

Socioemotional Development in the Preschool Years

Chapter 10

Preschoolers' Social Lives

- The preschool years are marked by increased interactions with the world at large.
- Around age 3, children begin to develop real friendships.
- Peers come to be seen as individuals with special qualities.
- Relationships are based on companionship, play, and entertainment.
- Friendship is focused on the carrying out of shared activities (rather than just being in the same place at the same time!).

With age, preschooler's view of friendship evolves.

- Older preschoolers see friendship as a continuing state, and as a stable relationship that has meaning beyond the immediate moment.
- Older preschoolers pay more attention to concepts such as trust, support, and shared interests.
- Even by age 3, children are interested in maintaining smooth social relationships with their friends, trying to avoid disagreements.

(Preschool Social Life, continued)

Some children are more readily liked by their peers than others.

Qualities associated with popularity

- physical attractiveness
- being outgoing
- being sociable
- speaking more
- smiling more
- having a greater understanding of others' emotions

Qualities associated with disliked children

- more likely to be aggressive
- More disruptive,
- impose themselves on their peers
- less cooperative
- do not take turns.

(Preschool Social Life, continued)

- Are unpopular preschoolers destined for a life with few friends? Not necessarily!
- Social skills that are associated with popularity can be taught by parents and teachers as well as enhanced through a warm, supportive home environment.

Playing by the Rules: How Play Affects Social & Personality Development

Categorizing play

- Three year olds typically engage in **FUNCTIONAL PLAY** which involves *simple, repetitive activities*, that is, doing something for the sake of being active. (playing with dolls, skipping, jumping rope, etc)



(Categorizing play, continued)



- By age 4, children typically engage in **CONSTRUCTIVE PLAY** which involves *manipulating objects to produce or build something* (legos, puzzles, etc.)
 - Constructive play allows children to test developing cognitive skills.
 - Constructive play allows children to practice motor skills.
 - Constructive play allows children to problem solve.
 - Constructive play allows children to learn to cooperate

The social aspects of play
(How Play Affects Social & Personality
Development, continued)

Mildred Parten (1932) noted various types of play...

- **PARALLEL PLAY** is when children play with similar toys, in a similar manner, but do not interact with each other.
- **ONLOOKER PLAY** occurs when children simply watch others play but do not actually participate themselves



(Mildred Parten's various
types of play, continued)

- **ASSOCIATIVE PLAY** is where two or more children actually interact with one another by sharing or borrowing toys or materials, although they do not do the same thing.
- In **COOPERATIVE PLAY**, children genuinely play with one another, taking turns, playing games, or devising contests.

More about the effects of play on social and personality development...

- Associative and cooperative play generally do not emerge until the end of the preschool years.
- The nature of a child's play is influenced by their social experiences.
 - Children with preschool experience engage in more social behaviors earlier (associative & cooperative play, etc.)



Television: Learning From the Media

- Average preschooler watches 20 to 30 hours of TV a week!
- Consequences of TV viewing are unclear.
- Children do not fully understand the plots.
- They may have difficulty separating fantasy from reality.
- Some information is well understood by young viewers, i.e. facial expressions.
- Yet, much of what is viewed is not representative of events in the real world.

→ Television may be harnessed to facilitate growth.

- *Sesame Street* is the most popular educational program in U.S.
- Viewers had significantly larger vocabularies.
- Lower income viewers were better prepared for school, scored higher on tests of cognitive ability, and spent more time reading.

Television: learning from the media?



- Critics of *Sesame Street* suggest that viewers may be less receptive to traditional modes of teaching.
- There are difficulties in assessing the effects of educational viewing, (e.g. the effects may be related to parenting).

**BUT overall the results of watching sesame street seem to be positive

Aggression and Violence in Preschool Children

- **AGGRESSION** is the intentional injury or harm to another person.
- Infants do not act aggressively, however, by the preschool years children demonstrate true aggression.
- The frequency and duration of aggressive acts declines throughout early childhood.
- Aggression is a relatively stable trait, the most aggressive preschoolers tend to be the most aggressive school aged children.

Even though most children are not exposed directly to real-life violence, television models aggression for them!

- TV has a clear impact on social development
 - We know that preschoolers imitate violence they see on cartoons
 - ~Does imitation lead to actual aggression?
 - Tough to answer definitively!
 - Conducting a true experiment would be unethical
 - Correlational studies clearly suggest subsequent aggression
 - ~Just as kids can learn aggression, they can unlearn!
Observation of nonaggressive models leads to reduced aggression levels.

Gender Identity





Gender Identity: Developing Femaleness & Maleness



- **Gender**, the sense of being male or female, is well established in young children. (*Sex* typically refers to sexual anatomy.)
- One way gender is manifested is in play.
 - During the preschool years boys increasingly play with boys.
 - Girls tend to play with girls.
- **Gender out-weighs ethnic variables** when it comes to play
 - An Asian American boy would prefer to play with an African American boy than with an Asian American girl

(Gender Identity: Developing Femaleness & Maleness, continued)

- Preschoolers also begin to develop expectations about appropriate behavior for girls and boys.
- Like adults, preschoolers expect males to be more *independent, forceful and competitive* and females to be *warm, nurturing, expressive and submissive*.
- These are expectations and not truths about actual behavior! But viewing the world this way affects preschoolers behavior!
- However, young children typically hold stronger gender-stereotypes than adults.

Several theoretical explanations for gender related attitudes exist.

- Biological perspectives argue that physical characteristics associated with the different sexes, hormone differences, and differences in the structure of female and male brains might lead to gender differences.
 - (inborn genetic factors → gender differences)

(Theoretical explanations for gender related attitudes, continued)

- Psychoanalytic perspectives attribute gender differences to **IDENTIFICATION**, *the process in which children attempt to be similar to their same-sex parent, incorporating the parent's attitudes and values.*
 - (gender development results from moving thru stages related to biological urges)

(Theoretical explanations for gender related attitudes, continued)

- Social-learning approaches argue that children learn gender-related behavior and expectations from direct training and from their observation of others, including the media.
 - (Gender related behavior & expectations learned from observations of others in their environment)

(Theoretical explanations for gender related attitudes, continued)

- **Cognitive approaches** argue that individuals develop a **GENDER IDENTITY**, *the perception of oneself as male or female*.
 - To do this they develop a **GENDER SCHEMA** (a cognitive framework that organizes information relevant to gender).
 - Preschoolers begin developing "rules" about what is right, and what is inappropriate, for males and females.

(The cognitive approach as an explanation for gender related attitudes, continued)

- By the time they are 4 or 5 years of age, children develop an understanding of **GENDER CONSTANCY** (*the belief that people are permanently males or females, depending on fixed, unchangeable biological factors*).
- Sandra Bem believes that one can minimize rigid views of gender by encouraging children to be **ANDROGYNOUS** (*a state in which gender roles encompass characteristics thought typical of both sexes*)
 - Males as assertive & gentle,
 - Females as empathetic & competitive

Parenting styles

Four parenting styles:

- **Authoritarian**
 - highly controlling, little discussion ("My way, or else").
- **Authoritative**
 - limits placed, but also warm, nurturing, encouraging independence within those limits ("Let's talk about it").
- **Indulgent (also called Permissive)**
 - involved, but with few demands or restraints.
- **Neglectful**
 - uninvolved in child's life.

Classification of Parenting Styles

	Accepting of and responsive to the child	Rejecting of and unresponsive to the child
Demanding, controlling of child	Authoritative	Authoritarian
Undemanding, uncontrolling of child	Indulgent	Neglectful

Fig. 9.6

Discipline Strategies

- 1979 Swedish law forbids any type of physical punishment by parents.
- Cross-culturally, U.S. and Canada among those most favoring corporal punishment.
- Alternatives include use of time-outs, reasoning with child, positive reinforcement, loss of privileges.
