**A REVIEW** 



DEPARTMENT OF CHILD AND ADOLESCENT HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT

**WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION** 

 The importance of caregiver-child interactions for the survival and healthy development of young children

**A REVIEW** 



DEPARTMENT OF CHILD AND ADOLESCENT HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT

**WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION** 

## WHO Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

The importance of caregiver-child interactions for the survival and healthy development of young children: a review.

1. Child development. 2. Caregivers – psychology 3. Psychology, Social 4. Growth – in infancy and childhood 5. Socioeconomic factors I. Richter, Linda II. World Health Organization

ISBN 92 4 159134 X (NLM classification: WS 105.5.C3)

## © World Health Organization, 2004

This document is not a formal publication of the World Health Organization (WHO), and all rights are reserved by the Organization. With an identification of the WHO source, the document may, however, be freely reviewed, abstracted, reproduced and translated, in part or in whole, but not for sale nor for use in conjunction with commercial purposes. Permission to use a photograph must be obtained from the original source.

 $The \ authors \ alone \ are \ responsible \ for \ the \ views \ expressed \ in \ this \ publication.$ 

Cover photo: WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development Designed by minimum graphics Printed in China

## **Contents**

Acknowledgements	1V V
Foreword	vii
Executive summary	1
Chapter 1. Introduction: The role of caregiving in the development of children	5
Methodology for the review	5
The caregiver	6
Chapter 2. Historical background: The importance of stable, loving care for young children	8
WHO and the work of John Bowlby	8
The effects of separation from a familiar caregiver on the health and development of children	9
Chapter 3. Advances in child development theory and research: Perspectives from	
psychology, linguistics, neurobiology, and evolutionary theory	11
Contemporary psychological theories of how children develop	11
Psychoanalytic theory, particularly Object Relations Theory	12
Lev Vygotsky and social mediation	12
Developmental psycholinguistics	13
Developmental psychology	14
Empirical findings regarding the perceptual and learning capacities of infants	16
Recent advances in understanding the neurobiology of early experience	18
Phylogenetic perspectives on human capacities for social and cultural	10
communication and cooperation	19
Chapter 4. The nature of caregiver-child relationships: Attachment, development and	
cultural adaptation	22
Attachment theory	22
Developmental changes in caregiver-child relationships	25
Features of supportive and facilitative caregiver-child interactions	28
Mutuality, synchronicity, emotional availability, and social referencing	29
Sensitivity	30
Responsiveness	31
Applicability of caregiver-child dimensions across cultures	31
Models of caregiving and parenting	33

	of children	3
	Child development outcomes	3
	Follow-up studies from early interactions	3
	Psychopathology and child abuse	3
	Institutional care	3
	Child health outcomes	4
	Prematurity and low birth weight	4
	Growth and failure to thrive	4
	Malnutrition	2
Chapter	6. Social and personal determinants of the quality of caregiver-child interactions	2
	Socio-economic conditions	2
	Child characteristics	4
	Caregiver characteristics	2
Chapter	7. Improving caregiver-child interactions: Implications for intervention	5
Glossary		£
Bibliogra	phy	
Photo o	credits	
	WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development	
Cover Page 7	WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development Linda Richter from the Birth to Twenty Study in Barbarin, O. A. & Richter, L. M. Mandel dren: Growing Up in Post-Apartheid South Africa (2001). New York: Rutledge, p. 105.	a's Ch
Cover Page 7 Page 11 Page 15	WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development Linda Richter from the Birth to Twenty Study in Barbarin, O. A. & Richter, L. M. Mandel dren: Growing Up in Post-Apartheid South Africa (2001). New York: Rutledge, p. 105. Linda Richter Lynne Murray and Peter Cooper in Murray, L. and Andrews, L. (2000). The Social Baby	
Cover Page 7 Page 11 Page 15 Page 17	WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development Linda Richter from the Birth to Twenty Study in Barbarin, O. A. & Richter, L. M. Mandel dren: Growing Up in Post-Apartheid South Africa (2001). New York: Rutledge, p. 105. Linda Richter Lynne Murray and Peter Cooper in Murray, L. and Andrews, L. (2000). The Social Baby mond, Surrey: The Children's Project, p. 53. A.N. Meltzoff & M.K. Moore (1977). Imitation of facial and manual gestures by human new	y. Ric
Cover Page 7 Page 11 Page 15 Page 17	WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development Linda Richter from the Birth to Twenty Study in Barbarin, O. A. & Richter, L. M. Mandel dren: Growing Up in Post-Apartheid South Africa (2001). New York: Rutledge, p. 105. Linda Richter Lynne Murray and Peter Cooper in Murray, L. and Andrews, L. (2000). The Social Baby mond, Surrey: The Children's Project, p. 53. A.N. Meltzoff & M.K. Moore (1977). Imitation of facial and manual gestures by human ne Science, 198, 75-78. Jacqueline Cidérac	y. Ric
Cover Page 7 Page 11 Page 15 Page 17 Page 18 Page 20	WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development Linda Richter from the Birth to Twenty Study in Barbarin, O. A. & Richter, L. M. Mandel dren: Growing Up in Post-Apartheid South Africa (2001). New York: Rutledge, p. 105. Linda Richter Lynne Murray and Peter Cooper in Murray, L. and Andrews, L. (2000). The Social Baby mond, Surrey: The Children's Project, p. 53. A.N. Meltzoff & M.K. Moore (1977). Imitation of facial and manual gestures by human no Science, 198, 75-78. Jacqueline Cidérac Anthony De Casper	y. Ric
Cover Page 7 Page 11 Page 15 Page 17 Page 18 Page 20 Page 20	WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development Linda Richter from the Birth to Twenty Study in Barbarin, O. A. & Richter, L. M. Mandel dren: Growing Up in Post-Apartheid South Africa (2001). New York: Rutledge, p. 105. Linda Richter Lynne Murray and Peter Cooper in Murray, L. and Andrews, L. (2000). The Social Baby mond, Surrey: The Children's Project, p. 53. A.N. Meltzoff & M.K. Moore (1977). Imitation of facial and manual gestures by human ne Science, 198, 75-78. Jacqueline Cidérac Anthony De Casper WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development	y. Ric
Cover Page 7 Page 11 Page 15 Page 17 Page 18 Page 20 Page 20 Page 21	WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development Linda Richter from the Birth to Twenty Study in Barbarin, O. A. & Richter, L. M. Mandel dren: Growing Up in Post-Apartheid South Africa (2001). New York: Rutledge, p. 105. Linda Richter Lynne Murray and Peter Cooper in Murray, L. and Andrews, L. (2000). The Social Baby mond, Surrey: The Children's Project, p. 53. A.N. Meltzoff & M.K. Moore (1977). Imitation of facial and manual gestures by human ne Science, 198, 75-78. Jacqueline Cidérac Anthony De Casper WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development	y. Ric
Cover Page 7 Page 11 Page 15 Page 17 Page 18 Page 20 Page 20 Page 21 Page 23	WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development Linda Richter from the Birth to Twenty Study in Barbarin, O. A. & Richter, L. M. Mandel dren: Growing Up in Post-Apartheid South Africa (2001). New York: Rutledge, p. 105. Linda Richter Lynne Murray and Peter Cooper in Murray, L. and Andrews, L. (2000). The Social Baby mond, Surrey: The Children's Project, p. 53. A.N. Meltzoff & M.K. Moore (1977). Imitation of facial and manual gestures by human ne Science, 198, 75-78. Jacqueline Cidérac Anthony De Casper WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development Linda Richter	y. Ric
Cover Page 7 Page 11 Page 15 Page 17 Page 18 Page 20 Page 20 Page 21 Page 23 Page 29	WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development Linda Richter from the Birth to Twenty Study in Barbarin, O. A. & Richter, L. M. Mandel dren: Growing Up in Post-Apartheid South Africa (2001). New York: Rutledge, p. 105. Linda Richter Lynne Murray and Peter Cooper in Murray, L. and Andrews, L. (2000). The Social Baby mond, Surrey: The Children's Project, p. 53. A.N. Meltzoff & M.K. Moore (1977). Imitation of facial and manual gestures by human ne Science, 198, 75-78. Jacqueline Cidérac Anthony De Casper WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development Linda Richter Eleanor Gibson (Cornell University)	y. Ric
Cover Page 7 Page 11 Page 15 Page 17 Page 18 Page 20 Page 20 Page 21 Page 23 Page 29 Page 30	WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development Linda Richter from the Birth to Twenty Study in Barbarin, O. A. & Richter, L. M. Mandel dren: Growing Up in Post-Apartheid South Africa (2001). New York: Rutledge, p. 105. Linda Richter Lynne Murray and Peter Cooper in Murray, L. and Andrews, L. (2000). The Social Baby mond, Surrey: The Children's Project, p. 53. A.N. Meltzoff & M.K. Moore (1977). Imitation of facial and manual gestures by human ne Science, 198, 75-78. Jacqueline Cidérac Anthony De Casper WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development Linda Richter	y. Ric
Cover Page 7 Page 11 Page 15 Page 17 Page 18 Page 20 Page 20 Page 21 Page 23 Page 23 Page 30 Page 32 Page 32	WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development Linda Richter from the Birth to Twenty Study in Barbarin, O. A. & Richter, L. M. Mandel dren: Growing Up in Post-Apartheid South Africa (2001). New York: Rutledge, p. 105. Linda Richter Lynne Murray and Peter Cooper in Murray, L. and Andrews, L. (2000). The Social Baby mond, Surrey: The Children's Project, p. 53. A.N. Meltzoff & M.K. Moore (1977). Imitation of facial and manual gestures by human ne Science, 198, 75-78. Jacqueline Cidérac Anthony De Casper WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development Linda Richter Eleanor Gibson (Cornell University) UNICEF/HQ91-0173/Betty Press WHO/S. Sprague Linda Richter	y. Ric
Cover Page 7 Page 11 Page 15 Page 17 Page 18 Page 20 Page 20 Page 21 Page 23 Page 29 Page 30 Page 32 Page 34 Page 38	WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development Linda Richter from the Birth to Twenty Study in Barbarin, O. A. & Richter, L. M. Mandel dren: Growing Up in Post-Apartheid South Africa (2001). New York: Rutledge, p. 105. Linda Richter Lynne Murray and Peter Cooper in Murray, L. and Andrews, L. (2000). The Social Baby mond, Surrey: The Children's Project, p. 53. A.N. Meltzoff & M.K. Moore (1977). Imitation of facial and manual gestures by human ne Science, 198, 75-78. Jacqueline Cidérac Anthony De Casper WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development Linda Richter Eleanor Gibson (Cornell University) UNICEF/HQ91-0173/Betty Press WHO/S. Sprague Linda Richter Jane Lucas	y. Ric
Cover Page 7 Page 11 Page 15 Page 17 Page 18 Page 20 Page 20 Page 21 Page 23 Page 29 Page 30 Page 32 Page 34 Page 38 Page 41	WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development Linda Richter from the Birth to Twenty Study in Barbarin, O. A. & Richter, L. M. Mandel dren: Growing Up in Post-Apartheid South Africa (2001). New York: Rutledge, p. 105. Linda Richter Lynne Murray and Peter Cooper in Murray, L. and Andrews, L. (2000). The Social Baby mond, Surrey: The Children's Project, p. 53. A.N. Meltzoff & M.K. Moore (1977). Imitation of facial and manual gestures by human new Science, 198, 75-78.  Jacqueline Cidérac Anthony De Casper WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development Linda Richter Eleanor Gibson (Cornell University) UNICEF/HQ91-0173/Betty Press WHO/S. Sprague Linda Richter Jane Lucas WHO/Armando Waak	y. Ric
Cover Page 7 Page 11 Page 15 Page 17 Page 18 Page 20 Page 21 Page 23 Page 29 Page 30 Page 32 Page 34 Page 38 Page 41 Page 41	WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development Linda Richter from the Birth to Twenty Study in Barbarin, O. A. & Richter, L. M. Mandel dren: Growing Up in Post-Apartheid South Africa (2001). New York: Rutledge, p. 105. Linda Richter Lynne Murray and Peter Cooper in Murray, L. and Andrews, L. (2000). The Social Baby mond, Surrey: The Children's Project, p. 53. A.N. Meltzoff & M.K. Moore (1977). Imitation of facial and manual gestures by human no Science, 198, 75-78. Jacqueline Cidérac Anthony De Casper WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development Linda Richter Eleanor Gibson (Cornell University) UNICEF/HQ91-0173/Betty Press WHO/S. Sprague Linda Richter Jane Lucas WHO/Armando Waak Jane Lucas	y. Ric
Cover Page 7 Page 11 Page 15 Page 17 Page 18 Page 20 Page 21 Page 23 Page 29 Page 30 Page 32 Page 34 Page 38 Page 41 Page 41	WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development Linda Richter from the Birth to Twenty Study in Barbarin, O. A. & Richter, L. M. Mandel dren: Growing Up in Post-Apartheid South Africa (2001). New York: Rutledge, p. 105. Linda Richter Lynne Murray and Peter Cooper in Murray, L. and Andrews, L. (2000). The Social Baby mond, Surrey: The Children's Project, p. 53. A.N. Meltzoff & M.K. Moore (1977). Imitation of facial and manual gestures by human new Science, 198, 75-78.  Jacqueline Cidérac Anthony De Casper WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development Linda Richter Eleanor Gibson (Cornell University) UNICEF/HQ91-0173/Betty Press WHO/S. Sprague Linda Richter Jane Lucas WHO/Armando Waak	y. Ric

## **Acknowledgements**

The author of this review was Dr Linda Richter, who is the Executive Director of Child, Youth and Family Development at the Human Sciences Research Council and Professor, School of Psychology, University of Natal (South Africa).

Dr Richter was assisted by Dr R. Dev Griesel, Research Professor in the School of Psychology at the University of Natal, and Ms Julie Manegold, an Intern at the Human Sciences Research Council.

Valuable comments and suggestions were provided by the following persons: Dr Kathy Bartlett (The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development and the Aga Khan Foundation, Geneva, Switzerland), Dr Maureen Black (University of Maryland, Baltimore, USA), Dr Meena Cabral de Mello (WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development, Geneva, Switzerland), Dr Patrice Engle (UNICEF New York, USA), Dr Ilgi Ertem (Ankara University Medical School, Ankara, Turkey), and Ms Zeynep Türmen (Intern, WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development).

We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of Dr Jane Lucas (Nicosia, Cyprus), who reviewed and edited the document, and Dr Jose Martines (WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development), the project coordinator. We thank Ms Sue Hobbs for the document's design and Ms Jacqueline Cidérac for her efforts to obtain permission to use the photographs in the document.

The WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development supported this review as the second in a series to guide interventions to improve the health, growth and psychosocial development of children, particularly those living in resource-poor settings. The first in the series is *A Critical Link: Interventions for physical growth and psychological development* (1999, WHO/CHS/CAH/99.3), available in English, French, and Russian. For these documents and further information, please contact:

Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development (CAH) World Health Organization 20 Avenue Appia, 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland

Tel: +41 22 791 3281 Fax: +41 22 791 4853 E-mail: cah@who.int

Website: http://www.who.int/child-adolescent-health



https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5\_30123

