

## ~DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY~

### Lecture 1: The Importance of the Early Environment

- Things that happen in the early environment have long lasting effects
  - Things that happen even before we have record of autobiographical accounts have long term effects
- We look at “abnormal” environments to understand the importance of environment
  - Normal environments can’t tell you much → no variation
  - By using abnormal environments → variation, something different
    - Study the differences of people from different environments
    - Realise the importance of environment
    - Variation in environment = variation in outcome
  - Studying by natural observation
    - Unethical to manipulate human experiences for research
- Common environment studies
  - Monkey experiments
    - Manipulate the environment of baby monkeys
  - Orphanages
    - Follow kids after their adoption to see the influence that growing up in an orphanage had on them
  - Postnatal depression
    - Follow the children who grew up in an environment with mothers who had postnatal depression
  - Difference in socio-economic classes
    - More naturally occurring variation in environments
- We look at what we can do to overcome these effects of early environments
  - Preschool interventions to enrich early environments
  - Head Start and Abecedarian Program
- Harlow and Monkeys (+Suomi)
  - The Pit of Despair—study of mother-infant bonds in monkeys
  - To discover the importance of the primary caregiver relationship
    - Focus on the importance of physical contact
  - Surrogate mother monkeys → No fur, but had food vs. Fur, but no food
  - Monkeys always chose the mother that had fur
    - Comfort over food
- Harlow, Monkeys and Suomi
  - New born monkeys raised in isolation for different periods of time
  - Monkeys growing up in isolation grew up to be scared and confused
  - Early isolation damaged them for life
  - \*\*\*Effects may or may not be the same for humans
  - Severity of damage was dependent on duration of isolation, age of monkey
  - 1<sup>st</sup> 3 months living in isolation
    - When resocialised, initial emotional shock
    - Within another month, behaved normally
  - 1<sup>st</sup> 6 months living in isolation
    - Behavioural disruptions persisted
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> 6 months in isolation (7-12 months)
    - Effects were not as long lasting

- Behavioural disruptions were readily reversed
    - Importance is not just duration, but when
    - Showed that the actual physical contact in the first 6 months is so important in stimulating growth
  - 1<sup>st</sup> 12 months living in isolation
    - Lifelong behavioural disruption
- Effects of Early Social Deprivation: Orphanage studies (Goldfarb)
  - Orphanages in 1940's were more concerned with physical health and hygiene
    - Did not think of the importance of social interaction in development
    - Physically took care of them, provided their basic needs
    - BUT orphans had very little access to social interaction
    - Lived their 1<sup>st</sup> year in isolation
  - Compared children that were adopted after 3 months and after 3 years of living in an orphanage
    - Children adopted readily vs. children adopted after several years
  - When institutional effects go on for 3 years or longer
    - Effects more long lasting, possibly irreversible
    - ex. Later the age of adoption, the lower the IQ
      - At age 12, those adopted earlier had higher IQs
  - Disabilities characteristic of children who grew up in orphans for 3+ years
    - Cognitive deficits
      - Poorer language skills, attention span, school achievement
    - Socio-emotional deficits
      - Socially immature, more aggressive, broke rules
      - Had difficulty forming bonds though they wanted to
- Effects of Early Social Deprivation: English/Romanian Adoption Study
  - Romania: law that every woman should bear at least 5 children
    - A lot of children were left abandoned in orphanages
    - Orphanages had really bad conditions→ children were not cared for properly, had no personalised caregiving
    - People in the UK would go to Romania to adopt kids
  - Examination of recovery of orphans
    - Effects of being raised in orphanage conditions for different amounts of time on development
    - To determine if any behavioural deficits were caused by being in impoverished environments
  - Experimental group: Romanian children adopted before 2 years old
  - Control group: Adoptees from England
  - Comparison not of adoption vs. no adoption, but conditions of the institution in which they grew up before adoption
  - Kids were at most 2 years old when they were adopted
    - May not even have memory of living in the orphanage
    - Romanian kids in orphanages for 6 months to 2 years
    - Kids assessed after 4, 6 and later
  - Measured physical qualities and cognitive milestones
    - Height, weight, head circumference
    - Cognitive measurements→ from parental responses
  - Romanian kids upon entry to the UK