

COMMUNITY OF REFLECTION AND PRACTICE
THE SOCIAL LIVES OF YOUNG CHILDREN



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WORKING THEMES, ABSTRACTS AND PRESENTATIONS

Theme 1: Young children's need for connectedness to others: questions of autonomy, interdependence, participation and citizenship

Questions for reflection and discussion

- 1.1 How can participation and citizenship be best understood in the context of young children's peer relations in early childhood education and care settings?
- 1.2 How does the notion of democracy relate to young children's peer relationships and peer culture?
- 1.3 How can young children be most effectively supported as they construct and reconstruct their sense of who they are in relation to their age, gender, ethnicity, and other key dimensions of difference?

PRESENTATIONS

Rights discourses, autonomy and self-determination in early childhood education and care

Anne Trine Kjørholt

The participation rights as stated in the UN Convention has been described as revolutionary compared to earlier children's rights declarations. These global discourses have been increasingly powerful worldwide since 1989, both in policy as well as in research, including policy and practice related to children below school age. However, still there is a lack of empirical studies and theorising regarding what it means to listen to young children and to give them rights to participation within early childhood education and care.

The aim of this paper is to present results from studies of how children's rights to participation are implemented in a Nordic context. By questioning autonomy, individual choice and self-determination that seem to be core issues in the new practices, I will discuss alternative ways of implementing participation rights. The philosophy of listening understood as an 'ethic of an encounter' represents a broad approach to listening far beyond the scope of human experiences limited only to autonomy, cognitive abilities and oral language. An ethics of listening also represents an interesting tool to promote children's own constructions of identities together with other children and adults within early childhood settings. Children, practitioners and parents are engaged in reflexive practices related to interpretations of events, phenomena and 'lived lives' in everyday life, by using a variety of different methods.

Young children's connectedness to others: autonomy, interdependence, participation, citizenship in day and foster care

Maria Clotilde Rossetti-Ferreira

Our experience has been mainly with day care and foster care. At day care, we showed that peer interaction already occurs at the first year of life. (DVD: "Do babies interact with babies?" 2007), but it can be fostered or hindered by the environment and routines. Our adoption and foster care studies pointed that the number of children separated/abandoned by their birth family could decrease, if good quality full time day care and first grade was provided, helping families to cope with unstable/poor situations. Siblings and peers acquire an important role, but are often sent to different destinations. Children construct their sense of who they are through the positions they are set in the family, community and educational contexts and in the interactions they establish. They construct their own histories through their narrative experiences with others.

Our experiences at day care show that some of those experiences can be planned. Projects developed by children, with help of family and community members, provided interesting peer and institution-families exchanges, stimulating respect, support and inclusion. Organizing with the children records of their own life and experiences can help them to construct their own personal identity. Our studies on institution foster care, however, show a lack of those records. Moreover, throughout the procedure of being taken away or losing their birth family, circulating between one or another family or institutional context, children are seldom heard or informed. They are helplessly submitted to the adult's decisions about their life.

The experiences of our group in Brazil is that, to tackle most of the questions proposed, and to improve the developmental conditions of children in our country, a network of dynamically interrelated activities must be developed: research, training and education of human resources, consultation and guidance, production of written and audiovisual materials, involvement in public policies.

Theme 2: The Importance of Peer Relations to Children

Key questions for reflection and discussion

- 2.1 How can we study children's perspectives of their peer relations and how do we operationalise concepts such as friendship, group dynamics, peer attachment and group affiliation?
- 2.2 How can we have access to children's perspectives of peer relations in daily practice and how can we give them a voice?
- 2.3 How can a positive sense of self be encouraged among all children, in ways that discourage some children from basing their positive identity on social discrimination, teasing and the exclusion of others?
- 2.4 According to your experience, what are the most difficult problems for children in their peer relations?

PRESENTATIONS

Draft paper

Carollee Howes

In order to understand and interpret the importance of peer relations of young children I use a theoretical framework that integrates theories of children's development of social relationships with theories of development within context, most particularly within cultural communities. Understanding peer relations and their significance requires attention to individuals, dyads, peer and classroom groupings, and to cultural communities. My theory of Culture Developmental Interface is depicted in Figure 1.

Theoretical framework

This graphic representation of culture developmental interface guides my understandings of the children's development of relations with peers. In order to explain children's development of social skills and relationships we must first account for dispositions and histories that the child brings to peer interaction. Children differ in temperament, some are shy and others exuberant in their peer encounters. Children also differ in their communicative abilities, verbal, non-verbal and emotional decoding. These individual differences in temperament and in communication skills influence their peer encounters (Dunn, 2004; Justice, Cottone, Mashbuurn, & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008; Spinrad, Eisenberg, Harris, Hanish, Fabes, Kupanoff, Ringwald, & Holmes, 2004).

Children bring to their current encounters with peers varying experiences with interactions and relationships with parents and other significant adults (Howes & Spieker, 2008) as well as their previous experiences with peers. The meanings and understandings that children derived from these experiences are brought to their peer encounters. As well the interactions and relationships with peers are formed against the background of the children's home cultural community, depicted in the left hand column of Figure 1.

A cultural community is defined as a grouping of people who share goals, beliefs, and everyday practices, and often a racial or ethnic identity (Rogoff, B, 2003). Children and adults who participate in the same cultural community develop through common activities and practices social interaction forms and styles. For example in some cultural communities, but not all, dinner table conversations or bedtime stories are times that children and their parent co-create narratives of the day's experiences. By participation in everyday activities like these dinner table conversations children develop styles of social interaction that are particular to their cultural community. For example, in one cultural community the "way things are done" is to interrupt the speaker to elaborate a fantasy story, "And then the little girl found a really big elephant just sitting in the back yard..." and in another it would be rude to interrupt and even worse to make up an untruth. Children and adults may find it relatively easy to identify practices and interactive styles that are different and almost impossible to identify their way of doing as particular to themselves. Differences in practices and interactive styles may be in even sharper contrast when the home language of the cultural communities is different, i.e. Spanish at home and English with peers.

It is important to understand that cultural communities are dynamic, the experiences of each of the members of the cultural community influences their participation with other members of the cultural community and as a result activities and

practices, and ways of thinking about activities and practices change. Therefore, as a result of parents and children participating in social interaction and relationship construction with adults and children outside of the home, home cultural community activities, practices, and beliefs may change. For example, children in Spanish monolingual households often bring pretend play themes and English home from peer play and share them with their younger siblings.

The adult caregivers who supervise children's play with peers also participate in cultural communities. Their home cultural communities function much as the children's home cultural communities, providing the adults with understandings, ways of doing things, and an interactive style and home language to use when engaging with others. This home cultural community may be the same or different from the home cultural communities of the children in the peer group. These similarities and differences may influence the relationships and interactions co-constructed by children and adults in the program (Howes & Shivers, 2006). Adult caregivers in peer settings also participate in a cultural community of the program, carrying out activities and practices that are consistent with their beliefs around caring for children and helping them develop (Huijbregts, Leseman, & Tavecchio, 2008; Wishard, Shivers, Howes, & Ritchie, 2003). These practices, e.g. what do teachers do and say when children are excluded from play, as well as their interactions and relationships with children shape the social development of children with their peers.

Finally, rarely are all the children in the peer group the same or even similar in home cultural communities. Children in the program may not all speak the same home language and may come from homes with different ideas and expectations about how to engage with others, e.g. to share materials or not to share. Constructing interactions and relationships among children from different home cultural communities may require different skills or different adult support than when all children are similar (Howes & Lee, 2007).

The right hand column of Figure 1 probably looks quite familiar to developmental psychologists. Children bring dispositions and skills; sociability and wariness, emotional regulation, and communicative skills, that influence their construction of an attachment relationship with the adult caregiver (Howes & Spieker, 2008) and their interactions and friendships with peers (Howes in press; Howes & Lee, 2006). Positive attachment relationships with caregivers influences children's formation of positive relationships with peers (Howes in press) and children who are in less conflict with peers are more likely to form positive relationships with caregivers (Howes & Shiver, 2006).

Interactions with peers and relationships with peers (whether friendships or playmate relationships) develop through multiple and recursive interactive experiences. Recursive interactions are well-scripted social exchanges which are repeated many times with only slight variation (Bretherton, 1985). From these experiences with peers, the child internalizes a set of fundamental social expectations about the behavioral dispositions of the partner (Bowlby, 1969/1982). These expectations form the basis for the development of an internal working model of relationships. Thus, through repeated experiences of social and social pretend play with a particular peer, a child forms an internal representation of a relationship with a playmate.

Some playmate relationships evolve into friendships. It is important to note that the child's representation of the partner comprises cognitions and affect derived from

both the structure and the content of social experiences with that partner. Children who engage in repeated and complex interactions with a given playmate are likely to represent the partner as a friend. Furthermore, the content of interactions is likely to influence the quality of the resulting relationship.

Because settings for peer interaction contain individuals, dyads (child-caregiver; peer friendships and playmates), and at least one peer group the interactions between children and caregivers and among peers, as well as the tone the caregivers set for the entire group all contribute to the social and emotional climate of the classroom or program. Imagine a classroom setting in which most of the interactions were harmonious and respectful, in which children and adults worked together on projects, in which a child who was distressed or frustrated was comforted and helped, and in which laughter and other expressions of positive affect predominated. Contrast this with a classroom setting in which children were ridiculed for being different, talked to and touched in a harsh rejecting manner, competed rather than helped each other, and the general tone included mistrust and anger. We can imagine that the social development of children would be take different paths in these two extremes. Because for the child encounters with peers become experiences of “living” within a group, it impossible to understand the social development of a child as isolated from the group.

Methodology

Recognizing that the development of peer relations includes attending to individual child behaviors, to dyadic interactions and relationship quality, and to peer groups necessitates particular methodological strategies. Descriptions of children’s socialization experiences must be at each level, individual, dyad and group. In order to fully understand the complexity of peer interaction within peer groups interactions between levels of analysis (individual, dyad, group) must be considered. For example, a shy child may find engaging with peers more difficult in a hostile versus a harmonious classroom climate (Gazelle, 2006). And having one peer who speaks your home language is a different experience from having your home language spoken by the entire group (Howes & Lee, 2007; Howes , Sanders, & Lee, in press). Analysis strategies must included attention to how individuals and dyads are nested within peer groups, of how groups are nested within settings, and of how settings are nested within and across cultural communities. Fortunately advances in hierarchical linear modeling have made these multi-level analyses possible.

Most if not all of the research in this area requires time consuming observing and interviewing within the programs. Although there are valid and reliable measures of general setting characteristics, e.g. the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scales (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 1998) and the CLASS (Pianta , LaParo, & Hamre, 2004), more targeted observational strategies usually require a time sampling procedure, e.g. The Peer Play Scale (Howes & Matheson, 1992). Inclusion of measures of the cultural community requires intensive open ended interviews with adults by interviewers who are culturally as well as linguistically bilingual e.g. (Howes, Wishard Guerra, & Zucker, 2007).

Beyond observing and describing peer encounters, careful observation and inference is necessary to interpret children’s social behaviors, interactions and relationships. For example, when a two year old starts to join two other children playing in a water table the observer must attend carefully to body language, eye gaze, and the

affect of all three children to determine if the reason she quickly left was because the other children excluded her from play, a peer accidentally splashed her and she doesn't like being wet, or that she left because she was distracted by a child riding by on a bike.

Children who are this young are very limited in their ability to reflect and to self report on their own perceptions of interactions and relationships. Training and establishing reliability on observational coding schemes is extremely important in this area of research. By age three children begin to reliably report on their social relationships with peers using sociometric methodology and their social and emotion regulation skills can be individually assessed (Raver, 2004; Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 2006).

How can a positive sense of self be encouraged among all children, in ways that discourage some children from basing their positive identity on social discrimination, teasing and the exclusion of others?

If children and caregivers come from diverse cultural communities and particularly if the differences are mirrored by dominant/minority culture discrimination and racism, the children may fare better when there are caregivers who share the children's cultural communities (Baker, 1999; Howes & Ritchie, 2002; Johnson, Jaeger, Randolph, Cauce, Ward, & ECCRN, 2003). In one of our recent studies in very diverse low income child care settings in a city marked by heightened racial and ethnic conflict, we found that children who had conflictual interactions with teachers different from them in racial/ethnic heritage as they entered child care had not achieved positive relationships with these teachers even after six months in the classroom (Howes & Shiver, 2006) If, we assume that having a positive teacher-child relationship to use as secure base in forming relationships and developing play with peers is important, then these findings are disturbing.

Cultural communities formed in the classroom.

In working with the construct of cultural community it is important to recognize that each individual can and most likely does participate in more than one cultural community (Rogoff, B., 2003). While the participants, teachers and children, in any given classroom come from several or only one home cultural community, by engaging with others within the classroom, they participate in a classroom cultural community. So teachers and children simultaneously participate in both cultural communities. Classrooms have common every-day practices: Where do you start your day? Sitting in your place on the rug for morning circle or having breakfast with a favorite caregiver, your brother, and your cousin? If you disrupt the morning circle do you lose minutes from outside play time, have to sit in a caregivers's lap, or go to the time-out chair? Can you say "you can't play" and to whom?

Feeling safe enough to enter into the world of peers

Working within an attachment perspective we assume that classroom cultural communities differ in children's feeling of trust and safety within the classroom (Howes & Ritchie, 2002). Therefore in integrating a cultural communities perspective with an attachment perspective it is important to examine common every-day practices that help children feel sufficiently safe to explore the world of peer relations. We have identified four types of every-day classroom practices that help or hinder children from feeling safe

enough to engage with peers: attachment relationships with caregivers; how teachers help children as they join the peer group; the social and emotional climate of the classroom; and the time to play.

Relationships with caregivers

Children with more secure attachments to caregivers are concurrently and longitudinally more socially competent with peers even when controlling for parental attachment quality (Howes, 1999; Mitchell-Copeland, Denham, & DeMulder, 1997; Pianta, Hamre, & Stuhlman, 2002). We sometimes incorrectly assume that children who form more secure relationships with teachers are more competent with peers because a positive relationship is generalized or that sociable children form good relationships with all people. Working within attachment theory we assume that children who form secure teacher-child relationships have more competent peer relations because they use the teacher as a secure base. When a child trusts a caregiving adult to be positive, loving, and warm then that child can use the adult as a base for exploration and mastery (Grossman, Grossman, & Zimmerman, 1999). Mastering peer relationships, particularly mastering competent cooperative play with peers, is easier when the child can explore and experiment with peers while making forays back to a trusted adult. If children feel valued and supported by a teacher, then they can try out what happens if they, for example, invite a potential friend to play, pretend to be a scary monster, or stand their ground in the face of bullying. If children do not trust the teacher to value and support them, then it is all too easy to pick a fight, refuse to let someone play, or hide from a bully.

Entering the peer group

Having adults as secure bases for exploring the peer group take on added importance when children enter new peer groups. When children are new to peer groups they neither know the games or the players, and thus may be at risk for exclusion from or withdrawing from already formed play groups (Feldbaum, Christenson, & O'Neal, 1980; Fox & Field, 1989). Children who are excluded or who anxiously withdraw from peers miss opportunities to play with others and to develop social interaction and relationships skills with peers. So the time period when children enter new (to them) classrooms becomes an important stage setting time for the development of peer relations. In early studies of children entering preschool (Feldbaum et al., 1980; Fox & Field, 1989) children appeared to rely on adults during the transition to preschool. Typically children would spend most of the first two weeks in a new setting close to the adults and then begin playing with peers. Children who enter new classroom settings are from the first day assessing whom, among the adults in the setting, can be trusted. In one small scale intensive study children who successfully made attachment bids to new teachers in the first few days within a new classroom were assessed as having positive attachments with these teachers two months later (Howes & Oldham, 2001).

The story is different, from this attachment perspective, for children with previous maladaptive relationship histories. These children, who have not had experiences with trusting adults and secure base behaviors, are less likely to look for adults who can be trusted and more likely to antagonize teachers and peers as they enter the classroom (Howes & Ritchie, 2002). The entry period is extremely important for these children. Encountering an adult who behaves in a warm and trust-worthy manner can help such a child begin relationships with these new peers in a more positive manner (Howes &

Ritchie, 2002).

Social-emotional climate created for playing with peers

The social-emotional climate of the classroom is the third area where every-day practices within the classroom can enhance or impede the development of competent relationships with peers. Classrooms that score high on the measure of social-emotional climate are pleasant places where there are conversations, spontaneous laughter and enjoyment expressed as children and teachers engage in various activities and interactions. Teachers are warm and sensitive to all of the children; they are emotionally and physically involved with the children's activities and they rarely are intrusive, angry, or annoyed. In these classrooms there are clear, but flexible rules and expectations for classroom routines. Children tend to follow these rules so that teachers' rarely have to employ control techniques. In contrast, classrooms with negative climates are characteristically filled with relational as well as physical aggression among children and hostile conflictual interactions between children and teachers. Children in these classrooms have few options for activities. Interactions and activities are adult-driven and most often based on behavioral management of out-of-control children.

A positive emotional climate appears to facilitate peer relationship development by providing rules for engagement that promote prosocial rather than hostile peer interactions. Children who experience positive emotional climates as three-year-olds are also likely to have positive peer relationships as second or third graders (ECCRN, 2008; Howes, 2000). If it is difficult for young children to construct play sequences when they are just developing the capacity to do so. It is even more difficult to do so when they are interrupted by conflict occurring around them.

Positive social-emotional climates also can facilitate positive peer relationships in newly formed peer groups. When social-emotional climates are negative and hostile children are challenged to create relationships and complex play (Howes et al., in press).

Time and permission to play

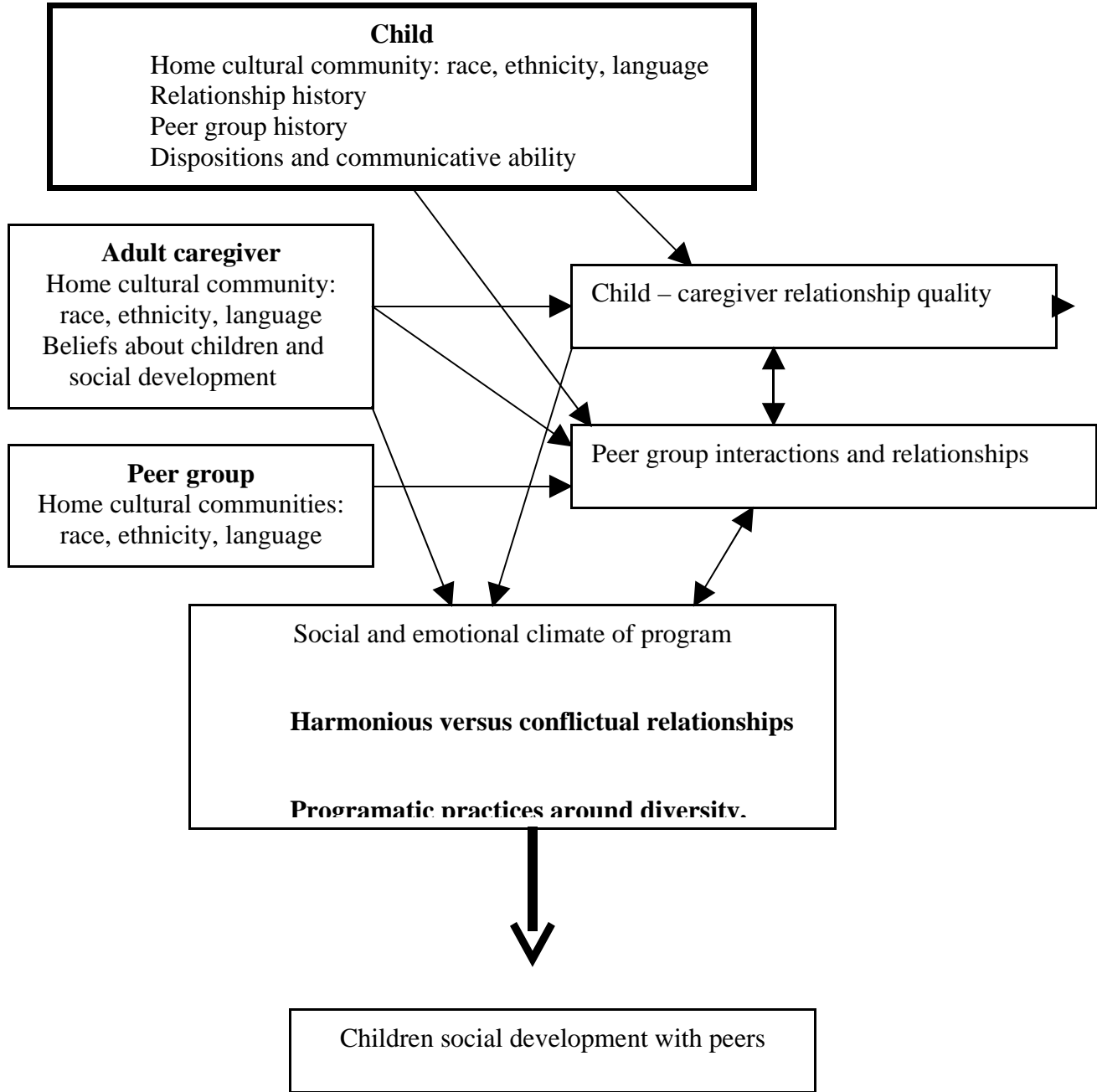
Creating peer play requires teachers to create an environment that values play. Children need physical space to play, materials that encourage pretend (Sutterby & Frost, 2006), and teachers who do not re-direct them from playing back to work. When teachers are pressured and expected to teach pre-academic content, early shared understandings about the importance of time, materials and spaces for enhancing peer play seem to fade into the background. In our own work we have seen the amount of time children engage in complex pretend play decrease over the 20 years we have been observing in local programs (Howes & Wishard, 2004). This decrease is consistent with anecdotal reports that programs are providing relatively little unstructured time for children to play.

Closing thoughts

For most children, social interactions and relationships with adults and peers outside of their families occur within a peer group. Understanding the development of peer relations within context requires a theoretical framework that integrates theories of development with theories of development within context, and with of theories of cultural community. It also requires attention to individuals, dyads, peer, and classroom groupings, and to cultural communities. For many children encountering peers also involves encountering interactive styles and practices of engaging with others that are

different than those they experience at home. These can be challenging experiences for young children who are just beginning to develop social skills and relationships. For research and for the children is important to focus on the social and emotional climate of the program.

Figure 1
A theory of developmental and cultural interface for understanding peer relations



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Affiliation and Dominance in Children Peer Groups

António Santos

The vast majority of human activity takes place in groups that both provide affordances for and impose constraints on individuals' actions and interactions. For children, salient groups include families and peers, with peers being encountered most frequently in the context of child-care and educational settings. Although it is historically true that formal peer groups were not normative until children reached primary school, for the last three decades, and even longer in some countries, it has become normative that children are in formal group care with peers from two- to three-years-of age forward. Interestingly, when young children are aggregated into groups, they face similar challenges facing groups of older children, adolescents, and adults. Ethological studies available for review suggest that both integration and competition are salient features of children's groups and that affiliative and dominance motivational systems are complexly inter-related at the level of the individual child and it seems plausible that the transactions between the group structures associated with these motivational systems should reflect this complexity as well. Whereas affiliative structures reflect cohesive, interdependent features of group life that emerge from social exchanges underlying social preferences, dominance relationships and dominance structures reflect self-interest and dyadic asymmetries regarding social power. Nevertheless, most studies of preschool children from the traditions of child and clinical psychology focus on the individual child and the effects her or his behavioral, character, experiential attributes, or relationships with others may have on her or his own development or on the behavior and opinions of peers. The assumption that individual and group level explanations of peer interaction are necessarily competitive, and possibly incommensurable, made détente between the two approaches difficult. Our research demonstrates how the individual focused and group focused traditions of research and explanation may be bridged.

Theme 3: Complexities of peer cultures and the role of parents and practitioners

Questions for reflection and discussion

3.1 Peer relations in daily practice pose a number of challenges for early childhood education practitioners which are influenced by beliefs and values about gender, culture, ethnicity, ability and socio-economic background. These include:

- Can children decide how long, with whom, what or where to play?
- When a child wants to participate in the play of another child, what rule should be applied? ‘Children should learn to share and play together’ or ‘children should not disturb each other’?
- How do adults enforce their own perceptions of what is “right” when they determine what children ought or ought not to do?
- Is it ‘better’ for children to play with same-aged peers or in mixed aged groupings?
- How do adults respond when their version of what is appropriate is at odds with children’s interests and inclinations? (adapted from Brown & Freeman, 2001; Paley, 2004; Corsaro, 1997).

Drawing on your own experiences, comment on how such questions and challenges are understood and dealt with.

3.2 How can parents and early childhood practitioners best support children who are marginalised in peer relations?

3.3 How far do stereotyped constructions of certain groups of children or individuals, as ‘immigrants’, ‘ethnic minority’, ‘at risk’, ‘problem child’, child with a difficult temperament’, a boy or girl, undermine young children’s ability to construct positive self-image, sense of possibility, and efficacy?

3.4 In a typical day children operate in different social contexts, each with its own interaction style and ‘rules’ of behaviour. How can early childhood practitioners capitalise on this in their planning and daily practice, prevent confusion in the child and maximise the learning opportunities?

PRESENTATIONS

Abstract

Bame Nsamenang

ECD Science knows and its practitioners endeavor to intervene over 90% of the world’s children 0-8 years who live outside the Western World mostly through Euro-Western middle-class lenses. The primary focus is on ‘friendships’ in ‘crafted’ circumstances of children from privileged backgrounds. In this paper, I glimpse at the major sources of the huge diversity in peer cultures across the globe. Then, I proceed to address the ‘assigned’ dimensions of peer cultures with impressions from archival research on Africa in general and evidence from my contextual work in Cameroon in particular. The paper attempts to

extend child development discourses by introducing ‘other’ images into predominantly Euro-Western narratives of 0-8 year olds peer cultures. For example, to what extent are researchers and practitioners aware that, like teachers (e.g., Serpell, 2008), parents tend not to listen to their children with the same degree of respectful open-mindedness as they seek to impose on their children’s thinking and behavioral patterns a preconceived set of constraints, and provide feedback to their children’s speech and behavior primarily in terms of how well the children are conforming to their expectations

. As such, children’s perspectives are ‘lost’, in analogous manner to loss of biodiversity (Pence & Nsamenang, forthcoming). Furthermore, policy and program design tend to lose sight of the ‘liberal’ values and reality of African parents delegating vital livelihood and caregiving roles to older sibs. In fact, this presenter (Nsamenang, in press) has observed that the African peer culture transcends Vygotsky’s theoretical zone of proximal development [ZPD] in that within African ZPD, it is not adults who nudge or mediate children’s developmental learning but children themselves who initiate and teach one another through the processes of interactional-extractive learning analogous to those Piaget (1952) espoused. This is possible because the peer culture is under the binding “word” of parents “whose direct intervention is no longer needed”(Zempleni-Rabain, 1973).

Abstract

Sumalee Kumchaikul

This presentation will share experiences I have from doing research on respectful relationships in an inclusive early childhood classroom in Thailand. Drawing on Foucauldian perspectives of discourse, power and ethics in relation to self-creation and relationships formation, I investigated how the relationships the children had with themselves and their peers were formed within the discourse in circulation. Given as an example, I explain how a group of young Thai children who were the participants of my study were shaped by the Thai discourse of being a “good Thai” person in daily practices. I also discussed how such way of being had an impact on relationships those Thai children formed with themselves, with their peers and with others. I further argue that it is significant for the children to have opportunities, provided by parents and practitioners, to investigate the discourse that governed their way of being. It is crucial, therefore, to invite the children to practise criticality by questioning whether different choices of way of being a ‘good Thai’ are possibly made. More importantly, in relation to others, the children need to learn to listen and respect when others’ being different.

Theme 4: Training, continuing professional development and awareness raising: Attuning parents and early childhood practitioners to children’s peer relations

Questions for reflection and discussion

4.1 What kinds of approaches and interventions are most effective in instigating positive change in relation to early childhood practitioners’ responsivity and sensitivity to the social lives of the children they work with?

4.2 What strategies can be employed to raise parents' awareness of the importance of peer relations for their children?

PRESENTATIONS

Effective Approaches and Interventions for promoting change in Early Childhood Practitioners' and Families responsiveness to the social lives of children

Roxanna Pastor Fasquelle

Most of the group care and education of children under six in Latin America is done by women with many years of experience as caretakers but practically no specific training as teachers. In México city most of the care takes place in day care centers that children can attend from the moment they are 3 months old until they enter first grade for long hours (between 8 and 12 hours per day).

Both teachers and parents have a very limited view of the role of play in their children's development and well being. Play is what children do when they finish their "work" or when adults can't pay attention to them. However, free play continues to be an important vehicle of development.

One of the main differences between the educational settings for children under six and the elementary schools they attend afterwards, is that play disappears from the curriculum of the early grades. Children's understanding of the transition of preschool to first grade is often expressed as "We can't play there. You can't bring your toys. You can't talk with your friends".

The aim of this presentation is to share an on site training program that has been designed for working with teachers with the above characteristics. The program considers children's rights and development, principles of adult education, the "folk pedagogy" that guides these teachers' actions, and the social and educational context in which group care takes place in México city. The training strategies include workshops, joint work in the classroom, mentoring, self evaluation and reflection of their practice.

The families of these children primarily bring their children to group care to be fed and kept safe during their long working hours. Parent support groups, classroom visits, interactive murals and written materials are some of the strategies that have been used to help parents gain a vision of their children's development, interests and needs, and acquire some strategies to play with and guide their children's interactions with their peers.

Slide Presentation: "Learning to Live Together"
Fostering socio-emotional competence of toddlers in group care
Miriam K. Rosenthal and Lihi Gatt

Israeli Day Care (0-3) in a nutshell...

- Large groups
- Poor adult:child ratios
- Low-level training
- Poor working conditions
- High staff turnover

Daily events as learning opportunities

Social and Emotional episodes in the group provide daily opportunities for:

- Promoting social cognition & emotional understanding
- Enhancing social skills & group entry skills
- Helping children develop emotion regulation and self control

Typical learning opportunities...

- Crying and other distress signals
- Conflicts and acts of aggression
- Joint activities
- Unsuccessful attempts to join-in
- Pro-social and caring behavior towards a peer

“Learning to Live Together”: Goals

- to sensitize care-providers to (a) daily events in daycare that present learning opportunities for social learning; (b) the group as an “audience”
- to clarify attitudes, beliefs and expectations regarding toddlers’ social behavior, and regarding care-providers’ role in supporting social development
- to teach adult behaviors that promote socio-emotional competence of young children, and recognize behaviors that do not support such competence

Structure of the training program

- Part I – Guided workshops for care-providers in Day Care settings (12 meetings)
- Part II - Guided video-observation of children's social and emotional behavior in daycare (4 meetings)

Content of the training program

- The "Group Experience"
- Toddlers Learn Empathy

- Toddlers Learn to Play Together
- Toddlers Learn to Resolve Conflicts

Toddlers Learn Empathy

During moments of emotional arousal
care-providers –

- *are aware of their “audience”*
- *help children acquire emotion regulation skills*
- *offer verbal or physical emotional support.*
- *offer explanation of the expressed emotion.*
- *encourage children in the “audience” to comfort an upset child.*

When overly stressed, however, a care-provider may:

- *Be detached or ignore children’s emotional arousal*
- *Be impatient with upset child*
- *Belittle, ridicule a child’s emotions*
- *Remove or separate the upset child from other children*
- *Loose temper, scold, or otherwise hurt the upset child*

Toddlers learn to Play Together

During peer interaction -
 Care-providers

- *are aware of their “audience”*
- *Support a child’s interest in a peer*
- *teach “joining” or “entry” skills*
- *Do not ignore children's attempts to initiate pro-social interactions*
- *Do not ignore children who have social difficulties*
- *Do not prevents imitative "joint play" generated spontaneously by the children*

Toddlers Learn to Resolve Conflicts

During conflicts between peers -
 Care-providers

- *are aware of their “audience”*
- *address the needs, intentions and emotions of both protagonists (“aggressor” and “victim”).*
- *help both protagonists regulate their emotions*
- *do not judge, or looks for the “guilty partner”*

Evaluation Study

Design *pre-training vs. post-training observations*

Intervention group (LTLT training) : n=40 care-providers

Comparison group (other training) : n=42 care-providers

young toddlers (15-24 months); *older-toddlers* (24-36 months)

Method

- Observations of care-providers' behavior
- Observations of children's behavior
- Care-provider's rating of children's social behavior
- Overall Quality of Care (ITERS)

Results

1. Overall Quality of Care *declined* during the year
2. Care-providers participating in LTLT were more likely to:
 - offer verbal and emotional support to children during emotional arousal
 - engage in behaviors that promoted conflict resolution skills and group-entry skills
3. Age of children in the group interacts with the effectiveness of training
4. Children in centers participating in LTLT tended to show greater social competence, less frequent aggressive behavior, or social withdrawal

Tentative conclusions

- Daycare *may* have an “added value” for socio-emotional development, as each child learns from being both a “protagonist” and an “observer in an audience”.
- “*Sensitive responsiveness*” and “*warmth*” need to be supplemented by specific care-providers’ interventions, in specific contexts, to foster socio-emotional competence.
- Training care-providers to intervene in specific ways during social and emotional events at daycare – can be effective.

New challenges: Cultural values and “Learning to Live Together”

1. What is a socially competent child?
Attitudes to:
 - emotional expressiveness and discourse
 - Valued social interactions
2. Which culture?
Socio-cultural change: ambivalence and conflicting values

Israeli Arabs as “co-authors” of a cultural adaptation of “Learning to Live Together”

A Bernard Van Leer Foundation pilot project

Training the “co-authors”

12 Arab professional trained as group leaders of the “Learning to Live Together” training program

Emerging cultural issues

- changing child-rearing beliefs
- expression of emotional distress
- strategies of conflict resolution

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

Participants listed alphabetically

Carollee Howes

PhD in Developmental Psychology 1978; Post doctoral work in social psychiatry 1979 – 1981; Professor University of California at Los Angeles 1981 – present

I am interested in very young children's development of interpersonal relationships. I study peer interaction, particularly friendships and social pretend play in toddler and preschool age children. I also study attachment relationships between children and their adult caregivers, mothers and other-than-mothers. My theoretical orientation is one that integrates an attachment theory of relationship development with a eco-cultural theory of relationships developing within cultural communities. Thus much of my current work includes describing children's development within classrooms and families against the background of race, ethnicity, and home language.

Anne Trine Kjørholt is Associate Professor and Director of Norwegian Centre for Child Research, Norwegian University of Science and Technology. Her research interests are discourses on childhood, children's rights, children's perspectives, early childhood education and care. Project leadership includes: 2005-2008 (with Jens Qvortrup) for the Research Council of Norway funded project (900 000 €) *Children as Citizens and the Best Interest of the Child – Challenges for Modern Democracies*; 2003-2008 (with Jens Qvortrup) for the Research Council of Norway funded project (1,2 million €) *The Modern Child and the Flexible Labour Market*. Other management experience includes: 1996-1998 Member of the Human Rights Group in Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs; 1992-2000 Member of the Norwegian UNESCO. Among Kjørholt's publications are: "Retten til lek og fritid" (The right to play and free-time) in *Barnekonvensjonen – Rettigheter for barn i Norge* (The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – Children's Rights in Norway), edited by Njål Høstmælingen, Elin Saga Kjørholt and Kirsten Sandberg (forthcoming 2008); *Beyond Listening. Children's Perspectives in Early Childhood Services* (co-editor with Alison Clark and Peter Moss); *Flexible Childhood? Exploring Children's Welfare in Time and Space*, vol.2 of COST 19: Children's Welfare (co-editor with Helga Zeiher, Dympna Devine and Harriet Strandell). Anne Trine Kjørholt is the co-editor (with Stuart C. Aitken and Ragnhild Lund) of *Children's Geographies* Special Issue Global Childhoods: Why Children? Why Now? (vol. 5 1-2/2007).

Margaret Kernan has been working as an independent consultant for the Bernard van Leer Foundation since August 2007. She previously worked as a researcher and lecturer in Early Childhood Education at the Centre for Social and Educational Research and the School of Social Sciences and Legal Studies, Dublin Institute of Technology. She completed her PhD in Education in 2006 (University College Dublin): an interdisciplinary study of outdoor provision in early childhood education settings in urban settings. Recent publications include: *Play as a Context for Early Learning and Development*: a Background Paper for the National Framework for Early Learning (Dublin, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2007) and *Engaging Young*

Children: a Nurturing Pedagogy (with Nóirín Hayes, Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 2008).

Sumalee Kumchaiskul is a lecturer in Early Childhood Education at the Faculty of Education, Chiang Mai University, Thailand. She is currently undertaking her Ph.D study at the University of Melbourne, Australia. In the past, her researches involved curriculum and pedagogy, parent involvement, knowledge construction and experiential learning. Over the past two years, she has been exploring poststructuralist analysis in her thesis on children negotiating respectful relationships in an inclusive early childhood classroom in Thailand. In the future, Sumalee hopes that this research will open up debate on the integration of social sciences issues into early childhood education services and research in Thailand. Gender in early childhood education, children's subjectivity and critical pedagogy are the areas of her future research interests.

A. Bame Nsamenang is Associate Professor of psychology and learning science at the School of Education of the University of Yaounde, Cameroon. He also directs a research and service facility, the Human Development Resource Centre, Bamenda. Prof. Nsamenang has taken up the challenge sub-Saharan African scholars face to connect their expertise to the apologetic state of their continent. Interactive contextualism and biological embedding, the hub of human thriving, health, and social competence, constitute his theoretical base. His research focuses on Africa's future hope - children and adolescents - and his lifetime commitment is to contribute to Africentric research on childhood and adolescence, as it can enrich global developmental science. He networks extensively for this purpose and has published and/or guided influential works on early childhood and adolescence in Africa. For more on his profile and work, you may visit: <http://www.unige.ch/fapse/SSE/teachers/dasen/Nsamenang.htm>

Prof. Nsamenang is the SRA (Society for Research on Adolescence) inaugural International Fellow (2008), a "Paul Harris Fellow (2007) in appreciation of tangible and significant assistance given for the furtherance of better understanding and friendly relations among peoples of the world," Stanford University Fellow (2002-2003), and an NIH Fellow (1987-90). He peer reviews for several institutions, journals and scientific conferences.

Roxanna Pastor Fasquelle

I have been a developmental specialist for the past 25 years and have worked for the inclusion and respect for diversity all my life. I initiated my work with children and families in very poor and segregated neighbourhoods in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. The direct work with children and their families involved individual therapy sessions, play groups, parent support groups and home visits. In the late 1980s I designed and directed the first Adolescent Parents and Children's Center in a Boston Public School. The major battle was convincing the authorities that this center would not incite other teenagers to have children and confronting my own biases towards adolescents. In 1989 I moved to Mexico city and started working as a professor at the National Autonomous University (UNAM) Graduate School of Psychology. Since then I have formed psychologists who want to be early childhood specialists. Our work includes assessment, evaluation and intervention from a developmental perspective with children, families, teachers and day care settings. The work with children includes promoting play opportunities, helping children with visible differences integrate with their peers and

classgroups, one to one intervention with children who have developmental problems and facilitating transitions. The work with teachers includes joint classroom work to promote a safe and healthy environment and on going training and reflection to better their educational practices. The teachers are women with lots of experience and empirical knowledge but very little formal schooling. Our work with families is a joint endeavour to understand their children, acquire parental skills and develop projects at their homes, the school and community settings for better care and development. I am also a sexuality specialist and for the past ten years I have coordinated community groups with women interested in exploring their self and their sexuality. These include groups of young university students, community leaders in impoverished neighbourhoods and groups of non heterosexual women.

Ana Rodrigues has a background in Early Childhood Education and holds a BSc. Degree from Escola Superior de Educação de Lisboa, in Portugal. Ana is currently a candidate for a MA in Development Studies at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, The Netherlands. The MA study programme is focused on Children and Youth Studies and she is presently writing her Thesis about Ethnic and Cultural diversity in childcare centres in Portugal and the Netherlands. She will analyze the policies and frameworks on both countries, as well as the programmes which are already being implemented in this field of action.

Her deep interest in alternative and intercultural education began when she was introduced to the area of Urban Intercultural Education while still pursuing her BSc. Degree, during her participation in the Erasmus Programme in the Netherlands. After graduating, Ana went to Central America where she volunteered at the United Nations mandated University for Peace rural "lab-school", participating in a project of the Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica and UNESCO for conflict-resolution in schools.

Miriam K. Rosenthal

I graduated from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 1961 and with a PhD in Psychology from Stanford University, California in 1965. I held academic appointments in London University, London, England (1965-68); York University, Toronto, Canada (1969-71) and at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem since 1971. At the Hebrew University I have developed and directed (for 30 years) an interdisciplinary graduate program in Early Childhood Studies.

My research interests focus on three topics:

1. Social and emotional development of very young children in group settings, and the effect of interactions with the caregiver in these setting on their behavior with peers.
2. The effects of social policy and cultural attitudes on "quality of care" in child-care settings and the effect of this quality on children's well being and development.
3. Child rearing ideologies and child development ethno-theories in different cultural contexts.

Outside the university I have been active in action research (changes in services for young children), as a consultant and as a member and chairperson of various public advisory committees concerning young children. My most recent involvement has been with the Israeli Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Employment that is responsible for

Day Care for children under-3 as: (a) a chairperson of a public committee that developed standards-of-care for Israeli Day Care settings (2004-2006); (b) a consultant on the planning of a pilot implementation of the new standards in 50 Day Care centers throughout Israel (2007-2008).

Maria Clotilde Rossetti-Ferreira obtained her PhD on Developmental Psychology at University of London, in 1967. From 1972 to 1975, received a SSRC fellowship to work at Institute of Child Health, London, with N. Blurton Jones, on *Development of attachment and social behaviors in one to three years old children*. In Brazil, she taught at Medical School of Ribeirão Preto, and from 1976 onwards at School of Philosophy, Sciences and Letters, USP. She coordinates *Brazilian Research Centre on Human Development and Early Child Education (CINDEDI)*, whose professional and research interests are focused on improving quality conditions for early child development in various contexts. The investigation of *the insertion of babies and families at daycare centers*, and on *early peer interactions* led to the proposal of a new theoretical-methodological perspective for the study human development (*Network of Meanings*). It is now being used to study various complex situations such as *adoption and fostering*, and *inclusion of children with special needs in preschool*. She has published various papers and books, and produced several didactic-scientific materials. The most recent videos are: “*Do babies interact with babies?*” and “*What house is that? foster institution as a good quality care for children and adolescents.*”

António J. Santos

I started to do research on ethology while an undergraduate student of psychology at the *Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada* (Portugal). By the time I was finishing my clinical psychology licentiate, I was beginning to combine traditional clinical evaluation methods with ethological observation methods in natural settings to study preschool children’s social adaptation. Soon after, as a graduate student of developmental psychology at the *Université du Québec à Montréal* (Canada), I elected as my thesis subject the study of preschool affiliative structures. Since that time, my major research objective is to complement traditional individual differences approaches to children’s social status and competence with a broader understanding of the impact of local affiliative constraints (e.g. friendship relationships, subgroup formation) emerging from the social ecology of the peer group. More recently, I started to study the expression of positive affect and emotions in order to better understand its role in children’s group social adaptation. I am trying to integrate socio-structural and co-constructionist perspectives in order to achieve that goal. I am convinced that only such approach may promote a renewed understanding of child development and further help us to elaborate more adequate intervention strategies for minimizing our children’s risk of social maladjustment.

Elly Singer

PhD in Developmental Psychology 1989; Associate Professor at the University Utrecht Department of Developmental Psychology and University of Amsterdam Department of Education. My studies are based on a constructivist relational approach of social-

emotional and moral development of children in their social context. Research interests in the field of early childhood education are: historical studies of the development of modern child day care and day care research in the context of social policy issues; effects of day care on children's development; quality issues and the development of a day care pedagogy; experiences of parents and the parent-teacher relationship; peer relationships and ethnicity. At the moment I am studying peer relationships and group dynamics of Dutch day care centers with a high level of group and teacher instability, because of the Dutch tradition of part-time working mothers. Besides that, I am project leader of the construction of the Dutch National Curriculum for child care centers (0-4 year olds).

Rita Swinnen is programme officer at the Bernard van Leer Foundation in the issue area Social Inclusion & Respect for Diversity. She graduated in Development Psychology at the University of Ghent, Belgium in 1971. After having worked and lived abroad (Algeria, Mali, Senegal and France) for more than ten years, she joined the Programme Development and Management Department of the Foundation in 1986 as a Programme Specialist. Although her primary responsibility at this moment relates to programme development in Greece, Turkey and the Netherlands and the wider European Region through the support of region-wide networks, such as DECET (Diversity in Early Education and Training), Children in Europe and the European network Children of Imprisoned Parents, she has extensive knowledge about programmes for young children in other contexts world-wide.