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ABSTRACT

The main perspective taken in this paper is that peer relationships in childhood provide more than incidental social experiences and constitute social contexts beyond those in the family. In the context of peer relationships, children's development continues to progress as children expand their experiences and increase their knowledge. Three major directions in the research are examined: the first section of this chapter provides a review of the major theoretical perspectives and empirical research on children's peer relationships in child development. In the second section, the findings of this research are related to questions that educators and parents may ask as they observe peer interaction in the classroom, home, or neighborhood. Throughout these two sections the implications for children's social experience in the school and at home are discussed and future research directions are proposed. In the last section, the role of adults in the development of children's peer relationships is reviewed according to available evidence, and methods for supporting and instructing children in peer relationship development are discussed. Various types of curriculum activity are then examined for their potential influence on peer relationships, especially those relationships between children of different ages, races, sexes, and abilities. (Author/DB)

PEER RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDHOOD

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Paper prepared for the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education

PEER RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDHOOD

The preschool playground. Several children are playing in the sandbox. There are some giggles of fun. There are some cries. From the sidelines, the adults watch. Children's relationships with peers--whether with acquaintances, friends, classmates, or adversaries--are important influences in children's development. The influence of parents and educators in children's peer relationships is more limited than in any other developmental context; the adult can only observe, inquire, and wait to be consulted. The peer relationship is thus the most independent sphere in the child's development. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why it is so fascinating to consider; so critical to understand its significance on children's development.

Researchers of child development have often acknowledged that peer interaction is an important part of childhood but only recently have these researchers made strides in outlining the major processes by which children become acquainted, share common experiences, coordinate activity, and get along with each other amid a variety of circumstances and over time. Accordingly, the main perspective taken in this paper is that peer relationships in childhood provide more than incidental social experiences and constitute social contexts beyond those in the family. In the context of peer relationships, children's development continues to progress as children expand their experiences and increase their knowledge. Three major directions in this research are examined in this discussion. The first section of this chapter provides a review of the major theoretical perspectives and empirical research on children's peer relationships in child development. In the second section, the findings of this research

are related to questions that educators and parents may ask as they observe peer interaction in the classroom, home, or neighborhood. Throughout these two sections the implications for children's social experience in the school and at home are discussed and future research directions are proposed. In the last section, the role of adults in the development of children's peer relationships is reviewed according to available evidence and methods for supporting and instructing children in peer relationship development are discussed. Various types of curriculum activity are then examined for their potential influence on peer relationships, especially those relationships between children of different ages, races, sexes, and abilities.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CHILDREN'S PEER RELATIONSHIPS

There is no single theoretical model that provides a description of the critical elements and processes in children's peer relationship development. Although all the models to be discussed here are based on major child development theories (social learning, cognitive developmental, and social contextual) they differ in their fundamental assumptions about the origin, nature, and course of human development. Each model, however, offers a viewpoint on children's peer relationships that may constitute either a challenge or confirmation of our ideas as educators, parents, or researchers. This section of the paper examines a selection of these models in terms of the following question: What are the social conditions (the activities and experiences encountered by the child in the family, neighborhood, and schools) which appear to influence social, cognitive, and language development in children's peer relationships?

Social Learning

The major theoretical position of the social learning perspective is that children learn to seek, engage in, and benefit from peer relations in the family, neighborhood, and school through reinforcement and imitation. In addition, some theoriests (e.g., Bandura, 1977; Parke, 1970) have pointed to the importance of conceptual modeling through direct or indirect instructions. According to social learning theorists, children are thought to initiate peer interaction because they are reinforced for doing so by adults, have viewed other children interacting, have received prompts or instructions, or all of these. A parent or preschool teacher may often say to a young child, "Go on, say 'Hi' to Billy" or "Go over and show your friend Alice your new toy" or "Good! You're such a friendly boy (or girl)," or when a social attempt is ignored or rebuked by a child's peer, "Maybe he'll play with you later" or "You should let Alice play with the toy, too." To parents and teachers such commentary, feedback, direction, encouragement and empathy is most often a spontaneous part of conversations with children.

Children are thus socialized to enter into and maintain peer interactions and to form friendships, and adults have some influence on that process. As children's peer contacts first begin, parents and other caregivers are in close proximity--most often on the periphery such as the same room, the kitchen, or the porch--and are available for giving attention, reinforcement, suggestions, discussion, and if needed, direction and intervention (Ainsworth, 1973). Infants with more secure attachments to parents, compared to those with less secure attachments, have been found at age 18 months (Easterbrooks & Lamb, 1979) and at 3½ years (Waters, Wippman, & Sroufe, 1979) to be more responsive to peers.

In preschool, kindergarten, and primary school, children interact in larger peer contexts with increasingly less adult presence. As yet, little research is available on how peers in these contexts socialize each other compared to how adults socialize children. For example, Shatz and Gelman (1973) found that in mixed age peer interaction, the 4-year-old children modified the structure of their speech in order to communicate more effectively with younger children (2-year-olds). Mangione (1981) found a similar pattern among dyads of 5- and 7-year-old children. Over the course of the elementary school years, children also increasingly base their self-evaluations on comparisons with characteristics of their peers (Ruble, Baggiano, Feldman, & Loebl, 1980). Evidence from several research programs indicates that peers also socialize each other in sex role behavior (e.g., Dweck & Bush, 1976; Lamb & Roopnarine, 1979).

Further research is needed on the content of children's interactions in order to clarify to what extent children's interactions provide unique contributions to their developmental changes or simply reinforce their already acquired behavior. To what extent, for example, does a child's new social learning extend beyond the family--the primary instrument of socialization? Peers appear to provide each other with additional sources of information and example partly because they are not, strictly speaking, at that same level in every respect. For example, two children may differ in age, sex, ability or interest and thus represent resources not likely to be available in a given child's own family. The peer group is thus thought by Hartup (1978) and others to expand the child's socalization.

Since peers interact over time and with increasing independence from adults, and share common territories (the sidewalk, schoolyard, classroom), they are also likely to develop their own unique standards and

expectations for social behavior. Ladd and Oden (1979) interviewed third- and fifth-graders on how they would help a classmate who was being made fun of by peers, being yelled at by a peer, or having a schoolwork problem. The children were also asked how they would help the classmate when he or she was alone and still unhappy after such events. Many of the helpful strategies most often suggested by children appeared to differ from the kinds of strategies adults might recommend. For example, for situations in which other peers were present, adults might recommend moralizing strategies, "I'd tell those kids that it's not nice to do that," or negotiate-mediate strategies, "I'd talk to that other kid to get him to stop." However, children in this study infrequently mentioned such strategies. Rather, order-command strategies were frequently suggested, "I'd say to those kids, 'Stop it!' " Instruct strategies were highly frequent for both the peer group and "alone with the classmate" situations. These strategies included direct instruction on how to tell teasing peers to "cut it out" or the yelling peer to "bug-off"; an explanation of what to do next time; and a demonstration of how to solve a schoolwork problem. In this study, children who lacked knowledge of which strategies were appropriate, according to peer standards, tended to be less liked by their peers as indicated by sociometric assessment. Isolation or rejection by peers may, in part, result from a lack of socialization from the peer group or a child's reluctance to participate or cooperate with specific peer norms.

Overall, social interaction and relationship skills, from the social learning view, are developmental in that they become more extensive and complex over time as experience and learning diversifies and increases. As children have increasing opportunities to interact with particular peers, they prefer the company of particular peers. Two children may thus seek

ways to increase the frequency or extend the length of time with each other, or in the course of interacting, they may simply experience stronger positive feelings and/or more ease in revealing thoughts and feelings. In this way each shares his or her individuality and a friendship relationship is thought to develop. According to the social learning perspective, these friendships should provide the opportunity for reciprocal positive reinforcement, modeling and instruction. Hartup (1978) has pointed out that these relationships appear to be characterized by their reciprocal nature; that is, each child provides a similar degree and/or type of positive reinforcement such as affection, encouragement, sympathy, and help. These peer dyad contexts should provide more intense socialization opportunities and at the same time, due to the element of mutual affection, should allow more room for the expression of individuality, thus constituting an unique opportunity for peers to learn from one another. If a child had only one friend, while of great value, in the absence of other positive peer interaction, this could be too limited an experience in peer relationship development. On the other hand, it might be that such a relationship serves to launch each child into additional peer relationships.

Social Cognition

Inspired largely by the cognitive theory of Piaget (1932), some researchers have focused on how children structure the social world and how they understand or construe what they observe, learn about, and experience. In this view, it is the growth in social thought that marks social developmental achievements. This progression is viewed as representing qualitatively different stages or levels in one or more social-cognitive domains such as the growth of the ability to know other persons (e.g., Peevers & Secord, 1973), the ability to distinguish one's own perspective

from that of another (e.g., Selman, 1981), the ability to distinguish moral from conventional problems (Turiel, 1978), and knowledge of the interpersonal world (Youniss, 1978).

According to an interpretation of Piaget's writing (1932) by Youniss (1978), "Interpersonal relations are the topic of social thought" (p. 214). According to this view, social knowledge is interactive and consists of different kinds of relations that become known through interpersonal exchanges. Thus a child learns of authority relations in interaction with parents, teachers, and other adults and later, through interaction with peers, of equal status relations in which rules are established by cooperative agreement among equals. Youniss more specifically proposed that social interactions are functional relations and may be understood by studying how interactions operate. "Interactions serve to: (a) establish a relation; (b) keep a relation going; (c) correct a relation when it goes awry; (d) intensify a relation; (e) terminate a relation; and (f) change a relation from one mode to another" (p. 221). Particular behavioral actions may vary across these types of relations or within a given type, yet it is the growth in understanding of social processes that is the important focus here.

Children increasingly appear to gain knowledge of how to construct social interactions with peers; they learn how social interaction progresses and how to coordinate activity with others. Youniss and Volpe (1978) gathered data by interviewing children 6- to 14-years-old on the subject of how friendship relations are formed, maintained, threatened, repaired and terminated. These data indicate that with time, experience, and development, children's understanding of a friend relationship changes from one

based on the sharing of physical activities, through the sharing of resources, being kind or nice to each other, especially when in need, to one based on a unique match of two different personalities. It may be helpful for teachers and parents to consider that the child's definition of friendship may differ from the adult view and yet to realize that the child's understanding is constantly undergoing exploration and revision.

For example, children's conceptions and acts of distributive justice among peers, commonly referred to as the process of dividing materials, space, and time were investigated by Damon (1979). Findings indicated an increasing ability among children to establish a fair method for the distribution of goods (for example, candy) even when a simple, equal division was not possible. Children of elementary school ages are less likely than preschoolers to keep material goods just for themselves, while older children are more likely to divide resources by some reasonably fair criterion, for example, which child tries harder. This developmental trend was found in experimental situations as well as in interviews. Studies also indicate that children who have persistent difficulty in fair distribution are likely to experience more peer conflict.

Children appear quite early to distinguish social and conventional behavior and moral issues. Turiel (in press) argues that social developmental progress does not necessarily follow in a uniform pace or direction; some domains may develop rather early and remain little changed in any fundamental sense whereas other domains may undergo continual change. In support of this, Bigelow (1977) contends that some aspects of the friendship-making process, such as ego reinforcement and sharing with others, may continue to be important expectations of friends as children develop; other behaviors may not. Similarly, data from several studies

indicate that as children develop they become increasingly aware of psychological dispositions and personality characteristics (e.g., Livesley & Bromley, 1973) and the difference between intentions and actions (Baldwin & Baldwin, 1970); even at quite young ages, they appear to have these capabilities to some degree. Turiel (in press) argues that there is not one central social cognitive system, but different rule systems for different cognitive domains which are not directly dependent or structurally interrelated. Thus, while progress in a child's understanding of moral issues may affect his social conventional understanding, the one would not determine the other. Conventional issues include manners, styles of dress, and so forth whereas moral issues pertain to respect for another person's rights and physical welfare.

As children's social development progresses, they become less egocentric; that is, they become increasingly able to see or comprehend a perspective other than their own. The growing capacity for social perspective-taking, originally discussed by Piaget, may undergo stage-like changes as Selman (1981) argues or may be a social interaction method as Turiel suggests. In either case, role-taking is an important ability evidenced early in children's development that has been found to undergo considerable change with time and experience (Selman, 1981). To understand, predict or anticipate another person's likely feelings, attitudes, and actions is dependent on the ability to see both shared characteristics or similarity between oneself and another and to know there are differences. The social perspective-taking process seems to require the ability to find ways to learn about the differences between oneself and another, communicate about these differences and deal with them.

Some researchers have recently viewed social-cognitive processes as social inference or reasoning processes centering mainly on the ability to comprehend psychological motives behind actions, to accurately attribute causes and to predict likely consequences of social actions and likely actions of another person in a given circumstance (see Shantz, 1975 for a review). Among the more compelling proposals, Stein and her colleagues (e.g. Stein & Goldman, 1981) propose that much of the way social events are understood and organized at a cognitive level may be in a narrative structure. In this model, children learn to solve social problems in much the same way they comprehend and process the elements of a story, which include consideration of the setting, the initiating event of the story, the internal responses and reactions of the main character, attempts by the main character to overtly deal with a problem or to seek a goal, and the consequences of these actions for the main character.

In sum, the social cognition perspective emphasizes the role of growth in the social-cognitive processes involved in the child's social development. In this view, the nature and course of a child's peer relationships are determined not simply by the child's previous learning, but also by his or her cognitive approach to the social world that influences peer interactions and relationships. At the same time, however, experience with peers presents continued challenges to the child's assumptions about the workings of the social world.

Social Contextual

The major focus of the social contextual perspective theorists (even more so than social learning and cognitive perspective theorists) is on the social context. Social contextual perspective theorists comprise an interdisciplinary group which includes anthropologists, ethnologists, psychologists,

sociologists, and linguists within psychology and sociology. Although these researchers differ in their interpretation of the particular kind of role the social context has in children's relationship development, the importance of studying the various systems in the child's peer contexts is stressed.

According to the social contextual view, a given social context is thought to differ in its structure and specific mechanisms from other contexts and may thus define, limit, or structure the nature and purpose of particular peer relationships. Denzin (1977) argues that to fully achieve a theory of the relationship between self and society, a theory must clarify the childhood socialization process. To Argyle (1969), the study of small group process is particularly important to the understanding of social interaction. Children and adults experience several different groups--the family, school (or work) groups, and friendship groups, each of which differs in its purpose, membership, structure of authority, procedure, and status hierarchy. Children thus learn to operate in a number of different school, neighborhood, and friend groups.

The social experience and conduct of children also reflects a given culture. According to Much and Sweder (1978), the cultural process involves "situations of accountability" in which cultural control and negotiation take place. When some "breach of social expectation" occurs, an accusation may be made, an explanation or account requested, and an evaluation provided which includes a cultural rule or message. Much and Sweder propose that there are at least five rule types: "(1) regulations (or laws); (2) conventions (or customs); (3) morals (or ethics); (4) truths (or beliefs); and (5) instructions (techniques, recipes, or 'know-how')" (p. 19). For example, a child is likely to learn or be reminded

that there is a rule against stepping ahead of a peer in line when he or she actually breaks that rule, or that hurting someone physically is wrong when that moral rule is violated. Similarly, regarding social conventions, a child may learn that to his peers he talks too loudly, wears funny clothes, or eats sloppily. Much and Sweder point out, however, that there is continual negotiation within groups as to which kind of behaviors are different, but acceptable, or not acceptable, tolerable or intolerable, morally right or wrong, allowable or not allowable, correct or incorrect.

A particular feature of peer interaction is participation in negotiation processes. Corsaro (1981) proposes that children have far more opportunity to negotiate in the peer context than in the family context. The children may select which peers they prefer to interact with and negotiate with by weighing their personal needs with the social context. Corsaro conducted an observational study of peer interaction in a nursery school over a year's time. He found that children's peer activities in the nursery school context were continually susceptible to disruption either from other peers wanting to join an activity or use the materials or from a change in the overall activity of the curriculum schedule. In this context, which Corsaro compared to an adult cocktail party, friendship making seemed more a function of the mutual ease with which two children could initiate or join an activity and perhaps negotiate how to resume it at a later time or protect the activity, their "interactive space," from continual invasions. Personal characteristics of playmates may have little importance to friends in this type of context unless the friendship is additionally pursued after school.

Negotiation is also integral to games and activities. Fine (1981) studied preadolescent boys who participated in little league baseball in

several communities. His observations confirmed the importance of "chums" as Sullivan (1953) originally referred to preadolescent male friends. At this point in development and in these contexts boys learn to negotiate their roles in games and other activities. They master such techniques for "getting along" as threatening, trading favors, using reason, "backing off" or "leaving the field." Through such activities, preadolescents develop considerable self-presentation skills in which they come to discover what Cooley (1902) originally called the social self-concept (knowledge of how one is perceived by others), and at the same time learn how to communicate personal views of themselves to peers.

Activities which enhance participation of children in peer interaction are thus important to children's peer relationship development. The research of Hallinan (1981) and Hallinan and Tuma (1978), for example, indicate that small group activities foster the development of friendships. What, then, are the elements of contexts such as activities, games, and discussions which contribute to relationship development? Sociolinguistic and pragmatic perspectives on the communication process have recently presented additional approaches toward gaining a greater understanding of the social meaning of these interactions. For example, Garvey and Hogan (1973) propose that children's early orientation to activities may promote the acquisiton and use of verbal forms of interpersonal contact and that as children develop language and learn methods to converse and sustain verbal interaction, activities become less important.

A critical skill in discussion context is turn-taking. The research of Ervin-Tripp (1979) and others on how children learn to take turns in conversations illustrates some of the specific pragmatics of language actually used in children's social interaction. (Bates [1976] refers to pragmatics as having to do with the rules that direct the use of language in

context.) These researchers demonstrate that learning to take turns in conversations involves learning the rules for how to begin, sustain, and terminate conversations. Conversational skills, however, also include the application of shared meaning, for example, by clarifying or repairing miscommunications and by asking questions in both direct and indirect forms.

The child also learns that conversational techniques such as interrupting the speaker, changing the subject, or proposing a topic may indicate which person has the greater authority in a conversation as in parent-child or teacher-child discussions. Other conversations are characterized by a "balance" between peers or by peer competition. Mishler (1979), who analyzed the conversations of 6-year-old children as they were bargaining to trade popcorn and cookies, proposed that it was important to consider the social context of the conversation, that of bargaining for a trade, in order to understand and predict the structure of the conversation and the meaning of the interaction. He concluded that the children's conversations in the context of trading are structured around not giving the upper hand to other children, which is signalled by being the first one to offer the trade. Researchers in future studies could similarly assess conversational structures in friendship-making contexts. For example, it would be interesting to determine how much peers like each other, or in a conflict of interest situation to assess whether the friendship relationship has an effect. Conversational structure may also provide insight into the status of the relationship, that is, to what extent the children are friends, strangers, and so forth. Studies of mixed-age interaction (e.g. Garvey & Hogan, 1973; Mangione, 1981; Shatz & Gelman, 1973) have found that

language patterns of mixed- and same-age peers differ in that older children will modify the complexity of their speech to approximate that of younger children.

The social contextual view of children's peer relationship development thus focuses on peer relationships as contexts in which the child learns to operate. The three perspectives reviewed, however, have common threads --the reciprocal nature of human relations, the increasing role of peers in children's behavioral and cognitive development, the role of the larger social environment in children's peer experiences and most important, the further contributions of peer relationships to the child's development beyond the family as additional sources of modeling information, feedback, challenge, and support.

THE VARIETY OF CHILDREN'S PEER RELATIONSHIPS

The discussion of recent research on children's peer relationships will now proceed with an emphasis on the research findings rather than the theoretical conceptions. The findings are organized according to the information and implications they provide for educators and parents on the variety of children's peer relationships.

Strangers and Newcomers

How do children get to know each other? Studies with very young children have recorded that even at 1 year of age children show a definite interest in other children (Lee, 1975; Lewis, Young, Brooks, & Michalson, 1975). Lewis et al (1975) conducted one of the few studies on peer interaction among infants. In the basic study, 16 groups of four infants were observed with their mothers in a room. One half of the group of children were 12 months and the other half were 18 months of age. Although the

infants stayed near their mothers, both age groups looked more at the peers than at the mothers. In a second study, children of approximately 12 months of age were paired with either a "friend" or a stranger peer for two sessions. The "friends" were infants who had had a minimum contact of two occasions during the previous two weeks. The infants were more likely to touch, seek proximity, look at, and imitate the familiar peer than the unfamiliar peer. In a study by Mueller and Lucas (1975), young children's reciprocal interaction was found to be facilitated by mutual interest in toys and other physical objects. Mueller and Brenner (1977) found a similar pattern in a 7-month longitudinal study of children from 12 to approximately 18 months of age. In this study, they also found that the familiar peers engaged in more sustained peer interactions, which in turn facilitated the development of their social skills, thereby enabling them to further sustain their interactions.

At first, a child who is a newcomer to a group of other children may be physically and verbally quite reticent (McGrew, 1972). Considerable time may be spent with the newcomer and his or her peers looking at each other. In McGrew's study of nursery school children, the newcomer children tended to make consistent strides across the first five days toward participation in the classroom activity, and although their general physical mobility increased, their verbal interaction was not markedly different. A follow-up observation, several months later, indicated that the children who had been newcomers were behaving and participating in the same ways and with the same frequencies as the other children. Foote, Chapman, and Smith (1977) studied 7- and 8-year old children who were either friend or stranger pairs as they watched a comedy film. The children who were strangers were much more constrained in their behavior

in general and toward each other than were the friend pairs. Newcomb, Brady, and Hartup (1979) found that in both competitive and cooperative task situations, first-and third-grade children paired with either a friend or nonfriend classmate were far more animated in the friend pairs. Gottman and Parkhurst (1979) found similar trends among 13 young children (from 2 to 6 years) who were paired with either their best friend or with a stranger. In this study, friends were more likely to participate in conversation rather than a collective monologue and to engage in fantasy play.

In a recent study, designed to determine the social processes occurring during children's initial acquaintanceship, Oden, Herzberger, Mangione, and Wheeler (1981) observed 5-, 6-, and 7-year old, same-age, same-sex dyads who were strangers to each other prior to the beginning of the study. The children were paired to play with art materials on five successive days for brief periods of time and their interactions were videotaped from behind a two-way mirror. The children's interactions, especially in the initial sessions, reflected a wariness between the peers (a finding consistent with previous such investigations with younger children). The transcriptions of their conversations showed that the children tended to become more comfortable and less constrained, more interested in each other's activity and more interested in getting to know one another as the sessions progressed.

Overall, the findings from several studies show that infants, preschool and primary school age children tend to "hang back" at first when confronted with an unfamiliar peer. It may be that the children test out the potential for a friendly versus an unfriendly response or are simply uncertain of how to proceed. Parents and teachers are often observed encouraging children to get to know each other by telling them to say

hello, say their names, or invite each other to participate in an activity. Such encouragement appears to be a source of children's learning how to initiate interaction in the early phases of peer acquaintance, but it seems important not to criticize children for their wariness or hesitation when faced with an unknown peer in the interests of encouraging children to become friends.

Friends and Best Friends

How do children become friends? As discussed earlier, several researchers (e.g. Damon, 1979; Selman, 1981; Youniss, 1978) have investigated children's conceptions of friendship. These researchers found that younger children (before the age of 9) say their friends are those with whom they play and share things whereas in middle childhood (9 to 10 years) friends are those who like each other and help each other. Among preadolescents, friends are those who understand each other and share personal thoughts, feelings and secrets. Selman proposes that the social role-taking or perspective-taking process is the central mechanism by which this progression in friendship occurs. Youniss focuses more on children's increasing ability to collaborate and reciprocate--in short, to interact mutually. However, each investigator stresses children's ability to like one another and to form affectional bonds as essential features of friendship development, a contention supported in the study by Oden et al (1981). These researchers found that when asked, elementary school age children suggested that liking to play together and having fun were important bases of friendships.

Although young children may have difficulty articulating and/or recalling to adults what they think about in the friendship-making process,

the 5-, 6- and 7-year-old children in the Oden et al (1981) study appeared to be quite aware of the specific actions of each other throughout the five play sessions. This study revealed that children begin to know each other by sharing information, including information about self, family, and friends, their activities, interests, values, and personal characteristics. At the same time, they develop ways to allow for individual activity by sharing materials and space, and taking turns. Children also explore the possibility of joint activity by attempting to plan what, where, when, and how they might do something of mutual interest. During an activity, children also share general knowledge and information and provide assistance or support. Throughout, children attempt to discover or even test out the personal and emotional characteristics of each other by teasing, direct inquiry, or openly showing or stating feelings and attitudes. Children are also likely to discover the limitations of a developing relationship and may need to find ways to prevent or alleviate disagreements or conflicts. The following conversations from the transcripts of the Oden et al. (1981) study illustrate the acquaintance process observed. The more common questions children asked each other and which set the "getting acquainted" process in motion were about age or grade. For example:

Child A	Child B
How old are you?	
	Six and a half.
So am I. I'll be seven.	
My birthday is..on..	
	Ooh. This is sticky clay.
Six more years and I'll be sixteen.	

Yeah. Seven more years I'll be seventeen. Three more years I'll be...thirteen. One more year, I'll be seven.

Me too.

* * * * * *

Child A

Child B

What grade are you in?

Second.

I'm in -- I'm in first.

* * * * * *

Child A

Child B

Did you--did you flunk kindergarten?

How did you know?

Your mother--my mother told-- your mother told my mother and my mother told me. My friend, she's eight years old and she's in second grade. Shouldn't she be in third grade?

Yes. She flunked.

* * * * * *

As the children were becoming acquainted, considerable amounts of their conversations revolved around planning individual and joint activities and ways to use the materials. Some had few problems agreeing on matters while others had to negotiate.

Child A

Child B

Oh, these are the pens that go with it.

I wanna do it.

I wanna do it, too!

Hold it, we can share these.

I want this--I want the other one.

You can use anything you want. Oh, look why don't you use this?

That's chalk and I don't wanna play with chalk.

Me neither. (Sings) I'm gonna draw something. Hold it.

We gotta share the markers. The mark--the markers go with this (pointing to own materials) anyways.

Why don't you use these? They're better than these... (points to other markers).

I want to use those. (Points to B's markers)

I'm using these.

We'll share those...

Yeah.

We got two packs.

So?

Hold it. These two packs are more than one pack.

I know I want the--(starting to escalate voice) We share.

Shh. We... share.

* * * * * *

The children in this study found ways to interact constructively and in most cases their mutual liking increased. Several dyads also increasingly exchanged information about each other, shared their activity, and planned to maintain the relationship after completion of the study.

In one of the sessions, a more structured art activity was provided via a battery-operated toy which spun a small sheet of paper around as each child used magic marker pens to make circular designs. The toy was highly attractive to the children and use of it appeared to present considerable challenges to all the children to distribute turns equitably. An in-depth analysis was then conducted in a second study to examine the conflict resolution processes among children who are just getting to know each other (see Oden et al., 1981). This situation appeared to provide a socialization exprience for some children.

Child A	Child B
	I'm gonna do it.
You're not gonna do it!	
	Yeah, I am.
Billy! It's mine!	
	This is mine!
Would you (mumbles)..all right! I quit! I'm not doin' nothin'.	
	But you got it. You had a turn.
You always....I didn't even do anything!	
	Yeah, you did.
What?	
	A design.
Nothin' - I didn't, I didn't do nothin'.	
	Yeah you did, keep it on!
No, I didn't. Bill -- all right!	
	All that, all that I was tryin' to do....

Well, let me have a turn!

All that I was tryin' - I... you got a turn.

I did not! (screams and throws down a pillow)

Yeah, you did.

No, I didn't, I...

Stop arguing. Don't yell - see that tape recorder? Just...you can do it now. We have to share, ya know.

Yeah (mumbles) but you gotta give me a turn.

I did give you a turn.

What'd ya call that thing? Nothin'. I don't like it. If I don't like it let me have another turn.

Ya can't always have your... your way.

I know that, but...

(Child B sets up paper for Child A to use)

The first time is neat. Don't try to chop off the tops.

Chop off the tops?

Yeah. Like these parts. Like this part right here. Why don't you try short-stop?

Kay. Where's red?

Red! I think this is red.

Gimme a purple.

Hey, these might work. These work.

Aw, look what I did in the middle!

Oh great. Wanna try green? Here's a green.

I -- I'm trying grey.

Tiny green now.

Wait - I'm gonna see what it looks like. But I'm gonna turn it back on, okay?

Yeah, but then it's my turn.

All right...

* * * * * *

Interestingly, by the end of the 10-minute session, children in each dyad had shared the toy to an equal extent of time, even though they switched the toy back and forth for varying lengths of time. Also, nearly every dyad worked out a system allowing for the child awaiting his or her turn to participate in some way; for example, handing the pens or selecting colors. The potential for a lack of equity was a critical issue here and may be a critical issue in enhancing or detracting from friendship building (see Wheeler, 1981). Among those children who seemed to be forming friendships in the current study, situations involving conflicts of interest did seem to present a catalyst of sorts:

Child A	Child B
	It's my turn.
I'm gonna show this to my Dad. You want me to turn it on? Cause we're best friends, right?	
	No, I'm not ready. Okay, now...
We're best friends, right? So we could turn it on. It's fun. It's fun. Isn't it a lot of fun? Ooo, I need more paper. No, too much paper. Huh,	

Wad!
Yours is gonna be much better.

Yeah. Oooh. That's pretty.

Oh. I'm sorry for being in the way.

Please use black. It's pretty. See.

It's real pretty. Please it's really pretty.

See? It's pretty.

Oh, that's pretty.

No, just...no it's not gonna turn awful. See? See that.

Right now? You could do somethin' else. Why don't you do somethin' else. Cause friend do...don't play really all that together...like... you know.

I can still fit a lot of colors in.

I'm gonna put some on the outside.

Nice. Okay.

I hope this turns out.

I don't want to use black.

Okay.

It makes the picture pretty.
I know.

But it's gonna turn out awful.
It is awful.

You have...three, right?
I have two.
Can I do another one?
Right now.

Well you're my...you know, best friend that I can play with. Cause I don't have any other friends in the neighborhood. Hey, want to get each other's address.

I'll give you my address...

I don't know my, um, address, but..(gives phone number).

Give me your phone number then. I'll rip this piece of of paper in half. You write it down and I'll write it down...

All right...

(Children quickly write down phone numbers.)

You better get goin' on your picture.

All right, now, here's mine.

* * * * * *

Gottman and Parkhurst (1979) stress the importance of studying the interactions of actual friends. From their data on preschoolers, they have formulated a model, which they suggest may predict whether young children will become friends. In this hierarchical model, Gottman and Parkhurst propose that the application of specific social skills is important if children are to begin to develop a friendship. The first skill in the model is the "connectedness" of the dyad's conversation and the clarity of their communication. The second skill is conversation that leads to establishing similarity in interests, feelings, and so forth. Third, when a "common ground" and agreements are solidly established, "contrasts" or individual differences between the children become interesting to them. The ability to resolve conflicts and have squabbles "burn out" appears to

be important throughout the friendship-making process. The final level is the ability of the children to interact in fantasy play, including role-playing, playing monsters, television characters, and so forth. In these interactions, the children can express feelings, explore differences, test each other's patience and limits, and resolve conflicts in less threatening ways.

Gottman and Parkhurst also suggest that older children participate more in "activity talk" which may indicate that they are less interested in making new friends and/or in mastering the friendship making process. This proposal remains to be explored, however. It may be that older children are more activity oriented as a function of the nature of the school context. Activities in school environments may receive increasing focus and the friendship-making process may thus become more integrated into the structure of the classroom, the schoolyard, and planned games.

If Gottman and Parkhurst's model is valid, a large degree of similarity between individuals seems important in childhood friendships as it is in adult interpersonal attraction (Berscheid & Walster, 1969). Reviews by Asher, Oden, and Gottman (1977) and Hartup (1978) reported on a number of correlational studies which found that children like or prefer to play with or be friends with children who are similar to them in personal status characteristics such as age, sex, race, and cultural background. However, Hartup pointed to the fact that children do have friends of different ages and might have more of these friendships if environments such as classrooms were differently structured. Singleton and Asher (1979) found that cross race interactions became more positive with greater opportunity to interact, although friendships were not really increased. Serbin, Tonick, and Stenglanz (1977) found that when opposite sex interactions

were encouraged by teachers, they increased. Perhaps it is only when interaction between children of a different age, sex, or race is actually encouraged that children may discover similarity and attraction and develop friendships with each other. It seems unfortunate that characteristics other than behavior or personality should constrain children from getting to know another who may potentially become a friend.

In summary, the process from acquaintance to friend may be a gradual one and the particular issues that emerge as important may vary according to the children's developmental level, previous experiences, or individual personalities, values, and interests. It appears that children may become friends and best friends when they have sufficient opportunities to get to know each other. Even where such opportunities exist, children may need to be encouraged to look beyond obvious differences and find a common ground to which they can relate. Providing children with activities that are likely to be interesting to both or many children may be helpful. Encouraging children to learn more about each other may also help children focus on more substantive issues. Educators and parents are likely to find that children will seek their help for clarification and information about how to unravel a misunderstanding or resolve a conflict. On such occasions, adults can help a child express his or her ideas and feelings, discover ways to learn the other child's perspective, and examine solutions that take into account both children's perspectives. (Further discussion of the adult role in peer relationships is provided in the last section of this chapter.)

Acquaintances, Playmates, and Classmates

Do children have many friends? Several investigators, using sociometric questionnaires, have investigated the number of children's friends,

especially in school (Asher & Hymel, in press; Gronlund, 1959; Hallinan, 1981; Singleton & Asher, 1979). According to research conducted by Asher and his colleagues approximately 5 to 10% of elementary school children are not named by any of their classmates as a best friend on sociometric questionnaires. For example, 23 out of 205 third- through fifth-graders in one sample received no nominations as an "especially liked" friend. Of the 23 children, 11 children received no negative nominations from same sex peers. A child could therefore be well liked or accepted by peers, but have no close or best friends in a given classroom. Further, a child could have one or more best friends and be quite disliked by some other classmates, and so forth. According to Peery (1979) children can be popular, amiable, isolated, or rejected.

Although most children in school do have one or more close or best friends either in their classroom, in another classroom, or elsewhere (in the neighborhood, in a club), there has been insufficient attention to the other types of peer relationships that a child experiences. A child's constellation of peer relationships may be differentiated according to familiarity, attraction, and liking and whether the attraction or liking is reciprocal or unidirectional. First, peers with whom a child interacts include peers that the child considers as playmates or companions, and peers he considers as friendly and unfriendly acquaintances. Secondly, peers with whom a child does not interact include the peers she finds attractive, peers she does not find attractive, and peers she has overlooked. Finally, among playmates, a child may have one or more best or close friends and may even have an adversary or two. Considering the complexity of the possible types and levels of children's peer relationships, part of a child's peer social development is likely to include his investigating and

understanding the range of possibilities. More research is needed on the social-cognitive and behavioral processes inherent in the range of children's peer relationships.

Cooper, Ayers-Lopez, and Marquis (in press) have stressed the importance of studying peers in teaching and collaborating roles. In peer socialization, children, including those not considered as friends, appear to be resources for each other for instruction, information, and evaluation. The one-fourth to one-half of peer interaction in which there is a more modest degree of liking or attraction is also a part of children's peer relations as indicated in studies employing sociometric analyses. Hallinan and Tuma (1978), for example, employed a sociometric questionnaire in 18 upper elementary school classrooms in which children were asked to indicate their best friends, friends, and nonfriends. The data revealed that 49% of the children's choices were in the friend category with the other half split between the best friend and nonfriend categories. Fine's study (1981) of preadolescent boys in little league baseball found that 18% of the possible relationships were rated as close friends, 31% as friends, and 2% disliked, leaving 47% who were neither friends nor disliked.

Peer relationships thus are varied in their degree of liking and purpose of the interactions. It may be that learning to interact cooperatively in an activity with another child who is not a friend and may not be especially likeable or attractive is an important early experience for constructive participation in work or recreational activities in adulthood. Furthermore, when children are encouraged to learn to interact with many children, more equal opportunity for all children to participate in the full range of academic experiences in school is enhanced, and some children may also increase their pool of potential peer relationships.

Cliques and Cohesive Groups

What types of peer groups do children form and what is the influence of membership in such groups? Research has indicated that cliques (mutual friend groups) do exist among elementary school children, often as a function of mutual preference for friends of the same age, sex, and race as discussed in the previous sections and further by Asher et al. (1977) and Schofield (1981). Hallinan (1979) studied classroom cliques (mutual friend groups) from over 60 fourth- through sixth-grades and found that 29% of the classrooms had no cliques at all. More cliques were found in the sixth-grade; larger sized classrooms had more and larger cliques. However, the majority of the cliques were not stable in peer membership across the school year. (Interestingly, the type of classroom organization --for example, open, traditional--did not appear to be related to the existence or stability of cliques:).

According to the cognitive-developmental perspective (e.g., Turiel, in press), children might not begin to explore the concept of a group, including its purpose and membership requirements, until middle childhood when cognitive operations are more advanced. It is during this period of childhood that clubs; for example, have been observed to become more interesting to children. Hallinan's research (1981) indicates that in this culture boys are much more likely to form groups of three or more friends whereas girls appear to elect dyadic friends, although they do participate in group activities. Research on actual peer groups and their development in the social context is important and to date quite overlooked. Studies should focus not only on friend groups, but also on "work" groups. The implications of such research would be informative to educators, in particular, but might also clarify some relationships between social and cognitive processes.

When children are given more opportunities to mix in group activities and helped to participate, especially in discussions, they may gain greater knowledge and understanding of each other. Friendships may then develop and thereby enhance the cohesiveness of more diverse peer groups. Hallinan and Tuma's (1978) study of 18 elementary classrooms found that those children who had the same reading teacher and who also spent greater time in reading groups over the course of the school year tended to develop more friendships in their group. Friendships were enhanced from nonfriend to friend status and from friend to best friend status without a decline in other best friendships. An evaluation of two first grade classrooms found similar results (Moss & Oden, 1980). In each classroom, two groups listened to stories read to them by the teacher twice a week over a six week period. They then participated in a discussion of each story's structure, including a discussion of the language, setting, characters, plot, problem or conflict events, attempts toward solution, motivation of the characters, and the overall purpose of the story. One of the groups in each classroom listened to stories about making friends and getting along with others while the other group listened to stories about the difficulties of bears living in the natural habitat. A third group in each classroom listened to both sets of stories, but were asked only for their initial reaction to the stories. Children in the groups which had discussion, regardless of the content of the stories, listened to and increased their mutual liking ratings of group members on posttest sociometric assessments. The group which did not participate in discussions slightly decreased their mutual liking ratings of group members. Cherry-Wilkinson and Dollaghan (1979), who examined the language used by children in first grade reading group discussions, offer some explanation as to

why discussions increase liking of group members. They found that discussion contexts provide opportunities for children to experiment with strategies for more effective communication with their peers.

Although little is known about group experience in children's peer relationship development, it seems that children tend to form groups, as they do friendships, largely on the basis of similarity in salient personal characteristics, such as race, cultural background, and physical disability. This tendency may be especially isolating for children who differ from classmates or neighbors on one or more characteristics that place them in the minority. Even where there are several children of some particular characteristic or similar characteristics in a classroom, peer groups may become polarized as each group has difficulty interacting with "those other kids." Groups based on same sex or race are the most common examples of this tendency. Again, as noted above, when children are encouraged to interact with each other, such barriers may give way to the formation of more diverse, yet cohesive peer groups.

Adversaries and Isolates

Why are some children disliked or alone? Some children do seem more likely than others to become engaged in an adversary relationship with their peers. Numerous studies have used observational methods and sociometric questionnaires to identify children who often seem to be at the center of fights, arguments, and other such social activity (e.g., Johnston, Deluca, Murtaugh, & Diener, 1977) and children who appear to be disengaged from their peers, on the periphery of peer interaction and relationships, or as Gottman (1977) described, "hovering."

The nature of the isolation experience of some children may also be variable. A child sometimes, for example, might interact negatively with

peers and at other times remain quite uninvolved or withdrawn from peer interactions. These children may lack knowledge of how to effectively interact with their peers. Children may also interact negatively with peers mainly in specific types of circumstances, for example, group discussion or with a specific peer group in the classroom. Putallaz and Gottman (1981) recently conducted research which illustrated that many children who were not well accepted by peers behaved as though they were newcomers to a setting, that is, unaware of peer norms and conventions for interaction. Even when they were interacting with children of similar low peer status, their behavior proceeded in a fashion that seemed likely to bring on rejection or negative interaction. Perhaps some children are self-defeating as a function of past experiences in their family and/or with peers who were rejecting toward them; they expect to be rejected. In some cases, children may simply lack socialization of basic norms and moral actions either from their family or from infrequent peer relationships that have the continuity of friendships. As indicated earlier, Ladd and Oden (1979) found that in middle childhood the children who were less liked by peers also tended to be less aware of peer norms for being helpful to their peers.

It is important to conduct research on the origins of peer social isolation to determine the duration of the isolation, and the original and current causes, including the critical situations and behavioral characteristics that lead to such isolation. Although children who are not well liked or accepted by peers may not share an equivalent profile, they do share an equivalent problem--isolation from positive peer interactions, reltionships, and socialization.

Recent research on social skills instructional methods with low-acceped and isolated children has indicated that interventions are helpful. Several intervention studies have instructed low-accepted children in positive social behaviors (e.g., joining activities, sharing materials, taking turns, asking questions, offering useful suggestions), and have provided structured opportunities for peer interaction resulting in improvement in the children's peer acceptance (Gottman, Gonso, & Schuler, 1976; Gresham & Nagle, 1980; Ladd, 1981; Oden & Asher, 1977). A variety of research and educational interventions have been found helpful to children's overall social development, and these meth[illegible] may be employed by teachers, parents, and counselors with children who have difficulty in peer relationships (Cartledge & Milburn, 1980; Furnam, Rahe, & Hartup, 1979; Roedell, Slaby, & Robinson, 1977; Shure & Spivack, 1978; Stocking, Arezzo, & Leavitt, 1980). Some of the intervention methods may be incorporated into educational and parenting methods to enhance children's peer relationships or to prevent or attenuate persistent problematic peer relationships.

Some children may not lack social skills but because they differ, as noted earlier, on some salient characteristic (race, cultural background, sex) they may encounter social rebuffs or neglect from peers--a situation that can lead to isolation, segregation, or mutual antagonism (see Scholfield, 1981). Similarly, several studies (e.g., LaGreca & Mesibov, 1979) have found that children who have some physical or learning disability and who are then "mainstreamed" into a classroom with peers of more typical development may not be accepted by these children.

When isolation from peer relationships is a stable condition, as some data indicates it can be (e.g., Oden & Asher, 1977), children are limited in their overall developmental experience. Some evidence indicates that

social isolation or problematic peer relationships in childhood may be related to social and emotional difficulty in young adulthood (e.g., Cowen, Pederson, Babigian, Izzo, & Trost, 1973). There is no available evidence, however, that positive peer relationships in childhood constitute a foundation for or have some influence on future positive relationships in adulthood. This would be an interesting direction for future research.

SUPPORT AND INSTRUCTION FOR CHILDREN'S PEER RELATIONSHIPS

The role of educators and parents in children's peer relationship development depends upon many factors including cultural values, current social issues, the individual child, the peer group, and the curriculum. Although some parents may feel that the teacher should have a limited role in their children's social development, peer social experience does take place within the teacher's sphere in day care centers, preschools, in the classroom, on the playground, and at camp, scouts, and little league. Yet the parent's role also continues to be a factor in children's social development. Children's peer relationship development in school is also likely to be affected by major social events in the society, for example the integration of children with diverse racial and cultural membership, mainstreaming of children with physical or learning difficulties, changing sex role expectations, and the increasing use of media and computers in the classroom. The major focus of this section, however, is the role of adults in children's peer relationship development. The adult's participation in children's peer relationships includes two major roles: (1) an adult person, experienced and knowledgeable about social interaction and relationships with peers; and (2) the architect and director of the curriculum and activity context in which children interact with peers.

Support and Instruction from Educators and Parents

What do you say to a child who tells you, "No one likes me at school," or "Jennifer and I had a fight," or "Mike's not my friend anymore," or "Alan's always bossing me around!" A supportive style of communication in discussions about a child's peer relationships is probably a necessary beginning element (see Stocking et al., 1980 for a review). Reinforcing or praising children's positive social interaction with peers is likely to enhance communication and discussion while the use of sarcasm or interruption are likely to block effective communication (see Robin, Kent, O'Leary, Foster, & Prinz, 1977). Parents and teachers should also ensure that their discussions of peer relatonships with children are relevant to the children's levels of development and understanding. At the same time, however, adults should avoid platitudes of "Oh, everybody likes you," "He'll forget about it," or "You'll feel better tomorrow." Usually, after some questioning and some listening, an adult will readily find a response that satisfies the child's search for a caring, interested, listening, and reassuring adult. Essentially, in these discussions, according to research in child development, the adult is both a model and a coach who helps the child toward an understanding of social interaction and relationship formation processes.

Methods for enhancing discussions with children may be discovered by comparing ideas with other adults. A number of such methods, however, have been examined by researchers. Some methods have been applied in schools and their effectiveness has been evaluated. Other methods have been applied as a part of research studies, but constitute models which may be adapted for various situations according to the individual child and adult, the particular peer group, or the particular situation. Several

methods are highly similar in that they engage the child in learning to describe, propose, and evaluate aspects of social interaction and relationship formation. More specifically, key features of these methods include:

(1) Describing a problem or event (e.g., a fight, trying to join a group, being teased);

(2) Describing one's own feelings, behaviors, and perspectives;

(3) Considering the likely perspective of the other peer or peer group;

(4) Suggesting a number of strategies that are potential solutions to a "problem" (e.g., a quarrel) or potential means of attaining a goal (e.g., making friends);

(5) Considering the likely impact of a strategy for oneself and the other peer or peer group.

A number of researchers have examined the critical features of such discussion methods in order to determine why they are effective. Meichenbaum and Goodman (1971) and Bash and Camp (1980) consider a critical feature to be the "talking-out-loud" aspects which children increasingly learn to do on their own before taking a course of action. In this way, children are likely to behave less impulsively and with more judiciousness prior to such action. Spivack and Shure (1974) and Shure and Spivack (1978) characterize these types of discussions between adult and child as "dialoguing" in which the child learns to think about how to rectify his or her problematic social behavior before selecting a course of action. The problem-solving process includes thinking of alternative solutions, thinking of the consequences of such actions, and means-ends thinking, that is, ways to put plans into action. Several social problem-solving scripts and programs along with opportunities to try out actions

have been found effective in enhancing positive social behavior of children (see Urbain & Kendall, 1980).

Methods which are highly similar to social problem-solving methods, but have been applied more specifically to enhancing peer interaction are referred to as "coaching" or social skill instruction. As previously discussed, these methods have been effective interventions with children found to be low in peer acceptance or to have a few friendships in school. In this research (Covill-Servo, 1981; Gresham & Nagle, 1980; Ladd, 1981; Oden, 1980; Oden & Asher, 1977), children participate in a number of "coaching" sessions in which they are first instructed by an adult in social skill concepts that are correlated with peer acceptance measures and represent general norms for social behaviors with peers. For example, Oden and Asher (1977) instructed children in the following social skills for playing a game with another child: participation (getting started in a game or activity, paying attention), cooperation (taking turns, sharing materials), communication (talking with the other child; listening), and validation/support, referred to as friendly, fun, and nice (being friendly, offering help or encouragement). Each child was then given an opportunity to play a game with a classmate. Following this, the adult and child reviewed the social skills previously instructed in light of the peer play experience (see Oden, 1980 for further details). Elements of the Oden and Asher study were replicated by Gresham and Nagel (1980) and Covill-Servo (1981). In the Gresham and Nagle study, children viewed a film with a narrative soundtrack providing instruction in the skills used in Oden and Asher's study. Results were comparable to those of Oden and Asher. The Covill-Servo study replicated Oden and Asher's social skill instruction with both classmates and nonclassmates as peer partners for

the play sessions. Play experience with children from the child's major peer group (e.g., the classroom) appeared to have a greater impact on the children's social participation and acceptance by peers. The children in Ladd's (1981) study made gains in specific social skills (e.g., asking positive questions, giving useful suggestions) as well as peer acceptance. This social skill instruction procedure included a guided rehearsal by the adult as each dyad played games. These findings also indicate that simply learning new skills and interacting with other children may not alter acceptance by classmates if opportunities to interact with peers are not increased in the classroom.

In summary, adult conversations with children about their peer relationships appear to be an important resource in helping children develop friendship skills. Numerous styles or methods of talking with children appear to be helpful to them. An adult who is open to talking with his or her child about peer relationships is also likely to further enhance the adult-child relationship.

Influence of Curricula and Activities

A curriculum for children's social development is ongoing in the classroom or family even though it may be implicit or "hidden" (Cartledge & Milburn, 1980; Johnson, 1981). Katz and Zalk (1978) and Lockheed and Harris (1978), among others, found that when children interact in curriculum activities which include mixed-sex and race groups, stereotypes tend to be lessened and a greater general openness to intergroup activities results. In general, the research evidence indicates that in order to promote children's social development, the preschool and elementary school curriculum should provide children with opportunities to (1) interact with their peers so that they can learn to know and get along with each other

and begin and sustain friendships; (2) ineract in pairs and in small groups; (3) interact with many different children in the classroom; (4) interact with many different children in various situations, (e.g., in classroom instructional activities, in language arts and media experiences, on the playground); and (5) discuss issues in human relations (e.g., rights of individuals, cooperation in the group, resolving conflicts).

Children are also likely to benefit from opportunities to interact with peers outside the school context such as at each other's homes, in clubs, scouts, art activites and/or family outings (e.g., the circus, zoo, or picnics). The inclusion of a sibling should also be considered in activities where they may enjoy or profit from being included. (The role of siblings would seem important in children's peer relationship but this is an area which needs investigation.)

In curriculum planning, educators and parents need to include various types of activities that foster children's general education as well as positive peer relationships. Language arts activities, as well as music, drama, art, and children's literature, for example, are important in helping children express individual feelings, ideas, and creativity, and in enhancing their understanding of reciprocity and fairness in human relations. Accordingly, language activities represent a potential for greater knowledge and understanding between children and for helping children interact with children of a different race or cultural background, age, sex, and physical or learning ability. Several studies have found that reading and discussing stories about children who differ on some characteristic such as a physical disability (e.g. Mauer, 1979) help children to have more receptive attitudes toward each other in future interactions.

Discussing stories from children's literature (e.g. Serow & Solomon, 1979) or from television (e.g. Slaby & Quarforth, 1980) can help children to be more aware of sex and race stereotypes and what may be incorrect or inaccurate about these stereotypes.

Academic projects may also be constructed so that children learn the role of cooperation in group effort. Those elements of the curricula designed to maximize children's knowledge of cooperative problem-solving are likely to be most beneficial to children when employed as an integral feature of classroom activity. It is important to balance the goal structures of activities so that children experience activities that are structured for cooperation as well as for assertiveness. Research evidence indicates that subjects such as math, spelling, vocabulary, geography, and so forth can be structured for group cooperation, and that such cooperation tends to enhance children's peer relationships while at the same time improving their cognitive abilities and academic achievement (Johnson, 1981). In general, engaging small groups of children in these activities allows every child to make some contribution to the group interaction. Large group activities also have their place. Physical education and sports activities, for example, are known to enhance group effectiveness and still foster friendships in larger groups (e.g. Fine, 1981).

Group discussion on issues of interest may include controversy but it can result in an enhancement of the peer group (Johnson & Johnson, 1979). Topics of controversy might be handled by discussion and activities that extend from the discussions such as a classroom newspaper or a debate. Various discussion formats and topics should be considered (e.g. Mehan, 1979; Johnson, 1981); however, there are some issues that should be highlighted or receive specific attention in discussions or debates.

These issues include specific events in the classroom and/or issues in human relations in society. Discussions could take place in relation to a television program, current event, slides, a story from children's literature, or by role playing. The discussion of issues in human relations should help children to examine stereotypes and get to know each other at the same time. Examples of general themes that are especially relevant as children progress through the preschool and elementary school years include:

(1) Learning how to include a child who tries to join a classroom activity;

(2) Learning to appreciate many of the diverse characteristics of classmates, playmates, and friends;

(3) Learning how to understand the perspective of another child whose values or situation may differ from one's own;

(4) Learning how to help another who may be in distress or having some problem such as learning a skill, finding the way around the school, making friends, or getting along with classmates; and

(5) Learning how to determine fair ways to utilize space and resources within a group.

These kinds of issues may also be pursued in special discussions to help solve problems over everyday issues, including participation of both sexes in games in the playground or in a specific section of the room (e.g. block building area, playhouse); refusal of a child to sit next to another child at the art table; teasing or bullying another child who may appear to be lost, upset, unaware of how to do something, or who is usually very quiet; pushing ahead of others in line; stealing someone's supplies or abusing someone's property; and settling arguments by physical fights. The use of role-playing and puppets for acting out potential

solutions to such situations has been found effective for clarifying perspectives and consequences of social actions (See Carledge & Milburn, 1980).

It is also interesting to consider the potential challenge that television and computers in the classroom will present for curriculum planning. Rather than increasing competition and isolation from peer relationship development, this technology could result in greater mastery of the basic academic skills and provide greater time for children to learn to apply or practice their skills in projects and joint endeavors. In any curriculum planning, activities should be examined for their potential for enhancing children's peer relationship development as well as their academic learning.

CONCLUSION

Peer relationships among children appear to provide contributions to children's social development. Children do not simply interact with peers; they develop relationships with peers which provide unique social contexts in the children's development. In a peer relationship, a child experiences interaction with another child who is of a similar level of experience and competence and yet who is different enough to provide a resource for enrichment of his or her own experience. Children also learn to develop cohesive peer groups--they learn how to resolve conflicts through negotiation and cooperation, and they learn how to compete with one another and yet maintain their own individuality. Essentially, they learn how to form friendships. Although the influence of adults in children's peer relationships is limited, their role is important in ensuring that classroom curricula, and activities in schools and the communiy provide sufficient opportunities for children to develop relationships with their peers.

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