DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 257 580 PS 015 204

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TITLE The Influence of the Culture of an Infant/Toddler Center on Peer Play Behavior: Informant and Observational Perspectives.
PUB DATE 19 Ap. 5
NOTE 29p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Association for the Education of Young Children (Des Moines, IA, April 17-20, 1985).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Age Differences; Child Rearing; *Cultural Influences; *Day Care Centers; Early Childhood Education; Expectation; *Infants; Outcomes of Education; *Play; *Toddlers; *Values; Videotape Recordings
IDENTIFIERS *Cultural Values

ABSTRACT

Emphasizing the possible influence of cultural factors on peer play of infants and toddlers in out-of-home settings, this study focuses on how values held by parent surrogates who design and work in group care settings may affect environmental qualities, developmental expectations, and adult and peer interactions. Specifically, cultural values and expectations held by adults who designed and worked in one infant/toddler center and the actual practices observed in videotapes of infants and toddlers at the center are explored. Findings are compared with results of three other studies conducted in the research setting, with the results of infant and toddler peer play studies reported in the literature, with responses of three other groups, and with "standardized techniques" of childrearing advocated by early childhood professionals. It is concluded that (1) informants' views are similar to those of other adults who have been enculturated by training in early childhood education but are different from the views of adults who have not had this background; (2) advocated and observed practices are congruent with results of three studies of peer play done at the center; (3) results are congruent with informants' theory of success; and (4) results are congruent with literature in the field of early childhood education. (Author/RH)

THE INFLUENCE OF THE CULTURE OF AN INFANT/TODDLER CENTER ON PEER PLAY BEHAVIOR: INFORMANT AND OBSERVATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

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Presented at The Midwest Association for the Education of Young Children Annual Meeting, April 19, 1985, Des Moines, Iowa

ABSTRACT

Environmental and developmental factors have been the primary explanatory variables investigated in studies of young children's peer play. Scant research attention has been paid to the influence of cultural factors on peer play of infants and toddlers in out-of-home settings. The question of how the values held by the parent surrogates who design and work in group care setting for infants and toddlers may affect the environmental qualities, the developmental expectations, and the adult and peer interactions which are observed in that setting is the focus of this paper.

The cultural values and expectations held by the adults who designed and worked in one infant/toddler center and the actual practices observed in videotapes of infants and toddlers at the center are explored and these results are compared with results of three research studies, with the literature in the field, and with three groups of other adults.

Conclusions of the study are that (1) informants' views are similar to other adults who have been enculturated by training in early childhood education but different from adults who have not had this background; (2) advocated and observed practices are congruent with results of three studies of peer play done at the center; (3) results are congruent with informants' theory of success; and (4) results are congruent with literature in the field of early childhood education.

The culture of the infant/toddler center described in this paper may function as a medium which enhances the competencies children require for success in the middle-class upwardly mobile American society. The developmental characteristics observed in research studies of peer play in group settings staffed by adults holding similar values may be influenced by these cultural variables. Comparison of these characteristics with those observed in group settings where adults hold different cultural values is warranted.

Environmental and developmental factors have been the primary explanatory variables investigated in studies of young children's peer play in group settings. Studies have described a number of the factors that may influence peer play; i.e., the effects of the presence or absence of objects, the characteristics of distal and proximal peer interactions, and the influence of quantity and quality of adult interactions (Mueller and Brenner, 1977; DeStefano and Mueller, 1982; Vandell, Wilson, Buchanan, 1982; Hay, Nash, and Pederson, 1983; Bleier, 1976; Holmberg,1980; Finkelstein, Dent, Gallacher, and Ramsey, 1978). These and other studies are providing useful descriptions of early peer play.

Although parent-infant play in the home has been identified as a means by which children learn the cultural rules of a given society (Bruner, 1976), peer play studies have not focused on the potential influence of cultural factors on infant and toddler peer play in out-of-home settings. The question of how the values held by the parent surrogates who design and work in group care settings for infants and toddlers may affect the environmental and developmental variables which have been observed in studies of peer play is the focus of this paper.

As John Ogbu asserts (1981), the cultural expectations of the adult society have a major impact on the developmental competencies which are encouraged and supported in the child rearing process. He contends that child rearing practices are part of a culturally organized system which is based on implicit adult agreement on the set of instrumental competencies that indivi-

duals must possess to be successful in that society. Moreover, these practices are "standardized techniques"; that is, child rearers are constrained by knowledge of the competencies needed in the society, by acceptance of the culturally sanctioned methods, and by awareness of the societal rewards and penalties attendant on the eventual adult performance of the children they care for. Evidence from crosscultural studies indicate that these competencies may vary across societies and time periods and may influence the child rearing practices which are sanctioned by these societies (Barry, Child, Bacon, 1959; Miller and Swanson, 1958; John, 1969; DeVos, 1973). Do the "standardized techniques" followed by parent surrogates who care for young children today promote instrumental competencies sanctioned by the American culture? Or do their techniques promote competencies valued primarily by specific subsets of the culture?

Frederick Erickson (1984), in an analysis of the elementary and secondary school as literacy learning environments, maintains that social relationships are "an inherent dimension of the learning task" but that learning in the school and in the home differs in regard to typical learning tasks identified, appropriate forms of objects and symbols accepted, and amount of control over selection of problems to be solved allowed to the learner.

He cites the work of Wertsch (1979) who describes the teaching task in the home as "proleptic instruction" in which the learner performs aspects of tasks under the direction of an expert (adult) who demonstrates appropriate performance. This type of

instruction is one of mutual negotiation, in which the learner seeks help and the teacher provides it, in a balance between observation and guided trials. The concept of "scaffolding" (Wood, Bruner, Ross; 1979) is also relevant. Scaffolding describes a "fluid, interactional system of social and cognitive support" which is jointly constructed by learner and teachers. The right to define the task is a part of scaffolding negotiation. Erickson concludes that the elementary and secondary school does not have this type of learning environment. But what about the early childhood school, especially when its students are infants and toddlers? Often these out-of-home settings have been defined as a bridge between home and "real" school. Thus, they may act as a transitional medium which has elements of both cultural worlds.

Professionals trained in early childhood education go through a process of enculturation to the field. They also bring with them their past enculturation as members of the society in which they were raised. The cultural assumptions and practices they bring to the infant/toddler center are usually drawn from a combination of the early childhood education culture and that of American white middle class society. As with every culture, this integrated culture has a "theory of success" and "standard techniques" (Ogbu, 1982). Making these explicit may be useful in explaining the results of studies of infant and toddler social interactions with adults and peers in group care settings.

Specifically, this paper focuses on the cultural values and expectations held by the adults who designed and worked in one

infant/toddler center, Center L, and on actual practices observed in videotapes of infants and toddlers at this center.

Center L.

The center is on the campus of a state university located in an upwardly mobile suburban area but contiguous to two major cities in a midwestern state. The population served by the center is primarily white, middle class (about 10% other ethnic groups, 10% low income, and 20% single parent families). Center L. was established as an integral part of the graduate and undergraduate early childhood education programs of the university to serve four major purposes: (1) to provide high quality care for young children and education for their parents; (2) to serve as a training site for students; (3) to be a model for early childhood educational practice; and (4) to be a site for research in child development and early childhood education.

At the time the observational research data were collected, Center L. had one building devoted to the infant/toddler parent programs and another for the toddler child care program. Other buildings housed preschool and kindergarten programs. The infant/toddler parent programs (no longer operating) served predominantly community families while the toddler child care program serves predominantly student and faculty families.

Subjects and Method

Two types of data were collected for this study. First, a description of the cultural expectations of the adult informants was obtained. These data come from surveys and interviews with

the eight professionals who designed, implemented, and operated the programs at Center L over a period of ten years. During the period from 1973 to 1983, these early childhood educators provided leadership for Center L. Four of them were primarily involved with the infant/toddler parent programs and four with the toddler child care program. All but one of them have degrees from the university where Center L. is located; the one who is not a degree holder was a faculty member. All eight professionals have served on the faculty of the university, have directed or taught at Center L., and have conceptualized and implemented major facets of the Center's programs. Two informants are male, six are female. None of the informants are presently active in Center L.'s programs; however, at the time the videotaped data were collected for the studies reported here, the programs' characteristics had been formed by this group of professionals.

Each informant answered a questionnaire on their views about both infants' and toddlers' developmental needs, the appropriate characteristics of environments for these children, the role of adults and of peers in group care settings, and the strategies which should be used in child rearing by parents and parent surrogates. After preliminary analysis of the responses, informants participated in a telephone interview, in which their answers regarding peer play were probed and information about their "theory of success" was sought.

Analysis of the data included identifying the cultural value themes expressed, the "standardized techniques" advocated, and the peer play developmental expectations for infants and for toddlers

that are held by the informant group. The similarities and differences between these informants' views and those of the three other respondent groups were noted. Comparative data from day care professionals in other locations, advanced level early childhood university students, and new-entry psychology students were also collected to provide contrasts to clarify the focus culture.

The videotapes collected and used in two research studies at Center L. were also reviewed and observations made to confirm or disconfirm whether the practices of the adults and the peer play of the children at the center reflect the cultural expectations and values of the informants.

Finally, comparisons of the relationships between these data and (1) the results of three studies of play conducted at Center L.; (2) the results of infant and toddler peer play studies reported in the literature; and (3) the "standardized techniques" of child rearing which are advocated by early childhood professionals were made.

Results: Informants' Perspectives on the Culture of Center L.

1. Infant Program: As described by informants, the preferred setting for infant group care is one which attempts to replicate the home's nurturance and one-to-one adult relationships, while providing in addition an interesting physical environment for exploration. Informants indicate that consistent, warm nurturance is the prime basic need of infants. Other major needs include: (1) opportunity to explore safely the objects in the environment

and (2) opportunity to develop reciprocally responsive relationships with adult caregivers. They believe that the first is fostered by tolerance for infant behavior, indirect methods of guidance, and flexibility in a stimulating physical environment which promotes experimentation. They include in the second the importance of sensitivity to infant cues, responsiveness to verbal communication attempts, and encouragement of infant social responses which leads to awareness of how to get their needs met by adults.

The importance of cognitive stimulation is mentioned, primarily through emphasis on exploration and communication, but this type of stimulation seems to be less emphasized than social stimulation aspects. Informants indicate that the major portion of the social stimulation at this age comes from adult/child interaction and play rather than from peer interaction and play. Although a few informants cite differences in the behaviors of male and female infants, (in activity level, need for touching, and vocalization,) most respondents strongly state that there are "no consistent differences" between male and female infants.

Enabling infants to become aware of peers as separate from self and to learn that these other social beings are not objects are cited as positive aspects of the group environment. Informants state that infants are interested in peers and demonstrate this interest through orienting to peer's vocalizations and responding with vocalizations, watching their activities, reaching and touching peers, and being attracted to the objects that peers are using. This interest is so intense in infants that a number of

informants mentioned the word "sparkle" to describe infants' reaction to the presence of other children. They suggest encouraging this interest by mentioning it verbally, arranging the environment and repositioning infants to promote it, and planning some activities that can include more than one child. Although they believe that adults are often "conditioned to intervene" when infants attempt to touch each other, they stress that peer touching and other physical attempts at interaction should be allowed.

Encouraging interactions among infants is not the highest priority, however. Although observation of peers as a source of new stimulation and as a means of learning new behaviors are valued, when asked to rank the importance of learning about adults, objects and peers, all informants indicated that learning about adults would come first, with objects ranked slightly more often than peers as second in importance.

The informants cite many play activities that adults should do with individual infants but few that specifically include peers. In addition, they see some potentially negative consequences of peer presence, primarily because they may interfere in the establishing of the close adult-infant relationship. Informants mention such terms as "competition for adult attention, neglect of individual needs, needs not met as quickly," and they also cite problems of overstimulation, imitation of undesireable behaviors and exposure to illness as potential negative effects.

2. Toddler Program: According to informants, the preferred set-

ting for toddler group care provides a cognitively challenging physical environment in which toddlers can safely exercise autonomy and independence, while making a transition from adult-child interaction and play to peer interaction and play. Informants consistently stress the toddler's needs to explore actively and independently a wide range of objects, to problem solve, to experiment, and to ask questions. Learning "what things are like" is only one aspect, however. Two other needs are (1) to learn symbolic ways of dealing with the environment and (2) to learn appropriate interactive behaviors with peers.

According to informants, the first of these requires adult encouragement of both language and symbolic play, through provision of an environment with many materials that promote symbolic development and through continued adult verbal and play interactions. The second is a goal achieved by encouragement of peer-present activities, stressing the responsibilites expected in relation to peers (such as sharing), and supervising peer play activities closely. Informants have expectations for "associative play, cooperative play, group interactions with peers, and play and language interactions."

In regard to interest in peers, toddlers are seen as peer-group-oriented. Informants state that toddlers' mobility allows them to be very active in making social overtures to peers and to "invite someone to share their experiences." They cite initial overtures such as active observation, moving close, taking and giving objects (or in one informant's words, "peace offerings",) touching, imitating, and playing connecting games as well as

engaging in associative, parallel, and cooperative play. They stress these positive aspects of peer presence: (1) understanding give and take and the meaning of sharing; (2) modeling new behaviors and learning by imitation; (3) developing empathy and knowledge of differences; (4) learning language; (5) developing play abilities.

Negative aspects include some mentioning of those cited for infants, but more stress on modeling of misbehavior, space encroachment and physical injury from aggression--all of which may be present in a 'learning phase' of peer interaction.

Although adult encouragement of toddler play is mentioned, most informants indicate that toddlers are "groupies" who "almost always are together" so that adults have no problem in making sure that there will be peer interaction. As one informant states, "adults should treat peer interaction sequences in the same way that they treat a child's building a tower of cubes; in both cases, the adult should not intervene as long as the sequence is going well." In citing play activities that adults do with toddlers, facilitating group games are mentioned by one informant; however, many of the activities mentioned have a high adult led cognitive/language stimulation component, i.e. reading or books is mentioned by almost all informants. Thus, even though peer play relationships are seen as of major importance, adult interactions using a "proleptic instruction" approach which focuses on learners as individuals and definers of the learning tasks are highly valued.

About half the informants cite differences between boys and girls at toddler age. Most of these differences tend to be about stereotypic behavior, such as doll or truck play. However, peer friendships are cited as more likely in girls while peer intrusiveness and aggression are noted as more likely in boys. Girls are seen as more likely to want comfort from adults.

Informants suggest many ways that peer play should be encouraged in toddlers; for example, providing a verbal overlay for their peer play activites, taking a role that promotes the extension of the peer play, monitoring the play to regulate the amount of intrusiveness and to mediate conflicts, stimulating by providing objects and materials that can be enjoyed by more than one child, and allowing toddlers to learn self resolution of peer conflict situations. Although some informants still stress learning about adults as most important, the majority rank learning about peers as the first priority for the toddler age, with learning about objects as the second priority.

3. Commonalities and Differences Between Expectations for Infants and for Toddlers

Many of the values expressed by informants are common to both age groups but the priorities vary. There are also some major differences in expectations for infants and toddlers. A common theme which underlies many of the informants' answers is responsiveness ("sensitivity to cues, going with the flow, encouraging children to use adults as resources, helping them to learn to get what they need"). The recommended early childhood school environment, therefore, seems to resemble the proleptic instruction model and

to promote a scaffolding approach. It also resembles the "patterns of indirection" model used by Native American and Alaskan cultures (Erickson and Mohatt, 1982; Barnhardt, 1982).

Another theme which informants stress for both infant and toddler groups is that of encouraging autonomous exploration and active, independent seeking of knowledge. Facilitating exploration, providing safe, stimulating and spacious environments and reducing adult initiated activities as children give cues that they can initiate their own problem seeking all are seen as promoting cognitive growth. Since emphasis on cognitive competence and ability to manipulate the environment successfully are major values of the American middle class upwardly mobile society, the techniques advocated by informants fit those values patterns as well.

Finally, the theme of democratic guidance, minimal control, and respect for individuality and uniqueness is evident in responses concerning both infants and toddlers. When asked how adults should deal with inappropriate or naughty behavior, many informants answered "for infants, there is no such thing as naughtiness," and they consistently suggested discipline techniques such as redirection, offering alternative actions, giving reasons, interpreting inappropriate behavior as a cue to provide a change of stimuli, and occasionally giving a firm "no" when redirecting.

4. Comparison with other respondents

The qualities emphasized by informants from this integrated early childhood-white middle class perspective are highlighted

when responses from the comparison groups are reviewed. The informants' views are similar to those expressed by the advanced student respondents from W. College, an early childhood education institution. This group of 10 respondents also mention the major themes expressed by the expert informant group, including the stress on nurturance for infants and exploration for toddlers. They stress the cognitive stimulation aspects even more strongly than the informant group. Since this group is also representative of early childhood education enculturation, validation of the presence of this cultural strain is provided by these respondents.

In comparison with the informants, the 12 new-entry psychology students, from a state university without an early childhood education program, have a more limited and less well-defined perspective on the needs of infants and toddlers. In regard to social needs, most give a global response such as "love and attention." They have difficulty defining cognitive needs and in differentiating between needs of infants and toddlers. Most also have a distinctly different perspective on certain aspects of child rearing from that of informants. For example, they do not support the "democratic guidance" form of discipline with redirection and tolerance for individuals that the informants support. The new-entry students are more concerned with control ("not spoiling", "letting them know who's boss") and about half advocate physical punishment. They do not stress exploration, independence or need for adult responsiveness to child cues as do informants.

The day care director respondents do not represent a consistent viewpoint. Three of them hold views very similar to the informant group, but two hold views on control and discipline that are more similar to that of the new-entry students. Because the training levels and educational backgrounds of these respondents are varied, they may have differing levels of early childhood enculturation.

5. Informants' "Theory of Success"

Informants were asked to identify the components of their "theory of success"; that is, to state what is needed for an adult to be successful in American society. Their answers provide support for Ogbu's contention that child rearing practices are influenced by the culture's "theory of success". Four major components were mentioned by all informants:

(1) Being able to function for oneself, to "be one's own person" (having self-confidence, self-esteem, self-understanding, feeling good about self, finding value and strength in one's own independence and autonomy). This value is cited by Derber (1979) as a pervasive one in present American society.

(2) Possessing thinking and learning ability (problem solving, recognizing patterns, developing concepts, acquiring knowledge).

(3) Having emotional/social competence (interpersonal skills, communication skills, adaptibility, ability to cope with stress).

(4) Possessing motivation for achievement (making best use of talents, persisting with tasks to completion, functioning in work, wanting to achieve, being interested in many things).

Thus, the informants' "theory of success" contains the competency

components that are also reflected in their statements of infant and toddler developmental needs and their advocated standardized techniques.

Results: Videotape Observations of Peer Play Compared to Informants' Expectations

The videotape review provides examples which confirm most of the informant-expressed cultural expectations. Those especially related to peer play are discussed in the following section:

1. Infant Program: Observations of the infant center videotapes provide numerous examples of the nuturance and sensitivity to cues valued by the informants, such as responses to crying, restlessness, fretting, clinging, pointing, lifting arms, and reaching for objects. Those infants who are not yet mobile are sometimes subjected to intrusive adult interaction and stimulation in the absence of cues from the infant, as though the adults are reluctant to allow them to be alone. Once the infants are mobile, the pattern changes, however, and independent exploration of the environment is encouraged. Although dependency is allowed when a child signals a need, in the majority of the observed instances the mobile infant is allowed independent exploration both of the objects and the peers in the environment.

Redirection and intervention are used but adults often seem to wait to see what will happen before redirecting or they attempt to make the intervention seem like another action alternative rather than a disciplinary technique. Adult techniques observed include repositioning children or rearranging equipment to make

it more accessible, offering of objects, calling attention verbally to objects or actions, initiating simple games such as peek-a-boo or ball, modeling symbolic acts, or using proleptic instruction and scaffolding. For example, an adult starts rolling balls down a plastic chute while the infant watches, accompanying the activity with verbal comments (overlay), then gives the child the ball and encourages the child to put the ball in the chute. After a number of prompts, the child is performing the activity while the adult watches and intervenes only if the child has difficulty. Contining verbal comment on the child's actions, making slight rearrangements when the process is not successful and obvious enjoyment of the child's actions are conveyed by the adult.

Both encouragement and discouragement of infant peer interest and play is seen on the tapes. Encouragement includes actions such as commenting on infants' observations of peers, calling attention to peer activity, repositioning infants so the peer can move closer, verbal prompts such as "say hi Brian" or "throw the ball to Tommy" (a baby of 6 months sitting on adult's lap), taking the infant to observe a smaller infant, and helping children to share animal toys. On the other hand, children's efforts to touch, take objects, or crawl close to peers are sometimes met by concern about possible harm so that repositioning away from peers also occurs, as do phrases such as "no, no, be nice" when peer is touched, "be careful" when close to infants, or giving reprimands when not sharing. This concern may be unwarranted for, as Hay, Nash and Pederson (1983) found, infant attempts to take objects

from peers are often met by non-resistance and neutral affect. The variety of peer interactions among infants includes distal and other emerging social behaviors and a few true peer play actions. Common actions are visually observing peers and peer/adult activities, creeping or crawling close to peers, touching, giving or taking object, listening to a peer cry and visually orienting to sound, reaching for peer or for peer's object, patting, smiling, mutual gazing, picking up an object a peer has used, wandering through a peer group, observing self and peers in mirror, sitting very close to peer, and playing in a parallel manner (for example, in sand or water).

Although informants ranked interaction with adults and with objects as more important for infants than interactions with peers, observation of the videotapes indicates that, even with those priority competencies, the social environment for infants is rich in opportunities for developing peer awareness and emerging social interactions at Center L.

2. Toddler Program: Observation of the videotapes of toddlers gives a picture that closely resembles the informants' views of the toddlers' need to explore and experiment with the physical and the social environment. The adult role includes providing nurturance but it is provided less as a focus of interaction and more as an accompaniment to instrumental attention. For example, the adult may read a book or help with a problem in a manner that conveys warmth and caring. There are also many instances in which the interactional pattern is toward involving the dependency-seeking child in an independent activity which will allow the

adult to move away. For example, the adult will hold the child for a moment, then try to engage his/her attention in a puzzle or other independent activity and move away when the child seems to become engaged. There are many examples which involve a repeated pattern of moving into and out of the child's activity and encouragement of independent movement and self control.

Another common role the adults play is that of "delayed action" or "laid back" observer. An adult is present near an activity area and alert to the needs of the toddlers but not intrusive in their activities. Adult intervention occurs when there is danger, potential conflict or when an adjustment of the environment will facilitate the play. Although there are a number of examples of the adult moving in too quickly to resolve a potential conflict, this is less common among the toddlers than with infants. Many peer conflicts are not resolved by adults but are subject to the "laid back" approach, with the adult waiting to see if the conflict will be resolved by the children. In one interaction, the toddler who had taken a truck from another child pointed out another riding toy for the other child to use and the play continued. In another case, a conflict over a ball was resolved by the adult casually finding a second ball that could be used. Empathy is also apparent in a few peer interactions. For example, one child who inadvertantly fell on another seemed puzzled at first when the second began to cry. When that child ran to an adult for comfort, the first child ran over and gave a hug to both as the adult said "show him you're sorry." Adults use language both to facilitate social play, ("he wants to help you

build," "help me rock the boat") and to respond to negative behaviors ("we dont't throw the ball on the table," "wait to turn the page").

Toddler peer interest and play is observed in a wide range of behaviors. Emerging social behaviors include observing peers or adult and peer activities, moving close to peers, giving and taking objects, mutual gazing, attending to peer voices, playing with objects that peer discards, grabbing or pushing, motioning peer to follow, imitating peer actions, playful screaming to gain attention, hugging and other nurturing behaviors, laughing together, and parallel play with similar materials but little direct interaction.

Much associative and simple cooperative play is observed, such as chasing games, block building, puzzles, pretending to feed each other, talking and laughing while engaged in similar play (which may escalate into "group glee"), working together on a task, engaging in rough and tumble play, mutual book "reading," climbing and sliding together, and playing peek-a-boo and ball games.

Verbal peer social interactions include using simple social rules, such as saying "thank you," "no, "mine," "my boat," "I want," and some reporting of peer actions to adults also occurs. Although peer conflicts are numerous, from simple interactions where one child takes an object from another and gets no resistance to physical or verbal conflict, many conflicts are resolved with a minimum of strain and the same children often are playing together shortly after a conflict. There is even evidence of the

beginnings of friendships, where certain children have mutual preferences for being in the presence of each other.

Although there are also many examples of toddlers' major preoccupation with the physical objects in the environment, even these segments include intermittant observation of peer activity. Thus, the informants' belief that a priority task for toddlers is learning about peers is supported by the tapes. All but the very youngest of toddlers seems to be tuned into the peers who are sharing the environment.

Comparison of Results with Peer Play Observed in Three Studies

Two studies comparing the interactive behaviors of infants and toddlers and one study comparing play of toddlers and preschoolers describe levels of peer play at Center L:

Study I (Sponseller, and Phillips; 1977) used a 10 second "snapshot" observational technique in which all interactions occurring at a certain time were recorded during infant sessions and toddler sessions. Three infant groups and three toddler groups, each with ten children were observed.

The results, indicating higher levels of infant-caregiver interaction than toddler-caregiver interaction, fewer infant-peer than toddler-peer interactions, and high levels of emerging social interactions at both ages, are all congruent with informants' expressed expectations.

Study II (Sponseller and Jaworski; 1979) was a longitudinal study comparing twenty children at toddler age and at preschool age on

social dimensions of play (Parten categories) and on cognitive dimensions (Piaget categories). In regard to toddler peer play, study results indicating high levels of solitary and parallel play, with girls engaging in more parallel and boys in more solitary, are congruent with informants' views. Significant differences exhibited between boys' and girls' social and cognitive play patterns also support informant expectations. Since this study did not address the adult role, there is no information related to those interactions.

In Study III (Bergen, Gaynard, Torelli; 1984) the sequence of interactive events occurring in ten minute samples of behavior of forty-two children, three to thirty months, were recorded and play behavior with adults and with peers was coded for social quality. For social interactions, the initiator of interaction, purpose of interaction, and results of interaction were recorded. Emerging social interactions (such as distal inter-action and parallel play) were also coded. The study results, indicating significant differences between infants and toddlers in length of interaction events and in initiator and subject of interactions, are in the directions of informants' expressed views.

Results indicating significant differences in adult-initiated interactions with infants as compared to those with toddlers, a high level of emerging social interactions, and significant differences in social quality of events over the age span are also in the direction which would be predicted by informants' viewpoints. The stress on attention-seeking (Derber, 1979), responding to cues and initiating interactions to achieve ends are

evidenced in the results. The results also support the informants' views that there should be greater emphasis on adult interaction at infant level and greater emphasis on peer interaction at the toddler level.

Results in Relation to Other Studies of Peer Play

Although the present data do not speak directly to other studies of infant and toddler peer play reported in the literature, the play developmental characteristics reported in these studies may be related not only to developmental universal's but also to competencies that are promoted by the culture of the early childhood programs the children attend and/or of the middle class parents who participate in the studies. The data which consistently reflect results congruent with expectations of informants in the present study, such as change from adult interaction to peer interaction, from object involvement to peer involvement, and from dependent to independent action, may also be reflecting the cultural expectations of the educators and parents who hold the values of the society in which these children will seek to be successful. Interviews with the adults in settings used in other studies would clarify whether their views are comparable to those of present respondents.

Results in Comparison to Early Childhood Education Standardized Techniques

As the examples indicate, the "standardized techniques" observed include proleptic teaching, scaffolding, democratic guidance, and verbal overlay. Adult direct-interactions tend to be focused on

cognitive content but the control of both cognitive and social interactions is mutually shared or delegated by the adult to the child.

From both the informant interviews and the videotape observations, there is evidence that an infant/toddler culture with agfeed-upon competencies promoted by the adults does exist. This culture combines the values of early childhood education and the American white upwardly mobile middle class. It is influenced by the "theory of success" which the early childhood professionals hold. The child rearing practices of Center L. promote the competencies that contribute to that definition of success and the techniques advocated are designed to promote achievement of these competencies. Moreover, these competencies are also supported by the early childhood education culture, as described in the literature of the field. For example, Caruso (1984) advises that "variety and contingency of responsiveness", "opportunity for self-initiated exploratory play both with objects and people", "secure and stable (adult) attachment", and "passing the lead role over to the child" are important elements of an infant group care environment. Toddler teachers are advised by Eheart and Leavitt (1985) to be "supportive participant(s)," to "tailor their behavior to the toddler's activity and respond thoughtfully," to "encourage young children to explore and experiment with materials in their own ways with the least amount of direction," and to "allow children to be as independent as they are able."

Conclusion

The thesis of this paper is that the results of research studies on infant and toddler social interactions and peer play development can be explained not only as evidence of universal developmental stages but also as evidence of a culturally organized system with implicit adult agreement on the set of instrumental competencies that individuals must possess to be successful in white middle class American society. The data indicate that Center L. exhibits a clearly defined culture which is promoted through the expectations and the practices of the adults who are early childhood education professionals. This culture promotes certain behaviors in infants and toddlers and does not promote certain other behaviors..

As American white middle class child rearing practices differ from those of other cultures, ethnic groups and time periods, so do their infant/toddler child care programs differ from those of other countries and of other American ethnic groups. The culture of the infant/toddler center described here may function as a means for enhancing the possibilities for later success in the predominant middle class American culture in which these children will live. Whether the competencies promoted by these early childhood professionals are prevalent in the majority of infant/toddler group care settings and whether they are essential for adult success for children from other ethnic and/or socioeconomic groups remains to be explored.

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