

# Bowlby's evolutionary theory of attachment

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Bowlby's theory is an evolutionary theory because he believes attachment is a behavioral system that has evolved because of its survival and reproductive value. Caregiving is adaptive because species have adapted over many years to enhance survival of the offspring so they can later reproduce. Bowlby's theory is made up of many different ideas. According to Bowlby, children have an innate drive to become attached to a caregiver. This is similar to that of imprinting which is an innate readiness to develop a strong bond with the mother figure which takes place during the sensitive period. Since attachment is innate there is likely to be a limited window for development. This is said to be when a child is 3-6 months when a child is most sensitive to an attachment. After this stage attachment can become more difficult. The internal working model is a cluster of concepts about relationships and what to expect from others. In the short term it gives the child and insight into the caregivers' behavior. In the long term it acts as a template for future relationships as it generates expectations. This is similar to the continuity hypothesis and the idea that emotionally secure infants go on to be emotionally secure, trusting and confident adults. Social releases elicit caregiving such as smiling, crying, looking cute etc. This induces monotropy, one relationship that the infant has with their primary attachment figure is of special significance. Infants also have secondary attachment figures which form a hierarchy. These secondary attachment figures act as a safety net and also contribute to social development. Attachment also fosters independence rather than dependence. A secure base helps this by giving a child somewhere to come home to after exploring the world.

Schaffer and Emmerson showed support for Bowlby's Evolutionary Theory of Attachment by observing 60 babies. They found that infants had many attachments (grandparents, mothers, fathers, friends etc.) However, they maintained one primary attachment figure. This was based on the quality of caregiving which shows support for monotropy, the idea we have one attachment figure and a hierarchy of secondary attachments.

Harlow also supported Bowlby's theory by showing that infant monkeys who formed an attachment with an unresponsive and insensitive wire mother became quite maladjusted adults who had problems reproducing, i. e. interaction is important. This therefore shows that having a primary attachment figure is innate and is important for emotional and social development.

However, the multiple attachment model suggests there are no primary or secondary attachments. All attachments are integrated into one single model. This shows a weakness in Bowlby's theory of attachment because it states that a primary attachment figure is of special significance in emotional development. It also states that the secondary attachment figures which form a hierarchy also contribute to social development. The multiple attachment model removes this.

Another weakness is that, despite many rapid advancements in the field of genetics, we have not found any gene, or genes, that control attachment, which can suggest that attachment isn't innate.