

Introduction

I think there are fundamental similarities of attachment at various ages, maintaining a degree of proximity to attachment figures is one that goes the whole way through, from infancy to old age. I think the secure base phenomenon is something that is focal to the concept of attachment relationships. ”

—Mary Ainsworth (1913-1999)

Influences

- Personally sought secure attachment relationships
- John Bowlby, M.D.
 - British psychiatrist who questioned classical psychoanalytic theory
 - Studied the effects of separation of children from their parents
- **Ethology**: The science of animal behavior, based on Darwin’s theory of evolution
 - Konrad Lorenz— an early ethologist famous for his study of geese
 - Harry Harlow—performed experiments with rhesus monkeys using surrogate mothers

Methods of Data Collection

- **Filmed observation**: An example is James Robertson’s films on children in natural situations. You see a cut from his *A Two Year Old Goes to Hospital*
- **Uganda direct observation**: 28 mother-child dyads for nine months
- From these, Ainsworth discovered that:
 1. There are specific attachment behaviors
 2. Babies go through a number of phases in developing attachment
 3. Some patterns of parenting lead to secure attachments, others to insecure
- **Baltimore direct observation**: 26 mother-child dyads for one year
 - Recorded episodes of:
 1. Crying, and maternal responsiveness to it
 2. Close body contact
 3. Face to face encounters
 4. Separation and reunion behaviors
 5. Infant cooperation or disobedience

Patterns of Attachment and the Strange Situation

- From analyzing her data, Ainsworth discovered that:
 1. Babies of mothers who responded quickly and sensitively to cries during the first six months cried less as one year olds, were more compliant, explored more, and developed cognitive skills earlier
 2. Sensitivity of the caregiver was the key to establishing secure attachments.
 - Caregiver ideally acts as both:
 - *Haven of safety*, in situations that seem unsafe or overwhelming
 - *Secure Base*, from which to explore and develop new competencies

- ***The Strange Situation*** is normally a 21-minute experience done behind a two-way mirror and is filmed for analysis
 1. Caregiver and child enter, and child is given opportunity to explore
 2. Strange adult enters, chats with caregiver, and interacts with child
 3. Caregiver leaves, leaving child with the stranger
 4. Caregiver returns, stranger leaves
 5. Caregiver leaves, child is alone
 6. Stranger enters and interacts with child
 7. Caregiver returns

Importance of Reunion Behaviors

- ***Securely attached babies***
 - Cried less at home, more in Strange Situation
 - Went to their mothers to be picked up upon reunion
 - Were easily soothed and returned to exploration
 - 66% of Baltimore babies in this category
- ***Insecure Attachments***
 - *Avoidant babies*
 - Less obviously upset at separation and slow to make contact upon reunion
 - 21 % of Baltimore babies
 - *Ambivalent-resistant babies*
 - Less initial exploration, difficult to sooth upon reunion
 - 13% of Baltimore babies
 - *Disordered attachment*
 - Identified by Mary Main and Judith Solomon
 - Some seemed to flee from parents, others approached and retreated with dazed expressions
 - Most able to be at risk for emotional and social problems

Implications

- ***Circle of Security—Haven of Safety***
 - *Securely attached babies*: enjoy a balance of the Secure Base and the Haven of Safety
 - *Insecure-avoidant attachment*: overemphasis on independence (Secure Base), but not enough support in stressful times
 - *Ambivalent-resistant*: too much emphasis on Haven of Safety issues, and not enough support for independent exploration
 - *Disorganized*: have no organized strategy with which to deal with stress
- ***Internal working model***
 - Term Bowlby created to express the framework of thoughts, feelings, plans, and goals with which we organize our relationships with others. These expectations are the product of millions of experiences.
- ***Subsequent studies:***
 - Assessments of attachment relationships at various ages
 - Adult Attachment Interview developed by Mary Main

- People with secure infant attachments generally have better subsequent relationships
- Developmental pathways are complex, and life offers opportunities to improve situations.
Conversely, traumas can change the life course

Ainsworth's Legacy:

- Supported further research
- Acknowledged that young children have healthy attachments to people other than their mothers, if the relationship is continuing and uninterrupted
- Operationalized love in terms of behaviors that can be reliably measured
- Discovered that secure attachments offer both safety and encouragement for competence

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