3.7 The Influence of Early Attachment on Later Relationships

AQA 7182 · about 60 minutes · Write-in edition

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Outline the concept of an internal working model as it relates to attachment and later relationships.

(Total for Question 1 is 4 marks)

2 Outline Bailey et al.'s finding on intergenerational transmission of attachment.

(Total for Question 2 is 4 marks)

3 Explain why the evidence is often correlational or retrospective and a consequence for the continuity hypothesis.

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

4 Identify and explain two criticisms of deterministic interpretations of the continuity hypothesis.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

5 Explain two practical implications for counselling or education from attachment continuity and transmission evidence.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

6 Discuss the influence of early attachment on childhood and/or adult relationships.

(Total for Question 6 is 16 marks)

7 Explain three methodological criticisms of Hazan and Shaver's Love Quiz study that limit generalisability.

(Total for Question 7 is 6 marks)

8 Outline Bailey et al.'s evidence for intergenerational transmission of attachment and evaluate one strength and one limitation.

(Total for Question 8 is 6 marks)

Mark scheme · 3.7 The Influence of Early Attachment on Later Relationships

Question 1

states that an internal working model is an internal mental representation of the self and others formed from early caregiver interactions oe	**M1**
explains it acts as a template for expectations about relationships and how to behave in them oe	**M1**
gives an example, e.g. a securely attached child expects caregivers to be responsive and later expects trust and intimacy in friendships or romantic relationships oe	**A1**
notes that it influences both cognitive beliefs and emotional responses in later relationships oe	**A1**

Answer: An internal working model is an internal representation of the self, others and relationships formed from early caregiver interactions; it serves as a template shaping expectations, emotions and behaviour in later friendships and adult romantic relationships, for example a securely attached child developing expectations of trust and reciprocity.

Question 2

identifies the method or sample element: studied mothers and their infants, using the Adult Attachment Interview and the Strange Situation to classify attachment oe	**M1**
reports the key result: there was a significant association between mothers' attachment classifications and their infants' attachment classifications oe	**M1**
explains implication: mothers who reported insecure attachments to their own parents were more likely to have infants classified as insecure oe	**A1**
notes this suggests a possible intergenerational transmission of attachment patterns via caregiving behaviour or internal working models oe	**A1**

Answer: Bailey et al. found that mothers' adult attachment classifications were significantly associated with their infants' attachment classifications: mothers who reported insecure attachment histories were more likely to have infants classified as insecure, suggesting intergenerational transmission through caregiving or internal working models.

Question 3

explains that longitudinal studies are time-consuming and expensive, so many studies rely on correlational snapshots or adults' retrospective reports of childhood attachment oe	**M1**
explains that retrospective self-report is vulnerable to memory distortion and current relationship state influencing recall oe	**A1**
states the consequence: correlational/retrospective evidence cannot establish causality between early attachment and later relationship outcomes oe	**M1**
explains that this weakens strong continuity claims, because third variables or reverse causation could account for associations oe	**A1**

Answer: Because longitudinal research is costly and slow, many studies use correlational designs or adults' retrospective reports. These methods are vulnerable to memory bias and confounding variables, so they cannot prove that early attachment causes later relationship patterns; therefore claims of strict continuity must be qualified.

Question 4

identifies a criticism: deterministic interpretation may lead to stigma or fatalism about individuals labelled as insecurely attached oe	**M1**
explains consequence: parents or children might be blamed or resigned to poor relationship outcomes, reducing opportunities for intervention and support oe	**A1**
identifies conceptual criticism: ignores plasticity and later experiences that can modify internal working models oe	**M1**
explains consequence: deterministic claims overlook evidence that therapy, supportive relationships or life events can change attachment-related expectations and behaviour oe	**A1**

Answer: A deterministic reading risks stigma and fatalism, potentially blaming parents or making people resign themselves to poor relationships, and it ignores evidence for plasticity, for example that later supportive relationships or therapy can alter internal working models and improve outcomes.

Question 5

identifies implication 1: early parent support and parenting programmes could improve later relationship outcomes oe	**M1**
explains how: interventions that teach sensitive responsiveness or enhance parental mental health may alter caregiving patterns and infants' internal working models, reducing risk of insecure attachment oe	**A1**
identifies implication 2: counselling and relationship therapy can target internal working models and attachment-related expectations in adults oe	**M1**
explains how: therapeutic approaches that address attachment beliefs and provide corrective emotional experiences can help people form healthier adult relationships despite early insecurity oe	**A1**

Answer: Implications include offering parenting support programmes to promote sensitive caregiving and prevent insecure attachment, and using counselling or therapy to help adults revise maladaptive internal working models so they can form healthier relationships.

Question 6

Level 4 Knowledge of the influence of early attachment is accurate and detailed. Discussion is thorough and evaluative, integrating evidence from studies such as Hazan and Shaver and Bailey et al. Evaluation addresses methodological limitations and alternative explanations and is consistently applied to the evidence. Application to childhood and/or adult relationships is clear and developed. Specialist terminology is used accurately and the answer is coherent.	**13-16**
Level 3 Knowledge is clear with some detail. Discussion includes evaluation and some integration of evidence but may be less wide ranging or partly descriptive. Application to relationships is present but may be uneven. Terminology is used appropriately and the answer is organised.	**9-12**
Level 2 Knowledge is present but limited. Discussion/evaluation is superficial or one-sided. Application to relationships is attempted but not well developed. Use of terminology is inconsistent and answer may lack clear structure.	**5-8**
Level 1 Knowledge is minimal and answers are likely to be brief or fragmented. Discussion/evaluation is limited or absent. Little or no application is made to relationships and specialist terms are missing or used incorrectly.	**1-4**
Level 0 No creditable content.	**0**

Indicative content:

- AO1: The continuity hypothesis predicts that early attachment patterns are generally stable and shape later relationships via internal working models which act as templates for expectations about self and others.
- AO1: Hazan and Shaver (1987) used the Love Quiz and reported associations between self-reported infant attachment type and adult romantic styles: secure linked to trust and longer relationships, avoidant to emotional distance, ambivalent to anxiety about relationships.
- AO1: Bailey et al. provide evidence for intergenerational transmission, finding associations between mothers' adult attachment classifications and their infants' Strange Situation classifications.
- AO2: Application could include examples where secure early attachment fosters positive peer friendships in childhood and more stable romantic relationships in adulthood, while insecure patterns can predict relationship difficulties such as avoidance or anxiety.
- AO3: Methodological evaluation: many studies are correlational or retrospective, so causation cannot be established; Hazan and Shaver used self-selected volunteers and retrospective recall, introducing sampling and recall biases; Bailey et al. are correlational and other factors could account for parent-child similarity.
- AO3: Further evaluation: strengths include use of standardised measures like the Strange Situation and Adult Attachment Interview, and longitudinal studies that do exist provide stronger evidence for stability over time.
- AO3: Alternative explanations include temperament and genetics, social learning from modelling, and current relationship experiences that can modify the internal working model, weakening deterministic continuity claims.
- AO3: Practical and ethical implications: supports parenting interventions and therapy targeting attachment beliefs, but deterministic interpretations risk stigma and underplay human resilience and change.
- AO3: Conclude by weighing evidence: overall there is reasonable support for an influence of early attachment on later relationships, but the size and causal nature of that influence is moderated by methodological limitations and subsequent life experiences.

Question 7

identifies volunteer/self-selected sampling as a limitation, e.g. people who respond to a newspaper Love Quiz may differ systematically from the general population oe **M1**

explains consequence: this may inflate the proportion of people interested in relationships and bias the pattern of reported attachment types, reducing external validity oe **A1**

identifies reliance on retrospective self-report about childhood attachment as a limitation oe **M1**

explains consequence: memory bias and reconstruction of childhood experiences may produce inaccurate classification, weakening the link between early attachment and adult reports oe **A1**

identifies social desirability or current relationship state influencing responses as a limitation oe **M1**

explains consequence: adults may answer according to their current feelings or cultural expectations about love rather than their actual infant experience, confounding the results oe **A1**

Answer: Hazan and Shaver used a volunteer newspaper sample and retrospective self-report. The self-selected sample may be biased towards people interested in relationships, reducing external validity, and retrospective reports are vulnerable to memory bias and social desirability, so adult reports may not accurately reflect infant attachment.

Question 8

outlines methodological detail: used the Adult Attachment Interview with mothers and the Strange Situation with infants to obtain attachment classifications oe **M1**

states the key finding: there was a statistical association between mothers' attachment classifications and their infants' attachment classifications oe **M1**

explains strength: using established, validated measures (Adult Attachment Interview and Strange Situation) provides systematic, standardised assessment supporting the reliability of the observed association oe **A1**

identifies a limitation: the association is correlational and cannot establish causation between mothers' own attachment history and their infants' attachment oe **M1**

explains consequence of limitation: other factors, such as current family stress, genetics or social support, could account for the similarity, so transmission mechanisms are not proven oe **A1**

offers an implication or qualification, e.g. longitudinal or experimental intervention evidence would be needed to strengthen causal claims about transmission oe **A1**

Answer: Bailey et al. used validated assessments for mothers and infants and found a significant association between mothers' attachment classifications and their infants' classifications. A strength is the use of standardised measures increasing reliability; a limitation is that the correlation cannot prove causation and alternative factors might explain the similarity, so intergenerational transmission remains probable but not definitively demonstrated.