

# **ATTACHMENT IN PSYCHOLOGY**

**ELLA KEENE**

# CAREGIVER-INFANT INTERACTION

- Attachment is important as it can help with development of the child. It can occur through bodily contact, mimicking, Caregiverese, reciprocity and interactional synchrony.
- Research into this attachment is considered socially sensitive as it can go on to affect children later in life as well as this it is difficult to tell whether there is a direct correlation between the behaviour as they may not be conscious movements.

# KEY RESEARCH

## MELTZOFF AND MOORE (1977)

- Method: An adult model would display one of three facial expressions or hand movements. The child's response was filmed. It was a controlled observation.
- Results: There was an association between infant behaviour and the adult model. Later research found the same finding in 3-day old infants which suggests interactional synchrony is innate.

Despite this the results are unable to show cause and effect and it is unethical as it could have long term effects on a participant's life.

## ISABELLA ET AL (1989)

- Method: Observed 30 mothers and infants together and assessed the degree of synchrony. Also assessed the quality of mother-infant attachment.
- Results: Found high levels of synchrony were associated with better quality infant attachment emotional intensity of the relationship.
- Again there is no evidence that there is a direct correlation with level of synchrony and attachment so this makes the research mostly circumstantial.

# FATHER ROLE

- Typically the primary caregiver role is the mother as males are considered the main breadwinner and are not with the children as much.
- Fathers now are seen as playmates, able to demonstrate sensitive responsiveness yet are still considered less equipped as mothers due to their biology.
- Factors affecting father-infant attachment are: their relationship with their own parents, the level of intimacy in their own relationship and the amount of support the father gives in caring and providing for the children.

# KEY RESEARCH

## FIELD (1978)

- Method: Analysed face-to-face interactions on video footage with infants at 4 months old.
- Results: Fathers engaged in playing but if they were lone parents they were more sensitive and caring spending more time in physical contact like hugging.

## LAMB (1987)

- Fathers that were main care providers were able to develop more sensitivity to children's needs and become a safe grounded base that they could come back to.
- SCHAFFER AND EMERSON (1964)
- Found most babies formed their secondary attachments with their fathers and primary with their mothers and 75% were attached to their fathers by 18 months.

# STAGES OF ATTACHMENT

- There are four stages of attachment:
- The 'Asocial Stage' can last up to six weeks after birth where babies do not discriminate between humans and there is no preference between say a human and a dog.
- The 'Indiscriminate stage' can last from six weeks to six months where babies begin to be able to tell people apart and form bonds with familiar adults, despite this still no fear of strangers.
- The 'Specific stage' can develop around seven months where babies begin to show signs of separation anxiety but still no distress to strangers.
- The 'Multiple attachments stage' is around 10 months old where they have formed an attachment with their primary carer and there is an interest in developing bonds with others.

# KEY RESEARCH

## SCHAFFER AND EMERSON (1964)

- Method: Researchers visited the babies at home every month for the first 12 months and then again at 18 months. They interviewed and observed the children and mothers looking at separation and stranger anxiety.
- Results: 6-8 months: 50% showed separation anxiety.
- 10 months: 80% had a specific attachment and 30% formed multiple.
- 18 months: 87% had at least 2 attachments and 31% had more than five.

## EVALUATION:

- The stages don't always occur in a fixed order.
- It could be considered culturally biased and only applies to an individualistic culture.
- Biased sample
- There were only two behavioural categories looked at which could include more behaviour types to make the experiment more in depth.

# ANIMAL STUDIES

## LORENZ (1952)

- Method: Divided a group of goose eggs into two groups, one was left with the mother and the other was placed in an incubator where the first moving thing they saw was Lorenz.
- Results: The geese hatched in the incubator continued to follow Lorenz whereas those who hatched naturally continued to follow their mother.
- These results can't really be generalised to humans as geese do not imprint in the same way as we do.
- Also after spending time with their own species it was found the process was reversible.

## HARLOW (1959)

- Method: Studied 16 rhesus monkeys for 165 days in a lab. They were placed in a cage with two mothers, one made of wire and one of cloth. Each half had the opposite mother with food.
- Results: Most of the monkeys spent their time cuddled to the cloth covered mother whether she had the feeding bottle or not, even with the wire one having food they returned to the cloth one.
- Again these results are difficult to generalise to humans, however monkeys are genetically closer than ducks.
- It can be considered unethical as the monkeys experienced psychological harm.



# EXPLANATIONS OF ATTACHMENT

## DOLLARD AND MILLER (1950)

- Say that infants and caregivers learn to form attachments so it is not innate. Can be referred to as cupboard love as caregivers are providers of food.
- Claim different types of conditioning can be used to explain attachment.
- Classical conditioning means babies associate caregivers with food so then become happy when they see them.
- Operant conditioning says crying gets a response from the caregiver so the baby learns if it cries it will get hugs or food.

## EVALUATION

- It is reductionist so too simplistic to explain the complex behaviour of attachment.
- Environmentally deterministic as it says early learning determines later attachments.
- Only explains a limited number of behaviours, some of which don't relate to a change of level in comfort.
- Schaffer an Emerson claim despite some infants being fed by other carers their primary attachment was still to their biological mothers.

# BOWLBY'S THEORY OF ATTACHMENT

- Bowlby takes an evolutionary perspective and believes that everyone is born with the innate tendency to form attachments so they can increase their chances of survival.
- The theory has five key words:
- 'Adaptive' saying that attachments give us an adaptive advantage.
- 'Social Releasers' are what babies have that unlock the innate tendency adults have to care for them.
- 'Critical Period' is the period from birth until 2 ½ years that babies should form an attachment in, if this does not occur their development may be stunted.
- 'Monotropy' is the intense attachments most infants form with their mothers. Can be with another mother-type-substitute.
- 'Internal Working Model' acts as a model for what relationships are like and can be known as the continuity hypothesis.

# RESEARCH SUPPORT FOR INTERNAL WORKING MODEL

## BAILEY ET AL (2007)

- Method: Assessed 99 mothers with 1-year old babies on the quality of their attachment, did this through a standard interview procedure and observation.
- Results: Mothers that reported poor attachments to their own parents in the interviews were more likely to have children classified as having poor attachments according to the observations.
- This suggests the internal working model is accurate as lack of the monotropic attachment leads to struggles forming later attachments.
- This research is socially sensitive and potentially unethical as it could affect children in a negative way due to their own parents lack of a monotropic attachment.
- There are other factors that may influence future social behaviours such as individual temperament meaning it is reductionist.

# AIMSWORTH'S STRANGE SITUATION

- **Using a sample of 100 babies ranging from 9-18 months old, psychologists observed eight different stages through a two way mirror with each stage lasting around three minutes.**
- Stage One: Leaves the mother and baby alone together
- Stage Two: A stranger joins the room and tries to interact with the infant.
- Stage Three: The mother leaves the baby alone with the stranger.
- Stage Four: The mother returns.
- Stage Five: The stranger leaves the room.
- Stage Six: The mother leaves the room so the baby is alone.
- Stage Seven: The stranger re-enters the room.
- Stage Eight: The mother returns and the stranger leaves.
- **Throughout the researchers measured proximity and contact seeking, contact maintaining, avoidance of proximity and contact and resistance to contact.**

# RESULTS

	Secure	Insecure-avoidant	Insecure resistant
Exploration & Secure base behaviour	Uses mother as a safe base	Doesn't use mother as a safe base	Little
Separation Anxiety	Moderate	Low	High
Stranger Anxiety	Moderate	Low	'Hot and cold'
Reunion Behaviour	Joy on reunion	Avoids Contact	Resists embrace

- Ainsworth found there were typically three types of attachment:
- Secure attachment: distress on separation. Avoid stranger without mother. Happy to be reunited with mother. 70% of infants.
- Ambivalent attachment: Intense distress on separation. Fear of stranger. Reject contact after separation. 15% of infants.
- Avoidant attachment: No interest when separated. Play with stranger. Ignores mother after separation. 15% of infants.

# EVALUATION

- Controlled observation meaning it is easy to replicate and compare results.
- Good inter-observer reliability as there were operationalised behaviour categories.
- Care-givers may change their behaviour to appear as better parents therefore affecting validity.
- Can put stress on the child, meaning they're not protected and deliberately put in a stressful situation.
- Other psychologists claim there is a fourth attachment: disorganised attachment. Ainsworth only identified three.
- The environment surrounding the infant can also cause anxiety.

# CULTURAL VARIATIONS IN ATTACHMENT

- Research suggest that attachment does differ between cultures, people all around the world bring their babies up in different ways which poses the question whether the 'Strange Situation' can be applied to different cultures and countries.
- Bowlby's idea that attachment is innate can be explained through globalisation, through mass media spreading around, parenting techniques are known all around the world so parents and children are all exposed to similar influences.

# KEY RESEARCH

## VAN LJZENDOORN AND KROONENBERG (1988)

- Studied 32 studies in 8 countries that used Ainsworth's Strange Situation.
- 1,990 babies were studied meaning the sample size was definitely large enough and they were classified using the same system as Ainsworth: type A, B or C.

Country (number of studies)	Percentage of each attachment type		
	Secure	Avoidant	Resistant
USA (18)	65	21	14
UK (1)	75	22	3
Holland (4)	67	26	7
Germany (3)	57	35	8
Japan (2)	68	5	27
China (1)	50	25	25
Israel (2)	64	7	29
Sweden (1)	74	22	4

## TAKAHASHI (1990)

- Looked at 60 middle class Japanese infants and their mothers. There were high levels of resistant attachments as mothers rarely leave infants in early childhood. This shows cultural variations for attachments.

## EVALUATION

- Could be biased towards individualistic countries as 27/32 of them were individualistic.
- Lacks cultural validity.
- Looking at countries rather than cultures makes it unrepresentative.



# MATERNAL DEPRIVATION

- Maternal deprivation is the effects that occur when infants are separated from their carers.
- Deprivation occurs when attachments formed between infant and caregiver are broken later in life. Separation from mother in early childhood can have serious consequences on the infant later in life. However, for many care children that doesn't occur as when they are adopted they form a new attachment.
- If the caregiver figure isn't replaced, infants become damaged by the lack of a caregiver figure.

# KEY RESEARCH

## GOLDFARB (1955)

- Method: Studied children who were fostered by the age of 4 months against those who remained in an orphanage. Their IQ was tested at the age of 12.
- Results: The fostered group had an IQ of 96 whereas the orphanage group had an IQ of 68.

## KULUCHOVA

- Found that twin boys from Czechoslovakia who had been locked in a cupboard from ages 1 ½ to 7 years appeared to recover fully when they were adopted by two loving adults.

- Deprivation can lead to affectionless psychopathy meaning they may have an inability to experience guilt or have strong feeling of any kind.

## BOWLBY

- Looked at 44 juvenile thieves who were interviewed for affectionless psychopathy to see if they had prolonged separation from their mothers.
- 14 of them were described as affectionless psychopaths.
- 12 of them had prolonged separation from their mothers.
- There was a control group of non criminals who were considered disturbed and 2/44 of them had separation from their mothers.

# EFFECTS OF INSTITUTIONALISATION

- Institutionalisation: The effects of living in outside the family/family home and in an institutional setting i.e. a hospital or an orphanage, for long, continuous periods of time.
- EFFECTS OF INSTITUTIONALISATION:
- Disinhibited attachment – not knowing what counts as appropriate behaviour
- Mental retardation - low IQ
- Physical underdevelopment
- Impaired adult relationships
- Quasi-autism: problem understanding the meaning of social contexts, may display obsessional behaviour
- Delayed language development

# KEY RESEARCH

## RUTTER

- Method: Studied 165 Romanian children who were in Romanian institutions and were then adopted in Britain. Control group of 52 British children who were institutionalised and adopted.
- Results: The age the Romanian children were adopted depended on how well they caught up with their British counterparts.

Age of Adoption	IQ Score
Before 6 months	102
6 months-2 years	86
After 2 years	77

## ZEANAH ET AL (2005)

- METHOD: Studied attachment in 95 children from ages of 12-31 months old who spent most of their lives in institutional care. Used a control group of 50 children who had never lived in an institution.
- RESULTS: 74% of the control group were securely attached compared to only 19% of the institutional group and 65% of them being considered as having disorganised attachment.

# INFLUENCE OF EARLY ATTACHMENTS

The internal working model can affect 3 types of relationships:

- Late childhood relationships with peers - Securely attached infants tend to form the best quality childhood friendships compared to insecurely attached infants often have friendship difficulties.
- Adulthood relationships with romantic peers – Securely attached infants tend to go on to have longer relationships where as resistant and avoidant have nearly half the time and tend to be jealous and scared on intimacy.
- Adulthood relationships as a parent – Often attachment types are passed on through generations so securely attached people will often have better relationships with their own children.

# KEY RESEARCH

## MYRON-WILSON AND SMITH (1998)

- Method: studied 196 children from ages 7-11 assessing their attachment type and how involved they were in bullying through a questionnaire.
- Results: securely attached children were unlikely to be involved in bullying. Insecure-avoidant children were likely to be victims of bullying and insecure-resistant children were more likely to be the ones doing the bullying.

## HAZAN AND SHAVER (1987)

- Method: used a questionnaire called the 'love quiz' to test the internal working model, the questionnaire was put in a newspaper and got 620 responses.
- Results: 56% of respondents were identified as securely attached. 25% were found to be insecure-avoidant and 19% were insecure-resistant.

- BAILEY ET AL (2007)
- Method: Studied attachment types between 99 mothers and their babies using the Strange Situation and adult attachment interview.
- Results: Found majority of the mothers had the same attachment type to their own children as they had to their mothers.
- Without an internal working model, individuals have no reference to base relationships with their children on.

