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Trends. Attachment Theory and Intelligence Case Officers

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Abstract: This Trends article discusses attachment theory as it is applied to intelligence case officers.

A significant contribution of political psychology comprises the role of attachment theory as applied to intelligence case officers developing and maintaining relationships with prospective, actual, and past agents. In its most common variation, attachment theory posits (1) several types of emotional relationships between toddler and mother and (2) predictive isomorphic links between these relationships and dyadic adult relationships. The types of relationships are based on observations wherein a mother leaves her toddler in a strange room to be observed by an experimenter—conceived as the strange situation—and, then, later returns. The most frequently identified types of relationships—viz., secure, avoidant, and resistant—involve likely sequences, permutations, and combinations of emotional, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral reactions between the members of a dyad. Correct typing of an agent by a case officer can facilitate agent handling from the initial approach to termination within the strange situation of the intelligence world.

However, there is a contemporary controversy based on empirical data about the very ontological status of attachment constructs, including whether they represent continuous or discrete and taxonomical or dimensional entities (cf. Waters & Beauchaine, 2003). Is this cause to jettison applications of attachment theory? Probably not. It may well turn out that attachment theory provides a useful narrative to construct yet other narratives about people. The veracity of these other narratives may be of little ultimate import as whether there is a Ding an sich—a thing in itself independent of human perception. (See Blatt, S. J., & Levy, K. N. (2003). Attachment theory, psychoanalysis, personality development, and psychopathology. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 23, 102-150; Fraley, R.C. (2002). Introduction to the special Issue: The psychodynamics of adult attachments--Bridging the gap between disparate research traditions. *Attachment & Human Development*, 4, 131-132; Kobak, R. (2002). Building bridges between social, developmental and clinical psychology. *Attachment & Human Development*, , 216-222; Waters, E., & Beauchaine, T.P. (2003). *Developmental Psychology*, 39, 417–422.) (Keywords: Attachment Theory, Intelligence Personnel)