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As Stories Become Familiar: Mother-Child Conversations During Shared Reading

Duncan McArthur, Lauren B. Adamson,
and Deborah F. Deckner, *Georgia State University*

The interactions of 24-, 30-, and 36-month-old children and their mothers reading two initially unfamiliar books were observed three times over a 2-week period. Coding characterized both the content and the role of their utterances as they discussed the stories. Utterance content depended on child age but changed little with increasing story familiarity. Focus on narrative intangibles such as characters' feelings and explanations of actions increased from 24 to 30 months, and the number of children who asked questions about these intangibles also increased with age. In contrast, utterance role depended primarily on story familiarity and varied only slightly with child age. The implications of these findings for the child's emerging narrative competence are discussed.

Duncan McArthur, Lauren B. Adamson, and Deborah F. Deckner, Department of Psychology.

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Mothers' and Fathers' Attitudes Regarding Pretend Play in the Context of Imaginary Companions and of Child Gender

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Mothers' and fathers' beliefs and attitudes regarding pretend play were examined as a function of whether their children had imaginary companions and their children's gender. Parents (73 mothers, 40 fathers) were surveyed about their children's pretend play, their attitudes toward pretense, and the environments they provided for their children's pretense. Results revealed that parents of children with and without imaginary companions saw their children's play similarly. Girls were rated as engaging in more pretend play than boys, and mothers perceived pretend play more positively than fathers did. Results are discussed in terms of the relation between individual differences in children and parents' attitudes and in terms of the relation between parents' beliefs about pretend play and their gender roles.

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Hidden Shyness in Children: Discrepancies Between Self-Perceptions and the Perceptions of Parents and Teachers

Andrea L. Spooner and Mary Ann Evans, *University of Guelph*

Renata Santos, *Thames Valley Children's Centre*

Differences between children's self-ratings of shyness and ratings made by their teachers and primary caregivers were investigated in a sample of 90 self-reported shy schoolchildren between 10 and 12 years of age. Analyses revealed that correlations between children's own shyness ratings and those made by parents or teachers were low to moderate, suggesting a difficulty in the ability of others to accurately report on the degree of children's shyness. Furthermore, approximately one-third of self-reported shy children were labeled by parents and teachers as nonshy. These children, whose shyness went undetected, were found to have lower self-esteem and lower perceptions of academic competence. Thus it may be that parents and teachers have difficulty identifying a significant minority of children who self-identify as shy. In turn, this lack of recognition by adult caregivers may put such children at risk for deleterious outcomes.

Andrea Spooner and Mary Ann Evans, Department of Psychology; Renata Santos, Thames Valley Children's Centre.

This research was funded by a grant to the second author from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). We extend thanks to SSHRC and to the children, parents, and teachers who participated in the research. Parts of this paper were presented at meetings of the International Society for the Study of Behavioral Development and Society for Research in Child Development. This study was conducted by all authors when at the Department of Psychology, University of Guelph. Renata Santos is now at the Thames Valley Children's Centre, London, Ontario.

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Links Among Gender, Inhibition, and Parental Socialization in the Development of Prosocial Behavior

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Prosocial behavior encompasses sympathetic, helpful, and caring responses toward others. Temperamental characteristics and experiences of child rearing are associated with children's prosocial behavior. However, little research has examined the associations between prosocial behavior and either temperamental inhibition or paternal child rearing. This study examined the contributions of maternal and paternal parenting and inhibition at 2 years to displays of prosocial behavior toward mothers and unfamiliar adults by 46 male and 42 female preschoolers. There were no direct links between toddler inhibition or fathers' parenting and prosocial behavior 2 years later, although protective maternal parenting predicted prosocial behavior. Toddlers' inhibition and gender moderated the links between maternal parenting and prosocial behavior. Maternal parenting was most strongly predictive of the prosocial behavior of more highly inhibited girls, suggesting there may be temperament- and gender-specific pathways for the development of positive characteristics.

Paul D. Hastings, Department of Psychology; Kenneth H. Rubin, Department of Human Development; Laura DeRose, Department of Human Development.

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Parents' Causal Attributions Concerning Their Children's School Achievement: A Longitudinal Study

Katja Rytönen, Kaisa Aunola, and Jari-Erik Nurmi, *University of Jyväskylä*

The present study investigated the causes to which parents attribute their children's academic successes and failures during children's transition from preschool to primary school. It followed 182 mothers and 167 fathers of 207 children. The parents completed a questionnaire concerning their causal attributions, level of education, and parenting styles in the middle of the preschool year and during Grades 1 and 2. The children's performance in reading and mathematics was tested at the beginning of the preschool year. The results showed that, while the children were in preschool, parents attributed their children's success to ability and teaching. When the children moved to primary school, parents increasingly attributed their children's success to ability, whereas they typically attributed failure to lack of effort. Furthermore, the higher the level of performance the children showed, the more the parents attributed their children's success to ability and the less they attributed it to teaching.

Katja Rytönen, Kaisa Aunola, and Jari-Erik Nurmi, Department of Psychology.

This study is a part of the ongoing Jyväskylä Entrance into Primary School (JEPS) study and was funded by a grant from the Finnish Academy (63099). We would also like to express our gratitude to all the children participating in this study, as well as their preschool and primary school teachers and local school authorities.

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Mothers' and Preschoolers' Mental State Language During Reminiscing Over Time

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Mental state language during conversations about the past was assessed in a short-term longitudinal study. Twenty-one mother-child dyads discussed several previously experienced events when the children were 30 and 42 months old. Over time, children's mental term use—although quite low—did increase, and both mothers and children talked more about the process of remembering in their references to mental states. Neither mothers' nor children's mental term use correlated with measures of the children's verbal abilities. Only the children's and not mothers' early use of mental terms uniquely predicted children's later mental term use. Associations were also found between children's mental term use during reminiscing and their deliberate remembering of objects in a strategic memory task performed at 42 months.

David J. Rudek, Department of Psychology; Catherine A. Haden, Department of Psychology.

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