

AI-01501 Projected Identification

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What is Projected identification in psychology. List 22 examples.

Projected identification is a psychological defense mechanism where a person projects unwanted thoughts, feelings, or traits onto another person and then subtly influences that person to embody those projected qualities. This concept is commonly associated with psychoanalytic theory, particularly in the works of Melanie Klein.

Here are 22 examples of projected identification:

1. A controlling partner accuses their significant other of being manipulative and, through their actions, makes them feel like they have to act in a manipulative way.
2. A boss who feels incompetent treats an employee as if they are incapable, causing the employee to doubt their abilities.
3. A parent who feels guilt for not being present accuses their child of being ungrateful and distant, leading the child to withdraw.
4. A jealous friend constantly accuses another of being envious, creating tension that fosters actual resentment.
5. A person who struggles with anger calls someone else aggressive and then behaves in ways that provoke an angry response.
6. A self-doubting teacher assumes students are uninterested in their subject and subtly discourages engagement, leading to real disinterest.
7. A passive-aggressive coworker claims a colleague is hostile and then acts coldly toward them, eliciting hostility.

8. A narcissistic parent calls their child selfish while pressuring them to meet their own emotional needs.
9. A defensive partner frequently accuses their spouse of being defensive, making the spouse frustrated and defensive.
10. A guilt-ridden individual insists others are judgmental toward them and behaves in ways that make people criticize them.
11. A fearful leader insists their team lacks confidence, and through excessive micromanagement, causes them to become unsure of themselves.
12. A person with trust issues insists their partner is deceitful, leading the partner to hide things just to avoid accusations.
13. A friend who fears rejection accuses others of excluding them and then acts distant, causing people to exclude them.
14. A person with commitment issues blames their partner for being distant, which makes the partner hesitate to invest emotionally.
15. An anxious parent tells their child they are too reckless, making the child more hesitant and fearful.
16. A self-centered manager insists their employees are only thinking of themselves, discouraging teamwork.
17. A perfectionist coach assumes their athletes lack discipline, leading to overbearing control that makes them lose motivation.
18. A person who feels unheard accuses others of not listening but constantly interrupts, making conversations frustrating.
19. A boss who feels insecure says an employee is always trying to prove something, making them feel like they must defend themselves.
20. A sibling with resentment claims their brother/sister is always competing, which leads to rivalry.
21. A person afraid of being abandoned accuses their partner of planning to leave, leading to tension that strains the relationship.
22. A micromanaging parent insists their teenager is irresponsible, leading the teen to rebel or give up responsibility.

In each case, the original projector influences the other person to unconsciously adopt the projected trait, reinforcing their belief.

Gemini Version

Projective identification is a complex psychoanalytic concept, primarily associated with Melanie Klein's object relations theory. In essence, it's a defense mechanism where an individual projects unwanted aspects of themselves onto another person, and then that person is unconsciously pressured to embody those projected aspects. Here's a breakdown:

- **Core Idea:**
 - It involves projecting feelings, impulses, or parts of the self onto another.
 - It goes beyond simple projection, as it includes influencing the recipient to experience those projected feelings.
 - It creates a dynamic interaction where the recipient may begin to act in accordance with the projection.

Here are some examples of projective identification in action:

- **1. A person who feels intensely inadequate projects those feelings onto a colleague, then criticizes the colleague for being incompetent.**
- **2. A person with hidden anger projects their anger onto their partner, then provokes their partner into becoming angry.**
- **3. A person who feels helpless projects those feelings onto a caretaker, then acts in a way that forces the caretaker to take over.**
- **4. A person who is feeling very chaotic internally, projects that feeling on to another person, and then criticizes that person for being chaotic.**
- **5. A person who disowns their own feelings of jealousy, projects that feeling on to their partner, and then accuses their partner of being jealous.**
- **6. A person who has a hidden need for control, projects that need on to another person, and then criticizes that person for being controlling.**
- **7. A person who is feeling deep shame, projects that shame on to a child, and then shames the child.**

- 8. A person who is feeling very frightened, projects that feeling on to someone else, and then accuses that person of being fearful.
- 9. A person who has disowned their own feelings of being weak, projects those feelings on to another person, and then bullies that person.
- 10. A person who is feeling very depressed, projects that feeling on to someone else, and then accuses that person of being negative.
- 11. A person who feels like they are bad, projects that feeling on to another person, and then treats that person as if they are bad.
- 12. A person who has repressed their own sexuality, projects sexual feelings on to another person, and then accuses that person of being overly sexual.
- 13. A person who is feeling very competitive, projects that feeling on to another person, and then accuses that person of being overly competitive.
- 14. A person who is feeling very needy, projects that feeling on to another person, and then accuses that person of being clingy.
- 15. A person who is feeling very critical of themselves, projects that critical feeling on to another person, and then is overly critical of that person.
- 16. A person who is feeling very dishonest, projects that feeling on to another person, and then accuses that person of being dishonest.
- 17. A person that feels they are being ignored, projects that feeling on to another, and then accuses that person of ignoring them.
- 18. A person who feels misunderstood, projects that feeling on to another, and then accuses that person of not understanding them.
- 19. A person who feels trapped, projects that feeling on to another, and then treats that person as if they are trapping them.
- 20. A person who is feeling very anxious, projects that feeling onto another person, and then accuses that person of making them anxious.
- 21. A person who feels they are being treated unfairly, projects that feeling on to another person, and then treats that person unfairly.
- 22. A person who feels they are being rejected, projects that feeling on to another person, and then rejects that person.

It's important to remember that projective identification is an unconscious process, and it can occur in various relationships, including family, romantic, and professional settings.

Give an example of projective identification in the context of a jealous spouse

Here's an example of projective identification within the context of a jealous spouse:

- **Scenario:**

- A spouse (let's call them Alex) has underlying insecurities and fears of being abandoned. They struggle with their own feelings of potential infidelity, although they may not consciously acknowledge this.
- Instead of dealing with these internal anxieties, Alex projects these feelings onto their partner (let's call them Jordan).
- Alex starts accusing Jordan of flirting with others, even when there's no evidence. They might scrutinize Jordan's interactions, misinterpret friendly gestures, and constantly question their whereabouts.
- Over time, this constant barrage of accusations and suspicion begins to affect Jordan. They might start feeling defensive, anxious, and even begin to withdraw from social interactions to avoid Alex's accusations.
- In some cases, Jordan, under the constant pressure, may start to question their own behavior, or even begin to act in ways that reflect the accusations, for example, by creating emotional distance.
- This is where the "identification" part of "projective identification" takes place. Jordan begins to act in accordance to Alex's projection.

- **Breakdown:**

- **Projection:** Alex projects their own hidden anxieties and potential for infidelity onto Jordan.
- **Identification:** Alex behaves in ways to induce the projected feelings into Jordan. And Jordan begins to act in ways that reflect the projected feelings.

- **Result:** Alex then uses Jordan's reactions as "proof" of their suspicions, reinforcing their own distorted perception.

In this instance, projective identification creates a self-fulfilling prophecy, where Alex's insecurities lead them to create the very situation they fear.

Give an example of projective identification in the context of an envy.

Projective identification related to envy can manifest in subtle but impactful ways.¹ Here's an example:

- **Scenario:**

- Person A deeply envies Person B's success and perceived ease in life. However, Person A cannot consciously admit to these envious feelings, as they clash with their self-image.
- Person A begins to subtly undermine Person B. They might:
 - Make seemingly "casual" remarks that diminish Person B's achievements.
 - Spread rumors or gossip that cast doubt on Person B's integrity or abilities.
 - Act in ways that sabotage Person B's efforts.
- Through these actions, Person A aims to induce feelings of insecurity and inadequacy in Person B.
- If successful, Person B may begin to:
 - Question their own abilities.
 - Feel anxious and uncertain.
 - Even begin to act in a less confident manner.
- Person A then can look at person B's new insecurities, and feel a sense of relief, or justification for their own envious feelings.

- **Breakdown:**

- **Projection:** Person A projects their own feelings of inadequacy and envy onto Person B.

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- **Identification:** Person A behaves in ways that pressure Person B to embody those projected feelings. Person B begins to show those projected feelings.
- **Result:** Person A unconsciously creates a situation where Person B reflects the very feelings they sought to disown, thus temporarily relieving Person A's internal conflict.

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In this example, the envious person doesn't just feel envy; they actively work to make the envied person feel the negative emotions associated with that envy.

Give an example of projective identification in the context of an envy. Is criticizing a luxurious brand that I owned such as a Mercedes Benz SUV, Ford Ranger Raptor or a nice Condo at 27th floor with a nice view. I always hear a statement "I will never purchase x ... I'd rather..."

Yes, the scenario you described can absolutely involve projective identification in the context of envy. Here's how it breaks down:

The Scenario:

- You possess desirable, luxurious items (Mercedes Benz SUV, Ford Ranger Raptor, high-floor condo with a view).
- You encounter people who express criticism of these items, often with statements like, "I would never purchase X... I'd rather..."

Projective Identification at Play:

- **Underlying Envy:**
 - The individuals making those critical statements may harbor unconscious envy of your possessions. However, directly acknowledging this envy can be painful, as it implies a sense of lack or inadequacy.
- **Projection:**
 - To cope with this discomfort, they project their own feelings of inadequacy and longing onto your possessions. They essentially transfer the negative

feelings associated with their own perceived lack onto the objects you own.

- **Criticism as a Defense:**

- By criticizing your possessions, they attempt to diminish their value, both to you and to themselves. This serves to reduce the perceived gap between their own situation and yours.
- The "I'd rather..." statement is a way of creating an alternative reality where they are in control and making "superior" choices.

- **Inducing Feelings:**

- By the person constantly making those critical statements, they may be trying to induce feelings of guilt, or shame within the person that owns the items. By doing this, they are trying to make the owner of the items feel bad about those items.

- **Identification:**

- If the owner of the items begins to feel guilty, or ashamed of their items because of the constant criticism, the person doing the criticizing has successfully had their projected feelings identified by the owner of the items.

In essence:

- The criticizer is not simply expressing a different taste; they are unconsciously attempting to manage their own envious feelings by projecting them outward.
- They are attempting to make the owner of the items, feel the feelings that they themselves are attempting to disown.

This is a very common defense mechanism, especially in situations where there are perceived differences in status or wealth.

Deep dive in projective identification in flaunting possession, cash expenses or luxury brands. Give an example.

When examining projective identification within the context of flaunting possessions, cash expenses, or luxury brands, it's crucial to understand the

underlying psychological dynamics. Here's a deeper exploration:
The Psychological Underpinnings:

- Insecurity and the Need for Validation:
 - Often, individuals who excessively flaunt wealth may be driven by deep-seated insecurities. They seek external validation to compensate for internal feelings of inadequacy.
 - The display of material possessions becomes a way to project an image of success, power, and worth.
- Envy and the Projection of Lack:
 - Conversely, those who react strongly to such displays may be grappling with their own feelings of envy or perceived lack.
 - Instead of acknowledging these feelings, they may project them onto the flaunter, criticizing their behavior as "showy," "tacky," or "superficial."
 - This projection serves to diminish the value of the flaunted possessions and alleviate the discomfort of their own perceived shortcomings.
- The Cycle of Interaction:
 - Projective identification creates a cyclical interaction. The flaunter's behavior elicits a response from others, which in turn reinforces their own need to flaunt.
 - For example:
 - A person who constantly posts images of their luxury vacations may unconsciously seek to evoke feelings of envy in their social media followers.
 - When followers respond with critical comments, the flaunter may feel a sense of power or superiority, further fueling their behavior.
- Scenario:
 - "Mark" frequently posts social media updates showcasing his extravagant lifestyle: expensive watches, high-end cars, and exclusive travel destinations.

- "Sarah," a former classmate, consistently responds with comments like, "Must be nice to waste money on frivolous things," or "I'd rather invest my money in something meaningful."
- Analysis:
 - Mark's flaunting behavior can be interpreted as a projection of his own insecurities and a need for external validation. He may unconsciously be seeking to evoke feelings of envy and admiration.
 - Sarah's critical comments reveal her own potential feelings of envy or perceived lack. Instead of acknowledging these feelings, she projects them onto Mark, criticizing his spending habits.
 - By doing this, Sarah may be attempting to make herself feel better about her own financial situation.
 - The interaction becomes a cycle: Mark's flaunting elicits Sarah's criticism, which in turn reinforces Mark's need to flaunt.

Key Considerations:

- Projective identification is often an unconscious process.
- It can occur in various social contexts, including online and offline interactions.
- Understanding this dynamic can help us to better navigate our own reactions to displays of wealth and to recognize the underlying psychological factors at play.

By recognizing the dynamics of projective identification, we can gain a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between material possessions, social interactions, and psychological well-being.

List 22 Protocols to deal with projective identification

Dealing with projective identification is a complex process, often requiring a nuanced approach, especially in therapeutic settings. Here's a breakdown of protocols and strategies, drawing from psychological principles:

Protocols and Strategies:

- **1. Self-Awareness:**

- Crucially, recognize when you might be the recipient of projected feelings. Pay attention to sudden shifts in your own emotions or behaviors.
- **2. Containment:**
 - Learn to "contain" the projected feelings without acting them out. This involves acknowledging the feeling without necessarily owning it.
- **3. Differentiation:**
 - Clearly distinguish between your own feelings and those being projected onto you. Maintain a sense of your own boundaries.
- **4. Reflective Practice:**
 - Take time to reflect on interactions where projective identification might have occurred. Journaling or talking with a trusted confidant can be helpful.
- **5. Therapeutic Intervention:**
 - In therapy, the therapist's role is to help the individual become aware of their projective patterns and to develop healthier ways of relating.
- **6. Countertransference Awareness:**
 - Therapists must be acutely aware of their own countertransference reactions, which can be influenced by the client's projections.
- **7. Setting Boundaries:**
 - Establish clear boundaries to protect yourself from being overwhelmed by others' projected feelings.
- **8. Validation (with caution):**
 - While not validating the projection itself, acknowledge the underlying feelings being expressed.
- **9. Communication:**
 - When appropriate, communicate your observations in a non-confrontational way, focusing on the behavior rather than the person.
- **10. Analysis of the relationship:**

- Examine the relational dynamics, and look for patterns of interaction.
- **11. Focus on the projector:**
 - When in a therapeutic setting, the focus must remain on the person projecting, and helping them to understand why they are doing so.
- **12. Time outs:**
 - When the dynamic becomes overwhelming, taking time to create distance can be helpful.
- **13. Seeking Supervision:**
 - Therapists should seek regular supervision to process their experiences with projective identification.
- **14. Reality Testing:**
 - Help the individual to differentiate between their subjective experience and objective reality.
- **15. Interpretation:**
 - In therapy, the therapist may offer interpretations of the projective process, helping the individual to gain insight.
- **16. Working with defenses:**
 - Help the person to understand their defense mechanisms, and to create healthier ones.
- **17. Emotional regulation:**
 - Help the person projecting to learn emotional regulation skills.
- **18. Observing the patterns:**
 - Help the person projecting, to observe the patterns of their behaviour.
- **19. Creating a safe space:**
 - Creating a safe therapeutic space is essential for the person projecting to feel safe enough to explore their behaviors.
- **20. Gradual exposure:**

- Help the person to gradually expose themselves to situations that trigger the projective identification.
- **21. Encouraging introspection:**
 - Encourage the person projecting to look inward, and to try to understand their own internal world.
- **22. Understanding object relations:**
 - Understanding object relations theory is very helpful in dealing with projective identification.

It's important to note that dealing with projective identification can be challenging, and professional guidance is often necessary, especially in therapeutic contexts.

Explain more about "criticism as defense", how so. Is the subtle method of externalizing a good example of the defense? List 22 examples.

You're right to focus on "criticism as defense." It's a key aspect of how projective identification and other defense mechanisms operate. Here's a deeper explanation:

Criticism as Defense: The Mechanism

Criticism, when used defensively, serves to protect the individual from painful internal experiences. It's a way to externalize and manage feelings that are too threatening to acknowledge directly. Here's how it works:

- **Externalization of Unacceptable Feelings:**
 - Instead of facing their own feelings of inadequacy, envy, anger, or fear, the individual projects those feelings onto another person or object.
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- Criticizing the target becomes a way to disown those feelings and create distance from them.
- **Restoring a Sense of Control:**
 - By criticizing, the individual attempts to regain a sense of control over their internal world. They shift the focus from their own perceived flaws to the perceived flaws of others.

- **Maintaining Self-Esteem:**

- Criticizing can temporarily boost self-esteem by creating a sense of superiority. If someone else is "wrong," then the criticizer feels relatively "right."

- **Managing Anxiety:**

- Criticism can be a way to manage anxiety. By focusing on external flaws, the individual avoids confronting their own internal anxieties.

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Subtle Externalization:

Yes, subtle methods of externalization are excellent examples of this defense. They are often more insidious because they are less obvious and can be difficult to challenge. Here are 22 examples:

1. **Passive-aggressive remarks:** "Oh, that's an *interesting* choice." (Implying it's a bad one)

2. **Backhanded compliments:** "You look great for your age."

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3. **Gossip and rumors:** Spreading negative information about someone to diminish their reputation.

4. **Sarcastic comments:** Using humor to deliver subtle insults.

5. **Nitpicking:** Focusing on minor flaws to undermine someone's confidence.

6. **Subtle put-downs:** "Well, at least you tried."

7. **Dismissive gestures:** Rolling eyes or sighing when someone speaks.

8. **Ignoring someone's accomplishments:** Failing to acknowledge their achievements.

9. **Minimizing someone's feelings:** "Don't be so sensitive."

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10. **Constant questioning:** "Are you sure you know what you're doing?"

11. **Comparing someone unfavorably:** "Your sister is so much more organized."

12. **Suggesting someone is incompetent:** "Let me do that for you."
13. **Subtle sabotage:** "Accidentally" deleting someone's work.
14. **Using "helpful" advice to criticize:** "If I were you, I'd do it this way..."
15. **Making assumptions about someone's motives:** "You're only doing that for attention."
16. **Using humor to mock someone:** "Just kidding... mostly."
17. **Withholding information:** "I thought you already knew."
18. **Creating a competitive atmosphere:** Constantly comparing oneself to others.
19. **Judging someone's appearance:** "That outfit is... bold."
20. **Criticizing someone's social skills:** "You're a bit awkward, aren't you?"
21. **Constantly correcting someone:** Even on small details.
22. **Using a condescending tone:** Speaking to someone as if they are a child.

These subtle forms of criticism can be just as damaging as overt attacks, and they often leave the target feeling confused and undermined.