Post-Traumatic Stress Among the Children in Golding’s Lord of The Flies

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2012
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Abstract
The essay explored the connection between the deviation of the children’s behavioral patterns and the theory of psychoanalysis. Texts by Klein and Freud and also adaptations of their theories by Mangs, Martell and Salzberg-Wittenberg were used to explore whether the characters followed the developmental stages according to psychoanalysis. Through a comparison between the records of the characters’ behavior with diagnostic material regarding Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder composed by the American Psychiatric Association, the conclusion was drawn that the result of the analysis points towards the fact that the deviation in the behavioral patterns of the children was a result of the traumatic events that took place around them.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis, Golding, Trauma, PTSD

Introduction
There is much written about William Golding's 'Lord of The Flies', although not much has been written about the behavior of the children through a psychoanalytical perspective. There has been extensive focus upon the power relations in the story, and also about group dynamics. The gap in the exploration of this particular area in the Lord of The Flies calls for attention to it. There are big differences between how the younger children develop compared to the older children, and they have distinctly separate ways of dealing with the traumatic experience which brought them to the island. The explanation presented in the story regarding the reason why the children ended up on the island was as follows: Their airplane had entered a warzone where they were mistaken for hostiles, and as a result they were shot down. The children were, because of this, exposed to high levels of trauma and a common reaction to this is that the exposed person starts to deviate from normal behavioral patterns; this is known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. It was first labeled PTSD in 1980, following the Vietnam War.
Prior to this there were several different diagnoses depending on what type of trauma that the patient had experienced, but findings showed that there were clear connections between all of them, and the increased interest in traumatic stress resulted in the diagnose PTSD. In 1940, a book was published by Sigmund Freud: An Outline Of Psychoanalysis, and it is still used today to explain how and why the human mind works the way that it does, and how mental illnesses can be treated through psychotherapy. The individuals on the island were twelve years old, and the youngest was six. This puts the characters in a main interest area of the theory of psychoanalysis; the developmental stages of children. There are no valid records stating that Golding was a follower of psychoanalysis, regardless of this, the theory of psychoanalysis is applicable to this story. It will give a better understanding regarding how the children felt and how they dealt with their traumatic experiences.

In the psychoanalytical developmental stages of children, a important aspect of this is the Oedipus complex. The Oedipus complex is a struggle which e child goes through. In boys (the female Oedipal development will not be dealt with since there are no girls in the Lord of the Flies), it is a struggle between him and the father, for the mother’s love. This will be further explained later. One concrete example that shows how some of the children were fighting a strong Oedipus complex is how the younger children called out for their mothers, whereas the older children told stories of how their fathers would come to their rescue. This points directly to how both Klein and Freud have described the development of the child psyche.

Psychoanalytical theory problematizes the development of children and divides them into phases; the oral, anal, early genital, latency, pre-adolescence, early adolescence, high adolescence, late adolescence and post-adolescence. The most relevant phases regarding Lord of The Flies are the latency phase and the pre-adolescent phase. The first presents normative behavioral patterns and deviations regarding the ages of 5 -11, which is relevant for this essay since most of the children are under the age of eleven. Since this presents explanations for such a long period of child development it is divided into sub-groups. Each of these sub-groups has certain characteristics, and through this they offer a deeper understanding of the children of this phase. It is divided into three sub-groups; early, actual and late. Ralph is presented to the reader as twelve years old, and whether Piggy or Jack are younger or older is not presented in the text, though both of them are presented to be about the same age as Ralph. This allows for another phase to be added to the analysis of these children; the pre-adolescent phase (children between the ages of eleven and twelve). In the analysis, the children will be divided into three groups, the littluns will form one group, a number of the older children in one group, biguns, and the oldest ones (Ralph and Jack) in one group. These three groups are divided in this way to match
the developmental phases of children presented in psychoanalysis. Because the children were all victims of several traumatic events, their behavior will be juxtaposed to common behavior among patients suffering from PTSD. PTSD is a common among trauma victims and therefore it will suit this subject perfectly. It will be carried out using a list of symptoms regarding PTSD from the American Psychiatric Association and data collected from the story. It should be pointed out that this analysis will not strive towards an actual diagnosis of the children. What this essay will strive to prove is that the deviation from normative behavioral patterns of the children is a result of the traumatic arrival to the island.

Starting by explaining the psychoanalytical developmental stages of children and giving a short explanation to the Oedipus complex, this will, later on, in the analysis serve to explain the way children would normally act; this is to be able to highlight the behavior in the characters in Lord of The Flies which deviates from the norm. And since there are certain criteria which a patient must fulfill in order to be diagnosed with this disorder, a list of these will be presented and juxtapose to the behavior of the children in the story. Using the definitions and explanations of the different developmental stages, they will work as a way of explaining why the characters act the way in which they do.

The Oedipus Complex
Freud said that it is a natural stage which e child has to pass through (Freud, 55). According to him, there are separate oedipal developmental stages for men and women, and as a result of the lack of females on the island, only the male Oedipus complex will be further addressed. Mangs & Martell explained that the beginning of the oedipal complex is when the boy realizes that his mother does not have a penis. This calls for more identification with the father and through this, his wishes to own, make an impact on and to take care of the mother; these are signs of him knowing his sexual role. The identification with the father causes him to see that he is inferior to the father’s strength. Because of his inferiority, it seems dangerous to compete with the father, who becomes a rivaling figure. “This causes the boy to imagine a threat of redemption, which gives birth to his castration anxiety” (My translation, refers to all following by: Mangs & Martell, 110). This threat of castration forces the boy to abandon his sexual urges towards his mother. As a result of this, the Oedipus complex is destroyed.

Early child development of relevance
Klein argued that the reason for children to believe that something evil is present when the mother is absent, has to do with the child projecting hatred, and as a result of this he/she believes that there is something evil that wants to kill or cause harm to him/her. This argument is strengthened by Salzberg-Wittenberg: “The small child cannot separate between inner and outer experiences, and regardless of what kind of fantasies it has, it believes that it has concrete effects both on the physical mother and on the psychological representation of her” (My translation, refers to all following by: Salzberg-Wittenberg, 65). A reason why young children cannot separate between what is real and what is not has to do with the development of what Freud called reality-testing. It helps the person to reason regarding what is real and what is not. Normally, when asleep this function falls into abeyance and that is the Freudian explanation why dreams can seem real when the person is asleep, and how they can seem absurd when the person wakes up. According to Freud, dreams are a kind of neurosis, but a positive one. However, due to intense external stimulus, through e.g. a traumatic experience, the reality-testing function can stop working and fall in abeyance even in a waking state. As a result of this the mind does not have a functioning apparatus that separates what is real and what is not and he or she becomes neurotic (Freud, 70-71).

The Latency Phase
The latency phase holds three different stages, which are: early latency (5-7 year olds), actual latency (7-9 year olds) and late latency (9-11 year olds).

“Early latency: The child is still strongly influenced by the Oedipus complex and physically restless (especially the sex-year-old). An immature ego strains by fighting genital and pregenital impulses. Temptation to regress is present. Anxiety, nightmares and sleeping difficulty is part of the picture. The super-ego is strong. The world is evil-good, black/white. The role as police is preferred in games like ‘cops and robbers’.

Actual latency: Increased control of the primary process thinking, at least in the presence of adults. Good bodily balance. Urge-impulses and demands from the super-ego are handled better. The defenses work smoother. The child acts more coherent and concentrated. Boundaries set by adults can be looked upon as support and help. The child appreciates well organized games and fair play. Late latency: troublesome ambivalence to other people starts to wear off. Wanting to collect facts and to create are prominent features. One can separate right from wrong, a pronounced sense for justice
and one can bare unpleasant emotions without denying them. The child acts more
grown up.” (Mangs & Martell, 134)

It is also common for children in this phase to tease other children. Insults like ‘Coward’ or
‘fatty’ are used as a defense against homosexual wishes and fears, the point in it being that the
child tries to ensure that he himself is not like that (Mangs & Martell, 149). “The one that does
not get welcomed into the world of peers risks to regress into feeling like a small child that
has to adapt to the adult world” (Mangs & Martell, 156). From a bullying peer’s perspective,
bullying can serve as a way to increase his own self-esteem among his friends. It is common
that the child listens to the super-ego as long as it is to its own narcissistic advantage; “Latency
children are often squeezed between the home’s and the street’s norm system. It is cowardly to
not dare to steal in the store. To dare can increase the self-esteem among peers”, and what is
considered moral is sanctioned through the parents (Mangs & Martell, 140). After the latency
phase, the child enters the phase of pre-adolescence. Usually it ranges between the ages of 11-
12. Anxiety and restlessness are common feelings for the pre-adolescent and it is not
uncommon that he/she feels irritability and aggressiveness about fitting in, both in the school
environment and at home. This phase presents itself in the boy where he often takes on a
dominant aggressive role. He does this in play, fantasy and the way in which he acts out. It can
lead to criminal behavior (Mangs & Martell, 172, 175). The pre-adolescent puts pressure on
himself in his relationship with his father, and it is common that a splitting in the father-imagos
takes place where a good and a bad father appear. This makes it possible to adore and love the
good father, and hate the bad one. Often the bad father can be represented in the bad traits of
the real father, or the hatred can be turned against someone which holds an aggressive
dominant role over the child. “In the aggressive relationship to the hated after the boy reassures
himself that he is his father’s match and will not be castrated by him” (Klein, 189).

Trauma
Depending on how vulnerable the individual is, and also because of how intense, sudden or if it
continues over a longer period of time, the traumatic experience will affect people in different
ways. It can for some cause total apathy and therefore hinders the person’s development.
However, for some it can be turned into something constructive and positive (Mangs &
Martell, 203). PTSD is a disorder which can occur after a person has been exposed to high
levels of trauma. The type of trauma in specific is not of primary focus, but the fact that he or
she has had the experience. There are minor and major stressors that can in certain
combinations or by themselves trigger a stress disorder to break out (Resick, 3). Regarding PTSD, The American Psychiatric Association has assembled a checklist to be used in order to set the diagnosis. It is divided into six questions, A-F, that have a number of answers that are supposed to match with the patient’s traumatic experience and the behavior which he or she possess (for more information see appendix).

In order to be able to perform a thorough investigation regarding whether a child suffers from PTSD we must examine how a child’s behavior fits into real behavior patterns. This is to make sure that they show realistic human characteristics. If they do not, the point in investigating their psyche becomes much vaguer. The developmental stages according to psychoanalysis (presented above) will now be compared to the behavior of the children.

The problem with localizing the oedipal complex among the children on the island derives from the fact that neither of the parents is present. However, through regression it is evident that it is present; this is also the reason why the littluns come into contact with the beast. Klein explained that fear of something evil that wanted to cause harm or to kill is common if the mother is not present in the early development of the child. In this context, this would be explained this way: Among children of the early latency phase regression is common, and in this context, the children regressed as a result of the traumatic arrival on the island, the reality-testing apparatus in their minds did not function to the same extent anymore and they felt as if they were threatened. The Oedipus complex is a triangle struggle between the good mother, which the child wants to protect and the father who is a rival in the fight for the mother’s love. Since there is no one to play the role of the father, the children look to find something else to take on the rivaling role. As a result of their reality-testing apparatus not functioning correctly they feel as if an evil force is out to get them; the beast took on the rivaling role of the father. This is also connected to how the children view the world as good/evil; the beast represented the evil force that wanted to cause them harm, and since the good force, their mothers, was not there to help them the problem remained. Like mentioned in the explanation of how the Oedipus complex represents itself in the children, there are several cases of where the younger children regress. A character that showed evident signs of regression is the littlun Percival. There is clear evidence of bullying and of him being cut off from the other children. In one passage we learn that one of the littluns, Percival, had crawled into a shelter for two days, where he sang songs and cried for himself. The other children thought that he had become insane. In the following pages of the book, both biguns and littluns cut him off, and there are several cases where he was bullied. The way in which he was treated
culminated when he answers “Percival Wemys Madison, The Vicarage, Harcourt St. Anthony, Hants, telephone, telephone, tele-” on the question what his name is. They continued to ask him about the beast, which he was said to have seen. In answer to this Percival yawned and said “Beast my foot!” (Golding, 93-94). This quote shows clear evidence that he has regressed into feeling that he is much younger than he is. This creates an even larger gap between himself and the biguns that were interrogating him, causing him to see them as representations of the adult world which he has to adapt to. In doing this, he says as much as he knows about himself, his whole name, his address and his telephone number. This language that he uses can be argued to be less developed than that of a healthy six-year-old. This would then be his way of communicating to and pleasing the adult world, which the biguns represented for him.

There are several passages where the children are told to suffer from nightmares and troubled sleep, one of which is: “‘Last night I had a dream, a horrid dream, fighting with things. I was outside the shelter by myself, fighting with things, those twisty things in the trees.’” … “‘Then I was frightened and I woke up. And I was outside the shelter by myself in the dark and those twisty things had gone away’” (Golding, 91). When it comes to showing examples of how the super-ego is at work we will look at the passage where Johnny, Henry, and Percival were building sand castles:

“Roger and Maurice came out of the forest. They were relieved from duty at the fire and had come down for a swim. Roger led the way straight through the castles, kicking them over, burying the flowers, scattering the chosen stones. Maurice followed, laughing, and added to the destruction. The three littluns paused in their game and looked up. As it happened, the particular marks in which they were interested had not been touched, so they made no protest. Only Percival began to whimper with an eyeful of sand and Maurice hurried away… Johnny finished his whimper and went on playing, for the tears had washed the sand away. Johnny watched him with china-blue eyes; then began to fling sand in a shower, and presently Percival was crying again… Percival had gone off, crying, and Johnny was left in triumphant possession of the castles. He sat there, crooning himself and throwing sand at an imaginary Percival.” (Golding, 62-64)

This passage shows how Roger and Maurice who are part of the older boys, and therefore the closest connection for the littluns to the adult world, unconsciously make it seem acceptable to
throw sand at Percival. This is like Mangs & Martell explained how children in the latency phase base their action moral on sanctions from their parents, regarding what is right or wrong. And since there are no parents or adults on the island, they would logically look at how the older children act and take after their behavior. The only records regarding the games that the littluns played stated that they were aimless and trivial; therefore this does not add much to the analysis. However, if one were to look at the pig-hunt as a sort of game it would show distinct evidence that strengthens the argument that children of early latency take appreciation in the police role in games like ‘cops and robbers’. When it comes to the area of actual latency, Martell & Mangs note that the individual has better control over primary process thinking. This would call upon a greater influence on the individual from his secondary process thinking. However, since this does not happen to the same extent in the absence of adults, the children of this developmental stage on the island would not develop this control. And this becomes clear when one takes a closer look at how the fear develops quicker in the children of this age group than for the oldest individuals. Ralph told the group several times that there was no beast, that it was illogical, the island was too small to inhabit big creatures and he also adds that the littlun could not have seen a beast since he had claimed to have seen the creature in the dark. In this context, the majority of the children in the actual latency phase seemed to agree with Ralph’s logical explanation. This is because he has had time to develop better control over his primary process thinking due to his higher age, and as one of the oldest individuals represents the only bridge that the younger children would have to the adult world. This would make it reasonable to assume that this is why they at first do not believe in the beast, but that they develop a fear over time as a reaction to the lack of adults on the island. It is first clear in chapter five that it is not only the littluns now that are afraid of a beast (Golding, 89), and this adds further to this argument. In a normal and healthy childhood, this is a part of the development when urge-impulses from the super-ego are handled better. Handling urge-impulses has much to do with understanding what is moral and what is immoral and Mangs & Martell said that due to the parents’ sanctions, a child earn[s] an understanding regarding what moral behavior is in their family. In this context where there are no parents for the children to base their morality upon. This would cause a disturbance in their development.

“Only Percival began to whimper with an eyeful of sand and Maurice hurried away. In his other life Maurice had received chastisement for filling a younger eye with sand. Now though there was no parent to let fall a heavy hand, Maurice still felt the unease of the wrong-doing.” (Golding, 63)
Roger remained, watching the littluns" (Golding, 63). Maurice was older than Roger and had had a longer time to develop a better understanding regarding moral behavior than Roger had. Maurice did kick sand in Percival’s eyes, but he felt bad afterwards because of it whereas Roger did not. The reason why Roger does not have control over his urge-impulses is because his development had been disturbed in or before the crash and therefore caused him to not feel remorse over his action that caused Percival to cry. The actual latency phase is also the phase where normally the child would have developed good defenses. It is common that children control their presence through “rules, rituals, magical spells and superstition” (Mangs & Martell, 157). Holding their breath while walking past the cemetery, or spitting when he/she sees a black cat are considered ways of defending himself/herself from lurking fears. This is something that one can see clear signs of later on in the story, when the head of a slaughtered pig is used as an offering to the beast, and it was thought that this would make them safe (Golding, 151). Why this is not shown until this late in the story might have to do with the traumatic experience of the plane crash, since traumatic experiences can stand in the way of the development of defenses (Mangs & Martell, 157). It is also common that children in this phase learn the good sides of fair play and it is clear that this is the case early on in the story when the children were to pick a leader when Roger suggested that they should have a vote regarding the matter (Golding, 18).

As early as in chapter one there are signs that prove that Jack, Ralph, and Piggy are all interested in collecting facts and to create. This shows through their desire to explore this new environment and to see whether or not it is an island. During this exploration they came across a new kind of flower which Ralph named candle buds (Golding, 22-28) and this shows that the older children fit in to the expected pattern where they are expected to gather information, and like in this case; create the name for the flower by exploring its existence[spelling]. There are several factors that add to the deviation regarding that children of this phase know right from wrong, however these factors became more recurrent the further the story progresses, and this becomes clear later when he entered the pre-adolescent phase where dominating and aggressive behavior is common. It is also common that he would show sadistic behavior. This also shows a clear difference between Ralph and Jack; Ralph knew that the fire had to be kept going in order for them to be rescued, and he argues that Jack’s obsessive need to kill a pig led to this neglect, since his hunters were supposed to watch the fire (Golding, 73). Jack’s sadistic tendencies are shown in his obsessive urge to kill pigs. It is clear that Jack did put pressure upon himself in order to become more like his father, and this is evident in how he marched
with his choir in a military fashion. It is therefore not unlikely that his father was a soldier. Whether or not he was a high ranking officer or not is not clear. However it is common that boys not only want to mimic the behavior of their fathers, but that they want to be even better, and stronger. Jack gave himself a higher rank than his father had in order to reassure himself that he will not be castrated by him.

This comparison between the children on the island and the developmental stages in psychoanalysis show that they show expected behavior among children of their age group. This has made it possible to continue to research their behavior and try and prove that their behavior deviated as a result of the traumatic events that they were all victims of. Starting with the youngest children followed by the middle group and later by the oldest group, recorded patterns will now be compared to a check-list for PTSD composed by the American Psychiatric Association. There are six major criteria (labeled A-F), which the patient has to meet in order to be diagnosed with PTSD. Beneath these six main criteria there are sub-criteria which problematizes the diagnosing further. Criterion A is called the stressor criteria. To meet this criterion the person has to have experienced, witnessed or been confronted with an event which involved death or serious injury; actual or threatened. Criterion B reflects if the person has had re-experiencing symptoms regarding the event in A. The next thing explored (criterion C) regards if the person avoids the event, in conversations, thoughts and in actual bodily re-visiting of the scene. Whether the person shows signs of physiological arousal, e.g. hypervigilance, irritability, difficulty concentrating and problems regarding staying or falling asleep is explored in criterion D. Criterion E reflects upon criterions B, C, and D and whether the symptoms has persisted for at least a month. This is of minor relevance to this analysis since there is no time-line presented in the story. The last criterion reflects upon whether the symptoms in the earlier criteria have had a negative effect on the person’s life. This is the criteria which indicate the need for treatment (Resick, 15-16). Criteria regarding time span will not be addressed that much since they are of minor importance as a result of the fact that there is no timeline presented in the story. The data collected from this will be further analyzed and compared to psychoanalytical theory.

The Littluns
When it comes to the first criteria there are evident signs that matches it among all of the children on the island. All of the children on the island did experience at least one event which involved a possible deadly outcome; the plane crash. This will therefore serve as evidence for
the other groups as well and it will not be dealt with further in the exploration of the older children. However, in addition to this it can be argued that the phenomena of the beast serves as another factor that caused the youngest children to feel threatened. The phenomena of the beast will be further explored in the analysis of the older children. Many would argue that the plane crash itself is a severe traumatic stressor, but also the feeling of being alone, without having any contact with the outside world and the deaths among the children should certainly be addressed as stressors too. There were several cases where intense fear and horror can be found among the littluns, e.g., they felt intense fear and horror towards the phenomena of the beast, and this fear seems to increase as the story progresses. There are also signs of disorganized behavior in their games, which are described as “aimless and trivial” (Golding, pg. 61). Criterion B and regarding recollections of the traumatic event is not visible in any cases regarding the littluns. However they might occur, it is just not presented in the story. The same can be mentioned among the older children as well. The only mentioning of the littluns games tell that they were aimless and trivial, nothing regarding if they were repetitive. However, they seem to have taken great appreciation in the pig-hunts which to the youngest hunters expectedly would have been a looked upon as a game. Nevertheless, the text does not tell of any clear similarities between the games and the plane crash. In almost e chapter of the book there are passages which tell of the disturbed sleep among the littluns. There are however no cases where we are told about any plane crash taking place in their dreams, but there are nonetheless unrecognizable content in their dreams which is interpreted first to be a beastie, and later as a snake-thing. In criterion B it is also common that the person feels as if the traumatic event was reoccurring, in hallucinations or flashbacks. In one passage it is clear that one of the littluns suffered from hallucinations as a result of his hypervigilance caused by the trauma; a littlun called Phil told of how he had woken up outside of his shelter and had seen the beast moving in the woods. However, this turned out to be Simon who had been out on a walk. This also shows how Phil suffered from disturbed sleep (Golding, 91). In addition to this it is common that the person feels psychological distress when confronted with internal or external cues that symbolizes or resembles the trauma. This is present in the children in this way: they felt helpless when they were in the airplane about to crash. The feeling of helplessness is and effect the plane crash, and it symbolized it. The nightmares where they felt helpless lead to more fear; intense psychological distress. In criterion C, what is asked for is whether the person makes efforts to avoid places, activities, feelings or thoughts about the trauma. This can be found in how all of the children ignored the need for a signal fire. This is because the fire reminded the children of how they were trapped on the island because of the
traumatic event where they had crashed. Conversations regarding this matter are also avoided, and this is with two exceptions (Ralph and Piggy) visible in all children. It is also expected that they would avoid people that reminded them about the crash; this is present in all of the children. None of the littluns explored the island and none of the littluns or the other children ever ventured to the crash site, this is evidence that they avoided the scene. They did not want to partake in activities that reminded them about the crash, e.g. the signal fire. As a result of this, most of the children left Ralph, whom constantly had reminded them about the need for the fire (Golding, 209). Since this is present in all of the children this will not be addressed further in the analysis of the older children. Since there are no places where the littluns discussed how they had arrived to the island it is impossible to say whether they had trouble recalling what had happened. Lack of interest in participating in significant activities is found in how the littluns did not build shelters as they were told, that they played instead (Golding, 51-53). Another criterion which has to be met reflects upon a feeling of detachment and estrangement. This is evident among the littluns as it is told that they kept to themselves (Golding, 61). In addition to this the littluns show clear tendencies to have a restricted range of affect. This can be found in the passage where Johnny threw sand in Percival’s eyes and did not seem to care at all. Instead of feeling bad he sat in triumph over his success of conquering Percival’s sand castle (Golding, 64). Criterion D deals with symptoms of physiological arousal and there are several places where this can be found among the littluns. One example is how they had trouble both staying and falling asleep (Golding, 91), and like presented in criterion C, they had difficulty concentrating on building the shelters. Hypervigilant behavior is found in the passage presented in B, where a littlun woke up after having sleep walked. His hypervigilance caused him to hallucinate and think that Simon was the beast. In addition to this hypervigilant behavior is portrayed when the children killed Simon because they thought that he was the beast. Connected to the hypervigilant behavior is their exaggerated startle responses. The death of Simon is a result of their exaggerated startle responses and their hypervigilance together. Because hypervigilance and exaggerated startle response is present in all of the children, it will not be addressed further in the analysis of the older children. Like presented earlier there will not be much focus upon the criteria which focuses upon time span. As a result of this, criterion E cannot be met. Nonetheless, since this analysis does not strive to diagnose the children with PTSD and rather to find the connection between the traumatic events and their behavior which deviate from the norms of child development, the criteria regarding time is not of major importance. However, regarding criterion F there is a one example from the story which gives a firm answer that is worth mentioning.
“The littlun Percival had early crawled into a shelter and stayed there for two days, talking, singing, and crying, till they thought him batty and were faintly amused. Ever since then he had been peaked, red-eyed, and miserable; a littlun who played little and cried often” (Golding, 61).

Since it lasted for less than three months it is an example of acute social impairment. Regarding criterion A in the biguns, the traumatic experience of the plane-crash and the deaths among the children is explained in the same manner as with the littluns above. A component in the story which calls for further analysis is how the fear of the beast evolved in a chronological order among the children; only the youngest littluns were frightened of it at first. It spread through the youngest of the biguns to finally, in the end, affect eone. The first passage where it is possible to trace a fear towards the beast among the biguns is in chapter five. Jack, Ralph and Piggy did not start to believe in it until the last chapters (Golding, 89). In the biguns there are no records of distressing dreams, however there are several cases where biguns suffer from hallucinations, e.g. when Simon thought that a cut off pig’s head, which was addressed as Lord of The Flies spoke with him. In this hallucination, Simon realizes that the beast was not real; that is was a figment of their imagination (Golding, 157-159). When it comes to criterion C the explanation for the littluns applies to this group as well. There is one example where Roger had kicked sand in one of the littluns’ eyes, and how he had enjoyed it (Golding, 62-63). There are several other places where Roger showed clear signs of the same tendencies, e.g. near the end of the book, Roger threw big rocks at the remaining children of the original tribe. One of the rocks caused the death of Piggy. After this he forced the children to join his tribe; if they did not they were to be hunted down and killed. That Simon had been out walking in the middle of the night is clear evidence that also the biguns suffered from disturbed sleep, which is a requirement in criterion D. There was a mutual agreement among the children that no one was to go out after dark, this time was intended for sleeping, yet he did not. Moving forward, there was evidence of an outburst of anger in the biguns in the passage where Simon was killed (Golding, 170). When it comes to the oldest children, Jack Ralph and Piggy shared the same traumatic events as the other children. However regarding criteria B there are two examples of recollections of the plane crash presented in the story. One of Ralph’s nightmares was presented in chapter ten, and it contained the same feeling of helplessness as he had felt in the plane crash. A bus moved closer and closer towards him, but there was nothing he could do. Before the bus would have
hit him, he woke up. This dream shared a key characteristic with the arrival on the island, the feeling of being helpless as a result of not being able to do anything (Golding, 182-183). The other example is in chapter eight where he recollects “the panic flight down the mountain-side” (Golding, 136). In the anxiety dreams he had it is also possible to see traces of psychological distress. In addition to this he felt sick as a reaction to all of the deaths on the island. It was not until late in the story when the children of this age started to hallucinate. They thought that they had seen the beast on the mountain which they had climbed. In reality this was not a beast but a dead man hanging from a parachute. When they had returned to the others they told about how the beast had had teeth and big black eyes (Golding, 136). Regarding the avoidance of the stimuli associated with the crash it is visible among the oldest children in many places. First of all, discussions regarding the arrival on the island was limited to the beginning of the story, and it was not dealt with much; they found the crash site and Piggy said that their plane had been shot down. This was the only place in the book where they discussed the crash directly. Because of the absence of such conversations it is possible to draw the conclusion that they avoided the subject. Ralph and Piggy were the only ones that constantly argued that they had to keep a signal fire going, so that they could be rescued. By doing this they forced the other children to deal with the traumatic experiences tied to their arrival on the island. It is also presented in the story that Jack and Roger hated Ralph, and that he could not understand why this was “What have I done? I liked him – and I wanted us to be rescued” (Golding, 209). Because Ralph and Piggy had reminded the other children of the need for the fire, they forced the other children to deal with the harsh reality of their situation on the island. This caused them to act in aggression towards Piggy and Ralph leading to the death of the first and the casting out of the second. The children also show signs of having trouble to recall important aspects of the trauma. In the beginning of the story Ralph showed signs that he had forgotten about important aspects of the crash, it was Piggy who reminded him about the fact that they had been shot down (Golding, 2). Both in Jack and Piggy there are evidences of lack of interest in taking part in significant activities, however Piggy did this as a result of his inability to perform hard labor because of his asthma. Jack on the other hand repeatedly claimed that hunting was more important than keeping the signal fire going (Golding, 73-75). There are no places in the story where the characters showed clear examples of feeling detached or estranged from the others as a result of the traumatic events. However, Piggy is a clear example of actual detachment and estrangement, but it is not presented that he feels this way. Jack is a reason why Piggy was estranged from the group as a result of his constant bullying. He is also the character who shows the shortest range of affect. There are no places in the story
where he showed any signs of remorse regarding the death of Simon, which he had played a big role in. Piggy and Ralph discussed this on several occasions, and both of them show feelings of remorse. He did also play a big role in the killing of Piggy and together with Roger he ordered the hunt for Ralph (Golding, 209). Regarding criterion D it is not until late in the story when we learn about disturbed sleep in the oldest children, apart from Ralph’s nightmare that was presented earlier. The only other passage in the story where we learn about this is in chapter ten when Piggy repeatedly called out for Ralph in the middle of the night (Golding, 182- 183). Apart from disturbed sleep there are several places in the story where irritability can be found among these children; mostly it was Jack and Ralph who became irritated over the fact that Piggy spoke his mind in many of the assemblies. There are also examples where the children had trouble handling their aggression. The clearest example would be in the end of the book when Ralph went to the other tribe to get Piggy’s glasses back and to talk sense into the children. He on the other hand did not want to meet Ralph’s demands and attacked him: “Jack made a rush and stabbed at Ralph’s chest with his spear” (Golding, 196). Ralph had the intention to talk sense into the children whereas Jack’s first reaction to this was to act in violence due to his limited control over his anger.

The data from the comparison between the children and the checklist for PTSD will be further analyzed. Connections to psychoanalytical theory will be drawn to explain why the children acted the way they did.

A Freudian explanation why the children felt such strong fear towards the beast is that their reality-testing apparatus had seized to function properly. If their reality-testing would have worked properly, the nightmares would have remained nightmares and the thought of the beast would not have become embodied. According to psychoanalytical theory, e child on the island would logically have had a reality-testing function; it is therefore necessary to explain why the beast originated from the littluns and not appeared in all the children at once. The reason why this is can be found by looking closer at their oedipal development. The littluns were still intensely influenced by the Oedipus complex, and since it is a triangle struggle between the child, the mother and the father it becomes disrupted when there are no people to play the roles of the parents. It is common that children feel that an evil force is after them when the mother is absent, and this is exactly what we see among the children on the island. The evil force is something which is between the littluns and their urges towards their mothers; therefore since the reality apparatus is not working, the evil force becomes something more concrete. The reason why the older children did not start to believe in the beast at first is
because due to their age they had gotten further in their psychological development, and therefore their reality-testing apparatus was worked better. This means that it would have taken higher pressure before their reality-testing apparatus would malfunction. This is clearly depicted in how Jack and Ralph did not start to believe in a beast until much later than the younger children. They claimed to have seen it on the mountain, but what they actually saw was a dead man caught in a parachute, moving because of the stormy weather. Because of the intense outer stimuli from the other children regarding the beast and the many traumatic events which had surrounded them, their reality-testing apparatus finally stopped functioning properly and they could not separate between reality and fiction. There is only one direct recollection regarding the plane crash among the children, in chapter eight when Ralph recollected the “the panic flight down the mountain-side” (Golding, 136). However, one thing that reoccurred several times in the story among the littluns was that they claimed to have seen the beast, which was present in nightmares among the children. According to the list by the American Psychiatric Association (see appendix), it is common that recollections of traumatic events happen through nightmares with unrecognizable content among small children. Because of this, the beast is an incarnation of the plane crash. It is common among small children because they are intensely influenced by the Oedipus complex; it is natural for children of this age to project their hatred upon an abstract, evil force when the mother is not present. Because of the traumatic experience of the plane crash their reality-testing apparatus was not functioning properly, the beast was the result of it. It is therefore expected that Ralph, who was older to have more true to life recollections in comparison to the younger children who often only recollect a key characteristic of the trauma.

There is not much presented in the story about what went on inside the minds of the children. This is because they would not dare to talk about their fear as a result of their ego-ideal. It would compromise the heroic ideal they want the others to see in them. The primary force among the children was to survive, and to not be a part of the group would make this much harder. To fit in becomes a condition in order to be accepted among the others (Mangs & Martell, 150). The result of this would be that the subject would be avoided, which was also the case. By continuing to explore the beast’s role in the story it becomes clear that it had another direct connection to the plane crash. In chapter three, it says that snakes were not mentionable among the littluns. This was a result of the previous assembly where one littlun first had claimed to have seen a ‘snake-thingy’ (Golding, 53). Since it was only unmentionable among the littluns, where the beast represented the plane crash this suggests that they avoided the subject of the trauma.
The most common thing regarding the trauma which all of the children show signs of having forgotten about was the reason to keep the signal fire going. It seems as though they could not recall why this was of such importance. Instead of doing the important tasks around the signal fire, and by building the shelters, many of the older children went hunting, and the littluns played trivial games on the beach. This would be expected among children that suffer from trauma since play is a way of dealing with and mastering anxiety regarding traumatic experiences. It has been shown that through play, children can overcome the painful reality of the trauma, and at the same time by projecting their instinctual fears and internal dangers into the outer world, the child learns how to master them (Klein, 177). There are several places in the story where we learn of actual detachment and estrangement among the children, however there are no places where we learn of how any child solely felt like they were not a part of the group; it was not only a feeling but a fact. The reason for this is that young children of this age try to fit in as much as possible among their peers. This is because they often believe that if they deviate from the norm, they will not be allowed to be a part of the group anymore. Children strive to be like each other and to be able to do all the things that the other can do. Fitting in became a criteria for surviving.

High exposure to trauma causes severe anxiety, and a reaction to this is that the child can become neurotic. A neurosis can cause repression of emotions and also of the anxiety that caused the neurosis in the first place, making them hard to spot (Klein, 102). This is exactly what we see in the children on the island; the severe anxiety in the beginning caused some of the children to become neurotic faster than others, the reality-testing function caused them to not see a difference between what was real and what was not real. Some of them stopped to care about getting rescued (no anxiety) to go hunting or playing instead. When Ralph showed little understanding in this behavior, their restricted range of affect caused by the neurosis lead them to cast him out of the group and later to try and hunt him down. What is clear among the littluns and biguns is that there is not enough evidence to prove that they thought that they would have a foreshortened future. However, this is not of such major importance since all criteria does not have to be met in order to set a diagnosis of PTSD.

A common defense among pre-adolescent children (Ralph, Piggy, and Jack) is to repress anxiety, and to deny it. It is also common that a child projects his anxiety and fear upon something else, e.g. another child (Mangs & Martell, 177). An example of this is how Ralph told the other children that if they chose to be with Jack, they would not get rescued, which was a big trigger for anxiety in Ralph. Jack continuously throughout the story repressed the need for a fire by focusing on hunting instead.
We are told that the littluns continuously throughout the story had trouble sleeping and that they suffered from nightmares. According to Freudian theory this would be expected in children. He wrote that dreams bring up recollections of forgotten events, and “unconscious material from the id – originally unconscious and repressed and unconscious alike – forces itself upon the ego, becomes the preconscious and, owing to the efforts of the ego, undergoes the modifications which we call dream-distortion” (Freud, 27-28). Because of this it was not expected that the children dreamed about the same concrete trauma, but through dream-distortion it could share an important aspect of the trauma, e.g. a feeling of helplessness. This can be found in an example in chapter ten where Ralph dreamed about a bus that was about to hit him. In the dream he did not move, he could not escape the scene in the same way as he could not escape the falling plane. It is also said in the checklist that children often recollect aspects of a trauma in unrecognizable dreams.

There are clear signs that some of the characters could not control their anger. The most evident example of this is close to the end of the book when one turned against Ralph and began to hunt him. This is explained because small children repress their anxiety and take refuge in play in order to master their anxiety; the children did not partake in important activities and played instead. Due to this, Ralph constantly reminded them about the need for the signal fire if they were ever to be rescued. This meant that they now had to deal with the trauma and they could not successfully repress it. A common way of defense among preadolescent children is to act in aggression, which Jack did when he attacked Ralph. When it comes to the younger children, aggression is not such a common method of defense and this is the reason why there are more aggressive tendencies in Jack. However since younger children tend to take after adult behavior, it would be understandable why e.g., Roger teamed up with Jack, who was one of the oldest boys in his hatred towards Ralph. Also, since it is common that children try and master their anxiety through play one can argue that it is no coincidence that they could not concentrate on building the shelters and instead went out to play. This is what would be expected among children after a traumatic experience.

Because the children did not have access to their mothers they became easily frightened. And since their reality-testing apparatus had been damaged there was nothing to separate real threats from imaginary threats. It is therefore evident why they would be on the alert and easily frightened. The result of this would be the death of Simon. The children’s actions are what would be expected among children of their age, in their situation.

The story progressed through discussions between the characters, in the thoughts of some, and also in descriptions in how the children acted. The primary focus for the children
was to survive, regardless of whether it was through a rescue or through hunting for food. It did not matter whether it was a Monday or a Saturday for the kids, and there is not one place in the story where they said what day of the week it was. They did not go to church on Sundays and they did not have any other ritual tied to a specific day and this made it unnecessary to have such structure, and therefore it is reasonable to come to the conclusion that time, apart from the day-night cycle did not matter that much for the children. In one place in the story Piggy suggested that they would build a sundial, so they could keep track regarding what time it was. However, none of the other children were interested in it, so it was never built (Golding, 68).

To add to this, among children it is common to escape reality as a defense, and this is just what they did. It is clear in the example presented above and also in the fact that Jack wanted to kill Ralph even though the only thing Ralph had done was to remind one about the importance of the signal fire. Time would have been a constant reminder of the real world since it is the essence of what it revolves around. This is my explanation why the reader never gets to know for how long their stay on the island persisted; it was not relevant to them.

Through the analysis, the characters acted according to the majority of the patterns presented for their age-groups according to psychoanalytical theory. This showed that they were realistic enough for a closer exploration regarding the deviation from these norms according to the symptoms checklist for PTSD. The analysis does not give enough evidence to diagnose the children with PTSD; however this was never the aim with the essay. The result of the analysis points towards the fact that the deviation in the behavioral patterns of the children was indeed a result of the traumatic events that took place around them. The course of events was as following: When the plane was about to crash all of the children felt as if they were helpless, which they also were. The crash caused memory loss in some of the children and the event was recollected in the littluns in the beast which was a result of their oedipal struggle and the malfunction of their reality-testing apparatus. Dream-distortion was the reason why Ralph’s nightmare retained some of the aspects of the plane crash and excluded others; the feeling of being helpless was retained and the actual plane was excluded. The lack of records though regarding what went on inside the minds of the children was due to the fact that they did not want to deviate from the heroic ego-ideal which they wanted to retain. Diminished interest in significant activities is found in how the littluns played, and the biguns hunted instead of building shelters or keeping the signal fire alive. This is because, among children, play has therapeutic properties and at the same time it was repressing things that reminds them about the trauma. The reason why the reality-testing apparatus in the older children did not malfunction
directly after the crash was because they had had a longer time to develop their apparatus due
to their age. Because of this, a greater outer stimulus was necessary in order for it to stop
working properly. The children claimed to have seen the beast on the mountain, and this
caused one to become hyper vigilant and due to their exaggerated startle responses, this
resulted in the death of Simon. A result of a neurosis is that emotions and anxiety get
repressed; this in combination with the fact that the children did not want to be reminded of the
real world (since it reminded them about their situation) caused them to kill Piggy and to hunt
Ralph. It is therefore reasonable to argue that the children acted the way in which they did as a
result of the traumatic events which they were victims of. Further it would be interesting to
investigate how they would adapt to the normal world after their rescue according to
psychoanalytical theory and juxtapose this to the experiences of the survivors of the famous
plane crash in the Andes in 1972.
References:

Books:


Appendix

“A. The person has been exposed to a traumatic event in which both the following were present:
   (1) the person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual
       or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others
   (2) the person’s response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror. Note: In children, this may be
       expressed instead by disorganized or agitated behavior

B. The traumatic event is persistently re-experienced in one (or more) of the following ways:
   (1) recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event, including images, thoughts, or
       perceptions. Note: In young children, repetitive play may occur in which themes or aspects of the
       trauma are expressed
   (2) recurrent distressing dreams of the event. Note: In children, there may be frightening dreams
       without recognizable content
   (3) acting or feeling as if the traumatic event were recurring (includes a sense of reliving the
       experience, illusions, hallucinations, and dissociative flashback episodes, including those that occur
       on awakening or when intoxicated). Note: In young children, trauma-specific re-enactment may occur
   (4) intense psychological distress at exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble
       an aspect of the traumatic event
   (5) physiological reactivity on exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an
       aspect of the traumatic event.

C. Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of general responsiveness (not
   present before trauma), as indicated by three (or more) of the following:
   (1) efforts to avoid thoughts, feelings, or conversations associated with the trauma.
   (2) efforts to avoid activities, places, or people that arouse recollections of the trauma
   (3) inability to recall and important aspect of the trauma
   (4) markedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities
   (5) feeling of detachment or estrangement from others
   (6) restricted range of affect (e.g., unable to have loving feelings)
   (7) sense of a foreshortened future (e.g., does not expect to have a career, marriage, children or a
       normal life span).

D. Persistent symptoms of increased arousal (not present before the trauma), as indicated by two (or more) of
   the following:
   (1) difficulty falling or staying asleep
   (2) irritability or outbursts of anger
   (3) difficulty concentrating
   (4) hypervigilance
   (5) exaggerated startle response

E. Duration of the disturbance (symptoms in Criteria B, C, and D) is more than 1 month.
F. The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

Specify if:

- Acute: if duration of symptoms is less than 3 months
- Chronic: if duration of symptoms is 3 months or more

Specify if:

- With delayed onset: if onset of symptoms is at least 6 months after the stressor.”  

(Resick, 14-15)