



Presentation Title: What causes dissociation?

Presentation Time: 4:30 PM - 8:00 PM US Eastern Time

Content Level: Intermediate

Abstract: Mary-Anne discusses the findings from her meta-analysis of 31,905 college students, in-depth interviews with 13 in-patients with a severe Dissociative Disorder (DD), and questionnaires completed by 313 participants from an Australian university and 30 individuals in treatment for a DD that explored dissociation (a 60 question version of Dell's Multidimensional Inventory of Dissociation), adult attachment style (Holmes & Lyons-Ruth's Relationship Questionnaire), experiences of childhood maltreatment (a revised version of Freyd, Deprince, & Zurbriggen's Betrayal Trauma Index), and the dynamics between themselves and their parents during their childhood (Kate's Parent-Child Dynamics Questionnaire). The meta-analysis finds 11.4% of students sampled meet criteria for DD, which is consistent with the prevalence of experiencing multiple traumas during childhood (12%). Scores on the Dissociative Scale varied significantly across the 16 countries and were highest in countries that were comparatively unsafe. There was no evidence that DES scores had decreased over recent decades. Three of the five hypotheses tested provided clear support for the trauma model of dissociation and a fourth hypothesis provided partial support for it. None of the five hypotheses tested supported the fantasy model of dissociation. In her own primary research, she was able to predict half of a person's dissociative symptomology based on specific childhood experiences of abuse, negative parent-child dynamics, an insecure attachment style, and the parents' role in, or reaction to, any abuse experienced. Mary-Anne quantified DD odds ratios, e.g. in females an insecure attachment style was 72 : 1, and if the mother's role in, or response to, maltreatment was negative it was 45 : 1. In light of her statistical analysis, Mary-Anne uses vignettes from in-patients to describe the pathogenic family environment in which dissociation occurs, as well as to illustrate how the fantasy model of dissociation could not account for the dissociative symptoms in the in-patient sample.

Learning Objectives:

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- Appraise the validity of the Trauma Model and Fantasy Model in light of the findings of the meta-analysis on the prevalence of DDs and dissociation in college populations
- Recognize the specific types of childhood maltreatment that are predictive of dissociation
- Identify the types of parent-child dynamics, attachment style and parents' role and/or response in relation to the maltreatment experienced, that are predictive of dissociation
- Assess the validity of the Trauma Model and Fantasy Model in light of the findings from questionnaires and interviews with in-patients
- Recognize the risk factors for dissociation and a DD, which may assist participants in identifying children at risk of developing a DD, and children and adults with a DD

Presenter(s)

Mary-Anne Kate, PhD

Dr Mary-Anne Kate has a professional background in the development of national and EU policies and practices to improve quality of life outcomes for vulnerable client groups. Mary-Anne is a Scientific Committee member of the International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation and has recently been awarded the Chancellor's Doctoral Research Medal for her PhD on childhood maltreatment, parent-child dynamics and dissociation. Mary-Anne teaches therapists internationally and locally about trauma and dissociation. She is the lead author of the Dissociative disorders and somatic symptom-related disorders in Wiley's Australasian edition of Abnormal Psychology. Her previous roles have included a diplomatic posting to Cairo to manage Australia's refugee and migration programmes for North Africa; policy development to improve the regulation, education and training of Allied Health Professionals in Scotland; coordinating Australia's National Integrated Settlement Strategy for migrants and refugees; and policy development for Europe's most influential think-tank on immigration and equality issues to improve the socio-economic situation of migrants and refugees in Europe.

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