

SAMPLE

COMPLETE GUIDE TO

Attachment

A-level Psychology | AQA | Paper 1



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ATTACHMENT

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What you need to know for the AQA A-level Exam Specification

1	Caregiver-Infant Interaction Reciprocity, Interactional synchrony	pg. 3
2	Stages of Attachment as proposed by Schaeffer, including multiple attachments	pg. 4
3	The Role of the Father	pg. 7
4	Animal Studies of Attachment including Konrad Lorenz and Immanuel Kant	pg. 11
5	Explanations of Attachment: Learning	pg. 15
6	Explanations of Attachment: Bowlby's Attachment Theory	pg. 17
7	Ainsworth's Strange Situation & Attachment Types Including Secure, Insecure Avoidant, and Insecure Resistant	pg. 19
8	Cultural Variations in Attachment including Van Ijzendoorn	pg. 22
9	Bowlby's Maternal Deprivation Theory	pg. 25
10	Effects of Institutionalisation: Romanian Orphan Studies	pg. 29
11	Importance of Early Attachment on Later Child & Adult Relationships	pg. 32





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Cultural Variations in Attachment (Including Van Ijzendoorn)

A-level Psychology | AQA | Paper 1 | Attachment

Previously we have considered Ainsworth's Strange Situation as a method of assessing the quality of attachment between a child and their caregiver. This was where she identified the attachment types of secure, insecure avoidant, and insecure resistant. And from this, researchers began to ask if these attachment types might vary around the world, so in this section we are going to explore cultural variations in attachment.

Culture refers to the norms and values that exist within any group of people, so when we say there is a cultural variation it is interested in the differences in the norms and values between groups of people.

We are interested in how the attachment types differ between cultures. As we explore cultural variations it is helpful to bear in mind a distinction that is often made between certain cultures.

Individualistic Cultures	Collectivist Cultures
 <p>Individualistic cultures, typically in the West such as the USA and the UK, prioritise the individual, independence and autonomy over the group.</p>	<p>Collectivist cultures such as China and Japan, prioritise the group, family and community over the individual.</p> 

Van Ijzendoorn & Kroonenberg (1988)

So how do psychologists conduct research to learn about the variation of attachment across cultures? This brings us to the work of Marinus van Ijzendoorn and Pieter Kroonenberg (1988) who conducted a meta-analysis.



Meta Analysis	A meta-analysis is a study that combines the data from many other studies that have previously been conducted and combines the results to see the overall effect or trends.
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Van Ijzendoorn & Kroonenberg (1988) conducted:

32 studies	8 countries	1,990 participants
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All of these 32 studies made use of the **Strange Situation** to measure attachment.

They analysed all the data to see the pattern of attachment types across the different countries.

They wanted to see if there were any:

Inter-cultural differences	Intra-cultural differences
(differences BETWEEN cultures)	(differences WITHIN cultures)

Harry Harlow (1958)



At the time of Harlow's research in the 1950s, one of the most dominant views in psychology was that of Behaviourism. When it came to attachment behaviour, Behaviourists took the view that babies formed an attachment with their mother simply because they provided food. Harlow argued that this missed something crucially important to the formation of a relationship and to healthy development in a child; and that was 'love'. In his work entitled 'The Nature of Love' Harlow studied Rhesus monkeys who were removed from their mothers at birth.

Using a controlled environment, the monkeys were then released into a cage where they had the choice of two surrogate monkey mothers (surrogate being a substitute mother).

One of these surrogate mothers was made from a block of wood, covered with sponge rubber, and a cotton cloth. A light bulb behind her radiated heat.

This surrogate mother provided what Harlow called 'contact comfort'.



The wire surrogate mother was made of wire mesh which displaced the bottle placed in a similar location to the one a real monkey mother would. Harlow found that this surrogate mother's "body differed in an essential way from that of the cloth mother in the quality of the contact comfort which she can supply".

When the monkeys were released into the cage with these two surrogate mothers, they recorded the amount of time the monkey spent with each of the mothers.

Given a choice between a mother that provided food but not comfort or a mother that provided contact comfort but no food, the monkeys chose contact comfort. The monkey spent less than an hour feeding with the wire mother and the rest of the time with the cloth covered mother.

Fear Test

In another version of his research, Harlow explored fear. He argued that one function of the mother is to be a **place of safety and security** for her young. In times of fear and danger, and that an infant's response to fear can be a measure of the strength of their attachment to their mother.

They tested this idea by presenting various fear-producing stimuli (see below).

Sometimes the monkey was alone without the mother.

They found that when the monkey was alone without a mother, they would crouch down in fear and avoid the object,



In other conditions the monkey was with the wire and clothed surrogate mothers.

They found that when they were given a choice, they looked to the contact comfort mother for safety, and did not show as much of a fearful response and in fact eventually began to explore and attack the object.

Evaluating Caregiver-Infant Interaction

1. Controlled Observations



The research into caregiver-infant interaction often uses highly controlled observations. For example, the research by Meltzoff & Moore made use of technology to capture the micro-sequences of behaviours that the infants displayed. This involves filming the very fine details of expressions and movements that can be recorded and analysed later which increases the validity of the research.

There are no problems with demand characteristics. When we know we are being observed we change our behaviour, whether that's to show the behaviours we think the observers want, or to do the opposite and deliberately behave in ways that the researcher doesn't want. But with an infant who is a few days, or weeks old they don't know they are being observed and so their behaviour is more natural.



2. Difficulties with Observations



Firstly, there is the problem of intentionality. It is difficult to draw conclusions about the role of caregiver-infant interactions in the development of an infant because it is difficult to determine the infant's intention. This is because what is being observed is just hand movements or changes in facial expression. An infant is limited in its ability to communicate and only has a few things that it can actually do. The researcher needs to make an inference about the children's behaviour. As a result, it is extremely difficult to be certain what is taking place from the infant's perspective.

Secondly, there is the potential problem of bias in the observation and interpretation of the behaviour. They may observe an infant's behaviour and interpret it as a direct response to the adult's behaviour because that is what they are hoping to find. This can then raise questions about the validity of the research and our understanding of caregiver-infant interactions.



3. Practical Application



Research into caregiver-infant interaction has been used for its practical application. This is because it has drawn attention to the important behaviours that are needed to help the development of an infant.

For example, in the past a mother and her baby would be put in separate rooms after the birth, but now the mother is encouraged to have skin to skin contact with the baby as soon as possible to encourage the bonding process. The research into caregiver-infant interaction encourages mothers to engage in social interaction and to respond to their baby's behaviour in an appropriate and timely manner.

It has pointed to the importance of these interactions for the benefit of the child's development, notably in areas such as empathy and social skills.

4. Socially Sensitive



One issue with research into caregiver-infant interactions relates to how it can be socially sensitive. This is because research emphasises the importance of interactional synchrony between a mother and an infant. Research suggests that children may not develop as well if the child does not receive high levels of it. Think back to Isabella and Bell's findings which suggested that low levels of interactional synchrony can lead to insecure attachments. A mother who returns to work shortly after her child is born would have less opportunities for interactional synchrony with her child. Would she feel like a bad parent? Would this lead her to be ostracised and looked down on by others?

Research into caregiver-infant interactions could put pressure on mothers not to return to work (when they might need to), or a mother might need to look after other children too and can't give as much attention as she would like to her newborn, which might make some mothers feel guilty about the situation.



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The Influence of Early Attachment on Child & Adult Relationships (Including the Internal Working Model)

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Psychologists believe that your attachment to your caregiver, your first significant relationship, will go on to shape all your future relationships; including the quality of your friendships, how you behave in your romantic relationships, and even how you will parent your own children.



Internal Working Model

Key to understanding how our early attachment can influence our later relationships is the internal working model. This is part of John Bowlby's Monotropic Theory. According to Bowlby, **your past attachment relationship acts as a model or template for later relationships**. It provides the blueprint, or those of you remembering your cognitive psychology, it leads to the formation of a mental representation or schema of how to relate to other people.

Friends



Kerns (1994)

Some research suggests that your attachment type is associated with the quality of your peer relationships in childhood; in other words your friends. Kathryn Kerns (1994) found a difference in the quality of relationships between secure and insecurely attached children.



Securely attached children were more likely to have good friendships during childhood, whereas children with insecure attachments had more difficulties not only in forming friendships but also in maintaining them.



"Children who are more securely attached form more positive relationships with peers, cooperate more with adults, and regulate their emotions more effectively." (Kerns, 1994)

Romantic Relationships



Hazan and Shaver (1987)



So, finally, let's consider how our early attachment can influence your romantic relationships. Hazan and Shaver (1987) conducted an investigation into the association between attachment and adult relationships, through what they called the 'love quiz'. The quiz consisted of nearly 100 questions. This was published in a local newspaper, the "Rocky Mountain News". They received 620 replies to their questionnaire.



They found...

Secure Attachment	Most likely to have good & longer lasting relationships & believe that love endures.
Insecure Avoidant	Were most likely to fear closeness in relationships & believe that love doesn't last.
Insecure Resistant	Were most likely to be needy for love. They fell in love very easily.

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