An Analysis of the Probable Association Between Narcissistic Personality Disorder and a Rage-Type Murder Event (Part 1)

Christiaan Bezuidenhout & Michelle Wharren

Abstract

This research was directed at establishing whether narcissistic individuals will go to extreme levels of violence, specifically murder, if their self-image is threatened. The aim was to determine the extent of pre-existing narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) in these individuals and how this could have contributed to the murderous action they committed. Emphasis was placed on the psychological motivation of the perpetrator, as well as the relationship that existed between the perpetrator and the victim prior to the event. Research on narcissism indicates that hostile aggression is a reaction to threatening evaluations of the self-esteem which often could lead to a gratuitous hostile aggressive action or an overkill murderous event.

This contribution is the first part of a two part series pertaining to our research. Part one will focus on the definition of the concepts, a literature review and a general discussion of the probable association between narcissistic personality disorder and rage-type murder. A case study will be reviewed against the backdrop of the existing literature. Part two of the research in a future publication will focus on our fieldwork and research findings pertaining to this topic.

Keywords

Aggression, “Catathymic Crisis”; DSM-IV-TR; Grandiosity; Narcissism; Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD); Rage-Type Murder; Self; Self-esteem; Self-image; Violence.

Narcissism is a phenomenon dating back to the Greek myth of Narcissus. The myth portrays the fate of a man who was so in love with himself, he completely withdrew from the world (Ehrlich, 2000; Fine, 1986). In simple terms, narcissism can be described as "self-involvement", and occurs when the ego adopts itself as the love object, where the alternative of falling in love with another is completely rejected (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Symington, 1993). Narcissism destroys any self-knowledge in the individual by projecting unwanted aspects of the character onto others (Symington, 1993). “Their whole demeanor tends to portray a quiet sense of knowing that they are more important than others” (von Krosigk, 2012, p.482). In addition they make unreasonable demands on others, show arrogant behavior and are demeaning towards others. These individuals have learned to rely only on themselves and their self-evaluations for safety and the preservation of their self-esteem (Millon, 1981; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2011).

There is a perception that individuals with narcissistic personalities retreat into themselves, as indifference is the best protection against disappointment (Fine, 1986; Ronningstam, 2005). The notion of others being untrustworthy, and reliance primarily on self-love, is a defense mechanism narcissistic individuals evoke to avoid the risk of rejection (Ronningstam, 2005). The main problem seems to be a disturbance in self-regard, as well as disturbances in object relations. These disturbances reflect intense, primitive and internalized object relations and the inability to depend on internalized 'good' objects (Kernberg, 1975).

Narcissistic individuals are by nature independent and not open to intimidation; their main interest is self-preservation. The ego has a substantial amount of aggressiveness, which is ready for activity whenever the self-image is perceived to be under threat (Freud, 1961). They see dependency on other people as a weakness and risky (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2011). Research on narcissism (Bauemeister, Smart & Boden, 1996; Bogart, Benotsch & Pavlovic, 2004; Bushman & Bauemeister, 1998; DiGiuseppe & Tafrate, 2007; Kernberg, 1975; Ronningstam, 2005) indicates that hostile aggression is a reaction to threatening evaluations of the self-esteem. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Text Revision) (DSM-IV-TR) (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) describes individuals with narcissistic personalities as those whose "self-esteem is invariably fragile; [these individuals] may be preoccupied with how well [they are] doing or how [they are] regarded by others. In response to criticism, [they] may react with rage…" (p.350). Thus the rage they experience is a direct expression of their aggression, and erupts when their superiority is questioned.

Aim of this Contribution

The authors focused on establishing whether narcissistic individuals will go to extreme levels of violence, specifically murder, if their self-image is threatened in intimate relationships. The aspiration was to determine the extent of pre-existing narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) in these individuals and how this contributed to the murder they committed. Emphasis is placed on the psychological motivation of the murderer, as well as the relationship that existed between the murderer and the victim prior to the event. Individuals who commit rage-type murders do not have psychopathy, and they cannot be diagnosed with Axis I disorders, as stipulated in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Text Revision) (DSM-IV-TR), and are thus seen as 'normal' (i.e. individuals who do not have a history of violence or psychopathology). In Part one (this article) the researchers will specifically aim to define the key concepts central to this study, namely: rage-type murder; narcissistic personality disorder and present the reader with the current body of knowledge available on rage-type murder. The researchers

will furthermore try and determine whether a causal link is probable and will use a current case study to give direction to the research and leave food for thought regarding a follow up article (Part two).

Hypothesis

The association between NPD and rage-type murder would assist in determining the risk associated with a narcissistic individual and the likelihood they would re-offend in similar circumstances. Individuals who commit rage-type murders should not be held criminally liable for their actions, since an underlying personality disorder as well as a specific build-up to the event, is required. They should be allowed to contextualize a defense of non-pathological criminal incapacity, and be committed to a psychiatric facility. The effects of the unconscious, a dysfunctional ego, or a weakness in the superego resulting in a personality disorder should not be valid justification for legal punishment (Bromberg, 1951; Levesque, 2006). The punishment for the crime must be based on the personality of the perpetrator, as well as the motivation underlying the act in order for a suitable treatment to aid in the perpetrator's adjustment in the future (Bromberg, 1951).

Definition of Key Concepts

Although definitions all have a common purpose, they often lack uniformity. For this reason the following definitions are provided in order to contribute to a common understanding of the key concepts in this article.

Rage-Type Murder

Megargee (1966) identifies two types of personalities in assaultive populations, namely the under-controlled personality and the over-controlled personality. The under-controlled personality has low inhibitions against aggressive behavior, engaging in violence when provoked, while the over-controlled personality has extremely rigid inhibitions against aggressive behavior and rarely responds to provocation. This individual is aware of the consequences associated with violence (Bartol & Bartol, 2014). Hinton (1983), and more recently Brookman (2005), found that over-controlled, conforming individuals are more likely to be linked to murder, but less likely to be associated with other types of crimes, and the probability of re-offending is low.

Individuals who commit rage-type murders can be classified as over-controlled individuals since they have strong inhibitors and violence only occurs when provocation is intense and, importantly, this has occurred over a period of time (Coid, 2005; Hollin & Howells, 1989). When frustration and provocation overwhelm the over-controlled individual they do tend to violently strike out at the

source of the frustration. Bartol and Bartol (2011) suggest that the over-controlled individual often displays violence in excess of the under-controlled individual, explaining the brutality and unexpected nature of the murder. According to Megargee (1966) the degree of violence is proportional to the degree of the perceived instigation. Thus, over-controlled individuals are likely to commit acts of extreme violence, but not likely to have a history of frequent minor offences. Violence is the result of instigation to violence, mediated by anger, which exceeds the level of control of the aggressive feelings (Coid, 2005; Hollin & Howells, 1989). The violence represents the last resort when all attempts to resolve the situation fail.

A comprehensive definition is important in order to recognize actions that can be considered rage-type murder, as there is a need to distinguish rage-type murder from psychopathic, perverse and psychotic, as well as murder committed to fulfill a criminal motive (Cartwright, 2001). However, no specific definition explaining the exact nature of rage-type murder could be identified. For this reason the operational definition of rage-type murder is based on the descriptions of what the action entails. Generally, murder is the deliberate, unlawful taking of another individual's life, where there is intent to harm that individual (Bergman & Berman, 2009). In the case of rage-type murder, the victim and perpetrator are known to each other, with evidence suggesting a pre-existing relationship. The perpetrator is said to have an over-controlled personality, with no history of psychological pathology, violent or aggressive behavior. There is no evidence of premeditation or motive, allowing the act to take place without prior warning. Post-event analysis indicates a situational build-up, with a relatively trivial catalyzing interaction (mostly an argument, a threat or an insult) between the perpetrator and the victim directly prior to the murder. Often dissociation occurs, leaving the perpetrator unable and unsure regarding the details of the murder.

As a description does not provide a clear definition and, in view of the above, rage-type murder, in the context of this research, can be defined as the deliberate, unlawful killing of an individual by another, with these individuals having a pre-existing relationship. The perpetrator has an over-controlled personality and no history of violent or aggressive behavior or of psychological pathology. The attack appears to be sudden and motiveless, although a situation build-up can be identified. The attack is carried out with excessive violence, generally triggered by a catalyzing interaction between the victim and perpetrator, and often dissociation is present.

Narcissistic Personality Disorder

The clinical features for NPD are set out in the DSM-IV-TR (American Psychiatric Association, 2000), as a classification system to ensure common diagnostic criteria of mental disorders exists. Narcissistic personality is classified as

a Cluster B disorder, namely the dramatic, emotional or erratic cluster. The DSM-IV-TR diagnostic criteria for NPD can be sub-divided into four broad categories, namely, interpersonal (criteria 4,5,6,7 and 8), self-image (criteria 1 and 3), cognitive (criteria 2), and behavioral (criteria 9).

In the DSM-IV-TR (American Psychiatric Association, 2000, p.717), the diagnostic criterion for NPD is outlined as follows:

Narcissistic personality is "a pervasive pattern (in fantasy or behavior), need for admiration and lack of empathy, beginning by early adulthood and persistent in a variety of contexts, as indicated by five (or more) of the following:

1. Has a grandiose sense of self-importance.
2. Is preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love.
3. Believes that he or she is "special" and unique and can only be understood by, or should only associate with, other special or high status people.
4. Requests excessive admiration.
5. Has a sense of entitlement, i.e., unreasonable expectations of especially favorable treatment or automatic compliance with his or her expectations.
6. Is interpersonally exploitative, i.e., takes advantage of others to achieve his or her own ends.
7. Lacks empathy: is unwilling to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others.
8. Is often envious of others or believes that others are envious of him or her.
9. Shows arrogant, haughty behaviors or attitudes."

As the DSM-IV-TR is the standard manual for diagnosing mental disorders in South Africa and many other western countries, the diagnostic criteria serve as a comprehensive definition of NPD. However, NPD is the rarest personality disorder to be diagnosed in individuals (Emmelkamp & Kamphuis, 2007; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2011). Only extreme manifestations of the criteria listed in the DSM-IV-TR reflect pathological narcissism (i.e. NPD), the less extreme manifestations of the criteria reflect narcissism as a personality trait (Emmons, 1987; Peterson & Seligman 2004). For this reason, a diagnosis of NPD as set out in the DSM-IV-TR is not required, as the significant aspect of NPD is the inconsistency between the descriptors. Grandiosity is the core trait of NPD, and self-esteem regulation is the core deficit (Emmelkamp & Kamphuis, 2007; Oltmanns, Martin, Neale, Davidson, 2012).

The criteria, as set forth in the DSM-IV-TR, are used to define NPD in context of this contribution. Operationally, a narcissistic individual can be defined as an individual who is behaviorally arrogant, cognitively omnipotent, personally grandiose, interpersonally exploitative, envious and callous with a sense of entitlement who lacks empathy.

Literature Review With Regard to Narcissistic Personality Disorder

Several authors' (Ellis, 1898; Freud, 1914/1957; Horney, 1939; Reich, 1933/1949) early descriptions of narcissism still have an influence on the conception of the disorder today. For example Freud described narcissism as libidinal investment (Sadock & Kaplan, 2007), which is the closest depiction to the DSM-IV-TR classification of NPD (Millon, 1981; Sadock & Kaplan, 2007). However, the focus of the disorder remains on the central characteristics of accomplishment, ambition and pretentiousness.

In the 1960s, Kernberg (1967) and Kohut (1968) introduced the terms "narcissistic personality structure" and "narcissistic personality disorder" respectively, to describe the long-term organized functioning used to define narcissism as a personality disorder (Ronningstam, 2005). Two theoretical perspectives on narcissism exist, namely the ego psychology-object relations perspective and the self-psychology perspective. The ego psychology-object relations perspective proposed by Kernberg (1967) states that the self is a sub-structure within the ego system, reflecting components developed through experiences (Kernberg, 1998), and the self-psychology perspective proposed by Kohut (1968) states that the development of the self is based on an integration of the internalized self and object representations. These perspectives depict narcissism as a unique behavioral pattern of the late 20th century (Millon, 1998).

Narcissistic individuals blindly base their self-esteem on the naïve assumption of personal worth and superiority, which is directed to recognize and cater to their high self-esteem (Fish, Casey & Kelly, 2007; Millon, 1981; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2011). Narcissistic individuals have immense self-reference, described as a preoccupation with themselves, "…it is what they think of themselves…that serves as the touchstone for their security and contentment…" (Millon, 1981, p.157). There is, however, a contradiction between an inflated self-image and a constant need for admiration (Kernberg, 1975), which is seen by some as a form of dependence. Kernberg (1975) and Kohut (1971) agree that the narcissistic individual remains emotionally invested in the grandiose self-image, despite having a less favorable self-appraisal. The views of the self are unrelated; however, the grandiosity and omnipotence co-exist with feelings of inferiority. Thus, the exaggerated self-esteem has an emotional rather than a cognitive character expressing self-love without cognitions of superiority, consequently involving an

unstable high self-esteem (Bushman & Bauemeister, 1998; DiGiuseppe & Tafrate, 2007). The presence of these extreme contradictions in their self-image is evidence of pathology, although well hidden under a surface of proficient social functioning (Kernberg, 1975; Sadock & Kaplan, 2007).

Indicators of the presence of a narcissistic personality include extreme sensitivity to perceived failure, a sense of entitlement and a need to be considered unique. They fail to develop and maintain long-term satisfying relationships (Brown, 1998; Campbell, Brunell, & Finkel, 2006) due to a lack of emotional depth, and consequently an inability to understand the emotions of others. Their feelings lack differentiation and they often have outbursts of emotion followed by quick diffusion. They display excellent anxiety tolerance; however, this is obtained through increasing narcissistic fantasies and a withdrawal into the self (Kernberg, 1975). They are extremely envious of others, emotionally shallow (Brown, 1998; Dobbert, 2007) and they expect one-sided, unconditional love and admiration by everyone in all situations (Boldt, 2007), and an overwhelming sense of grandiosity and omnipotence (Brown, 1998; Ronningstam, 2005). Narcissistic individuals are highly arrogant, exploitative and at times ruthless, holding an indifference to social standards (Dobbert, 2007; Millon, 1981), while at the same time feeling chronically uncertain, with deep-rooted dissatisfaction in themselves (Kernberg, 1975). These individuals have a desire for superiority, and therefore their behavior is less in line with the demands of society, and more an "exhibitionistic demand for admiration" (Boldt, 2007, p.48). They cause considerable damage to many of the social structures to which they belong (Symington, 1993), as their social behavior is directed to maximizing their self-esteem, ultimately validating their self-image (Bushman & Bauemeister, 1998; Campbell, et. al, 2006). By definition, they require excessive admiration and approval and will go to great lengths to obtain what they feel is their due (Brown, 1998; Dobbert, 2007).

A widely held view is that low self-esteem is a contributing factor to violence and aggression (Anderson, 1994; Barnett, Miller-Perrin & Perrin, 2005; O'Moore & Kirkham, 2001; Papps & O'Carroll, 1998; Toch, 1993). However, research carried out by Bauemeister, et. al, (1996) contradicts this assumption. In their opinion, violence is a result of any real or perceived threat to an individual's positive views of the self. Their research concludes that hostile aggression is a reaction to threatening evaluations of the self-esteem. Narcissistic individuals have a high opinion of themselves, efficient social functioning and impulse control, as well as the potential to fulfill ambitions (Kernberg, 1975). In situations in which narcissistic individuals find their ability or sense of entitlement is questioned, when they perceive threat to their self-image, or when they are hurt, they are likely to display primitive defense mechanisms, such as a cold demeanor, deep depression, and in some instances

intense aggression and extreme hostility (Bogart, et. al, 2004; Kernberg, 1975; Ronningstam, 2005). Any threat toward their 'superior' self-esteem is a predictor of aggressive and violent behavior (Ronningstam, 2005).

Research (Bushman & Bauemeister, 1998; Lachkar, 1992; Snyder, Schrepferman, Brooker, & Stoolmiller, 2007) indicates that all individuals who receive ego threats are inclined to respond with aggression to the source of the criticism. However, Bushman and Bauemeister (1998) found that the reaction is strongest among narcissistic individuals. This research furthermore illustrates that narcissistic individuals develop aggressive responses to positive reactions, revealing that these individuals react with aggression and hostility to any form of evaluation. Other authors' research has yielded similar results (Bogart, et. al, 2004; Campbell, et. al, 2006; Larsen & Buss, 2006; Nestor, 2002). This behavior is very similar to hostile attribution bias which means that they are more likely to interpret ambiguous actions as hostile and threatening (Bartol & Bartol, 2014). Narcissism does not, however, indicate overall elevation of aggression. The aggression is specifically directed towards the source of the criticism and is determined by the degree of the perceived threat (Bushman & Bauemeister, 1998), suggesting the aggression is interpersonally meaningful. Individuals who consider themselves superior to others are not more dangerous, rather it can be said that the individuals who have a desire to be superior are more dangerous (Bushman & Bauemeister, 1998).

The motive why an individual would murder someone who is known to the perpetrator, with no prior history of violent behavior, is enigmatic. In view of the above literature, it seems likely that narcissistic individuals will go to extreme levels of violence if their self-image is threatened to a substantial degree within an interpersonal relationship.

Literature Review With Regard to the Association between Rage-Type Murder and Narcissistic Personality Disorder

Narcissistic individuals require constant external admiration to maintain their self-esteem (the “narcissistic supply”). When they do not receive this, they perceive the experience as a personal rejection (the “narcissistic injury”), which will possibly result in an irrational reaction (Schulte, Hall & Crosby, 1994). Narcissistic individuals place themselves in situations where they intend receiving or creating attention from others. Invariably, they experience intense emotion from the feedback (Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998); be it positive or negative (Emmons, 1987). Discrepancies between external feedback and internal self-image result in an arousal state that promotes aggression, and possibly violence, under certain conditions (Papps & O'Carroll, 1998).

Narcissistic individuals displace or block appropriate affect in situations, which they consider overwhelming, yet they are able to display appropriate affect in other situations (Schulte, et. al, 1994). These individuals are unable to express or acknowledge rage, aggression, or disappointment, which results in behavior that is suggestive of potential harm to themselves or others (Schulte, et. al, 1994). They react with intense anger to any situation in which they are criticized, humiliated, or rejected (i.e. any situation which threatens their self-image) (Emmelkamp & Kamphuis, 2007). Single instances of perceived threats to the grandiose self-image are not sufficient to produce expressions of aggression. However, if constant criticism is directed at the narcissistic individual, it is likely to be perceived as a threat; it thus plays an instigating role, and when instigation is present, eruption of violence is almost always inevitable (Malmquist, 2006; Papps & O'Carroll, 1998). The isolation of appropriate affect is evident after the murder event, where the perpetrator seems to be unaffected by the situation. The notion exists that inappropriate affect, in this instance, relates to the narcissistic injury and subsequent rage (Lachkar, 1992; Schulte, et. al, 1994).

Narcissistic individuals display a pattern of emotional responses organized around their grandiose self-image, to maintain their fragile self-esteem. Grandiosity, dominance, narcissism, and hostility are positively correlated (Raskin, Novacek & Hogan, 1991), suggesting grandiosity and dominance mediate the relationship between narcissism, hostility and subsequently anger and rage (Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998). Anger is an "intense emotional experience, interpersonal in nature" (Papps & O'Carroll, 1998, p.421). Anger is a consequence of frustration, and is thus goal directed, in other words, it is used to overcome obstacles. Rage is an expression of "a primitive explosive affective state" (Cartwright, 2002a, p.22) that involves the self-system, and is a consequence of shame; in other words, it is a failure to maintain the self-system and it requires a personal insult (Almaas, 2000; Cartwright, 2002a).

Rage is anger caused by shame, and manifests with a dissociated behavior (Almaas, 2000; Cartwright, 2002a). The anger is so intense that the goal is blocked and the self-organization is disrupted (Almaas, 2000; Cartwright, 2002a). Rage is a "powerful motivator of behavior" (Glick & Roose, 1993, p.130), it impairs the ability to go beyond the immediate situation, it "focuses consciousness completely on the here-and-now situation with unparalleled intensity" (Katz, 1988, p.31), and may be expressed directly or indirectly (through displacement). Rage is not spontaneous; it has a threshold of activation, facilitation, and reactivity (Glick & Roose, 1993). Rage is experience-dependant, and is generated by a build-up of discontentment. The degree of the discontent determines the affect and behavior that are activated (Glick & Roose, 1993). The intensity, duration, and frequency of the

discontent determine the intensity of the subsequent rage reaction (Cartwright, 2002a), which is triggered by mounting discontent, and an inability of the ego defense mechanisms to mediate the experience (Glick & Roose, 1993). In narcissistic rage, threats to the self may lead to violent attacks, since the individual has a need to 'remove' the perceived threat (Akhtar, 2009; De Zulueta, 1993; Lachkar, 1992). Narcissistic rage is a "desperate defensive action" aimed at preventing shame, humiliation, and any threat to the wellbeing of the self that are produced by sudden loss of self-esteem (Akhtar, 2009, p.182; Cartwright, 2002a, p.25). A rage reaction emerges whenever there is a real or perceived lack of control within the narcissistic individual (Cartwright, 2002a). Unlike anger, rage is not related to overcoming an obstacle, it is a response to an injury to the self, which makes this reaction more intense, unfocused, and of a longer duration (Cartwright, 2002a). "The greater the threat to our sense of who we feel we are, the more powerful the [defense] processes we use" (De Zulueta, 1993, p.124). In rage-type murders, the rage is evident by the brutality of the crime and the gratuitous violence, as well as by the appearance of multiple wounds inflicted by an individual who has an intimate relationship with the victim.

Grandiosity and dominance in the narcissistic individual are defensive behaviors that allow the expression of hostility, anger, and rage. Anger, hostility, and rage are central to the emotional life of the narcissistic individual, as these responses are expressed to protect the self-image (Raskin, et. al, 1991). Anger and rage are a response to perceived threats to the grandiose self (Malmquist, 2006; Raskin, et. al, 1991; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998). Exploitation and projection are psychological defense mechanisms the narcissistic individual employs to protect their self-esteem (Raskin, et. al, 1991; Sadock & Kaplan, 2007). A psychological defense mechanism is a configuration that deals with rage on an unconscious level by splitting the ego into 'good' and 'bad' object (De Zulueta, 1993; Sadock & Kaplan, 2007). Individuals identify with good objects and project destructive bad feelings onto others (De Zulueta, 1993). All individuals depend on psychological defense mechanisms to protect them from feelings that are threatening or painful (De Zulueta, 1993). Narcissistic individuals maintain defensive psychological structures that promote feelings of safety, as this is essential to the survival of the idealized self (Bateman, 1999). "Certain [individuals] with narcissistic pathology, who are facing narcissistically overwhelming situations … may … be at risk for impulsively committing acts of violence towards themselves and others" (Schulte, et. al, 1994, p.620). When perceived threats do arise, individuals with a grandiose self-image do generally react in irrational ways (Almaas, 2000; Malmquist, 2006; Papps & O'Carroll, 1998).

When the defensive psychological structure is breached (the split of the ego into 'good' and 'bad' object is united), and the bad self is revealed, the levels of anxiety within the individual cannot be tolerated, and this compels the individual to remove the threat (i.e. commit the murder) (Cartwright, 2002b). This is seen as a form of self-preservative violence, in which the threatening object must be removed or destroyed (Bateman, 1999). The dissociation experienced is due to the individual's need to remain in contact with the other, while repressing the destructive feelings of rage brought out by the projective identification (De Zulueta, 1993). The idealized self is not a stable part of the internalized objects, as the goodness relies on projective identification with good external objects (Cartwright, 2002b). Projective identification is a process where unwanted aspects of the self are isolated and transferred into another individual, and the modified version of what is projected onto the other is returned (De Zulueta, 1993; Sadock & Kaplan, 2007). Projective identification is characterized by the 'oneness' of the self and the other, whereas pure projection is characterized by the 'otherness' of the self and other (De Zulueta, 1993; Sadock & Kaplan, 2007). Narcissistic individuals seek conformation of goodness from external objects to maintain their defensive psychological structures; they use projective identification to find external conformations to encourage their perception of being the idealized self (Cartwright, 2002b; Sadock & Kaplan, 2007). The external objects are part of a system that has a narcissistic quality, where there is no clear distinction between the self and the external object (Cartwright, 2002b). The idealized self supports and contains an internal bad object system. While supporting and containing the bad object system, the idealized self also protects the self from external threats (Cartwright, 2002b).

The splitting of the personality (ego) shows the refusal of the narcissistic individual to associate the self with any badness (Cartwright, 2002b; Sadock & Kaplan, 2007). The bad self-images remain split off and dormant in the personality; the bad self remains concealed behind the idealized self (Cartwright, 2002b). “Bad experience simply accumulates and remains unmodified and unarticulated” (Cartwright, 2002b, p.12), as acknowledging the bad experience could alter the idealized self, so the narcissistic individual does not deal with the experience, they merely remove it. The ego is maintained as long as the destructive personality remains split (Cartwright, 2002b). This defensive personality organization best explains the arrogant, grandiose personality (good object/idealized self-image) and the underlying inadequacy, incompetence, and passivity (bad object/fragile self-esteem), all which remain hidden because of the anxiety they create (Cartwright, 2002b). The defensive psychological structure allows rage and destructiveness to remain unconscious as long as the split in the personality is maintained (De Zulueta, 1993). When the split can no longer be maintained, displacement is used to preserve the self.

It is important to determine whether the threatening object is internal or external. In rage-type murder the object that is removed or destroyed is an external object that is identified with a bad internal object. Through projective identification, the other is perceived as the source of everything bad; it therefore becomes necessary to remove the other to protect the self (Cartwright, 2002b; De Zulueta, 1993). Due to projective identification, the boundary between the self and the other is not clearly distinguishable, thus the act of murder is seen as one to protect the self, as the other is not viewed as a distinct entity. The murder is a result of ego dysfunction and failure of repression (Cartwright, 2000). Glick and Roose (1993) state that "when excessive [criticism] persists, occurs frequently enough, and are sufficiently intense, they stabilize into hate, a more enduring feeling of self-object attached hostile destructiveness" (p.127). Hostile destructiveness creates a disruption in the formation of the structure of the psyche and object relations (Glick & Roose, 1993). Rage is an effect of hostile destructiveness, and takes into account that discontent is not only due to frustration, not always directed outward, and does not manifest immediately (Almaas, 2000; Glick & Roose, 1993). Frustration generates aggression whenever negative affect is aroused, and negative affect produces primitive anger experiences (i.e. rage) (Almaas, 2000; Papps & O'Carroll, 1998). Any negative affect immediately gives rise to some form of a reaction, be it avoidance or attack (Papps & O'Carroll, 1998). This is particularly evident when narcissistic individuals are involved, as they refuse to accept negative feedback and generally react with irrational responses (Papps & O'Carroll, 1998).

Object relations determine the level of rage generated in situations (Glick & Roose, 1993). The intensity, duration, and frequency of the discontent in the object relations produce the degree and form of hostile destructiveness in the relationship (Glick & Roose, 1993). Rage that is released in a specific situation is facilitated by increased levels of accumulated and stabilized hostile destructiveness (Glick & Roose, 1993). This means that when the ego is overloaded with experiences of discontent, any minor, trivial event can trigger an intense rage reaction. This rage reaction is linked to past experiences, which explains why the trigger need not be extremely intense (Glick & Roose, 1993; Sadock & Kaplan, 2007).

The narcissistic individual will only direct the rage toward the source of the threat (Papps & O'Carroll, 1998; Sadock & Kaplan, 2007). Thus, it is necessary to have a build-up of self-image threats directed at the narcissistic individual before an irrational aggressive reaction is likely to occur, and this reaction will be directed to the source of the criticism. Research (Bursten, 1981; Feldman, Johnson, & Bell, 1990; Horowitz, 1981; Malmquist, 2006) suggests that this reaction is due to a grandiose self-image, with a fragile self-esteem, which results in limited coping skills. The aggressive reactions are actions to re-establish the self-esteem (Schulte,

et. al, 1994). Violence is a specific manifestation of aggression (Cartwright, 2002a), the aggressive reaction is a consequence of continued threat to the self-image. Violence may result if the threat is directed at the narcissistic ego. Violence is a rare event, and is likely only to manifest in an intimate relationship (Schulte, et. al, 1994).

Wertham (in Cartwright, 2002a) describes rage-type murder as a process with its foundation in an injurious precipitating event, resulting in a catathymic crisis for which the victim is blamed. An emotional outburst, which consists of essentially unprovoked extreme rage, manifested by an explosion of aggression, was termed a "catathymic crisis" by Wertham in 1937 (in Revitch & Schlesinger, 1981). The catathymic crisis is defined as "a reaction activated by a strong and tenacious affect" (Revitch & Schlesinger, 1981, p.127), in other words, it is the eruption of the self to violence in which all energy is used in an attempt to control the situation, but when this fails, individuals devote all their energy into eliminating the threat. The release of energy during the violent act represents a failure of the perpetrator to contain, manage, and control the inner conflict and turmoil within the relationship (Pollock, Stowell-Smith & Gopfert, 2006). Once the threat is removed, intrapsychic equilibrium is re-established, and there is a return to a sense of normality (Hyatt-Williams, 1996; Wertham, 1966).

The catathymic crisis occurs within an ego-threatening relationship (Revitch & Schlesinger, 1981), and is triggered by a build-up of tension and frustration. This build-up can last anywhere from a few days to a year before the act is carried out, and a feeling of relief usually follows the act (Revitch & Schlesinger, 1981). In rage-type murder, violence becomes more of a solution as the tension and frustration build up, until it becomes uncontrollable and violence ensues, where after there is a superficial return to normality. In the case of other types of murder the perpetrator realizes that extreme violence is unnecessary; in the case of rage-type murder the perpetrator feels that violence is the only solution to the situation.

The murder appears to be motiveless, with a degree of dissociation present in the perpetrator (Cartwright, 2002a). The act itself is defensive in nature, and the destruction of the object (the source of the distress) is the motivating factor within the perpetrator (Cartwright, 2000). The impulse to murder originates from an "internally threatened part of the personality" (Cartwright, 2000, p.112) that the individual attempts to destroy by removing the perceived source of the threat (Bateman, 1999; Cartwright, 2000; Hyatt-Williams, 1996). To the perpetrator the murder may feel as if it is a necessary function for self-preservation, since their internal reality is controlled by fear (Cartwright, 2000; Cartwright, 2002b; Hyatt-Williams, 1998), thus, the act appears unprovoked to outsiders, but to the perpetrator it is necessary to preserve the self. The violence is committed, followed by a

superficial return to normality with no insight into the murder (Cartwright, 2002b). Dissociation occurs with a sudden surge of rage at the time of the murder, and passes immediately after the act (Cartwright, 2002a). The dissociative reaction is a consequence of the splitting of the ego (into good and bad objects) and superego from the rest of the personality; the result is that individuals are unable to control their feelings of anger and hostility (Abrahamsen, 1973; Sadock & Kaplan, 2007). The loss of control results in the clear overkill typical in this type of murder (Pollock, et. al, 2006).

The complete personality and the entirety of the situation of the individual, together with negative emotion (i.e. frustration, fear and depression) and the catalyzing event, bring about the factors that may result in the murder taking place (Abrahamsen, 1973; Wertham, 1966). The reason murder takes place is based on negative emotions, which are only risk factors when they are isolated and exaggerated. In the case of rage-type murder, the negative emotion is fear, stimulated by the circumstances surrounding the event (Wertham, 1966). Fear is an overwhelming negative emotion, and is usually the root of violence (Wertham, 1966). A seemingly irresolvable personal dilemma, with the idea of an easy solution to the dilemma through violence may lead to a violent response (Wertham, 1966). This is not the sole explanation as to why murder is committed; it is a factor in the dynamics of some types of murder (Wertham, 1966): where the perpetrator feels inferior and incompetent, extreme violence frees them from these negative emotions.

The central elements to the gratuitous hostile aggressive action or the overkill murderous event are:

A. The affective nature of the act (Wertham, 1950). The act is a defensive display of explosive affect, with the aim of eliminating the threat. It is unnecessarily violent, but brings the required relief to the perpetrator. The affective reactions (Wertham, 1950) can be explained in three stages:

    i. The incubation period, in which the perpetrator is preoccupied with the victim and the fantasies of murder. Growing tension prior to the murder is evident in post-event analysis, and is not always conscious to the perpetrator (Pollock, et. al, 2006). During the build-up phase, the perpetrator is usually obsessively preoccupied with the victim (Revitch & Schlesinger, 1981). In most instances the perpetrator is described as being depressed and sometimes suicidal (Revitch & Schlesinger, 1981). Fantasies of murdering the ego-threatening object usually accompany suicidal thoughts, which eventually become the dominant preoccupation (Revitch & Schlesinger, 1981).

ii. The act itself, which is the result of an accumulation of the build-up of tension, and is generally triggered by an insignificant event. The murderous act is dependent upon several factors coming together to cause the particular reaction (Cartwright, 2002a). The accumulation of events allows a low intensity stimulus to trigger the rage, which results in an excessive reaction to a seemingly trivial event (Cartwright, 2002a).

iii. The relief experienced when the build-up of tension and energy is released. After the murder, the perpetrator loses the suicidal thoughts, as the bad self has been eliminated. "Every [murder] … is unconsciously a suicide, and every suicide in a sense is a psychological [murder, both] acts are caused by the perpetrator's sudden and acute loss of self-esteem" (Abrahamsen, 1973, p.16).

B. The dissociation the perpetrator experiences (Wertham, 1950). The act is committed in an altered state of consciousness (Revitch & Schlesinger, 1981), where there is impaired contact with reality, although complete amnesia is highly unlikely. The perpetrator is not consciously aware of the motive for the violence. The perpetrator can often not discuss the events surrounding the murder, as they have difficulties in recollecting the offence, which is a display of the dissociated, split-off or amnesic attitude the perpetrator has (Pollock, et. al, 2006). Their self-reflection and metallization are limited, leaving the offence unintegrated into the consciousness of the perpetrator, also explaining the inability of the perpetrator to verbalize the event (Pollock, et. al, 2006).

C. The lack of motive for the excessive violence carried out (Wertham, 1950). A seemingly insignificant event triggers the explosive expression of aggression; there is no premeditation to the act. In the time preceding the murder, although not planned, every move made by the perpetrator and every countermove made by the victim determine the outcome of the situation. If the perpetrator and the victim do not 'feed off' each others' actions, the escalation to violence will most likely be prevented (Barnett, et. al, 2005; Hyatt-Williams, 1998). The actual murder only takes place when "too much pressure is experienced by the individual at risk before [they] had the time, opportunity or capacity to digest it and detoxicate it psychically" (Hyatt-Williams, 1998, p.157).

Revitch and Schlesinger (1981) draw four conclusions concerning rage-type murder that contextualize the above. Firstly, an injury to the pride of the perpetrator is a key determining factor in the murder event. Secondly, the murder occurs in a close interpersonal relationship, where unresolved conflict and helplessness result in attachment difficulties on the part of the perpetrator. Thirdly, trauma or a traumatic experience in the history of the perpetrator is not a significant contributing factor to the murder. Lastly, the motivating factor appears to be displacement of

emotion onto the victim, who carries a symbolic significance to the perpetrator. Several authors (Bromberg, 1951; Lehrman, 1939; Zilborg, 1935) made similar conclusions and suggest that in the majority of murder cases, the victim is likely to represent some aspects of the perpetrator unconsciously in the mind of the perpetrator.

In summary, the situational characteristics are attributed to the individual's psychological make-up (Wertham, 1950). An external event generally provokes the act; the perpetrator and victim are usually involved in an intimate relationship; there is an escalation of the situation, which over time becomes overwhelming, as both the perpetrator and the victim are unable to escape. The overkill signifies the need to remove the internalized object relationship; and the perpetrator is usually the one who notifies the authorities, suggesting they are aware of the wrongfulness of the act, but this is not a sign of remorse for their actions.

Interpretive Case Study to Contextualize the Literature

In a recent case in South Africa that made international headlines the above elements toward the gratuitous hostile aggressive action or the overkill murderous event as well as the dissociative process can be appreciated. The case also bequeaths food for thought pertaining to the catathymic crisis and dissociation after a person's "narcissistic supply" is terminated.

Johan Kotzé who was dubbed the "Modimolle Monster" was accused of orchestrating the gang-rape of and lengthy torture of his estranged wife, Ina Bonnette as well as murdering his stepson Conrad Bonnette in Modimolle [also known as Nylstroom - a town located in the Limpopo Province of South Africa] on 3 January 2012. At the time Bonnette was still married to Kotzé, but lived in her own apartment because of their strained relationship and earlier decision to split up (Bonnette, 2013). On New Year's Eve 2011, Kotzé apparently saw Bonnette with another man in loving interaction at a social function. He observed them for a while and later even secretly followed them to her apartment. In the court case his defense stated that this exploit of betrayal by Kotzé's estranged wife impacted severely on him as he was obsessed with Bonnette. He viewed her actions as treason and renouncement. In addition emotional pressure mounted when, according to him, during an argument on 3 January 2012, Bonnette placed a vibrator on a table in his house and told him to use it on his next wife. What unfolded later in the day links to our current study (Part one and Part two)? Later that day (January 3, 2012), Kotzé phoned Bonette to come and collect the last of her belongings from his home. When she arrived, Kotzé overpowered her, covered her head with a towel, tied her onto a bed and gagged her. The time lapse of the planning of the event on 3 January 2012 is not clear but Kotzé also managed to convince three of his employees to assist him with his "revenge" against his estranged wife who according to him "disgraced" him

on New Year's Eve three days earlier. He apparently told the three accomplices to hide in the bedroom cupboard not to raise any suspicion before she arrived at his home. Johan Kotzé, and his three employees, Andries Sithole, Pieta Mohlake and Sello Mphaka attacked Ina Bonette once she was tied to the bed. Kotzé apparently screamed at her before torturing and mutilating her with pliers, a saw, a screwdriver, steel nails and a grinder. She was beaten, gang raped by the other three men, her breasts were slashed, one of her nipples was cut off, her private parts were mutilated and objects were inserted into her. Bonnette suffered serious injuries and internal bleeding from the attack which lasted almost three hours. Kotzé also killed Ina Bonnette's son, Conrad Bonnette (his 19 year old stepson) with a .22 rifle in a room adjacent to where the torturing and rape was taking place. Kotzé apparently also phoned Conrad earlier in the day telling him to come to his house as he needed to talk to him. Conrad arrived while the men were torturing Ina Bonnette. Kotzé took Conrad to a room next to where his mother was suffering. Ina later told the court that Conrad begged Kotzé not to kill him (Bonnette, 2013). The begging did not help and his body was found in the next room. He had been shot in the head and heart.

Kotzé and the other three men were arrested a few days later. A court case followed and a clinical psychologist who acted on behalf of the defense team stated in court that Kotzé became dissociated when he saw Ina Bonnette with another man on New Year's Eve 2011. This dissociation was compounded when Bonnette placed the vibrator on the table during their argument before the hostile event later that day on 3 January 2012. The psychologist indicated that this added to his emotional pressure. The psychologist stated that Kotzé's "narcissistic supply" was cut off when he saw Bonnette with someone else and it caused severe trauma and stress. She stated in court that Kotzé had a narcissistic personality disorder and was obsessed with Bonnette. The psychologist insisted that Kotzé's narcissistic personality disorder regulated his behavior and the psychologist requested for mitigating circumstances and acquittal. She disclosed in court that "It is my opinion that the combination of Mr Kotze's narcissistic personality disorder, superimposed on traumatic psychological injuries, combined with an unmanaged, long-standing, major depression and untreated and unresolved acute stress disorder, resulted in a state of psychological dissociation during his alleged criminal acts" (Vermaak, 2012). At the heart of Kotzé's closing argument was the assertion that Kotzé was not fully aware of his actions and his attorney appealing that he should be acquitted as he was 'dissociated' when he allegedly attacked Bonnette and her son.

However the State's psychologist who clinically observed Kotzé during psychiatric observation and who testified for the prosecution said Kotzé did not suffer from any mental disorders and could be held accountable for his actions. The

"Modimolle Monster", Johan Kotzé, and his co-accused, Sithole, Mohlake and Mphaka, were handed down harsh sentences by the judge on Wednesday 17 July 2013. Kotzé and Sithole both received life sentences for the murder of Conrad Bonnette, while Mphaka and Mohlake were acquitted of the murder charge. Kotzé was also sentenced to 10 years for kidnapping and received another life sentence for Bonnette's rape. Sithole who was HIV positive at the time of the attack, was charged with a life sentence for Bonnette's rape and 10 years for kidnapping (Modimolle Madness, 2013; Vermaak, 2012).

This case, by some means verify the processes involved in exhibiting rage by someone with narcissistic personality disorder. The gravity of the "revenge" attack on Bonnette and the murdering of Conrad who continuously pleaded for his life somehow support the notion of the dissociation the perpetrator probably experienced. Kotzé stated in court that he could not recollect shooting Conrad or hurting Ina Bonnette. He told the presiding judge that these things happened but he could not remember what happened that day. He also denied shooting Conrad intentionally and told the court he remembered Conrad pleading but was surprised to hear that Conrad was dead. Kotzé said that he had been surprised to learn Conrad had been shot three times, and maintained he did not aim at Conrad. The judge asked Kotzé if he thought about what happened when he left the house after the incident and whether he thought he had committed a crime. Kotzé stated that he did not think so. This statement supports the fact that an act of this gravity is committed in an altered state of consciousness (Revitch & Schlesinger, 1981), where there is impaired contact with reality, although complete amnesia of the incident is highly unlikely. The perpetrator is not consciously aware of the motive for his violent actions. The perpetrator can often not discuss the events surrounding the murder, as they have difficulties in recollecting the offence. This leaves the question whether a person with NPD, a degree of narcissism or at least just about fit the criteria to be diagnosed with NPD should be deemed guilty and imprisoned? From the literature survey in this study it is safe to deduce that individuals with NPD will most likely react in a similar manner in similar circumstances, as a result of an underlying personality disorder. This suggests that incarceration in a correctional facility is probably not the correct place to rehabilitate these individuals and should subsequently rather be committed to a psychiatric facility. One can ask the question whether Kotzé knew exactly what he was doing or whether he acted with rage during a catathymic crisis which occurred within an ego-threatening relationship. His defense could however not convince the court and his plea of suffering of NPD was not successful.

Concluding Thoughts

The aim with the current research is to explore a possible association between rage-type murder and NPD. In Part one of the study rage-type murders as a phenomenon was delineated and NPD was defined. The literature pertaining to the association between rage-type murder and NPD was highlighted. A current case that signaled the probable processes during a catathymic crisis and the gratuitous violence that follows was interpreted against the background of the existing literature. The case leaves one with a sense of discontent as to whether NPD do play a role in cases involving rage-type murder and gratuitous violence. In Part two of the current study (future publication) the researchers will use cases identified from a Psychiatric Hospital to determine whether these perpetrators displayed narcissistic personality traits during the commission of a rage-type murder of a loved one. All the cases we selected in the qualitative research were referred to the Psychiatric Hospital by order of the court and involve males who displayed traits associated with NPD and committed rage-type murders - (Part two of the research).

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