Development Part I

Socioemotional Development
Overview

• Attachment bonds
• Types of attachment relationships ("strange situation")
• Causes and consequences of attachment styles
• Biological basis of attachment
Socioemotional Development

• The child’s emerging capacity to function as a social and emotional being

• **Attachment**: a strong, enduring emotional bond formed between two individuals (earliest is between infant and caregiver)
Earliest interactions

• Identifying Primary Caregiver

• From a very early age, infants are interested in face-to-face interaction.

• Social referencing
  • When infants begin to crawl (7 to 9 months), they begin to rely on facial cues of parent -- for instance, if the infant crawls into a dangerous or inappropriate situation

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6cqNhHrMJA
Separation Anxiety

• Infants begin to feel *separation anxiety* between 6 and 8 months.

• Bowlby: Infants have a need for contact comfort, which provides the infant with a secure *base*. 
Why do attachment bonds form?

- Survival value (imprinting)
- Reinforcement (food)
- Need for psychological comfort (Harlow experiments)
Imprinting

• Seminal work by Konrad Lorenz: study of animal behavior in natural environments

• Within the first 12 hours of life, if ducklings see something moving, they will **imprint** on the object and follow it -- they form a sort of “attachment” to the object.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LGBqQyZid04&feature=related
Harlow’s experiments

• Do infants bond with the mother because she feeds them or because she provides psychological comfort?

• Harlow experiment with wire or terrycloth monkey
Video: Harlow Monkeys (1 min)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MmbbfisRiwA&feature=related
Bowlby theory

• Caregivers serve as **secure base** from which infants can explore

• Children develop **internal working models** about caregivers typical responses

• These models guide attachment expectations, feelings, and behaviors throughout life
Strange Situation

- Identified different types of attachment relationships

- Attachment is assessed by observing behavior of children in the *Strange Situation*

- Observing a child’s responses to brief separations and reunions with the caregiver

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTsewNrHUHU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTsewNrHUHU)
Video: Attachment Styles (~ 4 min)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PnFKaaOSPmk
Types of attachment relationships

- **securely attached**
- **insecure attachment:**
  - avoidant
  - ambivalent

*Disorganized (not mentioned in book)*
Causes of attachment styles

- Parental influences
- Cultural differences
- Temperament
Attachment Styles: Parental Influences

- **Secure**: empathic, consistent, responsive parenting
- **Avoidant**: parent is rejecting; lacks warmth; uncomfortable with emotions and vulnerability and physical contact
- **Ambivalent**: parent is anxious, inconsistent; misperceives the child’s needs; sometimes overly-intrusive, sometimes unavailable
- **Disorganized**: child’s experiences with caregivers are so disruptive and chaotic that the child cannot form coherent beliefs about what to expect
Attachment Styles: Cultural Differences

• How often are infants left alone?
• Do infants co-sleep?
• Are infants encouraged to play with toys?
Cultural Differences in Patterns of Attachment

Notice how the patterns of attachment vary from one culture to the next. What childrearing and cultural factors contribute to these differences?

Attachment Styles: Temperament

• Characteristics within the child
  – Temperament
    • How sociable is the child
    • How generally fearful is the child

Most shy children are born that way, says Jerome Kagan, Ph.D., a professor of psychology at Harvard University and a Parents adviser, who conducted a large, long-term study of the temperaments of children ages 4 months to 11 years. An oversensitivity to new people and situations seems to be genetic and manifests itself in physical as well as psychological ways.
Video: temperament research by Kagan
(~5 min)

This video shown in class is not available online but here is a similar video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVJBzvaylH8
Attachment Styles: “Consequences”

- In the U.S., securely attached infants when they reach preschool/kindergarten:
  - Are more positive in emotional expressions
  - Are more positively evaluated by peers
  - Show more helping behaviors
  - Are more likely to have close friends
Attachment Styles: “Consequences”

• Hazan & Shaver (1987) assessed adult attachment styles and found 60% secure, 20% avoidant, 20% resistant – similar percentages to those found in infancy

• Adults’ styles of attachment are related to the quality of their romantic relationships

• They argue that, from childhood experiences, people develop schemas about the dependability of others and the worth or lovableness of the self -- these schemas are maintained into adulthood

Do a personality test to find out your attachment style https://yourpersonality.net/attachment/index.php
Attachment Styles: “Consequences”

- Fraley and colleagues (2013)
  - Assessed maternal sensitivity in 1,364 infants at 6 mo, 24 mo, 36 mo starting in 1991
  - Followed 707 infants through age 18 when 290 were in romantic relationships
  - Maternal sensitivity was correlated with measures of young adult relationship quality
  - But the low-to-moderate correlations (up to .29) suggest that adult schemas are also based on other factors and later experiences
Does attachment style cause an outcome?

- There is a debate over the mechanisms behind these correlational findings.
Early attachment is not destiny

• Infants may have different attachments relationships with different family members

• Attachment relationships can change as family circumstances change

• Mentors & friends provide alternative attachment models

• Early attachment experiences give us a push toward secure or anxious relationships, but children and adults are resilient and can learn from relationships (good and bad) and improve them
Biological Basis of Social Development

- **Hormone Oxytocin**
  - “feel good” hormone
  - Plays important role in childbirth and breastfeeding
  - Recent studies suggest larger roles

- Rodent studies
  - Injection of oxytocin in mice flips brain into maternal state
  - Enhanced perception in left auditory cortex for pup calls (Marlin et al., 2015)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5rKEW9UpvSM
Oxytocin & Romantic Attachment

- Schneiderman et al. 2012 study
- High levels of oxytocin seen in early phases romantic attachment
- Couples with higher oxytocin levels at three months were more likely to be together six months later
Brain activation & Romantic Attachment

- Brain regions implicated in parental–infant attachment are also activated in romantic relationships (Acevedo et al., 2011)

- Involvement of dopamine reward and basal ganglia systems, such as the ventral tegmental area (VTA) and dorsal striatum
Enhancing Social Functioning

• Recent studies examine oxytocin nasal sprays
  – Improved perception of emotional state
  – Suggestive evidence that social functioning can be improved in some patients with autism (Andari et al., 2010)