his position at work. He feels that were this to happen it would be 'a matter of survival' in the sense that he feels that he has to look after himself. He is aware that he could become violent if threatened. In fact he has been involved in a serious assault on an employee whom he felt challenged his power as an employer. The relationship has a history of animosity due to the recurrence of similar incidents. When the employee

refused to carry out his instructions Karl was left feeling humiliated. He decided to confront the employee although he was aware that this could result in physical violence. When the intoxicated man drew his flick-knife, Karl attacked him. Even after he had wrestled the knife away, Karl continued the assault and was eventually restrained only by the intervention of his colleagues. Although Karl acknowledges that he could have attempted to placate the employee when confronted with the weapon, he lost control and did not want to stop.

Prior to the confrontation Karl felt frustrated about having to deal with a situation he perceived as humiliating. He felt that he had no choice but to resolve the situation himself and when attacked, the pent up frustration he had experienced burst out in aggressive form.

This incident should be understood not only in the context of Karl's positioning as already discussed, but also in the broader social positioning of white, South African men in a discourse of 'baasskap' with its concomitant racial implications. So positioned, Karl's behaviour becomes, perhaps, less aberrant. However, his description of the employee as 'real scum ' who 'drinks all the time' suggests his projection of hated parts of himself onto the employee, thereby increasing his tendency to behave violently even when at a conscious level he knows that he should try alternative resolution methods. On another occasion a violent incident was narrowly averted when Karl was prepared to 'beat the hell out of' a stranger who was annoying him and whom he described as 'dumb' and 'stupid'.

Karl also reported an army incident in which he assaulted a black member of his troop who had challenged his leadership. He felt that physical violence was the only way in which he could assert his authority over the

challenger. While once again his behaviour should be understood within the context of his positioning in the 'baasskap' discourse as well as a perceived threatened mutiny on the eve of a military operation, Karl's investment in a 'power' discourse and his unconscious need to avoid the anxiety aroused when his power is threatened, increases his tendency to act out violently in accordance with his aggressive impulses.

Although on many occasions Karl has opted to ignore the person whom he experiences as provocative, thereby avoiding a potential conflict, he feels frustrated by always having to compromise. He describes how he has had to accept resolution 'on other peoples' terms, to satisfy other peoples' requirements'. While this can be traced to his possible frustration at always being the compromiser in relation to his father and later with his peers, his violent outbursts appear to relate also to his ability to withstand frustration only up to a certain point beyond which violence appears justifiable.

Karl's ability to justify his actions relies on his projecting his aggression onto others, thereby positioning them as aggressive opponents. He describes how an argument with a girlfriend resulted in them shaking one another. He was shocked to realise that he was about to hit her. He felt justified however as he thought that 'she was probably on the verge of hitting me as well'.

What all the reported incidents have in common is Karl's attempt to assert his authority over those he perceives to have humiliated him. In relation to 'strong' people Karl feels the need to assert his opinion. As Karl was raised to believe that he could surpass everyone else in all situations, his reaction can also be interpreted as the narcissistic rage of someone who has been shown up as less than his idealised self-image.

In contrast to his response to those dominant people who threaten him with narcissistic insult, Karl's response to a 'meeker' personality reveals his identification with those positioned in a 'passive' discourse. He does not feel the need to dominate and, on the contrary, is afraid of being overwhelming and appearing too strongwilled. He speaks of not wanting to 'mess him around' or upset them and so resorts to underplaying his own power. This could relate to his identification with his mother whom he perceived as sharing his position of weakness in relation to the authoritarian father. This could also resonate with an infantile fear of destroying his caregiver with his destructive impulses so that he resorts to splitting off his aggression and identifying with the passivity he associates with meeker personalities.

In order to defend against the anxiety of assuming his position within a 'passive' discourse, he appears to project the 'meek' part of himself onto others which could release him from his anxiety-provoking inadequacy in relation to the powerful father. He is afraid to dominate milder personalities, with whom he can possibly identify through the process of projective identification and with whom he feels frustrated as they are as powerless as he is.

His constant fear about being underassertive in relation to those he positions in the 'power' discourse and his simultaneous concern that he will be seen to be too aggressive by those positioned in the 'passive' discourse, appears to result from his attempt to reconcile his need to challenge authority and to achieve satisfaction for his aggressive impulses while avoiding the anxiety this creates. His anxiety fuels his fear of being unacceptable to others as he was when he failed to meet his father's expectations. His anxiety and guilt thus stem from the dual source of failing to be accepted

due to his inadequacy and passivity, as well as because of his aggressive impulses and attempt to assert his own power.

Drinking as a defence against anxiety

Karl's difficulties with confrontation and ambivalence towards positioning himself powerfully effects his ability to resolve problems. His pattern of dealing with problems is to find 'a scapegoat' onto whom he projects blame. The scapegoat can be a person or an institution. Having rid himself of responsibility, he is able to position himself as a passive victim who cannot do anything to resolve the problem. However, his 'passive' positioning leaves him feeling frustrated and anxious which stimulates his need to drink as he finds it easier to forget his problems and hence escape the anxiety. Were he to maintain his powerful positioning he would have to take responsibility, assert himself and confront his problems directly.

His postponement of resolution only intensifies his anxiety. He describes waking up in a state of high anxiety over a small domestic issue which he feels has 'tipped the iceberg'. It triggers what he experiences as 'quite a severe emotional disorientation' which has physical side effects similar to an anxiety attack. This sort of anxiety also builds up during his daytime activity. He describes his need to drink as 'self survival in the chaos' that has built up during the day and which he feels unable to resolve. He consumes alcohol to bolster his defences against anxiety but only succeeds in lowering them. The more he drinks the more anxious he becomes and he is then inclined towards 'extreme solutions'. In order to avoid being overwhelmed by his anxiety he fantasises about solutions which, when sober, he realises are impossible.

Karl's use of alcohol to escape anxiety is indicated in his stating that he would rather lose his mind in a bottle of drink than in other ways. This illustrates Dodes' (1990) argument that the addict uses the substance to regain a sense of control when he is threatened with being overwhelmed by affect. He points out that this sense of asserting power is not necessarily related to the pharmacological effect of the alcohol, as simply knowing that a drink is within reach implies mastery over the threatening affect. Dodes raises the paradox of attempting to overcome loss of control via an addiction which, by its definition, indicates a loss of control. Thus, the addiction indicates both ego functioning as well as loss of ego functioning. It can also be understood in terms of Karl's attempt to simultaneously position himself in 'passive' and 'power' discourses as he tries to assert control but in fact becomes increasingly passive and hence more anxious.

Joseph (1988) relates passivity in some addicted patients to a predominance of the death instinct, manifest in an addiction to near death. These people engage in activities that are clearly mentally and physically self-destructive - including alcohol abuse and isolating themselves from social relationships. She argues that the life instinct is projected onto others resulting in the patient's apparent inability to help himself. Unlike those patients who are drawn towards death due to lacking the effort required to live, Joseph argues that this group need the masochistic satisfaction of destroying themselves. She states that the destruction of the self provides libidinal satisfaction in spite of, or perhaps because of, the accompanying pain. Not only is the patient captivated by self-destruction, he also destroys his objects.

Karl's passivity in the face of conflict resolution, his inability to overcome his addiction, and his constant

dwelling on the frustrations in his life which he appears helpless to change - all illustrate Joseph's argument.

Joseph questions why this self-destructive relationship is so powerful that the part that wishes to be free of the addiction is weaker than the part that desires it. She argues that the patient's capacity for relating to a whole object is disturbed and he projects the split off, living part of himself onto others, thus remaining passive himself and lacking the life force required to fight his addiction. Through splitting off the life instincts, Joseph argues, the patient avoids feelings of ambivalence and guilt which result from whole-object relating ie the depressive position.

Depression, aggression and creativity

The conflict between the life and death instincts can also be seen in Karl's experience of his depression during which time he feels 'really down on the ground'. This occurs about once a month. Although depression, which is intensified when drinking, positions him as 'very passive', it also energises him and he is able to draw on it for creative purposes. He feels affirmed by turning around the energy; when he reaches the point of no return he turns it around 'somehow'. He experiences a certain amount of pleasure from having 'negative thoughts' about suicide. While he fantasises about suicide he feels he will not carry it out. Once again Joseph's theory of the satisfaction derived from self-destruction, here in fantasy form, is illustrated.

Karl's ability to derive energy from depression is mirrored by his feelings about his anxiety. Although afraid of the 'internal chaos' which he feels when anxious, he is simultaneously drawn to the 'dark side' and 'evil things' which emerge. These emotions entice and repel Karl who refers to them as the 'dark forces'.

Although they frighten him, they are simultaneously the source of his creativity. It is perhaps no coincidence that Karl produces most of his work at night when he feels most in touch with anxiety provoking material which intrigues him. He describes the daytime as more 'concrete' in comparison with the night which is abstract and more reflective and internal. He feels that the darkness of the night brings out 'something' which leads to mood change. As a result, his need to drink to relieve anxiety is particularly marked in the evening when he experiences a sense of paranoia and feels more anxious about himself.

His nocturnal alcohol consumption increases his access to the dark forces as his defences are lowered. Karl finds himself drawn towards his 'darker and more dangerous emotions' and tries to depict these in his art. He refers to this as 'the more evil side' which includes his depiction of death, tragedy and hate rather than the affirmation of life. He argues that art does not have to be pleasant and pretty and feels that the reverse is true. When he was a teenager he had hope about there being more to life. Now he feels that there is indeed 'something else' but that it is not conventionally beautiful. This 'something' is the dark side which he considers to be quite beautiful.

Karl's description of his art and the forces he draws upon illustrates Segal's (1977) argument that the artist grapples with the conflict between beauty and ugliness as symbolic of the struggle between life and death instincts. Karl is conscious of the conflict between beauty and ugliness, life and death, good and evil. He speaks of creating beauty and life through depicting ugliness and death.

Segal (1977) suggests that all artistic creation is an attempt to restore lost love objects to their former

position before they were destroyed by the artist's own infantile sadistic and greedy impulses. The artist has to admit his/her destructive impulses, as reparation implies a prior destruction. The death instinct must therefore be acknowledged as an aggressive and self-destructive force which can destroy both the self and the object (Segal, 1977). Stokes (1977) suggests that this conflict is expressed in the very act of creation where the artist attacks the initially unblemished surface in order to create. The creative act can therefore be understood not so much as sublimation, as argued by Freud, but rather as a direct outlet for aggressive impulses.

Silverman and Will (1986) add an important point in viewing the creative act as an attempt to gain mastery over destructive impulses by converting them into constructive activity. In order to achieve the balance between these forces they suggest that the artist requires sufficient life forces to counter the aggression manifest in the creative act.

Stokes (1977) suggests that in attempting to make reparation, the artists is not only restoring lost objects, but also part of himself. Niederland (1976) suggests that the artist, through identifying with his creation, proves his ability to repair the self in a form that is neither deficient nor incomplete. Karl's inability to successfully repair his lost objects is illustrated through his experience of his work. While initially feeling 'quite precious' about a creation, when his idealised object (the creation) proves to be less than he hoped for, he suddenly becomes very violently 'anti' the work and attempts to resolve it by attacking the implements with which he is working. Karl appears to split the object and hence alternatively idealises and devalues it. He is therefore unable to make reparation as he cannot integrate the positive and negative aspects of

the object. Similarly, he is unable to integrate the parts of himself which he projects.

Karl's creative activity provides temporary containment and outlet for his experiences of 'chaos' which he fears will erupt in a less contained way resulting in a physical attack on other people. Klein (1975f) argues that the experience of chaotic feelings is directly related to the fear of death and is similar to the feeling that one is dying. Karl attempts to control this inner disintegration by attempting, through his creative activity, to repair the objects which he has destroyed and which, in their introjected form, now threaten to destroy him. He describes his anxiety when approaching his raw materials and his need to create something out of the chaos. He describes how he addresses aspects of his 'subconscious' and that he feels in control of what he is doing there.

His sense of control or power is precarious, however, as he feels aware of the lurking danger of his aggression. He reports feeling scared after attacking his artwork and asks himself, 'if you can get violent like this, why are you normally so contained and what triggers this sudden release here?' Karl's release of his aggression onto his artwork appears to be a way of allowing steam to escape from the boiling pot. His release of aggression which is not socially sanctioned when attacking people, finds free expression in the studio. In his artistic world he is able to maintain his positioning in a 'power' discourse as he has a direct outlet for the anxieties provoked by this positioning.

Karl views a successful artwork as being a perfect model for how he would like to run his life - he would like less structure but still be able to control the chaos. His exploration of the 'dark forces' provides him with a 'balance' so that he does not live 'too properly' or

behave 'too well'. Silverman and Will (1986) discuss this issue of laws and restrictions as pertaining to creative activity. They argue that primary process functioning needs to be contained by the mechanisms of the secondary process. In other words, spontaneous creativity needs to be bounded by 'traditional form' if it is not to spiral out of control. Karl's conflict between freedom and structure in his life and his music seems to illustrate this theoretical observation. Without the containing function of the secondary process mechanisms, Karl could be overwhelmed by the internal chaos which he draws upon for creative inspiration.

Karl feels that his work gives him the scope to not only question artistic traditions, but also moral values and the rules of society. He claims to feel released from trying to please others or doing things in terms of the response he will elicit. While his art appears to release him from the constraints imposed by his real and internalised father, this is achieved because in this field he manages to meet the expectations and thus feels less pressure to please.

He also derives satisfaction from excelling in this field and creating work that no-one else has ever done before. He feels able to exploit his talent and finds that it comes easily to him in the artistic realm. In this field at least Karl appears able to live up to the standards of excellence laid down in his childhood. In addition to satisfying the need to excel, Karl's art is also an aspect of his life in which he is able to function completely on his own terms. He does not feel forced to create and thus experiences a spontaneity not evident elsewhere. He works intuitively for if he plans to recreate ideas or images, he is unable to do so. It seems as if art provides him with a refuge from the external control by which he feels persecuted, and an opportunity to live up to expectations which he feels that he fails

to do in all other aspects of his life. While he is confronted by anxiety provoking inner chaos through his art, it is at least contained and provides respite from the external persecution which he experiences.

Karl's need for refuge from the persecution of the external world could fuel his fantasy about alienation and is closely linked to his creativity. Part of the satisfaction he derives from his art relates to it being a solitary activity. He believes that the ultimate purpose of art is to be something completely removed from humanity and from reality. His feelings of alienation are similar to the 'mystical experience' which he had in the army where he felt absolutely alone with no reference to the rest of the world. Karl feels ambiguous about this recurring experience, being both drawn towards and averse to it. Karl feels that he functions better on his own but feels very alone if he has not chosen to be solitary. He describes his fear of facing being on his own and not wanting to be faced with himself. Although he feels that his feelings of alienation are not as strong as they were when he was younger, he tends to isolate himself from friends and does not interact very much with people.

Fantasies of suicide and destruction

This feeling of alienation is central to Karl's longstanding and recurrent homicidal or suicidal fantasy. It involves mass killing followed by suicide and includes the reaction of family members on discovery of his body. The fantasy occurs most often when he feels alienated, out of control of things around him, insecure and inadequate. Often it is induced by abusing alcohol. He suggests that the 'inhumanness' of acting out his fantasy 'would establish this ultimate alienation'. The fantasy provides important insights into Karl's inner world of dark forces which seems to encompass his feelings of alienation and experience of internal chaos.

The inclusion of both homicidal and suicidal components and Karl's awareness that he will not 'get away with it', suggests sufficient superego development to inflict punishment on himself. In this sense he has to pay the price for his own aggressive and destructive impulses. It is reminiscent of the child who punishes himself for wrongdoing in order to avoid parental retaliation (Orgel, 1974). Klein (1975c) argues that the child's self-inflicted punishment is an attempt to sustain a less severe punitive attack than that anticipated.

Karl reports suicidal ideation from his mid-teens. Perhaps the suicidal fantasy grew from the child's sense of consistently disappointing both his real and internalised father and as such is the ultimate self-inflicted punishment. Viewed in this light, the homicidal component could stem partly from his use of projection as a dominant defence mechanism. As he projects his guilt and shame onto others, they deserve to be destroyed. Through the process of projective identification, he also identifies with the person into whom he has projected. In destroying the person of whom he now feels a part, he must also destroy himself. So his final suicide bid stems from both his own shame and projective identification with others onto whom he has projected hateful parts of himself.

The self-destructive and punitive suicidal act follows on the omnipotent fantasy of destroying other people. The aggression underlying the homicidal fantasy could relate to unexpressed rage towards his father who made him feel inadequate and lacking control. Positioned within the 'power' discourse in order to escape the anxiety of his inadequacy, he fantasises about ending the lives of others as well as his own, going down in a blaze of bullets. His family discover and mourn the loss. The discovery of his body by his family can be seen as a

punitive assault on the emotions and structure of the family unit. It can also be interpreted as a final plea for recognition and emotional response from a father who very rarely displayed emotion towards his son.

Karl finds the fantasy satisfying in that it involves the displacement of reality. Although he does not intend to carry it out, he derives satisfaction from planning something which is quite unreal. He says that he likes to think he is in control of the fantasy and believes that he has sufficient good in him, in terms of belief in humanity, to prevent him from executing his plans. He believes that he is not afraid of the fantasy becoming reality but does not know if he is entirely correct in his belief. Once again the balance between life and death, good and evil appears tenuous.

Perhaps it affords him the opportunity to be positioned within the 'power' discourse in fantasy, thus avoiding the anxieties which arise when he is so positioned in reality. He can, therefore, finally resolve the conflict and assume his positioning without having to defensively reposition himself in the 'passive' discourse. In his fantasy Karl is able to assert control over the external world and all its persecutory objects while allowing his aggressive instincts free reign in an orgy of violence.

CONCLUSION

This paper has explored the subject's investment in the discourses of power and passivity and has related his positioning to his aggressive behaviour towards peers and colleagues. His positioning in social discourses has been shown to be influenced by his particular intrapsychic history.

Karl's oscillation between the discourses of power and passivity stem from his history of passivity in relation

to his dominating father. His childhood experience of pressure to behave both powerfully and passively persists in adulthood and the ensuing contradiction remains unresolved. The anxieties provoked by his positioning in each of the discourses provide the intrapsychic motivation for his simultaneous positioning. The defences used to prevent the anxiety from becoming overwhelming are the mechanisms used to shift between discourses. Karl's alcohol abuse and creative activity provide release for his aggressive instincts which he fears might overwhelm him. His violent and self-destructive fantasies suggest the possible consequences of his uncontained aggression.

In its attempt to incorporate both intrapsychic and social components into the analysis, the paper draws on theoretical models which are partly compatible but also reveal divergence. Despite several theoretical contradictions which remain unresolved, the Kleinian position is considered to be the most relevant psychoanalytic theory for clarifying the intrapsychic mechanisms operating to secure emotional investment in discourse. Without this level of analysis, discourse theory would remain within the social realm of interpersonal relations. A purely psychoanalytic analysis would not account for the subject's insertion into social practice nor how this practice inserts itself into the very creation of the subject.

The conclusion drawn from this analysis is that, while many people may be positioned within a particular discourse, they are all positioned uniquely, as their emotional investments differ according to their intrapsychic dynamics. Behaviour can therefore not be accounted for simply on the basis of positioning, but has to be understood within the context of the individual's unconscious phantasies, anxieties and defences.

Such an analysis is clearly limited in its generalizability. However, in dealing with particular individuals in a therapeutic setting, psychologists are concerned with the particular unconscious dynamics unique to the client. This analysis has clinical implications for, if a client's aggressive behaviour is to be addressed, attention has to be focused on both internal and external perspectives. Thus the links between the client's psychodynamics and emotional investment in the discourses in which s/he is positioned need to be explored. As the client's intrapsychic dynamics shift, it can be assumed that her/his investment in discourses will change and repositioning will occur. A simple attempt to shift discourses without tackling the unconscious investments is unlikely to succeed. As far as violent and aggressive behaviour is concerned, the perpetrators' unconscious dynamics need to be understood and modified if they are ever to be repositioned in non-aggressive discourses.

The approach adopted in this paper contributes to an understanding of the prevalence of violence beyond the case of the individual perpetrator. In South Africa many people are positioned within aggressive discourses and they, in turn, position others as adversaries. It is insufficient to explain such positioning as the result of the current economic recession or the years of humiliation under Apartheid rule. Only when unconscious dynamics are understood in the context of the social practice within which people are inserted, can positioning in alternative discourses be seriously considered. Perhaps then a reduction in the alarming levels of violence might become a reality.

REFERENCES

Burman, E. (1991). What discourse is not. Philosophical Psychology, 4(3), 325-342.

Burman, E. (1992). Feminism and discourse in developmental psychology: power, subjectivity and interpretation. Feminism and Psychology, 2(1), 45-59.

Davies, B. & Harre, R. (1990). Positioning: the discursive production of selves. Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 20, 43-63.

Dodes, L. M. (1990). Addiction, helplessness and narcissistic rage. The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 59, 398-419.

Frosh, S. (1987). The politics of psychoanalysis. London: Macmillan Education.

Frosh, S. (1989). Psychoanalysis and psychology. London: Macmillan Education.

Gillespie, W. H. (1971). Aggression and instinct theory. International Journal of Psycho-analysis, 52, 155-160.

Harre, R. & Van Langenhove, L. (1991). Varieties of positioning. Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 21, 393-407.

Henriques, J., Hollway, W., Unwin, C., Venn, C., & Walkerdine, V. (Eds.). (1984). Changing the subject . London:Methuen.

Hollway, W. (1984). Gender difference and the production of subjectivity, In J. Henriques, W. Hollway, C. Unwin, C. Venn, & V. Walkerdine (Eds.), Changing the subject. London:Methuen.

Hollway, W. (1989). Subjectivity and method in psychology. London:Sage.

Isaacs, S. (1952). The nature and function of phantasy. In M, Klein, P. Heimann, S. Isaacs, & J, Riviere (Eds.), Developments in psycho-analysis. London: Hogarth Press.

Joseph, B. (1988). Addiction to near death. In E. Bott Spillius (Ed.), Melanie Klein today volume 1: mainly theory. London:Routledge.

Joseph, B. (1989) Defence mechanisms and phantasy in the psychoanalytical process. In M. Feldman & E. Bott Spillius (Eds.), Psychic equilibrium and psychic change: selected papers of Betty Joseph. London: Routledge.

Klein, M. (1975a). The mutual influences in the development of ego and id. In Envy and gratitude and other works: 1946-1963. New York:Delta.

Klein, M. (1975b). Our adult world and its roots in infancy. In Envy and gratitude and other works: 1946-1963. New York:Delta.

Klein, M. (1975c). Envy and gratitude. In Envy and gratitude and other works: 1946-1963. New York: Delta.

Klein, M. (1975d). Some theoretical conclusions regarding the emotional life of the infant. In Envy and gratitude and other works: 1946-1963. New York: Delta.

Klein, M. (1975e). On the theory of anxiety and guilt. In Envy and gratitude and other works: 1946-1963. New York:Delta.

Klein, M. (1975f). On identification. In Envy and gratitude and other works: 1946-1963. New York: Delta.

Korber, I. (1992). Positioned to kill: an new approach to the question of military violence. Psychology in Society, 16, 32-48.

Laplanche, J. & Pontalis, J. B. (1973). The language of psychoanalysis. London:Karnac Books.

Niederland, W. G. (1976). Psychoanalytic approaches to artistic creativity. The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 45, 185-212.

Orgel, S. (1974). Fusion with the victim and suicide. International Journal of Psycho-analysis, 55, 531-538.

Parker, I. (1990). Discourse: definitions and contradictions. Philosophical Psychology, 3(2), 189-204.

Richards, B. (1985). Psychoanalysis and the deconstruction of psychology. Free Associations, 1, 105-112.

Segal, H. (1977). A psychoanalytical approach to aesthetics. In M. Klein, P. Heimann, & R.E. Money-Kyrle (Eds.), New developments in psychoanalysis. London:Maresfield Reprints.

Silverman, M. A. & Will, N. (1986). Sylvia Plath and the failure of emotional self-repair through poetry. The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 55, 99-129.

Stokes, A. (1977). Form in art. In M. Klein, P. Heimann, & R.E. Money-Kyrle (Eds.), New developments in psychoanalysis. London:Maresfield Reprints.