



## 3 Attachment

# The nature of attachment and its development

### Activity 3.1

Students might find it helpful to complete the sheet 'Bowlby's attachment theory' on page 31, and keep it as a glossary of terms for future reference and as a basis for giving an account of the theory. Make copies of this sheet and distribute them to the class.

Emphasise to students that they have to provide not only a definition of what each term means but also an explanation of how it relates to the theory (e.g. the term 'adaptive' requires reference not only to evolutionary theory, but also an account of how Bowlby's theory proposes that attachment is adaptive).

### **Suggested answers**

**Ethology:** the study of animals in their natural surroundings. Bowlby's theory was influenced by ethological ideas, in particular the phenomenon of imprinting, with which he drew a parallel with attachment in humans.

**Imprinting:** a phenomenon observed in some birds, for example geese, which follow the first moving object (usually the mother) they see on hatching. This behaviour would promote survival in the young, in terms of protection and food. Bowlby saw attachment in infants performing the same role.

**Critical period:** in ethology, a brief window of time within which imprinting must take place; it cannot happen outside this period. Bowlby suggested that there is also a critical period for attachment in humans, i.e. before the age of 3.

**Separation anxiety:** the protest demonstrated universally by infants when separated from the major caregiver, which emerges in the second half of the first year and gradually decreases from about 15 months. Bowlby saw this as indicating that an attachment bond has been formed.

**Stranger anxiety:** the fear of strangers that is shown by infants over the same period as separation anxiety. Bowlby believed that this prevents another bond from being formed, and thus has the function of protecting the infant from harm.

**Social releasers:** infant behaviours such as smiling, crying, sucking and clinging, to which others are innately predisposed to respond, and which would trigger care from the mother.

**Internal working model (IWM):** a mental representation formed by the infant of self, the mother, and the relationship between the two. Bowlby believed that this first relationship forms a template for later ones.

**Reciprocal:** attachment is mutual. The mother is predisposed to form an attachment to her infant, as well as the infant to form an attachment to the mother. The mother's attachment would lead to care, and so promote the survival of the infant.

**Sensitive period:** in ethology, although imprinting is more likely to take place within a restricted time period (critical period), it can also occur outside this period. This idea was not current when Bowlby developed attachment theory, but may also apply to attachment in humans.

**Adaptive:** in evolutionary theory, a characteristic or behaviour is adaptive if it promotes survival. In humans, attachment would be adaptive in that it would lead to care.

# Secure and insecure attachment

## Activity 3.2

The categories used in the Strange Situation are referred to throughout this section of the chapter, in relation to different ages and different kinds of relationships. Students could be asked to bring this all together in one table, summarising the information in the text. Here is a sample of the table students should create.

	Type A anxious-avoidant	Type B secure	Type C anxious-ambivalent (or anxious-resistant)
Nature of infant's IWM			
How mother interacts with the child (Vondra et al.)			
Characteristics of child aged 3–6 (Main and Cassidy)			
AAI (Main and Goldwyn): classification			
AAI (Main and Goldwyn): beliefs about relationships			
AAI (Main and Goldwyn): likely type of attachment to their own children			
Characteristics of adult romantic relationships (Hazan and Shaver)			

## Institutionalisation

Three main studies are described in the section on institutionalisation. This exercise asks students to sort statements according to which of the studies each refers to, and to sort them further in terms of whether they are descriptive (findings and conclusions) or evaluative. Some students can find it difficult to apply this distinction.

### Activity 3.3

Students should prepare the following blank table in landscape format:

	<b>Goldfarb (1943) early study</b>	<b>Hodges and Tizard (1989) longitudinal study</b>	<b>Rutter et al. (2001) Romanian orphans</b>
Description of Findings			
Description of Conclusions			
Evaluation			

Give out a separate sheet of items (page 28) which they can cut out and stick onto the table, or simply copy the items onto the appropriate section. Ask them to add any other details that they think are important.

The items required are given on page 27 for reference. The items in *italic* refer to *Goldfarb*; those in **bold** to **Hodges and Tizard**, and those in standard text to Rutter et al. However, you should distribute the version on page 28.

attachment problems were more common than controls	<i>the lack of an attachment figure led to social, emotional and cognitive problems</i>	<b>many adopted children continued to have social and emotional problems</b>
<i>children who were fostered could not be matched with those who remained in the institution</i>	children have only been followed to age 6, so longer-term effects have not been shown	<i>an attempt was made to match the groups on the basis of mother's occupation and educational level</i>
children raised in institutions showed impairment of cognitive rather than emotional functioning	<b>the study suffered from drop-out of participants, which could have resulted in a biased sample</b>	<b>the study differentiates between the effects of institutionalisation and more general lack of stimulation</b>
<b>both adopted and 'restored' children had difficulties in forming peer relationships</b>	<i>the ill effects could have been the result of carer turnover rather than institutionalisation more generally</i>	poor peer relationships were not more common in institutionalised children
children raised in institutions to age 3 can develop normal psychological functioning in a good adoptive family	<b>adopted children tended to form better attachments to their adoptive parents than children returned to their natural parents did with those parents</b>	<i>it is difficult to distinguish between the effects of an unstimulating environment and the lack of an attachment figure</i>
the study examined many different areas of psychological functioning	there is a lot of individual variation in the effects of institutionalisation	<i>only a very small sample (N=30) was tested</i>
it was not possible to establish which aspects of institutionalisation had the most effect	the study is ongoing so should provide more information in the future	<i>the ill effects could have been the result of early isolation rather than institutionalisation</i>
<i>institutionalised children showed the lack of guilt which characterises Bowlby's affectionless psychology</i>	<b>the problems which continued to be experienced by adopted children suggest there may be long-lasting effects of institutionalisation</b>	many children who had spent a long time in institutions nonetheless showed normal functioning

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# The effects of day care on children's social development

To emphasise the characteristics of good and poor day care, students could be asked to write a day-care diary.

## Activity 3.4

Students should first write a diary for one day from the perspective of a 2-year-old child attending good-quality day care. This nursery is very well equipped and one of several in the area. It is staffed mainly by people who are trained in child development; many have children of their own.

The students should prepare a grid divided into time slots following the example given below, allowing room for between two and four sentences per slot. They should then use the grid to write a description of the 2-year-old's activities, thoughts and feelings from the time the child is dropped off at 8.45 a.m. until pick-up at 4.00 p.m. An example of a suitable grid is given below.

8.45–9.00	
9.00–10.00	
10.00–11.00	
11.00–12.00	
12.00–1.00	
1.00–2.00	
2.00–3.00	
3.00–4.00	

They should then write a similar diary, again from the 2-year-old's perspective, relating to poor-quality day care. This nursery does not have much money, and is the only one in the area. It is staffed mainly by volunteers who, although they mean well, do not have much experience.

Before they begin, the students should read through the indicators of good-quality day care given in their textbook, and consider the implications of these characteristics in terms of what poor-quality day care might be like. They will need to make it apparent, through their descriptions of the day, that the quality of the environment has an effect on the child and his/her activities. Students might prefer to work in pairs or in small groups.

## Activity 3.5

Students could plan an observational study of young children relating to aggression or prosocial behaviour. They could work in pairs or small groups, with each group presenting their ideas at the end of the session for comment by other class members.

They will need to consider:

- what their research question will be (i.e. what they are aiming to find out)
- what they perceive the potential benefits of the research to be
- who the participants will be and how they will be recruited

- where and when the observation will take place
- the type of observation to be used (students should refer to the section on observational methods in Chapter 4 of the textbook (pages 96–98))
- what they will be observing
- what the data will be and how they will be collected
- any practical issues which may arise, and how they will be dealt with
- what ethical issues arise and how they will be addressed
- briefing and debriefing procedures

Each group could write a project proposal to submit to another group acting as an ethics committee. The ethics committee should highlight any ethical issues that they feel have not been considered or adequately addressed, and suggest how the project could be adapted to resolve these issues.

See page 24

Activity 3.1

## Bowlby's attachment theory

Using your textbook as a reference, write brief definitions of these terms, relating each to Bowlby's attachment theory.

- ethology:

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- imprinting:

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- critical period:

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- separation anxiety:

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- stranger anxiety:

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- social releasers:

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- internal working model (IWM):

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- reciprocal:

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- sensitive period:

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- adaptive:

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