

As Psychology end of unit 3.2 assignment

**1a) Describe one theory of attachment**

Schaffer & Emerson developed the stage theory of attachment. They measured attachment in infants during different intervals. They used two methods of measuring this attachment – separation protest and stranger anxiety. These are both signs that an attachment has formed. There are three main stages of attachment. Asocial stage 0-6 weeks, the infant has no attachment. Indiscriminate attachment 6 weeks– 7 months, the infant seeks attention from different people. Finally, specific attachments which is between 7- 11 months. The infant has a strong attachment to one person.

**1b) Give two criticisms of the theory outlined in part (a)**

One criticism is that the data in which was collected during the study to get to the theory was recorded from mothers & direct observation. Therefore the information collected is prone to bias and inaccuracy.

A second criticism is that the theory appears to be correct as the presence of separation and stranger anxiety occurs when a child is faced in the situation. It shows the infant has formed schemas for known and unknown people and reached an emotional stage development where the unknown creates a fear response.

**1c) ‘Cross cultural research has demonstrated many similarities of attachment style across different cultures.’ To what extent are there cross-cultural variations in attachment?**

There are many positive and negative factors that contribute to cross cultural variations in attachment. The Strange Situation Test used three main ways of measuring attachment separation anxiety, stranger anxiety and re-union with caretaker. Different cultures vary in attitudes, behaviour and norms as each culture is socially constructed uniquely. For instance, studies show that 71% of American infants compared to 68% of Japanese infants have secure attachments. This shows that American infants are provided with a positive working role model and carer who is emotionally available more so as a whole than the Japanese infants. The study also shows that 12% of American infants have anxious and resistant behaviour compared to 32% of Japanese infants. This shows that the Japanese infants have inconsistent carers and seek attention by causing disruptive behaviour. Finally the study showed that 17% of American infants are anxious and avoidant compared to no Japanese infants acting in this manner. This shows that American infants believe they are unworthy and their carer is rejecting more so than Japanese infants and carers.

The strange situation test used in research and studies have led to various theories trying to identify the key cultural differences responsible for the variations in infant attachment from one culture to another.

Van IJzendoorn & Kroonenberg researched different databases for studies on attachment that had used the strange situation to classify attachment type. They conducted a meta-analysis on 32 of these studies. They were the first researchers to

carry out a thorough Meta analysis to consider all cross culture findings using the Strange Situation Test.

The Strange Situation Test is the only test of infant attachment that has been used in several countries. It could be argued that findings from test could be used to understand some of the main sub-cultural differences found within any given country. There have been many key findings as a result of the test. The most important was that the variation in attachment within cultures was 1-½ times greater than the variation between cultures.

However, the Strange Situation procedure was carried out in the laboratory and therefore it has a fairly artificial approach. Also, the infants attachment behaviour is much stronger in the laboratory than at home. Additionally, the Strange Situation Test was carried out in the USA so it may be culturally biased. Therefore the ecological validity of the Strange Situation must be questioned. The Strange Situation measurement assumes that the behaviour of all children in all cultures means the same thing. The Strange Situation Test is based on cultural assumptions, this technique is called imposed etic –where a process is devised in one culture to study other cultures. This questions the validity of the Strange Situation Test as a measuring tool for attachment between cross culture variation.

Cross-cultural variation has been well tried and tested and is one of the most popular measures of attachment. It is also possible to see the value of such a measure; there are some real practical applications from being able to assess a child's security. However, all the limiting factors mentioned in the above paragraph contribute to the fact that we cannot be sure either way about cross-cultural similarities or differences, because of these limitations. Additionally we have to be careful in drawing conclusions, regarding a culture from such a limited sample. The conclusions regarding the Chinese children are based on one study. We can't make generalisations regarding a population the size of China, on the results of just a handful of children.

I feel there are many similarities across cultures for instance there was a considerable amount of consistency in the overall distribution of attachment types across all cultures and secure attachment was the most common type of attachments in all 8 nations researched in Van IJzendoorn & Kroonenberg's study. Also the Western cultures dominant insecure type is anxious/avoidant and the non-western cultures dominant insecure type is anxious/resistant. However, there are of course differences, which are not accounted for in the Strange Situation Test. For instance China was the exception as anxious/avoidant and anxious/resistant were distributed equally. This shows that it is wrong to make such generalisations on the basis of the techniques used, as there are not just variations between cultures but within cultures also.