

EMOTIONS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDHOOD

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Gary and Ron are practicing soccer moves on the playground. They have all their equipment – goal, shinpads, regulation ball – and they’re having fun together. Ron shows Gary how to head the ball into the goal, both shouting, “Hurray!” But then things get complicated, changing fast, as interaction often does. Ron, thinking twice about sharing his best technique, kicks the ball ferociously away from Gary on the next play. Then Huynh, who had been watching from the sidelines, shyly asks Gary if he can join them. Simultaneously, Gary trips over a swiftly kicked ball, and slumps to the ground. And just then, Jack, the class bully, approaches, laughing at Gary’s discomfort and demanding they leave so that he and his buddies can use the field. Somehow, Gary deals with all of this. He hands the ball to Huynh, extends a hand to Ron, and calmly tells Jack, “It’s our turn now.” When the teacher calls them inside, everybody except Jack is satisfied with recess.

What do emotions have to do with social development? Our example abounds with instances where emotions help determine the flow and outcome of interaction. First, behaviors of others in one’s social group often constitute antecedent conditions for a child’s emotions. When Ron became angry, it was because his goal of being “the best” was threatened. Huynh approached diffidently because he often had been “left out” from play. Second, when the child exhibits emotion within a dyad or group, this emotional expressiveness also is important information for these others. When Gary experienced delight at making a goal, he probably wanted to keep playing; others, like Huynh, want to join him. Jack is cranky, irritable, and easily provoked; he often strikes out at those he perceives to be “in his way.” His classmates, observing his emotional behaviors, wisely seek to leave the scene. Third, one child’s expressions of emotion may form antecedent conditions for others’ experience and expression of emotions. Playmates exiting from Jack’s wrath may themselves feel some combination of discomfort at his uncontrolled display, fear at his targeted nastiness, answering anger, and even spiteful delight when he *doesn’t* get his way.

In concert with these views, theorists highlight the interdependency of emotional and social competence (Denham, 1998; Saarni, 1999). The interpersonal function of emotion is central to its expression and experience, its very meaning. Conversely, social interactions and relationships are guided, even defined, by emotional transactions (Halberstadt, Denham, & Dunsmore, in press). Emotional and social competence are intimately intertwined, and, we argue, become even more so with development. Unfortunately, however, the peer literature still lags in integrating explicit elements of emotional competence into its models (Ladd, 1999; but cf. Hubbard & Coie, 1994; Lemerise & Arsenio, 2000).

Given these considerations, our first goal is to outline how social developmental tasks differ across childhood. The defining social issues of each age help clarify the role of emotion within each period. Our second goal is to describe aspects of emotional competence important to social interaction and relationship building with parents, peers, and friends (Denham, 1998; Halberstadt, et al., in press). The social tasks and emotional

competencies of each period of childhood are situated within ascendant social relationships. Our third goal is to detail and evaluate existing research on the contribution of emotional competence to social competence, using the framework of aspects of emotional competence changing across developmental epochs and differing within relationships. We will identify gaps in theory, methodology, and evidence, to suggest future directions.

Developmental Tasks of Social Competence

The nature of adaptive social functioning changes with development; what is useful for coordinating preschoolers' interactions may be less helpful later. These changes in children's social competence and relationships are accompanied by parallel reorganizations of ways to deal with emotional issues.

Preschoolers' social tasks include managing emotional arousal within interaction and beginning to meet social expectations of persons other than one's parents (Gottman & Mettetal, 1986). Coordination of play is the preschool child's overriding goal. Serving this goal are social processes of common-ground activity, conflict management, creation of a "me too" climate, shared fantasy, and achievement of good will and harmony. The processes inherent in succeeding at these social tasks call for skills of emotional competence -- arguments must be resolved so that play can continue; enjoying one another's company greases the cogs of sustained interaction. Emotion regulation is key; young children must learn to avoid the disorganization of a tantrum, to think reflectively about a distressing situation.

The goals, social processes, and emotional tasks central to social competence then change radically, as gradeschoolers become aware of a wider social network than the dyad. Peer norms for social acceptance are complex and finely tuned, with inclusion by one's peers and avoiding rejection or embarrassment paramount (Gottman & Mettetal, 1986). Instead of reining in vivid emotions, gradeschoolers want to avoid embarrassment, rejecting sentiment in favor of logic. Hence, socially competent responses to many salient social situations, such as group entry and provocation, are to be guarded, cool, and unflappable. Social processes of gossip, social support, relationship talk, self-disclosure, and information exchange serve this goal. Conversation assumes particular importance, perhaps carrying the weight of earlier, more overt, emotionality. Managing how and when to show emotion becomes crucial, as does knowing with whom to share emotion-laden experiences and ideas.

Elements of Emotional Competence

Next, we elaborate a model of emotional competence, showing its complex relation with social competence. We focus on three basic components crucial for success in these social developmental tasks: experiencing, expressing, and understanding emotion. Each component of emotional competence follows a partially independent developmental trajectory, which we now describe.

Experience of Emotions

We refer to "experience of emotions" as not only the awareness and recognition of one's own emotions, but also as the effective regulation of one's emotional expression in the context of an ongoing social interaction

(Halberstadt et al., in press). In Figure 1, we depict the process of emotional experience (Denham, 1998). First, there is arousal. Something happens – an environmental event (as when Gary fell down on the soccer field), one's actions (as when Ron made a goal), the actions of others (as when Jack came up to boss them), or even memories (as when Ron ruminated over giving up his "soccer secrets").

Sometimes this arousal is automatic – when Ron fell down, he didn't need contemplation to experience his pain and dismay. Emotion ensued automatically, along with its attendant behavior – holding his knee, trying unsuccessfully not to cry (leftmost column, Figure 1). Sometimes emotional arousal needs to be understood, not just reacted to, because children create an increasingly complicated network of desires and outcomes they want to attain – their goals. Huynh needed to represent the notable change, what happened to him as he walked up to Gary. How do the "butterflies" in his stomach impact his goal of joining play, if at all? What does this arousal mean? Does he acknowledge it as apprehension? Before any specific emotional reaction was felt by Huynh, or noticed by Gary, Huynh attended to the event, comprehended it, and interpreted it (middle column, Figure 1).

Interpretations of events' relations to ongoing goals lead not only to felt emotions, but also to actions associated with each specific emotion, and new changes in arousal (rightmost column, Figure 1). Does Huynh try to "deal with" his jitters so that he can present himself as a worthy teammate, maybe taking a deep breath and making an effort to walk steadily? Do these attempts at regulation work, so that he really is calmer, and his chances with Gary are better? Ability to access and manage emotions, and to communicate (or not communicate) them to others, is important to relationships' success.

To be emotionally competent, one must first recognize an emotion is being experienced. The valence of the emotion is registered at this level of skill. This low-level awareness is necessary for higher-level abilities of understanding – what emotional signal am I sending to others? How do my emotional signals affect them? Identifying one's emotions accurately is also important intrapersonally. If Ron is not able to recognize his annoyance, that it stems from wanting to be "the best," he is danger of experiencing a cascade of feelings and behaviors related to misplaced anger – which, once enacted, are resistant to reorganization.

One also must comprehend one's emotional experience within the constraints of the emotion scripts that are active, and the ongoing social context. Knowledge of feeling rules may guide children in selecting aspects of their emotional experiences upon which to focus. The glee that Gary experiences at getting a goal is more complicated than it appears. He may experience a conglomeration of delight, mild "macho" contempt, and fear when he almost didn't make it; the feeling rule, "when you win, you feel happy," may help him discern the emotional tone of his experience, or decide which aspects to communicate to others. Further, understanding that inner and outer emotional states may differ ("I know I'm scared of Jack, but I am going to put on a calm face"), also is important.

Next, the management or regulation of emotional experience is necessary when the presence or absence of

emotional expression and experience interfere with a person's goals--when emotions are distressing, positive but possibly overwhelming, or needing amplification for intra- or interpersonally strategic reasons. By preschool age, such emotion regulation becomes both necessary, due to the increasing complexity of children's emotionality and the demands of their social world, and possible, because of their increased comprehension and control of their emotionality. The child chooses responses that serve the goal of modulating emotional experience (Denham, 1998). "Doing something" about the experience of emotion need not be overt and active; regulatory responses may be emotional, cognitive, or behavioral (Figure 2). The experience of emotion may need to be diminished or modulated, or even transformed; a child feeling anxious at preschool may smile to convince herself and others that she is happy.

Perceptual and cognitive coping steps are also possible. Refocusing attention is a useful perceptual means of regulating emotional experience – Huynh may focus on the soccer ball rather than the boys whose social status makes him uncomfortable. Problem-solving reasoning can be particularly useful. The child may relinquish a goal, choose a substitute goal, or conceive new attributions that bring comfort. A boy who is sad about not going swimming may say, "I didn't want to go anyway." Children also do things to cope with the experience of emotion – enacting a solution to the emotional situation, looking for support from adults, lashing out, or crying.

To succeed at emotion regulation, then, several abilities are key. One must experience clear rather than diffuse feelings, to know what to regulate! Managing false self-signals is also crucial – sometimes we may experience self-signals that aren't actually emotional, but could be mistaken for feelings (e.g., Huynh had a sudden "tummy rumble" as he approached Gary, but ignored it as not pertinent). One must also know what to feel and what not to, to attain one's goals. Children learn to retain or enhance relevant and helpful emotions, to attenuate relevant but not helpful ones, and to dampen those that are irrelevant; these regulatory behaviors help them to maintain genuine and satisfying relationships.

Experiencing and regulating emotion during the preschool period. Little research has focused specifically on how preschoolers experience emotion. More has been done with respect to emotion regulation. Preschoolers often need external support for skillful emotion regulation; caregivers' support allows their strategies to be maximally effective. Parents assist them in cognitive coping strategies they will eventually use themselves (e.g., purposely redeploying attention). Adults also use emotion language to help children regulate emotion – by identifying and construing their feelings, and processing causal associations between events and emotions. They also demonstrate behavioral coping strategies when they problem solve around emotional situations, or structure their child's environment to facilitate regulation (e.g., a father avoids arranging a play date with someone who will leave his son cranky).

As preschoolers become more autonomous and capable of cooperation, they collaborate with caregivers' regulation efforts. They also make independent attempts, such as orientation of attention toward or away from a

stimulus, self-distraction via physical self-comforting or self-stimulation, approaching or retreating from a situation, or symbolic manipulations of a situation through play (Grolnick, Bridges, & Connell, 1996). Next, young children slowly see connections between their emotion regulation efforts and changes in their feelings. Their awareness of the need for, and use of, coping strategies increases. Finally, they begin to appreciate the success or failure of their emotion regulation, and become more flexible in choosing optimal ways of coping in specific contexts. Behavioral disorganization resulting from strong emotion decreases dramatically.

Experiencing and regulating emotion during middle childhood. Age changes in emotion regulation occur due to the socialization messages of others, as well as cognitive abilities to appraise the controllability of emotional experience, shift one's thoughts intentionally, reframe situations, and examine different aspects of the situation so that new solutions are possible (Denham, 1998; Saarni, 1999; v. Salisch, 2000a). Thus, gradeschoolers use and refine the same coping strategies as preschoolers – in different frequencies (Saarni, 1997). They increasingly use cognitive and problem solving behavioral coping strategies to regulate emotion, and rely less on support seeking. Finally, they endorse distancing when stressors are not controllable. They are aware of the multiple strategies at their command, and that some strategies are most adaptive in specific situations.

Expression of Emotions

Another key element of emotional competence is expressiveness. Emotions must be expressed in keeping with the child's goals, and in accordance with the social context. Thus, emotional competence includes expressing emotions in a way that is advantageous to moment-to-moment interaction and relationships over time. First, emotionally competent individuals are aware that an affective message should be sent in a given context (Barrett, 1995). Perhaps Ron ruminates that Gary is becoming a better soccer player because Ron showed him new moves. Gary inadvertently pokes him on the way to the pencil sharpener; because of his emotionally toned rumination, Ron may feel like sending a high intensity message – “come closer at your own risk!” But what affective message should be sent, for interaction to proceed smoothly? Second, children learn which expressions of emotion facilitate their goals in a given social context. Third, after determining the affective message appropriate in the current context, children must also send it convincingly. The method, intensity, and timing of sending an affective message are crucial to its meaning and eventual success or failure. Showing brief annoyance over a friend's winning a game conveys a very different message than remaining angry for days. Fourth, affective messages must be sent within the constraints of display rules. Finally, the unique characteristics of interaction partners and of their interpersonal interchange must be considered (Halberstadt et al., in press). Some situations, like a raucous game of street hockey, and some people, like Great Aunt Martha, “pull for” particular modes of expressiveness.

Accordingly, it is important to express clear, nonredundant emotional messages. Often it is most

productive for a child to show what she feels, such as anxiety when lost in a store. Nonetheless, real affective messages often need to be managed – what affective message is relevant and helpful? There are also times when real affective messages are not appropriate -- some are relevant to the situation but not the context, and some irrelevant ones need to be masked. The quite relevant emotions of disappointment and rage at being barred from playing Scrabble with the adults make sense, but are inappropriate in front of company. Anxiety when meeting a new friend is probably irrelevant to the goal of fun, and should be suppressed.

Expressiveness during the preschool period. Preschoolers' emotional lives become quite complex. They are aware of the need to send an affective message, and can express vividly all the "basic" emotions. They also begin to show "social" emotions that require a sense of self and of others, including empathy, shame, guilt, and contempt (Barrett, 1995; Denham, 1998). Preschoolers also begin to show blended emotions. After his best friend leaves angrily – "You broke my truck--I won't be your friend anymore" – Antonio expresses a multifaceted mixture of sadness, guilt, and anger.

Young children's propensity to show emotions also tends to become stable across time, and across some situations. Preschoolers also have a rudimentary awareness that there are important contextual differences about what to send or not send (Zeman, Penza, Shipman, & Young, 1997). They begin to use, but not completely understand, display rules and "dissembling" emotions (Cole, 1986). Perhaps, despite feeling sad and guilty, Antonio may show his friend only his righteous anger. To look sad or act guilty would only make things worse.

Expressiveness during middle childhood. With time and experience, older children learn that goals are not always met by showing their most intense feelings. They often do not express emotions as directly and vividly as they did earlier, with emotional expression depending on the person with whom, and the situation in which, they are interacting. For example, they regulate anger due to the negative consequences they expect (Zeman & Shipman, 1996). Along with the "cool rule," that mandates their more muted emotions within most settings, older children's emotional messages can be more complex, with the use of more blended signals, and better-differentiated expressions of the social emotions. Their new ability to express (and experience) guilt, pride, and shame is buttressed by attributions of responsibility and normative standards (Harris, 1989; Olthof, Ferguson, & Luiten, 1989). Although empirical evidence is sparse, social emotions undoubtedly influence the nature of interactions and relationships.

Understanding Emotions

Understanding emotion lies at the heart of emotional competence, with both experiencing and expressing emotions contributing to understanding, and understanding contributing to both other aspects. An initial appraisal that another individual is sending affective information is necessary – missing such information definitely puts one at a disadvantage (e.g., if Gary misses the muted expressions of annoyance on Ron's face, he

may gloat about learning to head the soccer ball, to the dismay of both). Once perceived, the other's affective message must be interpreted accurately. Then this information must be understood within the constraints of display rules and applied within the "ongoing flow" of the context. The key here is receiving as clearly and nonredundantly as possible, the emotional messages of others.

Realizing that inner and outer emotional states may differ, that different individuals have differing emotional "styles," is also important. It is tricky to manage true or false emotional signals from others. One must be able to ignore false affective messages if ignoring benefits one's goals, or to accept them as real if that is advantageous. Gary may notice Ron's attempts to mask his pain and accept them, to allow Ron to save face. One must also: (1) pick up real, relevant, helpful messages; (2) ignore real but irrelevant messages; and (3) somehow deal with real and relevant but not helpful messages. When Gary notices Ron's real but not helpful message of annoyance, he has to decide whether to ignore this expressiveness as a momentary "blip."

Understanding emotions during the preschool period. Preschoolers can name and recognize expressions for most basic emotions, and identify common emotion-eliciting situations (Denham, 1998). They can talk about emotions' causes and consequences, especially when ecologically valid measures are used. Young children also are acquiring the beginnings of even more sophisticated knowledge of emotion. They are becoming aware of equivocal emotions (some people love oatmeal, others would be angry to be served it) and using personalized information about emotional reactions (Gnepp, 1989). They are just beginning to understand emotion regulation, display rules, simultaneity, and ambivalence; often they can grasp these concepts if assistive methods are utilized (Josephs, 1994; Kestenbaum & Gelman, 1995). However, there are limits to preschooler's understanding of emotions; despite emerging abilities, they often remain wedded to an emotion's outward expression or its eliciting situation, which of necessity hampers their accuracy (Hoffner & Badzinski, 1989).

Understanding emotions during middle childhood. Intricate understanding of emotions blossoms during this period. Gradeschoolers show marked improvement in understanding that different events elicit different emotions in different people, and that enduring patterns of personality affect individuals' emotional reactions (Gnepp & Chilamkurti, 1988). They better understand finer nuances of emotions in self and others, including (1) display rules, serving both prosocial and self-protective functions (Gnepp & Hess, 1986); (2) multiple emotions (Harris, 1989; Olthof, Meerum Terwogt, Van Eck, & Koops, 1987); (3) the time course of emotions and sophisticated means to regulate them (Meerum Terwogt & Olthof, 1989); and (4) social emotions (Nunner-Winkler & Sodian, 1988). Taken together, these new understandings bode well for emotional competence as children mature, affecting their reactions to others' emotions, and their understanding of how others perceive emotions in themselves.

Relationship-Specific Interconnectedness of Emotional and Social Competence

The utility of such emotional competence, its relation to socially competent outcomes, often depends on

the specific relationship in which it is embedded. In the following, we consider the unique links between social and emotional competence in three relationships differing along the dimensions of symmetry and closeness, that is, “ordinary” peers (symmetrical and not close), friends (symmetrical and close), and parents (asymmetrical and close). When considering relationships influential in the development of emotional competence, many minds first turn to parents, as we do now.

Emotional Development in Parent-Child Relationships

Children’s relationships with their parents are close dyadic relationships. In contrast to peer relationships and friendships, however, these relationships are asymmetrical and complementary (Youniss, 1980); e.g., most children rarely give advice on their parents’ emotional problems. The complementary nature of the parent-child-relationship has implications for children’s emotional competence in four respects. First, from birth, parents are primary attachment figures in times of pain, anxiety, or distress. As children develop, the importance of this support gradually diminishes, but parents still play a major role in times of need. A secure attachment to mother tends to promote preschoolers’ understanding of basic emotions (Denham et al., 2000; Laible & Thompson, 1998; Suess, Grossmann & Sroufe, 1992) and mixed emotions (Steele, Steele, Croft, & Fonagy, 1999). Children with an insecure attachment to their mother are more likely to express hostility during the preschool years (DeMulder, Denham, Schmidt, & Mitchell, 2000).

Second, parents are experienced adults. Their children are likely to model their emotional behavior, to be exquisitely attentive to parental reactions to their emotions, and learn much from their emotion language (Denham, 1998; Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinrad, 1998; Halberstadt, 1991). These aspects of socialization contribute to strengths and weaknesses in all elements of children’s emotional competence.

Parents also have a more advanced knowledge of emotions and of strategies for regulating them than children. Because of their life experience and sophisticated knowledge, parents can teach children about appraisals of emotional events, verbal labels for emotional experiences, and antecedents and consequences of expressive displays (Dunn, Brown, Slomkowski, Tesla & Youngblade, 1991). Such teaching promotes children’s later emotional understanding (Brown & Dunn, 1996; Denham, Zoller & Couchoud, 1994), as well as their moral sensitivity (Dunn, Brown & Maguire, 1995). Type of emotion talk also may be important – empathy-related statements, explanations about causes and consequences of emotions, and descriptions of parents’ own emotions appear especially compelling for children (Garner, Jones, Gaddy, & Rennie, 1997; Kochanoff, Denham, & Caswell, 1998).

When parents’ admonitions about emotions are misleading or idiosyncratic, children may develop distorted emotion understanding. The anger-intensifying tendency to attribute hostile intentions to another, even when none are present, is a particular problem (Weiss, Dodge, Bates & Pettit, 1992). Although there are no studies on “feeling talk” in middle childhood, we can assume that parents also speak to school-age children about

emotion-relevant issues, such as complex emotions, mixed feelings, masked emotions, and regulatory strategies (Harris, 1989; see also Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1996).

Third, parents introduce their children to cultural rules about experiencing, expressing, and regulating emotions, such as expressing politeness towards the elderly (Hochschild, 1983; Joshi & MacLean, 1994; Weber, 1996; Saarni, 1999). In addition, parents usually have subcultural, familial, or personal goals and values for appraising emotional events, as well as ways of feeling and displaying emotions in certain situations (e.g., Zahn-Waxler, Friedman, Cole, Mizuta & Hiruma, 1996). Baltimore working class mothers' child-rearing values motivate them to teach their toddlers "toughness," to prepare them for the challenges of their inner city neighborhood (Miller & Sperry, 1987).

But there are possible negative contributions of parents to children's emotional competence. Because parents are adults, their understanding of their children's emotional appraisals may be limited. Parents may also vary in how much they value children's emotional lives; e.g., a ghost that frightens their child may not impress them. Child-rearing values also may stand in the way of parents' ability to empathize with their children's emotions. Further, even well meaning, empathic parents cannot know all of today's peer norms about appraisal, experience, and display of emotions.

Second, parents may differ in their willingness and ability to share children's joy and exuberance (Downey & Coyne, 1990; Halberstadt, 1986). Some parents also have difficulties with negative emotion -- depressed parents tend to instill higher levels of unjustified guilt in their children (Zahn-Waxler, Kochanska, Krupnick & McKnew, 1990). Angrier mothers tend to have less empathic, more defiant children (Denham, 1998). Witnessing interadult anger causes distress and sometimes anger in children (El Sheikh & Reiter, 1996), alleviated only when the adults resolve their disagreement and show positive emotions (Shifflett-Simpson & Cummings, 1996).

Despite possible negative trajectories, parents of gradeschoolers continue to be important supports for their children's growing emotional competence. Most school-age boys still share their fears with their parents (Rimé, Dozier, Vandenplas & Declercq 1996). A majority of elementary school children endorsed the genuine expression of anxiety, sadness, and pain in hypothetical vignettes in which their parents watched their emotional reactions (Saarni, 1988, 1989; Zeman & Shipman, 1996). But, gradeschoolers also expected that their expressions of anger about third parties would displease their parents. These findings may depend on the gender of child and parent; when disclosing their sadness, elementary school boys expected fathers to react more negatively than mothers (Zeman & Garber, 1996).

Experience and regulating of emotion and parent-child relationships. No research that we know directly addresses parent-child experience of emotion and its association with social competence. As noted, however, parents do use emotion language to support their young children's emotion regulation efforts. Preschoolers with

access to more sophisticated maternal language about emotion coped more productively with their own emotions expressed in their preschool classroom (Denham, Cook, & Zoller, 1992). Teachers and peers alike viewed these more affectively balanced children as more socially competent (Denham, McKinley, Couchoud, & Holt, 1990). In contrast, with depressed mothers who did not talk productively about emotion, the opposite pattern of findings obtained (Zahn-Waxler, Ridgeway, Denham, Usher, & Cole, 1993).

Parents' means of coping with their children's negative emotions also has received some attention. Concern over the child's need for emotion regulation, if not punitive, fosters child's awareness of and attention to his or her own emotions (Denham, 1997; Roberts & Strayer, 1987). In contrast, overly strict sanctions about emotional expressiveness may motivate children to hide, not regulate, their easily aroused negativity. In turn, children's coping is associated with their social functioning, and with sociometric status, even with the contribution of child temperament partialled (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1994; Eisenberg, Fabes, & Murphy, 1996; Eisenberg, Fabes, Shepard, Guthrie, et al., 1999).

Expression of emotion. Fruitful investigation of the contribution of parental emotion to children's social competence, as mediated by children's emotion expressed during interaction with parents, has begun. Isley, O'Neil, Clatfelter, and Parke (1999) have found that parents' positive affect during game playing was related to their children's social competence, as mediated by the children's positive affect while interacting with their parents (see also Denham & Grout, 1993; Jones & Eisenberg, 1997). Parental negative affect had only a direct, negative contribution to children's social competence (Isley et al., 1999). Angry interchanges with mothers and fathers unfortunately can help children become easily aroused in during interaction, and/or learn a confrontational style, that carry over to peer aggression and avoidance (Carson & Parke, 1996; Denham & Grout, 1993). Parental affect is especially related to social competence for father-son shared negativity and maternal positive emotion. Taken together, these investigations suggest an important alignment of parents' expressiveness with children's emotional and social competence.

Understanding of emotion. Parents', especially mothers', contributions to their preschool-aged children's understanding of emotion have been investigated with some interesting results. Denham, Zoller, and Couchoud (1994) found that when mothers explained emotions, showed predominantly positive emotion, and were positively rather than negatively responsive to the children's emotions, children evidenced greater emotion understanding (see also Dunn, Brown, & Beardsall, 1991). Presumably, children who experience mothers' positive meta-emotion philosophy (Gottman et al., 1996) are more willing to explore, and have greater access to, the world of emotions, which in turn enhances their social interactions and relationships (Dunn & Cutting, 1998; Dunn & Herrera, 1997).

Emotional Development in Interaction with Peers

The peer group is expected to have a pervasive influence on children's emotional development for two

reasons. First, because of their similarity, peers are in a better position to understand the emotional life of age-mates than parents or children of other age groups (Dunn & Hughes, 1998). Age-mates argue at about the same socio-cognitive and moral level, face the same transitions and (normative) life events, and share the same role vis à vis school and teachers (v. Salisch, 2000c). Second, being with a group of like-minded peers may intensify children's emotional experiences, such as glee over a teacher's faux pas or panic over crawling insects. Children create group cultures with their own norms and values (Corsaro & Eder, 1990), including the shared appraisal of emotion-eliciting events, and explicit and implicit rules about the expression and the regulation of emotions.

Experiencing and regulating emotion and peer relations. From preschool through the primary grades, children who improve, or are consistently average or high in emotion regulation, show higher social competence than those whose regulation ability is consistently low or declining. Experience of emotions and their regulation also interact in contributing to social competence. Especially for highly negative children, attentional and behavior regulation are related to social functioning and sociometric status (Eisenberg, Fabes, Shepard, Murphy, et al., 1997; Eisenberg, Fabes, Guthrie, Murphy et al., 1996; Eisenberg, Guthrie, Fabes, Reiser, et al., 1997). Further, high attentional regulation and low emotional intensity, as well as their interaction, predict sympathy concurrently and over time (Eisenberg, Fabes, Murphy, Maszk, et al., 1995).

Gradeschoolers learn to adopt an "emotional front" (Saarni, 1988, 1989). "Letting it all hang out" is uniformly selected as the worst reaction to negative emotional experiences with peers (Saarni, 1997). Gradeschoolers apply differing strategies to achieve their "fronts"; they report cognitively distancing themselves from anger-provoking situations, redirecting attention to alleviate distress, avoiding confrontations altogether, or problem solving calmly (Murphy & Eisenberg, 1996; Stegge & Meerum Terwogt, 1998; v. Salisch, 2000a). Although these "fronts" make children's expressions less genuine, they also have positive aspects, including saving face and "surviving" in a possibly hostile environment.

Expressiveness and peer relations. Preschoolers' expression of specific emotions also relates to their peer status and to teachers' evaluations of their friendliness and aggression. Positive affect is important in the initiation and regulation of social exchanges, and for communication during socially directed acts; sharing positive affect may facilitate the formation of friendships. Happier, less angry preschoolers react more prosocially to peers' emotions, are better liked by peers, and are rated as friendlier and more cooperative by teachers (Denham et al., 1990). Conversely, preschoolers, who show larger proportions of negative affect, are often seen as troublesome and difficult (Denham et al., 1990). Sadness is related to teacher-rated withdrawal (Denham & Burger, 1989).

The relation of emotional expressiveness to social competence is often context dependent. Arsenio, Cooperman, and Lover (2000) have examined preschoolers' emotions within and outside periods of conflict, to

investigate these emotions' relations to aggression and social competence. Children's nonconflict anger (and less nonconflict happiness), and happiness during conflict were positively related to initiation of aggression and negatively related to sociometric status. Anger during conflict appears normative – after all, it *is* a conflict. A generally irascible demeanor, or glee at another's discomfort, however, is incongruent with social competence.

Little work has described observed expressiveness and social competence in older children. It becomes more difficult to code emotion because of the "cool rule"! There are clear indications, however, that rejected and accepted children's emotional profiles differ (Underwood et al., 1999). To avoid peer rejection, gradeschoolers are challenged to reduce expressions of anger, triumph over others' failures, and envy, in favor of polite negotiation (Krappmann & Oswald, 1995; Tassi & Schneider, 1997). Children also say they would express only extreme or visible anxiety and hurt to peers (Saarni, 1989), and expect harsher reactions when expressing sadness or pain in front of peers rather than parents (Zeman & Garber, 1996). Some expectations are gender-dependent. Boys say they are unlikely to share fears, but girls report not displaying anger (Underwood, Coie & Herbsman, 1992). Finally, although some studies support that children prefer to befriend peers who are "fun" (Parker & Seal, 1996), there is little research on rules about expressing positive emotions.

Understanding emotions and peer relations. Children who strategically apply emotion knowledge more often succeed in peer interactions. Preschoolers' understanding of emotion is related to their positive peer status, to teachers' views of their social competence, and to their prosocial reactions to the emotions of peers and adults (Denham, 1986; Denham et al., 1990). Barth and Bastiani (1997) have uncovered a more subtle relation: Preschoolers' mistaken perceptions of peers as angry – a recognition bias similar to the hostile attribution bias of later years – are associated with negative social behavior.

Other discrete types of positive social behavior also are related to preschoolers' emotion knowledge. For example, preschoolers' emotion knowledge is related to use of reasoned argument, and caregiving, with siblings (Dunn, Slomkowski, Donelan, & Herrera, 1995; Garner, Jones, & Miner, 1994). Older children's understanding of prosocial display rules is related to (1) prosocial behavior; (2) prosocial responses to hypothetical conflicts; and (3) teacher- and peer-rated social competence (Garner, 1996; Jones, Abbey, & Cumberland, 1998).

Emotional Development Within Friendships

Because friendships now attain a new quality of intimacy, friends' emotions are experienced "close up" (Krappmann, 1996). Observing another's emotions in a symmetrically reciprocal relationship, where the child takes more responsibility for successful interaction, may be accompanied by attention that facilitates learning. A friend's conformance to display rules, display of complex emotions, and demonstration of ambivalence may be especially instructive. Thus, sharing emotions with friends may contribute to children's emotional competence, but these theoretical speculations badly need empirical support.

Caution is warranted, however, against assuming only beneficial aspects of friendships; all friends and

friendships are not equal (Hartup, 1999). Reciprocal negative, as well as positive, effects can operate (v. Salisch, 2000b). Several issues to consider are: (1) Is the friend' socially competent? (2) Is the friendship amicable? intimate? conflictual? (3) Child characteristics, including temperament and family processes.

Experiencing and regulating emotion within friendship. Friends may assist each other to manage their experience of emotion, e.g., by reframing the break-up of another friendship ("he's not worth crying over"), or by giving explicit advice on emotion regulation ("don't think about it any more"; Gottman & Mettetal, 1986). Preadolescent friends also use distraction to keep their friends from ruminating over negative attributions that accentuate emotions like shame, guilt, or depression (Denton & Zarbatany, 1996). Not all is amiable, however. Gradeschoolers who endorsed revenge goals and hostile strategies in conflict scenarios quarreled more in their best friendships and had fewer reciprocal best friends (Rose & Asher, 1999a). In conflicts during a computer game, competitive friends expressed anger, contempt, and disgust, and self-reported more intense experiences of shame and guilt (v. Salisch, 1999).

Expressiveness within friendship. Preschoolers display positive affective reciprocity more frequently, and are more expressive overall, with friends than with siblings (Brachfeld-Child, & Schiavo, 1990; Volling, Youngblade & Belsky, 1997). Although preschoolers' experience similar *intensity* of anger with liked and disliked peers, their behavioral responses, especially boys', are more controlled to liked peers (Fabes, Eisenberg, Smith, & Murphy, 1996). Children also are more sympathetic to the hypothetical plight of a friend than a nonfriend, and more readily propose an intervention (Costin & Jones, 1992). Because the tasks of middle childhood friendship include caring, concern, help, conflict management, forgiving, and affection, friends are children's "best bets" for sharing emotional experience, especially feelings of vulnerability, and helping each other acquire emotional competencies (Rose & Asher, 1999b; Saarni, 1988, 1989).

Understanding emotions and friendship. Preschoolers' understanding of the causes and consequences of emotions already is differentiated by relationship (Dunn & Hughes, 1998). Understanding of emotions and others' minds is related to four-year-olds' positive interaction with friends—both child and friends' emotion knowledge contribute to cooperative shared pretend, low frequency of conflict, and successful communication (Dunn & Cutting, 1999). Child-friend conversation about emotion also is related to cooperative interaction (Brown, Donelan-McCall, & Dunn, 1996). Finally, positive play within friendships predicts understanding of mixed emotions at the end of the preschool period (Maguire & Dunn, 1997), suggestive of a bi-directional relation.

The shifting developmental tasks served by conversations between friends (Gottman & Mettetal, 1986) point to middle childhood as a time when friends may use emotion talk in various ways, specifically about the aspects of emotion understanding undergoing rapid development at this age—display rules, ambivalence, and complex emotions like guilt. First, friends' ubiquitous gossip allows them to mention potential insecurities without naming them, similar to earlier fantasy play (e.g., "I hate it when he 'blows up', don't you?"). Second, close

friendships challenge preadolescents to be helpful to the friend in need, to not respond in an ignoring or hostile way (Rose & Asher, 1999b). Friends' approval, sympathy, and affection could easily include emotion language. Emotion-colored accounts are compared, contrasted, and validated as friends help each other to sort out their shared and idiosyncratic feelings (Sullivan, 1953). Third, conflict processes also rear their not-necessarily-ugly head, with conversations replete with emotion talk about regulating anger, sadness, envy, jealousy, shame, guilt, and hurt feelings. Fourth, friends react to each other's emotions during their conversations. Reactions that comfort ("Don't worry about the test") and exhort ("Stop crying – everybody's looking!") may be pivotal in assisting the friend learn about emotions and feel generally positive, while conforming to group norms. Research on emotion-related aspects of elementary school-aged friends' conversation and behaviors, especially their relations to other aspects of their emotional competence, is sorely needed.

Where Do We Go From Here?

It should be obvious that much exciting work has been done, to show the ways in which emotional competence is an integral part of social competence. There also are many readily discernible ways to expand upon this work, primary among them to follow children's lives across time – what is the predictive power of emotional (in)competence? What happens to Gary, Ron, Huynh, and Jack? Only longitudinal study can spell out the significance of emotional development for children's long-term adaptation and settle issues about the direction of causality. Thus, although our evaluations may be somewhat biased, it seems clear that we must:

- Flesh out the dual roles of each relationship partner – parent, peer, and friend. That is, it is probably apparent to the reader of our exposition of parents' influence centered on socializing emotional competence, whereas discussion of peers and friends focused on the role of the child's emotional competence within such relationships. We need to know (1) how children's emotional competence in interaction with parents is related to successful parent-child relationships; and (2) how peers and friends act as socializers of other children's emotional competence. *What does Huynh learn about expressing emotions from Gary, or from Jack? Conversely, how does Gary's shrewdness about emotions play out in the transformations of his relationship with his father, as he nears adolescence?*
- Make more headway in the investigation of children's "live" experience of emotions, especially during preschool (e.g., Olthof & Engelberts-Vaske, 1997). *Was Jack really feeling so dominant in his bullying, or was that a "front"? What emotions does he experience and display in high school, and how do they affect his relationships?*
- Plumb the relation between use of display rules and social competence, despite the efforts of Zeman and Shipman (e.g., 1996); in fact, the union of investigation of social and emotional competence still lags, in our view. *What if Huynh hadn't managed to conceal his fear? What sort of peer relations and friendships would he have years later?*

- Investigate more thoroughly the emotional world of gradeschoolers, especially in comparison to more easily accessible preschoolers; more work on emotional/social competence links in middle childhood friendships is sorely needed. *Did Ron and Gary continue to use their emotional competence skills to the utmost with each other? Are they still friends in high school?*
- Examine these phenomena with minority and low SES children (with the exception of Garner's work, which often suggests that low SES, minority children's emotional competence milestones, and their socialization, often are similar to more affluent children's). *If the boys had been playing stickball in an inner city neighborhood, would they need the same or different emotional competence skills? And what would their trajectory be?*
- Uncover possible gender effects, going beyond main effects (which seem to be sparse); the ways in which emotional competence contributes to social competence may differ for boys and girls (but see Eisenberg, Fabes, et al., 1997). *What if the four children playing soccer had been girls?*
- Consider that emotional competence is not *always* beneficial for establishing and maintaining harmonious relationships. For example, even though a well-developed empathic sense might keep aggressors from attacking their victims, they might use it to enhance the maliciousness of their attacks (Sutton, Smith, & Swettenham, 1999). Similarly, developmental change in competence concerning envy, jealousy, and anger may influence social development negatively. *Did Jack's perceptive reading of peers' weaknesses allow him to become an ever more powerful thug?*

These specific needs must be addressed in future research. Steps toward rapprochement of peer and emotions subdisciplines are hopeful signs. For example, Lemerise and Arsenio's (2000) inclusion of emotions with their model of social information processing should spawn much fruitful work.

There also are more overarching areas needing attention. One problem area is cultural. Most of the studies reviewed so far come from the Western industrialized countries. This limits the generalizability of their results. *What if the four soccer players had been Nigerian? Or Chinese? How would "emotional competence" be different for the children?*

A further limitation is measurement-related. Many studies of gradeschoolers use self-report measures, especially in research on emotional competence with peers and friends. Self-reports are subject to biases, and may be influenced by gender-role concepts or cultural styles of self-presentation. Many investigations on emotional development in gradeschoolers' relationships use hypothetical vignettes, sometimes of questionable ecological validity. New, more ingenious, methods of self-report also can be devised. To measure experiencing and regulating, children could review videotapes of themselves, pressing a button when they were feeling (and showing or not showing) an emotion. They could describe their feelings and causes, as well as means of regulation. To measure expressiveness, children could view a videotape of social interaction, and press a button

when an affective message needed to be sent. They could be asked, as well, what message should be sent? Emotional reactions to others can be measured within “created” situations in the laboratory or within real social settings – e.g., helping an older confederate, consoling an adult, and discussing the experience during a post-event interview (Denham, 1986; Saarni, 1992). To measure understanding, a child could press a button when there is an affective message on videotape, and identify it.

Observational research covering a broad range of age groups and emotion-eliciting situations is especially needed for the joint study of peer influences and emotional development (e.g. Denham et al., in press; Underwood et al., 1999). For example, observed facial expressions of anger do not become less frequent across middle childhood, nor is a subtler variant substituted for the full anger expression, as might be expected (v. Salisch, 1997; cf. nonobservational studies, Zeman & Garber, 1996; Underwood et al., 1992).

We also must integrate inter- and intrapersonal aspects of emotional competence in our investigations, rather than centering on one or another, because bidirectionality can be assumed between them. For example, intrapersonal representations, such as lack of emotion understanding or a hostile attribution bias, may influence the expression of anger and hostility in interpersonal contexts, ultimately leading to peer rejection. Conversely, interpersonal practices, such as ample emotion talk in the family, are likely to promote children’s intrapersonal understanding of emotions. A transactional model that depicts the reciprocal influences between intra- and interpersonal features of emotional competence, both concurrently and longitudinally, is necessary.

Finally, we realize that at the interpersonal level, it is somewhat artificial to tease apart the differential influences of parents, peers, and friends because most children take part in each of these kinds of relationships. In addition, some influences may not be specific to one type of relationship. Nevertheless, differentiating between the emotion components of experience, expression, understanding, and regulation strategies, and tracing the influences of different interpersonal relationships on the development of the emotion components, seems to be a worthwhile undertaking for the future, considering how important emotions and relationships are to the participants.

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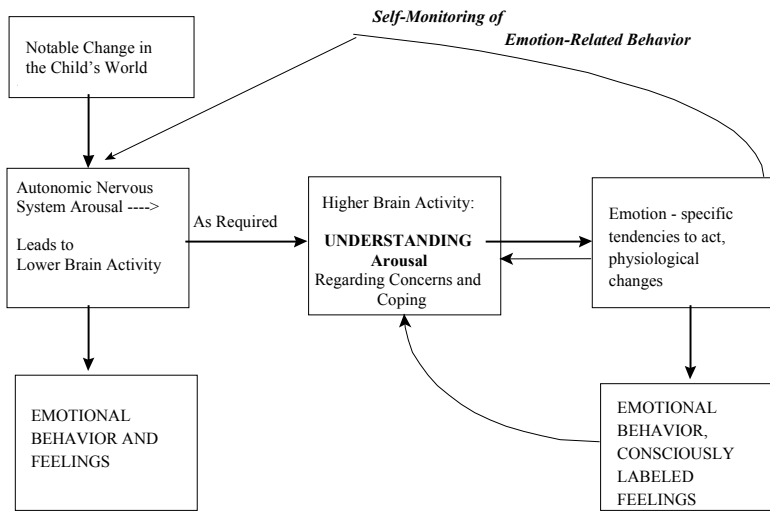


Figure 1. Emotional Experience

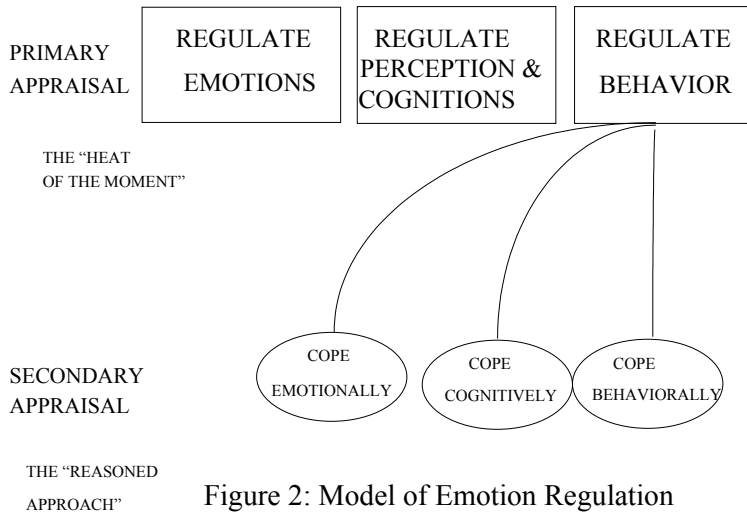


Figure 2: Model of Emotion Regulation