Placement stability and attachments: two strands in a single braid

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Our first intimate relationship

Balances exploration and safety
Effective if adults respond
Lifespan

- Childhood attachment influences how we think and feel about ourselves and other people over our lifespan
- Developmental pathways are probabilistic not deterministic
- But attachment disorganization remarkably stable over time and between generations
Prevalence of Disorganized Attachment

- 15 – 25% of children have disorganized attachment
- More widespread in families with low SES
- 43% in families with substance abuse
- 48% in maltreating families.
- 80% in clinical samples
  - Lyons Ruth, 1996
- This, along with observational data, suggests that many socially excluded children have a disorganized pattern of attachment.
## Attachment and mental health

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<th>Adolescent attachment style</th>
<th>Coping strategies</th>
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<td>INTERNALIZING:</td>
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<td>• Depression</td>
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<td>• Anxiety</td>
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<td>Dismissing</td>
<td>DISTRACT SELF &amp; OTHERS FROM ATTACHMENT CUES</td>
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<td>• Substance misuse</td>
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Parental bonding

Low intention to reoffend

Affectionate constraint

Over protection

Affectionless control

High intention to reoffend

Optimal bonding

Enough protection

Low protection

Weak bonding

Kiriakardis (2006)
We should be worried about this!

- Property crimes
- Affectionate constraint
- Over protection
- Affectionless control
- Rapists
- High Warmth
- Optimal bonding
- Enough protection
- Low Warmth
- Weak bonding
- Familial sex offending

Multiple placements

- Attachment organization develops from child's ability to predict caregivers’ response to stress and distress
- Recovery happens with safe, stable relationships
- Changing caregivers and different approaches can have a disorganizing effect
Resilient enough placements

- Not all children have the same degree of difficulties
- Tier 1: Relatively simple & straightforward needs
  - Placements may be stable because they are relatively low cost
- Tier 2: Deep rooted, complex needs
  - Placement moves may disorganize attachments
  - Difficulties often emerge with adolescence
- Tier 3: Extensive, complex & enduring needs
  - Require expertise, support, long-term commitment
  - May require support beyond childhood
Making a difference

- Sampson & Laub (2005) identified
  - New situations that “knife off” the past
  - More supervision, changed routines, transforming situations
  - Life turning-points include
    - School
    - Work
    - Residential change

- Recovery and change in a planned environment
Bonding for LAC

- Is risk aversion “Over protection”?
- Are unmatched placements “Low protection”?
- Are multiple placements “Low warmth”?
Recommendations

• Support therapeutic approaches that keep attachment in mind in social settings and through individual psychotherapy.

• Two strand integrated approach
  • Social milieu and individual work

• Interventions should take account of how to maintain the child/young person’s safe relationships.
Chris has published on working with attachment difficulties and provides consultancy, training, and practice-development in therapeutic approaches to early trauma and attachment difficulty.
References:


