



UEL Research & Knowledge Exchange Conference 2013

Call for Abstracts

Name & Title of Presenter:	Mark R. McDermott
School:	Psychology
Co investigators:	Nilupa B. Barik
Title of Abstract:	Rebelliousness and attachment difficulties as legacies of parental neglect in childhood.
Key Theme/ Key words:	Rebelliousness, attachment, neglect

Abstract (No more than 400 words):

What we did: we gave questionnaire measures of proactive and reactive rebelliousness, attachment style in adulthood, and recalled parenting style to eighty adults, 45 men & 35 women, aged 18 to 50 (mean age=25; sd=7.45). We also collected demographic information from each respondent.

We found that: (i) an attachment style characterised by a feeling of being uncomfortable with closeness and intimacy independently of other variables predicted self-reported levels of proactive and reactive rebelliousness; (ii) a neglectful parenting style, whether maternal or paternal, was independently predictive of both proactive and reactive rebelliousness; (iii) a maternal parenting style of indifference was also found to be predictive of reactive rebelliousness; (iv) paternal indifference predicted proactive rebelliousness; (v) over-controlling and abusive parenting styles however, were not found to be predictive of either forms of rebelliousness (with the exception of an abusive paternal style for proactive rebelliousness); and (vi) self-reported parental neglect was found to be associated with feelings of discomfort with closeness & intimacy .

We concluded: parental neglect emerges as an important childhood antecedent of both the sensation seeking form of rebelliousness (proactive) and the disaffected form of rebelliousness (reactive) in adulthood. Parents not taking an active interest in their children's concerns, worries, episodes of being upset, in their friendships, whereabouts,

and other needs has long-term adverse consequences. Such neglect, by association, also appears to have implications for readiness to enter and feel comfortable in relationships in adulthood, which in turn feeds into nonconformity as an adult. A tripartite model of these variables is proposed.

Potential impacts & external links: these findings are discussed in relation to current explanations of disaffection and adolescent anomie and in relation to social policy interventions past, present and future possible. Opportunities for forging links with relevant public, private and third sector organisations who might be interested in taking forward these findings are considered.