

# Getting to know the inner self. Exploratory study of Identity oriented psychotrauma therapy

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Preliminary findings, not yet published



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# Why this study?



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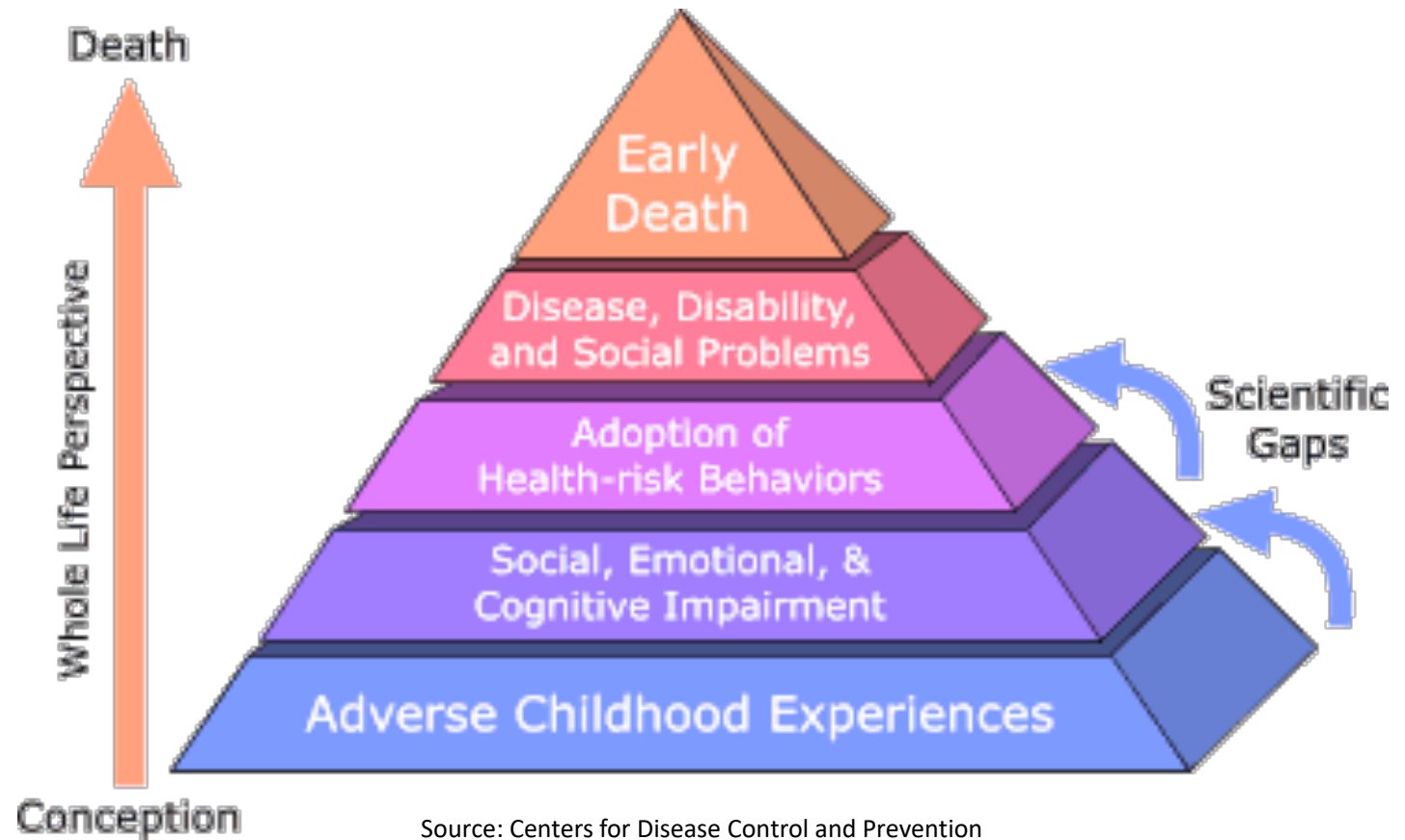
# What is trauma?

- Exposure to stressful, dangerous events  
(e.g. witness/direct/indirect exposure to actual/threatened death, injury, sexual violence) (APA)
- Acute, chronic, complex
- Impersonal or interpersonal
- Trauma encompasses the event itself and the individual's subjective reaction to it (APA, 2013).
- It is not the event per se, but its effects that characterize traumatizing events (Allen, 2001).

# Trauma can lead to...

- Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (DSM)
  - Reexperiencing of symptoms
  - Avoidance and numbing symptoms
  - Hyperarousal symptoms
- Complex trauma (C-PTSD) (multiple exposure) (ICD)
- It can induce:
  - hyper- and hyporegulation of emotional and physiological arousal (Ogden, Minton, Pain, Siegel, & van der Kolk, 2006)
  - result in splitting of personality, where one parts relives the trauma and the other tries to avoid anything that reminds of it (Herman, 1992; van der Kolk & McFarlane, 2004).

# The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study (Felitti et al 1998)



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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# Attachment research

Secure – Avoidant - Anxious - Disorganized

Attachment style affects:

- Perception and handling of closeness, emotional intimacy
- Ability to communicate and understand own/others' emotions/needs
- Handling of/response to conflicts
- Expectations on relationships (internal working models)

(Ainsworth & Bowlby)

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Harlow's Rhesus monkeys experiments





- 90% of all child abuse undetected (WHO 2014)
- Short/long term consequences
- Therapy evidence PTSD: strong
- Therapy evidence C-PTSD: lacking
- Need for trauma informed care

# Identity oriented psychotrauma therapy (IoPT)

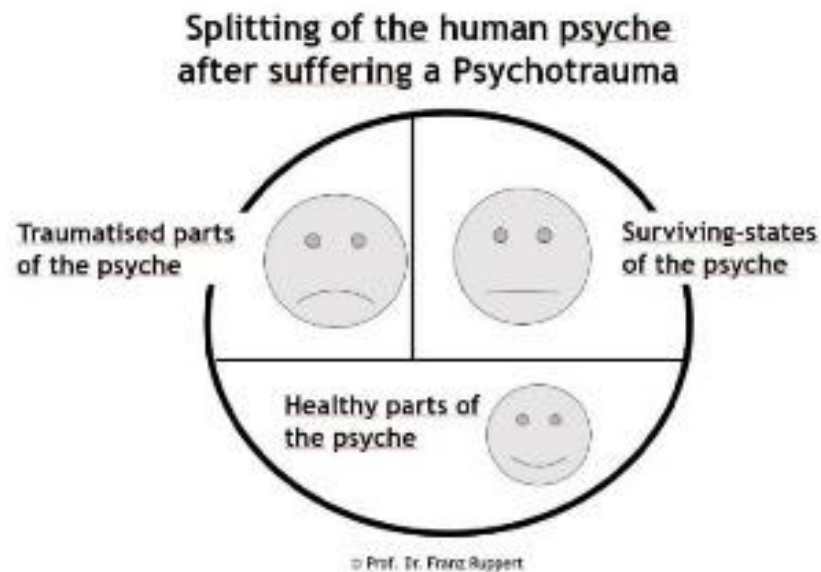


Figure 1. Model of Split of the human psyche after suffering a psychotrauma by Ruppert

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# The study's aim

To explore the experiences and value of IoPT in participants with experiences of IoPT, whether as a client (C), a current therapist/facilitator (current/future), representative (R), and/or observer (O).

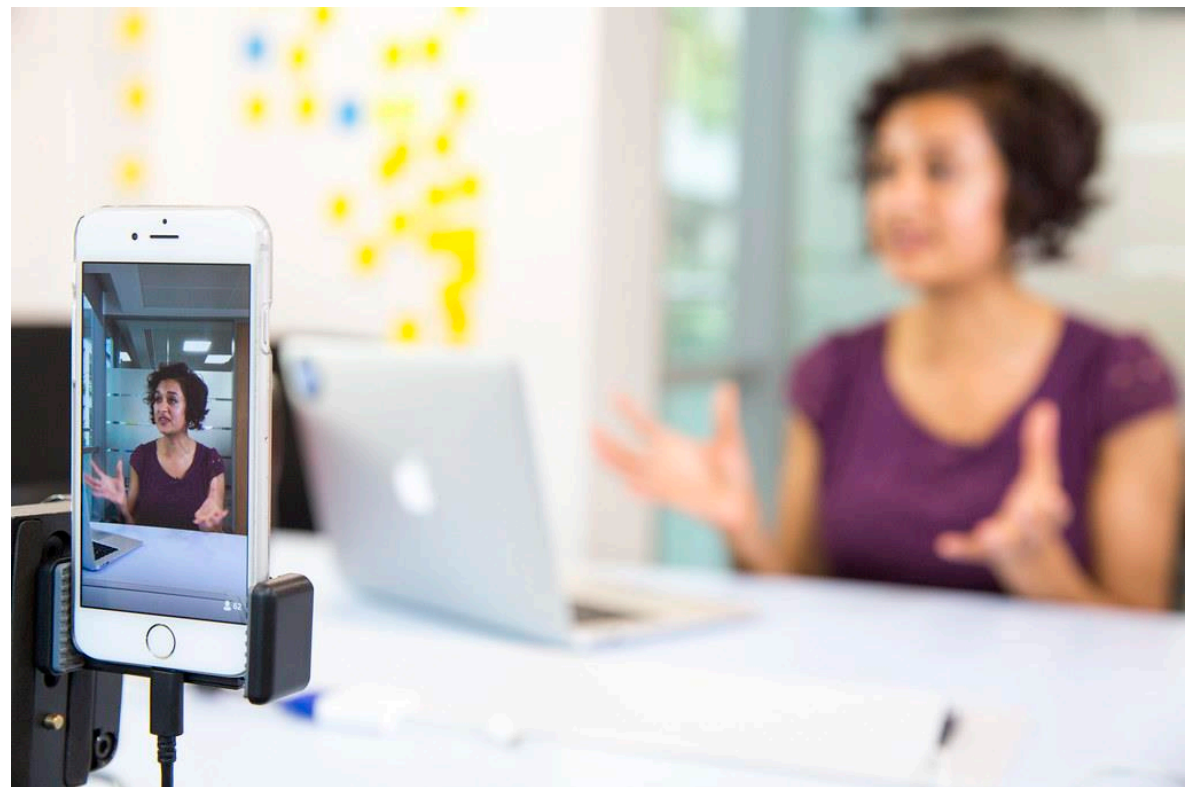
- Persons with experiences of IoPT (C, T, R, O)
- Nordic or English language
- $\geq 18$  years

# Methods - Grounded Theory

- The informants' voices in focus
- Unexplored area, little research
- Naïve outlook, no preconceived ideas

# How and with whom?

- newsletter to network
- 20 participants
- mostly women, Western World
- mean age 55.3
- C (n=19), T (15), R (18), O (14)
- majority with basic and/or advanced training
- sessions as T (5-900, mean=252)
- sessions as C (5-100+, mean=41)
- 16 individual interviews (f2f, skype, phone)
- 2 focus groups (2 persons/group)
- interview length 58-217 min (mean=114 min)



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# Analysis

- Parallell data collection and analysis
- Constant comparative method (GT) (Glaser & Strauss)

## To deepen my understanding of IoPT:

- International training modules (5 modules, 2018-2020)
- Two workshops (Oslo/München, 2018)
- IoPT books
- Scientific literature on neurosciences, traumatology, attachment, mentalisation, etc. – before/during/after





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# IoPT a journey towards self-discovery



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# Getting to know the inner self

*'The work has enabled me to decide where I want to focus next, in terms of my exploration of myself and my exploration of that other life that I can't remember.'* (C)



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## Intertwined but separate roles and perspectives

*‘Being a facilitator means you have to keep working on yourself, you have to keep digging deeper and deeper.’ (T)*

*‘I can also feel that it starts-up //my own processes when I am a representative for others. // And when I see recognition in the client that I am resonating with // I feel more secure accepting others when they are representatives for me. //.’ (C/R)*

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Photo by Daria Sannikova from Pexels

# To witness and be witnessed on multiple levels in a safe space

*'//seeing through the resonance, and you can't ignore it because it is in your face. And it hurts "Oh, this is what I am doing towards myself or towards others." Really to see it outside yourself in your resonance//.' (C)*

*'With IoPT you get contact with the things you don't want to talk about, can't talk about, or don't know how to talk about. You get help to talk about it with the help of your representatives. You get help to come into contact with it.' (T)*



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## The subject in the driver seat

*'Here the therapist is a guide and the client is in the driver seat and steers.'* (T)

*'The main thing is the way of facilitating, which is none intrusive, so held back. So respectful of the autonomy of the client, even if the client himself does not think he has any autonomy at all.'* (T)

# Navigation through facilitation, with or without crew



*'I am not here to tell you about your own life, only you know that, you and your psyche have been there the whole time. So you and your psyche know how much you want to explore. My role is to provide you with a safe vehicle.'* (T)

*'Always realize yourself that I as facilitator can't have a solution, can't find a solution.'* (T)

*'Whereas the advantage in group is absolutely that all your basic dynamics that are mirrored by the resonance points are active simultaneously.'* (C)

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# Meaning of the Crew

*'Apart from experiences that you're not alone, that you have witnesses and that there is a holding power, which is very, very good.'* (C/T)

*'You get a feeling of great support  
// For me who don't trust people//  
I start to do that now, but I am  
terrified of people because my  
closest ones abused me. // Now I  
don't feel lonely anymore.// So the  
whole session widens my  
perspective on what people can be  
for me.'* (C)

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Photo by Andrea Piacquadio from Pexels



# Resonance as a phenomenon and role



Photo by Tasha Kamrowski from Pexels

*'And that for me was a break-through in understanding what was being manifest was what was going on for me, but also trusting in the phenomena. There is no way that woman could have known that sentence!'* (C)

*'Somehow words, feelings, physical sensations, acts, movements come by themselves.// Being a representative has been the clearest for me because I really feel that "this isn't me", and still I feel and say all this. But now I can show all these things// sometimes one is chosen... because it's an nearby issue. Just as I know that it's only the other one that has moved in, I still know and feel that it also affects my own issues. I can separate the two. And then it is healing.'* (R)

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# Reclaiming the self



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*'You can help the client separate the past from the present. Because clients are often triggered in the present. The triggers give bodily sensations, bodily pain or anxiety, or whatever. Once they learn that what happens in the present is a reaction to what happened in the past and how you can deal with it, and how you can recognize your traumatized part and how your survival parts take over. You make a definite separation between the two, and you can learn that you can use your healthy parts to become stronger.'* (T)

# The black box - struggling with an explanation and pedagogical model



*'It's important that the therapist is confident with the method and confident with how (s)he presents him/herself and the method. // One needs to pack this, to present it so elegantly that this magic - I call it magic - that arises when we manage to read each other, it should be described in a way that results in "Yes, I understand that's how the method works."' (T)*

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# Concluding remarks

- Explorative, qualitative study with 20 participants
- Limited sample, rich data
- Experiences of IoPT from different perspectives
- The different perspectives can be enriching
- Value of IoPT for self-discovery and self-development
- Challenging to explain the "how" of IoPT
- Further research



Thank you!

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