

Mrs. C the first tape recorded specimen case in the US

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The Analyst of Mrs. C



- His work under the auspices of the New York Psychoanalytic Institute led him to record an entire six-year psychoanalysis — 1,114 sessions — that he conducted from 1968 to 1974 in a specially constructed soundproof room at New York University.

Known as **The Case of Mrs. C**, the work has been used in many research studies, noted his wife, Virginia Teller, a linguistics professor and chairperson of the Department of Computer Science at Hunter College.

- He died in April 2007

Malcolm J (1980) Psychoanalysis: The impossible profession. Knopf, New York

Transcript of session 5

(3-minute silence, occasional stomach rumbles)

#1

Something that's been on my mind today is the relationship I have with the girl who is my assistant this year and was last year. And (sigh) well, it took me quite a while to get used to her last year and I imagine it was a variety of reasons. But at the beginning of this year things were going quite nicely and I was quite pleased with the kind of things she can do and not feeling at all annoyed by her, which was part of the trouble I had last year, although at times she's a, a type of person that I don't feel completely sympathetic with, I guess. And uhm, because of the other assistant having left, she's having to fulfill both of the functions to an extent and, and both of the teachers, myself and the other teacher, are to make adjustments too, so that she can help us both out.

- This is the verbatim transcript of the fifth hour of the tape-recorded psychoanalysis of a 28-year old married woman.
- The transcript was carefully prepared and punctuated to reflect the disfluencies and fragmentation that are characteristic of much of spoken language.
- In this session the analysand spoke 5244 words and the analyst 247. Substitute proper names have been used, e.g. David is the woman's husband.

Mrs C As Subject of Studies

Horowitz L., Sampson H., Siegelman Ey., Wolfson Ag, Weiss J (1975) On the identification of warded-off mental contents. J. Abnorm. Psychol. 84: 545-558

Silberschatz G (1978) Effects of the therapist's neutrality on the patient's feelings and behavior in the psychoanalytic situation. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. New York University.

Weiss J., Sampson H. The Mount Zion Psychotherapy Research Group (ed) (1986) The psychoanalytic process: Theory, clinical observation, and empirical research. Guilford Press, New York

Weiss J., Gassner S., Bush M (1986) Mrs. C. in: J. Weiss, H. Sampson and Mount Zion Psychotherapy Research Group (eds) The psychoanalytic process: theory, clinical observation, and empirical research. Guilford, New York, pp 155-162

Teller V, Dahl H (1986) The microstructure of free association. J Am Psychoanal Ass 34: 763-798

Anonymous (Dahl H) (1988) The specimen hour. in: H. Dahl, H. Kächele and H. Thomä (eds) Psychoanalytic Process Research Strategies. Springer, Berlin, pp 15-26

Bucci W (1988) Converging Evidence for Emotional Structures: Theory and Method. in: H. Dahl, H. Kächele and H. Thomä (eds) Psychoanalytic Process Research Strategies. Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg, New York, London, Paris, Tokyo, pp 29-59

Dahl H (1988) Frames of mind. in: H. Dahl, H. Kächele and H. Thomä (eds) Psychoanalytic Process Research Strategies. Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg, New York, London, Paris, Tokyo, pp 51-66

Dahl H, Teller V (1994) The characteristics, identification and applications of FRAMES. Psychother Res 4: 252-274

Bucci W (1997) Pattern of discourse in good and troubled hours. J Am Psychoanal Ass 45: 155-188

Siegel P, Demorest A (2010) Affective scripts: A systematic case study of change in psychotherapy. Psychother Res 20: 369 - 387

Who is Mrs. C?

- „At the time she sought treatment, Mrs. C was an attractive 28-year old social worker in a Catholic agency. She had been married for two years to a successful businessman. Her chief complaint concerned her sex life.
- She did not enjoy sex, did not have orgasms, and indeed was reluctant to have intercourse. She sought treatment at the insistence of her husband, who had threatened to divorce her if she did not overcome her sexual difficulties.“
- Weiss J., Gassner S, Bush M (1986) Mrs. C. in: J Weiss, H Sampson and Mount Zion Psychotherapy Research Group (eds) The psychoanalytic process: theory, clinical observation, and empirical research. Guilford, New York, p 155

Two Dynamic Formulations

- New York group of analysts:
- „Mrs. C's difficulties were crystallized after the birth of her brother when she was six. After this time Mrs. C noted a marked change in her father's, and in a lesser extent in her mother's, attitude toward her.
- She felt that her parents valued her brother more than her. She assumed that her father preferred her younger brother because he had a penis and she did not. She assumed, too, that because she lacked a penis, she was doomed to an inferior position in life“ (p. 160)

Two Dynamic Formulations

- San Francisco group of analysts:
- „Mrs C's problem arose primarily not from unconscious envy but from unconscious guilt. She perceived her parents as fragile and vulnerable. She believed they would be severely damaged if she held ideas or values different of theirs, or disagreed with them, or led an independent life that was freer, less burdened, and less joyless than their lives. She also unconsciously felt superior and contemptuous towards her parents and siblings. And unconsciously pictured them as weak and envious.
- She protected herself from hurting them by making herself weak, constricted, and helpless“ (p.160)

Pathogenic Beliefs

- According to our most general predictions, Mrs. C would seek to change her pathogenic beliefs about her exaggerated sense of responsibility for others and about her fear of hurting them.
- More specifically she would struggle (especially in relation to the analyst) to change the pathogenic beliefs underlying her separation guilt, survivor guilt, and Oedipal guilt.....She would work to become both independent with her husband and able to enjoy intimacy, including sexual intimacy, with him...(p.162)

The Unconscious Control Hypothesis

- Process notes and verbatim transcripts of the first 100 sessions of Mrs. C
- Comparing contents from session 1-40 to sessions 41-100
- Identification of previously warded off contents
- Pointing out which new contents had never been interpreted by the analyst
- **Findings:**
 - a fair number of previously repressed mental contents became conscious without the benefits of interpretation (p.185)

Bucci's Study on Mrs C (1988)

- These two studies provide background for our application of this approach to the Specimen Hour, Hour 5 of a young woman's psychoanalysis.
- Fluctuations in RA level were compared to incidence of emotional structures in the course of the hour.
- The typed transcript was divided into idea units, following the procedure outlined in the Leeds and Bucci study above.
- Referential Activity level was scored for each unit.
- Graphs of this sequential variation were constructed for patient and therapist separately.
- An independent clinical evaluation was carried out to identify the incidence of emotional structures in the text.

Analysis of RA Level

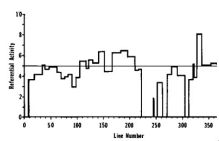


Figure 1

- The patient's speech in the course of this hour was segmented by the judges into 38 idea units.
- Referential Activity level for each unit, scored on a scale of 0 to 10, is shown in Figure 1, according to line number in the typed transcript of the hour.
- The horizontal line, at 5, marks the midpoint of the RA language style Index.

Analysis of RA Level

- The first result that emerges is a predominance of low RA utterances in this session; 24 of the idea units or 63% were scored as below the midpoint of 5 on the RA scale, and 14 above.
- We would expect that the relatively low RA level seen in this session relates to high resistance levels at this early stage of the analysis, and that RA level will increase with clinical progress in successful therapy.

Low RA Utterances

- Excerpts from high and low RA utterances in this session may be used to illustrate the nature of the RA language style dimension. The following excerpt (lines 92 to 98 in Figure 1), represents the low RA point of this session:
 - (#10) I suppose it's also just wondering what the function of friendly advice is anyway. If you're a good friend of somebody, not that I'm saying this is the situation I'm in, but just makes me wonder, when you're a good friend of somebody, how much, from your point of view, you should advise your friend and how much you should keep quiet, because the person is what they are and, and your point of view is going to be different from theirs in any case.
- This paragraph is a characteristic low RA utterance. The language is abstract, general and vague, lacking in specific and concrete detail, and does not evoke imagery in the listener. (Later on in the treatment, this analyst will often respond to such utterances with interventions such as "You're being obscure," "Can you be more specific," "Can you be more concrete").

High RA Utterances

- In contrast, here are lines 326 to 337, the high RA point of the session:
 - (#55) In fact, I was kind of horrified last night at myself. I had a course a_ after I left here and uh, (sniff) it uh, it's an art course for teachers (sniff) and we were working on rubbing things for texture. And at one point I noticed the professor's tie, which was a very nubby coarse woven one, and although it would have been too soft to rub, I just (chuckle) reached out and held it out and said, "Well, this has a wonderful texture," which it did. But I was horrified at myself, because I've never done anything like that before. And then I was sure his reaction was horror too, that I had been so forward. I don't know what it was actually, but at the time I was sure it was just horror.
- This passage illustrates many features of high RA language style - a specific incident, rich in concrete sensory detail, and including stylistic features such as direct quotes. The passage gives the impression of immediacy of the experience in the speaker's mind, and evokes a corresponding experience for the listener.

Incidence of Emotional Structures

- In this study, the identification of the emotional structures was done by one clinician following the general definition of frame structures outlined by Teller and Dahl (1986), rather than by the rigorous multi-judge, multi-stage procedure used in the Leeds and Bucci study.
- The purpose of this preliminary analysis was to get a comprehensive picture of the underlying emotional patterns for the entire hour.
- The identification of the emotional frame structures was entirely independent of the language style assessment.

Incidence of Emotional Structures

- The major types of wishes identified in this session were, first, desires for support and reassurance, and second, a wish for closeness and togetherness. These are expressed in relation to several different subjects and objects.
- The patient and her father are both described as experiencing such wishes. The wishes are directed by the patient toward many objects, including her husband, the children in her classroom, and the analyst.
- The patient also repeatedly demonstrates an expectation that the wishes will not be fulfilled, and expects or fears that her action in seeking gratification is likely to be uncontrolled.

Incidence of Emotional Structures

- Thus, she delays the action of seeking gratification of these wishes, and in some instances controls the emergence of the experience of the wish – thereby insuring that gratification does not occur when she wants it.
- The identification of these wishes and expectations and their interaction in emotional frame structures are discussed in detail by Teller and Dahl (1986).
- We may note that this structure corresponds to the repetitive pattern found in the Leeds and Bucci study, although arrived at independently, using a different text analysis procedure.

Convergence of RA and Emotional Patterns

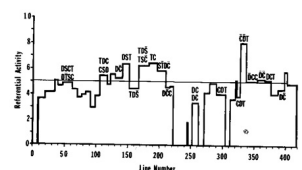


Figure 2

- We can now look at the distribution of these emotional structures in the transcript of the session in relation to fluctuation in the RA level of the patient's speech as shown in Figure 2. Each of the emotional frame structures and their negations are represented by a sequence of letters denoting the component themes; S = a wish for reassurance or support, T = a wish for togetherness, D = a defense of delay, C = a defense of control.

Emotional Frame Structure in High vs Low

Table 1 → Emotional Frame Structures in High vs. Low RA →
→ Idea Units →

Emotional Frame Structures				
Idea Units	IFS	Wish	Defense	
High RA → 14 →	4 →	11 →	3 →	
Low RA → 24 →	7 →	3 →	4 →	
Total → 38 →	21 →	14 →	7 →	

- For this session, which included 38 utterance units, a total of 21 emotional frame structures, each built upon two or more of the four basic themes were found; some utterance units had more than one emotional structure, some had none. The findings are summarized in Table 1:

Converging Evidence

- These data provide a strong demonstration of converging evidence for emotional structures in the free association of an analytic patient. The assessment of emotional structures and the evaluation of linguistic quality were carried out by applying distinct concepts and following independent procedures, but show striking correspondence. The findings are of considerable interest in demonstrating that significant fluctuations in RA can be reliably discerned within a session, and in providing evidence that these fluctuations have clinical significance.
- Passages marked as containing emotional frame structures were significantly higher in Referential Activity level than those not so marked, indicating more direct access to nonverbal experience in the associative process of the patient at those points. Furthermore, the passages highest in RA contained the only unmitigated expressions of wishes in the transcript.

Conclusion

- The important point that we have tried to make here by presentation of this preliminary research is that in the context of a coherent and systematic model of the mental apparatus, the linguistic indicators provide a means of external and shared validation
- of the presence of private and internal emotional representations. Thus we are **not confined within the hermeneutic circle**, but can point to evidence for emotional structures that are present independent of their verbal report, and that are detected by observers rather than constructed by them.

FRAMES of Mind by Dahl 1988

- In the past decade psychotherapy researchers' strategies have converged on a set of closely related methods for the systematic description of patient's conflicts, of the processes of change in treatment, and of their relationship to the outcomes.
- All of them share two fundamentally important commitments. First and foremost they focus on repetitive structures. And second, the detailed nature of the structure is a central function of the particular descriptive method employed. This is most clearly illustrated in the case of Luborsky's CCRT. Luborsky is concerned with identifying one or two content themes that capture a patient's central conflicts, but in so doing he imposes a uniform structure on the way this conflict is represented by always specifying the same three components of a relationship episode.

Repetitive Structures

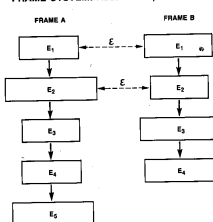
Table 1¹

RUBRIC	FIRST PUBLICATION	REPRESENTATION ²
PHANTASY	Freud (1897)	Phantasies rather than actual events postulated as etiology of neuroses. ³
FANTASY	Arrow (1968a, 1968b, 1980)	Clinical summaries of recurrent manifestations of unconscious fantasies. ⁴
CCRT	Luborsky (1977)	Sequential structures extracted from a patients' relationship with objects. ⁵
CA	Horowitz (1979)	Configurational Analysis: a systematic method of case formulation. ⁶
FRAME	Teller and Dahl (1981a)	Sequential event structures extracted from a patients' discrete narratives. ⁷
PERT	Gill and Hoffman (1982b)	Coded instances of a patient's experience of the relationship with the therapist. ⁸
SCHEMA	Slap and Slaykin (1983)	Clinical summaries of recurrent themes. ⁹
TLDP	Schacht, Binder, and Strupp (1984)	Dynamic focus on a patient's cyclical maladaptive patterns of action. ¹⁰

Dahl Frames of Mind 1988

Frames

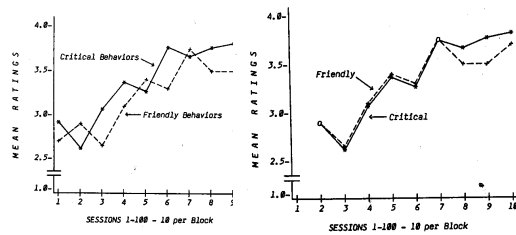
FRAME SYSTEM: Abstract Representation



In 1981 Teller and I first reported our discovery of repetitive structures in the free association of a patient in psychoanalysis (Teller and Dahl 1981a) and have published a detailed report of some of their characteristics (Teller and Dahl 1986).

As a name for these structures we chose Frames, Marvin Minsky's (1975) term for stereotyped knowledge structures that have many desirable theoretical features.

Critical -Friendly Frame



Prediction

- However, Figure 8 shows a dramatic change in the relationship when the C behaviors from block n are compared with the F behaviors from block n+1.
- Now the similarity of the curves is apparent and the first order lagged correlation, $rc(f+1) = .97$.
- But here again, both C and F are highly correlated with time.
- Nonetheless, when time is partialled out of both, $rc(f+1).t = .89$, $df=6$, $p<.005$.
- In a test of the logical possibility that if F were lagged one block (to see if F might precede C), $rc(c+1).t = .26$, ns.
- Thus the empirical test supports the second prediction derived from the CRITICAL/FRIENDLY frame, namely, that critical behavior must precede friendly behavior.