

Definitions and Concepts for AQA Psychology A-level

Topic 3: Attachment

Bowlby's monotropic theory: A theory of attachment proposed by John Bowlby, that suggests attachment is the result of evolutionary behaviours towards a primary caregiver.

Bowlby's theory of maternal deprivation: A theory for social deviance proposed by John Bowlby that suggests that constant separation from the child and primary caregiver results in permanent difficulties for the child in the future.

Critical period: A period of time (proposed by John Bowlby) within which if a child does not form an attachment, they will never form an attachment.

Interactional synchrony: A type of interaction between a child and primary caregiver in which both the caregiver and infant mirror each other's actions.

Insecure-avoidant attachment: A type of attachment identified by Mary Ainsworth in her Strange situation. This "Type A" attachment style is characterised by low anxiety in the presence of strangers and absence of the caregiver. Upon reunion with the caregiver, the child shows no interest in receiving comfort.

Insecure-resistant attachment: A type of attachment identified by Mary Ainsworth in her Strange Situation. This "Type B" attachment style is characterised by extreme anxiety in the presence of strangers and absence of the caregiver. Furthermore, the child will resist comfort from the caregiver.

Institutionalisation: The long-term effects of growing up in an institution and being unable to create an attachment with a primary caregiver.

Internal working model: An internal framework, theorised by Bowlby, which is formed by a child's interactions with their primary caregiver that remains as a reference for understanding the world.

Learning theory (of attachment): An explanation of attachment according to the behaviourist approach, attributing attachment to classical/operant conditioning. For example, a child associates their primary caregiver with food, and thus becomes a conditioned stimulus.

Reciprocity: A type of interaction between caregiver and child in which both individuals respond to each other's actions with mutual responsiveness, and elicit responses from each other.

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Secure attachment: A type of attachment identified by Mary Ainsworth in her Strange Situation. This type of attachment is characterised by a child that shows moderate anxiety in the presence of strangers and absence of their caregiver. The child accepts comfort from the caregiver upon reunion and uses their caregiver as a safe base from which to explore.

