3.3 Stages of Attachment and the Role of the Father

AQA 7182 · about 50 minutes · Write-in edition

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Outline the indiscriminate attachment stage and give two behavioural features.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 Outline the specific attachment stage, its typical onset age and two signs of specific attachment.

(Total for Question 2 is 3 marks)

3 Outline the multiple attachment stage, examples of secondary attachment figures and one implication for family relationships.

(Total for Question 3 is 3 marks)

4 Describe Grossmann's finding linking fathers' behaviour to later attachment, and explain one contribution to understanding fathers' influence.

(Total for Question 4 is 3 marks)

5 Identify the attachment stage illustrated by the 8-month-old in the vignette and justify with two behavioural signs.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

6 Explain why Schaffer and Emerson's sample limits generalisability to current family structures.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

7 Give two reasons for inconsistencies in father-research and explain how each causes variation in findings.

(Total for Question 7 is 4 marks)

8 Discuss the stages of attachment and the role of the father, making balanced judgements and using evidence.

(Total for Question 8 is 16 marks)

Mark scheme · 3.3 Stages of Attachment and the Role of the Father

Question 1

names the stage as indiscriminate attachment or describes it as occurring at about 2 to 7 months oe — **B1**

gives one feature such as: infant accepts comfort from any adult, shows little separation anxiety and little stranger anxiety, but shows preference for human company over inanimate objects oe — **B1**

Answer: The indiscriminate attachment stage (around 2 to 7 months) when infants prefer people to objects, accept comfort from any adult, and show little separation or stranger anxiety.

Question 2

names the stage as specific or discriminate attachment and gives the typical age as around 7 to 9 months when it develops oe — **M1**

gives a sign such as showing separation anxiety when separated from a particular caregiver oe — **A1**

gives a second sign such as showing strong stranger anxiety or seeking proximity and comfort specifically from one primary attachment figure oe — **A1**

Answer: Specific or discriminate attachment develops around 7 to 9 months; signs include separation anxiety from a primary caregiver and strong stranger anxiety, plus seeking proximity and comfort from that one person.

Question 3

identifies the stage as multiple attachments or the formation of attachments to several people, typically after the specific attachment has formed, around 10 months onwards oe — **M1**

gives an example of secondary attachment figures such as father, grandparents, older siblings, regular carers oe — **A1**

gives an implication such as: infants can form stable emotional bonds with several caregivers so parenting responsibilities can be shared and social support networks matter for development oe — **A1**

Answer: The multiple attachment stage (around 10 months onwards) is when infants form attachments to several people such as the father, grandparents or regular childminders. This implies caregiving can be shared and the wider family network can support the child's emotional development.

Question 4

describes Grossmann's longitudinal finding that the quality of a father's play with the child was related to the child's later attachment outcomes in adolescence oe — **B1**

identifies that this suggests fathers contribute to attachment development through play interactions rather than primarily through caregiving routines oe — **B1**

explains that this supports the view that fathers have a distinct role, influencing social and exploratory aspects of development which contribute to attachment quality oe — **B1**

Answer: Grossmann found that the quality of a father's play was related to later adolescent attachment outcomes, suggesting fathers influence attachment through play interactions and contribute to social and exploratory aspects that shape attachment quality.

Question 5

identifies the stage as the specific (discriminate) attachment stage cao — **B1**

justifies with separation anxiety on being left with the childminder oe — **B1**

justifies with stranger anxiety or wariness when a stranger approaches oe — **B1**

justifies using age as supporting evidence, since around 7 to 9 months is typical for specific attachment to develop oe — **B1**

Answer: Specific (discriminate) attachment: Noah shows separation anxiety when his mother leaves and stranger anxiety when a stranger approaches, consistent with the typical 7 to 9 month onset.

Question 6

identifies the sample limitation: study used a relatively small, working-class sample from Glasgow in the 1960s oe — **M1**

explains why this is unrepresentative of present-day diversity in family structures, cultures and socioeconomic situations oe — **A1**

explains the consequence: stages and timing of attachment formation may differ in families with different childcare patterns, maternal employment, or fathers as primary carers, so the model may not generalise well to current UK families oe — **A1**

gives a brief real-world implication such as caution when applying the stages to policy or practice across diverse contemporary populations oe — **A1**

Answer: Schaffer and Emerson used a small, working-class Glasgow sample from the 1960s, which may not represent modern UK families with varied cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds and childcare arrangements. As a result, the stages and timing they described may not generalise to families where fathers are more involved, where formal childcare is used, or where cultural norms differ, so caution is needed when applying the model today.

Question 7

reason 1: methodological differences between studies, e.g. different measures of attachment, use of self-report versus observation, cross-sectional versus longitudinal designs oe — **M1**

explains effect: different methods capture different aspects of father involvement or vary in reliability, producing divergent findings about fathers as primary or secondary attachment figures oe — **A1**

reason 2: variation in family roles and cultural practices, e.g. some samples include many stay-at-home fathers or cultures where fathers are primary carers while others do not oe — **M1**

explains effect: genuine population differences mean fathers will appear more central to attachment in some samples than others, creating inconsistent results across studies oe — **A1**

Answer: Inconsistencies arise because studies use different methods that measure different aspects of fathering, and because samples vary in family roles and cultural norms; methodological variation affects what is measured and its reliability, while true population differences mean fathers play different roles in different samples, producing divergent findings.

Question 8

Level 4 Knowledge of the stages of attachment and the role of the father is accurate and detailed. Discussion is thorough and well balanced, using relevant evidence to support points and considering strengths and limitations. Evaluation is integrated and analytical, considering methodological issues, alternative explanations and real-world implications. Answers apply material appropriately and show clear, coherent reasoning with specialist terminology.	**13-16**
Level 3 Knowledge is generally accurate with some detail on stages and father-role research. Discussion shows evaluation and use of evidence but may be less thorough or somewhat unbalanced. Some application and analysis is present. The answer is organised and uses relevant terminology.	**9-12**
Level 2 Knowledge is present but limited or partial. Discussion contains some evaluative points but these are underdeveloped or descriptive. Evidence and application may be brief or only partly relevant. Specialist terms may be used inconsistently.	**5-8**
Level 1 Knowledge is very limited with little appropriate discussion or evaluation. The answer may be largely descriptive or disorganised and lack relevant evidence or terminology.	**1-4**
Level 0 No creditable content.	**0**

Indicative content:

- AO1: Schaffer and Emerson's stages: asocial stage (early weeks, similar responses to social and non-social stimuli, preference for faces), indiscriminate attachment (around 2-7 months, preference for people, accepts comfort from any adult, little stranger/separation anxiety), specific or discriminate attachment (around 7-9 months, primary attachment to one caregiver, separation and stranger anxiety, proximity-seeking), multiple attachments (around 10 months onwards, attachments to several people including father and other caregivers).
- AO1: Clear description of behavioural signs and typical age ranges is expected, and the idea that multiple attachments build on the specific attachment.
- AO2: Apply stages to brief vignettes to show understanding of behavioural criteria for each stage and appropriate age ranges. Use examples to show how separation anxiety or stranger anxiety indicate specific attachment, while acceptance of comfort from any adult indicates indiscriminate stage.
- AO1/AO2: Evidence concerning fathers: many studies find fathers are rarely the primary attachment figure in conventional samples; Grossmann's longitudinal research linking fathers' play quality to later attachment outcomes; Field's experimental and observational work showing fathers can adopt expressive caregiving when primary caregivers and form secure attachments.
- AO3: Evaluative points about Schaffer and Emerson: strengths include a naturalistic longitudinal design that showed typical progression across stages; limitations include an unrepresentative, historical sample, reliance on mothers' reports and retrospective elements, and changing childcare patterns that may alter timing and prevalence of stages today.
- AO3: Evaluation of father research: methodological diversity and sample differences produce inconsistent findings; some studies emphasise play and stimulation as fathers' key contribution, others focus on sensitivity and caregiving; Field shows role flexibility while other work emphasises traditional maternal primacy. Discuss issues of operationalisation of attachment, cultural and socioeconomic variation, and whether attachment functions can be shared across caregivers.
- AO3: Consider alternative explanations such as role of experience and opportunity for interaction, gender-role socialisation, and biological influences. Discuss practical implications for parental leave policy and early-years practice, and caution when generalising findings across different family structures.
- AO3: Conclude with a balanced judgement that Schaffer and Emerson's stages remain a useful descriptive framework but must be applied flexibly in light of social change and methodological limits, and that fathers can and do contribute to attachment in multiple ways, with evidence supporting both distinct paternal roles and the capacity to form primary attachments under certain conditions.