

ABSTRACT

The Relationship Among Reflective Functioning, History of Childhood Trauma, and Symptoms of Depersonalization and Derealization in Patients with Panic Disorder

by

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This exploratory study examined the relationship among reflective functioning (RF), history of childhood trauma, and symptoms of depersonalization and derealization in an attempt to provide a more nuanced clinical picture of panic disorder.

All analyses were conducted using baseline data collected as part of the “Dynamic therapy vs. CBT for Panic Disorder” study at Weill Cornell Medical College and the University of Pennsylvania. The study participants were 201 patients with a primary DSM-IV diagnosis of panic disorder with or without agoraphobia who completed the parent study.

While there was a significant relationship found between trauma and panic severity at one of the sites, $t(95) = -2.44, p = .009$, as well as between trauma and ratings of reflective functioning at the other, $t(82) = 1.70, p = .047$, there were no significant findings supported by data across both sites. Notably, however, demographic characteristics such as race and age made significant contributions to the variability in scores of depersonalization/ derealization for both sites. In addition, the presence of this sample’s large incidence of childhood trauma (62% at site 1 and 64% at site 2) has potential implications for the way panic disorder should be conceptualized and treated.