

ATTACHMENT

New Directions in Psychotherapy
and Relational Psychoanalysis

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Attachment

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Promoting Attachment and Inclusion

Our Vision and Values

The Bowlby Centre Vision

Our vision for our organisation is:

- Of The Bowlby Centre as a world-class centre for attachment-based therapy, research, and outreach.
- Of The Bowlby Centre as a welcoming home in London for our work with paid staff in key areas.
- Of The Bowlby Centre with a clear identity which gives legitimacy and recognition.
- Of The Bowlby Centre as a centre for developing thinking.

The Bowlby Centre Mission

In order to achieve that vision, The Bowlby Centre undertakes the following:

- The Bowlby Centre will provide accredited training to those wishing to be attachment-based psychotherapists.
- The Bowlby Centre will provide an attachment-based referral service and clinic especially to the excluded and unattached.
- The Bowlby Centre will develop other training provisions, especially those aimed at giving an attachment orientation to other professionals.
- The Bowlby Centre will develop an outreach provision aimed both at encouraging policy makers to heed attachment issues and at developing general attachment-based emotional literacy.
- The Bowlby Centre will contribute to research from its experience of attachment-based practice.

The Bowlby Centre Values

The Bowlby Centre mission will put into action the following agreed values:

- The Bowlby Centre believes that mental distress has its origin in failed and inadequate attachment relationships in early life and is best treated in the context of a long-term human relationship.
- Attachment relationships are shaped in the real world and impacted upon by poverty, discrimination, and social inequality. The impact of the social world will be part of the therapy.
- Psychotherapy should be available to all, and from an attachment-based psychoanalytic perspective, especially those discriminated against or described as 'unsuitable' for therapy.
- Psychotherapy should be provided with respect, warmth, openness, a readiness to interact and relate, and free from discrimination of any kind.
- Those who have been silenced about their experiences and survival strategies must have their reality acknowledged and not pathologised.
- The Bowlby Centre values inclusiveness, access, diversity, authenticity, and excellence. All participants in our organisation share the responsibility for anti-discriminatory practice in relation to race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, (dis)ability, religion, class, educational and learning style.

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Contents

EDITORIAL

- vii Breaking silence
Kate Brown

ARTICLES

- 1 Hidden infantile trauma in adult anxiety—where Spock was wrong
Patrick Casement
- 5 Attachment continuity: A neurobiological reassessment of attachment in adoption
Antonia Gergen
- 21 The exploration of interconnectivity between violence and blocked care within a forensic residential childcare setting
Julia Heselton, Ioan Ohlsson, and Simon Jafari
- 35 The racial internal working model and racial attachment styles
Mohini Murti Gulati-Olapoju
- 45 The analyst's migration in the client's inner world: How is it experienced?
Maryam Masoomi, Valentin Artounian, Hadi Zarafshan, and Shabnam Nohesara
- 61 Psychotherapy process and challenges in dissociative mutism: Attachment theory as framework
Harikrupa Sridhar, Himani Kashyap, Jyothsna Chandur, and Prabha S. Chandra
- 76 Applying the free energy principle to attachment theory: Implications for internal working models and mental health
Steve Arthey
- 97 A therapeutic community is a secure base, allowing growth which continues beyond treatment: A discussion on therapeutic communities as an attachment model using lived-experience voices captured in the medium of podcasts
Marilyn Ruttley, Ellie Wildbore, Natasha Williams, and Ciara Murphy
- 115 The Adult Attachment Interview: A critique
Niels Buus, Megan Galbally, Gaynor Blankley, and Ben Ong
- 128 Poetry

Book reviews

133 *How to be Real: A Survival Guide in Challenging Times*
by Stephen Frosh
Reviewed by Sue Wright

137 *Babies in Groups: Expanding Imaginations*
by Ben S. Bradley, Jane Selby, and Matthew Stapleton
Reviewed by Ratan Sarkar

142 Notes on contributors

148 Notes to contributors

Editorial

Breaking silence

Kate Brown

We believe that people who have undergone extreme traumatic experiences must have their reality acknowledged and their ways to survive deeply respected. (Bowlby Centre Philosophy, 2026)

The image we have chosen for the front cover of this journal is of a sculpture, or vase, made of horse hair. Horse hair is incredibly strong, and natural, a sign of vitality and strength, but in the form of a vase is exquisitely fragile and delicate. The object is able to contain some things, but not others, such as liquids. Like much therapeutic work, its boundaries are permeable, and its frame flexible but strong. It holds space. Hair falls from an animal or human, and is often treated as waste material, blown in the wind, removed from plug holes, discarded in waste bins. But here, the artist recognises it as something precious, something that can be used, and can be of value and beauty. Like therapy, it holds space and form, but in the hands of an artist, is graceful and almost without effort.

Recognising the value, fragility, and beauty in the natural world is fundamental to our humanity, and something easily lost, threatened, or destroyed. Once gone, it might never return, leaving a trail of devastation in its wake. Through recognising the value and beauty of the natural world, we also recognise something of our own human beauty and value, and that of others. In recent months, we have witnessed growing escalation of destruction and violence in the Middle East with horror.

It is significant that we have included in this edition an article by psychiatrist and psychotherapist, Dr Maryam Masoomi and her colleagues writing about the experiences of Iranian patients when their analysts migrate. We recognise and honour the courage it has taken to write this research, live through these experiences, and present this research for publication. We also acknowledge the privilege that those living in nations who are currently more peaceful enjoy, and offer our kinship-in-the-same-darkness.

This journal has a rich history of expanding understanding of trauma, loss, and separation. Previously published in this journal is an article by Stolorow (2011), who tells us:

Although the possibility of emotional trauma is ever present, so, too, is the possibility of forming bonds of deep emotional attunement within which devastating emotional pain can be held, rendered more tolerable, and, one hopes, eventually integrated. Our existential kinship-in-the-same-darkness is the condition for the possibility both of the profound contextuality of emotional trauma and of the mutative power of human understanding. (p. 12)

The written word is often how we metaphorically break silence, communicate, and share our common humanity and kinship in the same darkness. Literature is a form of psychoanalysis (Schwartz, 2001) and offers a rich source of psychoanalytic inspiration. Bowlby was once described as the “Dickens of Psychoanalysis” (Laschinger, 2012), and in his morality tale, *Oliver Twist*, Dickens (1838) wrote:

We need be careful how we deal with those about us, when every death carries to some small circle of survivors, thoughts of so much omitted, and so little done, of so many things forgotten, and so many more which might have been repaired! There is no remorse so deep as that which is unavailing; if we would be spared its tortures, let us remember this, in time. (p. 215)

It has been a joy to gather, curate, and edit this collection of articles and research papers. I am extremely proud to have been involved in bringing this edition of the *Attachment* journal to fruition. As I sat to contemplate this collection of articles as a whole, I realised that each of these articles had something to contribute to the theme of silence, and The Bowlby Centre value of acknowledging the reality of those who have been silenced. This edition of the journal is also published within a social and historic context of growing awareness of the abuse of power by those in positions of privilege and authority, both nationally and globally. We are particularly honoured and pleased to have received the profoundly moving article by Patrick Casement. The article addresses unprocessed trauma and the impact of being left to cry whilst being too young to have words with which to communicate or make sense of the distress.

In this edition, Antonia Gergen’s article reminds the reader about the survival strategies of the adopted child. Mentioned in this article are issues to do with indiscriminate friendliness exhibited by adopted children, which may fall lower in awareness compared to very overt signs of distress and trauma. Whilst it may seem counterintuitive to be concerned that a child is too friendly, adoptive parents watching their child striking up conversations with strangers might also feel alarmed. They might also want some insights as to how best to support and protect their child without shaming them. To understand this behaviour as attachment behaviour, which has meaning in the context of early separation, allows the behaviour to be destigmatised, made more comprehensible, and therefore worked through.

Also in this edition is Heselton et al.’s article, which explores the experience of caregivers in a forensic setting concerning the concept of blocked care, and its links

to an increased risk of violence. This is a helpful reminder of the importance of staff's support systems, reflective practice, and risk management issues around violence. The caregiver and recipient of care's attachment systems are intimately linked and intertwined. It implies that if we wish to build a safer, less violent society and culture, we must attend to the implications of caregivers' attachment histories and legacy of trauma. There can be no sense of security without earned relational security within and between those in need and those providing care, and this is very complex and hard won indeed.

We were also delighted to receive Mohini Murti Gulati-Olapoju's article on the racial internal working model. By linking experiences of race and racial identity to attachment theory, including internal working models, a new attachment theory-informed way of approaching race is offered. This is a crucial development of language about race and attachment theory, enabling each sphere of understanding to deepen, and inform the other. This allows the pain of racism to be verbalised and understood both within a person's cultural and social context, and within the context of an individual's attachment history.

Mutism is a subject which also puts us in the realm of the unspeakable. In this context, Kashyap and colleagues conceptualise mutism in the context of dissociation, and link this to a client's attachment history. The description of the clinical work gives a useful example of how good outcomes of therapy can be gained by recognising the meaning and function of perplexing symptoms in the context of dissociation and a person's attachment history. Those carrying out the therapeutic work in this context resist any pull towards short-term fixes offered by behavioural models seeking to manage behaviour rather than understanding behaviour's meaning. By delving deeper, it is possible to secure more meaningful and lasting change. This is a significant departure from the historic treatment of mutism by previous generations, which includes soldiers of the First World War said to be suffering from shell shock, who received barbaric treatment to force the patient to talk (Reid, 2019).

Another central aspect of attachment theory, is the concept of internal working models (Bretherton & Munholland, 2008), and we were happy to receive Arthey's article in which he explores predictive modelling and feelings of safety, and expands these concepts in relation to internal working models.

Therapeutic communities have always been an arena where attachment theory is seen in action, and provides treatment beyond the fifty-minute psychoanalytic hour of those whose distress is too great to be contained in outpatient treatment. Attachment is one of the fundamental aspects of therapeutic community treatment (Haigh, 1999), and therapeutic community treatment has much more to contribute to our understanding of human distress with insights that can be applied to outpatient therapy. It is exciting that we have a contribution from Ruttley and colleagues in this edition of the journal, examining and reflecting upon their lived experience of therapeutic community treatment through the medium of podcasts, using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Too often the voices of those with lived experience of receiving treatment of care in therapeutic settings are not heard from, and may be deprived of platforms for their voices to be heard. Historic social injustice and deep-rooted power imbalance seem to prevent this inequality from being addressed in the wider psychotherapy field, despite flattened hierarchies being a long-held tradition of therapeutic communities (Kennard, 1998). Developments in digital media mean that it is possible for those who have previously been without traditional platforms to speak (such as at conferences or via publication), to now have a wider means for their voice to be heard by receptive others. We are grateful for the courage of the authors of this article for writing about their lived experience of interactions with services, and their innovative use of podcasts.

The journal should also be a forum in which it is possible to critically evaluate long-established traditions and historic ways of doing things. This is to ensure that how we work remains open to question and wisdom remains subject to proper scrutiny and reality testing. One of the central tools in terms of categorising attachment styles has been the Adult Attachment Interview. Historically in this journal, the role of the Adult Attachment Interview has been questioned. For example, Slade (2008) argues:

Child and adult attachment categories have become the sacred cows of attachment research. Certainly, these have been crucial to the scientific evolution of the field, and to the range of empirical validations that have carried the field forwards immeasurably. At the same time, the focus on classification has rarified and oversimplified the meaning and dynamic functioning of attachment processes, resulting in an over-emphasis on classification within the research domain and a failure to appreciate the complexity and depth of attachment processes as they are manifest within the clinical domain. (p. 91)

We are therefore pleased to have received and published in this edition of the journal an article by Professor Neils Buus and colleagues, which critiques the Adult Attachment Interview. In order for our profession to remain vibrant and relevant, there needs to be a continuation of a culture of critical analysis of even the most sacred of our sacred cows.

Our offering of poetry and book reviews continues, and we wish to continue to combine the creative and poetic alongside research, theoretical, and clinical papers. We continue to welcome poetry, suggestions of books to review, and offers to review books. We also invite you to contact me as editor-in-chief of the journal, with suggestions and comments you have of topics to explore and ways to better reflect all aspects of our community and our work. We would certainly be interested to hear from you, and may consider the publication of suitable letters to the editor, with mutual agreement. Our next edition (due out in December 2026) will be on digital technology and attachment.

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