

Written 2

Psychology



Developmental Psychology Written Assignment 2 Discuss attachment theory and current findings on the effects of infant day care. Attachment theory was first developed by Bowlby in 1951; where he discussed the importance of the bond shared by the child and the primary caregiver (Berger, 2008).

According to Bowlby; children who were separated from their parents showed distinct signs of distress; and prolonged separation led to a number of problems in the child's development. Through his research, he was able to determine that children exhibited a number of behaviors that were designed to provide contact with the caregiver; and these behaviors ranged from those that encouraged interaction (like smiling and cooing), to those that were aversive when not attended to (like crying) and those that were used actively by the child to come closer to the caregiver (like following). In 1969, Bowlby described the phases of attachment development in young children (Berger, 2008). He describes four stages - pre attachment, attachment in the making, clear cut attachment, and goal corrected attachment - that occur between birth and 5 years of age. Ainsworth further showed that the quality of a mother's responsiveness was related to the type of attachment pattern formed by the child. Through their research, she and her colleagues were able to identify four patterns (Watts, Cockcroft and Duncan, 2009). Initially they identified the Secure attachment, avoidant attachment, and the ambivalent patterns; and in later research, they were able to identify the fourth and possibly least secure pattern, the disorganized-disoriented pattern of attachment (Papalia and Olds, 2001).

A significant amount of research has gone into understanding the effect of day care on young children. A large percentage of the children under 5 years of age now receive care from individual who are not their parents for more
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than 30 hours a week (Watts, Cockcroft and Duncan, 2009). Research in this area is mixed, with some studies pointing out concerns, while others laud the effects of day-care. Research indicates that the most important aspect seem to be the quality of the day - care received by the child (Papalia and Olds, 2001). Day care centers that have small groups, competent and involved staff, and a high adult to child ratio seem to have positive effects on children, while those that have merely controlling or custodial staff, large groups of children with few adults and a lack of stimulating activities show ill-effects on the child's development. Good day - care seem to have at least temporary positive effects on the child's ability to learn and use cognitive abilities and language skills; to interact with familiar and non-familiar adults, make friends, and participate in group activities (Berger, 2008). They also benefited the most when they came from families with difficulties and quality care reduced effects of insecure attachment. The concern is when insensitive parenting is coupled with low quality daycare; with the children in such situations showing the most insecure attachment styles (Papalia and Olds, 2001).

Outline the advances in vocabulary and grammar in the play years, and comment briefly on differing theories about the effects of bilingualism. Children in the play years tend to learn a number of things rapidly, and language use is an important aspect of this learning. Between the ages of three and six years, they learn over 10, 000 to 12, 000 words (Papalia and Olds, 2001), learn to use these words in context; use the laws of grammar to some extent, and learn to communicate under a variety of social situations. Young children are inquisitive, and ask a number of questions. The responses they receive help them in acquiring more information, and among this

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information, more language skills. At this age, children learn new words very rapidly - almost 9 new words per day. They are able to learn with such speed since they memorize words with context; and attempt to use it with the partial understanding they gain through the context in which it is encoded. This process has been studied by Rice in 1982 (in Papalia and Olds, 2001); leading to the theory of 'fast mapping'. While the basis for fast mapping is not completely clear; it is evident that this process allows children to store individual words, but within a context; so that they use these cues to understand the meaning of the word; and to apply the word to their own speech. Although these children learn rapidly; they are still quite literal in the way they understand and say things; and may use words in a peculiar manner due to this. They are learning to draw on the relationships of similarities and distinctions; and use metaphor to explain their thoughts (Berger, 2008). They exhibit the ability to use fantasy and may even describe fantastical objects.

During the play years, children are able to understand various aspects of the grammatical structure of speech, and use plurals, tenses and person (Watts, Cockcroft and Duncan, 2009). They are able to construct simple sentences, but may have difficulty constructing complex sentences. They do seem to show understanding of some aspects of complex sentence structure; but tend to have difficulties with other aspects in the early years. By the time they are 6 to 7 years old; most children do learn to understand and use complex sentences (Papalia and Olds, 2001). Most often, they are able to identify context, and will change the manner in which they communicate to suit context by the age of four to five years. This shows that they have understood the different requirements of different situations in order to be

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understood.

Children coming from bilingual or multilingual backgrounds have been a cause for concern in schooling policy. Proponents of the ESL or English immersion approach believe that encouraging children to learn a new language at a very early age will help them attain proficiency in the said language. But research has shown that bi-lingual learning programs, wherein children learn in two languages simultaneously are far more efficient in ensuring not only language proficiency in both languages (Berger, 2008); but also in other subjects and in social interaction (Papalia and Olds, 2001).

Children from non – English backgrounds in these programs did as well as those from English backgrounds. Research in the English speaking countries often consider bilingual children difficult to teach, and are skeptical about the child’s ability to gain proficiency in any one language. But research in Africa, India and other multilingual countries have shown that children as young as three to four years exhibit equal proficiency in two or even three languages; and are able to switch languages according to context with ease (Watts, Cockcroft and Duncan, 2009). These children are able to switch languages depending on who they spoke to; and were able to carry information from one language into the other (Papalia and Olds, 2001).

References

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