Attachment Theory and Attachment-Based Interventions

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Outline for Today

- Early childhood tasks and social fields
- Attachment theory basics
- Measurement of attachment
- Intergenerational transmission
- Outcomes
- Approaches to intervention
Section A

Early Childhood Social Fields and Tasks
Early Childhood Social Fields and Tasks

- Who/what influences early development?
- In what domains?
Social Fields across the Life Span

Major EC tasks = language acquisition & impulse control

Child care
- Family of orientation
- School
- Peer group

Child’s school
- Intimate relationships
- Family of procreation
- Postparental family
- Peer group

School transition

Early & middle childhood
- Adolescence
- Early adulthood

Middle age

Old age

Adapted by CTLT from Kellam et al., (1975) Mental Health and Going to School. Chicago, IL; Univ. of Chicago Press.
Attachment Theory Basics

- Early childhood tasks and social fields

- Attachment theory basics
  - Behavioral systems
  - Basic tenets
  - As applied to parenting
Behavioral Systems

- Exploratory system
- Fear system
- Attachment system
Children need their primary caregiver(s) to be:
- A secure base for exploration
- A safe haven for protection
Circle of Security

Source: Circle of Security® [http://www.circleofsecurity.net/]. All Rights Reserved.
Children’s perceptions of their caregiver form the basis for “internal working models”:
- Of the self
- Of the caregiver
- Of others
As individuals grow to adulthood,
- These internal working models influence their interpersonal behavior
Attachment Theory as Applied to Parenting

- Internal working models shape...
  - Parents’ interpretation of their children’s needs
  - Parents’ responses to children’s needs
Measurement of Attachment

- Early childhood tasks and social fields

- Attachment theory basics

- Measurement of attachment
  - In children
  - In adults
    - Per developmental psychology
    - Per social psychology
Mary Ainsworth’s Strange Situation Procedure

- Mary Ainsworth’s “Strange Situation” procedure:
  1. Parent and child introduced to room
  2. Child allowed to explore
  3. Stranger enters, parent leaves
  4. Stranger gears behavior to that of child
  5. Parent returns, greets/comforts, leaves again
  6. Stranger leaves, child is alone
  7. Stranger returns, gears behavior to child’s
  8. Parent returns, greets/comforts, stranger leaves
Mary Ainsworth’s Strange Situation Procedure

- Observations of child’s behavior
  - Exploratory
  - Reactions to parent’s departures and returns

- Classification of child’s behavior upon parent’s return
## Mary Ainsworth’s Strange Situation Procedure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Observed <em>infant</em> behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
<td>Insecure - avoidant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Infant is detached on separation, avoids parent on reunion, engages in displacement exploration that is devoid of true interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
<td>Secure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Infant engages in positive exploration, is upset by separation but gives a positive response to parent upon reunion, with a rapid return to exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong></td>
<td>Insecure - resistant/ ambivalent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Infant is preoccupied with parent’s availability. Shows distress on separation and anger/ambivalence upon reunion and is difficult to comfort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Insecure - avoidant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Expected <em>parent</em> behavior (not necessarily during procedure)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent is insensitive to infant’s signals and deflects proximity seeking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Parent is consistently sensitive and responsive to infant’s signals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Parent is inconsistent in response to infant. May vary between insensitive and intrusive.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>