

Arriving at a Conclusion on the Likelihood of Attachment Disorder: People of Mixed Race Heritage with Comparisons to Other Groups

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to provide a conceptual framework for the Study of Attachment Behaviour among persons of diverse ethnicity. It is argued that Attachment develops by virtue of a process of consistent and predictable care in early life. It is the basis for security feelings at this early stage of life. Reactive Attachment Disorder develops if this facility of care is not available.

Attachment Disorder has been studied in adopted children following severe abuse or multiple placements among orphans in circumstances of early severe deprivation. It is found in two fifths of maltreated foster care children. It requires an experience of extreme adversity in early life but in addition may require the co-existence of a trigger.

The present study compares findings in Black, White and Mixed Heritage malfunctioning carers and offenders. More of the mixed heritage people were brought up in care than the remainder. The groups were similarly distributed by the experience of child abuse but more of the mixed heritage group did not have a close relationship with both parents and more of them came from household where a mother was disordered. Many of the mixed heritage group suffered from identity confusion but some of the cases also suffered from this disorder. Conduct Disorder was equally distributed. It is argued that the co-existence of Reactive Attachment Disorder with Conduct Disorder may present difficulty in diagnosis.

The population is narrowed to include only those cases brought up in care and admitting to a poor relationship with their mother. By carrying out this control dual heritage mothers cannot be distinguished from Blacks and Whites on most variables with the exception of two factors.

Those of dual heritage were more likely to admit that they did not know one or other parent. In addition those of dual heritage were more likely to come from families where their mother or father suffered from mental disorder. These findings might suggest that this population of at risk persons is highly selected but unlikely to show any variation in the frequency of Reactive Attachment Disorder among mixed heritage and other groups.

These findings are discussed and note is made of the likely effect of private fostering in the development of Reactive Attachment Disorder.