How do emotions and personality develop in infancy?

Emotional Development

- What Are Emotions?—Feeling or affect that occurs when a person is in a state or an interaction that is important to her or him, especially to his or her well-being.
- Biological and Environmental Influences—Emotions are linked with early-developing regions of the human nervous system, including structures of the limbic system and the brainstem. The capacity of infants to show distress, excitement, and rage reflects the early emergence of these biologically rooted emotional brain systems. Emotions serve important function in relationships, and social relationships provide the setting for the development of a rich variety of emotions.
- Early Emotions—Emotions that infants express in the first six months of life.

Two broad types of emotions

1. Primary: present in humans, animals
   - Appear within first 6 months of life
   - Include surprise, anger, joy, sadness, fear
2. Self-conscious: require self-awareness that involves consciousness, and a sense of “me.”
   - Empathy, jealousy, embarrassment can appear about 6 months
   - Pride, shame, guilt first appear about 1 to 1½ years
   - Enables child to use social standards and evaluate own behavior

- Emotional Expression and Social Relationships—The ability of infants to communicate emotions permits coordinated interactions with their caregivers and the beginning of an emotional bond between them.

- Crying—Crying is the most important mechanism newborns have for communicating. There are at least three types:
  1. Basic cry: A rhythmic pattern that usually consists of a cry followed by a briefer silence, then a shorter whistle and brief rest.
  2. Anger cry: A variation of the basic cry with more excess air forced through vocal chords.
  3. Pain cry: A sudden, initial loud cry followed by breath holding; no preliminary moaning is present.

- Smiling—Another important communicative behavior, with two types that can be distinguished in infants:
  1. Reflexive smile: Is a smile that does not occur in response to external stimuli and appears during the first month after birth, usually during sleep.
  2. Social smile: A smile that occurs in response to an external stimulus, typically a face in the case of the young infant. Social smiling occurs as early as four to six weeks after birth.
  3. Anticipatory smile is when they communicate preexisting positive emotion by smiling at an object and then turning their smile toward an adult.
 Fear—One of the baby’s earliest emotions is fear which typically appears at about 6 months of age and peaks at about 18 months. The most frequent expression of fear involves stranger anxiety, in which an infant shows a fear and wariness of strangers. Stranger anxiety first appears usually emerges gradually and it first appears at about 6 months of age in the form of wary reactions. By age 9 months, the fear of strangers is often more intense. Infants are less fearful of child strangers than of adult strangers, and are less fearful of friendly, outgoing, smiling strangers than of passive, unsmiling strangers.

 Emotional Regulation and Coping—During the first year, the infant gradually develops an ability to inhibit the intensity and duration of emotional reactions. At first, infants depend on caregivers to help them soothe emotions, then to self-soothing strategies, redirected attention and then self-distraction. Controversy still characterizes the question of whether or how parents should respond to an infant’s cries. Developmentalists argue you can’t spoil a child in their first year of life, which suggests that parents should soothe a crying baby.

 Temperament—An individual’s behavior style and ways of emotionally responding to stimuli.

 Defining and Classifying Temperament—Researchers have described and classified the temperament of individuals in different ways.

 Chess and Thomas’ Classification

- Easy child—Child is generally in a positive mood, quickly establishes regular routines in infancy, and adapts easily to new experiences.
- Difficult child—Child reacts negatively, cries frequently, has irregular daily routines, and is slow to accept new experiences.
- Slow-to-warm-up child—Child has low activity level, somewhat negative, low adaptability, and low intensity of mood.

 Kagan’s Behavioral Inhibition—another way of classifying temperament focuses on the differences between a shy, subdued, timid child and a sociable, extraverted, bold child. Kagan regards shyness with strangers (peers or adults) as one feature of a broad temperament category called inhibition to the unfamiliar. Kagan has found that inhibition shows considerable stability from infancy through early childhood.

 Rothbart and Bates’ Classification

 1. Extraversion/surgency—Includes positive anticipation, impulsivity, activity level, and attention seeking.
 2. Negative affectivity—Includes fear, frustration, sadness, and discomfort; these children are easily distressed and may fret and cry often.
 3. Effortful control (self-regulation)—Includes attentional focusing and shifting, inhibitory control, perceptual sensitivity, and low-intensity pleasure; children high on effortful control are able to keep their arousal from getting too high and have strategies for soothing themselves.

 Biological Foundations and Experience—According to Kagan children may inherit a physiology that biases them to have a particular type of temperament; however, through experience they may learn to modify their temperament.
Biological influences—Physiological characteristics have been linked with different temperaments. Twin and adoption studies suggest a moderate influence of heredity on temperament.

- Gender, Culture, and Temperament—Gender may be an important factor shaping the context that influences the fate of temperament. Parents may react differently to an infant’s temperament depending on the child’s sex. Reactions to different types of temperament are also influenced by culture.
- Goodness of Fit and Parenting—Goodness of fit refers to the match between the child’s temperament and the environmental demands with which the child must cope. Some temperament characteristics pose more parenting challenges than others.

Personality Development—Emotions and temperament form key aspects of personality, the enduring personal characteristics of individuals. Characteristics that often are thought of as central to personality development during infancy are: trust and the development of self and independence.

- Trust—According to Erikson, the first year is characterized by the trust versus mistrust stage of development. If the infant is not well fed and kept warm on a consistent basis, a sense of mistrust develops. The trust vs. mistrust conflict arises again at each stage of development.
- The Developing Sense of Self—Individuals carry with them a sense of who they are and what makes them different from everyone else. Self-awareness emerges over the first few years of life.
- Independence—Independence becomes a more central theme in the infant’s life in the second year. Theories of Margaret Mahler and Erik Erikson have important implications for both self-development and independence. Mahler argues that the child goes through a separation and then an individuation process. Separation involves the infant’s movement away from the mother and individuation involves the development of self. Erikson stressed that independence is an important issue in the second year of life and describes the second stage of development as the stage of autonomy versus shame and doubt, with important implications for the individual’s future development.

How do social understanding and attachment develop in infancy?

Social Orientation/Understanding—As socioemotional beings, infants show a strong interest in the social world and are motivated to orient to it and understand it.

- Social Orientation—Young infants stare intently at faces and are attuned to the sounds of human voices. By 2- to 3-months of age, infants respond differently to people than objects, showing more positive emotion to people than inanimate objects. Infants also learn about the social world through face-to-face play with a caregiver and other social contexts, such as with peers.
- Locomotion—As infants develop the ability to crawl, walk, and run, they are able to explore and expand their social world and to independently initiate social interchanges.
- Intention, Goal-Directed Behavior, and Cooperation—Perceiving people as engaging in intentional and goal-directed behavior are an important social cognitive accomplishment and this initially occurs toward the end of the first year.
Social Referencing—The ability to recognize and interpret the emotions of others is another important social cognitive accomplishment in infancy. Social referencing refers to the process of using emotional cues in others to help determine how to act in a particular situation; infants become better at social referencing in the second year.

Attachment and Its Development—Attachment is a close emotional bonding between infant and caregiver.

1. Freud emphasized that infants become attached to the person or object that provides oral satisfaction. Disproved by Harlow’s research: regardless of which mother fed monkeys, both preferred physical comfort of cloth mother
2. Erikson argued that responsive, sensitive parenting contributes to infants’ sense of trust.
3. Bowlby claimed that infants use the caregiver as a secure base from which to explore the environment. Work with monkeys indicates proximity and comfort rather than food are key components of secure attachment.

Individual Differences in Attachment—The quality of babies’ attachment experiences varies. To study individual differences in attachment, Mary Ainsworth created the Strange Situation, an observational measure of infant attachment that requires the infant to move through a series of introductions, separations, and reunions with caregiver. Responses to the Strange Situation determine an infant’s attachment classification. (Ainsworth video clip)

- Securely attached babies use the caregiver as a secure base from which to explore the environment, show distress when the caregiver departs, and reestablishes positive interaction when the caregiver returns before resuming playing.
- Insecure avoidant babies show insecurity by engaging in little interaction with the caregiver, not showing distress when the caregiver leaves, and not reestablishing contact when the caregiver returns.
- Insecure resistant babies often cling to the caregiver and then resist her by fighting against the closeness. In the Strange Situation, these babies often don’t explore the playroom. When the caregiver leaves, they often cry loudly and push away if she tries to comfort them upon her return.
- Insecure disorganized babies might appear dazed, confused, and/or fearful in the Strange Situation. They show strong patterns of avoidance and resistance or display certain specified behaviors, such as extreme fearfulness around the caregiver.

Evaluating the Strange Situation—The Strange Situation shows evidence of cultural bias, and some critics stress that behavior in the Strange Situation might not indicate what infants do in a natural environment. But researchers have found that infants’ behaviors in the Strange Situation are closely related to how they behave at home in response to separation and reunion with their mothers.
• Interpreting Differences in Attachment—for some children, early attachments seem to foreshadow later functioning, though for some children, there is little continuity. Some developmentalists believe that too much emphasis is placed on the important of the attachment bond in infancy. Another criticism is that it ignores the diversity of socializing agents and contexts that exists in an infant’s world.

• Caregiving Styles and Attachment Classification—maternal sensitivity in parenting may be linked with secure attachment. Securely attached babies, for example, tend to have caregivers who are sensitive to their signals and are consistently available to respond to their infants’ needs, while caregivers of insecure avoidant babies tend to respond less frequently to infants’ communicative gestures.

How do social contexts influence socioemotional development in infancy?

The Family—The family can be thought of as a constellation of subsystems defined in terms of generation, gender, and role, and each family member participates in several subsystems.

• The Transition to Parenthood—when people become parents through pregnancy, adoption, or step-parenting, they face disequilibrium and must adapt. During the early years of the child’s life, parents must juggle their roles as parents and self-actualizing adults. New parents must adapt to new demands on time, finances, and roles.

• Reciprocal Socialization—Reciprocal socialization is socialization that is bidirectional that is children and parents socialize each other; and mutual gaze or eye contact plays an important role in early social interaction. An important form of reciprocal socialization is scaffolding, in which parents time interactions in such a way that the infant experiences turn-taking with the parents. Scaffolding involves parental behavior that supports children’s efforts through positive reciprocal frameworks.

• Maternal and Paternal Infant Caregiving—In most cultures, mothers tend to be more involved in caring for their infants than fathers. Mothers do more family work than fathers, but observations of fathers with their infants suggest that fathers have the ability to act sensitively and responsively with their infants. The typical father, however, behaves differently toward an infant than the typical mother, with paternal interactions more likely to include activities such as rough-and-tumble play.

• Child Care—Many U.S. children today experience multiple caregivers.

• Parental Leave—About 2 million U.S. children are in formal, licensed day care with millions more in informal, unlicensed babysitting situations; in part, these numbers reflect the fact that U.S. adults cannot receive paid leave from their jobs to care for young children.

• Child Care Policies Around the World
  Five types of parental leave
  a. Maternity leave
  b. Paternity leave
c. Parental leave  
d. Child-rearing leave  
e. Family leave  

- Variations in child care  
  a. Type and quality  
- Longitudinal Study of Child Care  
  Patterns of Use:  
    - High reliance and early entry  
    - By 4 months, nearly 3/4 of infants have had some non-maternal child care  
    - Socioeconomic factors affect amount and type of care  
    - Income level, education  
    - Dependence on mother’s income  
  Quality of Care  
    - Small group sizes  
    - Low child-adult ratios  
    - Teachers: specialized training, formally educated, experienced  
    - Caregiver sensitivity to children  
    - Children linked to higher competence  

Amount of Childcare  
  - High-quality care and fewer hours in care lead to positive outcomes  
  Family and parenting influences  
    - Influence not weakened by extensive child care; parents significant influence  
    - in children regulating emotions  

- Strategies for child care  
  - Recognize quality of parenting on your child’s development is a key factor in your child’s development  
  - Make good parenting decisions  
  - Monitor your child’s development  
  - Take time to find best child care