

5-2008

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Citation of this paper:

Evans, Elspeth M.; Bento, Sandi; Pederson, David R.; and Moran, Greg, "The Relation of FR Behaviour to AAI Scales" (2008).
Psychology Presentations. 14.

<https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/psychologypres/14>

The Relation of FR Behaviour to AAI Scales

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INTRODUCTION

- *Attachment theory* describes the bonds between caregivers and children that serve a protective function for children.
- The *FR theory* developed by Main and Hesse (1990) proposes that unmonitored parental behaviour, or frightened, frightening and dissociative (FR) behaviour, stemming from a history of Unresolved/disoriented (U/d) trauma, disorganizes the attachment relationship.
- The parent is a source of fear and is thus unavailable as a source of safety and protection.
- Previous research has found a link between Disorganized infant attachment, characterized by odd behaviours toward the parent, and FR parental behaviour (see Madigan, Bakermans-Kranenburg, van IJzendoorn, Moran, Pederson, & Benoit, 2006).
- The current work explores the discriminant validity of FR behaviour in relation to the scales of the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI; George, Kaplan, & Main, 1985) in an adolescent mothers sample that is high in childhood trauma.
- In particular, this study investigates whether FR behaviour is related specifically to the scales of Unresolved/disoriented adult attachment, characterized by lapses in monitoring of reasoning or discourse during discussions of childhood abuse or loss, or whether it is also related to other AAI experience and states of mind scales.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

- $N = 50$ adolescent mothers and their 9-month-olds involved in a longitudinal study of mother-infant attachment who were recruited from two city hospitals shortly after the birth of their infant.
- Mean age of mothers at the birth of their infants was 18.4.
- The majority of mothers were single, on social assistance, and had completed 11 years of education.

MEASURES

- Adult Attachment Interview* (AAI; George, Kaplan, & Main, 1985): Probes into early childhood experiences with attachment figures, including abuse and loss experiences, to assess state of mind with respect to attachment. Coding results in scales for experiences with caregivers and states of mind with respect to attachment.
- Appropriate levels of interrater reliability were achieved.
- FR Coding System* (FR; Main & Hesse, 1998): Codes 6 categories of anomalous parental behaviour (frightening, frightened, dissociated, sexualized, timid, disorganized) and results in an overall level (9-point scale) and classification (scores greater than or equal to 5).
- Appropriate levels of interrater reliability were achieved.

PROCEDURE

- Mothers were interviewed with the AAI at 6-months of infant age. Transcripts of these interviews were made for later coding.
- At 9-months, mother-infant dyads were observed in the home during feeding and free play (with toys and no toys). Videotapes of these interactions were coded for FR.

RESULTS

- Descriptive Statistics:
 - 36% U/d
 - 46% FR
 - Mean level of FR behaviour: 4.48 ($SD = 2.03$)
- Relations of FR with AAI Measures:
 - Mothers classified as Unresolved/disoriented on the AAI demonstrated higher levels of FR behaviour three months later ($M = 5.53$, $SD = 1.87$) than did mothers classified as not-Unresolved/disoriented ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.90$), $F(1, 48) = 8.66$, $p < .01$.
 - Mothers classified as FR had higher Unresolved/disoriented-loss scores ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 2.05$) than mothers classified as not-FR ($M = 2.92$, $SD = 1.61$), $F(1, 40) = 6.08$, $p < .05$.
 - U/d-Loss was correlated with the FR classification, $r = .36$, $p < .05$.
 - U/d-Abuse was not related to FR.

- Presence of trauma was correlated with the overall level of FR, $r = .41$ ($p < .01$) and the FR classification, $r = .41$ ($p < .01$).
- There were no associations between FR and maternal experiences of love, rejection, role reversal, pressure to achieve or neglect.
- Level of FR was significantly correlated with coherence of mind on the AAI ($r = -.33$, $p < .05$) and overall derogation ($r = .29$, $p < .05$).
 - In particular, FR dimension I (frightening behaviour) was correlated with overall derogation ($r = .34$, $p < .05$).

CONCLUSIONS

- Overall, these findings suggest that it is the scales associated with Unresolved/disoriented state of mind that predispose a mother toward displaying FR behaviour, rather than general experiences or other states of mind. These results lend support for the FR theory.
- Future research should investigate the relations of FR behaviour with indices of psychopathology and replicate these findings in a community sample of mothers.

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