SERIALISING, SPLITTING AND INTEGRATING:

ON THE CONTRIBUTION OF GROUNDED THEORY TO A PSYCHOANALYTIC

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF LOVE

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INTRODUCTION

This preliminary communication is a contribution to the psychology of love inspired by Freud's early papers on the topic (Freud, 1910: 1912: 1918). It suggests a method of researching the clinical situation in psychoanalysis which might enable psychoanalytic research to be brought more firmly within the mainstream of social scientific research. More ambitiously, it might be seen as setting forth the beginnings of a framework for the systematic study of the psychoanalytic social psychology of love.

BACKGROUND

I give four anecdotes to situate the thrust of the paper - the first, an oftrepeated remark by Anna Freud; the second, some thoughts on a paper by Joseph Sandier; the third, some remarks on what I call 'the problem of imposition'; and, finally, some thoughts on the recently stated editorial policy of the *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*. The first anecdote explains what led me to the central theme of the paper - the conjoining of the research methodology of grounded theory (GT) with the research method of psychoanalysis. The remaining three anecdotes are designed to intimate why this conjoining might lead to a worthwhile con-

tribution to what Emde and Fonagy (1997) have recently referred to as 'an emerging culture for psychoanalytic research?'.

Anna Freud often used to remark how psychoanalysts will frequently find a way of returning to the specialism (or specialisms) they were trained in prior to their psycho- analytic training. In my own case, prior to psychoanalytic training I had spent a considerable part of my academic research life trying to apply the methodology of grounded theory to whatever empirical area in the social sciences took my fancy (e.g. Ekins, 1997). In the second section of the paper 'On Grounded Theory'. I will outline the approach of grounded theory. For the moment, it is sufficient to emphasise that grounded theory is a strategy for the simultaneous collection, analysis and writing-up of data which emphasises the logic of discovery rather than verification.   It is a method of qualitative analysis which lends itself particularly well to the analysis of qualitative data. It is a method of research which demands intimate apprecia- tion of the arena studied, but which writes up that intimate appreciation in terms of theoretical analyses (Ekins, 1997). In particular, it emphasises theoretical coding. As Glaser (1978, p. 55) puts it: The essential relationship between data and theory is a conceptual code. The code conceptualises the underlying pattern of a set of empirical indicators within the data. Thus, in generating a theory by developing the hypothetical relationships between conceptual codes (categories and their properties) which have been generated from the data as indicators, we "discover" a grounded theory. Soon after qualifying as a psychoanalyst, I found myself seek- ing to develop an approach to psychoanalytic research which drew upon the grounded theory method of research. I should stress. perhaps, that this paper is a first attempt to bring together the approaches of psychoanalysis and grounded theory. Whilst Odis Simmons has pioneered what he terms 'grounded therapy' based largely on his grounded theory study of the practice

of counselors (Simmons, 1994), the conjoining of psychoanalysis and GT is entirely virgin territory.

But what of the relevance of Joseph Sandler's writings to my research problem? Here I focus on Sandler's important position paper 'Research Without Numbers' (Sandier, 1995). In this paper, Sandier details his conceptual approach to research - an outgrowth of the Hampstead Index, initiated by Dorothy Burlingham. This paper may be situated within the contemporary call to research the psychoanalytic process. In it Sandier argues forcefully that researching the psychoanalytic process does not necessarily entail the use of numbers. Rather his approach entails the generation and application of psychoanalytic concepts from clinical material   by groups of researchers; the elaboration and fine tuning, and, if necessary, reconceptualisation and application of the concepts; and discursive reports of alternative conceptualizations which are designed to lead to greater clarity and more systematic development of psychoanalytic conceptualizations, which are then available as resources to feed back into both the clinical and   research arenas. I was impressed by Sandler's approach. It accorded with my preference for qualitative and conceptual research. However, in truth, I found his approach over-conceptual and lacking the empirical substance needed to verify the conceptualizations. In particular, I found his approach lacking in detailed directions to be followed by researchers wishing to work within his preferred tradition. I had the hunch that grounded theory applied to psychoanalytic research might provide a worthwhile important alterative approach. It could facilitate a 'research without numbers' which incorporated both a sensitive tool and detailed direction for psycho- analysts wishing to retheorise and generate new theory.

What I term 'the problem of imposition' is conveniently illustrated by a more personal anecdote. I had not long been attending Scientific meetings of the British Psycho-Analytical Society when I happened upon a particularly striking example of the problem of imposition. Robert Caper (1996), from the United States, presented a Kleinian formulation which sought to explore the relationship between depressive awareness and the Oedipal situation. He prefaced his paper with a review of certain ideas about paranoid schizoid and depressive object relationships with an eye to clarifying what he meant by depressive awareness. He stated his view that emergence into the depressive position depends on one's being able to have a realistic experience of the Oedipal situation and, *inter alla*, discussed Oedipal aspects of the transference. Caper then presented a clinical illustration viewing his clinical material through his Kleinian formulation of the Oedipal situation in such manner that that the formulation seemed to give validity to his reading of the clinical material, and the clinical material seemed to provide evidence for the validity of the formulation. The paper was greeted with considerable applause, whereupon Hanna Segal (1996) warmly praised the speaker for the courage and independence which had led him to write his paper. He had, as I understood her, sought out Kleinian teachers who were officially unrecognised by the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA), rather than undergo a psychoanalytic training which would lead to IPA accreditation. For fourteen years Caper had been in no-man's land career wise. Only when the new Institutes in the USA were sponsored by the IPA did Caper become a training analyst, a fact cited by Dr. Segal as evidencing that 'the proof of the pudding is in the eating'.

It seemed to me that our American visitor had cleverly detailed a tautology. Having viewed and selected the clinical material through his Kleinian lens, he then

used both the lens and the material to validate each other. His tautology was then duly praised as evidencing as Dr. Segal put it: 'an outstanding example of a man who has a mind of his own'.

This problem of imposition, this 'grid-reading' of clinical material as it might be called, is widespread in the psychoanalytic literature - simply scan the relevant literature on any substantive area and see how the area is re-written with every major shift in psychoanalytic conceptualization. Whilst you might argue that each new conceptualization tells us more about the same researched object, it has always seemed to me that each new conceptualization constitutes a different object of research. Far better, for research purposes, to seek an approach which does not provide a version of data as filtered through an imposed theoretical framework. This, indeed, is the promise of GT. As Glaser puts it: 'Categories are not precious, just captivating. The analyst should readily modify them as successive data may demand. The analyst's goal is to ground the fit of the categories as best he can' (Glaser, 1978: 4).

My final background anecdote is taken from a recent 'editorial afterthoughts' (Tuckett, 1995) in the *International douMal of Psychoanalysis*. The editor David Tuckett is a sophisticated methodologist. He underscores the theoretical pluralism in contemporary psychoanalysis and details what he refers to as 'the grossly inadequate' 'efforts to develop a rigorous basic methodology of communication and debate'. After outlining his view of the nature of data in the analytic situation he argues that 'it follows that communication of clinical facts requires the analyst, as participant-observer in the intersubjective field, to provide us with as clear and complete a record of the occurrences and his subjective experience and his thoughts about them as possible . . . it is a fallacy to believe that the patient's (and analyst's) words have a

meaning outside the analyst's subjective context. 'More ominously, in the context of future peer review procedures for The International Journal, he argues that 'the study of the analyst's mind and his observational and inferential methodology (be placed) at the heart of the accumulation of psychoanalytic knowledge'.

While we might agree with the tenor of his diagnosis, his 'way forward' does not follow. Data does, indeed, emerge within the interplay of analysVresearcher and patient. Theory does, indeed, emerge within the same interplay. However, it is perfectly in accord with an 'intersubjectivist', post-positivist methodology to write up that emergence in terms of forms and contents of social process, rather than in terms of the study of the analyst's mind. This is a possible GT 'solution' to his problem and one that I personally favour. Other psychoanalytic researchers who are not particularly enamoured with the contemporary tum to the mind of the analyst may well find the GT approach a congenial alternative.

ON GROUNDED THEORY

I have suggested that GT provides a sensitive and detailed methodology for 'research without numbers' that does not fall foul of 'the problem of imposition'; that it is a methodology compatible with a post-positivist ontology and epistemology; and that it might find its rightful place within an emerging culture for psychoanalytic research. So what is grounded theory in the present context?

I shall content myself with a few remarks before turning to the substantive focus of the paper - that of the problem of object-choosing. Far better, in the present context, to illustrate the fruits of GT rather than spend too much time delineating the methodology.

Grounded theory is the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained and analysed in social research, following the basic methodology set forth in Glaser and Strauss

(1967) and expanded in Glaser (1978), Bigus, Hadden and Glaser (1982), and Strauss (1987).

Each researcher who adopts the approach is likely to develop his or her own variation of

technique (Charmaz, 1983). My own approach is most influenced by Glaser (1978). In that

book, Glaser emphasises the fact that 'The goal of grounded theory is to generate a theory that

accounts for a pattern of behaviour which is relevant and problematic for those involved. The

goal is not voluminous description, nor clever verification' (Glaser, 1978: 93).

Glaser delineates how the researcher generates substantive codes from the data which

conceptualise the empirical substance of the research area; how s/he then generates theoreti-

cal codes in order to conceptualize how the substantive codes may relate to each other as hy-

potheses to be integrated into the theory (Glaser, 1978: 55); and how both are then subsumed

under a small number of core categories which have the greatest explanatory power.

Grounded theory is concerned to research generic social processes. In this sense it is con-

cerned with form not content. The principle methods it uses are theoretical sampling and the

constant comparative method. GT gives specific directions for theoretical sampling. That is to

say it indicates where you might look too next as a result of analysis of data previously col-

lected. The constant comparative method has four main stages: (i) comparing incidents ap-

plicable to each category; (ii) integrating categories and their properties; (iii) delimiting the

theory; (iv) writing the theory.

Of particular importance to Glaser is the value of conceptualising codes and catego-

ries in terms of what he calls 'basic social processes' – a concept developed further in Bigus,

Hadden and Glaser (1982). The basic social process in the research domain is the process that

continually resolves the main concern of the subjects studied. To access it, the researcher asks

the question: what is the chief concern or problem of the people in the substantive area, and what accounts for most of the variation in processing that problem?

Using the GT method of theoretical sampling, I began to scour my own personal experience, my knowledge of literature, current affairs and so on, together with my past and present case load notes, for incidents of object choosing which I could compare using the 'constant comparative method' as detailed in the GT methodology texts. Further, I began to listen to colleagues' case presentations with a particular ear for incidents of objectchoosing, and did likewise with my reading of the psychoanalytic literature. My coding of such incidents soon led me to the view that object-choosing took three major modes, which I termed 'serialising', 'splitting' and 'integrating'. Furthermore, it emerged that all object-choosing viewed as a social psychological process could be seen with the maximum parsimony and bite in terms of these three modes - their dimensions and properties and their respective interrelations.

An adequate grounded theory of object-choosing would entail what GT calls 'theoretical saturation'. 'Saturation' means that that no additional data are being found where the GT analyst can develop properties of the categories. As s/he sees instances over and over again, the researcher becomes empirically confident that a category is saturated.

It is not my present purpose to detail, or even illustrate, an adequately dense and integrated theory of object-choosing, however. Rather, in the remainder of this section I shall briefly set forth each of the three modes of objectchoosing in isolation, with reference to a number of their major dimensions and properties, and give a number of illustrative examples. My intention is both to give something of the flavour of my particular use of GT, and also to provide the basic conceptual wherewithal to develop the illustrations in the section on 'clini-

cal illustratons' which follows this one. In that section, I return to the clinical cases of Mr. A. and Mr. B. - those cases that led me to develop a theory of object-choosing in the first instance.

SERIALISING

Serialising refers to object-choosing which arranges itself in a series. Principal dimensions of serialising are as those of number, intensity and time.

Don Juan may be taken as illustrating one end of the serialising continuum as regards numbers of object-choice. He endlessly seeks partner after partner only to drop them just as soon as he has seduced them. The most commonplace psychoanalytic observation about the Don Juan type is that he is treatiing his partners as he was treated. Just as his mother left him, he leaves his mother-substitutes. Furthermore, as he is unconsciously seeking his mother, each object-choice in the series is unsatisfactory once secured, and must be given up in an endless search for the lost mother-object. At the other end of the continuum, as regards numbers, might be the person who keeps choosing the same object and goes through seemingly endless cycles of falling in love, securing, and separating. Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton engaged in   this type of serialising for many years. Solicitors tell of couples who marry, divorce and re-marry each other - many times over. What anthropologists term serial monogamy has increasingly become the norm in advanced industrial countries in late-modernity.

The intensity dimension refers to the degree of drivenness of the serialising. Many serialisers feel so bereft without a partner, that they habitually engage in overlapping serialising. That is to say, they seek to ensure they have obtained the next object in the series, before dispensing with the preceding object. Others seem less driven to serialise. They engage in what might be termed unintermittent serialising (cf. continuous serializing). There may be

greater or lesser periods without an object-choice. Or such persons might variously content themselves with fantasy object-choices. Or they might tide the period over with variously elaborate schemes of securement.

Each object-choosing in the series may be be for variously short or long periods. At one end of this continuum might be placed the person who endlessly seeks one-night stands with readily available and willing partners. At the other end of the continuum, we might place the long-term married, who on the death of their spouse may take up with another spouse - a series of just two. Most serialising does, of course, take place variously within these 'extremes'.

Serialising is variously bound to different pre-conditions in the objectchoice, and variously bound to the qualities possessed by the object-choice. At one extreme might be the clothes fetishist who may serialise with any object who is prepared to wear the fetish. Others may have the most elaborate pre-conditions of object-choosing. Again, serialising is marked by differing degrees of ritual and flexibility. In highly ritualised object-choosing, what we might see as the compulsion to repeat seems particularly evident. Finally, we might highlight the degree of awareness of serializing possessed by the serialiser. Conscious awareness of a driven serialising which is seen to be unsatisfactory, at best, and highly damaging, at worst, may well propel the serialiser into therapy.

SPLITTING

I use the term 'splitting' with some hesitation. It is, of course, a term widely used in the psychoanalytic literature sometimes descriptively and sometimes with explanatory intent. I have in mind here, object-choosing which entails two or more simultaneous partners. The term might also be applied to fantasy partners, but in its simplest form the splitter sees to it

that he has two or more concurrent object-choices, each of which are sought to meet different needs.

As with sertalizing, the dimension of number is significant. Overtly widespread is the male who marries and keeps his wife at home, while also having a mistress. Three-fold splits into the mother-figure, madonna-figure and whore-figure are widely written about. Again there may be various preconditions, variously ritualised, and variously enacted. John, a successful lawyer, always found himself attracted to what he termed 'the bar-room floozy/working-class type'. He wooed and married such a woman whom he found 'particularly beautiful'. As his wife became older, had children and generally became more encultured within his professional circle and his upper middle-class family, he found himself becoming increasingly attracted to alternative 'bar-room floozies'. It was not long before he had set up one such as his mistress.

The splits may be variously what might be termed 'aparted'. Many splitters carry secret 'aparting' to their graves. John seemed compelled to so manage his affair with his mistress that third parties brought the affair to the attention of his wife (dual-world fusing). There followed much heart-ache and recrimination, but always John sought to secure his dual-splitting anew. After some thirty years, he remains married to his wife and has had a series of three mistresses.

Many splitters seek to secure multiple object-choices each filling different needs. Others find this too difficult, impracticable, or dangerous when sought in 'reality'. They may increasingly seek satisfaction of their needs in fantasy relationships. An interesting variant here is the cross-dresser who 'splits' within himself. Too fearful or inhibited to secure his own heterosexual partner, he creates one in his fantasies. As the psychiatrist in the final denoue-

ment of Hitchcock's classic *Psycho* (1960) says of Norman: [Norman] was simply doing everything possible to keep alive the illusion of his mother being alive. And when reality came too close: when danger, or desire, threatened that illusion, he dressed up. Even to a cheap wig he bought. He'd walk about the house. Sit in her chair. Speak in her voice. He tried to be his mother. And er ... now he is.'

INTEGRATING

When I read a draft of this paper (up to this point) to a non-psychoanalyst colleague, she commented that not much of it seemed to be about love. It is of interest in this regard that when Otto Kemberg re-worked his paper 'Barriers to Falling and Remaining in Love' for his recent book *Love Relations: Normality and Pathology* (1995) he did so in a chapter he retitled 'Psychopathology'. From this standpoint, serialising and splitting are likely to be seen as pathological variants of mature love. Indeed, integrating might best be seen in terms of movement towards neither serialising nor splitting. At its simplest, 'integrating' in object-choosing refers to the objectchooser's integrating his various needs in one object. When elaborated, 'integrating' is well illustrated with reference to psychoanalytic writings that have focussed on genital love (Balint, 1948), or mature love (Kernberg, 1974, 1995). Balint, for instance, suggested that, in addition to genital satisfaction, a true love relation included idealisation, tenderness, and a special form of identification. He suggests calling the last Genital identification', within which the 'interests, wishes, feelings, sensitivity, shortcomings of the partner attain - or are supposed to attain - about the same importance as our own' (p. 115). Balint's idea was a shift from the then dominant focus on 'genital primacy' per se as the the basis for ideal love relations, pointing to the important preoedipal elements influencing geni-

tal identification, and to the importance of integrating pre-genital tenderness with genital satisfaction.

Integrating may be variously fragile/secure. It may be variously dependent on pre-conditons in the chosen object. It may appear variously in an objectchoosing career. Trajectories of integrating may be variously short or long. Mature love is not seen to happen overnight, however. It entails getting to know the chosen object; seeing him/ her as a whole person, time for development, and so on.

CLINICAL ILLUSTRATIONS[3]

A moment's thought will suggest that although it may be possible to speak conceptually about the three modes - serialising, splitting and integrating - in isolation, in the empirical world they, and their various dimensions and properties, will interrelate. Furthermore, it will also be evident that differing emphases on description and psychoanalytic explanation and their interrelations are possible. In the previous section I deliberately remained largely at the descriptive, psychoanalytically unsophisticated level. This is because, once the explanatory realm is entered, a veritable hornet's nest of epistemological and methodological problems are stirred up - particularly in regard to problems of reliability and validity.

To introduce the more complex issues, I now contrast and compare the cases of Mr. and Mr. B. Both illustrations might be seen principally in terms of splitting. Both patients also illustrate secondary serialising. The instability of Mr. A's splitting has led him to therapy. His integrating is minimal. Mr. B's· splitting is relatively stable and his analysis facilitates noteworthy integrating. In Mr. A's case we have little or no evidence to move from description to evidenced explanation. The progress of Mr. B's long analysis provides a mass of data

which might be drawn upon to explain his modes of object-choosing, their changing patterns and their changing interrelations.

I saw Mr. A. for just 32 sessions in twice weekly psychoanalytic psychotherapy. He frequently missed appointments. Though I was free to speculate about explanations of his object-choosing pattern, I uncovered no material which could in any sense be said to provide convincing psychoanalytic explanation. He did, however, provide a very interesting example of a particular type of object-choosing which might be seen as very illuminating for descriptive purposes. On the other hand, I have seen Mr. B. for some six years in five times weekly psychoanalysis. He remained very firmly 'in analysis' for those years. Recovery of memories and psychoanalytic reconstructions provide very plausible explanatory material, in addition to the interesting descriptive material he has furnished.

Mr. A., a 30 year old unmarried local government clerical officer, presented in some desperation. He had been adopted as a baby and had lived at home with his adoptive parents until his early 20's. Since his late teens, he increasingly spent his weekends away from home, in a coastal resort where he generally had a 'rave', mainly within a sub-culture involved in music and soft drugs - marijuana, magic mushrooms, and the like. He had occasionally taken LSD.

He would feel himself getting attached to a woman and then suffer severe panic attacks, and feel he had to get away from the woman. I have already referred to the occasion when after a long-standing on and off affair with an Australian visitor, the woman tried to forcibly restrain him from leaving her, and he fell to the floor trembling and sweating. On another occasion, he fled from a woman with the intention of going on a solo trip around the

world. By the time he had reached London (from his home in the United Kingdom), he was in such a bad state that he had admitted himself to a psychiatric hospital.

It was difficult for him to talk about anything else besides his panics. He would repeatedly ask a similar set of questions. Was he irreparably damaged in some way? Could I help him? Did he have to reconcile himself to a life of living alone? A solitary life resolved the problem of his symptoms, but most of the time he felt he did not want to be without a partner. Yet, what was the alternative?

As I have said, I only saw him for 32 sessions, and he found it very difficult to come to the sessions regularly. So in a sense he was repeating in the transference his characteristic way of relating. The slightest of movements towards attachment to me tended to herald his missed sessions.

Rather soon a picture of his relationships with women emerged. I came to see him as a very good example of a man unable to unite what Freud (1912) referred to as the affectionate and sensual currents in love. It was striking, too, how much his preferred object-choices resembled each other.

His object-choosing typically conformed to the following pattern. He would meet a woman who was engaged, or married, or sometimes just involved with someone else, but uncertain whether to continue the relationship. My patient would be kind, considerate and helpful to her. Gradually the woman's attachment would switch to him. She would break off the relationship with the husband, fiance or partner. As long as Mr. A. was just being 'helpful' to her, things were fine. He would feel great tenderness and love for her. Then, quite inexplicably to him, despite his loving feelings for her, he experienced panic attacks. He just had to 'get away'.

He had his first girlfriend when he was 19. The relationship lasted a couple of weeks. The young woman was engaged at the time. They had intercourse. Then Mr.A. thought, 'God, What have I done?'

At 22 he met another young woman who was engaged. She broke off the engagement to.be with Mr. A. He had intercourse with her once and did not want her any- more. He explained what had happened to his family who told him it was quite normal. 'You just did not want her when it came to it', they said.

On occasions he was able to sustain a relationship over several years, as he did with the Australin girlfriend who only came to Ireland occasionally. She was a keen surfer - 'more like a man', as he put it. On one occasion, when she made advances towards him, he thought 'back off you bitch'.

Not surprisingly, he was getting attached to another woman in the series, when he was seeing me. In session 16, he related: 'I've just had the worst attack ever and I want to tell you about it. I arranged to see Fiona on New Year's Eve. I wanted to touch her. We got close through talking. This meant more than having sex. I don't think I could have sex with her. She telephoned me on Tuesday for lunch. I went through the door (at her house) and had an attack.' He then recounted how things were getting worse for him. How he really did love her, but that things were changing again. How he went back to his own house, broke down crying and took the dog out for a walk. As he tellingly put it: 'I've got you; I'm fed up with you; I hate you. The dream switches to a nightmare'. Even at this stage, he would be jealous if his woman friend talked to anyone else. He talked of suicide and of his fears that the treatment was making him worse. In session 25, he talked of the women he can have sex with. 'With some girls it's just a good funk - you don't mind me using these words?'

He spoke of one woman who was married and renowned for sleeping around. He thought: I'm going to screw you. I've no feelings, whatsoever, for you - no affectionate feelings; no soft feelings. Just sex. I don't give a toss about your marriage. I want rough sex. I don't care about you at all'. He continued: 'I showed roughess to her. I enjoyed it. I went to the bathroom next morning, cleaned up, and walked away. The.re were no feelings of affection, love or tenderness. It was a release; like a form of masturbation'. Once he's besmirched the women, he's not interested in them.

Now it is, of course. quite possible to speculate about antecedents, and so on. We might note the fact that Mr. A. was adopted and might find ouselves speculating about the significance of the mother who had abandoned him. Perhaps she. was the prototype of the faithless woman whom he wanted to funk and then abandon, as he was abandoned. Perhaps, the prototype of his affectionate object-choices was an idealised natural mother. Perhaps, the affectionate object-choices provoked anxiety as Oedipal conflicts became aroused and it was these Oedipal conficts that led to his panic attacks.

The fact was, though, that Mr. As preoccupations with his symptoms and his bleak future precluded the uncovering work necessary to provide any evidence for these speculations - or, indeed any alternative speculations - let alone a convincing case for them. Indeed, shortly after I had put it to him that he was reluctant to tell me his secrets, he broke off his treatment with me. However, in terms of his serialising and splitting, it is instructive to note his particular compromise formations.

Mr. B. was referred to me with episodes of palpitations, uncontrollable shaking, and fear that he was going to die. He was a highly successful workdriven advertising executive of 38, married with two children.

Following work on various issues and a striking reduction of his symptoms during the first year of analysis, his relationship with his mother became the focus of his analysis. He had lived with her until he was four, then following a spate of illnesses, his mother had spent the next three years in and out of hospital.

He went to live with his Aunt's family and her unmarried sister who was still living at home. At the time his analysis began he had no memories of those three years. He was told that his mother had visited him for periods at a time but had no recollection of any visits.

As a young boy, he recalled lying awake in bed determining to become a successful businessman and provide for his parents and family the security, comfort and possessions that his own parents had been unable to provide for him. He had done just this, for the most part single-handedly.

As the analysis progressed over some four years, it became apparent just how much the insecurity of his early object relations had affected his relations with his object-choosing, laying down the template for his subsequent pattern of 'splitting'.

From post-adolescence onwards, he contrived to have one permanent 'safe' partner, to whom he was not very attached, and did not find very satisfasctory.

First, there was a relationship with a trainee social worker, while he, himself, was at College. Later, he had a relationship with the woman he married ·in his mid-20s. He would have fairly regular intercourse with his wife, but did not find it satisfactory.

In parallel with the 'safe' relationship, he had one non-sexual relationship which he fantasied would provide the answer to the security he sought. For most of his life, since his student days, his fantasy relationship took the form of one particular person who he idealised. However, whenever he had the opportunity to make the fantasy reality, he never took it.

When he came near to it, he was married by that time and was unable to make the break from his wife and children. Furthermore, he felt too guilty and inhibited to pursue a sexual relationship with his idealised partner when the opportunity arose, which it did on a number of occasions over a twenty year period. His inhibitions in this regard did not stop his fantasies. He would fantasise that this idealised woman would take the initiative, acknowledge what he had been through, hold him in her arms and comfort him.

In parallel with these two main relationships that continued throughout his adult years and, indeed, through many years of his analysis, he maintained a third relationship. This took the form of a secret and sexual affair with a junior work colleague whom he found very attractive and who was always available for him but with whom he felt unable to have full intercourse.

Over the course of his analysis, we came to see how his object-choosing mirrored his early object relationships. When is mother left him for hospital, he lived for those 3 years with his aunt. She was safe, but unsatisfactory. He could never commit himself to her. It was his mother he wanted.

When, however, his mother returned, or when he lived with her again later, he could not commit himself to her either. He was angry that she had 'gone away', that she did not acknowledge his pain, and, most of all, he was fearful that she would go away again. He could not acknowledge his anger with her, far less express it to her - she was too fragile, and that might send her away for good. He was not going to be caught out again. Yet he so yearned for her to understand him, comfort him, say how much she appreciated his suffering, how she would not go away again, and so on.

Similarly, with the mother-substitute fantasy relationship, he would never put it to the test, for fear of losing her. Here, sexual inhibitions were particularly overt. In any event, the evidence suggested that his idealised object-choice wanted a mature companion and lover. He, on the other hand, wanted a mother-figure. So in reality the relationship was never sustained, however strong the fantasy, and whatever the opportunity to fulfil the fantasy.

The extent to which his object-choosing mirrored his early object relationships came as a complete revelation to Mr. B. We came to see that on each occasion he had presented for psychiatric help, or, indeed, had been hospitalised, a particular crisis had arisen in the management of his three relationships. The chronology was such that it seemed irrefutable that it was when his 'splitting' failed him that he became ill. Similarly, there was abundant evidence in the clinical material that when Mr. B. became aware of the extent to which his current relationships mirrored their proto- types, their grip on him began to wane. The central dilemma then became - do I have to try to settle for my unsatisfactory 'aunt' wife, or have I created such a person? Might it be possible to commit myself to my wife, to integrate the splitting.

By the fifth year of his analysis, there had been such genuine psychic change that both the fantasied relationship and the relationship with his work colleague had finally ceased to hold their grip on him. We increasingly entered periods where 'integrating' material was particularly prominent in the sessional material. He began to make increasingly sustained efforts to commit himself to his wife, to find the integrating increasingly satisfactory, and to maintain the periods of integrating for increasingly longer time spans. Coterminously, I might add, he began to confront the possibility of the analysis coming to an end - pointing to all sorts of parallels between 'integrating' and 'terminating'. But there we must leave Mr. B.

CONCLUDING COMMENT

In the space of a short preliminary communication it has not been possible for me to develop the GT analysis in any conceptually or theoretically dense manner. Had I done so the development would have followed three main directions. Firstly, I would have detailed many more dimensions and properties of my core categories of serialising, splitting and integrating. Secondly, I would have begun to explore their detailed interrelations with reference to my clinical illustrations. This would have raised hosts of issues as to diverse trajectories of object-choosing and their interrelations, trajectories of discovery of patterns, of patterns of antecedents, and so on. Finally, I would have drawn on a great deal more clinical data to provide evidence for my underdeveloped explanatory comments. This would have provided ample opportunity to explore the contributions of transferential and counter-transferential data to GT analysis. Nevertheless, I am hopeful that I have at least provided enough background material, preliminary GT analysis, and illustrative material to have indicated the potential of the GT approach for researchers seeking a hitherto unexplored approach to qualitative psychoanalytic research.

Footnotes

1. The Editor and Regional Editors of the *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* recently announced a special interest in encouraging papers discussing empirical research in psychoanalysis and in debating their value (*Int. J. P. Pschoanal*, 1997, 78: 643). This preliminary communication is a contribution to that debate. An earlier version was presented as a talk to the Northern Ireland Association for the Study of Psycho-Analysis on 25 October, 1997.

2. In psychoanalysis, an object is that which the subject requires in order to achieve instinc-

tual satisfaction. Object-choice 'refers to the process by which one renders someone else psychologically significant.' (Moore and Fine, 1990, p. 129).

3. Biographical details have been altered to protect the identity of the clinical cases.

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