

Object Relations, Defensive Operations, and Affective States in Narcissistic, Borderline, and Antisocial Personality Disorder

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Rorschach data were used to psychometrically "map" the internal psychological operations of three Cluster B personality disorders, listed in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (3rd ed., rev. [DSM-III-R]; American Psychiatric Association, 1987), all of which may be organized at a borderline level. Psychopathic antisocial subjects (P-APDs) and narcissistic subjects (NPDs) were highly narcissistic. NPD subjects, however, produced more indices of anxiety and attachment capacity and fewer scores related to borderline object relations and damaged identity. P-APDs and borderline subjects (BPDs) produced similar mean numbers of borderline object relations; however, the BPDs were more anxious, produced more unsublimated aggressive and libidinal drive material, and evidenced greater potential for attachment. BPDs were also less narcissistic than both P-APDs and NPDs. Nonpsychopathic antisocial subjects (NP-APDs) were less borderline than P-APDs and BPDs, less narcissistic in terms of a stable grandiose self-structure than NPD and P-APDs, produced less evidence of attachment capacity than NPDs and BPDs but more than P-APDs, and were similar to BPDs in their proneness to anxiety. The outpatient NPDs and BPDs produced more idealization responses than the incarcerated antisocial personality disorder (APD) groups. We conclude that the behavioral descriptions offered for these three Cluster B personality disorders, when used in conjunction with information such as level of personality organization (Kernberg, 1984), level of psychopathy (Hare, 1980, 1985), and outpatient versus inpatient research settings, may have greater intrapsychic specificity than previously thought.

The DSM series (American Psychiatric Association, 1952, 1968, 1980, 1987) has provided a set of often criticized behavioral criteria (Kernberg, 1984, 1989; Millon, 1981) for three clusters of personality disturbance and 11 individual personality disorders. Much of the criticism has focused on the failure of behavioral descriptions to capture the dynamic and clinical understanding of each disorder. Kernberg's (1975, 1984) delineation of the personality disorders into three levels, based on defensive operations, level of identity integration, and accuracy of reality testing, provides a psychoanalytic framework for understanding the similarities and differences among these disorders. Viewed in this light, Cluster B personality disorders exhibit a dramatic, impulsive, emotional, erratic, and egocentric behavioral style (American Psychiatric Association, 1987) as well as psychodynamic processes consistent with the lower range of character pathology or borderline personality organization (Kernberg, 1984).

Contrary to criticisms, empirical studies have begun to demonstrate relationships between the *DSM-III-R* behavioral descriptors and personality traits (McGlashan & Heinssen, 1989; Plakum, 1990; Ronningstam & Gunderson, 1990), such as psychopathy (Gacono, 1990; Gacono, Meloy, & Heaven, 1990; Guze, Woodruff, & Clayton, 1971; Hare, 1985; Harpur, Hare, & Hakstian, 1989), and may suggest that criticisms of the DSM series have been premature or at least unduly severe. These relationships may also suggest that a levels phenomenon, such as the one outlined for psychopaths (Gacono & Meloy, 1988, 1992), is equally applicable to the study of other personality disorders. Specifically, we hypothesized that personality has certain psychodynamic, cognitive, psychophysiological, and behavioral operations that intercorrelate. Hence, within clearly defined disorders, behavior patterns provide an avenue for understanding and assessing both dynamic and cognitive functioning.

CLUSTER B DISORDERS

APD is hypothesized to be an aggressive variant of NPD (Bursten, 1973, 1989; Gacono & Meloy, 1988; Kernberg, 1975, 1989; Meloy, 1988; Millon, 1981) organized at a borderline level of personality organization (Kernberg, 1975), lacking in benign modes of self-repair (Bursten, 1973; Meloy, 1988) and whose deficient capacity for idealization (Gacono & Meloy, in press) contributes to underdeveloped sublimatory channels (Deutsch, 1942; Kernberg, 1989) and subsequent lack of career success. Despite similarities with affect regulation and impaired interpersonal relationships between inpatient NPDs and APDs, all of whom met the criteria for BPD, APDs displayed less dependent features, exhibited less successful work histories, were younger upon first psychiatric admission, were less likely to harm themselves, and were more likely to direct aggression toward others (McGlashan & Heinssen, 1989).

Although APDs vary in character style (Gacono, 1988; Wulach, 1988), level

of borderline organization (Gacono, 1990; Hofer, 1989), and level of psychopathy (Gacono, 1990; Hare, 1985), they share with NPDs an independent style (Millon, 1981) and object relations characterized by a grandiose self-structure. Primitive defenses, pathological internalized object relations, and specific conscious cognitive processes (Bursten, 1972; Gacono & Meloy, 1988; Meloy, 1988) regulate and balance the intrapsychic functioning of these individuals. Greater achievement and vocational success differentiate outpatient NPDs from both APDs and BPDs (Ronningstam & Gunderson, 1990). Outpatient NPDs when compared to APDs demonstrate more adaptive use of anxiety, better impulse control, and some superego development (Kernberg, 1989). Although less satisfied than BPDs with heterosexual relationships, they manifest fewer borderline personality traits than inpatient NPDs and are perceived by their therapists as less self-destructive and more capable of reaching therapeutic goals than their BPD counterparts (Plakum, 1990).

Compared to the psychopath's shallow affect (Cleckley, 1941/1982), intense affective displays in BPDs (Plakum, 1990) contribute to their unstable presentation. Difficulties regulating affects and internalized objects, rapid attachments that vacillate between initial idealization and subsequent devaluation, and an internalized object world that defends against perceived object loss and threatened abandonment characterize BPDs. Their affective state is chronically dysphoric and diffusely anxious. Dysphoric affective states develop from the experience of threatened or real object loss and serve to maintain the object tie as psychic energy is directed to and invested in the abandoning object. Hence BPDs, unlike the detachment noted in NPDs and APDs (Berg, 1988; Millon, 1981), appear to have a greater desire for interpersonal relatedness.

Both APDs and BPDs struggle with controlling an excess of aggressive drive derivatives. Whereas in APDs aggression is directed toward others (McGlashan & Heinssen, 1989), aggression in BPDs generally results in self-damaging acts and/or verbal devaluation of a previously esteemed object. Contrary to APDs, BPDs' need for continued object relatedness serves to regulate aggressive outbursts in such a manner that the object of the aggression is likely to become psychically devalued while physically spared. The devaluation in BPDs ultimately results in feelings of dysphoria and images of the self as damaged, whereas in both NPD and APD devaluation of others serves to enhance grandiosity.

Based on these theoretical and empirical findings, we decided to investigate aspects of the relationship among three of the Cluster B personality disorders, APD, NPD, and BPD. We utilized the Rorschach protocols of four groups ($N = 79$): incarcerated psychopathic APDs ($n = 22$, P-APD), incarcerated nonpsychopathic APDs ($n = 21$, NP-APD), outpatient NPDs ($n = 18$), and outpatient BPDs ($n = 18$). Protocols were analyzed for select Rorschach structural and dynamic indices with the following hypothesized relationships: Affective relatedness/bonding (T) and experience of anxiety and helplessness (Y) are significantly greater in NPDs and BPDs than APDs, with the P-APDs

producing the least proportion; experience of depression/damaged self-image (MOR) is significantly greater in BPDs than both NPDs and APDs; affective constraint/depression (C) is produced significantly more in BPDs than the other groups; egocentricity (egocentricity ratio) is significantly greater in the P-APDs and NPDs than BPDs and NP-APDs; primitive (borderline) object relations (Kwawer, 1980) are significantly greater in P-APDs and BPDs than NPDs and NP-APDs; idealization (Cooper, Perry, & Arnow, 1988; Lerner & Lerner, 1980) is produced significantly more by NPDs and BPDs than APDs; impressionistic responses (Gacono, 1990; Gacono et al., 1990) are produced significantly more by P-APDs than the other groups; and, based on our previous findings (Gacono, 1990; Gacono & Meloy, 1992, in press), there are no significant between-group differences for aggressive movement (Exner, 1986). Additional variables are presented within the tables; however, they were not submitted to between-group comparisons or hypotheses formulation.

METHODS

NPD and BPD Subject Selection

The NPD and BPD subjects were 36 outpatients taken from a mixed gender sample of 76 previously described by Berg (1990). Berg's (1988) sample was selected from 1,500 patients referred to the private practice of two psychologists between 1979 and 1988. They had been diagnosed according to *DSM-III* criteria by two expert, psychoanalytically informed diagnosticians as either borderline or narcissistic personality disorders (Berg, 1990). The narcissistic subjects presented with superficially appropriate social adaptation and relatively high social and/or occupational functioning and did not manifest deficits in anxiety tolerance, impulse control, or shifts toward primary process thinking. Diagnosis was determined at the time of referral and based on clinical interview and historical data. These data were archival.

From Berg's (1988) sample, we selected those male subjects who were ≥ 18 years of age and produced Rorschach protocols ≥ 13 responses. NPD subjects were between the ages of 30 and 73 with a mean age of 46.78 ($SD = 12.37$). BPD subjects were between the ages of 21 and 49 with a mean age of 36.78 ($SD = 7.82$). Most of the 36 subjects were White, none had a history of felony arrest, and all were free of a diagnosis of schizophrenia, mental retardation, antisocial personality disorder, or bipolar illness.

APD Subject Selection

Two hundred two records were randomly selected from the files of the entire inmate population of a California State Correctional Facility. Files were re-

viewed on the basis of successive admission to the facility between July 1987 and October 1987. Those subjects who met the *DSM-III-R* (American Psychiatric Association, 1987) criteria for APD were interviewed concerning participation in the study (Gacono, 1988; Gacono & Meloy, 1991; Heaven, 1988). Thirty-four subjects completed testing, and 24 subjects completed both testing and an interview for level of psychopathy. Twelve subjects were randomly selected from a county correctional institution. Six of these county inmates met inclusion criteria. Thirteen additional subjects were selected from other California State Institutions.

Each subject completed an intelligence measure and the Rorschach. Once testing was completed, the subject participated in a structured interview for the purpose of verifying the presence of an APD (American Psychiatric Association, 1987) diagnosis, the absence of a major mental disorder, and completing the Hare Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R; Hare, 1985; Hare, Harpur, Hakstian, Forth, & Hart, 1990). The diagnosis of APD was determined utilizing both semistructured interview and record data and was based on an agreement between Gacono and Meloy. The interviews were conducted by one researcher and observed by the other. PCL-R scores for each subject were rated independently by the researchers. An average of the researchers' scores represented the final PCL-R score. The PCL-R score was used to order the subjects on a psychopathy continuum from 0 to 40 (Hare, 1985) and to divide the subjects for this study into psychopathic and nonpsychopathic APDs.

The 43 APD subjects produced Rorschach protocols of ≥ 12 responses. One subject produced a valid protocol with 12 responses; the remaining produced ≥ 13 responses. The 22 (PCL-R ≥ 30) P-APDs were between the ages of 18 and 43 with a mean age of 30.36 ($SD = 7.05$). NP-APDs ($n = 21$, PCL-R < 30) were between the ages of 18 and 35 with a mean age of 26.57 ($SD = 5.96$). Forty APDs were tested and interviewed while incarcerated in a California State or County Correctional facility, and 3 APDs were probation violators evaluated in an outpatient setting. Twenty-three APDs were White, 11 APDs were Black, and 9 APDs were Hispanic.

Instrumentation and Procedure

Intelligence estimates for NPDs and BPDs were taken from the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Revised (WAIS-R; Wechsler, 1981). Subjects with IQs ≤ 80 were excluded from the study. Mean IQ scores for the NPDs and BPDs were 109.94 ($SD = 13.90$) and 107.06 ($SD = 16.05$), respectively. The Rorschach tests were administered and scored utilizing the Comprehensive System (Exner, 1986). All Comprehensive System data were rescored for reliability by Gacono. Mean number of Rorschach responses for NPDs and BPDs were 23.94 ($SD = 8.87$) and 24.50 ($SD = 6.42$), respectively. The APDs were administered the Rorschach (Rorschach, 1942) also using Comprehensive System procedures

(Exner, 1986). Rorschach protocols were scored for Comprehensive System data by Gacono or Meloy and rescored for reliability by Donna Peaslee. Problematic scoring was resolved through consultation with Philip Erdberg. Mean number of Rorschach responses for the P-APDs and NP-APDs were 18.45 ($SD = 6.83$) and 19.86 ($SD = 7.74$), respectively.

Randomly selected protocols were used to examine interrater agreement for the Lerner and Lerner (1980) defense indices ($n = 20$), Kwawer (1980) primitive (borderline) object relations categories ($n = 20$), and aggression scores ($n = 30$). Mark Rodlund and Margot Moser rescored these indices for reliability. The Lerner and Lerner (1980) comparison revealed 85% agreement for composite devaluation, 83% for composite denial, and 100% for composite idealization. Splitting and projective identification were too infrequently produced in the random sample ($n = 20$) to be subjected to an interrater check. All defenses were rescored by Margot Moser, and 100% agreement was achieved by Gacono before inclusion in the data analysis. Because we were particularly interested in idealization as a defense, Cooper et al.'s (1988) idealization response was also scored. The Kwawer (1980) scoring also produced a reliability agreement of 95% for composite object relations categories. The aggression scores, initially scored by Gacono, were rescored by Peaslee and Meloy with adequate agreements for aggressive movement (Ag) 92%, aggressive content (AgC) 95%, aggressive potential (AgPot) 100%, and aggressive past (AgPast) 96%.

Intelligence estimates for APDs were taken from scores on the Shipley Institute of Living Scale (Shipley, 1940; Zachary, 1986), the WAIS-R (Wechsler, 1981), or the Quick Test (Ammons & Ammons, 1977). APD subjects with IQ scores ≤ 80 were excluded from the study.

The PCL-R (Hare, 1985) was used to determine a subject's level of psychopathy. Hare utilized Cleckley's (1982) criteria to establish this 20-item, 40-point scale. Both the 22-item PCL and 20 item PCL-R have been found to be reliable and valid measures of psychopathy in prison populations. Interrater reliabilities for Hare's scales have ranged from .88 to .92, and test-retest reliabilities have ranged from .85 to .90 (Schroeder, Schroeder, & Hare, 1983). Criminals scoring high on the PCL (≥ 30) have been found to differ significantly from low scorers (< 30) in lower levels of physiological responding (Hare, 1965, 1966; Hare, Frazelle, & Cox, 1978), poorer response to therapeutic intervention (Ogloff, Wong, & Greenwood, 1990), greater quantity and variety of offenses committed (Hare & Jutai, 1983), greater frequency of violent offenses (Hare & McPherson, 1984), greater likelihood of reoffending, and lengthier criminal careers (Hare, McPherson, & Forth, 1988).

Analysis of Data

Means, standard deviations, and frequencies were computed for age, IQ, number of responses, and all Rorschach variables (see Tables 1, 2, and 3). Group

age, IQ, and number of Rorschach responses were compared with one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs). Newman-Keuls analysis was utilized for pairwise comparisons. Selected individual Rorschach variables were compared for main effects with the Kruskal-Wallis test for independent samples. When Kruskal-Wallis analysis revealed significance ($p < .05$), the Mann-Whitney U was used for pairwise comparisons. The following variables were analyzed for between-group differences: total object relations (Kwawer, 1980), idealization (Cooper et al., 1988), pairs (2), reflections (Fr , rF , r), egocentricity ratio, personals (PER), texture (T), diffuse shading (Y), impressionistic (IMP), achromatic color (C), and Ag. Findings were considered significant if they reached a .05 level. Spearman's rho (Siegel, 1956) was used to assess the degree of agreement between the raters' PCL-R scores ($r = .94$).

RESULTS

Overall ANOVAs revealed no group differences for IQ, but found significant main effects for age, $F(3, 75) = 20.86$, $p < .001$, and total number of responses, $F(3, 75) = 3.4$, $p < .03$. Pairwise comparisons utilizing Newman-Keuls revealed that NPDs were significantly older ($p < .05$, $M = 46.8$, $SD = 12.37$) than all groups, BPDs were significantly older ($p < .05$, $M = 36.78$, $SD = 7.82$) than the APD groups, and there was no significant difference between APD groups (mean for P-APD = 30.36, $SD = 7.05$; mean for NP-APD = 26.57, $SD = 5.96$). There was no significant difference in total number of responses between the two APD groups (NP: $M = 19.9$, $SD = 7.74$); however, pairwise comparisons revealed that NPDs ($M = 23.9$, $SD = 8.87$) and BPDs ($M = 24.50$, $SD = 6.42$) produced significantly greater responses ($p < .05$) than the psychopathic APDs ($M = 18.5$, $SD = 6.83$). This may be due to a decreased motivation to produce responses while incarcerated as well as a characterological constriction (Gacono & Meloy, in press).

Consistent with theory, the two outpatient groups are older. As Berg (1988) noted, narcissistic defenses may begin to fail in the middle and late years of life and result in an older mean age for these outpatient groups. An early age of first psychiatric admission for APDs (McGlashan & Heinssen, 1989), criminal behavior of NP-APDs tending to decrease after age 30 (Hare et al., 1988), and inclusion of APD criteria requiring an onset prior to age 15 support a lower mean age for the incarcerated APDs.

Differences in number of responses between groups strengthen, rather than lessen, our findings for many of the variables. This is especially evident when the lower response groups produce greater frequencies for a variable. For example, the P-APDs produced significantly fewer responses than the outpatient groups, but had virtually an equivalent mean number of primitive (borderline) object relations ($M = 5.0$) as BPDs ($M = 5.44$) and a similar mean number of

reflections (1.0) as NPDs (.94). Significant differences for certain variables strongly suggest a characterological basis for these responses. Variables such as pairs (2), whose mean score is likely to vary with the number of responses presented in a protocol, are discussed with this limitation in mind.

Structural Rorschach Variables

Kruskal-Wallis analysis of pair (2) responses revealed a significant main effect ($T = 8.48, p = .037$). Virtually every protocol contained at least one pair response, with mean scores for all groups > 5 . Pairwise comparisons indicate that BPDs produced significantly more pairs than both APD groups ($p < .05$). As noted in Table 1, both outpatient groups produced greater mean numbers of pair responses than the APD groups. This finding should be interpreted with caution as lengthier protocols tend to contain more pair responses.

There were no significant between-group differences for reflections ($p = .08$). Gacono et al. (1990) found that psychopaths (P-APDs) produced a significantly greater proportion of reflections than nonpsychopathic APDs (NP-APDs). An absence of significance in this study may be a statistical phenomenon. That is, increased degrees of freedom in comparing four groups nullified the potential significance. As noted in Table 1, P-APDs ($M = 1.0$, frequency = 50%) and NPDs ($M = .94$, frequency = 50%) produce reflections in patterns more similar to each other than NP-APDs ($M = .14$, frequency = 14%), BPDs ($M = .61$, frequency = 33%), or Exner's (1990) nonpatient males ($M = .08$, frequency = 6%). The egocentricity ratio ($3r + (2)/R$) did yield significant between-group main effects ($T = 12.47, df = 3, p = .006$). The egocentricity ratio of P-APDs and NPDs were significantly greater ($p < .05$) than NP-APDs. P-APDs ($M = .47$) were more similar to NPDs ($M = .46$) than to BPDs ($M = .40$), Exner's (1990) nonpatient males ($M = .38$), or NP-APDs ($M = .30$).

Kruskal-Wallis analysis revealed a significant between-group main effect for *PER* ($T = 11.29, df = 3, p = .01$). Pairwise comparisons indicated that P-APDs produced a significantly greater number ($p < .05$) of *PER*s than the NP-APDs or BPDs. The number of *PER*s produced by NPDs ($M = 2.00$) was also less than the P-APDs ($M = 3.32$). This extends previous findings (Gacono et al., 1990), which found the *PER* response to be a consistent discriminating variable between psychopathic offenders, nonpsychopathic offenders, and nonpatient males ($M = .93$; Exner, 1990).

Significant main effects were found for *Y* ($T = 12.22, df = 3, p = .007$) and *T* ($T = 11.75, df = 3, p = .008$). Pairwise comparisons indicate that P-APDs produced significantly less *Y* and *T* ($p < .05$) than the other three groups (as noted in Table 1). Both APD groups less frequently produce *T* (P-APDs = 5%; NP-APDs = 33%) than NPDs (56%), BPDs (56%), or Exner's (1990) nonpatient males (88%).

Differences for *MOR* and *Ag* were not significant ($p < .05$). An analysis of

TABLE 1
Selected Rorschach Variables for DSM-III-R Cluster B Personality Disorders

Variable	P-APD (n = 22)			N-APD (n = 21)			NPD (n = 18)			BPD (n = 18)		
	M	SD	Freq.	M	SD	Freq.	M	SD	Freq.	M	SD	Freq.
Self and other relatedness												
Pair (2) ^a	5.36	3.72	22	5.19	2.58	21	7.50	4.96	17	7.78	3.67	18
Reflections (Fr, rF, r)	1.0	1.23	11	.14	.36	3	.94	1.43	9	.61	1.42	6
Egocentricity ratio ^a	.47	.23	22	.30	.14	21	.46	.17	18	.40	.19	18
Personals (PER) ^a	3.32	2.46	20	1.33	1.35	14	2.00	1.78	14	1.67	2.56	9
Affective states												
Texture (T) ^a	.05	—	1	.47	.81	7	1.06	1.11	10	1.06	1.35	10
Diffuse shading (Y) ^a	.36	.73	6	2.04	2.60	15	1.16	.92	13	1.72	2.02	12
Vista (V)	.23	.43	5	.48	.87	6	—	—	4	.67	.91	7
Achromatic color (C) ^a	.73	.94	12	.86	1.11	10	1.22	1.26	10	1.83	1.42	14
Morbid (MOR)	1.77	1.54	18	2.00	2.19	16	1.56	1.50	12	2.39	2.75	14
Aggression												
Aggression (Ag)	.59	.85	9	.43	.68	7	.78	1.21	9	1.39	1.33	13
Aggressive Content (AgC)	3.95	2.55	21	3.10	2.09	20	3.22	1.86	17	2.89	1.88	18
Aggressive past (AgPast)	1.0	1.15	13	1.0	1.35	12	.39	.85	5	.83	1.46	8
Aggressive potential (AgPot)	—	—	4	—	—	2	.39	.61	6	.89	2.16	6

Note. Freq. = the number of subjects in each group who produced at least one response in a given category. Individual object relations categories were not statistically compared.

^aKruskal-Wallis analysis produced the following significant main effects: pairs ($T = 8.48$, $df = 3$, $p = .037$), egocentricity ($T = 12.47$, $df = 3$, $p = .006$), PER ($T = 11.29$, $df = 3$, $p = .01$), Y ($T = 12.22$, $df = 3$, $p = .007$), T ($T = 11.75$, $df = 3$, $p = .008$), and C ($T = 8.01$, $df = 3$, $p = .05$).

C', however, revealed a significant main effect ($T = 8.01$, $df = 3$, $p < .05$). BPDs produced significantly more ($p < .05$) *C'* than both APD groups but not the NPDs. Because *C'* not only indicates dysphoric affect (depression) but affective constraint, the means for groups fall within an expected theoretical gradient. Ag responses were produced with the following means and frequencies: BPDs, $M = 1.39$, frequency = 72%; Exner's (1990) nonpatient males, $M = 1.17$, frequency = 69%; NPDs, $M = .78$, frequency = 50%; P-APDs, $M = .59$, frequency = 41%; and NP-APDs, $M = .43$, frequency = 33%). As previously discussed (Meloy, 1988; Meloy & Gacono, 1992), because APDs and especially psychopaths (Hare & McPherson, 1984) manifest high levels of violent behavior, interpretations from the Ag response to real world aggression are not supported within these forensic populations. The high number of these responses in the BPD sample, however, is consistent with an internal world characterized by poorly controlled aggressive and sexual impulses in a nonincarcerated outpatient population.

Object Relations

As noted in Table 2, an analysis of the total primitive (borderline) object relations between groups yielded a significant main effect ($T = 22.57$, $df = 3$, $p = .0001$). Although P-APDs ($M = 5.0$) and BPDs ($M = 5.44$) were not significantly different ($p < .05$), both produced significantly more ($p < .05$) primitive borderline object relations responses than NP-APDs ($M = 2.24$) or NPDs ($M = 3.06$). The most frequently produced responses for P-APDs were symbiotic merging (54%); violent symbiosis, separation, and reunion (45%); malignant internal processes (50%); narcissistic mirroring (50%); and boundary disturbance (54%). NP-APDs did not produce any category with a frequency $\geq 50\%$. NPDs most frequently produced malignant internal processes (56%) and narcissistic mirroring (50%), whereas BPDs frequently produced malignant internal processes (78%) and violent symbiosis separation and reunion (67%).

Defenses

Observation of the Lerner and Lerner (1980) defense indices means (see Table 3) did not suggest specific trends between the four groups, except perhaps the idealization response, with 56% of NPDs producing at least one response, compared to 39% of BPDs, 9% of NP-APDs, and 9% of P-APDs. Because the Lerner and Lerner (1980) system is somewhat limited by its reliance on human responses (Gacono, 1988), too few scores were produced to analyze these indices meaningfully. Cooper et al. (1988) primitive idealization responses, which include nonhuman responses, were compared between groups and yielded a significant main effect ($T = 12.46$, $df = 3$, $p = .006$). Pairwise comparisons indicate that NPDs and BPDs produced significantly more ($p < .05$) primitive

TABLE 2
Primitive (Borderline) Object Relations in *DSM-III-R* Cluster B Personality Disorders

Variable	P-APD (n = 22)			N-APD (n = 21)			NPD (n = 18)			BPD (n = 18)		
	M	SD	Freq.	M	SD	Freq.	M	SD	Freq.	M	SD	Freq.
Engulfment	—	—	0	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	1
Symbiotic-merging	.77	.92	12	.38	.59	7	.17	.38	3	.50	.71	7
Violent/Separation & Reunion	.86	1.17	10	.52	.93	8	.33	.49	6	1.33	1.61	12
Birth-rebirth	—	—	3	—	—	4	—	—	1	—	—	5
Malignant Internal Process	.73	1.03	11	.38	.59	7	.72	.83	10	1.33	1.08	14
Metamorphosis & Transformation	.41	.67	7	—	—	2	.28	.46	5	—	—	4
Narcissistic mirroring	1.0	1.23	11	.14	.36	3	.94	1.43	9	.61	1.42	6
Separation/Division	.36	.66	6	—	—	2	—	—	3	.44	.62	7
Boundary Disturbance	.64	.66	12	—	—	4	.28	.46	5	.39	.78	5
Womb imagery	—	—	2	—	—	0	—	—	1	—	—	2
Total object relations ^a	5.0	2.39	22	2.24	2.74	19	3.06	2.26	15	5.44	3.05	18

Note. Freq. = the number of subjects in each group who produced at least one response in a given category. Individual object relations categories were not statistically compared.

^aKruskal-Wallis analysis revealed significant main effects ($T = 22.57$, $df = 3$, $p = .0001$). Total object relations was the only variable analyzed in this table.

TABLE 3
 Defensive Operations in DSM-III-R Cluster B Personality Disorders

Variable	P-APD (n = 22)			N-APD (n = 21)			NPD (n = 18)			BPD (n = 18)		
	M	SD	Freq.	M	SD	Freq.	M	SD	Freq.	M	SD	Freq.
Lerner and Lerner (1980) defense categories												
High devaluation	.91	.92	13	.81	.98	11	1.44	1.58	12	1.0	1.02	11
DV3	.32	.72	4	.52	.75	8	.67	.69	10	.39	.70	5
DV4	—	—	2	—	—	0	—	—	0	—	—	3
DV5	.36	.73	6	.81	.92	11	.33	.59	5	.55	.78	8
High idealization	—	—	0	—	—	0	.66	.91	7	—	—	1
Low idealization	—	—	2	—	—	2	.61	.98	6	.44	.62	7
Denial 1	—	—	2	.33	.58	6	.33	.59	5	.50	.92	5
Denial 2	—	—	4	—	—	1	—	—	3	—	—	2
Denial 3	.55	.74	9	.52	.75	8	.28	.46	5	.50	.92	5
Cooper, Perry, and Arnow (1988) select defense categories												
High denial	—	—	6	—	—	2	—	—	3	—	—	3
Massive denial	2.32	1.46	20	1.67	1.59	15	1.83	1.10	16	1.78	1.73	14
Splitting	1.32	1.46	15	.86	1.15	10	.78	1.06	7	1.11	1.88	8
Projective identification	1.82	1.59	17	1.76	1.55	16	.94	.80	12	1.44	2.18	11
Omnipotence	1.55	1.57	17	.86	.96	12	.78	1.21	9	.61	1.19	5
Devaluation	4.18	2.26	22	4.14	2.95	21	3.39	2.19	16	3.83	2.79	16
Primitive idealization ^a	.95	1.25	11	.81	1.50	8	2.61	2.19	14	1.88	1.67	14
Gacono (1990) and Gacono, Meloy, and Heaven (1990)												
Impressionistic response (IMP) ^a	.55	.80	9	—	—	1	.94	1.06	10	1.78	1.35	16

Note. Freq. = the number of subjects in each group who produced at least one response in a given category. High devaluation includes Levels 1 and 2; high idealization includes Levels 1 and 2; low idealization includes Levels 3, 4, and 5. Five or fewer responses were produced in the Lerner and Lerner (1980) categories for splitting and projective identification, so these indices were not included in this table.

^aKruskal-Wallis analysis revealed significant main effects for primitive idealization ($T = 12.46, df = 3, p = .006$), and IMP ($T = 21.97, df = 3, p = .0001$). These were the only variables analyzed in this table.

idealization responses than the NP-APDs. NPDs produced significantly more primitive idealization responses than P-APDs. A similar nonsignificant ($p = .055$) trend was found between BPDs and P-APDs.

The *IMP* response also differentiated between groups ($T = 21.97$, $df = 3$, $p = .0001$). The *IMP*, which is related to Holt's (1977) color or shading symbolism response (*Sym-C*), was defined as, "associations to the blot stimulated by color and containing abstract concepts or events. Using Exner (1986) scoring, the impressionistic response (*IMP*) [italics added] must include achromatic or chromatic color and an abstraction (*Ab*)" [italics added] (Gacono et al., 1990, p. 272). BPDs most frequently produced *IMP* (89%), followed by NPDs (56%), P-APDs (41%), and NP-APDs (5%). Pairwise comparisons indicated that BPDs produced significantly more *IMP* responses than both APD groups. Both P-APDs and NPDs produced significantly more *IMP* responses than NP-APDs.

DISCUSSION

The lack of significant between-group differences for the defense measures, with the exception of primitive idealization and the *IMP* response, supports Kernberg's (1975, 1984) concept of borderline as a level of personality organization partially regulated by primitive defenses. This suggests that these Cluster B diagnostic categories, in fact, have in common a borderline level of organization. Defenses in both outpatient groups appear less rigid and, in general, more adaptive than the APD groups, because they allow some tolerance for dysphoric affects. This tolerance permits relations to external objects and perhaps decreases the need for the systemic discharge of affect into action found in APDs. Aggression directed at external objects also weakens the potential for possible object ties for APDs. Personality differences among these Cluster B disorders become manifest in the characterological expression of various object relations paradigms.

The lack of idealization and low frequencies of *T* (as noted in Table 1) in APDs are consistent with their impaired ability to idealize (Bursten, 1989; Kernberg, 1989) and form attachments. When APDs do produce idealization responses (Gacono & Meloy, in press), they are likely to be lower level human (Lerner & Lerner, 1980) or nonhuman percepts (Cooper et al., 1988). This may represent their inclination to idealize nonhuman "hard objects" rather than human "soft objects" (Meloy, 1988, in press). When P-APDs produce idealization of human percepts, it frequently suggests self-idealization (reflections and *PER*; Gacono & Meloy, in press). The paucity of idealization (Lerner & Lerner, 1980) in APDs and greater frequency of the Cooper et al. (1988) primitive idealization response within the NPD and BPD outpatients (see Table 3) are consistent with a predicted absence of this Lerner and Lerner (1980) response among severely disturbed groups (P. Lerner, personal communication, June 1990) and previous

findings (Lerner & Van-Der Keshet, in press; Piran & Lerner, in press). Idealization is more sensitive to adaptive rather than defensive operations.

The *IMP* response (Gacono, 1988, 1990; Gacono et al., 1990), which Holt (1977) discussed as one aspect of explicit symbolism in which both perceptual organization and underlying thought process were suggested, demonstrates the differences in defensive style among groups. Most frequent in the BPDs, this variable may not be specific to the hysterical cognition of the primary psychopath as we earlier thought (Gacono et al., 1990). Rather it may be a sensitive indicator of the degree to which certain patients organized at a borderline level split off affect into rapid and diffuse symbolization. In this study, the BPDs' significantly greater proportion of *IMP* responses suggests both their lability of affect and the dynamic responsiveness of thinking to split off such affective states through the use of symbol or abstraction. This empirical finding lends support to the theoretical notion that BPDs manifest thought disorder in relation to dynamic affective themes, rather than the more pervasive structural deficits in thinking seen in schizophrenic populations (Meloy & Singer, 1991).

Differential patterns are most evident when P-APDs are compared to NPDs and BPDs. Although both P-APDs and BPDs produce similar mean scores for primitive (borderline) object relations (as noted in Table 2), P-APD's high mean scores for egocentricity (.47), *PER* (3.32), omnipotence (1.55), and low frequencies for *T* (5%), and *Y* (27%), when compared to BPDs (egocentricity = .40; *PER* = 1.67; omnipotence = .61; *T* = 56%; *Y* = 67%), support the argument that psychopaths are a severely and pathologically detached variant of NPD. A grandiose self-structure, lacking in the BPD, regulates internalized object relations which defend against the experience of anxiety and helplessness. Although the majority of BPDs produced *Y*, the four BPD subjects who had *Y*-less protocols all produced narcissistic mirroring responses; two BPD subjects produced both *Y* and a narcissistic mirroring response. This finding, coupled with the BPDs' low frequency of narcissistic mirroring and highest frequency of *Y*, suggests that narcissistic mirroring serves as a defense against anxiety for both BPDs and P-APDs, but the latter use it much more successfully.

Despite similarities between the NPDs and P-APDs in egocentricity and the use of narcissistic mirroring, the higher incidence of *T*, *Y* (see Table 1), and idealization (P-APD = 50%, NPD = 78%) and lower incidence of *PER*, omnipotence, and primitive borderline object relations (see Table 2) in NPD suggest that, although both groups are pathologically narcissistic, the NPD group contains more capacity for attachment and anxiety and possibly uses immature justification and attitudes of entitlement (cognitive correlates of omnipotence and self-aggrandizement) less frequently. In psychopaths, entitlement may negate the possibility of idealization, as it inherently suggests an expectation to be served by, rather than idealize, the object. The NP-APDs tend to be less borderline in their primitive object relations than both P-APDs and BPDs; however, their low egocentricity ($M = .30$; Exner, 1990, normals produce

a $M = .38$), lower incidence of self-aggrandizement (*PER*, $M = 1.33$), and high levels of *Y* ($M = 2.04$, frequency = 71%) suggest that their intrapsychic functioning does not operate as smoothly as their more grandiose psychopathic neighbors, and they are more prone to the disruptive effects of internal and external threat (Gacono & Meloy, 1991, in press).

Specific object relations patterns, as measured by observation of Kwawer's (1980) individual categories and *MOR* and *AgPast*, suggest a self-identity that has been both damaged and aggressed against for both APD groups. The P-APDs present a malevolent, destructive internalized object world characterized by intense and violent intrapsychic conflict surrounding attachment and separation (see Table 2 and the following frequencies: violent symbiosis, separation, and reunion, 45%; symbiotic merging, 54%; and boundary disturbance, 54%). The presence of both symbiotic merging and narcissistic mirroring in P-APDs suggests an inherently conflicted need to both join and be perfectly reflected by the primary object: a logical impossibility, but an apparent psychological desire. In comparison to P-APDs, NPDs' self-identity is damaged (*MOR* = 67%), but possibly not the result of being aggressed against (P-APD, *AgPast* = 59%; NPD, *AgPast* = 28%). This may relate to actual early relationship paradigms.

BPDs produced patterns consistent with a core damaged and aggressed against self-identity with an extremely malevolent, vulnerable, and conflicted internalized object world (*Ag* = 72%; *AgPast* = 44%; *MOR* = 78%; malignant internal processes = 78%; violent symbiosis, separation, and reunion = 67%). BPDs also produced a higher frequency of unsublimated aggression (*Ag* = 72%) and libidinal drive material that is bound by relationship dependencies (*T*, $M = 1.06$). BPDs experience their aggressive impulses as ego-dystonic, whereas P-APDs identify with aggressive introjects (Meloy, 1988) and experience these impulses as ego-syntonic.

The internal world of the BPD is similar to that of the P-APD, but without the benefit of the regulating capacity of a grandiose self-structure. This narcissistic equilibrium, however, takes a massive toll. The hypercathexis of the self in APDs demands a scornful and detached devaluation of others (see Table 3), rendering treatment access to such an individual highly unlikely, if not impossible. The BPD, on the other hand, despite the frightening and readily accessible nature of his inner life, has the attachment capacity and anxious motivation to reach out to another. The NPD has a similar attachment capacity, which makes treatment much more successful than the psychopaths, but the NPD will be less likely to engage in treatment than the BPD, because he shares the psychopath's defensive regulation of the grandiose self-structure. Despite these characteristic differences between these *DSM-III-R* (American Psychiatric Association, 1987) Cluster B personality disordered groups, the presence of a shared borderline personality organization suggests that treatment effects will be difficult and laborious and, most likely, very long term for all three groups. The Rorschach, however, continues to impress us as a potent tool for understanding the

intrapsychic world of the borderline organized patient and the variety of characterological styles that are presented to clinicians.

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