

Hypnotizability and Dissociativity in Sexually Abused Girls

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Abstract—Research on the relation between hypnotizability and clinical dissociation has led to contradictory findings. Measures of hypnotizability and dissociation are only weakly correlated in general population samples, but studies of posttraumatic stress and dissociative disorders patients have found elevated levels of clinical dissociation and traumatic antecedents in 54 sexually abused girls, ages 6—15 years, and 51 matched controls. Hypnotizability was assessed on initial evaluation and again in matched subsamples at one year using the Stanford Hypnotic Clinical Scale for Children. Clinical dissociation was assessed using the Child Dissociative Checklist. Abuse variables were extracted from Child Protective Services reports. There were no significant differences in hypnotizability between abuse and control subjects. There were significant differences in clinical dissociation initially and on 1-year retest. Hypnotizability and clinical dissociation were only weakly correlated ($r(105) = .118$, $p = \text{NS}$). However, in the abuse group, highly hypnotizable subjects were significantly more dissociative. Higher levels of clinical dissociation were associated with abuse by multiple perpetrators and co-presence of physical abuse independent of the sexual abuse. A small subgroup of “double dissociative” subjects, high in both hypnotizability and dissociativity, was identified. Double dissociation was associated with multiple perpetrators and earlier onset of sexual abuse.