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Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

CORINE DE RUITER and MARINUS H. VAN IJZENDOORN

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980) emphasizes the importance of a secure attachment relationship between care-giver(s) and child for socio-emotional development throughout life. Thus far, empirical research has borne out this supposition. The relevance of attachment theory to cognitive development and education is a relatively new area of interest. This issue presents theoretical and empirical contributions on this topic.

De Ruiter and van IJzendoorn present a brief review of attachment theory and recent developments in this area of research. Subsequently, the extant research literature on the relationship between attachment and cognitive development is reviewed, with special emphasis on exploratory and problem solving competence, parental teaching styles and high-risk samples. The chapter concludes with the presentation of a heuristic model of the relationship between attachment and cognition. The authors propose that a secure attachment, relative to an insecure one, has several positive influences on the child's academic development: increased willingness to cooperate with teachers and peers, increased mastery motivation, higher self-esteem, and lower test anxiety.

Grossmann and Grossmann focus on the role of emotion regulation in cognitively challenging situations. They propose that the internal working model of attachment serves as an emotional appraisal system, which they illustrate with findings gathered with the Adult Attachment Interview. Further, they provide empirical evidence that failures in emotion regulation in young children negatively influence cognitive performance in stressful situations.

Moss, Parent, Gosselin and Dumont provide an integration of the theoretical work of John Bowlby and Lev Vygotsky, thereby offering a conceptual basis for understanding the developmental interdependency between (meta-)cognitive and socio-affective processes. The authors present data from a study that compared collaborative styles of securely and insecurely attached mother-child dyads during the preschool period. Mothers of securely attached children were more inclined to verbally monitor and evaluate their children's activity in a task situation, while secure preschoolers showed more advanced development in the use of metacognitive strategies during collaboration.

Bus provides an integrative review of her research on the relationship between attachment and emergent literacy. She has found that the quality of attachment between mother and child affects the quality of assistance of the mother during interactive reading sessions. Also, securely attached dyads spend more time reading and the reading interactions are more rewarding. Finally, it could be demonstrated that secure preschoolers showed more advanced emergent literacy skills. These findings

support the notion offered by Moss and her colleagues in the previous chapter, that socio-affective and cognitive processes in development are interdependent.

Takahashi reports on a study in which mothers and their preschool children performed a referential communication task. Attachment security was studied in relation to the mother's tendency to control the child's task-irrelevant behaviors and errors in decoding. In contrast with the previous chapters, attachment security was assessed by the mother's perception of the child's relationship to her, and not with the Strange Situation. The author found that mothers of securely attached children tended not to control their child's off-task behaviors and that their children made more errors in decoding. She suggests that the discrepancy with findings from studies with Western children may be due to cross-cultural influences.

The chapters in this issue attest to the fruitfulness of the theoretical and empirical integration of attachment theory in studying cognitive development. Affective and motivational components, as revealed in the quality of internal working models of attachment, can have an impact on cognition and learning. Future research could extend the reach of the current approach into the school years, and focus more directly on the relationship between attachment and educational issues.