

Human development – early memory development

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Introduction Many human development specialists have examined memory loss of adults later in life. During the past fifty years, there have been many studies in children's cognitive development and earlier childhood memory loss. Ernest G. Schachtel conducted studies on why people forget childhood memories as they grow older. He described the processes that could be involved in early memory loss (Crain, 2005). He was influenced by Sigmund Freud's cognitive theory (Crain, 2005). Lev S.

Vygotsky, however, described children's early memory development as a holistic process that involved society, physiological, cultural, and economical environments. (Vygotsky, 1978) Vygotsky was influenced by Karl Marx's theory of people's development, noted Crain (2005). Schachtel was influenced by Sigmund Freud; both theorists seemed to agree that children learn to remember more systematically when prompted by a more experienced person, like their parents and caregivers (Broderick and Blewitt, 2010). Young people separated from their parents when they were children can have fragmented memories of that earlier time.

There are a series of systems involved in memory loss (Lerner, Easterbrooks, and Mistry, 2003). Keywords: memory, socialization, childhood, processes, environment HSV 504: Human Development-Early memory loss Doctor Schachtel said adults lose their very early childhood memories. He says the older children get, the more early childhood memories they lose (Crain, 2005). Crain (2005) explained that Schachtel said early childhood memory loss was called "infantile amnesia" (p. 327). When they were infants people had intense experiences; however as time passed and other experiences took their place, they forgot the earlier memories (Crain, 2005).

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Most importantly, the earlier experiences were lost because they occurred before the child could speak. Like his predecessor Freud, Schachtel said that to some extent, early hostile and sexual feelings were repressed because they led to shame (Crain, 2005). Schachtel believed forgetting most early childhood memories was common to every experience people had during early childhood. In addition, children were socialized by caregivers and peers to change their first response to pleasure in order to conform to cultural expectations.

Schachtel believed that the differences with adult's and children's memory loss were with how they experienced their lives. He said that adults experience their lives primarily through verbal associations (Crain, 2005), like seeing a nice shade of blue and saying what a pretty color it is. Children before one year of age experience their lives through taste and smell (Crain, 2005). As children grow up, they start to conform to the way adults and peers experience the world, yet to maintain the characterization of familiar perceptions of the world (Crain, 2005). Schachtel said that infants experience life with their senses.

The most important sense is taste. Babies have more taste buds than adults do (Crain, 2005). Many times whatever they touch winds up in their mouths. In addition, the sense of smell is important to babies because they learn to identify their mother by her smell, as well as how she tastes. The sense of sight is not as important to infants as it is for older children (Crain, 2005). Schachtel identifies these senses as body senses. Temperature is felt on the body as hot and cold, they are inside senses, he said. Sight and hearing are

outside senses because they are other focused. Smell and taste are inside focused (Crain, 2005).

According to Schachtel, when adults experience memory categories, they have very little words to describe the tasting, smelling and feeling senses in memory (Crain, 2005). When children start to experience life by exploring new things, looking at their body functions for example, adults become concerned and begin socializing them to respond like themselves (Crain, 2005). Freud said the same about children being discouraged from investigating their body functions (Gay, 1998). However, he said that they are discouraged from that experience by their caregivers (Crain, 2005). It is considered rude in the west to discriminate based on smell.

To say someone's breath smells bad in public is not considered polite, so that sentiment is rarely spoken in public. Yet, body odor is the primary smell that would intrigue a very young child, said Schachtel (Crain, 2005). Their parents tell them that it is not good and the child learns to distance herself from that sensory pleasure. Schachtel also said that with passing of time the highly sensitive sensory experiences are lost to the children because they are repressed (Crain, 2005). Schachtel believed that adults are less sensitive to their earlier sensory perceptions due to socialization (Crain, 2005).

The senses become defined as either good or bad, and adults have extensive vocabulary labeling things they see, but not food that they taste or odors they smell (Crain, 2005). Schachtel further explains the only adults that would still have their earlier perceptions intact after parental and peer socialization would be creative individuals like writers and painters (Crain, 2005). When a child gets older, many things that were accepted in infancy can become less

intense because their orientation changes toward the outside senses, sight and touch.

Schachtel also said that babies enjoyed the warmth of protective environments (Crain, 2005). Crain (2005) added that Schachtel was a pioneer in his observations about the loss of early memories. When Schachtel started writing, no one else was aware that as people got older they lost many of their childhood memories (Crain, 2005). In the years after Schachtel had written about early memory loss, there have been several studies that have added to his insights. Crain (2005) also stated we could lose memories earlier and faster than Schachtel said we did. Lev S.

Vygotsky said that children develop within their respective cultures and societies long before they learn to speak (Crain, 2005). He also noted a children's development involved its society, economic status, and physiological development. Vygotsky (1978) stressed that a child's learning processes were more than subconscious and mental; children's development can grow within every environmental aspect of their lives. Children learn from caregivers in their respective cultures how to relate within their environments, noted Broderick & Blewitt (2010).

Vygotsky said that children learned how to relate in two stages: first when parents teach them to interrelate; and then within themselves as they start to interact with their peers (Crain, 2005). Most importantly, Schachtel taught people what processes could happen inside the thinking of babies and very young children (Crain, 2005). He also believed that parents help children put their thoughts into words by recalling what they saw at particular events, but at a cost of the children losing much of their earlier memories.

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In this view, Schachtel agreed with Vygotsky (Crain, 2005). Schachtel was a pioneer in the study of memory loss of young children as they grow older (Crain, 2005). According to Crain (2005), his theory has made the deepest impression on this writer who is a caseworker. As a practitioner that enters legal codes for children that have gone through many kinds of abuse and neglect, one wonders how many of those children are trying to recall their earlier memories of being separated from their parents. Some of these young people grew up in their relative's homes.

Those adults told them about their parents and some of the circumstances that caused them to be placed in foster care. Now, they are coming to the agency requesting to see their closed case records. Many of those records have photographs. There are court hearings that video tape their proceedings for their records. Some of Vygotsky's findings were published abroad three years after Schachtel published his human development work (Crain, 2005). Vygotsky's theory about children's cognitive development was not paid attention to because his writings were banned (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010).

Today both theorists are studied because Vygotsky stressed environmental involvement in cognitive development (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010); and Schachtel's theory stressed the mental processes of human development (Crain, 2005). Schachtel and Vygotsky's theories agree in that both said that parents, caregivers and other environmental models help children in learning new activities. Vygotsky said that since children are learning new things all the time, their abilities progress as they grow older (Crain, 2005).

Schachtel said most of children's socialization comes from parents and peers to conform to their respective society's mode of behavior (Crain, 2005). Vygotsky's theory of socio-cultural development resonates with many developmentalists because there has to be more to people's development than mental processes. A whole series of systems contributes to very early memory functions as children grow up. According to Lerner, Easterbrooks, & Mistry (2003), there have been numerous studies on cognitive functions and memory.

They explained that memory loss of young children as they become adults can be related to a combination of processes from neurological to sociological. In addition, there are now numerous studies discussing brain function with social and physiological developments (Lerner et al. , 2003). Lerner et. al (2003) also explained that age, lifestyle, and education are among other determinants that have influenced the changing relationships in memory processes over a person's life. Since Schachtel's writings more than fifty years ago on children's memory development, there have been many studies on the same subject (Cycowicz, 2000).

Human development specialists are discovering new information on memory and cognitive development. According to Wertsch (1985), Vygotsky's works are now studied because of their holistic approaches to human development.

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