

Topic 3: Attachment

Extended Question Answers

12 Outline and evaluate Bowlby's monotropic theory of attachment.

[8 marks]

Bowlby's monotropic theory of attachment states that infants form attachments to a caregiver with who, they spend most time with- forming a primary attachment. This primary attachment according to Bowlby which forms during the first 6-10 months of the baby's life is vital for ensuring that the baby has the capacity to form other attachments in life. **AO1**

The first, primary attachment serves as the basis for the internal working model. This model gives the children a template of what relationships should be like. According to Bowlby, if their relationships with their primary attachment figure is secure and full of care and sensitivity, then the child themselves will in the future not only expect such things from relationships, but will also put those things into any relationships they have. **AO1**

However, it is argued that monotropy and its emphasis on primary attachments is not an accurate depiction of what attachment formation is like. In collectivist societies like those studied in the Van Ijzendoorn and Kroonenberg (1993) study, emphasis is placed on the community raising children and so such children may form multiple attachments from the onset. Bowlby's theory suggests the opposite- that children can only form multiple attachments following the formation of a highly important primary attachment. **AO3**

In addition to this, Bowlby's theory makes reference to a critical period in which this attachment must form and be maintained in line with his law of continuity and law of accumulated separation. Bowlby suggests that if this primary attachment is severed or interrupted, then irreversible damage is done to the infant. However, studies show that with effective substitute care, infants progress at almost the same rate as they would have done had the attachment not been severed. This suggests that the primary attachment figure is not, as stated by Bowlby, the most important attachment in terms of furthering child development. **AO3**

Mark: 8

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