



**Dr. Marisol Voncken** (University of Maastricht)

## **Social bonding: a new dimension in social anxiety disorder**

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Konferenzraum - Lehrstuhl für Biologische und Differentielle Psychologie,  
Stefan-Meier-Str. 8, 3. OG

### **ABSTRACT**

How I came to write my grant for the Dutch Scientific Organization for talented young researchers (and received it): "Social bonding: a new dimension in social anxiety disorder. The effect of social anxiety and oxytocin on mimicry and reciprocal self-disclosure in social anxiety disorder".

Patients with social anxiety disorder (SAD) persistently feel anxious during social interactions. Although sophisticated cognitive-behavioral models of SAD exist there is surprisingly little attention for the role of social bonding in this debilitating disorder. Social bonding is a basic need of humans and essential to experience happiness. Intriguing is that people have an opposite, analogous psychophysiological system to the anxiety or "fight-flight response". This response is known as the "social bonding response" and is hormonally driven by oxytocin. Oxytocin, originally known for its role during labor and mother-child attachment, is speculated to play an important role in SAD. Indeed, recently first promising studies on oxytocin in SAD were published. Moreover, first evidence exists that two types of essential social bonding behaviors are disturbed in individuals with social anxiety: a) reciprocity of self-disclosure (mutually increasing disclosure of personal information) and, b) mimicry (unintentional mimicking of others' postures, facial expressions or gestures). Oxytocin might be an important hormone to facilitate these bonding behaviors and, therefore, important in the recovery of social anxiety disorder.

### **Brief BIOSKECH**

**Dr. Marisol Voncken**

Dr. Marisol J. Voncken (1976) is an assistant professor at the department Clinical Psychological Science of the faculty Psychology and Neuroscience at the Maastricht University. She also works as a cognitive behavioral therapist at the ambulant mental health centre in Maastricht. In addition, she is a full member of the Dutch-Flamish research school Experimental Psychopathology (EPP). Moreover, she is active in the Dutch Association for Cognitive Behavioral therapy as a member of the scientific committee for their annual congress and as a member of their anxiety disorders committee. She received her PhD in 2006 at the Maastricht University. Her dissertation was titled 'Afraid of being disliked: From distorted cognitions to interpersonal problems in social phobia. She studies and publishes regularly on experimental studies on maintenance factors in social anxiety disorder. Moreover, she develops and evaluates psychological treatment protocols for social anxiety disorder. Recently she received a subsidy granted by the Dutch Scientific Organization (NWO) awarded to the best 10-15% young researchers in her field. With this subsidy she will study the role of reciprocal mimicry and self-disclosure and oxytocin in social anxiety disorder.