



UNIVERSITÀ
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DI BERGAMO

Department
of Human
and Social Sciences

STaRs (Supporting Talented Researchers) Program – Incoming Visiting Professors

Linguistic Dimensions of Body Dysmorphic Disorder

Keynote speaker

Dr. Christopher Christian, Ph.D.

Editor-in-Chief, Psychoanalytic Psychology, Journal of Division 39 of APA
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Discussants

Pietro Barbetta, Rachele Mariani, Trudy Milburn, Attà Negri

July 18th, 2019 9.00-12.00
Classroom 11, Via Pignolo 123

Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD) is a psychiatric condition characterized by an obsessive preoccupation with a perceived flaw in physical appearance. It is a common affliction, affecting approximately 1.7% to 2.4% of the population, with roughly equal distribution among men and women. A psychoanalytic approach to treating BDD stresses that, rather than address the condition as a form of cognitive distortion or misperception, the clinician ought to facilitate the patient's elaboration and symbolization of the perceived malfunction or physical flaw. As patients speak about their symptoms and physical condition they engage in a process of symbolizing a wider range of conflictual and anxiety-laden intrapsychic content (Ferro, 2018; Bucci, 1997).

In this seminar we will review psychotherapy sessions from the treatment of a patient with BDD, in which the patient believed that the entire left side of his body was deformed and lacked connective tissue. Thirty sessions from this single case study were transcribed and analyzed for fluctuations in the patient's emotional engagement when speaking about his body. Applying Bucci's linguistic measures of referential process, we will describe some linguistic dimensions of body dysmorphia. The study is the first of its kind to assess language dimensions of body talk, and helps illuminate a complex clinical phenomenon that is fraught with challenges for clinical intervention.

Please send an email to giovanbattista.andreoli@unibg.it to register for the seminar.

Attendance will be certificated and acknowledged as part of the traineeship activities for the second year students of Master's Degree Program in Clinical Psychology.