

Attachment is the strong emotional bond that develops between infant and caregiver, providing the infant with emotional security. By the second half of the first year, infants have become attached to familiar people who have responded to their need for physical care and stimulation. Maurer and Maurer (1989) suggested that attachments are welded in the heat of interactions. ([www.psychology.sunysb.edu](http://www.psychology.sunysb.edu)) In other words, attachments depend on interaction between two people rather than simply being together.

Infants are physically helpless and need adults to feed, care for, and protect them and without such assistance they can not survive. So infants are born with a tendency to form an attachment in order to increase their chances of survival.

According to Schaffer (1996) there are certain stages in infant development:

- **Pre-attachment phase:** this stage last until about three month of age. At this stage, infant produce similar responses to all objects. Towards the end of this period, infant are beginning to show a greater preference for social stimuli, such as a smiling face.
- **Indiscriminate attachment phase:** between 2-7 months of age, infant become more social. They prefer human company and can distinguish between familiar and unfamiliar people. However they are still easily comforted by anyone and do not show anxiety with strangers.
- **Discriminate attachment phase:** around 7- 24 month, infant begin to show a different sort of protest when particular person puts them down. They show especial joy at reunion with that person. They have formed specific attachment. The infant begins to display stranger anxiety, uneasiness with strangers. (Cardwell et al 2000 p30)

After the main attachment is formed, infant also develop a wider circle of attachment depending how many consistent relationship they have. Some psychologists believe that there remains one special attachment figure.

There are different types of attachment. In the presence of stranger, the attachment of mother and infant is classified as: (Gross 2005,p 541)

- Secure
- Anxious/ avoidant
- Anxious/ ambivalent

According to psychoanalytic accounts, the infant becomes attached to its caregiver because of his or her ability to satisfy its instinctual needs. Freud suggest that childhood experiences form the basis of the adult personality and therefore the mother's status is 'established unalterably for a whole lifetime as the first and strongest love-object and as the prototype of all later love-relations' (Freud, 1924).([www.sfeu.ac.uk](http://www.sfeu.ac.uk))

Ethological theories suggest that attachment is important because it ensures the infant's survival by keeping it close to its caregiver. The mother is often the source of food, either as the lactating mammals, or in leading the young to , suitable sources nourishment. Being able to recognise the mother is therefore extremely important and has obvious evolutionary value. ([www.sfeu.ac.uk](http://www.sfeu.ac.uk))

John Bowlby (1907-1990) was an innovator in the study of human attachment. Many of his studies found that many children who didn't get certain needs met became 'affectionless characters.' These individuals use people solely for their own needs and have difficulty forming a loving, lasting tie with another person. ([www.psychematters.com](http://www.psychematters.com))

Bowlby considered that relationships between infants and their mothers developed as a result of a process known as imprinting. This was a kind of learning, which occurred in the first stage of infancy, and which established a deep attachment on the part of a young animal towards its parent. Imprinting has been studied extensively in animals, and Bowlby considered that a similar process was responsible for the development of attachments between human infants and their mothers, at the age of about seven months. ([www.psychology.sunysb.edu](http://www.psychology.sunysb.edu))

Because of this Bowlby developed the idea of monotropy. The idea that a human infant would develop only one special attachment to its mother, which was completely different from the other relationships which it developed, and that it would cause the child great distress and lasting damage if it was broken. He also suggested that if attachments were not formed by the age of two and a half, then the child would suffer permanent emotional damage, especially in terms of being able to form lasting relationships. ([www.psychology.sunysb.edu](http://www.psychology.sunysb.edu))

For Bowlby, the father is of no direct emotional significance to the young infant. But only of indirect value as an emotional and economic support for the mother. (Gross 2005)

Bowlby held the view that if a child lacked an attachment to a mother figure it could have major effects on its development. He claims that the attachment to the mother could not be broken in the first few years of life without serious and permanent damage to social, emotional and intellectual development. This is the maternal deprivation hypothesis (1951) which was based largely on studies during the 1930's and 1940's of children brought up in orphanages, residential nurseries and other large institutions. ([www.answers.com](http://www.answers.com))

Bowlby failed to distinguish between the effects of being separated from an attachment figure or never formed an attachment to begin with. His theory doesn't explain why some children are able to cope with poor attachment experiences while others suffer long term consequences. He also failed to distinguish between deprivation and privation.

Bowlby's work was done after the war, it was commissioned by the government and so it would not have been looked very positive on if he were to have said more was needed in our institutional care systems. After the war women had become empowered and this had upset social order. This was because whilst the men were away fighting, the women had to get jobs and provide for their families. Once the war was over, the women chose to stay in these occupations as they now were aware they were capable of working. There had been a huge raise of female awareness of their position in society.

To assess Bowlby's research and to question Bowlby's view that it is separation itself that produced harmful long term effects for the child, Rutter did an experiment. He studied over 2000 boys between the ages of 9 -12, living on the Isle of Wight. He used interviews with the boys and their families to see if the boys who had been separated from their mothers in early life turned to crime later on. ([www.psychol.ucl.ac.uk](http://www.psychol.ucl.ac.uk))

He relied on the proofs of other researchers such as Newson (1974) who argued that mothering skills are not in any way innate or instinctive. Instead, they are skills, which are acquired through practice in communicating with that particular individual baby. As you get to know a baby, and see it as having human sensibilities and a 'personality', you also become more able to detect and understand that baby's responses. Babies, on their part, learn very fast, and respond more to those people who are sensitive to their actions. They are also, as Schaffer and Emerson (1964) showed, more likely to form attachments with people who respond sensitively to them. The implication here is that interacting with babies is a learned skill, and that fathers can acquire these skills just as mothers do, given motivation and opportunity.

Tizard and Hodges (1978) gave evidence against Bowlby's view as well. They said natural parents are not necessarily the best. They studied 65 children who were placed in care before the age of 4 months. By the age of four years, 24 were adopted and 15 returned home, often to single parents. In terms of intellectual and social development the adopted children were doing best at the age of eight. So it indicates that mother is not always best and that attachment may take place after the age of four. (Cardwell et al 2000)

Spitz carried out studies that concentrated more on the emotional effects of institutionalisation. Spitz visited some very poor orphanages in South America where infants, who had irregular attention from the staff, were very apathetic and showed high rates of depression e.g. loss of appetite and morbidity. After 3 months of unbroken deprivation, recovery is rarely complete. Bowlby and these types of studies failed to see that the institutions, which were clearly of very poor quality, not only failed to provide adequate maternal care but they were also environments in which to grow up. Therefore we cannot say that it is maternal deprivation that is responsible for lack of development.

Privation is a lack of attachment due to a failure to form attachment between infant and caregiver. *Genie* is a good example of privation.

She was discovered by the authorities at the age of 13, having been kept in virtual isolation for most of her life, and treated cruelly by her parents. She had been tied to a 'potty chair' for much of the time, could only eat baby food, and her development was severely retarded. She walked awkwardly, had no language, and made very little sound, having been beaten for making a noise.

After spending about a year in hospital, *Genie* went to live with her therapist, David Rigler, and his family. He was also in charge of the scientific research project that had funding to study whether *Genie* was able to develop language, or whether she had passed the critical period for language development. She lived with them for four years, and experienced an intensive care and rehabilitation programme.

Given the importance of the child's first relationship as a model in general, failure to develop an attachment of any kind is likely to affect all subsequent relationships. (Gross 2005 p555)

Another case study was by Koluchova involving Czech Twins who had been locked in a cellar for most of the first 7 years of their life. The twins relied on gestures as they could barely talk. At the age of 9 they were fostered and it was found that by 14 their behaviour was essentially normal and by 20 they were of above average intelligence and had excellent relationships with

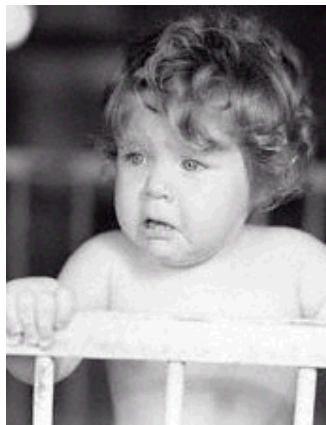
members of their foster family, social problems seem to have also been reversed as both were married.

This study seems to show that privation effects can be reversed. As well as differences in attachment behaviour from one individual to another, there are also variations from one culture to another. Researchers in many different countries have used the strange situation to investigate secure and insecure attachment. They found out that securely attached infants were later rated as having better social skills. So secure attachment is important in cultures for healthy psychological development.

Deprivation is the loss of an attachment which has already been made. The distinction between the two is important as each may have different effects.

To investigate the short term effects of deprivation, Robertson examined children in hospital. This study was done in the late 1940's when parents were not allowed to visit their children in hospital as they were told it would be too distressing.

They examined children in hospital, looking particularly at how the children coped with the separation from their mother. They also made a series of upsetting films of these children, the most famous being that of 'John' coping badly with the trauma. The main finding was that during the separation, children were extremely distressed, and on their return home, were less attached, less affectionate, and less happy than they had been before.



Short-term effects occur when the child is separated from any attachment figure and these can last a few months. Young children show three different stages of behaviour after separation:

1. Distress- the child cries, protests and is physically agitated
2. Despair - the child is miserable and has little energy for anything
3. Detachment - the child seems to have resigned itself to the situation and shows little interest when reunited with the attachment figure.

On long term effect of short term deprivation is separation anxiety. It can include detachment, aggressive behaviour, psychosomatic reaction.

Research from around the world supports the claim that all infants develop attachment relationships, secure or insecure, with their caregivers. Beyond this, there is considerable evidence that the number of children who develop a secure pattern of attachment is proportionately similar across cultures. In African, Chinese, Israeli, Japanese, Western European, and American cultures alike, most children, about two-thirds, are securely attached to their caregivers. (Ref)

The proportion of children who are insecure-avoidant or insecure-ambivalent, however, varies across cultures. Consider that in Japan a higher proportion of children are classified as ambivalent and a lower proportion of children are classified as avoidant than in Western European and American cultures. Japanese infants, in fact, are more likely to be very upset during separations from their caregivers and less likely to explore the environment than American infants.

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