Groups

Communities, either online or off, about plurality.

- alt.support.dissociation (AKA a.s.d.)
- Pavilion Hall/Lancers
- Soulbonding (Livejournal community)

alt.support.dissociation (AKA a.s.d.)

alt.support.dissociation was a Usenet group created "for persons with dissociative disorders," (Unknown Date). It was founded on 8/28/1994, making it one of the oldest existing dissociative groups still extant and even sporadically active. It is now owned by Google groups.

Quick Details

Type: Usenet group
Dates Active: 1994-present
Location: https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/alt.support.dissociation

The Founding

On 8/28/1994, a poster named Jonathan Grobe posts, "The reason I had for suggesting/creating this newsgroup was originally going to be to discuss JUST multiplicity (aka MPD aka Multiple Personalities aka Multiple Personality Disorder aka Dissociative Identity Disorder) and the problems arising from it, how to deal with it, what to do about it, etc. etc. While discussing it on alt.config, someone mentioned calling it alt.dissociation and including other dissociative disorders as well as MP. I thought this was a wonderful idea, because many people who aren't "really multiple" experience the same types of problems and handle their dissociative states in a very similar way. So, with that in mind, alt.support.dissociation was born."

Perspective on Trauma and Medicalization

Even on the announcement of the creation of a.s.d., Jonathan Grobe states, "although not everyone feels that it [dissociation] is a problem for them, they are 'officially' disorders," and that ambivalence seems to have carried over. An early poster remarked, "I was told a.s.d. was to be a support newsgroup for mp's or those who dissociate, regardless of how dysfunctional they are or are not. [...] I do not consider myself to be disordered or broken." (1994, September 6).

The first version of the alt.support.dissociation Insider FAQ, created by Discord and Sapphire Gazelles, offers the following definition of "multiple system": "someone who has multiple persons/personalities living inside of one body. These are referred to here as alters. (As of the DSM-IV, this condition is called Dissociative Identity Disorder, but most people here will probably not use the official term.)" In the section "What causes multiplicity?" Discord and Sapphire Gazelles specifically state that while many experience trauma, "there are exceptions to this." These include, "a few multiples exist that do not believe that they were abused but have had dissociative role models, such as a multiple parent." (1994, September 7)

In later edits of the FAQ, this expanded to also include, "Some people explore identity or alternate identity games, like role playing, acting, pretending, or alternate social structures to the point where they begin to question their original identity. In some cases, these identities can take on aspects, experiences, and problems which are essentially identical to those experienced by multiples who experienced trauma." They also emphasize, "Some multiples are unaware of any initial trauma. Whether such trauma exists and the memories blocked or whether no such trauma exists is usually impossible to determine" (1995, May 14).

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Pavilion Hall/Lancers

Pavilion Hall: Voices of Plurality in Action was an organization that described themselves as "dedicated to raising public awareness of healthy multiplicity through positive activism" (n.d. A). The Lancers were their partner group, whose "goal is to promote the equality of singlets, medians/midcontinuums, and multiples" (2003, August 3). Both groups involved the same theories, members, and websites; they were basically two faces of the same group.

While technically active from 2002-2015, the groups achieved little of substance after November 2002. Their biggest accomplishment seems to have been bringing the term "median" into use. Ex-followers have alleged the group was coercive and abusive.

Quick Details

Type: Online group
Dates Active: June-November 2002; still extant today, but inactive
Location: http://karitas.net/pavilion/ and https://web.archive.org/web/*/http://www.tanuki.cx:80/pavilion*

The Active Period

Pavilion Hall and the Lancers were founded in June 2002 (Pavilion, 2003 February 15). Ostensibly, all that was required to join Pavilion was "the willingness to support the work for respect and equality of all plural and non-plural types, actively if required," while the Lancers were more hardcore, "a group of singlets, medians and plurals dedicated to a particular philosophy of plurality and life," that of the Codex (Pavilion, 2003 April 23). Work immediately began on that Codex (Lancers, 2003 August 04), most of the content of which has been lost.

For a few months, there's activity (Pavilion, 2004 February 10a), but it's mostly internal--online communities created, internal hierarchy and job positions named, members recruited, meetings held. A presskit gets made. Some essays are written for the Library.

There is an offline meet-up, called the Floating Tea-Party, in Connecticut from 8/30/02 to 9/1/02 (Pavilion, 2004 February 10b). No others are ever noted.

In November 2002, the groups are put on "winter break" (2004, February 10a). Nothing of substance is ever done afterward, except for a vague statement of "Pavilion editors begin implementing updates and changes" in July 2003 (ibid). The reason for the shutdown is unclear.

Projects

Pavilion Hall started the following projects, and made the following progress:

Bananarama (later renamed Paperchase): "Send brochures to researchers and psychologists interested in plurality, collect and keep track of public opinion. Provide a real-time contact to replies." 263 brochures were sent out, as of 10/24/02 (2004 February 10c); the number remains unchanged to the present day (n.d. B).

Library: "Create a library of articles hosted on Pavilion able to be cited for essays and arguements [sic]" (2004 February 10c). This is the only project that has made much progress after 2002. Seven media reviews were written in 2003, one in February 2007, and one in September 2014 (n.d. C).

Radiohead (later renamed RadioNow): "Arrange for an interview on Pacifica Radio presenting multiplicity as normal, debunking myths and outlining our agenda. [...] As of 9/8/03 nothing is happening on this project" (2004 February 10c). The sole change to the project since 2003 is that on the current version of the page, "As of 10/14/04 nothing is happening on this project" (n.d. B).

Armory (later renamed the Resource Section): "Creation of a resource area for Frontline [Lancer] members and others in Pavilion to be able to have backup in the form of essays and arguements" (2004, February 10c). In the old page from 2004, there are two complaint letters, a "Public responses to common questions and misconceptions," and a "Hall of Flames" (2004 January 30). Fifteen years later, all that has changed is that the Hall of Flames has been removed, another complaint letter added in 2007, and two links added by 2008: "How To Write A Good Complaint Letter" and "Guidelines -- Promoting Accuracy In Depictions of Multiple Personality" (2008 October 13). Despite over a decade passing, the 2008 links are still labeled with glittery rainbow "new!" text (n.d. D).

Northside: "Create a presskit including a cover letter, fact sheet, short bio sheet, copy of the brochure, and press releases as we write them. To be sent to media outlets with whom we desire an interview" (n.d. B). The presskit is completed on October 10, 2002, the sole Pavilion project to ever be finished (2004, February 10a).

Railroad: "Creation of a database for plurals to be able to access to find 'plural-friendly' businesses and services" (n.d. B). There has been no progress whatsoever since 2002.

The Lancers' Codex and "Fires" Theory

The Lancers' Codex is, in their own words, "a set of principles, definitions, essays, and a simple code of etiquette by which Lancers guide ourselves in our day-to-day lives and in our actions to bring healthy plurality to the attention of the general public. It stores our *working definitions* [emphasis theirs] of plurality and also ideas of how to bridge the gaps when people have trouble understanding" (2003, February 15). Despite this, their unified theory of plurality is abstruse, vague, overly metaphysical, and difficult to understand.

The backbone of this theory was "fires," which they defined as "primal sources of vitality and inspiration. They're your who-you-are, your True Name. [...] People have described fires as sources of creativity, pillars of strength, centers of emotional and spiritual refreshment, places of rejuvenation, people who are inspiring rolemodels to others in their plural group...in other words, a fire is a source of energy. [...]

"Singlets possess a single fire that is their identity and their life motivation. [...]

"Medians, one body with many people, also possess a single fire, embodied in a person within the group. [...] Everything in that group is dependent on that one person. [...]

"Multiples, also one body with many people, may possess more than one fire. These are not necessarily embodied in a person... it could be the sense of identity with one's otherworld, or some element therein. Some persons in multiple systems are also fires -- sometimes called giving fires, they are people who are looked up to as exemplary, role models, someone who inspires and encourages those around them to perseverence [sic], excellence and other virtues" (Lancers, 2003 August 4b).

Apparently the theory seemed incoherent even then; the next question in the FAQ is, "The description of fires confuses me. Is there any clarification for it?" (ibid) The linked explanations have mostly been lost to the sands of time but what the one that remains is a rambling chat log that offers no clarity (Lancers, 2002, July 31). Under this categorization, soulbonders were considered medians (Lancers, 2002, October 8a).

It was also this categorization that created the term median, it seems.

The Creation of the Term "Median"

At the time of the creation of Pavilion Hall and the Lancers, "median" was not a term in use, at least not on alt.support.dissociation or Dark Personalities. The more common term for being between singlet and multiple was "midcontinuum," used for at least the prior five years on alt.support.dissociation, Dark Personalities (2002 December 24), and by the Vickis (1997 January 25).

The only sign of any discontent with the term "midcontinuum" predating the creation of Pavilion Hall comes from Dark Personalities, which in their 2001 glossary of plural jargon defined "midcontinuum" as "Being somewhere on the spectrum between multiple and singlet. Since many people feel the idea of a continuum to be inaccurate, many are seeking a new term instead of mid-continuum" (2001, May 19). Astraea will later plagiarize this definition wholesale in their own glossary definition of "median" (2003, January 11).

Later on, Astraea credits Blackbirds (who helped found Pavilion) with the creation of the term "median," saying "The reason we chose median, a word suggested by the Blackbirds, was that it seemed to encompass multiples who did not dissociate in addition to those who did" (2008, May 11). But that isn't the original explanation given for why the term was rejected.

In 2002, Lancers and Pavilion rejected "midcontinuum" for its fluidity. "The original idea of Mid-Continuum was designed to be loose, and therein lay the problem - it was entirely /too/ loose. Multiples and Mid-Conts were not quite sure where the lines lay between them. It was used to describe a massive ‘shades of grey’ area between singlet and multiple. Unfortunately, there was no clear idea of where these ‘shades of grey’ actually ended, though they began at anything more than single" (Phoenix, 2002 December 13). They then go on to regurgitate the Fires theory, and how what differentiates medians from multiples isn't any different position on a spectrum, but that they have only one "fire."

Astraea took up the term "median" in their glossary, a few months after Pavilion's creation (2003, January 11), copy-pasting the old definition for midcontinuum and reapplying it to the new term. The current edition of the glossary (n.d.) goes further and appends the Pavilion/Lancers "fires" theory to the definition, though stripped of its metaphysical baggage: "Persons in a median system may be dependent upon a single individual (who may have created them at some point), and unable to exist without that central person." It then goes on to discuss all the fluidity that Pavilion Hall protested midcontinuum for.

Over time, "median" grew to be just as fuzzy and fluid as "midcontinuum" was. However, the use of "median" to the exclusion of "midcontinuum" on Astraea's Web MPD/DID glossary may have something to do with the use of the term in subsequent plural groups.

Ableism and Internal Conflict

While Pavilion members "can come from anywhere," (2003, April 23) Lancers refused to take plurals who didn't maintain a certain standard of functionality and normalcy. "If everyone in your group cannot yet work functionally together in daily life, *do not ask to join.* If you wish to help the Lancers but haven't got things sufficiently together to be able to present to the world as strong, sane, and responsible, look elsewhere for help" (2002, October 8b).

Despite this, an ex-member of Pavilion hall, Amorpha, have publicly stated that Pavilion Hall's true goal was medical acceptance. "That's what it was all driving at in the end: getting doctors to approve the existence of non-DID systems and/or having media portray them, because SOCIETY! SOCIETY! SOCIETY will never take us seriously unless we have a doctor's endorsement or SOME form of authority backing us up. Actually, one of the systems involved stated numerous times that people just didn't understand that healthy multiplicity would NEVER get anywhere until we could GET A DOCTOR TO BACK US UP" (2017, September 20).

Amorpha further reports that behavior within the group was aggressive, coercive, and degrading, and that the membership roster was padded with sockpuppets. "The split between Lancers and Pavilion was

initiated by the groups in charge to get rid of Jen (yes that Jen) and all the systems they didn't think were 'functional enough' and then they lied about it being because 'Lancers is a SERIOUS HARDCORE ACTIVISM GROUP, Pavilion is for people who can't afford to devote as much time,' and two of the median systems listed were actually sockpuppets created to 'promote the median concept' to people who identified as soulbonders or singlets and 'might not realize they were median,' and the system that took it over a few months before it folded went around yelling about 'we need fanatics right now' and 'THE CODEX MUST NOT BE CHANGED' and lecturing everyone who hadn't been screaming at people for 'not doing enough work,' for 'coddling them'" (2017, September 22).

The Present

Lancers have recategorized themselves as "devoted to explaining multiplicity to singlets" (n.d). Their Livejournal community hasn't been updated since 2012, and they are never discussed on the current Pavilion website.

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Soulbonding (Livejournal community)

"A Robust Connection to Fiction" --from the community's subheading (2009, January 1).

The primary LJ comm for soulbonders; it was created on January 2, 2002 (soulbonding, 2009 January 1), and deleted between January 18, 2018 (soulbonding, 2019 January 18), and June 20, 2018 (Lee, 2018). Its archive appears to have no back-ups, except for a few stray archives in the Wayback Machine; it is lost.

Quick Details

Created by: ???
Time Active: 2002-2018
Location: Livejournal

Lockdown

Originally, the soulbonding comm was somewhat public. However, the comm was locked down in December 2007 after a college student under the name of myprotagonist stated that they had created " a term paper which focuses on soulbonding, otakukin, and the relationship of these two subcultures to Japanese popular culture and capitalism" (soulbonding, 2013 May 9). The comments are lost, but apparently things got heated enough that within the day, myprotagonist returned to post (after numerous edits) "I've looked into the legal and ethical issues surrounding the matter, and I see no reason to do anything more than remove usernames, so that is what I'll do. Hopefully this will alleviate anyone's concerns" (ibid). This post is deleted sometime between 2009 (August 17) and 2013 (May 9).

A couple months after the fight, the community's profile page reads, "If you plan on using material discussed in this community for purposes of writing a research or school paper, we would ask you to introduce yourself and state that you are writing a paper, since not everybody is all right with having their words quoted to a wider forum than that of this community. It should go without saying that, should you use specific quotes, you should ask for permission from those you quote," (2008, February 5) seemingly in reference to this event. No public posts were ever made on the community after that.

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