

Assessment Task 1: Reflective Practice

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Author Declaration

I, Michael Alford, declare that I am the sole author of the following work submitted as part of the assessment in HSH206. Particularly, I have not colluded with other students in the completion of this work; I have not duplicated work of my peers or from sources such as books, journal articles, or websites without adaptation and due citation; and I have not contracted a third-party to complete any component of this assessment on my behalf. I acknowledge that any of these activities would constitute Academic Misconduct as defined by Regulation 4.1(2) of Deakin University and may consequently attract penalties as defined in Schedule A: Penalties for Student Academic Misconduct.

Question 1

The developmental theory of Nature vs Nurture suggests that development is brought about through a complex interaction between these forces. Naturists emphasise the importance of our genes, overarching developmental processes, and built in biological influences carried through the generations, positing that all developmental milestones reached under this interaction are universal to all people. Nurturists, on the other hand, are of the view that our development is influenced directly by stimuli from our environment, such as parental influence, social trends and culture (Sigelman et al., 2019). While debate has been under way for sometime, recent evidence cited by Kuther (2019) confirms that researchers now agree that nature and nurture both play a role in the depth and breadth of our development.

One of the influences of nature in my own life revolves around the genetic issue of colour blindness. While this issue has not necessarily been of overly significant importance, it is definitely a part of my nature that has exerted an influence on my life from a reasonably early age. As explained by Sigelman et al. (2019), a child primarily inherits colour blindness from their mother, who is more often than not just a carrier of the defective gene, as it is linked with the X chromosome, and often does not effect women. Some of the difficulties I have experienced as a result of colour blindness include choosing the right colour pencils as a child, getting a drivers license and joining the military (as a job requirement for certain roles).

Nurture has influenced my life having grown up as a child of divorce. Garriga & Pennoni (2020) has outlined the many effects of divorce on the wellbeing of children, and I definitely remember seeing or feeling these as I was growing up. There are, however, instances where parental divorce and separation can be of benefit to children, such as where physical violence is a factor in the divorce, as this can lead to mother and children finding a place more conducive to healthy well being than the original family home.

Question 2

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory outlines the process by which we learn through the observation of others, and the consequences for such behaviours Sigelman et al. (2019). It is

through these actions that we develop understandings of other concepts such as reinforcement, punishment, self-regulation, and situational awareness. Kuther (2019) suggests that behaviours can be modelled by parents, immediate family, and other influential people in a child's social sphere as a method of punishing undesired or reinforcing desired behaviours as context may dictate.

A further developed example of Bandura's Theory is Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) Schaub & Tokar (2005). In adherence with this theory, performing the tasks of a particular role, I discovered that the initial training provided by my employer was enough to get started as a novice, but further development was required to stand out in the crowd and be noticed. I started at the beginning, of course, with not much more than a basic working knowledge of internet technology, but found along the way that managers and colleagues alike were visibly demonstrating the skills needed to advance my knowledge without any formal training methods / sessions. I found that I was able to copy the tasks they were performing, while adding my own additional knowledge to processes and procedures to extend my skills in these areas beyond those of others. By regularly applying these methods to multiple tasks at work and conversations with colleagues, I was able to make a name for myself both in my team, and with other teams and departments within the company. For a good while there were opportunities to learn more about the employer as a company and my colleagues about what to do (reinforcing desired behaviours), and what not to do (punishing undesired behaviours), so as to ensure that I was noticed for the right reasons.

Another example of the use of Social Cognitive Theory in my day to day life could be attributed to learning other skills of importance to me such as how to paint and repair the walls in my lounge room at home, and watching this skills being demonstrated via a Youtube video, and replicating the steps as demonstrated.

Question 3

The psychosocial changes an infant progresses through are primarily associated with the type of bonding to their primary caregiver Sigelman et al. (2019). It is in this period of development that the relationship with our primary caregiver (usually our mothers), leads

to the development of our attachment style, shaping future patterns of relating with others through our school years and into adulthood. As infants, this attachment style can be observed through scenarios such as Mary Ainsworth's Strange Situation Kuther (2019). It is in this time that our interest in exploring the world starts to develop as we begin to crawl and vision improves. It is also during this time that our attachment figure ideally provides a safe place for us to return to after periods of exploration and discovery. Mary Ainsworth's experiment demonstrated that not all primary caregivers provide an infant with an environment conducive to secure attachment, suggesting that insecure avoidant, insecure resistant, and insecure disorganised attachment styles can also be observed.

The roles of both parents can be seen as a positive element of the Microsystem in Bronfenbrenner's model, with the role of fathers gathering interest as a research topic from as recently as the late 1960s to today, with numerous examples of positive impacts on the psychosocial development of infants. The review of previously conducted research into Attachment Theory conducted by Palm (2014) has looked into the roles that both mothers and fathers play in the development of infants, discovering that the context of the family plays a significant role in determining which parent is the emotionally supportive figure of attachment. Further analysis within this study also suggests that there is further variability of attachment models than first considered, and that these models can adequately impart a secure sense of attachment in the absence of a maternal figure.

The Exosystem from Bronfenbrenner's model and the parent's economic situation can have a negative impact on the development of an infant. If the family as a whole is experiencing financial difficulty, for example, the father may have to work extended hours to provide for his family while the mother is caring for the infant (and working on the development of the infant's attachment style). The potential increase in anxiety this environment may cause within the family could cause both parents to inadvertently withdraw their attention from the child, imparting an insecure style of attachment on the child. Evidence confirming the malleability of this relationship between mother and child has been identified in the longitudinal study conducted by Pickard et al. (2017). The study examines the effect of maternal mindfulness at a prenatal stage, where mindfulness is defined as "the awareness that

emerges from paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment” (Pickard et al., 2017). The mother’s completion of these exercises, is later confirmed by the researchers to increase the effectiveness and likelihood of transmission of a secure attachment style to the infant after birth.

Question 4

The activity versus passivity debate in our development posits that we can be either intelligently pursuing and fuelling our own skill and knowledge development in particular areas, or we are subject to other forces exerting their influence on us, such as genetic traits, the people or personalities in our family, or other environmental factors (Sigelman et al., 2019). Kuther (2019) embellishes on this debate by explaining that activity refers to shaping our own experiences, while passivity refers to allowing the outside world to shape our experiences.

An unborn baby is entirely reliant on the mother as the provider of nutrients for the growing fetus. “Pregnancy, Drugs & Alcohol” (n.d.) goes through a list of the more commonly available teratogens potentially ingested by the mother, and the options available to mothers in cessation of their use. The listed details and advice on this page start to outline some of the dangers to the unborn child associated with drug and alcohol use, also suggesting that the child is a passive recipient of these substances, and is not making choices for themselves while in the womb. A recent study conducted by Lees et al. (2020), for example, has confirmed further that any exposure of alcohol to a child during pregnancy is known to have detrimental effects to the child. Considerable evidence exists regarding the damaging effect of excessive alcohol consumption has on an unborn child (and the incidence of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome, as a result), however, the data collected by Lees et al. (2020) specifically highlights evidence that the amount and frequency with which the mother consumes alcohol during pregnancy is of relative influence to the severity of damage alcohol consumption can inflict on an unborn child. The argument for passivity in the consumption of alcohol during pregnancy, is not of the child’s doing, and is therefore, a result of their environment.

Further evidence of the passivity of an unborn child comes from various sources relating to the physical environments a mother can frequent during pregnancy, and the exposure to

other teratogens such as radiation, lead, mercury and pesticides (Sigelman et al., 2019). As the mother is able to come into contact with these substances, it is clear that the foetus is unable to exercise discretion in these situations. A summary of just over 5000 meta analyses examining the link between environmental factors and birth outcomes has been completed by Nieuwenhuijsen et al. (2013). The outcome of this summary study has confirmed the connection between a number of birth defects and exposure to hazardous materials during pregnancy, further solidifying the passive nature of development to the foetus, in contrast to the activity of the mother.

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