



5th Annual Conference and Meeting:

Attachment in the Context of Multiple Attachment Relationships

20th and 21st September 2018

Lund, Sweden

Department of Psychology, Lund University

Eden, Paradiset

Organizers:

Elia Psouni; Lund University, Sweden

Elin Alfredsson; University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Johanne Smith-Nielsen; University of Copenhagen, Denmark

Sarah Daniel; Psychologist, private practice, Denmark

Tommie Forslund; Uppsala University, Sweden

Plenary Speaker

Marian Bakermans-Kranenburg

Marian Bakermans-Kranenburg is professor of Child and Family studies at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Netherlands, with a special interest in the neurobiological determinants of parenting and development. She has been involved in studies on the intergenerational transmission of attachment, precursors and sequelae of (disorganized) attachment, and been part of developing the Video Feedback Intervention program to promote Positive Parenting & Sensitive Discipline (VIPP-SD). She is also interested in the hormonal correlates of parenting, and currently runs of a series of studies on neurobiological and behavioral aspects of fathering.

Invited Speakers

Ida Brandtzæg and Stig Thorsteinson

Ida and Stig are directors of "Attachment-Psychologists; Education-Center and Clinic" (Tilknytningspsykologene; Utdanningscenter og Klinikk) in Oslo. They have considerable experience working with Circle of Security (COS) and are accredited COS Supervisors and Trainers, implementing COS Intervention and COS Parenting in Scandinavia. They are currently working on transferring knowledge from attachment theory and the COS into practice in child care and school settings. They have written two books with Guro Øiestad (University of Oslo); *Se Barnet Innenfra – Arbeid med Tilknytning i Barnehagen og Se eleven innenfra – Relasjonsarbeid og Mentalisering på Barnetrinnet* (both available in Swedish and Danish).

Program Overview

20th September 2017

Venue: Eden 129

11:30-12:30 Arrival, Lunch

12:30-13:00 **Welcome and Information**

Elia Psouni

13:00-14:25 **SESSION 1: Emotion regulation strategies associated with attachment insecurity**

Chair: Elin Alfredsson

14:25-14:45 *Networking, mingling and Coffee*

14:45-15:45 **SESSION 2: Attachment-Focused Interventions**

Chair: Sarah Daniel

15:45-16:00 *Short break*

16:00-17:15 **Plenary talk and discussion**

- **Marian Bakermans-Kranenburg**

Mothers, and fathers, and attachment networks

Chair: Elia Psouni

17:15-18:30 *Posters and appetizers*

21st September 2017

Venue: Eden 129

08:30-09:30 **NAN annual meeting**

09:30-10:45 **Invited presentation and discussion**

- **Ida Brandtzæg and Stig Thorsteinson**

Putting Knowledge About Attachment and
Epistemic Trust into Practice in Child Care Settings

Chair: Johanne Smith-Nielsen

10:45-11:15 *Networking, mingling and Coffee*

11:15-12:30 **SESSION 3 Attachment Measurement Issues
and roundtable discussion**

Chair: Tommie Forslund

12:30-12:45 **Closing of the 5th annual meeting**

13:00-14:00 *Lunch (for those who wish to join)*

SESSION 1: Emotion regulation strategies associated with attachment insecurity

1 Attachment security and cortical responses to fearful faces in infants

Mikko J. Peltola¹, Marinus H. van IJzendoorn², & Santeri Yrttiaho¹

¹University of Tampere

²Erasmus University Rotterdam, University of Cambridge, & Leiden University

Previous findings indicate that the development of secure and insecure patterns of infant-mother attachment during the first year are associated with infants' attention to faces, with insecurely attached infants showing reduced attentional biases to fearful faces. The aim of the present study was to extend these findings with measurements of event-related potentials (ERPs) to investigate whether cortical responses to facial expressions of fear are associated with attachment security. ERPs to facial expressions were measured at 7 months of age with electroencephalography (EEG) and attachment was assessed at 14 months of age with the Strange Situation Procedure (n = 61). Occipitotemporal face-sensitive ERP responses particularly in the time range of the N290 component were related to attachment security at 14 months. Only securely attached infants showed age-typical cortical discrimination of fearful from non-fearful faces at 7 months in the N290 component, whereas the ERP responses did not differ in insecurely attached infants. These results indicate less pronounced ERP differentiation of fearful from non-fearful faces in insecurely attached infants and they converge with previous findings to suggest that patterns of secure and insecure infant attachment are related to early-emerging differences in the perceptual processing of facial emotions.

2 The Effects of Attachment Security Priming on Avoidant Attentional Defenses

Gizem Han & Elia Psouni

Department of Psychology, Lund University, Sweden

Background: Attachment avoidance is associated with deactivation of the attachment system in times of distress, and disengagement from the distressing information as an emotion regulation strategy aimed at restoring *felt security*. Here, we investigated how experimentally induced attachment security affects avoidant strategies at an early, attentional level of processing.

Methods: In a randomized within-between-subjects design, a Dot Probe Task was used for assessing attentional orientation towards neutral and contemptuous facial expressions as a function of avoidance level (high vs. low) and priming condition (attachment security priming vs. neutral priming). The priming was individualized. State-trait anxiety and other relevant background features did not differ between the attachment security and neutral priming groups.

Results: Compared to low-avoidance participants, high-avoidance participants had lower attentional vigilance at baseline and higher post-priming. Attachment security primed low-avoidance participants did not show increased vigilance to the contemptuous faces post-priming.

Conclusions: Attachment security priming did not affect high-avoidance defenses, suggesting that habitual avoidant strategies are hard to override. Thus, secure base priming may have different effects depending on the individual's attachment style; highly avoidant individuals may immediately disengage from the priming and remain unaffected by it. Non-personalized primes are perhaps less threatening and thus more effective for highly avoidant individuals.

3 Disorganized Attachment, Socio-Emotional Competences, and Externalizing Behavior Problems: Examination of competing Theories of Mediation

Tommie Forslund, Mikko Peltola, & Karin C Brocki

Background: Disorganized attachment is a risk factor for externalizing behavior problems and poor development of distinct socioemotional competences. Therefore, examination of competing theories of mediation is paramount to integrate the two levels. Moreover, concerns have been raised that attachment theory may suffer from overextension, wherefore multi-factorial research must examine which outcomes attachment quality is reliably important for.

Method: 105 children (M age = 80 months) completed laboratory tasks for attachment representations, attention toward facial expressions, identification of facial expressions, and cognitive inhibition. Parents rated emotion regulation and ODD and ADHD symptoms. At T2 (M age = 104 months), parents and teachers (N = 80) rated ODD and ADHD symptoms. Discriminant functions analysis was used to enable analysis of not only if, but also *how* groups differ (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

Results: The disorganized group was discriminated by a function that mainly tapped elevated levels of ODD symptoms, not ADHD symptoms. Further, a function capturing elevated reactivity for anger and fear, and a poor ability to regulate these emotions, mediated the link with ODD symptoms.

Discussion: Our findings provide further support for disorganization as a risk factor for anger and oppositionality, while cautioning against theories suggesting a pathway to ADHD symptoms.

4 Adult attachment and emotion regulation in daily social contexts

Lindblom, J.¹, Tammilehto, J.¹, Bosmans, G.², Kuppens, P.², Kerns, K.³, Peltonen, K.¹, Flykt, M.¹

¹*University of Tampere, Finland.*

²*KU Leuven, Belgium.*

³*Kent State University, USA.*

According to the attachment dynamics model, individual differences in emotion regulation (ER) become apparent when the attachment system activates (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). These involve secure based, deactivating and hyperactivating regulatory strategies. However, a few studies have focused on adult attachment and emotional experiences in everyday life. To the best of our knowledge, previous studies have not tested how attachment predicts daily ER. In this study, we use ecological momentary assessment to examine (a) how adult attachment associates with daily ER and emotional experiences and (b) whether the social context (i.e., being alone vs with others) moderates these associations.

Participants were 111 adults (M age = 26), recruited from university student population. Adult attachment was assessed using ECR-R (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2002). The ecological momentary assessment involved 7 daily assessments over the period of 7 days. At each assessment, the participants used their mobile phones to report their ER and emotional experiences with 5-point Likert-scales. Single-item questions assessed usage of *distraction*, *rumination*, *suppression*, *reappraisal*, *savoring*, *social sharing*, as well as the *social context* (alone vs friend/partner/family member). Four items assessed the experience of *negative* and *positive emotions*. The results are being analyzed and will be presented at the congress.

SESSION 2: Attachment-focused interventions

1 Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up Intervention (ABC) – A Norwegian pilot study

Hans B. Bergsund¹, Gunn Astrid Baugerud², Filip Drozd¹, Kari Slinning¹, Heidi Jacobsen¹

¹Department for Infant Mental Health, Regional Centre for Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Eastern and Southern Norway (RBUP)

²Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet)

ABC is an in-home attachment-based intervention for families with young children. The aim is to increase parental nurturance and following the child's lead in play and to reduce frightening parental behavior. The most important component is "in the moment commenting (ITM)". American studies of ABC have shown that the intervention promotes secure child's attachment, decreased child problem behavior and increased parental sensitivity. In Norway there is a need for research-based interventions for parents with young children involved in the child protection services (CPS). The aim of this pilot-study is to investigate the acceptability of ABC in a Norwegian CPS context, in addition to parental and child outcomes. The study is a pre-post implementation study and includes questionnaires, interviews and observations. The project started in 2018 with training of parental coaches and certification of Norwegian ITM supervisors. Parent coaches will receive guidance for one year. During the one year of data collection the aim is to recruit 40 families. Currently, seven CPS offices, 12 parent coaches and 10 families have been included. Informal feedback from parent coaches and parents is so far positive. Reflections on ABC as suitable in a Norwegian CPS context, recruitment experiences and cases from the home visits will be presented.

2 The effectiveness of minding the baby in a Danish community sample

Maiken Pontoppidan

VIVE – the Danish centre for social science research

Minding the Baby (MTB) is an intensive and preventive home-visiting program offered to high risk mothers. The aim is to reduce negative health and mental health outcomes for mother and infant, and strengthen the attachment relationship. MTB is delivered by an interdisciplinary team of highly skilled practitioners with health and social work experience. In this randomized controlled trial (RCT) we will study the effectiveness of the MTB intervention across seven Danish municipalities (10 units). Site staff will be trained at two sessions one year apart. Units are randomized to training at time 1 or 2. All units will recruit treatment as usual control families before they receive training. Potential participants will be approached by a local front staff member (e.g. midwife, health visitor or social worker) who will inform mothers of the project in the early pregnancy. Consenting eligible participants will be assessed before they give birth (baseline) and when their child is 3, 12 and 24 months old. The effectiveness of the MTB program will be evaluated by assessing a range of maternal and infant outcomes, including maternal sensitivity, parent mental health, child development, combined with register data on e.g. infant hospitalization, immunization, parent income, and parent education.

3 Focusing on the attachment between children and their professional caregivers: A research proposal

Johanne Smith-Nielsen, Ida Egmose Pedersen, & Mette Skovgaard Væver

Center for Early Intervention and Family studies, Dept. of Psychology, University of Copenhagen.

Background: The parent-child attachment relationship plays a crucial role for children's socioemotional development. Still, as 97% of all Danish Children attend kindergarten, and as 88% of them spend minimum 30 hours per week in daycare, the staff constitute an important part of the children's social environment. As such, the professional caregivers must be considered significant attachment figures impacting on the child's socioemotional development. Children who have insecure attachment relationships with one or both parents are often vulnerable in terms of developing secure attachments to other adults. However, if the professional caregivers are able to establish secure relationships with these children, the kindergarten provides a potentially important protective factor in vulnerable children's lives.

Objective: In this project, we aim to evaluate the effect of implementing the Circle of Security – Classroom (COS-C) model, in a Danish kindergarten-setting.

Methods: In a controlled cross-over design, we will offer the staff in 8 kindergartens a four-day COS-C training (pre-implementation phase) followed by five monthly supervisions (implementation phase). Effects on caregiver behavior, child outcomes, and the staff's perception of the model will be evaluated 6 and 12 months post-implementation (evaluation-phase).

Discussion: The project idea, design, and outcome measures will be discussed.

SESSION 3 and Roundtable discussion: Attachment conceptualization and measurement

1 The Child Attachment Interview (CAI): A psychometric longitudinal validation study in a German sample

Jörn Meyer, Stefan Stürmer

*University of Hagen, Germany, Universitätsstr. 33 D- 58095 Hagen
Germany*

The assessment of attachment patterns in toddlers and adults has been well researched and valid diagnostic methods (e.g., Strange Situation Test, Adult Attachment Interview) are applicable. For middle and late childhood, on the other hand, there are only few validated methods available so far. For the Child Attachment Interview (CAI) promising validation studies from English-speaking countries are available, but so far a comprehensive study on the validity of a German sample is lacking. Within the scope of a longitudinal project, the results of the first point of measurement are reported in this study. A German-language version of the CAI was carried out with 111 primary school children (56% female; Mage = 8.34, SDage = 0.49). In relation to psychometric quality criteria, parameters on interrater reliability, construct validity and discriminant and convergent validity are reported. Analyses of the correlations between attachment patterns and internalizing and externalizing behavior problems from parent and teacher reports are presented. The implications for the German-language assessment of attachment in middle and late childhood in research and individual case diagnostics, e.g., in the context of conducting expert evaluation reports for family courts, are discussed.

2 Factor structure of The Friends and Family Interview

Elia Psouni^{1*}, *Sonja Breinholst*², *Barbara Hoff Esbjørn*² & *Howard Steele*³

¹ *Department of Psychology, Lund University, Sweden*

² *Department of Psychology, University of Copenhagen, Denmark*

³ *Department of Psychology, The New School for Social Research, New York, USA*

Background: The *Friends and Family Interview* (FFI) combines typical attachment-related dimensions (secure base, idealization, coherence) with dimensions concerning the child's quality of friendships, sibling relationships, self-perception, and reflective functioning. While the FFI is fairly common in attachment research, its structure is unexplored. Here, we examined and specified its factor structure.

Methods and Results: Exploratory Factor Analysis on data from 341 children (184 girls, 54%), including 36 FFI sub-scales and valid data from the 316 participants with siblings, returned a ratio of 8.8 cases/variable. Seven components emerged, together capturing 65% of variance in the data. The first component (33% of variance) combined coherence, secure base/safe haven availability, and adaptive response, but also the subscales that code everyday use of reflective functioning.

Conclusions: The child's reflective functioning, ability to differentiate between of parental representations, but also self-perception including friendships, social and school competence, are structurally related to attachment security. On the other hand, our data suggest that the information processing strategies employed by children when discussing attachment related experiences are not clearly established yet. That the FFI reaches for the reflective functioning, self-perception, and social domains of the child's life can thus be seen as strength.

Roundtable Discussion:

Questions remain regarding the caregiving behavior most crucial for attachment quality (i.e., the transmission gap; Verhage et al., 2016), and the outcomes influenced by attachment (i.e., the competence hypothesis; van IJzendoorn & Sagi-Schwartz, 2008). While early theory on caregiving and attachment quality focused on safe haven behavior (e.g., intersubjective regulation, Bernier & Meins, 2008), secure base aspects have been increasingly emphasized (e.g., autonomy support, van IJzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2018). In parallel, an early emphasis on development of emotional competences, grounded in learning from close interactions (cf. the attachment-teaching hypothesis, e.g., Sroufe et al., 2009) has shifted toward development of cognitive abilities grounded in support of exploration (cf. the attachment-exploration hypothesis, e.g., Bernier et al., 2012).

Concerns have been raised that attachment theory suffers from overextension (Sroufe, 2016), and there are a proliferation of mini-theories grounded in different conceptualizations of attachment (Thompson, 2016). The discussion focuses on the distinct roles of the attachment figure's role as *both a safe haven* and a *secure base*; including sub-questions like these roles' importance for theory and research on caregiving-attachment, as well as issues of measurement.

POSTERS

1. Is middle childhood attachment associated with emotional attention biases in a high-risk sample?

Lindblom, J.¹, Peltola, M. J.¹, Belt, R., Hyysalo, N.¹, Saurio, K.¹, Kerns, K.², Punamäki, R-L.¹, & Flykt, M.¹

¹ *University of Tampere, Finland*

² *Kent State University, USA*

Emotional information processing is crucial for well-being, emotion regulation and social functioning. According to attachment theory, internal working models influence how emotional information is processed. Extant literature suggests, for example, that avoidantly attached children are initially vigilant (i.e., attend towards) but may subsequently resort to defensive avoidance (i.e., attend away) of emotional cues (Zimmermann & Iwanski, 2015). In the current study, we test how attachment in middle childhood associates with emotional attention biases in a high-risk sample.

The participating children (n = 49) were part of a longitudinal study. Nineteen (39%) children had mothers with a history of drug abuse and thirty (61%) had prenatal medical risks. In middle childhood (8-12 years) children's attachment was assessed by the Attachment Story Stem (Granot & Mayseless, 2001; Kerns et al., 2011). Attachment security, avoidance, ambivalence and disorganization were coded from children's narratives. Children's emotional attention biases were assessed using a dot-probe task, with threatening (angry) and positive (happy) stimulus faces, and at the early (SOA of 500ms) and late (1250ms) phase of processing.

The results are currently being analyzed and will be presented at the congress. They will help to understand how attachment operates at the implicit-procedural level of emotional information processing.

2. Early Caregiving Environment and its Changes Predicting Attachment Representations in Adolescence

Heikkilä, L. M.¹, Punamäki, R.-L.¹, Flykt, M.¹, Lindblom, J.¹, Vänskä, M.¹, Poikkeus, P.², Tiitinen, A.²,

¹ *School of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Tampere, Finland*

² *Helsinki University Hospital, University of Helsinki, Finland*

Secure attachment is important for individual well-being and social competence. Family relationships and parental mental health in infancy are pivotal for attachment security. However, longitudinal studies from infancy to adolescence are scarce, concentrating mostly on the mother–child relationship and ignoring whole-family relations. This study aims to examine longitudinal, whole-family precursors of adolescent attachment. We expect optimal early caregiving environment, indicated by balanced family relations and good parental mental health, to predict attachment security, and non-optimal environment to predict insecurity.

The original sample comprised 763 families during pregnancy. *Early caregiving environment* is conceptualized as marital and parenting relationship autonomy and intimacy (SFTP; Matthey & Scholz, 1994), parental divorce, and parental mental health (GHQ; Goldberg & Hiller, 1979). Parents reported family relationships and parental mental health at 2 and 12 months, and at 7–8 years. About 400 adolescents participated at the follow-up at 17–18 years, reporting parental divorce and *attachment representations* of mother, father, best friend, and romantic partner (ECR-RS; Fraley, Heffernon, Vicary, & Brumbaugh, 2011). Latent growth curve analysis will be used to model individual differences and changes in caregiving environments. The effects of concurrent family environment will be controlled. The results will be presented at the conference.

3. Screening for mental illness in obese children and youth

Kajsa Järholm^{1,2} & Beatrice Nyström^{1,3}

¹ *Department of Psychology, Lund University, Sweden*

² *The Child Obesity Unit, Skane University Hospital, Malmö, Sweden*

³ *The Clinic for Children and Youth, Helsingborg Hospital, Helsingborg, Sweden*

Background: The number of children and youth with obesity (i. e. ISO-BMI >30), has increased greatly during the last few decades. Obesity usually has strong social- and psychological components, and the relation between children and their parents is of great importance. Simultaneous to the increase in obesity, there has been an increase in the number of children and youth that develop mental illness. Medical care providers have well-established programs for examining somatic secondary diseases to obesity, however, no routine exists for examining their mental health. The main purpose of this study is to describe the prevalence of mental illness in children and youth that receive obesity treatment at medical clinics in Sweden. Furthermore, we aim to implement a functional screening tool for examining mental health in this group.

Method: Children and youth, 11-18 years of age, that receive obesity treatment, will be asked to fill out three questionnaires on an I-pad during a visit at the clinic. The questionnaires are well validated screening tools for various forms of mental illness; GAD-7 (anxiety), WHO-5 (positive- and negative well-being, depression), and ChEDE-Q8 (eating disorder). Patients that receive high scores will meet a psychologist for further evaluation and treatment (e. g. individual- or family centered therapy).

Conclusions: The project design and outcome measures will be discussed.

Registration Fees

NAN members: SEK 250

Non-members: SEK 600

Undergraduate student NAN members: SEK 0

Undergraduate student non-members: SEK 300

Registration fee includes lunch on the 20th of September and coffee and snacks during all meeting breaks and mingle.

For participants from outside Sweden:

The conference fee can be paid in cash upon arrival to avoid bank fees. Indicate when registering if you need to use this option.

Welcome!

