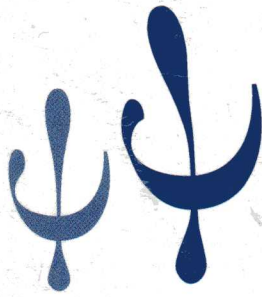


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**PROGRAMME**

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## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN ADOLESCENCE: TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF HOW ADOLESCENTS RESPOND TO DIFFERENT TYPES OF SOCIAL-CONTEXTUAL CHALLENGE

### Co-convenors

Jackson, A.E.\* & Honess, T.\*\*

\* University of Groningen, The Netherlands

\*\* City University, London, UK

### Discussant

Mallet, P.

University of Rheims, France

Adolescence has long been recognised as a period in which young people extend the range of their social activities and develop their social understanding. Modifications take place in the parent - adolescent relationship, peer relationships are extended and become more intense, boy-girl relationships are initiated and progress towards more adult forms. These and similar developments have been the subject of considerable research attention. However, much of the early work in this area was global in nature and concentrated primarily on descriptive accounts based on survey data or general observation. In recent years much more focused research has begun to emerge in this area. This work has set out to examine specific aspects of social relationships with a view to understanding the nature of the underlying processes. Frequently, it has made use of ideas derived from other areas of psychological research, e.g. Attachment theory or studies of Coping, in order to clarify how early social development contributes to new social challenges or better to understand the relationship between the expression of particular forms of behaviour and social contextual factors. This symposium illustrates

the nature and thrust of such research. Jackson and Honess discuss the strategies young people use to apply when responding to a new social challenge in adolescence - how to establish a dating relationship. Two papers are also derived from attachment theory to examine how adolescents respond to parental conflict (Honess) and to an adoptive relationship following their abandonment by their natural parents (Vinay & Tap). McDermott's paper focuses on the relationship between a specific form of psychological response - rebelliousness - and adolescents' way of dealing with specific types of social contextual conditions.

### Adolescents' response to sexual attraction: Strategies in approaching a first romantic relationship

Jacob, M.-N.\* & Jackson, A.E.\*\*,  
Erpicum, F.\*\*\* & Cattelino, E.\*\*\*

\* University of Liege, Belgium

\*\* University of Groningen, The Netherlands

\*\*\* University of Torino, Italy

### From abandonment to adoption: Coping processes in establishing a new attachment relationship in adolescence

Vinay, A., & Tap, P.

University Toulouse II - "Le Mirail", France

### Coping with parental conflict: The mediating role of attachment

Honess, T.

City University, London, UK

### Rebelliousness as manifold predictor

McDermott, M. R.

University of East London, UK

## **SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN ADOLESCENCE: TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF HOW ADOLESCENTS RESPOND TO DIFFERENT TYPES OF SOCIAL-CONTEXTUAL CHALLENGE**

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### **Discussant**

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Adolescence has long been recognised as a period in which young people extend the range of their social activities and develop their social understanding. Modifications take place in the parent-adolescent relationship, peer relationships are extended and become more intense, boy-girl relationships are initiated and progress towards more adult forms. These and similar developments have been the subject of considerable research attention. However, much of the early work in this area was global in nature and concentrated primarily on descriptive accounts based on survey data or general observation. In recent years much more focused research has begun to emerge in this area. This work has set out to examine specific aspects of social relationships with a view to understanding the nature of the underlying processes. Frequently, it has made use of ideas derived from other areas of psychological research, e.g. Attachment theory or studies of Coping, in order to clarify how early social development contributes to new social challenges or better to understand the relationship between the expression of particular forms of behaviour and social contextual factors. This symposium illustrates the nature and thrust of such research. Jacob and Jackson discuss the strategies young people apply when responding to a new social challenge in adolescence -how to establish a first dating relationship. Two papers use ideas derived from attachment theory to examine how adolescents respond to parental conflict (Honess) and to an adoptive relationship following their abandonment by their natural parents (Vinay, & Tap). McDermott's paper focuses on the relationship between a specific form of psychological response - rebelliousness- and adolescents' way of dealing with specific types of social contextual conditions.

### **Adolescents' response to sexual attraction: Strategies in approaching a first romantic relationship**

Jacob, M.-N.\* & Jackson, A.E.\*\* & Erpicum, F.\*\*\* & Cattellino, E.\*\*\*

\* University of Liege, Belgium

\*\* University of Groningen, The Netherlands

\*\*\* University of Torino, Italy

Romantic involvement is a specific form of social relationship which is frequently associated with adolescence. Entry into such a relationship is not necessarily easily achieved and this is particularly so when previous experience is lacking and when there may be difficulties in obtaining support and advice from others. Both of these conditions apply to adolescents who have not previously experienced a dating relationship. How they actually go about establishing such a relationship is of particular interest with regard to the social cognitive and coping strategies which are employed. This paper presents results of a series of studies concerning adolescents' approach to a new dating relationship. The type of actions employed in different sorts of interpersonal situation will be discussed. Analyses of interviews carried out with boys and girls will be presented. Attention will focus upon differences between the genders in the strategies which they employ. The results will be discussed with reference to broader processes of social cognitive development in adolescence.

### **From abandonment to adoption: Coping processes in establishing a new attachment relationship in adolescence**

Vinay, A., & Tap, P.

University Toulouse II-"le Mirail", France

Abandonment is a dramatic event which involves the breaking of the parental bond. It puts the child in a situation of "non filiation" - the link with the parent no longer exists. This is a determining event which demands adjustment and

copied on the part of the child and involves entering into new forms of social relationships. In fact, one of the major objectives where the adoption of the abandoned child is concerned, is to try to establish a new attachment relationship and to recreate a secure affective basis between the adoptive parents and the child. The adoptive parents' educative style and the child's personal identity play an important role in this process. The theory of attachment provides a useful basis for understanding how coping processes emerge and become established. Attachment serves to reduce the emotions which arise in response to significant changes in the young person's environment. It provides a basis for new adjustment strategies. Such strategies may be positive or negative. For the child who has been abandoned and then adopted, the coping strategies developed during childhood may, depending on the nature of the stress experienced, help or prevent the creation of a new attachment relationship, i.e. they may help to enhance or to restrict the processes of social development. In this paper we will use the results of research on attachment and the coping strategies of adopted teenagers to illustrate how this can occur.

### **Coping with parental conflict: The mediating role of attachment**

Honess, T.

City University, London, UK

Interparental conflict has been associated with a number of indices of child maladjustment. A new longitudinal study seeks to provide a better understanding of the role of children's appraisals of parental behaviour as well as their coping strategies in accounting for the effects of such conflict on immediate and long-term emotional and behavioural adjustment. The study\* is based on a questionnaire survey of 600 families (i.e. reports from both parents, teachers and the target adolescent beginning age 11 years). The first wave of data collection will take place in early 1999. In addition, a sub-sample of the families (target N=50) will be interviewed. This symposium presentation reports findings from the interviews in which the mediating role of attachment style -especially as manifest in the respondents' sense of felt security and self-worth- is explored. Drawing on Mary Main's method of analysing the Adult Attachment interview and social cognition theorising in respect of narrative construction, the relative coherence of respondents' accounts will be the key resource for establishing attachment style.

### **Rebelliousness as manifold predictor**

McDermott, M. R.

University of East London, UK

Despite its conspicuousness during the two developmental periods of infancy and adolescence, rebelliousness is a relatively neglected psychological construct. Within the experimental social psychology tradition of post-war North American psychology, relevant work focused primarily upon elucidating the conditions under which people conform and obey. Comparatively little attention however, was directed at those socio-contextual conditions under which we rebel and disobey -and indeed, as to whether a "disposition" or "readiness" to rebel could be identified as an individual difference variable, something arguably of particular salience in adolescence and young adulthood. It was in response to such relative neglect that a questionnaire measure of rebelliousness was developed in the mid 1980s by McDermott and Apter. During such development two forms of rebelliousness were identified: Proactive and reactive rebelliousness (McDermott, 1987; 1988). These factorally derived subscales have been shown to be cross-culturally replicable in North American and British samples and to have construct validity of various kinds and internal reliability. This paper seeks to review conceptual issues as outlined above and to illustrate some of them with reference to published and recently generated data as collected with the rebelliousness questionnaire. Particular attention will be given to a study (Doherty, & McDermott, 1993) which examined rebelliousness as a statistical predictor and covariate of delinquency. In so doing, the importance of this construct to an understanding of the phenomenology of adolescence will be illustrated.