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The tie between parent and child with significant developmental delay

Exploring home observed attachment behaviour

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- Significant cognitive delay (~ severe or profound ID)
- 1 → 6/8 years old
- Min. 4 n/week at home
- Variety in additional syndromes, problems or disabilities

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Content


- 1) Attachment & intellectual disabilities: Is that important?
Theoretical background
- 2) Do children with significant developmental delay differentiate their attachment behaviour towards parents?
Discussion of the paper
- 3) How does this fit into the doctoral project: 't Klikt!
Embedding in larger project

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1) Attachment in children with an intellectual disability: Is that important?

Theoretical background



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Attachment & mental health

! At risk for mental health and behavioural problems

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Emotion regulation problems at the core?

↓

Parent as attachment figure?

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• Protect me
• Comfort me
• Delight in me
• Organize my feelings

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Crying = unpleasant

↓

Successful affect regulation by parents:
Parents are sensitive and responsive.

↓

Children experience their parent as a secure base: Internal working model

↓

Exploration and the development of autonomous affect regulation

↓

Coping with stressful events autonomously

(Bowlby, 1969)
(Shaver, Mikulincer, Pereg, 2003)

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• Protect me
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• Stress-attachment model

Stress ↔ Insecure attachment

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(Janssen, Schuengel, & Stoik, 2002)


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Emotional wellbeing

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- Parenting = less self-evident
- Uncertainty about role of primary caregiver
- Risk factors concerning secure attachment
 - Prolonged distress
 - Extraordinary sensitivity required
 - Unresolved reactions to diagnosis
 - ...



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2) Do children with significant developmental delay differentiate their attachment behaviour towards parents?

Discussion of the paper



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2.1 Aims

1. ... Examine the extent to which children display **attachment behaviour** towards parents
2. ... Examine the extent to which they **differentiate** their behaviour according to the interaction partner
3. ... Explore individual differences in attachment behaviour according to **child- and parent characteristics**

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2.2 Method- Participants

- 14 care organisations participated
- 20 families
- Inclusion criteria
 - a. Between 1 and 7 years old
 - b. Severe or profound ID
 - c. Living at home
- No exclusion criteria
- ① High non-response



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- Sample
 - 2y1m – 6y11m
 - Developmental age:
 - $X = 11.11$ m (6 -16.50 m)
 - Special daycare or special education schools
 - Belgian nationality (one adopted)
 - 35% mothers' firstborn



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2.3 Results – Attachment behaviour

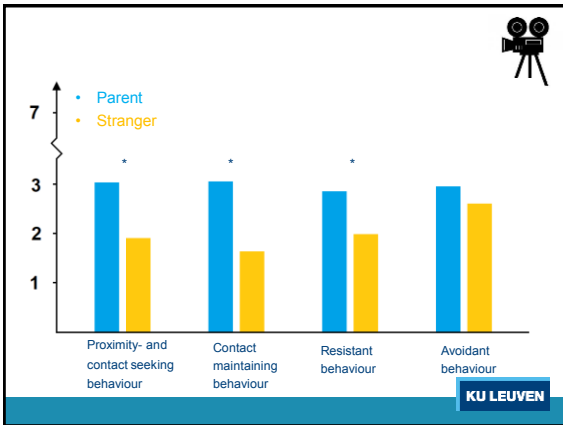
Secure attachment behaviour	Min	Max	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Mother's self-report	2.35	6.58	4.77	1.15	1					
2. Father's self-report	2.40	6.40	4.35	1.10	.58*	1				
3. Towards father according to mother	2.15	6.16	4.53	1.15	.96*	.81*	1			
4. Towards mother according to father	2.70	6.55	4.55	1.10	.68*	.96*	.68*	1		
5. Total composite across informants	2.41	6.20	4.55	1.01	.90*	.87*	.91*	.91*	1	
6. Independent composite with one informant	2.45	6.28	4.54	1.03	.90*	.86*	.92*	.91*	1*	1

Most

“Physical contact with me helps to comfort my child”
 “When my child is frightened or sad, (s)he is easily comforted by me”
 “I am able to comfort my child by paying attention and talking to him/her”

 “My child readily follows my suggestions”
 “When my child finds something new to play, (s)he draws my attention”
 “When other children bother my child, (s)he seeks contact”

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2.3 Results – Child & parent characteristics

- Girls > Boys
- No epilepsy/autism > Epilepsy/autism
- Visual/motor impairment > No visual/motor impairment
- Developmental age: Developmental age

- Additional disabilities → less differentiation between parent/stranger
- Developmental age - Proximity seeking:

- Regularly or frequently supportive of their child
- Parental support (maternal sensitivity!) ~ secure attachment behaviour

- Parental support ~ observed attachment behaviour

2.4 Take home points

- Individual differences in attachment behaviour
 - Self-report
 - Observation
- Differentiation according to interaction partner

≠
- Developmental age ~ less contact- and proximity seeking
- Comorbid disabilities → less differentiation
- Limits to behavioural observation and existing coding scheme


Illustration take home 5




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't klikt!

't Klikt! A safe nest for my child with a significant developmental delay

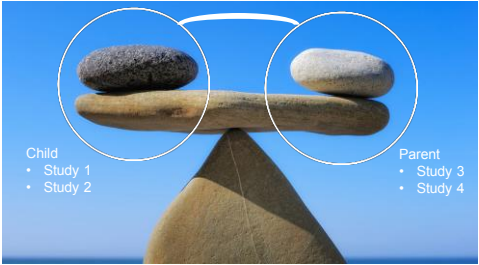
Embedding in doctoral dissertation



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Child

- Study 1
- Study 2

Parent

- Study 3
- Study 4

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Study 1: Observation study



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Study 2: Intervention child




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Study 3: Bioresponse intervention parents





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Study 4: Bioresponse vs. other interventions



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