An Assessment of Lars and His Real Girl

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Introduction

Lars Lindstrom is a 27 year old Caucasian male from a rural Wisconsin town. He lives alone in a self-standing garage on the property of the house he grew up in. Lars does not currently show signs of any medical conditions or complications. His mother passed away during his birth, leaving a heartbroken father to raise two young sons alone. Stifled and distraught by both his family’s circumstance and rural Wisconsin, Lars’s older brother Gus left town as early as possible, making Lars and his father the only remaining members of the family living at home. Years later, Lars’s father passed away and Gus eventually married and returned home with his expectant wife, Karin. Gus and Karin currently live next door to Lars in the house on the same property (Aubrey, Cameron, & Kimmel & Gillespie, 2007).

Lars prefers to spend the majority of his spare time alone in the garage. Despite his anti-social tendencies, Lars holds a full-time job and is a regular attendee at a local church parish. One day, after a longstanding pattern of refusing invitations from Karin, Lars rings Karin and Gus’s doorbell and informs his family that he has met a girl. Karin and Gus share in Lars’s excitement as he tells them all about Bianca, a wheelchair-bound woman of both Brazilian and Dutch descent that he met online. Gus and Karin are disturbed to discover that Bianca is a sex doll that Lars purchased online and treats as if she were a human girlfriend. As attentive and committed as the most ideal partner, Lars treats Bianca like a princess.

Uncertain how to address the situation, Karin and Gus seek help from a local psychologist, Dagmar. Dagmar diagnoses Bianca with low blood pressure, believing Lars will
continue to bring her in for weekly visits. During these regular sessions, Dagmar provides Lars with needed clinical intervention and encourages family and friends to go along with Lars’s delusion for the time being. Lars is warmly supported throughout his journey with Bianca by his family, co-workers, and local community, despite some initial resistance and concern from many.

Lars does not perceive there to be a problem with his current situation at this time. However, he does show significant signs of distress when touched by others, including feeling an intense burning sensation. He specifically mentioned Karin wanting to hug him and others too frequently. To control for this uncomfortable phenomenon, Lars wears multiple layers of clothing and avoids getting too close to others. While Lars does not state a desire to make major changes in his present situation, his actions indicate an interest in making changes that might lead to the alleviation of this and other related experiences.

Gus and Karin are both extremely concerned by Lars’s behavior, both prior to and following the arrival of Bianca. Karin is particularly alarmed by the amount of time Lars spends in isolation. After meeting Bianca, Gus and Karin worry that Lars has lost his mind. They both fear that Lars has suffered permanent damage from a traumatic childhood, leaving him uninterested and incapable of forming healthy relationships with others. Gus is concerned with the reputation of his brother and how Lars’s relationship with Bianca will affect his well-being, future, and their entire family. Gus and Karin hope to see Lars move on from his relationship with a sex doll and develop lasting and meaningful relationships with others.
Assessment of Ego Functioning

Upon the analysis of Lars’s ego functioning, it is clear that he currently exhibits characteristics and tendencies that indicate weak or impaired ego functioning in all 12 categories of the assessment. While Lars makes significant improvements in most of the 12 ego functions during our time together, his current status remains weak at best.

Lars’s ability to utilize proper reality testing is considered weak, as he only sometimes perceives external stimuli in his surrounding environment accurately. We see Lars get to work on time, attend church regularly, and make and keep commitments with others. However, Lars does maintain the delusion that Bianca, a life-sized doll, is alive. Lars also experiences burning sensations when he is touched by others, an illusion that he has created himself.

A sense of judgment is used in making decisions that support or obscure goal achievement. Lars uses good judgment as he navigates caring for himself, holding a full-time job, and remaining active in his church community. However, Lars has a weak sense of judgment due to his decision to order a doll to fill the void of meaningful relationships in his life. Lars does not use good judgment as he becomes increasingly dependent on Bianca and begins to become possessive over her when she is introduced to different community members and organizations.

Lars has an impaired sense of identity. This can be substantiated by looking at his inability to manage acceptable boundaries with others. Lars goes to great lengths to avoid others, especially any interactions that involve touch. In addition, Lars exhibits symptoms of an impaired sense of identity through his creation of and dependence and over-involvement with his doll girlfriend.
While Lars does not struggle to navigate the distinguishing of primary drives and planned mental processes, his *impulse and affect control* is weak due to his inability live in accordance with accepted social norms. Lars’s actions might not completely inhibit him from functioning, but the degree to which he veers away from societal norms by creating and maintaining an intimate relationship with a doll limits him. Were Lars to live in a less supportive environment, he may experience a significant decline in functioning.

An ability for healthy *thought process regulation* allows a person to focus their attention and efforts effectively in order to facilitate the achievement of specific and desired outcomes. Lars has created an entire life built around a fantasy, leaving his *thought process regulation* impaired. Lars experiences major road blocks in any attempt to properly regulate thoughts, as he is kept distracted by developing and maintaining Bianca’s story and day to day experiences.

When taking into consideration Lars’s inability to completely separate Karin’s pregnancy with the loss of his mother during childbirth and his challenges in managing appropriate relationships with others by regularly isolating himself, Lars’s functioning of *interpersonal/object relations* is impaired. Lars repeatedly relied on Karin, sometimes unknowingly, to facilitate his relationships with other community members.

While Lars lives on his own, we see weakness in his *autonomous functioning* due to his compromised social skills. Lars intentionally created distance from others throughout his life, beginning by withdrawing at a young age. Lars struggles to develop intimate relationships with others.

Lars’s *adaptive uses of defenses* have become maladaptive, leaving Lars with significant impairment in this particular function. Lars overuses the defense mechanisms of fantasy and
delusional projection by creating a life for his doll girlfriend and incorporating this reality into all aspects of his life. By choosing to eventually have Bianca get sick and die, Lars begins to attempt to lessen his dependence on this particular defense mechanism. Lars also relies on several other defense mechanisms to minimize his anxieties. He utilizes somatization in experiencing pain upon his physical interactions with others. In addition, Lars acts out as Bianca starts to become too involved with activities in the community. Lars becomes possessive and extremely distraught. Lars seems to attempt to repress any unpleasant feelings he has towards his childhood, uninterested in exploring how his past may have affected his present mental condition with his therapist or anyone else.

An impaired stimulus barrier is indicated by Lars’s fears and significant resistance to physical touch and intimate interactions with others. It seems as though, Lars currently has an extremely limited ability to receive sensory stimulation. However, after allowing Bianca to die and putting her life behind him, Lars begins the journey of allowing others in. Specifically, a female co-worker of Lars’s is slowly welcomed into his protected world.

There are major impairments in Lars’s adaptive regression in service to the ego functioning. The reason for significant impairment in this particular function is Lars’s inability to break away from his temporary release from reality. Becoming completely engrossed in his life with Bianca, Lars loses his sense of self and embarks on an on-going and continual creative process that only further complicates his issues regarding isolation and societal integration.

Weakness is apparent in the functioning of Lars’s mastery and competence. While Lars is competent enough to master his environment sufficiently enough to care for himself and hold a full-time job, he has yet to prove that he is able to master a life free of fantasy, but one that is
instead rooted in reality. Lars is a successful and productive member of his community in part due to their supportive nature.

Considering Lars’s struggle to fully integrate all of the various aspects of his life, his synthetic-integrative functioning is severely impaired. Lars creates Bianca, therefore providing observers with a visual representation of his challenges associated with personality integration and total self-coherence. Too insecure to deal with his issues without her, Bianca represents an inability to address the pains of his past for Lars. Fortunately, with the passing of Bianca, Lars embarks on a journey of improved internal coherence and improved management of conflicting tendencies.

Assessment of Strengths

Physically healthy, creative, and well-disciplined, Lars Lindstrom has many strengths from which he can draw as he tackles life’s challenges. At 27, Lars lives along and takes care of himself and his household. He has no assistance with any of the normal activities of daily living and uses his own car for transportation. Lars enjoys living alone and when not engaged with activities in the community, Lars entertains himself at home with solitary activities, like board games. Holding a full-time office position with a local employer, Lars is reliable, punctual, intelligent, and dedicated. While at work, Lars enjoys the benefits of being accepted by his co-workers, as he is regularly invited to attend work-related activities. Lars expresses being content with his current position at work and hopes to maintain the current lifestyle his situation affords. Currently, Lars is experiencing no financial strain as his full-time work allows him to live comfortably, even affording to purchase relatively large luxury items on occasion. Being
physically healthy, employed full-time, and having relatively low living expenses means that access to insurance and health care coverage is not a concern for Lars at this time. Lars is supported emotionally and socially by his brother and sister-in-law. Living next door to Lars, Karin and Gus are invested and committed family members to Lars. Additionally, Lars lives in a rural Wisconsin town that has an abundance of patient, caring, and supportive community members. Lars receives loving support from his local church family and a majority of his co-workers. Lars is currently working hard to address the issues from his childhood that have led to his having socially-isolating behaviors by confronting his delusions.

**Diagnosis**

Multiaxial Evaluation

Axis 1: 297.1 Delusional Disorder-Unspecified Type

Axis 11: V71.09 No diagnosis

Axis 111: None

Axis 1V: Problems with primary support group

Axis V: GAF=58 (current)


Lars was given the diagnosis of delusional disorder-unspecified due to his meeting diagnostic criteria for the disorder but failing to meet criteria for all other mental disorders and conditions presently. Delusional disorder was initially considered due to the central focus of the delusion in Lars’s situation. Lars’s delusions are considered nonbizarre, as his delusion of having a girlfriend could in fact happen to a person in reality. Lars does not meet criteria for
Schizophrenia. He is currently only presenting with one of the characteristic symptoms of schizophrenia, delusions, drastically enough to be considered clinically significant. The display of at least two characteristic symptoms is needed to meet criteria for Schizophrenia. Considering his ability to continue to care for himself and hold a job, Lars continues to function normally in all areas of his life not related to his delusion. Lars does not seem to exhibit symptoms of clinically significant mood episodes presently. And finally, there have been no indications of Lars having at any point suffered from physiological effects of a substance. In addition, Lars does not appear to be using any substances currently. Lars was given the additional specifier or Unspecified Type due to his delusion not being accurately described as any of the named types. Social Anxiety Disorder-Social Phobia was also looked at as an Axis 1 diagnosis, on a number of accounts, but was later ruled out after the diagnostic criterion was not met. Not only does Lars not indicate a fear of embarrassment or humiliation, he does not indicate recognizing that his fear of social situations is excessive. Furthermore, describing Lars’s preference for solitary activities and tendency to isolate himself as a fear of social situations is exaggerated.

While Avoidant Personality Disorder was considered for Axis 11, his anti-social tendencies are not the consequence of his fear of disapproval or rejection from others, but instead reflective of his desire to isolate himself from others due to personal issues with intimacy and managing appropriate boundaries with others.

Lars has no current medical conditions and has been in recent contact with local physicians who have indicated that he is presently healthy and cleared medically.

Lars’s problems with his primary support group date back to his early childhood. Lars’s mother died during his birth, leaving a heartbroken single father to care to Lars and his older
brother Gus. Gus left home as soon as he was old enough to get along without immediate parental support, leaving Lars and his father alone with one another. As an adult, Lars presently struggles to allow for support or significant interaction from his immediate family. He struggles to allow people to get close enough to provide him adequate support.

Lars GAF score is currently 58 due the presence of symptoms affecting his present psychological, social, and occupational functioning. With symptoms that are moderate in severity, Lars has some difficulty in social, occupational, and many personal situations. While Lars’s behavior is frequently influenced by marked delusions, he is able to control this behavior well enough to maintain a proper level of functioning to remain in good standing at work and continue to care for himself, as he lives alone.

**Goals**

Collaboratively, several treatment goals have been established in hopes of better equipping Lars with tools to effectively adapt to his current life circumstances. With a foundation built on the premises of ego psychology, the treatment Lars will participate in will address many of his current challenges. Ego psychology is based on four main assumptions. Ego psychology asserts that people are born innately capable of learning how to develop in order to adapt to their changing environments, psychological functioning is affected by social influences, behavior is significantly motivated by desires to achieve mastery and competence, and environmental influences or internal conflicts can create challenges that inhibit proper social functioning at any point in one’s life (Walsh 2010). The following goals were developed in hopes of improving Lars’s functioning by decreasing the negative effects of his presenting
problems associated with his delusion. While Lars works towards these goals, his strengths will be noted and emphasized.

Lars’s first goal is to improve his synthetic-integrative functioning by no longer using his delusion of Bianca to distance himself from others and himself. Lars will confront his reliance on a fabricated intimate partner by embracing his independence and fostering relationships with others. Specifically, Lars has a female co-worker named Margo with whom he would like to spend more time. As this desire seems to be reciprocated by Margo, Lars will let Margo into his private world by engaging in social activities four or more times per month. Upon their interaction, Lars will journal about how this interaction felt.

Secondly, Lars will improve his interpersonal/object relations by developing and nurturing intimate relationships with family and friends without relying on Karin or other members of the community to facilitate this for him. Lars will continue to attend church regularly, but will make attempts to engage other members in conversation. Lars will also work through his discomfort with the risks associate with Karin’s pregnancy by becoming an active participant in her journey and accompanying her on a doctor’s visit to see how firsthand how well Karin and the baby are doing. Lars will have the opportunity to discuss his fears and concerns regarding his sister-in-law’s pregnancy.

Finally, Lars has a third goal to address and manage his adaptive use of defense mechanisms, as his over use of several defense mechanisms has become maladaptive. While Lars uses a number of defense mechanisms to cope with his anxieties, his reliance on fantasy limits him most significantly. While it is important Lars’s defense mechanisms are not taken entirely away, Lars’s reliance on them is not sustainable and does not promote on-going healthy
functioning. Lars will actively engage with others without speaking for or about Bianca at least some of the time. Lars’s independence and autonomy will be emphasized and encouraged.

While many of the above goals will be challenging for Lars, the emphasis will be on accepting where he is and encouraging him to embrace challenges as he is ready. Focusing on his strengths and abilities, the ultimate treatment goal is to increase his level of functioning and decrease any associated guilt or dysfunction he is carrying with him from his past.
References

