Attachment and Dissociation as Mediators of the Link Between Childhood Trauma and Psychosis

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Background

Childhood Trauma

- Personality difficulties
- No psychological difficulties

Psychosis

Bipolar

Depression

Childhood Trauma

Psychosis
Background

Childhood Trauma

Dismissive (avoidant)

Preoccupied (anxious)

Insecure attachment

Psychosis

For a review, see Gumley et al. (2014)
Background

- Different experiences related to psychosis involve different cognitive mechanisms

- Therefore, are different psychosocial mechanisms involved in the pathways to their development?

(Brookwell, Bentall & Varese, 2013)

(Bentall et al., 2008)
What Mechanisms?

Childhood Adversity

Insecure attachment

Paranoia

Dismissive (avoidant)

Preoccupied (anxious)

Childhood Trauma

Dissociation

Voices

Bentall et al., 2014, Pickering et al., 2008; Wickham et al., 2015

Perona-Garcelan et al., 2012; Varese, Barkus & Bentall, 2012
Experiences don’t integrate into self.

Dissociates experience from consciousness.

Immediate threat that child cannot escape.

Dissociation

Memories

Emotions

Parts of the self

Hearing Voices

Children Trauma

Experiences don’t integrate into self-development.
The Cognitive Attachment Model of Voices

Berry & Bucci (2016)
CAV Model

Innately seek care while simultaneously frightened.

Anxious AND Avoidant

Dissociation

Childhood Trauma (primary caregiver)

Hearing Voices
Hypotheses

1. Fearful attachment would significantly mediate the relationship between childhood trauma and hearing voices.

2. Insecure attachment styles (preoccupied, dismissive and fearful) would significantly mediate the relationship between childhood trauma and paranoia.

3. Dissociation would significantly mediate the relationship between childhood trauma and hearing voices.
Method

112 Participants

- Self reported seeking help for experiences of psychosis
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Childhood Trauma</td>
<td>BBTS: Goldberg &amp; Freyd, (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment</td>
<td>RQ: Bartholomew &amp; Horowitz (1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paranoia &amp; Voices</td>
<td>CAPE: Stefanis et al. (2002)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

Correlation Analyses

Hearing Voices
Preoccupied
Dismissive
Fearful

Paranoia
Dissociation

Correlation Comparison Test

.36**
.54**
.42**
Do fearful attachment and dissociation mediate the relationship between childhood trauma and voices?

- Dissociation was the only significant mediator between childhood trauma and voices
  - \(a_1b_1: b = 0.09, \ 95\% \ CI \ [0.03, 0.17]\)
- Fearful attachment did not significantly mediate the relationship
  - \(a_2b_2: b = 0.02, \ 95\% \ CI \ [-0.01, 0.07]\).
Do fearful attachment and dissociation mediate the relationship between childhood trauma and paranoia?

- Both mediated the relationship between childhood trauma and paranoia
  - Dissociation ($a_1b_1: b=.17, 95\% \text{ CI } [.07, .30]$)
  - And fearful attachment ($a_2b_2: b=.05, 95\% \text{ CI } [.15, .12]$)

**Notes:**
- $*p<.05$
- $**p<.01$
- $***p<.001$
- $\text{ns}= \text{ non-significant}$
Discussion

Dissociation

Results did support previous research that dissociation is an important mechanism.

Childhood Trauma

Results did not support aspects of the CAV model.

Fearful Attachment

Voices

Disorganised Attachment?
Discussion

Childhood Adversity

Insecure attachment

Fearful Attachment

Not preoccupied or dismissive

'others are threatening' 'I am vulnerable'

Hypervigilance to threat

Threat-based attentional and attributional biases

Paranoia
Discussion

Childhood Adversity

Insecure Attachment

FEARFUL Attachment

‘others are threatening’ ‘I am vulnerable’

Hypervigilance to threat

Threat-based attentional and attributional biases

Detachment from others

Seeing one’s self from an outsider perspective

Social anxiety & dissociation

Dissociation

Not preoccupied or dismissive
Future Research

- Prospective research
- Determining causal pathways
- Further exploration of the CAV model
- Disorganised attachment
- Further exploration of the relationship between dissociation & paranoia
Clinical Implications

Fearful attachment
Consider within the therapeutic relationship

Dissociation
Consider within formulations

Therapeutic tools to help reduce distress caused
Consider working with people with both voices & paranoia

Consider working with people with trauma and paranoia
References


• Varese, F., Barkus, E., & Bentall, R. P. (2012b). Dissociation mediates the relationship between childhood trauma and hallucination-proneness. *Psychological Medicine, 42*(05), 1025-1036
Thanks for Listening!

Any Questions?