



ESTSS – Two sides of trauma – victim and offender experience



Attachment style as a framework for linking trauma and offending.



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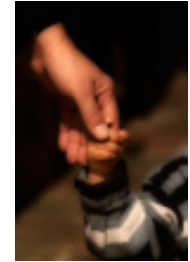
Attachment framework and offenders

- Attachment frameworks increasingly used to understand developmental issues related to early trauma, quality of close relationships and subsequent ability to form close relationships.
- Whilst this originated in parent-child relationships, it has since been used to look at adolescent and adult experience in relating to psychological disorder.
- Its relevance to offender behaviour is also being investigated. Bowlby's early work (1944) looked at attachment and affectionless character in juvenile delinquents with accumulated separations from carers.



Attachment Theory

Bowlby, 1969-80 Attachment and Loss trilogy.



- Attachment theory provides a useful framework for investigating lifespan linkages between early interactions between parent and child and subsequent relationship style in adolescence and adulthood.
- Research evidence shows insecure attachment style relates to:
 - childhood neglect/abuse (Crittendon 1997),
 - poorer support (Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Bartholomew & Horowitz 1997),
 - stress (Mikulciner & Florian, 1998) and
 - psychological disorder in adolescence (Allen, 1998) and adulthood (Mickelson & Kessler 1997)
 - Offending behaviour (Fonagy et al 19967; van Ijzendoorn et al 1997).





Attachment Theory main points:

- Attachment is a basic human need
- Relationship with parents in early childhood dictates subsequent security of attachment.
- Loss of parent, parental unavailability or hostile parenting relate to different forms of insecure attachment.
- Insecure attachment shows itself as anxious ambivalence, avoidance or disorganised.
- Attachment style derives from distorted 'internal working models' (cognitive schemas).





Proximity maintenance

- Child feels safe when physically close to mother/main carer, particularly under situations of threat.
- In adulthood this develops into an ability to summon the other when needed (ie under stress) and to have frequent contact. This related to coping (support-seeking).
- It subsumes the notion of support and felt attachment in adulthood as buffer against stress
- Need to differentiate actual close support from fantasy support.



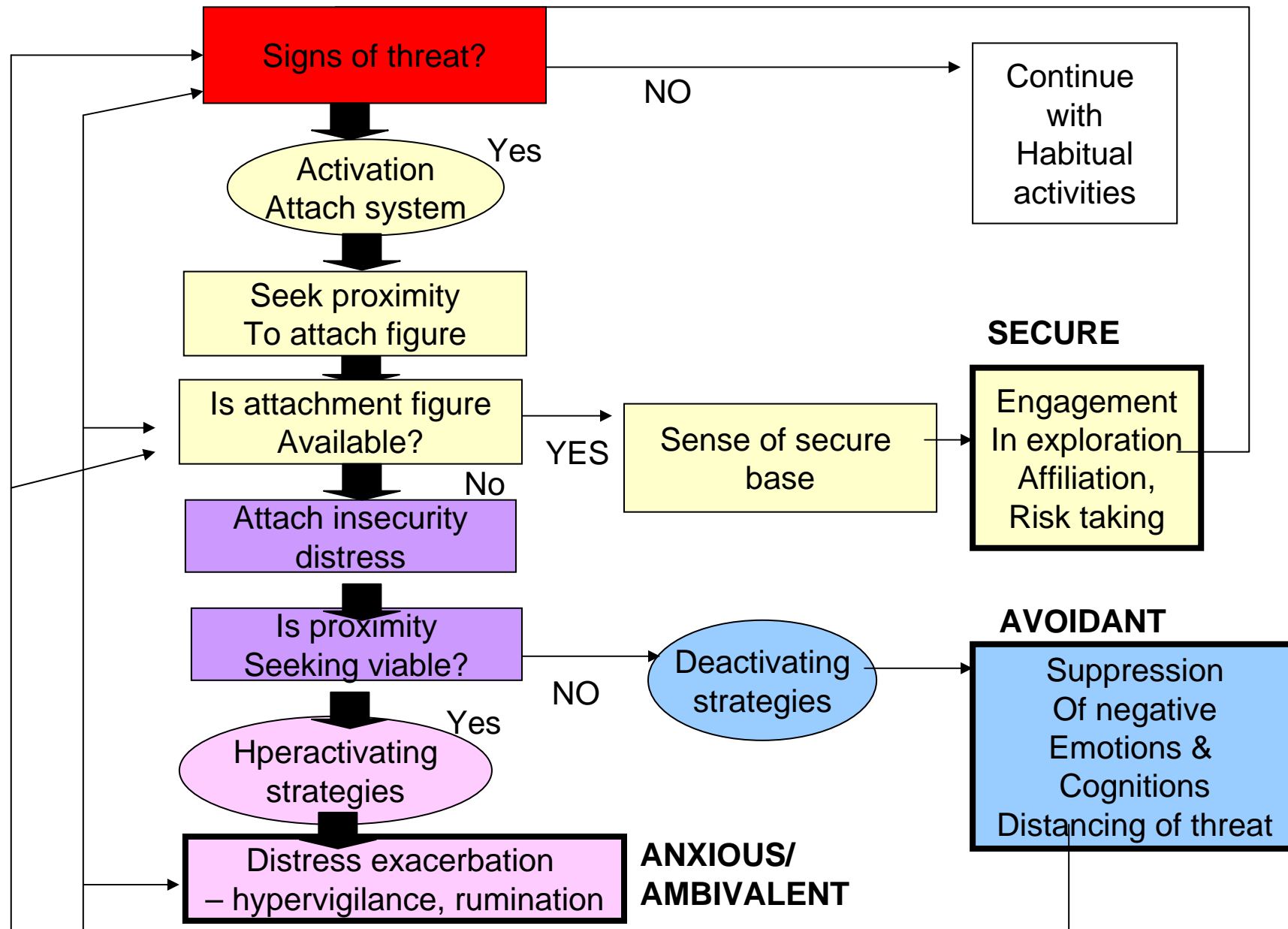


Internal working model

- An internal cognitive ‘guidance’ system about relationships
- A representation based on memories of past interactions and expectations of future ones. When these are negative it leads to negative cognitive biases in expectations of others behaviour (through mistrust, fear of rejection etc)
- An active thought process, which although open to change is also a mechanism for continuity into adulthood.

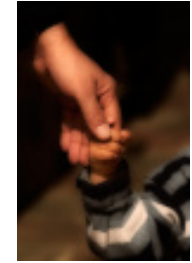


Attachment system activation,





Insecure attachment



To feel attached is to feel *safe and secure*. By contrast an insecurely attached person may have a *mixture of feelings* towards their attachment figure: *intense love and dependency, fear of rejection, irritability and vigilance*. Their lack of security has aroused a simultaneous wish to be close and the angry determination to punish their attachment figure for the minutest sign of abandonment.



Jeremy Holmes, 1993





Types of attachment style

- Secure
 - (*autonomous*)
- Anxious-ambivalent
 - (*Enmeshed, Preoccupied, Fearful*)
- Avoidant
 - (*Dismissive; Angry-dismissive; Withdrawn*)
- Disorganised
 - (*Unresolved loss; Can't classify; Dual style*)



Avoidant individuals – deactivating style

Belsky 2002

- Distance themselves cognitively from distress
- Have lower access to painful memories
- Can be unaware of own anger despite showing physiological arousal
- Do not show much emotion
- Use deactivating or avoiding strategies for coping
- Dissociation between conscious and unconscious levels of responding



Anxious/ambivalent individuals- hyper-activating style

Belsky, 2002

- Focus on own distress, ruminate on negative thoughts
- Use emotion-focussed rather than problem-solving coping styles – the emotion can undermine problem solving ability
- Easy access to painful memories and generalise these: ‘negative contagion’.
- Hyperactivating strategies – projective identification
- Automatic spread of emotion from one remembered incident to another





Secure individuals – emotionally regulating Belsky, 2002

- Appraise stressful events as less threatening
- Have optimistic expectations about coping
- Can access painful memories but do not generalise them
- Can disclose personal information and feelings to close others – express emotion openly
- Use support for regulating distress – discuss problems
- Acknowledge the physiological signs of anger and express anger in controlled way
- Engage in adaptive problem-solving
- Have better mental health & relationships





Characteristics of those with disorganised styles

- Have features of both anxious style (eg fear rejection or dependence) with avoidant style (angry-dismissive or withdrawn).
- Is related to unresolved loss (Main and Solomon, 1990)
- Linked to dissociation and complex trauma (Liotti, 2004)
- Linked to violent behaviour (Fonagy, 97, van Ijzendoorn)





Attachment and aggression

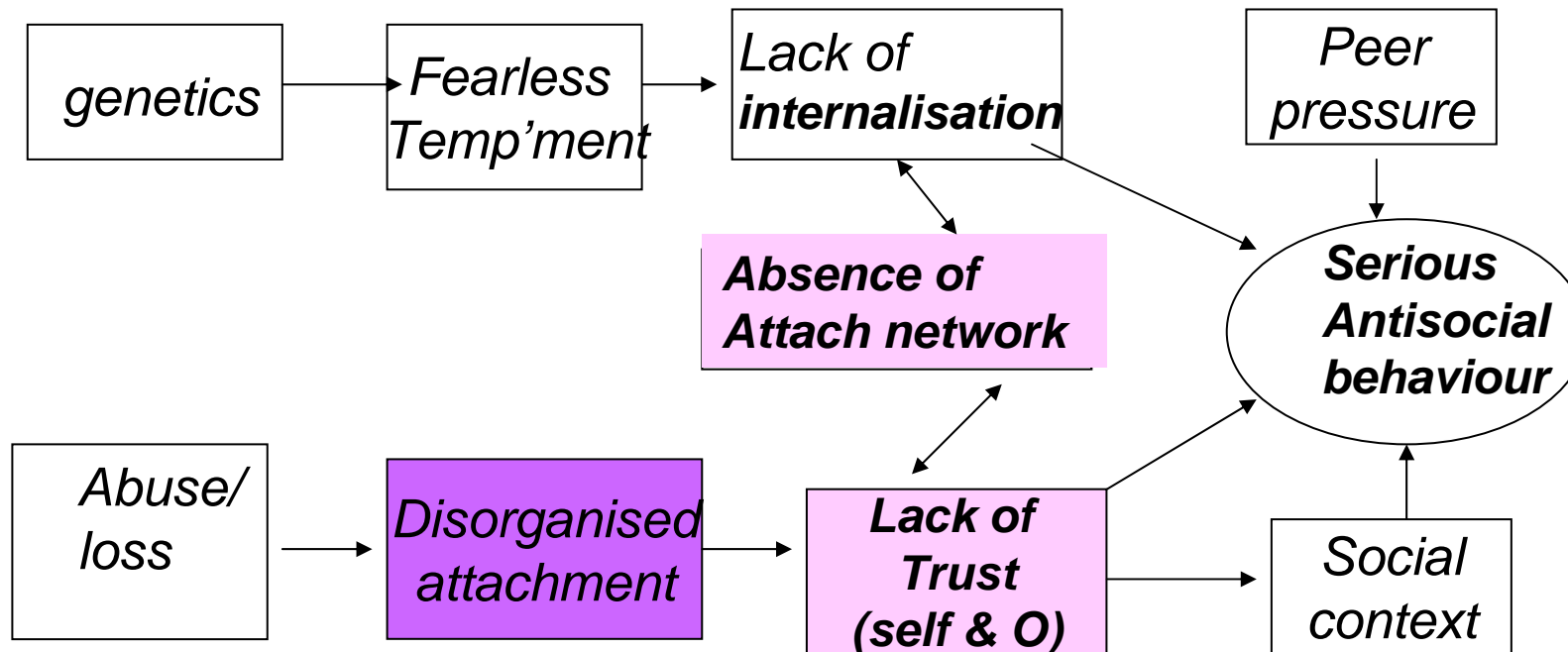
- Conduct problems viewed as strategies for gaining attention or proximity of unresponsive caregivers (Greenberg & Speltz, 1988) or as Social control – delinquent behaviour results from weak ties to the social system (Hirschi, 1969)



Violent Offending and attachment

- 40 male serious offenders, most had insecure attachment style (95%) with 53% **disorganised** attachment (van Ijzendoorn et al 1997)
- 22 criminals vs matched psychiatric controls – nearly all had insecure styles. Those committing crimes against persons more likely to be **disorganised** (Fonagy et al 1996)
- Relationship violence is an exaggerated response of a **disorganised** attachment system (Fonagy, 1999). Related to early abuse, disorganised attachment in infancy and absent male parental figure. Mediated by poor mentalisation and development of self.
- Insecure **avoidant** attachment style and **unresolved** childhood trauma associated with violent offending (Renn, 2002).
- 24 psychopathic offenders had high rates of **dismissing (avoidant)** attachment style and **disorganised** (unresolved). Related to rejecting fathers and idealised mothers. (Frodi et al, 2001)

Models of attachment and serious antisocial behaviour van Ijzendoorn, 1997





Sexual offending and attachment style?

- **Avoiding** and dismissive styles reported in male sex offenders (Chantry & Craig, 1994)
- Fear of intimacy identified by sex offenders (Bumpy & Hansen, 1997)
- Marshall & Marshall 2000 – poor parent child bonds and sexual abuse, low self esteem, poor quality of relationships and inadequate coping skills precursors of sex offending.
- Burk & Burkhart (2002) **disorganised** attachment style creates aversive intrapersonal experience to motivate in aggressive acts with sexual behaviour as a self-regulatory strategy for affect.





Measuring attachment style in forensic settings

- Psychodynamic approaches are lengthy, require extensive training and provide little context of ongoing relationships (eg Adult Attachment Interview).
- Most social approaches involve brief self-report questionnaire, open to reporting bias and provide no context to relationships (eg Relationships Questionnaire).
- The Attachment Style Interview (ASI) is a social approach which questions about current relationships and attitudes towards closeness and autonomy.





Adult Attachment Interview (AAI)

- A semi-structured interview for adults questioning about childhood experience.
- Primarily a research tool, requiring extensive training. Practitioner training not available.
- Scoring is through discourse analysis of narrative to look for incoherence, idealisation, denigration etc.
- Categories of Secure, insecure-preoccupied, insecure-avoidant and unresolved loss established.
- Concordances shown between parent and infant styles using the Strange Situation Test for infants. This also occurs in fostering settings.



George, Kaplan & Main (1984) Attachment Interview for Adults:
University of California, Berkeley

ESTSS April 2010



The ASI

www.attachmentstyleinterview.com

- Semi-structured interview covering:
 - Current relationship with parent and two very close support figures, around confiding, quality of interaction and felt attachment.
 - Also generalised attachment attitudes including mistrust, constraints on closeness, fear of rejection, self-reliance, desire for company, fear of separation and anger.
 - Overall attachment style and degree of insecurity.
- Focuses on behaviour in relationships and attitudes scored by degree of intensity and generalisation. Investigator-based scoring system based on benchmark ratings.



Attachment style classification (ASI)

DUAL/DISORGANISED

- **Anxious and avoidant style**

ANXIOUS

- **Enmeshed** (low self-reliance, fear of separation, high need for company).
- **Fearful** (mistrust, constraints on closeness; fear rejection)

AVOIDANT

- **Angry-dismissive** (mistrust; self-reliance, anger)
- **Withdrawn** (constraints on closeness; self-reliance)

SECURE

Good relating ability and support. Flexible attitudes about closeness and self-reliance. Low mistrust, anger or fear of rejection.

Degree of insecurity

Type of style

- Enmeshed
- Fearful
- Angry-Dismissive
- Withdrawn

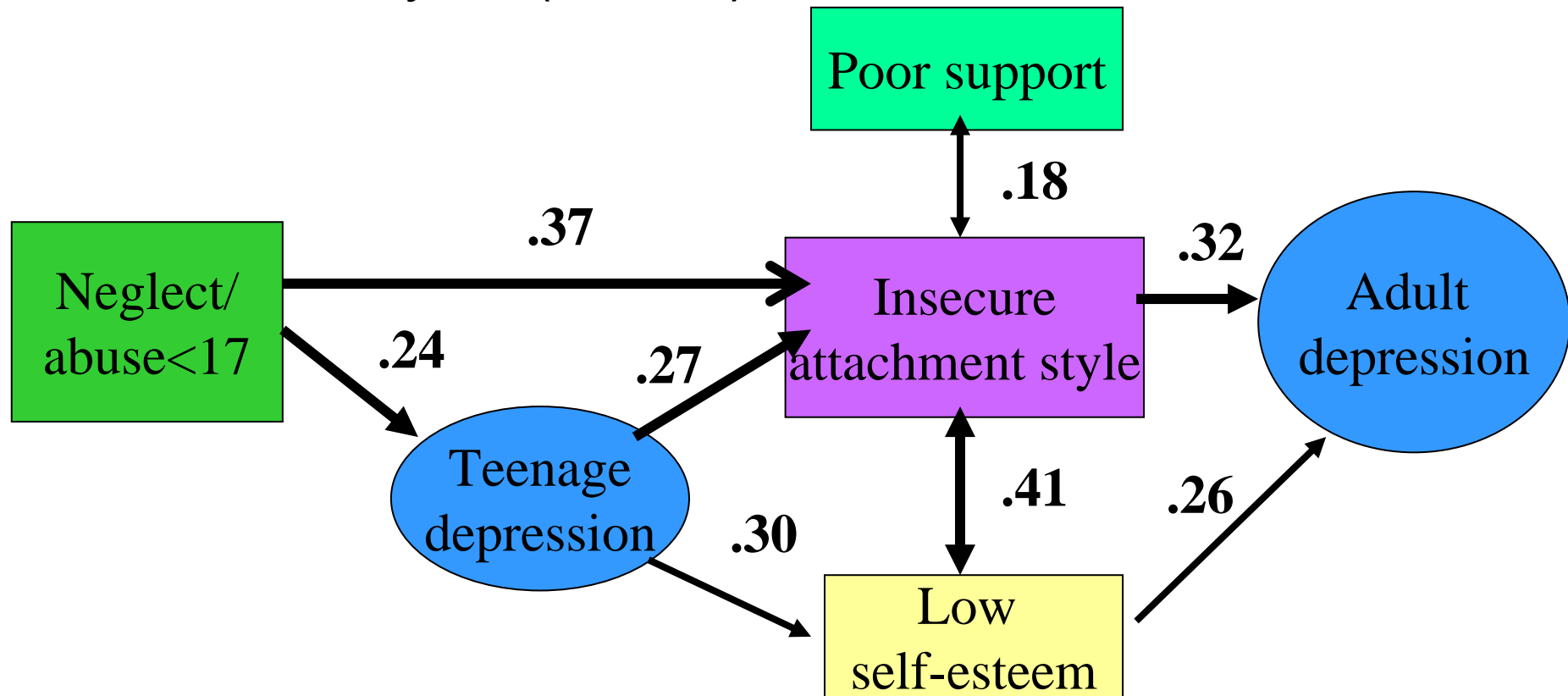
- Clearly Secure

Degree of impairment

- Marked
- Moderate
- Mild

Childhood experience and attachment in adult women

Path analysis (n=303)



Dual/disorganised style: Fearful and Angry Dismissive - Darla

Darla is 22 years old and lives with her 2^{1/2} year old daughter and her partner. She is isolated and only sees her sister and her mum. She has lost contact with a lot of her friends. Childhood experience of physical and sexual abuse. Has substance abuse, depression and self harm behaviour. Her attitudes to attachment show both fear of rejection as well as anger in relationships:

'I don't trust anyone now. Best friends always turn out to be enemies – I would not tell my friends anything because they cannot keep a secret. I just feel you can't trust anyone. About her partner she says: "I really trust him 100% but I'm very scared of him"

The relationship I had before - I was hurt badly, I was faithful and he wasn't. I find it too hard to fall in love and trust someone else. That is why I have to be in control. (Did you feel scared your partner will let you down?) Yeah, every day I do. I have fallen out with a lot of friends through trust.

Anger: 'If things don't go the way I want them to I just explode'. With her partner: 'I'm the violent one. If he does something I don't like, I just switch. He gets scratches and bruises. It is me that is throwing and banging and thrashing.' Her daughter: *I do get angry with her, I have to control myself*

Angry-dismissive – Enmeshed - Mike

Mike is aged 29, lives alone having broken up with girlfriend. Has two children by previous relationships but never sees them. Has been violent in his partner relationships. Neglect and physical abuse in childhood from stepmother, residential care because of conduct problems at 13. Father criminal and often in prison. Has ASPD, substance abuse and depression.

Is suspicious and finds it hard to trust most people. "I only listen to 50% of what somebody tells me" He doesn't like asking for help. "I've been in the most extreme positions and not asked anyone to help." (Is having someone close important) Sometimes and sometimes it can be a pain in the neck. I like having someone around and then I don't as much as when they weren't around. I'm not a very argumentative person but I do get into arguments, I can't help it! sometimes people will say things to me that touch me the wrong way or say something and it will head to a fight." (Gets into arguments and fights very quickly. Hostile to family, girlfriend, other friends).

Enmeshed – Mike (cont...)

“I’m a very paranoid person.” Jealous and possessive. “I do get very jealous and worry about people going off, my girlfriend is not allowed to have more friends. Always in the back of my mind that that might go off.” Is possessive..

(Anxious when others away) yeah I do. I start asking questions and worry about them. If girlfriend is back late .. I don’t feel sick...I start getting angry. I want to know, know where she is and start getting the hump. If she does turn up here safe I want to know why!



Some findings of ASI

- Insecure attachment style is related to neglect, physical, sexual and psychological abuse in childhood in both adults and adolescents
- Anxious attachment styles mediates between neglect/abuse in childhood and adult depression and anxiety.
- Anxious attachment styles relate to self harm behaviour. Self harm relates specifically to role reversal and neglect in childhood.
- Disorganised styles relate to substance abuse and neglect/abuse from fathers
- Disorganised style is very high in young people in residential care with conduct problems, self harm etc





Discussion

- Are attachment categories useful for understanding different types of offender behaviour?
- Would the type of insecure style differentiate between offenders? Is dual profile helpful for clarifying disorganised attachment?
- Would the ASI be useful for assessing offenders in treatment?

