



# Attachment

PY 228/ PY 252 INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

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# Attachment

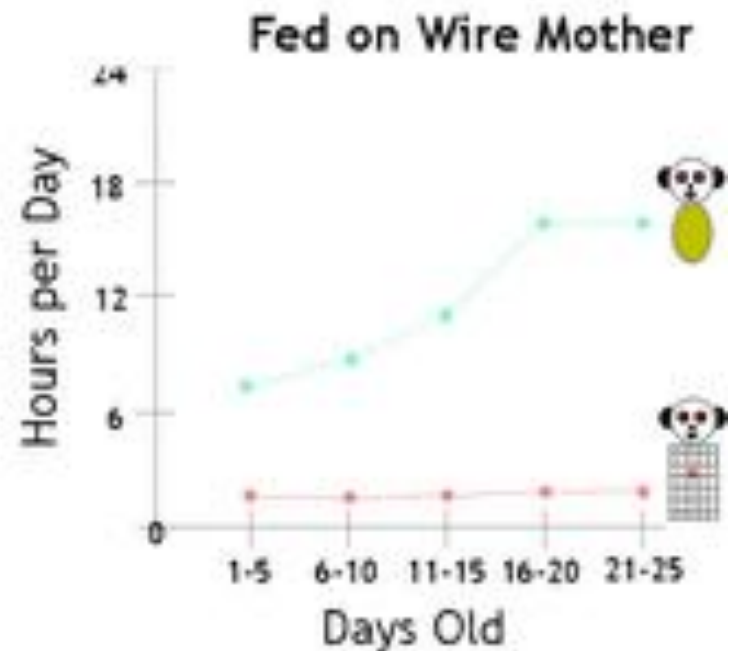
- ▶ Attachment: close emotional bond between two people (or animals)

# Development of Attachment

- ▶ Different theories:
  - ▶ Freud: infants become attached to the person who provides oral satisfaction (e.g. Through feeding)
  - ▶ Behaviorism: attachment through reinforcement
  - ▶ Erikson: trust comes from physical comfort and sensitive care
  - ▶ Harlow: infants prefer contact comfort over food
    - ▶ Harlow monkey experiment

# Harlow's Study

- Time spent with “mother”



# Bowlby's Theory

- ▶ Bowlby's Theory of Attachment
  - ▶ Infants + parents biologically predisposed to form attachments
    - ▶ E.G. Lorenz (1935) study on imprinting (Critical period for imprinting is shortly after birth)
    - ▶ E.G. Crying, cooing, clinging to mother, smiling, following the mother
  - ▶ Critical period: 6 months – 2-3 years
  - ▶ During this time, infant should receive continuous care



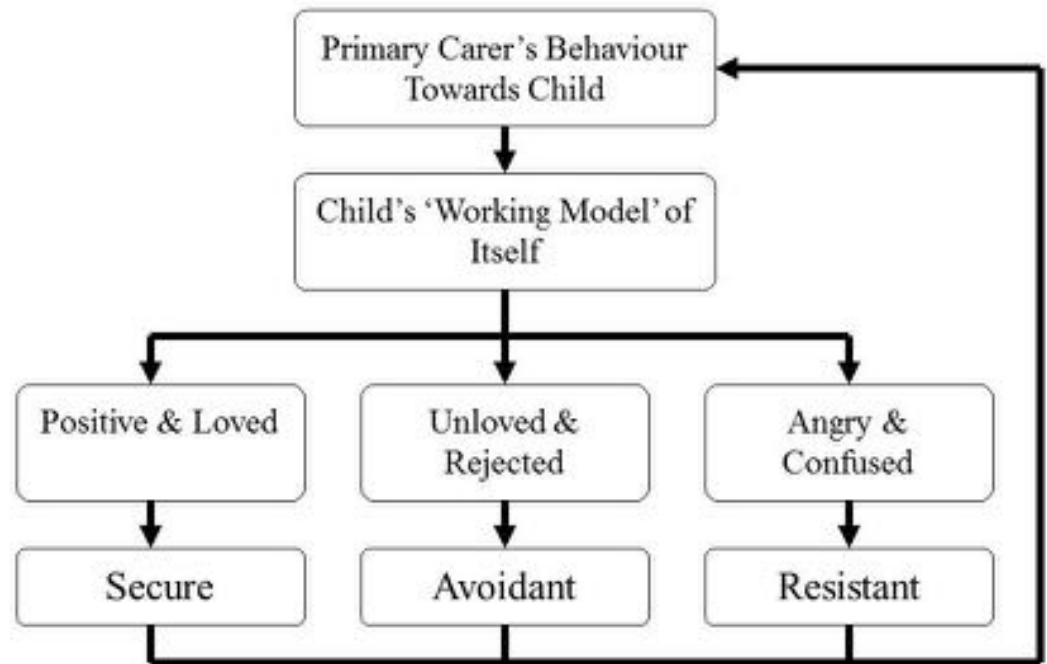
# Bowlby's Theory

- ▶ Develops in 4 phases
  - ▶ Phase 1: birth – 2 months
    - ▶ Attachment directed to other humans (eg. Parents, strangers)
  - ▶ Phase 2: 2-7 months
    - ▶ Attachment focused on one person (usually primary caregiver)
    - ▶ Learns to distinguish between familiar and unfamiliar people
  - ▶ Phase 3: 7-24 months
    - ▶ Specific attachments develop (eg. Mother and father)
    - ▶ Locomotor skills -> Actively seek contact with regular caregivers
  - ▶ Phase 4: 24 months +
    - ▶ Become aware of others' feelings
    - ▶ Take these into account in forming own actions

# Development of Attachment

## ► Bowlby

- Parent's care towards the child influences the child's working model of the self
- The working model includes:
  - A model of others being trustworthy
  - A model of the self as valuable
  - A model of the self as effective when interacting with others



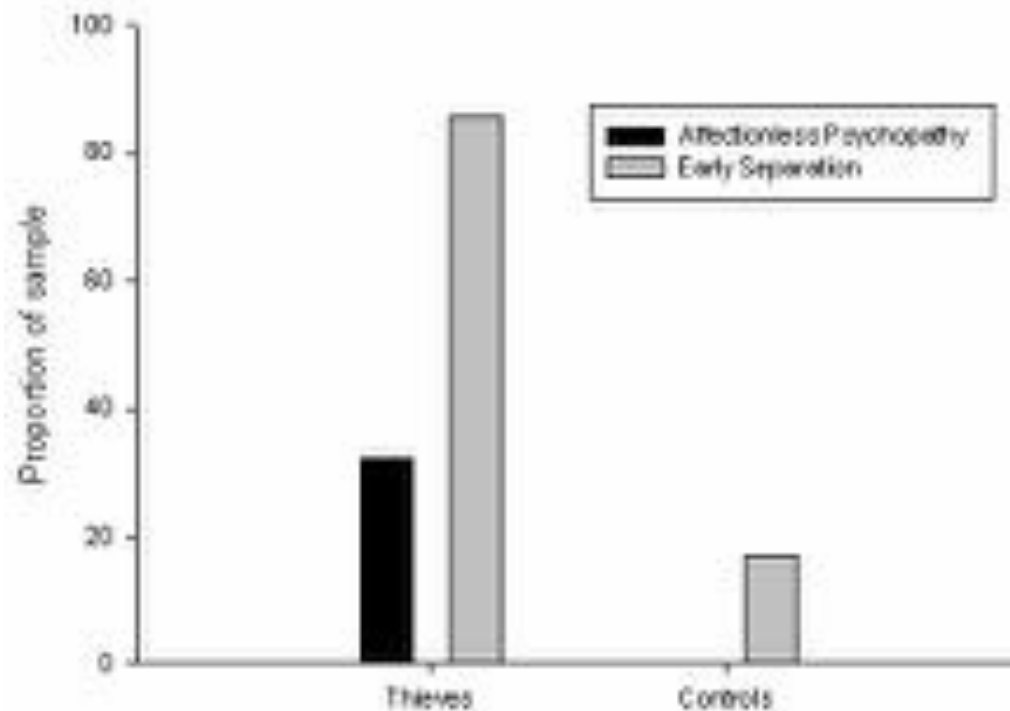
# Bowlby's Theory

- ▶ Consequences of maternal deprivation
  - ▶ Delinquency
  - ▶ Reduced IQ
  - ▶ Increased aggression
  - ▶ Depression
  - ▶ Affectionless psychopathy



# Bowlby's Theory

- ▶ E.G. Thieves study (Bowlby, 1944)



# Ainsworth's Strange Situation

- ▶ Individual differences in attachment
  - ▶ **Strange situation:** observational measure of infant attachment
  - ▶ Requires infant to move through
    - ▶ Introductions
    - ▶ Separations
    - ▶ Reunions and adult stranger in prescribed order

# Ainsworth's Theory of Attachment

- ▶ 4 attachment styles

- ▶ **Securely attached babies**

- ▶ When caregiver is present, infants will explore the room
    - ▶ When caregiver leaves infant cries
    - ▶ When caregiver returns, infants reestablish positive interaction (e.g. Climbing onto lap, smiling)
    - ▶ Resume playing with toys in room

- ▶ **Avoidant babies**

- ▶ Avoid caregiver
    - ▶ Not distressed when caregiver leaves room
    - ▶ Does not interact when caregiver comes back
    - ▶ If contact then infant leans/looks away

# Ainsworth's Theory of Attachment

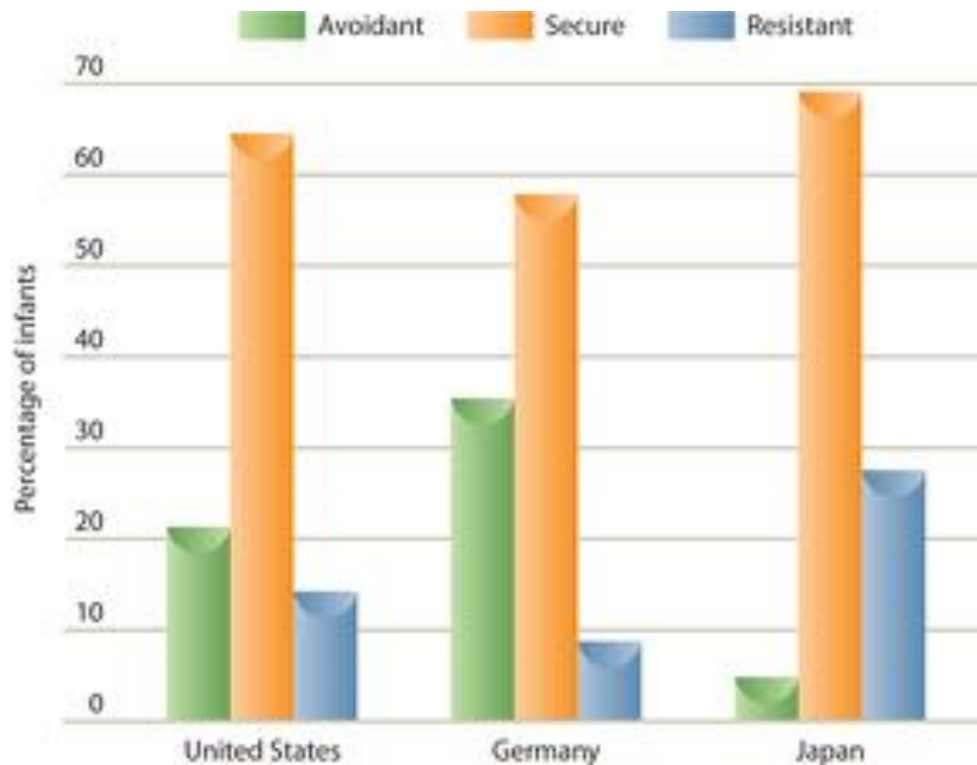
## ▶ **Resistant (ambivalent) babies**

- ▶ Clings to caregiver in strange situation room
- ▶ Do not explore playroom
- ▶ Cry when caregiver leaves
- ▶ Push caregiver away when he/she returns

## ▶ **Disorganized babies**

- ▶ Dazed, confused, fearful
- ▶ Strong avoidance and resistance of caregiver
  - ▶ E.g. Extreme fearfulness around caregiver

# Evaluating Ainsworth's Theory of Attachment



# Adult Attachment

- ▶ Adult Attachment in romantic relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987)
  - ▶ **Secure attachment style:** Have a positive view of relationships and find it easy to get close to other
  - ▶ **Avoidant attachment style:** Are hesitant about getting involved in romantic relationships
  - ▶ **Anxious attachment style:** Demand closeness, are less trusting, more emotional, jealous, and possessive

# Research Findings for Adult Attachment

- ▶ Findings:
  - ▶ 60-80% of adults describe themselves as being securely attached (Zeifman & Hazan, 2008)
  - ▶ Infants who were securely attached at 1 years old were securely attached in adult relationship at age 21 (Steele et al., 1998)
  - ▶ Securely attached infants were in more stable romantic relationships than insecurely attached infants (Salvatore et al., 2011)

# Research Findings for Adult Attachment

- ▶ Security predicts more positive romantic relationships (Holland & Roisman, 2010)
- ▶ Anxiously attached individuals showed strong ambivalence toward romantic partner (Mikulincer et al., 2010) and relationship commitment than securely attached individuals (Joel, MacDonald & Shimotomai, 2011)
- ▶ Avoidant and anxious adults have lower sexual satisfaction than secure adults (Brassard et al., 2012)



# Research Findings for Adult Attachment

- ▶ Insecure attachment linked with chronic disease such as cardiovascular disease (McWilliams & Bailey, 2010)
- ▶ Avoidant and anxious adults linked with depressive symptoms (Jinyao et al., 2012)

# Benefits of Secure Attachment

## ▶ Attachment

### ▶ Benefits of secure attachment:

#### ▶ Mikulincer and Shaver (2012)

- ▶ Self-acceptance
- ▶ Self-esteem
- ▶ Self-efficacy
- ▶ Emotional control
- ▶ Optimistic
- ▶ Resilient
- ▶ Activate cognitive representations of stability -> effective coping strategies

#### ▶ Li and Chan (2012)

- ▶ Better relationships with partners

# Conclusion

- ▶ Attachment linked to relationship problems
- ▶ Other factors may also play a role in relationship functioning