Stages of Attachment

**STAGE 1 ASOCIAL STAGE (FIRST FEW WEEKS)** - Behaviour isn’t actually asocial. Baby recognises and forms bonds with caregivers but shows similar behaviour towards non-human objects and humans. Babies may show some preference to familiar adults (these adults may find it easier to calm the baby) and babies will also be happier in the presence on humans.

**STAGE 2 INDISCRIMINATE ATTACHMENT (2-7 WEEKS)** – Baby has more ‘sociable’ behaviour, prefer people over inanimate objects and recognise and prefer familiar adults. Babies will still accept comfort from any adults, won’t usually show separation or stranger anxiety. Behaviour is ‘INDISCRIMINATE’ as babies don’t change it according to person.

**STAGE 3 SPECIFIC ATTACHMENT (AROUND 7 MONTHS)** – Babies will have formed a **specific attachment** to the adult who is most sensitive to the babies needs and offers response and interaction to the babies ‘signals’, this adult is the **primary attachment figure**. Baby will start to show **separation anxiety** when away from their primary attachment figure (biological mum 65% of time) and will show **stranger anxiety** towards unfamiliar adults.

**STAGE 4 MULTIPLE ATTACHMENTS** - A short time after babies have formed their primary attachment, they will have similar behaviour and have multiple **attachments** with other adults and will from **secondary attachment** to them. Schaffer and Emerson found that 29% of infants had secondary attachments within a month of forming a primary attachment and by the age of 1 the majority of infants had formed multiple attachments.

### Hard to Study the Asocial Stage

SCHAEFFER & EMERSON identify the first few weeks of life as the ‘asocial’ stage even though important interactions take place during this week. Babies this young have poor co-ordination and are basically immobile. It is therefore hard to make judgements based on observing behaviour because there isn’t much to observe.

This doesn’t mean the babies feelings and cognitions aren’t highly social but the evidence can’t be relied on.

### Measuring Multiple Attachment

There is an issue when measuring multiple attachment. Just because a baby shows distress when a person leaves the room doesn’t mean that they are the ‘true’ attachment figure. Bowlby said that children have playmates as well as attachment figures and get distress when their playmate leaves them room but it doesn’t show attachment. This is a limitation because observation doesn’t clearly show a difference between behaviour towards attachment figures and playmates.

### Conflicting Evidence on multiple attachments

There is no doubt that children are capable of multiple attachments at some point but it isn’t clear when. Some research indicates that most babies form attachments to their primary caregiver before they can form multiple attachments (Bowlby). Other researchers (mainly those who work in cultural contexts where multiple caregivers are the norm) believe babies form multiple attachments from birth. Some cultures are **collectivist** as families work together to raise babies.
Explanations of Attachment: Bowlby’s theory

**Innate**- Babies have the innate (born with) ability to form attachments to a caregiver because it enables survival, (Bowlby’s theory is evolutional)

**Social Releasers**- Babies are born with a set of innate ‘cute’ behaviours and characteristics e.g. big eyes, smiling, gurgling which elicit caregiving, attachment is a reciprocal process, the baby and the mother both have the innate tendency to become attached and social releasers trigger this response in caregivers

**Critical/Sensitive period**- Bowlby identified a critical period in which babies form attachments (around 2 yrs), this is when the infant is most sensitive so it can also be recognised as the sensitive period, if an attachment isn’t formed it is harder to form one later on

**Monotropy**- Multiple attachments can be formed but babies will form one special attachment to the caregiver who is most sensitive to the baby’s needs (not necessarily the one who spends the most time with them) this person is called the primary attachment figure

**Internal Working Model**- attachment between the infant and caregiver sets up expectations about future relationships and creates an internal working model

**Continuity Hypotheses**- Internal working model creates a consistency of the quality of relationships the infant will go on to have, if a baby has a good attachment, they will form healthy relationships and vice versa, the type of attachment affects behaviour.

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**Supporting Study- Harlow**

The Rhesus monkeys in Harlow’s study were deprived of real mothers. Later on in their lives the monkeys had poor social relationships and poor mothers (neglected, attacked and sometimes killed their young). This supports the internal working model and continuity hypothesis because having not had attachments when they were younger the monkeys then couldn’t form good attachments when they were older.

Harlow also found that infant monkeys had to form attachment to a maternal figure within 90 days after birth, this supports Bowlby’s critical period.

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**Personality/Temperament- KAGAN**

Bowlby says that attachment determines social behaviour but the temperament theory states that infants are born with an innate personality (genetically influences). E.g. some babies are more anxious or sociable than others as a result of their genetic makeup (KAGAN 1982) these differences can explain later social behaviour rather than attachment.

**Mixed Evidence for Monotropy**

SCHAFFER & EMERSON- study of babies in Glasgow showed that babies form one primary attachment supporting Bowlby’s idea of monotropy. However they also found that some babies could form multiple attachments at the same time which contradicts Bowlby’s ideas.

RUTER- challenged the idea of monotropy and put forward the idea that all attachments are equally important and integrated into one model & father attachments are just as important for social development.
Internal Working Model - an infant’s attachment/relationship with their primary caregiver forms a mental representation of this relationship which acts as a template for future relationships.

The quality of a child’s first attachment is very important because this template will influence the nature of their future relationships. A child whose first experience is a loving relationship with a reliable caregiver will assume this is how all relationships are and will seek out functional relationships and will behave functionally within them. A child with bad experiences will bring this into future relationships, they may struggle to form and maintain relationships, displaying type A or C attachment to friends and partners.

Relationships in Later Childhood - affiliations with other people in childhood, including friends and classmates, teacher and other adults.

Attachment type is often associated with the quality of relationships with peers in childhood. Securely attached infants go on to form the best quality childhood friendships whereas insecurely attached infants have difficulties in friendships.

Bullying behaviour can be predicted from attachment types. Myron-Wilson and Smith 1998 assessed bullying involvement and attachment type using standard questionnaires in 196 children aged 7-11 from London.

Secure children= unlikely to be involved in bullying
Insecure-Avoidant= most likely to be victims of bullying
Insecure-Resistant= most likely to be a bully

Relationships in Adulthood - relationships a child goes on to have later in life, include friendships and working relationships but most importantly romantic relationships and relationships with the persons own children.

McCarthy (1999) studied attachment and romantic & friendship relationships. 40 adult women who were assessed as infants using the strange situation for attachment type.

Securely attached = best adult friendships and romantic relationships
Insecure-Resistant = problems maintaining friendships
Insecure-Avoidant= struggled with intimacy in romantic relationships