

Experiment on attachment theory and delinquency



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The reason behind this experiment was to show that if a child is deprived of affection and attachment to its mother or caregiver during early stages of childhood when they grow up they are likely to become delinquent and lack affection. Attachment is a very strong emotional tie that develops over time between an infant and their main caregiver. Infants when they are first born they are physically reliant on adults to feed, care for them and protection. Infants are referred to as children who are under the age of two. It is believed that infancy are born with innate habit to create attachment for survival. Innate is the behaviour that genetic or inherited, it is considered to be found on both adults and infants. Attachment is considered to be also of long term benefit as it helps to ensure the creation of emotional relationship later in life and as the foundation of how to behave through learning from the care giver.

John Bowlby was born in 1907 was a psychoanalyst like Freud and believed that mental health and behavioural problems could be attributed early in childhood experience. Psychodynamic theory suggests relationship problems with parents could be the later cause of problems later in life. Bowlby thought that a Childs mother or main care giver acted as both ego and super ego. Bowlby took up Freuds views on the importance of maternal care and the ethological concept of imprinting to produce a new theory. Lorenz's study (1935) of imprinting showed that precocial species imprint and follow the first moving object. He mentioned that this happens within a critical period and it's for survival value. Bowlby took up this study into his theory and suggested that attachment forms to those who respond to child signals and there is a window period for it to take place on both humans and animals

and in humans is between 6 months to 3 years. Disruption of this attachment will have developmental consequences which maybe physical, emotional and intellectual. Bowlby mentioned that maternal deprivation may lead to lack of guilt and regard for the consequences of their actions.

In the learning theory through classical conditioning babies learn to associate their care-giver with food. Food is an unconditioned or primary rein-forcer. According to behaviourists behaviour is not innate but learned. Learning can be due to association being made between and behaviour can be altered by patterns of reinforcements reward and punishment. The care-giver is a secondary rein-forcer the baby feels secure when the caregiver is present because of the association they have with food. According to this theory babies become attached to people who satisfy their physiological needs. Dollard and Miller (1950) proposed the further adaptation of the learning theory account of attachment, based in part on operant conditioning but with exclusion of a mental state. They suggested that human infants when hungry feel uncomfortable and enters a drive state so the caregiver becomes the source of reward every time they feed the infant.

Harlow (1959) studied learning using rhesus monkeys; he separated them from their mothers and raised them in cages on their own. The baby monkeys were given baby blankets but every time it was removed they became distressed. To Harlow blankets was an association of their mothers and this suggested to Harlow that attachment was not based with the association of food.

John Bowlby's experiment of 44 juvenile thieves was done to test if a child is continuously separated from its mother or main care giver would result in the child developing behavioural problems later in life. His participants were 88 children from the age of 5 to 15 who had behavioural problems and had been referred to child guidance clinic. 44 of these children had been referred to the clinic because of stealing. Out of the 44 Bowlby identified some of them as affection psychopaths lacking social responsibility and did not even show guilty for the crimes they had committed. Some of the children who had been sent to the clinic had not committed any crime at all they had emotional problems but were not considered to be displaying antisocial behaviour. None of these children were considered to be affectionless psychopaths so they were used as the control group. He found out that out of the thieves a large number had experienced early prolonged separation from their mothers. In the other group only 4% had experienced continuous early separation from their mothers. These results according to Bowlby showed that there is a relationship between early separation from parent and having to develop social emotional problems later in life. In serious cases maternal deprivation leads to anti social behaviour which in this particular was thieving and if it's not critical may lead to affectionless psychopathy.

Bowlby's theory on imprinting on non humans research by Lorenz supports view that imprinting is innate because the goslings imprinted on the first moving object they saw whether it was a goose or Lorenz himself. This process is likely to have evolved in many species as a means of protection of the young to enhance their survival. On attachment failure it mentions that once the period pass it is difficult to form attachment Hodges and Tizard

found that children who had formed no attachment later difficult with peers. If attachment did evolve as Bowlby suggests providing an important biological function, then we would expect attachment and care-giving behaviour to be universal. Tronic et al (1992) study in Zaire where family groups even breastfeed and look after each other's infant, despite this the infants at six months still have to have one primary attachment with their mother. Monotropy and hierarchy Bowlby suggests that infants form multiple attachments but as a form of hierarchy with one attachment giving special importance in social development. Schaffer and Emerson observed that strongly attached infants had mothers who responded instantly to their demands and the ones who were weakly attached to their mothers failed to interact with them. The results in Harlows study the monkeys got attached to unresponsive wire mother and they all ended up maladjusted adults. They had difficulties in reproduction and were poor parents. Bowlby's theory of attachment has been very influential in academic circles. Hospitals now allow parents to stay with their child to prevent attachment disruption. Social service supports parents who are struggling rather than removing children into foster care. Day care facilities now have a key worker to provide substitute care giver in the absence of a working parent.

There are a number of issues to consider most of the evidence of the maternal deprivation hypothesis came from children who are in institution were there where deprived in many ways. The argument can be that these children may have suffered some forms of deprivation other than maternal deprivation. Not all the researches that lie in this category have found that maternal deprivation leads to maladjustment a study done by Bowlby in

1956 on a group of children who had tuberculosis under the age of 4 and had been hospitalised. They were put on a strict regime and did not get personal care their parents would only visit them once a week. Later on in life they were compared to those that had not been hospitalised the results showed no differences at all. Michaels Rutter (1981) mentioned that Bowlby confused cause and effect with an association. He listed that some families might be at risk because of poor living condition or unsettled interpersonal relationships. Bowlby failed to describe different kinds of deprivation as a child could have been deprived of the care givers presence if they could have created an attachment with the care giver and when disrupted the child suffers from privation rather than deprivation.

Multiple attachment most psychologists hold that attachments are equally important (Rutter, 1995) in multiple attachment model there are no primary or secondary attachment. Prior and Glaser (2000) conclude from a review of research that the evidence still points to the hierarchical model as suggested by Bowlby's concept of monotropy. Maternal deprivation hypothesis suggest that quite serious consequences for even a small amount of separation.

Some psychologists believe that these can be a result of privation than of deprivation and Bowlby failed to distinguish between the two. Bowlby's WHO report was used politically remove the few women positions for returning from war. Bowlby's theory suggests that even temporary separation between child and mother has damaging effect and it has led many women to feel guilty for leaving their child. One of Bowlby's theory suggests that there are continuities between early attachment and later social behaviours. However such development can be explained without Bowlby's theory an innately

trusting and friendly personality could be the major factor in securing attachment and the prime factor forming close relationships. Nachmias et al (1996) found no association between early temperament and attachment strength

The diversity of ethical and moral behaviour reflects the diversity of human societies. What is ethical and moral behaviour for one maybe unethical and immoral for another. Ethics are moral codes laid down by professionals it could be argued that Bowlbys study was unethical as it discriminated against women, making them to feel guilty for not being at home looking after their children. Bowlbys study on the attachment theory heavily relied on the study of animals which are in normal sense completely different from humans. This experiment was dealing with the experiences that had occurred to this kids while they were still infants it will probably mean that they could have forgotten what had happened to them when they where infants. Bringing back this past experience will be meaning relieving post traumatic experiences they had suffered resulting in psychologically harming them. Deception might also have happened as the participants were divided before the experiment and could have already been labelled to be affectionless psychopaths or had antisocial behaviours. The experiment was carried with the full consent of the parents as the participants where under aged so there was full consent. The participant where debriefed before the experiment so Bowlby followed the BPS ethical guidelines. The participants were notified the purpose of this experiment and were let known this was a study which was later going to be studied and their names were not going to be published so confidentiality was kept. The parents were informed about what

the experiment was about so if they could have found it to be harmful to their kids they had a right to withdraw at any time.