

## CHARACTERISTICS OF ATTACHMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMANS AS SOCIAL BEINGS

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**ABSTRACT.** ATTACHMENT NEED IS PART OF PRIMARY NECESSITIES OF HUMAN BEINGS; IT IS INNATE AND ITS AIM IS SURVIVAL. ATTACHMENT WAS FIRSTLY STUDIED IN MOTHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIP, BEING THEN TRANSFERRED TO COUPLE RELATIONS. ATTACHMENT MEANS BEING CLOSE TO THE PERSON ONE WANTS, BUILDING AN EMOTIONAL LINK AND FEELING ONESELF PROTECTED BY A STRONGER PERSON. PEOPLE GET EMOTIONALLY CLOSER TO OTHERS BY THEIR NEED OF AFFILIATION, ATTACHMENT SIGNIFYING A MAJOR ASPECT OF STRONG AFFILIATION.

**KEY WORDS:** ATTACHMENT, AFFECTIVITY, MOTHER-CHILD, RELATION.

Attachment is represented by preferential and partially unconscious closeness of two persons. Here, in this type of relation, one person plays the role of security for the other (the child) or they can switch places at certain times (the adults). Closeness can be considered the first relationship that humans establish with the environment.

Attachment need is part of primary necessities of human beings; it is innate and its aim is survival.

The research in this area of child attachment was highly influenced by the psycho-analytical theories of Freud, who emphasized the importance of mother-child relationship. Bowlby (1969) and other scientists considered that mother-child relationship represents the basis for all the later interpersonal relations. In his first life year, child develops the security and attachment feelings towards his parents and other persons taking care of him.

The term of attachment was introduced by John Bowlby (1959) to describe the affective and long-term link between humans, especially between mother and child. Being attached to someone means being able to look for closeness and contact with the other, especially when circumstances are not very productive. Attachment is dynamic, it arises, develops and has its climax during childhood, lowers and can even fade out the moment when the attached person does not exist anymore.

Generally, attachment is present into a certain form throughout the life. Attached relationships have, consciously or not, the mission of protect the weaker vulnerable person, regarding the internal or external agents. Thus, attachment functions as a supplementary protection mechanism together with oblivion, repression, intellectualization, rationalization.

We can define the theory of attachment as a way of conceptualization the tendency of human beings to develop strong affective links with other persons, initiating thus personality and emotional disorders such as: anxiety, fury, depression, emotional distance that have origin into involuntary separation and loss.

Attachment means being close to the person one wants, building an emotional link and feeling oneself protected by a stronger person. Attachment was firstly studied in mother-child relationship, being then transferred to couple relations.

Cosnier (2007) defines attachment as a long-term relationship established between two humans.

The psychology dictionary (Baiceanu, 2004) defines attachment as a term introduced by John Bowlby to describe the affective and long-term link between two people. We can thus emphasise the “long-term” idea that is representative for the attachment relation.

### **Attachment theories**

The theory of attachment is of primary importance to describe the personality disorders. The scientists Safran and Segal (1990) and Liotti (1991) focused on its influence on individual vulnerability development in contrast with psycho-pathological disorders such as schizophrenia and depression, or personality disturbance.

According to Abraham H. Maslow’s theory of needs on human motivation, affiliation is a superior need. The individual is concerned by higher needs, social ones. These emotional needs imply offering, but also receiving affection.

When not given, the person feels the lack of friendship or partner closeness. Such person will seek for a place into a group, in the family and will try to relate to people all the time as an aim. Biologically and psychosocially determined affiliation desire is a strong motivational vector. (Maslow, 2007)

„ Even from childhood there are attachment infantile affective and maternal capacities for creating a special relation. This primary force corresponds to a primitive and autonomous affiliation impulse that allows the development of maternal behaviour and continues with the social behaviour development.” (Cosnier, p.68)

A secure attachment represents a fundamental learning pre-acquisition (Hay, 1980). According to the author, it even becomes a compulsory pre-acquisition for character acquirement, which is considered the second major personality dimension acquired by learning.

Bowlby (1959) studied the children attachment to their parents, the separation and loss of them as processes that show affective relations as connected or broken. The research aim was to explain the way children become attached or anguished, he underlined the idea that this behaviour remains constant from childhood to the entire existence.

### **Attachment characteristics**

John Bowlby went far from Freud’s conceptions and, using an ethological approach, demonstrated that attachment is an independent and primary process, characterising all the primates, including man.

According to Bowlby, attachment is a class of social behaviours with its own typical functions, which is that of maintaining links with another stronger being (Bowlby, 1959).

The concrete models of interaction and affiliation are found at the meeting point between innate disposition, social interaction and communication and external, situational factors. People are

social collective beings, so they are programmed to affiliate. But, despite the group living tendency, attachment is biologically determined, especially at children. (Ilut, 2000)

Ian Suttie (1935) anticipated the ideas of Fairbairn, Guntrip, Balint, Winnicott and Bowlby, but opposed to the ideas of Melanie Klein. Klein's ideas are certainly innovative, especially the concepts of „internal object” and „internal object relations”, but Suttie's theses represented an epistemological rupture against the psycho-analytical theory of his time.

Suttie's primary concept is the innate character of human interpersonal relation needs. Its accomplishment leads to a security accomplishment between mother and child.

Contrary to Freud, who considered child sexuality as initially auto-erotic, Suttie focuses on relational concepts. From this point of view, he considers the child's original experience as unitary, which is not experiencing other selves but himself. This first evolution level was named infantile solipsism and focuses on experience development through interpersonal relationships. (Suttie, 1935)

Behaviour schemes are developed by repetitive experiences and a coherent system is created, all these generating a secure attachment to children.

The physical absence of parents or the incoherence of stimuli, the unpredictability of showing attachment can contribute to a disorganised and uncoherent type of attachment. Thus, attachment development means an adult-child relationship.

The two factors must actively participate in this system for a comprehensive result for both of them.

Interaction means the sensorial integration of both subjects (glance non-verbal communication, eye contact, touching)

The adult is the one who discovers, explains and decodes for his child the external environmental significance, giving him the decoded clear information, especially by the sensorial system.

Melanie Klein (1949) designed a theory contrary to that of Suttie and Sullivan, in which she states that unconscious fantasy is the psychological representation and the centre of her research. The Klein theory claims the birth existence of a rudimentary Self/I or a primitive impulse life. She does not make a difference between I and Self as „the centre of individual psychological universe” (Kohut, 1985). These terms are synonyms to her. The impulses guide the Self or I of the child towards objects that come into primitive relations with him, both in reality and fantasy. Klein's merit is focusing on the fantastic psychological variety of a child-unconscious impulse life. One of her theory key words is „internal object”.

The theory of object relations designed by Fairbairn (1970) represents the furthest approach from the one of Freud. The author refuses the Klein theory of the relation impulses centrality and claims that the libido aim is to look for the object. He maintains the idea of sexual impulse or libido as a component of a referential concept frame.

The Fairbairn theory is important in the way it claims that the fundamental connection between self and object is not intermediated by impulses, but by foreknowledge and direct experience of objects that offer functions influencing the Self. It is claimed that Self has personal energy and does not take it from exterior and finds motivation in search of object relations, not pleasure. This concept represents an important development in psychology showing a central Self that is not led by external forces, but acts on its own way.

There are some similarities between the attachment theory and other modern theories (the modern psycho-analytical theory, social cognition theories, positive psychology, interdependence theory, etc.), but there are also some important differences, which define its characteristics.

The attachment theories are generally used to improve the understanding of social relation disturbances, anxieties and committal that involve short or long-term separation.

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