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ABSTRACT

For one school year, the classroom and playground social behaviors of normally developing and developmentally delayed children were analyzed for the occurrence of interactions across gender, across race and ethnicity, and across developmental condition. The potential impact of teachers' nonsexist language, and encouragement of interaction among mainstreamed peers, were also examined. Use of an ethnographic case study approach revealed increasing acceptance of mainstreamed children by peers, as well as several patterns of gender-segregated play. Interaction data showed gender to be used more than race and ethnicity in playmate choices at both centers. More cross-gender friendships were observed at the center with a gender balanced staff. The most gender-segregated play at both centers was seen on the playground and during other gross motor play, followed in frequency by free choice times. During such times, girls were observed attempting to join boys in their play. Implications for early childhood programs and teachers are discussed, along with implications for early childhood programs and the role of techers in promoting children's acceptance of diversity. (Author/RH)

Enhancing Children's Acceptance of Diverse Peers: Interaction Patterns in Two Mainstreamed Multicultural Day Care Centers

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Running Head: ENHANCING CHILDREN'S ACCEPTANCE

Abstract

Children's classroom and playground free play interactions throughout a school year are analyzed in terms of cross-gender, cross-race/ethnicity and cross-ability interactions. The potential impact of teachers' non-sexist language, and encouragement of interaction among mainstreamed peers is also examined. This study employed an ethnographic case study approach, and found increasing acceptance of mainstreamed children by their peers, as well as several patterns of gender-segregated play. Implications for early childhood programs and teachers are discussed.

Interaction data showed gender to be used more than race/ethnicity in playmate choices at both centers. More cross-gender friendships were observed at the center with a gender balanced staff. The most gender-segregated play at both centers was seen on the playground and during other large motor play, followed in frequency by free choice times. During such times, girls were observed attempting to join boys in their play. Implications for early childhood programs and the role of teachers in promoting children's acceptance of diversity are also discussed.

Enhancing Children's Acceptance of Diverse Peers: Interaction Patterns in Two Mainstreamed Multicultural Day Care Centers

Many socially important values, perceptions and behavioral roles are first demonstrated and internalized by preschool children -- often through their play. Attitudes and interaction patterns related to race, gender, and developmental differences have life-long implications and have been the subject of research in several disciplines. The impact of mainstreaming preschool children with special developmental needs has also been the subject of research, much of which has focused on interactions between mainstreamed and normally developing peers. This study examines the peer interactions - particularly during free play or "choice times" of the day - at two mainstreamed, multicultural day care programs.

There is much evidence that young children, by the age of three in most studies, are aware of color and racial differences (Crooks, 1970; Goodman, 1964; Johnson, 1977; Jones, 1972; Porter, 1971), as well as gender differences (Foot, Chapman & Smith, 1980); Van Parys, 1981; Watson & Fisher, 1980). At about this age, children also begin to obtain "gender constancy," or the knowledge of gender as a stable characteristic of themselves and of others (Pickhardt, 1983; Slaby & Frey, 1975; Thompson, 1975).

A related issue concerns the development of racial attitudes. There is evidence that by age four color becomes affectively laden, though the child lacks a highly developed understanding of race; this has been found even earlier in Black children (Crooks, 1970; Porter, 1971). Racial identification appears to develop similarly to gender identification, with girls tending to use gender for identification

more than race (Adair & Savage, 1974; Van Parys, 1981). Preschool programs emphasizing positive integrated contact can be important in the development of positive self-concept and racial identity, particularly among Black children (Crooks, 1970; Horton, 1973; Kirn, 1973).

The present study focused on peer social interactions. Social interaction is particularly important to preschool children with handicaps or developmental delays. Play can be a time for learning and for observing models of appropriate behavior. The role of social interaction in mainstreamed settings has been the subject of early childhood research (e.g., Dunlop, Stoneman & Cantress, 1973; Dunn, 1968; Johnson & Johnson, 1980; Mercer, 1973; Smith & Greenberg, 1981) for several years.

Research findings have been mixed in terms of the interaction patterns described. Some earlier findings, for example, found mainstreamed children to be rejected by their nonhandicapped peers, or less well accepted than normally developing children (Gerber, 1977; Goodman, Gottlieb & Harrison, 1972; Iana, Ayers, Heller, McGettigan & Walker, 1974). Other studies have reported quite different findings. Kennedy and Bruininks (1974) found no significant difference in peer status accorded handicapped and non-handicapped peers. Peterson and Haralick (1977) and Shoggen (1975) also failed to find support for the proposition that children with disabilities experience isolation or rejection.

Dunlop, Stoneman and Cantrell (1980) assert that such discrepancy in findings may be due at least in part to

> "(a) inattention to variables of potential relevance in the development of social interaction, and (b) the use of sometimes simplistic methodology to study complex developmental processes."

For example, many studies have employed sociometric measures administered only once or over a very limited time period. Studies which have looked at thedevelopment of social skills over time have reported increasing levels of both

interaction and positive attitudes toward such interactions, as time in the integrated setting increases (Budoff & Gottlieb, 1976; Hazen & Black, 1984; Kohl & Beckman, 1984).

Using repeated observations over a school year, Dunlop, et al. (1980) found that handicapped and nonhandicapped peers were quite similar across the various aspects of interactions examined. Their data indicated cooperative interactions in both groups, and increasingly similar patterns of behavior over time. Other studies in the early childhood mainstreaming literature have examined the interrelationships of the types of activities, types of play, and role of the teacher as facilitator of mainstreamed interaction during parts of a preschool day (e.g., Cole, 1986; Gentry, 1983; Kohn & Beckman, 1984; Swadener, 1986; Villarruel, Dickson & Martin, 1986). Findings generally suggest the importance of adults in facilitating positive peer interactions, as well as availability of appropriate activities.

The purpose of the present case study was to describe and analyze the daily interactions among preschool children in mainstreamed and pluralistic settings, focusing on patterns of cross-race/ethnic, cross-gender, and cross-ability interactions which emerged (e.g., friendship or peer preference patterns, roles in play, attitudinal statements, and types of activities chosen). An additional purpose of the ethnography from which these data are taken was to examine the formal and informal curriculum dealing with aspects of human diversity at each center. These related findings are reported elsewhere (Swadener, 1986, 1987) and will not be discussed here.

Method and Procedures

Ethnographic Case Study Approach

This study employed utilized an ethnographic case study approach to naturalistic observations and interviews during a nine month school year at two

early childhood programs. Spindler (1982) defines the ethnography of schooling as documentation of "educational and enculturative processes that are related to schools and intentional schooling, which leaves room for studies of playgrounds, peer groups, play groups, and other aspects of school-related life".

Settings

The settings, and their ecology, become the "subjects" in ethnography. The group patterns - friendships, work-and play-mates, seating patterns, favored activities, and diversity of children--are all the subject of observation and analysis. This the children and their teacher are described in the context of their settings.

The settings were two day care centers, located in an urban midwestern community. The study focused on the older groups of children at both "Center A" and "Center B." These children ranged in age from 3.9 to 5.5 years at the beginning of the school year. Both day care centers offer full day programs, and are mainstreamed with children who have developmental disabilities and delays.

Center A

During the period of the case study, 25% of the children enrolled were from countries other than the U.S., and most of these children were learning English as a second language, or were bilingual. Approximately 6% of the children were U.S. minority children and the remainder were Euro-American.

Center A had two mainstreamed children in the older group. Marita had Downs syndrome and Umaru was considered "autistic-like and hyperactive", with language and social delays. Both children took part in most of the regular activities at the center, and had a special resource teacher working with them most of the time they were at the center.

Center A had 43 children enrolled during most of the school year; at the beginning of the study there were 22 boys and 21 girls. The children were grouped

by age into five small groups; this study focused on the children in the older two groups. Three teachers worked with the older children during the school year. Joan, the most experienced teacher at the center, worked with the oldest group. Martin worked with the younger four-year-old group at the beginning of the study, and Kate began working with this group in November. At the beginning of the study there were two male staff; in March, a third male teacher was hired to work primarily with the younger children. In addition to a gender-balanced staff, Center A also had a racially diverse teaching staff, with one African teacher, an Afro-American special needs resource teacher, and several Afro-American volunteers.

Center B

Center B is a mainstreamed, full-day program, located in a larger research and rehabilitation facility. At Center B, approximately 40% of the children enrolled have a developmental disability or delay. Thus, the staff make-up at this center includes a number of special education teachers, as well as support staff and trainees.

This study focused on the room with the oldest children. At the beginning of the school year this classroom had fourteen 4-and 5-year old children; 10 boys and 4 girls. This changed to 9 boys and 5 girls in November. There were four children in this room with special needs. One child had cerebral palsy, another had brain damage-related developmental delays and began the school year with very little language, one child was considered "socially constricted" with some large motor delays, and another child received speech therapy. In this class, there were two children from European countries; the other children were Euro-American and Eastern European in heritage.

Two staff were the regular team teachers in this classroom. One co-lead teacher was trained in early childhood exceptional education, and the other was an

experienced preschool teacher. A research assistant working on a microcomputer project was the only male staff member in this classroom on a regular basis, although several of the children's fathers were often seen at the center.

Research Design

Data for the case study were collected over a nine month period, with observations conducted both in classroom and playground settings at both centers. Weekly observations lasted between 2-3 hours, and focused initially upon: (1) peer interactions and conversations, and (2) teacher-child interactions and discussions, many of which were during small and large group activities. Children at both centers were observed interacting in all the activity areas (e.g., small manipulatives, dramatic play, large blocks, arts, book corder, science, woodworking, and playground and other large motor areas, including the gymnasium at Center B). Over 186 hours were spent observing at the two centers. The study was not intended to be a comparison of Center A and Center B. Rather, the use of two different programs was intended to look at peer interactions in both ethnically diverse and relatively monocultural settings.

Observation Methods

This study employed a series of repeated observations at both centers, during various parts of the program's schedules. These included free choice activity times, snacks, teacher-guided small and large groups, outside times, field trips, and transitions. In the case of small group activities, a direct transcription of the dialogue was made, along with noting seating patterns and relevant events which happened in the environment.

Field notes were discussed with teacher immediately following most observations, to clarify what was observed and add additional background information. As data were analyzed and categories emerged, observations were

focused on these categories and data were coded accordingly. All field notes were analyzed in terms of the major questions guiding the study, and coded accordingly.

Reliability Measures

A number of steps were taken to insure, to the degree possible in an ethnography, the reliability of the findings. Measures included a comparison of the researcher's observations with perceptions of teachers involved in a particular activity interaction. Following the data collection period, sections of the Results chapters were shared with the teachers. Since names had been changed in this write-up, teachers were asked to identify the children described, and give feedback to the researcher on the analysis. Additional interpretations of sample observation notes were done by a more "neutral" person, knowledgeable in child development and the centers involved.

RESULTS

Friendship Patterns and Peer Preferences: Race and Gender

In general, gender seemed to be a stronger criterion for playmate choice than did shared racial or ethnic background. In fact, some strong cross-racial friendships were observed throughout the school year at Center A. Children at this center also had a variety of daily cross-racial interactions with their mainstreamed peers, Marita and Umaru, who were Afro-American and Nigerian, respectively.

One dyad of particular relevance to cross-racial interaction consisted of two girls, Marissa and Alison, who were "best friends." In the nine months of observations, Marissa and Alison played together almost exclusively on 32 out of 36 observations. They typically sat together at snack and project times, and frequently played together during free play times, engaging in a variety of dramatic play together -- often involving just these two.

Yet another frequently observed dyad consisted of two boys, Tomas and Carlitos, often joined by Brandon (who was Euro-American). Both Tomas and

Carlitos had family members who spoke Spanish (Tomas was Puerto Rican and Carlitos was Mexican-American). These two boys were not as exclusive in their play as were Marissa and Alison. Carlitos also had frequent interactions with Nikki, a Native American girl, who was in the next younger group.

Another "shared heritage" friendship and play grouping which was frequently observed were three girls from Israel, who also included Fenia (from Turkey) in their play. The girls from Israel often switched from English to Hebrew when playing together. Similar to Marissa and Alison, these girls sought each other out during free choice and outdoor times. Naomi, Masha and Rebeccah were most frequently seen playing exclusively with each other on the playground, at the art table during free choice times, and sitting together at lunch.

Cross-gender Interaction Patterns

Center A

Gender segregated interactions appeared to be consistently related to the type of activity or setting of the interaction. For example, children chose to sit next to same sex peers at snack 72% of the time, and at table activities 65% of the time. When there was more "freedom of movement" (e.g., during unstructured activities such as small and large block play), this was typically not the case. At Center A in the large and small block room, dramatic play room, wood-working room, science corner, and to a lesser degree in the games and small manipulatives area, there was far more cross-gender play than during more "fixed" table activities. On average, gender segregated play at these times was observed only 50% of the time.

On the playground children were observed to play with same-gender peers approximately 75% of the time. The exception to this was observed in the children who had formed "best friendships" across gender. These children also played

together on the playground, though they were more likely to participate in gender segregated activities outside than inside.

A partial explanation for the observed increased in gender cleavage outside can be found by examining the themes and types of dramatic and motor play engaged in by the children on the playground. The most frequently observed play themes among boys, for example, consisted of "super hero" chasing games - particularly involving male staff and volunteers (at Center A), trikes and scooters, and the tire swing. Boys also frequently played together on the climber, making airplane or "rocket ship" sound effects, or role-playing animals such as cougars or jaguars.

Girls often continued family dramatic play themes outside (e.g., assigning family roles to each other or pretending to be "teenagers" or "big sisters"). They also frequented the tire swings and climbing structure area, but used the tire swing when the boys were in another area of the playground (typically on the bike and scooter path). Both boys and girls played - and played together - in the sandbox and on the large wooden platform of the climbing structure. A wide variety of dramatic play themes were developed and carried out in these adjacent areas.

Age may also have been a contributing factor in the degree of gender segregation in free play situations. Specifically, there appeared to be more gender cleavage among the 3-year-old and young 4-year-olds than among the older 4-and 5-year-old children. The oldest children at the center included at least two strong cross-gender friendships.

The most consistent cross-gender friendship observed at Center A was that of Eric and Brigitte. Eric was new to the center in September, and was quickly befriended by Brigitte. Although they did not always sit together during snack and other table activities, Eric and Brigitte were observed playing together on every

observation of the oldest group during "project times," which took place in small manipulatives, large block, woodworking, science, or dramatic play areas. Eric and Brigitte also played together during the free choice time which followed project time.

By the end of the school year, however, these two good friends were playing together less frequently - particularly on the playground. Eric was now playing more during free choice times with the older boys, and Brigitte was playing more with the girls. When asked (in April) whether Eric was her "good friend," Brigitte replied, "Not any more! You know why? 'Cause he pretended to shoot Rebeccah! and I don't like guns."

The oldest group also included three girls who were leaders and often initiated play themes with boys, as well as with other girls. One of these girls, Trina, also engaged in some dramatic play with boys on the playground - particularly "wild animal" play, and (less so) superhero play. A favorite theme of virtually all the older children, but particularly the boys, was animal-related role play (e.g., "cougars," "Siberian tigers," "cheetahs" and various species of sharks and whales).

Center B

Upon entering the classroom of oldest children at Center B, one could at first be struck by the ratio of boys to girls. When observations began, in September, the ratio of boys to girls was 11:4, which changed to 10:5 later during the first semester. This ratio appeared to be more central to the "classroom dynamic" earlier in the school year than it did in later, second semester observations. By later in the year, increased cross-gender cooperative play was observed, along with more obvious female leadership in the classroom. A wide variety of behavior and interaction patterns were exhibited by both the boys and girls in this room, with perhaps the greatest diversity of roles apparent in the boys.

Particularly in the fall semester, gender cleavage was evident for most of the children, particularly during certain types of activities, as at Center A. Specifically, children played with same-sex peers in the gym and on the playground during approximately 80% of the interactions observed. Free choice activities (e.g., small manipulatives, blocks and dramatic play) also were the occasion for much gender segregated play. Less gender cleavage was observed in the skills and science area, art area, computer, and at snack and lunch times.

Although there was a predominance of same-gender peer groups during choice time activities, the observed effects of many of the play themes deserves comment. For example, during 8 observations, a group of 4-5 boys engaged in "nurturing" dramatic play themes, such as taking care of dolls or playing other parental roles. On two other occasions, when a "beauty and barber shop" was set up, a number of boys dressed up, put on make-up, and competed for the "best jewelry."

The same group of boys who engaged in the most "nurturant" play themes also actively included a mainstreamed child (Jimmy) during five of the eight interactions observed. Jimmy liked babies and doll play, and the other boys frequently included him when these props were available in the dramatic play area.

The girls were observed to play together exclusively in a variety of choice activities, particularly outside and in the gym. Girls also were frequently heard to describe other girls in their classroom as "best friends." These friendships changed very little over the course of the school year, and included at least one cross-ability friendship. One such relationship was between two girls, one of whom had cerebral palsy. By early in the second semester both girls made consistent reference to each other as "best friends," and were frequently observed moving from one activity to another - together.

Two cross-gender friendships merit mention here. One was between Ruth and John. This friendship appeared to be stronger in the fall semester (as was the case

with the cross-gender "best friendship" at Center A discussed earlier). During the fall semester, Ruth and John's most frequent shared activities were working together at the computer, doing skills or small manipulative activities together, and, less frequently, engaging in dramatic play.

The other strong cross-gender friendship observed at Center B was the relationship between Jimmy and Kathryn. Their interactions will be discussed in more detail in the next section, which deals with exceptionality and cross-ability interactions. Kathryn frequently let Jimmy (a child with special needs) play on or near her cot during rest time, and also played chasing games with him outside during the spring. They also sat by each other frequently at snack or during table projects, such as cooking.

Three girls (Ruth, Elizabeth and Kathryn) emerged as leaders in the room observed at Center B. Ruth was frequently observed either entering or attempting to enter play with boys. Two of the boys (Josh and John) usually accepted her into their activities - the computer, dramatic play or table choices. Other boys were typically less willing to have her join in their projects, as the following dialogue illustrates.

This interaction took place during a small group project in the block area - building a maze for the gerbil. On this occasion, the boys were working together on a fairly intricate construction, and Ruth was attempting to work with them.

Ruth, "Can I help?"
Peter, "No!"
Ruth, "You guys...I CAN play with you!"
Diego, "No! We don't need your help now."
Ruth, "Yes I can."
Josh, "Yes. She can play!"
Diego, "No, 'cause we don't have the hardest part done yet."
Ruth, "I can play - see, here are some of my blocks, and I think I'll just build right here..."
Josh, "Let her play...she can bring her blocks over here by us...C'mon!"

Just as at Center A, some of the most obvious gender cleavage occurred on the playground and during other large motor activities, followed in frequency by

dramatic play and bock area interactions. In these settings, when cross-gender play did occur, it typically consisted of girls trying to join in with boys' activities.

Gender-related Interactions: Summary

Staff at both centers did much to actively discourage sex-role stereotyping and to encourage cross-gender cooperation and friendships. At least four consistent cross-gender close friendships were observed. Still, much gender cleavage was observed - particularly during outside play and many of the dramatic play interactions observed.

Female leaders were observed at both Center A and Center B, with more girls in leadership roles at Center A. This may have been due to the more balanced ratio of girl and boys at this center, however. Children's dialogue reflected an attempt to use less sexist terms, particularly later in the school year - even if this meant inventing new words.

In certain types of play - most notably blocks, large motor and dramatic play - "cross-gender" play could more accurately be described as girls attempting to join the play of boys. This was less the case with table activities such as small manipulatives, art, and the computer, where girls were more likely to initiate the activity and be joined by boys.

The typical dramatic play themes observed were different for male and female play groups much of the time. Male peers tended to play animal and superhero themes, and female peers tended to develop dramatic play around family and career themes. During units emphasizing care-giving roles (e.g., infant nursery, hospital, veterinary clinic), boys at Center B were frequently observed engaging in nurturant role-play. Two boys at Center A were frequently observed switching between male and female play groups during project and free play times.

Cross-Ability Interaction Patterns

Center A

Two children were mainstreamed in the four-year-old group at this center. Both children attended a public school special education program half days and spent the rest of their day at Center A. Both Marita and Umaru were supported by a resource teacher (different teachers for morning and afternoon) during most of the time they spent at the day care center. Marita attended mornings and Umaru afternoons.

Marita has Downs syndrome. At the beginning of the school year she was non-verbal and was beginning to learn sign language. Due to her level of disability, she required virtually constant support from a resource or regular teacher. Umaru (who was labelled "autistic-like and hyperactive") was also delayed in language and social interaction skills, although he showed much progress in both areas during the second semester.

In analyzing field notes relating to children's interactions with Marita, the role of the resource teachers becomes even more apparent. Although the special needs resource teachers interacted frequently with the other children, when Marita was inside her resource teacher's role included "speaking for" Marita (e.g., interpreting her behavior, feelings and requests to other children). Marita's resource teachers were also frequently observed preventing and redirecting inappropriate behavior and modifying activities, when necessary, to enhance Marita's participation.

Thus, in describing Marita's interactions with peers and the types of activities which appeared to foster the greatest amount of cross-ability interaction, there will necessarily be some description of the resource teachers' interactions with the other children. An obvious advantage of this level of one:one support for Marita was that she participated in virtually all the activities of her small group. She was not

frequently removed from her peers' activities, and she was encouraged by all the teachers to try out a variety of activities.

The children at Center A were in frequent interaction with Marita. Overall, the relationship of her peers to Marita could be described as "accepting." In general, activities which fostered the most interactions (both in terms of quantity and quality) between Marita and her peers were project times - particularly simple table activities and large motor activities such as games in the block room, morning snack, and outdoor play - typically on the tire swing or in the sandbox. The fewest cross-ability interactions were observed during indoor free choice and large group activities, when children tended to seek out special friends to play with, and often excluded Marita.

Since Marita was virtually non-verbal, resource teachers and regular staff were teaching her to use sign language. The other children definitely appeared to enjoy learning to use signs, as well as helping Marita learn to sign. Several children stated that what they liked to do best with Marita was "help her learn to talk" or "help her learn sign language."

Marita needed the least one-to-one support when participating in large motor activities, such as games indoors or during playground free play. Her sense of balance was excellent, and Marita particularly enjoyed playing on the tire swing with the other children. During such interactions, she would be on the swing with two or three other children - usually other girls (Naomi, Danielle, Brigitte or Rebeccah), who also appeared to enjoy these interactions.

An example of how a motor activity was modified slightly to better include Marita's participation follows. Children in Marita's small group were taking turns tossing bean bags into a stand-up clown with holes in it. Her resource teacher helped Marita throw hers', and when she got one in, all the children cheered for her.

Later, the same group played a "step-taking" game ("What Time is It?"). Marita and her resource teacher took their turn together, holding up a number of fingers (with the children taking that number of steps). Again, Marita's peers appeared to enjoy her participation. Several of them incorporated signing or holding up fingers when it was their turn to be the leader.

At times, however, Marita's acting out behaviors did upset the other children. The following dialogue, during free play in the block room, was representative of children's differing feelings about Marita's participation and behavior within her small group. Most complaints from children were during project times in the smaller rooms at the center - block, science and dramatic play areas. In this case, children had been building an airport together in the small back room when Marita entered with Anne, her resource teacher.

> Randy, "Oh no - Marita's here!" As Marita sat down virtually on top of Rebeccah's construction, Rebeccah responded, "Marita did this - but I can fix it! That's ok."

In terms of interactions involving Umaru, most of the relevant observations were done during outside and inside free play times, primarily in the afternoons (when he attended Center A). Other children generally seemed to enjoy Umaru, although he often engaged in either solitary of parallel play, with little or no direct interaction with peers. This was particularly true during the fall semester. His favorite activities included using a variety of small manipulatives, taking things apart and re-assembling them, and playing in the sandbox area, outside. By spring, Umaru was talking more, although mainly in short phrases, and seemed to be more accepted by his peers.

During several afternoon free play observations, Umaru played with younger children at the small manipulatives and games tables. During one observation he worked on a puzzle with a younger boy, and they put it together without any teacher

assistance. Both boys seemed very proud, and the younger one showed their cooperative work to a teacher. On other occasions, Umaru's older peers pointed out something he had made or had taken apart and put back together. "Look what Umaru did!" was overheard on several times during afternoon observations.

In summary, both Marita and Umaru enjoyed frequent interaction with their peers at Center A. Marita's interactions were typically with her resource teacher and a small group of children. Umaru as seen as being more independent, and played alone and without a resource teacher during many of the observations. Interactions between the children at this center and their mainstreamed peers were, for the most part, quite positive, accepting and helpful. Children seemed to enjoy learning and teaching sign language, and helping their mainstreamed friends "learn to talk."

Center B

Three children in the room observed at Center B were considered to have "special needs." As at Center A, the degree of involvement differed greatly among these children. Susan had cerebral palsy, affecting primarily her legs and one arm (she wore braces); Jimmy had brain damage and several related developmental delays, particularly in language; Steve had large motor delays and was considered "socially constricted" in his interactions with other children.

Children at Center B were in frequent interaction with their mainstreamed peers, and a number of close cross-ability friends grew throughout the year (and were discussed briefly in the previous section on gender).

Although the two regular teachers in this classroom consisted of one "regular education/early childhood teacher" and one "special needs teacher", both team-teachers shared in overall classroom responsibilities fairly equally.

Jimmy progressed from having virtually no speech early in the school year to learning sign language, and then greatly increased his vocabulary by the end of the

school year. In terms of interactions with peers, it appeared that both Jimmy and his peers experienced a year of changes and growth together. Jimmy, in terms of his social adjustment, communication abilities, and overall cognitive functioning, and his peers, in their acceptance of and increasing friendships between Jimmy and his peers.

Several themes were obvious in the repeated observations of Jimmy and his classmates. These included the use of humor - increasingly laughing with, vs. laughing at Jimmy, learning from Jimmy - particularly learning sign language, and taking pride in his other accomplishments. An example of mutual humor and enjoyment can be found in the following example, in which Peter is helping Jimmy get dressed into a firefighter outfit.

Peter, "Here - this is what you need to wear to be a firefighter! Look in the mirror at how you look, Jim." Jimmy looked in the mirror with obvious pride, and then started putting a piece of clothing on over his shoes. Peter," You're putting that over your shoes, Jimmy - you're silly!" Both boys giggled and went over to a teacher to "show off" their firefighter outfits.

Several of the boys welcomed Jimmy into their dramatic play themes - typically in the block or adjacent dramatic play areas at choice time. On another occasion, four boys, including Jimmy, were playing in the "infant nursery" and were washing dolls in the water table.

Jimmy was very involved in the water table play - making lots of what could be described as "happy sounds" and saying "Babee, babee" often. The other boys found places to put their dolls down to bed, and Josh helped Jimmy find a bed for his doll. Jimmy, "Baby! B-b-b-...babee." Josh, "Here, Jimmy, here's a bed for your baby." Then Jimmy started to take another doll out of the dramatic play corner and Josh told a student teacher about this. After she explained to Josh that "There's one baby for everyone," Josh took Jimmy's hand and said, "It's OK, it's OK."

This sort of supportive, though somewhat protective, interaction was frequent between Josh and Jimmy, as well as between several of the other children and Jimmy. Another classroom interaction pattern involving Jim was the less positive tendency of some of the boys to "lead Jimmy on" or encourage him to make sounds, run around, or engage in other behaviors generally considered inappropriate in the classroom. The most frequent example of this involved other boys encouraging Jimmy to make motorcycle or car noises. They would sometimes make the sound or show him a toy car, then "tell on him" when he started making noises. This sort of play was not discouraged on the playground, and was most frequent outside.

Susan wore braces, which she explained to her peers both verbally and through a photo essay done by Susan and her mother of "How My Braces Are Made." Susan definitely progressed in terms of social integration in the group during the school year. During the fall semester, particularly during free choice activities, Susan was often observed play alone, or on the periphery of other children's play. She seldom initiated attempts to join in dramatic play or table activities with other children, and often spent time at the computer, art or skills tables.

This began to change, however, by late November. Part of this could be attributed to her growing "best friendship" with Elizabeth, was very vocal and a leader in the classroom. Susan also played, off and on, with other special needs children in her room. She got along very well with Steve, and frequently played with him at the computer or at the skills or art tables. Susan tended to play with Jimmy mostly on the floor - with the blocks or on the periphery of dramatic play.

By spring, Susan played more in dramatic play, climbed up to do the activities on top of the loft in the classroom, and asserted herself more with the boys (e.g., in the block area and outside). Steve also showed progress in socialization during the year. Steve was described as being "overly constricted in social interactions." He

would not have been picked out as being a "special needs child" to most visitors. He typically became very involved in whatever he was doing, and often spent his entire choice time in one or two areas at the most. Steve preferred art and small manipulatives to other activities, and interacted with the girls who "frequented" the art table. He rarely participated in dramatic play, but did build with blocks on several occasions with the boys.

Outdoors and in the gym were the only places that Steve's large motor delays were at all visible. Steve often stayed on the periphery of other children's running and chasing games, or stood near a teacher. When choice activities were available on a picnic table outside, this was where Steve could consistently be found. By later in the year, however, Steve observed playing more with other boys - particularly near the climbing structure and outside playhouse. He also appeared to be less dependent on table activities and on his teachers, and seemed increasingly interested in sharing in activities with other children.

Overall, there were very consistent and positive interactions between handicapped and non-handicapped peers at Center B. Some of the most striking observations of relationships were of Jimmy and several of the children in his room. This was particularly interesting since Jimmy had the most noticeable delays, and lacked language for much of the school year.

Potential contributors to the growth of the mainstreamed children included different factors for each child. For Jimmy, the increased instruction in and use of sign language by peers in the classroom, coupled with friendships with valued or "popular" children were seen as contributing to his improvements from fall to spring For Susan, the year-long growth from being "on the sidelines" to greatly increased and varied interactions with peers of both gender was attributed in part to her strong friendship with Elizabeth. Finally, Steve's steady, if not dramatic, progress

in confidence, large motor skills, and social interaction was noted throughout the year.

Discussion

Mainstreaming

One of the positive findings of the present study was the degree to which children at both centers accepted, and (particularly at Center B) valued their mainstreamed peers. Children at both centers appeared to have a basic understanding of their handicapped peers' strengths and limitations. This supports the contention that mainstreaming in early childhood programs can enhance both mainstreamed children's socialization and skill learning, and peers' acceptance and valuing of "differently-abled" friends.

Another factor which was seen as potentially contributing to the quality of cross-ability friendships between children was their opportunity to play together outside the school setting. This was particularly obvious at Center B, where two children - Jimmy and Susan - were both more accepted by their peers and more confident by the second semester. Susan's growing "best friendship" with Elizabeth was seen as fostered by their opportunities to get together over a weekend, or during the evening, and they were frequently observed making plans for future get-togethers. In terms of Jimmy's growing friendships, three children reported that one of their "favorite things to do with Jimmy" was to either go to his house or have him visit theirs.

Learning sign language, which both Jimmy and Marita were encouraged to do, became a "status symbol" at both centers. Most (11) of the children at Center B, for example, stated in interviews that they like to "learn sign language from Jimmy." As the year progressed, Jimmy became increasingly part of the regular play group of boys, particularly through the efforts of Josh. He also became close friends with Kathryn.

When children did have questions about their mainstreamed peers, the answers given during observations seemed to be consistently "matter-of-fact" and honest. For example, two children in Marita's group at Center A grappled with whether or not she was a "baby," and were told on several occasions that her rate of development was just different from theirs. Children were also given straight forward explanations for who certain peers could not talk, or where just learning to talk, as well as why a child with cerebral palsy might need leg braces. In this latter case, at Center B, it was the child involved who explained her own leg braces to the children in her room and even brought in a photo essay made by her mother entitled "How my braces are made."

Teachers - both preschool and special education/resource teachers - were seen as playing a key role in encouraging children's acceptance of and interactions with mainstreamed peers. Teachers were obviously committed to mainstreaming and "having it work" in their centers. Appropriate special needs support appeared to contribute to teachers' overall positive attitudes toward mainstreaming. Additionally, teachers modeled their enjoyment of their interactions with children with special needs, answered children's questions openly and honestly, and even encouraged children with disabilities to act as "teacher assistants" on several occasions. This valuing and appreciation of all children by teachers set an inclusive and accepting context, in which young children could learn similar attitudes.

Gender

In terms of gender-related findings, all the teachers observed used non-sexist language and also encouraged boys and girls to take on many roles in play. The gender-balanced staff at Center A provided for the frequent opportunity for stereotypes to be directly confronted and discussed by teacher (e.g., whether men could have long hair or be toddler teachers, or whether women could carry heavy

objects or repair things). The staff make-up also provided the opportunity for children to observe men in nurturing care-giving roles, and women in leadership roles.

At Center B, role models were predominately female. The regular and special education teachers, student teachers, interns and the director were Euro-American women. One Chicano male research assistant spent a limited amount of time in the classroom observed, and fathers were also fairly frequent classroom visitors. As discussed above, staff consistently role-modeled non-sexist language and encouraged children to try a variety of roles in dramatic play. Children often attempted to use non-sexist terms, often inventing words. Yet, gender segregation was evident in several aspects of the program. The most obvious gender segregation was observed during free play on the playground, in the gym, and in the classroom.

During indoor free play, the site of most gender segregated play was the block area, where super hero play was typical. When cross-gender interactions did occur in their area, they were typically initiated by one or two girls, attempting to enter in play with a group of boys. The opposite was rarely observed; the only boys seen joining in with girls' play in the block and large motor areas of the room were Josh and Jimmy.

More cross-gender cooperation was observed during creative arts, small manipulative, computer and more structured small group activities. These instances of cross-gender play were not limited to girls joining in activities of boys; in fact more cooperative play was observed during these activities. "Leadership" or initiation of particular activities and conversations was also seen as more evenly balanced between girls and boys during these activities, which was in contrast to the obvious leadership role many of the boys had in dramatic play, blocks and during large motor activities. Both gender segregation and some cross-gender cooperation

were observed in the dramatic play area, and appeared to be correlated with the theme of play and props available each week. For example, during "infant nursery," "art gallery," and "veterinary hospital" themes, there was fairly equal participation and cooperation between boys and girls. In "restaurant," "firefighters," and "underwater world" themes, however, more gender segregated play was observed. Two children who seemed to be successful at breaking the "gender barrier" at Center B in virtually any setting were Ruth and Kathryn, who did play with the boys, both inside and on the playground. Ruth used what could be described as an "assertive approach," and Kathryn, a "cooperative, brainstorming" approach.

In summary, teachers' consistent interventions to correct sex stereotypic language or assumptions was seen as having an impact on children's language, roles in play, and activity preferences to a degree. Consistent use of non-exist language, a gender-balunced staff at Center A, and encouragement of children taking on a variety of roles appeared to have a "cumulative effect" on the children throughout the year.

Implications for Practice

In considering the various types of peer interactions noted in this case study, the effect of the teachers in facilitating these interactions becomes obvious. The acceptance of handicapped peers, indeed valuing noted at Center B, did not occur due to opportunities for mainstreamed interactions alone. Although this paper has not presented the related findings on formal and informal curricula, it has conveyed some of the ways in which teachers systematically created a milieu in which individual differences were frequently stressed, non-sexist language was consistently used, and acceptance and enjoyment of all children was modeled by the teachers.

As noted earlier, the selection of weekly units or themes, related dramatic play set-ups, and valuing of the unique contributions which each child brought to the

day care center all appeared to have had a cumulative effect on the children's understanding and acceptance of their diverse peers. Cooperation was stressed, as was the viewpoint that there are often several ways to accomplish a task or express one's feelings and ideas. This was a particularly important value to be conveyed as teachers, and children themselves, answered children's questions regarding handicaps and other individual differences. The discussions of Susan's braces and how they were made, the discussion of how people develop different skills at different times, and how Marita needed a teacher to help her do most of the activities her peers were doing were typical of the open, honest approach taken by the teachers.

In other ways, the gender-related peer interaction stereotypes prevailed. This was particularly noted in free play situations on the playground, in large motor activities, and, to a lesser extent, in dramatic play and block building. Again, teachers often took an active role encouraging cross-gender cooperative play and selecting dramatic play props that would encourage non-stereotypic role-play. In terms of friendship patterns over the school year, it was interesting to note that more cross-gender friendships and female leadership among children were observed at the center which had a more gender-balanced staff.

Turning to the group make-up of the children in both centers, in terms of their degree of pluralism, it is also obvious that far more "teachable moments" about race, ethnicity and cultural issues were available at Center A (the more multicultural and multilingual of the two programs, which also had a racially-and gender-balanced staff). Thus, centers which are committed to teaching about human diversity and exposing children to authentic interactions with diverse peers are encouraged to look at both their enrollment and hiring practices. Providing a setting in which both men and women are seen as care providers, leaders, teachers, and playpartners seems more likely to counter stereotypes than merely using non-sexist language and providing activities which de-bunk gender stereotypes.

Terms of encouraging young children's acceptance of mainstreamed peers, while enhancing the self esteem of children with special needs, several implications can be drawn from the present study. First, the importance of providing for frequent and varied opportunities to interact with mainstreamed peers was evidenced by both centers. At Center A, the role of a one-to-one resource teacher was noted. Without this resource, some of the patterns of isolation and exclusion noted in earlier mainstreaming literature may have been present. At Center B, the two team teachers were sensitive to ways to include Jimmy (the most delayed child in his room), in group times, teaching sign language, and even getting together with friends outside of school. These teachers also encouraged Susan (who has cerebral palsy) to get increasingly involved with large motor activities, block building, and dramatic play. This was often done in very sensitive, subtle ways, which did not seem obvious to Susan's peers. This sensitive approach--including knowing when to help as well as when to remember the "dignity of risk"--seemed to be particularly present at Center B. At Center A, the values of cooperation, vs. competition, and an acceptance of children's diverse viewpoints or perspectives was noted.

Thus, the role of the early childhood teacher in empowering children who may be considered "different" in various ways was seen as having a critical effect in encouraging children's acceptance of peers, as well as enhancing self esteem. Additionally, the involvement of parents, use of non-stereotypic dramatic play options, and selection of themes and activities were also seen as contributing to a milieu of acceptance at both centers. Finally, the children themselves, particularly at Center A, were seen as providing countless informal learning experiences which were culturally authentic and led to an increased acceptance of linguistically and culturally diverse peers.

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