

Psychotherapy and Attachment

*Psychotherapy Sections of the British Psychological Society
and the Royal College of Psychiatrists
Royal Society of Medicine, November 1995*

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The political context is important. The British Psychological Society and the College of Psychiatrists are two of the five organisations who are competing to develop the profession of psychotherapy and who are committed to scientific research as practised in universities and hospitals. (The others are BAC, UKCP, and BCP who represent psychoanalysts). Attachment was a good theme, as it both celebrated the work of Bowlby and allowed integration between research and psychoanalysis.

Kim Bartholomew from Simon Fraser University, Canada, gave us a state of the art account of how the work of Ainsworth on attachment between child and parent has been expanded to look at attachment between couples. John Birtchnell from the Institute of Psychiatry showed his attachment to Bowlby by comparing and contrasting their respective careers. He described a way of profiling attachment strategies and linked them to the 10 personality disorders listed in DSM IV. Morris Eagle, another professor from Canada, pointed out that Bowlby's notion of attachment to background explains such things as the repetition of destructive re-

lationships. His emphasis on external real events leads psychoanalysts to reject him for not dealing in wishes, conflicts, fantasy and personality but, Morris Eagle pointed out, this did not cause any organisational difficulty, as Bowlby had no wish to found his own school of psychoanalysis. Jeremy Holmes, a psychiatrist from Devon who spoke last, invited us to sleep through his paper. And here was the problem. Each paper lasted 1 hour and 10 minutes. After two of these papers a 'discussant' talked for 15 minutes, after which there were just 10 minutes for 'plenary' discussion among the 200 participants. This format is excellent for research seminars and conferences of researchers working in the same field, but here it needed to be adapted to the needs of the teachers and practitioners who made up the bulk of the audience.

I liked the fact that Cassie Cooper and Frank Margison who head up the psychotherapy sections were running the registration desk and checked us in, and that Eric Bromley in his opening address reminded us that psychotherapy is, by its nature, subversive.