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| **Learning Table 8: Bowlby’s Maternal Deprivation Theory** | |
| *Maternal deprivation – the emotional and intellectual consequences of prolonged separation between a child and its caregiver.* | |
| **AO1** | **AO3** |
| **Key Study: Bowlby’s (1944) 44 Thieves Study**  **Aim**: To investigate the link between affectionless psychopathy and maternal deprivation.  **Procedure**: The sample was made up of 44 teenagers accused of stealing. All ‘thieves’ were interviewed for signs of affectionless psychopathy. Characteristics such as lack of affection, lack of guilt about their actions and lack of empathy with their victims were assessed. The families were also interviewed in order to establish whether the ‘thieves’ had prolonged early separation from their mothers. A control group of non-criminal but emotionally disturbed young people was set up to see how often maternal deprivation occurred in children who were not thieves.  **Findings**: Bowlby found that:   * 14 out of 44 thieves could be described as affectionless psychopaths. * Of this 14, 12 had experienced prolonged separation from their mothers in the first two years of their lives. * 5 of the remaining 30 thieves had experienced separations. * Of the control group, 2 out of 44 had experienced prolonged separations.   **Conclusions**: Prolonged early separation/deprivation caused affectionless psychopathy. | **Researcher Bias**  P: A negative aspect of Bowlby’s 44 thieves study is that it could be subject to researcher bias.  E: This is because he conducted his own research in an attempt to find supporting evidence for the Maternal Deprivation Hypothesis. Furthermore, Bowlby was responsible for gathering and interpreting the data in the research.  E: This could mean that Bowlby manipulated the results of his study in order to prove his hypothesis correct (that affectionless psychopathy will occur in children who are deprived of their primary caregiver.)  L: As a result, this weakens the credibility of the study and furthermore, impacts negatively on the strength of the Maternal Deprivation Hypothesis in accounting for the effects of deprivation on behaviour.  NB: Must link to MDH if used as an evaluation point for the theory… |
| **Maternal Deprivation Hypothesis (1951)** |  |
| This theory argues that the continual presence of nurture from a mother (or mother substitute) is essential for normal psychological development.  **The Critical Period** – Bowlby claimed that if a child was deprived of a mother’s love for a prolonged period of time in the **first 30 months (2 ½ years)** of its life psychological damage was inevitable.  **Intellectual Development** – Bowlby believed that if maternal deprivation took place in the critical period, mental retardation would occur in the form of **abnormally low IQ**.  **Emotional Development** – Bowlby identified **affectionless psychopathy** is as an inability to experience guilt or strong emotion for others. This prevents the person from developing normal relationship and is associated with criminality because they lack remorse for their actions.  **Delinquency** – As revealed by his 44 thieves study, Bowlby believed that maternal deprivation can also lead to delinquency (minor crimes committed by young people).  **Irreversibility** – Bowlby also claimed that once a child had been deprived of its primary caregiver, the effects of this are irreversible. | **Contradictory Evidence for MDH**  P: One weakness of Bowlby’s 44 thieves study is that there is evidence to contradict is findings.  E: For example, Lewis (1954) partially replicated the 44 thieves study on a larger scale, looking at 500 young people. In her sample a history of prolonged separation from the mother did not predict criminality or difficulty forming close relationships.  E: This is an issue because for the maternal deprivation hypothesis as this research suggests that other factors may affect the outcome of early maternal deprivation.  L: As a consequence, this reduces the credibility of Bowlby’s 44 thieves study and also the explanatory power of the Maternal Deprivation Hypothesis.  **Sensitive Period**  One weakness of Bowlby’s MDH is that there is evidence to suggest that deprivation in the critical period is not inevitable.  For example, Koluchova (1976) reported a case of twin boys from Czechoslovakia who were isolated from 18 months until they were 7. They were later adopted by two loving sister and appeared to make a full recovery.  This is an issue for the MDH because it shows that the critical period identified by Bowlby may be more of a ‘sensitive’ period and with good quality care, a child can recover fully from the deprivation.  As a consequence, this reduces the explanatory power of MDH as a theory of deprivation. |