

Review - The Attachment Bond: Affectional Ties Across the Lifespan, Virginia M Shiller, New York, Lexington Books, 2017, pp. V + 215, ISBN 978 1 4985 2253 3,

Chapter by chapter, page by page, this book offers a very comprehensive and highly technical insight into the world of attachment theory and its relevance to practice across the lifespan. The application to social work practice is only too clear once one digests and appreciates the contents of this book.

Shiller presents compelling arguments in relation to the formation and reformation of attachment bonds across the life course, paying attention to the impact early trauma can have on a child's internal working model.

Having a keen interest in attachment, I was eager to see how well Shiller unpacks the complexity of human interactions that form the basis for future relationship building. It was an honest and thought-provoking book that offered clarity around the relationship between early trauma and later-life psychology, as well as risks of psychopathology.

Chapter 1 focuses on the role and input from Main and Ainsworth, who have contributed widely to the attachment field. The exploration of the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) and the Strange Situation Procedure (SSP) throughout this book is highly technical. The focus and draw towards the work of Main and Ainsworth have meant, however, that there is no focus on the work of Crittenden (2008) and her DMM model (2008, p. 11). Readers interested in attachment would gain greatly from appreciating the various perspectives of attachment theory and development, in particular the work of Pat Crittenden and others.

Chapter 2 uses a number of case examples and vignettes which offer an opportunity to begin to understand the complexity of human behaviour as well as the functionality of it. There is fascinating detail of the SSP offered in this chapter. What is also welcome is the appreciation and focus on professionals avoiding 'mother blaming' (p. 28). This, in particular, should be a great focus and attention to an emerging social worker at both undergraduate and postgraduate stages.

The following two chapters explore in greater detail the formation of attachment. In Chapter 4, there is a captivating exploration of both victimisation (p. 77) and cartoon perceptions (p. 74), both of which are critical in understanding the finer nuances of attachment bond formation.

Shiller continues to expand on her desire to express caution around understanding the AAI and the SSP, which is both welcome and refreshing. What is fascinating, further, about this chapter is that this is the first point at which reflective integration is mentioned and referred to. Reflective integration (otherwise known as working memory) refers to the process by which 'past and present information can be integrated' (Farnfield and Holmes, 2014, p. 64). It is this integration that leads to the formation of new dispositional representations, which is a wide range of images/thoughts that come to mind when you hear a particular person's name (Damasio, 1994).

Chapter 6 brings together wider discussions around the ability for children and young people to adapt to their environments, as well as their care-givers. There is focus on internalisation and externalisation of feelings and behaviours which is critical for all social workers engaged with at-risk populations. Even more critical are the findings and recommendations found within Chapter 8. This chapter explores and expands on the notions of shared care, particularly the impact of this on a child's internal working model. This thorough and detailed exploration of overnight contact is critical to all students and qualified social workers.

Owing to the high degree of technicality associated with the SSP and AAI explored in this book, readers would benefit from having a foundation knowledge of attachment theory before embarking on *The Attachment Bond*. Publications by Howe (2011) such as *Attachment Across the Life Course* and *Why Love Matters* by Gerhardt (2014) would offer such a foundation.

Overall, this is a book which offers great insight into the formation and reformation of attachment across the lifespan, with a particular focus on childhood and youth. As with much research and evidence on attachment theory, this book focuses on the mother–child dyad, which Shiller recognises as a limitation in working with a wide interpretation of the term ‘care-giver’. Furthermore, there is a focus on the family unit being a mother and a father, which again is recognised as attracting obvious limitations in its application.

This is an insightful and informative book which draws on research internationally. When thinking about the impact of early-life experiences on the emerging adult mind, the overwhelming message from this book is that correlation does not necessarily imply causation. Reviewed, on the rear of Shiller’s book, by seminal writers in the area of attachment theory such as Siegel, Steele and Van Ijzendoorn clearly positions this book as a top read for professionals and academics.

References

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Farnfield, S. and Holmes, P. (2014) *The Routledge Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Hove, East Sussex, Routledge.*

Gerhardt, S. (2014) *Why Love Matters*, Hove, East Sussex, Routledge.

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