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Precis: The origins of Attachment Theory: John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth

The article titled, “The origins of Attachment theory: John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth” was written by Inge Bretherton of the University of Wisconsin—Madison. In her article, Bretherton details the individual and collaborative innovations that both John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth played into the development of what is now known as the Attachment theory.

To begin Bretherton makes it rather clear that the formation of the concepts that now create the attachment theory have a long history that did not come from one single study or one single research. In fact, Bowlby and Ainsworth worked independently for the larger portion of their early careers but did focus on similar influences such as Sigmund Freud and other psychoanalytical theorists.

Due to the nature of the time that Bowlby did his earlier research (1930s-1940s), many of his studies focused on children and their attachment styles of people in the World War II era. Bowlby conducted a study that was now viewed to be the emergence of the attachment theoretical thinking when he studied separation of hospitalized children from their parents in World War II. Bretherton details that this study by Bowlby was fundamental in him learning about collection and observational practices for his later career in attachment research. A couple of years later, Ainsworth joined Bowlby’s research team.

Mary Ainsworth is recognized for her research on observation attachment styles to children in Uganda and Baltimore. However, Ainsworth might be most notably known for her creation of the Strange Situation study.

To finish her article, Bretherton adds challenges that the attachment theory might encounter as well as her own predictions for the future of this theory. Although Bretherton’s

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article was very factual and informative, I find that she approaches her discussion on the theory as an attachment theorist herself and lacks the inclusion of critiques of the theory. Even though her discussion on the importance of the theory is thorough, I find that having chosen to not include many critiques or controversial aspects of the theory itself makes the article lack some validity and portrays it as one-sided.

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