

Zagreb Seminar (December 8, 2024)

Other seminars:

Supply (self, sadistic, narcissistic)

Other and Othering

Contemporary Sexuality

Borderline Personality Disorder Revisited

Trauma and Dissociation

ETIOLOGY and PSYCHODYNAMICS

Models: categorical (DSM 4) vs. Dimensional (DSM 5 alternative models of personality disorders), trait domains (ICD-11).

Pathological narcissism as the core of all personality disorders, especially cluster B.

Metaphors of pathological narcissism as a private missionary religion, cult, and private language

Relational and individual disorders

Trauma model of personality disorders (Colin Ross): developmental trauma disorders (RAD, DTD)

“When alarmed, the child seeks proximity to a caregiver (safe base). But proximity to a frightening caregiver only increases the alarm (and the child then attaches to an imaginary caregiver, the False Self, godlike - SV)” (Hazen and McFarland , 2010)

Hereditary contribution and brain abnormalities

Overview of Psychodynamic (not clinical or presenting!) Features

Lack of functioning self: identity diffusion or disturbance

Orson Wells described Hitler (who he met on hiking trip):

“No personality whatsoever ...I think there was nothing there”

External locus of control and alloplastic defenses

Prosocial/communal variants (locus of grandiosity)

Pseudo-psychosis, hyperreflexivity: inability to tell internal from external (introjection vs. object relations)

Ego-discrepancy and ego-incongruence (e.g., implicit vs. explicit self-esteem)

Compensatory mechanisms

External regulation (lability, dysregulation, schizoid in collapse)

Pain/hurt aversion, paranoid/persecutory ideation, anticipatory anxiety (catastrophizing), hypervigilance, alexithymia

Primitive defenses and internalized active object

Subjective time fluidity

Separation insecurity, control, introjection as self-soothing solution

Object and introject inconstancies (impermanence)

Impaired reality testing, cognitive distortions owing to dissociation and ontological insecurity (Giddens)

Magical thinking, recklessness

Pseudo artefacts: stupidity, humility, victimhood, conspiracism

Cerebral vs. somatic

Paradoxical thinking (Bateson's double bind, incomplete knot)

Cold empathy

Attachment disorders/injuries

Addictions

Fantasy defense

Idealization-devaluation-discard-replacement-hoovering cycles

Intermittent reinforcement

Approach-avoidance repetition compulsion

Decompensation/acting out

Uncanny valley

Trauma and Dissociation

Definitions of **abuse and trauma (not limited to ACEs)**

Personality disorders as **post-traumatic conditions with dissociated self-states (Schizotypy, neoteny)**

[Bromberg, Jung's complexes, subpersonalities, IFS, ego-state therapy, dynamic self-regulatory processing model, etc.]

Dissociation is an integrative-synthetic deficit, not only a defense. It yields psychoform and somatoform symptoms.

Integration-synthesis depend on **personification and presentification**.

Dissociative disorders:

Depersonalization is a failure at personification (semantic, not episodic memory).

Derealization is a failure at presentification.

Amnesia is a failure of both.

Trauma reduces integrative capacity. In premorbid personalities with low integrative capacity, it **may lead to dissociation**.

The Charles Samuel Myers model of **structural dissociation**:

AS1 (Action System 1) linked to ANP (Apparently Normal Parts) and **AS2 linked to EP** (Emotional Parts of the personality). [Myers called the parts “personalities”].

EP contain vivid trauma recall (vividness or flashbacks) and vehement negative emotionality and affectivity (fear, horror, helplessness, anger, guilt, shame – or being listless, non-responsive, and submissive – or dissociative states of being derealized and depersonalized). They are linked to body dysmorphia and to a separate sense of self.

ANP repress traumatic memories and avoid triggers via amnesia, sensory anaesthesia, restricted emotions, numbness, and depersonalization.

Narcissists, borderlines, paranoids, have both an **empty schizoid core** and phases of schizoid behavior. These phases are reactive to **deficient narcissistic supply and collapse (narcissism), abandonment and engulfment (borderline), or overwhelming paranoid ideation.**

Confabulation

n. the falsification of memory in which gaps in recall are filled by fabrications that the individual accepts as fact. It is not typically considered to be a conscious attempt to deceive others. Confabulation occurs most frequently in [Korsakoff's syndrome](#) and to a lesser extent in other conditions associated with neurologically based amnesia (e.g., Alzheimer's disease). In forensic contexts, eyewitnesses may resort to confabulation if they feel pressured to recall more information than they can remember.

Black hole in autistic children first suggest by Frances Tustin in 1972.

We are all born with an empty schizoid core and we compensate by introjecting mother (**symbiosis and primary narcissism**).

Borderline's introjection failure and consequent **introject inconstancy** is what gives rise to his/her sense of **emptiness** (described by Kernberg). She compensates by over-reliance on external objects (**anaclitic personality**).

Narcissism is compensatory and infantile: object inconstancy, ceaseless introjection and incorporation of internal object mask the emptiness, compensate for it (**introjective personality**).

Like supernova: Empty schizoid core seat of **persistent pathologies and addictions which substitute for and are misidentified as core identity**.

Halo personality: periphery of void (remnant of supernova) comprises what in healthy people constitutes identity or personality: beliefs, values, traits, cognitions, emotions.

The halo personality elicits **external regulation and generates a hive mind:** it attempts to become.

Formation of the Empty Schizoid Core

Critical period hypothesis (CPH)

Secure base: mother is sensitive, responsive, meets the needs, child refers to her to reduce anxiety and upset

Becoming through the mother's gaze (trauma of the schism and the emergence of the world)

Child rejects the traumatizing maternal gaze and thus realizes the mother's externality and separateness.

Lacan's apperception or self-objectification or ambivalent self-alienation.

Lacan: the unconscious - the seat of repressed traumas - is a compendium of other people's gazes. Thus, the **mother's gaze is the cause of the formation of the unconscious**, its nucleus is this primal trauma of being seen.

Unconscious emerges to resolve the existential dissonance between the survival need to be seen - and the **repressed trauma of being seen**.

Kohut's narcissistic transferences (mirroring, idealizing, twinship)

Child objectifies and instrumentalises mother as its first mirror.

Primary narcissism: mother actively reflects the child to itself, idealized and aggrandized ("**hall of mirrors effect**"). Thus **aggrandized child takes on the world** and cathects it. **Mother secure base with secure attachment (Erikson's basic trust).**

Mother's gaze engenders mentalizing (Fonagy) and object relations founded on the separateness of external objects.

Andre Green's "Dead (Guntrip's rejecting-frustrating) mother" disrupts the transition **from symbiotic phase to separation-individuation**. It is a **modeling failure (Social Cognitive/Learning Theory)**.

Such a child is incapable of mentalizing, remains stuck in solipsistic narcissism. Hall of mirrors effect is a mere **grandiose cathexis, regressive infantile retraumatization**.

The partner is a dead, frustrating, withholding, betraying mother who **mirrors herself and the world rather than the narcissist** - thus undermining the shared fantasy having become an **internal persecutory object**.

Hegel's negation of the negation: child, negated child, negated negated (become) child.

Disruption in ego (self) formation: no boundaries (external/internal), no ego functions (e.g., reality testing, self-regulation of impulses, object relations, nonprimitive defenses, synthetic-integrative).

The infant is unable to transition **from preverbal nonconceptual mental content (unthought known, unconscious) to the conceptual, linguistic phase**.

The child fails to recognize the **externality and separateness of objects** and to generate **theories of mind (mentalize)** as well as theories about relationships (**IWM – Bowlby's Internal Working Models**), and about reality. S/he is stuck in **apprehensive knowing (non-verbal) vs. comprehensive knowing** (Systems Therapy).

Nonemergence of a continuous and cohesive core identity generates a **nonidentity problem** in the dissociative, nonconceptual non-individual: **an inability to conceive and imagine future selves and act to safeguard and enhance their welfare and wellbeing.**

Othering failure: introjection (snapshotting)

Role of **shame and prolonged grief:** fragility/vulnerability, compensation/fantasy (paracosms), external regulation, cognitive distortions (grandiosity).

Moral defense (Fairbairn), internalized bad object, primitive superego (Strachey), splitting (Klein's good breast)

Vs.

Splitting of others (bad breast), internalized idealized object, no ego or superego

Aggression towards frustrating-rejecting mother displaced onto mother substitutes in repetition compulsion relationships.

Attempts to **reenact early childhood dynamics and accomplish separation-individuation** vicariously within a **shared fantasy**. This involves **regression and infantilization** of both participants in the shared fantasy ("**dual motherhood**").

PHENOMENOLOGY

Overt and covert states mediated via collapse (not injury!), decompensation, and mortification (Libbey's internal and external solutions)

Primitive-infantile Defenses

Splitting

Projection

Projective Identification

Rationalization

Externalizing solutions

Narcissistic Rage (Frustration-aggression hypothesis)

I. ***Explosive*** – The narcissist flares up, attacks everyone in his immediate vicinity, causes damage to objects or people, and is verbally and psychologically abusive.

II. ***Pernicious or Passive-Aggressive (P/A)*** – The narcissist sulks, gives the silent treatment, and is plotting how to punish the transgressor and put her in her proper place. These narcissists are vindictive and often become stalkers. They harass and haunt the objects of their frustration.

They sabotage and damage the work and possessions of people whom they regard to be the sources of their mounting wrath.

Internalizing solutions

Autoerotism

Schizoid states and self-supply

Techniques of self-supply

Future orientation (future generations will appreciate my legacy, I will be proven right)

Exclusive, privileged, or superior referents (only geniuses can understand my work)

Self-referential transcendence (I am hyper moral, strong, gifted, a martyr or victim)

Self-audiencing (journaling, self-documenting, self-appraisal)

Self-referential ideation and attribution (everyone envies me, my ideas are influential and pilfered)

Contemptuous withholding (they don't deserve me or my output, I am alone because no one is on my level)

Paranoid ideation (I am the focus of malign intentions and attention).

The Fantasy Defense and Paracosm/Shared Fantasy

Bela Gruenberger's narcissistic elation (oceanic feeling of symbiotic merger with the mother): **regressive driving force** behind the narcissist's shared fantasy.

Narcissistic elation is undermined by **mother as a frustrating object** and is the precursor of separation-individuation in healthy adults.

Fantasy: counterfactual (often **delusional and coercive**) **narrative, regulatory mechanism**, a form of **self-supply**, a **defense against fragility** and vulnerability, a **time machine** (regression to symbiosis and womb), a **fake good object**, a **cognitive distortion**, a **pseudo-emotion** (euphoria, not elation and dysphoria, not depletion).

Fantasies of narcissists and borderlines different. The borderline's is object (person)-centred, the narcissist's is process (narrative)-centred.

7 Stages of shared fantasy

1. Co-Idealization through lovebombing: the introjected partner is idealized and the narcissist is all good because he is the owner of an ideal object;
2. Dual motherhood in a shared fantasy: a recreation of early childhood by converting both partners into maternal figures, unconditionally accepting and loving. The partner regresses and, as an infant, falls in love with her own idealized image via the narcissist's gaze ("hall of mirrors" effect);
3. The need to reenact the failed separation in the narcissist's childhood leads to a mental discard which results in a narcissistic injury as it implies that the narcissist is not omniscient because his judgment of his erstwhile partner as ideal was wrong;
4. Devaluation of the external object in order to restore the narcissist's grandiosity (make an ego-congruent sense of the discard of an hitherto idealized object);
5. Devaluation of the partner's introject via the splitting defense (introject is now all-bad, the narcissist is grandiosely all-good);
6. Real life discard: projection of introject onto the partner in an attempt to integrate it with the external object. This attempt at projection-integration fails owing to abandonment anxiety triggered by the partner's introject inconstancy and refusal to own a split, all-bad introject. Thus, the devalued, split, all-bad introject remains as an internal object, in narcissist's mind. This creates anxiety and dissonance

(owing to the internalization-introjection of a bad object which represents the partner);

7. The only way to reintegrate this internal object and reduce anxiety is by re-idealizing an external object (the original external object or a substitute) and the corresponding introject. This is impossible to accomplish if the narcissist has been mortified. He then departs from his previous version and reinvents himself which allows for self-idealization and self-supply (grandiosity restored).

Sacrificing you to the false self

False self is a primitive savage parental deity that demands and expects human sacrifice, starting with the narcissist's true self.

Narcissism is, therefore, a private missionary religion: the narcissist attempts to convert others into his/her creed and then sacrifice them to the insatiable, voracious shared fantasy around the false self.

The false self is a parental figure, it is how a child views his/her parents: godlike, infallible, omnipotent, omniscient. At the beginning of the shared fantasy, the narcissist convert you into a maternal figure.

This creates competition (dissonance) between you and the false self (same happens in therapy). One of you has to go. Since the narcissist identifies him/herself with the false self (there is no real, constellated self), he sacrifices you.

This process is one of the main engines of the attempted reenactment of the failed early childhood separation-individuation which leads to devaluation and discard.

But having discarded you, the narcissist still remains stuck with your maternal introject (persecutory object) and with his parental false self. The dissonance is never resolved.

10 clinical features, presenting symptoms and trait domains of cluster B personality disorders

The above enumerated impairments should be "stable across time and consistent across situations ... not better understood as normative for the [individual's developmental stage](#) or socio-cultural environment ... are not solely due to the direct [physiological effects of a substance](#) (e.g., a drug of abuse, medication) or a general medical condition (e.g., [severe head trauma](#))."

Lack of affective/emotional empathy

Impaired ability to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others; excessively attuned to reactions of others, but only if perceived as relevant to self; over- or underestimation of own effects on others.

Fear of intimacy (insecure, usually dismissive-avoidant attachment style)

Relationships largely superficial and exist to serve self-esteem regulation; mutuality constrained by little genuine interest in others' experiences and predominance of a need for personal gain.

Disturbed or diffuse identity

Excessive reference to others for self-definition and self-esteem regulation ([narcissistic supply](#)); exaggerated self-appraisal inflated or deflated, or vacillating between extremes ([grandiosity](#), a cognitive distortion); [emotional regulation mirrors fluctuations in self-esteem](#).

Attention seeking behaviors (narcissistic supply or self-supply)

Excessive attempts to attract and be the center of attention of others; admiration seeking.

Goal-setting based on gaining approval from others; personal standards unreasonably high in order to see oneself as exceptional, or too low based on a sense of entitlement; often unaware of own motivations.

Grandiosity (cognitive distortion) and Entitlement

Feelings of entitlement, either overt or covert; self-centeredness; firmly holding to the belief that one is better than others; condescension towards others.

Anankastia

[Perfectionism](#), perseveration, emotional and behavioral constraint, stubbornness, deliberativeness, orderliness, and concern with following rules and meeting obligations.

Negative affectivity, including fragility

Negative [emotions](#) and poor [self-concept](#):
[anger](#), [contempt](#), [disgust](#), [guilt](#), [fear](#), and [nervousness](#).

Dissociality (antisocial behaviors)

Traits of impulsivity, high negative emotionality, low conscientiousness and associated behaviours, including irresponsible and exploitative behaviour, recklessness and deceitfulness

Antagonism, Defiance, Contumaciousness

Antagonism, the low pole of Agreeableness, references traits related to immorality, combativeness, grandiosity, callousness, and distrustfulness. It is a robust correlate of externalizing behaviors such as antisocial behavior, aggression, and substance use

External Regulation: affective dysregulation, mood lability, reactance, and impulsivity

Impulsivity: tendency to act on a [whim](#), displaying behavior characterized by little or no [forethought](#), reflection, or consideration of the consequences.^[1] Impulsive actions are typically "poorly conceived, prematurely expressed, unduly risky, or inappropriate to the situation that often result in undesirable consequences,"^[1]

Reactance is a motivational state characterized by distress, anxiety, resistance, and the desire to restore that freedom [proposed in 1966 Jack W. Brehm]

Lability: sudden, unpredictable rapid changes in mood

Only the last 3 traits mellow with age probably for biological reasons. The same mellowing is observed in psychopaths and borderlines.