Tonya Alexandri

Final Exam PSY 504-Athens (December 2010)-Dr D. Montague

(Develop workshops for relevant theories of development. Highlight these theories and explain Maria's history and issues in terms of these theories).

Title of workshop: 'Reviewing a life: The case study of Maria'

Introduction

This workshop aims to briefly present various developmental theories and highlight important ideas of each theory. The discussion and understanding of these theories will be facilitated through the illustration of the primary concepts in relation to the key developmental issues for a particular fictitional client, Maria. A narrative of the client will be handed out to all workshop participants to familiarize everyone with Maria's developmental history. Furthermore, because we believe that development and change occur throughout the lifespan and that our relationships with others are a highly significant social context for development, if time allows we may engage in brief critical evaluations of the theories discussed. However, neither the presentation of the theories nor the application of basic concepts can be exhaustive within the limits of these workshops.

To begin with, developmental psychology draws heavily on many other psychological perspectives because development is the result of the dynamic interaction of multiple contextual influences and psychological and physiological variables. It must also be highlighted that there are many different theories that explore development and change from different perspectives with different emphasis on different aspects of development. For instance, an evolutionary approach might suggest that development fulfils adaptive functions; a psychoanalytic perspective partly underpins attachment theory; both psychodynamic concepts and humanistic ideas underpin Erikson's theory, and so on. Also, different theories explore the interaction between biology, environment, cognition, physiology, learning and experience to a different extent and provide

explanations at different levels. Additionally theories can be explored in terms of their emphasis on fixity or change, and the extent to which individuals have autonomy and are agentic are greatly determined by their early developmental experiences.

Finally, some theories postulate transformational change, which occurs in invariant stages and suggest an evolution from a ground plan (foundation) to something new, whereas others suggest variational, quantitative changes (Overton, 2003, cited in Lerner, Easterbrooks and Mistry, 2003).

Brief presentation of theories and application of basic theoretical concepts to Maria's developmental history

Third workshop: Attachment Theory: Concepts and Research Findings on Child and Adult Attachment Styles

I would like to begin by mentioning that in terms of our previous discussion on temperament, some attachment researchers see temperament as indirectly affecting attachment classification through its effect on parental responsiveness to the child (Van den Boom, 1994, cited in Landy, 2002) and although it is not suggested that temperament directly causes an insecure mother-child relationship it is thought that it may limit the caregiving environment (Mangelsdurf et al., 1991, cited in Landy, 2002).

To begin with, John Bowlby is considered the key figure in the development of attachment theory, which explores how people create *attachments,* which are strong emotional bonds between two people, and the underlying processes of these bonds. His work is informed by psychoanalytic ideas, especially Melanie Klein's idea of 'internal objects' and objects relations theory, and influenced by ethological insights into human behaviour. His central idea is that human infants have a *biological drive*, much like imprinting in chicks, which happens during a *critical period* (Bowlby preferred the term *sensitive period*) in early infancy, to achieve security through an attachment to *'the mother figure'*. In the 1950s Bowlby and Ainsworth researched the effects of maternal deprivation on children's development at the Tavistock Clinic in London and raised awareness of the detrimental effects of emotional deprivation. In

1951 in his report on institutional deprivation Bowlby claimed that children's inability to form intimate and lasting relationships was caused by their missing the opportunity to form a solid attachment to a mother figure during the *sensitive period* (cited in Crain, 2005).

This primary attachment relationship depends on the infant's representation of the caregiver as a *secure base* from which exploration is possible, knowing that he/she can return to an available mother figure. This however, could only be achieved through the infant's building up of an *internal working model* (IWM) of the self, the caregiver and their relationship. Bowlby conceived the IWM as the child's expectations and feelings about the caregiver's responsiveness and believed that the establishment of healthy IWMs is essential for later mental health, future relationships and socially responsible behaviour (cited in Wood, Littleton and Oates, 2007). Inconsistent, interfering or abusive parenting can lead to the child creating two segregated sets of IWMs; one accessible to conscious awareness and compatible to what it is being told and one inaccessible to awareness, held at an unconscious level and unaltered by others' interpretations. Empirical studies have supported Bowlby's idea and have found that insecure individuals' IWMs are more fragmented in comparison to the better integrated IWMs of individuals who were classified as secure and Ainsworth further suggested that each attachment type is associated with different IWMs. More recent studies also support Bowlby, Ainsworth and other attachment theorists' beliefs concerning benefits from secure attachments. For instance, findings from Tulkin et al.'s longitudinal study suggested that middle class children faired better at school probably due to their earlier stronger attachments to their mothers (1970s, cited in Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Bowlby suggested that during the first few months of their lives infants use *social gestures with limited selectivity* to maintain proximity to caregivers. *Attachment behaviours* like crying, sucking, clinging, grasp and Moro reflexes or social smiles are part of their biological equipment to elicit caregiving and proximity. During the first three months infants' selectivity is very limited and they mostly respond to everyone; however, Fogel suggests that they have some

capacity to discriminate among people and they prefer the mother's voice, odor and face (2009, cited in Crain, 2005). During the next three months infants *narrow their responsiveness to familiar people* and their social smiles, babbling, etc is restricted to people they know. The third period lasts till the third year and is characterized by *intense attachment and active proximity seeking*. It is during this period that infants demonstrate *anxiety separation* and greet the caregiver/s intensely after absence and from about 6 to 8 months they start to exhibit fear of strangers. Dozier and Rutter suggest that the *fear response* period might be genetically programmed (2008, cited in Crain, 2007). Bowlby and Ainsworth suggested that now the infant uses the caregiver as a secure base and ventures to explore but ideally returns and maintains a brief contact before venturing out to explore again (1988, cited in Crain, 2005). Although Bowlby was not confident as to when exactly the sensitive period ended he agreed with Hess (1963, 1972, cited in Crain, 2005) that it ended at about six months when the fear response kicked in and this was perhaps further supported by findings from adoptions of Rumanian babies in 1989. Those adopted before the sixth month of their life were able to form strong attachments, whereas, 25% of those adopted after the sixth month exhibited social deficits (Crain, 2005). The last phase of childhood is mostly characterized by *partnership behaviour*, but Bowlby suggested that there are still limits to amount of separation children can tolerate. Furthermore, Bowlby suggested that at the age of 3 to 4 children's behaviour starts to consolidate into a *goal-corrected system,* because their cognitive development allows them to increasingly understand caregivers' intentions and as a result they can induce changes to suit their desires (1982, cited in Crain, 2005). Finally, even though Bowlby focused mostly on childhood attachment he believed it is important throughout the life cycle (from cradle to grave) and suggested that healthy adult relationships involve the secure base concept.

In 1954 Ainsworth moved to Uganda where she observed infants' behavioural differences in terms of separation and reunion with their mothers. She found three types of attachment, which she later replicated and further clarified as a result of her more elaborate studies in Baltimore in the USA (cited in Crain, 2005). In the 1970s

Ainsworth went on to develop a method for assessing infants' attachment, the Strange Situation (SS), which is a standard 20 minute experimental technique (cited in Crain, 2005). Ainsworth identified three types of infant attachment based on the behaviours observed during the SS. *The securely attached infant* used the mother as a secure base to explore; showed diminished interest when mother left the room; actively greeted her on her return and ventured forth for new exploration. *The insecurely - avoidantly attached infant* did not use mum as secure base; was independent and explored; ignored mum on her return and did not become upset when she left. Finally, *the insecurely - ambivalently attached infant* was clingy and pre-occupied with her/his mum; hardly explored and became extremely upset at her departure and ambivalent on her return (cited in Wood, Littleton and Oates, 2007). Home observations had revealed that securely attached infants had mostly received sensitive, responsive and consistent mothering, whereas, insecurely attached children had received insensitive, interfering and rejecting or inconsistent mothering respectively. Additionally, in the 1980s Main and Solomon suggested a further fourth classification *(Disorganised/ Disorientated)* of IAT because they found that some children displayed fearful behaviour, for instance, they approached their mothers but their faces were averted or they froze (10-15% in USA sample). They attributed this type of attachment to neglectful and/or abusive parenting (cited in Crain, 2005).

Moreover, attachment theorists suggest that because IWMs persist and influence people's lives, infant attachment types (IAT) are associated with later adult attachment types (AAT). Studies have been conducted to explore correlations between the SS/IAT and AAT. The Bielefeld longitudinal study, which started in 2000 by Zimmerman et al, and included systematic collection of 'life events' in the intervening period between the SS assessment and the teenagers AAT classification, found that the SS classification was a poor predictor for later AAT and that consequent life experiences had a strong impact. On the other hand, Hamilton's study in California in 1994 found a stronger correspondence (cited in Wood, Littleton and Oates, 2007). (There is much more empirical data from studies today that have found a much stronger connection between

the SS and later AAT). Additionally, Crain suggests that more research is needed in terms of variables that foster secure attachment because the relationship between maternal sensitivity and secure attachment is modest (Crain, 2005) and Van Ijzerdoorn's meta-analysis of attachment research found that mother's AAT can be predictive of their mothering style and of IAT (35%), but mostly in terms of secure attachment (1995, cited in Wood, Littleton and Oates, 2007).

Based on the basic assumption of attachment theory that IWMs determine our modes of relating later on in life Main and Goldwyn (1987, cited in Crain, 2005) used a standardized interview (AAI) to interview parents about their childhoods and developed a typology that correlates well with children's classification in SS. The emphasis of the interview was not on content but on the participants' way of describing their experiences. They basically found that those who were classified as *secure/autonomous* were able to talk about their childhoods openly, recognize importance of relationships, and had further been able to integrated negative early experiences and move on. Finally their children seemed to be more securely attached. Those classified as *dismissing* underestimated importance of relationships, denied influence of past childhood experiences and exhibited an avoidant attachment style towards their children. Finally, those classified as *preoccupied* seemed to be stuck in the past, had not resolved many past issues with parents, were enmeshed and mostly provided inconsistent parenting. However, Main and Goldwyn also suggested that there is another category that of *'earned secure'*, which suggests that ways of relating in the past and IAT can be modified, through positive consequent life experiences (1984, cited in Wood, Littleton and Oates, 2007).

In addition, Kim Bartholomew adopted a trait approach to describe AAT by using two dimensions (1990, cited in Wood, Littleton and Oates, 2007). In particular they found that adults with positive self image and sense of others will exhibit a secure/autonomous AAT. Individuals with high self esteem but negative opinion of others will probably exhibit a dismissing/avoidant AAT. Individuals with low

self esteem will display a fearful or preoccupied AAT depending on whether they fear others or view them positively.

Brief critical evaluation of attachment theory

Summarily, although attachment theory has generated significant insights it has been critiqued for neglecting the influence of positive experiences across the lifespan on people's adult attachment styles and for decontextualising relating. Furthermore, in some cultures 'closeness' is less valued and this type of attachment requires particular types of family structure and economic and social conditions. Miyake and Morelli explore cultural relativity of attachment styles and Gergen suggests that attachment theory is laden with western values and is blinded by other conceptions of relatedness (cited in Wood, Littleton and Oates, 2007). Finally, it is suggested that three basic attachment styles cannot be exhaustive or mutually exclusive or even stable within different temporal and spatial contexts.

Application of basic concepts of attachment theory to Maria's history in terms of differential patterns of attachment with each parent both in the past and currently and the influence of her IWMs of attachment on current functioning and relating style based on chronosystem events that relate to attachment

There is evidence that Maria was able to form a secure attachment during the sensitive period with her primary caregiver because Anna took a one-year sabbatical from her work to take care of Maria and most importantly was calm, affectionate and attentive, responding to the baby's innate drive to feel secure, and thus, facilitating the infant in forming an attachment and later using the mother as a secure base. Anna was also confident in her choices in terms of child rearing, which suggests that her mothering was not fearful but consistent. In terms of Antonio's participation we are led to understand that although he was fascinated by his new baby and loved her, his wife was the primary caregiver in terms of feeding and taking care of the baby's needs. Antonio preferred to admire mother and infant and interact with the baby in other ways; for instance, he held Maria affectionately and danced around the room while doing so.

Antonio's mode of responsiveness may indicate that he was somewhat uncomfortable with more direct interaction with the child and could suggest a link between his AAT and that of his mother's or it could reflect societal influences and beliefs concerning child rearing in the particular historical context.

But all in all, we can assume that during the sensitive period she was able to create healthy, integrated IWMs of both parents although she probably formed a stronger bond with her mother. Maria's early IWMs in terms of herself, her parents and their relationship must have been a positive/healthy one. We can also further assume that Maria's attachment type was secure because by the end of Maria's first year Anna returned to work and was replaced by a nanny, who also provided caring and consistent caregiving. According to Ainsworth's findings from the SS experiments Maria displayed a secure attachment style during separation. Of course Bowlby and Ainsworth raised questions in terms of whether day care or lengthy daily separations with the primary caregiver disrupts bonding or prevents babies from forming strong bonds. Additionally, more recent research findings suggest that stability of secure attachment was lower among those infants that were placed in day care or whose mums returned to work during the first year (Belsky et al; Thomas et al.; 1982, cited in Bronfenbrenner, 1986), but there is also evidence that suggests that even these infants become/are attached to their parents (Crain, 2005).

However, Maria's attachment to her grandmother, Stella, might have been somewhat different (ambivalent or avoidant) although there is not adequate information in terms of the grandmother's involvement with the child. We can perhaps suggest that Stella's AAT was avoidant to some point because she disagreed with Antonio and Anna's parenting style and suggested that they would spoil the baby. Concerning the issue of spoiling children Bowlby claimed that spoiling occurs only when parents take all the initiative from children or when they 'smother' them and do not listen to their cues and not when they are sensitively attentive and affectionate (Crain, 2005).

In the previous workshop it was suggested that Maria's initial frustration at kindergarten may have been the result of temperament characteristics, but we could provide explanations at other levels as well, informed by attachment theory or Erikson's approach, for instance. Within this perspective we could assume that the events that occurred during the period before kindergarten took a toll on Maria's relationship with both her parents and as a result adapting to a new environment might have caused further stress. And even though during this period the child is more wiling to understand parents plans and 'let them go' there are limits to how much physical separation a 3 or 4 year-old can tolerate. During this phase Maria suffered the unexpected and total loss of physical and emotional contact with her dad (brain injury) and her mother was preoccupied and had little patience and time to respond to the child's age appropriate needs sensitively. She was not adequately available to soothe her fears or encourage her to try new experiences and master new skills. Consequently, all this upheaval in her life must have led to shifts in her IWMs in terms of caregivers' reliability, relationship with her parents and therefore, her sense of self.

As mentioned above, our early attachment history and IWMs impact our later decisions, functioning and relating patterns both at a conscious and at an unconscious level. This becomes obvious as we read about Maria's choices in later developmental phases. To begin with, music and movement have always played an important role whether that involved her being soothed by music or her mother's singing, being danced around the room by her dad or being carried in a jogging carriage round the park as an infant. Later it involved music and dancing classes and during adolescence it was one of the options she considered in terms of a career decision. Finally, it is clearly stated that it is an integral part of who she is now. These facts would suggest that early IWMs of self in relation to music and dance and intenalisation (introjection) of relevant life experiences, which her parents provided, have definitely influenced her sense of self and life choices.

Furthermore, Maria's more recent and current relating style also seems to be consistent with early secure forms of attachment and

healthy IWMs in terms of relating. For instance, Maria's acceptance, during adolescence, that her best friend would take a different path might indicate a healthy secure/autonomous AAT, which practically means she can attach and become emotionally involved with others without becoming needy and dependant and that she also values independence and autonomy. Similarly, Maria and Tom's relationship, which is characterized by mutual trust and care, is probably the result of early healthy attachments and IWMs she established concerning others, self and relationships, and may also reflect her parents' relationship that she has internalised. Additionally, according to research findings mentioned earlier in terms of AAT her adult AAT corresponds with her IAT. Practically, it means that Maria has a secure/autonomous AA style which corresponds with her early secure infant attachment. Finally, the impact that her parents' attachment styles have had on Maria is also partly supported by Van Ijzerdoorn's findings in terms of 'intergenerational transmission of attachment' (1995, cited in Wood, Littleton and Oates, 2007).

Conclusion

Now that the five workshops have come to an end I would like to mention that during these workshops it has not been possible to exhaust all the possible explanations for all the events provided in the narrative, nor has it been possible to present the different perspectives in greater detail and to critically evaluate the many aspects of these theories. Additionally, I would like to add that although it would be challenging to produce an account of development where all theories and considerations are integrated, at the moment all theories concerning development are more or less partial because they focus on different areas and emphasis is placed on different aspects of development. However, many theories could be viewed as complementary; for instance, Piaget focuses on biological aspects of cognitive development, Bronfenbrenneur, on the other hand, emphasizes interactions between individuals and environment, which highly impact cognitive development, and finally, attachment theorists focus on emotional and social benefits of attachment and explore how early experience and unconscious

processes shape our growth. <u>Furthermore, *produced knowledges* always reflect researchers and theorists' assumptions, and therefore, it is necessary each time to situate the discussion of development, or any other issue for that matter, historically (Hollway, 2007, cited in Hollway, Lucey and Phoenix, 2007) and adopt *a both/and approach* in terms of thinking and understanding development. Finally, it is important to respect the plurality of psychologically adequate ways of developing and being.</u>

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** Dr Dianne Montague's tutorial notes