

How does Temperament **affect** attachment?

Temperament is believed to be the infant's behavioural disposition, which is a production of an internal manifestation of events associated with environmental and generational affects (deVries, 1948). There has been considerable debate between attachment and temperament theorists in the roles of temperament in attachment (Dirkin, 1998; Berk, 1997). Factors, which contribute to the attachment relationships strength, have recently been suggested as; behaviour (Notaro and Volling, 1999) and maternal sensitivity (Rosen and Rothbaum, 1993). However transitionally, it is likely that infant-parental relationships are influenced by individual differences (temperament) (Seifer et al, 1996). This essay will therefore present infant and caregiver temperament influences, on attachment relationship. Differences in maternal and paternal attachments formed with infants will also be discussed, concluding by summarising the temperament influence on attachment relationships.

Nine dimensions of temperament are proposed in the Infant Temperament Questionnaire (ITQ): activity, rhythmicity, approach/withdrawal, threshold, adaptability, persistence, intensity, mood, and distractibility (deVries, 1984). However, the main characteristics which are generally discussed are; emotionality, distress-anger, fear and activity (Lemery et al 1999). Lengue, West and Sandler (1998) suggested, if infants have negative emotionality or are impulsive, internalising and externalising problems may result respectively. It could therefore be proposed, that impulsive children have more socialising difficulties and in turn attachment difficulties because of externalising problems (e.g. hyperactivity). Also, resilient children have been found to adapt better to different contexts, whereas over-controlled children are believed not to exhibit successful social interaction (Hart et al, 1997).

Sroufe (1985) suggested, that **attachment and temperament are orthogonal**. Temperamental variation may influence differences in activity level which may subsequently determine behaviour, but not attachment classification, e.g. "whether comfort is sought when the distress threshold is exceeded" (Sroufe, 1985). Vaughn et al. (1980), supports this, finding the ITQ did not predict attachment classifications. However, attachment classifications (from the Strange Situation) are suggested to be due to temperament (Campos et al., 1983), where differences between secure and insecure infants were attributed to differences in temperament responses (Kagan, 1984).

Infant characteristics are believed to affect the feasibility of establishing an **attachment between children and caregivers** (Berk, 1997). Attachments are said to be secure when **children are not perceived as difficult and the caregiver is patient** (Moran and Pearson, 1995). Conversely, avoidant infants were found to produce intrusive caregiver responses (Notaro and Volling, 1999), thus it could be suggested that the caregivers' responses to infant's temperament characteristics are reflected in the attachment formed. Sroufe (1985) proposed that the quality of care received by the infant, is more important in determining the attachment relationship than endogenous infant child temperament characteristics.

It is suggested that responses to different child temperaments are influenced by the caregiver's temperament (Dirkin, 1998). Though little research has explored the prospect of the **caregiver's temperament** on attachment, it has been suggested that their reactions to a child's temperament may mediate the attachment relationship security (Berk, 1997). It has been found that mothers of irritable infants are more likely to respond in a rigid, and controlled manner (Mangelsdorf et al,

1990; Van de Boom, 1995). Weber, Levitt and Clark, (1986) propose that both caregiver and infant temperament are important in relation to individual differences in attachment security between familiar and unfamiliar adults. The strength of attachment security from infant's temperament (and other child characteristics) is thought to be influenced by their '**goodness-of-fit**' (Thomas and Chess, 1977), which results when the child's capacities, motivations and temperament are adequate to master the demands, expectations and opportunities of the environment (Goldberg, Marcovitch 1989). The modification caregivers make to adapt to their infant's temperament/behaviour is important for the security level established (Seifer and Schiller, 1995; Sroufe, 1985). It could therefore, be suggested that if caregivers have limited capabilities due to internal or external difficulties and have an infant with a difficult temperament, then the probability of their attachment relationship being insecure is high (Berk, 1997)

Although, infant difficulties have been reported to contribute to insecure attachments in stressful home environments (Wille, 1991). Research has found (van Ijzendoorn et al, 1992) that difficulties [i.e. physical or psychological problems] of the caregiver have a more negative impact on attachment security than those of the infant. If active infants' mothers suffer from depression, then optimal parenting styles decrease (Lyons-Ruth et al, 1990). However, if the caregiver receives support from their surrounding environment (mother, work colleague), then a secure attachment with their child is effectively maintained (Lyons-Ruth et al, 1990). Furthermore, it has been proposed that continuous external difficulties (i.e. work-stress, illness) do not contribute significantly to the attachment between caregiver and infant (Berk, 1997).

This essay has previously mentioned how the sensitivity of different caregivers may vary towards their infant. Thus, the author suggests that this variability in sensitivity may result from differences between infants' temperaments. If this were the case, one would assume that similar attachments would be formed with both caregivers (i.e. Mother and Father). However, it is proposed that both caregivers will rarely have the same relationship with the infant, due to differences in the interests and/or characteristics of each caregiver. For example, if a father clashed with his son (they were both stubborn), difficulties could arise in their attachment. If a child and a parent shared similar interests (for example, they both loved ballet) their bond could be enhanced. Research has shown that each caregiver establishes different relationships with the same child (Goosens and van Ijzendoorn, 1991). However, evidence for the **consistency between mother and father attachment** to their infant is disputed. Further studies have reportedly shown similarities between maternal and paternal parenting styles, in their reactions towards the same child (Fox, Kimmerly, and Schafer, 1991; Rosen and Rothbaum, 1993). Further investigations into the influence of interactions between mother, father and child characteristics on attachment relationships, need exploring.

Although temperament is thought to be stable (Lemery et al 1999), Sroufe (1985) disagreed, and in addition dismissed claims that temperament predicts attachment. Rosen and Rothbaum (1993) have also demonstrated poor associations between **parental behaviour** and attachment security. However, Brehar et al (1977) found that the caregiver's behaviour does affect attachment. For example, parental interaction (especially fathers)(Notaro and Volling, 1999) towards an infant is suggested to motivate the child (Kelly, Brownell and Campbell, 2000). Individuals' internal working models (Bowlby, 1969) enable interactions within the personal and physical world which are consequently important in attachment development. Supportiveness and accessibility are crucial personality characteristics within the caregivers' working model (van de Boom, 1989). Thus, temperament is suggested to be associated with the quality of interaction, which may predict attachment outcomes. Therefore, the author suggests that caregivers with more 'active' temperaments may facilitate better attachment relationships. Although, Weber, Levitt, and Clark, (1986) suggested that infants may learn avoidant defensives as a result of very reactive carers.

Three possible relations between temperament and attachment (Goldsmith and Campos, 1982) have been documented: firstly, caregiver's social responsiveness may be due to temperamental influences, which subsequently influences attachment. Secondly, both temperament and attachment manifestation may be influenced by the caregivers' social responsiveness'. Lastly, assessments in the strange situation may be directly influenced by temperament differences, which in turn may not determine attachment. However, only the first and second proposal is thought to be accustomed with the relationship viewpoint (Sroufe, 1985).

However, other socialisation practices may participate in determining attachment between infant and caregiver. For example, shared environmental influences of both infant and caregiver, are proposed to need exploring to explain infant temperament and hence attachment (Goldsmith et al, 1999), as it is noted temperaments of both are not single contributors (Buss and Plomin, 1984)

It has been suggested that, caregiver parenting styles and individual differences in infant temperament may contribute to how secure an infant is (Goldsmith et al, 1987). Thus, it is proposed that maternal sensitivity and infant temperament are united in relation to attachment. The essay concludes [as Campos, (1983) suggested] that both caregiver and infant temperament are needed to determine attachment status.

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