Outline and evaluate Bowlby's evolutionary theory of attachment.

Bowlby claimed that infants are born with an innate drive to develop a reciprocal attachment to their primary caregiver. This is the person who interacts best with, and responds most sensitively to the infant's needs. The attachment is adaptive for the child and the PCG as it promotes the infant's survival. Remaining in close proximity to the caregiver allows the child to remain protected against predators and also ensure it gets the basic necessities to live during a time where it is unable to fend for itself. The infant encourages the PCG to care using social releasers such as smiling, crying and reaching. The PCG will reciprocate because responding to the child and ensuring it is safe means that the 9 month investment made is not wasted by the child dying from diseases. As a result Bowlby suggest that mothers are more likely to create attachments compared to fathers, this is known as monotropy. The attachment enables the infant to learn about and safely explore their emotional and social world resulting in the formation of an internal working model of relationships. Bowlby argued that attachment develops best within the critical period, the first 1-3 years. If attachment does not occur in this time period it would be very difficult for a child to create attachments later.

There are a number of case studies that support Bowlby's theory of attachment. A study conducted by Sroufe et al (1999) where he followed a group, aged [illegible] months to adolescence. They were observed throughout their childhood by various people. At the end of the experiment, his results showed that those children who were rated as being securely attached was more popular and had higher self-esteem and confidence, this indicates that social competence was linked with early attachment supporting Bowlby's views of long term benefits of attachment.

However, there are studies that oppose this theory: A case study where Czech twins were locked up and isolated from the outside world as well as being abused was discovered when they were 7, after being showed loving kindness from two sisters they were able to form meaningful attachments. These evidence dismisses the critical period of Bowlby's theory, as it shows that even though the twins were not able to form any attachments for a long time after the critical period, they still were able to form attachments in the end.

The learning theory of attachment provides a simple explanation of attachment because it only focuses on one factor that cause attachment whereas Bowlby's attachment theory gives several explanations as to how attachments are formed. The learning theory provides an adequate explanation of how attachment is formed, it seems highly likely that simple association between the provision of needs essential for survival and the person providing those needs can lead to strong attachments. This therefore opposes Bowlby's evolutionary theory.