



**UK Attachment Network
22 September 2017**



**UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM**

**Frankland 305, Frankland Building
School of Psychology, University of Birmingham**

10:45-11:15 Coffee

11:15 Introduction and Welcome

11:20-12:50 Morning Presentations

11:20 Fay Julal: *Is mind-mindedness related to caregiving in adult romantic relationships? Findings from two exploratory studies*

11:50 Nate Shearman: *A systematic review of the relationships between adult attachment dimensions and automatic attentional processes*

12:20 Maliheh Taheri: *Cooperative behaviour in a conflict situation: The effect of attachment and environmental manipulations in the prisoner's dilemma game*

13:00-14:00 Lunch

14:15-15:15 Afternoon Presentations

14:15 Emily Gold: *Attachment security priming with children*

14:45 Shannon Hirst, Erica Hepper, and Harriet Tenenbaum: *Priming attachment security to promote forgiveness*

14:45-15:00 Coffee

15:00-16:15 Discussions, Blitzes and Breakaway Meetings

16:15-16:40 Plenary: Conclusions and future UKAN meetings

17:00 Drinks, followed by dinner, at Bar Estilo The Mailbox, B1 1RF



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Abstracts

Is mind-mindedness related to caregiving in adult romantic relationships? Findings from two exploratory studies

Fay Julal, with Ruth Butterworth (University of Birmingham)

Mind-mindedness is the tendency to treat others as individuals with minds (Meins, 1997) and is shown when verbal or written descriptions of another person include reference to their cognitive and emotional characteristics. Although this tendency is correlated across close relationships, mind-mindedness appears to be relationship-specific rather than trait-like. Previous research has related maternal mind-mindedness to maternal sensitivity and infant's attachment security. Across two exploratory studies, we investigated whether romantic mind-mindedness was associated with reports of more sensitive, responsive caregiving towards one's romantic partner. Participants in Study 1 ($n=245$) and 2 ($n=227$) wrote descriptions of their current romantic partner and completed measures of global and romantic attachment styles and global and romantic caregiving styles, and caregiving efficacy (Study 1) or relationship-specific empathy (Study 2). Two indicators of mind-mindedness were used: frequency, proportional. Although in general mind-mindedness was significantly correlated with caregiving scores, different associations were observed across the two studies. Discussion focuses on romantic mind-mindedness as a potential explanatory mechanism in the link between attachment and caregiving in adult relationships.

A systematic review of the relationships between adult attachment dimensions and automatic attentional processes

Nate Shearman (University of Sheffield)

This presentation will provide an overview of a recent systematic review, which was submitted as part of a DClinPsy thesis. This systematic review examined the literature on the relationships between adult attachment dimensions (anxiety and avoidance) and automatic attentional processes, in order to compare empirical findings to the proposed secondary strategies within the integrative model of the activation and dynamics of the attachment system (IMDAS). Systematic searches for papers that used quantitative methodology were conducted on the PsycInfo, Scopus, Web of Science, EThOS, and ProQuest databases. The search terms were '(attachment) AND (attention* OR process* OR cogniti* OR executive) AND (relationship* OR correlat* OR association* OR mediat* OR moderat* OR regress*)'. Inclusion and exclusion criteria and quality assessment checks were applied. Searches yielded 34 studies within 21 eligible results. Different attentional tasks and experimental procedures were employed, and undergraduate students were predominant participants. Studies showed attachment anxiety and avoidance were not consistently associated with hyperactivating and deactivating strategies, as measured by attentional tasks, respectively. Findings do not consistently support theoretical assumptions, using behavioural data. However, methodological limitations are discussed. Future research should consider alternative methods to examine the relationships between adult attachment dimensions and automatic attentional processes. Moreover, caution should be taken when extrapolating



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findings from this review to clinical groups and practice. This review raises doubts about theoretical claims and the adequacy of research methods.

Cooperative behaviour in a conflict situation; the effect of attachment and environmental manipulations in the prisoner's dilemma game

Maliheh Taheri, Pia Rotshtein, and Ulrik Beierholm (University of Birmingham)

In the world of many interpersonal and international conflicts, cooperation is vital for our human survival and for our social progress. However, our cooperative behaviour is affected by various variables such as environmental factors and our interpersonal differences. To study human cooperative behaviour in a conflict situation we recruited 52 participants and conducted a behavioural study based on the Prisoner's Dilemma Game. We examined the effect of environmental manipulation and individual differences based on participants' relationship attachment style. We found that while participants believed that their rational decision-making capability was not affected by the environmental manipulation, the results showed their cooperation rate was affected by the different contexts. Moreover, we found that negative environmental context had a negative interaction with attachment style, with higher relationally anxious and avoidant attached individuals cooperating less in the negative as compared to the neutral and positive environments. Overall, our findings highlight the effect of external factors (environment) and internal factors (attachment style) on human cooperative behaviour in conflict situations as exemplified by the prisoner's dilemma game.

Attachment security priming with children

Emily Gold (University of Southampton)

Within the last decade there has been a significant rise in the number of mental health issues amongst children and young people (CYP). Anxiety and depressive disorders in particular are associated with significant adverse mental health and life course outcomes. Therefore, effective interventions which are able to reduce anxiety and depressive symptoms within CYP are imperative. Correlational research has found that insecure attachment dimensions (anxious and avoidant) may be linked to anxiety and depression. Temporarily activating a mental representation of a secure attachment figure (attachment security priming) has been found to endorse feelings of support, positive affect and reduce stress in individuals. The majority of studies which have utilised an attachment security priming methodology, however, have typically been conducted with adults and very little research exists with CYP. Thus, my proposed research thesis involves using attachment security priming with CYP who suffer from anxiety and depressive symptoms as an intervention to improve their emotional wellbeing.

Priming attachment security to promote forgiveness

Shannon Hirst, Dr. Erica Hepper, and Dr. Harriet Tenenbaum (University of Surrey)

Background: Despite interpersonal relationships being a vital part of society, they also put us at risk of violations by others. Forgiveness is one means of coping with such violations and involves the replacement of negative with positive emotions, cognitions, motivations, and behaviours (McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997). Research suggests that secure attachment orientation supports



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forgiveness, whilst attachment anxiety and avoidance are associated with low forgiveness (e.g. Burnette et al., 2007; Chung, 2014). Using a hypothetical scenario paradigm, the first study of the current PhD found attachment anxiety and avoidance to be stable predictors of low-forgiveness, regardless of severity of transgression or whether an apology was present. The current study aims to extend on these findings and test whether it is possible to help people respond to transgressions in a more forgiving way by increasing their attachment security through use of attachment security priming.

Methods: Participants (N=72) were recruited in couples to take part in a 'problem-solving' task together at the University. Participants were randomly allocated to an attachment security prime condition or a neutral control condition, and filled out pre-test measures of attachment, personality, and relationship satisfaction, commitment and trust. A transgression was then manipulated by the experimenters, in which participants thought their partner had chosen to do the task alone. Participants then filled out self-report measures, which assessed their response to this 'betrayal'.

Findings: Preliminary analysis found no direct effect of priming condition on Positive Forgiveness, or Avoidance & Revenge Motivations, but that attachment security priming resulted in greater Grudge Motivations. An indirect relationship between attachment avoidance and Positive Forgiveness was mediated by commitment, with those higher in attachment avoidance experiencing less commitment and lower Positive Forgiveness.

Discussion: Priming participants with attachment security priming that requires them to focus on their attachment figure, and then manipulating a transgression results in greater Grudge Motivations for those participants. Further, when faced with a real-time transgression those high in attachment avoidance experience lower Positive Forgiveness due to lower commitment.