

# SPOTLIGHT

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## Exploration of the relationship between observation skills, problem solving abilities and autobiographical memory in mothers of conduct problem children

### Researchers

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### Aim

Inaccurate maternal observation skills predict poor treatment outcomes for conduct problem children and successful interventions must identify and address these parental deficits. Unfortunately measuring parental observational skills is a time-consuming activity.

This study sought to establish whether maternal autobiographical memory for incidents in the life of a child, as measured by the Parent Child Autobiographical Memory Test (PCAMT), was a quick way of assessing maternal observational skill deficits.

Since parental problem solving abilities also predict treatment outcomes, the study also explored the relationship between maternal observational style, autobiographical memory and parental problem solving as measured by the Means-Ends Problem Solving test (MEPS).

### Project Outline/Methodology

Twenty-two mothers of children with clinically significant behaviour management problems coded a video of their child, in the family setting, for good and bad child behaviour. Professional coders coded the same tape enabling a comparison to be made between their judgements and the mothers'. The mothers also completed the PCAMT and their scores were analysed to assess the amount of undercoding of behaviour they exhibited relative to the professional observers. A measure of interpersonal problem-solving (the MEPS) was also taken.

In a separate study, mothers of referred children were compared to 15 mothers of non-referred children on the PCAMT and the MEPS to examine the discriminability of the measures between groups.

### Key Results

Mothers of referred children significantly undercode their child's good and bad behaviour relative to the professional observers, identifying only 50% of bad behaviour and 25% of good behaviour.

No relationship was found between maternal attentional bias and the PCAMT, although maternal undercoding of negative behaviour was associated with lower MEPS scores, i.e. poorer problem solving.

Both the PCAMT and the MEPS discriminated well between the conduct problem and non-problem groups and were highly correlated.

### Policy/Practice Implications

The PCAMT does not measure maternal observational bias and there is still a need to find a measure of this that is quick and therefore of clinical utility.

Problem solving is associated with both negative observational bias and poor autobiographical memory. Problem solving depends on recall of past strategies and solutions. Given the well established association between poor problem solving and poor treatment outcomes, the correlation between the MEPS and the PCAMT suggests that clinicians may find it helpful to assess maternal autobiographical memory as one aspect of the skills needed in problem solving.

### Next Steps

Conduct problems represent a large clinical service demand with poor outcomes proving costly for all. The fact that both the PCAMT and the MEPS (also relatively time consuming to measure) discriminate between mothers of problem and non-problem children (and are highly correlated) suggests that it is useful to measure the PCAMT in clinical settings, although more research is needed. Within the clinical sample the MEPS showed a correlation with negative maternal bias and it appears, from this study, to be measuring something that is related to both autobiographical memory and maternal attending bias.

Further investigation into how parental observation, autobiographical memory and problem solving skill deficits are related and how their negative effects on treatment outcome can be remedied are needed.

A quick way of assessing parental observation skills is still needed and work is continuing to establish whether parents of conduct problem children show similar deficits when coding the behaviour of a child that is not their own since this is a much less time consuming to measure.

### Further Details

Details of the report and a list of other publications from the Child Behaviour Project can be obtained from the project office email [j.hutchings@bangor.ac.uk](mailto:j.hutchings@bangor.ac.uk) and are on the project web site on: [www.psych.bangor.ac.uk/childbehaviour/index.html](http://www.psych.bangor.ac.uk/childbehaviour/index.html)



# LLEWYRCH

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## Ymchwiliad i'r berthynas rhwng sgiliau arsylwi, galluodd datrys problemau a chof hunangofiannol ym mysgr mamau plant gyda phroblem ymddygiad

### Ymchwilwyr

Judy Hutchings, Mike Smith a Helen Gilbert.

### Nod

Mae sgiliau arsylwi anfanwl ym mysgr mamau yn rhagfynegi canlyniadau triniaeth gwael i blant gyda phroblem ymddygiad, ac y mae'n rhaid i ymriadau llwyddiannus nodi a thrin y diffygion hyn yn y rhieni. Yn anffodus, mae mesur sgiliau arsylwi'r rhieni yn weithgarwch, sy'n cymryd amser hir.

Ceisiodd yr astudiaeth hon ganfod a yw cof hunangofiannol y fam am ddiwyddiadau ym mywyd y plentyn, a fesurir gan y Prawf Cof Hunangofiannol Rhiant Plentyn (PCAMT), yn ffordd gyflym o asesu diffygion sgiliau arsylwi mamol.

Gan fod galluodd y rhieni i ddatrys problemau hefyd yn rhagfynegi canlyniadau triniaeth, bu'r astudiaeth hefyd yn ymchwilio i'r berthynas rhwng arddull arsylwi'r fam, cof hunangofiannol a datrys problemau gan rieni, a fesurir gan y prawf Datrys Problemau Moddion-Dibenion (MEPS).

### Amlinelliad o'r Prosiect/Methodoleg

Bu dwy ar hugain o famau, yr oedd eu plant â phroblemau rheoli ymddygiad o arwyddocâd clinigol, yn codio tapiau fideo a wnaed o'u plant yn y sefyllfa deuluol, ar gyfer ymddygiad plentyn da a drwg. Bu codwyr profesiynol yn codio'r un tapiau, fel y gellid cymharu eu dyfarniadau hwy â dyfarniadau'r mamau. Cwblhawyd y prawf PCAMT hefyd ganddynt, a dadansodwyd eu sgoriau, i asesu maint y tangodio ymddygiad a amlygwyd gan y mamau o gymharu â chodwyr profesiynol. Mesurwyd y datrys-problemau rhyngpersonol hefyd, gyda'r prawf MEPS.

Mewn astudiaeth ar wahân, defnyddiwyd PCAMT a MEPS i gymharu mamau plant a gyfeiriwyd gyda 15 o famau plant na chyfeiriwyd, gan edrych i weld pa mor wahanadwy oedd y mesurau ar gyfer y ddau grŵp.

### Canlyniadau Allweddol

Mae mamau plant a gyfeiriwyd yn tangodio ymddygiad da a drwg eu plant yn arwyddocaol, o gymharu â'r arsylwyr profesiynol, gan nodi 50% yn unig o'r ymddygiad drwg a 25% o'r ymddygiad da.

Ni chanfuwyd unrhyw berthynas rhwng gogwydd sylwadol y fam a'r PCAMT, er bod tangodio ymddygiad negyddol gan y fam yn gysylltiedig â sgoriau MEPS is, h.y. gwaelach am ddatrys problemau.

Yr oedd PCAMT a MEPS yn gwahaniaethu'n dda rhwng y grŵp problemau ymddygiad a'r grŵp di-broblem, ac yr oedd eu cydberthyniad yn uchel.

### Goblygiadau Polisi/Ymarfer

Nid yw'r PCAMT yn mesur gogwydd arsylwadol y fam, ac y mae'r angen yn parhau i ddarganfod ffordd o fesur y nodwedd honno sy'n gyflym ac felly yn ddefnyddiol yn glinigol.

Mae datrys problemau yn gysylltiedig â gogwydd arsylwadol negyddol yn ogystal â chof hunangofiannol gwael. Mae datrys problemau yn dibynnu ar alw i gof strategaethau ac atebion o'r gorffennol. Yng ngoleuni'r berthynas brofedig rhwng prinder gallu i ddatrys problemau a chanlyniadau triniaeth gwael, mae'r cydberthyniad rhwng MEPS a PCAMT yn awgrymu y gallai fod yn ddefnyddiol i glinigwyr asesu cof hunangofiannol y fam, fel un agwedd ar y sgiliau sy'n angenrheidiol er mwyn datrys problemau.

### Y Camau Nesaf

Mae problemau ymddygiad yn cynrychioli galw enfawr am wasanaeth clinigol, ac y mae canlyniadau gwael felly yn gostus i bawb. Mae'r ffaith bod PCAMT yn ogystal â MEPS (sydd hefyd yn cymryd amser cymharolfaith i'w fesur) yn gwahaniaethu rhwng mamau plant sydd â phroblem a mamau plant di-broblem (a bod cydberthyniad uchel rhyngddynt) yn awgrymu y byddai'n ddefnyddiol mesur PCAMT mewn sefyllfaoedd clinigol, er bod angen rhagor o ymchwil. O fewn y sampl clinigol, yr oedd MEPS yn dangos cydberthyniad â gogwydd mamol negyddol, ac y mae'n ymddangos o'r astudiaeth hon ei fod yn mesur rhywbeth sydd â pherthynas â chof hunangofiannol yn ogystal â gogwydd sylw mamol.

Mae angen ymchwilio ymhellach i'r berthynas rhwng arsylwi gan rieni, cof hunangofiannol a sgiliau datrys problemau. A sut y gellir gwrthdroi eu heffeithiau negyddol ar ganlyniadau triniaeth.

Mae'r angen yn parhau am ddull cyflym o asesu sgiliau arsylwi rhieni; ac y mae gwaith ar droed i ganfod a fyddai rhieni plant sydd â phroblem yn dangos diffygion tebyg, wrth godio ymddygiad plentyn heblaw eu plentyn eu hunain, gan y byddai hynny'n cymryd llai o amser o lawer i'w fesur.

### Manylion Pellach

Mae manylion am yr adroddiad hwn a rhestr o gyhoeddiadau eraill y Prosiect Ymddygiad Plant ar gael o swyddfa'r prosiect, e-bost: [j.hutchings@bangor.ac.uk](mailto:j.hutchings@bangor.ac.uk) ac i'w gweld ar safwe'r prosiect: [www.psych.bangor.ac.uk/childbehaviour/index.html](http://www.psych.bangor.ac.uk/childbehaviour/index.html)

