



6th Annual Conference and Meeting

Attachment and Trauma

September 4th-5th 2019

Gothenburg, Sweden

University of Gothenburg

Conference Centre Wallenberg, Europa

Medicinaregatan 20

Organizers

Elin Alfredsson; University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Elia Psouni; Lund University, Sweden

Tommie Forslund; Uppsala University, Sweden

Mikko Peltola, Tampere University, Finland

Maiken Pontoppidan, VIVE, Denmark

Nordic Attachment Network

www.nordicattachmentnetwork.nu

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The conference is organized with support from the
Department of Psychology, University of Gothenburg

Plenary Speaker

Abraham Sagi-Schwartz

Abraham (Avi) Sagi-Schwartz is Professor of Psychology and Child Development, and Founder and Director (emeritus) of the Center for the Study of Child Development; University of Haifa, Israel. Prof. Sagi-Schwartz research is in the area of attachment and socioemotional development across the life span and across cultures, socioemotional development and adaptation under extreme life circumstances and experiences, especially the effects of the Holocaust as well as other violent political conflicts. Prof. Sagi-Schwartz received in 2007 the Society for Research in Child Development Award for Distinguished International Contributions to Child Development, and in 2015 the Bowlby-Ainsworth Founder Award for attachment research.

Invited speaker

Anders Broberg

Anders Broberg is Professor emeritus of Clinical Psychology at the Dept. of Psychology, University of Gothenburg, Sweden, licensed psychologist, psychotherapist and specialist in clinical child psychology. His research has been in the area of attachment and the effects of different life incidents on child development. Early research focused on the effects of different childcare arrangements on young children's socio-emotional and cognitive development, while later research includes follow-up of adolescents who survived the Gothenburg Discotheque fire, refugee children with traumatized parents and children living with domestic violence. He is author of several textbooks on attachment theory and its applications in pre-schools, health care and social services. In 2005, he received Allmänna Barnhusets Stora Pris for his efforts to bridge the gap between academic psychology and general practice and in 2014, he was nominated to Sveriges Psykologförbunds Stora Pris.

Program overview

September 4th 2019

Venue: Europa

11:30-12:30 Arrival, lunch

12:30-12:45 **Welcome and information**

Elin Alfredsson

12:45-14:10 **SESSION 1: Attachment beyond the dyad**

Chair: Maiken Pontoppidan

14:10-14:40 *Networking, mingling and coffee*

14:40-15:20: **SESSION 2: Experimental activation of attachment behaviors**

Chair: Mikko Peltola

15.20-15:45 *Break*

15:45-17:00 **Plenary talk and discussion:**

Abraham Sagi-Schwartz

“Does trauma transfer? The case of three generations of the holocaust”

Chair: Elia Psouni

17:00-18:30 *Appetizers and mingle*

September 5th 2019

Venue: Europa

08:00-9:00 **NAN annual meeting**

09:00-10:15 **Invited talk and discussion:**

Anders Broberg

“The importance of close relationships in traumatic impact as well as in rebuilding trust”

Chair: Elin Alfredsson

10:15-10:30 *Break*

10:30-11:45 **SESSION 3: Parental psychological problems
and caregiving: child-caregiver relationships and
child development**

Chair: Tommie Forslund

11:50-12:00 **Closing of the 6th annual conference and meeting**

12:30-13:30 *Constituent Steering committee meeting and lunch*

SESSION 1: Attachment beyond the dyad

1. Attachment Research Improves the Mental Health of Children in Care all Around the Globe

Niels Peter Rygaard

Fairstart Foundation

Millions of children grow up in substandard foster, group home and refugee systems. After a world tour caused by his book “Severe Attachment Disorder in Childhood – a Practical Guide to Therapy”, the presenter invited an international network of researchers to design staff educations for governments and NGOs, in how to train caregiver groups. Today, the partnerships from his www.fairstartfoundation.com have educated some 500 local instructors, who trained the caregivers of more than 35.000 children in attachment based care theory and practices. Training programs adjusted to local culture are free online in 20 language versions. The mission of Fairstart is to promote uniform, research based standards of staff education and training. Also, to provide organizations with low cost blended learning programs, enabling them to build national networks of local experts, and train large numbers of frontline caregivers. As examples of partnerships, two current cooperations will be presented: a bilingual, cross-professional education for teachers, orphanage and school home staff, designed for Greenland Government. And foster care programs in English, Swahili and Kinyarwanda language for SOSchildren’s Villages in four East African countries. Challenges and outcomes will be discussed.

2. With Children Northeast: Working with the Parent-Child Relationship in Socioeconomically Marginalized Areas

Amina Abdullahi & Linn Arbeus

Psychologists for Maternity- and Child Healthcare, Gothenburg, Region Västra Götaland

Psychologists for maternity- and child healthcare (P-MCH) promote young children's psychological development and wellbeing in their families. A difference in help seeking is related to socioeconomic status, and is lower in the northeast of Gothenburg; a community with many families with migration backgrounds. The project, "With children Northeast" (WCNE) aims to reach more families in this area to overcome obstacles preventing them from seeking help.

Amongst other interventions, groups with the purpose of reflection and discussion about children's psychological and emotional needs and the parent-child relationship was offered. The Circle of Security Parenting (COS-P) was shortened, highlighting key elements, in consultation with the Scandinavian implementers. Language and cultural interpreters were educated prior to meetings. Groups were held at public arenas and childcare was provided. Seventy-one parents with no prior knowledge of P-MCH participated across six groups and evaluation focused on parental experience.

Helpful factors in reaching new families were: co-operation with trusted members of society and healthcare staff at open arenas, quality and continuity of interpreters and increasing their prior knowledge, time and place, childcare, participant certificates and a balance between structure and flexibility by group leaders. Parents expressed high satisfaction and asked for more in-depth knowledge and more gatherings.

3. The Influence of Attachment Representations and Co-parents' Scripted Knowledge of Attachment on Fathers' Caregiving Representations

Elia Psouni

Department of Psychology, Lund University, Sweden

Background/Methods: Despite increased engagement of men in parenting, paternal caregiving representations have not been investigated, and potential gender differences in the links between parents' attachment representations and their caregiving representations are unexplored. The present study investigated fathers' and mothers' (N = 77) representations of caregiving, and links to their own and their co-parents' mental representations of attachment.

Parents were interviewed with the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) and the Parental-Caregiving Attachment Interview (P-CAI). Co-parents' attachment scripts were measured through Attachment Script Assessment (ASA).

Results/Conclusions: Results revealed similarity between mothers' and fathers' caregiving representations, but gender differences emerged in probable rejecting and neglecting parental behaviors. For both fathers and mothers, there were systematic differences in caregiving-specific state-of-mind dimensions on the P-CAI, depending on the parent's classification on the AAI. Importantly, co-parent attachment security, but not parent gender, predicted the likelihood of being classified as autonomous with respect to caregiving. Thus, quality of co-parenting ought to be included in future studies of parents' attachment and caregiving representations, and in interventions with child development outcomes as targets. Notably, while methods for assessing different features of parenting are discussed as largely adapted to mothers, the P-CAI gave rise to information of relevance to both genders.

4. Identity and Attachment - the role of parents, partners and peers for young adults

Caroline Järmo

Department of Psychology, University of Gothenburg

Previous research has found a small but significant relationship between attachment in adulthood and ego identity development, showing that secure attachment has a positive correlation with identity achievement and a negative correlation with identity diffusion. Although transference of attachment functions from parents to peers and identity development are theorized to be central developmental tasks in adolescence and young adulthood, the literature combining the two is scarce. Therefore the aim of this study is to investigate the connection between self-reported attachment behaviors towards individuals of significance, and identity status in the romantic relationships domain of the Identity Status Interview. Young adults (N=123, Mage=33.3) were interviewed and completed the WHOTO-questionnaire concerning attachment-related functions (proximity seeking, safe haven, separation distress and secure base). Findings show that while individuals coded to identity achievement and foreclosed identity chose current family to a greater extent than family of origin, the opposite was true of participants with identity diffusion. Interviews from a subsample of participants (n=9), who were in long-term relationships but did not choose current family for attachment-related functions, were analyzed qualitatively and four themes emerged: The unimportance of being in a relationship, The functionality of having a partner, Ambivalence and “I never thought about it”.

Session 2: Experimental activation of attachment behaviors

1. The Impact of Attachment Security Priming on Avoidant Attentional Defenses, based on Eye Tracking and Micro-saccade Analysis

Rebecca Mellor & Elia Psouni

Department of Psychology, Lund University, Sweden

Background/Methods: Attachment avoidance is associated with deactivation of the attachment system in times of distress, and disengagement from the distressing information as a regulation strategy for restoring felt security. In a randomized within-between-subjects design, we experimentally induced attachment security and explored its influence on avoidant disengagement from emotionally expressive faces. A Dot Probe Task and an eye-tracking procedure were used to assess attentional orientation towards neutral and angry faces as a function of avoidance (high/low) and priming (attachment security/neutral). Eye-tracking was used –for the first time in this body of research– to indicate covert attentional shifts (non-voluntary eye movements called micro-saccades) in response to the different facial expressions. Security priming was achieved through standardized attachment script assessment. Attachment anxiety and state-trait anxiety were controlled for.

Results/Conclusions: Micro-saccades correlated with behavioral data and captured attentional shifts away from angry faces, compared to neutral faces. A General Linear Mixed Model assessed whether attachment avoidance could predict the influence of security priming on attentional vigilance indicated by both behavioural data (Dot Probe) and microsaccadic eye-movements. Study findings are discussed in terms of insights into avoidant attentional strategies, the essence of security priming on different attachment orientations and the usefulness of micro-saccades in assessing attachment-related attentional patterns.

2. Abusive caregivers are not a secure base for their infant: Understand the neurobiology using a rodent model

***Anna Blomkvist, Maya Opendak, Don Wilson, Regina. M. Sullivan**
Department of Psychology, Stockholm University*

Both studies with humans and animals underpin the importance of early life experiences for a healthy development. From the attachment literature, the primary caregiver has always been the center of attention in predicating outcomes in later development of the child.

The attachment literature highlights two functions that the caregiver activate the safe haven and the secure base. Safe haven function is when the infant can depend on the caregiver for comfort and relief if stressed. The secure base function is described as when the caregiver works as a platform for the child to explore. This latter function has the intent to describe the infant's balance between two behaviours; exploration and proximity seeking.

We are in this study linking the attachment behaviour system with a neurobiological approach of measuring cortical local field potential (LFP) oscillations in rat pups. By using an experimental setting where the pup interacts with the mother and a stranger we evaluate the secure base function by measuring both behavior and LFP. In addition, we are applying the Scarcity-Adversity Model of maltreatment to extricate critical attachment disruptions. We are discovering differences in the two different groups of rat pups (control and maltreatment) and are reflecting on these results both on an attachment behavioral and neurobiological developmental level.

Session 3: Parental psychological problems and caregiving: child-caregiver relationships and child development

1. Trauma in mothers and fathers receiving the Minding the Baby intervention 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 families. 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. The intervention lasts from pregnancy to the child is two years old. During pregnancy, experienced trauma in mothers and fathers is assessed with the Child Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ) and symptoms of post-traumatic stress (PTSD) are assessed with the PTSD8. In this presentation I will focus on the different kinds of trauma that mothers and fathers report. Data is based on responses from 45 mothers and 21 fathers recruited in 2018 and 2019.

2. “Sometimes the Structure Around Us Fails.” Parents’ Subjective Understandings of How Their Psychosis Affects Parenting

Jennifer Strand, Petra Boström, & Karin Grip

Department of Psychology, University of Gothenburg

Parental psychosis poses a risk factor for a child’s well-being. Few studies have focused on the parents’ views of how their psychosis affects their parenting, and results for parenting ability in this group are contradictory. The present study aimed to explore how parents with psychosis experience the effect(s) of their illness on parenting. In-depth and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 parents who attended psychiatric open-care units specializing in psychosis. Data related to the research aim were analyzed deductively according to the protection, reciprocity, control, guided learning, and group participation model of parenting. Data in each domain were then coded inductively to form subthemes. Results show that all domains of parenting appear to be affected by psychosis. The parents specifically mentioned that depression, fatigue, and difficulty focusing because of hearing voices had negative impacts on their abilities to provide protection, reciprocity, and control. The parents also expressed difficulties in maintaining routines in the child’s everyday life. Furthermore, the theme “Unpredictable absences” crosses all domains and highlights the parents’ recurrent mental and physical absences from their children during psychotic episodes. In conclusion, parents with psychosis could benefit from interventions that aim to improve their parenting skills in relation to practical as well as emotional and relational aspects of caregiving.

3. Child mental health, parent and family factors and parent-child relationship in families with parental depression, bipolar and anxiety disorder

Lina Wirehag Nordh

Department of Psychology, University of Gothenburg

Children of parents with mental illness are at risk of developing mental health problems themselves. Risk factors include genetic, child, parent, relational, family and environmental factors and the transmission of risk is a complex process. The aim of this study is to explore mental health and family environment in a group of at-risk children. Patients ($n=60$) receiving treatment in adult psychiatric care for depression, bipolar and anxiety disorder, who have minor children aged 8-17 completed questionnaires about themselves and their children. A smaller group of the patients' partners ($n=25$) also completed the same questionnaires. The parents answered questionnaires about 88 of their minor children, and of these children a small group ($n=19$) completed questionnaires themselves. Mental health in children were assessed by SDQ. Family environment were assessed by mental health in parents (CORE-OM, HADS), family functioning (FAD), parental control of child behavior (subscale from PLOC) and relationship satisfaction (DAS-4). The children who completed questionnaires themselves, rated their own mental health (SDQ), family functioning (FAD) and experiences in close relationships (ECR-RS). The results are currently being analyzed. Preliminary results will be discussed.

4. Attempting to preserve normality – child and parent perspectives on parental psychosis

Jennifer Strand, Petra Boström & Lina Wirehag Nordh

Department of Psychology, University of Gothenburg

Mental illness is known to interfere with parenting capacity, and may in turn affect the child's well-being. Psychosis in particular affects individual functioning extensively as well as the person's social network. The present study aimed to explore how children and their parents with psychosis experience the parent's illness, the parent-child relationship, and the child's well-being. Six parents and their seven children were interviewed individually and the transcripts were analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis. There was no clear distinction between the descriptions of the parent as a person and the illness, and some of the children provided unclear images of their parents. The parent-child relationship seemed to be non-hierarchical, with children carrying extensive practical and relational responsibility in attempts to preserve normality. To have an additional caregiver, such as another parent or relative to turn to, seemed to be vital for child well-being. Some children, whose speech and stories were incoherent, seemed tuned in, or highly attentive, to their ill parent. These children seemed to be vulnerable and were also described to suffer from mental health issues. Implications of parental psychosis will be discussed in relation to attachment and caregiving.

Registration

Registration latest August 12, 2019. To register, follow the link <https://psy.gu.se/english/nan-2019> **Registration fee** includes lunch on September 4 and coffee, drinks and snacks during all meeting breaks and mingle:

NAN Members: SEK 500

Non-members: SEK 900

Undergraduate student NAN members: SEK 200

Undergraduate student non-members: SEK 600

Please pay the correct fee to **Plusgiro account** number: 947032-9
(IBAN: SE1795000099602609470329, BIC: NDEASESS)

Remember to denote the payment ‘**name**’/ **CONF19**

If you are a member and would like to pay membership fee at the same time, please denote the payment ‘**Name**’/**MEMB+CONF19** (e.g. “E. Alfredsson/MEMB+CONF19”)

The Nordic Attachment Network (NAN) is a platform where Nordic attachment researchers whose work is firmly rooted in attachment theory and uses established attachment measures, as well as clinicians using treatment methods explicitly based on attachment theory and research, meet for stimulating exchanges, networking and coordination. If you are a researcher or clinician in Denmark, Finland, Norway or Sweden, who is trained in and actively uses established attachment methods for assessment and/or intervention, and wants to contribute to the further development of attachment based research in the Nordic countries, join us! Find out more at www.nordicattachmentnetwork.nu or www.facebook.com/NordicAttachmentNetwork. Alternatively, come and talk to us at the 6th Annual meeting & Conference!

Welcome!

