

# 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](http://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/](http://www.yourpersonality.net/relstructures/)
- TCU Institute of Child Development
  - [www.child.tcu.edu](http://www.child.tcu.edu)