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PARENTING STYLES AND SOCIODRAMATIC PLAY

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A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
Psychology

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by  
Lorrie Renea Moudy

June 1994

PARENTING STYLES AND SOCIODRAMATIC PLAY

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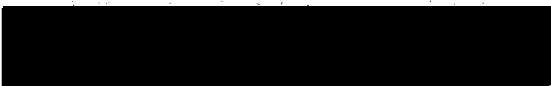
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by  
Lorrie Renea Moudy


June 1994

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## ABSTRACT

This exploratory study investigated the relationship of parenting styles to sociodramatic play in preschool-aged children. The sample included 31 three- to five-year-old girls ( $M = 4$  yrs. 1 mo.) and their mothers. Mothers completed a 91-item questionnaire on child-rearing values and practices. Children were observed for two 15-minute sessions during their preschool's regular indoor free-play periods to determine their level of sociodramatic play. Although it was hypothesized that parents who exhibited qualities of authoritative parenting (i.e., high warmth/responsiveness and high demandingness/control) would facilitate higher levels of sociodramatic play in children, the results indicated that maternal control only, and not authoritative parenting per se influenced children's level of sociodramatic play. These results suggest that by exerting firm control, a mother may be setting the framework by which a child is more self-confident, explores more, is friendly and cooperative, and self-assertive, all of which are characteristics that may facilitate sociodramatic play.



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## INTRODUCTION

Children's play behavior has become a serious issue in psychology because of the critical function it serves in a child's development. The play of children is common to all cultures and has been termed the "lifeblood of childhood" (Hendrick, 1992). Research to date on familial influences on play behavior have shown that attachment, parental behavior related to play (e.g., offering children support and opportunities to play), and parental attitudes regarding play (e.g., whether parents value the concept of play) govern to a great extent a child's play behavior and development. The influence of parenting styles per se on play behavior, however, has not been examined. The purpose of this study is to examine parenting styles in relation to children's play behavior.

### Overview of Children's Play

Definition of Play. Defining play is a difficult task. A universally-accepted definition eludes researchers. Educators and theorists have yet to formulate a definition which includes everything that play is and everything it is not.

Hutt (1966) makes a strong argument for differentiating between play and exploration. Exploration precedes play and is defined as the "attentive investigation of objects in novel situations" (Harris, Ford, & Clark, 1990, p. 84). She

concludes that when children explore strange objects, they initially ask themselves, "What does this object do?" It is only after the child has learned all that he or she can about the way the object works that it becomes incorporated into play rather than mere exploration. The question becomes "What can I do with this object?"

Groos (1898; 1901) postulated that play is the very "stuff of childhood", and that a period of immaturity (i.e., childhood) is necessary in order that organisms might play.

Piaget (1951) defines play as primarily assimilation; the pleasure involved is simply the emotional expression of that assimilation, in which the child responds to the "whims of the ego" instead of accommodating to the demands of the world.

Some propose that play is "the child's work." Part of the confusion emanates from the old distinction between work and play, with the view that, while work is good, play is somehow questionable, if not bad or sinful (Hartley & Goldenson, 1957; Piers & Landau, 1980; Spodek, 1974; Werth, 1984).

Pepler and Rubin (1982) define play as behavior that is intrinsically motivated, freely chosen, process-oriented, and pleasurable. Play, as defined by Garvey (1977), must meet four conditions: it must be pleasurable and enjoyable; it must be an end in itself, not a means to some goal; it must be spontaneous and voluntary; and it must involve some

active engagement on the part of the player.

Developmental psychologists and educators generally agree that play serves an important role in a child's development but find its definition hard to specify. Gilmore (1966) addresses this very issue, suggesting that play is an "abstract and global sort of behavior, one that eludes precision" (p. 312).

History of Play. Rousseau, a French philosopher, was perhaps the first thinker to argue the importance of play. His book, Emile (1759), inspired educators such as Froebel and Montessori because it was such a forward-looking text, describing the ideal education for a young man. Rousseau postulated that to a child of 10 or 12, work and play are the same, provided that both are carried out with the charm of freedom. He also argued that children ought to play as a right (Cohen, 1987; Morrison, 1991; Smith, 1979).

The early Victorians of the 1800s saw it differently, however. As Victorian industry (i.e., factories and mines) developed, children became a source of cheap labor. Children were very useful in the mines; they could burrow where no one else could. They were exploited and often the victims of both tyrannical employers and deplorable parents (Cohen, 1987).

However, by the mid 1800s there was enough concern for children to secure the passage of several laws collectively referred to as the Enlightened laws. The first of these

appeared in 1833 and was referred to as a Factory Act, and it limited the amount of time per day that children could work in factories. In 1842, a Mines Act was passed which forbade the employment of children who were less than 10 years of age to work underground. Five years later in 1847, The Hours Bill restricted children in textile factories to working no more than 10 hours a day. An act of 1864 was also passed to stop children from being used as chimney sweeps (Cohen, 1987).

Despite the passage of these laws, many children were still oppressed. It was not until the late Victorian period (1865 on) that play began to be of scientific interest. This interest reflected a growing concern for the welfare of children, and as the Victorian industry flourished it became necessary to create a division between work and leisure. Although the Enlightened laws gave children a kind of freedom which they had never had before, play was viewed as having to have some purpose to be worthwhile. In other words, play had to have some practical uses and if people had free time, it was believed that they ideally should use it to improve themselves (Cohen, 1987).

Two of Rousseau's most important followers were Frederick Froebel and Dr. Maria Montessori. They, in different ways, showed how unfree play still remained. In both instances, educational programs were created which had more structured activities without free-play (Cohen, 1987).



Froebel was the first to set up a "kindergarten" (i.e., a "garden of children"), where children could "blossom as flowers did" (Cohen, 1987; Morrison, 1991; Smith, 1979). Children, it was felt, should be encouraged by interested adults rather than have facts forced on them-- and, more importantly, they should be allowed to play. Froebel was fighting to allow children far more freedom than was usual, but saw play as having educational uses and, therefore, children were not that free in his kindergarten. For example, children were given bricks to play with in a symbolic fashion, however, they were instructed as to what to imagine the bricks could be. The children were required to see that which the teacher suggested. Because the German authorities accused Froebel of running seminaries, and were convinced he was an atheist and a socialist, this gentle, activity-oriented system of education was perceived as a political threat and Froebel was forced to close all of his schools in Germany thirteen years after opening his first kindergarten. However, the schools continued to spread throughout Europe (Cohen, 1987; Morrison, 1991).

Montessori had a strong faith in children and turned the teacher into an observer who guided children to freely choose specified activities for themselves. However, it would be wrong to believe that she valued play as a creative force in itself. Montessori argued that toys and puzzles should be used to train children to succeed at certain

skills. She devoted much of her time developing strategies to get children to read and write better and to master mathematics more effectively. To the extent that Montessori was interested in play, she wanted to apply it to educational goals (Cohen, 1987; Morrison, 1991).

Montessori wanted to capture some of the benefits of play to make children more proficient socially and cognitively. She was particularly eager for children to be taught morals; playing together, under the instruction of the teacher, was thought to be a means to that useful end (Cohen, 1987; Morrison, 1991).

Both Montessori's and Froebel's views reflect the contradictory attitudes of Victorians toward play. On the one hand, it was thought that children ought to be loved and cared for in a civilized society; on the other hand, it was felt that any free time was a concession and ought to be used to improve oneself (Cohen, 1987). Such attitudes marked early writings on play.

Theories of play. A great deal of attention has been paid to play behavior. Over the years, researchers have been concerned with why humans spend long periods of time at play. Early theories of play fall into four categories: (1) the surplus energy theory of play, (2) the recreation and relaxation theory, (3) the practice theory, and (4) the recapitulation theory of play (Gilmore, 1966; Johnson, Christie, & Yawkey, 1987; Piaget, 1951; Rubin, 1982; Rubin,

Fein & Vandenberg, 1983).

Friedrich von Schiller, an eighteenth-century philosopher and poet, gives the most explicit treatment to the surplus energy theory of play. In his writings, Schiller (1954) defined play as "the aimless expenditure of exuberant energy." Schiller's main hypothesis was that animals and humans are driven to work by their primary, appetitive needs. However, play was seen as the outcome of the excess energy that remained after the primary needs were met. Young children, because they are not responsible for their own survival, were thought to have a total energy "surplus." This surplus of energy was thought to be worked off through play.

The recreation theory of play is attributed to Moritz Lazarus, a nineteenth-century German philosopher. He suggested that hard work leaves humans physically and mentally exhausted. Such exhaustion requires a certain amount of rest; however, full recuperation was only thought possible when a person engaged in activities that allowed a release from the reality-based constraints of work. Thus, Lazarus suggested that recreational activities or play could serve a restorative function (Rubin et al., 1983).

G. T. W. Patrick (1916), an early twentieth-century philosopher, argued that play stemmed from a need for relaxation. Patrick proposed that contemporary occupations required eye-hand coordination, abstract reasoning, and

concentrated attention, all of which were presumed to be recent evolutionary acquisitions. Since this work tapped recently acquired skills, it was considered more taxing than physical labor. He suggested that relief from the fatigue caused by mentally straining work could be gained through play.

The practice or pre-exercise theory of play was articulated by Karl Groos (1898, 1901). He believed that play had to serve an adaptive purpose for it to have continued its existence over the years in various species. Groos also postulated that the length of the play period varied in direct accord with the organism's place in the phylogenetic domain. The more complex the organism, the longer its period of immaturity. These increasingly longer periods of immaturity were considered necessary for sustenance during adulthood. Thus, Groos proposed that play existed to allow the practice of adult activities.

Prior to the turn of the century, philosophers and psychologists discovered that as the human embryo develops, it appears to go through some of the same stages that occurred in the evolution of humans. This discovery led to the theory that ontogeny (i.e., the development of the individual) recapitulates or reenacts phylogeny (i.e., the development of the species) (Johnson et al., 1987). G. Stanley Hall (1920) extended recapitulation theory to children's play. Hall noted that with embryonic growth the



human appeared to pass through increasingly complex stages from protozoan to human. He also noted that during childhood the history of the human race was recaptured; through play, the motor habits and the spirits of the past could be progressively reenacted.

Cultural epochs in the history of humankind were theorized to be sequentially recapitulated as follows: "...the animal stage (as reflected in children's climbing and swinging); the savage stage (hunting, tag, hide-and-seek); the nomad stage (keeping pets); the agricultural/patriarchal stage (dolls, digging in sand); and the tribal stage (team games)" (Rubin et al., 1983, p. 697).

Criticisms of these theories of play exist, however, and despite their weaknesses each has had a major impact on the psychology of play. Modern views concerning the functions and types of children's play can be traced to these classical theories. The most notable theorists to put forward their elaborations of the theory of play are Piaget, Vygotsky, Freud, and Erikson.

Piaget's (1951) theory of play is the most exhaustive to date. He suggests that intellectual adaptations result from an equilibrium between the process of assimilation and accommodation. However, play begins with the first dissociation between assimilation and accommodation where assimilation dominates over accommodation. Piaget postulates that after learning to grasp, swing, or throw,

which involve both an effort of accommodation to new situations, and an effort of repetition, reproduction, and generalization (which are the elements of assimilation), children sooner or later grasp for the pleasure of grasping, swing for the pleasure of swinging, and throw for the pleasure of throwing. Children repeat such behaviors for the mere joy of mastery and not in any further effort to investigate or to learn.

Vygotsky (1976) believed that play had a direct role in the cognitive development of children. According to his theory, young children are incapable of abstract thought because, for them, thought (the meaning of a word) and objects are fused together as one. As a result, young children cannot think, for example, about a horse without seeing a real horse. Play is a transitional stage in that when children begin to engage in make-believe play and symbolic play, thought begins to become separated from the objects themselves. Children soon become able to think about meanings independently of the objects they represent. Symbolic play is therefore thought to have a critical role in the development of abstract thought.

Although Freud never articulated a systematic theory of play, he did contribute in a significant way to the psychology of play. He proposed that play provided children with a means for the mastery of traumatic events and wish fulfillment. Freud's early writings describing the

properties of the id and the pleasure principle focused primarily on the wish fulfillment aspects of play. According to Freud (1959), "The opposite of play is not what is serious, but what is real" (p. 144). Play allows the child to escape the pressures of reality, thereby providing a safe context for releasing unacceptable behaviors too harmful to express in reality.

Freud addressed the mastery aspects of play in his discussion of the repetition compulsion (i.e., a psychic mechanism that allows individuals to cope with a traumatic event). Children are more susceptible to trauma since the ego structure and psychic defenses are not sufficiently constructed to spur the destabilizing effects of anxiety-producing events. Thus, in play "Children repeat everything that has made a great impression on them in real life, and that in so doing, they abreact the strength of the impressions and...make themselves masters of the situation" (Freud, 1961, p. 11), allowing children to become the active masters of situations in which they were once passive victims.

Erikson (1950) is well known for his contributions to the theory of play. While agreeing with Freud regarding the major elements of play, Erikson emphasized the coping effects of play. He proposed the theory that "the child's play is the infantile form of the human ability to deal with experience by creating model situations and to master

reality by experiment and planning" (p. 222). Erikson contends that play is indispensable in overhauling shattered emotions and "...to 'play it out' is the most natural self-healing measure childhood affords" (p. 222).

Types, functions, and developmental stages of play. In spite of theoretical differences and definitional disputes, children continue to play and do so in many different ways.

Social play (i.e., playing with others) progresses through stages through which a child moves naturally, graduating from one stage to the next in keeping with his/her biological development (Smilansky, 1968). It is functional, in that children explore the environment and experiment with their own physical capabilities; it is constructive, which means that children use materials to make a product; and finally, it becomes dramatic as children symbolically combine reality with fantasy. In its highest, most sophisticated form, (i.e., sociodramatic play), children interact and practice with others (Hendrick, 1992; Piaget, 1951; Smilansky, 1968).

Sociodramatic play refers to make-believe role play with other children. It can be labeled as fantasy, make-believe, pretend, or imitative of real life events (Werth, 1984). Sociodramatic play behavior is thought to contribute to the development of three domains of child development: creativity (i.e., the utilization of past experience and



controlled by the demands of some framework); intellectual growth (i.e., the power of abstraction, the widening of concepts, and the acquisition of new knowledge); and social skills (i.e., positive give-and-take, tolerance, and consideration) (Smilansky, 1968).

Peller (1952) contends that there is no imitation in dramatic play without an emotional motivation. Children are highly selective in the behaviors they imitate. Their choice of a role follows certain standards. Children pretend to be someone whom they admire and love and whom they would like to take after. Children play at being mother, father, or teacher; they pretend to be a king, queen, or a fairy. However, adoration alone is seldom the basis for a child's choice; as a rule, there is a combination of frustration, deprivation, or fear.

Hartley, Frank and Goldenson (1952) devote two chapters of their book, Understanding Children's Play, to dramatic play. They stress the value of dramatic play as an individual expression of the child's inner needs, strivings, and concepts. They also note that in addition to its general utility in relieving tensions and externalizing inner experiences, it helps the child to set boundaries between reality and fantasy.

Dramatic play serves many important functions. It gives children the opportunity (1) to imitate adults; (2) to play out real life roles in an intense way; (3) to reflect

relationships and experiences; (4) to express pressing needs; (5) to release unacceptable impulses; (6) to reverse roles usually taken; (7) to mirror growth; and (8) to work out problems and experiment with solutions (Hartley et al., 1952). These may be defined as follows:

Simple Imitation of Adults: Imitation episodes are adopted so that children can play out what they have seen in order to understand it or at least to feel they are part of it.

Intensification of Real Life Role: These roles are often adopted because they offer such satisfaction that the child does not wish to experiment with other roles.

Reflection of Home Relationships and Life Experiences: These events could be grouped with the simple imitation of adults except for the intense emotion involved and the insight these events lend to the child's relationships with significant others.

Expression of Pressing Needs: In dramatic play, children, for example, may seek the warmth and affection they fail to find at home or for those children who are being insistently urged toward mature behavior, may adopt infantile roles.

Outlet for Forbidden Impulses: Children frequently struggle against their own impulses. These impulses cannot be released completely even in play, but their existence is more clearly indicated in dramatic make-believe than in any

real life behavior. Sometimes aggressive impulses cannot be expressed towards real people even in make-believe. Then the important role of the object of aggression is assigned to some inanimate object such as a teddy bear or a doll.

Reversal of Roles Usually Played in Real Life: Through dramatic play children attempt to expand the self and break through the rigid and confining limits which circumstances have imposed on them. For example, a very destructive child sometimes performs the role of a good and solicitous mother; a normally self-reliant child likes to play "baby", and a timid, submissive child acts the dominant parent with great enthusiasm.

Reflection and Encouragement of Growth: Dramatic play is an important indicator to social growth. It reflects and encourages changes in attitude and adjustment. These changes come with the help of teachers and parents who give the kind of experience the child needs.

Working out Problems Through Dramatic Play: Dramatic play enables children to identify their difficulties and actually try to solve them- as opposed to play which is simply a reflection of changes taking place within them.

Four general characteristics of a child and his/her world are most strikingly and consistently revealed through his/her dramatic play: (1) the characteristic "flavor" of the world from the child's point of view; (2) the child's own compelling needs (without necessary reference to the

basis of these needs); (3) the child's conceptions of the self; and (4) the problems and preoccupations with which the child is concerned (Hartley et al., 1952).

Also included in dramatic play is symbolic play which is the capacity to use an object, gesture, or a sound to represent an absent object or person (Slade, 1987). This ability to transform objects or situations through the use of imagination into meanings that are different from the original object or situation forms the foundation for intellectual development and communication (Nourot & Van Hoorn, 1991).

Children's play progresses through a series of stages. One of the most commonly used systems for identifying these stages is that developed by Parten (1932). According to this system of classification, play develops from solitary through parallel play to associative play and ultimately to cooperative play.

Solitary play is characterized by a child playing alone and independently with toys that are different from those used by other children within speaking distance and making no effort to get close to other children. In parallel play, a child plays independently, but the activity chosen naturally brings him/her among other children. The child plays with toys that are like those which other nearby children are using, but plays with the toy as seen fit, and does not try to influence or modify the activity of the

other children. The child plays beside rather than with the other children. Associative play is group play in which there is an overt recognition by the group members of their common activity, interests, and personal associations. All the children engage in similar if not identical activity. There is no division of labor and no organization of the activity of several individuals around any material goal or product. Cooperative play is the most highly organized group activity in which the elements of division of labor, group censorship, centralization of control in the hands of one or two children, and the subordination of individual desire to that of the group appears. The child plays in a group that is organized for the purpose of making some material product, or of striving to attain some competitive goal, or of dramatizing situations of adult and group life, or of playing formal games (Parten, 1932).

Piaget (1951) has defined three stages in a child's development of play. The first is the sensorimotor stage of infancy. In this stage, babies often repeat movements because of the stimulation provided by the action. Piaget terms this practice play. The second is a level of symbolic play, the stage of dramatic play in which nursery-kindergarten children are found. At the end of the second stage children leave infancy behind and move into the preoperational period. As concrete-operational thought emerges, symbolic play declines. The third stage is the



stage of playing games with rules which represents the play behavior of older children and where concrete-operational thought dominates.

### Developmental Benefits of Children's Play

Play fulfills a wide variety of developmental benefits in a child's life. Benefits of play range from the child's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development.

Play fosters physical development. A child's earliest kind of play is purely physical. An infant repeatedly moves solely for the pleasure it brings. This same pleasure of repeated movement also dominates the physical exuberance of young children and it will continue into adulthood. The child who swings or who rolls down a hill becomes the adult who skis, dances, or gets involved in gymnastics. With maturation, practice, and the imposition of rules, physical play also becomes hopscotch or soccer among schoolchildren and rock climbing or tennis among adults (Schell & Hall, 1984).

Play fosters intellectual development. When researchers study the development of intelligence, it is most often within the context of cognition. Thus it is difficult to separate the concept of cognition from intelligence because cognition is considered the basic unit of intelligence (Harris et al., 1990).

The links between a child's cognitive level and play are extremely strong. As children's thought develops, their

play changes and different stages of play predominate, from the thoughtless repetitions of motor movements seen in an infant to the intricate, challenging games of the older child and adolescent. The cognitive connection can be even closer. The freedom to play can produce efficiency in problem solving. Also, as children develop, their play with language shows an increasing appreciation of ambiguity and subtlety (Schell & Hall, 1984).

The extensive relationship between play and cognition is well outlined by Swedlow (1986). If a child is to develop competencies in reading, writing, and mathematics, it is necessary to develop visual memory, auditory memory, language acquisition, classification, hand-eye coordination, body image, and spatial orientation. In order to develop these skills, a child needs experiences with configurations, figure-ground relationships, shapes, patterns, spatial relationships, matching, whole-part relationships, arranging objects in sequence, organizing objects in ascending and descending order, classification, verbal communication, measurement, and solving problems. These concepts and abilities can be acquired as a child has time and space to initiate activities with such open-ended materials as blocks, cubes, pegs, paints, dough, clay, water, sand, and wood. Thus, the basic concepts and skills for reading, writing, and mathematics are learned as a child plays.

One of the critical benefits of a child's play is its

contribution to the child's thinking ability. Children have been shown to acquire knowledge most easily through play across a variety of contexts. Play has been linked to two modes of cognitive thought: convergent and divergent problem solving (Barnett, 1990). Convergent problems have one and only one solution as in puzzle solving. Divergent problems have no single correct solution, but a variety of possible solutions (Pepler & Ross, 1981).

The predominant method of assessing children's problem solving skills has been the lure-retrieval paradigm where children get an out-of-reach object by clamping together two or more sticks to form a stick long enough to pull the object towards them (Harris et al., 1990). This method of assessment was first used on chimpanzees. Those chimpanzees which were allowed to play freely with the sticks before testing, were more successful using the sticks to solve problems.

Sylva, Bruner, and Genova (1976) were the first to replicate the original lure-retrieval studies using children. The children were exposed to one of three treatments: (1) free play with sticks and clamps; (2) the observation of an adult successfully completing the task; or (3) no intervention. They found that children in the play group required fewer hints, had more goal-directed responses, and were categorized as "learners" more frequently. Also, the play and observation groups were more



successful than the control group in reaching the object. The researchers suggest that a child's thought processes, both convergent and divergent, are very much influenced by playful activities and interactions.

Research generally supports the contention that play may have a significant impact on problem-solving ability, although the way in which it makes this contribution is unclear. The literature suggests that it is more likely that play provides the child with a flexible approach to the environment, and contributes to the development of a generalized mode of cognitive approach which the child utilizes in the problem situation (Barnett, 1990).

Play and learning serve joint functions in a child's life: first, both involve a communicative function of sharing objects with others; and second, children use both play and language to experiment and thereby learn about symbolic transformations and various self-other relationships. Since play precedes the advent of language, play itself is in one sense a form of language because it incorporates symbolic representation. Play is regarded as instrumental in developing both the production and comprehension aspects of language (Barnett, 1990).

Several studies have found support for the relationship between play and language comprehension. Fein (1975) reported findings demonstrating that it is symbolic play which is closely related to language production and

comprehension, and Smilansky (1968) and Garvey (1979) found that sociodramatic play offers children valuable language practice and skills. Pellegrini (1986) also found that language is stimulated when children engage in dramatic play.

Play enhances social development. Important social gains are made through a child's play. From infancy, play with peers reflects children's growing conception of themselves and others. Through social play, children learn that others may perceive things differently than they do, or that others may prefer to carry out activities in another fashion. Children learn how to resolve problems, share, cooperate, hold a conversation, and make and keep friends; all in the course of playing with others (Schell & Hall, 1984). They also learn how to enter a group and be accepted by it, how to balance power and bargain with others so that everyone gets enjoyment from the play, and how to work out the social give and take that is the key to successful group interaction (Hendrick, 1992).

Connelly and Doyle (1984) conducted research which illustrates the relationship between social pretend play and social competence. They found that fantasy play measures could significantly predict social competence outcome measures; children who engaged in greater amounts of social fantasy play or more complex play were more socially skilled.

Stronger support for the relationship between play and social development can be found in Smilansky's (1968) work which demonstrates how to train children's social skills through dramatic play. Smilansky found that sociodramatic play training led to greater verbal communication skills, more positive affective behavior, and less aggression.

Play contains rich emotional values. Play has been utilized by psychologists as a medium for the expression and relief of feelings in young children. When a child shows signs of emotional distress (i.e., having frequent nightmares, engaging in highly aggressive behavior, or engaging in severely withdrawn behavior), play therapy is often a therapist's main resource for uncovering the origin of the child's problems and helping the child to overcome them (Piers & Landau, 1980).

By observing the characteristics of the child's play, its themes, patterns, inhibitions, and repetitions, the therapist gains meaningful insight into the child. Through the therapists guidance and sharing of the child's play, problems can be mastered and anxieties relieved (Piers & Landau, 1980).

#### Influence of Attachment, Parental Behaviors and Attitudes, and Parenting Styles on Children's Play Behavior

Researchers have suggested that the play of children is influenced by their attachment relationships and by parental attitude and behavior towards play. Several studies support

this view.

Attachment theory. Attachment refers to the quality of the security of the bond that is formed between an infant and his/her primary caregiver (Bowlby, 1969, 1973). The attachment bond can be classified as either secure or anxious. An infant who has experienced his/her caregiver as consistently accessible and as responsive to his/her communications and signals may be identified as securely attached. On the other hand, an infant who has experienced a caregiver who is not easily accessible, is unprotective, and is unresponsive may be identified as anxiously attached (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978).

Attachment theory emanated from the writings of Bowlby (1969, 1973), who was interested in a young child's responses to separation from its mother figure. He proposed that the biological function of the attachment system is protection. This is best served when a young child is in close proximity to his/her primary caregiver, namely the mother figure.

A long period of immaturity characteristic of humans implies a long period of vulnerability during which a child must be protected (Ainsworth et. al., 1978). Bowlby argues that children must be equipped with a stable behavioral system that operates to promote sufficient proximity to the mother figure so that parental protection is facilitated. This system, which is attachment behavior, supplements a

complementary behavioral system in the adult, i.e., maternal behavior, that has the same function.

Some behavioral components of the attachment system are signaling behaviors. An infant signals its mother figure by crying, smiling, or calling so to attract the mother figure to approach the child or to remain in proximity once closeness has been achieved. Once a child learns to crawl and walk, the child is able to seek proximity to his/her attachment figure(s) on his/her own account (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

It is under very unusual circumstances that a child encounters conditions such that his/her attachment behavior does not result in the formation of an attachment. Most family-reared children do become attached, even to unresponsive mother figures (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

Ainsworth and her colleagues (1978) have developed a highly reliable method for assessing attachment. This method is termed "strange-situation", where individual differences in the quality of attachment are explicitly defined in terms of attachment/exploration balance, use of the caregiver as a base for exploration, and ability to derive comfort from the caregiver's presence, interaction, or contact. Children are classified into one of two groups: securely attached or anxiously attached. Anxiously attached children are often termed as either avoidant (i.e., where the child actively avoids proximity and interaction with

his/her mother figure) or ambivalent (i.e., where the child persistently manifests intense anger and/or resistant behavior towards the mother figure while also strongly seeking and maintaining contact).

Matas, Arend, and Sroufe (1978) found that securely attached infants at age two engaged in more imaginative, symbolic play than either avoidant or ambivalent infants. These results were found to be unrelated to developmental quotient or temperament.

In a similar study, Slade's (1987) results indicated that secure children had longer episodes of symbolic play overall and that at 26 and 28 months of age they spent more time in the highest level of symbolic play than their anxious peers. Slade also found that secure children do better in social play than do their anxious peers.

Attachment theory predicts that children's interest in exploring their environment, as well as their competence in such explorations, will be directly related to their sense that their needs for nurturance and comfort will be met by the mother figure (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969). The above mentioned studies imply that securely attached children may have more authoritative parents (i.e., parents who offer their children a stimulating, loving, and supportive environment), however, this connection has yet to be documented.

Parenting behaviors and attitudes. van der Kooij and



Slaats-van den Hurk (1991) examined the relationship between play and parents' child-rearing orientation (i.e., the way they feel involved in educational processes, the degree to which they experience child-rearing as a burden, the degree of adaptation they expect their children to perform, and the degree in which they tend to be restrictive). Results suggested that children's play seems to be a product of the educational and cultural orientation of parents. Those parents who seemed to be more strict, to have a narrow image of play, and to have a more rational approach appeared to restrict their child's play behavior.

van der Poel, de Bruyn, and Rost (1991) examined parental behaviors and attitudes toward play. The amount and quality of the children's playfulness was assessed by observing children with a novel play object. Results showed that parents of more playful children believe that children should be offered full support and opportunities to play, but in practice they also set limits to these opportunities and to their own engagement in their child's play.

van der Poel et al.'s study was based upon a study reported by Bishop and Chace (1971), who found that the childrearing style of parents (i.e., categorized as either "conceptually abstract" or "concrete") was related to their behaviors and attitudes toward children's play. They also found a relationship between parental child-rearing style and children's creativity. Conceptually abstract mothers

were more likely than concrete mothers to enhance the playfulness of the home play environment, and the children of more abstract mothers showed evidence of greater creativity. Bishop and Chace explained these results by suggesting that parental behaviors and attitudes reflecting openmindedness, unorthodoxy, low-authoritarianism, and respect for the child's autonomy (i.e., characteristics of authoritative parenting) would enhance the child's playfulness.

These studies reflect the important relationship between parent and child and how this relationship may enhance or hinder a child's playfulness. They also suggest that positive parental behaviors and attitudes regarding children's play may be compared to authoritative parental authority, however, this association has yet to be documented.

Parenting styles. Three patterns of parental authority have emerged from research conducted by Baumrind (1971, 1975, 1978, 1989): authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. Permissive parenting comes in two forms: permissive indulgent and permissive indifferent. These general patterns are based on the relative balance of two factors: parental warmth/responsiveness and parental demandingness/control.

Warmth/responsiveness refers to the degree to which the parent responds to the child's needs in an accepting,



supportive manner. Demandingness/control, on the other hand, refers to the extent to which the parent expects and demands mature, responsible behavior from the child. A parent who is very warm/responsive but not at all demanding/controlling is labeled permissive indulgent; whereas one who is neither demanding/controlling or warm/responsive is labeled permissive indifferent. A parent who is very demanding/controlling but not warm/responsive is labeled authoritarian; whereas one who is very warm/responsive and equally demanding/controlling is labeled authoritative (Steinberg, 1989).

Permissive indulgent parents function in an accepting, benign, and passive way in matters of discipline. They place few demands on the child's behavior. These parents often believe that control is an infringement on the child's freedom that may interfere with the child's healthy development. Indulgent parents are more likely to view themselves as resources which the child may or may not use instead of actively participating in their child's development (Steinberg, 1989).

Permissive indifferent parents do whatever is essential to lessen the time and energy that they must devote to interacting with their child. These parents know little about their child's activities and interests, show slight interest in their child's friends or school experiences, rarely communicate with their child, and rarely consider

their child's opinion when making family decisions. Indifferent parents are "parent-centered" where they structure their home life predominately around their own interests and needs (Steinberg, 1989).

Authoritarian parents attempt to control the attitudes and behaviors of the child in accordance with a set standard of conduct. These parents place a high value on obedience and conformity. They tend to favor more forceful disciplinary measures. Verbal give-and-take is uncommon in authoritarian households and parents tend not to encourage independent behavior and, instead, often restrict the child's autonomy (Baumrind, 1971, 1975, 1978, 1989).

Authoritative parents are warm and responsive but also exert firm control. They set standards for the child's conduct, but form expectations that are consistent with the child's developing abilities. These parents place a high value on communication and discuss with their children the reasoning behind their rules. They encourage the development of autonomy, but assume full responsibility for their child's behavior. Authoritative parents are responsive in the sense of being loving, supportive, committed, and in providing a stimulating and challenging environment (Baumrind, 1971, 1975, 1978, 1989).

Baumrind's (1971, 1975, 1978, 1989) work has focused on how parenting styles influence a child's self-esteem and social competence. She reports a strong relationship

between authoritative parenting and a child's healthy development. However, the relationship between parenting styles and children's play behavior has not been explored.

Based on the characteristic similarities between Ainsworth et al.'s (1978) and Bowlby's (1969, 1973) secure attachment classification (i.e., where the parent is consistently accessible and responsive to the child's needs) and Baumrind's (1971, 1975, 1978, 1989) authoritative parenting style classification (i.e., where the parent is warm, supportive, and responsive to the child's needs), we might speculate that since securely attached children have been found to engage in more imaginative, symbolic play than avoidant and ambivalent children (Matas et al., 1978) and to engage in longer periods and higher levels of symbolic play than their anxious peers (Slade, 1987), that children of authoritative parents would show the same characteristics of longer periods and higher levels of play than children of authoritarian, permissive indulgent, or permissive indifferent parents.

#### Purpose of Study and Hypothesis

To date, secure attachments and parental attitudes and behaviors towards children's play have been associated with the play of children. However, parenting styles have not directly been researched in terms of children's play behavior. Since the play of children has been shown to facilitate many aspects of a child's development (i.e.,

physical, intellectual, social, and emotional), it is important to better understand what facilitates play.

In general, the purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between parenting styles and children's play behavior. Specifically, Baumrind's authoritative parenting style and its relation to children's sociodramatic play behavior will be examined.

Sociodramatic play refers to a form of voluntary social play activity in which preschool children participate. It is the highest, most sophisticated form of social play for children three to seven years of age (Smilansky, 1968). Sociodramatic play was chosen as the dependent variable because it is thought to contribute to three domains of child development (i.e., creativity, intellectual growth, and social skills) (Smilansky, 1968) and offers children valuable language practice and skills (Garvey, 1979; Smilansky, 1968). It was also chosen because Smilansky (1968) has conducted extensive research examining sociodramatic play and has operationalized it, making it the best assessment to date of children's play behavior. The quality of sociodramatic play is assessed by determining the presence or absence of six basic factors: (1) Imitative role play; (2) Make-believe in regard to objects; (3) Make-believe in regard to actions and situations; (4) Persistence; (5) Interaction; and (6) Verbal communication. The first four factors apply to dramatic play in general,

the last two to sociodramatic play only.

It is therefore hypothesized that children whose parents exhibit qualities of authoritative parenting (i.e., high warmth/responsiveness and high demandingness/control) will show higher levels of sociodramatic play compared to children whose parents exhibit authoritarian, permissive indulgent, or permissive indifferent parental authority.



## METHOD

### Subjects

Thirty-one preschool girls between the ages of three and five years old (mean age: 4 years, 1 month) participated in this study. The subjects were selected from a preschool program in a suburban community in Southern California. The program was selected because it was relatively unstructured and encouraged children to engage in free-play. Female children only were used for the present study to limit the potential confound of gender (e.g., Smilansky, 1968).

Table 1 shows background information on subjects. Subjects were primarily caucasian with the majority of their fathers and mothers having some college education. Eighty-seven percent of the mothers were currently married.

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Table 1

### Demographic Information on Children, Fathers and Mothers (N = 31)

#### Age

Child	Range: 3 yrs. 1 mo. to 4 yrs. 11 mos. ( $\bar{M}$ = 4 yrs. 1 mo.)
Father	Range: 25.0 yrs. to 42.0 yrs. ( $\bar{M}$ = 32.1 yrs.)
Mother	Range: 21.0 yrs. to 39.0 yrs. ( $\bar{M}$ = 30.2 yrs.)

#### Education

Father	0% Did not complete high school
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	30.0%	Completed high school
	46.7%	Some college
	13.3%	Bachelors degree
	10.0%	Graduate degree
Mother	6.5%	Did not complete high school
	16.1%	Completed high school
	54.8%	Some college
	22.6%	Bachelors degree
	0%	Graduate degree

#### Child's Ethnicity

	21.4%	Hispanic
	64.3%	Caucasian
	0%	Asian
	0%	Native American
	14.3%	African American
	0%	Other

#### Mother's Marital Status

	3.2%	Single
	87.1%	Married
	0%	Living with significant other
	9.7%	Divorced
	0%	Widowed

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#### Measures

Sociodramatic play. Smilansky (1968) designed an instrument to conveniently observe and evaluate the level of children's sociodramatic play. The Sociodramatic Play Inventory (SPI) assesses the quality of sociodramatic play by determining the presence or absence of six basic factors in children's play behavior. The SPI recording sheet is a checklist with the children's names listed in rows and the six factors listed in columns (See Appendix A). The factors are as follows:

Imitative role play. The child undertakes a make-

believe role and expresses it in imitative action and/or verbalization.

Make-believe in regard to objects. Movements or verbal declarations are substituted for real objects.

Make-believe in regard to actions and situations. Verbal descriptions are substituted for actions and situations.

Persistence. The child persists in a dramatic play episode for at least five minutes.

Interaction. There are at least two players interacting in the framework of the play episode.

Verbal communication. There is some verbal interaction related to the play episode.

The first four factors apply to dramatic play in general, and the last two factors apply to only sociodramatic play.

The researcher observed each child and recorded her play behavior using the SPI recording sheet during the two 15-minute sessions during the preschool's regular indoor free-play periods.

During each 15-minute observation period, the researcher, in 5-minute intervals, placed a check in the appropriate column of the SPI recording sheet for each factor observed in the child's play during that time segment. The researcher designed a separate recording sheet for Factor 4, Persistence, to obtain a more accurate account

of the time spent in a dramatic play episode (See Appendix B).

At the conclusion of the observation period, the researcher also rated each child's overall play behavior on a seven-point Likert-type scale depending on their level of play (See Appendix C). These categories were as follows: (0) Not Playing (no kind of dramatic play); (1) Playing dramatic play only; (2) Lowest level of sociodramatic play; (3) Low level of sociodramatic play; (4) Medium level of sociodramatic play; (5) High level of sociodramatic play; and (6) Highest level of sociodramatic play. The researcher developed this rating scale to more easily determine the child's level of play.

For play to be considered sociodramatic, the factors of Imitative role play and Interaction had to be present (e.g., Smilansky, 1968). These two factors were categorized as "Lowest" form of sociodramatic play (Smilansky, 1968). If one other factor was present during the observation period, the child's play behavior was categorized as "Low" level of sociodramatic play. If two other factors were present during the observation period, the child's play behavior was categorized as "Medium" level of sociodramatic play. If three other factors were present during the observation period, the child's play behavior was categorized as "High" level of sociodramatic play. If all six factors were present during the observation period, the child's play

behavior was categorized as "Highest" level of sociodramatic play. For example, a little girl, all dressed up as a "lady" with a shopping bag in hand, who announces, to no one in particular, "Pretend that I am the Mommy and I am going shopping," was defined as engaging in dramatic play only (Smilansky, 1968). Only the factors of Imitative role play and Make-believe in regard to actions and situations were present. Or, if two girls sat on a bench with wheels in hand, turning them, beeping, pushing the bench, but the girls did not communicate, this play situation was defined as "Lowest" level of sociodramatic play because only the factors of Imitative role play and Interaction were present (Smilansky, 1968). If the girls also communicated, the play situation was defined as "Low" level of sociodramatic play. Also, if the girls played for at least five minutes, in addition to communicating, the play situation would be defined as "Medium" level of sociodramatic play and so on.

Parenting styles. Mothers were asked to complete The Child-rearing Practices Report (CRPR) (Block, 1965) which assessed parents' child-rearing attitudes and values (See Appendix D). The CRPR consisted of 91 statements which parents indicated their extent of agreement using a five-point Likert-type scale. The CRPR has test-retest reliability with an average correlation between two tests of .707 (range= .38 to .85; sigma= .10). Sample statements from the CRPR are as follows: "I respect my child's

opinions and encourage him/her to express them"; "I think a child should have time to think, daydream, and even loaf sometimes"; and "When I am angry with my child, I let him/her know it". Data were collected on the entire CRPR; however, only selected items were used for the final analyses. Items were selected from the CRPR to form two variables, Parental Warmth and Parental Control, and were based on Baumrind's conceptualization of these two factors. The Warmth variable contained 20 items and the Control variable contained 7 items (See Appendix E). A reliability analysis was performed on the variables using the present sample to determine the internal consistency of the Warmth and Control variables. Cronbach's alphas were .80 for the Warmth variable and .11 for the Control variable. The lower internal consistency for the Control variable is likely due to the multidimensional nature of Baumrind's definition of control (i.e., the extent to which the parent expects and demands mature, responsible behavior from the child, and also provides structure and sets boundaries for the child). Items were rated on a five-point Likert-type scale with 1 being DEFINITELY FALSE and 5 being DEFINITELY TRUE. Scores on each of the Warmth items were combined to form a Warmth variable consisting of 20 items with a possible range of scores from 20 to 100. Scores on each of the Control items were combined to form a Control variable consisting of 7 items with a possible range of scores from 7 to 35.

Parenting styles were assessed for mothers only in the present study since studies indicate that mothers appear to be responsible for the majority of child-rearing duties (Patterson, 1982).

Background information. Mothers were also asked to complete a demographic questionnaire providing information on their child and family (See Appendix F). Demographic information for the child included age and ethnic background. Background information for the parents included age, marital status, education, and occupation.

#### Procedure

Preschool directors were contacted by the researcher to request the participation of the children in their program in this study. Once a director had agreed, letters providing information about the study, consent forms (see Appendices G and H), demographic information sheets, and Child-rearing Practices Reports were distributed to the parents via the directors. Those children whose parents returned the consent form, demographic information sheet, and the Child-rearing Practices Report participated in this study.

Any questions that children had were answered fully. At the conclusion of the study, a letter to the parents was distributed, explaining the study in more detail and thanking them and their children for their cooperation and participation in the study (See Appendix I).



## RESULTS

First, the Sociodramatic Play variable was computed by determining the subjects' level of sociodramatic play using a seven-point Likert-type scale with 0 being NOT PLAYING to 6 being HIGHEST LEVEL OF SOCIODRAMATIC PLAY. These scores were derived from the subjects' scores taken from Smilansky's (1968) Sociodramatic Play Inventory (SPI), which determined the presence or absence of six basic factors in the subjects' play behavior: (1) Imitative role play; (2) Make-believe in regard to objects; (3) Make-believe in regard to actions and situations; (4) Persistence; (5) Interaction; and (6) Verbal communication.

Next, the Maternal Warmth and Maternal Control variables were computed. A Pearson correlation was then computed on Maternal Warmth and Maternal Control by Sociodramatic Play (Table 2). Results showed that maternal control, and not maternal warmth, was significantly correlated with sociodramatic play.

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Table 2

Pearson Correlation: Sociodramatic Play by Maternal Warmth and Maternal Control

	<u>Maternal Warmth</u>	<u>Maternal Control</u>
Sociodramatic Play	.15	.30*

\*  $p < .05$

Children were next divided into four groups based on their mothers' scores for the Warmth and Control variables to reflect Baumrind's four classifications of parenting styles [i.e., authoritative (high-warmth/high-control), authoritarian (low-warmth/high-control), permissive indulgent (high-warmth/low-control), and permissive indifferent (low-warmth/low-control)]. These groups were created using a median split for the Warmth and Control variables. "High-warmth" mothers scored at or above the group mean of 87 for that variable; "low-warmth" mothers scored below the group mean. Similarly, "high-control" mothers scored at or above the group mean of 29, whereas "low-control" mothers scored below this mean.

Table 3 shows the parenting style groupings and the mean score of these groupings for sociodramatic play.

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Table 3

Parenting Style Grouping	N	Sociodramatic Play Mean Score
Authoritative	n=14	<u>M</u> =5.8
Authoritarian	n= 3	<u>M</u> =5.7
Permissive-Indulgent	n= 2	<u>M</u> =3.5
Permissive-Indifferent	n=12	<u>M</u> =3.9

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The hypothesis predicted that children whose parents exhibited qualities of authoritative parenting (i.e., high-warmth/high-control) would show higher levels of sociodramatic play compared to children whose parents

exhibited authoritarian, permissive indulgent, or permissive indifferent parental authority.

An ANOVA was then performed on the four parenting groups (i.e., authoritative, authoritarian, permissive indulgent, and permissive indifferent) to determine if there were significant differences among the four groups. A difference was found  $F(3,27) = 3.09, p < .05$ , but post hoc tests (Tukey) showed no significant differences among the four groups. These analyses were merely exploratory due to the small number of subjects in two of the four parenting style groupings.

In summary, only maternal control, and not maternal warmth, appeared to significantly influence sociodramatic play. These results suggest that children who have mothers who expect and demand mature, responsible behavior from the child, and who provide structure and set boundaries, have children who tend to display higher levels of sociodramatic play than those whose mothers do not show these behaviors. Maternal control, then, and not authoritative parenting per se (as predicted by the hypothesis), appears to be the primary influence on children's level of sociodramatic play behavior.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this exploratory study was, in general, to gain a broader understanding of the influence of parenting styles on childrens' play behavior. Specifically, it was expected that parents who exhibited qualities of authoritative parenting (i.e., high warmth/responsiveness and high demandingness/control) would facilitate higher levels of sociodramatic play in children compared to those whose parents exhibited authoritarian (i.e., low warmth/responsiveness and high demandingness/control), permissive indulgent (i.e., high warmth/responsiveness and low demandingness/control), or permissive indifferent (i.e., low warmth/responsiveness and low demandingness/control) parental authority.

The hypothesis was not supported by the findings from the present study. Authoritative parenting appeared to have no effect on the subjects' level of sociodramatic play. When warmth and control were examined separately, however, only maternal control, and not maternal warmth, appeared to influence childrens' levels of sociodramatic play.

A possible explanation for why maternal warmth did not affect sociodramatic play may be that, in general, children seem to have the ability or capacity to play regardless of the level of parental nurturance in the home. In clinical settings, for example, play therapy (i.e., where children

use play to express their thoughts, feelings, and emotions) has been shown to be effective with children who have emotional difficulties arising from, for example, divorced parents, abusive parents, or rejecting parents who show a lack of nurturance, where parental warmth may be at a minimum or nonexistent. Because it is difficult for children to tell a therapist what is troubling them, play therapy has been shown to be effective in helping a child to overcome emotional difficulties by providing for the child a safe environment to act out his/her feelings whether they be, for example, fear, hatred, or anxiety (Schell & Hall, 1984). Erikson (1950) found that the composition of a child's play was often intimately related to their past experiences. He also emphasized the coping effects of play. Erikson contends that "...to 'play it out' is the most natural self-healing measure childhood affords" (p. 222). Children can play effectively to the extent that their play can actually "heal" them, regardless of maternal warmth. Thus, play can be used as a tool for children to work through their emotional problems, and, therefore, maternal warmth does not have to be present for play to be effective in doing so. This may explain why maternal warmth had no effect on children's levels of sociodramatic play.

The positive influence of maternal control on subjects' level of sociodramatic play may be explained in the following way. High maternal control in the present study

referred to setting boundaries for the child, providing a structured environment for the child, and giving the child clear expectations that demand mature, responsible behavior from the child. These characteristics of control may be viewed as firm control, which is characteristic of authoritative parenting (i.e., where the parent is loving, supportive, and provides the child with a stimulating and challenging environment, but also sets firm standards for the child's conduct), rather than harsh or intrusive control, which is characteristic of authoritarian parenting (i.e., where the parent places a high value on obedience and conformity and is in favor of more forceful disciplinary measures) (Baumrind, 1975, 1989). Whereas harsh or intrusive control has been shown to have a negative effect on emotional stability for girls (Baumrind, 1989), firm control has been associated with self-confident, exploratory behavior for boys and with friendly, cooperative behavior for girls (Baumrind, 1989). Firm control has also been associated with socially responsive behavior for girls and with independence and self-assertiveness for boys (Baumrind, 1975). Furthermore, firm control has been found to be highly related to general competence for both boys and girls (Baumrind, 1989). By definition, sociodramatic play is "social" in nature. It requires the active participation of at least two players. It is likely that certain characteristics such as friendly and socially responsive



behavior of the child must be present in order for sociodramatic play to be satisfying to the participants involved in the play episode. If a child, for example, is not friendly or cooperative, it would seem that the play episode would be negatively effected. On the other hand, if a child is socially responsive and exploratory, participation with other children may increase, thus enhancing play situations. Thus, where a mother exerts firm control, she is setting the framework by which a child is more self-confident, explores more, is friendly and cooperative, independent, and self-assertive, all of which are characteristics that may facilitate sociodramatic play. This, then, may explain the positive influence of the maternal control aspect of authoritative parenting on the level of children's sociodramatic play in the present study.

#### Critique of Study and Future Research

Although the present study strived for a subject pool of 60, many of the subjects did not return the required forms. The final subject pool of 31 was small, and therefore poses limitations in the interpretation and generalization of the findings from this study. Future studies could use a larger sample pool to obtain more reliable results.

Further studies could also address the role of the father in children's sociodramatic play behavior since the influence of fathers on children's play behavior has yet to

be examined.

### Summary and Conclusions

Children's play has been shown to facilitate many aspects of a child's development, thus, it is important to better understand what factors facilitate play. It cannot be inferred from the results of this study that authoritative parenting influences children's levels of sociodramatic play; however, results do indicate that maternal control positively influences the level of sociodramatic play in children. Improved sources of parental information about appropriate child-rearing practices, and support for parents may be essential in promoting the development of firm control in parents' interactions with children. These parents may then be more likely to provide an environment for the development of children who are self-confident, independent, exploratory, friendly, and cooperative, thereby providing an environment where sociodramatic play may flourish. Previous research has established that the degree of parental control influences children's behaviors. The current study further promotes the assumption that child-rearing practices influence children's behaviors, and specifically children's sociodramatic play behaviors.

APPENDIX A

Sociodramatic Play Inventory: Recording Sheet

		Factors*					
Name		1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	T1 _____ T2 _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2.	T1 _____ T2 _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	T1 _____ T2 _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	T1 _____ T2 _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	T1 _____ T2 _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

\*Factor 1= Imitative role play

2= Make-believe in regard to objects

3= Make-believe in regard to actions and situations

4= Persistence

5= Interaction

6= Verbal communication

APPENDIX B

Recording Sheet for Factor 4: Persistence

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Dramatic play episode time			Type of play episode
Begin	End	Total	

T1

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

T2

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

APPENDIX C

Recording Sheet for Level of Sociodramatic Play

Name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ (0) Not playing (no kind of dramatic play)

\_\_\_ (1) Playing dramatic play only

\_\_\_ (2) Lowest level of sociodramatic play

\_\_\_ (3) Low level of sociodramatic play

\_\_\_ (4) Medium level of sociodramatic play

\_\_\_ (5) High level of sociodramatic play

\_\_\_ (6) Highest level of sociodramatic play

## APPENDIX D

### Child-rearing Practices Report

Please read each of the following statements, and then circle one of the numbers on each line to indicate whether the statement is true or false for you.

THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS:

- If a statement is definitely false for you, circle 1.
- If the statement is mostly false for you, circle 2.
- If you do not know whether the statement is true or false, circle 3.
- If the statement is mostly true for you, circle 4.
- If the statement is definitely true for you, circle 5.
- If the statement does not apply to you, circle N/A.

Some of the statements may look or seem like others, but each statement is different, and should be rated by itself.

	Definitely False	Mostly False	Don't Know	Mostly True	Definitely True
1. I respect my child's opinions and encourage her to express them.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I encourage my child always to do her best.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I put the wishes of my mate before the wishes of my child.	1	2	3	4	5 N/A
4. I help my child when she is being teased by friends.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I often feel angry with my child.	1	2	3	4	5
6. If my child gets into trouble, I expect her to handle the problem mostly by herself.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I punish my child by putting her off somewhere by herself for a while.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I watch closely what my child eats and when she eats.	1	2	3	4	5



	Definitely False	Mostly False	Don't Know	Mostly True	Definitely True	
9. I wish my spouse were more interested in our child.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
10. I feel a child should be given comfort and understanding when she is scared or upset.	1	2	3	4	5	
11. I try to keep my child away from children or families who have different ideas or values from our own.	1	2	3	4	5	
12. I try to stop my child from playing rough games or doing things where she might get hurt.	1	2	3	4	5	
13. I believe physical punishment to be the best way of disciplining.	1	2	3	4	5	
14. I believe that a child should be seen and not heard.	1	2	3	4	5	
15. I sometimes forget the promises I have made to my child.	1	2	3	4	5	
16. I think it is good practice for a child to perform in front of others.	1	2	3	4	5	
17. I express affection by hugging, kissing, and holding my child.	1	2	3	4	5	
18. I find some of my greatest satisfactions in my child.	1	2	3	4	5	
19. I prefer that my child not try things if there is a chance she will fail.	1	2	3	4	5	
20. I encourage my child to wonder and think about life.	1	2	3	4	5	

Definitely Mostly Don't Mostly Definitely  
False False Know True True

- |                                                                                            |   |   |   |   |   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 21. I usually take into account my child's preferences in making plans for the family.     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. I feel like my child is going to be an adult before I know it.                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. I feel a child should have time to think, daydream, and even loaf sometimes.           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. I find it difficult to punish my child.                                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. I let my child make many decisions for herself.                                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. I do not allow my child to say bad things about her teachers.                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. I worry about the bad and sad things that can happen to a child as he/she grows up.    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. I teach my child that in one way or another, punishment will find her when she is bad. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. I do not blame my child for whatever happens if others ask for trouble.                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30. I do not allow my child to get angry with me.                                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 31. I feel my child is a bit of a disappointment to me.                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32. I expect a great deal of my child.                                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 33. I am easy going and relaxed with my child.                                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

	Definitely False	Mostly False	Don't Know	Mostly True	Definitely True
34. I give up some of my own interests because of my child.	1	2	3	4	5
35. I tend to spoil my child.	1	2	3	4	5
36. I have never caught my child lying.	1	2	3	4	5
37. I talk it over and reason with my child when she misbehaves.	1	2	3	4	5
38. I trust my child to behave as she should, even when I am not with her.	1	2	3	4	5
39. I joke and play with my child.	1	2	3	4	5
40. I give my child a good many duties and family responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5
41. My child and I have warm, intimate times together.	1	2	3	4	5
42. I have strict, well-established rules for my child.	1	2	3	4	5
43. I think one has to let a child take many chances as he/she grows up and tries new things.	1	2	3	4	5
44. I encourage my child to be curious, to explore and question things.	1	2	3	4	5
45. I sometimes talk about supernatural forces and beings in explaining things to my child.	1	2	3	4	5
46. I expect my child to be grateful and appreciate all the advantages she has.	1	2	3	4	5

Definitely Mostly Don't Mostly Definitely  
False False Know True True

- |                                                                                                                                   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 47. I sometimes feel that I am too involved with my child.                                                                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 48. I believe in toilet training a child as soon as possible.                                                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 49. I threaten punishment more often than I actually give it.                                                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 50. I believe in praising a child when he/she is good and think it gets better results than punishing him/her when he/she is bad. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 51. I make sure my child knows that I appreciate what she tries or accomplishes.                                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 52. I encourage my child to talk about her troubles.                                                                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 53. I believe children should not have secrets from their parents.                                                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 54. I teach my child to keep control of her feelings at all times.                                                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 55. I try to keep my child from fighting.                                                                                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 56. I dread answering my child's questions about sex.                                                                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 57. When I am angry with my child, I let her know it.                                                                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 58. I think a child should be encouraged to do some things better than his/her peers.                                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 59. I punish my child by taking away a privilege she otherwise would have had.                                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

	Definitely False	Mostly False	Don't Know	Mostly True	Definitely True
60. I give my child extra privileges when she behaves well.	1	2	3	4	5
61. I enjoy having the house full of children.	1	2	3	4	5
62. I believe that too much affection and tenderness can harm or weaken a child.	1	2	3	4	5
63. I believe that scolding and criticism makes my child improve.	1	2	3	4	5
64. I sometimes tease my child.	1	2	3	4	5
65. I believe my child should be aware of how much I sacrifice for her.	1	2	3	4	5
66. I teach my child that she is responsible for what happens to her.	1	2	3	4	5
67. I worry about the health of my child.	1	2	3	4	5
68. There is a good deal of conflict between my child and me.	1	2	3	4	5
69. I do not allow my child to question my decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
70. I feel that it is good for a child to play competitive games.	1	2	3	4	5
71. I like to have some time for myself, away from my child.	1	2	3	4	5
72. I let my child know how ashamed and disappointed I am when she misbehaves.	1	2	3	4	5
73. I want my child to make a good impression on others.	1	2	3	4	5

	Definitely False	Mostly False	Don't Know	Mostly True	Definitely True
74. I want my child to be independent of me.	1	2	3	4	5
75. I make sure I know where my child is and what she is doing.	1	2	3	4	5
76. I find it interesting and educational to be with my child for long periods.	1	2	3	4	5
77. I think a child should be weaned from the breast or bottle as soon as possible.	1	2	3	4	5
78. I instruct my child not to get dirty while she is playing.	1	2	3	4	5
79. I do not go out if I have to leave my child with a babysitter.	1	2	3	4	5
80. I think jealousy and quarreling between brothers and sisters should be punished.	1	2	3	4	5
81. I think children must learn early not to cry.	1	2	3	4	5
82. I control my child by warning her about the bad things that can happen to her.	1	2	3	4	5
83. I think it is best if the mother, rather than the father, is the one with the most authority over the children.	1	2	3	4	5
84. I do not want my child to be looked upon as different from others.	1	2	3	4	5



	Definitely False	Mostly False	Don't Know	Mostly True	Definitely True
85. I believe it is very important for a child to play outside and get plenty of fresh air.	1	2	3	4	5
86. I get pleasure from seeing my child eating well and enjoying her food.	1	2	3	4	5
87. I do not allow my child to tease or play tricks on others.	1	2	3	4	5
88. I think it is wrong to insist that young boys and girls have different kinds of toys and play different sorts of games.	1	2	3	4	5
89. I believe it is unwise to let children play a lot by themselves without supervision from grown-ups.	1	2	3	4	5
90. I don't think young children of different sexes should be allowed to see each other naked.	1	2	3	4	5
91. I don't think children should be given sexual information before they can understand everything.	1	2	3	4	5

## APPENDIX E

### Warmth and Control Variable Items

#### Warmth

- Q1 I respect my child's opinions and encourage her to express them.
- Q3 I help my child when she is being teased by friends.
- Q4 I often feel angry with my child.
- Q5 If my child gets into trouble, I expect her to handle the problem mostly by herself.
- Q6 I feel a child should be given comfort and understanding when she is scared or upset.
- Q8 I express affection by hugging, kissing, and holding my child.
- Q9 I usually take into account my child's preferences in making plans for the family.
- Q10 I feel a child should have time to think, daydream, and even loaf sometimes.
- Q12 I talk it over and reason with my child when she misbehaves.
- Q14 I joke and play with my child.
- Q16 My child and I have warm, intimate times together.
- Q18 I encourage my child to be curious, to explore and question things.
- Q19 I believe in toilet training a child as soon as possible.
- Q20 I believe in praising a child when she/he is good and think it gets better results than punishing her/him when she/he is bad.
- Q21 I make sure my child knows that I appreciate what she tries or accomplishes.
- Q22 I encourage my child to talk about her troubles.
- Q23 I believe that too much affection and tenderness can

harm or weaken a child.

Q24 I let my child know how disappointed I am when she misbehaves.

Q25 I think a child should be weaned from the breast or bottle as soon as possible.

Q26 I think children must learn early not to cry.

Control

Q2 I encourage my child always to do her best.

Q7 I believe physical punishment to be the best way of disciplining.

Q11 I find it difficult to punish my child.

Q13 I trust my child to behave as she should, even when I am not with her.

Q15 I give my child a good many duties and family responsibilities.

Q17 I have strict, well-established rules for my child.

Q27 I do not allow my child to tease or play tricks on others.

APPENDIX F

Background Information

Please fill in the appropriate information or place an "X" by the appropriate response.

1. Child's Age: \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months
2. Child's Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ female \_\_\_\_\_ male
3. Father's Education: (highest level attained)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Did not complete high school  
\_\_\_\_\_ High school graduate  
\_\_\_\_\_ Some college  
\_\_\_\_\_ Bachelor of Arts/Science Degree  
\_\_\_\_\_ Graduate Degree (MA, MS, PhD)
4. Mother's Education: (highest level attained)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Did not complete high school  
\_\_\_\_\_ High school graduate  
\_\_\_\_\_ Some college  
\_\_\_\_\_ Bachelor of Arts/Science Degree  
\_\_\_\_\_ Graduate Degree (MA, MS, PhD)
5. Father's Age: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Mother's Age: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Child's Ethnicity:  
\_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic                      \_\_\_\_\_ Native American  
\_\_\_\_\_ Caucasian                    \_\_\_\_\_ African American  
\_\_\_\_\_ Asian                            \_\_\_\_\_ Other
8. Father's Occupation:  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Mother's Occupation:  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Current Marital Status:  
\_\_\_\_\_ Single  
\_\_\_\_\_ Married  
\_\_\_\_\_ Living with significant other  
\_\_\_\_\_ Divorced  
\_\_\_\_\_ Widowed

## APPENDIX G

### Letter to Parents

Dear Mother or Primary Guardian,

I am a graduate student in developmental psychology at California State University, San Bernardino and I am currently working on my master's thesis under the supervision of Dr. Laura Kamptner. The study I am conducting focuses on children's play behaviors in preschool settings. Research to date has suggested that play is extremely important in a child's development. This study is important because it will help us to gain a better understanding of the factors that are related to children's play.

I would like your permission to include your daughter in our study. Participation would include: 1) observation of your daughter's free play in a group setting for two 15-minute periods, and 2) your completing a questionnaire about your family life. The questionnaire should take about 30 minutes of your time.

This study has been approved by the Psychology Department Human Subject Review Board at California State University, San Bernardino. Your daughter's involvement in this study is strictly voluntary. In order to maintain confidentiality, no names or other identifying information will be used. Moreover, only group results will be examined and reported. No individual information will be released. Also, you have the right to withdraw your's and your daughter's participation at any time without penalty.

Should you have any questions about your daughter's involvement in this project, feel free to contact Dr. Laura Kamptner at (909) 880-5582.

If you agree to allow your child to participate in our study, please complete the enclosed consent form, information sheet, and the questionnaire and return it to your child's preschool director no later than July 30, 1993. Thank you in advance for assisting us in this project!

Sincerely,

Lorrie Moudy  
M.A. Candidate  
Department of Psychology  
California State University, San Bernardino

Laura Kamptner  
Associate Professor of Psychology  
California State University, San Bernardino

APPENDIX H

Consent Form for Children's Participation

I, \_\_\_\_\_  
(parents's full name)

give my permission for my child \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ to participate in the  
(child's full name)

study being conducted by Lorrie Moudy through California State University, San Bernardino. I understand that my child's participation is voluntary and that she may withdraw at any time during the study if she so desires.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(parent's signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(date)



## APPENDIX I

### Debriefing Letter to Parents

Dear Mother or Primary Guardian,

At this time I would like to express my appreciation to you and your daughter for taking part in this project. Your participation has contributed greatly to this study's successful completion.

Through this study we hope to discover how different kinds of parenting behaviors might possibly contribute to children's play behaviors. Specifically, we are examining how children's sociodramatic play behavior (i.e., make-believe role play among two or more preschool children) is influenced by their parents' child-rearing practices. Research to date has suggested that play is extremely important in a child's development, and we therefore hope to gain a better understanding of the factors that influence play.

The final results of this study are expected to be completed by June 1994. Only group results will be reported. No individual information will be released. If you have any additional questions or if you are interested in the results, please feel free to contact me at (619) 951-0028 or Dr. Laura Kamptner at (909) 880-5582. Thank you again for your participation.

Sincerely,

Lorrie Moudy



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