The Politics of Attachment *
Evidently still relevant after 20 years

This collection of essays was published in 1996 by Free Association Books following a conference of the same name – and with many of the same contributors – held at the Tavistock Clinic in March of the same year.

Given the passage of time it is in some ways disappointing that these papers still sound so familiar; the prospect of using systematic knowledge to fashion a better society seems a far off prospect in 2015.

Below is the preface to the Greek edition of the Politics of Attachment, published almost ten years after the English one, followed by Sebastian’s short talk at the 1996 book launch in the House of Commons, and the first (largely Jane’s) and last (largely Sebastian’s) pieces in the book.

Jane Roberts DBE and Sebastian Kraemer.
Joint conference organisers and book editors

September 2015

Besides ourselves the contributors to the book were

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patricia Hewitt</td>
<td>Preface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marjorie (Mo) Mowlam MP†</td>
<td>The Political context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremy Holmes</td>
<td>Attachment theory: a secure base for policy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynne Murray</td>
<td>Personal and social influences on parenting and adult adjustment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrea Pound †</td>
<td>Hope in the inner city: towards a new deal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Utting</td>
<td>Tough on the causes of crime? Social bonding and delinquency prevention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray Pahl †</td>
<td>Friendly society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beatrix Campbell</td>
<td>Gender crisis and community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Nicholson</td>
<td>Place and local identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian Taylor †</td>
<td>Is there an alternative to the global society?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan Gosling</td>
<td>The business of ‘community’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Benington</td>
<td>New paradigms and practices for local government: capacity building within civil society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tessa Jowell MP</td>
<td>The life of a legislator: can politicians be normal people?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Ormerod</td>
<td>You pays your money: models of capitalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Marris †</td>
<td>The management of uncertainty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oleg Liber</td>
<td>Digital community: ‘only connect’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Rustin</td>
<td>Attachment in context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helena Kennedy QC</td>
<td>Aux armes, citoyens!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• From the preface to the Greek edition of *The Politics of Attachment* (2005)

The conference that led to the publication of this book was momentous. It took place in the dying years of the Conservative government in UK, and was full of hope in a future Labour government that would create a more cohesive society, in which human attachments to others but also to places and projects, would be respected. Two of the contributors to the conference (Tessa Jowell and the late Mo Mowlam) later became Cabinet Ministers in the 1997 Labour government, as did the author of the preface to the English edition of this book (Patricia Hewitt). Many of the other contributors were, and still are, distinguished figures in British public and intellectual life.

The book’s aim was to draw together thinking from different disciplines within a framework of attachment theory and in so doing, introduce another perspective to the language of politics. It attracted considerable interest and may well have played a significant part in the fact that the concept of attachment is now part of the currency of family policy in the UK. There is, furthermore, vigorous debate about the concept of social capital and ways in which the stock of social capital can be increased. Indeed, one of the editors (JR) has argued, as Leader of a central London local authority, that a seminal role of local government should be precisely to address these issues.

There is however a long way to go to achieve a society in which the profound inequalities that rent apart our social fabric are diminished, and in which the power of connectedness in human experience is recognised. In retrospect, we could have been more emphatic about the role that economic inequality plays in undermining social networks. We regret therefore that we were not able to include a chapter by Richard Wilkinson¹ whose work provides compelling evidence for the health and social costs of inequality. Once physical and economic survival is assured it is social relations that determine the quality of life for all of us. This is also the message of attachment theory.

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Jane and I have discussed whether or not the politics of attachment is a "Big Idea". I don't think either of us believe that it is, but there is something new in it, in that it brings together ideas which up to now have been separate, psychology and politics. I think we should regard this project as successful if it offers any opening towards new ways of political thinking. There are many parallel efforts going on, which strongly suggests that there is a real need – call it millennial if you like – for fresh answers, even fresh questions.

One of these question is "what is security?" The most secure time most of us can remember, if we are old enough, is the 1950s. There was peace, work for everybody, low inflation and a growing economy. Then we didn't need to lock our front doors and everyone was properly deferential to parents, teachers, doctors, ministers of the church, government and monarch. Divorce rates were actually falling, for almost the only time in the past hundred years. Yet at the same time you could be hanged for murder, and the beating of children was widespread – a normal practice. Homosexuality and attempted suicide were against the law.

Although everything was stable there was a price to pay, but it was largely out of sight, and out of mind. How many marriages were unhappy, how many children were abused and neglected? Where were all the people with chronic disabilities and mental illness? Although it is very tempting, we should not be too quick to idealise that kind of security, which depended to a considerable extent on the concealment or suppression of unhappiness, pain, nonoconformity and disability. Politically, too, the enemy was far away, behind the iron curtain. So security depended on shame, on external authority and external threats.

What we are trying to describe here is security that is internal, security that comes from inside people and inside society. Attachment theory traces the origins of personal security in the attentive care of parental figures. John Bowlby developed the theory from the 1940s to the 1980s and he said that being well looked after is not a luxury, but a necessary condition of good mental and physical health. He often pointed out that attachment is different from dependency. In his time the idea of independence was really based on a denial of personal need so that you would be expected, for example, to obey orders in battle and walk straight into the enemy's bullets without running away.\(^2\)

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\(^2\)During the second world war, Tavistock psychiatrists and psychologists, Bowbly among them, forged a new understanding of authority and leadership in the military in the War Office Selection Boards. Bowlby showed in an outcome study of WOSB that officers selected on the basis of their capacity to attend to the needs of soldiers were less likely to drop out than those selected in the traditional way by social and educational background and physical prowess. Dicks, HV (1970) 50 Years of the Tavistock Clinic. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, p. 107
Dependency was, and still is, regarded as a weakness. Of course children are dependent on adults, but the point about personal security is that it comes about from having people who are interested in how you are getting on, they don't just do everything for you. (The term 'nanny state' is peculiarly contemptuous of the real need for citizens to be looked after, as if parents who care for you had been entirely dismissed from the story). A mother who is interested in you in this way is actually dependent on you, the baby, in the sense that she has to take the lead from your noises and expressions. This helps you to know your own mind – it gives you a secure base in life and a far better chance of facing the world with confidence, curiosity, and generosity, a better base for resilience than self control. Those without this kind of insurance are relatively incompetent, which clearly has implications in all areas of society far beyond the realm of family life.

The evidence for the importance of early care came not only from clinical and social work experience but also from studies of other primates. Harry Harlow's notorious experiments with rhesus monkeys showed that if you take an immature monkey away from its mother it can't develop the necessary skill to bring up the next generation. What Harlow discovered is that the deprived juveniles clung to a terry towel (the next best thing to a mother), rather than to the alternative choice of a teated milk bottle. When these poor creatures got pregnant – and that was a pretty incompetent exercise in itself – they produced infants that they could not care for. They hadn't a clue, sometimes even trying to kill them. Similar things can happen to humans – if you don't have someone to help you make sense of your experiences in infancy and childhood then it's very hard to do the same for others, including your own children when they come along. Of course the attempted murder of children is relatively rare, but all children provoke intense feelings in parents, and it's easy to be overwhelmed by them if you haven't had a good enough experience of parenting yourself. The core idea of attachment is responsiveness – or attentiveness – which is carried from one generation to the next. Along with generations of child mental health workers, Bowlby knew this from experience, but now we have impressive evidence for it from rigorous and elegant scientific studies which have been going on since the late 1970s.

The idea that the capacity for attentiveness is transitive is crucial to our argument. Insecure attachments make people anxious and inconsiderate – even hostile. If we are badly treated we will pass that on to others. This is not only evident in families but also in larger organisations, hospitals, factories, businesses, local authorities and the country as a whole. And of course the more our industries move away from manufacturing to services the more aware we become of this process – we can see in the NHS how morale goes down as managers get more frustrated by the cuts they have to implement. There is little room for valuing the dedication of health workers in such an environment. What is a service if it is not attentive? It's a bad service. In general, security and trust in an organisation depend on the responsiveness of management at every level.
That’s just one example; this book is about the quality of social life as a whole, going beyond the intimate activities normally covered by attachment studies. The Politics of Attachment is not about families, and we are not making any recommendations for family policy, though obviously these are implied. The main message is that there are social conditions in which people will be more or less cooperative. We have actually had the experiment in the past fifteen years or so. Clearly the appeal to individualism sets up a race in which some will win and many will lose. The politics of attachment is an appeal to kind of collectivism, but not one based on the naive moralising of communitarianism, nor on the heavy handedness of state socialism.

The big ideas that we already have are democracy and socialism and it is the development of these that we hope to support with this book.

Sebastian Kraemer

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• From the text of the published book

INTRODUCTION

Holding the thread
Jane Roberts and Sebastian Kraemer

Exactly fifty years ago Bertrand Russell noted that the most creative periods in Western History have ended when what are seen as the fetters of moral restraint are cast off. In so doing, those societies sowed the seeds of their own destruction; what followed was the dominance of less civilised governments but which were nevertheless not so destitute of social cohesion” (Russell 1946). Russell ventured that liberalism with its appeal to more rational values might lead the way forward out of this endless cycle. As the millennium approaches, we too might find the dazzling uncertainties of the post modern world brushed away under regimes offering simple solutions to insoluble problems. Maybe, however, we need something more than a liberal analysis. The purpose of this book is to add to the prevailing political language an account of what we know about fundamental human needs and so renew our confidence in the possibility of more complex yet more cohesive societies. "There is no such thing as society" was perhaps the most provocative statement of the 1980's. We want to join in the refutation of that view. In our support there is now accumulating knowledge of the conditions under which cooperativeness may flourish as well as a richer understanding of how humans may turn against themselves and others. This book is not a manifesto although implications for policy there most certainly are. Rather, it describes how ordinary human life is both influenced by, and can influence, the process of politics.
Political thought, like fashion, moves in mysterious ways. Yet it has a common thread, the tension between social and individual needs, which can be traced from ancient times to the present. This argument has been brought into sharp relief in recent political history in the UK. With the swing away from the collective solutions of post war times, came an emphasis, not only from the right, on the importance of individual liberty, freed from the shackles of the state. But there is unease across the political spectrum at where that move has taken us, and an uncertainty as to what route we should now follow. Indeed, in our post modernist or "reflexive" (Giddens 1991) maelstrom, there is doubt that any defined way forward is possible. The certainties of that world have gone, particularly the oppositions on which they were based - east and west, male and female - leaving bewilderment in their wake. To whom or what do we belong? With whom or what do we identify? It is a matter of regret and nostalgia to many that we have left behind the age of deference, when people knew their place and behaved properly - at least in public. Now we know that public order, however desirable, can conceal many ills. Knowing this gives us little comfort, however. It serves only to unnerve us and shift the sands yet more. Insecurity abounds - jobs, housing, hierarchies, familiar family structures, our rulers' perceived competence, are all dissolving - and is no longer confined to any one class. Quite how do we make sense of it all?

Since Marx and Durkheim, writers from a phalanx of different "socio-" disciplines - sociology, social anthropology, social psychology and social psychiatry - have been preoccupied with the nature of the relationship between the individual and society. Though Marx began "In total contrast to German philosophy, which descends from heaven to earth, here it is a matter of ascending from earth to heaven......of setting out from real, active human beings, and on the basis of their real life processes demonstrating the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life process" (Marx 1846), he ended up with a view of industrial society in which individuals were little distinct from one another except by virtue of their place in the social structure, their class. Political writing has continued to be dominated by a social, rather than a psychological view of the world, but because of that, something has been missing. Cohen persuasively argues that social anthropology has suffered from the same defect, its concern with the social bases of relations ignoring the dimensions of self and self consciousness. He acknowledges "the irony that we have to approach the fundamental problem of social cohesion through its apparent opposite, selfhood and personal identity" (Cohen 1994).

In the political domain little attempt had been made, until recently, to examine the more subtle ways in which the individual and society are inextricably bound up with one another, rather than simply being in irreconcilable conflict. The once agonised political search for "the big idea" is now more exploratory in mood, with many writers and thinkers, not always aware of each others' work, converging on the questions implied by this book - what are the qualities that define good societies and good relationships within and between them? (Ignatieff 1990, Giddens 1991, Nussbaum 1992, Samuels 1993, Midgely 1994, Zeldin 1995). Much of this debate is reminiscent of the philosophies
of the enlightenment, yet our knowledge, particularly about human desires and needs, is far greater now than then.

Many writers have brought in psychoanalysis to bridge the gap between the individual psyche and the social/political domain, from Freud (1961) himself, through Fromm (1963) and Reich (1983), to more recently Frosh (1989), Richards (1989), Rustin (1991), Gordon (1995) and many others. These attempts have not on the whole broken through into mainstream political thinking. Yet extensive research over the last half century in the rather different, but related fields of developmental psychology and personality development have a crucial but hitherto neglected contribution to make to political debate. John Bowlby, on whose theory we focus in this book, was well aware of the social implications of his ideas and indeed considered the interplay between psychology and democracy 50 years ago (Bowlby 1946). Around the same time, another eminent practitioner, the psychoanalyst and paediatrician, Donald Winnicott, wrote extensively about the roots of anti-social behaviour and delinquency (Winnicott 1964). Despite the determined efforts of Bowlby and Winnicott, the political and the psychological have remained until recently, resolutely separate.

There are now, however, some tentative moves from the social/political side towards rapprochement. Words such as community, belonging, stakeholding, exchange, gifting, trust are on everyone's lips. Avner Offer, an economic historian, highlights the notion of reciprocity and the economy of regard in non-market exchange. He goes further, "...It is reasonable to assume that the capacity for regard, like the capacity for language, is innate, even if the forms it takes are culturally specific" (Offer 1996). Indeed it is, as this book seeks to demonstrate. From the social sciences, Anthony Giddens emphasises the notions of risk and trust in our current setting of "late modernity". He views trust as "a crucial generic phenomenon of personality development... directly linked to achieving an early sense of ontological security" (Giddens 1991). Also focusing on trust, but on its role in economic life, Fukuyama (1995) stresses the significant impact of "spontaneous sociability" by which he means the ability of societies "to form new associations" (or, as we would say, attachments).

Recent psychological studies show what the conditions for sociability are, and in this book we attempt to connect these with current political thinking. This is not to say that people are really nicer than one might think but to argue carefully from what we know from psychology and ethology, that our niceness or nastiness is not irretrievably fixed in our genes, but is reciprocally affected by the social and cultural environment. Whilst acknowledging the complex nature of the relationship between biology and the social sciences, the distinguished ethologist, Robert A Hinde, has argued too that "the view that characteristics of human social structures and sociocultural structures are rooted in the behavioural propensities of individuals is reasonable, and indeed inevitable" (Hinde 1987). The essential message is that the quality and style of interaction, in government, business, education and so on, has a major impact on the lives of the participants.
Several disclaimers are necessary. First, we are not offering a theory that can explain everything about human behaviour. Although attachment is a concept based in biology and psychology, it has little to do with the sociobiological views of E.O. Wilson and his followers, who were clearly in possession of what they saw as a comprehensive theory of human nature (Wilson 1978). Attachment theory makes no such claims. It sets out a model of healthy development, and is at its most powerful in identifying the conditions that promote it. It is less confident when it comes to accounting for the more extreme and perverse forms of human behaviour. The message of sociobiology, in contrast, is that most of what human beings do, whether good or bad, is determined by evolutionary forces beyond anyone’s control; differences between people are primarily genetic. Of course, apart from identical twins, we are all genetically different but attachment theory points to a remarkable consistency in patterns of relationship, not only within the human species but in other mammals, and in birds. It shows that variations in the quality of attachment depend far more on the histories of the participants than on their genes. Our purpose is to place this knowledge alongside complementary social and political theories, not to replace them. It also needs to be said that much post-Darwinian theorising has been used to prop up the uses and abuses of social and political power, most notoriously in the work of the Victorian Herbert Spencer (note 1), who actually coined the term “survival of the fittest” and argued confidently that the theory of evolution supported the class and imperial values of his day. Not only was his argument logically wrong, but it was also predicated on a still common assumption about the nature of “untamed” animal life in the wild, that it is essentially cruel and savage; “every one for himself”. There is a great deal of modern evidence to show how sophisticated and attentive is the social life of wild animals, particularly primates. Even though fierce and violent acts between individual animals take place, chimpanzees, for example, are highly attuned to one another (Dunbar 1996), and exquisitely conscious of the need for peacemaking and the restoration of order after struggle (de Waal 1996). Midgley neatly sums it up, "The reality of affectionate bonds among social animals is now fully documented by ethologists. Their sociability is not just a means to an end" (Midgley 1994).

Secondly, this book is not an appeal to sentiment; quite the reverse. Because attachments are rooted in the earliest intimate relationships, there is a serious risk that some readers will recoil from the argument, as if it were merely an invitation to "love thy neighbour". Not so. Human relationships, public as well as intimate, depend as much on conflict as upon co-operation for their vitality, but to manage either requires social and emotional skills which have to be learned. Such skills are all the more vital if we are to be able to cope with and manage the uncertainties and risks that lie ahead. Rather than an exhortation to virtue, this book is an attempt to outline the conditions in which the learning of these skills can most effectively take place.

We have deliberately set out to assemble a group of contributors from disparate fields, from psychology and psychiatry to the social sciences but taking in economics, politics, law, journalism and cybernetics on the way. As editors, this is something of a double-
edged enterprise: a challenging venture but fraught with risks. The attempt to forge a common thread of understanding between different disciplines may be seen as brave but essentially misguided. Undaunted, however, we have persisted in trying to bring together the different contributions in such a way that a genuinely fresh and useful perspective emerges.

Our starting point is an understanding of personal and social well-being, based on attachment theory, which is widely accepted amongst child mental health workers, such as ourselves, but remains little known elsewhere, even amongst some of the most learned people. (Witness, for example, the reactions of many media commentators to the perpetrators of some particularly foul crimes in recent years.) An inescapable truth of human and other higher mammalian relationships is that those who are respectfully treated are more likely to be respectful to others. How this comes to be so is not self evident and will not be understood simply by seeking recourse to sentimentality, religious ethic or, the last refuge of the desperate, "common sense". Our contention is that the ideas underlying attachment theory have a significant contribution to make in understanding the links between one generation and the next, and between the individual and the social. Hard-headed stuff. Yet if the notion of attachment means anything at all to the general reader, it tends to conjure up a rather syrupy picture of loving contentment, such as a mother and baby enjoying each others’ company. Intimate moments like these are vital for healthy development, but attachment is not always sweet; in cases where children are dependent upon abusive and neglectful caregivers, it is painfully raw and confused (Main 1995). The idealisation of motherhood in two millennia of Christian iconography has contributed to our collective ignorance of the lives of real babies. What do they actually need? John Bowlby defined and redefined attachment theory from 1939 until his death in 1991 and was for many years scorned because he dared to spell it out, although many parents (mostly mothers, of course) instinctively knew. The answer is that babies need looking after, both physically and emotionally. Most people know about the former but are vague about the latter. As Jeremy Holmes describes in his chapter, attachment theory proposes that we all have a biological need to be in proximity to our caregivers in our earliest years so that we can be not only physically protected but emotionally contained, responded to, held in mind and stimulated. In such "good enough" (Winnicott 1974) conditions, we can then grow and develop in sufficient security to feel good about ourselves, more confident in ourselves and others (see Murray, this volume). It is no accident, from an evolutionary perspective, that the most intense proximity seeking behaviour, at 18 months, is seen in normal development at the time when mobility begins. Furthermore, it is in the first 18 months, before weaning, that the most rapid and critical brain growth occurs, a crucial time of preparation for humans and other primates, for the long period of steady childhood development before puberty and sexual maturation. Indeed it is important to note that the attachment process probably determines not only emotional and social development, but also the stability of physiological variables. There is strong evidence from animal studies to show that early separation from mother, for example, has profoundly disturbing effects on the maintenance of body systems such as the
circulation and pressure of the blood, immunity from infection, hormone levels, temperature control and so on (Hofer 1995 and see also Kraemer 1992).

The key to good attachment, as both Jeremy Holmes and Lynne Murray show, is consistency, sensitivity and responsiveness. What has all this got to do with our adult lives, let alone politics? Although the theory begins with observations of mother-infant pairs in both human and non-human species, it readily extends to include other relationships, such as between children and their fathers, grandparents and others important in any individual's life. Under "good enough" conditions, the quality of those relationships become internalised and so coalesce into a coherent personality - one who feels sufficiently good about him or herself, and can then turn out to meet the world with trust and confidence. It is also important to emphasise, as Holmes and Utting do in their chapters, that a secure attachment is more likely to develop if intense states of mind in infancy are emotionally contained; the setting and maintenance of clear boundaries later on, crucial for continuing healthy development, is thus made easier. In such circumstances, an individual can feel safe to explore and venture further afield. The capacity to trust is enhanced. Note that a secure attachment facilitates creativity, independence and autonomy, rather than encouraging dependency. On the other hand, an insecurely attached child may cling on desperately to a familiar figure, effectively imprisoned by anxiety. There are intriguing parallels here with the notion put forward by the anthropologist, James W Fernandez, that individuals struggle continuously against uncertainty, insecurity, "the dark at the bottom of the stairs" and reach out for familiarity and certainty. Only then, he argues, can individuals behave competently (Fernandez 1986). Nor is all this only in the realm of speculation; from no less an authority than the eminent child psychiatrist, Sir Michael Rutter, "most of the key components of attachment concepts have received empirical support" (Rutter 1995). As Holmes details, there is robust empirical research which links the conditions which make for security of children with a number of characteristics in which society has a legitimate and growing interest, such as self-esteem, sense of agency, problem solving ability and social competence. The story can now be tracked still further with the revealing work on adult attachment which emphasises not just the content of our life experiences, but crucially the way in which those experiences are construed, how individuals make sense (or not) of what has happened to them and therefore how their narrative hangs together. Even amongst those who have had adverse experiences and been traumatised, those who can bring coherence to their histories (and thus have a capacity for "reflexivity") have a far better chance of "breaking the cycle" - and of making secure attachments to their own children (Fonagy et al 1994).

Jeremy Holmes concludes his chapter with some thoughts about the application of attachment theory to the political domain and argues for "a new rallying call: security". This echoes the issues raised by Mo Mowlam, M.P. One of two national politicians contributing to this book, she sets the political context for thinking about insecurity both on an individual level (including Members of Parliament themselves......) and at community level. Throughout her essay, the demoralisation and humiliation of those
who cannot find work resounds; if we are serious about addressing the rampant insecurity in our society, we must do all that we can to enable people to find a job in which they are paid and treated decently. Attachment theory can usefully inform our understanding of the social and psychological effects of unemployment. Indeed, the response to unemployment is akin to that of any other situation in which a loss is sustained (Fagin & Little 1984). Studies since the 1930’s consistently report the significantly poorer mental health including loss of self-esteem and reduced social contact in those who lose their jobs (Bhugra 1993). This is hardly surprising given the importance that work has for self-identity. More recently, ill-effects from the anticipation of job loss, before employment status has changed, have been convincingly demonstrated (Ferrie et al 1995).

Mowlam goes on to draw on her current portfolio - Shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland - to warn of the dangers in communities which, though tightly knit, can be exclusive and indeed, repressive. We would argue that the intolerance displayed in some communities which appear to be strongly bound together against a common adversary is evidence of an insecure base, which relies on mistrust and 'projection' to keep its boundaries intact. As Michael Rustin and Bea Campbell argue in their chapters, attachment theory is not sufficient on its own to account for the depth of fear and viciousness of certain divisions, notably of ethnicity and gender, in modern society. As Rustin makes clear, "the need for security and membership is such that psychic health may be sought.....within fragments held together by antagonism to what lies outside their imaginary boundaries. Thus, a gang projects its vulnerabilities on to its victims.....". From the different perspective of social anthropology, Cohen (1994) proposes that at times of uncertainty we are more likely to assert our belonging to collective identities such as nationality, gender and sexuality. Indeed, when the struggle for identity is most acute, the "battle between the civic and the ethnic nation" (Ignatieff 1994) is heavily weighted in favour of the latter. Disastrous consequences may flow, as the international scene bears witness in all too many countries. Even then, strenuous attempts may be made by an abusing power to obliterate all traces their dead victims. Derek Summerfield, a psychiatrist working with those who have been tortured, argues for "the politics of memory", an acknowledgement and naming of the dead and "disappeared" so that survivors can begin to make sense of their losses. Then at least some repair of the social fabric may be possible (Summerfield 1995). His plea has a powerful resonance with the theme of this book.

It may be easier to understand the qualities that underlie a secure or insecure attachment by seeing what happens when attentiveness, sensitivity and responsiveness are absent. Lynne Murray's studies show that with the best will in the world, some parents fail to be attuned to the changing moods of their children, who are then deprived of the ordinary help that they need to become generous people, curious about and interested in what is going on around them. The resulting deficits are both social and intellectual and may well persist into adulthood. Murray painstakingly examines the writings of Amitai Etzioni and the tenets of communitarianism, drawing out
comparisons with recent "New Labour" ideas about stakeholding. Although communitarianism has captured the imagination of some commentators, it is found profoundly wanting; nowhere is addressed the crucial issue of the conditions in which parents can promote the well-being of children. The focus on parenting and morality is welcome, indeed overdue, but the analysis lacks any theory of moral development. It is merely prescriptive, a behaviourist model and inevitably therefore, incomplete. In general - not only in families - the regulation of behaviour is not determined as much by rules or contracts, necessary though they are, as by a host of other less rigid means, one of which is the way in which citizens are attached to each other and to the organisations and communities that make up the whole.

Whilst this book is not intended primarily to outline a policy for child care, that inevitably is implied in several chapters, notably those by Andrea Pound and David Utting. Both describe some of the pitfalls that may lie in wait for us all as parents. Pound highlights the pioneering, preventative work being done by voluntary sector organisations, such as NEWPIN, which attend to the isolation felt by often desperate mothers. Here the focus is on the younger age group, particularly the under 5’s. Utting succinctly summarises the known risks for later delinquency but acknowledges the difficulties in tracing causation in such a tangled web. He nevertheless points the way towards a considered strategy to reduce delinquent behaviour. He highlights the thesis that the quality of attachments formed by children and adolescents is the key to healthy social behaviour. Securely attached children are more likely to be socially active, sought out by other children, peer leaders and sympathetic to peer distress (Waters et al 1979). Such attachments may be formed not just with family members but with other significant figures including teachers and friends, and also, by extension, with social institutions, notably schools, whose ethos has the capacity to foster respect for others (Rutter et al 1979).

The links with the importance of friendship follow on seamlessly. In our moral panic over the perceived disintegration of the family, friendship has been quietly neglected as a major player in our lives, as Ray Pahl in his chapter so elegantly demonstrates. He highlights the crucial distinction between individualism and individuality, emphasising the importance of the latter for communities in which fraternity can flourish. With the trend towards smaller families and increasing numbers of women choosing to remain childless, friendship links will become ever more important for us all. What then makes for mutually beneficial, trusting friendships? Whilst there is much research still to be done, there are positive associations between secure attachment in children and later friendship quality (Dunn and McGuire 1992). The evidence is available too in the findings quoted both by Lynne Murray and Andrea Pound in their chapters of the modifying effects on mothers' parenting skills, of friendship or its more formal sibling, befriending. We know also that despite entreaties from yesteryear to "get on yer bike", few of us ever do; of those who move house, 22% move only within 2 miles and a further 41% within 5 miles (Bob Tyrell, personal communication). Perhaps we all instinctively know of the importance for psychological health of social support networks, a conviction
which is now supported by empirical research in the field of social psychiatry. Brugha (1993) stresses that it is "the specific 'personal' provisions of social relationships and particularly their more subjective components, e.g. confiding, intensity, and reciprocity of interaction and reassurance of worth" that should be further explored rather than the material value of the support, crucial though that may be.

We know that men and women, indeed girls and boys, have different patterns of friendship. Girls have more emotionally intimate same-sex friendships than boys and invest heavily in trust and loyalty, with high expectations in return (Graham & Rutter 1985). What implications might these have for the way in which different communities, whether neighbourhood, parent and toddler group or board room, function? We know that gender demarcates much of our public space. As Bea Campbell, in her essay, trenchantly points out, it is women, particularly mothers, who take on the job of bringing together fractured, despairing communities and interdigitating private and public domains. That task goes on, day in, day out, though, of course, it is rarely acknowledged and is hidden from the political spotlight. Unacknowledged too, she continues, is the glaringly obvious fact that the overwhelming majority of delinquents and criminals are male: "the problem with no name". These young men "hijack the public space they share with their community". Attachment theory helps us to understand the conditions in which deviancy takes root (see Utting, this volume) but it does not purport to offer an explanation of how the two sexes then go on to express differently the pain of their insecure attachments: why, for example, women are more likely to internalise their pain and become depressed while men beat the living daylights out of each other (and their partners). Men too are thought to be more vulnerable to the effects of unemployment because of the centrality of work to their identity. There is no NEWPIN or its ilk for them, however; on the contrary, contacts by those in "blue collar" jobs with their social network decrease as unemployment continues (Atkinson 1986).

Friendship and other social support networks flourish in known, well-worn and familiar communities which still can be open and trusting. A statement of the obvious, perhaps, even tautological. What is far more testing, however, is the maintenance of such communities at times of change and their evolution anew, where none previously had existed. George Nicholson in his chapter gives a thoughtful overview of the planning processes in London in the last half-century. He outlines the tensions that almost inevitably exist between residents on the one hand, and policy planners and property developers, on the other. Planning authorities have not only to mesh the conflicting demands, but more subtly to reinforce a sense of place (or, in attachment terms, "a secure base"), a connection to our environment in space and time such that we are able to grow and develop. Our sense of place and connection with now often sadly neglected public spaces has, however, been sorely tested; urban parks best exemplify the descent into public squalor, with women and children driven out first. Yet public parks are of essence places of "communality"; where different people's needs are met in very different ways, where strangers make glancing, subtly negotiated contact and where personal and community meanings can be embodied (Burgess 1994). Although
undoubtedly the growth of "non-places" - airports, motorways, supermarkets, for example, where individuals are supposedly all uniformly connected and where no organic social life is possible (Auge 1995) - strains our ability to make sense of the world, Nicholson demonstrates our remarkable persistence in hanging on to our sense of place, whether defined either by neighbourhood or by community of other interests.

Ian Taylor continues the theme of the loss of a sense of place and mastery but over a wider terrain. (In so doing, he points wryly to the discovery of a sense of place for all those avid anthropologists and commentators of supermodernity....) He does nevertheless complete a full circle to draw on three aspects of life in England, (note not UK, Celts beware) - football, differences between and within regions, and "the Corporation" - which give shape and identity to our lives. Such attachments depend on intense attunement to even small differences (or, "local distinctiveness" (Clifford and King 1993)) so important is the sense of identity that flows from it. This echoes Nicholson’s emphasis, in this volume, on the importance in the planning process of the recognition of difference rather than the pursuit of similarity, for local identity. There is a sense of optimism, grittiness and humour in Taylor’s contribution, qualities which themselves inform the affectionate (and playful) processes of attachment.

As we know, however, attachments are not always so healthy, especially when they are principally defined by the exclusion of other, hated, groups, as Michael Rustin powerfully demonstrates in his chapter. He sets the development of attachment theory in its historical context; it was very much the creature of its post-war time. He goes on to argue cogently, nevertheless, that ideas about attachment are germane to the changed circumstances in which we find ourselves at the end of the century. Communities may be experienced more "as symbolic, even imaginary entities" rather than merely in face-to-face encounters; such a complex society will inevitably now be composed of widely different sub-groups. The crucial issue though, is "to ensure that dialogue, mediation and movement of individuals between them is possible". This theme reverberates throughout this book.

Attachments may be fostered in local geographical communities or within organisations of work or interest, but, as Jonathan Gosling portrays, there is a blurring round the edges of differences between "community" and "organisation". Employers especially are increasingly using the rhetoric of community to engender loyalty and commitment from their workers whilst communities are moving into more formal structures and procedures in the name of efficiency and effectiveness. In both, however, processes of attachment have significance. Both communities and organisations involve a quid pro quo: work/interest/commitment/duty put in, for satisfaction of some sort and, at minimum, a wage got out. The more intense the sense of belonging and ownership, the more both sides of the equation benefit. Attention therefore to reciprocity pays dividends (perhaps literally....).

Reciprocity is a word that has not been fashionable in local government circles until
recently. Local government has been much maligned in the last twenty years, an object by some of contempt and derision. Yet as both Ian Taylor and John Benington in their chapters make clear, municipal government in times gone by was a leading force for the betterment of its citizens, proud, civilising and unbowed. The relentless, fragmenting sweep towards the introduction of internal markets, the contract culture, quangos and privatisation, together with the crushing blow to the self-esteem of many local authorities at the loss of political autonomy in the 1980's, had led to an uncertainty, even floundering, about the way forward. Benington describes the stirrings of a local government movement, increasingly surer of its role but defined now in terms of "community governance" rather than simply in the provision or the enabling of services. The essence of the notion of community governance is that communities defined by locality (here, district, county or borough) should have representation on all matters of interest of its citizens, that the council should act as advocates for its constituents. In so doing, a local authority can be seen not only to restore some sense of agency to its citizenry but in pulling together disparate strands, to facilitate social networks, encourage a sense of belonging and cohesion. In Britain, it appears that we strongly associate the notion of citizenship with membership of a community rather than, as in the USA, with the endowment of legal rights and responsibilities (Crewe 1996) or, as promulgated by the Conservative right, with the acquisition of consumer status. There is a resurgence in the idea of citizenship which is rooted in "the context of social networks bound together by the ties of membership, loyalty and mutual obligation .... Relationships between individuals are based upon reciprocity, interdependence and commitment rather than market exchange" (Prior et al 1995). We seem, nevertheless, increasingly reluctant in practice to engage in even the most minimal community activity, preferring instead to retrench into the atomised, televised and private world behind our front doors. Civic bonds are weakening, journalists proclaim, "the single most important issue of our time" (Kettle 1996). Who better, then, to foster, cajole or even provoke the regeneration of our civic connectedness than local authorities? They are of course not the only bodies who play a part in the complicated, delicate web of their locality but their elected position confers on them a degree of legitimacy that is unique. Local authorities should, however, keep their side of the bargain; to earn the respect and trust of the populace, they must engage with their citizens responsibly, respectfully and in a spirit of openness. Councils have a crucial role to play in making sense of what goes on at a local level, relating this in a meaningful way to the national context. Jeremy Holmes emphasises the importance of process in government, central as much as local: "we should expect of our politicians respect for persons, the capacity to listen, acknowledgement of pain, acceptance of the need of legitimate expressions of anger, and above all to strive for security so that exploration and growth can take place." These themes hark back to the significant relationship between the coherence of adults’ narrative of their childhood and their own style of parenting. It is not just what happens (the content) that is important but the way in which it is construed and made sense of (the process) that determines its impact on our daily lives.

Whilst we make more, or at least different, demands of our politicians, we should be
mindful of the intense load already placed on councillors and M.P.s alike. Even the securest attachments are likely to be tested, as one of the editors (JR) is all too aware. Tessa Jowell MP takes up this theme and asks whether politicians can ever be normal people. She portrays the intricate juggling act required of all MPs who will inevitably have an intense attachment to their political values, to their parliamentary party and to their constituency but who must also nurture their attachments to intimate figures in their own lives. Not only must they do this for their personal survival but, paradoxically also, for their effectiveness as politicians, connected to the real struggles of ordinary people.

Economics has however traditionally taken little heed of such dilemmas. In a more provocative vein (for many readers of this volume perhaps), Paul Ormerod unequivocally affirms the fruits of capitalism. He makes clear however that there is a choice to be made between social cohesion and economic performance, at least as conventionally defined. Ormerod illustrates the point with the experience of the USA. Others, however, have argued that despite high crime rates and many other social ills, the USA is a country where trust, co-operation and mutual respect are still highly valued in commerce (Fukuyama 1995, Kay 1996). In Britain, high unemployment has played a significant part in the disintegration of our social fabric, but has been justified, with crocodile tears, on the grounds of its painful necessity on the road to higher growth. Rates of unemployment however, as Ormerod demonstrates, show little correlation with medium term economic growth. He challenges the notion (expressed elsewhere and by other contributors in this book) that national governments are rendered helpless by the onslaught of globalisation. Other countries have maintained relatively low rates of unemployment despite a slow down in economic growth. Unemployment is therefore essentially a political matter. The issue then becomes whether or not support can be garnered for the inevitable financial cost of reducing unemployment - either from work sharing, higher taxation or higher prices - and under what conditions is this support most likely. Our contention in this book is that if we can understand the conditions which promote a cohesive society then we are better able to make informed choices about the relative merits of the different approaches to it, rather than settle by default for the (incalculable) costs of social disorder. As Michael Rustin reminds us in this volume, there is a progressive breakdown in understanding and relationship across the social spectrum, the forerunner of social disorder, as economic inequality grows. And it is not just social disorder, alarming as that may be, which may result from a less cohesive society, but possibly also a reduced life expectancy. There is evidence, even from developed countries, that widening inequality in income reduces life expectancy across all income groups, not just that of the more deprived groups (Wilkinson 1994, Davey Smith 1996). The mechanism of such an effect is open to speculation but Richard Wilkinson suggests that it is not only poverty, damp housing and other social ills that determine health inequalities but the "feelings of failure, insecurity, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem". There is then almost certainly a psychological twist to the tale.

Aneurin Bevan knew a thing or two about attachment theory when he wrote: "The
assertion of anti-socialists that private economic adventure is a desirable condition stamps them as profoundly unscientific. You can make your home the base for your adventures, but it is absurd to make the base itself an adventure" (Bevan 1978). The Gadarene rush towards demutualisation of building societies is but one example of our tendency to retreat into our own lairs at times of insecurity, when our homes almost literally are no longer a secure base. Peter Marris carries forward this theme with his description of how power is used above all to protect against uncertainty. Uncertainty is then bundled down towards those who are the most vulnerable, with the least power. This concentration of uncertainty amongst the most disadvantaged will in turn have repercussions on the quality of their emotional attachments, marginalising them still further.

Uncertainty is of course no longer confined to the working class (hence, many argue, all the fuss and maybe this book......). New technology has swept away many middle and senior manager posts and radically changed the working environment for those remaining; known and familiar hierarchies flattened, the once "secure base" of the firm's headquarters metamorphosing into satellites of digital home-working. What does that mean for those men, especially, whose friendships and self-esteem have traditionally been forged in the camaraderie of the shop-floor or office? Whilst these are undoubtedly thorny issues, new technology enables us to communicate in innovative ways and hence opens up the possibility of different sorts communities, as Oleg Liber describes in his essay. His plea for us not to shirk from this challenge, but instead to pursue with vigour the opportunities offered by technology for a more participative democracy, echoes the cry from very different quarters for a practice of citizenship based on increased participation in the political process (Prior et al 1995).

Helena Kennedy in her chapter takes further the case for citizenship as she delivers a sweeping critique of the British Government of the last two decades. She vigorously asserts that the roots of citizenship are nurtured within the socialist ethic of solidarity and fellowship, but they then depend for their sustenance on a political system in which people can have trust. On this count, our political system has failed most spectacularly; the plummeting fall in ethical standards of some prominent politicians is only the most visible example of how our political process has come to be so mistrusted. Kennedy brings the work of the sociologist, Robert Putnam into the debate; his insistence on the importance of "social capital" - mutual trust, reciprocity, strong local networks - has an obvious resonance with the theme of this book. Kennedy presses further for a model of citizenship which has, as a prerequisite, radical constitutional reform. Anything less simply will not do.

So where does all this leave us? Do the ideas underlying attachment theory really have any relevance for the political world? Or should we psychiatrists know our place and return to the metaphorical couch? We argue here that politicians must now give credence to such ideas. They cannot afford not to. Cynicism in our political masters is rampant, though perhaps not always justified. Unless politicians are able to engage with
the electorate in a more meaningful way, they are complicit in their own demise.

The arguments marshalled in this book point to three broad ways in which the political domain could benefit from incorporating some of the tenets of attachment theory, a politics of attachment: first, the theory itself, grounded in biology, ethology and psychology, provides a coherent underpinning for the current preoccupations with "community", "stakeholding", "solidarity", themes which all skirt around the same sort of issues, but somehow remain anchorless, doomed to float away with apple pie and motherhood. Secondly, a politics of attachment could usefully influence the content of policy in a number of areas other than family policy, for example: the criminal justice system, housing (to ensure at the very least, an obligation to house those who are most vulnerable, which could not be discharged by temporary accommodation), the organisation of the work-place, planning and regeneration, environmental issues, the role of the voluntary sector, local government. Crucially too, it underlines the priority that should be given to a sustained reduction in unemployment. Many of these areas are examined in the following chapters but this book is not intended to be a policy document, merely to hint at what the policy implications of a collaborative approach between the psychological, sociological and political, might be. Attachment theory too can enable politicians to have a more sophisticated understanding of the unforeseen impact of policies already enacted. The absence of the "feel good" factor is perhaps the most obvious example but more specifically, the outrage and grief caused to many elderly people forced to sell their own homes in order to pay for their care could so easily have been predicted. Thirdly, ideas from attachment theory could very significantly influence the process of policy implementation. In the frantic scrabble to press the right electoral button, politicians ignore process at their peril. It is what you do, but it is also how you do it. In spite of the inevitable coarsening of thoughtful ideas as they metamorphose into public policy, there is a crying need for politicians to make sense of our complicated, tangled world and to acknowledge the importance of authenticity, responsiveness and trust. As with attachment theory, though, it takes two to tango; this message therefore applies equally to our responsibilities as citizens, as the Canadian philosopher, Jean Tronto, makes clear, "the qualities of attentiveness, of responsibility, of competence, or responsiveness ...... can also inform our practices as citizens" (Tronto 1993).

We should here make a final bid for humility. We are not arguing that attachment theory offers a complete account either of normal development or of psychopathology, nor indeed that a psychological explanation provides a comprehensive framework for all political endeavour. That would be truly omnipotent. We do however believe passionately that the psychological in general, and ideas based on attachment theory in particular, have much to inform the debate, yet have hitherto been sadly neglected. A message which is a little too close to home for some, perhaps..... Politics is, however, about life, avers John Cole (1995). So it is. How then can we ignore what we know about the ways in which we humans grow, develop and relate with others: an ordinary yet fundamental part of life?
The processes we describe, though only recently articulated and written about, are hardly new. Everwhere in the world, for thousands of years in countless different cultures, people have been getting attached to each other and to the places they inhabit. For even longer periods our mammalian cousins have been doing so too, and are still at it. Yet the convictions that led us to this project need repeated confirmation, because they so easily disappear in the glare of soundbite and front page politics, as if that were all there was to political discourse.

The range of contributions might have been different. We could have included chapters on housing, parks, the design and use of public buildings, and other features of everyday life that determine its quality. The details would have varied but the overall theme would not. We have sought to keep in mind the processes which remain central to human experience, and to bring them into the public sphere. Alongside many other possible criticisms, we can imagine being dismissed as too psychological and therefore outside the approved boundaries - that we deal with issues that are entirely private or personal, and which are therefore nothing to do with policy. Yet if politics is simply the struggle for influence between interests, then our aim is to add other interests to the frame. We have taken a leap from what is known about intimate relationships to what could be achieved in political ones.

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