

# Infancy and Childhood

Attachment through adolescence





# *Attachment - the first language of survival*

- ▶ An emotional tie with another person;
- ▶ shown in young children by their seeking closeness to the caregiver and showing distress in separation.



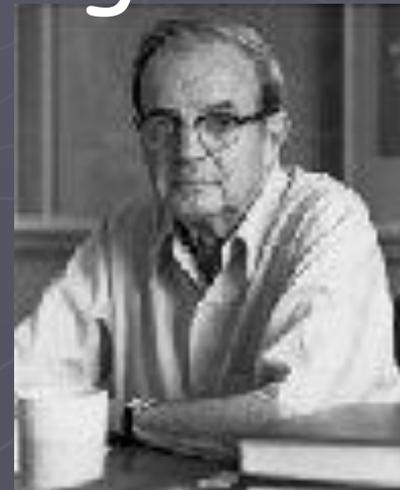
# ***Factors of Attachment***

- ▶ **Body Contact**
- ▶ **Familiarity**
- ▶ **Responsive Parenting**

# Body Contact

- ▶ It was first assumed that infants became attached to those who satisfied their need for nourishment.

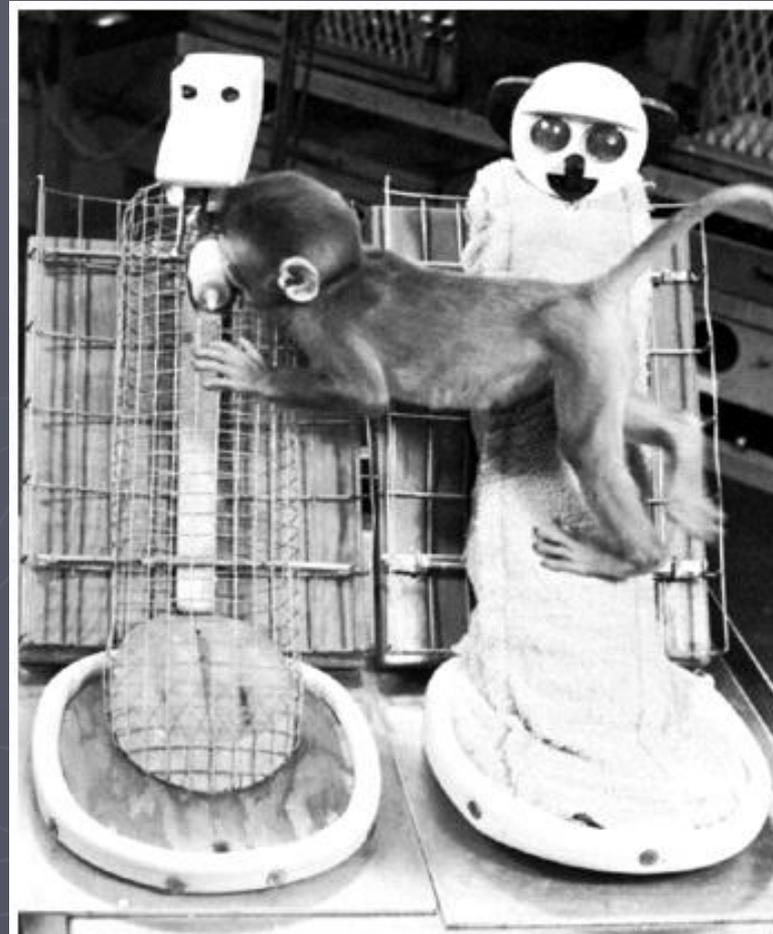
Then this guy came along.....



# Harry Harlow and his



Discovered that monkeys preferred the soft body contact of a cloth mother, over the nourishment of a hard/wirily mother.



# Harlow's Monkeys



# Familiarity

- ▶ Attachments based on familiarity are formed during critical periods.

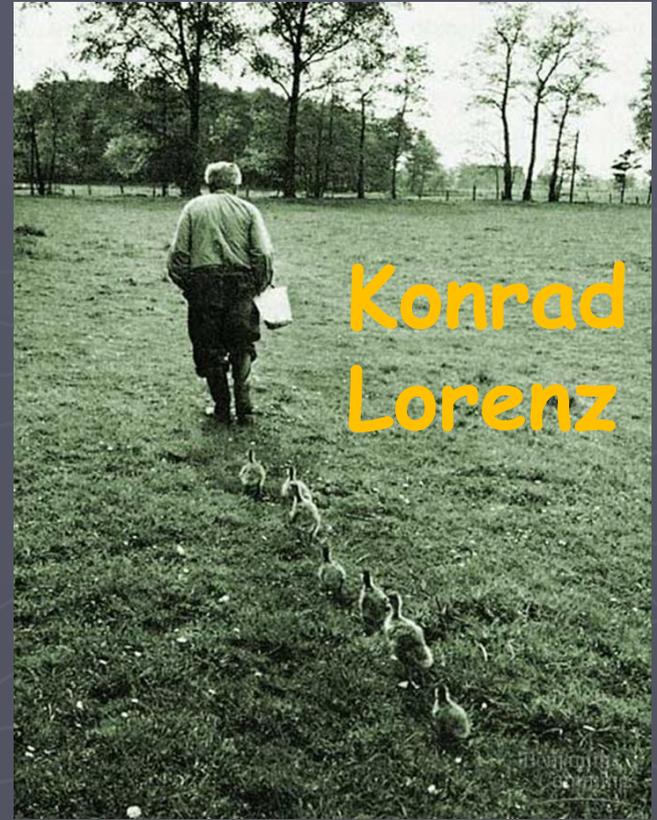
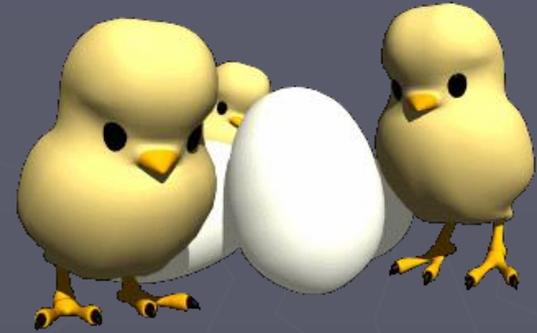
**Critical Periods** the optimal period shortly after birth when an organism's exposure to certain stimuli or experiences produce proper development.

# Critical Period: The Semantics

- ▶ Critical period:
  - begins and ends abruptly
  - period beyond which a phenomenon will not appear
- ▶ Sensitive period:
  - begins and ends gradually
  - period of maximal sensitivity
- ▶ "Window of opportunity"

# *Imprinting*

- ▶ The primary formation of social bonds in infant animals.
- ▶ Must occur during a critical period very early in life.
- ▶ Irreversible
- ▶ Mother-offspring bonding in animals is crucial to safety & development of the offspring



# Konrad Lorenz

## Ethologist



- Geese hatchlings follow the first thing they see that moves
- Lorenz ensured that he was the first moving organism seen by the hatchlings
- Hence, the geese hatchlings had imprinted on Lorenz
  - Wherever he went, the hatchlings followed



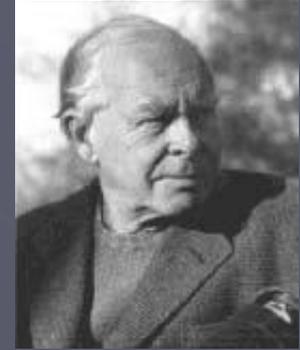
# Responsive Parenting

Do parents play a part in your attachment?

- John Bowlby
- Mary Ainsworth Stranger Paradigm
- Dymphna Van den Boom



# John Bowlby



- ▶ John Bowlby 1907-1990
  - British Child Psychiatrist
  - Childhood Attachment
    - ▶ Mother is said to have only attended to him for one hour per day to prevent him from being spoiled.
    - ▶ Nanny attended to him more consistently, but she moved on when he was age four.
      - He later described this as a "tragic loss of a mother"
    - ▶ He was placed in boarding school at age seven
  - Performed volunteer work with maladjusted children in his early career

# John Bowlby

- ▶ All children "attach"
  - Securely
  - Insecurely
- ▶ Attachment relationships constitute the basis upon which offspring are most likely to survive, reproduce and flourish.
- ▶ Attachment system functions to curtail anxiety and duress caused by separation that evolved through the child's desire for proximity with their primary caretaker during times of danger or threat.
- ▶ "Secure Base" - A responsive caregiver provides security to explore the environment

# The Strange Situation

## ▶ Ainsworth (1978)

- Investigation of the quality of attachment between a caregiver and child.

## ▶ Aim

- To see how an infant behaves under conditions of mild stress

## ▶ Participants

- 106 middle class infants

# Methodology

- ▶ **Strange Situation:** Experimental task for infants
  - Infant, parent, and experimenter go into a laboratory room
  - Eight episodes of about three minutes apiece are used to determine the security of the infant's attachment to the parent
  - One of the key moments is the "reunion," when mother and child are re-united after grief separation.
- ▶ **Secure Attachment:** Explore environment with parent, distressed when parent leaves, delighted when parent returns
- ▶ **Insecure Attachment**
  - **Resistant:** Clings to parent, cries when the parent leaves, angry when returns
  - **Avoidant:** Not care if mother leaves and ignores the parent upon return

# Strange Situation

	Event	Attachment Issue
1	Parent and baby enter playroom.	
2	Parent sits quietly while baby plays.	Parent as secure base for exploration
3	Stranger enters and talks with parent.	Baby's response to new adult
4	Parent leaves the room. Baby is alone with the stranger.	Baby's response to separation
5	Parent returns. Stranger leaves.	Baby's response to reunion
6	Parent leaves. Baby alone in the room.	Baby's response to separation
7	Stranger enters and offers comfort.	Baby's ability to accept comfort from a stranger
8	Parent returns and offers comfort if needed and tries to get the baby to play.	Baby's response to reunion

# The Strange Situation



# The Strange Situation

- ▶ The child in the video is what Ainsworth described as "securely attached"
  - What behavior did that child exhibit?
  - What other behavior could a different child show in the same situation?

# Attachment Styles

- ▶ **Securely Attached:** Belief that the caregiver will protect and provide for them
  - Explores the environment with the parent
  - Used mom as a secure base from which to explore
  - Might protest separation from parent but smiles more often when the parent is present
  - Shows pleasure at reunion with parent
  - 65% of middle-class American infants
- ▶ **Insecure-Avoidant:** Belief that the caregiver will not protect or provide. The caregiver is not a safe haven in stressful circumstances
  - Does not protest at parent's departure
  - Responds the same to the stranger and the parent, or more positively to the stranger
  - Avoid parent upon return
  - Child characterized by "I don't need you but don't go away"
  - 20% of middle-class American infants

# Attachment Styles

- ▶ **Insecure-Resistant:** Uncertainty about whether the parent will protect or provide safety in stressful circumstances
  - Remain close to parent. Refuse to explore the new environment
  - Clingy, distressed at separation of parent
  - Mixture of approach and avoidance when reunited
  - Child would allow moms to pick them up upon return, but would arch away too.
  - Child characterized by: "I need you, but it hurts when you leave, and I don't like you because of that"
  - 10% of middle-class American infants
- ▶ **Disorganized or Disoriented:** No consistent way of dealing with the stress
  - Exhibits contradictory behavior at the strange situation
  - Typical attachment style when the infant is abused or neglected
  - Less than 5% of middle-class American infants



# Sensitive parenting

According to Ainsworth...



Sensitive, responsive mothers who noticed what their children were doing and responded appropriately tended to have children who were securely attached.

Insensitive, unresponsive parents who attended to their babies when they felt like doing so, but ignored them at other times tended to have babies that were insecurely attached.



When Harlow's monkeys, who had insensitive, unresponsive mothers, were placed in the strange situation, they were terrified and showed insecure attachment.



# What type of attachment?

- ▶ Read the handout. Are these children
  - Securely attached?
  - Insecure - Anxious avoidant?
  - Insecure - Anxious Resistant?