Multiple Personality Disorders Essay, Research Paper

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By Philip Ausherman

Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD) or Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) was first recognized in the 1700’s but was not understood so therefore it was forgotten. Many cases show up in medical records through the years, but in 1905, Dr. Morton Prince wrote a book about MPD that is a foundation for the disorder. A few years after it was published Sigmund Freud dismissed the disorder and this dropped it from being discussed at any credible mental health meetings. Since then the disorder has been overlooked and misdiagnosed as either schizophrenia or psychosis. Many in the medical profession did not believe that a person could unknowingly have more than one personality or person inside one body, even after the 1950’s Three Faces of Eve was published by two psychiatrist. In 1995, records showed that three to five thousand patients were being treated for MPD compared to the hundred cases reported ten years earlier. There is still as increase in the number of cases being reported as the scientific community learns more and more about the disease and the public is becoming more and moreaware of this mental disorder.

There are still many questions left unanswered about the disease, like “Is it genetic?” or “Is a certain type of personality more vulnerable to the disorder?” but many aspects of how people come by the disorder are already answered (Clark, 1993, p.17-19) MPD is commonly found in adults who were recurrently abused mentally, physically, emotionally, and/or sexually as young children, between birth to 8 years of age. The child uses a process called dissociation to remove him/herself from the abusive situation. Dissociation is when a child makes up an imaginary personality to take control of the mind and body while the child is being abused. The child can imagine many personalities but usually there is a personality for every feeling and or emotion that was involved during the abuse (BoyyM, 1998, p.1). As an adult, the abused child finds it hard to keep track of time and may have episodes of amnesia. Other symptoms that will appear in adults with MPD are depression, auditory and visual hallucinations (hearing voices) and suicidal thoughts. Another major symptom is when the adult has no recollection of their childhood. The adult with MPD has no idea they were abused as children and also unaware of the other personalities living inside of their head (Multiple Personality Disorder-fact sheet, 1996-99, p.1). Multiple Personality Disorder is when there is “the presence of two or more distinct identities or personalities, each with its own relatively enduring pattern of perceiving, relating to, and thinking about the environment and self”(BoyyM, 1998, p.1). There can be anywhere from two to over a hundred different personalities.

Usually each personality will fall into one of the following categories: core, host, protectors, internal self-helper, fragments, child members, preteen, teenager, adults, artistic/music, cross-gender, cross-colored, animal members, inanimate members (BoyyM, 1998, p. 2-3). The host personality is the person who is the multiple, this is the original personality, or the one that created the other personalities, but is unaware of them. The most common apparent identities are the child, persecutor, rescuer, and helper. The child is the identity that is under the age of twelve. They behave as children often sucking thumbs, twisting hair, like to eat cookies, throw tantrums, and use child-like vocabulary. The Persecutor identity is the self-destructive identity that is violent and angry. Persecutor identities usually have a drug/alcohol problem and generally put the host at risk. The rescuer personality is usually devoid of emotion but logical, able, proficient, and responsible. The helper personality knows the most about the history of the multiple; they generally want to help everyone for the general good. The helper personality is the personality that is most helpful in therapy because they usually know about all the other identities (Clark, 1993, p.80-83). Subpersonalities are not only part of a person with MPD but they are also evident in emotionally normal persons as well. Although, in a normal person, he/she remembers when their subpersonality takes over, but in a MPD patient, the personality disconnects from the host that the host can not remember what happens. When a traumatic experience happens, whether positive or negative, a subpersonality will develop. In a normal person, the splitting is broken into an “ok self” and a “not ok self”. In a multiple, the personalities are more defined; they are broken into smaller fragments that disassociate from the human host (Rowan, 1990, p. 7, 20).

In the book by Terri A. Clark, M.D., it shows the distinct the personalities are in several cases. It also shows how each identity can be different from the other identities and the host. In one of Clark’s cases, “Veronica”, one of the personalities of her patient “Regina”, showed up for the weekly appointment instead of “Regina” (note that it really was Regina, but she was a different identity). Clark noticed a change in the appearance of “Regina” on her arrival and noted the difference in her voice. “Veronica” (Regina) continued to speak to Clark as if it was the first time they had met. Although, “Veronica” knew about Clark, “Regina’s” personal life, and therapy, this was the first time Clark had met this personality. Clark discovered while talking to “Veronica” that she had a separate business which she ran on the weekends, and when “Veronica” was in control of the body. “Regina” had no idea about the business; “Veronica” used the fake name and an Art Gallery’s telephone number in which to run her business. “Veronica” even had a different handwriting than “Regina”. According to Clark, each personality has its own distinct features, such as handwriting, fashion taste, hobbies, and culinary taste. In most cases, there will always be personality that writes with their left hand, while the host and other identities write with their right. In “Regina’s” case, “Veronica” wore different clothes than “Regina” and she had an interest in fine art. Each personality of a host, when asked, will tell you they have a certain type of hair color and cut, height, weight, and even gender (Clark, 1993, p. 73-78). The problem with having all these personalities is that they do not mesh well. Consequences can arise from having so many different traits inside one body like eating and sleep disorders, depression, anxiety, and substance abuse (Smith, 1993, p.1). Each alter also has their own name, these names can come from anything but there are three common factors that influence the alters name. Some alters are just born with the name, this is when the alter is modeled after a real or fictional character. Some alters are named after emotional responses, such as Sad One or Angry Janie. Many alters are named for the specific job they are supposed to do, like Director, Helper or Avenger. The names chosen have been created by a child so they are most likely modeled after a fictional or real character. Although the host will have no idea of the other personalities and will not respond to the names at first, the alters respond to the birth personalities name (Clark, 1993, 90-91). The circumstances that the identities get the host into can also become a problem.

The different alters while in possession of the body can go somewhere where the host does not know and then leave and the host is left with no idea how he/she got there and how to get back. In “Sybil”, one of the first times she realized she had a problem was when she had to leave her Columbia University Chemistry Lab when something broke. The last thing she remembered was standing at the elevator but when she regained consciousness she was in the warehouse district of Philadelphia. Miles from where she had been before in New York and it was five days later (Schreiber, 1973, p. 23-36). The persecutor identity has a tendency to leave the host in dangerous situations. “Carla”, one of Clark’s patients, had a persecutor alter named “Godiva”. “Godiva” was always putting “Carla” in sticky situations like “Godiva” would pick up men at bars and bring them home or go home with them. “Carla” would come to consciousness with an unknown man in her bed and she would pass out, another alter would have to come out and rescue “Carla”. “CJ” (”Carla’s” big burly male alter) would come out punch the guy and leave. “Christine” (”Carla’s” logical alter) would come out and handle the situation using her negotiation skills. At other times “Timmy” (the young boy who was an escape artist) would come out talk his way out of the situation, leaving the man so bewildered because he was with a woman who thought she was a young boy. When this occurred it would leave the other alters upset at “Godiva” (Clark, 1993, p.99).

There are three different types of relationships that alters can have between each other. The first one is, “one-way amnesia”, this is when alter number one knows about alter number two but alter number two does not know about number one. The second relationship is “‘two-way amnesia’ exist when neither alter know about each other”(Clark, 1993, p. 87). Cognizance, the third relationship, is when all the alters know about each other but the host personality knows about none of them. The host will hear conversations in his/her head, these conversations are between the alters. This is when the alters know the host personality but is unable to affect it as long as the host is in control (Clark, 1993, p. 87-88).

The cause of MPD is severe trauma, most of the trauma happens at a young age and the violator is usually someone who the child knows. In satanic cults, children mistreated and abused, to intentionally cause MPD, do not know everyone who is involved in the abuse. Examples given by Clark are children put in a coffin with rats, snakes, and bugs then buried alive. Later the satanic cult leader or priest will rescue the child therefore making the child feel obligated to that person. In satanic cults, children are also raped. During the rape, men and women would violate the child they would also violate the child with objects such as a knife, an upside down crucifix, and other objects (Clark, 1993, 181-198). The child gets to the point where they think they are going to die, and they disassociate themselves from the situation, this is when the personalities are born. Other types of abuse are emotional and psychological abuse by a parent. One of Clark’s patients remembered under hypnosis a time when she was two. Her mother took her outside put her in a tree and told her to jump, the child after a slight hesitation did so, and the mother stepped back, watched the child fall to the ground, and laughed. These traumatic events and others are the cause of MPD (Clark, 1993, 105-106). No matter how bad the abuse was and how many different personalities are present; a MPD patient can be cured. The process to recovery for a MPD patient is long and hard. The personalities are not being made to disappear but to become one. There has to be a fusion of all the alters into the host, the host has to learn to express all the emotions, that for so long, another alter would take care of for them. Although some MPD patients are harder than others to fuse, but all patients can be cured. Patients that were subject to Satanic Ritual Abuse are more difficult to fuse due to the threats that the cult made or are making on their lives. A patient that was in a cult must have lost all contact with the cult before successful fusion can take place. When fusion is successfully accomplished, the host person can handle their emotions as where before fusion they were unaware of many common emotions (Clark, 1993, 208-213). Research is continuing to be done on this disorder. Many people still doubt the realism of the disorder, especially as more people fake the disorder to get out of judicial problems. About 1% of America’s population has MPD, but many are scared to see Psychiatrist, and many fake the disorder (Smith, 1993, p. 1). As awareness for the disease is becoming more prevalent, more patients are discovering after years of misdiagnosis, they finally can start the right kind of therapy. Multiple Personality Disorder is not a disease or mental illness, it is a disorder caused by traumatic events in early childhood. MPD is treatable and a MPD patient can hope to one day live a normal life with every part of his/her personality fused into one. A MPD patient is not something to be afraid of as where they usually just inflict pain upon themselves and not on others. MPD patients can be your next door neighbor, parent, and even spouse. They do not seem that different from normal people, and many do not even know they have the disorder. Awareness is the key, not only awareness of MPD but of child abuse, if child abuse is stopped MPD will not be a problem.

Multiple Personality Disorder is often brushed aside by Christians who think that MPD is demon possession, but MPD and demon possession differentiate in many ways. MPD although it can be caused by satanic ritual abuse is not evil, it is a process of the mind. Possession on the other hand, is when a body is taken over by an evil spirit. It is the physical body that the demon has control over not the mind. In MPD the only part affected is the mind, the body is not changed and does not convulse as it does in possession. In Ephesians 6:12(NIV) it is written, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” Demon possession is the fight against the flesh MPD is the fight against the mind. I do not believe that MPD is demon possession, I do believe that they are more susceptible to it if they have been involved in a satanic cult. MPD patients are gifted, smart individuals who suffered greatly as children and they used their only defense their imaginations to alleviate the pain.

In conclusion I believe that anyone that believes they have MPD should seek help to bring out the feelings that are causing these split personalities to work against eachother and to join eachother and work together. EMDR is a new technic that is being tested and it causes you to bring out represt memories and to express and discuss the situations that you were put in.

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