

Chapter 6

Personality Disorders

Llewelyn Moss: *If I was cuttin' deals, why wouldn't I go deal with this guy Chigurh?*
 Carson Wells: *No, no, no. You don't understand. You can't make a deal with him. Even if you gave him the money he'd still kill you. He's a peculiar man. You could even say that he has principles. Principles that transcend money or drugs or anything like that. He's not like you. He's not even like me.*
 Dialogue about the psychopath Anton Chigurh in *No Country for Old Men* (2007)

Questions to Consider While Watching *No Country for Old Men*

- Do you think the diagnosis of antisocial personality disorder adequately explains the personality dynamics of Anton Chigurh?
- What advice would you give to a colleague who stated they were treating someone who fit the description of Chigurh given in the epigraph?
- What clues are given in the film that explain why Chigurh acts the way he does?
- Is there a typical childhood for those with antisocial personality? What are some common themes?
- Is it possible for a person to experience absolutely no guilt and remorse for severe wrongdoings?
- Do most people with antisocial personality disorders engage in highly risky behavior?
- Is there any way Chigurh could ever have a positive prognosis? Can someone with a diagnosis of antisocial personality disorder recover?
- Can a person have several different personality disorders at the same time?
- Is antisocial personality disorder more common in men or in women? Why?
- How is a personality disorder qualitatively different from an Axis I *DSM-IV-TR* disorder?

Patient Evaluation

Patient's stated reason for coming: "I am looking for someone. You're not the man I am looking for." He later added, "This guy wanted me to come speak with you," referring to a probation officer who accompanied him. The probation officer stated that this evaluation is "a recommendation of the court."

History of the present illness: Anton Chigurh is a 48-year-old man who has never married, lives alone, and does not appear to have any meaningful relationships. He has had a number of legal problems, most recently for car theft and arson. He has been accused of murder but has been acquitted. The officers at the local jail know Mr. Chigurh well because he is arrested a couple of times each year. He has escaped from his jail cell on two previous occasions.

Past psychiatric illness, treatment, and outcomes: Mr. Chigurh reported a long history of rule-breaking behavior and problems with the legal system. He was raised in foster homes during his childhood and was placed in juvenile detention centers and psychiatric treatment centers for much of his adolescence. As a child, he tortured and killed dogs, cats, and rabbits. He stated he has been given a number of diagnoses over the years; these include schizophrenia, depression, and bipolar disorder. He denied problems controlling his impulses, saying any action he takes is conscious and deliberate, not impulsive. He does not report any pleasure resulting from his acts of arson. He denied feelings of guilt or remorse for his previous illegal activities. He stated he has never backed down from a fight and is often the instigator.

Medical history: Mr. Chigurh denied any significant medical history or use of prescription medications. He reports being physically healthy.

Psychosocial history: Mr. Chigurh says he is self-employed but would not explain his work any further. He noted he has never held a regular job with an employer for longer than one day. He dropped out of high school and did not attend any college class or receive a GED. He has committed a number of felonies and misdemeanors and has spent several months in jail as an adult. He is socially isolated, and he has no interest in making friends or initiating intimate relationships; however, he does state that he "knows" a lot of people who are acquaintances and work contacts.

Drug and alcohol history: Mr. Chigurh reported he used to use hallucinogens and "other stuff" on a daily basis over several years. He noted he has not used a single illegal drug for over 20 years. He has not used alcohol or smoked a cigarette for over 20 years. When asked about the turning point two decades ago, Mr. Chigurh refused to share much, stating: "Sometimes things happen."

Behavioral observations: Mr. Chigurh was very taciturn, and rarely spoke more than a sentence or two at a time; his voice tone was deep and he was very clear and precise in his choice of words. His range of affect was limited – flat with mild agitation. Mr. Chigurh described his mood as "good." His eye contact was direct and penetrating to the point of inappropriate staring at the interviewer; it was uncertain as to whether he was trying to intimidate the interviewer or whether this was his typical style. His appearance was clean and casual. He was particularly insightful and appeared to understand the rationale behind each of the interviewer's questions; however, he refused to offer insights into his own behaviors or personal life.

Mental status examination: Mr. Chigurh was oriented to person, place, time, and situation, and he scored 30 out of 30 on the Mini Mental State Examination. There was no evidence of cognitive difficulty or psychiatric disturbance on the mental status examination. Homicidality was indeterminate; he did not give a yes or no response but also did not reveal any details as to any harm he was intending to inflict. He denied suicidality. Hallucinations, delusions, and paranoia were not exhibited and explicitly denied; however, he did make cryptic comments such as when the interviewer asked about his thoughts about the man who recently turned him to the authorities; Mr. Chigurh replied, "I freed him. Sometimes people get lucky."

Mr. Chigurh stated that since he answered a number of questions and took the mental status exam that the interviewer should play a game with him in return. For rapport building purposes and because it was toward the end of the interview, the interviewer agreed to participate. Mr. Chigurh took out a coin and stated "Heads or tails, call it." He flipped the coin, and the interviewer guessed correctly; Mr. Chigurh then smiled and walked out of the room without saying another word.

Functional assessment: Mr. Chigurh reported he is functioning adequately in all areas of his life. By societal standards, he is not functioning well socially, psychologically, or personally. Mr. Chigurh shows no concern about these areas.

Strengths: Mr. Chigurh is quite intelligent and seems to be very aware of what is going on in his environment and the motives of those around him. He seems to be patient and highly self-controlled. He displayed a dry sense of humor.

Diagnosis: Antisocial personality disorder

Treatment plan: Mr. Chigurh is at high risk of harming again although no specific plan or intention has been shared. His violent and aggressive history, his diagnosis, and his lack of empathy for others support this belief. His enigmatic presentation and unsettling body language do not help his case. A release of information was signed that permits the interviewer to communicate regularly with Mr. Chigurh's probation officer. The interviewer will consult with a forensic psychologist colleague on this case and may contact the American Psychological Association ethics office for consultation on best approaches at present to prevent harm to others and for advice about how to respond to future scenarios that might emerge. The top treatment priority should be ensuring the safety of others who may come into contact with Mr. Chigurh.

Prognosis: Poor. This man shows no remorse, no interest in changing anything about himself, and no awareness that anything that he has done is wrong.

Psychopathy, Antisocial Personality, and *No Country for Old Men*

Javier Bardem's 2007 Academy Award-winning performance as Anton Chigurh is one of the most chilling portrayals of psychopathology and evil in cinema history. It is hard to imagine Chigurh not

being named as one of the top 5 villains on the next American Film Institute's list of top heroes and villains in cinema history (see Appendix A). His portrayal is as engaging as it is frightening. On one level, he is a man after money, simply doing a job; on another level, he is a cold-blooded, psychopath-

ic serial killer; on still another, he symbolizes evil itself. It is fair to call him amoral – he is someone totally devoid of a moral code; on the other hand, some might say he is a man of principle, following his belief in one thing – fate. At times, Chigurh uses a coin toss to determine whom he will kill; at other times he simply kills anyone who gets in his way. He does not show a hint of goodness, morality, or care for anyone with whom he comes into contact; meaning and purpose are the furthest thing from his mind. He employs a unique weapon – a penetrating captive bolt pistol that is normally used to stun or kill cattle.

The character of Chigurh is a fascinating film portrayal – he has a deep, harsh voice, penetrating eyes, and a steady, self-assured gait. He is usually fairly taciturn; when he does speak, he chooses his words carefully. His nationality and ethnicity are intentionally left unclear so he could potentially be from anywhere. His behavior is incredibly resourceful with a high level of “negative ingenuity” (creativity in the moment and for malicious purposes). He appears as unstoppable, and he adeptly “uses” everyone he encounters. There are no walls or locked doors that can slow him down or block him; his bolt-gun blows through every lock he encounters. It seems to make no difference where a person goes if Chigurh is waiting there to deliver his or her fate. In one scene he is put on the defensive, yet he finds a way to disappear. This is another critical aspect of his character. Just as one does not necessarily see “pure evil,” but perhaps forms of evil, we do not see Chigurh and he does not want to be seen. One character refers to him as a ghost. Indeed, the first shot of him (and several other shots) in the film is a shadow as he sits in the back seat, just before an escape and a brutal killing. He follows his subjects silently and then suddenly is present; just as quickly as he appears, he disappears. When asked if he was going to kill a man, Chigurh responds “That depends, can you see me?”

When reading these descriptions, it is probably clear that Chigurh is not a typical antisocial personality. He not only displays a pervasive pattern of breaking rules, irresponsibility, impulsiveness, and aggressiveness, but he is also a serial killer devoid of any hint of humanity. The diagnosis of psychopathic personality (not a formal *DSM-IV-TR* diagnosis, but something discussed later in this chapter) provides a more accurate and apt description.

No Country for Old Men (2007) won a number of awards, including Academy Awards for Best Director, Best Picture, and Best Adaptive Screenplay. Directed by the Coen Brothers, the

film merges a number of genre elements – thriller/suspense, crime drama, and western.

Anton Chigurh’s character can be compared with the late Heath Ledger’s Academy Award-winning performance as The Joker in *The Dark Knight* (2008). The Joker is an incredibly engaging – and more charismatic – villain who clearly fits the dimensions of the psychopathic personality. He displays no remorse or hint of human goodness and kills at will. Both of these characters would be on the severe end of this personality disorder dimension. Viewers are very curious about each of these characters and eagerly anticipate each scene in which they appear. There are a number of explanations for viewers’ fascination with these two characters and those of other psychopaths such as Hannibal Lecter in *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991) and Alex in *A Clockwork Orange* (1971). Curiosity researcher Todd Kashdan offers three explanations (Kashdan, 2009, and personal communication):

1) **Exposure:** Movies are a safe place for the viewer to experience one’s greatest fears and this opportunity is often relished since the viewer always knows at some level that what they are seeing is not real. These films combine curiosity and fear, producing a blended emotional state that can be a very pleasurable and positive experience. The viewer’s anxiety amplifies the pleasure of the intrigue and the resulting positive experience is more intense and long-lasting.

2) **Thrill seeking:** Some viewers enjoy taking personal and emotional risks for the sake of the experience. Since much of life falls into the neutral category and there are typically few instances in which we can experience intense emotions (e.g., hatred), these movies let us fill out the full spectrum of experiences allowing the viewer to experience intense sensations.

3) **Social scripts:** We know that courage and overcoming fear can lead to positive outcomes. Some viewers get to tap into this positive social script, while for others who don’t necessarily enjoy the experience, it is nothing more than a test of courage. There are few occasions in which we get to do this, so the viewer will often seek them out, even if he or she doesn’t particularly enjoy the experience. This occurs when a viewer has an emotion profile of high curiosity and low pleasure.

Types of Personality Disorders

All of us have unique personalities and our own individual personality traits. On occasion, these

Table 6.1. Characteristics of personality disorders with examples from contemporary cinema

Disorder Cluster	Personality Disorder	Characteristics	Classic Film Examples	Recent Film Examples
A	Paranoid	Distrust and suspiciousness about the motives of others	Lt. Cmdr. Philip Francis Queeg (Humphrey Bogart) in <i>The Caine Mutiny</i> (1954); Fred C. Dobbs (Humphrey Bogart) in <i>The Treasure of the Sierra Madre</i> (1948)	Paul (John Diehl) in <i>Land of Plenty</i> (2004); Dell Spooner (Will Smith) in <i>I, Robot</i> (2004)
	Schizoid	Detachment from social relationships and a restricted range of emotional expression	Will Penny (Charlton Heston) in <i>Will Penny</i> (1968)	Bartleby (Crispin Glover) in <i>Bartleby</i> (2001); Ed Crane (Billy Bob Thornton) in <i>The Man Who Wasn't There</i> (2001)
	Schizotypal	Acute discomfort in close relationships, cognitive or perceptual distortions, and behavioral eccentricities	Jack Arnold Alexander Tancred Gurney (Peter O'Toole) in <i>The Ruling Class</i> (1972)	Willy Wonka (Johnny Depp) in <i>Charlie and the Chocolate Factory</i> (2005); Charlie Fineman (Adam Sandler) in <i>Reign Over Me</i> (2007)
B	Antisocial	Disregard for and violation of the rights of others	Alex (Malcolm McDowell) in <i>A Clockwork Orange</i> (1971); Bruno Anthony (Robert Walker) in <i>Strangers on a Train</i> (1951)	Chris Wilton (Jonathan Rhys Meyers) in <i>Match Point</i> (2005); Andy Hanson (Philip Seymour Hoffman) in <i>Before the Devil Knows You're Dead</i> (2007)
	Borderline	Instability in emotions and interpersonal relationships, inadequate self-image, fear of abandonment, and marked impulsiveness	Alex Forrest (Glenn Close) in <i>Fatal Attraction</i> (1987)	Barbara Covett (Judi Dench) in <i>Notes on a Scandal</i> (2006); Margot (Nicole Kidman) in <i>Margot at the Wedding</i> (2007)
	Histrionic	Excessive emotionality and attention seeking	Blanche DuBois (Vivien Leigh) in <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> (1951)	Carolyn Burnham (Annette Bening) in <i>American Beauty</i> (1999)
	Narcissistic	Grandiosity, a need for admiration, and lack of empathy for the problems and needs of others	Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson) in <i>Sunset Blvd.</i> (1950)	Troy Duffy as himself in <i>Overnight</i> (2003); Ron Burgundy (Will Ferrell) in <i>Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy</i> (2004)
C	Avoidant	Social inhibition, feelings of inadequacy, and hypersensitivity to criticism or negative evaluation	Laura Wingfield (Jane Wyman) in <i>The Glass Menagerie</i> (1950)	Amélie Poulain (Audrey Tautou) in <i>Amélie</i> (2001); William Forrester (Sean Connery) in <i>Finding Forrester</i> (2000)
	Dependent	Submissive and clinging behavior and fears of separation	Bob “Bobby” Wiley (Bill Murray) in <i>What About Bob?</i> (1991)	Claire Richards (Renée Zellweger) in <i>White Oleander</i> (2002)
	Obsessive-Compulsive	Preoccupation with orderliness, perfectionism, and control	Felix Ungar (Jack Lemmon) in <i>The Odd Couple</i> (1968)	Al Fountain (John Turturro) in <i>Box of Moonlight</i> (1996)

personality traits get us in trouble. For some individuals, their personalities result in a persistent pattern of recurring interpersonal difficulties. When there is a persistent pattern of inflexible and maladaptive behavior that *continually* gets an individual in trouble or that causes him or her considerable subjective distress, a diagnosis of personality disorder may be appropriate.

People with personality disorders exhibit enduring, pervasive, and inflexible patterns of behavior that deviate markedly from societal expectations. Their behavior seems odd, unusual, or peculiar to most other people. However, to the individual the experience is so ingrained that it is **ego-syntonic** – it does not bother them, i.e., they have learned to be comfortable with their own pathology.

The list of ten personality disorders in Table 6.1. is not arbitrary but is based on a conceptual model that groups all personality disorders into one of three relatively distinct clusters. **Cluster A** (for *odd or eccentric behavior*) includes the paranoid, schizoid, and schizotypal personality disorders. **Cluster B** (for *dramatic, emotional, or erratic behavior*) includes the antisocial, borderline, histrionic, and narcissistic personality disorders. **Cluster C** (for *anxious or fearful behavior*) includes the remaining personality disorders: avoidant, dependent, and obsessive-compulsive. Just as it is a challenge for clinicians to diagnose a personality disorder in a single meeting with a client, it is challenging to diagnose cinematic characters with personality disorders in films that take place over a short period of time. Films that show the developmental course of a character from childhood to adulthood and that depict the character in a variety of settings leave the viewer in a better position to make the diagnosis (e.g., *Red Dragon* (2002), *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), *Hannibal* (2001) and *Hannibal Rising* (2007), the four films documenting the life of Hannibal Lecter.

A personality disorder diagnosis is inappropriate in any situation in which aberrant behavior results from transient situational factors (e.g., an individual who repeatedly gets his or her tax returns audited may become paranoid about the government). Finally, it is critical that cultural variables be considered when a diagnosis of personality disorder is being considered. For example, the Italian film *Down and Dirty* (1976) includes a protagonist who appears to have an antisocial personality. However, his behavior must be understood in terms of the culture of southern Italy and the debilitating and corrosive effects of poverty.

Some personality disorders are more common in men (e.g., antisocial and narcissistic personality

disorders), while others are found more often in women (e.g., borderline, histrionic, and dependent personality disorders). This is quite consistent with cinematic portrayals, as we will soon show.

Cluster A Disorders

These “odd and eccentric” disorders are rare and hence their depiction in cinema is uncommon (unlike other disorders such as dissociative identity disorder, which, though rare in reality, are often shown in movies).

Paranoid Personality Disorder

People with a paranoid personality are isolated and suspicious. They are convinced that others are talking about them behind their backs or plotting against them. The behaviors of others are carefully scrutinized for evidence of intent to harm, and overtures of friendship or good will by other people are rejected as manipulative gestures or parts of a plot. Ironically, because paranoid individuals behave in peculiar ways, a self-fulfilling prophecy occurs and people *do* begin to discuss the paranoid individual behind his or her back. Paranoid people tend to have few or no friends. They personalize almost everything and misinterpret casual remarks to make them fit into their belief structure.

Land of Plenty (2004, US/Germany) is a Wim Wenders film about misguided post-9/11 patriotism and paranoia in the US. A young woman, Lana (Michelle Williams) returns to the US from Tel Aviv with a mission to meet her Uncle Paul and deliver a letter to him on behalf of her mother. Paul is a highly suspicious and paranoid man whose life is preoccupied with searching for individuals with bombs or who may be attacking the city of Los Angeles. He has an irritable disposition, often characteristic of those with this personality disorder. When he communicates to others, his verbiage is intense and convincing. Paul lives in a dilapidated van, uses a makeshift camera with a joystick and monitor, and covers the walls of his van with newspaper clippings. Some of these come from the garbage cans he digs in looking for evidence. He racially profiles Arabic men and when he encounters a homeless man wearing a turban, he immediately concludes the man is a terrorist. He later watches a drive-by killing of the man – and since he was taping the man’s every move, he is able to keep the tape to re-watch for his own amusement. Paul notes he had been exposed to Agent Orange in Vietnam; therefore, a physical disorder would need to be ruled out before any

psychological diagnostic conclusions could be made.

“They’re trying to infect our country.
They’re trying to destroy us. I won’t let
‘em do that.”

Paul revealing his paranoia in
Land of Plenty (2004)

The dangers associated with having a leader with a paranoid personality become clear in *The Last King of Scotland* (2006), in which Academy Award winner Forest Whitaker portrays the leader of Uganda, Idi Amin. On the one hand, Amin is quite charismatic as he tries to convince the people that he is their rightful leader and the “father” of Uganda. He is also often fun-loving, friendly, jovial, and teasing. On the other hand, he is shown to be a ruthless dictator, explosive and unpredictable, who murdered over 300,000 Ugandans during his reign. Paranoia was a significant part of this man’s personality, and he used his paranoia to justify his horrendous actions.

“But a man who shows fear. He is weak...
and a slave”

Idi Amin’s ironic observation in
The Last King of Scotland (2006)

A convincing portrayal of paranoid personality disorder found in Detective Del Spooner (Will Smith) in *I, Robot* (2004). Spooner is a highly suspicious, judgmental, and angry person, particularly around robots, which are a mainstay in this world of 2046. Spooner takes a shower with no curtain and his frustrated mistrust of robots leads him to push away a friendly robot delivering a package. His misperceptions bring him to randomly chase down and tackle a robot running with a purse, which he has assumed is a robbery even though no robots have ever committed a crime at this point in history. Much of the plot transgresses due to Spooner’s paranoia, which other characters recognize. One man (Dr. Alfred Lanning, played by James Cromwell) counts on Spooner’s paranoia

to save the human race from robots. As with many films depicting a paranoid character (e.g., Jerry Fletcher, played by Mel Gibson, in *Conspiracy Theory*, 1997), the psychopathology is often distorted by the entertainment value of the plot which results in a character’s paranoia proving to be accurate and justified in the end.

Ben Stiller’s character Chas Tennenbaum in *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001) displays numerous paranoid characteristics that seem stable over time. He has an underlying anger and rage toward his father, unrealistic fears, and displays excessive concern and hypervigilance regarding his environment and home.

Humphrey Bogart’s role as Captain Queeg in *The Caine Mutiny* (1954) is a wonderful illustration of the paranoid personality. Queeg becomes preoccupied with trivial misdemeanors by sailors while he ignores the important parts of his job – such as maintaining the morale of his men. He eventually falls apart under pressure when he is called to the witness stand to testify in a court martial hearing for an insubordinate junior officer. There is a famous scene in which Queeg takes two ball bearings out of his pocket and begins to move them around nervously in his palm, and everyone in the court senses that this man is not well adjusted. Bogart plays another paranoid personality in *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (1948) in which he becomes obsessed with the idea that his partners are out to steal the gold all three men have agreed to split between them.

Schizoid Personality Disorder

The individual with a schizoid personality has little interest in and avoids close interpersonal relations. He or she is likely to be described as a loner who lacks meaningful ties to a family, community, or value system. These individuals are unlikely to display strong emotions or tenderness to others; they appear apathetic, diffident, and indifferent. They most often have little or no interest in sexual encounters and few marry.

There are some excellent portrayals of schizoid personality in the cinema. Two examples come from two films named *Bartleby*; both are remakes of a Herman Melville short story, “Bartleby the Scrivener.” The 2001 version is a fascinating, cult film about a quiet, passive man named Bartleby (Crispin Glover) hired for a mundane office job. He thoroughly does his job at first but soon begins to refuse doing extra work, repeating the mysterious phrase, “I would prefer not to.” This quirky behavior continues as he stares for hours at an air conditioning vent and displays no interest in

socializing with his work peers. Schizoid individuals are often isolated from society, and an opening scene symbolizes Bartleby's isolation as he is depicted enclosed and caged on an overpass bridge above a busy, productive society represented by an expressway below. His speech is slow, eye contact is limited, and affect is flat and emotionless throughout the film. At times, he displays an incongruent, distant, random smile or two, but he does not engage others interpersonally with smiles or laughter. Often, there is no understandable reason as to why a person behaves in a schizoid manner, and the film parallels this idea, as no explanation is overtly given for Bartleby's behaviors, lack of emotions, or social apathy. The earlier 1970 version portrays very similar schizoid traits for the lead character and the plot is very similar to the new version. This older film is black and white, dark, slow, and gloomy.

Another classic example of schizoid personality is found in the Coen Brothers' film noir, *The Man Who Wasn't There* (2001), where even the title of the film suggests a schizoid quality. Billy Bob Thornton plays Ed Crane, an aloof, taciturn barber who appears disinterested in life and claims he dislikes most things and that his life has been one of "no excitement." He is unemotional with flat affect and a monotone voice. He moves slowly and stiffly, and even the way he smokes cigarettes is a slow, unconscious, steady ritual. His responses to others are dull with heavy sighs, and he is passive when criticized. He does not seem very bothered by the fact that his wife is cheating on him with his best friend. He allows himself to be exploited by a traveling salesman. The only relationship he seems to invest emotional energy in is with a young girl; he appears committed to helping her pursue her dream of becoming a musician. Also consistent with schizoid characteristics is that no one "really knows him;" this is reinforced by his inability to share himself with others.

Crispin Glover plays another socially awkward, schizoid character in *Willard* (2003). Willard is isolated from others and his only companions are the rats that congregate in his basement. After one rat, whom he names Socrates, saves him from a suicide attempt he distances himself further from people and rallies the rats to help him get revenge.

In the film *Heavy* (1995), the lead character displays a schizoid reaction to his mother's death. He becomes frozen, emotionless, sexually disinterested, and isolated with flattened affect. In order to qualify for a diagnosis of schizoid personality disorder, his bereavement would need to be differentiated and his personality assessed prior to his

mother's death. The film offers another interesting schizoid description about the lead character's isolation through his belief that you can be as "big as an ox and no one sees you."

The figure of the loner is a staple in western films, and many of these characters would meet the criteria for schizoid personality disorder. These individuals avoid close relationships, prefer solitary activities, lack close friends and confidants, and appear indifferent to the praise or criticism of others; the title character (Charlton Heston) in *Will Penny* (1968) is one example; the eponymous lead (Robert Redford) in *Jeremiah Johnson* (1972) is another.

Schizotypal Personality Disorder

People with schizotypal personality have "schizophrenia-like" characteristics but do not typically meet the diagnostic criteria for schizophrenia. They hold odd or peculiar beliefs, thoughts, and/or behaviors. They are often very superstitious, have unusual perceptual experiences, and are suspicious and paranoid.

Adam Sandler's portrayal of Charlie Fineman in *Reign Over Me* (2007) is an impressive portrayal of someone with a schizotypal personality disorder. Charlie has lost his whole family – three daughters and his wife – in the 9/11 tragedy, but the viewer sees the character's deterioration and not his immediate reaction to the tragedy. Instead, the story picks up years later and the viewer observes a man who would qualify for the diagnosis of schizotypal personality. Charlie exhibits eccentric and bizarre behavior, is odd in his appearance (e.g., he is unkempt, and he constantly wears headphones while riding around on a motor scooter), and seems childlike. He appears to be clueless socially and interpersonally – brutally cold and inappropriate at times (e.g., eats with his new friend's family but sits on the counter while singing to himself with his headphones on). When he speaks with others it is only to ask random trivia questions. He repeatedly remodels his kitchen and spends his time in one of two activities: death metal drumming or playing solitary video games. The features of personality disorders in each cluster may merge and overlap at times. For example, Charlie appears to have no desire to connect with others (schizoid) and is highly suspicious of others (paranoid). Before making a diagnosis of schizotypal personality disorder, the clinician would need to discern how much of Charlie's personality features are truly a prolonged bereavement, or the extent to which they might be related to severe depression or PTSD, and the therapist would need

to know what Charlie's personality was like prior to the tragedy.

An outstanding illustration of a schizotypal personality can be found in Johnny Depp's unique portrayal of Willy Wonka in Tim Burton's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005), a portrayal that is much more clear in terms of this diagnosis than the portrayal by Gene Wilder in *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* (1971). Depp's Wonka has a quality of desperate aloofness in which his isolation, unusual perceptual experiences, and odd thinking are much more apparent. He lives alone and his only friends are a culture of dwarfs (Oompa-Loompas). He is quirky when he does communicate – for example, he exhibits disorganized speech, uses note cards to compensate for his poor social skills, talks to himself in public, and is unable to say the word "parents." His appearance is colorful and eccentric. The film depicts a familial root for Wonka's personality in that he lived alone with his father who was distant and authoritarian, and he showed no concern when his son decided to run away from home.

In *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001), Owen Wilson plays Eli, a man who wears flamboyant outfits and uses unusual words. He has a quirky tone of voice, exhibits odd and eccentric behavior, and often does not have a firm grasp on reality. His apartment has numerous odd paintings covering the walls. It is uncertain how much these qualities result from his drug abuse; regardless, his behavior and interactions are quite schizotypal.

Denis Leary plays a truly fascinating man who has paranoid schizophrenia in *Final* (2001). He displays some interesting schizotypal traits as well, but to qualify for a diagnosis of schizotypal personality, these traits could not occur exclusively with the schizophrenia episodes.

The character Ernest (Maury Chaykin) in *Bartleby* (2001) displays many schizotypal traits. He has a poor use of logic and when he gets upset, he speaks in a verbal salad, mixes words, and is somewhat nonsensical. His appearance is disheveled. He is easily overwhelmed by stress. His behavior is often inappropriate for the situation, as he never appears to be working when he is at the office, he displays no reaction after spilling water and copier ink, and he is later repeatedly and genuinely scared by a pop-up spin toy. He presents with a constant paranoid, concerned look on his face and has blunted affect throughout the film.

The schizotypal personality is demonstrated in Flannery O'Connor's novel *Wise Blood* (1952) and in the 1979 John Huston film adaptation. The Southern preacher works hard to convince people



Additional Questions for Discussion (Cluster A Disorders)

- Where do you draw the diagnostic line for these disorders, and how can one differentiate them from similar Axis I counterparts (e.g., schizophrenia)?
- What are some etiological components for schizoid personality (such as for the title character in *Bartleby*)?
- Is there any validity to the idea that people who are odd and eccentric, as illustrated by these examples, are simply extremely creative people?
- What is the treatment of choice for someone with a Cluster A diagnosis?
- Do any of the characters in the films discussed above make meaningful changes in their personal, social, or occupational life? Are Cluster A disorders resistant to change?

to join his "Church Without Christ." He has numerous peculiar beliefs, odd speech, constricted affect, strange behavior, and few close friends. These five characteristics would be sufficient to justify the diagnosis of schizotypal personality.

Hyler (1988) uses DeNiro's portrayal of Travis Bickle in *Taxi Driver* (1976) to illustrate the schizotypal personality. He feels this film is such a useful tool for teaching medical students about psychopathology that he has incorporated it into a computer program that can be used to teach medical students to perform and record a complete mental status exam (Hyler & Bujold, 1994).

Cluster B Disorders

Each of the personalities in this cluster is often lively and colorful, fitting the description "dramatic, emotional, and erratic." Consequently, individuals with Cluster B disorders are common in movies, as they tend to make fascinating, stimulating cinematic characters. They are often attention grabbing, conflicted, manipulative, charming, and charismatic – many of the qualities the moviegoer typically loves or hates. In addition, they often have troubled pasts, and the viewer gets to observe them escape from present pain or make impressive changes, either way making for good drama.

The Talented Mr. Ripley (1999) is a wonderful example of a film's character (Tom Ripley, played by Matt Damon) who displays characteristics of each of the disorders in this cluster. Even the opening credits get at the complexity of this disorder, listing

the following adjectives to replace “talented” in the title: mysterious, yearning, secretive, lonely, troubled, confused, loving, musical, gifted, intelligent, beautiful, tender, secretive, haunted, passionate.

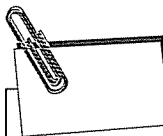
Antisocial Personality Disorder

People with antisocial personality break the law, can be physically aggressive, manipulate others, lie, take senseless risks, and have little or no sense of remorse or guilt about the consequences of their behavior. These individuals violate the rights of others and appear to experience distress only when their behavior results in punishment or incarceration. They are impulsive, thrive on the “pleasure principle,” and have a great deal of trouble planning their future behavior or anticipating its consequences. Individuals with antisocial personality disorder have a great deal of trouble learning from their mistakes and find themselves dealing with similar legal and interpersonal problems throughout their lives.

The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford (2007) portrays the obvious antisocial characteristics of a well-known train robber, Jesse James (Brad Pitt), and it also illustrates James’ calm manipulation and defiant recklessness, as well as a high level of paranoia. He becomes suspicious that his followers and fellow criminals are out to get him. His paranoia leads him to become more controlling, impulsive, and unpredictable, especially as the price on his head increases. James would likely be diagnosed with **personality disorder not otherwise specified (NOS)** with antisocial and paranoid traits.

Before the Devil Knows You’re Dead (2007) is an intense Sidney Lumet melodrama in which the story defines the characters (in a drama the characters define the story). Two brothers struggling financially and craving a better life plot to rob a “mom and pop” jewelry store; however, the owners are their own mom and pop. After things go wrong with the robbery, the antisocial tendencies of each brother strongly emerge and deceit, impulsivity, and recklessness run rampant. Lumet reveals how each character is ultimately a flawed human being, and each becomes terrible in their revenge, decompensation, or inaction.

People with antisocial personality disorder often have multiple sexual partners and tend to use others for sexual gratification, with little concern for the needs or feelings of their sexual partners. They can be superficially warm and charming but become distant and aloof after their sexual conquest. This is evident in Johnny, the intellectual, philosophical, and antisocial character portrayed



Questions to Consider While Watching *Before the Devil Knows You’re Dead* (2007)

- It seems that each of the characters in the film could change. Why don’t they? Is resistance to change common in those with antisocial personality?
- Do the actions and inactions of the characters of Philip Seymour Hoffman, Albert Finney, and Ethan Hawke make them evil? If not, what would a person have to do to be considered simply evil?
- Philip Seymour Hoffman’s character abuses drugs as a way of coping with a horrifying set of circumstances. How common is this among people with antisocial personality disorders?
- The film’s unique title comes from a famous Irish toast: “May you have food and raiment; a soft pillow for your head; may you be 40 years in heaven; before the devil knows you’re dead.” What does this mean? Why is the title appropriate for this film?

by David Thewlis in *Naked* (1993). Robert Duvall plays a complicated, antisocial minister who philanders, abuses, and projects his problems onto other characters and God in *The Apostle* (1997). Duvall’s character, Sonny, is driven but flawed. He is a “spiritual antisocial” in that he passionately preaches and his manipulation and charm often take the form of genuinely wanting to help others have more meaningful lives; however, he externalizes his problems by blaming Satan and not taking responsibility for his life. He abuses alcohol, is unfaithful to his wife, threatens her with a gun, throws an object through a window, and, most seriously, grabs his wife roughly by the hair and attempts to drag her away from the baseball game and then hospitalizes his wife’s boyfriend by hitting him on the head with a baseball bat. He lies to others about his past, despite their trust in him as their spiritual leader. Sonny certainly embodies the qualities of narcissism as well, with his grandiose speech and in his preaching, and he feeds off others’ admiration and his ability to stake out a position in center stage. This film will remind some of the role of the much more psychopathic “preacher” played by Robert Mitchum in the classic film *The Night of the Hunter* (1955).

The fascinating film *Tape* (2001) takes place in one setting (a motel room) with only three characters (played by Ethan Hawke, Robert Sean Leonard, and Uma Thurman). Despite this sim-

plicity, the film is a complex look at a devious, antisocial personality, Vince (Hawke), and his manipulation of two high school friends. Vince is a 28-year-old without a job who volunteers as a firefighter. He presents as unstable, using drugs, jumping and running around the small motel room, “chugging” beers, and throwing the cans around. He has a history of drug dealing and reports that he has “anger tendencies” and “unresolved issues.” At times, he is sweet and soft spoken, but the viewer soon realizes he is purposefully acting this way to manipulate his friends. With extreme craftiness, he secretly “tape records” his friend John (Leonard) revealing some vulnerable information (about a date rape in high school) after Vince interrogates him in cross-examination style; displaying a total lack of empathy, he blackmails John and calls another old friend (Vince’s ex-girlfriend and John’s date rape victim), Amy (Thurman), with the hopes of continuing his plotted manipulation.

Jonestown: The Life and Death of Peoples Temple (2006) utilizes old footage, tapes, writings, and interviews with several survivors and family members of those involved in what has been called the largest mass suicide in modern history. On November 18, 1978, in Jonestown, Guyana, 909 members of Peoples’ Temple killed themselves along with their evangelical leader, Jim Jones. Members of the church adored Jones for his charisma and his messages of integration, hope, equality, and justice. Many embraced him as godlike and considered him a savior. What was missed by those who died and many others was that Jim Jones was a vicious antisocial personality. He abused power and used the congregation to meet his own sexual needs (in one case explaining to a woman shivering while he had sex with her, “I’m doing this for you”). He frequently humiliated, shamed, and manipulated the congregants, finding pleasure in spanking or beating people in front of the congregation as punishment for petty transgressions. Jones once staged a blind woman in a wheelchair and performed a fake healing. He convinced people to sell their homes for the church and in return he promised that the church would take care of elderly family members. He encouraged people to not think for themselves so that he could think for them; he reflected that he was happy to play whatever role the congregant needed – friend, brother, savior, or God. Jones exhibited significant pathological traits as a child; for example, he killed cats so that he could officiate at their funerals.

The true story of Danny Burrows (played by Ryan Gosling) in *The Believer* (2001) speaks to

the serious love-hate relationship a young man has with himself as he adopts a dramatically contradictory role as a Jewish Nazi. In the opening sequence, the viewer sees Burrows, who presents as a stereotypic skinhead displaying Nazi symbols, seek out and beat a young Jewish man in the middle of the street. He embraces repugnant Nazi beliefs, ranking races by worthiness in the following order: Whites, Asians, Blacks, and Jews. At the same time, Burrows is highly intelligent and articulate, speaking charismatically to adults many years older than him about Nazi order, discipline, and values, articulating “kill your enemy” and “Judaism is a sickness” messages. His aggressiveness and impulsivity lead him to instigate numerous fights. Burrows displays little remorse for any of his antisocial behaviors until, while ransacking a synagogue with a Fascist group, he begins to show concern for how people treat a scroll containing sacred Jewish writings. He brings the scroll home, takes painstaking care of it, and begins to teach his girlfriend Hebrew. From here, he must face his internal contradiction and deal with the consequences of the lifestyle he has created for himself.

Another film illustrating an antisocial personality that is based on a true story is the film *Shattered Glass* (2003) about Stephen Glass (Hayden Christensen), the *New Republic* magazine writer who went to extensive lengths to fabricate and embellish stories. Both the film and Christensen do a remarkable job of depicting not only the elaborate deceit, fantasy, and double life associated with this personality disorder, but also the neurotic quality of the “antisocial in trouble.” The latter phrase refers to anxiety mixed with a façade of change that comes about when a person with an antisocial personality disorder is caught or about to be caught. Glass’ response is to become emotional, obsequious, and/or apologetic. His manipulations take many forms, from trying to emphasize his need for the editors’ support and how important it is (when he is lying) to trying to play others against one another to incessant repetition of the question “Are you mad at me?” Glass does not see the consequences of his actions as he continues to tell various lies and stories to cover up earlier lies, digging himself deeper into deception with each interaction; we later see the tremendous impact of his behavior on the *New Republic*.

Another “caught” antisocial is Edward Norton’s character in *25th Hour* (2002), who has 24 hours before he must serve a prison term for trafficking marijuana. Since he is caught, he is forced to face some of his shame, guilt, and anger. In one unforgettable scene, he externalizes intense

anger, blaring out “fuck you” to every race, group, district, and borough in New York City, as well as his father and girlfriend. We can infer he is saying this to himself as well, especially since he is looking at himself in the mirror while talking, but the acceptance of personal responsibility seems to be missed – as it often is in the antisocial personality. This Spike Lee film brings up important issues of regret and choice and brilliantly leaves many questions unanswered.

Catch Me If You Can (2002) is another film about a character with an antisocial personality disorder. The film is based on the true story of Frank Abagnale Jr., a con man who used his charm and good looks to defraud banks of millions of dollars in the 1960s. The role of Abagnale is played by Leonardo DiCaprio, who successfully impersonates a Pan-Am co-pilot, a physician, and an attorney. Abagnale is pursued for six years by FBI agent Carl Hanratty (Tom Hanks) before he is eventually captured, and he winds up consulting with the FBI on fraud crimes.

An interesting contrast of antisocial personalities occurs in *Levity* (2003), a film in which Billy Bob Thornton plays a person with an antisocial personality trying to make amends for his actions (a murder many years ago), and Morgan Freeman plays an antisocial preacher who uses a fake identity to hide from the police. Likewise, Tom Hanks is a charming person with an antisocial personality who cleverly uses sophisticated speech and extensive rationalizations to manipulate an old woman for his own purposes in *The Ladykillers* (2004).

A somewhat less dramatic illustration is found in the callous manipulation of naive home buyers vividly portrayed by Jack Lemmon, who plays a desperate and unhappy real estate salesman in *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1992). The manipulation of others for personal gain without concern for the consequences of one's behavior is a characteristic feature of antisocial personality disorders. Natasha Richardson and Mia Farrow play two consummate con artists in *Widow's Peak* (1994), although the diagnosis of antisocial personality is incompatible with the character portrayed by Farrow for most of the film. Many films appear to depict antisocial behavior, but it is often unclear as to whether these characters would meet all the criteria for the disorder. *Compulsion* (1959) depicts two antisocial fraternity men, Artie and Judd, who are intent that the perfect crime is “the true test of the superior intellect.” They believe they should be able to manipulate the system to get away with murder simply because “we can.” Each has an antisocial personality disorder, although Artie's case is more

severe. He is cool, smooth, and calculating under pressure, and enjoys listening to the police discuss the murder of which he is the perpetrator, taking pleasure in their confusion and chaos.

Some actors like Kevin Spacey can make a career out of playing antisocial characters. Though Spacey can play a variety of characters with vastly different personalities, he has played an impressive range of roles that illustrate some dimension of the antisocial personality; for example, he portrayed an arrogant writer in *The United States of Leland* (2004), an unhappy man who becomes obsessed with “the pleasure principle” in *American Beauty* (1999), a devious serial killer in *Se7en* (1995), a con man in *The Usual Suspects* (1995), a brutal executive in *Swimming with Sharks* (1994), and an ineffectual, unethical and depressed therapist in *Shrink* (2009).

While the film *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room* (2005) describes the antisocial behavior of various executives in a corrupt organization, the film *The Corporation* (2004) demonstrates that the typical corporation meets the criteria for psychopathy (e.g., callous unconcern for others, failure to conform to social norms).

“The fatal flaw at Enron, if there was one you'd say, it was pride but then it was arrogance, intolerance, greed.”

The underlying issues in the executives in *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room* (2005)

Antisocial vs. Psychopathic Personality

Though **psychopathic personality disorder** is not an actual diagnosis, it is a commonly used term, and there is often confusion when the labels antisocial personality, sociopath, and psychopath are all lumped together. Robert D. Hare, the world's leading authority on psychopathy, has been doing research on psychopaths for over 40 years. Hare explains that most psychopaths fit the criteria for antisocial personality; however, the reverse is not necessarily true. Hare adds that crosscultural studies have noted that psychopathy is generalizable. He cites a number of criteria for psychopathic personality including shallow emotions, glibness, manipulateness, a parasitic lifestyle, episodic relationships, persistent violation of social norms,

egocentricity, lack of remorse/empathy, low frustration tolerance, and lying (Hare, 2006).

In movies, psychopaths and sociopaths are often described as people who have “no conscience.” Consider *Pirates of the Caribbean* (2003; 2006; 2007) and contrast Johnny Depp's character as the antisocial pirate with many of the pirate zombies led by Geoffrey Rush's character. The latter are clearly psychopathic. Table 6.2. uses contemporary films to clarify the difference between antisocial personality disorder and psychopathy.

Two particularly powerful films pose interesting questions relevant to this distinction: *Monster* (2003) and *American Psycho* (1999). *Monster's* Aileen (Charlize Theron) might be a rare example of a serial killer who seems more antisocial than psychopathic. She is able to express and share love for another (her lover, played by Christina Ricci) and in the film she claims that her killings were in self-defense (as did serial killer Aileen Wuornos

in real life). In *American Psycho*, Patrick Bateman (played by Christian Bale) is shown killing many people throughout the film. If we are to take this literally, then he is clearly a psychopathic personality. Interestingly, the film also suggests that all of the murders depicted in the film are in Bateman's thoughts/fantasies, which is supported by plot elements, by his extensive fantasy doodles, and cinematically at the end through close-up shots of Bateman's head. The viewer is left to believe that Bateman is very narcissistic and has heavy antisocial traits, but is not a psychopath.

The cinema is replete with examples of characters who illustrate the psychopathic personality. Some salient examples include Anthony Hopkins' portrayal of a murdering cannibal, Hannibal Lecter in *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), Hannibal (2001), and *Red Dragon* (2002); Kurt Dussander (Ian McKellen) in *Apt Pupil* (1998), a film that depicts the rekindling of a suppressed psychopath-

Table 6.2. Differentiation of antisocial personality from psychopathic personality through movies

Personality Type	Film	Personality Characteristics
Antisocial	Jack Sparrow (Johnny Depp) in <i>Pirates of the Caribbean</i> (2003; 2006; 2007)	Manipulative and devious, though Jack Sparrow does show qualities of trust, care, allegiance, and teamwork
	Monty Brogan (Edward Norton) in <i>25th Hour</i> (2002)	History of not conforming to laws/rules, impulsive, irritable, and reckless disregard but shows remorse and care for others
	Johnny (David Thewlis) in <i>Naked</i> (1993)	Deceitful, impulsive, self-centered, lacks empathy, irresponsible; also shows fleeting concerns and care for others and for the betterment of society
	Euliss “Sonny” Dewey – The Apostle E.F. (Robert Duvall) in <i>The Apostle</i> (1997)	Heavily deceitful, impulsive, and dangerous in words and behaviors; also shows genuine care for others, love for God, and exhibits remorse
Psychopathic/ Sociopathic	Barbossa (Geoffrey Rush) in <i>Pirates of the Caribbean</i> (2003; 2007)	Kills at will for own gain, embodies the seven deadly sins, particularly greed
	Vann (Owen Wilson) in <i>The Minus Man</i> (1999)	Serial killer with no conscience and no reason or purpose, kills randomly
	Mickey Knox (Woody Harrelson) and (Mallory Knox) Juliette Lewis in <i>Natural Born Killers</i> (1994)	Torture and kill anyone who gets in their way or bothers them, without hesitation or regret
	Elijah Price (Samuel L. Jackson) in <i>Unbreakable</i> (2000)	Complete disregard for human life as he commits mass murder out of a self-serving need to find his “better half”

ic personality; *In Cold Blood* (1967); *The Boston Strangler* (1968); *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* (1990); Fritz Lang's child serial killer in *M* (1931); and Dennis Hopper as a sociopath in both *Blue Velvet* (1986) and *Speed* (1994). Charles Manson, as portrayed by Steve Railsback in the film *Helter Skelter* (1976), is another example of the indifferent disregard for social values and moral behavior that is found in people with psychopathic personalities. (Manson, responsible for the death of nine people in 1969, has never shown any remorse for his behavior or the deaths of his victims.)

"A door had been opened that couldn't be shut."

Kurt Dussander (Ian McKellen), a reclusive former Nazi henchman in hiding, in *Apt Pupil* (1998)

The legendary director Stanley Kubrick frequently depicted psychopathic personalities in his films. Perhaps his most famous is the street hoodlum, Alex, in *A Clockwork Orange* (1971); other characters in his films with strong psychopathic tendencies include the Senior Drill Instructor (Gunnery Sergeant Hartman) in *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), the deteriorating character of Jack Torrance (Jack Nicholson) in *The Shining* (1980), the deceptive computer, Hal, in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), the obsessed pedophile in *Lolita* (1962), and the generals who confronted Kurt Douglas' character in the anti-war masterpiece *Paths of Glory* (1957).

A classic example of a psychopathic personality is found in Alfred Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train* (1951). Bruno Anthony (Robert Walker), who repeatedly engages in unlawful behavior (including murder), is deceitful and glib shows impulsivity, and there is never any reason to suspect he feels any remorse for the murder he commits or his plan to have his father murdered.

Borderline Personality Disorder

Borderline personality disorder is characterized by unstable but intense interpersonal relationships, labile mood, impulsive behavior, and erratic emotions. These individuals are easily angered, but their anger may pass as quickly as a summer storm, leaving no sign of its recent presence. Fear of abandonment is a pathognomonic characteristic of

borderline personalities. These individuals become overly attached in almost all of their relationships. When they initially become romantically involved, their partners are apt to feel smothered by the intensity of the relationship and perplexed by the wild swings between affection and anger; when they enter therapy, therapists quickly become concerned about their excessive dependence and inappropriate adulation. These are the patients most likely to call in the middle of the night, insisting on an emergency consultation or late-night office visit. This is most apt to occur when the patient feels isolated or alone (e.g., when the therapist is about to take a vacation). They often vacillate between indiscriminate adulation and active hatred (referred to as "love-hate" or "push-pull"), sometimes within the space of hours.

Suicidal gestures and self-injury are common in people with borderline personality disorders. These gestures cannot be ignored, because completed suicide occurs in about 10% of borderline personality disorder cases. However, it is more common for the patient to behave in ways that are more attention seeking than life threatening, such as swallowing 20 Valium and then calling a crisis center or making superficial cuts on the upper arm before calling a suicide hotline. Self-mutilation is also a common and serious problem with borderline personalities. The symptoms of borderline personality disorder overlap with those of both depression and bipolar disorders, and some borderline personality patients respond to treatment with either antidepressants or mood stabilizers. Women are diagnosed with borderline personality disorder much more often than men.

Glenn Close's character Alex Forrest in *Fatal Attraction* (1987) offers one of the best available depictions of borderline personality disorder. Michael Douglas plays Dan Gallagher, a happily married New York attorney who becomes sexually involved with Alex Forrest, a glamorous and sexually aggressive publishing executive. What starts out as a simple, one-night affair for Dan turns into a nightmare for him and his family as Alex becomes increasingly possessive and manipulative. Dan tries to extricate himself from the affair, but Alex resorts to verbal threats, telephone calls to his wife, a suicide gesture (slashing her wrists after Dan tells her the affair is over), and intimidation of his wife and child. The performance by Close dramatically illustrates many characteristics of patients with a borderline personality disorder: anger, impulsivity, emotional lability, fear of rejection and abandonment, inappropriate behavior, vacillation between adulation and disgust, and

self-mutilation. Although people with borderline personality disorder can be dangerous to others (as displayed dramatically in *Fatal Attraction*), this is not typically the case and these individuals are probably more likely to be dangerous to themselves. If the individual has strong antisocial personality characteristics as well (which Alex Forrest does), the risk of danger to others rises.

Nicole Kidman portrays the title character in *Margot at the Wedding* (2007). Margot, a likely borderline personality, has separated from her husband and she and her son are spending time at her sister's home for a wedding. As noted earlier in the chapter, it is difficult to diagnose a personality disorder with only a snapshot of the individual's life (e.g., a period of just a few days). Margot has very loose boundaries, labile affect, is impulsive in her speech, and she shares the confidential news of her sister's pregnancy. Her mannerisms, speech, and behavior frequently reveal tension, anger, impulsivity, and reactivity. It is clear there has been significant tension over the years between the two sisters and a history of abuse which they discuss casually in front of their children. Margot roars with uncontrollable laughter when describing a rape. Margot also displays her fear of abandonment at the end of the film when she goes running uncontrollably after her son on a bus after just having sent him off, leaving her handbag and other items behind her on the ground. Most of her behavior and reactions are at least mildly inappropriate and have a significant impact on her life.

A more intense example of borderline personality disorder can be found in Rae (Christina Ricci) in *Black Snake Moan* (2006), a film that exposes the protagonist's character flaws through a mixture of tragic scenes and beautiful interpersonal scenes. Rae is an unstable young woman whose fear of abandonment intensifies when her boyfriend Ronnie (Justin Timberlake) leaves for war. She covers over her fear with alcohol, drug abuse, and casual sex with multiple men. Sex is the only way she knows to relate to others. She has a history of abuse and allows others to take advantage of her. She displays a high level of explosive behavior and transient dissociative symptoms, both characteristic of people with borderline personality disorders. Also interesting is that over time she reverts back to her same pervasive patterns of seductiveness and explosiveness.

Christina Ricci has become very successful at portraying borderline personality, as demonstrated by two other films. In *Prozac Nation* (2001), her character, Elizabeth Wurtzel, displays an intense fear of abandonment, is emotionally labile,

possesses and then rejects her boyfriend, sabotages her friends, experiences multiple crises, has a deep underlying self-hatred, and reports a history of self-injurious behavior. She also suffers from co-morbid depression. Likewise, her character Amanda Chase in Woody Allen's *Anything Else* (2003) displays borderline personality qualities in her interpersonal relationships and her affective instability. She has some attention-seeking qualities, is dishonest, manipulatively takes advantage of a dependent man, uses drugs, and is defensive and self-righteous in explaining her decisions and behaviors.

Another Woody Allen character – albeit deeper and darker – displaying a borderline personality disorder is Maria Elena, played by Academy Award winner Penelope Cruz in *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (2008). She is unstable, intense in relationships, sexually impulsive, affectively labile, has rage-like temper and revengefulness, and is briefly suicidal with dissociative symptoms.

A more manipulative illustration of borderline personality can be found in Barbara Covett (Judi Dench), in *Notes on a Scandal* (2006). Barbara, a veteran teacher, discovers a younger teacher, Sheba Hart (Cate Blanchett), having an affair with a 15-year-old student and the two women engage in a battle of manipulation and deceit. Barbara is a lonely woman with no friends or intimate contacts and seems to crave touch and emotional connection; she feels an intense attraction toward Sheba, sexualizes her, and engages her in a touching/stroking game. People with borderline personality disorders often misread and distort the realities of interpersonal situations, particularly those involving intimacy, and Barbara misreads their friendship as evidence of a deeper, more intimate connection. At the same time, she has no qualms about taking advantage of Sheba's trust and loyalty and she betrays Sheba's trust, just as Shakespeare's Iago betrays Othello. Barbara also displays the pathognomonic symptom of fear of abandonment, even with respect to her cat. The viewer peers into Barbara's internal world through voice-over narration associated with her thinking and her journaling. In watching this film, the viewer is reminded that people with personality disorders exhibit repetitive behavioral patterns over time, and we learn that Barbara had often been obsessed with younger teachers and that in the past her behavior had led to a restraining order against her by another teacher; in a concluding scene, the viewer sees Barbara grooming her next victim.

The hospital staff in the film *Girl, Interrupted* (1999) apply the diagnosis of borderline personality disorder to the lead character, Susanna (Winona

Ryder). It is difficult to justify this diagnosis, as Susanna only seems to display two behaviors fitting this diagnosis – a suicide attempt and sexual promiscuity. However, she is clearly depressed and has serious relationship problems. A rare depiction of male borderline personality can be found in Tom Ripley (Matt Damon) in *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1999). Ripley has a tremendous fear of abandonment and even commits a murder in order to prevent himself from experiencing the pain of abandonment. Other potential examples of borderline personalities include Theresa Dunn (Diane Keaton) in *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* (1977) and several of the female supporting characters in Martin Scorsese's *After Hours* (1985). Catherine Tramell (Sharon Stone) in *Basic Instinct* (1992) and *Basic Instinct 2* (2006) displays a number of borderline characteristics, not all of which are explicit *DSM-IV-TR* criteria; for example, she is interpersonally manipulative, sexually exploitative and impulsive, seductive in therapy sessions (in the latter film), emotionally labile, angry, and vengeful.

Histrionic Personality Disorder

The defining feature of histrionic personality is dramatic attention-seeking behavior. These individuals are self-centered and preoccupied with their appearance. They feel uncomfortable in any situation in which they are not "center stage," and they can quickly turn their emotion on or off and with little provocation. They resent attention directed at others and will often engage in excessive behavior to have the focus of attention redirected to themselves. They initially seem to be spontaneous and interesting people, not unlike Rosalind Russell's portrayal of the title character in the film *Auntie Mame* (1958). However, true histrionic personalities soon find that others quickly tire of their desperate attempts to remain at the center of attention and are angered by their inability to engage in equitable social interaction.

Carolyn Burnham (Annette Bening) in *American Beauty* (1999) is very melodramatic and clearly a character with a histrionic personality. She is unhappy and under-stimulated in her marriage, and she is having an affair with a man whom she admires for superficial reasons – he is rich, successful, charming, and highly narcissistic. She ruins a rare intimate moment with her husband Lester (Kevin Spacey) when she shows obsessive concern that he might spill beer on the couch. She is exact in her appearance, dressing in elegant clothes that make her stand out. At work as a real estate agent, Carolyn attempts to sell a

house by exaggerating the house's appearance to unimpressed customers. She shows excessive emotionality and breaks down when faced with the reality that bright smiles and superficiality do not sell houses, and she goes into an emotional fit, crying, slapping herself in the face, stomping on the floor, and yelling, "Shut up! Stop it! You're weak! You baby! Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!" In social situations, Carolyn displays a very loud laugh that can be heard across a crowded room. She is socially inappropriate and highly critical of family members, such as when she greets her daughter after her daughter's dance routine, "I watched you closely. You didn't screw up once" with a big smile on her face as if she has just made an important, helpful observation. Her daughter looks at her in disgust.

In addition, rapid shifting from one extreme emotion to another is common in people with histrionic personality disorders. Carolyn quickly switches from hysterical laughter to blatant seriousness with a man she desires, and later from tearful crying to anger and slapping her daughter's face. Histrionic personalities are often very suggestible as well. Carolyn displays a ridiculous level of awe for another real estate agent's mantra, "You cannot count on anyone except yourself," and she follows and teaches this as the most important lesson to learn in life. In summary, appearance and style are far more important than substance for the person with a histrionic personality disorder.

Another precisely accurate example of a histrionic personality is Katharine Hepburn's portrayal of a dying mother in *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1962). Family life centers around the mother, and her two sons and her husband dote on her. She is extremely concerned with her appearance, openly fishes for compliments, and makes frequent references to her lost beauty. If she were being clinically evaluated, Hepburn's character Mary Tyrone would be diagnosed as having histrionic personality disorder on Axis II and as opioid-dependent (morphine) with physiological dependence on Axis I.

In *White Oleander* (2002), Robin Wright Penn plays Starr (an appropriate name for a histrionic character), the first mother-figure for a young adolescent, Astrid (Alison Lohman), whose biological mother has been incarcerated. Starr is a former stripper, recovering alcoholic, and born-again Christian who encourages Astrid to read the Bible and accept Jesus as her savior. At first, Starr is kind and overly helpful in her care for Astrid; soon the viewer realizes these are superficial overtures that develop into a dangerous murder attempt

when Starr becomes threatened as she realizes that Astrid's emerging sexuality appeals to her husband.

Narcissistic Personality Disorder

People with a narcissistic personality have an intense need for admiration, often self-centered, and have an exaggerated sense of their own importance. They may spend a great deal of time fantasizing about success or power. They feel entitled to special treatment and expect that others will automatically comply with their expectations; this often leads to their appearing conceited and pretentious. Their preoccupation with themselves leads them to overlook or devalue the contributions of others. The name of this disorder is taken from the Greek myth of Narcissus, who fell in love with his own reflection. Mirrors are often used in films portraying narcissists to symbolize self-reflection, infatuation with self, and distorted or broken mirrors represent a fractured sense of worth or esteem.

Although presenting as confident and secure, people with narcissistic personality disorder have low self-esteem and harbor unconscious feelings of insecurity, unworthiness, and self-doubt. Consider the film *Phone Booth* (2003), only worthwhile for the ending in which a highly narcissistic New Yorker is stripped of his defenses and completely unravels, admitting to all his deceits, manipulations, and cover ups, from the expensive clothes he wears to his deep relationship fears to keeping a young male sidekick around to feel better about himself. Suddenly, all his grandiosity, entitlement, and conceit are gone. He had never admitted these deeper issues even to himself in a conscious way, and they remained present but deeply embedded. It took an extreme situation to trigger awareness and admission. Of course, most narcissists do not come to such insights about themselves, and when they do, it is not long before they return to their old patterns.

The narcissistic wound is also exhibited in *Overnight* (2003) a docudrama that tells the rags to riches to rags story of Troy Duffy, a bartender offered an attractive deal by Miramax for his screenplay. Nevertheless, it is Duffy's narcissism – his grandiose sense of self-importance, preoccupation with success, entitlement, and interpersonal exploitativeness – that leads to his downfall and the likelihood he will never work in Hollywood again. The film does a good job of depicting a deeply troubled/wounded man who is completely unaware of his shortcomings.

Contemporary cinema is replete with examples of narcissistic personality disorders: Andy Garcia's

fascinating character, Byron, in *The Man from Elysian Fields* (2001), is a narcissistic, struggling writer who eventually realizes his narcissism and subsequent self-inflicted destruction and makes a change by facing his pain; Nicholas Cage's corporate character Jack Campbell in *The Family Man* (2000) states his only concerns are for money and power, nothing deeper; Ben Stiller's ridiculous character Derek in *Zoolander* (2001), is too self-absorbed to realize he has been brain-washed; and John Turturro's character Dante Dominio is a narcissistic opera singer and performer in *The Man Who Cried* (2000).

"Underneath all that bravado beats the heart of a guy who's not nearly as cocky as he wants everybody to believe."

Liz (Susan Sarandon) calling out the narcissism of Alfie (Jude Law) in *Alfie* (2004)

In *Roger Dodger* (2002), Roger Swanson (Campbell Scott) is a classic narcissistic personality – a womanizer who is teaching a 16-year-old adolescent about how men think and see the world. He teaches the boy to see, think, and perceive sex everywhere he looks. Roger creates various "opportunities" for the boy to seduce women – at the bar, at a party, and then with prostitutes. He has no qualms about encouraging the boy to take advantage of a drunken woman who has passed out. Roger displays little true empathy for the boy as he thrusts him to manhood. Underneath Roger's inflated self-image and conceit is his rage at being rejected by his attractive boss (Isabella Rossellini) who has put an end to their love affair.

In *Lovelife* (1997), Alan (Jon Tenney) is a minor writer and professor who thinks he is very important. He seems to care only for himself and his work. He treats women poorly and exploits them through seduction, deceit, and manipulation, and he eloquently explains his approach and craft to a barfly. In denying his own arrogance, Alan believes he is compassionate and sensitive because he has to struggle to manage a relationship with two women (the real issue is that one of the women is not as fawning as the other). He believes women should be at his "beck and call" (one character describes him by saying "he says what he wants and everybody jumps").

"I want somebody to think I'm the greatest thing that ever happened to them and without me they couldn't go on."

A narcissistic writer in *Lovelife* (1997)

The film accurately portrays the underlying sensitivity to criticism and inherent low self-esteem of the narcissist (which frequently results in narcissistic injuries). Alan gets very upset, stubborn, and passive-aggressive when his girlfriend does not come to his lecture; he expresses an intense fear of abandonment as he makes a big production about his girlfriend leaving a party without him, he then grovels on his knees with the girl standing over him, and lays in a girl's lap to receive the motherly nurturance and attention he so deeply craves.

"Let's hurt someone."

Chad (Aaron Eckhart) in
In the Company of Men (1997)

Director Neil LaBute created unforgettable and cruel narcissists in two of his bitterly satirical movies – *In the Company of Men* (1997) and *The Shape of Things* (2003). Though there are two male narcissists in the former movie, Chad (Aaron Eckhart) is more pathological as he convinces his friend that they should seduce a vulnerable, deaf woman and get her to fall in love with both of them, planning to subsequently dump her. Chad feels entitled to do this, blaming women for being rejecting, controlling, and manipulative, ostensibly believing he and his partner can restore dignity to men through revenge and the pain of the innocent. In *The Shape of Things*, a character named Evelyn (Rachel Weisz) transforms Adam (Paul Rudd), an anxious, insecure, shy person, into a physically attractive, stylish, confident man. Without any qualms, she shocks Adam, the viewer, and the audience to whom she is giving a presentation when she reveals that her relationship with Adam has been a class "project" in which she used a human subject to prove that people are like clay and can easily be molded and manipulated. When talking with Adam afterward, Evelyn has a strongly stubborn, con-

fident, and resentful expression on her face. She believes she has made him a better person and thus should be thanked for her behavior. The characters in each film have strong antisocial qualities evident in their complete disregard for others and social convention and in their pathological manipulation. They are literally predators who consciously seek out their prey – a vulnerable, neurotic individual with poor esteem. The endings of both movies reveal just how pathological both characters are as they reveal their manipulative "game," totally devoid of empathy. A similar plotline depicting extensive female manipulateness can be found in *My Summer of Love* (2004).

Female narcissists are less common, but also include Madonna portraying a grandiose, striking Eva Peron in *Evita* (1997). Eva emphasizes physical appearance, presentation to others, and her posture as critically important features. She manipulates people throughout the film for her own advantage – to help her rise in her career and look better in front of others. Annette Bening as Julia Lambert in *Being Julia* (2004) is another example of a female narcissist. Julia is a star of the theater who relishes her success and revels in her fame; however, feelings of self-loathing break through whenever she is rejected. She has been addicted



Additional Questions for Discussion (Cluster B Disorders)

- Why are most film examples of borderline personality cases women and most examples of narcissists men? Is this an accurate clinical picture?
- What qualities of the Cluster B disorders make them the most common personality disorders found in jails and prisons?
- Do you agree with the distinction between the Antisocial Personality and Psychopath/ Sociopath? State your case.
- Does society have a role in the creation of serial killers?
- One way of interpreting *Monster* is that Aileen Wuornos is a victim of circumstance. Would Aileen have developed into a murderer if she had not been a prostitute? What would have happened if she had never been abused?
- With which of these disorders is a client most likely to seek treatment? When and why? Who is least likely to ask for help?
- How close does Tom Ripley's character in *The Talented Mr. Ripley* come to meeting the criteria for each of the four disorders in this cluster?

to work most of her career, but taking a break and having an affair revitalize her and her narcissism seems to shift. The character also has some histrionic qualities as throughout the film it is often difficult for the viewer to discern when Julia is acting and when she is feeling/expressing real emotions. In addition, Mena Suvari's adolescent character Angela Hayes in *American Beauty* has narcissistic traits clearly seen in her preoccupation in becoming a model, her lack of empathy for a new student who has been hospitalized, and her strong beliefs that she is somehow special and important.

Other classic narcissistic characters include Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson) in *Sunset Blvd.* (1950) and an (initially) arrogant and self-serving Whitey Marsh (Mickey Rooney) in *Boys Town* (1938). In *The Doctor* (1991), William Hurt plays Jack MacKee, a self-centered and narcissistic physician who cares little for anything except himself and his career until he develops a tumor in his throat and discovers what it feels like to be a patient. Finally, Warren Beatty plays Bugsy Siegel, a narcissistic and self-centered gangster in the Barry Levinson film *Bugsy* (1991).

Cluster C Disorders

As is true in clinical settings, characters in films will have symptoms and personality characteristics that overlap with more than one disorder in each cluster. For example, it is clear that Robin Williams' milquetoast character in *One Hour Photo* (2002) has a personality disorder, however, he has characteristics of several disorders, most of which are found in cluster C. He lives alone, being too scared to take the risks that relationships require (avoidant); he is obsessed with a pseudo family (dependent); and he is orderly and rigid in handling photos at work and hoarding photos at home (obsessive-compulsive). Add in some depression with psychotic features, a probable history of past sexual abuse, and voyeuristic elements and Williams' character becomes even more complex.

Avoidant Personality Disorder

People with **avoidant personality disorder** have a tremendous fear of being exposed as inadequate and inferior. They are hypersensitive to criticism and shape their lives around fear of rejection and disapproval. They generally avoid intimate relations, convinced that they would be ridiculed as inadequate lovers. They conceptualize the world (and especially interpersonal relationships and interactions) as unsafe and threatening. They have

diminished self-esteem and describe themselves as inept, incompetent, and inferior. They are apt to spend much of their time at home and alone, in large part because of their concern that their personal deficiencies will be revealed if they venture out in public. These pervasive feelings of inferiority typically originate in childhood. In Adlerian terms, the person with an avoidant personality lacks the *courage to be imperfect*. However, it is important for clinicians to be sensitive to cultural differences that may affect a client's behavior. For example, in some Asian cultures, self-deprecation and extreme modesty about one's own achievements are normative behaviors and not indicative of a maladaptive personality trait.

This diagnosis overlaps substantially with the diagnosis of **social phobia, generalized type**. The overlap is so substantial that many clinicians find the distinction between the two diagnoses to be meaningless, and the *DSM-IV-TR* acknowledges that the two diagnoses may be simply different ways of conceptualizing the same (or similar) conditions. Keep this in mind as you read about the characters in the following films.

Avoidant personality can be distinguished from schizoid personality in that although both avoid interpersonal contact, the avoidant person actually craves the intimacy lacking in life. *Finding Forrester* (2000) is about a high school student, Jamal, who befriends a reclusive, retired professor and writer, William Forrester (Sean Connery), who seems to want more intimate connections. This film is about people who are trying to get "unstuck" from their avoidance patterns. In *Finding Forrester*, Connery's character does not leave his apartment and can only be seen by others when he is cleaning his windows. He wrote an award-winning book 50 years ago but has not been published since then. He seems to have given up, perhaps because of fear of rejection. He avoids other people and denies being interested in any life other than his own. When he does eventually go out, he has a panic attack when in a crowd. He is socially inappropriate, such as when he closes the door in the face of Jamal without a "goodbye." There is a fundamental sadness in William's isolation in his apartment; he actually does look for connection as a voyeur, watching others outside with interest and keeping his windows clean so he can continue observing the outside world. The viewer begins to wonder how much of William's isolation is loneliness. The protagonist frequently drinks alcohol alone, often while working. He avoids discussing personal issues such as his family history or his work. Clearly, he is reluctant to risk

interpersonal sharing, and although this changes significantly as the friendship with Jamal develops, William keeps the secret of his cancer to himself.

Dependent Personality Disorder

Dependent personalities have extreme difficulty making decisions. They are submissive and look to others for structure, meaning, and direction in their lives. They tend to be passive and clinging. These people lack assertion skills and submit to the will of others. They sometimes submit to verbal, physical, or sexual abuse by their spouses and others. They lack self-confidence and feel they cannot manage on their own. They fear the loss of approval that may occur if they express their own opinions or beliefs. They invest tremendous time and energy in maintaining a relationship with the person upon whom they are dependent. When a close, dependent relationship ends, they almost immediately seek out another relationship that supports their chronic need for succor.

An amusing illustration of a dependent personality occurs in the 1991 film *What About Bob?* Bob, played by Bill Murray, is the patient of a psychiatrist played by Richard Dreyfuss. Bob pursues the beleaguered psychiatrist across the country when the psychiatrist tries to take a short vacation. Almost all therapists have had overly dependent patients, although they are unlikely to have encountered a case as extreme as that of Bob. The film is an interesting starting point for a discussion of transference and countertransference.

"I've been seeing myself through him for years."

Dependent personality in *Lovelife* (1997)

In *Lovelife* (1997), a female bartender, Molly, maintains a high level of obsequiousness toward her narcissistic boyfriend, Alan, doing everything she can for him and losing her own identity in the process. Molly believes Alan can do "no wrong" and that he has no flaws; in addition, she subjects herself to his unrelenting criticism. Like many other dependent personalities, she finds herself rejected by her boyfriend who takes up with another woman; when he loses that other woman, he shows up and Molly takes him back.

In *White Oleander* (2002), Renee Zellweger plays Claire Richards, a foster mother with a

dependent personality. Claire's submissiveness to her husband, her inability to confront or challenge his decisions, and her vulnerability to manipulation by others lead her to commit suicide. Jason Biggs' agreeable, people-pleasing character Jerry Falk in *Anything Else* (2003) is so dependent he has to be "tricked" into being alone, into asserting his needs, and into challenging himself.

Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder

A person with obsessive-compulsive personality has enduring, inflexible, and maladaptive personality traits that involve perfectionism, orderliness, and an excessive need for control. They display exacting attention to detail and may devote a great deal of time to making lists and plans. Time is seen not as the fabric of life but rather as an enemy and something to be conquered. All of this psychological energy is expended in a futile attempt to achieve a sense of control over the exigencies of life and the vicissitudes of fortune. Two films that are solid depictions of obsessive-compulsive personality disorder are *The Odd Couple* (1968) and *M*A*S*H* (1970). *The Odd Couple* presents a memorable performance by Jack Lemmon as Felix Unger, the neurotic roommate of Oscar Madison (Walter Matthau), who roams the house with a can of air freshener, determined to eliminate any unpleasant smells. In *M*A*S*H*, Major Frank Burns (Robert Duvall) spends the entire war fretting about the antics of "Hawkeye" Pierce (Donald Sutherland) and "Trapper" John McIntyre (Elliott Gould) and the inability of the system to set limits on their exuberant behavior. He is obsessed with rank and bitterly resents any undue familiarity by enlisted men or junior officers. He also works hard to ensure that the enlisted men do not fraternize with Korean women. He is self-righteous, moralistic, and rigid, despite the fact that he is having an ongoing affair with "Hot Lips" Hoolihan (Sally Kellerman). He becomes furious when he doesn't get his way, and he is totally ineffectual in responding to the cavalier attitudes of his tent mates.

It is important to understand the difference between obsessive-compulsive personality disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder. The first disorder reflects a maladaptive personality style; the second indicates the presence of a serious mental disorder characterized by recurrent and persistent thoughts, images, or impulses (obsessions) and repetitious behaviors or mental acts (compulsions) that the individual cannot avoid or suppress. For example, an obsessive-compulsive personality may need to be constantly cleaning the house and "picking up." This is maladaptive

(when excessive) but may not significantly impair the person's life, and may be mildly adaptive in some roles. However, the patient with an **obsessive-compulsive disorder** – e.g., Nicholas Cage's character Roy Waller in *Matchstick Men* (2003) – spends much of the day focused on their obsession or engaged in compulsive behavior. This individual is significantly distressed by his or her problem, and realizes that the behavior or thoughts are abnormal and out of control. In contrast, people with **obsessive-compulsive personality disorder** are far less likely to be troubled by their condition.

John Turturro plays Al Fountain, a man with obsessive-compulsive personality disorder (OCPD) in *Box of Moonlight* (1996). Turturro's character is a rigid, overly conscientious, rule-driven man in both his work as a manager and in his family life with his wife and children. Al is rigid about the way his child learns using flashcards and obsessively asks about their use; he seems unable to handle joking, and has to rehearse a social situation before its occurrence. He is awkward and rigid at his job, bossing others around, seems robotic and machine-like, and is stiff in behavior (e.g., walking). The depiction of the effect of these OCPD traits on the family and co-workers is very clear: Family members are avoidant, passive, or hesitant around him and his co-workers make fun of him behind his back.

Al takes time off work and family to loosen up as he goes on a journey to search out his past. Along the way, two Jehovah's witnesses quickly and accurately get at his pain and sense of loss over the years (perhaps confronting the etiology of his OCPD), but they soon turn religious and proselytizing, which only alienates him. In a couple of scenes, Al sees things going backwards – e.g., water being poured and a child riding a bike. Does

this represent his own life going backwards? It is a fascinating cinematic example of the lack of progress that occurs when one is so stuck in routine that it seems as if one is going backwards. Moreover, it is a metaphor for time, one of the biggest enemies to someone with OCPD.

Films Portraying Various Personality Disorders

Some readers may want to see films that depict several personality disorders in one viewing for educational and clinical purposes. These films present interesting dynamics in their portrayal of interactions between different pathologies. Some examples follow.

Bartleby (2001) displays a classic example of schizoid personality in the lead character, Bartleby, portrayed exquisitely by Crispin Glover. Surrounding Bartleby, amidst a colorful office, are co-workers who are narcissistic (Joe Piscopo as Rocky, a self-inflated womanizer), schizotypal (Ernie, a disheveled man who often speaks in word salad), histrionic (Vivien, seductive and attention seeking), and dependent (the boss, unable to separate himself from a "fired" employee).

In *White Oleander* (2002), we see a young girl under the care of various "mother-figures," each with their own personality flaws. The child goes from her biological mother, Ingrid (an antisocial manipulator), to Starr (a dangerous histrionic), to Claire (a dependent personality with low self-esteem), and eventually to Rena (an antisocial personality who forces her foster children to sell clothes on the street to make money). The eyes of each mother seem to say it all, from the penetrating eyes of Ingrid to the downtrodden eyes of Claire.

The Royal Tenenbaums (2001) portrays the ultimate dysfunctional family, with pathologies that include narcissism, dependency, incest, suicidal behavior, paranoia, addiction, depression, and antisocial behavior, along with a schizotypal friend.

Woody Allen's *Anything Else* (2003) portrays an older man with a narcissistic personality disorder who befriends a young person with a dependent personality disorder in a relationship with someone with a borderline personality.

French director, Jean Pierre-Jeunet purposefully creates films with very interesting and quirky personalities who play their roles on elaborate, often fantastical, set designs. For examples, see



Additional Questions for Discussion (Cluster C Disorders)

- How close does Robin Williams' character in *One Hour Photo* (2002) come to meeting the criteria for each of the disorders in this cluster?
- Since anxiety is a strong component of these disorders, can medication be an important part of treatment?
- Is the treatment the same for a person with OCD as with OCPD?
- What advantages are associated with being OCPD, avoidant, or dependent?

Amelie (2001), *The City of Lost Children* (1995), and *Delicatessen* (1992).

International Films: Personality Disorders

Cluster A

The character Joseph (Dominique Pinon) in *Amelie* (2001) meets the criteria for a paranoid personality, as he is so suspicious of his ex-girlfriend dating and meeting other men that he sits all day in the café where she works and watches her closely. He carries a small tape recorder in his pocket and records her various laughs, comments, and conversations with his own play-by-play and time of day voice-over. The viewer sees this is a pattern (thus providing additional weight for the diagnosis) as he continues similar suspicious behavior with the next woman he begins to go out with and then again with the first girlfriend when the new girlfriend dumps him. Anger and quick defensive reactions are common in the paranoid personality and are clearly part of Joseph's personality.

Cluster B

A classic in film history is *Breathless* (1960, France) by Jean-Luc Godard, one of the leading directors of the French New Wave cinema of the 1960s. This movement involved filmmakers who shifted toward being more abstract and experimental in writing style and narrative structure, and emphasized psychological and social issues such as psychopathology and alienation rather than hard sciences and technology. In *Breathless*, the protagonist, Michel Poiccard (Jean-Paul Belmondo), is a young hoodlum and an anti-hero. He steals, gets in police chases in which he glibly kills one of the officers, and spends his time on the run from the authorities. He becomes truly fascinated by an American girl (Patricia Franchini, played by Jean Seberg) and tries to convince her to escape to Rome with him. This character is devoid of empathy and is characterized by selfishness, rudeness, blaming, and objectification of women.

Polish director Krzysztof Kieslowski created *The Decalogue* (1989), an extraordinary work composed of ten 1-hour films portraying a variety of tenants in a apartment complex. Each film relates loosely to one of the ten commandments.

There are a number of antisocial characters scattered throughout the films, such as the mother who uses deceit and manipulation in an attempt to keep her daughter's child from her, and the young vagabond who wanders the streets and randomly strangles a taxi cab driver. *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* (2006, Germany) is an interesting film from independent director Tom Tykwer, about a boy who grows up with a superior olfactory sense. He becomes obsessed with this ability, smelling anything in the environment, near or far. As the character, Jean-Baptiste Grenouille (Ben Whishaw), matures to adulthood, he develops a mission to "preserve scent" and to "keep smell" as he searches for the ultimate perfume. Along this journey, he directly and indirectly begins to cross boundaries (e.g., he inappropriately grabs the arm of a woman on the street without speaking to her and carefully smells her arm) and kill people—in one scene, he obsessively smells a woman after accidentally killing her by covering her mouth to prevent her from screaming; he then strips her naked and smells her whole body carefully. Recklessness, irresponsibility, and lack of remorse are key features of this character.

Tsotsi (2005, South Africa/UK) is a movie about an African gangster who kills others when needed and brutally beats a fellow gang member to a pulp. One day Tsotsi (Presley Chweneyagae) robs a woman and steals her car but discovers there is an infant in the back seat. He reluctantly decides to care for the baby, and this experience slowly transforms his character. Through flashbacks the viewer learns of Tsotsi's painful past—his longing for a connection with his mother, his physically abusive father, his observation of his father abusing animals, and the neglect his father orchestrated in intentionally keeping Tsotsi separate from his mother despite living in the same household. The viewer begins to feel some sympathy for this brutal character and this experience for the viewer intensifies when Tsotsi's caring and nurturing of an infant leads him to make a connection with a caretaking mother in his village, renew a friendship with the man he beat up, and sacrifice his livelihood by returning the infant to its mother.

Another young person with an antisocial personality disorder is portrayed in a film that won the Palm D'or award at Cannes, *The Child* (2005, France). A somewhat endearing, petty street thief, Bruno (Jérémie Renier), becomes much less likeable when he sells his newborn for money. The film shows an interesting depiction of selling a baby: Bruno makes a phone call, goes into a seemingly abandoned house, walks up several flights

of stairs, places his baby on his jacket in a room, walks into the next room and closes the door. He makes a call on his cell phone, saying "it's done," waits a short time, and then goes back into the first room and picks up his jacket and money.

The intriguing movie *Swimming Pool* (2003, France/UK) portrays a young woman, Julie (Ludivine Sagnier), who is seductive, provocative, and has a desire for excitement. She presents as nonchalant and laid back, but she is also someone who can be easily hurt or angered. She is sexually impulsive and promiscuous, having sex with a different man each night. She throws herself at older men, even when they express disinterest. One night she appears with a bruise on her face around her eye and the viewer is left to speculate as to what sort of danger she had been involved in while staying out the whole night. She is manipulative and jealous when her roommate begins to dance with a man. Julie acts out in anger when she is rejected. Her instability leads to a dissociative episode where she thinks she sees her mother (who is deceased) and expresses happiness at the prospect of her mother's return, screams when she is told that her mother is not there, and then faints. Julie also experiences a loss of memory, in which she is unable to remember killing her lover.

Zaza (Michel Serrault), the gay transvestite performer in *La cage aux folles* (*Birds of a Feather*, 1978, France), provides a wonderful example of a histrionic personality. She is dramatic and flamboyant, and almost everything she does is exaggerated. When her partner Renato (Ugo Tognazzi) tells her that he plans to invite his ex-wife to an important dinner with his son's future in-laws, Zaza is highly insulted and announces her intention to commit suicide. Neither Renato nor the viewer thinks for a minute that she is serious about her threat.

Cluster C

Sheila McCarthy plays Polly Vandersma, an insecure, socially awkward, temporary worker with avoidant traits in the popular Canadian film, *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing* (1987). She is naïve, socially inhibited, and seems to have a fragile self-esteem and self-concept. The voice-over narration done by McCarthy provides insights into her thinking and feeling when she is interacting with others.

Audrey Tautou's whimsical and endearing title character in *Amelie* (2001, France) has many avoidant personality characteristics. Amelie wants contact with others, especially intimate love,

though she is unable to take the risk. The emphasis in the film is on her thoughts and the challenge involved in meeting a man; the key theme, which the movie cleverly portrays cinematically, is her constant avoidance of actually meeting a man who comes into her life. After doing a good deed, Amelie appears nervous and looks away, ignoring an opportunity for human interaction; she simply does not know how to interact socially. The film is rare in its sophisticated exploration of the causes of Amelie's anxiety and avoidant behavior. It notes that, from birth, she was trapped between a neurotic mother (who had "shaky nerves" and was anxious about everything) and an iceberg father, who avoided all feelings. In addition, she had no playmates or social life and therefore became used to isolation, fantasy, and imagination. Other contributing etiologies are presented when she is tricked by a neighbor into feeling guilty as the "cause" of natural disasters, when her mother is dramatically killed in front of her, and when she has ongoing problems in relating and communicating with her father.

A common pattern for people with avoidant personality is the problem of self-sacrifice—devoting oneself to helping others and losing sight of one's own struggles and self-care. Amelie epitomizes self-sacrifice as she devotes herself to being a regular "do-gooder," helping others find joy and become "unstuck" from their life patterns. Amelie is personally stuck in her avoidant pattern and does not know it. Eventually, she learns to reach out to others for support and develops the courage necessary to face her fears.

Audrey Tautou portrays a cluster C character, Michèle, in another French film, *God is Great and I Am Not* (2002), in which she has a quirky element of dependent personality (but probably not the disorder) insofar as she repeatedly compromises her beliefs by conforming and converting to the religion of her partner at the time. She is shown trying to dedicate herself to Catholicism and Buddhism before finding a Jewish man and converting to Judaism. Her fear of being alone leads her to become suicidal after the end of an intimate relationship.

In the Spanish period film, *Mad Love* (2002), a woman compulsively attaches to her husband despite continuous evidence of his philandering. She becomes preoccupied and worried about his whereabouts, yet she maintains a high level of excitement when he returns from a journey that has obviously involved infidelities. In one scene, he resists a warm embrace despite her clinging and affectionate behavior, and she asks him to lie to her

about where he has been. Even when she is rejected by him, she obsessively continues to love him and believe they will be reunited upon her death.

"I want to love you even if you loathe me."

A classic dependent quote from
"Joan the Mad" in *Mad Love* (2002)

Critical Thinking Questions

- Why do many of the films portraying personality disorders exhibit some of the most compelling and memorable characters?
- Why is the public so fascinated and drawn to characters who are so diabolically evil (e.g., the Joker, Anton Chigurh, or Hannibal Lecter)? Is it appropriate for these characters to receive so much attention in the media and many of the major movie awards?
- Is it useful to treat life-long personality characteristics as *diseases* (i.e., should personality disorders be included in the *DSM-IV-TR*)?
- It is difficult to treat personality disorders, and treatment may last for several years. Should insurance companies be required to cover the treatment of these conditions?
- Is the concept of *evil* meaningful when discussing people with antisocial personality disorders?
- How does a personality feature (such as suspicion) differ from a personality disorder (such as paranoid personality disorder) or a disease (such as paranoid schizophrenia)? Are the differences qualitative as well as quantitative?
- *Fatal Attraction* (1987) originally ended with a suicide by Alex Forrest, using a knife that had Dan Gallagher's fingerprints on it. However, viewers did not like this ending, and it was replaced with the memorable bathtub scene. Would the original ending have been more consistent with a diagnosis of borderline personality disorder?
- What problems can therapists anticipate when they are treating clients with borderline personality disorders?

Further Exploration

If you have time to read just one book relevant to this chapter, make it:

Yudofsky, S. C. (2005). *Fatal flaws: Navigating destructive relationships with people with disorders of personality and character*. Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing.

If you only have time for one article, read:

Widiger, T. A., & Trull, T. J. (2007). Plate tectonics in the classification of personality disorder: Shifting to a dimensional model. *American Psychologist*, 62, 71–83.



Personality Disorders

☐	<i>No Country for Old Men</i> (2007)
☐	<i>The Talented Mr. Ripley</i> (1999)
☐	<i>Sunset Blvd.</i> (1950)
☐	<i>The Odd Couple</i> (1968)
☐	<i>Notes on a Scandal</i> (2006)
☐	<i>Fatal Attraction</i> (1987)
☐	<i>American Beauty</i> (1999)
☐	<i>A Clockwork Orange</i> (1971)
☐	<i>Bartleby</i> (2001)
☐	<i>Charlie and the Chocolate Factory</i> (2005)