

Exploring Primary Caregiving and Continuity of Care

Research Finding Summary

To date, secure base behavior (indicator of attachment security) has been observed in every culture that has been studied. What differs from culture to culture is the form secure base behavior takes. A study in seven countries identified ways in which secure base behavior may look different. The seven countries were: China, Colombia, Germany, Israel, Japan, Norway, and the United States. In each country, the researchers were native to that country. They identified four dimensions along which secure base behavior may differ:

- Amount of physical contact (body to body contact)
- Physical proximity (distance away from caregiver while exploring)
- Smoothness of interaction with caregiver (child's readiness to interact when adult initiates interaction, compliance, cooperativeness)
- Level of comfort with other adults (in physical contact with another adult when the primary attachment figure is present)

These differences suggest that there are multiple ways to form a secure base relationship with a child. In each of the seven countries in this study, the way children formed secure relationships with adults was considered ideal.

In your small group, discuss how this information relates to caring for infants and toddlers in groups. Why would this information be helpful for infant/toddler caregivers to know?

Reference

Waters, E., Vaughn, B. E., Posada, G., & Kondo-Ikemura, K. (1995). Caregiving, cultural and cognitive perspectives on secure-base behavior and working models: New growing points of attachment theory and research. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 2-3, Serial No. 244, 60.

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Research Finding Summary

Over the years, experts have debated whether being in infant/toddler care has an adverse effect on their attachment relationships at home. In a 10-site national study sponsored by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, **no link** was found between the child spending time in infant care and the child's attachment security at home. Infants who entered care as early as three months of age and spent long periods of time in group care were just as likely as to be in an emotionally secure relationship with a parent at home as children who were never experienced group care outside the home.

In your small group, discuss how this information relates to caring for infants and toddlers in groups. Why would this information be helpful for infant/toddler caregivers to know?

References

- NICHD Early Child Care Research Network. (1997). The effects of infant child care on infant-mother attachment: Results of the NICHD study of early child care. *Child Development, 68*, 860-879.
- NICHD Early Child Care Research Network. (1999). Child outcomes when child care center classes meet recommended standards for quality. *American Journal of Public Health, 89*, 1072-1077.

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Research Finding Summary

In an analysis of various studies of infants' and toddlers' relationships with their caregivers, researchers reported the following findings:

- The percentage of children in family child care homes with secure attachments was significantly higher than the percentage of children in child care centers with secure attachments
- Infants and toddlers with stable child care experiences (no changes from one setting to another) were more likely to have secure attachments than children with less stable child care experiences
- Small group size and low child-adult ratios appeared to contribute to caregivers' sensitivity to children and the security of children's relationships with them

In your small group, discuss how this information relates to caring for infants and toddlers in groups. Why would this information be helpful for infant/toddler caregivers to know?

Reference

Ahnert, L., Pinquart, M., & Lamb, M. E. (2006). Security of children's relationships with nonparental care providers: A meta-analysis. *Child Development, 74*(3), 664-679.

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Research Finding Summary

Continuity of care is grounded in attachment theory, but limited research studies have explored the benefits of this relationship-based practice. In a study comparing continuity of care toddler classrooms with noncontinuity of care toddler classrooms, researchers reported the following findings:

- Toddlers in continuity of care classrooms experienced more interactive caregiving than toddlers in noncontinuity classrooms
- Toddlers in classrooms with lower child-adult ratios experienced higher levels of interactive caregiving with their caregivers
- Toddlers in continuity classrooms were rated by their caregivers as having fewer problem behaviors

In your small group, discuss how this information relates to caring for infants and toddlers in groups. Why would this information be helpful for infant/toddler caregivers to know?

Reference

Ruprecht, K., Elicker, J., & Choi, J. Y. (2016). Continuity of care, caregiver-child interactions, and toddler social competence and problem behaviors. *Early Education and Development, 27*(2), 221-239, DOI: 10.1080/10409289.2016.1102034.

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Research Finding Summary

To date, few research studies have thoroughly investigated the experiences of implementing continuity of care in infant and toddler programs. In this study, researchers interviewed infant toddler caregivers, parents, preschool teachers, and administrators to learn about their perceptions of the benefits and challenges of continuity of care. Findings revealed that:

- Caregivers reported that continuity of care increased their child development knowledge and understanding of individual children. Increased knowledge of children allowed caregivers to provide more responsive and individualized care.
- Primary care relationships were the starting point for caregivers to build trust and learn about individual children.
- In stable relationships caregivers, parents, and children experienced an increased sense of security. In addition, caregivers and parents developed a mutually respectful partnership with the common goal of supporting the child.
- Caregivers and parents appreciated the family-type atmosphere created by continuity of care. This atmosphere was characterized by trust, open communication, respect, affectionate interactions with children, and consistent routines between home and school.
- Continuity of care allowed caregivers to build teamwork with each other and to understand each other's beliefs, styles, strengths, and preferences.
- Preschool teachers reported that children who came from continuity of care environments show higher levels of social and self-help skills.

In your small group, discuss how this information relates to caring for infants and toddlers in groups. Why would this information be helpful for infant/toddler caregivers to know?

Reference

McMullen, M. B., Yun, N. R., Mihai, A., & Kim, H. (2016). Experiences of parents and professionals in well-established continuity of care infant toddler programs. *Early Education and Development*, 27(2), 190-220, DOI: 10.1080/10409289.2016.1102016.

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Research Finding Summary

In a research summary of the development of resilience, the authors concluded that supportive relationships are key for children's skill building. The summary includes the following points:

- Regardless of the hardship children experience, the single most common factor for children who end up doing well is having the support of at least one stable and committed relationship with a parent, caregiver, or other adult. Such relationships are the active ingredient in building resilience.
- Stable, committed relationships provide the personalized responsiveness, scaffolding, and protection that can buffer children from developmental disruption.
- Relationships also help children develop capacities such as the ability to plan, monitor, and regulate behavior, and adapt to changing circumstances, which better enable them to respond to adversity.

In your small group, discuss how this information relates to caring for infants and toddlers in groups. Why would this information be helpful for infant/toddler caregivers to know?

Reference

Center on the Developing Child. (2015). *The Science of Resilience* (In Brief). Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu.