

Introduction to Attachment

The Role of the Caregiver

Klaus and Kennel - Contact after birth necessary for development of attachment in critical period, enjoyed better relationships with child.

- Immediate contact - tender care/interactions and spend more time looking at them
- Sensitive Responsiveness = successfully attachments

Messer - Caregiver communicates on child interests, ensuring child attends to communication

Infant Interactions

- Interactional synchrony - CONDON - Babies coordinate action in time with parent's speech. i.e. a conversation dance
- Frozen Face - MURRAY - 'Frozen Face Experiment' - The infant is active in communication, drawing the mother back in. Also appears upset, turns away and cries
- Motherese - SNOW - Distinctive language patterns. Usually slow, high pitched, repetitive, varies intonation and short simple sentences.
- Imitation - MELZOFF - Innate, infant imitation of facial expression. Young children imitate adult's facial expression: tongue pulling, lip protrusion, open mouth.

Criticisms

- Imitation shown is intentional?
- Exact role of imitation in the development of child's social understanding is unclear.

Functions of Attachment

- Not for food but for survival (LORENZ - Goslings)
- Attachment is adaptive - it ensures survival and makes reproduction likely
- Promoted by social releasers (e.g. smiling, crying). Formed with the individual who is most responsive to social releasers. (AINSWORTH - mothers response to different situations could be linked with security of relationship)

- Formed at critical period
- Formed with one special person (BOWLBY - monotropy)

Secure Attachments

A secure attachment, is an attachment which is constant, loving, warm and strong.

Insecure Attachments

Insecure attachments can be regarded as attachments which are weak, unavailable and are considered to be as caring or loving as secure attachments.

Measuring Attachments

Experiment: AINSWORTH

Aim: Studied reactions of young children to brief separations from their mother in order to determine the nature of attachment behaviours and types of attachments.

Method:

- Over 25 minutes infants exposed to sequences of 3 minute episodes
- A stranger had a brief chat with the mother, mother then left, leaving infant and stranger for max of 3 minutes
- If child became distressed, mother would return earlier
- Sequence repeated with stranger episode

Results: Measures: Proximity seeking and maintenance of proximity. 65% in secure category, 15% in anxious avoidant and anxious resistant. (Information on these categories which Ainsworth produced can be found below)

Conclusion: Type of attachment dependant upon mother's sensitivity and responsiveness.

Result Categories (Ainsworth)

- Anxious avoidant – baby ignores mother and seems indifferent. Easily comforted by stranger. Treats mother and stranger the same
- Secure – Baby happy in mother’s presence and distress when mother leaves. Calms down at mother’s return.
- Anxious resistant – Fussy child which cries a lot. Distressed when mother leaves, and isn’t comforted on her return. Shows anger, resists stranger.

Evaluation of Ainsworth's Investigation:

1. Ainsworth study retest unreliable.
2. Category system fairly stable, but validity in strange situation questionable.
3. Proximity measure – babies may explore their environment.
4. Not cross-cultural (GROSSMAN)

Adult Attachment Interview

- Open mother – secure children in strange situation
- Pre-occupied mother – insecure children
- MAIN – mother’s own childhood experiences affects how she interacts with her child.