

2. The development of John Bowlby's ideas on attachment: His early works

Abstract

The major founder of the attachment paradigm, John Bowlby, has claimed that his early views were traditional and that he subsequently did not substantially change his views. The present chapter attempts to assess what value should be attached to these statements. On the basis of a reading of the early writings of Bowlby and those of his contemporaries it is concluded that his views were both orthodox and revolutionary depending on the reference group one chooses. It is also shown that there is a surprising constancy in the themes (e.g., love deprivation as the source of maladjusted behavior) that Bowlby addressed throughout his career, but that this constancy doesn't exclude subtle changes in his treatment of these issues. It is argued that historical research into the origin and growth of attachment theory is badly needed.

Introduction

There is a growing interest in the origin and history of attachment theory and in the person of John Bowlby (1907-1990) as

one of the principal founders of the attachment paradigm. Bretherton (1991, 1992) has published analyses of the roots and growing points of attachment theory. Newcombe and Lerner (1982) have given a fascinating account of the historical context of Bowlby's ideas and recent books by Holmes (1993) and Karen (1994) provided new information about Bowlby's life and work.

It is, however, probably fair to say that the origin and development of attachment theory have not yet been studied in sufficient detail. What is particularly lacking is a detailed study of Bowlby's early publications and their relationship to his later theoretical work. Neither does one have adequate knowledge about the originality of these early publications and about points of divergence and similarity with contemporary theoretical views. Bowlby (1939) himself has claimed that his views regarding the importance of early attachment relationships were 'traditional teaching'. In interviews he has also repeatedly claimed that his basic ideas were present at the outset and that he never substantially changed his views (e.g., Bowlby, Figlio & Young, 1986). Indeed, on a first reading one sometimes gets the impression that his basic set of ideas - the ideas which eventually would lead to attachment theory as stated, for instance, in his well-known trilogy (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980) - was already present in some rudimentary form in his very first papers and that the rest of his career was dedicated to no more than the refinement, empirical verification and corroboration of these views. If this impression is correct, then two questions immediately spring to mind. Which factors, arguments, and personal circumstances led the young Bowlby to the adoption of the view he advocated in

these early papers? In other words, we want to know more about the scientific and personal intellectual and perhaps emotional background of Bowlby's early ideas. The other question that suggests itself is to what extent the further development of Bowlby's ideas can indeed be fruitfully considered to have been no more than an extension and refinement of his first basic ideas. To argue this, one should, for example, be able to demonstrate that the mature Bowlby's emphasis on the adverse effects of mother-child separations (e.g., in the case of hospitalization of the child or of the mother) was present in basically the same form in his early work.

In this chapter we shall primarily address the question about the development of Bowlby's views. In this context we will briefly refer to the recent discussion about the notion of 'critical period' in Bowlby's writings. We will, in addition, say a few words about the 'traditional' nature of Bowlby's work by briefly comparing his ideas with those of several important British contemporary psychoanalysts working in the same field, namely Anna Freud, Dorothy Burlingham, and Melanie Klein. In order to answer the questions raised we will focus on Bowlby's crucial early papers up to his well-known article about 44 juvenile thieves (Bowlby, 1944, 1946a), the article which provided him, incidentally, with the nickname 'Ali Bowlby and his forty thieves'.

Bowlby's early works

One of Bowlby's very first works was a book written with the Labour politician and minister Evan Durbin, who died in the late 1940s. The main theme of this book, called 'Personal aggressiveness and war',

is unfortunately still very topical (Durbin & Bowlby, 1939). The book was the result of a symposium entitled 'War and Democracy' held in 1938. It consisted of a first part (50 pages) written by Durbin discussing the comparative merits of different theories of war and a second, much larger, part (approximately 100 pages) written by Bowlby which discussed the biological, ethnographic, and psychological evidence for the various theories. It was at once a very traditional and a truly original book. The basic theme of the book is that "war is due to the expression in and through group life of the transformed aggressiveness of individuals" (Durbin & Bowlby, 1939, p.41).

To argue this view, Bowlby considered the evidence based on studies of, respectively, apes, primitive people, Western children, and Western adults. In his discussion of apes, Bowlby largely followed Zuckermann's (1932) study of a group of baboons in the London Zoo. He concluded that most aggressive fighting is based on sexual rivalry while he did not accentuate the importance of food or parental love as sources for conflicts. His point was that if apes' fighting is caused by basic biological forces (notably sex), the same must hold true for humans. Referring to evidence on primitive people, Bowlby ventured as his opinion that "men will fight for the possession of wives like any monkey" (Durbin & Bowlby, 1939, p.59) and that "when man lives in unorganized groups, he tends towards a social life basically similar to that of apes" (Durbin & Bowlby, 1939, p.61). To strengthen this idea he referred to anthropological studies (notably by Davie, 1929 & Frazer, 1922).

These studies showed that primitive man is always fighting - "[they] live in a state not far removed from that of ba-

boons” (Durbin & Bowlby, 1939, p. 107) - and that the main cause of primitive inter-group conflict is the stealing of wives for sexual gratification. Unlike apes, however, primitive man is capable of making war based on the tendencies called ‘animism’ and ‘projection’. According to the first tendency, primitive people attribute any natural disaster to the agency of individuals inside or outside their own group, a tendency which Frazer (1922) coined the ‘scapegoat mechanism’. On the basis of the second tendency, introduced by psychoanalysis, people tend to ascribe their own unconscious feelings to other people, preferably outside their own group. The result of both tendencies, Bowlby argued, may be war. It is typical of the always cautious Bowlby that he acknowledged that in some cases the causes for stealing women or making war might be economical and that no definitive evaluation of the relative importance of the different motives is possible without more thorough investigation. At the same time, however, he suggested that his position (i.e., that women are stolen for sexual motives) was by far the most probable “taking into account our knowledge of human nature and of baboon behaviour” (Durbin & Bowlby, 1939, p.115).

Children, likewise, are always fighting. For this information on the behavior of children Bowlby relied heavily on Susan Isaacs (1933). Isaacs was the first British psychoanalyst to carry out applied research in child development. Relying on her work, Bowlby claimed that the chief causes of mutual conflict are the possession of goods or affection and frustration after failure or punishment, or are due to impersonal events. In the light of his later works it is remarkable that he highlighted deprivation or threatened deprivation as

“one of the chief sources of hatred and aggression in childhood” (Durbin & Bowlby, 1939, p.67).

But the chief source of aggression in children, Bowlby argued after Isaacs, is the unavoidable frustration they experience in the ‘pressure cooker’ of the nuclear family. A baby will hate his mother for denying the breast like he will hate his father for sleeping with his mother. Expression of these feelings would be dangerous and undesirable and the result is that these feelings of aggression and resentment go underground and are projected onto a scapegoat. Here Bowlby sketched a very traditional psychoanalytic picture to explain the abundant feelings of aggression in children. Just as traditional was his claim that such feelings are lasting and will lead to aggressiveness in adults. In the words of his co-author: “it [aggression] cannot be destroyed” and “it appears later and in other forms” (Durbin & Bowlby, 1939, p.17). We thus get a clear and simple picture of the origin and causes of war: the inevitable frustration leads to feelings of aggression which are projected onto the members of other groups. These people now form the scapegoat for all sorts of misfortune and the natural solution is to punish this scapegoat by making war.

In fact, it is basically along these lines that Bowlby explained the persecution of the Jews by the Nazis and Hitler's urge to make war with the other European states. It would seem that the State does no more than canalize the irrational feelings of its members much like the ego in traditional psychoanalytic thinking can do little more than canalize the primitive forces of the id. One remembers Freud's remark that

in its relation to the Id the Ego is like a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse... Often a rider, if he is not to be parted from his horse, is obliged to guide it where it wants to go; so in the same way the Ego is in the habit of transforming the Id's will into action as if it were its own rider (Freud, 1923/1973, p.25).

One way then to canalize the aggressive feelings of the State's members is to select an enemy and to make war. Bowlby suggested that this is the preferred method of totalitarian states and that democratic states may be less war-minded because there is always some rival political party to blame in the case of massive unemployment and other misfortunes (Durbin & Bowlby, 1939, p.146).

The book with Durbin belongs to Bowlby's very few writings which address themes of a sociological and political nature (Bowlby, 1946b; Bowlby, n.d.). Bowlby's other publication from 1939 dealt with a topic which would become very prominent in his later work and which we now in retrospect consider to be more typical of his thinking. In this article, 'Substitute homes' (1939), published in *Mother and Child*, he discussed the origins of deviant behavior in children on the basis of his work as a psychiatrist in the London Child Guidance Clinic. Bowlby argued that any substitute home is an "exceedingly poor substitute for a child's real home" and that even a bad home provides for "the vital emotional background of security" (Bowlby, 1939, p.3). His claim was that "the emotional bond between child and mother is the basis for all further social development" (Bowlby, 1939, p.3). The feeling of security that a loving mother provides, gradually generalizes to

other adults and children and allows the child to develop gratifying and lasting relationships with them. Interestingly enough, Bowlby claimed that this was 'traditional teaching' supported by psychoanalytic evidence.

What goes awry if there is no such emotional bond between mother and child? Here Bowlby relied heavily on the cases of children he had seen in the London Child Guidance Clinic. He described the typical syndrome of children who show an apparent lack of any affection and a deep indifference to what others think of them. These children have no relationships at all or very superficial ones only. On inspection of their personal history it turned out, said Bowlby, that many of them had had "no permanent emotional relationship with a mother or mother substitute" (Bowlby, 1939, p.4). Often they had suffered prolonged separations (e.g., hospitalization) from their mother and subsequently appeared to be little strangers to their relatives.

Bowlby's explanation of the apparent lack of affection of these children was that

the one person whom they really trusted has deserted and betrayed them. The result is a lack of trust and disregard for other people and a profound unwillingness to risk having their hearts broken again (Bowlby, 1939, p.5).

Bowlby claimed that the most critical period is between four months and three years of age but added that even older children can be quite vulnerable to such separation experiences. The child feels that he is being abandoned by his mother for his evil deeds or wishes such as 'killing the baby', i.e., his jealous wish to have his younger sibling out of the way. The result-

ing feelings of horror and grief are so distressing that the child may never again develop a normal relationship with his mother nor be able to engage in normal relationships with other people for 'the rest of his life'.

On the basis of this gloomy picture, Bowlby suggested some very practical measures to be taken to mitigate the effects of separations. First, if transfer to a foster-mother is necessary it should take place as early as possible and certainly before the child is nine months old as "even one change during the critical period of the second year may have a serious effect on a child" (Bowlby, 1939, p.7). Secondly, if the child needs to be in a hospital or other institution it is of paramount importance that one single person takes care of the child as otherwise

the children have no opportunity of forming solid emotional ties to any one person. This, more than any other single thing, accounts, I believe, for the withdrawn impersonality [sic] of the institutional child (Bowlby, 1939, p.6).

Thirdly, one should try at all costs to prevent the necessity of placing the child in a substitute home. Even obviously bad homes may provide the emotional relationships and the resulting feelings of security children need so badly. Fourthly, one should assist foster-parents as these face a very hard task. Raising a child who has gone through a prolonged separation in his infancy is exceedingly hard. Bowlby said that it is surprising that there were so many successes in these circumstances. In fact, he was inclined not to trust these successes on face value and claimed that "for all their apparent gayness [adopted chil-

dren] suffer from a sense of inner emptiness and gloom" (Bowlby, 1939, p.7).

Although it is clear that this gloomy picture was based on his experience as a psychiatrist at the London Child Guidance Clinic, Bowlby (1939) hardly provided any details of his investigation in this paper. In his article 'The influence of early environment in the development of neurosis and neurotic character' (1940a), we see Bowlby discuss the data in rather more detail. Then it becomes clear that he was gradually accumulating the evidence for a theory of the origins of child delinquency that he would eventually set forth in his now well-known paper on juvenile thieves (Bowlby, 1944; 1946a).

Bowlby's article was written to qualify as a full member with voting rights of the British Psychoanalytical Society. As such it was a rather bold paper, because it challenged some of the most cherished views of prominent members of the Society. Right at the start of his paper Bowlby stated that over the course of three years he gathered material concerning the personal background of deviant children he treated in the London Child Guidance Clinic and that he considered that

this type of research is of much more value in solving certain analytic problems than is research limited to analytic sessions (Bowlby, 1940a, p.154).

As we shall see later on, this was anathema to many members of the Psychoanalytical Society who emphasized the environment-as-experienced and attached less importance to the relevance of objective environmental factors for the child's mental development. Bowlby claimed that we need to investigate both the child, his

environment, and the interaction between them. This does not mean that he disdained all psychoanalytic evidence. On the contrary, he intentionally disregarded economic and social factors and concentrated upon the emotional background of the deviant child seen from a psychoanalytic perspective. As he himself made clear

My own approach to the role of environment in the causation of neurosis has of course been from the analytic angle. For this reason I have ignored many aspects of the child's environment such as economic conditions, housing conditions, the school situation, diet and religious teaching (Bowlby, 1940a, p.155).

Bowlby was primarily interested in:

- (1) the history of the mother-child relationship and the possible separations between them;
- (2) the mother's treatment of the child (her unconscious attitude included);
- (3) illness and death in the family and how it affected the child.

Bowlby expressed his belief that these environmental factors overshadow the influence of genetic factors and that factors operational in the early years are most important as these influence "the whole cast of the character" (Bowlby, 1940a, p.157). In this period he distinguished between (a) potentially harmful specific events and (b) the mother's emotional (negative) attitude. Of these specific events by far the most important in his opinion were the separations between the mother and the child. Based on an examination of his files, Bowlby concluded that a 'broken mother-child relationship' in the first three years of life often leads to emotionally withdrawn children who do not develop 'libidinal ties' with others. Of 16 cases of

emotionally withdrawn children who were prone to stealing, the so-called affectionless thieves, 14 turned out to have experienced major separations from their mother in the first three years of their life. In 30 cases of other thieves, Bowlby found another five separations, while in 44 cases of non-thieves (apparently meant to function as some sort of control group) there were only three separations to be found.

On the basis of these findings, Bowlby concluded that a certain clinical syndrome - the affectionless thief - is caused by major separation experiences. He added, that in his view the further conclusion follows that minor breaks as well may have a damaging effect on a child's development. A satisfactory explanation of why exactly mother-child separations would lead to stealing and other pathogenic environmental factors to other forms of deviant behavior is still lacking at this stage of Bowlby's research.

Quite apart from specific pathogenic events, the mother's emotional attitude may play a harmful role. Bowlby discussed several case histories of children whose neurotic parents had an adverse effect on their emotional development. Mothers who at the same time love and unconsciously hate their children will tend to have children who show the same ambivalence of feelings. The child loves his mother but at the same time his mother's hostile attitude will cause him to experience strong feelings of aggression and frustration. This leads to emotional conflict, repression by the superego and feelings of guilt. Bowlby emphasized that such ambivalent and neurotic parents do really and objectively exist and that neurotic symptoms tend to be transmitted from one generation to another unless we take measures to treat both the child and

the parents. In fact, he suggested that “ideally both mother and child should be seen at the same time by different workers, and this is a procedure I habitually attempt” (Bowlby, 1940a, p.176).

Although Bowlby cautiously remarked that a more thorough statistical comparison of the emotional environment of normal and deviant children was needed, he nevertheless drew the following conclusions: (1) mother and child should be separated only in cases of absolute necessity. If this is absolutely necessary, then one should try to arrange for daily visits or replacement of the mother by persons the child knows well and feels comfortable with, (2) both mother and child should be treated on a weekly basis, (3) in analyzing adults we may retrospectively get an impression of the real personalities of the child's parents and the objective events he experienced and this knowledge may help us in the treatment.

During the winter of 1939, Bowlby completed a draft of a more systematic study of these juvenile thieves. He submitted it to the *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, but it was not accepted, because the editor thought it required a discussion of theory. In the winter of 1943-44, James Strachey, the editor of the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, remarked that he had nothing for the 1944 volume and wondered if Bowlby had anything suitable. To which Bowlby replied that he

had a rather long paper on delinquent children which might be suitable. The upshot was that I worked every spare hour revising the draft ... It appeared in two parts during the year and created sufficiently interest that I arranged it to be reprinted as a separate

monograph (Bowlby, 1991, pp.12-13).

Bowlby's empirical research into the affective origins of delinquency thus culminated in his paper on 44 juvenile thieves (Bowlby, 1944; subsequently published in book format as Bowlby, 1946a). Bowlby gave a detailed account of the case histories of an unselected group of 44 thieves (several of whom we recognize from his earlier papers) and compared his pattern of findings with those found for a control group of 44 non-thieves, children who were maladjusted in other ways. All children were seen and treated during 1936 to 1939 at the London Child Guidance Clinic where Bowlby was working during this period. Bowlby's chief aim was to show that “theft, like rheumatic fever, is a disease of childhood and adolescence” (Bowlby, 1944, p.19).

In order to argue this claim, he collected data about the children's childhood in interviews with the children themselves, their parents, close relatives, and teachers. Most children and mothers were interviewed by Bowlby himself, while a psychologist tested the children. A social worker took the psychiatric history of the children. In his discussion of the findings, Bowlby attached fundamental importance to the children's relation to their parents and possible emotional traumas. Children were grouped according to their character type: normal, depressed, circular, hyperthymic, affectionless, and schizoid. Here Bowlby made fruitful use of the classification of character types he developed in his work on personality and mental illness at Maudsley Hospital and University College Hospital (1933-34) which was published in Bowlby (1940b).

Bowlby (1944) devoted special attention to what he called the affectionless characters. These were children who showed no affection or warmth and responded neither to kindness nor to punishment. They had no close emotional ties with peers and Bowlby suggested that their syndrome might perhaps be fruitfully looked upon as a chronic depression of very early origin as with very few exceptions these children had suffered the complete emotional loss of their mother or foster-mother. He added that

it is my hope that these Affectionless Characters will be studied in great detail in the future, for I believe that they form the real hard core of the problem of recidivism. There can be no doubt that they are essentially *delinquent characters* (Bowlby, 1944, p.39).

Amongst the control group there were no affectionless characters which in Bowlby's view demonstrated the specific association of this character type with stealing.

Bowlby distinguished several factors that might lead to maladjusted behavior in childhood and adolescence or to theft in particular. These were (a) genetic factors, (b) contemporary environment, and (c) early home environment. Not surprisingly, he attached little value to the first two factors. Although in 18 of 44 cases of thieves one of the parents or grandparents had had mental problems, the same was true for non-thieves. In Bowlby's view, this meant that genetic factors could only play a role in maladapted behavior in general and do not lead to specific forms of maladapted behavior such as stealing. Much the same is true, Bowlby argued, for the influence of contemporary environment. He admitted that the death of near relatives, for ex-

ample, can cause depressions or over-activity. He found, however, that such events were equally common in the thieves and non-thieves group and again concluded that, apparently, such events are associated with instability and maladaptation in general and not with stealing in particular. Bowlby added that children as well as adults are frequently the active authors and choosers of their environment and not merely its passive victims. That left early home environment as the potential causal factor in explaining childhood theft.

In line with his earlier papers, Bowlby distinguished the influence of (1) the parents' attitude, and (2) specific events such as death or separation. Regarding the role of parental attitude, Bowlby again argued that a negative attitude can work out detrimentally for the child but that the incidence of negative parental attitude is about the same for thieves and controls. In both groups about 70-75% of the children had mothers who were neurotic or unbalanced in their attitude to their children. Bowlby believed that parental attitudes can have adverse affects but do not necessarily lead to delinquent behavior. It is true, he added his usual caveat, saying that

not until we have obtained a full and detailed history of a child's environment and of his reaction to it from birth onwards, with especial reference to the emotional atmosphere of the home, and compared our findings with those for a control group, have we the right to conclude that the environment was of no account (Bowlby, 1944, p.116).

Quite a different pattern of findings results when we go into the role of specific events during early childhood such as death and separation. Bowlby found that 17 of 44

thieves have suffered separation from their mother or mother substitute as compared with 2 amongst the controls. The association was particularly strong for the 14 affectionless characters 12 of whom suffered an early separation from their mother. Bowlby noted that pathogenic separations practically always occur after six months. This suggested a lower age limit:

it is therefore suggested that, to be pathogenic, a separation must occur when the child's capacity for personal relationships has developed at least to a certain point (Bowlby, 1944, p.111).

He also left open the possibility that a single separation is not fatal for the child's emotional balance but that it may be multiple separations which cause the child to get deranged.

Thus the essential factor... is that... the child is suddenly removed and placed with strangers... This situation must be distinguished sharply from the situation in which the child... is henceforward looked after by close relatives whom he already knows (Bowlby, 1944, p.111).

Separations thus seem especially pathogenic when (a) they occur after the first six months of life of the child, (b) the child is placed with a complete stranger, (c) they occur suddenly and unexpectedly, and (d) they are repeated, for example, when the child goes back and forth from mother to foster mother.

Bowlby now argued that separations from a beloved mother or mother substitute (and death of the mother as the ultimate separation) play a fundamental role in the origin of childhood delinquency.

But why should such experiences lead to theft in particular? Here Bowlby followed two lines of argument. He (1) offered a theory to explain why particularly affectionless characters are prone to stealing and (2) suggested that children with separation experiences display other maladaptive behavior as well. His theory to explain the relation between early childhood separation and theft was thoroughly psychoanalytic. The idea was that by stealing the child hopes for 'libidinal satisfaction'. The child who temporarily lost his mother is actually craving for love and its material symbols, therefore, theft from the mother is actually theft of love. From infancy onwards love has become strongly associated with material items like milk, food, and presents. In this connection, Bowlby noted that the children's cravings often take an oral form, for example, children steal food or milk:

The food they stole was no doubt felt to be the equivalent of love from the mother whom they had lost, though probably none was conscious of the fact (Bowlby, 1944, p.121).

This line of reasoning, then, should explain why children who suffered separations from their mother are prone to stealing and why they often steal from their mother.

Undoubtedly, the child may also be led by feelings of revenge. Bowlby stated that there was "massive inhibition of object-love combined with excessive and relatively uninhibited libidinal and aggressive impulses" (Bowlby, 1944, p.122). What plays a role here is that the development of the superego goes hand in hand with the development of object-love. Bowlby explained that the development of an affec-

tive bond with the mother implies that children learn to regulate their aggressive and affective impulses, that they learn that aggressive behavior towards their mother may result in loss of love or food. Without such an affective bond the superego will not develop. The affective bond itself will not develop when (a) there is no opportunity as the mother has left or died; (b) when the child's hatred towards his mother surpasses his love for her, because, for example, she unexpectedly brought him to a hospital; and (c) when the child is determined at all costs not to risk again the loss of someone beloved and the child resists new emotional attachments after a first separation experience.

It is probably fair to say that these considerations by Bowlby possibly demonstrate why children may become affectionless characters but do not give a satisfactory explanation of the fact that they become thieves (despite Bowlby's psychoanalytic explanation). It is therefore not surprising, although perhaps not entirely consistent, that Bowlby argued that children with pathogenic separation experiences display other criminal behavior as well. He stated as his opinion that a large percentage of prostitutes lost one or both parents and that actually many of them probably were affectionless characters (the alleged search for libidinal satisfaction after early separation experiences explains the choice of their profession). He also noted that his 44 thieves showed more cases of truancy than the controls did.

Having discussed his 44 case histories in considerable detail and having ruled out alternative explanations, Bowlby concluded that he had identified certain specific adverse factors in the development of character. Although he stated that "juvenile delinquency ... is also a problem of

sociology and economics" (Bowlby, 1944, p.125), he urged his colleagues to treat the psychological cases before the child reaches three years of age as by the age of 8 years, the age when children could first be charged, "the disease is far advanced" (Bowlby, 1944, p.126). His claim was that many prolonged separations could be avoided and that a network of experts, for example, in infant welfare centers and nursery schools, might play a beneficial role in the diagnosis, prevention, and cure of the separation syndrome.

Basic themes in Bowlby's early works

We are now in a position to summarize the basic views which Bowlby put forward in his very first writings. We think it is clear that several of these views foreshadow important themes of his later attachment theory.

First, it will be seen that Bowlby's general orientation is clearly influenced by evolutionary thinking. Like many of his contemporaries (e.g., Koffka, Vygotsky, Werner), he saw a straight line leading from apes via primitive man and Western children to Western adults. Thus he regarded the evidence found in animal and anthropological studies as clearly relevant for the study of human beings. His later fascination with the ethology of Lorenz and Tinbergen must be seen against this background.

It is clear, however, and this is our second point, that Bowlby read these writings from a traditional psychoanalytic view concentrating on the basic drives of aggression and sex outlined by Freud. For the early Bowlby the origin of human misery primarily lies in the inclinations, drives, and instincts of the individual per-

son in combination with the specific constellation of the nuclear family and not so much in socio-economic factors.

Thirdly, it is fascinating to see that Bowlby in his very first writings highlighted deprivation of love as the origin of frustration, aggression, and deviant behavior. One of the chief sources of this deprivation was, of course, major separations between the child and his mother, a mother who provides 'security' and a 'basis for all further social development'. A child who has had no such permanent emotional bond with a mother or mother substitute will become emotionally crippled and socially maladapted.

Fourthly, it is not only important how the child experienced his social-emotional environment, but also what this environment really and objectively constituted. This led Bowlby to suggest that we can change this environment by simultaneously treating the parents of a psychiatric child and the child himself. To repeat, there are objective environmental factors which cause children to become unhappy, neurotic and socially maladapted. A major pathogenic environmental factor is a prolonged mother-child separation which undermines the child's basic feeling of trust, love, and security. Evidence for environmental factors leading to mental distress may be found in animal, anthropological, and clinical retrospective studies.

We may thus conclude that several of the basic themes of attachment theory were already present in Bowlby's very first writings. To give yet another example, it was in 1952 that Robertson's film 'A two-year-old goes to hospital' convinced many people that mother-child separations may have very strong and negative effects on the child's emotional development. The hypothesis that such separations are poten-

tially very harmful was, however, already stated 13 years before in Bowlby's (1939) paper on 'Substitute Homes'.

Traditional teaching?

Above we have mentioned that Bowlby (1939) called his emphasis on the mother-child bond and the adverse effects of mother-child separations 'traditional teaching'. But if this claim was true, why then was there such a row over Bowlby's (1940a) paper 'The influence of early environment in the development of neurosis and neurotic character' written to qualify as a full member of the British Psychoanalytical Society? During a business meeting of the Society

when Dr. Bowlby's name was put forward for election as Member, Dr. Rickman, seconded by Dr. Winnicott and somewhat less obviously Mrs. Riviere raised the question whether associates should be elected on the strength of such papers¹.

Undoubtedly, part of Bowlby's early thinking was traditional in the sense that he shared several of the common assumptions and convictions of the psychoanalytic movement as a whole. Thus, he de-emphasized sociological factors in the explanation of juvenile delinquency and, consequently, paid little attention to such factors as poor housing, and poverty. He also subscribed to a view advanced by

¹ Dr. M. Schmideberg at Business Meeting, May 13th, 1942. (Contemporary Medical Archives Center, Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 193 Euston Road, London NW1 2BP: pp.bow G1/3)

Freud (1930, 1933) that exceedingly complex phenomena such as war can be explained directly from primitive experiences in the nuclear family. Finally, his thinking was in many ways similar to the work of Anna Freud.

Together with Dorothy Burlingham, Anna Freud had started the Hampstead Nurseries in London which provided war-time homes for children whose family had been broken up as a result of the war. Based on their experiences with these nurseries Burlingham and Freud wrote several books (Burlingham & Freud, 1943, 1944; Freud & Burlingham, 1943) in which they made claims which came quite close to Bowlby's basic views. Thus, they stressed the need for the child to have a secure attachment to a mother or a mother substitute. They took special measures to ensure that the children in their nurseries would become attached to a specific nurse who would fulfil the role of a stable substitute-mother. They argued that if such precautions were not taken

one important instinctual need, that for early attachment to the mother, remains as we know more or less unsatisfied; consequently it may become blunted, which means that the child after a while ceases to search for a mother substitute and fails to develop all the more highly organized forms of love which should be modelled on this first pattern (Burlingham & Freud, 1944, p.22).

Like Bowlby, the authors claimed that

this first and early love reaction to a mother enriches the life of the child by laying the foundations for all future love-relationships (Burlingham & Freud, 1944, p.47).

Other aspects of Bowlby's thinking, however, were less in line with at least part of the ideas of the British psychoanalytic world of his time. Above we have noticed that he emphasized the objective environmental causes of child neurosis and insisted on interviewing relatives, friends and teachers of his patients in order to obtain a fair assessment of their objective living conditions both at the time of treatment and during their childhood. This empirical approach was received very critically by many of his psychoanalytic colleagues, in particular by the followers of Melanie Klein who was at that time the driving force behind the British Psychoanalytical Society. In Klein's view, the environment-as-experienced was more important than the environment as such. She claimed that a child "tries to adapt it [reality] to his phantasies and not his phantasies to reality" (Klein, 1948, p.195). Elsewhere she argued that

there is a common tendency to overestimate the importance of unsatisfactory surroundings, in the sense that the internal psychological difficulties, which partly result from the surroundings, are not sufficiently appreciated (Klein, 1948, p.280).

Judging by these quotations and taking Klein's position in the British Psychoanalytical Society into account, we may indeed conclude that Bowlby was being rather provocative when he began his paper (1940a) with the words "that this type of [empirical] research is of much more value... than is research limited to analytic sessions" (see p.6, ms.). Although Bowlby was trained in the Kleinian tradition by Joan Riviere, a close friend of Klein, he attacked the Kleinian notions in the very

paper which was to ensure his full membership of the Society.

Of course, the question of the traditional or non-traditional nature of Bowlby's early ideas is a complicated one which we cannot fully address in the context of this chapter. But if we restrict ourselves to Bowlby's immediate scientific environment, the British Psychoanalytical Society, then it becomes clear that Bowlby's views were, on the one hand, in line with those of Anna Freud and other psychoanalysts who had fled from the continent. On the other hand, they were in striking contrast with the views supported by Klein and her followers. The complicated situation in the British Psychoanalytical Society, with its struggle between two rivaling currents, makes it impossible, therefore, to give an unequivocal answer to the question whether Bowlby's work was 'traditional teaching' as this question unjustifiably presupposes the existence of one predominant way of thinking within the psychoanalytic tradition.

Concluding remarks

Many of the basic themes of attachment theory are already to be found, in some form, in Bowlby's early writings. Above we have mentioned themes such as 'the evolutionary origin of human behavior', 'deprivation of love as the origin of frustration, aggression, and deviant behavior' and 'emphasis on the objective environmental causes of mental distress'. It would seem then that it is not justified to speak of a 'Bowlby 1' versus a 'Bowlby 2', like we speak of a Wittgenstein 1 and Wittgenstein 2, or like we commonly distinguish the younger Piaget (using such concepts as syncretism and egocentrism)

and the older Piaget (with his emphasis on logical structures).

However, the fact that Bowlby basically addressed the same themes throughout his career should not blind us to the fact that there were many subtle changes in his treatment of these themes and in the concepts he employed. To give an example, we will briefly refer to a recent discussion about Bowlby's use of the notion of 'critical periods' in child development.

On the one hand, it is quite clear that in his early works Bowlby used some variant of the concept of a 'critical period' which is unacceptable to modern research. In his article 'Substitute homes', for example, he said: "even one change during the critical period of the second year may have a serious effect on a child" (Bowlby, 1939, p.7). Eight years later he still claimed:

Just as a projectile's destination is determined by the direction of its first few feet of movement, or the dental structure of an adult by his diet in infancy, so is a human being's capacity for making good relationships dependent to a high degree on the form taken by his earliest object relations (Bowlby, 1947, p.37).

Now it has been said that such a viewpoint is still characteristic of and prevalent in attachment research. But here we should be very cautious. There is no doubt that one can indeed find many instances of such a view in present-day empirical attachment research. However, one can argue that it is not a viewpoint that is inextricably linked with the attachment paradigm and that Bowlby himself subsequently substantially refined his views. Thus, in his trilogy we find him using another and more subtle metaphor of child development which convincingly shows that his

view of the notion of a critical period changed considerably:

a system that starts as a single main route which leaves a central metropolis in a certain direction but soon forks into a range of distinct routes. Although each of these routes diverges in some degree, initially most of them continue in a direction not very different from the original one. The further each route goes from the metropolis, however, the more branches it throws off and the greater the degree of divergence of direction that occur. Nevertheless, although many of these sub-branches do diverge further, and yet further, from the original direction, others may take a course convergent with the original; so that ultimately they may even come to run in a direction close to, or even parallel with, routes that have maintained the original direction from the start. In terms of this model the critical points are the junctions at which the lines fork, for once a train is on any particular line, pressures are present that keep it on that line; although, provided divergence does not become too great, there remains an opportunity for a train to take a convergent track when the next junction is reached (Bowlby, 1973, p.413).

This is a metaphor of child development which is much more acceptable to modern research in developmental psychology and which, in fact, closely resembles the famous epigenetic landscape advanced by Waddington. It is quite probable that both views of the dynamics of child development and the role of 'critical periods' therein are present in modern research on attachment. But judging by the two quotes given, Bowlby himself seems to have left his original views on the plasticity and irreversibility of processes in child devel-

opment. That this is not a question of merely historical interest, but one that is quite topical, is obvious from the fact that quite recently the theoretical debate as to the status of the notion of critical periods in attachment theory was re-opened (Van IJzendoorn, 1995a, 1995b; Fox, 1995).

The 'definitive' historical and theoretical assessment of the work of any scientist should deal with the life and work of that scientist from several interconnected perspectives. From the synchronic perspective, one should attempt to connect the scientist's writings with those of his contemporaries and, in general, try to reconstruct the social embeddedness of his work. In Bowlby's case this implies that one should try to take account of the scientific developments to which he reacted or which he helped create and of the larger social developments (including war and evacuation) that stimulated the interest in mother-child attachment. From the diachronic perspective, one should try to analyse whether it is possible to distinguish different stages in Bowlby's thinking and, if so, establish the nature of the link (e.g., antagonism, resorption etc.) between these stages. It is only using these interconnected perspectives that one can try to make a first attempt to unravel the complex fabric of Bowlby's attachment theory.

The work of Bowlby continues to generate interesting research and lively empirical and theoretical debates. Historical studies such as ours can yield a modest contribution to these discussions by discerning the traditional and not so traditional nature of Bowlby's writings and by highlighting major shifts in his intellectual development. It is our hope that the theoretical debate informed by such historical studies will gain in interest and accuracy.

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