Psychology: Knowledge Organiser. Paper 1: Attachment

Caregiver-infant interactions

- From a very young age babies have meaningful interactions with caregivers.
- Reciprocity: baby & caregiver take turns, respond to and elicit responses from each other. Like a dance. Babies have alert phases in which they seek interactions. Babies take an active role. They are not passive recipients of care.
- Interactional synchrony: babies & caregivers mirror each others expressions and gestures. The beginnings of synchrony can be seen in babies as young as two weeks (**Meltzoff and Moore**). Good levels of synchrony are associated with good quality attachments.

☺ Filmed observations of interactions, analysed later, can established inter-rater reliability and babies not aware of being observed. Increases validity.
☹ Difficultly observing babies: hard to know what their expressions/gestures mean.
☹ Developmental importance: behaviours can be reliably observed but this doesn't reveal their importance.
☺ Counterpoint: evidence (e.g**. Isabella et al**) does support the importance of early interaction in attachment.

Schaffer's stages of attachment

- Asocial: first few weeks, baby behaves in same way to humans as inanimate objects.
- Indiscriminate: preference for (familiar) people, no strangers/separation anxiety.
- Specific: at about 7 months with one primary attachment figure (65% were to the mother).
- Multiple attachments: by 12 months most babies form several more attachments.
- Schaffer & Emerson's research: 60 Glasgow babies observed at home by mothers, reported on separation anxiety and stranger anxiety. Findings: babies developed attachment through a fixed sequence of stages.

☺ Good external validity: mothers did observing so babies not stressed by presence of a researcher.
☹ Poor evidence for asocial stage, babies have poor co-ordination, so may just seem asocial.
☹ Real-world application: day care ok in asocial and indiscriminate stages, starting at specific attachment stage is undesirable.

Animal studies of attachment

- **Lorenz's** research: large clutch of goose eggs, half saw mother within hours of hatching half saw Lorenz. Goslings followed whichever was the first moving object they saw. Conclusion: imprinting occurs only in critical period.

☺ Research support: **Regolin et al** observed chicks imprint on shapes. ☹ Generalisability to humans: attachment systems in birds less complex and not two way.

- **Harlow's** research: 16 very young rhesus monkeys raised with 'surrogate mothers'. The young monkeys preferred cloth covered mother to plain wire one with milk. Conclusion: contact comfort more important than food in attachment.

☺ Real-world value: helps professionals (e.g. social workers) to promote bonding & applied to zoos and breeding programmes.
☹ Generalising to humans, monkeys better than birds but human mind and behaviour is still more complex.

Ainsworth's strange situation

- Ainsworth's strange situation: controlled observation in lab, assess quality of caregiver—infant attachment. Behaviours measured including proximity seeking, separation anxiety, stranger anxiety and reunion behaviour.
- Seven episodes (3 min) e.g. stranger enters, caregiver leaves, stranger returns.
- Findings: secure (66% of British babies), secure base and moderate anxiety, easily calmed by caregiver. Insecure avoidant (22%) no secure base, no stranger or separation anxiety, avoids reunion. Insecure resistant (12%) extreme anxiety, resist comfort on reunion with caregiver.

☺ Good inter-rater reliability: 94% observers agree on attachment type (**Bick**)
☹ issues with overt observation on the mothers behaviour.
☹ Culture bound test: strange situation behaviours have different meanings across different cultures.

Bowlby: maternal deprivation

- Continuous maternal care needed for healthy development. Deprivation is loss of emotional care, negative effects if during the first 2.5 years (critical period).
- Intellectual development: deprivation reduces IQ (**Goldfarb**, institutionalised children). Emotional development: deprivation leads to affectionless psychopathology (no guilt).
- Bowlby's research: procedure, interviewed 44 young thieves and families. Findings: 14 affectionless psychopaths, 12 of these separated from mothers before 2 years of age.

☺ Real world application: how children are looked after in hospitals.
☹ Flawed evidence: Bowlby conducted interviews himself (bias). ☹ Privation not deprivation (**Rutter**), some of the 44 thieves may have been 'prived, deprivation may be less damaging.
☹ Sensitive not critical period: Czech twins recovered from severe deprivation (**Koluchova**).

Explanations of attachment: Bowlby's theory

- Attachment is innate and adaptive: evolutionary survival advantage.
- Social releasers: innate cute behaviours activate attachment in adults. Critical period: maximally sensitive up to 6 months although may extend to up to 2 years. Monotropy: attachment to one person, is different and special. Internal working model: first attachment is template for later relationships.

☺ Research support: **Lorenz** (critical period) **& Hazan & Shaver** (internal working model).
☹ Validity of monotropy challenged, primary attachment may not have unique qualities. (**Schaffer & Emerson).**
☺ Counterpoint: research support for social releasers, babies distressed when 'cute' signals ignored (**Brazelton**).
☹ **Rutter: '**Sensitive period' instead of 'critical period.

Explanations of attachment: learning theory

- Classical conditioning: UCS (food) produces UCR (feeling of pleasure). Caregiver (NS) associated with food becomes CS, produces pleasure (CR) and feelings of love for caregiver (an attachment is formed).
- Operant conditioning: crying reinforced because produces caregiver response. Negative reinforcement, caregivers response reinforced because crying stops.
- Drive reduction: attachment is a secondary drive learned by association of caregiver with hunger satisfaction.

☺ Some conditioning (association with comfort) could still be involved in selecting the primary attachment figure. ☹ Counterpoint: babies are more active in attachment than this theory suggests.
☹ Animal studies show that attachment does not depend on feeding (**Lorenz/Harlow**).
☹ Human studies: primary attachment figure not always the person who does feeding (**Schaffer & Emerson**), quality of attachment related to interactional synchrony not feeding (**Isabella et al**).

Cultural variations in attachment

- **Van IJzendoorn & Kroonenberg's** research: meta-analysis of 32 studies using Strange Situation in 8 countries/cultures. Findings: secure attachment most common (range from 50% China to 75% Britain). Conclusion: more insecure-resistant type in collectivist cultures (e.g. Japan) than individualist (e.g. US).
- Cultural similarities: **Tronick et al:** supports secure attachment is most common globally. Cultural differences: **Grossman et al:** In German culture, child rearing practises favour independence.

☺ Most of the studies were conducted by indigenous psychologists. ☹ Van IJzendoorn's sample was biased.
☹ Confounding variables: studies in different countries not matched for sample or method. ☹ Imposed etic: attachment behaviours may have different meanings to different cultures.

Influence of early attachment on later relationships

- Internal working model (IWM) first attachment is template for future relationships (**Bowlby**).
- Relationships in later childhood: securely attached children form better friendships (**Kerns**) and are less likely to become bullies (**Myron-Wilson et al**).
- Relationships in adulthood: parenting and romantic style based on IWM attachment type passed on in families (**Bailey et al**) and related to romantic relationships (**Hazan & Shaver**).
- Hazan & Shaver: analysed 620 replies to a 'love quiz'. Findings: securely attached adults = long lasting relationships, insecure avoidant types tended to be jealous and feared intimacy.

☺ Strong support linking attachment to later development (**Fearon et al**). Longitudinal support (**Simpson**).
☹ Association doesn't mean causality: third factor, environment.
☹ Relies on retrospective classification asking adults about their early lives.

The role of the father

- Attachment to fathers: father primary attachment object in just 3% of cases (**Schaffer & Emerson**). Secondary attachment formed with father within 18 months (75% of cases).
- Distinctive role for fathers: attachment between mother & baby more crucial in later teen attachments (**Grossmann et al**). However, quality of fathers' play with babies linked to later attachments, different role for fathers. Fathers can be primary attachment figures: adopt behaviours typical of mothers (**Field**).
- Key to primary (emotional) attachment is responsiveness of adult (e.g. interactional synchrony) not gender.

☹ Research confusion, researchers address different issues on fathers role.
☹ Conflicting evidence for distinct role: children without fathers do not grow up different.
☺ Real world applications: advising parents about the flexibility in the role of the father.

Romanian orphan studies: institutionalisation

- **Rutter et al:** ERA study, 165 Romanian orphans adopted in UK, 52 British adoptees as controls. Findings: children adopted before the age of 6 months had mean IQ of 102 at age 11, adoption after 2 years had mean IQ of 77. Sensitive period: no attachment before 6 months has long term effects (disinhibited attachment).
- **Zeanah et al:** BEI project, assessed group of 95 institutionalised Romanian children using Strange Situation. Findings: In institutionalised group only 19% secure attachment, 44% disinhibited attachment (compared to 74% and 20% retrospectively for controls).

☺ Real world application: improved caring in institutions (key workers for each child).☺ Confounding variables: fewer in these studies, no early trauma. ☹ Counterpoint, poor conditions in Romanian orphanages could be a confounding variable. ☹ Lack of adult data e.g. late adopted children may 'catch up'.