

Mary ainsworth

Science



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When reading many introductions on the history of psychology it is noticed there are very few females mentioned. That does not mean women are not attributed to making significant impacts in the development of psychology. “ The contributions of many of psychology's most eminent female thinkers have long been ignored, but that is starting to change as more history texts begin to recognize women such as Karen Horney, Mary Ainsworth, Leta Stetter Hollingworth, and Christine Ladd-Franklin in their pages. ” These women are just a few who have made tremendous contributions and marks on psychology.

The background, theoretical approach, and contributions of Mary Ainsworth are very significant to the field psychology even still today. Time line/Background of Mary Ainsworth Mary Ainsworth was born in December 1913 in Glendale, Ohio. She was the oldest of three girls; in 1918 her family relocated to Toronto Canada, and gained their citizenship. In her household education and studies were noted to be important. “ When she was fifteen, she read William McDougall's book *Character and the Conduct of Life*, which inspired her lifelong interest in psychology” (O'Connell, 1983).

In 1929 Ainsworth attended study at the University of Toronto; she was one of only four students to finish the honors degree program in psychology. At the time her father decided it would be best for her to become a stenographer, but he was still supportive of her pursuit of graduate work in psychology. In 1939 Mary Ainsworth was a recent Ph. D. graduate. She wanted to stay at the University of Toronto, and she fascinated the head of the psychology department. However, she was not selected for a position because the University Senate refused to appoint a female.

In 1942 Ainsworth joined the Canadian Women's Army Corp, and after serving as a counselor in the Army for four years, she came back to the University of Toronto and gained the position assistant professor. She got engaged to Leonard Ainsworth a graduate student, and they married in 1950. It was difficult working as assistant professor on the faculty where her husband was a pupil so both moved to London, England. " Mary Ainsworth was selected for a research position at the Tavistock Clinic under psychiatrist John Bowlby.

Bowlby's research of the effects of separation of children from their mother's/caregiver's served as a precursor of Ainsworth's earlier work on the security theory". In 1953 Leonard Ainsworth was interested in going to Africa. Mary Ainsworth could find employment as a research psychologist at the East African Institute of Social Research in Kampala, Uganda. She conducted a short-term naturalistic study of the mother-infant relationship and published the results.

Two years later Mary landed a position as a lecturer in Baltimore, Maryland, at John Hopkins. Not only did she lecture, and supervise students, she set up a private practice dedicated to children. In 1960 because of divorce Ainsworth became very depressed. In 1963, one year after starting the research she is best known for she became a full professor. In 1975 Ainsworth left Hopkins for a professor position at the University of Virginia. She taught there until her retirement in 1984. She remained active in her profession until 1992.

The American Psychological Foundation awarded her the Gold Medal Award for life achievement in the science of psychology from. In 1999 Mary Ainsworth passed at the age of 86, she never had any children but her major

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contributions were in study of children. Theoretical Perspective of Mary Ainsworth Bowlby and Ainsworth worked together to develop the attachment theory and research. “ The distinguishing characteristic of the theory of attachment that we have jointly developed is that it is an ethological approach to personality development.

Although they had separate approaches to understanding personality development, they worked together each adding different ideas and perspectives. In Uganda Ainsworth spent time doing research on mother child interactions. At the same time she teaching and lecturing about psychology at John Hopkins, Mary Ainsworth began work to create a test to measure attachments between mother’s and caregiver’s, and their children. Here she developed the “ Strange Situations” assessment. Children ages 12 months-18 months were observed during the assessment.

A researcher watched a child’s reaction when he or she was briefly left alone in an unfamiliar room. Important information was revealed during the separation and upon the mother’s/caregiver’s return. “ Based on her observations, Ainsworth concluded that there are three main attachment styles. The three main attachment styles are secure, anxious- avoidant, and anxious resistant”. Because her initial finding, her work has spawned numerous studies into the nature of attachment and the different attachment styles that exist between children and caregivers.

Mary Ainsworth’s contributions to psychology Significant contributions to the science of psychology have been made by Mary Ainsworth with her “ Strange Situations” assessment. After the research she concluded the main attachment styles are secure, anxious-avoidant, and anxious-resistant. She <https://assignbuster.com/mary-ainsworth/>

set a platform and many others shortly followed. Her controversial research on attachment played an important role in understanding the development of children.

In 1986 researchers Main and Solomon added a fourth attachment style: disorganized-insecure. There are numerous studies that support Ainsworth's research. Additional research has also shown early attachment styles can help predict behaviors later in life. Mary Ainsworth's research and contributions are still important to the study of psychology today. Conclusion " Mary Ainsworth knew her work was debatable and could be understood by some in the women's movement as a order to mothers to stay home with their children in their early age".

" And while I emphasize the importance of a secure attachment between infant and caregiver, and that full-time mothering may be the usual way of ensuring a secure attachment, she did not deny that alternative arrangements were possible. She said, " Had I myself had the children for whom I vainly longed, I like to believe I could have arrived at some satisfactory combination of mothering and a career, but I do not believe that there is any universal, easy, ready-made solution to the problem" (Ainsworth, 1983. p. 216).

With tables turning and the contributions of psychology's most prominent female theorist being added to text books students will study more about the contributions of Mary Ainsworth. Her background, significant contributions, and theoretical approach are vital still today. Many psychology researchers use the " Strange Situation" assessment as a basis for analysis on child development research. Mary Ainsworth lived 86 years and most of her life

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was spent researching, lecturing, teaching, and observing in the psychology field.