Emerging parenthood: Parental sensitivity from infancy to toddlerhood

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CHAPTER 2

2

Context Matters: Maternal and Paternal Sensitivity to Infants in Four Settings

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Abstract

To date, results have been inconsistent in whether mothers show higher parental sensitivity to their infant than fathers do. The context in which sensitivity is measured may play a role in these inconsistent findings, but this has not been examined yet. The aim of the current study was to test context as a source of variability in parental sensitivity, comparing maternal and paternal sensitivity to infants in four different observational settings. Participants included 109 families with their 4-month-old infants. Parental sensitivity was observed during a routine caregiving session, free play episode, and the baseline and reunion of the Still Face Procedure. Results demonstrated that parental sensitivity showed weak to strong stability (correlations) across the four contexts. Furthermore, overall levels of parental sensitivity were higher in more naturalistic contexts (routine caregiving > free play > Still Face). Lastly, mothers and fathers were overall equally sensitive across contexts. Our findings highlight the importance of taking context into account when observing parental sensitivity in research as well as practice. Furthermore, future research should examine the emergence of possible differences in maternal and paternal sensitivity over time.

Keywords: parental sensitivity, mothers, fathers, context, observation.

Introduction

Parental sensitivity reflects parents' ability to accurately interpret and appropriately respond to their children's signals (Ainsworth et al., 1974), and is related to a host of positive child outcomes, such as attachment security and adaptive cognitive development (e.g., De Wolff & Van IJzendoorn, 1997; Mesman et al., 2012). Mary Ainsworth originally developed this construct based on long, naturalistic observations of mother-infant interactions (Ainsworth, 1967; Ainsworth et al., 1974; Ainsworth et al., 1978). In current research however, parental sensitivity to infants is generally observed for shorter periods and in a broad range of contexts, from less naturalistic settings such as the Still Face Procedure to more naturalistic settings such as a bathing session (e.g., Joosen et al., 2012). Such contextual differences in observational settings may play a role in observing parental sensitivity, but to date little research has examined this issue.

Each observational setting has advantages and limitations. Single routine caregiving situations (e.g., bathing the infant) are closest to the original context in which Ainsworth developed her maternal sensitivity framework and are highly naturalistic, because they reflect regularly performed activities. Play sessions on the other hand are generally more standardized, because parents receive specific instructions to play with their child for a certain amount of time with or without toys, in order to immediately elicit actual parent-child interaction in a relatively short time frame. However, neither setting necessarily elicits parental sensitivity to infant distress specifically. This could be a disadvantage, as sensitivity to distress and sensitivity to nondistress seem to be distinct dimensions of parenting, as they have different predictors and outcomes (Leerkes et al., 2012). Stress-inducing paradigms during which parental sensitivity to infant distress specifically can be measured are the Still-Face Paradigm (SFP; Tronick et al., 1978) and the Strange Situation Procedure (SSP; Ainsworth et al., 1978). A possible disadvantage of these distress-inducing paradigms is however that they are not necessarily naturalistic, as the paradigms are highly standardized and are often executed in a lab (especially the SSP). A second disadvantage is that not all infants get equally distressed by these paradigms (e.g., Mesman et al., 2013).

Even though different observational settings are used in research to observe parental sensitivity, little is known about the extent to which sensitivity is stable (in rank order) and consistent (in mean levels) across these contexts. A small number of studies have already looked at stability and/or consistency in parental sensitivity to infants across different settings, most of these examining mothers only. Regarding stability, studies consistently found positive, moderate to strong correlations between maternal sensitivity in a stress-inducing context and maternal sensitivity to nondistress (e.g., Braungart-Rieker et al., 2014). Regarding consistency in parental sensitivity to infants across contexts, results have been more mixed. Some research suggests that mothers may be more sensitive in more naturalistic settings, as maternal sensitivity has for example been found to be higher during a routine caregiving session than during a more structured free play session (Joosen et al., 2012). However, when examining other contexts, not all studies found a significant difference between more and less naturalistic settings (e.g. Behrens et al., 2014). Thus, more research is needed to examine the extent to which context plays a role in observing parental sensitivity.

In addition to contextual deviations from Ainsworth's original study, in recent research fathers' sensitivity is also increasingly taken into account while Ainsworth's definition of sensitivity was based on observation of mothers only. Some studies suggest that mothers are more sensitive than fathers (e.g., Hallers-Haalboom et al., 2014), but other studies do not find a significant difference between maternal and paternal sensitivity (e.g., Braungart-Rieker et al., 2001). Interestingly, studies that found a mean-level difference between mothers and fathers measured sensitivity often during free play (e.g., Hallers-Haalboom et al., 2014), whereas studies that did not find a difference measured sensitivity often during the SFP baseline (e.g., Braungart-Rieker et al., 2001). Infant age differed as well, with differences between mothers and fathers more often found in parents with older infants (≥6 months; e.g., Fuertes et al., 2016) than in parents with younger infants (e.g., Braungart-Rieker et al., 1998). This could suggest that (the absence of) a difference in sensitivity between mothers and fathers may at least partly depend on context and/or infant age, but to date this has not been examined.

In summary, it is unclear to what extent contextual differences in observational settings play a role in observing and comparing sensitivity in mothers and fathers. More research is needed to disentangle variability in parenting behavior from contextual differences. The present study contributes to the existing literature by examining not just parental similarities and differences in sensitivity to infants, but also contextual differences, and their interplay. Four different contexts are examined: routine caregiving, free play, SFP baseline, and SFP reunion. The following hypotheses are tested: (a) parental sensitivity across contexts is stable (i.e., significantly correlated): parents who are more sensitive in one context, are also more sensitive in other contexts; (b) parents are more sensitive in a routine caregiving context than in a free play context, differences between all other contexts will be explored; (c) overall, mothers and fathers are equally sensitive; (d) a possible parent-by-context interaction effect on parental sensitivity will also be explored.

Method

Participants

Dutch expecting parents were recruited through pregnancy fairs and prenatal exercise classes from September 2014 to March 2015 throughout the Netherlands, and through flyers and posters distributed at pregnancy stores and midwife clinics. Interested couples filled out a screening questionnaire to check eligibility. Primiparous expecting parents were eligible to participate if they were at least 21 years of age, were living together in the Netherlands, and were planning on raising their baby together. Families were not included in the study if either parent did not speak Dutch, had a (self-reported) history of psychotic depression, psychosis, substance misuse or addiction, or was undergoing an extensive medical or therapeutic treatment. A total of 132 couples participated in the prenatal assessment, of which in 119 families both father and mother also completed the 4-month assessment which is the focus of the current study. Attrition between the prenatal and 4-month assessment was due to infant health problems ($n = 4$), parent mental problems ($n = 1$), and lack of time ($n = 8$). Participating families did not differ from non-participating families on age, educational level, working hours, personal income, and family income (*p*s:

.07- .77). In the current study, families with missing data were excluded (n = 10), resulting in a final sample of 109 families (47 boys).

At the 4-month assessment, mothers were between 21 and 39 years old (M = 29.89, SD = 3.58) and fathers between 23 and 48 years (M = 32.12, SD = 4.33). Regarding educational level, 69.8% of the mothers were highly educated, meaning they had at least a Bachelor's degree, 13.2% had a medium educational level, meaning they obtained postsecondary or short-cycle tertiary education, and 17.0% of the mothers had a low educational level, meaning they obtained upper secondary education or less. Regarding the fathers, 59.8% were highly educated, 12.4% had a medium educational level, and 27.8% had a low educational level. Concerning employment, 83.8% of the mothers and 95.3% of the fathers had a paid job, and monthly household income ranged from 1,500 to 10,900 euros (M = 4965.39, SD = 1779.67). Furthermore, mothers worked on average 23.18 hours per week (SD = 11.57), and fathers 38.88 hours per week (SD = 9.96). Lastly, 33.0% of the mothers with a paid job were taking parental leave for an average of 10.31 hours per week (SD = 8.96), and 11.0% of the fathers with a paid job were taking parental leave for an average of 6.36 hours per week (SD = 1.96).

Procedure

Fathers and mothers were visited separately at the 4-month assessment, with a period of approximately one week in between visits. The order of mother and father visits was counterbalanced. If the other parent was present during the home visit (n = 96), he or she was in another room so the assessment with the target parent would not be disturbed. In all other cases, no one else was present during the home visit except for the target parent and the infant. During the home visit, parental sensitivity was videotaped for observation in four contexts: (1) free play on the parent's lap or on the floor, (2) the SFP baseline, (3) the SFP reunion, and (4) a routine caregiving task. During the free play episode parents were instructed to play with their infant for 5 minutes as they would normally do, but without toys or a pacifier. During the SFP the parent sat in front of the infant, while the infant was seated in a car seat. The SFP consisted of three parts: (a) the baseline (2 min), during which parent and infant were allowed to interact like they normally do; (b) the "still-face" episode (1 min), during which the parent kept a neutral facial expression and was not allowed to respond to the infant; (c) the reunion (2 min), during which the parent was allowed to interact with the infant again, and after the first minute the parent was also allowed to pick up the infant from the car seat. The routine caregiving episode consisted of either bathing the infant (N = 85 for mothers, N = 84 for fathers) or changing the infant's diaper (N = 24 for mothers, N = 25 for fathers). Bathing lasted in between 7.58 and 30.07 minutes (M = 17.77, SD = 4.11), while changing the infant's diaper lasted in between 2.09 and 15.36 minutes (M = 5.08, SD = 2.76). Episode duration differed significantly between bathing and changing the infant's diaper in both mothers and fathers, $t(107) = 15.79$, $p < .001$ and $t(56.20) = 15.89$, $p < .001$, respectively. However, both maternal and paternal sensitivity did not differ significantly between bathing and changing the infant's diaper. All visits were conducted by trained graduate and undergraduate students. Informed consent was obtained from both parents. Parents received a gift voucher and a small present for their infant after every home visit. The study was approved by the Ethics Review Board of the Institute of Education and Child Studies of Leiden University, the Netherlands.

Measures

Parental sensitivity during the free play and routine caregiving contexts was coded using the Ainsworth Sensitivity Scale (Ainsworth et al., 1974), a 9-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = highly insensitive to 9 = highly sensitive, by assigning one single global rating to the parent per context. Ten coders were trained to reliability by the last author. The reliability set contained 30 videotapes of free play sessions; intraclass correlation coefficients (absolute agreement) for the different pairs of coders ranged from .73 to .92 (M = .83). After successfully completing the reliability set on free play sessions, coders received two extra training sessions on the coding of routine caregiving episodes. The free play and routine caregiving episode were coded independently by separate coders for most mothers and fathers (N = 90 for mothers, N = 95 for fathers). Due to constraints in coder availability, for the other parents the two episodes were coded by the same coder, resulting in coder overlap for 19 mothers and 14 fathers. However, correlations across contexts for the subgroup with coder overlap were not significantly higher than in the group without coder overlap. Furthermore, mothers and fathers of the same family were coded by separate coders.

Parental sensitivity during both the SFP baseline and reunion was coded by a different set of coders using the SFP Sensitivity scale, an adapted version of the Mother-Infant Coding System (MICS; Miller, 2000). This coding system consisted of a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 0 = no sensitivity to 3 = predominantly high sensitivity. The reliability set contained 40 videotapes of SFPs (both baseline and reunion). Four coders were trained to reliability by the last author. Intraclass correlation coefficient (absolute agreement) for the SFP across baseline and reunion and in a set that included both mothers and fathers was .71. Due to constraints in coder availability, the coders trained to code mothers' versus fathers' SFP videotapes were different. The same coder coded both baseline and reunion for one parent.

To be able to compare parents' sensitivity scores during all contexts in one model, the Ainsworth scores of parental sensitivity (9-point scale) during free play and routine caregiving were recoded into a 4-point Likert scale to have the same range as the SFP Sensitivity scale (see supplemental material). Scale points 1 and 2 were recoded into 0 (*no sensitivity*), scale points 3 and 4 were recoded into 1 (*minimal or low sensitivity*), scale points 5 and 6 were recoded into 2 (*mixed or moderate sensitivity*), and scale points 7, 8, and 9 were recoded into 3 (*predominantly high sensitivity*).

Analyses

Data analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics 23. Data on parental sensitivity as well as potential covariates were explored (i.e., parents' age, educational level, working hours, household income, routine caregiving session duration, and coder overlap between routine caregiving and free play). There were five outliers, defined as scores at least 3.29 *SD* below or above the mean. These were winsorized according to the method of Tabachnick and Fidell (2012): scores were changed in such way that they fell in the accepted *SD* range but were still most deviant. All variables approached normal distribution, except for mothers' educational level. Therefore, a square root transformation of this variable was used in the preliminary analyses, which were done to examine whether the possible

covariates were significantly related to parental sensitivity in one or more contexts. If they were significantly related, they were included in further analyses as covariate.

To examine stability in parental sensitivity between the four different contexts, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated. To examine differences between parents, differences between contexts, and parent by context interaction effects, a GLM Repeated Measures analysis was performed. First, the main effects of the within-subjects factors context (free play, routine caregiving, SFP baseline, SFP reunion) and parent gender (mother, father) on parental sensitivity were examined. Second, the effect of the interaction between these two within-subjects factors on parental sensitivity was examined. To check if the results regarding differences between free play and caregiving context would differ using original instead of recoded data, two additional GLMs were run and compared: one in which only the routine caregiving and free play context were examined using the original Ainsworth Sensitivity Scale scores, and one in which the same two contexts were examined using the recoded scores. Because the two models showed the same results, demonstrating that recoding did not influence the results, only the full model with the recoded data is reported.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

None of the potential covariates were related to paternal or maternal sensitivity, except for parents' educational level. Mothers with a higher educational level were more sensitive during free play (r = .19, p =.046) and the SFP reunion (r = .19, p =.047), but not during routine caregiving and the SFP baseline. Additionally, fathers' educational level was related to maternal and paternal sensitivity during free play (r = .22, p =.021 and r = .23, p =.017, respectively), and to paternal sensitivity only during routine caregiving, the SFP baseline, and the SFP reunion (r = .26, p =.007, r = .21, p =.028, and r = .24, p =.014, respectively). Because maternal and paternal educational level were related to parental sensitivity, the GLM Repeated Measures analysis was performed with these variables as covariate. Even though duration of the routine caregiving episode was not significantly related to paternal or maternal sensitivity, it has been suggested that longer observations may capture a more ecologically valid and reliable sensitivity score (Mesman, 2018). Therefore, duration of the routine caregiving episode was included as a covariate in the GLM Repeated Measures analysis as well. Descriptive statistics for all parental sensitivity measures are shown in Table 1.

Stability in Parental Sensitivity Across Contexts

Correlations between mothers' and fathers' sensitivity in all four contexts are presented in Table 1. Parental sensitivity was related between contexts: that is, parents who were more sensitive in one context, were also more sensitive in the other three contexts, with weak to strong correlations for both mothers (rs = .22 - .53) and fathers (rs = .21 - .64). Correlations were highest for the two contexts that were part of the SFP (baseline and reunion). The strength of the correlations between sensitivity in the four contexts did not differ significantly for mothers versus fathers (zs = -1.22 ~ 0.56, ps >.22).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Maternal and Paternal Sensitivity to Infants at 4 Months in Four Contexts.

		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	M	SD	Range
Mothers	1. Sensitivity free play								1.83	0.96	0-3
	2. Sensitivity routine caregiving	.25**							2.70	0.48	1-3
	3. Sensitivity SFP baseline	.26**	.33**						1.90	0.80	0-3
	4. Sensitivity SFP reunion	.22*	.24*	.53**					1.87	0.77	0-3
Fathers	5. Sensitivity free play	.18	.15	.14	.01				2.00	1.00	0-3
	6. Sensitivity routine caregiving	.20*	.29**	.10	.11	.27**			2.50	0.65	1-3
	7. Sensitivity SFP baseline	.02	.30**	.19*	.05	.23*	.26**		1.39	0.87	0-3
	8. Sensitivity SFP reunion	.10	.30**	.10	.06	.22*	.21*	.64**	1.40	0.72	0-3

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Differences between Mothers' and Fathers' Sensitivity in all Four Contexts

Regarding the GLM Repeated Measures analysis, Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated for the main effect of context, $\chi^2(5) = 31.53$, $p < .001$, and the interaction effect between parent and context, $\chi^2(5) = 26.26$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the degrees of freedom were corrected using Huynh–Feldt estimates of sphericity ($\varepsilon = .87$ for the main effect of context and $\varepsilon = .92$ for the interaction effect between parent and context). First, there was a significant main effect of context on parental sensitivity, $F(2.61, 265.82) = 3.71$, $p = .016$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. Post hoc analyses revealed that parental sensitivity during routine caregiving ($M = 2.60$; $SE = 0.04$) was significantly higher than during free play ($M = 1.90$; $SE = 0.07$), the SFP baseline ($M = 1.66$; $SE = 0.06$), and the SFP reunion ($M = 1.65$; $SE = 0.05$). Additionally, parental sensitivity was significantly higher during free play than during the SFP baseline and reunion, and there was no significant difference between parental sensitivity during the SFP baseline and reunion. Second, there was no significant main effect of parent on parental sensitivity, $F(1, 102) = 3.70$, $p = .057$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. Third, there was no significant interaction effect between parent and context, $F(2.74, 279.87) = 2.35$, $p = .079$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, indicating that the lack of mother-father differences in sensitivity was consistent across contexts. Figure 1 shows the results regarding the GLM Repeated Measures analysis.

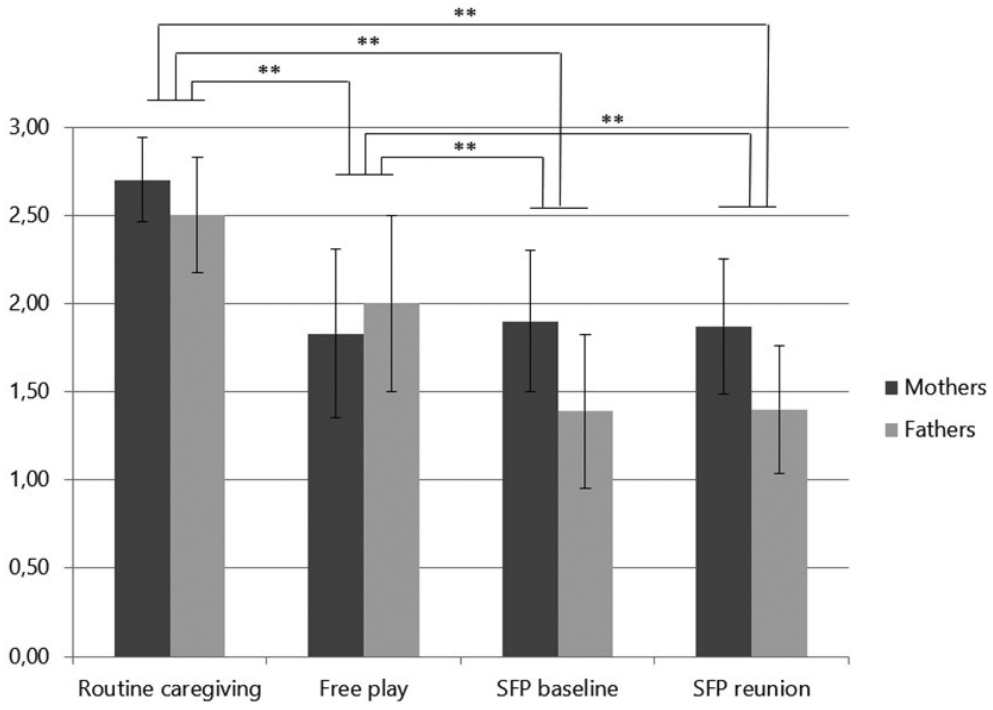

Figure 1. Maternal and paternal sensitivity to infants at 4 months during routine caregiving, free play, SFP baseline, and SFP reunion.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine variability in maternal and paternal sensitivity towards their infants by observing sensitivity in four different contexts: routine caregiving, free play, SFP baseline, and SFP reunion. Parental sensitivity was moderately stable across contexts: parents who were more sensitive in one context, were also more sensitive in the other three contexts. Overall, mean levels of parental sensitivity varied across contexts: parents were more sensitive during a routine caregiving task than during free play, the SFP baseline, and the SFP reunion, and more sensitive during free play than during the SFP baseline and reunion. Mothers and fathers were equally sensitive across contexts, and the lack of mother-father differences in sensitivity was consistent across contexts.

As expected based on previous studies (e.g., Braungart-Rieker et al., 2014), parents who showed higher sensitivity in one context also demonstrated higher sensitivity in other contexts. However, it should be noted that the correlations for mothers as well as fathers were relatively low except for those between the SFP baseline and reunion. This indicates that even though there is an element of correlational stability in parental sensitivity

across contexts, there is also variability. It may be that the amount of experience with a certain setting plays a role in whether parental sensitivity is stable across contexts. Less experience with a specific context may make it more difficult to pick up and correctly interpret the infant's signals and respond appropriately in that context. Further, research demonstrated that maternal sensitivity is lower in situations where infants show high levels of negative affect compared to situations in which infants show low levels of negative affect (Mills-Koonce et al., 2007). Some of the infants in the current study may have shown more negative affect in one of the contexts, which could have resulted in less parental sensitivity towards the infant in that context specifically and thus in lower correlations between contexts. Future studies should therefore examine moderators such as familiarity with the context and infant affect that could explain why parental sensitivity is not highly stable across all contexts.

In line with our hypothesis, we also found mean-level differences. Parental sensitivity was overall lowest during the SFP baseline and reunion, somewhat higher during free play, and highest during a routine caregiving task, which is in line with a previous study on mothers (Joosen et al., 2012). Thus, it seems that more naturalistic observational contexts result in higher levels of parental sensitivity. Parents may be more used to performing routine caregiving tasks than playing with their infant on their lap for 5 uninterrupted minutes, thus making it easier to accurately pick up on their infant's signals and respond to them appropriately. Furthermore, given that the SFP is a highly structured standardized experiment, this setting is probably equally unfamiliar to all parents, making it even less naturalistic than either lap play or routine caregiving. This could be the reason why parents in general were least sensitive in both the SFP baseline and reunion. Yet, Behrens and colleagues (2014) did not find a significant difference in levels of maternal sensitivity between the SSP - a stress-inducing experiment similar to the SFP - and a more naturalistic home setting. However, their home setting did include several structured tasks, there was a 2.5 year gap between the two assessments, and the contexts were not coded independently. Furthermore, as infants play an active role in the interaction with their parents and may respond differently to each context as well, future research should include infant behavior to examine a potential infant effect on parental sensitivity in each context. All in all, even though the current research indicates that parents are more sensitive in more ecologically valid observational contexts, more research is needed to further examine how and why parental sensitivity differs across multiple contexts.

Taking into account possible contextual differences, the hypothesis that mothers and fathers would be equally sensitive to their 4-month-old infant was confirmed. As mentioned previously, the literature shows mixed results with regard to a possible difference between maternal and paternal sensitivity. However, both contexts and infant age differed across these studies, which could explain the mixed results. The current study indicates that differences in sensitivity between mothers and fathers are not present yet when the infant is only 4 months old. However, they may develop over time as most research that did find a significant difference was done with infants older than 4 months (e.g., Hallers-Haalboom et al., 2014).

While this study extends the literature on contextual differences in parental sensitivity, there are some important limitations. First, sensitivity was measured with two instruments. Even though they strongly overlap in their conceptualization of parental sensitivity, a minor part of the SFP scale includes warmth, whereas the Ainsworth scale does not. Because there is evidence that warmth and sensitivity are related but different concepts, different sensitivity measures are not necessarily interchangeable and small differences in conceptualization could thus influence research results (Bohr et al., 2018; Mesman & Emmen, 2013). However, in the current study sensitivity during the routine caregiving session and free play (measured with the same scale) were not more strongly related to each other than to the SFP baseline and reunion (measured with another scale), suggesting that the difference in instruments was not a determining factor. Nevertheless, future research on contextual differences in parental sensitivity would benefit from using one measurement instrument. Second, it could be questioned whether the SFP is a reliable stress-inducing procedure to measure parental sensitivity, as not all infants are equally distressed during the SFP (Mesman et al., 2013). In future studies it would be better to use a stress-inducing experiment that relies less heavily on the parent's performance and is more universally stressful for infants. Third, due to practical reasons (e.g., most babies fall asleep after bathing) the order of the contexts during the home visit was initially fixed, which could have resulted in order effects. Eventually, in 85 out of the 218 home visits the order was however different than planned, for instance because the infant was already very tired when the researcher arrived, or the infant became fussy during a certain task. In those cases the order was changed in such a way that data collection was still possible. Furthermore, in all four contexts there were no differences in both maternal and paternal sensitivity between the fixed-order group and the mixed-order group, *t*s (107) ≤ 1.53, *p*s ≥ .13. Thus, it is unlikely that the context effect can be explained by an order effect.

In conclusion, the current study demonstrated that mothers and fathers were equally sensitive towards their 4-month-old infants across multiple contexts. Longitudinal research is needed to determine when and how differences in maternal and paternal sensitivity arise over time, given that the studies that do find differences tend to involve older infants. Furthermore, the current study also demonstrated that both mothers and fathers show lower sensitivity in less naturalistic contexts. It is important to take this into account for research as well as practice. Research has already demonstrated that parental predictors and infant outcomes of general sensitivity are different from those of sensitivity to distress (e.g., Leerkes et al., 2012). It could therefore be possible that other contrasting research results on (predictors and outcomes of) parental sensitivity are also explained by differences in the contexts in which sensitivity is measured, emphasizing the importance of the choices researchers make regarding the context in which to observe parental sensitivity. Our results also highlight the importance of using the same observational context when examining sensitivity longitudinally, to avoid confounding effects. For the evaluation of parenting skills in (clinical) practice, it is important to realize that parents seem to show their capacities best in more ecologically valid settings, whereas they are more challenged in settings that are less naturalistic. Both ends of their sensitive capabilities would be valuable to test in clinical assessments. In sum, our research highlights that context matters when mothers and fathers are observed and scored on their sensitivity towards their infants.

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Supplement: Overlap Between Scale points of the Ainsworth Sensitivity Scale and SFP Sensitivity Scale.

Ainsworth Sensitivity Scale	SFP Sensitivity Scale
1 = Highly insensitive. Responds insensitively almost all of the time, sensitive responses are extremely rare or absent.	**0 = No sensitivity.** Mother shows virtually no sensitivity in her interactions with the infant.
2 = Very insensitive. Responds insensitively almost all of the time, but some small instances of sensitivity can be observed.	
3 = Insensitive. Responds insensitively most of the time, but some instances of sensitivity can be observed.	**1 = Minimal or low sensitivity.** Mother shows a few instances of sensitive behavior, which shows she is able to respond sensitively to the infant.
4 = Quite insensitive. Responds insensitively more often than not, but does clearly show the capacity for sensitivity several times.	
5 = Inconsistently sensitive. Responds sensitively more often than not, but lapses occur often as well, and some of them are conspicuous.	**2 = Mixed or moderate sensitivity.** Mother is moderately sensitive, or not consistently sensitive throughout the segment.
6 = Adequately sensitive. Most often responds sensitively, but lapses occur several times, and a few of them are conspicuous.	
7 = Sensitive. Very often responds sensitively, and lapses are small and infrequent.	**3 = Predominantly high sensitivity.** Mother is consistently infant-centered in her interactions with the infant and responds to the infant's cues (also the more subtle cues).
8 = Very sensitive. Virtually always responds sensitively, and any lapses are small and rare.	
9 = Highly sensitive. Virtually always responds sensitively, and any lapses are small and extremely rare.	

Note. The Ainsworth Sensitivity Scale was developed by Ainsworth, Stayton, and Bell (1974). The SFP Sensitivity Scale is an adapted version of the MICS developed by Miller (2000).