
EDITORIAL

The legacy of John Bowlby

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We would like to dedicate this special issue on attachment and developmental psychopathology to the memory of John Bowlby. In his trilogy on attachment, Bowlby (1969/1982, 1973, 1980) significantly advanced the disciplines of psychoanalysis, developmental psychology, and developmental psychopathology (Ainsworth, 1969, 1973; Bretherton, 1987; Sroufe, 1983). As depicted in his article “The Making and Breaking of Affectional Bonds” (1977a) Bowlby described attachment theory as “a way of conceptualizing the propensity of human beings to make strong affectional bonds to particular others and of explaining the many forms of emotional distress and personality disturbance, including anxiety, anger, depression and emotional detachment, to which unwilling separation and loss give rise” (p. 201). Throughout his career, Bowlby articulated how attachment theory could inform our understanding of the different pathways leading to mental health and psychopathology as well as provide a framework for implementing therapeutic interventions with a variety of clinical conditions (Bowlby, 1977a, 1977b, 1988a).

Influenced by the embryologist Waddington, Bowlby developed a model of branching developmental pathways. Within this epigenetic perspective, Bowlby believed that developmental change, though always possible, was “constrained by the branching pathways previously chosen” (Sroufe, 1986, p. 842). However, as Bowlby noted, because the “course of subsequent development is

not fixed, changes in the way a child is treated can shift his pathway in either a more favourable direction or a less favourable one” (1988a, p. 136). Furthermore, Bowlby stressed that “this continuing potential for change . . . means that at no time of life is a person invulnerable to every possible adversity and also that at no time of life is a person impermeable to favourable influence. It is this persisting potential for change that gives opportunity for effective therapy” (1988a, p. 136; see Greenberg & Speltz, 1988, and Lieberman, 1991, for illustrations based on attachment theory).

Bowlby described how adaptation is an ongoing, dynamic process through which individuals both react and shape their interpersonal environment in terms of representational models of attachment figures, the self, and the self in relation to others (Bretherton, 1985; Sroufe & Fleeson, 1986). Despite the fact that basic beliefs about the self and others will manifest themselves in phenotypically different ways throughout the course of development, Bowlby believed that close interpersonal relationships were characterized by continuity and coherence over time (cf. Sroufe & Fleeson, 1986). Likewise, Bowlby felt that the relationship patterns formed in earlier close relationships were carried forward into later close relationships, both within and across generations, through the construction of representational models (i.e., the mental, and emotional, representations are carried forward: see, e.g., Cassidy, 1990; Cicchetti & Schneider-Rosen, 1986; Sroufe & Fleeson,

1986). Because the discipline of developmental psychopathology is not only concerned with disorders of childhood and adulthood, but also with the course of individual differences in the adaptive process, both normal and abnormal (Cicchetti, 1984; Sroufe & Rutter, 1984), Bowlby's life work is vital to this perspective.

Bowlby's theory of attachment emerged from his observations of clinical populations. An early example of this conceptualization is the classic article "Forty-four Juvenile Thieves: Their Characters and Home Life" (1944), in which Bowlby described how a number of these children developed affectionless characters, an outcome thought to be a reflection of their early experiences of maternal deprivation, separation, and rejection (see also Cleckley, 1941/1976).

In the preface of his book *A Secure Base* (1988a), Bowlby wrote that it was "a little unexpected that, whereas attachment theory was formulated by a clinician for use in the diagnosis and treatment of emotionally disturbed patients and families, its usage . . . has been mainly to promote research in developmental psychology" (p. ix). While Bowlby welcomed "the findings of this research as enormously extending our understanding of personality development and psychopathology, and thus as of the greatest clinical relevance, it has none the less been disappointing that clinicians have been so slow to test the theory's uses" (pp. ix-x). We also wish to add that, until recently, researchers have been equally slow in studying the causes, course, and developmental sequelae of attachment in high-risk and disordered populations across the lifespan (Cicchetti, Cummings, Greenberg, & Marvin, 1990).

During the past decade, there has been a growing concern for investigating attachment processes in atypical populations (Crittenden, 1988; Cummings & Cicchetti, 1990; Greenberg, Kusche, & Speltz, 1991; Radke-Yarrow, Cummings, Kuczynski, & Chapman, 1985; Speltz, Greenberg, & DeKlyen, 1990). Moreover, a number of researchers have demonstrated that insecure attachments are risk factors for the development of later maladaptation, behavior prob-

lems, and psychopathology (Lewis, Feiring, McGuffog, & Jaskir, 1984; Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985; Sroufe, 1983; see also the articles in this issue). Increasingly, theoretical and empirical work is focusing on addressing the pathways and processes through which the internal representations of early experiences with one's attachment figures impact on the formation of relations with peers and nonparental adults (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1991; Sroufe & Fleeson, 1988), as well as on the types of relationship disorders and psychopathological conditions that appear across the lifespan (Sameroff & Emde, 1989).

In one of his later articles, Bowlby (1988b) wrote that, at long last, developmental psychiatry had "come of age." Indeed, a number of theoreticians share a viewpoint similar to Bowlby's and believe that developmental psychopathology has emerged as a discipline in its own right (Cicchetti, 1989; Zigler, 1989). Attachment theory and research have made major contributions to the advancement of this new science. Following the lead of developmental theorists such as Bowlby, Heinz Werner (1948) and others (see Cicchetti, 1990, for a review) who have contended that the study of atypical populations has implications for our theories of normal development and for our understanding of the integrative nature of advances in the perceptual, cognitive, socioemotional, representational, and biologic domains, the investigation of attachment in high-risk and clinically disordered populations is flourishing. In fact, we believe that research on attachment from a developmental psychopathology perspective, in concert with the implementation of prevention and intervention programs based on the principles of attachment theory, will usher in a new era in the field of attachment.

As is apparent in the contributions to this special issue, a number of Bowlby's seminal ideas are explored with high-risk or clinically disordered populations. Issues such as the quality of attachment in risk and psychopathology across the lifespan, pathways to adaptation and maladaptation, representational models of attachment figures, the self and the self in rela-

tion to others, the effects of relationships on relationships, and the intergenerational continuity and discontinuity of relationships, all are represented in this special issue. Through these explorations into pathological processes, attachment theory has returned to the roots of Bowlby's ideas. We know that John would be pleased by

the advances that are occurring in our knowledge of basic and applied research in the area of attachment and psychopathology. Just as attachment continues as a salient issue throughout the life course, so, too, will John Bowlby's influence extend into current and future theorizing about normal and pathological development.

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