

## A Level Psychology

### An example of some student work

Two mothers at the toddler and parent group are chatting.

"I always felt sorry for my husband when Millie was a baby. He used to say his bond with Millie was not as strong as mine because I was breastfeeding."

"I'm not sure", replies the other mother. "I think there's something about a mother's love that makes it more special anyway – and so important for future development."

Discuss the learning theory of attachment **and** Bowlby's monotropic theory of attachment. Refer to the conversation above in your answer.

**[16 marks]**

You may use this space to plan your answer.

#### Plan :

##### *Introduction*

Bowlby's view on Monotropy – primary attachment – innate

Learning theory thinks we are born a blank slate

##### *Paragraph 1*

Classical conditioning – baby associates the mother with food – makes the baby like the mother more

##### *Paragraph 2*

However, Bowlby – primary attachment – nothing to do with food

##### *Paragraph 3*

Bowlby - Rutter's theory of multiple attachments - Learning theory – associated with food – however Harlow's monkey claims comfort is more important

Learning theory supports the husband's view that the mother had a special bond with Millie due to her breast-feeding her, this is evidenced through classical conditioning. On the other hand, Bowlby's monotropic theory supports the other mother's view that 'a mother's love makes it more special anyway', this is evidenced through primary attachments. **Perfect start.**

Learning theory is shown through classical conditioning. The idea of classical conditioning is that an unconditioned stimulus creates an unconditioned response, so when a baby is given food they become happy. When a neutral stimulus is added to the unconditioned stimulus it still creates an unconditioned response, so when the mother is the neutral stimulus and she feeds the baby, it makes the baby happy. Eventually, the neutral stimulus (in this case the mother) will lead to a conditioned response (in this case happiness). This theory is stating that, overtime, you can associate one thing with another and create a conditioned response. This supports the view that the mother had a closer

bond to Millie because she's breast-feeding as she could have associated the mother with the food and that caused happiness.

However, Bowlby's monotropic view opposes this idea, as he claimed that infants usually have one primary attachment (which in most cases is the mother) and attachments are innate so they don't need to be learnt. This supports the other mother's view as it shows that Millie could just have a stronger attachment with her mother, due to her being her primary attachment, and not because she associates her mother with the breast-feeding. Bowlby's theory resulted in a paradigm shift **well done!** as his theory helps to explain why infants, a lot of the time, attach themselves to one person rather than multiple.

Rutter criticised Bowlby's theory as he thought Bowlby had focused too much on the primary attachments and not the surrounding ones. Rutter claimed that all of your attachments helped to create a picture of what attachments should be like and not just your primary one. So this could lead you to believe that the other mother was incorrect because of learning theory. But, Harlow's monkeys oppose learning theory; Harlow did a test on some baby monkeys where he created an artificial monkey made of wire that fed the baby monkeys and an artificial cloth monkey which was just there for comfort. He found that the baby monkeys spent nearly all of their time with the cloth monkey, which shows that they seek comfort over food – which means the husband might be incorrect in his theory that the breast-feeding created a greater attachment between the mother and Millie.

**this is the best answer I have seen on this question. Your intro is concise. Your outline on each part of theory is accurate, clear and not too long. And then you have included good evaluation at the end (which is the bit that lots of people did not do).**

**It's a pretty perfect answer, but have a look at the example answer from the exam board – there are bits in there which could be useful additions to your knowledge. Choose a few and put them into your answer, then print off the completed thing.**

**15/16 A\* Nice one!**