

Bowlby's theory of maternal deprivation

maternal deprivation

- Bowlby argues the continual presence + nurture from the mother is essential for normal development.
- **separation**: a child's not in the presence of primary caregiver.
- **deprivation**: not in the presence of primary caregiver + losing an element of their care.
- extended separations can lead to deprivations, causing harm.
- Bowlby saw the first 2.5 years of life as the CP. If a child is deprived of their mother's emotional care for an extended time during CP, then psychological harm would be inevitable.
- Bowlby believed children who were deprived of maternal care for too long during CP would suffer delayed intellectual dev. (abnormally low IQ)
- Bowlby identified affectionless psychopathy (inability to feel guilt / strong emotions for others), preventing the person from developing normal rel.

Bowlby's study

- Bowlby interviewed 44 thieves + looked for signs of affectionless psychopathy. Families were also interviewed.
- A control group of non-criminals were also interviewed.
- **Findings**: 34/44 thieves were described as affectionless psychopaths. 12 thieves had experienced prolonged separation from their mothers in the first 2 years of their lives.
- From the control group, only 2/44 had experienced long separations.
- **Conclusion**: prolonged separation / deprivation causes affectionless psychopathy.

evaluation

- **Strength**: supporting research that maternal deprivation can have long-term effects. Levee et al. showed that separation from baby rats and their mothers for as little as a day had a permanent effect on their social dev. This provides support for Bowlby's idea of MD.
 - ↳ **Counterpoint**: animal experiments lack generalisability as humans are more complex than animals. Drawing conclusions on animal behaviour is reductionist.
- **Limitation**: contradicting research that psychological damage is inevitable. Koluchova found 2 twin boys who were locked up for the first 7 years of life in a cupboard. However, they were looked after by 2 loving adults and seemed to recover fully. This challenges Bowlby's claim that there's a CP when children need to form a strong att. to one person if they're to avoid psychological + emotional problems (Bowlby was deterministic).
- **Limitation**: Rutter makes a distinction between 'deprivation' and 'privation'. Deprivation = loss of att. figure after the bond has been formed. Privation = failure to form an att. in the first place. Rutter argued the LT damage Bowlby associated with deprivation is more likely a result of privation. There are 3 circumstances: separation from att. figure, loss of att. figure, and privation, which Bowlby overlooked.
- **Limitation**: psychodynamic reductionism. Bowlby only focused on psychodynamic factors e.g. experiences of emotional trauma during early childhood, and disregarded others e.g. poverty. In his study, criminality + psychopathic behaviour have many different factors, which Bowlby overlooked.