

## INVITED REVIEW

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**Dissociogenic components of oppression and obedience in regards to  
psychotraumatology and psychohistory** **Erdinc Ozturk<sup>1</sup>**,  **Barishan Erdogan<sup>2</sup>**<sup>1</sup>*Istanbul University-Cerrahpaşa, Institute of Forensic Sciences and Legal Medicine, Department of Social Sciences, Istanbul, Turkey*<sup>2</sup>*Istanbul Arel University, Faculty of Letters, Department of Psychology, Istanbul, Turkey*Received 30 June 2021; Accepted 29 July 2021  
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**Abstract**

Today, oppression is addressed by various disciplines on the basis of modern psychotraumatology and psychohistory paradigms. From a psychotraumatological perspective, oppression, as negative occurrences that force obedience that individuals and societies have to encounter at certain rates, is characterized by dissociative experiences and post-traumatic stress reactions. According to psychohistory, on the other hand, oppression may maintain its control and obedience-oriented domination on both individuals and societies on the basis of violence-focused as well as unempathetic negative child-rearing styles and intergenerational transmission of traumas. Oppression, which is also a socially negative life experience, may force individuals to obey by both traumatizing and dissociating them. In postmodern societies, oppression can be defined as providing absolute control and dominance over individuals and societies by creating fear of chaos over individuals and societies with excessive or variable use of digital communication networks by dominant/authoritarian leaders. Especially since digital network platforms make cyber anonymity “exceedingly” possible, the masses who use these platforms excessively and uncontrollably can both easily overcome the interpersonal boundaries that they would not normally violate, and also lose their ability to grasp the reality or truth in the face of highly contradictory stimuli they are exposed to. Individuals who are unable to realize, grasp and comprehend reality may begin to dissociate themselves in the face of oppression over time. As a strategy of control, obedience and manipulation, oppression continues to exist with its dominance over individuals who show conformity to strict rules on a pathological basis in order to ensure the legitimacy of the system, which does not have the ability to stretch. Being able to effectively fight against oppression, which is a social traumatic experience, can be achieved by neutralizing violence-oriented and unempathetic negative child-rearing styles, as psychotraumatology -especially psychohistory- emphasizes, and by adopting empathetic child-rearing styles with a positive nature that are “away from oppression and control”. The aim of this study is to evaluate the dissociogenic components of oppression and obedience in terms of psychotraumatology and psychohistory.

**Keywords:** Oppression, obedience, psychotraumatology, psychohistory, dissociation, reversible society, trauma denial, intergenerational transmission of trauma, intergenerational transmission of psychopathology, overstimulation, stimulus deprivation

**Introduction**

The commence of the evaluation of the psychosocial dynamics of oppression and obedience in the axis of modern psychotraumatology paradigms and dissociation theories today has provided the emergence of scientifically innovative and solution-oriented approaches of psychology and psychohistory. Oppression that tends to expand from individual to society, consists of negative life experiences that force people to think, feel and act against their will by hindering their personal freedom through a political, economic, religious, institutional, relational

or educational authority figure. These short or long-term and controlling negative life experiences create acute and chronic psychopathological effects on individuals and societies. The oppression that forces obedience modalities shifts people from the subject position to the object position, traumatizing and dissociating the individuals by pushing them away from the centers of their own lives and dragging them to become like someone else [1,2].

In terms of psychotraumatology, all kinds of oppression that individuals and societies have to experience is primarily a psychological trauma, and dissociative experiences and post-traumatic stress reactions occur in direct proportion to the frequency, severity and duration of these traumatic experiences. In terms of psychohistory, traumatic experiences are transferred to consecutive or next generations at close rates through “intergenerational transmission of trauma”. According to Öztürk, intergenerational transmission of trauma is provided by dysfunctional families with

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violence-focused -oppression-oriented- child-rearing styles, and a dysfunctional generation is raised that manifests obedience in the face of oppression. In this respect, it can be stated that in terms of psychotraumatology and psychohistory, oppression forces individuals and societies into obedience by both traumatizing and dissociating them [1-3].

Today, psychohistory has managed to attract the attention of the academic world all over the globe with its applicable, practical and effective solutions for the prevention of oppression implemented by dominant leaders, childhood traumas and wars. Trauma and dissociation have become one of the most studied scientific fields, both clinically and theoretically, for clinical psychology, psychohistory, psychotraumatology and psychiatry all over the world, especially in terms of dynamics associated with recurrent or chronic childhood traumas that begin at an early age. Societies that have advanced and integrative child-rearing styles that give importance to the mental health of children, undoubtedly, by raising more equipped and psychologically healthier new generations, will progress in the intergenerational process with firm steps that are suitable with solution-focused techniques that may be adopted in any environment of crisis -precisely oppression- [1,2,4-7]. The aim of this study is to evaluate the dissociogenic components of oppression and obedience in terms of psychotraumatology and psychohistory.

### **Psychotraumatology, psychohistory and dissociation**

Psychotraumatology, defined as the collective body of studies on trauma, which precisely focuses on individuals' reactions to traumatic experiences, psychotherapy of trauma and prevention techniques. It is possible to refer to psychotraumatology as a scientific field that highlights the traumatic stress and dissociation that take place as a consequence of both natural and human-made disasters and traumas as well as focusing on their treatment [7]. Recent literature suggests that half of the possible reactions to trauma (i.e. fight, flight, freeze and fawn), are in a dissociative nature. Dissociative reactions (including dissociative disorders) to trauma happen to be more common than most mental health professionals consider [8]. In this context, it is unlikely to address the phenomenon of trauma without taking dissociation into consideration. The largest contribution in the field of psychotraumatology, in this direction, can be said to be obtained from scholars that focus on the concepts of trauma and dissociation [1]. The situation of children with traumatizing and dissociating caregivers cannot be considered utterly different from that of members of oppressive societies under traumatizing leaders. Not unlikely the relationship between traumatized children and their abusive caregivers, the dependent individuals of oppressive societies tend to direct the whole of their attention to the actions, desires and directions of the aggressor who is most likely to be the oppressive leader of the community. The intimidating state of such societies and dysfunctional families end in (both communal and individual) dissociated states and coping mechanisms, i.e. idealizing as the oppressed and identifying with the aggressor [9,10]. The acceptance of the leaders' and/or abusive caregivers' unempathetic and coercive behavior may end in skepticism to one's own perception of reality. Such connections between the actions of oppressive leaders and the negative child-rearing styles of neglecting caregivers that lead to obedience and dissociation as

a consequence of oppression can be best scrutinized in the frame of psychotraumatology and psychohistory [2,7,11].

According to Öztürk, psychohistory is both a neglected, true history and a painful adventure of trauma and dissociation, that is, child abuse, which has turned into a nightmare that has been wanted to be forgotten for centuries. Psychohistory, which has close relationship dynamics with psychotraumatology, is basically a systematic analysis of the historical and psychological motivations of individual and social traumas and violence that are fed by negative child-rearing styles. With this method of analysis, psychohistory tries to provide effective and functional new paradigms for the prevention of childhood traumas, social oppression and wars, just as psychotraumatology does. In an objective, scientific, perceptible (as experienced) level as well as in a critical style, psychohistory tells us the history of humanity, built on childhood traumas and the social oppression of authoritarian leaders [2].

Öztürk, who defines dissociation with a modern and innovative approach on a psychotraumatological basis, is regarded as a respected scholar in both national and international scientific platforms with his work in the field of trauma and dissociation. Dissociation is an extreme and intense effort of integration of a divided and multiple consciousness system. Dissociation as a process, on the other hand, is a strong desire or struggle for integration or unification rather than division. Dissociative disorders that occur as a result of dissociative reactions to minimal traumas in actual life, dissociative experiences that develop in the face of negative child-rearing styles, and repetitive trauma that started at an early age, are quite ordinary life experiences that continue to manifest their adaptive as well as psychopathogenic psychological effects that have been parallel to each other in a wide spectrum throughout human history, in a complicated and chaotic process [2,7].

### **Overstimulation, stimulus deprivation and variable stimulus level in postmodern societies: Conformist and dissociative modalities in the face of oppression**

Oppression, which is closely related to sacrifice rituals in terms of psychohistory, is used by dominant leaders as a method of controlling the society and individuals are forced to obey in line with the expectations and interests of those dominant leaders. Dominant leaders, who are soulless actors of the past, has preferred the methods of intimidating the masses as a means of oppression. Today, digital communication networks are used by dominant leaders to force the masses to obey in the face of oppression created by spreading the fear of chaos on individuals and societies. After this digital oppression, individual and social obedience is usually achieved through dissociative reactions on the basis of conformism [1,2,5-7]. According to Öztürk, it is often not possible to lead an integrated life with the optimal stimulus level in postmodern societies. In these societies, individuals are forced to obey by being controlled by conformist and dissociative modalities, through the basic ground of oppression with overstimulation or stimulus deprivation. In fact, making a certain society experience overstimulation and stimulus deprivation at varying rates through digital communication networks normalizes the dissociative reactions of the masses and facilitates their control [1,5,10].

Overstimulation, stimulus deprivation and variable stimulus level against the optimal stimulus level act as dissociogenic agents. Overstimulation or stimulus deprivation leads to disruptions or impairments in the ability of individuals and societies to assess reality. This process becomes even more pathological with the disruptions of consciousness, at which point it is inevitable to obey in the face of oppression. According to Öztürk, people can only establish associative bonds at the optimal stimulus level without experiencing any disruption of consciousness [1,2,5,10]. Disruption of individuals' perceptions of reality through intense and, at certain rates, irrelevant, media-induced information flow is a form of overstimulation that affects the entire society. On the other hand, stimulus deprivation causes a single-focused way of thinking in an excessive mental preoccupation with rigid religious ideas, primitive traditional rituals and postmodern ways of thinking and behavior. Chronic exposure to disproportionate stimuli causes dissociative reactions in individuals; and as a prerequisite for establishing and maintaining an oppressive system in which they live, these individuals carry out a conformist identity transition process in the direction of the expectation of the authority figure in the name of conformism [1,12-14].

Individuals and societies can continue their lives psychologically normally at the optimal stimulus level. Individuals who lead a life below or above the optimal stimulus level in all dimensions and ages try to adapt to these disproportionate stimuli by showing certain psychopathologies at certain rates by differing from the average and normal. Bringing stimulus deprivation or excess to an optimal level is not an easy process for most individuals, sometimes it might not even be a possibility. Individuals and societies can only give integrative reactions at the optimal stimulus level. When the optimal stimulus level decreases or increases, individuals and societies give dissociative reactions with a submissive and freedom-renouncing orientation [1].

### Reversible societies and dysfunctional generations

In the psychotraumatological axis, oppression functions as a dissociative agent and forces obedience modalities rather than fighting against these negative occurrences to the majority traumatized by the system in which they exist. According to Öztürk, a dysfunctional generation traumatized by both dysfunctional families and the system will become largely obedient in the face of all kinds of oppression [10]. However, questions about why an individual or society surrenders to living under oppression, how oppression is maintained, and why the affected subjects sometimes even develop no awareness remain valid. The answers to these questions should be sought in psychohistorical studies, which psychohistory examines in detail under the title of leader analyzes and biographies with a scientifically signature approach [1,12,13,15,16].

According to Öztürk, cyber dissociative experiences that emerged as a psychopathology through the absorption of individuals into digital communication networks have created a "reversible society" that wants to experience almost everything, is pleasure and interest oriented; yet highly obedient, manageable and watchable or observable. With the influence of reversible societies, the lifestyles of individuals have switched greatly compared to past, and the phenomenon of identity has also taken its share from

this change. Individuals trapped in the network society experience a psychological transformation process that is characterized by obedience in the face of oppression in order to adapt to today's digital age. However, today's chaotic and nearly amorphous postmodern society, which shows a rapid change, does not give individuals the chance to catch the optimal stimulus level in every aspect of life. Social dynamics associated with excessive or insufficient stimulation may lead to dissociative reactions, leading to the emergence or maintenance of oppression between individuals and societies. In the oppression process, individuals and societies are controlled by both traumatizing and dissociating them through this excessive or insufficient stimulation and variable stimulus level [1,5,12-14].

Today, the masses are forced into obedience in the face of oppression by the fear of grounded –or mostly ungrounded- economic or political chaos pumped by dominant leaders. Öztürk emphasizes that the obedience of a dysfunctional generation who has been traumatized and grown up with violence-focused -oppression-oriented- negative child-rearing styles is a dissociative reaction. The inconsistent, and in the face of oppression, easily obedient youth mass, which is described as the "dysfunctional generation" by Öztürk, is characterized by conformist structures as well as psychopathogenic features. As long as there are dysfunctional families in all societies and times of the world, this "dysfunctional generation" will continue to prevail and obey with dissociative reactions in the face of oppression. Because of borderline personality structure components and "weak" or "disrupted" ego functions, members of the dysfunctional generation ally themselves with all kinds of forces without being able to distinguish between right and wrong. This dysfunctional generation can largely compromise any values and beliefs they hold in order to gain acceptance in the face of power. Traumatized -dysfunctional- generations raised by dysfunctional families may enter into a dissociative obedience process without thinking in the face of the oppression of dominant leaders and their policies [10].

According to Öztürk, a psychotraumatologist, a dissoanalyst, and a psychohistorian, raising a psychologically integrated and development-oriented generation is only possible with normal, namely "functional" families. Parents who have traumatizing and dissociative child-rearing styles that cannot be underestimated, however, sign their names in the history of their own children as their first abusers. Families transform their own abuses from their childhood and apply them to their children. The individual who is exposed to physical abuse from their parents mostly does not apply this physical abuse to their own child, but abuses him emotionally. In this respect, traumatic experiences undergo a transformation and ensure their continuity by transmitting through the intergenerational process at the same rate. In dysfunctional and pathological families, the principle of "pathology wins" is valid in a duality between "renewal" and "preserving the old". Since power, which is largely characterized by oppression in a dysfunctional family for children, will be perceived as identical with pathology, the pathological parent is usually taken as a model, in which dissociative reactions begin to function in the modeling process. All of the individuals who are traumatized and controlled in a dysfunctional family lead to the formation of an obedient society [1,10].

## Postmodernism and fear of chaos

Postmodernism and fear of chaos are basic concepts with close relationship dynamics and function transitions with oppression. In the face of the desire to experience a free life, the feeling of constant fear of chaos in a world closely associated with crises for most individuals leads to overstimulation, as well as an obligatory-voluntary acceptance of oppression to re-establish a sense of control. Indeed, the expectation of a future-oriented crisis causes dissociative fears of internal confusion in individuals to be triggered, and these fears in turn make external confusion fears more severe with a wrong strategy. Some major psychological theories and practices of the past century, which preferred to "alleviate" rather than integrate inner fears, were indifferent and inadequate in addressing the dilemma of individual and social oppression. According to Öztürk, modern psychotraumatology and psychohistory theories are very sensitive to this individual and social oppression dilemma and develop solution-oriented approaches [1,2,5,12-14].

In today's postmodern world, individuals are often alienated from themselves, the society and the system they are a part of, with the effect of insecurity, loneliness and obedience tendencies that develop during or after the traumatization and revictimization processes within the scope of oppression to be controlled in both their work and actual lives. After this alienation, for them, concepts related to individuality and freedom are replaced by dissociative modalities, objects and copies. Now, every individual, every object, every employee, every brand, every theory, every art or every philosophy surely has a similar or an imitation. In digital network and consumer societies, everything has now turned into a copy of a copy. Almost without exception, people have come to a position where they can be backupable, abandonable, monitorable, trackable and recordable in their work and private lives. The postmodern system functions as a dissociogenic formation in the face of oppression that breaks people's nature of resistance [5,12,17]. Both the individual and social origins of oppression have been the focus of attention of researchers and theorists from many different disciplines. The main scientists of this focus of attention have been psychologists and especially psychohistorians. The irresistible actions of the violence-oriented oppressive totalitarian regime in Germany before and during the Second World War prompted psychohistorians to examine the characteristics of "potential authoritarian personalities". A number of social psychology studies have also revealed the astonishing willingness of individuals to submit to authority figures who issue orders that conflict with their own personal values [1,18,19].

Unfortunately, the human profile of postmodern societies is a competitive, self-interested and merciless mass that emulates everything, wants to experience everything, imitates everything, believes that they can do anything. This mass, focused on individual and hedonistic goals rather than social goals and objectives, has an orientation that is dependent and uncreative, but able to obey in the face of oppression, experiencing "depressive and dissociative moods" in the face of multiple choices presented to it on a certain axis. This orientation forces individuals to ally themselves with all kinds of power and systems with a conformist attitude and to obey in the face of oppression [1]. However, humanist people, who have the ability to protect themselves from the pollution of the

postmodern culture that pumps obedience in the face of oppression, and have an advanced thinking and reasoning capacity, continue to struggle successfully by focusing on their homeland, country, beliefs, values and science and positioning themselves against this transformation process [1,12].

## “Intergenerational transmission of trauma” and “Intergenerational transmission of psychopathology”

In all societies of human history, traumatic experiences and violence-focused and oppression-oriented negative child-rearing styles have been used and continue to be used for both obedience and control. Because both individuals and societies can more easily control the people and masses they traumatized and pathologized by dissociating them, and this sense of control causes a temporary feeling of well-being in their disordered souls. These traumatic and pathological experiences are transferred to the next generation by people living in the same age in a revictimization cycle. In this direction, traumatic and psychopathological experiences are seen at a similar rate in consecutive generations. This process is provided on a dissociative basis by "intergenerational transmission of trauma" and "intergenerational transmission or transition of psychopathology" [1,2,10].

The term “intergenerational transmission of trauma” refers to a multiaxial formation which consists of the development of positive child-rearing styles structured through a novel orientation in terms of the odyssey of trauma in an intergenerational path, as well as the prevention of childhood traumas; and is addressed in the fields of clinical psychology, psychohistory and psychotraumatology [1,2,10]. According to Öztürk, although the terms “intergenerational transmission of trauma” and “intergenerational transition of trauma” are similar to some degree, they are not completely identical. Studies on the intergenerational transmission of trauma are most likely to be structured quantitatively, even if they are also possible to be conducted qualitatively while studies on the intergenerational transition of trauma may be qualitatively structured. In multidisciplinary studies on the intergenerational transition of trauma, findings that are different or contradictory or that exclude other scientific studies may emerge. Studies on the intergenerational transmission of trauma studies, on the other hand, are reproducible and provide findings that are close or related to each other or that do not exclude other scientific studies. In intergenerational transition of trauma, scientific disputes may arise about what is transitioned and in what ways. Intergenerational transmission of trauma is, however, clearer and more measurable with scientific techniques, and the quantitative or numerical values of different studies can be easily compared with each other [1].

Öztürk defines the “intergenerational transition or transmission of pathology” as the transmittal of existing psychiatric diagnoses (depressive disorders, anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder and dissociative disorders) as well as psychological problems and dilemmas (anger management issues, self-harm behaviors and suicide attempts) to next generation by dysfunctional families that are characterized by negative child-rearing styles and cause childhood traumas. The active agent in this intergenerational transmission of pathology is violence-focused, inconsistent and negative child-rearing styles, also including childhood traumas. In this direction, it is expected that similar psychopathologies will be seen in consecutive generations with largely similar child-rearing

styles [1,10].

More precisely, according to Öztürk, the psychopathology that occurs in children due to chronic childhood traumas and the effects of violence-focused, unempathetic and negative child-rearing styles is identical with the psychopathology of the whole family. Dysfunctional families not only traumatize their own children, but they are also unable to protect them from other traumatic experiences and negative life occurrences from outside the family. In the formation of psychopathology, dysfunctional family structure and dynamics come into play as the most destructive internal systems. The basic reality here is that both psychopathology disrupts the family structure and the family is in an existentially dysfunctional structure. This maladaptive family structure is transmitted to successive generations by intergenerational transition of pathology [1,10].

Family psychopathologies, which are characterized by dysfunctional relationship dynamics, are both directly proportional and identical to the "social psychopathology" of the country in which they live. Öztürk emphasizes that, according to modern psychohistory and psychotraumatology paradigms, the most fundamental factor of submission in the face of oppression is "intergenerational transmission of trauma" and "intergenerational transmission of pathology". Because most of the neurotic mental disorders and social violence events are based on childhood traumas and violence-oriented -oppressive- negative child-rearing styles that lack empathy [1,2,10].

### **Identity, trauma and dissociation**

From a psychotraumatological point of view, the process of "control and obedience" plays a fundamental role in all trauma-related negative life experiences, from domestic violence to war, from war to mobbing, from oppression to torture. The process of control and obedience includes social values, consciousness and identity as well as thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Traumatic experiences and dissociative reactions operate as a "dual and dominant phenomenon" that disrupt the individual's interpersonal relationship dynamics, interrupt the integrative functions of identity and self, disintegrate the power of subjectivity and subjective activity, force the person to obey modalities in the face of oppression or domination, make the person open to being controlled and abused, obstructs one's objective self-description and realization, even creating a conflict between dependence and independence. Traumatic experiences create a dissociogenic effect in the form of loss of reciprocity between inner and outer reality, between people in actual life and between intrapsychically different aspects of identity; this dissociation itself being the main agent that inflicts a "psychic impact" by creating interruptions in consciousness after traumatic experiences. Just as non-traumatic experiences and identifications contribute to the integrative aspect of identity, traumatic experiences and identifications likewise contribute to the dissociative aspect of identity, they may remove the individual from their identity; lead the aggressor's goals and desires to take the place of the person's own, or even lead them to a path that differs from attachment to the abuser to identification with the abuser [1,10,14,20,21].

In most of the history, in the face of oppression, individuals can transition to an obedient self-structure by turning to a "reversible"

position rather than developing a harmonious "dialogical self" [22]. Exposure to intense, inconsistent or insufficient stimuli is used by oppressive systems as a means of individual and social submission and causes dissociative reactions [14]. Dissociation is a normative and usual characteristic of modern society in terms of experiential disconnection, interpersonal isolation and alienation from the environment. In this respect, dissociation is a distancing effect on the tendency to adapt to the social structure that causes directly constructed advanced technology, consumerism and mobilization [1,10]. Öztürk and Çalıcı claim that a substantial proportion of users develop "cyber dissociation" and "cyber alter personality" due to the widespread use of social media tools, the overstimulation, and the unique dynamics of this overstimulation. It is predicted that cyber dissociation is at a point between dissociation of actual life and clinical dissociation. The "cyber alter personality" is the starting point of cyber dissociation in the context of clinical psychology. Öztürk emphasizes that cyber dissociation first started as an effort to adapt to digital oppression and after addiction to these digital communication networks develops, it turns into a psychopathology. By placing individuals in a position prone to cyber dissociation, digital communication networks both provide control over the expectations of dominant leaders and enable them to give obedience-oriented responses in the face of digital oppressions of these dominant leaders [1,5,13,23,24].

The fact that the individuals of this century can act more mobile, make quicker decisions and make mood transitions more easily than the individuals of the previous century have made them both changeable and transformable beings. Compared to individuals in modern societies, 19<sup>th</sup> century people are relatively more traditional or internally oriented. Industrialization, urbanization, globalizing public relations, borderless marketing and advertising techniques and digital communication networks have made it possible for a new individual or a new generation to be transformed, by causing people to be easier targets for all kinds of oppression and to be controlled from outside more easily. Socially, changes and developments have competed with each other, but not every change has brought development or positive transformation, and even created the profile of today's people who can transform significantly and obey in the face of oppression [1,13,14,25,26].

### **Psychological dynamics of obedience and disobedience as reactions to oppression**

People today continue to be prone to manipulation and even permeation by oppression, by being pampered and tricked into the possibility that they will one day become billionaires and stars. However, when they realize this fact of being deceived or the betrayal trauma, all the illusions of individuals are shattered and the system they live in begins to traumatize them. After this traumatization, most individuals fail to deal with the oppressive system appropriately, and this mass-oriented process of failure creates a communal dissociation. "Communal dissociation" makes individuals an exploited and abused part or orbiter of the system [1,10]. Law, justice, tradition, belief and culture systems take part as fundamental building blocks in the continuation of the social order. When the violence of oppression is increased, the indispensable basic elements of societies such as justice and freedom turn into a utopia for individuals who experience disruptions of consciousness in a social order despite these building blocks that ensure integration

and functionality [1,2,5,10,14]. In the process of disruptions in consciousness, that is, when the individual is in a dissociative state, higher-level and complex forms of communication are rendered relatively inaccessible, and the person remains relatively sensitive to simpler, lower-level instructions. Such a situation may place the dissociated subject in a state of being ready to follow instructions for restraint and control presented as simple and didactic commands [1,2,5,12,14,27]. According to Öztürk, both "individual dissociation" and "communal dissociation" experienced in the face of the "traumatization" and "alienation" processes caused by oppression and control in postmodern societies in a volitionless manner drag the masses after the apparent saviors they believe or are persuaded to be heroes [5,10].

Psychotraumatology and psychohistory explain the relationship dynamics between childhood traumas and dissociative experiences quite clearly. These relationship dynamics come into play as an agent that facilitates obedience in the face of individual and social oppression. The freeze and fawn reactions in the face of acute or chronic traumas can lead individuals to a position of obedience or renunciation of freedom in the face of all kinds of oppression. In periods of oppression, processes of attachment to the abuser may be experienced against dominant leaders [7,28]. For this reason, it is essential to struggle against both individual and social traumas as a whole. Traumatic experiences are the most powerful and destructive weapons in all systems, on a dissociative basis, subjugating and freedom-renouncing. Psychohistory is one of the leading disciplines that develop the most successful solution strategies and policies in the world in the shortest time to struggle with dissociation-oriented psychopathologies characterized by traumatic experiences and these negative life events. Adopting an education-focused solution strategy with low budgets, psychohistory claims that traumatic experiences will end with the neutralization of negative child-rearing styles that are characterized by violence and oppression, and this claim is largely proven by its regional studies [1,16].

In terms of psychohistory, the functionality of traumatic experiences and violence-focused, negative child-rearing styles function and act as a whole in a society result in the increase of social oppression by the authoritarian leaders chosen and adopted by this society, and the restriction of freedom as a stimulus deprivation. In addition to this process, which creates an interruption and a regression in individual and social development, cultural and social conditions such as poverty, rigid traditions with a primitive nature, especially obedience, restrictions due to conservatism, political control over mass media and suppression of creativity can also cause stimulus deprivation. Overstimulation may occur as a result of intrusive or overprotective child-rearing styles and/or pampering children [2,3,11,29,30]. In postmodern societies, the combination of overstimulation and lack of stimulation is the most common case. Situations such as the intense flow of information presented directly by the mass media originating from the society, the exposure of the individual to information incompatible with their age, and the violation of interpersonal boundaries can lead to overstimulation. Especially since digital network platforms make cyber anonymity "exceedingly" possible, the masses who use these platforms excessively and uncontrollably can both easily overcome the interpersonal boundaries that they would not normally violate, and also lose their ability to grasp the reality or truth in the face of

highly contradictory stimuli they are exposed to. Today's people that are focused on digital network platforms, whose reasoning and consciousness are disrupted, may have significant problems in responding optimally to overstimulation, and may become prone to prefer obedience rather than disobedience in the face of oppression and authoritarian demands [1,14].

### **Identity dissolution, identity atrophy and identity transitions in postmodern societies**

During or after both individual and communal dissociation in the face of traumatization caused by oppression in postmodern societies, individuals enter the process of "dissolution of identity" defined by Öztürk. Identity dissolution is the alienation, distance from and narrowing of the individual's own identity, which has a dissociative reaction with the tendency to obey in the face of oppression. According to Öztürk, individuals experiencing "identity atrophy" want to go after the so-called saviors, whom they believe or are convinced to believe to be heroes both individually and socially. This intense desire to involuntarily follow, makes it possible for the dominant leader or so-called saviors to make an identity dominance on individuals who experience identity dissolution and identity atrophy, and also enables the experience of identity transitions between dominant leaders and these masses at individual and social levels. Identity dissolution refers to the process in which individuals give the control of their own identities to abusive leaders or people for the sake of little and simple profits or by the very nature of symbiotic communication; thus atrophying their own identity and adopting a recessive and controllable primitive structure as the victims of these abusers. The identity dissolution process, which is closely related to this dissociation, can lead the individual to become attached to and identify with the abuser. The "dissolution" and "loss of functionality" of the identity, which is normally highly integrated, over time after chronic childhood traumas and increasing revictimization rates can initiate a search for a new identity in the individual. This search mostly results in the adoption of the identities of dominant and abusive people. In this process, the individual can try to survive by developing a "dissociative blindness" against the abuser's true -malicious- identity and his oppressions as a buffer to their "dissolving identity" [1,5,21].

### **Identity split, identity penetration and identity diffusion in the face of oppression**

Öztürk addresses the concepts of "identity transition" and "identity penetration", both of which were defined by him, in two different forms as individual and social dimensions. Losing oneself in another person can be defined as "individual identity transition", and losing oneself in a group or society can be defined as "social identity transition". These identity transitions may result in the penetration of people and societies which the individual experiences an "identity loss" into the very identity of the individual. These processes can be defined as "individual identity penetration" and "social identity penetration", respectively. Penetrations of individual and social identity are frequently encountered both in asymmetrical and manipulation-oriented communications or controlling life forms in actual life, and in life forms shaped by conformism in the face of oppression. In this direction, identity split, identity penetration and identity diffusion processes are frequently experienced after oppression [1].

Dissociation functions as reactions or phenomena with both adaptive and psychopathogenic tendencies that are opposed to each other in oppressive postmodern societies. Submissive identities that submit to oppression and experience an identity split also affect some of the non-submissive identities, causing an identity diffusion. The dissociogenic orientation of submissive individuals makes it possible for the dominant leader or other oppressive people to make an identity transition onto them. The society transforms into identical identities that move in masses in a certain time extent, having lost both their subjectivity and autonomy, having become unhumanized, having lost their individual compass, and are managed by digital communication networks. In addition, there are fractures and freezes in individual and social development; even history itself can be almost told to be fixed to the same time –namely to the traumatic period characterized by oppression. [1,3,12,21]. As deMause and Öztürk emphasize, the concept of “social alter”, which can be expressed as the expansion of the influence of traumas in the society as an identity diffusion and taking a large number of people under control, consists of a triple combination of violence -oppression- oriented negative child-rearing styles, trauma and dissociation. Authoritarian/totalitarian leaders and systems impose rigid rules and sanctions that can penetrate a significant portion of society (as in identity diffusion) in order to keep their citizens under control as well as making them obey. The masses, who are currently constantly traumatized by oppressive and over-controlling systems, can endure this social abuse process with their social alters as a dissociative reaction. Throughout the history of humanity, dissociative reactions and experiences have played a major role both in the way most societies are governed, in family dynamics and child-rearing styles [1-3,11].

### **True icons against heroes as so-called saviors in postmodern societies**

An optimal or average stimulus level makes it possible for the person to develop an objective perception, free from bias, of both themselves and others. Dissociation during or immediately after disproportionate arousal causes the person to develop a negative perception of both themselves and others [1,31]. In this perspective, individuals establish fusional relationships with potential saviors in the guise of heroes in order to substitute (that is, to deny these negative perceptions) the conjugate socio-psychological mutuality experience. These saviors are individuals, institutions, or ideas that are perceived as dominant others despite their rather average characteristics and nature [1,32]. Because of their common and mutual attraction in harmony with society in general, this ordinariness in their essence makes it easier to identify with them [1,21].

In postmodern societies, heroes differ from true icons in terms of their subjectively ascribed values. According to Öztürk, true icons are timeless and never just stay in the past, or they are present in terms of time, that is to say, they always exist. By penetrating the present time from hundreds of years ago, icons can play a more major and more active role than contemporary real heroes for the change and development of societies living at that time [1,21]. Both heroes and icons circulate around individuals, groups and societies, helping individuals of all age groups in terms of adaptive and developmental identity transitions. Unlike icons, heroes can have positive or negative features and only reflect the

Zeitgeist of that era. In postmodern societies, all heroes, including negative heroes, are becoming more and more easily followed and attached, explicit or implicit leaders, whose identity transitions are experienced in digital communication networks with a fluid nature. The fluidity and “dysfunctional flexibility” provided by digital network platforms make it very difficult for confirmed information to be produced, delivered to individuals and even noticed by individuals. Individuals who are unable to realize, grasp and comprehend reality may begin to dissociate themselves in the face of oppression over time. In this process, identity transitions made with fake and apparent heroes or being associated with the abuser, which can also be called “reverse identification”, can reveal psychopathology, especially cyber psychopathologies [1,5,13,14].

### **Individuals and societies are controlled by their traumas**

Individual, societal and communal traumas are made in order to construct a way of control at the abusive person or group’s disposal; so to say that by being dissociated, individuals and societies are ruled or controlled by their traumas [33]. Individuals and societies controlled and forced to obey in the face of oppression by being traumatized. In the psychohistorical perspective, social oppression is a slow-starting, gradual process. This process manifests itself from the very beginning both with signs and symbols and metaphors. Prior to overt oppression, there is usually a period of primary overstimulation in which individuals feel free and unrestricted, as if unshackled. The Weimar Period in the history of Germany is cited as an example of the newly blooming freedoms that brought growth panic and oppression. In such periods, high-speed socioeconomic movements such as rural-urban migration and liberal tax policies are allowed. Individuals affected by this transition can easily switch to dissociative lifestyles for which they are not psychologically ready [1,3,11,14,29,34].

Traumatized societies in agitated periods seek leaders who are thought to be able to organize the social life which was told to be constantly expanding and enriching. This position is usually filled by a hero who will become the authoritarian leader of the later oppression phase. Reflecting a social split, especially a subgroup of reversible personalities allied themselves with the oppressive system and, like opinion leaders, they mislead others. Submission, disobedience, negotiation and denial are the possible alternatives to this. Denial, among these, refers to the replacement of the reality with utopic scenarios. Over time, the individuals forming the community witness the intense intervention of the authoritarian leader and his unreal -dystopic- actions; this, in return, triggers the next phase of uprisings and the search for a new order [1,3,11].

Traumatizing and dissociating oppressive systems form individuals, institutions and organizations through dystopic rules and precautions of obsessive orientations. The absurd rules replace the logical rules that regulate daily life. This absurdity is at a level that makes it difficult or even impossible to enforce the rules. On the other hand, it can be reflected that the new regulations are reforms made for the sake of development and adaptation to international standards and even to become a freer society, but the process continues with stricter practices. These measures increase obsessive fears and lead to panic and inappropriate decision-making strategies in individuals who know that they can be easily followed by authority figures in the age of advanced technology and are under the influence of this situation. In the first period of

the oppression, it is possible for dissociative factors to emerge with a desire for a kind of opposition. In the phase following dissociation, collapse or submission will most likely occur; a possibility of revolt being less likely [1,3,14].

Since oppressive systems tend to foster uniformity, which also indicates a deprivation of stimulus to some extent, it can be said that oppression prevails in all parts of human existence, both psychological and physical, in such a traumatized society. Oppressive systems impose a uniform, distorted or exaggerated reality; they resist the larger and integrated perception of reality that includes all its components [1,35]. The aim here is to form alliances with individuals in a narrow and single-focused perception of reality. This process may proceed in a concomitant direction with the systematic distortion of reality by the mass media. Television programs, soap operas, and contests that broadcast supposedly entertaining content expose and publicly legitimize the humiliation of people for anything (i.e. money, competition or fear). Authoritarian leaders in most countries of the world also join this trend by humiliating their own citizens to a certain extent [1,3,11,14].

According to Öztürk and Derin, these primitive humiliation and anachronistic insult rituals are performed both to show and normalize the process of "being controlled" to individuals and societies. As a result, the masses can endure the oppressive and chronically abusive system by obeying to a large extent accompanied by dysfunctional and dissociative defenses. As the frequency, severity and duration of the obedience process increase, individual psychopathologies and socially violent events characterized by chaos and conflicts emerge [1,3,11,14,15]. Absolute realities undergo a primitive transformation in oppressive societies by submitting to a single reality. Absolute reality becomes replaced by the form of a reinterpretation of that society's religion or beliefs according to the needs of the oppressive and authoritarian system [1,36]. This is used by the system as a source of authority that creates decisions and rules that show what is allowed and what is not. Oppression generally begins with an obsession with hygiene, and this process, accompanied by an obsession with smoking and drinking bans, covers every field from culture to science over time. Finally, it is possible to say that the use of conspiracy theories, terrorist attacks and wars to control the masses is not a phenomenon unique to modern times, on the contrary, this process has manifested in similar ways throughout history [1,14,37].

According to psychohistory and psychotraumatology, responses to oppression are quite limited, and most of them are reactions of a dissociative nature. One can fight oppression, ignore it, or transform their own identity in a dissociative orientation in order to adapt. Subjects who refuse to transform and develop themselves, or who make this transition very radically and rapidly, are particularly at risk of being oppressed. In all societies and times of the world, transformative subjects who cooperate with the system in the face of oppression become the most easily sacrificed when times change. It is predicted that these individuals, who can be defined as conformists, will lose all their resources to resist, and then they will be victimized in the public eye or considered as scapegoats. In terms of psychotraumatology, oppression creates a sense of defeat that subsequently impairs the individual's ability to overcome conflict. Fighting against oppression without harming

oneself and society provides support for personal development and creativity. Individuals who can neither fight oppression nor transform themselves according to oppression fall into depression in the final stage, a period in which there is no possibility of rebellion. Individuals who are psychologically integrated, that is, possessing good ego functions, do not ally with an oppressive system and do not enter into a process of obedience [1,11,14,37].

The world is once again in the midst of a global crisis, with oppression, violent child-rearing styles, and the postmodern consumerism of traumatized societies. No one knows how and when this crisis will be resolved, who will control it, whether the world is plunged into chaos. With their narcissistic selves, politicians and even authoritarian leaders are ready to market themselves as saviors to fearful individuals and masses [1,11,38]. As a new approach, the prolonged crisis and the threat of chaos will be a method used by oppressive systems to control individuals and masses in the future as well as today. In anticipation of re-establishing a sense of control, people become prone to submit to oppressive leaders or systems when they are under the threat of possible chaos. In fact, the threat of external chaos triggers dissociative fears of an internal (individual) chaos and dualities of obedience or disobedience in the face of oppression. Bringing the sociological self to the forefront among the individuals constituting a community exacerbates this conflict and prevents societies from finding solutions to dissociative processes that lead to crises. In fact, the threat of a protracted crisis is itself a phenomenon that generates a state of hyperarousal that underlies the socially oriented distortions of consciousness consistently created by stimulus deprivation and fosters dissociation [1,13,14].

### **"Denials of trauma" and "The century-old history of hysterical blindness"**

The history of humanity is loaded with amnesic periods of trauma and dissociative disorders, and these amnesic periods, which are an attack on reality, are also such a burden for the denial of traumatic reality that this burden has now turned into a hump due to the inability of people to face the mercilessness of mental health professionals and societies. It has become a psychological, social and scientific dysmorphia accompanied by ethical violations. The denial of traumatic reality is a crime against humanity and a delusion produced by an outdated mentality that needs to be eliminated immediately. The denial of trauma and dissociation can only be explained by disruptions in both individual and social consciousness in the face of oppression [1-3,10,15].

The increasing importance and interest given to trauma and dissociative disorders strongly triggers the positive transformation and development of these two concepts in the space from past to present. This transformation and development contributes to both modern modalities and the formation of new trends and paradigms in the field of "trauma and dissociation" in clinical and academic terms. In all times and societies of the world, taking the side of the abuser despite the victim is nourished by the response of silence to trauma and dissociation, in other words, "trauma denials" and "the century-old history of hysterical blindness". Being a spectator or blinded by all different times and "psychosocial strata", outdated and lacking in empathy, likewise, can only be explained by their epochal and egocentric calculations of benefits, rather than the penetration of an incurable pathological process into them

[1,2,10,15].

## Conclusion

According to psychotraumatology and psychohistory, the psychology theories and practices of the past century, which are identical to the lifestyle of an outdated era that are trying to train mental health professionals that are lacking in sense with their biased approaches and "trauma denials", which are offensive to reality, were insufficient to give a new perspective to this inextricable situation. Instead, they have contented themselves with helping their apparently intellectual consumers deny their fears of individual dissociative inner chaos and provide temporary pleasures by justifying fantasies as substitute realities. Although people were convinced that the possibility of external chaos was the primary threat, they did not have the ability to develop the necessary courage to overcome this situation. One of the main reasons why they cannot develop this courage is that individuals are traumatized by oppressive and authoritarian systems and their locus of control is interrupted or even significantly dissolved. As a strategy of control, obedience and manipulation, oppression continues to exist with its dominance over individuals who show conformity to strict rules on a pathological basis in order to ensure the legitimacy of the system, which does not have the ability to stretch. The mass, which acts as a socially "dissociative whole" by developing a "social alter", can endure the oppression directed in an intense and systematic way with these dissociative reactions to a large extent [1,11,12,14,15]. According to Öztürk, dysfunctional families and dysfunctional generations become active agents in the "intergenerational transmission of oppression". This intergenerational oppression dilemma, which functions with dissociative reactions on dysfunctional families and dysfunctional generations, needs to be neutralized as soon as possible [33]. Finding a solution to this dilemma is only possible with an integrated consciousness, that is, by not getting lost in fantasies while trying to turn a utopia into reality. The most important agent that can achieve this will be possible by raising a humanist, compassionate and nature-loving new generation in which a new child-rearing style is applied, which is free from violence, values being a subject, and is empathetically oriented, and by finding support for trauma-centered new paradigms and theories. Psychotraumatology and especially psychohistory, should adopt the principle of teaching in the most integrated way that individuals and societies can give psychologically optimal and healthy responses in the face of oppression without harming themselves and without compromising their own freedoms, by connecting the past and the present [1-3,11,12,14,15,29].

## Conflict of interests

*The authors declare that they have no competing interests.*

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