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Self-inflicted injuries

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1. Goal: to study the psychic processes in the moments of cuts in the skin and their precedents.

2. Sample: the material corresponds to the discourse of a 31 years old patient internshipped in a neuro-psychiatric hospital due to the fact that she self-inflicted cuts in her skin.

First self-inflicted injuries. Distant antecedents: the patient suffered a rape at the age of 18 from a partner who pretended to be sick. She first believed in his words. Her father was alcoholic and little before dying (when she was 28) accused her of being a drunk without her trying to refute it. After his death, her younger brother also accused her with violence of being alcoholic; she believed in him and moved to her older brother who lived with a couple. As this couple showed her upset towards Lorena's presence, she went to live alone. Direct antecedents: in several occasions, after visiting her older brother, Lorena returned to her home furious for not being able to say anything, knowing she was lying she kept saying everything was ok, at night she consumed beer and cut herself.

Second self-inflicted injury: Distant antecedents: she was hospitalized by her older brother shortly after. While being in the hospitalization room a partner had an attempt of suicide in spite of having told Lorena that she felt like killing herself but that she wasn't going to do it. Lorena first believed in her, but when the partner had the suicidal attempt she stopped trusting her. Direct antecedents: few days after, a resident reprimended her because during the weekend she had excessively drunk, when she had only drunk a glass of beer, authorized by the psychiatrist. The patient believed in the resident's accusation. Little after that, her brother accused her of having excessively drunk. Then she felt like cutting herself and she asked for help. Finally, she was "contained" (hobbled) by the hospital's staff. Shortly after, for bureaucratic reasons, she had denied a permission of weekend outing that a psychiatrist had promised her. So she said she didn't understand the professionals that attended her, and from that moment she remained in silence and cut herself.

3. Method: The David Liberman algorithm (DLA) is a method that allows to detect drives and defenses as well as their state in the narrated and enacted episodes.

4. Procedure: 1) to research the episodes of self injury, 2) to research the antecedents of self injury, 3) to compare and connect the outcomes of 1 and 2..

5. Analysis: the distant antecedents of the first episodes of self inflicted injuries show that the patient tended to depend on subjects who said not believable (O1 and failed disavowal) and unfair (A1 and failed disavowal) phrases. The direct antecedents of these first episodes show that this dependence of fake and unfair subjects was finally combined with the separation experience regarding her family (IL and successful-failed foreclosure of the affect and O2 and failed disavowal, with the predominance of IL and foreclosure of the affect). Lorena only resorted to the cuts in the skin when O1 and A1 and failed disavowal and IL and successful-failed foreclosure of the affect were

combined. Then the patient started also to fake (O1 and successful disavowal) and avoid her family (UPH and successful repression plus characterologic traits), until culminating in the physical alteration (IL and successful foreclosure of the affect) which was also a way of carrying out a vengeance (A1 and successful disavowal).

The distant antecedents of the second episode show that also in this occasion the patient started to depend on liar (O1 and failed disavowal) and unfair subjects, and that she felt tore by her family (IL and successful-failed foreclosure of the affect and O2 and failed disavowal, whit the predominance of IL and the successful-failed foreclosure of the affect). The immediate antecedents of the second episode show an reinforcement of her dependence from those liar and unfair characters (with a predominance of the experience of the other being fake), combined with the fact of feeling prisoner (A1 and failed disavowal). This combination culminated with the silence (UPH and repression plus characterological traits) and the injury (A1 and successful disavowal and IL and successful foreclosure of the affect, with a predominance of this last one).

The patient's episodes showed that she had a combination of wishes and defenses: 1) UPH and repression+avoidance traits of character, 2) A1 and disavowal and O2 and disavowal, 3) O1 and disavowal and IL and foreclosure of the affect. The core of the episode of self inflicted injury included a detonant situation and a consequence. The detonant situation was to be excluded from a body attachment to others (IL and failed foreclosure of the affect) and to be trapped by a liar (O1 and disavowal). The consequence is the cathartic discharge (IL and successful foreclosure of the affect) and the vindictive activity (A1 and successful disavowal)..

6. Discussion: The main aspects of the detonant situation consist in a combination of two components: 1) being jailed in an external space (IL and failed foreclosure of the affect), 2) being dependent from an untruthful character (O1 and failed disavowal). This combination contains a more refined description of the situation of lacking of a basic belief, which has a great relevance in the psychic life. The combination can be seen as an operationalization of the concept of absence of the basic truth. The main components of the moment of the outburst of the self injury are to accomplish the wish of vengeance (A1 and successful disavowal) and the need of discharge of the inner body tension (IL adl successful foreclosure of the affect).

7. Conclusions: The study of the episodes of self injury and their antecedents allows to infer that certain wishes and defenses as well as their state prevail (Table I).

Table I: Drives and defenses in the antecedents of self injuries

Drive	Defense	Function
UPH	Repression+characterological traits	Complementary appearance
A1/O2	Disavowal	Passionate core
O1	Disavowal	Decisive regression step
IL	Foreclosure of the affect	

Among them, some have a complementary value, some others correspond to the passionate appearance and a third group are the core of the psychic organization. Three

main combinations drives-defenses prevail: A1 and O1 combined with disavowal, and IL combined with foreclosure of the affect.

The combination of drives and defenses already mentioned participated either in the detonant situation and in the self-injury episodes (Table II).

Table II: Drives and defenses as well as their state in the detonant situation and in the moment of self injury

Detonant situation	
Main components	IL and failed foreclosure of the affect
	O1 and failed disavowal
Complementary components	GPH and failed repression and+characterological traits
	O2 and failed disavowal
	A1 and failed disavowal
Moment of self-injury	
Main components	IL and successful foreclosure of the affect
	A1 and successful disavowal
Complementary components	GPH and successful repression

Among them, only IL and foreclosure of the affect appears in the detonant situation and in the subsequent outbreak of self injury. The difference corresponds to the state of the defense: failed in the first moment and successful in the second. Failed disavowal combined with O1, which has great relevance in the detonant situation, but during the outbreak episode it is replaced by successful disavowal combined with A1 in the outbreak of self injury. In consequence, the previous state of being dependent from a liar person lasts unchanged and seems to become a decisive stimulus determining the episode of violence.