

Buchheim A, Viviani R, Walter H. (2013) Attachment Narratives in Depression: A neurocognitive approach. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 20: 292-305.

Author Abstract:

Attachment is the way we relate to others. The way we attach to others is developed early childhood, can be impaired by early traumatic life events, and is disturbed in many psychiatric disorders. Here we give a short overview about attachment patterns in psychiatric disorders with a focus on depression, and discuss two recent empirical studies of our own that have investigated attachment related brain activation using fMRI and the Adult Attachment Projective Picture System. In the first study with patients with borderline personality disorder we used a paradigm in which patients produced narratives in response to attachment pictures and measured brain activity while participants were talking. Our results are consistent with the view that BPD pathology might be correlated with traumatic attachment fear related to autobiographic abuse and loss experiences. In the second study we investigated patients with major depression undergoing therapy in a longitudinal design. In this study we used a design with individualized stimuli that were extracted from narratives produced outside of the scanner. We found that patients, as compared to healthy controls, showed differences in a pre–post comparison. The significant correlation of changes in the subgenual cingulate and medial prefrontal cortex with symptom improvement provides evidence that these regions are involved in mediating therapy related effects.