

THERAPY NOTES

8/09/2004

First Name	Last Name	DOB
Fennis	Del Mar	5/21/1944

Reason for visit

- court-mandated therapy (3 months, 12 sessions)
- charged for simple assault and battery

Notes

- 15 minutes late
- gruff demeanor, kept muttering about it being a waste of time
- maintains that nothing is wrong with him
- lots of silence, often refuses to expand beyond yes or no
- when asked about his strategies for conflict resolution, talked about violence being the norm- "its the easiest way to get through to somebody"
- client has little response to treatment so far

Next Steps

- no medication necessary
- next session objective: help the client to open up more, feel comfortable in this space, introduce nonviolent coping strategies/conflict resolution

THERAPY NOTES

12/15/2004

First Name	Last Name	DOB
Ennis	Del Mar	5/21/1944

Reason for visit

-continuing therapy (biweekly session)

Notes

- opened up about grief regarding death of a close personal friend
- seems like sense of hopelessness
- "I have to stand it, but some days I feel like I can't"
- death 21 years ago, grief persists
- speaks of person as if they were life partners
- at mention of them ever having a relationship (neutrally-phrased question), client had forceful reaction
 - "I am not queer and I never have been!" (repeated multiple times)
- after 10 minutes of calming down, Mr. Del Mar explained they did have a relationship and he wishes they could have been together
- definitely some internalized homophobia
- ideal self concept does not match real self, self-concept is incongruent
- discussed fear of societal rejection
- "It may be different now but back then you would never see two guys livin' together like that"

Next Steps

- next session objective: guide client through grief, combat homophobic thoughts and cognitive dissonance, build self-esteem

THERAPY NOTES

03/01/2005

First Name	Last Name	DOB
Finnis	Del Mar	5/21/1944

Reason for visit

-continuing therapy (biweekly session)

Notes

- feels guilty, still mourning Jack
- reflected on childhood influences
- emphasis on violence shaped his ideas of conflict resolution
- brother was very violent, father encouraged violence as a response and means of protection, modeled violent behavior
- childhood experiences with LGB TQIA+ community also negative
- key childhood moment: seeing gay man violently murdered
- father encouraged violence against gay community
- admitted to bullying other boys he saw as queer in childhood (age 13)
 - father encouraged that behavior
- bullying was used as a coping mechanism to deal with self-hatred

Next Steps

- work on negating false beliefs from childhood, find healthier thought patterns
- explore trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy

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The Ballad of a Lonely Cowboy: A Brokeback Mountain Adaptation Self-Analysis

My adaptation is based primarily on Annie Proulx's *Brokeback Mountain* and consists of a collection of notes from Ennis' therapy sessions, which take place around 20 years after his partner Jack's death. These notes focus on important emotional and behavioral themes of Ennis' character in the short story, including grief, hopelessness, homophobia, violence, and childhood trauma, while also taking various creative steps to fill in the gaps. This adaptation was written in a very different communicative situation from the original text and focuses and expands on Ennis' character and emotions.

I think it is first important to note that I am not a licensed therapist and I am not sure how therapists take notes, although I imagine it varies widely with individual preferences, goals of therapy, and types of practice. My notes focus on the content of Ennis' sessions and what I predict a professional would note about his stories. More than an accurate depiction of what a professional therapist's conclusions would be, I want this adaptation to explore Ennis' character, how he might react in this new situation, and what emotions and experiences lie beneath the surface.

Grief was one of the main topics that I focused on for Ennis' therapy notes because he still mourns Jack and has been unable to completely move on or move forward since that loss. Similarly, another concept from the text that I tried to incorporate was Ennis' sense of hopelessness and how he does not consider himself capable of changing the society that has hurt him or does not consider the society as capable of or worth changing. At the end of the story, he explained that "if you can't fix it you've got to stand it." While this sentiment, encouraging perseverance and personal strength, is true about loss and grief, it also implies that Ennis does not consider attempting to change society so that other LGBTQIA+ couples can be together. This fixed mindset may also come from a place of internalized homophobia.

Another key theme that I incorporated was Ennis' internalized homophobia and how he still hesitates to identify as gay. In the short story, Ennis has trouble admitting that he is attracted to Jack. Proulx writes, "They never talked about the sex, let it happen, at first only in the tent at night, then in the full daylight with the hot sun striking down, and at evening in the fire glow, quick, rough, laughing and snorting, no lack of noises, but saying not a goddamn word except once Ennis said 'I'm not no queer'" (Proulx 217). This quote demonstrates how Ennis does not identify with the queer community and how his feelings conflict with his ideal self-image. Throughout the rest of the short story, Ennis hides his sexuality from his family and never fully embraces his true self. Even after years of loving each other, Jack's most meaningful memory of the two of them included "the knowledge that Ennis would not then embrace him face to face

because he did not want to see nor feel that it was Jack he held” (Proulx 232). It seems that only after Jack is gone that Ennis can truly admit to himself how significant their relationship was and his true romantic feelings for Jack. This is reflected in the therapy notes as Ennis working through his grief about Jack’s death and his reaction to the therapist’s question of the nature of their relationship. Ennis’ initial reaction is to deny any questions of his sexuality because of his internalized homophobia, but he eventually shares his true feelings. I included that he opens up because I imagined that Ennis no longer fears societal rejection and consequences as he is in a safe space with a person he has grown to trust.

Violence was another important topic that I focused on in Ennis’ therapy. Throughout the short story, Ennis instinctually turns to violence, threatening his ex-wife and punching Jack. In the movie, Ennis even assaults a stranger in an unprovoked attack. When his ex-wife Alma confronts him about his relationship with Jack and is about to call for her husband for protection, Ennis responds with “You fuckin go right ahead. Go on and fuckin yell. I’ll make him eat the fuckin floor and you too.” He gave another wrench that left her with a burning bracelet, shoved his hat on backwards and slammed out” (Proulx 227). This quote demonstrates how Ennis uses violence to threaten and harm those around him when they disagree or when he feels attacked. In my adaptation, the therapist recognizes Ennis’ violent tendencies and plans for Ennis to find peaceful and productive coping strategies and means of conflict resolution.

The childhood trauma that shaped Ennis’ outlook was incredibly relevant, especially to his violent tendencies and homophobic mindset. His father supported violence as a means of conflict resolution, explaining that there is “nothin like hurtin somebody to make him hear good” (Proulx 224). Ennis was also exposed to a gay man “dead in a irrigation ditch [where others] took a tire iron to him, spurred him up, drug him around by his dick until it pulled off, just bloody pulp” (Proulx 224). These influential childhood messages and experiences deeply shaped Ennis’ thinking and behavior. Exploring and reflecting on the origins of different tendencies is an important part of therapy; this step can be helpful in recognizing the problematic parts of a behavior and working to change it.

One creative decision that I decided to add was a story of Ennis bullying other children that he saw as being queer. I felt this was very fitting for his character as he had violent influences growing up and was taught to hate the LGBTQIA+ community. In the short story, when the gay man was murdered, Ennis’ “Dad made sure [he] seen it” and “laughed about it.” Ennis even states that “for all I know [his father had] done the job” (Proulx 225). Ennis tells Jack about these experiences as justification for why they cannot be together openly and to explain his family’s views on queerness. Furthermore, it is evident that Ennis’ father encouraged violence; when Ennis was six years old, his father told him to physically attack his older brother. As children are very impressionable, I would imagine that young Ennis embodied his father’s views of the gay community and the effectiveness of violence. Being a child and seeking his parent’s approval would then lead him to do what he assumed would make his father happy; targeting and bullying other members of the queer community would be very fitting. Furthermore, Ennis

himself had queer feelings, so it makes sense for him to get upset about that and channel that self-hatred into taking it out on others. Overall, this creative decision has legitimate support in the original text through the lingering internalized homophobia and the experiences that Ennis describes from his childhood.

Another creative decision that I added was the situation that brought Ennis to therapy. Ennis does not seem the type of person to open up or voluntarily seek therapy. Ennis maintained, and his mindset at the end of the short story, years after Jack's death, was "nothing could be done about it, and if you can't fix it you've got to stand it" (Proulx 238). This quote confirms that Ennis is still experiencing this loss but views his emotional pain and grief as a part of life, highlighting values of self-reliance and perseverance. Therefore, I find it hard to imagine that Ennis would seek out therapy and far more likely that he would be ordered to go. I specifically chose an assault and battery case as an explanation for this therapy because of Ennis' violent tendencies. Although court-mandated therapy is primarily implemented if the offender has a history of mental illness or substance abuse, I believe that assault and battery with the offender being a grief-stricken old man could realistically lead to more sympathy and court-mandated therapy instead of other sentencing. In my adaptation, although the origin of his therapy was his violent outbursts, I included that his therapy helps him work through much of his other emotional pain.

I chose to add these original details to make the situation more plausible but also to enhance Ennis' character. Including the childhood bullying was a way to add more explanation to Ennis' rich backstory. As Sanders states, "It is at the very point of infidelity or departure that the most creative acts of adaptation take place" (Sanders 24). I agree that the most creative aspects of my adaptation are tied to the original additions, however, changing the setting of the character through a different format, time period, and language was also a way that I set my adaptation apart from the original.

As we begin to add original details in an adaptation, I think it is important to distinguish between the concepts of a creative adaptation and fan fiction. Both can focus on adding new material to the original story, but to me, the differences lie in the purpose of the work and the strength of the connections to the original. An adaptation can put the original into a different context with supplementary material that is supported by specific details in the original. Fan fiction, however, adds content to the original that may not be as heavily supported and stems more from the ideas of the fan fiction creator. For example, if my adaptation did not tie as much into the original material and the creative decisions such as childhood bullying were not as related to ideas in the original text, then I would consider aspects of my work to be more fan fiction than adaptation.

One smaller feature that I decided to include to make the adaptation more realistic was specific dates. Using information from the movie and short story, I gathered that Ennis was born in 1944 and placed his therapy in 2004-2005 when he would be 60. A 60-year-old Ennis would be young enough to get involved in an assault and battery case, but old and tired enough to comply with the court-mandated therapy.

Another detail I planned was how each successive therapy session gets progressively more personal and deep. I doubt a character with Ennis' personality and emotional walls would confide in another person right away. In the short story, Ennis does not have a strong emotional connection with anyone other than Jack, who he also resists defining his relationship with or opening up to. The dates on this collection of therapy notes demonstrate how Ennis takes months of consistent treatment to trust his therapist and share his thoughts. During the first session, Ennis is guarded and resistant to the treatment. However, in the coming months, Ennis opens up about his grief regarding his relationship with Jack and eventually about the childhood experiences that shaped his mindset. Therefore, the third therapy session that I wrote notes for focuses on these influences and the conclusions that the therapist draws from Ennis' stories.

One thing that is extremely different between my adaptation and the original *Brokeback Mountain* short story is the communicative situation and specifically the context, time period, and author's experience. As Casetti discusses, "What matters [in an adaptation] is the new role and place that the later event takes on within the discursive field, more than the abstract faithfulness that it can claim with respect to the source text. In fact, the text's identity is defined more by this role and this place than by a series of formal elements." (Casetti 82). One of the biggest differences I can see between the communicative situations and the places of both works would be the view on therapy. My personal experience with therapy has certainly shaped and inspired this adaptation. Although I first rejected the idea of therapy, feeling that I did not need professional help, I have regularly attended therapy for the past two years and have felt it to be extremely valuable in learning how to cope with life events, process my emotions in a healthy way, and build and maintain important relationships in my life. Being able to talk to a professional with the freedom to be completely honest in a judgment-free environment has been incredible for my mental health. A few of the people in my circle of friends and family also go to therapy; my sister was one of the biggest proponents of me taking this step. Overall, in my own experience, I feel as though therapy is very accepted and praised, although I understand this is not the case for many people and many cultures. I would imagine that this would be different even around 25 years ago when the *Brokeback Mountain* short story was written and published. Over the years, the number of adults seeking therapy has increased; there are 32.81% more Americans getting mental health care in 2021 than in 2002 (Ducharme). Because of this, I imagine there were many more negative stereotypes about therapy in the past. With stronger gender stereotypes also encouraging men to not show their emotions and emphasizing self-reliance, I think fewer people back then would have the idea to adapt a story in this way. The premise of my adaptation being the main character going to therapy fits the current time and place that the work comes out of, reflecting its communicative situation and the author's perspective.

Audiences can have different experiences with an adaptation, depending on if they are familiar with the source material. Sanders discusses that sometimes "the full impact of the film adaptation depends upon an audience's awareness of an explicit relationship to a source text"

(Sanders 27) and although the knowledge may not be necessary, it “could enrich the spectator’s experience and may indeed enhance or complicate the pleasures involved” (Sanders 28). I believe that my adaptation matches that, as familiarity with the original work is necessary to understand and fully appreciate it. The notes do not focus much on Ennis’ relationship with his family or the progression of his and Jack’s relationship, which are key aspects of the main plot of the short story. These ideas, however, do relate and provide context to the emotions and behaviors that come up in Ennis’ therapy. Generally, I believe that my adaptation is much more meaningful to an audience who knows Ennis’ story.

Another aspect of adaptations to consider is how their existence impacts the source text. Sanders writes that “it is the very endurance and survival of the source text, alongside the various versions and interpretations that it stimulates or provokes, that enables the ongoing process of juxtaposed readings that are crucial to the cultural operations of adaptation, and the ongoing experiences of pleasure for the reader or spectator in tracing the intertextual relationships” (Sanders 34). She argues that the ties to the source text make adaptations pleasurable as the audience can enjoy making connections and seeing the similarities between the two works. I generally agree with that and in my own experience with adaptations, if I do not enjoy them then I appreciate the original even more. However, I feel as though adaptations that expand on a source text, such as my therapy notes for Ennis, can also take away from the source material. Although my adaptation ties in aspects of the plot that the audience can recognize, it is in essence more of an extension of Ennis’ character. If the audience disagreed or did not enjoy aspects of my adaptation, it could color their view of the original. For example, if the audience felt that Ennis going to therapy and eventually opening up to his therapist as I describe is unrealistic, then the existence of my adaptation can detract from their idea of Ennis being self-reliant and convinced of society’s representation of masculinity.

My overall goal for this adaptation was to reprogram the reception of Ennis’ character. In Casetti’s writing, they discuss that “to adapt, to move from one communicative situation to another, entails a number of things, most significantly, to re-program the reception of a story, a theme, or a character, and so on. The second life of a text coincides with a second life of reception” (Casetti 85). I feel as though, in general, therapy gives people a chance to better themselves and better understand the impact and origin of their thoughts, tendencies, and behaviors. As Ennis’ character has a traumatic history and pattern of intense, harmful reactions, one of my goals for this adaptation was to dive into his perspective. The short story itself touches upon Ennis’ backstory and the very valid reasons he has to fear the society he lives in; I hoped to take that a step further and help readers to even empathize with Ennis. In that way, I hoped to reprogram the reception of this character and give the short story a new life.

Works Cited

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Revisions made:

Keener sense of audience awareness

- Deep editing:
 - Took out a bit about my experience with therapy as they were not the focus of the paper
- Sharpened clarification:
 - Moved the assault and battery discussion to a more logical place in the paper
- Thoughtful additions:
 - Added a new, more intriguing title

Improvement in textual understanding and analysis

- Deep editing:
 - Cut out repetitive parts of textual explanation for "If you can't fix it, you've gotta stand it" second use (Ennis would not seek out therapy)
- Sharpened clarification:
 - Clarified, reexamined meaning in "If you can't fix it, you've gotta stand it" first use
- Thoughtful additions:
 - Added about specific sections of the original that inspired and supported creative choice to add in childhood bullying and Ennis' resistance to treatment

- Added new source to works cited

Refine and strengthen claims

- Deep editing:
 - Cut and moved some writing about how the third session gets deeper and more personal from paragraph where that was not the focus
- Sharpened clarification:
 - Clarified why I chose assault and battery and court-ordered therapy; also discussed possible drawbacks of that choice
- Thoughtful additions:
 - Added a statistic about the increase of people going to therapy

Polish essay for clarity and precision

- Deep editing:
 - Cut out parts of a quote that were unnecessary
 - Fixed grammar errors
 - Cut down wordy sentences/phrases that did not add anything
- Sharpened clarification:
 - Made a few word/phrasing changes for clarity
 - Moved around sections to more logical places
- Thoughtful additions:
 - Further discussed the difference between fan fiction and adaptation