Interaction in the Home of Mothers and Infants in Disorganized Attachment Relationships

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ABSTRACT

PURPOSE: To describe the interaction of mothers and infant naturalistic expression of Disorganized attachment.

RESULTS: Disorganized attachment relationships displayed significantly lower levels of MBQ5 sensitivity at home (M = -.30, SD = .35) than those in Organized relationships (M = .45, SD = .32; t(97) = 6.54, p < .001).

CONCLUSIONS: The origins and impact of Disorganized attachment may be more pervasive than sometimes conceptualized.

INTRODUCTION

Attachment is an enduring social emotional tie between caregiver and child (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1969) and provides an organized foundation for future social relationships.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS: 99 adolescent mother-infant dyads who were part of a larger longitudinal study. Adolescents were recruited from two city hospitals.

MEASURES:

- Strange Situation procedure (Ainsworth, Bowlby, Bell, & Stayton, 1978)
- Maternal Interaction in the Home of Mothers and Infants

RESULTS

1) Global Measures of Interaction

- Infant Themes
- Maternal Themes

2) Distinctive Themes of Interaction in the Home Associated with Disorganization

CONCLUSIONS

- Disorganized attachment is distinguished by a lack of regulation of affect in the home.
- Mothers in Disorganized relationships display more lack of engagement with the infant than in organized relationships.
- Infants in Disorganized relationships display more lack of compliance with maternal requests than in organized relationships.

APPENDIX

Representative AQS Items

Representative MBQS Items

STUDY RATIONALE

1. Disorganized attachment has been little studied in the home.
2. Current conceptualizations of Disorganization suggest that:
   a. Global Measures of Interaction
   b. Distinctive Themes of Interaction in the Home Associated with Disorganization

DISORGANIZATION

Abnormal Behavioural (ABQ):

- MBQ5 consists of 10 items that measure maternal behaviour in the home and are sorted into piles ranging from 1-constantly hostile to her mother, to 9-most like this mother.
- A continuous score for maternal sensitivity was calculated after 1 hour of home visit. Infant attachment security scores were derived by comparing the observer’s sort of 90 items describing infant interaction behaviour to a set of MBQ5 items. The cut-off score of .67 was used to identify organized attachment (M = .31, SD = .32; t(97) = 6.54, p < .001).

CONCLUSIONS

- Disorganized attachment is distinguished by a lack of regulation of affect in the home.
- Mothers in Disorganized relationships display more lack of engagement with the infant than in organized relationships.
- Infants in Disorganized relationships display more lack of compliance with maternal requests than in organized relationships.