SWITCHING: PART II THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS OF AN INVESTIGATION USING EXPERIMENTAL PHENOMENOLOGY

Donald B. Beere, Ph.D.

Donald B. Beere, Ph.D., is Professor of Psychology and Director of Clinical Training of the Psy.D. program in clinical psychology at Central Michigan University.

For reprints write Don Beere, Ph.D., Department of Psychology, Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, MI 48859

ABSTRACT

Previous phenomenological research (Beere, 1996) demonstrated that switching from one personality to another occurred when reality events were proceeding toward a possible outcome of significance to a non-executive alter. When intensity of state exceeds a threshold, the non-executive alter assumes control of the body. The results support current notions about the primacy of identity for switching. The results did not support the notion that switching is a mechanism to cope, defend or manage stress, elicited by triggers, or explained by state-dependent learning or changes in state of consciousness. Indirect support was found for Beere's (1995) perceptual theory of dissociation.

In a previous paper (Beere, 1996), experimental phenomenology was used to research the experience of switching from one personality to another. That paper focused exclusively on the results of that research. This paper will discuss the theoretical implications of the results reported in that previous paper and will be organized in the following fashion. First, a brief summary of current thinking about switching will be presented. Second, the results of the prior phenomenological research on switching (Beere, 1996) will be summarized. Third, the implications of the phenomenological results for current theoretical explanations of switching will be extensively discussed. Last, directions for further research will be presented.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF CURRENT VIEWS ON SWITCHING

Most unique about Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) previously named Multiple Personality Disorder or MPD is switching from one personality or identity to another. (See *DSM-IV*, 1994, pp. 484-487.) Asserting the obvious, having DID encompasses such switching. "Switching is the process of changing from one alter personality to another and is a core behavioral phenomenon in MPD" (Putnam, 1989, p. 117). Switching is a most crucial experience to understand in DID theory, research and treatment.

Given its core role, "[o]ne might expect that there would be a large introspective literature on switching. What does it feel like to switch? Yet very little has been written. Researchers of altered states of consciousness, in particular, have tried to study the subjective state-change experience with little success" (Putnam, 1988, p.27). Despite its core role, only a small number of articles on switching have been published (Putnam, 1988; Lowenstein et al., 1987).

Braude (1991) summarizes current views on switching: "Switching personalities enables a multiple to cope with exhaustion, pain, or other impairments to normal or optimal functioning" (p. 45). Kluft (1993) states the following:

> The most distinguishing characteristic of multiple personality disorder (MPD) is the presence of alters that recurrently influence behavior and assume executive control of the body. The first personalities develop in the course of an overwhelmed child's efforts to contend and to cope with overwhelming circumstances. They enact alternative strategies and approaches to the handling of difficult events, serve protective and self-soothing functions, and internalize the constellation of events and relationships in which they are involved . . . In many patients, both the alters and the process by which they are formed rapidly attain secondary autonomy, and what had proved adaptive under duress may become an ongoing and increasingly elaborated way of responding to life's events and challenges. (Kluft, 1993, p. 101)

Putnam (1989) presents the following overview of switching.

> Switching is a psychophysiological process that may occur in a controlled or uncontrolled fashion. A switch may be stimulated by the internal dynamics of the multiple's system, or it may be elicited by events in the immediate environment. In general, the alter personality present before the switch is

replaced by another personality. In some cases, however, both personalities will be present simultaneously.

As an MPD patient progresses through treatment, he or she gains control over the switching process. Early on, switches tend to be triggered by environmental cues or internal conflicts, and are experienced as being out of volitional control, particularly by the host personality. Many of the alter personalities will be unaware of one another and view life as a series of appearances and disappearances in which they often "wake up" in strange and unusual circumstances. There is a certain adaptive logic to the switching process, however, so that an appropriate alter personality is called out in most circumstances. (Putnam, 1989, p. 117)

Lowenstein, Gamilton, Alagna, Reid, and de Vries (1987) used experiential sampling to assess state changes in a DID patient. They documented with naturalistic, self-report data that switching and coconsciousness occurred during the random time samplings.

Our data complement the clinical observation that relatively few multiple personality alters have frequent or habitual access to full control of the body at times of reasonably good day-to-day functioning, although others may manifest themselves, intra-psychically or co-consciously or only come out for particular activities, in response to specific situational triggers, or at times of stress. . . .The relation between enduring and abiding characteristics of multiple personality disorder alternates and those activated by dynamic and situational factors is an important area for future research.
(Lowenstein et al., 1987, p. 23)

Ross (1989), in a way similar to Putnam (1989), describes switching as elicited by triggers, using a non-articulated learning paradigm as explanation. "Triggers . . . often are related to specific details of the childhood trauma" and elicit "internal stimuli, which are memories and feelings" (Ross, 1989, p. 103). Braun (1984) articulates a more specific state-dependent learning paradigm. "The personalities of an MP [DID] are probably called out (switching) via a classically conditioned (probably limbic, ACTH-facilitated) process and perpetuated in the present via operant conditioning and reinforcers" (p. 188).

Lowenstein (1991, p. 599) notes that states or alters can overlap, interfere or blend. Furthermore, "alters can be called out with a simple request" (Ross, 1989, p. 235). Both Putnam (1989) and Lowenstein (1991) describe the verbal evocation of switching either by direct request or by asking either for information or for emotion relevant to another alter.

Putnam (1988) presented the most clearly articulated theory of switching. He equates switching with a change in state of consciousness, a state being discrete and discontinuous. A state of consciousness is self-organizing and, as a result, reorganizes behavior so as to be consistent. The state evokes a non-linear response in affect, memory, attention, cognition, physiological regulation, and self.

SUMMARY OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH ON SWITCHING

The descriptions used in the phenomenological research referred to above (Beere, 1996) are consistent with the observations about switching referred to in the prior section. They demonstrate the variety of switch phenomena described in the literature: controlled and uncontrolled, environmentally and internally elicited, amnestic and co-conscious, appearing in unusual situations, disappearing unpredictably, and alters overlapping, blending and interfering. Only the number of described externally precipitated switches, however, was sufficient for a phenomenological analysis. Consequently, the analysis pertained to externally precipitated switches alone.

The General Structure of the Experience of Externally Precipitated Switching

Externally precipitated switching from one personality to another has three contexts. First, within this person's experienced-totality, there are at least two personalities characterized by coherent and self-referential thoughts, memories, traits, emotions, and behaviors, who can assume control of the body. Second, the lived-world presents an energizing lived-situation for an alter not currently in control of the body and this lived-situation can lead to the enactment of the energized need, impulse or emotion. If the person has been energized prior to entering the lived-situation, this prior energizing predisposes the DID person to react even more strongly in the lived-situation. Third, the executive alter constitutes itself so as to exclude the energized need, impulse or emotion evoked for the second alter in the lived-situation. While the self-constitution of the executive alter excludes the experience or expression of these specific needs, impulses or actions, the self-constitution of the alter currently not in control both includes the expression of these specific needs, impulses or actions and they possess significance for this second alter's being-in-the-world. The lived-world presents situations which unfold toward a livable-future and, in the process of that unfolding, elicit increasingly intense responses in the non-controlling alter as lived-possibilities crystallize into realizable experience, expression or action. Switching seems predicated on the experienced belief that events will proceed toward a specific outcome, often, but not necessarily fearful or painful, to which an alter reacts in characteristic ways. The alter for whom these possibilities are ener-

61

gizing and livable engages in psychological activities designed to actualize them as lived-realities. When the intensity escalates, the non-controlling alter, whose self-constitution includes accepting, expressing or enacting these particular, energized needs, impulses or emotions, assumes control of the body after the intensity overwhelms the executive alter and the second alter takes over. That a lived-possibility could, in fact, become a reality evokes the switch to the second alter. To phrase this differently, as the experience intensifies and becomes less distant, the executive alter's ability to maintain control lessens until the energized alter takes over. The new alter's being-in-the-world represents itself as a unique lived-body in a unique lived-world. Afterwards, when the prior executive alter has resumed control, that alter frequently has negative emotional reactions to having switched.

Brief Summary of Additional Conclusions

Switching was not always triggered by fear, pain or stress. Intensity of state, not fear, pain or stress, was a necessary precondition for externally precipitated switching. Furthermore, switching required that the alter currently in control had a rigid self-constitution which excluded that particular, intense state. Switching always involved taking control of the body. Bodily control makes action in the world possible. Conscious activity and bodily control by alters are distinctly different; only one alter controls the body at a given time. Switching intends to make actual a potential and significant lived-possibility for the "new" alter. The assumption of bodily control follows intensification associated with that realizable possibility. This analysis yielded the following conclusion: Self-control is bounded by how identity is constituted in consciousness; a self can only control experiences that occur within its boundaries. Importantly, however, non-executive alters can, without the awareness or choice of the executive alter, perceive worldly events, anticipate possibilities, and plan future actions. In addition, non-executive alters can influence executive alters.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESULTS FOR CURRENT THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS OF SWITCHING

These results have significant implications for current conceptualizations of switching: 1) as a way to cope; 2) as a way to defend; 3) as elicited by stress; 4) as state-dependent learning; 5) as triggered; and 6) as self-organized states of consciousness. The results support more recent thinking on 7) identity (Horevitz, 1994). Each of these topics will be discussed in the following section.

1) Switching as Coping

Braude (1991) expresses what is most frequently asserted about switching: It is an attempt to cope with some kind of negative experience. Although this seems to characterize many switches (Beere, 1996), it does not adequately explain the four-year-old coming out to talk to Santa, the alters wanting to watch the kids dressed up on Halloween, and possibly the sexual alter who goes to Las Vegas. Switching, in these situations, did not seem to be motivated to cope with negative or noxious affect. The assumption that switching inevitably implies a reaction to a dysphoric inner state (such as fear, pain, anxiety or stress) seems incorrect.

2) Switching as Defense

Lowenstein et al. (1987) state the reason some consider switching defensive: ". . .multiple personality disorder develops as a childhood defense against overwhelming trauma" (p. 23). Since alters develop defensively, so the argument follows, switching is also defensive. Referring again to the switch of the four-year-old talking to Santa and the alter watching the costumed kids (Beere, 1996, examples two and three), it is difficult to consider these switches defensive. It appears that switching cannot automatically be assumed to be defensive. As Kluft (1993) wrote, "alters . . [can] . . . attain secondary autonomy" (p.101), even if developed as a defensive or coping mechanism.

3) Switching in Response to Psychosocial Stress

The only observation about switching in the DSM-IV (1994) is "Transitions among identities are often triggered by psychosocial stress" (p. 485). As should be apparent from the phenomenological analysis and the descriptions themselves, the stress experienced has frequently been created by the DID individual. The woman (example one in Beere, 1996) who discovered herself talking to the dealer in Las Vegas was in a situation created by another alter. The alters switching in response to the drive across the city on Halloween (Beere, 1996, example three) were reacting out of their own interests and idiosyncrasies. In other words, an objective, external psychosocial stress was seldom the sole motive behind the switch.

4) Triggers

Ross (1989) describes switching as activated by "triggers . . . [which] often are related to specific details of the childhood trauma" and elicit "internal stimuli, which are memories and feelings" (p. 103). Although some of descriptions involve specific stimuli which act as triggers, in general, the described switches mostly involve anticipating unfolding situations which will have significance to the alter who will come out. This complex, future-oriented involvement does not match the stimulus-response paradigm underlying "triggers." Furthermore, no descriptions report overt memories of childhood trauma.

5) State-Dependent Learning

The state-dependent learning (SDL) model asserts that

62

alters developed as coping mechanisms during traumatic states and that the re-presentation of that same state activates the prior learned coping mechanism, namely, the alter. Braun (1984) explains that alters form and, thus, switch via a physiological state which is classically conditioned to eliciting triggers and the state itself is linked to mental phenomena such as identity and memory retrieval. The present results have significant implications for the SDL theory. First, energized state was a precondition for switching. In fact, being pre-energized (for example, angry, tense or upset), prior to a situation, seemed to prime reactions of a specific alter. The results match this facet of the theory. Second, on the basis of the SDL model, one would not expect positive or neutral states to be associated with switching as was the case in several descriptions. In other words, since negative affect created the alters, negative affect *must* be associated with their elicitation. Positive or neutral affect, therefore, should not be associated with switching. Nonetheless, in conflict with the SDL theory, switching was evoked by positive states.

Braun (1984) also theorizes that switching (based on the SDL model) is perpetuated in the present via operant conditioning and reinforcement. Reflecting on the complexity of the switching process presented in these descriptions, classical and operant conditioning as well as reinforcement must be involved. On the other hand, alters interpret events, engage in complex cognitive processing, make plans by anticipating the future, and subtly and/or actively influence the executive alter, sometimes for weeks. This extensive and complex cognitive, behavioral and emotional processing prior to and eventually leading to a switch seems autonomously motivated. In other words, many switches seem to occur from active and intentional efforts on the part of the alter, and do not appear to be an automatic and classically conditioned response to an emotional state or to a trigger. In most situations, a non-existent situation, a future possibility, seems to trigger the switch.

In addition, what is not explained by the SDL model is how a switch occurs. At first blush, it would appear obvious that once a state is experienced, it brings up its associated alter. It does not, however, seem so obvious to the present author. A state is a subjective response to events. In this regard, states were frequently activated by an alter's initial response to and perception of events. The alter was often consciously operating before the state was activated. In other words, while on the one hand the person might have been energized by "objective" circumstances, on other occasions, the objective circumstance was experienced in an idiosyncratic and energizing fashion by the alter. In this second situation, rather than the state triggers the alter, the alter triggered the state.

In summary, the SDL model matches the consistent energization associated with switching. Three results, however, are not consistent with the SDL model: switching to positive emotional states, anticipatory planning which leads to a

switch, and an alter's active role in perceiving a situation as potentially energizing prior to that state coming about.

6) Self-Organizing States of Consciousness

Putnam has written about switching more than any other author (Putnam, 1988, 1989, 1991). He (Putnam, 1988) hypothesizes a normative substrate for switching derived from transitions between behavioral states which possess an inherent organization in infants, and seem analogous to the switches between alters in DID. Such state transitions are also apparent with mood shifts in adult psychiatric patients. Appearing at birth, states seem to be foundational and organizational structures for consciousness, attention, memory, psychophysiology, and behavior. The present results must be considered in the light of his theory.

According to Putnam (1988), switching stems from a change in state of consciousness. "State transitions are marked by non-linear changes in . . . patterns of behavior differing along axes of affect, access to memory, attention and cognition, regulatory physiology, and sense of self" (p. 24). A state of consciousness is a discrete and self-organizing pattern of behavior. Consequently, it is discontinuous with prior and subsequent states.

"States," according to Putnam (1988) are "the fundamental unit of organization of consciousness" (p. 25). Normal development leads to a smoothing out and differentiation of these states.

> Multiple personality can be thought of as a disorder in which the individual's consciousness is organized [the research supports this] into a series of discrete dissociative states (alter personalities) centered around specific affects, body images, modes of cognition and perception, state-dependent memories, and behaviors. By and large the transitions between these rarified states [of consciousness] are abrupt and discontinuous compared to the smoother transitions between normal states of consciousness (p. 26).

Putnam (1988) defines a state-change or switch:

> as the psychobiological events associated with shifts in state of consciousness as manifest by changes in state-related variables such as affect, access to memories, sense of self, cognitive and perceptual style, and often reflected in alterations in facial expression, speech and motor activity, and interpersonal relatedness (p. 26).

Before discussing Putnam's (1988) theory, a caveat must be made: the current research relates to externally precipitated switches. Putnam, by contrast, discusses all kinds of switches – ones consciously chosen, switching in response

63

to requests by researchers and therapists and those precipitated by external events as well as internal dynamics. An adequate theory, however, must explain all of these phenomena. Consequently, even though Putnam does not isolate externally precipitated switches in his discussion, the results remain an adequate "mirror" to hold up to the theory. In addition, there are some internal contradictions which surface when the current results are applied to Putnam's theory.

Consciousness (Mind) And/Or Physiology (Body). Issues of consciousness per se will be considered later; however, the fundamental position taken by Putnam in his theory is that switching is a change in state of consciousness where consciousness is "organized into a series of discrete dissociative states (alter personalities)" (p. 26). Later Putnam defines "a state-change or switch as the psychobiological events associated with shifts in state of consciousness" (p. 26). Putnam integrates mind and body – as state of mind changes so does body.

According to Putnam, if an alter is present in consciousness, then consciousness has reorganized to accord with that particular self-organizing state along with its associated psychobiological accompaniments. Numerous descriptions in this research (Beere, 1996) present situations in which alters are present in consciousness, observe what is occurring, yet cannot control the body. In other words, according to these descriptions, an alter, a self-organizing state of consciousness, does not inevitably bring its associated psychobiology. One must, therefore, based on these results, make a distinction between the state of consciousness and the psychobiology of an alter. By implication, switching cannot adequately be explained by a change in state of consciousness.

Consciousness Changes as a Whole. An assumption underlying Putnam's (1988) position is that when consciousness changes it does so as a whole. In this sense, consciousness is unitary. Thus, a switch from one personality to another involves a transition of the whole of consciousness from one state to another. The instability associated with the transition, according to Putnam, explains why an alter's memory during that transition will be disrupted.

As the author understands the logic of Putnam's (1988) position, since consciousness self-organizes in a self-maintaining and self-regulating way, when an alter is active in consciousness (in other words, when a specific alter's state of consciousness is active) it will reorganize the whole of consciousness. Once again, the results of the current study do not support this conclusion. There are frequent descriptions of multiple states of consciousness coexisting. In other words, a state of consciousness (here defined as an alter) does not lead to a reorganization of the whole of consciousness. A passage on "Mixed States" indicates that Putnam (1988) is aware that multiple states of consciousness still need to be understood.

Abrupt Change in State of Consciousness. Putnam (1988) writes "by and large the transitions between these rarified states [of consciousness] are abrupt" (p. 26). Focusing purely on state of consciousness, several alters can be in consciousness at the same time and can be aware of each other. Furthermore, executive control can alternate while each remains aware of the other. Consequently, the results do not match the conclusion that the transitions in consciousness are abrupt when switching occurs.

Discrete and Discontinuous Changes in State of Consciousness. Referring to characteristics of alters by referring to the literature on consciousness, Putnam (1988) states, "The first [central property of states of consciousness] is the idea that states are discrete and discontinuous" (p. 24). In the following paragraphs, these two conditions, discrete and discontinuous, will be considered from the point of view which emerges from the descriptions of switching.

Context must first be clarified. Putnam (1988) is explaining changes in states of consciousness. In other words, consciousness is changing over time. At time T1, alter1, or state of consciousness 1, has self-organized consciousness in a particular way; later, at time T2, alter2, or state of consciousness 2, has self-organized consciousness differently. There is no continuity over time: the existence of alter1 is interrupted at the time of the switch; in addition, alter2 does not exist in consciousness until after the switch. Thus, alter1 and alter2 are discrete, meaning they are separate or distinct.

The conceptualization of switching as discrete rests on the assumption that consciousness changes unitarily. As already demonstrated, the unitary change of consciousness does not match the current results. Let us, however, take the paradigm outlined in the previous paragraph and test it against the results. In this paradigm, alter2 does not exist as a state of consciousness prior to switching. As pointed out earlier, alters exist as states of consciousness prior to a switch. In terms of the "discrete" condition for change of consciousness, therefore, the present results indicate that alter1 can be in executive control while alter2 exists in consciousness prior to switching. This does not support the "discrete" assumption made by Putnam (1988). Furthermore, the conceptualization of consciousness as unitary, or characterized by a single state, also is not supported by the phenomenological results.

The "discontinuity" condition means a break or gap in the continued existence of an alter. In other words, when a non-executive alter switches in, it comes into existence in consciousness and when another alter takes over, the prior alter disappears from consciousness. It should be apparent from the prior discussion that non-executive alters who later switch in can be present in consciousness prior to the switch. Furthermore, alters who are switched out can also remain aware or in consciousness. The "discontinuity" condition, therefore, is not supported by the descriptions.

Summarizing this critique, Putnam's (1988) explanation

64

of switching as self-organizing states of consciousness has several conceptual and empirical difficulties. The underlying assumption that consciousness changes as a whole did not match the evidence. Furthermore, switching was neither abrupt, discrete nor discontinuous.

The difficulties in Putnam's (1988) theory stem from its assertion that switching is a change in state of consciousness. As repeatedly emphasized earlier, switching involves taking control of the body. There is an explicit experiential distinction in the descriptions between an alter functioning in consciousness and that alter controlling the body. Consequently, an analysis of switching must focus on control of the body, not consciousness in isolation from the body. Paradoxically, the phenomenological results do match the characteristics Putnam (1988) uses to describe switching: when an alter assumes control of the body it is a unitary or holistic change that is abrupt, discrete, and discontinuous. Thus, the difficulties with the theory arose by focusing exclusively on consciousness. In addition, the characteristics of alters described by Putnam (1988) as being organized around specific structures for consciousness, attention, memory, and behavior is consistent with the phenomenological results.

7) Identity or Self-Constitution

In contradistinction to the SDL and self-organizing state paradigms, the results indicate that when the self is constituted in an alternative fashion then alternative needs, affects, and memories are experientiable. Thus, psychophysiological functioning seems not to be dependent on the state but on the self-constitution of the alter in control of the body. A recent review by Horevitz (1994) makes a similar observation: "It is believed that the unintegrated or parallel-processed experience is not lost, but rather encoded not only in terms of emotions (state dependency) but also in terms of personal identity (identity alteration)" (p. 440). It should be apparent from the earlier discussion that both emotion and identity are involved in switching. Although on first reflection, it might appear that neither emotion nor identity would be more primary than the other in eliciting switches, as one considers the descriptions further, identity or self-constitution seems more fundamental than state for switching. (See the SDL section.)

The descriptions of switching (Beere, 1996) demonstrate that the dominant factor in switching is the identity of the alter. Self-constitution guides, among other processes, perception, memory, belief, judgment, affect, goals, and action. In an unpublished switch episode studied in Beere (1996), an alter is described as making plans and influencing the executive alter's actions. This non-executive alter seems motivated to act by some date, although not necessarily energized. In other words, this alter seems to have a conscious goal (to kill the abuser) consistent with its identity (protector) and maintains its behind the scenes influence over weeks. An overt

switch occurs when the alter is afraid that it cannot protect the person by killing the abuser. At this point, emotion escalates, the alter attacks the therapist and the client's usual executive alter loses control of the body. The energization or state necessary to elicit switching comes about after weeks of influence by the alter. Thus, identity or self-constitution are more fundamental than emotion or intensity of state: it is a precondition for the switch and facilitates the energization.

Self-constitution, therefore, guides what is perceived and how that is responded to emotionally. Alters possess an identity in consciousness which involves specific kinds of emotions, memories, thoughts, judgements, actions, and beliefs. This structuring of consciousness and perception need not lead to switching, here defined as taking control of the body. Based on the descriptions, alter identities arise when experience presents in ways significant to them. Activation of alters in consciousness does not seem to require state-dependent elicitation but meaningfulness or significance. Switching, however, does require an energized state plus a liveable-future, significant for the emergent alter's being-in-the-world.

Spiegel (1990) discusses self as a locator of memory and drive, similar to the conclusions presented in the previous paragraphs: ". . . each cluster of dissociated elements carries with it a different self that emerges from its role in regulating its own subset of elements. . . The awareness of self . . . is colored by *selective choice* of memories, experiences, and desires. . ." (p. 133-134, italics added).

The Change Process. The descriptions reveal the following about self-constitution in relation to change in therapy. If an alter's self-constitution is rigid, switching is abrupt, discontinuous, and amnestic. When the alter's self-constitution becomes more inclusive (as a result of change or therapy), the alter can acknowledge the experience of previously discrepant energized states and cognitions. The alter might then become aware of the switch process and of the thoughts, emotions, and actions of another alter's being in control of the body. This is the beginnings of co-consciousness. Although this is not articulated in the descriptions, it would seem that when an alter can accept as its own another alter's emotions, thoughts, and memories, fusion has begun to occur.

Differences in Memory Retrieval. There are conflictual results concerning implicit and explicit memory across different alters (Putnam, 1991, p. 494). The results of the current study might provide a preliminary explanation. Events/experiences can be perceived and processed independently of the current executive alter. What is not clear from the descriptions is why that information is inconsistently perceived and processed or what stimulates or inhibits its perception and processing. The following hypotheses extend the results of the current research to those other studies. Information or processes excluded by a particular alter's self-constitution, that is, for which it would be amnestic, will not transfer to it from another alter. In contrast, information or processes included in a particular alter's self-constitution will

transfer to it from another alter. Neutral information or processes, which could be accepted within the self-constitution of any alter, will transfer across alters. The issue, therefore, pertains to what is and is not consistent with the self-constitution of the particular alters involved.

Summary Vis-a-Vis Identity or Self-Constitution. The results support current notions of the importance of identity (self-constitution in this article) which seems more fundamental than state or emotion in switching. As concluded earlier, self-constitution guides how an alter responds either internally or externally, and can eventually lead to increased energization bringing about control of the body in order to bring to fruition a significant happening in the world. Emotion is only one kind of energization.

SUMMARY OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESULTS FOR CURRENT THEORIES

The results provide support for current notions about the role of identity (self-constitution in this paper) in switching. Other theoretical ideas or assumptions did not receive support based on the following logic: If several examples of switching are inconsistent with current views, then those views are not a comprehensive explanation for switching. Switching, for example, did not seem to be explained adequately as a mechanism to cope, defend or manage stress. This does not imply that switching can never be used in this fashion; these explanations are not comprehensive or exhaustive.

Even though state (energization) was critical in evoking a switch, the SDL theory does not adequately explain how a switch occurs: alters seem to generate the state rather than the state triggering the alter. A similar difficulty arises with the notion of "triggers" since they appear to be a function of the meaning attributed to them by the perceiving alter. This does not imply that triggers can never elicit a switch; rather, such an explanation is not comprehensive. The notion that switching occurs as a state-change in consciousness also was not supported by the descriptions since consciousness did not change as a whole and the assumption of bodily control by an alter was neither discrete nor discontinuous for the non-executive alter's conscious state. Overall, the identity or self-constitution of an alter seemed more significantly involved in switching since the meanings of experiences, whether internal or external, seemed to be most significant in bringing about a switch.

Elsewhere Beere (1995) speculated about the formation of alters as follows:

Real world events put the person in a situation in which actions must be taken yet "cannot" be performed by the current self. . . . Thus, horrifying acts, totally inconsistent with one's current identity,

would lead to an alter self. Note that "horrifying" is defined by the self-concept. Thus, someone diagnosed with fugue finds spontaneity a necessity yet the prior identity cannot express those needs and impulses and finds them horrifying. The author believes that many children who become DID are forced to act in ways totally identity-discrepant and to engage in identity-discrepant, actions requires a new identity. Finally, it is unclear to the author whether action is necessary for a change in identity or whether intentions which are horrifyingly self-discrepant are sufficient to evoke a change in identity.

(Beere, 1995, p. 173)

It would appear that Beere's (1995) speculations have been supported by the phenomenological results. In addition, Beere's (1995) perceptual theory of dissociation posits that dissociation occurs when a situation is highly meaningful for the individual and subjectively intense. These two situational characteristics have also been associated with switching. Consequently, the results of the phenomenological research on switching also support Beere's (1995) perceptual theory of dissociation.

DIRECTION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The results of the phenomenological research are limited to externally elicited switching; thus, other kinds of switching need to be researched to clarify their relationship to the present results. There are, in addition, particular questions which arise about how alters function.

The outcome of Beere's (1996) study might have been colored by the precise question asked. By asking DID individuals to describe switching from one personality to one other personality, the respondents might have described switching which involved single personalities. This is consistent with the results of the study which suggest that only one alter controls the body at one time and that apparent simultaneity of control is actually sequentiality. In other words, alters battle for control, evenly matched, and take over and lose control in rapid succession. A follow-up study could request descriptions of two or more alters being simultaneously in control of the body.

By contrast, simultaneous alters were present in consciousness. If several alters were able to control the body at once, do they control different spheres of activity? One might anticipate, in the context of recent research on implicit-explicit memory (Schachter, 1992), modality or part-specific control by different alters.

Another possible artifact relates to volitional switching. The single "consciously decided" switch derived from an overwhelming intensification of competing responses that interfered with control by the executive alter. Once again, the

particular question asked in this study might have invited descriptions of non-volitional switching. A follow-up study could analyze descriptions of conscious switching.

Three other kinds of switching are mentioned in the literature: internally (dynamically) activated switches, overt requests by an outside person such as a therapist, and stimulus triggered switches. These also could be researched.

Lastly, there is a series of questions which this study brings to the fore. What is the experience of an inner boundary? How do non-multiples shift states? What is the experience of loss of control in obsessions, compulsions, and phobias? There is also a large number of questions about the functioning of alters. Are there alters who are only conscious and never assume control of the body? What is the difference between being conscious and being in control of the body? Was an alter initially created when it first took control of the body? Are alters always created via negative and overwhelming affect or are there ways in which, once learned, alter formation becomes a template for later patterns? Are some alters created during non-traumatic times?

Can conclusions about the creation of alters be drawn from the results? If the conclusion reached here is robust, then an alter is possibly generated to provide control otherwise unavailable to the prior alter. The possible error in this logic is confusing the current functioning of alters with their causation. If we consider the observations made about self-constitution, an alter eventually become integrated "around" a unique identity which limits the range of possible experience. Could a dissociative substrate which somehow separates experiences have been established via learning or genetics prior to initial identity formation?

As is the case with much research, the current results raise more questions than they answer. Nonetheless, a phenomenological approach, using qualitative research methods, has proved useful as a preliminary exploration of the inner world of DID individuals. ■

REFERENCES

American Psychiatric Association(1994). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (4th ed.)*. Washington, DC: Author.

Beere, D. B. (1995). Loss of "Background": A Perceptual Theory of Dissociation. *DISSOCIATION, 8,* 166-174.

Beere, D. B. (1996). Switching: Part I — An Investigation Using Experimental Phenomenology. *DISSOCIATION, 9,* 48-59.

Braude, S. E. (1991). *First person plural: Multiple personality and the philosophy of mind.* New York: Routledge.

Braun, B. G. (1984). Towards a theory of multiple personality and other dissociative phenomena. *Psychiatric Clinics of North America, 7,* 171-193.

Horevitz, R. (1994). Dissociation and multiple personality: Conflicts and controversies. In S. J. Lynn & J. W. Rhue (Eds.), *Dissociation: Clinical and theoretical perspectives* (pp. 434-461). New York: Guilford.

Kluft, R. P. (1993). Clinical approaches to the integration of personalities. In R. P. Kluft & C. G. Fine (Eds.), *Clinical perspectives on multiple personality disorder* (pp. 101-133). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press.

Loewenstein, R. J. (1991). An office mental status examination for complex chronic dissociative symptoms and multiple personality disorder. *Psychiatric Clinics of North America, 14,* 567-604.

Loewenstein, R. J., Hamilton, J., Alagna, S., Reid, N., & deVries, M. (1987). Experiential sampling in the study of multiple personality disorder. *American Journal of Psychiatry, 144,* 19-24.

Putnam, F. W. (1988). The switch process in multiple personality disorder and other state-change disorders. *DISSOCIATION, 1(1),* 24-32.

Putnam, F. W. (1989). *Diagnosis and treatment of multiple personality disorder.* New York: The Guilford Press.

Putnam, F. W. (1991). Recent research on multiple personality disorder. *Psychiatric Clinics of North America, 14,* 489-502.

Ross, C. A. (1989). *Multiple personality disorder: Diagnosis, clinical features, and treatment.* New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Schachter, D. L. (1992). Understanding implicit memory: A cognitive neuroscience approach. *American Psychologist, 47,* 559-569.

Spiegel, D. (1990). Hypnosis, dissociation, and trauma: Hidden and overt observers. In J. L. Singer (Ed.), *Repression and dissociation: Implications for personality theory, psychopathology, and health* (pp. 121-142). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

67