

The Role of the Father in Child Development

With Focus on The Early
Years



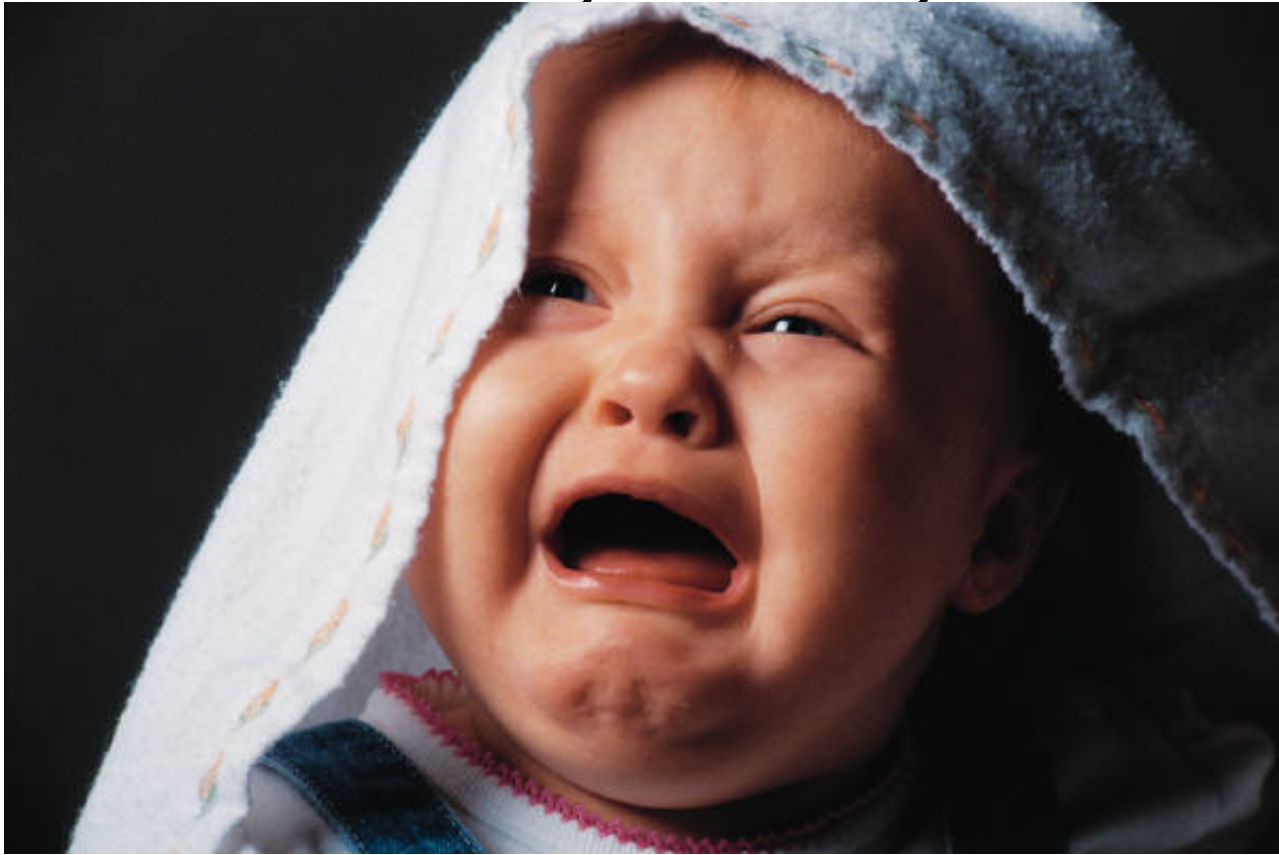
Outline

- **Forming attachments**
- **Individual differences**
- **Relative importance**
- **Socialisation**
- **The 'essential' father**
- **Family context**
- **Together and apart**

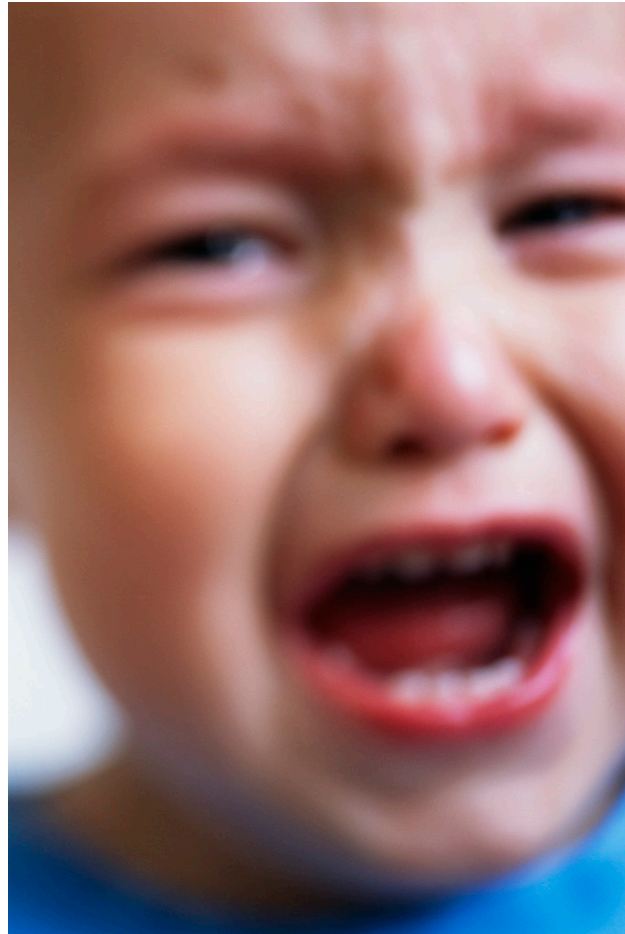
Becoming attached

- **How?**
- **To Whom?**

Babies can't approach or hold on--
but they can cry!



Adults respond instinctively to cries









Crying elicits responses that link features of the adult with positive feelings of relief, and confidence in the person's reliability

To Whom?

Babies form attachments to both parents at the same time if both are attentive even when one is more involved.

Individual Differences







**Degree of trust
varies depending on
sensitivity, affecting
security of
attachment**

No intrinsic differences in
parenting ability --
Expectations and greater
involvement build maternal
skills
Make the mother-child tie
stronger and more
influential.

Socialisation

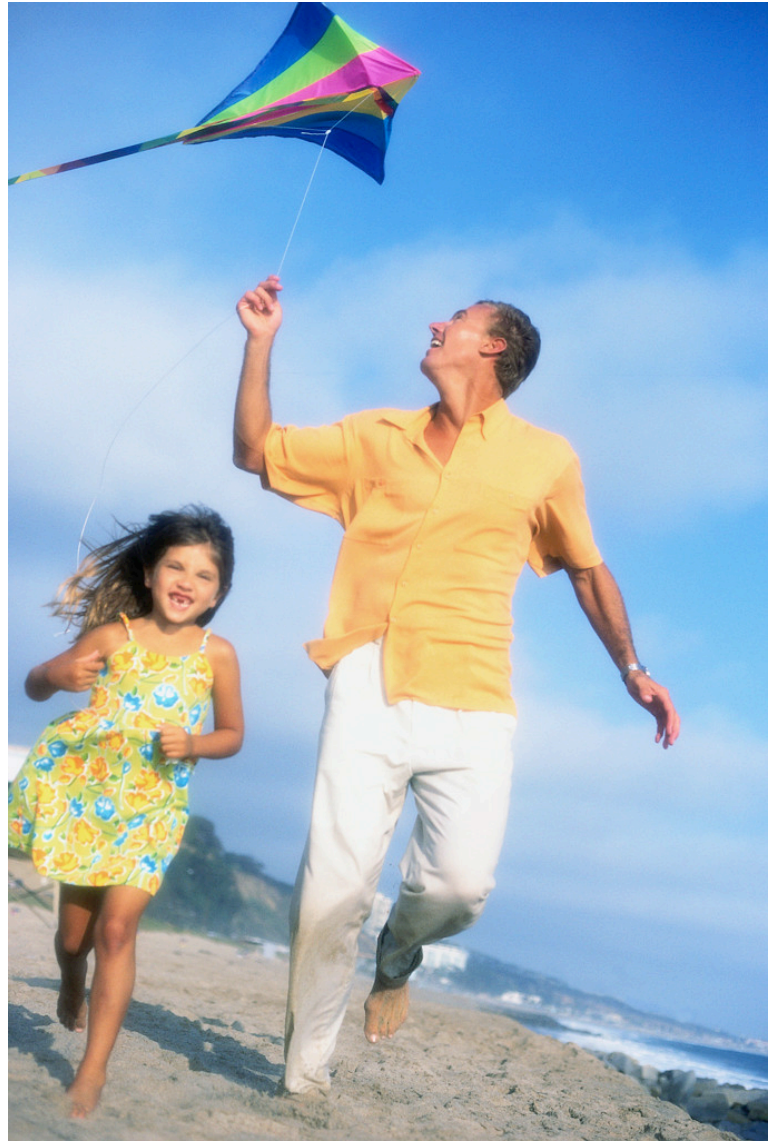
- **Deliberate efforts to shape children's behaviour**
- **Warmth and Control**

**Both relationships
affect adjustment.
Parents are the most
important
psychological
influences.**

**Are There 'Essential'
Differences Between
Mothers and Fathers
Conditioned by Their
Gender?**











- **Gender or Role?**
- **Cultural Variability?**
 - **Does it Matter?**

Fathers have positive effects when they are responsive, committed, caring, and involved.

Tendencies to rough-house or appear masculine do not affect children's adjustment.

**Amount of time together
is less important than the
range of shared activities
and contexts.**

**Major risk when parents
don't live together.**

**Effects can be positive
or negative.**

**Mothers and fathers
affect children whether
or not they live
together.**

In addition to
relationships with
parents, interaction
between parents is
influential







**Quality of relationship between
parents at least as important
as quality of relationships with
children—whether or not the
parents live together.**



Children in one-parent families are at risk because relationships with parents are attenuated, they are exposed to conflict, inadequately supported, and/or economically stressed.



Summary

- **Father- (and mother-) infant relationships emerge together.**
- **They affect children in similar ways.**
- **Effects can be positive or negative.**
- **Direct and indirect.**
- **Relationships change.**
- **Mothers and fathers affect children whether or not they live together.**

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- *Kind und Familie : Untersuchungen der Wechselbeziehungen des Kindes mit seiner Familie* ("Child and family: Studies on the interactions of the child with his family"). Fischer, Jena 1937.