AMBIT

Adaptive Mentalization Based Integrative Treatment

Mentalizing in Teams
Dickon Bevington
1. Mentalizing beyond brain and dyad: 
   A function of social connectivity (networks)

2. AMBIT: what’s a “well-connected team”? 
   Systematic efforts toward a mentalizing culture.

3. Encouragement from the wings: 
   Interdisciplinary findings (Social Network Analysis)
MENTALIZING: brain, dyad and...

- **Brain-based** – prefrontal cortex
- **Relational** – developed in secure reciprocal (attachment) relationships
- A **Social Capacity**… a function of **Networks**
MENTALIZING IS SYSTEMIC and NETWORKED

Vicious Cycles of Mentalizing Problems Within the Family

VISIBILITY 

Anna Freud Centre
Powerful emotion

Frightening, undermining or coercive behaviours

Loss of mentalizing

Unable to notice or attend to others' emotions

Justified escalation in efforts to change others or oneself

Others seem incomprehensible & thoughts/attributions about them are increasingly seen as reality, not just “thoughts”

Unable to notice or attend to others’ emotions

Powerful emotion

Frightening, undermining or coercive behaviours

Loss of mentalizing

Justified escalation in efforts to change others or oneself

Thanks to Raymond Ho
The P-factor and “Social Thinning”

(thanks to Eamon McCrory)

As a result of neurodevelopmental factors, neglect, abuse, trauma, depression, anxiety, etc...

...a child’s capacity to create and sustain **adaptive** epistemic trust and to develop and sustain multiple **prosocial** bonds is depleted

The child grows up increasingly isolated from minds that understand

Challenge and threat become trauma and psychopathology

Evidence based treatments seem to “bounce off”
We join *existing* networks of help
EPISTEMIC TRUST DETERMINES HOW WE RESPOND TO (AND CO-CREATE) OUR NETWORKS

We workers join existing networks of help, we do not create new ones.

Epistemic trust does not map conveniently onto role, training, seniority, or power.

The effectiveness of any “treatment” will largely be determined by the extent to which a worker/team leaves the client with a more or less functioning network of help.
TEAM:
A small, trusted, and encultured group, with shared understandings of their common task

NETWORK:
a set of relationships across a given locality or area of endeavour, that are uneven and are not subject to unitary control (cf. “managed systems”.)
Team around the Worker: 

A *complementary* shift of emphasis

**Team around the child**

- Psychiatrist
- Family therapist
- Young Person and Family
- CBT Therapist
- CPN

**Team around the worker**

- Psychiatrist
- Social Worker
- Family Systemic
- YOT Worker
- CBT
- Co-workers

Roles, Authority, Responsibility

EPISTEMIC TRUST

Mentalization as our basic *therapeutic stance*, AND our shared responsibility: sustaining *our colleagues’ Mentalizing*
We're commissioned and skilled at keeping young people out of prison.

We're commissioned and skilled at treating young people's mental health.

You all speak different languages, you want different things, your appointments clash, & you don't even really get on.

Networks naturally suck.

I'm the best!

I'm all alone 😞

You really get me! (Not like that doctor!) If you can do that, then I'm interested.... What do you say about the rest of the world that might work for me?

TEAM around the CHILD

TEAM around the WORKER
AMBIT and SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS
A social network analysis of Members of UK Parliament’s voting histories re: options for Brexit
Triads are the ‘most basic molecules’ of complex social networks

**Stable** ("my friend’s friend is my friend"); "my enemy’s enemy is my friend") – networks with a higher density of triads are more stable

**Mentalizing?** ("other perspectives must exist")
CLOSURE

Stability
Good for **safety** behaviours
(social disciplines and rituals)

Rigidity/inflexibility
Gangs, some families,
Some teams that you and I know...
BROKERAGE

REDUNDANCY

STRUCTURAL HOLE
Two challenges for AMBIT

1. Can we move from imagined/mentalized understandings of helping networks, towards situated, *data-informed* understandings?

2. Is there any evidential support for our principled AMBIT stance that could hint at mechanisms of change?
1. AMBIT encourages mentalizing across teams and complex multi-professional and multi-agency networks

Increase reciprocal understanding as a complement (even, sometimes, an alternative?) to structural reorganisations

- In Teams: Thinking Together
- Sculpting or “Pro-grams”
- Dis-integration grids

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVELS OF DISINTEGRATION</th>
<th>Young Person</th>
<th>Parent/carer</th>
<th>Other agency (actual person)</th>
<th>Other agency (actual person)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explanation</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘What’s the problem? (Why is it happening?)’</td>
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<td>Intervention</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘What to do’ (…that might help…)</td>
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<td>Responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Who does what?’ (who’s responsible for doing this?)</td>
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Mark the Task
State the Case
Mentalize the moment
Return to Purpose

But these approaches are all “soft” on data: based on imagined/mentalized understandings of networks

• Systematic efforts to “extend one’s ambit” across professional boundaries through the creation of epistemic trust (‘Connecting Conversations’.)
2. AMBIT has developed a set of paired (mutually hard-to-reconcile) principles: the AMBIT stance.

But these principles are not really supported by any hard evidence other than user-feedback and client-outcomes: there is no proposed mechanism of change.

Why these principles, in this order?
Might SNA offer some ways into these two problems?

1. Imagine an app

- Worker and client identify the key “players” in this network
- Two or three very simple questions probing the nature of the helping relationship are sent electronically to each member of the network to answer about each other member – answers by shifting sliders (0-10, or from “not at all” to “all the time”)
- The App takes numerical answers and generates a data-based map of the network...
Therapist
Psychiatrist
Family therapist
Youth worker
Youth offence worker
Social worker
Suspected gang influencer
Local Peers
Mother
School pastoral lead
School Head of year
Father
Relationship of help
Strong relationship of help
Poor relationship of help
Figure 3.
Group Performance Surface, across Structural Holes and Network Closure.

TEAM: Small, Trusted, enculturated group, with shared tasks

“Brokerage/Structural Holes”

“Redundancy”

Eds. N. Lin, K. S. Cook, R. S. Burt. A. de Gruyter, 2001
AMBIT: a network
‘areas benefiting from systematic attention’
Respect, Evidence, and Experience

Multiple Domains
Responsibility for Integration

Scaffolding existing relationships
Managing Risk

Well-connected team
LEARNING at work

AMBIT: a network
‘areas benefiting from systematic attention’

Closure
Dense, strong ties, stability, safety

Brokerage
Non-redundantly-distributed, weak ties
New changes, creative difference
Thank you for listening!

AMBIT: a network
Territories of work benefiting from systematic mentalized attention

Manuals.annafreud.org/ambit