

INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOANALYSIS
Traumatic Narcissism: Theories of Power and Subjugation
Weekend Psychoanalytic Training Program 2019-2020

Instructor: D. Bradley Jones, Psy.D, LCSW

Time: Saturdays 8:30 to 11:00am

Dates: January 30, March 20th, May 1st, 2021

Total Hours: 2.5 hours x's 3 meeting = 7 ½ hours.

Course Description:

As psychoanalysis has evolved, theories about the genesis and nature of narcissism have varied. As you've learned in other courses on Kohut and Self Psychology, self psychologically-oriented theorists have posited that narcissism represents a developmental force that is involved in the development of the self and the maintenance of self-esteem. Other theorists from more Freudian, Kleinian, or interpersonal orientations have emphasized that narcissism is pathological, reflecting defensive and compensatory processes caused by too much self-love, aggression, or an enormous vulnerability to shame. In this brief course, we will look more closely at these defensive and compensatory aspects of narcissism by considering the relational systems out of which narcissistic adaptations emerge.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

The overall objective of this seminar on Traumatic Narcissism is for candidates to gain a deeper understanding of the various theories of narcissism after the relational turn. During our first class we will study two papers by Bromberg and Mitchell that will enable students to compare and contrast both the developmental and defensive aspects of narcissism. In our second class, we will discuss Bach's ideas of how patients develop a defensively omnipotent stance in response to formative developmental trauma. We will then discuss Daniel Shaw's ideas about how narcissism reflects family systems of subjugation—the objectification of one person in a relationship as the means of enforcing the dominance of the other's subjectivity. Shaw integrates theories of trauma, attachment, intersubjectivity, and notions about how traumatic narcissism is intergenerationally transmitted. In our final class, we will continue to discuss Shaw with a bit more depth, and compare his work to Steven Stern. Stern's ideas about how narcissism show that narcissism is not only a vestige of the traumatic past of a patient, but specifically a repetitive sequela of identification with parental negation. At the completion of the course candidates will be able to:

Session #1

1. Candidates will identify the developmental and defensive aspects of narcissism.
2. Candidates will be able to identify and discuss Mitchell's integrative approach to narcissism.

Session #2

1. Candidates will be able to identify and discuss dissociative processes within systems of parental negation.
2. Candidates will be able to identify and discuss three different ways a person adapts to system of parental negation.

Session #3

1. Candidates will be able to identify and discuss identification with negating parental attitudes.
2. Candidates will learn how to facilitate a softening of a patient's identificatory fusion with negating parental attitudes.

Required Readings:

All papers will be uploaded on the ICP/LA website. It will be expected that you will arrive for class having read the assigned readings. Also, please be prepared to share cases and clinical material to enrich our exploration of narcissistic vulnerability.

Bach, S. (1999) The language of perversion and the language of love. Chapter 9. Jason Aronson: New York, NY.

Bromberg, P.M. (1983) The Mirror and the Mask. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 19:359-387

Mitchell, S. A. (1986) The Wings of Icarus: Illusions and the Problem of Narcissism. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 22:107-132

Shaw, Daniel. (2014). *Traumatic Narcissism: Relational Systems of Subjugation*. Chapter One: The Relationality of Narcissism. New York, NY: Routledge.

Shaw, Daniel. (2014). *Traumatic Narcissism: Relational Systems of Subjugation*. Chapter Two: The Adult Child of the Traumatizing Narcissist: Enter Ghosts! New York, NY: Routledge.

Stern, S. (2019). Airless Worlds: The Traumatic Sequelae of Identification with Parental Negation. *Psychoanal. Dial.*, 29(4):435-450.

Goals and Objectives Session by Session

Session # 1 01/30/2020

In our first session candidates will grapple with various theories of narcissism from Freud, through the relational turn as described by Phillip Bromberg. The class will discuss how each theory impacts our listening, our understanding of the patient, and how we as analysts decide treat them. We will also consider various theoretical perspectives of narcissism through the lens of Steven Mitchell. Mitchell, who is an integrationist, writes about how the illusion in a narcissistic organization is used both as a defense and as a pathway to developmental growth.

Bromberg, P.M. (1983) The Mirror and the Mask. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 19:359-387

Mitchell, S. A. (1986) The Wings of Icarus: Illusions and the Problem of Narcissism. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 22:107-132

Session #2 March 20th, 2021

In our second session we will first discuss Chapter 9 of Sheldon Bach's ideas about how patients develop a defensive omnipotent stance in response to formative developmental trauma. According to Bach, this trauma threatens an individual with the "death of the self," evoking the experiences of Winnicott's primitive agony. We will then discuss the first chapter of Daniel Shaw's book *Traumatic Narcissism*. Shaw asserts that narcissism is engendered developmentally, and as it is enacted relationally within family systems. Shaw describes the relational system of what he terms the 'traumatizing narcissist' as a system of subjugation– the objectification of one person in a relationship as the means of enforcing the dominance of the subjectivity of the other.

Bach, S. (1999) The language of perversion and the language of love. Chapter 9. Jason Aronson: New York, NY.

Shaw, Daniel. (2014). *Traumatic Narcissism: Relational Systems of Subjugation*. Chapter One: The Relationality of Narcissism. New York, NY: Routledge.

Session #3 May 1st, 2021

In our third session, we will deepen our understanding of Shaw's work by reading his second chapter. Shaw gives a fascinating case that exemplifies not only the dynamics at play in the etiology of narcissism, but also how it can play out in treatment. Candidates will come to identify not only dissociative aspects of trauma, but also Stern's of ways in which patients internalize the traumatic systems of parental negation.

Shaw, Daniel. (2014). *Traumatic Narcissism: Relational Systems of Subjugation*. Chapter Two: The Adult Child of the Traumatizing Narcissist: Enter Ghosts! New York, NY: Routledge.

Stern, S. (2019). Airless Worlds: The Traumatic Sequelae of Identification with Parental Negation. *Psychoanal. Dial.*, 29(4):435-450.