

The Attachment Dance

Dr. Karyn Purvis

Empowered to Connect, April 8 - 9, 2011

Antecedents of Secure Attachment

- Parental responsiveness
- Acknowledgement
 - Moms acknowledge their babies actions and words
- Affectionate pickups
 - Moms pick babies up frequently and affectionately
- Competent holdings
- Sensitivity to signals
 - Moms respond to signals of their babies behaviors

Consequences of Secure Attachment

- Sociability with adults
 - Securely attached children are more likely to enjoy interaction with adults
- Pro-social with peers
 - Securely attached children exhibit play which is more social and less aggressive
- Interactive with peers
- Persistence/Enthusiasm on tasks
 - Securely attached children have good learning skills and are able to ask for help from adults

Behavioral Systems

- Attachment
- Exploratory
- Fear-Wariness
- Affiliation

Inter-Generational Transmission of Attachment

- Three generations assessed using Strange Situation and Adult Attachment Interview (AAI)
- Mothers' AAI classifications were stable through pregnancy until testing of infant
 - 90% (3 category) : 77% (4 category)
- Mothers' AAI classification predicted infant classification
 - 81% (3 category) : 68% (4 category)
- Mothers' AAI classification predicted Grandmothers' classification
 - 75% (3 category) : 49% (4 category)

Adult Attachment Interview: TCU Study

- No significant difference in distribution of classifications

- Mothers Involving Anger (M = 4.45)
- Fathers Involving Anger (M=2.0)
- Mother's Unresolved Loss (M=3.24)
- Fathers (M=2.06)

Thematic analysis yielded recurrent themes:

- Alcoholism (7 fathers, 1 mothers home)
- Spousal abuse (3 mothers homes)
- Loss of sibling (6)
- Loss of child (1)
- Loss of spouse (2)
- Renewed mourning (9)

Adult Attachment Interview (AAI)

- *Expected Classifications* for low-risk samples
 - 60% Free/Autonomous
 - 20% Dismissing
 - 20% Entangled
 - 2% Unresolved/disorganized with regards to loss or trauma

Resources & Recommendations

- www.empoweredtoconnect.org
- The Connected Child: Bring Hope and Healing to Your Adoptive Family (Purvis, Cross & Sunshine)
- Attaching in Adoption: Practical Tools for today's Parents (Deborah Gray)
- Online Attachment Questionnaire
 - www.yourpersonality.net/relstructures/
- TCU Institute of Child Development
 - www.child.tcu.edu