

# **International Psychotherapy Institute**

## **Interpretation and Working Through In an Adolescent Analysis**

**March 28, 2021**

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# Adolescence

- “The hour of the stranger” [D. H. Lawrence]
- Extended period of mourning
- Working through inner biological changes
- Psychic restructuring amid social & cultural pressures
- Turbulent and longstanding crisis
- “The age of experimentation”

# Adolescence

- “What has been silenced in childhood usually manifests itself loudly in adolescence” [Kancyper, 2007]
- The unconscious is active generating manifestations in all stages of life
  - Can reorder situations
  - The adolescent questions the parents
  - A questioning stage to create something new
  - A window of opportunity

# Adolescent challenges

- Transitioning from infantile to adult psychic structures
- Reorganization of identity & sexual self
- “Unsettling” of latency period & “settling” into adult life

[Meltzer, 1973]

- Reactivation of aggressive & sexual impulses
- Restructuring of entire personality

# Adolescent states of mind

- Heightened anxiety & disruptive states of mind
- Predominance of projection mechanisms
- Aim to protect mind by avoiding internal conflict
  - Evacuating anxiety, “acting out,” denial
  - Pseudo-maturity
  - Egs. Bullying, substance use, gangs
- Containment: Therapy, Parent work

# Vignette

- 16 y.o. boy in 1x-weekly therapy with Anabella
- Limited verbal communication with lots of affect
- Tended to use play materials like a younger child
- Arrived to the video session as a monkey/shark
- Scene wearing shorts without a t-shirt, & in bed
- Opportunity for setting frame & containment

# Environment's Influence on Development

- Parent-child Relationship=most N.B. Factor
- “Relationships are the ‘active ingredients’
- Developmental Approach is essential
- Self-regulation is basic
- Therapeutic alliance determines outcome

Novick, Novick. *Child Adolescent Psychiatric Clin N Am* 22 (2013)

# Core Concepts of Concurrent Parent Work

- Optimizes effectiveness of adolescent therapy
- Dual goals of all child/adolescent tx
  1. Restores adolescent's developmental path
  2. Strengthens relationship with parent
- Full range of interventions
- Continue regularly throughout treatment
- adolescent tx & parent work are mutually enhancing

Novick, Novick. *Child Adolescent Psychiatric Clin N Am* 22 (2013)



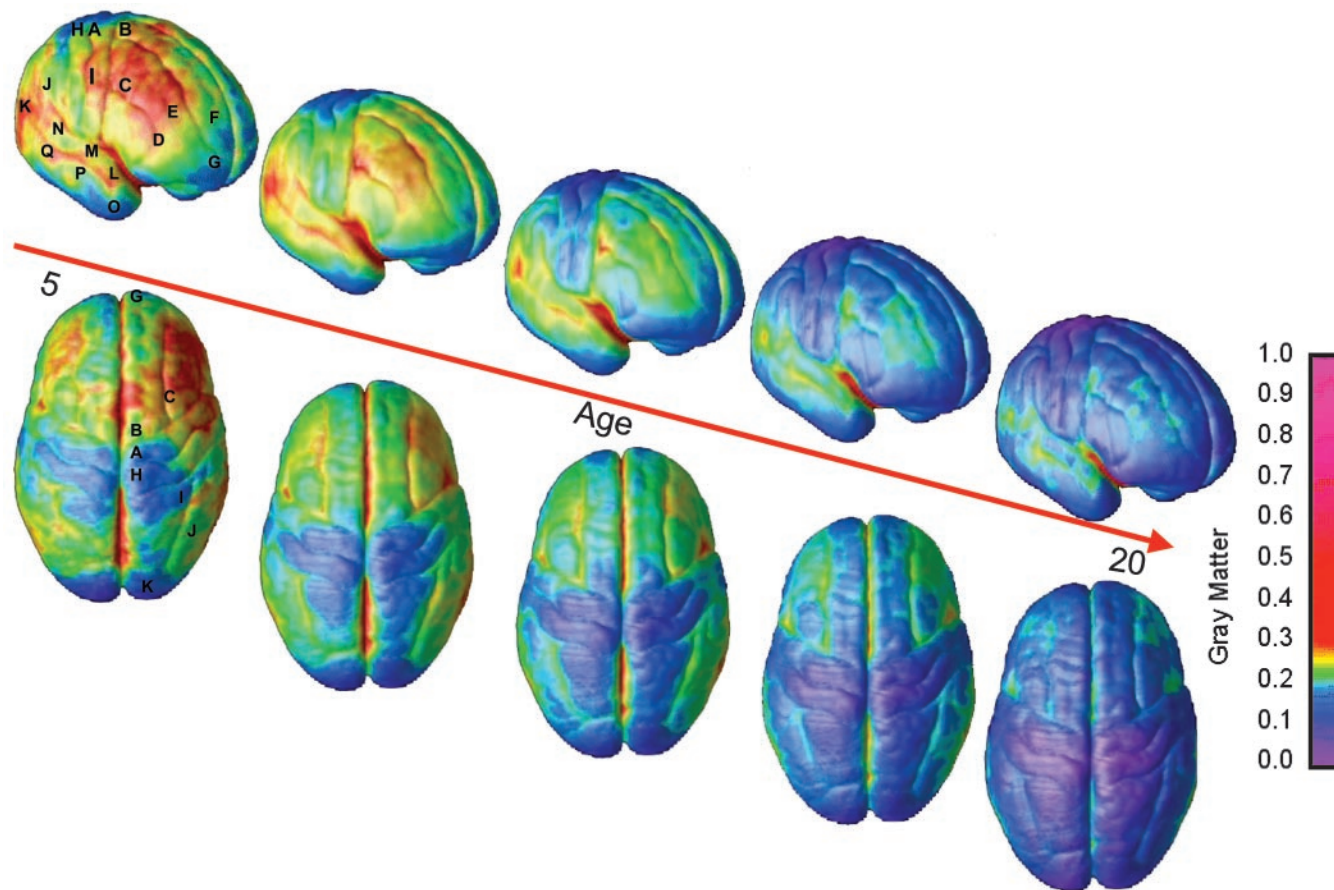
# Neurobiological development

- Cortical gray matter decreases as subcortical white matter reorganizes
- remodeling of neural connections, synaptic pruning
- Quantum leaps in reasoning and flexibility

# “Heart over mind” mentality

- Mismatch of subcortical & cortical development
- Fosters desire to explore and experiment (+ve)
- Poorer decision-making and impulse control (-ve)

# Neuroimaging of brain development



Gogtay, N., Giedd, J. et al Dynamic mapping of human cortical development during childhood through early adulthood (2004)

# Early Adolescence

- Extends from 11 (or 12) yo to 14 yo
- Approximates to middle school years
- Physical body transforms very quickly
- Onset and speed of pubertal changes impacts self-experience viz-a-viz peers

# Early Adolescence

- Self-representation evolves as the body transforms
- Focus shifts from family onto complex peer group
- Reliance upon the peer group for guidance
- Emergence of risky behaviors

# Defensive functioning

- Massive cognitive development
- Psychic structure is malleable
- Prone to labile states of mind
- Self-fragmentation
- Heavy reliance upon immature defenses

# Mid-Adolescence

- Extends from 14 yo to 17 yo
- Approximates to high school years
- Ends when teenagers anticipate autonomous self
- Bodily changes pose serious challenge to mental life

# Mid-Adolescence

- Growing autonomy → conflicts with parents
- Risky behaviors continue to increase
- Work on gender role identity, masturbation fantasy
- Interpersonal sexual contacts emerge



# Defensive functioning

- Process of growing integration of the self
- Formal operational thinking matures
- Greater capacities for self-regulation
- More able to rely upon more mature defenses
- Employ more on internal supports

# Late Adolescence (17-21)

- Extends from 17 yo to 21 yo
- End of high school and the post-high school experiences
- Intrapsychic phase in which identity, personality, and superego is consolidated
- Advancing individuation
- Shifts in power differential in parent-child relationship

# Late Adolescence

- Development and integration of personal identity
- Integration of childhood trauma & self-continuity
- Distinguishing love and sex
- Maturing of moral functioning

# Defensive functioning

- Ongoing integration of self
- Advanced thinking capacities & executive functioning
- More mature self-regulation & defenses
- Greater control of feelings and actions

# Analytic attitude & method

- Receptivity, reverie, listening, observation
- Tolerance of the unknown
- Attends to the unconscious (Ucs) to Ucs communication
- Gathers Ucs fantasies and examines defenses
- Distinguishes between manifest and latent content

# Interpretation & Working Through

- Make links between associations
- Gives form to the words of the patient
- Thinks on behalf of the patient and lends thinking to the patient to build the adolescent mind
- Focus on the transference link as crucial to working through

# REFERENCES

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