

To what extent do research studies support the view that maternal deprivation can have long-term effects on individuals?

‘Breaking the maternal bond with the child during the early years of life often (but not always) has serious effects on its social intellectual and emotional development’ this was quoted from Bowlby he claimed that the negative effects caused by maternal deprivation were permanent or irreversible. This theory was created and supported by Bowlby’s study named ‘the 44 thieves’. This involved comparing 44 children who were referred to a clinic for stealing and 44 children suffering from emotional problems. Bowlby found that maternal deprivation in the long-term can restrain the development of emotional skills. However this could be due to certain parenting styles and individual differences. Maternal deprivation will occur through a PDD reaction (protest, despair and detachment) this model was made by Robertson and Bowlby in 1971.

Goldfarb’s study of maternal deprivation showed that it had long-term effects. Goldfarb studied a group of children who were in an orphanage for the first few months of their life (group a) with children who were in an orphanage for the first 3 years of their life (group b) Their intellectual skills were then tested since leaving the orphanage, Goldfarb found group a scored higher on intellectual skills as they had more attention from parents, rather than group b who were shared by caregivers among others. A similar study was done in 1945 by Spitz who studied children in an American orphanage, as they received little interaction due to staff they suffered emotionally and never really recovered.

In 1975 Douglas analysed data from 5000 hospitalised children who had spent one week in hospital up to the age of 4 years, Douglas found they had behavioural problems. However Clarke and Clarke refuted this study as they claimed that the study did not take individual differences into account. For example the children may have been poor or malnourished when they went into hospital, which caused a bad immune system. Also been in hospital caused anxiety that would have reflections on them as a teenager.

Although there is a large extent of studies that have just been mentioned that support the view of maternal deprivation having long-term effects. Some studies refute this. For example Rutter et al criticised Bowlby’s theory as some children may recover quite well and not all experiences of deprivation were the same. Rutter also claimed that Bowlby had muddled the various kinds of separation, when in fact they are very different. Rutter et al did a study named ‘the Isle of Wight’ study where they found that family problems were more associated with maladjustment. This showed that maternal deprivation had long-term effects but the focus of it was

different from Bowlby's. As parents were interviewed which showed parenting styles had been taken into account. Bowlby's theory had just been changed around.

Freud and Dann clearly refuted the idea of maternal deprivation having longterm effects as their study of orphans in a ww2 concentration showed that children are more resilient than Bowlby had thought. A reason for the children in Freud and danns study to not have long -term effects caused by maternal deprivation could have been they had never experienced maternal attachment as they could have been separated before knowing a maternal attachment. According to Bowlby attachments form within the first two years of a child's life.

The extent to which studies support the view that maternal deprivation can have long-term effects on individuals is varied, as there are always individual differences as criticisms. For example the simple fact, that children have different temperaments. So therefore not all studies will support the view of the maternal deprivation hypothesis.