

Paper sessions 202, Thursday August 31, 13:45 – 15:15 hrs.

pap202-10 Attachment Processes

pap202-10.1 Childhood Behavioural Inhibition and Attachment: Predicting Intolerance of Uncertainty in Young Adulthood

Magdalena Zdebik, Jean-François Bureau, Ellen Moss
University of Montreal, CHU Sainte-Justine Hospital Research Center, Canada

Aim: Identifying childhood risk factors is a crucial step in the creation of effective methods to prevent the development of anxiety in adulthood. The cognitive schema of Intolerance of Uncertainty (IU), a tendency to react negatively to uncertain situations is an important component contributing to anxiety disorders. Yet, little is known about its etiology. Understanding IU's development is important since daily life is full of uncertain situations, and being unable to cope with uncertainty or ambiguity places an individual at great risk for constant worry and anxiety. Furthermore, IU has more recently been identified as a transdiagnostic cognitive component related to diverse mental health problems, including depression, and shown to be a good target for clinical intervention. Two proposed risk factors for the development of IU are an insecure parent-child attachment and temperament, particularly behavioral inhibition (BI), a tendency to react negatively to the unfamiliar. However, no prospective empirical study has yet investigated these links. **Methods:** In the current study, attachment to caregiver and BI of sixty children were assessed at age 6, using observational measures. Mother's anxiety symptoms were assessed when participants were 14-years-old. IU was self-reported by participants when they were 21-years-old, as was neuroticism. **Results:** Two types of insecure attachment (ambivalent and disorganized controlling) and BI were positively related to IU over a 15-year span, even after controlling for participants' neuroticism and maternal anxiety. Attachment and BI had no significant interacting effect on the development of IU. Maternal anxiety was positively related to child BI and insecure attachment, but not IU. **Conclusions:** This is the first empirical confirmation of a link between the development of IU in young adulthood and childhood ambivalent and disorganized-controlling attachment and BI. These results have etiological as well as preventative implications for anxiety disorders and for all disorders related to IU.

pap202-10.2 Transition to “fathering”: Dyadic adjustment and father attachment before and after birth

Mónica Pires, Cristiana Fernandes
Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa/Autonomous University - Lisbon, Portugal

Pregnancy, although physically conditioned to women, does not exclude paternal involvement. Studies suggest that attachment begins during pregnancy, increases after birth and it's associated to a decrease in the quality of the couples' relationship. Childbirth it's considered a milestone in couples' life, and a transition to parenthood not often addressed in the father's perspective. The present study to verify the relation between dyadic adjustment and prenatal attachment (study 1) and the effect of childbirth in the dyadic adjustment and the postnatal attachment (study2).

In the 3rd trimester of partner's pregnancy, 130 men, completed Antenatal Emotional Attachment Scale and Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS). A repeated measures design (+ Postnatal Attachment Scale) was developed with a sub-sample of 22 fathers from initial study, 2 months after the child was born.

Results found in the 1st study are in line with previous findings: Younger and first time fathers tend to be more attached to the unborn baby and to present lower scores of couples' dyadic cohesion. In the 2nd study paternal prenatal attachment and couples' cohesion are strong predictors of paternal postnatal attachment. Even though fathers' attachment decreases after the baby is born, contrasting to previous studies, dyadic adjustment increases. Cohesion, consensus and marital satisfaction appear as relevant to fathers' evaluation of relationship quality. So, for recent fathers the transition to parenthood may act as a relevant factor to bring couples together, in the important task of nurture and caring for the newborn. We conclude that the dyadic adjustment exerts an influence on paternal attachment. Results stress the need for further research on the fathers' role, its evolution, and the relevant impact of couples' relationship adjustment for fathers' attachment, involvement and overall family functioning.