

Some Thoughts on Helping Inconsolable Organizations to Heal¹

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Abstract

This paper explores how an applied anthropologist might consult with traumatized organizations that have undergone and/or are undergoing downsizing, reengineering, restructuring, and other forms of “managed social change.” The author proposes a distinction between organizational healing by “splitting” and organizational healing by “integration.” Healing by integration is made possible by acknowledgment of loss and mourning.

Introduction

Opening vignette: The day began at Consolidated Telecommunications (CT, a multinational corporation) like any other Friday. People greeted each other, got their morning coffee, spoke of their weekend plans, and set about their usual tasks. What all but a few could not know was that earlier in the week the board of directors and upper management of CT had met and decided on a large-scale Reduction in Force (RIF), in order to make CT more productive, profitable, and competitive. It would take place at 10 AM Friday. Rumors had circulated lately that “something” was about to happen in CT, but no one knew what or when.

As if perfectly choreographed, managers from throughout the corporate site showed up at 10 AM on Friday, each with a large, empty cardboard box, at the work-sites of those designated to be fired. The managers simply notified them that their employment was terminated effective immediately, and that they were to fill this box with their personal belongings, turn over all their keys and other corporate property to the manager, be escorted by the manager to their vehicle in the parking lot, and to not return. Few words were spoken. The managers politely told the employees not to take this personally, that it was just a necessary business decision.

From the moment they were notified of their firing, the employees' every move was carefully monitored, and the office door (if they had one) and the parking lot gate were locked behind them. Management was afraid that those who were fired might try to sabotage the computer system or steal equipment. Those being fired were notified by the manager that they would receive their final paycheck in the mail within a week. The RIF was executed so flawlessly that many of the remaining employees did not realize it was occurring as they worked. They only noticed during afternoon breaks and later that many people were no longer there and that their work areas or offices were empty.

The event became known in the vernacular as a “walk out,” named for managers “walking” the fired employees out of the building to their cars. This was the third RIF in four years. The remaining employees were resigned to their fate, grateful that no manager had shown up this time at their workstation. They kept to themselves, staying very busy, trying not to think about what had just happened and what could happen at CT. Many thought that if the managers saw them working hard, they might be spared in the next “walk out.”

This paper describes my work as an applied anthropologist with organizations that have undergone, and/or are undergoing, traumatic change (Vivian and Hormann 2002; Hormann and Vivian 2005). Since the mid-1980s, over thirty million Americans have lost their jobs or have had their roles radically changed by various forms of “managed social

change” – downsizing, reductions in force, rightsizing, restructuring, reengineering, outsourcing, off-shoring, deskilling, and others. Rationalized in the language of economic necessity, these reductions in the workforce have in fact expressed both structural violence and psychological brutality.

Since the 1980's, the triad of change-loss-

grief has been widespread in the life of United States workplace organizations. In a number of articles and books, I have described the brutal psychological realities behind the euphemisms of “managed social change” (Stein 1998, 2001, 2007) that have affected workers, managers, and leaders alike. Likewise they have demoralized both those who have been fired and those who, at least temporarily, survive. They have led to what Yiannis Gabriel has called “organizational miasma” (2005) and what I have called “inconsolable organizations” (Stein 2007); that is, workplaces whose grief is boundless, even as their members are pressed to be more productive and told to be grateful that they still have a job.

In order for applied organizational anthropologists to be of help to traumatized organizations, our first task is to be able to perceive through the cultural smokescreens to recognize and label what is in fact happening – that is, what has long been shrouded in destructive euphemism. The first change is within ourselves, especially since we more than likely share the same cultural “blind spots,” organizational vulnerabilities, and defenses against them.

As an applied anthropologist doing organizational consulting, I strive to help employees and organizations to recognize, label, and work through the enormous psychological and interpersonal damage that has occurred (not to mention diminished productivity, profit, and competitiveness). Later in this paper, I offer some suggestions of how one might help organizations to heal through acknowledging and grieving the enormous losses. I first propose a distinction between organizational (and wider cultural) healing via “splitting” and organizational healing via “integration.” I then offer some ideas of how an applied anthropologist can foster integrative organizational healing.

Organizational Healing by “Splitting” and by “Integration”

At the outset, I pose some questions that will guide the discussion: What is gained and lost organizationally by splitting? Likewise, what is gained and lost by integration? Finally, how do organizations heal by splitting and integration, respectively, from their group wounds? I will explain these terms as I proceed.

In individuals and in groups such as organizations, people can unconsciously perform radical maneuvers to keep a sense of “goodness” inside “us” and expel all sense of “badness” and locate the latter in some Other or “them.” At the conscious level, an organization can build its meanings in language rooted in the psychological mechanisms of splitting and projective identification. Here, emotionally unacceptable and unwanted parts of oneself and one’s group are severed from the rest of oneself and deposited in others, which are subsequently perceptually experienced as inherent properties of the other. Organizations can attempt to heal themselves of conflict and of any feelings of vulnerability, weakness, or badness, by splitting off these characteristics from their experience (mental representation) of themselves, together with the companion defense mechanism of projective identification, which perceptually puts or injects these characteristics in others. In this way, organizations try to get rid of these unwanted aspects of themselves. The dynamic of splitting and projective identification, of keeping the good inside and extruding all the bad to the outside, is characteristic of a widespread social structural form in corporate life.

Perhaps the most familiar and ubiquitous current organizational meaning system based on splitting and projective identification is that of the corporate “silo” (Diamond, Stein, and Allcorn 2002; Diamond, Allcorn, and Stein 2004), in which members of vertically integrated workplace hierarchies view themselves as good and others (even in the same corporation) as suspect, if not bad and persecutory. Silo mentality is plagued by what Howard Schwartz called “narcissistic process and corporate decay” (1987, 1990). Schwartz has carefully linked belief in organizational perfection with slavish feeding of the hierarchy’s grandiosity, and, in turn, with organizational totalitarianism. This characterizes the emotional life in the emotionally hermetically sealed corporate silo.

For instance, one corporation with which I was familiar had many functional divisions. Its various units (if I may reify them for the sake of simplicity) experienced themselves as distinct and separate from, yet dependent upon, other units who often “dragged us down.” There was

little sense of belonging and loyalty to the wider corporation. Each unit saw itself as superior to the others, yet, in contrast with other units, deprived of important resources and perks from the central office. Envy and competition ran rife between the units. For example, sales pushed itself toward higher and higher productivity, while it felt that shipping was always getting behind. For its part, shipping resented sales' new facility and for sales not understanding that their archaic machinery had to suffice. Sales saw research and development (R&D) as living "the easy life," while R&D felt misunderstood by the other departments and time-pressured to produce results and new products. Each division of the corporation felt victimized by the others and superior to them in productivity and worthiness to the larger corporation. Further, each division perceived that other units were favored by management – who were located in a distant city and were alternately idealized and demonized.

A second brief vignette about silos comes from a conversation I had with a member of management of a multinational information technology designer and manufacturer. The functioning of the corporation was founded on efficient, "lean manufacturing," Six Sigma Quality Improvement (a popular business management strategy to identify and remove causes of defects and variation), and a tight time-to-market pressure that was highly stressful for all employees. The corporation was divided both functionally and geographically worldwide. My colleague spoke of an effort begun several years ago to unify the corporation by pulling a member from each vertical unit into a special unit to collaborate for two years on a new project, and then return for reintegration to his/her original work site. This was a high visibility program sponsored by upper management.

It was management's hope that each unit from which a person originated would be proud and enthusiastic to have their member selected for the special unit and project. It was management's further hope and expectation that after the two years in the special unit, the individual would bring back new ideas and skills that would help his or her own unit to function better – and that the individual would be welcomed back and re-absorbed into the work group.

Although this occurred to a certain extent, what surprised my colleague was the fact that units were often reluctant to let their member go off for two years into some unknown realm whose benefit to them was unclear. On the one hand, they were a little envious of the person's special treatment; on the other hand, they often resented the extra work they would have to do in the reassigned person's long absence. Although there was identification with the corporation as a whole, often silo-identity trumped corporate identity. Put a different way, local "vertical" loyalty competed considerably with the new corporate-wide "horizontal" ideal. "Us" tended to be the local functional unit, whereas "them" tended to be the other functional units across the continent and the world and even corporate headquarters itself. The workers chosen to be part of the company-wide project were only reluctantly reintegrated into their "own" unit: it took many months until they were treated once more as one of "us" rather than suspiciously as one of "them."

My colleague said,

Everyone wants to think that his unit or silo is the best [the most competitive], even though all of the units share the same overall mission. "We're in this together" competes with "We don't need any outside help from anyone" type of isolation. There is arrogance, a feeling of being elite, better than others, and that "We should lead." There is the problem of having a mixed mission in the organization, and each unit doesn't want to give up control. Competition is key, at the same time that they're supposed to work toward the same corporate goal.

Of course, in this vignette, unlike workers who are laid off or fired and sacrificed, the "chosen few" can and do return. Nonetheless, the dynamics of loss and grief, though not as extreme, still occur, since *all change involves some experience of loss and an emotional response to that loss*. Here the emotional response to the return of the "chosen few" is, at least for a while, to keep the returned worker(s) at emotional distance. Likewise, the returnees may long for the heady days where they were part of the corporate "great experiment," and feel somewhat reluctant to

completely re-identify with their “own” unit.

Organizational healing by splitting is thus a process of exclusion. Alternately, when people can accept and learn from their less-than-ideal characteristics by integration, the process is inclusive. When organizational loss occurs, healing by splitting is accomplished by denying the worth of those who were sacrificed for the supposed economic health of the organization.

For instance, in downsizing, restructuring and off-shoring, organizations repeatedly attempt to solve their problems by getting rid of people who are no longer regarded as full human beings but rather objectified as “dead wood” or useless “fat” to be trimmed from the corporate body, that is, as things. One feels good about oneself and the surviving organization by viewing with contempt and mistrust those who are no longer there. One withdraws identification and compassion from them. Instead of saying something akin to “There but for the grace of God go I,” a surviving employee might say, “He/she/they must have done *something* to get fired.” In unconscious collusion with the accusation, those fired often blame themselves as well. In *Falling from Grace*, Katherine Newman (1999) provides similar findings among corporate middle managers who personalize and individualize the experience of being fired and attribute the fault to themselves.

In organizational healing by splitting, there is little official or corporate recognition of the breadth and depth of the loss and grief (cf. Thompson 2007). In fact, the overall response from management and shareholders constitutes what Kenneth Doka (1989) called “disenfranchised grief,” loss and grief that is neither socially acknowledged as significant nor supported by others. From the workers’ viewpoint, organizational identity is a whole-person, integrative identity, and a way of life. From the viewpoint of management, managers and employees are disposable things and functions that are strictly a means to an economic and political end. “Managed social change” creates what Gay Becker (1999) called “disrupted lives,” wherein long-held expectations of a life course and coherent narrative are shattered. One loses cultural meaning when one’s anchors are cut. Personalization – self-

blame – is a common way of making meaning when one is downsized.

Organizational Meaning by Splitting and Projective Identification

The human animal dwells in universes of meaning that we have created (Becker 1962; Stein 1983; Stein and Apprey 1987) – what Hallowell called a “behavioral environment” that is “culturally constituted” (1955). In workplace organizations and their wider cultures, meaning is at various times created, constructed, discovered, achieved, promoted, projected, internalized, perpetuated, modified, undermined, lost, destroyed, and revitalized. Often the loss of cultural meaning is a greater threat to life than the prospect of biological death (Becker 1962). The loss of meaning triggers feelings of annihilation as well as separation.

An often neglected dimension of organizational and wider cultural meaning is that of projective meaning or meaning-by-splitting and projective identification. Here, meaning does not originate inside oneself as a product of one’s own agency, but instead is the product of an interplay between disembodiment and re-embodiment. For instance, organizational employees, workers, managers, and executives who are treated by superiors and co-workers as mere instrumental functions, functionaries, and objects often come to embody these others’ disavowed self-contempt, and feelings of weakness, anxiety, and vulnerability. Technically speaking, through the dialectic of projective and introjective identification, the targets come to embody others’ projective meaning, which turns into their own meaning as well. That is, one can have and become someone else’s meaning, and one’s authentic meaning is cast aside. I have elsewhere (Stein 1986) discussed this process in terms of the role projective identification plays in shaping the content and experience of many social roles. Social roles can be governed as much by unconscious complementarity of role partners as by consciously negotiated roles – in workplaces and in international relations as much as in marriages and families.

Since the 1980s in the United States, the various forms of managed social change in

organizations – ranging from downsizing and reduction in force, to redundancy, rightsizing, reengineering, restructuring, deskilling, outsourcing, and managed health care – have systematically destroyed the wealth of meaning that work can have. They have constricted meaning into narrow productivity for the now-sacred financial bottom line and short term increased shareholder value (Stein 1998, 2001; Uchitelle 2006; Ehrenreich 2006; Sennett 2007). They have created millions of disposable Americans and cultivated widespread meaninglessness. As a concept, the bottom line (metaphorically, the highest good) can be seen foremost as a cultural category of meaning (as a dominant symbol of immortality [Becker 1973]) and only secondarily and derivatively as an economic concept.

In a similar fashion, Burkard Sievers (1994) has shown that the business concept of motivation (psychological motivation of workers to perform their tasks more efficiently, rooted in American Taylorism, after Frederick Winslow Taylor) to be essentially an ersatz and sham form of meaning. Motivation in this sense is, in fact, a form of degrading and straitjacketed meaning. Both workplace motivation and the various forms of managed social change constitute *enforced* destruction and loss of meaning. Yiannis Gabriel (2005) speaks of this as “organizational miasma,” to which I have proposed the additional concept and image of an “inconsolable organization” (Stein 2007). All these are heir to, and made possible by, splitting and violent projective identification.

In organizational healing by splitting, the destruction of organizational meaning is inseparable from the creation of meaning. When organizations and their wider cultures undergo threat to their meaning system and loss of meaning (as a metaphorical living organism), they often undertake Herculean efforts to restore or create new meaning. Workplace organizations, like larger cultures, can undergo efforts at revitalization. Corporate executives are eager to persuade shareholders and surviving employees alike that they are undertaking these repeated draconian measures such as downsizing and restructuring in order to rescue, save, and turn around the organization threatened by outside

competition (ranging from other corporations to Wall Street). War and disease metaphors abound in this discourse of organizational violence. Executives speak in the language of life and death, as if the corporation is a biological organism threatened with extinction. In this menacing world, anything internal that threatens the survival and integrity of the (good) organization must be gotten rid of (the bad). In a common rescue fantasy, the corporate executive is the all-powerful surgeon who will heal and save the organization by cutting out and removing the bad parts that threaten it. Further, the charismatic CEO promises corporate greatness and excellence – usually measured by short-term profit – and engages shareholders, managers, and employees’ fantasies, ambitions, and anxieties to harness their uncritical, enthusiastic consent.

The turbulent era of the charismatic and flamboyant Joseph Nacchio as CEO of Qwest (1997-2002), a telecommunications corporation, illustrates the cruel paradox of rescuing and saving an organization through relentless destruction. In June 2000, Qwest made a hostile takeover of U.S. West, a historically customer service oriented company that had prided itself on the dedication of its operators and linemen. With great bravado, Nacchio sought to radically change the function, identity, and image of the expanded Qwest into a fiber optic telecommunications network giant. The new corporation would realize in the world his grandiosity and consuming ambition. The historic, albeit imperfect, relationship between U.S. West and the communities it served was disparaged, and the once high status of telephone workers plummeted. Once the pride of the company, they were now a burden and afterthought. Members of U.S. West felt that they had been deprived of their identity and, to make matters worse, that the historical identity of U.S. West had been inverted and ridiculed as virtually worthless. Nacchio elevated Qwest by disparaging the U.S. West it absorbed. Here, organizational revitalization and healing were to be achieved through an ideological splitting into “us” (good) and “them” (bad).

Further, when organizations attempt to cure or heal themselves of their problems and

construct meaning through splitting, the group psychodynamics involved resemble that of war between ethnic, religious, and national groups. In a discussion of the psychodynamics of war, Vamik Volkan writes:

[Some] psychoanalysts have gone as far as suggesting that there are elements of “therapy” in wars (Fornari 1966; Money-Kyrle 1937). Writing in 1933, between the two world wars, the British psychoanalyst [Edward] Glover also saw a peculiar “curative” aspect in war. He was concerned with the sadistic and masochistic impulses expressed in armed conflict and called war “mass insanity.” His hypotheses about war seemed based on the classical psychoanalytic view that identifies an urge for restitution alongside or following the regressed state in schizophrenia. He suggests that the mass insanity associated with wars initiates a “curative process,” that the group tries to cure itself but can accomplish only *pathological* adaptations such as killing or destroying the land of the enemy in order to feel “good” about itself (Volkan 1998:132, emphasis in original).

One dimension of the cure-by-war is the induction of loss and death anxiety by the leader, leading to a frightened, regressed, credulous, dependent, and emotionally manipulatable constituency. In this way, what is in fact a toxic leader is seen as group healer and savior (Lipman-Blumen 2006).

War is the most extreme expression of group healing by splitting and the attempt to obliterate the object of one’s violent projective identification. Through war, one literally gets rid of, or attempts to get rid of, one’s bad internal world by physically killing the enemy. Of course, even in fierce competitions, hostile takeovers, and swift mergers, organizations do not literally spill blood. Still, symbolic annihilation is a kindred mental representation of the experience of death and loss (Stein 2004). This annihilation is in part accomplished through metaphor: e.g., surgically cutting out the supposedly bad, unprofitable parts of the organization (disease metaphor); the moniker “Neutron Jack” Welch, the ruthless CEO of General Electric, and

“hostile takeovers” (military metaphors). During emotionally and economically catastrophic times in organizational life, massive splitting and projective identification can symbolically dehumanize and annihilate the distinct otherness of the Other (corporate division, firm, worker, the person fired, etc.) and replace it with renounced parts of the self. In this way, the organization attempts to heal itself, if spuriously. Magically, the “death” of the sacrificial victims purchases new “life” for the organization. Sometimes war and disease metaphors not only overlap, but fuse.

Helping Clients and Organizations to Heal by Acknowledging Loss and Grief

In the face of this juggernaut of enforced change and political violence, how can an applied, practicing anthropologist help to foster integration and not become a colluding part of the problem for which splitting and emotional distancing have thus far been the cultural cure or treatment of choice? What does it mean to practice anthropology in organizational settings where, for example, an executive describes firings as “taking out,” that is, the undisguised language of killing thousands of once valuable employees (Lardner 2007: 62)? By “trimming down to the bone,” corporate upper management creates a demoralized workforce, not the “lean, mean, fighting machine” they had imagined. What emotional integration is possible under such brutal and brutalizing circumstances?

Speaking personally, I have persevered because deep down I knew that I had discovered a terrible truth whose enforced silence I must help to break. Bearing witness – giving voice to forbidden truths – was an essential correction to endless euphemistic spins. The ability to hear and sit with the client in his or her inconsolability is prerequisite to any help that the consultant may offer.

Let me take a moment to describe the varied nature of my consulting work in which the kinds of stories explored in this paper often emerge. To begin with, I have long worked as formal and informal consultant in many of the departments and other clinical units of the health sciences center in which I have been employed for over thirty-one years. I also work as an external

consultant; I am hired by CEOs, boards of directors, conference organizers, departmental chairpersons, program directors, educators, and physicians, among others. For the most part, the topic of organizational trauma, loss, and grief emerges from the official topic or task under consideration; it is the sub-text or substratum underlying the formally stated problem that percolates up during the course of interviews and participation in organizational meetings.

Most of the time, I am formally employed or requested to do other things: e.g., to help humanize the downsizing of a hospital, to help plan a jobs fair, to participate in strategic planning, to give a lecture or presentation on psychocultural issues involved in organizational change or to facilitate an organizational retreat. Although there are palpable products from these consultations – for instance, a jobs fair or a strategic planning document – for the most part my product is a *process*. Often what begins as a lecture or presentation (what I am officially asked to do) evolves into a workshop that helps the group to process the feelings and thoughts about change-loss-grief that my talk triggered.

Many years ago I gave a talk on this triad of organizational change to a department of psychiatry in a health sciences center. No sooner had I finished speaking than the room quickly became an emotionally volatile workshop which erupted into grief, anger, and rage at the chairperson's recent closing of the inpatient child psychiatry hospital unit. Ostensibly a cost-cutting measure, for many of the participants in the group, the closing felt like a betrayal. For them, it involved a loss of an identity and of a much-needed service to children and families, not only of a job and a hospital-unit.

In these workshops, I often ask questions that invite reflection and storytelling: e.g., what is it like to work here? Where are the strengths and weaknesses? The pain? What are the critical events and incidents that have shaped the way things are now in the organization? Where are the land mines? What is leadership and followership like? What are some of the organizational secrets? What are some of the sources of organizational pride and shame? If you could change something, what would it be?

The previously unstated nature of my role as informal consultant/therapist emerges in sometimes humorous ways. As part of office Christmas decorating a few years ago, several people drew a cartoon on a large piece of paper that they taped to the front of my door. The cartoon consisted of the Peanuts character Charlie Brown posing as a prospective patient standing in front of Lucy, who is behind a booth on which she had inscribed a large caption that reads: "PSYCHIATRIC HELP 5¢. THE DOCTOR IS IN." I had long imagined that one of my informal departmental roles was the departmental shrink, that is, the counselor/consultant who helps with individuals' and group issues, but here the role was made explicit, though in a humorous way. This underscores the fact that often my informal, unconscious role in the organization must be inferred through my own countertransference – that is, from my internal emotional response to what I am experiencing in the organization.

Paradoxical as it may sound, the first focus needs to be on the self of the consultant and not the client. Stated differently, in order to be emotionally available to the client, the consultant must have access to his or her own emotional responses. This requires that the consultant recognize and heal his or her own inner splitting, fragmentation and dissociation. Often this working through comes about not before but during the encounter with the client. That is, the anthropological consultant becomes aware of these emotional tugs through the relationship transference and countertransference with the client.

Being emotionally present and truly listening to others is not a simple matter. Certainly active listening is a fundamental skill for anthropologists. In part, one listens to the client through *listening to one's inner response to the client* (Boyer 1999; Ogden 1996). The feelings that arise when you work with a client provide crucial data about the client's anxiety and defenses against it. For instance, the consultant's sudden wish not to hear or to flee is crucial data about the relationship, and in turn, about the client. The anthropological consultant must emotionally be able to bear the material, that is, to be able to stay emotionally connected with the client and

not prematurely foreclose the conversation with supposedly culturally easy and familiar, if not magical, solutions – such as renewed strategic plans, mission statements, or stylized debriefing. The consultant's dawning awareness of his or her own modes of self-protection becomes a cue to the client's often terrifying anxiety.

With respect to organizational trauma, the defenses of splitting and projective identification are commonly employed by executives, managers, employees – survivors and those fired alike – as defenses against the pain of loss and mourning. The anthropological consultant can help the client begin the integrative healing process by giving them the opportunity to grieve by facilitating the recognition and experience of the depth and breadth of loss. This is not a mechanical process but a subtle and gradual one. By fostering a safe emotional space in which unspeakable anxiety can be experienced and memory reclaimed, the consultant creates conditions wherein forbidden stories are permitted to surface.

Is it appropriate for an applied anthropologist to be this kind of deep listener? Is this really an anthropological role – or is it more properly clinical? Does this emotional intensity and intimacy belong within applied anthropology? As a rule, applied anthropologists are more comfortable in the role of social intervention than in psychological intervention, since the former ostensibly allows greater objectivity – and emotional distance from the client or group. Further, psychological intervention is also a product of professional territory and power dynamics, reinforced by licensure. Yet, whether the intervention is social or psychological (a spurious distinction, I think), the intersubjective relationship is always part of the narrative or project that is jointly constructed. It is part of the work to be done. To the degree that we do not have access to our own emotional response to our client, our data about ourselves and about the client (the Other) are impoverished or distorted. Ironically, to insist on a professional division of labor wherein emotional intensity and depth of relationship are allocated only to clinical roles is evidence of our splitting in the practice of anthropology!

The consultant mostly listens (which is never “just listening”) in the manner of wishing to hear what the client slowly begins to reformulate. The consultant is a compassionate witness, not a mere receptacle of information. The consultant labels, and in turn helps the client to label, experiences that had been banished. This lifts the power of secrecy, validates experience and memory, and empowers people and truthfulness in the face of deceptive euphemisms. Reality itself is affirmed, as if to acknowledge, “This really happened.” Healing narratives begin to replace destructive narratives, and authentic re-empowerment begins. The client begins to feel empowered rather than totally powerless and also begins to feel more human and less dehumanized.

The consultant-client relationship makes known a secret that most everyone already knows, but which remains mostly largely beneath consciousness and therefore language (what Bollas [1987] felicitously calls “the unthought known”). Part of the naming or labeling process consists of recognition of betrayals of loyalty and of brutality masked as good business. It helps the client to feel less isolated and less personally responsible for his or her fate. The consultant-client relationship helps put personal experience into broader psychocultural and psychopolitical context. Often the client reconstructs what had become an enforced narrative.

The consultant helps the client to rescue the experience from being banished, silenced, lost, and invalidated. Dignity emerges from imprisonment in shame, degradation, and vulnerability as self-integration replaces dissociation. The consultant honors the client's experience and emergent emotions. The consultant's acceptance of the client's loss often leads to deep grief. What Doka (1989) calls “disenfranchised grief” becomes acknowledged. That is to say, in the safety of the consulting relationship, the client realizes that there is something that is worth grieving over (loss of others, loss of the self, loss of dignity). In all these ways, a more integrated self begins to emerge, one less imprisoned by culturally obligatory lies.

Toward Integration of Self, Relationships, and Organization

Acknowledgment of loss and grief in turn fosters the process of integration, internal, interpersonal, and organizational. What, then, is integration? What does it look like? How is it fostered? And how does it differ from the work of splitting? The previous section alluded to facets of this process as related to loss and mourning. An integrative work environment has a distinctive feel or interpersonal atmosphere. If splitting leads to organizational and personal fragmentation, integration leads to organizational and individual wholeness.

In integration, people experience themselves and others as worthwhile, multi-dimensional human beings. Even in supervisor/subordinate relationships, they feel respected. People treat one another as experiencing subjects rather than as purely instrumental objects to be manipulated and discarded. Management treats employees as living persons, not inanimate things. In an integrative work environment, work feels meaningful and does not require externally enforced motivation (Sievers 1994). In an integrative workplace, employees do not feel constantly on guard and defensive; instead they feel free to be creative, to be more fully themselves. The sense of aliveness that comes from integration contrasts with a sense of deadness that prevails in an environment dominated by splitting.

In integrative work circumstances, if an executive or manager must lay off people, it is done reluctantly as a last resort rather than a first and recurrent solution. And if firing occurs, it is done with compassion and sadness, rather than indifference or contempt toward those who are fired. Treated as full, feeling human beings rather than as objects, employees are prepared for the firing – and are not the targets of peremptory, surprise attacks by security guards or managers. For the survivors of layoffs, an integrative environment creates a sense of safety and security rather than one of ominous and constant threat that they might be next. There is frequent communication and updating between management and employees rather than silence and secrecy – and the accompanying feelings of conspiracy and

betrayal. Employees feel included as part of a process rather than its targets.

In an integrative organizational environment beset with economic adversity, management says to employees in effect, “We have a problem,” rather than “*You are the problem,*” and enlists their talents and loyalty to try to devise solutions for greater productivity, cost-cutting, and profitability that will avert or reduce downsizing (Kennemer 2009). A success story of integration is one where executives, managers, and employees collaborate on solutions that increase morale and victimize no one. It is a narrative in which the past is acknowledged and mourned, in which members of the organization feel free to invest in a new future, rather than feel stuck in and haunted by the past.

Conclusions

In this paper, I have distinguished between two types of organizational and wider cultural healing: by splitting and projective identification and by integration. I have suggested that widespread organizational downsizing, reengineering, restructuring, off-shoring, and outsourcing accomplish a psychologically bogus and destructive healing through defensive processes that specifically transforms whole human beings into disposable waste. Loss is denied and grief short-circuited. Finally, in the above section I have suggested a number of approaches by which an applied anthropologist – fundamentally as a deep listener who facilitates organizational storytelling – can help both those fired and those who are survivors to be able to reclaim their humanity through recognizing the immense loss and grieving what and who have been lost. ○

Notes

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