

ABSTRACT: Designed for child caregivers, this guide to research on infants and toddlers offers references to works that provide reasons for high quality care and increase caregivers' understanding of ways to facilitate the optimal development of babies. Citations concern abuse, attachment, caregiver role, child care effects, child care quality, child competence and intelligence, discipline, socialization, enrichment programs, fathering, gender, infant mental health, longitudinal effects of intervention, language, parent-child relations, transactional influences, peers, prosocial behavior, risk factors, special needs, temperament, and buffers. Materials that include information that can help parents, caregivers, or children overcome difficult conditions are noted. Nearly 50 references are cited. (RH)
Recent infant/toddler researches: A helpful guide for caregivers.

Babies are special people. Their physiology, their nutritional needs, their contact comfort needs, their learning styles are radically different from those of older children. Without secure attachments to one and preferably two attuned caregivers, who are genuinely responsive to infant signals, good interpreters of infant distress, and of infant communications (whether coos, jargon, or two word telegraphic speech) infants will not flourish. Theoretical work by Mahler, Erikson, Winnicott and others have made clear just how important the role of the loving responsive partner is in communication and cuddling and provision of nurturance for babies. Yet theory is not enough. Caregivers working with infants and toddlers need to know major research findings with children under three.

Sometimes parents request inappropriate actions, such as excessive cognitive pushing of babies to learn school-type materials much beyond the ability of infant sensorimotor and early preoperational functioning. Some parents request harsh or punitive or indifferent behaviors of caregivers in group care situations, such as demanding that a baby be left to cry and get himself to sleep, or that a baby be punished for a toileting accident during early training efforts. Research "ammunition" can help group care personnel to speak not only from their own clinical experience with babies, but from the best resources that research can provide.

The researches that will be discussed for this session are divided into 20 categories alphabetically. They represent work of the past decade that can be helpful in understanding how to answer those who may be ignorant of the reasons for quality care and so may challenge the optimal practices that caregivers and centers are trying to put into place for infants. For example, Finkelstein's work show that unless prosocial teaching goes along with enriched cognitive inputs for babies, then the best intellective intervention program may produce youngsters who later on are 15 times more aggressive on kindergarten playgrounds than low-income control peers who have never attended a University-based daycare program with cognitive emphasis.

Another important example is the finding by Main and George that abused toddlers do not respond positively to friendly overtures by caregivers. They may aggress against their teachers as well as their peers, and side up to teachers with eye-

1. Paper presented at the annual meetings of the National Association or the Education of Young Children, Atlanta Georgia, November 2-5, 1989.
aversive contact. Also, they may show anger and distress rather than empathy if a peer is hurting. Caregivers who do know about these important researches will be better able to diagnose cases of suspected abuse and to prevent adult retaliation behaviors. They can better summon up empathy as a response to help abused toddlers become "reparented" through tender, responsive ministrations, as well as try to reach out to parents in dysfunctional families and involve them in parent education in order to help the toddler.

Some of the researches presented here seem superficially to suggest that infant day care has no untoward results. Yet, if one reads them carefully, causes for concern arise. For example, the work by Andersson, concluding that infant day care leads to successful achievement and social interactions in 8 year olds as rated by their teachers, needs to be read carefully. For his work took place in Sweden, with no infant beginning day care until after 7 months; and full work benefits were paid to parents who stayed at home during that period. Overwhelmingly, Swedish moms nurse their babies. Also, day care workers have strong training requirements, are well paid and are respected professionals. Thus, Andersson's findings must be contrasted with the American situation, where infants may begin group care far earlier and where centers have much staff turnover (over 41% in the latest Day Care Staffing study reported in the November, 1989 issue of Young Children) and far less training for caregivers.

Field's research must be read in a similar critical vein. Although the researchers in her study did not observe any difference in assaultive behaviors of the children who had been in infant care or not, teachers did report significantly higher ratings of aggression for preschoolers who as infants had been in full time rather than part time care in infancy. And the teachers knew their preschoolers well.

Health research shows that handwashing is the single most effective factor in preventing infectious disease in day care settings. Yet, some states do not even require handwashing in infant care facilities, according to Kendall.

Caregivers who want to use researches in order to enhance their knowledge base and skills in interacting with infants as well as their comfort and information-level in talking with parents, will need to learn to read researches with a critical eye. For, sometimes, the title of a research report may be misleading. Buried in the research report may be news that some infant care practices are not quite as benign for babies as some people would like to believe. In any case, researches are an important resource for quality infant/toddler caregiving. In that spirit, we suggest that information from the following researches can be useful for understanding more about babies and how to support and facilitate their optimal development.
Recent Infant/Toddler Researches: Ammunition for Caregivers
Alice Honig, Ph.D. & Donna Wittmer, Ph.D.
NAEYC --- Atlanta --- November 1989

1. Abuse

2. Attachment


3. Caregiver Role


4. Childcare Effects (age of entry, length of day)


5. Child Care Quality
6. Competence/Intelligence

7. Discipline/Socialization

8. Enrichment Programs


   **Parents as Teachers National Center, University of Missouri-St. Louis, Marillac Hall, 8001 Natural Bridge Road, St. Louis, Mo. 63121-4499. (314) 553-5738.


9. Fathering
   Pederson, F.A. (1982). Mother, father, and infant as an

10. Gender


11. Infant Mental Health


Zero to Three Bulletin. Published by The National Center for Clinical Infant Programs, 733 N.W., Suite 912, Washington, D.C. 20005.

12. Intervention—longitudinal effects


13. Language


14. Parent-Child Relations/Transactional Influences

Bee, H.L., et. al. (1982). Prediction of IQ and language


15. Peers


16. Prosocial


17. Risk Factors


18. Special Needs

19. Temperament


20. Wonderful Buffers


**These references include information about buffers that help parents, caregivers, or children overcome adverse or difficult conditions.