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19 mins

### Outline and evaluate one theory of attachment

Freud's theory of attachment, known as the cupboard love theory (1926), describes how infants attach strongly to their mother due to wanting food, comfort, security and oral sexual gratification. It describes how the baby can have an unhealthy attachment to the mother, when the mother deprives or overindulges the baby, and therefore this had a huge impact on mothers during that time. The cupboard love theory described immensely how the maternal mother figure is important on the babies' future, implying that it could damage the babies' future if not present. The theory also describes infants becoming most attached to those who satisfy their needs the most often, and therefore leading to long-term security and comfort. Many people believed Freud's theory as it seemed logical, however independent research does not entirely support the theory due to the fact it could be counted as inaccurate and not being directly related to cupboard love theory.

Harlow's study on monkeys (1959) and Harlow and Zimmerman (1959), showed small indications that Freud's theory of attachment was true, however the study was carried out on monkeys and we are unable to withdraw information from this if comparing to a human. Harlow's first study indicated that the attachment to the blanket represented their great need of comfort and in a way this did represent the cupboard love theory. However Harlow's study also could represent the fact that human minds may act in a more complex way and therefore could be shown as slightly irrelevant. Harlow's other study with Zimmerman, which added fear stimuli and comfort suggested how monkeys clearly protected the comforting 'mother', however this could easily suggest how monkeys react not humans. Also this study suggested that the theory was inaccurate as it shows that the monkey did not attach because of food. Both theories clearly show how monkeys do attach for comfort and food and security; however the research strongly suggests that a human's psychological view may be more complicated.

Harlow's independent study suggested that without anything to attach to, animals will die or suffer. It also suggests comfort may be important in formation on attachment. This clearly rejects cupboard love theory because the blankets did not provide sexual gratification or food. Harlow's and Zimmerman's study suggests that attachment is not about food, it is about comfort. This study clearly shows that contact comfort is more important than food. This rejects Freud's cupboard love theory because it shows that attachment is not based on food, because the babies were attached only to the cloth mothers. Over all, both studies suggested that cupboard love theory is inaccurate as none of the infant monkeys attached for food or oral sexual gratification. On the contrary, the monkeys' appeared to attach for contact comfort which was not mentioned by Freud. Also the studies clearly represent monkey's needs, where as we know that humans need more than monkeys and therefore the studies are highly unlikely to represent human's responses.

Schaffer & Emerson's study on sixty infants, suggested that infants attached to those who they had seen on a regular basis. The infants showed that they clearly showed that they attached to those who didn't carry out caretaking activities, such as fathers, as well as in 39% of cases those who carried out the caretaking activities did not represent the infant's primary attachment figure. In evaluation, this study clearly showed that babies attached to those who responded to the babies' behaviour, as well as the amount of time/stimulation the person had with the baby. The study was more realistic rather than Harlow's and this therefore would be more reliable than Harlow's. On saying this, the study does not fully support the theory as the findings weren't based on oral sexual gratification and food. The study is more of accurate representation of a human's form of attachment and highly represents how the attachments are

more complex than a monkey's. However, the study had a lack of control which meant that the study would be hard to replicate and therefore unscientific and may be unreliable. The study was highly restricted due to the time and area on which it took place and therefore may be only related to those conditions.

Overall, the studies reject cupboard love theory in some way. The strengths of the theory is that it does represent factors affecting attachment however the research that was done on this theory does not entirely represent the theory. Also the research does clearly show that other factors such as comfort and interaction affect the amount of attachment, and therefore cupboard love theory can be seen as inaccurate.