

Sample research paper on social learning theory, sociocultural theory, and attach...

[Life](#), [Childhood](#)



Research suggests that early childhood education is extremely important for the success of children as they age. Without proper early childhood education, children are set up for failure in their lives before they even begin to attend school; children who attend preschool programs, for instance, have a much easier time learning in the kindergarten and first grade classrooms than children who are immediately placed into those same classrooms (Edwards, Cutter-Mackenzie et al., 2014). Perhaps some of the most important skills that children learn in these early childhood educational experiences are not academic skills, but are the skills that they need to be successful in the classroom-- learning to sit quietly, for instance, or cooperate with other children are skills that are learned in the early childhood educational setting but are often not taught as comprehensively once children begin to attend school. This discussion will center around social learning theory, attachment theory, and sociocultural theory in the development of early childhood educational programs.

Research suggests that there are a number of different approaches that instructors and educators can take when considering early childhood education. These approaches will form the framework of their interactions with their children within the classroom, and will even inform the interactions that children have with other children inside the classroom (Edwards, Cutter-Mackenzie et al., 2014). Because so many classrooms today are full of children of different backgrounds, utilizing different types of educational and psychological theories to maximize the time each child-- regardless of gender, ethnic, or cultural background-- spends in the classroom is particularly important for the instructor to consider. These theories can also

be used to take into account language differences that may occur in the classroom, and be utilized to help mold children into more accepting and culturally-accepting individuals.

Social learning theory is a theoretical approach to cognitive and behavioral theories of learning that makes an attempt to frame learning in such a manner that the experiences and lessons of the classroom mirror those of the outside world (Armstrong, 2011). According to social learning theory, learning is not a purely behavioral action on the part of individuals, even in children; learning is not something that happens as a result of a child mimicking behavior, for instance, although mimicking behavior can certainly be a part of the process of learning (Armstrong, 2011). However, the process of learning cannot be reduced to a simple behavioral response; Armstrong, 2011 suggests that much of the learning process is cognitive. Cognitive processes are processes that can occur without the traditional inputs that behavioral learning requires, such as direct positive or negative reinforcement and motor reproduction (Armstrong, 2011).

Instead of having traditional positive or negative reinforcement used in social learning theory, students can learn a behavior-- or a skill-- by observing the behavior or skill and then the consequences of the behavior (Armstrong, 2011). The process of observation of skill and consequences is the process of vicarious reinforcement, a type of reinforcement that is entirely separate from the traditional ideas of positive and negative reinforcement (Armstrong, 2011). Human beings, even very small ones, can learn by observation, and then extract the necessary information from the observations that were made (Armstrong, 2011). This is known as modeling or observational

behavior; it is important for the early childhood educational setting, and will be expounded upon later in this section (Armstrong, 2011). Perhaps the most important aspect of social learning theory, however, is the fact that the learner, according to this theory, is not passively accepting information; the learner is cognitively engaged in the process, making decisions about how to act based on the behaviors observed and the consequences of these behaviors. Armstrong (2011) writes, “ Learning involves observation, extraction of information from those observations, and making decisions about the performance of the behavior (observational learning or modeling). Thus, learning can occur without an observable change in behavior. Reinforcement plays a role in learning but is not entirely responsible for learning; the learner is not a passive recipient of information. Cognition, environment, and behavior all mutually influence each other in a process known as reciprocal determinism” (Ura and McClell, from Armstrong, 2011). All of these theoretical approaches are important in the application of the theory to early childhood education.

Young children are often taught using social learning theory, because it is a way of engaging the child entirely in the lesson or the class. Social learning theory often makes use of live-model learning, through which the child can make decisions about behaviors or actions that he or she wishes to take based on the consequences that are observed (Ry, Zucker et al., 2013) . In live model learning, the child or children can observe the process that the instructor is giving, and can then build their actions based on the actions that the instructor has demonstrated (Ry, Zucker et al., 2013). For children, observing their peers and the way their peers act in class is important as

well; children who are well-behaved are praised by instructors, while children who are rowdy may be punished or negatively reinforced (Ry, Zucker et al., 2013). Children can then build their reactions based on the instructor and his or her interactions with the other individuals and students within the classroom environment.

Children who are not exposed to this type of environment early often miss out on social developments that set them behind their peers. Instead of having the basis for educational learning-- the ability to sit still in class, for instance-- they must do their social learning in an educational environment not geared towards this type of learning. Without early childhood education, the child may suffer social and educational setbacks for the lack of social learning in the school environment.

As previously mentioned, the amount of multicultural requirements in American classrooms and classrooms around the world is growing. As globalization of the world increases, so too does the amount of movement of people from place to place; today, in an American classroom, there may be any number of children who do not speak English as a first language, for instance. These differences play into the fundamental belief of sociocultural theory: that every function in a developmental cycle is developed twice (Edwards, 2014). The first time the function is developed, it is on a social level. The next time it is developed, it is on a personal level (Edwards, 2014). Sociocultural theory is often linked with constructivism theory, because the two theories go hand-in-hand in terms of education in the classroom. They share fundamental beliefs, and are used as functional pairs by many instructors, teachers, and educators. Ry, Zuker, Taylor et al. (2013), write:

<https://assignbuster.com/sample-research-paper-on-social-learning-theory-sociocultural-theory-and-attachment-theory-in-early-childhood/>

Classroom observations showed greater gains for RECC and RECC+ teachers' responsive practices including helping children manage their behavior, establishing a predictable schedule, and use of cognitively stimulating activities (e. g., shared book reading) compared with controls; however, teacher behaviors did not differ for focal areas such as sensitivity and positive discipline supports. Child assessments demonstrated that children in the interventions outperformed controls in areas of social and emotional development, although children's performance in control and intervention groups was similar for cognitive skills (language, literacy, and math). Results support the positive impact of responsive teachers and environments providing appropriate support for toddlers' social and emotional development. Possible explanations for the absence of systematic differences in children's cognitive skills are considered, including implications for practice and future research targeting low-income toddlers. (Ry, Zuker, Taylor et al., 2013)

Although these environments tend to ask more of the students involved in the classroom than other types of learning environments, teaching young children the proper way to utilize and hone their critical thinking skills. When students are placed at the immediate center of their learning environment, they become important in their own minds as well as in the eyes of the educational institution; this type of self-branded self-confidence is important when it comes to building thinkers and leaders in the coming years (Edwards, 2014). Children in environments that are welcoming and open, and allow them to construct and build their own realities are more confident and more flexible in many ways, according to Edwards (2014).

For instructors, using constructivist and sociocultural theories to build a classroom environment means focusing more on the children than make up the classroom environment. This means that socioculturally-diverse classrooms are often better served by having a highly varied ethnographic and sociocultural makeup (Edwards, 2014). This diversity serves to better allow children to build their own worldviews, using the various experiences and sociocultural interactions that they have with their peers in the classroom (Edwards, 2014).

Attachment theory, finally, suggests that as children reach early and middle childhood educational stages, peers become much more important to their sociological and cultural development (Goldberg, Muir and Kerr, 2013).

Attachment theory initially suggests that because humans are essentially social animals, they are primed to need to make attachments to other individuals (Goldberg, Muir and Kerr, 2013). Failure to attach at an infant stage, for instance, can lead to long-term problems with attachment as the child ages, and may lead to severe psychological issues further down the line (Goldberg, Muir and Kerr, 2013). However, in terms of early childhood, attachment theory suggests that the child's attachment to his or her parents, while still strong, is suddenly shared with peers and other individuals in the child's life outside of the child's immediate family group (Goldberg, Muir and Kerr, 2013). Participating in early childhood educational activities allows the child to more fully realize his or her attachments and personal growth outside the family unit; without this growth, the maturation of the child can slow or become stunted altogether over the course of the child's development (Goldberg, Muir and Kerr, 2013).

In early childhood, the primary attachment figures for children are the primary caregivers of those children (Goldberg, Muir and Kerr, 2013).

However, the introduction of the child into alternative forms of care-- like preschool or other school programs-- introduces the child to the alternative forms of attachment that the child will begin to form as he or she ages (Goldberg, Muir and Kerr, 2013). This type of introduction is a stepping stone into the next developmental stage that the child will experience (Goldberg, Muir and Kerr, 2013).

Integrating these three theories into the practice of early childhood education is a way to develop the skills that children need to develop into excellent learners. Utilizing social learning theory, for instance, builds a classroom in which all the children in the classroom are involved with the lesson and the instructor. Children may be able to touch, taste, smell, feel, or play with the materials that the instructor is using to teach the lesson; these type of lessons tap into the conscious, cognitive processes that inform a child's learning process. Within the classroom, the instructor may also utilize multicultural lesson plans to engage the children in a sociocultural learning process, engaging them in the differences between cultures and teaching them the beginnings of diversity training and multicultural acceptance. Finally, instructors may use attachment-based theories in the classroom to motivate children into making friends and bonds with the peers that they have access to, priming them for introduction into the next phase of their development in their middle childhood education.

Early childhood education has the function of preparing children for their next phases of development. Giving children the best start possible in the

educational world provides them with the greatest chance for success in their lives; those who have excellent early childhood educational opportunities are more likely to succeed in the long term. This success has been quantified and measured, and utilizing a number of different educational and cognition-based theories to maximize this success can only increase the success of the early childhood educator in his or her classroom. Increasing this reach and impact can functionally serve to better the lives of all the children in the classroom, but makes a particularly significant difference for low-income or marginalized children who may have been forgotten or overlooked in other types of preschool or early schooling programs.

References

- Armstrong, M. C. (2011). Perceptions on collaborative learning.
- Berant, E. (2013). Empirical and clinical aspects of attachment theory. *Rorschachiana: Journal Of The International Society For The Rorschach*, 34 (2), pp. 111--114.
- Edwards, S., Cutter-Mackenzie, A., Moore, D. & Boyd, W. (2014). Environmental education and pedagogical play in early childhood education. Springer, pp. 25--37.
- Edwards, S. (2005). Constructivism does not only happen in the individual: sociocultural theory and early childhood education. *Early Child Development And Care*, 175 (1), pp. 37--47.
- Edwards, S. (2003). New directions: charting the paths for the role of sociocultural theory in early childhood education and curriculum. *Contemporary Issues In Early Childhood*, 4 (3), pp.

Goldberg, S., Muir, R. & Kerr, J. (2013). Attachment theory. Hoboken: Taylor And Francis.

Han, H. S. (2013). Supporting early childhood teachers to promote children's social competence: components for best professional development practices. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, pp. 1--9.

L, Ry, S. H., Zucker, T. A., Taylor, H. B., Swank, P. R., Williams, J. M., Assel, M., Crawford, A., Huang, W., Clancy-Menchetti, J., Lonigan, C. J. & Others (2013). Enhancing early child care quality and learning for toddlers at risk: the responsive early childhood program. American Psychological Association.

Lupton, D. (2013). Infant embodiment and interembodiment: a review of sociocultural perspectives. *Childhood*, 20 (1), pp. 37--50.

Macartney, B. & Morton, M. (2013). Kinds of participation: teacher and special education perceptions and practices of 'inclusion' in early childhood and primary school settings. *International Journal Of Inclusive Education*, 17 (8), pp. 776--792.

Wood, E. A. (2013). Free choice and free play in early childhood education: troubling the discourse. *International Journal Of Early Years Education*, (ahead-of-print), pp. 1--15.