

Attachment and body representations in adolescents with (and without) personality disorders

Howard Steele¹, Bernadette Buhl-Nielsen², and Miriam Steele¹

¹The New School for Social Research

²University of Copenhagen Section for Geogenetics

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Abstract

Background: Attachment theory has served as an influential framework for understanding psychopathology, partly due to reliable assessment methodology. The influence of insecure attachment on attitudes towards the body and the impact this might have for the development of psychopathology is however less well elucidated. **Method:** 123 adolescents (35 with borderline personality disorder or BPD, 25 with other personality disorders or OPD and 63 comprising a healthy control group) were interviewed with the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) and the Mirror Interview (MI). The MI questions respondents about how they feel about their bodies, as they look in the mirror **Results:** The AAIs from the BPD group were predominantly insecure-preoccupied and unresolved. Adolescents with PD but particularly BPD had significantly greater issues with negative body representations (NBR) than the control group. Insecure attachment and unresolved attachment status were significantly linked to NBR. Regression results revealed a low loving relationship with fathers, high involving anger with father, low coherence of mind & passive speech uniquely predicted 61% of variance in NBR. **Conclusion:** Unfavorable attachment experiences may give rise to negative body images and influence the development of psychopathology, especially BPD.

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