

in situations where caretaker roles are less well defined by those involved.



FIG 9-9 Infancy is an important time for attachment to significant others. (Photo by Paul Vincent Kuntz, Texas Children's Hospital, Houston, TX.)

When infants are not provided a safe haven and consistent and loving care, an insecure attachment develops; such infants do not feel they can trust the world in which they live. This insecure attachment may result in psychosocial difficulties as the child grows and may persist even into adulthood. Insecure attachment may also exist in homes where there is domestic violence and maternal postnatal depression.

Attachment progresses during infancy, with the infant assuming an increasingly significant role in the family. Two components of cognitive development are required for attachment: (1) the ability to discriminate the mother from other individuals and (2) the achievement of object permanence. Both of these processes prepare infants for an equally important aspect of attachment—separation from the parent. Separation-individuation should occur as a harmonious, parallel process with emotional attachment.

During the formation of attachment to the parent, the infant progresses through four distinct but overlapping stages. For the first few weeks of life, infants respond indiscriminately to anyone.