Attachment

• Definition: An emotional bond with a specific person that is enduring across time and space

• **Harlow** and the Rhesus Monkeys
  - Rhesus monkeys at birth were isolated from other monkeys
  - At 6 months the isolated rhesus monkeys showed many socially disturbing behaviors
  - This research showed the value of early social interactions

Long-Term Effects of Attachment

• Security of attachment is related to psychological, social, and cognitive factors.

• Secure attachments have been related to:
  - Acceptable emotional expression
  - + peer relations
  - + social skills
  - Greater understanding of other’s emotions
  - Greater sharing
  - Less aggressive and antisocial behavior
  - Closer friends
  - Well liked by others
  - Higher grades

• Lasting?
  - Perhaps if the environment remains constant
Bowlby’s Attachment Theory

- Infants use their primary caregiver as a secure base—a presence that provides an infant with a sense of security that allows them to explore the environment.

- The Attachment Process:
  - is based on ethological theory
  - focuses on the innate basis of attachment
  - looks at the quality of attachments with caregivers

- Result: child develops internal working model of attachment—a representation of the self, attachment figures and relationships in general which guides later interactions with people.

Ainsworth’s Work

- This work looks at the security of an infant’s attachment

**The Strange Situation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Episode</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Attachment Behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Caregiver/child enter room</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Caregiver/child alone</td>
<td>Caregiver as secure base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Stranger enters</td>
<td>Reaction to stranger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Child and stranger</td>
<td>Separation distress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Caregiver returns/stranger leaves</td>
<td>Stranger comfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Child alone</td>
<td>Reunion reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Stranger enters</td>
<td>Stranger comfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Caregiver returns</td>
<td>Reunion reaction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ainsworth’s 3 Attachment Categories

• **Secure**
  ▪ Caregiver is a secure base
  ▪ Child shows some distress when caregiver leaves
  ▪ Child is glad to see caregiver at reunion

• **Insecure/Resistant or Ambivalent**
  ▪ Child is clingy in the strange situation
  ▪ Child is upset when caregiver leaves
  ▪ Child reestablishes contact, but resists caregiver’s efforts at comfort

• **Insecure/Avoidant**
  ▪ Child avoids strange situations
  ▪ Child does not greet caregiver upon return
  ▪ Child ignores stranger

Some children didn’t fit so…

• **Disorganized/disoriented**
  ▪ Child shows no consistent way of coping
  ▪ Child has a dazed expression
  ▪ Child demonstrates variable behaviors
Percents of middle-class American children in secure and insecure attachment groups

About two-thirds of middle-class American children are securely attached. In addition to the insecurely attached children depicted in the chart, less than 5% of children—those who previously were designated as insecure/avoidant or insecure/resistant or were unclassified—are now categorized as disorganized/distressed children. (Adapted from Thompson, 1998)

Factors Associated with Security of Attachment

• Parental sensitivity in child rearing
  – Mothers of securely attached infants respond readily to their children’s signals.
  – Mothers of anxious/resistant infants are inconsistent in caregiving.
  – Mothers of anxious/avoidant infants tend to be indifferent and emotionally unavailable.
  – Disorganized/distressed infants tend to be frightened by or confused by their mothers.

• Child’s temperament.