

# Australian Journal of Educational & Developmental Psychology (AJEDP)

Volume 8 2008

---

## Affective Anomia: An interventional focus for Attachment Disorder

Michael G. King  
Sebastopol Medical Clinic  
Sebastopol, Victoria, Australia

Karyn Newnham  
University of Ballarat, Victoria, Australia

### Abstract

It has been proposed that social disconnectedness at school age can stem from early unsatisfactory attachment experiences. This interpretation leads to the somewhat diffuse label "Attachment Disorder" (AD) however there exist few school-relevant interventions for the various forms of AD. A new perspective (King and Newnham, 2008) with more promising avenues for intervention has proposed that:

- (a) AD be seen as instances of the failure to (thus far) master the fundamental socio-developmental level of Basic Trust described by Erikson and by Blos.
- (b) The failure to experience and to master Basic Trust goes hand in hand with an inadequate ability to identify and predict emotional responses of others – this deficit being precisely linked with the social/behavioural deficits which are described as AD.
- (c) By school age, deficient Basic Trust may be appropriately strengthened by acquiring the capacity to anticipate other people's affective responses – that is, Affective Empathy (AE).
- (d) School relevant interventions for a range of resistant social and behavioural problems may be based upon improving AE.

Building upon this interpretation and applying the communication model of Bormann's Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT) a short class-based intervention was designed with overt goal of more exciting and interesting story writing skills to help all students, and the covert goal of improved Affective Empathy. Testing the hypothesis that AE can be changed, in a pilot study of three one hour lessons held at 2-week intervals, a group of 7 students, mean age 10y11m, found significantly improved their scores on the test of AE.

[Link to full text paper pdf \(95KB\)](#)

*Uploaded: 18 December 2008*

---