

Bowlby juvenile study



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In the following essay I will be looking at the case study of John Bowlby and the 44 Juvenile thieves. I will be describing the original hypothesis of the study and what Bowlby aimed to find. I will then look at two other key psychological studies into human behaviour. Once I have looked at all three of the studies, I will then look at the research methods used by all three. I will closely look at the ethical implications of the studies as well as the practical applications used in each.

John Bowlby (1907-1990) was a Psychoanalyst who worked at the London Child Guidance Clinic between 1936 and 1939. Bowlby believed that mental health and behavioural problems could be attached to early childhood experience just as Freud did. He aimed to prove that separation from Mothers or sole carers before the age of five affected children's adolescent behaviour. Bowlby took 44 patients that had come into his clinic who were thieves that had been recommended by their school, parents or social carers. The group of thieves were split into two groups, these were grade I who had only stolen once, and the other was grade IV who were repeat offenders. He then took another group of 44 children who were emotionally disturbed but not thieves, this group was known as the control group. The 88 children involved in this study were all aged between five and sixteen. In the group of thieves there were 31 boys and 13 girls whilst in the control group there were 34 boys and 10 girls.

There were three key studies in this case study which were run by a psychologist, social worker and a psychiatrist. The first was an IQ test which was invigilated by one of the clinic psychologists; the test was done as each of the participants entered into the clinic. The psychologist found that as well

as all of the participants being similar in age, they were all similar in their IQ so they were no anomalies when comparing the educational background of the children.

The second study was an interview of the participant's parents that was held by a social worker, the aim of this was to record details of the child's early life.

The third study was an interview held with the child and the parent that they were with; this was held by a psychiatrist to see if the details given by the parents matched with those of the child.

The social worker and psychiatrist made separate reports which were compared when they had completed them in regard to each child. Once the reports had been compared, the children were then split into different groups, these were;

Normal

- No Abnormal symptoms

Depressed

- Showing symptoms of depression

Circular

- Showing symptoms of depression and over activity

Hyperthymic

- Over activity

Affectionless

- No affection for others and no sense of shame or responsibility

Schizoid

- Withdrawn and lacking relationships with others

Priggish

- Showing symptoms of anxiety or hysteria

The results have some significant anomalies; the 14 affectionless characters are statistically significant, this is because 13 of the 14 (93%) were grade IV thieves; this clearly shows that the affectionless have been very misguided and uncared for in the childhood. Over half of the grade IV thieves were affectionless. Other findings are that 19 of the cases had suffered prolonged separation from their sole carer during their first five years. 17 of the 19 that had suffered prolonged separation were thieves and 12 of these 17 were classed as affectionless. Of the 23 that were grade IV thieves, 14 of them had suffered prolonged separation.

After the case study, Bowlby concluded that " The prolonged separation of the child from his mother or foster mother is highly characteristic of the persistent offender"

When looking at the case study in depth, there are several implications that make this study unethical. All of the children that were involved in the study were already clients of Bowlby's and so when the case study was done, neither the children nor the parents were informed of what Bowlby was doing and had no idea that the results of the study would be released. This is very

unethical as Doctors and Psychiatrists are supposed to have a confidentiality agreement with the client, this study shows that Bowlby clearly did not have any worries in releasing the results that were found and so there could have been many implications when released. When Bowlby went ahead with this study, there was a lot of personal information released along with the results. This information included the names of the clients and parents, along with things such as whether the children were breast fed as a baby. This sort of information is very personal and even if all the participants agreed to the study and information being released, these sort of in depth details being released can be even more damaging to the participants in the long run as anybody that has read the full report that Bowlby had released could have preconceptions of them when they are older and in certain situations such as applying for work.

After looking at the results of the case study, there is a clear difference between those that are repeat offenders and those who are not. When comparing the results of the two groups, it was a surprise to see that the eight Priggish children were from the control group; this is surprising as they have no history of theft, let alone repeat offending.

When evaluating the Bowlby study, there are more criticisms of the study than positives although, the positives are still around to see today. Once the results of the study had been released, attitudes towards child care changed dramatically. Bowlby's work 'humanised' child care practices in regard to fostering policies. Hospitals have also changed their policies in regards to parental visits. Criticisms of the study are that Bowlby should have used a third group of ordinary children from a normal school as he then would have

had something to compare to as the participants were all either thieves or emotionally troubled and so gives an unfair reflection. Because the study was taken orally, there could have been gaps in the information given by the children or parents, this is because memories fade and so some of the details recorded could have been inaccurate, the parents were also able to give their own answers and so could have altered the truth so they would look better. Bowlby put the children into the different groups knowing which ones were thieves and which ones were not and so this automatically alters people's views on the results as they already may have had their own perceptions of what they expected to find out.

Before Bowlby started this case study, he already had an opinion that any form of deprivation would cause problems when older; he did not take into consideration the difference between deprivation and separation. This meant that Bowlby's opinions were already influenced before the results had been recorded. Another influence on Bowlby was Konrad Lorenz and his study into geese.

Michael Rutter (Born 1933) was one of the first Psychologist's to question Bowlby's theory that deprivation caused juvenile delinquency amongst children. Rutter believed that it was important to distinguish the differences of deprivation suffered by children as different forms of separation caused different outcomes in adulthood. In 1972 he wrote a book called Maternal Deprivation Re-assessed where he suggested that Bowlby may have oversimplified the concept of maternal deprivation. Rutter distinguished the differences between deprivation and privation. Rutter believed that privation was when a child failed to make an attachment, which could have been for <https://assignbuster.com/bowlby-juvenile-study/>

many reasons such as having many carers. Deprivation Rutter believed was the loss of or damage to an attachment they may have had. Rutter quoted that “ Privation is likely to lead to attention seeking, a personality characterised by lack of guilt and clingy behaviour”.

In 1981 Rutter tested his theory on Deprivation and Privation. His case study was very influential as his theory on Privation was later studied again by Hodges and Tizard (1989). Rutter’s hypothesis was to prove that different types of separation had different influences later on in life. Rutter studied over two thousand boys aged between nine and 12 who lived on the Isle of White. He interviewed the boys and their families to see whether the boys who had been separated from their mothers in early life had turned to crime.

Rutter found that the boys who had been separated from their mothers through illness or death were less likely to turn to crime later on. The boys who had been separated through the psychological disorder of one of the parents, stress or arguments within the family were four times more likely to turn to crime.

From the results Rutter concluded that it was the conflict and stress of the separation more than the separation itself that was the cause of the antisocial behaviour and caused the children to turn to crime later in life.

Strengths of Rutter’s case study are that he used two thousand participants who were all close in age. Two thousand is a large sum of people to do detailed interviews with and so you can conclude that the results are fairly reliable and can be generalised across a higher number of people. People

could also conclude that if the study was repeated outside of the Isle of white, the results could be similar.

Weaknesses of the study are that because the children were aged between nine and twelve, they would have to recall from memory which is a similar weakness to that of Bowlby's case study. Another weakness is that Rutter only used boys in the study; results could have been different if girls were also interviewed.

There were not any real ethical implications of the Rutter case study. The parents of the boys interviewed were aware of the reasoning behind the case study. There was no personal information given out when the results of the study were released so there was no worry of implications in the boy's later lives.

"Jill Hodges and Barbara Tizard (1989) focussed very much on the privation side of the Rutter case study. The study aimed to look at the long term effects of Privation.

There were three aims for this case study and these were;

1. To investigate the effect of institutional upbringing on later attachments.
2. To investigate the effects of privation on later social and emotional development.
3. To investigate if the effects of privation can be reversed." (Anon)

In the Hodges and Tizard case study, they followed 65 children from birth through to adolescence at 16. The Children were in two groups; one of the

groups had children that spent the first part of their lives in an institution until either adopted or taken back by their biological parents and the other group were normal kids who had grown up with their biological parents and siblings. The aim of the study was to see how beginning life in an institution affected the development of relationships with the children, their carers, parents, teachers and peers throughout their childhood. They would do this by getting the parents, adopted parents and teachers to fill out questionnaires at different stages whilst growing up to see how their relationships were developing. “ The results showed that the ex-institutional children were deeply attached to their adopted parents whilst the ex-institutional children who went back to their biological parents were not deeply attached. The ex-institutional children did have trouble forming close relationships and friendships with their siblings and peers in comparison to the non-institutional children.” (Anon)

Advantages of this study were that it was a longitudinal experiment which meant that it was done over a long period of time (16 years), this meant that they were able to get a vast amount of information about each child over that period of time.

Disadvantages of this kind of study are that as it is over such a vast period of time, it is almost impossible to keep in touch with the parents of all the children for whatever reason i. e. changing address. This means that they were unable to completely get all of the information needed.

Ethical implications of this case study are that there was not enough information on whether the parents and adopted parents were fully aware of

the reason behind the study. The children may not have been physically or mentally harmed by the experiment but had they become aware that their experiences were being documented for an experiment; they may not have wanted those details being released.

When comparing each of the three case studies that I have looked at in this essay, there are clear differences between them. Rutter (1981) and Hodges and Tizard (1989) have both managed to significantly prove that Bowlby oversimplified his theory when doing the 44 juveniles case study. They both proved that children were not simply affected in later life by deprivation of attachments from their parents. There were much more complicated aspects that needed looking at when studying the behaviours of children. Whilst Bowlby was on the right track with his theory, it has been proved that he was heavily influenced by other theorists and that his theory that deprivation would cause juvenile delinquency was quite far off the truth. The main outcome from these three key studies is that children are able to have close attachments to parents later on in life; but it is the parents themselves that affect how close the attachment becomes.