

THE CONTINUUM CONSTRUCTION THEORY: A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF THE CAUSATION AND CONSTRUCTION OF MULTIPLE PERSONALITIES IN PERSONS DIAGNOSED WITH DISSOCIATIVE IDENTITY DISORDER *by Rosalind Monahan, 2011*

This theoretical dissertation introduces a new way of understanding the evolutionary process in the causation and construction of alter personalities: the *continuum construction theory*. This model explores the intrapsychic world of individuals who create multiple selves or multiple identities that are amnesic for each other as an adaptive mechanism to cope with memories of horrific childhood abuse, and addresses why and how alter personalities are developed.

John Bowlby's object relations attachment theory is linked to contemporary trauma theories that have established childhood maltreatment as an antecedent to the development of alter personalities. In the new *continuum construction theory*, the infant's disorganized attachment pattern to the mother or mother figure has been identified as an even earlier antecedent to the evolutionary process in the formation of alter personalities identified in persons with the most severe forms of dissociation as defined by the DSM-IV-TR: dissociative identity disorder (DID) and dissociative identity disorder not otherwise specified (DDNO). Drawing from Richard Kluft's four-factor theory, I propose a six-stage process that proceeds on a linear continuum beginning at birth, and under certain conditions may begin even earlier, in utero, that leads to the construction of multiple alternative personalities:

1. A disorganized attachment disorder with segregated models of self and mother figure;
2. Childhood maltreatment of a horrific nature, especially childhood sexual abuse;
3. "Selective exclusion" of information – dissociation;
4. Fantasy in the creation of imaginary characters;
5. Introjects in the construction of alter personalities;
6. Dissociative amnesia for the traumatic memories along with blocking of co-consciousness of alters.

The research questions addressed in this dissertation are two: (a) What is the evolutionary process under which various alter personalities are constructed? And (b) What course of treatment would relieve or cure the suffering of individuals who utilize alter personalities as a habitual maladaptive coping strategy throughout their lifespan?

Contemporary theories are used to define stage-oriented, or phase-oriented, treatment strategies currently used in trauma treatment. Finally, the *continuum construction theory* is applied to case material to demonstrate its practical effectiveness.