

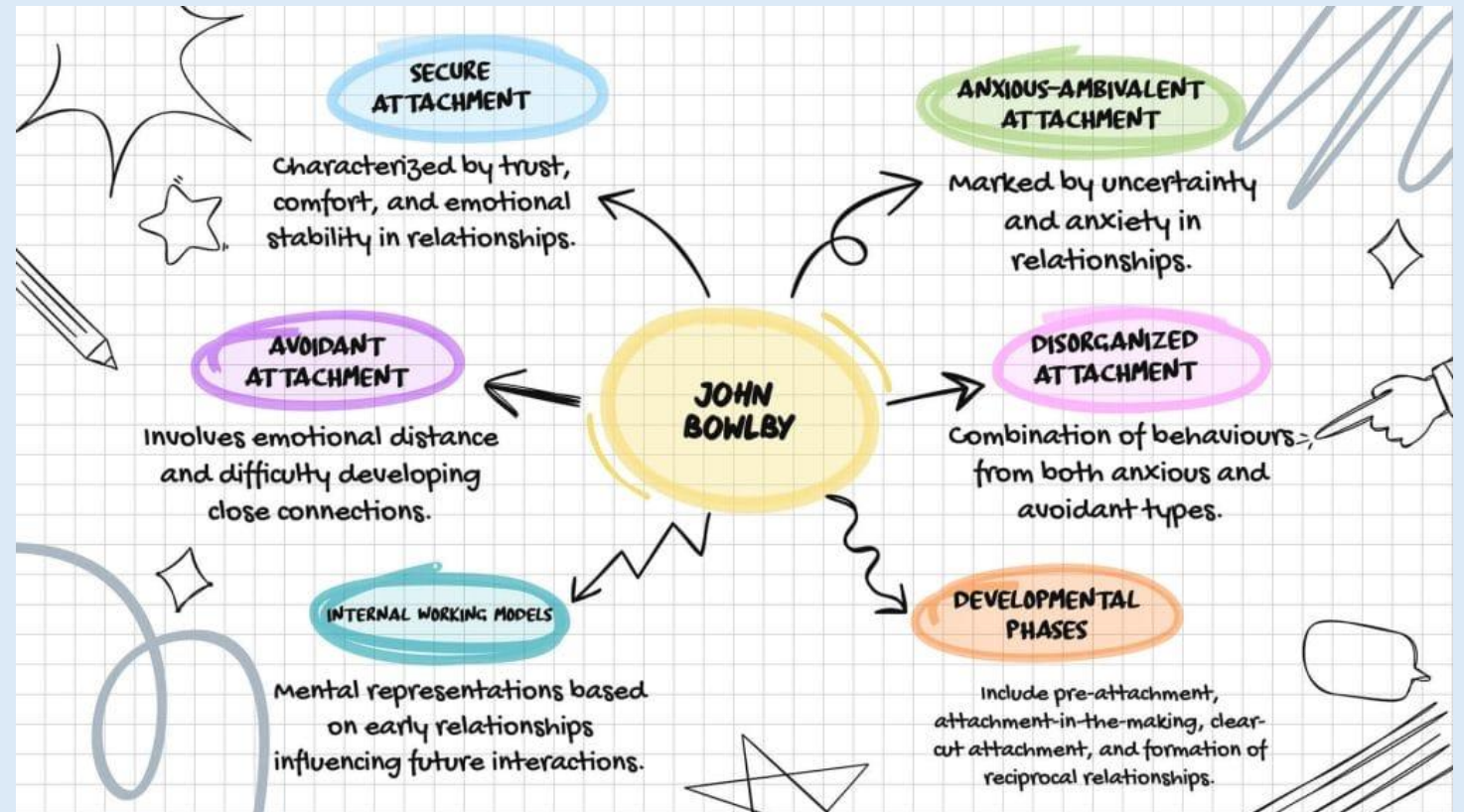


Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

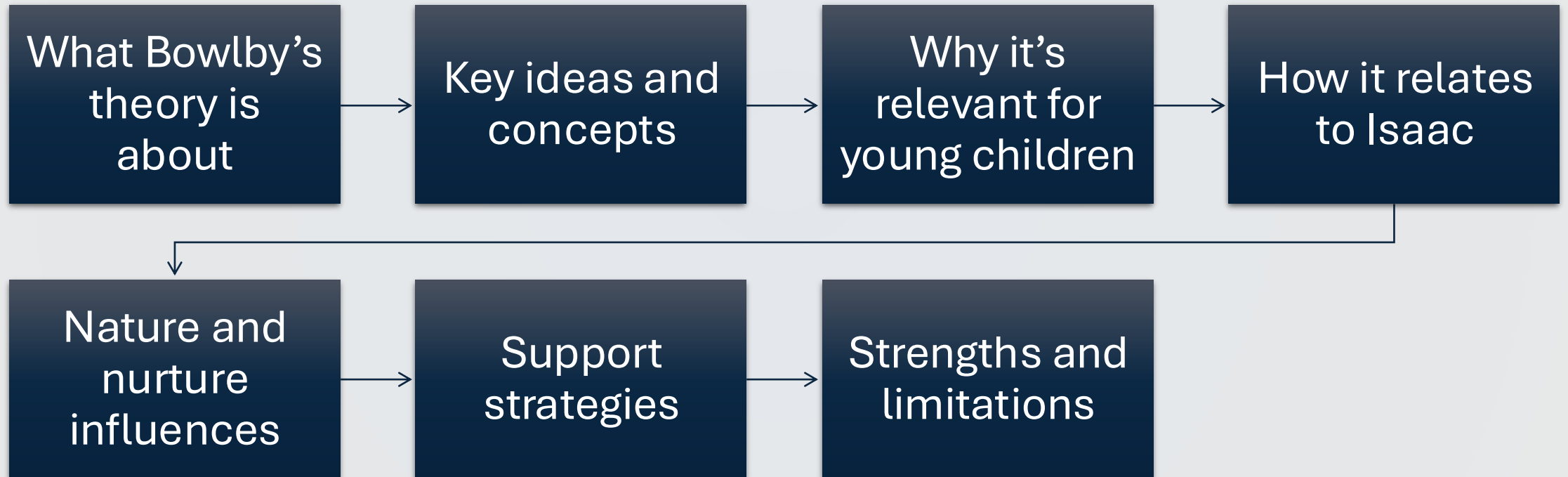
Rebecca Payne

Student ID: 2508539

Bowlby's Attachment Theory

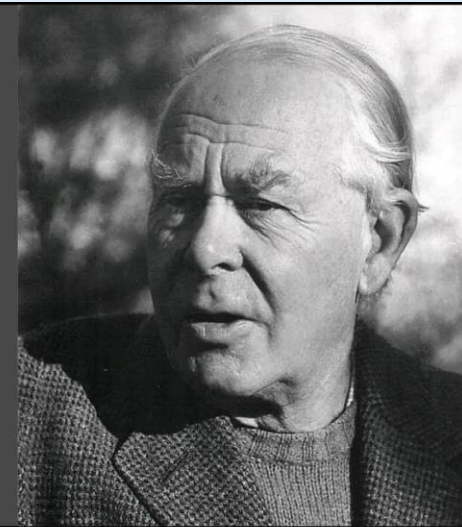


Overview



About John Bowlby

- British psychologist focused on early relationships (*Bowlby, 1969*)
- Believed attachment is essential for survival
- Influenced by evolutionary theory
- His work shaped modern early years practice (*Howe, 2011*)



Attachment Theory
John Bowlby



Key Concepts of attachment

- Babies are born ready to form attachments (*Bowlby, 1969*)
- Monotropy: one main attachment figure
- Secure base for exploration (*Ainsworth et al., 1978*)
- Internal Working Model shapes expectations (*Bowlby, 1969*)
- Sensitive period in early years.

Why Bowlby fits early childhood

Focuses directly on ages 0–5 (*Howe, 2011*)

Explains emotional and social development (*Zeanah, 2018*)

Helps understand clinginess and separation anxiety (*Ainsworth et al., 1978*)

Widely used in early years and safeguarding (*DfE, 2023*)

Issacs Background

- Mother experiencing post-natal depression
- Disrupted childcare and relocation
- Withdrawn and distressed at separation
- Clingy and struggles with independence
- Delayed language development

Applying Bowlby to Issac's situation

- Inconsistent care → insecure attachment (*Bowlby, 1969*)
- Maternal depression reduces emotional responsiveness (*NHS, 2023*)
- Frequent changes affect trust (*Howe, 2011*)
- Clinginess fits separation anxiety (*Ainsworth et al., 1978*)
- Withdrawal suggests lack of secure base
- Limited interaction affects language (*Zeanah, 2018*)

Nature and Nurture

- Temperament differences (Zeanah, 2018)
- Stress affects early brain development (Gerhardt, 2015)
- Sleep linked to emotional regulation
- Nurture
- Mother's mental health (NHS, 2023)
- Inconsistent routines (DfE, 2023)
- Limited social contact (Howe, 2011)
- Moving home impacts stability



Support Strategies

Attachment-Focused

Consistent key person
(DfE, 2023)

Predictable routines
(Howe, 2011)

Warm, responsive
interactions
*(Ainsworth et al.,
1978)*

Play & Language

Small-group play
(Zeanah, 2018)

Storytelling and
modelling language
(DfE, 2023)

Supporting Mum

Parenting support
(NHS, 2023)

Mental health
signposting *(NHS,
2023)*

Multi-Agency

Health visitor
involvement *(DfE,
2023)*

Speech and language
therapist *(Zeanah,
2018)*

Evaluation of Bowlby

- **Strengths**

- Highlights importance of early relationships (*Bowlby, 1969*)
- Strong evidence base (*Ainsworth et al., 1978*)
- Useful in early years practice

- **Limitations**

- Monotropy culturally narrow (*Howe, 2011*)
- Underestimates wider family/community (*Zeanah, 2018*)
- Not all insecurely attached children struggle (*Gerhardt, 2015*)
- Attachment more flexible than Bowlby suggested

Conclusion

- Isaac's early experiences may affect attachment (*Bowlby, 1969*)
- Bowlby helps explain his behaviour (*Howe, 2011*)
- Support should focus on stability (*DfE, 2023*)
- Multi-agency work essential (*Zeanah, 2018*)

References

- Ainsworth, M.D.S., Blehar, M., Waters, E. and Wall, S., 1978. *Patterns of Attachment: A Psychological Study of the Strange Situation*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Bowlby, J., 1969. *Attachment and Loss: Volume 1 – Attachment*. London: Hogarth Press.
- Howe, D., 2011. *Attachment Across the Lifecourse: A Brief Introduction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- NHS, 2023. *Postnatal Depression*. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/post-natal-depression/> ([nhs.uk in Bing](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/post-natal-depression/)) (Accessed 18 June 2026).
- Department for Education (DfE), 2023. *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)*. London: DfE.
- Zeanah, C.H. (ed.), 2018. *Handbook of Infant Mental Health*. 4th ed. New York: Guilford Press.