

Early attachment relates to later adult relationships



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During the 1950s and 1960s the assumption that babies become attached to the people who feed them because of an association with hunger relief was challenged. Harlow used isolated monkeys and two wire mesh cylinders, one contained a nipple to provide milk and the other was covered in towelling. According to learning theorists the monkeys should show more attachment and spend more time with the wire cylinder because it provided milk. The results were the opposite as the monkeys became more attached to the towel cylinder, when they were scared they went back to it as well.

Lorenz's work 'imprinting' has an influential effect on the way attachment is thought about, by using ducks. The first thing a duck usually sees when it hatches is its mother, it follows her around and looks to her for security, Lorenz used newly hatched ducks for an experiment and found that attachment was shown for objects that don't move such as a watering can, there is a critical period for imprinting but not within a set time frame that's why it is called the 'sensitive period' meaning if an animal or human is capable of learning primary reinforcement doesn't have to be part of the process.

Bowlby invented an alternative to learning theory, he said that there is four phases in development of attachment behaviours, the first phase being that, babies don't discriminate between different phases, although there is some evidence to show that a baby will look longer at its mothers face. The second phase that occurs six weeks to eight months, babies show preference for certain adults such as its mother and father, for example smiling, talking and being soothed. The third phase of attachment development happens between seven and eighteen months, children show attachment by

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protesting at separation from particular people and wariness of strangers. In the fourth stage Bowlby believes infants between eighteen and twenty-four months begin to understand their parents motives and start to organise their own behaviour around it.

Ainsworth and Bell (1969) Strange situation test consists of a series of episodes where (1) a child and their mother are left in an unfamiliar room the child has a pile of toys to play with, (2) a stranger enters the room then plays with the child, (3) the parent leaves the room, (4) the parent returns (5) the stranger leaves, (6) the parent leaves again (7) stranger returns to the room and the parent enters the room in the final episode the reunion. Each episode lasts about three minutes. A coding system is used to record the child's behaviour in terms of the attachment they show. Type A: Avoidant infants show little sign of distress during the separation of parent, the child doesn't engage with or come close to the mother at the reunion, Type B: Secure infants, they sometimes show distress at separation the infant actively seeks interaction and proximity with its mother especially at reunion. Type C: Ambivalent infants, at reunion they seek contact seeking and resisting behaviour; they need it but don't want it. Type D: Disorganised, they show no clear pattern across the episodes and show strange responses to separation and reunion.

Maternal belief systems are assessed by the adult attachment interview (AAI) is related to infant attachment. The four main adult attachments are (1) Autonomous, they can recall events from childhood and can see positives and negatives in their experiences in with parents; in the 'strange situation' these people usually have securely attached children. (2) Dismissive, these <https://assignbuster.com/early-attachment-relates-to-later-adult-relationships/>

adults regard their attachment with his/her parents as of little relevance or importance they usually have children who have avoidant attachments. (3) Enmeshed, these adults find it difficult to be away from their parents, sort of tied to their parent's apron strings, they usually produce children of the ambivalent attachment. (4) Unresolved, often resulting from a loss of a parent, where issues are still unresolved, and adults of this attachment usually have children of disorganised attachments.

According to attachment theory, internal working models of relationships are developed during early parent-child interactions and subsequently 'carried' forward into future relationships (Sroufe & Fleeson, 1986) children who expect their needs to be met and see themselves as worthy of love and support may behave in a way that show positive responses and friendship from their peers. The quality of early peer relationships may have important implications for children's psychosocial adjustment later in life (Cowan and Cowan, in press). Internal working models of attachment relationships may influence children's perceptions, beliefs, behaviours and interpretations of social interactions, shaping expectations about and reaction to the world (Bowlby 1980; Cassidy, Kirsch, Scolton & Parke, 1996). A child who has a secure attachment to their parents sees a relationship as mutual and supportive. A child who has insecure attachments and their needs are not met by their parents, may expect the same from other situations outside home, this can interfere with the development of friendships and can result in peer rejection which leads to the child being avoidant. There is evidence that early childhood attachment affects friendships at different points in time in later childhood and adolescence (Weinhold, Ogwa and Sroufe, 1997)

Warren, Huston, Egeland and Sroufe, (1997) also found that children who had anxious / resistant attachments in infancy were twice as likely as other children to develop an anxiety disorder. This suggests that anxiety may be the outcome of insecure attachments. Behaviour problems like aggression, avoidance and withdrawal are linked with peer rejection.

Hazan and Shavar were the first to apply Ainsworth et' al's three basic attachment styles to adult sexual romantic relationships (Gross 2004) they wanted to find out if early attachments with a persons parents related to their adult attachments. The three attachment styles were reworded to make them suitable for a study on adult attachments. As part of a love quiz in a local newspaper respondents were asked to choose a description out of the three attachment style statements that best describe their feelings about romantic relationships, they were then asked to complete a simple adjective list describing their childhood relationships with their parents. The scores were then correlated with the chosen attachment style. They're results were close to that of Ainsworth et. al's findings.

Individuals inner working models can updated and modified as a result of experience, for example adults who reported being insecure in their relationship with their parents managed to produce children who are securely attached at twelve months and six years. They had mentally worked through their unpleasant experiences with their parents and their inner working models are now more typical of secure types (Gross, 2004).