

# The Many Ecologies of Infancy

## Chapter 2

# INFANT, MOTHER AND FATHER

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# Direct effects – heritability

- **Monozygotic** – twins born from the same egg and fertilized by a single sperm share 100% of genes
  - **Dizygotic** – twins born from different eggs and fertilized by different sperm
  - Typical twin studies involve comparing the extent to which certain characteristics are shared by
    1. monozygotic twins reared together or apart or
    2. monozygotic and dizygotic twins
- ⇒ If a characteristic is inherited, identical twins even if reared apart should be more alike, just as identical twins should be more alike than fraternal twins

# Direct effects – heritability

- Adoption studies – if a characteristic is inherited, biological parents and children should be more alike than adoptive parents and children
- **Epigenesis** is the developmental process whereby each successive stage of development builds on foundations laid down by preceding stages

# Direct effects – parenting

- 4 major domains of parenting
  1. Nurturant caregiving: promoting infants' basic survival, providing protection, supervision, and sustenance
  2. Material caregiving: manner in which parents structure infants' physical environments, provision of toys and books and restrictions on physical freedom
  3. Social caregiving: parental efforts to involve infants in interpersonal exchanges, soothing, touching, smiling, and vocalizing
  4. Extradidactic caregiving pertains to how parents facilitate infants' understanding of the world around them, directing babies' attention to and interpreting external events, and providing opportunities

# Direct effects – parenting

- 2 interactional mechanisms by which parents affect infants
  1. Specificity principle: specific forms of parenting at specific times shape specific infant abilities in specific ways: vocabulary level was specifically sensitive to maternal verbal responsiveness and not to how many different words mothers used during mother–infant exchanges
  2. Transactional principle: infants shape their experiences with parents just as they are shaped by those experiences

# Indirect effects

- **Attachment** – relationship between infant and caregiver
- Indirect effects: e.g., paternal influences on infant development are indirectly mediated through the father's impact on the mother
- The most common reason for **single parenthood** is that an unmarried woman gives birth to an infant conceived either in a romantic relationship or by donor insemination

# INFANTS, SIBLINGS, PEERS

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# Sibling relationships

- Siblings in many non-Western, non-industrialized countries assume a major responsibility for childcare
- Siblings in Western, industrialized countries seldom assume any responsibility for infant caregiving, and sibling relationships appear to incorporate features of both the infant–adult and infant–peer systems

# Developing relationships with other children

- Development of infant–peer relationships
  1. In the first year, social interaction between infants is not frequent, and when it does occur it is not sustained for very long
  2. Between 12 and 18 months of age, infants become aware of their feelings and begin to realize that others have feelings as well, leading to increases in empathy and prosocial behavior
  3. By 2 years of age, infants observe their peers' negative emotions carefully and attempt to respond appropriately

# Developing relationships with other children

- **Peer sociability:** smiling at peers, initiating play, imitating, and taking toys from peers
- **Active peer refusal:** refusing peers' attempts to play, turning back to peers, and moving away from peers
- **Passive peer avoidance:** watching rather than participating, and acting as if he/she does not notice peers' attempts to initiate play
- Negative social behavior in infancy is not necessarily a sign of poor social competence
- Infants who experience warm, sensitive parenting and grow up in harmonious families tend to be well adjusted socially, unaggressive, and popular
- Caregivers can play a significant role in facilitating infants' peer relationships

# NONPARENTAL CARE OF INFANTS

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# Nonparental care

- e.g., daycare, child care, early childhood education programs, and babysitting
- here: **daycare** = all nonparental care
- Families of higher income are likely to enroll their infants in daycare centers that are of high quality and families in the lowest income brackets are likely to enroll their infants in high-quality federally funded programs such as Head Start.
- Working poor- and middle-income families are most likely to have other relatives care for their infant or place infants in low-quality programs.

# Measures of daycare quality

- **Structural measures of child care context**
  - group size
  - teacher–child ratios
  - teacher training
- **Process measures of child care context**
  - language-reasoning experiences
  - caregivers' interactional competence with the children
  - breadth and diversity of the learning curriculum

# Impacts of daycare on infant stress

- Full-day placement in daycare is emotionally and physiologically stressful for most infants
  - Securely attached toddlers had markedly lower cortisol levels in the daycare centers than insecurely attached toddlers as long as the mothers were also present
  - Cortisol levels were similarly elevated in securely and insecurely attached toddlers when they were separated from the mothers
- ⇒ Secure child–mother relationships buffered some of the stressfulness of entry into daycare

# Attachment with nonparental caregivers

- Secure relationships to care providers are less common than secure relationships to mothers or fathers: 60–70% of parent–infant attachments are secure, whereas only 42% of attachments to nonparental care providers are secure
  - No differences in the proportion of secure attachments whether or not infants had experienced nonmaternal care
  - Parent–child interactions at home differ, e.g., parents interact more intensely during shorter time intervals with children who attend daycare
- ⇒ Parenting continues to shape the quality of child–parent relationships even when children experience daycare



# Effects of daycare on infants

- Infants from low-income families tend to benefit when they attend stimulating daycare settings
- Infants from middle- and high-income families do not necessarily benefit from daycare; they may even show detrimental effects

# **SOCIOECONOMIC CLASS, CULTURE, AND INFANCY**

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# Social class

- SES = parental education + income + occupation
- Parents instill values that will maximize their children's chances of success in the social station in which they are likely to find themselves as mature adults
- E.g., middle-class mothers encourage their infants to converse and to expand their communicative abilities more than lower-class mothers
- Differences across socioeconomic status in maternal and paternal holding, maternal carrying, and paternal caregiving
- But ethnic differences in maternal availability, affection, caregiving, and stimulation between African-American and European-American parents irrespective of SES

# Culture

- Reasons for doing cross-cultural studies
  1. People are always curious about development in foreign cultures
  2. Documenting the full range of human experience and establishing valid developmental norms
  3. Facilitates the quest to understand forces at work in development by exposing variables that are highly influential but may be “invisible” from a monocultural perspective
  4. Permits natural tests of the universality of psychological constructs

# Parenting and culture

- Parents' ideas about child development and child rearing contribute to the “continuity of culture” by helping to define culture and the transmission of cultural information across generations
  - E.g., mothers from individualist cultures (US, Belgium, Italy, Israel) who scored higher on neuroticism (i.e., the tendency to worry a lot, be nervous, emotional, and insecure) reported less competence and satisfaction in parenting, but mothers from collectivist (Japan, Korea, Argentina) cultures who scored higher on neuroticism reported more satisfaction with parenting
- ⇒ Neuroticism undermines feelings of competence and satisfaction in individualist cultures where independence is valued, but it does not in collectivist cultures because such social sensitivity is a valued trait and thus does not undermine mothers' satisfaction with parenting

# Niches

- 3 ways in which niches differ
  1. physical circumstances
  2. ideology (i.e., worldview)
  3. customs (e.g., mother–child sleeping arrangements)

# Cross-cultural differences in motor development

- Hopi infants begin to walk alone late
  - Balinese infants follow a different set of stages on their way to walking
  - African Ganda and Wolof infants tend to be more advanced in sensory, psychological, and motor development than European American age norms
- ⇒ Differences are probably due to differences in child rearing, not genes
- Immigrant parents' parenting behaviors may acculturate more quickly or readily than parenting beliefs