

**Basic caring functions that  
need to be sustained in the  
family to promote a child's  
optimal development**

**Some critical questions that  
need to be raised**

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# Child care reflecting the varying challenges of different societies

- ✦ Child care is a reflection both of the biological needs of the child and the dominant activities and institutions of society into which the child is going to participate and adapt. This means *there are multiple ways of bringing up children* inside the limitations and directions of the child's biology and genetic

# Human development is a socially assisted process that requires the presence of stable caregivers

- ◆ Human babies are born with dispositions for communication with others (Trevarthen/ Stern)
- ◆ They are in a sense "born apprentices for enculturation"
- ◆ This requires sensitive caregivers that respond and guide the child into the social world of skills and knowledge that are required for adaptation into the dominant activities of society...

# When there are no responsive caregivers:

- ◆ We know from studies of children in socially depriving institutions that their development is seriously inhibited and disturbed and in extreme cases they do not develop the minimal capacities for communication, coping and responding to other human beings... (Mc Vicer Hunt 1986).
- ◆ These studies show that care and guidance from adult caregivers is a precondition for normal human development.

# Four basic caring functions that need to be sustained for normal development (ICDP):

1. Caregivers who see child as a "person" and who communicate a positive image and social identity with potential for development - a life career
2. An emotional expressive dialogue with stable close caregivers to create basic trust and secure attachment
3. Guidance into a world of meaning and knowledge - help the child to understand his surrounding world
4. Support the child to learn the skills and codes of conduct for social adaptation, planning and self-control - regulation

# 1. Caregiver's perception and definition of the child as a "person"

- ◆ This means seeing the child as a human being, a person with the same needs for love, inclusion and respect.
- ◆ By communicating a positive developmental conception to the child, this creates the basis for a positive self-definition in the child (Goodnow 1996).
- ◆ This also means counteracting negative and stigmatizing definitions of the child that reduce his potential for development



# Empathy as the basis for human care

- ◆ A child needs caregivers who see the child as “person” as a human being like yourself
- ◆ This creates a basis for “empathic identification” and reciprocal bonding which constitutes the basis for empathic care
- ◆ Sensitive care also includes counteracting negative definitions and stigmatizations – seeing the positive potentials and resources of a child.

## 2. An emotional-expressive dialogue with stable caregivers

✦ A child needs one or more stable caregivers who can participate in an emotional-expressive and loving dialogue with the child that creates the basis for a sustained, secure and confirming relationship – secure attachment where both are involved.

✦ There is a wealth of research on mother-infant communication specifying this need for early communication in order to sustain mental health and secure attachment



### 3. A dialogue of meaning that and expands the child's experience

- ◆ A child needs one or more caregivers who can provide meaning to the child's experiences, support, enrich and develop the child's exploration of his surrounding world and thus assist the child in creating a predictable and safe conception (narrative) of reality and self. (Klein 1992, Rogoff 2003)

## 4. A dialogue of regulation and limitsetting that promotes self-control, and planning skills

- ◆ A child needs caregivers who can assist the child to develop self-control, planning skills and efficacy, through guided support, including clear prescriptions of limit-setting and with encouragement to take on tasks and challenges... (Hoffman 2000).
- ◆ "Scaffolding" and "guided participation"

# Where are the stable caregivers to assist the child's development?

- ✦ Traditionally in the family. Most theorist of family, despite varying definitions of what is a family, agree that *child rearing is one of its basic functions of the family.*
- ✦ But there has been historical changes in the role and the functions of the family and these influence also the functions of the family.

# Historical changes in the American family as an example of the typical trend in most western societies:

- ◆ See Hernandez diagram of historical development of various family types



## Historical changes of the family

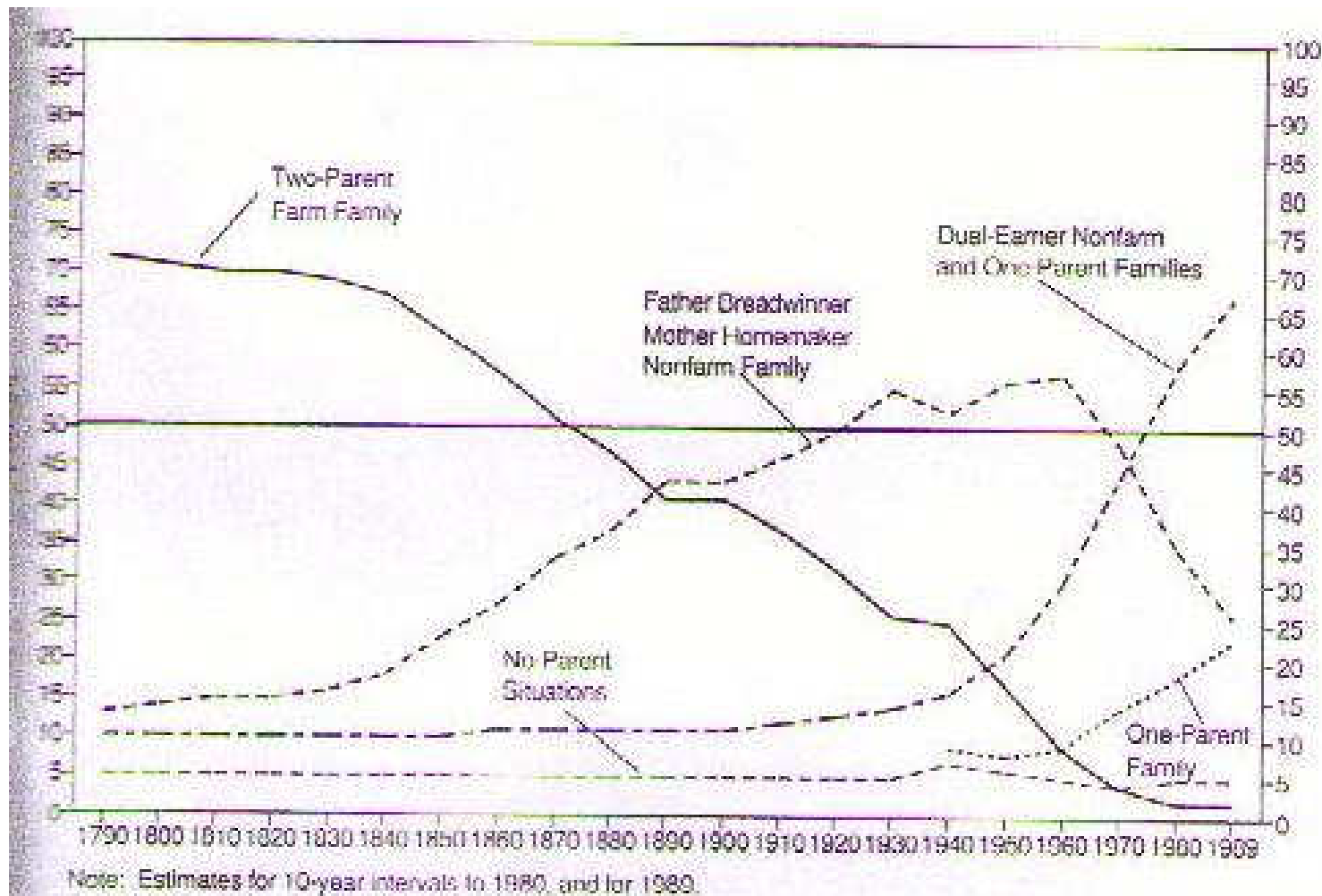


FIGURE 5.8

Children up to age 17 in farm families, father-as-breadwinner families, and dual-earner families, 1790–1989 (Hernandez, 1993).

# This figures shows that:

1. Decline in the traditional *two parent farm family* where both work at home/on the farm from 1850 onwards with the raise of industrialism.
2. At the same time there is rise in *father breadwinner outside home*, mother at home till sharp decline around 1960s
3. From 1960 sharp rise in *dual earner families* :both parents woking outside
4. Sharp increase in *one parent families* from 1960 onwards.

Around 1990 around 70% of the American families are in category 3 and 4  
(Hernandes 1999)





# Changes in family are reflected in child rearing values and practices:

- ◆ *Traditional rural society*: Emphasis on *obedience, respect* for parents and elders, loyalty towards family and collectivity.
- ◆ Strong family ties and loyalty bonding
- ◆ Children important workforce – economic value – security for parents' old age
- ◆ *Modern society after 1960 onwards*: *Independence, competitiveness* and individual success, individualism.
- ◆ Weakening of family ties. (LeVine 1992, Kagiticibasi 1996, Rogoff 2003)

# Recent changes in caring functions both working:

- ◆ Institutionalization of childhood: Children spend most of their lives in educative institutions from 1-2 years onwards.
- ◆ Transfer of caring functions and responsibility from parents to institutions and professional staff – political aim 100% coverage!
- ◆ Increase in divorce and corresponding increase in one parent (usually mother headed) families:
  - ◆ Fathers becoming more peripheral in care

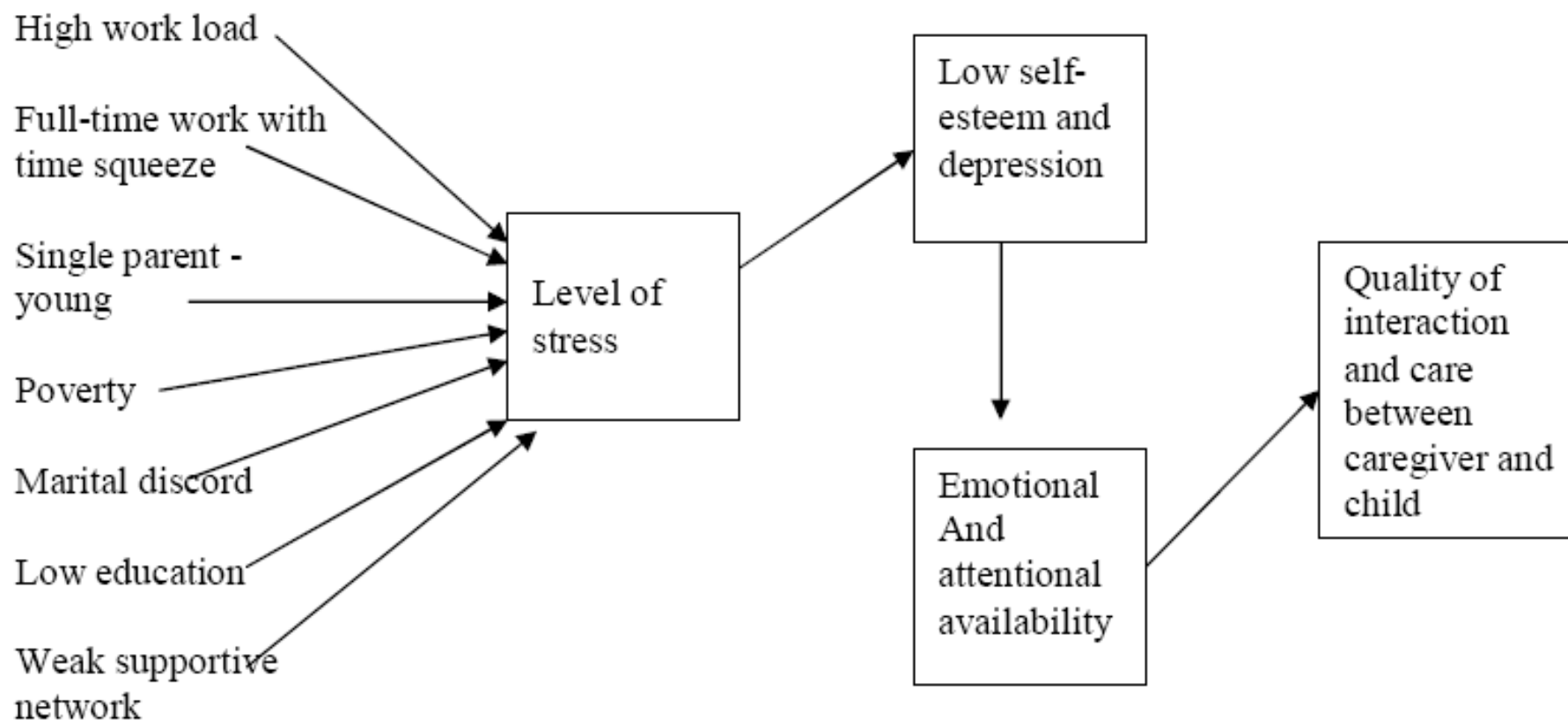
# Possible consequences of institutionalization of childhood:

- ◆ The quality of care in preschool decisive:
- ◆ Lack of close intimate contact and interaction in preschool?
- ◆ Lack of stable staff as a source for secure attachment (preschool)
- ◆ Lack of stable adults for identification and as models for developing skills and competence as in traditional society
- ◆ *Seeing the individual child as a person and the emotional dialogue may be reduced*
- ◆ *The regulative and the meaning dialogue is probably adequate*

# Consequences for care at home: "Psychological space" for the child

- ◆ Inhibiting factors:
- ◆ Everyday stress and exhaustion in both parents and children
- ◆ Time squeeze and *emotional and attentional availability* of parents – also children
- ◆ Parental emotional investment in professional careers less in identification and bonding with children
- ◆ Possible consequence: reduced psychological space and time left for the child? *Insecure attachment amongst the youngest?* (Belsky 1996)
- ◆ Can preschool substitute? Peer group? Computers and TV substitute?

## Process model of situational factors influencing level of stress and care for children at home



# Not single focussed but integrated interventions necessary

- ✦ The figure above shows that psychological space and emotional availability is embedded in caregivers' life context or life conditions
- ✦ For that reason effective psychosocial interventions need to include also *improvement of life-conditions* for positive effects to be sustained



# Summing up: Negative trends

- ✦ Increase in divorce -> increase in risk
- ✦ Increase in poor, young one-parent families -> increase in risk for children
- ✦ Absent fathers -> increase in risk
- ✦ Parental stress (time squeeze) -> neglect and insensitivity
- ✦ Increase in psychopathology, behavioural problems and suicide amongst children (Fogany 2002, Mato 2003, Reder 2000, Carr 2000)

# Summing up: Positive trends:

- ◆ *Positive:*
- ◆ Humanization of care - from traditional institutions (Thuen 2008)
- ◆ Childrens' rights – new awareness
- ◆ Protection of vulnerable children: abuse, spanking - child ombud
- ◆ All children equal opportunities for education
- ◆ At risk children are protected and included into the educational system
- ◆ Institutions: preparation for challenges of life – instead of isolation and overprotection at home

# Beyond caregivers: Tacit values and priorities in modern child policy

- ◆ The underlying assumptions:
- ◆ Work for both parents
- ◆ Gender equality in both work and care,
- ◆ Two incomes are necessary to sustain a reasonable standard of living
- ◆ Institutionalization of children is a consequence for both working
- ◆ The care for children in institutions are considered adequate and should be increased
- ◆ Democratization: education for all
- ◆ A high material standard of living is the key to a good life

# Some key references in the lecture

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# The balance between individualism and collective participation

- ◆ Kagitcibaci's solution:
- ◆ Independence with emotional relatedness as in Turkey and South East Asian states.
- ◆ Individualism not a necessary precondition for economic growth – South East Asia.
- ◆ The problem of isolation and loneliness in the west and the search for a new collectivity

# Who is in charge of the child's day?

- ◆ Beatrice Whiting quote...
- ◆ The mother most important role is to control the child's "activity settings" where the child spend his day.
- ◆ Which activity settings constitute the child's day? Home settings..., play and media/computer activities, sports and peer activity settings, school and educational settings
- ◆ Which activity settings are lacking in some children's day: Settings of intimacy and close contact?



# New trends in care

Parents romanticizing childhood:

- ◆ Modern overidentification and emotional investment in children: Spoiled egoistic self-centered children?
- ◆ Lacking close adult models and intimacy?
- ◆ Lacking responsibility training like children in traditional societies