

## Attachment Theory in Relation to Literacy/Reading Acquisition for Immigrants, Refugees, and the Disenfranchised

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### Abstract

The increase in immigrant, refugee and disenfranchised children in education is growing exponentially, and therefore, causing a demand for understanding the reasons that marginalized children are struggling to succeed within the current educational system. One response to this academic quandary is, as the research suggests, that attachment to the caregiver is a vital platform for all child development and learning Bowlby (1958). Another proposition is that attachment theory premises can be used to identify if and how attachment to a parent impacts attachment to literature and literacy development, which directly affects academic achievement. The association between attachment to the caregiver and a child's attachment to literature among Anglo-Germanic groups (Van Ijzendoorn, 1996) has been studied, and the results demonstrate a direct correlation between the rapport with the caregiver and literacy acquisition and reading readiness. The link between attachment and literacy/reading acquisition as a cognitive phenomenon has not yet been studied among children that comprise immigrant, refugee, and disenfranchised children, and therefore, is the hypothetical imperative for recommended research.

*Keywords:* attachment and literacy/reading-readiness theory, immigrants, refugees, second language literacy development

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## Introduction

Immigrant, refugee and disenfranchised children comprise a substantial percentage of the current global multi-cultural educational population in the United States. As of 2015, there were 17.9 million children who were under age 18 lived with one immigrant parent. These children account for 26 percent of the 69.9 million minority children in the United States as reported by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI). 84,994 refugees were admitted to the United States in the fiscal year 2016 per the State Department Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System (WRAPS). This is an increase of 22 percent compared to the 69,933 refugees that were admitted to the United States in 2015. Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Somalia, Myanmar (Burma), and Iraq, were the primary refugee seeking countries, accounting for 71 percent (60,204) of all refugees admitted in 2016. The number of children seeking asylum rose sharply to 26,600 in 2015, the highest level on record (an 112 percent increase from 2014 and a 236 percent increase from 2013). Additionally, 15 million children in the United States, or 21 percent, live in a state of poverty according to the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) representing the disenfranchised subgroup. Collectively, these groups comprise approximately 46% of all children living in the United States according to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

These traumatized children have become the complex, diverse populace responsibility and focus for educators. Instructors must not only educate students but also, attempt to instill in them the desire to learn, including the understanding of literature, in hopes that these students will have the opportunity for improved educational achievement. For immigrant, refugee and disenfranchised children to become literate, productive, prosperous members of society they should have occasions to encounter secure, emotional bonds to literature, as the foundation of all academic learning. This aperture highlights the disparity and supposed intellectual separation that exists between students from the dominant cultural or hegemonic group, and those from the lower socioeconomic groups particularly those that are newly arrived or hail from "othered," uncanny Ollivier-Garza (2016) subordinate socioeconomic and sociocultural backgrounds.

What is proposed is that with early childhood intervention, and secure emotional attachment to literature, one may increase reading receptiveness and reading aptitude for immigrant, refugee, and disenfranchised children.

## *Reading Receptiveness and Literacy Acquisition*

The concept of "reading readiness" is relatively new to education and has continued its development over the last four decades. Meanwhile, trepidation over instructing young children to read can be traced back to the early Greeks history when fables were taught to young children to promote goodness and soul development (Mason, 1984). Ancient Greeks were not concerned about pre-reading skills because they did not consider learning to read to be a task demanding enough to be worthy of being defined as a readiness stage (Venezky, 1975). Plato believed that reading should not begin until the age of 10. In fact, Plato, (1982) quotes Socrates' description of learning to read as follows.

Just as in learning to read, I said, we were satisfied when we knew the letters of the alphabet, which were very few, in all their recurring sizes and combinations;

not slighting them as unimportant whether they occupy a space large or small, but everywhere eager to make them out; and not thinking ourselves perfect in the art of reading until we recognized them wherever they are found. ( III, 402a).

This view of reading existed until the 1900s when Huey (1908) initiated the idea that there was more to learning to read than simply alphabet identification. Although Huey's ideas represented a shift in thinking about the skills involved in the reading process, little attention was given to the age at which reading instruction should begin. Many educators, including Huey, thought that age 8 was optimal for beginning reading instruction because developmentally the child potentially has enough conceptual knowledge to be able to understand the concepts in text form. Piaget (1969) also suggests that age eight was optimal for learning to read because that was the concrete operational stage and the opportune time to expound on language and thought. Currently, in Western Society, we initiate the reading process at or around age five, which some suggest is too early for many learners especially diverse groups of students. One might argue that reading receptiveness and reading readiness lies on a continuum of preparedness. Certainly, children that are linguistically, socially, or emotionally unprepared are equally underprepared to develop reading readiness skills. Immigrant, refugee and disenfranchised children fall into this camp. So, for these demographic groups to be receptive to reading, some specialized preparedness should take place prior to setting the expectation for acquiring reading readiness skills.

Reading receptiveness is a literacy skill, which involves active participation but does not necessarily require language production as an expressive skill. Having receptive skills is developing the ability to understand information, words, and sentences, and make meaning of what is read. Conversely, expressive language means being able to put thoughts into words and sentences, in a way that makes sense. Once receptive skills have been acquired, then reading readiness skills will indicate whether a child is ready to learn to read.

Reading readiness skills include oral language development and vocabulary, appreciation of books, phonemic awareness (ability to distinguish and manipulate individual sounds of language), and the understanding of basic concepts of print. Printed text represents spoken words; spaces between words are meaningful; pages written in English are read left to right from the top of the page downward, and books have a title, author, and illustrator. There should be a basic understanding of the alphabetic principle (letters represent the sounds of language), and there should be some ability to distinguish shapes (visual discrimination) and at least some letters of the alphabet. However, the idea that to achieve readiness certain information should be learned for meaning and cognitive development to occur is an assumption (Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1988).

For many children reading readiness is an assumed, automatically acquired developmental stage in their learning. However, for children that have never been in school, have been exposed to trauma, or have not developed reading readiness skills, being receptive to new learning concepts requires innovative ways of thinking and new instructional practices. These practices to improve reading readiness should be designed using what is known about attachment theory, cross-cultural aspects of attachment, how trauma affects learning and literacy acquisition. When children lack

reading readiness advanced, groundbreaking reading intervention design should be created and be based on the aforementioned theories for attachment to literature and learning to occur.

### ***History of Attachment Theory***

To understand how attachment theory is related to literacy/reading acquisition and readiness, one must understand attachment history and why secure attachment is important for the development of childhood cognition. Attachment theory is a psychological model that articulates a behavioral phenomenon and illustrates how humans attach to their caregivers to establish a healthy and foundational childhood base allowing the child to take risks and explore the environment in a safe and secure manner. The following are the major philosophers that have researched and established attachment theory concepts (Lorenz, 1935; Harlow, 1958; Bowlby, 1958; and Ainsworth, 1964). Lorenz and Harlow studied attachment with animals while Bowlby and Ainsworth made the transition to the study of human engagement.

Lorenz (1958), an Australian zoologist, performed attachment and imprinting research with goslings and ducklings. He studied the phenomenon and instructive behaviors of animal imprinting. Lorenz suggests that attachment is innate. To explore this phenomenon, he took half of an addling of eggs from a goose nest. He placed half of the eggs with the mother, and he kept the other half with and near himself. When the baby geese hatched Lorenz made mother duck quacking sounds, and the young birds followed him as though he was their mother. Lorenz found that the young birds were most impressionable within the first 12-17 hours. Lorenz also found that if no attachment occurs within the first 32 hours attachment is not likely to ever occur. He believed that once imprinting had taken place that it could not be reversed and if it did not transpire it could not be reversed.

Another attachment theorist was Harlow (1958) who studied attachment theory through an evolutionary lens. Harlow was an American psychologist renowned for his research on maternal-separation, needs and dependency, and social isolation experiments on Rhesus monkeys. His work exemplified the importance of caregiving and companionship with regard to cognitive and social/emotional development. These infant primates were highly dependent on the parent for sustenance, comfort, protection, and socialization. Harlow's experiments were controversial; they included subjecting newborn monkeys to isolation chambers for up to two years. Some of these primates exited the study being intensely disturbed depending on the amount of time that they were subjected to certain research criteria.

Harlow's studies on attachment with Rhesus monkeys during the 1950's and 1960's took several forms. One of the unsettling studies included the observation of infant monkeys reared in isolation. Harlow (1958) took the baby monkeys and isolated them from birth. They had no contact with each other, their mothers or anybody else. He kept some of these primates this way for three, six, or nine months. Some of the monkeys he kept for the first year of their lives. He then put them back with the other primates to see what affect their failure to form attachment had on their behavior. The result was disturbing because the monkeys engaged in bizarre behavior such as clutching their bodies and rocking compulsively. He observed that when the isolated primates were placed back in the company of other monkeys, the infant monkey babies were scared of the other monkeys but shortly after that became very aggressive. The isolated monkeys were unable to

communicate or socialize with other animals and were aggressive toward them as well. The isolated primates participated in self-mutilation, tearing hair out, scratching, and biting their arms and legs.

The conclusion of this observation was that deprivation of attachment has the potential to be permanently damaging. The extent of this abnormal behavior had a direct correlation with the amount of time that the monkey was kept isolated. Those monkeys held in isolation for three months were the affected the least, but those in isolation for a year or more never recovered the effects of deprivation. Harlow's research, although controversial, influenced the theoretical work of Bowlby who has become known as one of the most influential psychologists in attachment theory. Here is where attachment research moves from the evolutionary lens to the human social framework of study.

John Bowlby (1958) is a British psychologist, psychiatrist, and psychoanalyst well known for his work and his research in the area of child development. He is renowned as the founder of attachment theory. Bowlby's birthplace is London England whose family is an upper-middle-income family. He had five siblings and was raised by a nanny as is common in Britain for the middle-class during that period. The Bowlby family hired one nanny to raise the children in a separate nursery. This nanny took care of the children and had two nursemaids to help her. Primarily a nursemaid raised Bowlby. The nursemaid acted as a mother figure to him and his siblings. It is proposed that this potentially may have been the inspirational motivator for Bowlby's desire to investigate the notion of attachment theory.

Bowlby (1958) was the psychiatrist for the Child Guidance Clinic in London in 1930 where he treated numerous children with emotional difficulties. During this time, Bowlby studied and observed the importance of the child's relationship with their mother and/or caregiver with regard to their social, emotional and cognitive development. Specifically, his research shaped his belief about the link between early infant separations with the mother and later maladjustment. This knowledge led Bowlby to formulate his attachment theory.

Bowlby (1958) observed that children could experience extreme distress when separated from their mothers. He also noticed that even when children were fed and cared for by other caregivers, this did not diminish the child's anxiety. Bowlby's findings contradicted the dominant behavioral theory of attachment, which underestimated the child's bond with their mother believing that a child becomes attached to the mother because she is the one feeding the infant.

Bowlby (1969) defines attachment as a "lasting psychological connectedness between human beings" (p.149). He suggested that attachment could be understood within an evolutionary context and that the caregiver provides safety and security for the newborn child to enhance the chance of survival. Bowlby believes that infants could have a universal need to seek close physicality with their caregiver when circumstances became stressful or threatening (Prior & Glaser, 2006).

Bowlby formulated the basic tenets of the human attachment theory. Attachment theory draws on concepts from cybernetics, ethology, developmental psychology, information

processing, and psychoanalysis. The psychological description of attachment theory suggests that it is a matter pertaining to the function of the brain or some mental phenomena and therefore, becomes the subject matter of psychology.

Attachment theory deals with the affects the mind. The effect is primarily found to be a function of awareness, feeling, and/or motivation. When humans, namely children, normally attach to their caregivers they establish normal and healthy responses to the caregivers and the environment. Attachment theory is one explanation that describes the dynamics of short-term and long-term interpersonal relationships between humans.

Attachment is a profound and long enduring emotional bond that does not necessarily have to be reciprocal. One party could be attached and the other party not. One of the main characteristics of attachment is to seek out proximity regularly. This tends to occur especially when the person is upset or feels threatened in some way Bowlby (1969). Attachment behavior occurs not only in children but also in adults. Adult attachment towards the child includes responding sensitively and appropriately to the child's needs. Bowlby contends that this responsivity behavior appears universally similar across cultures. Attachment theory provides an explanation of how the parent-child relationship emerges and influences subsequent development.

Following in the footsteps of Bowlby, Mary Ainsworth also researched attachment theory using different methodologies than Bowlby. Ainsworth was an American-Canadian developmental psychologist. She was known for her work in emotional attachment with the Strange Situation Procedure, as well as her work in the development and confirmation of the components of attachment theory.

Ainsworth's methodology was innovative. Her methods not only made it possible to test some of Bowlby's ideas empirically but, also, helped expand the concepts of attachment theory. Ainsworth (1964) contributed the hypothesis that the attachment figure should be a secure base from which a newborn can explore the world. Also, Ainsworth articulated the concept of maternal sensitivity to infant gesticulations and how that behavior impacts the development of the newborn's attachment patterns to the mother.

Ainsworth (1964) used Bowlby's research as a base to determine individual differences in attachment. She used the Strange Situation Procedure to measure the types of attachment classifications. The attachment types were identified as secure, insecure avoidant, insecure ambivalent/resistant and anxious-disorganized-disoriented attachment. Ainsworth (1964) concluded that these attachment styles were the direct result of early interactions that the child has with the mother. An important fact is that all of Ainsworth's participants were Anglo-Germanic child and mother dyads.

Securely attached children comprised the majority of Ainsworth's (1971, 1978) studies. Securely attached children feel confident that the caregiver will be available to meet their needs. They use the caregiver as a secure base as is noted in Harlow's research (1958) to investigate their world and seek the caregiver in times of stress or uncertainty Main, & Cassidy (1988). Securely attached babies are quickly comforted by the caregiver when upset. Children develop a secure

attachment when the caregiver responds appropriately and promptly to their needs and has proved to be sensitive to their gesticulations. Bowlby (1980) states that an individual who has experienced a secure attachment “*is likely to possess a representational model of attachment figures(s) as being available, responsive, and helpful*” (Bowlby, 1980, p. 242).

Another attachment style identified by Ainsworth is the insecure avoidant attachment style. These insecure avoidant children do not orient to their attachment figure while exploring their surroundings. These children are very independent physically and emotionally. These children do not seek contact with the caregiver when they feel stressed. According to Ainsworth (1978) these types of children tend to have a caregiver who is not sensitive and rejects their needs. Another notable characteristic of the caregiver in this attachment style is that they may withdraw from helping the child during difficult tasks and are regularly unavailable during times of emotional distress.

Ainsworth (1970) identifies a third attachment style labeled as insecure ambivalent (also called insecure resistant). In this attachment style, children demonstrate an uncertain behavioral style towards the attachment figure. The child exhibits a strange and contradictory behavior. The child is clingy and dependent but rejects the attachment figure when they try to engage in any type of encounter.

The child fails to feel secure with regard to the attachment figure. Correspondingly, they exhibit difficulty moving away from the attachment figure to explore their environment. When under stress these children do not soothe with ease. They are not soothed by interacting with their caregiver. This behavior is the result of inattentive responses to their needs from the primary caregiver.

Ainsworth (1978) suggests that there is a caregiver sensitivity hypothesis. This is an explanation for the various attachment types. Ainsworth's Maternal Sensitivity theory argues that a child's attachment style is dependent on the behavior and interactions that the mother shows towards them. Ainsworth hypothesized that sensitive caregivers are responsive to the child's needs and respond to their interactions and needs accordingly. Responsive and attentive caregivers are the most likely to have securely attached children. Conversely, mothers who are less sensitive towards the child, respond inappropriately to the child's needs, which are not patient, or ignore the child, are likely to have the result of developing an insecurely attached child.

When infants have responsive caregivers, the result will be securely attached, children. Inconsistent interactions with the caregiver result in insecure ambivalent attached children. Sometimes the child's needs are met, and sometimes they are ignored. Insecure avoidant infants are associated with unresponsive care. When the communication needs have little to no influence on the caregiver, the child comes to believe that communication is of no use. Ainsworth's (1971, 1978) research provided the first research-based evidence with regard to Bowlby's attachment theory.

Ainsworth established that securely attached children develop a positive working self-perception and have healthy mental representations of others as being helpful. These children

view themselves as worthy of respect. Avoidant children think themselves unworthy and unacceptable, caused by a rejecting primary caregiver. Ambivalent children have a negative self-image. They tend to amplify their emotional responses.

### *Cross-Cultural Studies of Attachment Theory*

It is equally important to establish the cultural, anglophile and somewhat androcentric positionality of the aforementioned theorists and theories by reviewing the cross-cultural attachment studies. This establishment is important because of the influence and alteration to the original theoretical formation of attachment theory.

All of these theorists hail from anglophile backgrounds. This is an important aspect of this study since it potentially has an impact on the outcomes of the subjects involved. One must question as to whether this fact directly or indirectly affects conclusions of these studies. One must also examine how children that are from other cultures will interact and respond to Anglo researchers taking into account the researcher's positionality. The fact remains that culture is relevant because various societies will innately either support or reject the initiating party impacting research results.

Modern researchers of Cross-Cultural patterns of attachment Van IJzendoorn & Kroonenberg (1988) have used the foundational works of Bowlby and Ainsworth to study attachment theory. According to Bowlby's research, attachment has evolved over the history and evolution of the human species and exists to perpetuate human existence. Therefore, a foundational basis of attachment theory is that infants must become attached regardless of the cultural affiliation. The evolutionary perspective suggests that global adaptive behaviors actuate depending on the culture to which the child belongs to survive. This theory then forces infants to develop avoidant attachment patterns to meet the cultural demands. These avoidant attachment patterns require adaptations. The adaptations then become dependent on the known culture and childrearing arrangements. It has been found that the principal attachment patterns are universally normative suggesting that the secure attachment pattern is the primary strategy for social environment adaptation.

In the studies of Western countries, all infants became attached to their caregivers. The only children that were found not to attach had profound neurophysiological deficits comparable to being intellectually delayed. In Western Societies, the majority of infants are securely attached. Attachment security depends on the antecedents during childhood and leads to the child's ability to regulate negative emotions, establish healthy relationships and to develop cognitive skills in the areas of literacy and metacognition. Conversely, in cross-cultural studies, approximately 40% of infants are insecurely attached Van IJzendoorn & Kroonenberg (1988), and the number of securely attached infants varies considerably among cultures.

Cross-cultural studies of attachment review the universality of the components of attachment, the culturally specific dimensions of attachment patterns, and the generalizability of attachment patterns and constructs across cultures. This is important as a comparative because attachment to the caregiver has been studied cross-culturally, but attachment to literature for reading receptiveness has not been studied across cultures. The cultures that will be reviewed in

the cross-cultural study of attachment to the caregiver are various African cultures, Chinese, Israeli, Japanese and Indonesian cultures.

To explore the African cultures the researchers reviewed the work of Ainsworth (1967, 1977) in her exploration of attachment within multiple-caregiver contexts. Ainsworth found that when mothers shared caregiving responsibilities with other adults and older children infants still became attached to their mothers and used the parent as a secure base to explore the world.

Ainsworth began her work with Africans, and subsequent researchers followed her lead and revisited the research of attachment with other African groups. The Ugandans, the Gusii, the Hausa, the Dogon and the Khayeltsha peoples were studied. The Gusii study findings showed that the attachment outcomes of the Gusii children to their mothers were very similar to the Western results. The Hausa research showed varying results, and that may be due to the fact that the Hausa people are Muslim. Hausa men are allowed to marry up to four wives. Therefore, all of the caregivers share the social, verbal, and play tasks. The biological mothers take care of the physical care needs. These infants displayed attachment behavior to more than one caregiver. The principal attachment figure was identified to be the caregiver that held and interacted with the infant the most. The Dogon study demonstrated siblings as well as their biological mothers caring for the infants. The Dogon people are a farming people, and the infant mortality rate is 25% in the first year of life. This high mortality rate led to mothers feeding their children on demand and as frequently as the child requested. This study shows that there were more disorganized infants than in Western studies. Interestingly, a high percentage (88%) of the Dogon children were securely attached. 12% of the Dogon children were resistant and 0% avoidant. These results support that the Strange Situation procedure holds true as being classifiable. The lack of avoidant attachment may be a result of a high-stress situation and therefore producing differing results. The Khayeltsha study was comprised of mostly impoverished people. In this study, despite the poor living conditions, the majority of children were securely attached (62%). 26% were disorganized attached, 4% were avoidant attached, and 8% were resistantly attached. The summary of the African research shows that one sub-cultural group had similar results to the Western studies. The other three sub-cultures had some outside influence that may have impacted the research results from multiple wives to sibling caregiving and impoverished living circumstances. All of the studies, however, were able to use attachment theory components to define the outcomes of the research.

After Ainsworth's (1977) Van IJzendoorn & Kroonenberg (1988) studies included several cultures with regard to attachment theory. Van IJzendoorn & Kroonenberg (1988) researched the Chinese, Japanese, and Sudanese-Indonesian cultures.

Chinese culture was studied with regard to attachment theory. In Beijing, researchers wanted to know if the attachment and secure base phenomenon exist in Beijing. Do mothers and experts evaluate secure attachment similarly to those of Western experts? Do mothers and experts agree with each other about the ideal typical secure child? The patterning of attachment behaviors, as a result of self-identified behavioral descriptions, showed that Chinese parents, as well as experts, found that the concept of attachment is applicable within the Chinese cultural context. The Chinese mothers did not deviate from mothers of other societies when describing the relevance

of the secure-base phenomenon to their children and the Chinese mothers were in agreement in the description of the ideally secure child.

Israeli culture was researched, and the findings showed that 59% kibbutz infants are securely attached while 72% Israeli city infants were securely attached compared to 65-70% of infants being secure worldwide. Other factors may have influenced the Israeli study. The ecology of the home, separation anxiety issues, infants' temperament, and mother-infant play interactions were taken into account for this study. The outcome showed that regardless of any outside factors the primary impact for infants being securely attached was the level of maternal sensitivity.

The Japanese study had the most severe analyses of attachment theory. The issue here was the contention that there was an inhibition of "cultural blindness." Researchers in Japan claim that ambivalent attachment relationships are overrepresented, and avoidant attachment is underrepresented. The Strange Situation study is criticized as being invalid for Japanese infants who are used to continuous and close proximity to their mothers. Lastly, the concept of attachment may not be relevant to Japanese culture because of the cultural idea of *Amae*. *Amae* (as a culturally expected dependency) is specifically a representation of the production and reproduction of Japanese culture. Japanese social bonding is expected in the mother-child experience. A Japanese mother is expected to carry or hug her child as expected by the dependence inherently displayed in *Amae* way of life. The Japanese overprotect and have over-indulged their children. The Japanese mother monitors her child and embraces the *Amae* way, is rewarded with identity reinforcing responses like clinging behaviors by the child.

Lastly, attachment of Muslim families in Indonesia will be reviewed and is a relatively new study implemented in 1997. Indonesia is a highly populated country with approximately 200 million citizens. The Sudanese-Indonesian children usually have long periods of close physical proximity to their mothers. They are carried in a carrying cloth or *Slendang* during the child's first year of life. The children are breastfed on demand through the first 2-3 years of age. The children are allowed to sleep with their mothers until the age of four in the same bed as mother. When these infants are fussy, the mother soothes the child promptly. Sudanese-Indonesian women marry at a very young age, and the divorce rate is very high. Unstable and unpredictable jobs add to family instability. Poverty and health problems lead to high infant mortality rates. When studying the Indonesian attachment rate 57% were securely attached, 33% were resistantly attached, 7% were avoidant, and 4% fell into the category of other. The majority of Muslim children appeared to be securely attached, and secure attachment was associated with maternal support in the predicted way.

It is important to identify and recognize how various cultures display attachment. The cultural behaviors of refugee, immigrant and disenfranchised children coming from a variety of homelands may provide insights as to how attachment is perceived and addressed especially with regard to education. In addition, due to global migration, or circumstances of poverty, these children have experienced some form of trauma, and therefore the issues surrounding trauma needs to be recognized.

### ***Current Classification of Attachment Theory***

Currently, attachment has been defined as a disorder and renamed and reclassified by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-V) as Reactive Attachment Disorder. As of 2013, the DSM-V classifies Reactive Attachment Disorder as a trauma and stress-related disorder. This stress-related disorder is more commonly known as Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). In children, this disorder is especially relevant when the interactions with caregivers and the subject have included patterns of extreme or insufficient care.

Researchers in the field now view attachment as being a cross-cultural disorder as seen from a clinical perspective. Attachment research continued after Bowlby's death in 1990, and some argue that attachment should not be viewed as a trait or characteristic but instead should be considered as a behavioral condition resulting from traumatic influences. These traumas are cross-cultural and should be re-evaluated because attachment is not expressed identically in all human, social, or cultural categories as proven through the research of the cross-cultural patterns of attachment.

### **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder among Syrian and Iraqi Refugees**

Currently, Syrian and Iraqi refugees are among the most current displaced mainstream refugees in the United States. This demographic group exhibits a variety of signs and symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Robertson & Breiseth (2017). Among the symptoms observed and recorded are sleeplessness, irritability, inability to get along with others, intensive anxiety etc. These students need support and resources that include increased exposure to language, keeping them engaged and peer support students Robertson & Breiseth (2017). In addition, the British Council Report Delaney (2016) claims that language classes can help with trauma because of the structure and support systems that are put into place. Learning English as a second language is especially important to refugees in order to function in their newly adapted country. Therefore, it is proposed that reducing the stress for refugee students and providing structured support will lay the foundation for attachment to literature in the second language and provide a foundation for literacy acquisition.

### **Attachment as it Pertains to Literature and Literacy Acquisition**

Now that the history and current state of attachment theory have been established, it is important to understand the correlation between attachment, literature, and emergent literacy acquisition. Children appear to get some awareness into the characteristics of written language from an early age Teale & Sulzby (1986), and therefore it is critical to examine the circumstances under which all children are establishing their attachment to literature and written language. While current research does evaluate attachment and literacy acquisition, studies have not addressed attachment to literature for young immigrant, refugee, and disenfranchised children. All the while, this description of marginalized children exemplifies an ever-growing portion of the current student population included in the globalized educational system today. Educators are being asked to instruct these distinct and unique groups of students without the skill set needed to meet their educational needs. Studying how attachment to literature is perceived for disenfranchised children is an examination area that is in need of additional research based on the fact that we are living in an era of an ever-growing, and ever-changing academic forum with a new and diverse demographic composition.

The need for research regarding attachment to literature and reading readiness for these specific demographic subgroups deserves further research investigations. Researchers have approached attachment to literature in a variety of ways. They have looked at the adult to child relationship and attachment. They have taken into consideration developmental stages as it may or may not affect attachment to literature in tandem with attachment to the caregiver. They also have looked at the lack of attachment to literature as it corresponds with insecurely attached children.

Bus & Van IJzendoorn (1988) reviewed the relationship between mothers and their children to assess how and if the relationship impacts attachment security and performance on emergent literacy measures. The purpose of their study was to describe the relationship between the mother and child and analyze how this relationship related to the interactions with written text. These researchers deduced that early reading acquisition did not appear to be a natural process but viewed as an informal teaching and learning process between mother or caregiver and child.

While Bus, Belsky, Van IJzendoorn and Crnic (1997) focused on the quality of the parent-child interactions during book-reading assessments including the evaluation of the child-parent attachment security. This study reviewed toddlers of 12-20 months of age. This study included videotaping of the book-reading sessions. During the first and third interaction, the mother-child security level was assessed. The secure children would point and label during the reading sessions and were actively engaged with the text. The insecure-avoidant children were more distracted and less inclined to respond to the book. One important outcome was that the age of the child did have an impact on the interactions and reading-related activities over the child's development. Therefore, the implication is that one-year-olds and three-year-olds will respond differently to interactions and are at different states of preparedness for emergent literacy skills and measures aside from the mother-child security and attachment status. Another important finding was that the older dyads would pay more attention to the reading and the younger pairs focused more on the narration by the mother as told and represented by the pictures within the story.

Some researchers have found that mother-child interactions affect emergent literacy skills especially when mothers watch educational television, look at books, and read to their child. Unbeknownst to the mothers, they are scaffolding literacy for their children (Bruner, 1985; DeLoache & Mendoza, 1987; Ninio & Bruner, 1978). From a cultural perspective, it appears that mothers try to create and teach their children lessons that the child can perform with guidance Pellegrini et al. (1985). This could be interpreted as mothers having the sense to scaffold and teach their children instinctively where they are in the best place of learning.

The age of the child is another important consideration in attachment to literature and the mother-child relationship. It is assumed that from a cultural-historical perspective, older children will have the ability to pay more attention to the various aspects of reading. Younger, and less developed children are more in tune with mother's narration and interpretation of the text, pictures, and story within the literature.

In addition to the child's age, one should take into account the affective atmosphere during storybook reading since the environmental setting tends to have some impact on the reading

experience. Another consideration when studying instructional interactions, as identified by attachment theorists (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, Wall, & Bowlby, 1980), is that children who are more securely psycho-socially and emotionally attached to their mothers or caregivers, are also more likely to readily acquire new literacy skills when they are exposed to them by this same caregiver. Securely attached children are less disruptive and are behaviorally more cooperative especially compared to anxiously attached children (Bretherton, 1985). This could be interpreted as the mothers of securely attached children place higher demands for reading instruction on their children. Anxious children have less coping skills to deal with problems, especially problems that related to reading acquisition, take fewer risks and explore the environment less. Although there has been much discussion about attachment theory and the age that particular attachment behaviors occur and become stabilized, there is evidence that there is a high correlation between security of attachment between year one and six years of age (Main, Kaplan & Cassidy, 1985). This research looked at concurrent relations between attachment security and the written language activities during mother-child interactions and one of the factors that influenced children's written language experience is how often reading-related activities occurred in the context of mother-child interactions. These researchers investigated whether emergent literacy interaction of activities such as jointly reading a storybook, was affected by mothers who would pay more attention to reading functions during reading-related activities to surmise whether the child would be more advanced in emergent literacy skills of letter knowledge, print motivation, vocabulary, print awareness, phonological skills, and narrative skills. Another deliberation is that children who obtain emergent literacy skills are generally more curious about formal literacy and illicit reading instruction by their caregiver while keeping in mind that when there is more maternal or caregiver attention to reading, emergent literacy skills are emphasized.

### Conclusion

After reviewing how attachment pertains to literature, emergent literacy skill acquisition, and reading readiness, one should ask how this information applies to the current state of education today especially for marginalized student groups. Research has addressed developing literacy skills for Anglo-Germanic, African, Chinese, Israeli, Japanese, and Indonesian cultures. However, attachment to literature and reading readiness has not been studied as a part of immigrants to Western society, refugees assimilating into Western culture and how disenfranchised children of poverty within the United States gain access to literature in meaningful and long-lasting ways.

Examining the findings that address attachment to the mother-caregiver and attachment to written language, the hypothesis propositions that with early childhood intervention secure emotional attachments to literature and reading readiness may occur. There will potentially be an increase in reading receptiveness and reading aptitude for immigrant, refugee, and disenfranchised children. The key to this hypothesis will be to uncover the treatment(s) or intervention(s) that provide the greatest impact and opportunity for literary attachment and reading readiness for academic success for all marginalized children.

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