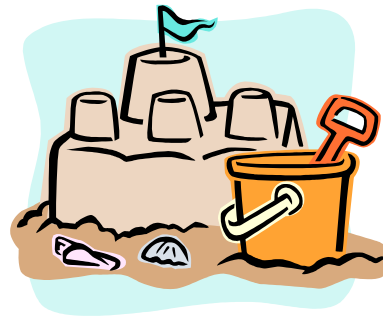


Playing at Home



The Talk of Pretend Play

By Jane R. Katz

Defining Social Pretend Play

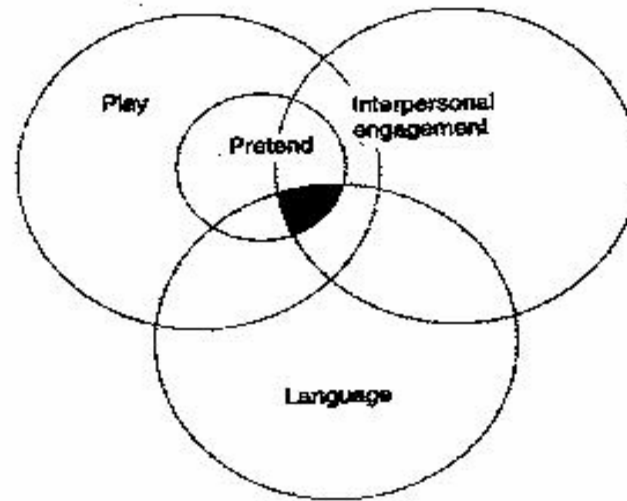


Figure 3.1. Language, interpersonal engagement, and play are distinct yet overlapping activities.

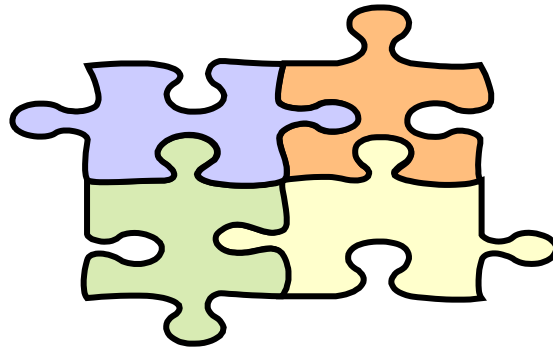
Characteristics of Social Pretend Play

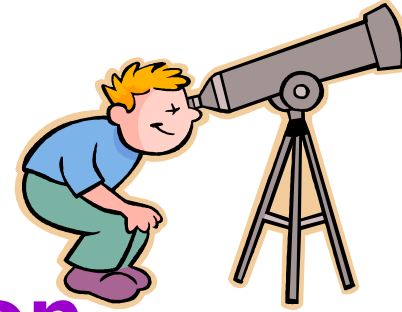
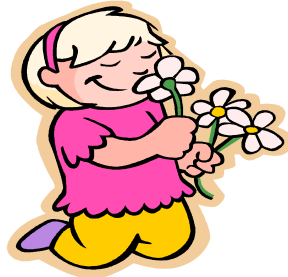


- In social pretend play, participants explicitly or implicitly make objects, people, places, or other aspects of the here and now represent something other than what they are. That is, they make symbolic transformations.
- In social pretend play, participants share this nonliteral approach and their transformations.
- In social pretend play, the motivation and the reward for engaging in the activity lie in the experience itself.

Theoretical Views on the Development of Social Pretend Play

- Swiss developmental psychologist, Jean Piaget
- Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky
- Communicative view of pretending
- Longitudinal research of Wendy Haight and Peggy Miller

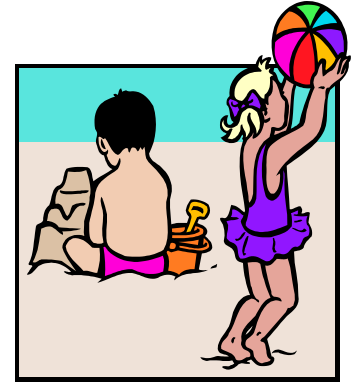




Analyzing the Play Session

- **4 Portrait Children out of 52 mother-child pairs**
 - Astra--very verbal; initiated the play; pretending was her favorite form of play
 - Todd--focused on building blocks, adding cars and dinosaurs; initiated more interaction with time
 - Casey--also played primarily with blocks and cars; responded to mother's questions and comments
 - Mariana--used a variety of toys; played actively; talked little

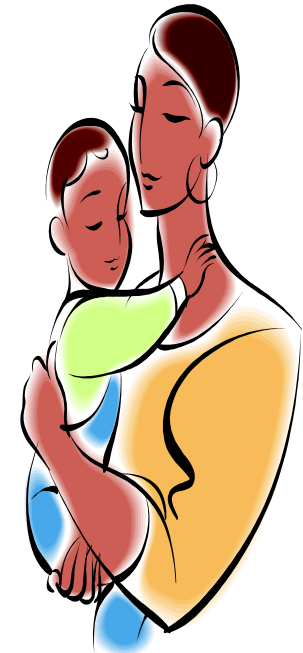
Types of Talk During Toy Play



- **Pretend talk**—talk with pretend elements and a non-literal approach to features in the immediate environment
- **Non-pretend talk**—talk that maintained a literal approach to actions and toys
- **Non-toy play talk**—talk about events or concerns that were unrelated to the immediate play setting

Relationships Between Mothers' and Children's Use of Pretend Talk

- On average, 40-50% of total play talk was pretend or non-pretend play talk (vs. non-play talk)
- Mother-child pairs were distinctive from average in amount of both kinds of talk that they used
- Less pretend talk when children were 3; more when children were 4; and less again when children were 5
- Higher percentage of pretend talk from mothers correlated positively and strongly with higher percentage used by children





From Pretend Talk to Early Literacy

- Children's and mothers' use of pretend talk when children were 3 had moderate positive relationship with definitional skill in Kindergarten
- Use of pretend talk at age 3 had weak positive association with high scores on Kindergarten Receptive Vocabulary Test
- Greater amounts of pretend talk at age 4 had a moderate positive association with higher scores on Emergent Literacy tasks
- Greater amounts of pretend talk at age 4 had a weak but significant positive relationship with children's ability in kindergarten to create a narrative
- **Conclusion:** Skill with the extended discourse of pretend talk in the preschool years is related to the language and literacy skills that are important for children in kindergarten.



Suggestions For Parents

- Different cultural beliefs regarding language, pretending and play
- Introduce pretend in both gestural and verbal play
- Engage toddlers in play and talk about play
- Introduce knowledge about the world into play scenarios with toddlers and preschoolers
- High-structure toys vs. low structure toys