

Infant observation: 10 month old baby



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Infant Observation

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Less than a year ago my close family friend delivered a second baby. And since we lived close to each other and the couple already had an experience with infants I realized that it was a perfect place for my observation paper. I decided to observe the child three times at different dates and time of day because it could help me better distinguish infant's psychological behavior. The baby's name was Alex and at the time of the observation he was ten months old. He was born healthy and without any complications. At the first day of his life he weighted 7.5 pounds and was 19 inches tall which is considered a normal range (Zinsser, 2015). The parents are very diligent and hardworking people and take care of their children very well.

The behavior of the new born baby reminds me of a chain of reactions in response to new sensations which surrounds the infant during first year of life. When I observed Alex it was almost impossible not to notice his reflexes, senses, and natural instincts. When the mother tried to touch his lip with a finger the baby immediately opened his mouth and was prepared to suck. However, I noticed that he more prefers to suck his own fingers rather than someone else's. When the mother put something sweet on her finger the baby used to start sucking it and in response to something sour or bitter he immediately wrinkled his face and tried to clean his mouth. This phenomenon can be explained by research conducted by scientist who claimed that humans' affinity to sweet taste over any other taste corresponds to human genetics (Tatter, Schubert, Timischl, Simbruner, 1986). Another very interesting response I observed was a reaction to the

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loud noise. The sudden loud TV sound made him to furrow his brow, he looked very aware, and at the same time very scared. It seems that all of these reflexes are involuntary and the infant doesn't have a knowledge or experience to realize that he is a baby and that he is the part of the world.

All of the infant's natural reflexes and instincts were very well described by Jean Piaget, a Swiss psychologist who is known for his studies with children. According to Piaget's cognitive stage theory, the babies have an innate schema which is developed before they have any experience with surrounding environment. These cognitive structures are responsible for innate reflexes which are genetically programmed inside of us (Huitt, Hummel, 2003). For instance, most of the infants have sucking reflex which can be triggered by touching baby's lips and based on these observations Piaget came up with the idea that infants have a sucking schema.

Paget's schema development can be applied to many other innate reflexes. For example, when something touches baby's palm he will experience the grasping reflex, or similarly, the rooting reflex in which the child will turn his head in direction of the cheek you touched. For instance, during my observation I realized that rooting reflex works much better when the baby is hungry. Once the mother touched his cheek the infant turned his head right away and slightly open his mouth. It was very interesting to follow this process because it helped me to visualize how the schema works in real life situations. Moreover, I felt like the baby was waiting for the next signal which is food consumption. Both of these actions are nothing more than a reaction to touch which makes the life itself a very unique phenomenon.

The overall baby's physical appearance is very similar when he is still in the womb. His body, arms, and legs tend to take position in the way in which they were occupied in mother's belly. When I asked my friend to hold a baby, the first thing I noticed was how the musculoskeletal system was undeveloped. Newborn babies tend to have very weak muscles which don't allow them to hold the head or anything in hands. On the other hand, I noticed that when the infant grasped my finger I felt quiet bit of a power produced by the muscles. This interesting observation made me think how the voluntary and involuntary muscular contractions developed and their role in adaptation with surrounding environment.

An innate reflex is the specific response to external stimuli. The study of reflexes is mainly used to assess the state of the nervous system and all of the related pathologies. There can be some exception but in most cases children are born with grasp reflex. In order to activate it the parents should simply touch the palm of baby's hand and he will immediately flex his digits. Usually, some of the reflexes can be noticed from the birth and it is very important for young parents to distinguish any abnormalities in infants. (Futagi, Toribe, Suzuki, 2012).

During the first month of the life the baby spends most of his time lying down either on a bed or in the mother's hands. Also, it was very obvious to see that the baby liked being rocked, and when the parents surrounded him. I believe that most of the baby's behavior is strictly automatic rather than deliberate. All of the actions are meant to evoke a sense of attachment. For example, when the infant starts crying he is probably hungry or wants to be held.

During the infancy period most of the babies are far away from language/speech development. However, I realized that communication does exist between parents and the child. All of the babies tend to cry a lot and this is one of the main sign for a caregiver that something is wrong. During my observation I realized that babies cry because they feel some sort of discomfort which requires immediate attention. For young parents it might be often difficult to understand what happened and why the baby is crying. However, over some period of time caregivers begin to distinguish main concerns.

As a future parent this observational experience was very educational for me. I learned that it takes a lot of compassion and hard work to take care of the baby. This a very demanding job which requires a lot of time and hard work and the knowledge of developmental psychology is a good way to understand scientifically what is like to be a baby. Piaget's cognitive stage theory is a great way for new parents to get familiar with the environment and psychological behavior of the new born baby which can be applied in order to establish connection between caregiver and child.

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