A psychosocial perspective on 'level'

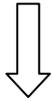**Psychosocial studies =** research in social sciences which draws on <u>psychoanalytic</u> principles

- a non-rationalist understanding of the human subject
- attempts to take the unconscious into account

- the data collected in a research environment will be co-constructed by the researcher and the participants
- N.B. 'psycho' doesn't mean 'psychology'

Clarke and Hoggett (2009), Bibby (2011), The Centre for Psycho-social Studies at the University of the West of England http://www.uwe.ac.uk/hlss/research/cpss/whatispss.shtml

Primary Task

⇩

Anxieties

⇩

Defence Mechanisms

- conflicts of interest
- finite resources
- never completely definable
                    (Menzies Lyth, 1988)

eg. what to do? what to teach? how to teach?

    will I get in trouble?   will I do something wrong?

Menzies Lyth (1960, 1970, 1979, 1988); Bibby (2009, 2011)

eg. <u>Systematicity</u>, Fragmentation, Compliance   (Bibby, 2011)

eg. <u>classifying students</u>, codifying the syllabus

eg. <u>levels</u>

Assumptions associated with this defence (classifying students into levels) might include:

1. We know what to teach the students

2. We know how to teach the students

3. There is a 'right level' for any one student

4. We know more than the students do

5. Lower levels are easier to teach

6. Higher levels are easier to teach

➔   What should we do? Psychoanalysis teaches us to notice/avoid the assumptions and acknowledge the anxieties.
(Menzies Lyth, 1988; Bibby, 2011)

Jane Blackwell
j.e.blackwell@qmul.ac.uk

References

Bibby, T. 2009. *How do children understand themselves as learners? Towards a redefinition of pedagogy. Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 17 (1) pp.41-55

Bibby*,* T. 2011. *Education - an 'impossible profession'? Psychoanalytic explorations of learning and classrooms.* London: Routledge.

Clarke, S. and P. Hoggett. 2009. Researching beneath the surface: a psycho-social approach to research practice and method. In Clarke, S. and P. Hoggett (eds). 2009. *Researching Beneath the Surface: Psycho-Social Research Methods in Practice*. London: Karnac pp. 1-26

Menzies Lyth, E. 1960. 'Social systems as a defence against anxiety'. Reprinted in du Gay, P., J. Evans and P. Redman (Eds). 2000. *Identity: a reader*. London: Sage. pp. 163-182

Menzies Lyth, E. 1970. The functioning of social systems as a defence against anxiety. In Menzies Lyth, E. 1988. *Containing Anxiety in Institutions: Selected Essays Volume 1.* London: Free Association Books pp. 43-85

Menzies Lyth, E. 1979. Staff support systems: task and anti-task in adolescent institutions. In Menzies Lyth, E. 1988*. Containing Anxiety in Institutions: Selected Essays Volume 1.* London: Free Association Books pp. 222-235

Menzies Lyth, E. 1988. *Containing Anxiety in Institutions: Selected Essays Volume 1.* London: Free Association Books

N.B. Please do contact me with any comments or questions!

Jane Blackwell
j.e.blackwell@qmul.ac.uk