OBJECTIVES
- Purpose of the theory development and selection
- Historical context of authors and theory
- Structural elements
- Analysis using Barnum’s criteria
- Utility to research and practice
- Applicability to psychology well being and relationship quality in homeless adolescents

PURPOSE
- Bowlby: To study attachment and effects of deviations from attachment
- Draudt: To determine applicability of Attachment Theory to psychological well-being and relationship quality in homeless adolescents
February 26, 1907 to September 2, 1990

4th of 6 children; upper middle class family

Spent an average of 1 hour with his mother per day

Grieved the loss of one of his nannies

Father was a surgeon, encouraged Bowlby to attend medical school
  • Attended medical school and later became interested in psychiatry

Said to be one of the top 4 most influential people in psychology this century
MARY AINSWORTH

- December 1, 1913 to March 21, 1999
- Notable contributions to Attachment Theory
- Studied bonding and attachment in Uganda before the formal presentation of Attachment Theory
- Proposed some of the major concepts of Attachment Theory: Patterns of Attachment and Secure Base

http://www.famouspsychologists.org/mary-ainsworth/
INFLUENCES: THEORIES

- **Control Systems Theory** (“A control system is a means by which a variable quantity or set of variable quantities is made to conform to a prescribed norm;” the ability of one to control her environment (Waters))

- **Dependency Theory** (Learned drive, acquired through its association with the reduction of primary drive (Ainsworth)) Singer and Prebisch’s theory

- **Object-Relations Theory** (“object” of an instinct is the agent through which the instinctual aim is achieved, and the agent is usually conceived as being another person” (Ainsworth)) Greenberg and Mitchell 1983
INFLUENCES: DISCIPLINES

- **Medicine**: Bowlby’s father was a surgeon; Bowlby attended medical school.
- **Ethology**: Study of animal behavior. Heavily influenced by Harlow’s rhesus monkeys and Lorenz’s study of avian species.
- **Psychology**: Bowlby was educated in psychoanalysis after medical school. He believed that current psychoanalytic theory did not describe the bond between an infant and his/her parent.
CONCEPTS

Attachment

Patterns
- Insecure
- Secure

Functions
- Sensitivity
- Comfort

Attached Person
- Internal Working Models

Behaviors
- Early Interaction

Figures
- Maternal Deprivation

CONCEPTS
ATTACHMENT

“...The dimension of the infant-caregiver relationship involving protection and security regulation. Within this theoretic framework, attachment is conceptualized as an intense and enduring affectional bond that the infant develops with the mother figure, a bond that is biologically rooted in the function of protection from danger” (Mooney, 2010)
THE ATTACHMENT BEHAVIOURAL SYSTEM (HOLMES, 1993)

Figure 4.1  The attachment behavioural system
ATTACHMENT BEHAVIORS

“Attachment behaviour [...] refers to any of the various forms of behaviour that the person engages in from time to time to obtain and/or maintain a desired proximity” (Bowlby, 1988).

“The condition in which an individual is linked emotionally with another person, usually, but not always, someone perceived to be older, stronger and wiser than themselves” (Holmes, 1993)

Examples: Crying, clinging, smiling, vocalizing

http://www.lilomaternity.com/blog/is-your-baby-crying/
THE EVOLUTION OF ATTACHMENT BEHAVIOR

INFANCY
- Maternal Handling

Babyhood
- Attachment Pattern

Latency
- Relationship Style

Adolescence
- Internal World
- ‘thinking’ about ‘thinking’
- Self-other representation

Adulthood
ATTACHMENT PATTERNS

- **Secure Attachment:**
  - Emotionally open and straightforward
  - Accept comfort and protection from caregiver when distressed
  - From available, predictable, and sensitive caregiving

- **Anxious Avoidant:**
  - Insecure
  - Suppress or hide negative emotions
  - Avoid eye contact
  - Use toys as distraction
  - From consistent distant, rejecting, punitive caregiving; emotional/physical abuse

- **Anxious Ambivalent:**
  - Insecure
  - Show mixed emotions to caregiver when distressed
  - Periods of helplessness and passivity, aggression, or fear
  - Explores surrounding but concerned with proximity
  - From unpredictable/impulsive caregivers; neglect

- **Disorganized:**
  - Insecure
  - Confusing mixture of conflicting—need to seek proximity vs. need to escape
  - May have abnormal body movements e.g. tics
  - From prolonged isolation, neurological illness
VISUAL MODEL OF ATTACHMENT PATTERNS

http://internal.psychology.illinois.edu/~rcfraley/attachment.htm
ATTACHMENT FUNCTIONS

- **Proximity Maintenance** allows the person to stay close to and resist separation from the attachment figure.
- **Safe Haven Behavior** provides reliability on the attachment figure for support and comfort.
- **A Secure Base** is an environment provided by the attachment figure from which a child/adolescent can return knowing that he will be welcomed, nourished physically and emotionally, comforted and reassured. This allows for non-attachment behaviors such as exploration, which can allow an individual to learn things that may increase survival.

[Source](http://blog.lib.umn.edu/vanm0049/myblog/2011/12/attach-vs-detach.html)
OTHER CONCEPTS

- **Attachment Figure**: one with whom another person (in the original context an infant/child) is attached
- **Maternal Deprivation**: Term from Bowlby’s earlier work describing the process of an infant losing or being deprived of its mother.
- **Early Interaction** between infant and mother considered important for secure attachment. Ainsworth emphasizes interaction within the first 9 months of life
- **Sensitivity** of the mother to her child’s needs; described as a parenting style that facilitates secure attachment; part of “secure base”
- **Comfort** is the mother’s ability to soothe a distressed child; also part of “secure base”
- **Internal Working Models**
  - From Cognitive Psychology
  - Higher animals need a map of the world in the brain to predict, control and manipulate their environment through thoughts
    - Environmental and organismal models that tell us about ourselves in relation to the world
DEVELOPMENTAL PATHWAYS FROM MATERNAL DEPRIVATION (HOLMES, 1993)

Figure 3.1 Developmental pathways from maternal deprivation

- good schools
- ‘easy’ temperament
- success at school
- humour
- good relationships

maternal deprivation

birth

family discord

- ‘difficult’ temperament
- few successes
- disordered relationships
- males more at risk
- ‘sink schools’

good self-esteem

stress buffered

good choice of partner

poor self esteem

poor choice of partner or no partner

causes stress fails to buffer stress
ASSUMPTIONS/STATEMENTS

- Assumptions not explicitly stated
  - Psychological bonds exist
  - Attachment Behaviors exist
  - Patterns of Attachment exist
  - Attachment Figures exist (usually mother)

- Statement importance not prioritized explicitly
  - I interpreted some of the assumptions as existential statements (above)
  - Relationship statements among attachment, attachment behaviors, patterns of attachment, attachment figure, infant/child
EVALUATION: INTERNAL CRITICISM

- **Clarity**
  - concepts are difficult to discern, but overall clearly described
  - concepts are further separated into sub-concepts which are described several ways; no single definitions
  - the relationship between attachment and mental health are clearly explicated
  - Bowlby wrote the theory in a trilogy of lectures, a synthesis of information may that explains the theory parsimoniously is needed

- **Consistency**
  - terms are used consistently
  - delineates terms that may be misunderstood or have been misunderstood
  - Attachment Theory has recently been applied to relationships other than parent/child, which compromises consistency of original terms, meanings
EVALUATION: INTERNAL CRITICISM

- **Adequacy**
  - the theory fulfills its purpose
  - further refinement and clarification may be necessary (e.g. synthesis of information)
  - the subject matter is well accounted for

- **Logical Development**
  - Developed from several theories and disciplines
  - Refined with input from Ainsworth and clarified in response to critique
  - In early development, the idea was radical and unproven; today extensive literature supports its premises
  - Conclusions seem logical, argument was considered overstated given the available evidence during the original development.

- **Level of Theory Development**
  - Well developed through several revisions (in response to critique, misunderstandings)
  - Work continues to be done, specifically with measurement and expanding the applicability
EVALUATION: EXTERNAL CRITICISM

- Reality Convergence
  - Attachment is needed for human development
  - Kettle suggests that attachment belongs in Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs
  - Theory builds on existing work, very reality-based
  - Considered a middle-range theory (possibly high middle range given increasingly broader applicability)

- Utility
  - Applied extensively to research and practice in psychology and outside of the discipline including social work, nursing

- Significance
  - Mental illness is a significant problem
  - Although intent was not necessarily to be useful to nursing, Attachment Theory addresses a phenomenon experienced by nurses
EVALUATION: EXTERNAL CRITICISM

- **Discrimination**
  - borrowed from psychology, not unique to nursing; boundaries gray
    - nursing interventions can influence attachment behaviors, which clouds the boundaries

- **Scope:** High middle range with “gushy” empirical testability and applicability
  - Ethics of true empirical testability; retrospective studies possible
  - Highly applied

- **Complexity**
  - Relatively few concepts, well described although lacking concision
  - Factors influencing attachment are multidimensional and complex
    - Macro, Meso, Micro level factors
    - Mediators and Moderators discussed in later revisions
OTHER CRITICISM

- Strongly focused on the maternal-infant bond
  - Inadequately describes paternal-infant bond
  - Implicitly blames mothers for children’s mental illness + takes responsibility away from fathers
  - Feminists objected to Bowlby’s use of biology “to justify what is essentially a cultural product of our own ‘patriarchal but father-absent’ society” Leupnitz (1988)

- Nature vs. nurture
  - Too strongly accepts nurture are causative factor for mental illness
  - Does not account for genetic predisposition to mental illness

- Mentions “attachment figures” but does not describe the differences in attachment between parents (particularly mothers) and other individuals to which one can be attached
UTILITY IN RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Research
- Psychosomatic Illness
  - Chronic Pain
  - Cardiovascular Disease
- Relationships
- Nurse-Patient relationship + Patient Outcomes (e.g. adherence)
- Child sexual abuse, child maltreatment
- Extensive research in psychology
  - Developmental psychopathology
  - Cognitive Psychology
  - Psychoanalysis

Practice
- Guides clinical psychology
- Applied to psychiatric mental health and women and infants nursing
- Head start
- Custody cases
- Foster care
NEWER AND FUTURE APPLICABILITY

- May be more broadly applied with additional research studying attachment in situations other than parent/child
  - nurse/patient
  - adolescent peer
  - romantic couples
  - attachment and loss at end of life
- Newly applied to psychosomatic illness
APPLICATION TO PRESENTER’S RESEARCH

-Bowlby studied homeless children and adolescents
  • Wrote a report on mental health in homeless children in post-war Europe for the World Health Organization (WHO)

-Several researchers apply Attachment Theory to their research with homeless youth including Tavechhio, Taylor-Seehafer, and Whitbeck

-Effective at providing a framework to understand psychological well being and relationship quality in relation to childhood attachment in homeless adolescents

-New research leading to further applicability to peer relationships, which can also be applied to psychological well being and relationship quality in homeless adolescents


