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RELATING CHILDREN'S SOCIAL COMPETENCE TO MATERNAL
BELIEFS AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES OF
PEER RELATIONSHIPS

by

Eryn D. Hamel

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Family and Human Development
Department: Family and Human Development

ABSTRACT

Relating Children's Social Competence to Maternal
Beliefs and Management Strategies of
Peer Relationships

by

Eryn D. Hamel, Master of Science
Utah State University, 1999

Major Professor: Dr. Shelley L. Knudsen Lindauer
Department: Family and Human Development

This study explored the links between maternal beliefs about the importance of children's social skills, modes of obtaining social skills, management strategies, and children's social competence. Subjects were 67 mothers whose 3- and 4-year-old children attended one of five preschools in Cache Valley, Utah. Mothers completed questionnaires assessing their beliefs about the importance of social skills, their beliefs about how children acquire social skills, and the ways they are involved in their children's peer relationships. Demographic measures were also completed by the mothers. Classroom teachers completed the Child Behavior Scale on every child in their class, regardless of maternal participation, in order to measure the child's social skills with peers.

The results showed that mothers who returned the questionnaires were significantly more likely to have children with lower social competence. Mothers

believed that social skills were important for preschool children and rated resolving conflicts, making friends, and sharing as more important than sticking-up for oneself or being a leader. Mothers were slightly more likely to believe that social skills were acquired as a result of innate characteristics. However, they were also more likely to choose an experience explanation for not being considerate of others' feelings and choose an innate explanation for children who were considerate of other children's feelings. When ranking modes of acquisition, mothers who chose an experience or teaching explanation were less likely to believe that social skills were influenced by innate characteristics of the child. Mothers who believed that children gain social skills through experience were also more likely to have children with lower social competence.

When testing the hypotheses, links between maternal beliefs about the importance of social skills, maternal management strategies, and children's social competence were not found. No differences were found between maternal beliefs or management strategies of mothers of 3-year-olds and mothers of 4-year-olds. There were also no statistically significant differences in mothers' beliefs or management strategies based upon children's gender. Children's age and gender were not found to be related to children's social competence.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The ability to maintain successful relationships may be the most important aspect of socialization (Hartup, 1989). The acquisition of social skills and the resulting degree of social competence are crucial parts of children's social development (Rubin, Mills, & Rose-Krasnor, 1989). Since children's first relationships are with their parents, parents are considered to be a major factor in socializing their children (Maccoby, 1992). Noting the importance of social development in children, it is necessary to explore the relationship between the family and the development of children's social competence.

In order to maintain peer relationships, children need to develop certain skills that are useful when interacting with others (Erwin, 1994). Children's knowledge of relationships is developed throughout the preschool years (Flannagan & Hardee, 1994). Within peer relationships, preschoolers add to their existing knowledge and skills as they interact with others (Miller, 1993). In order to assess how successful children are in their interactions with peers, some studies use sociometric status as a measure of social competence (Cohn, 1990). Researchers have shown that children who are more popular give more effective and competent solutions to peer conflict problems than do children who are less popular (Brochin & Wasik, 1992; Erwin, 1994). When asked by researchers how to make friends at a new school, unpopular children have also been shown to be less able than popular children to give ways to initiate friendships. The differences in the

proficiency of these skills in children have been shown to affect their relationships with peers (Erwin, 1994).

Another factor that may influence relationships is the previous relationship experience of the family. The first relationship that the child experiences is usually with the mother (Bowlby, 1969). In the early years, the infant forms an attachment with the mother, which is characterized by reciprocal interactions (Ainsworth, Bell, & Stayton, 1971). Through this relationship, the child internalizes interactions and develops an expectation of the quality of future relationships (Cohn, 1990). Therefore, if the relationship with the mother is positive, the child may be more positive in subsequent relationships with peers. The child may also learn styles of interactions, including responsiveness and communication, which may be applied to peer relationships (Kerns, Cole, & Andrews, 1998). Through the parent-child relationship, mothers play an important part in the social development of children. In addition, mothers may contribute to social development in other ways.

Mothers have been shown to influence children's social development by arranging for peer play (Kennedy, 1992), initiating and monitoring peer relations (Ladd & Golter, 1988), and social coaching (Pettit, Brown, Mize, & Lindsey, 1998). These are more direct ways of promoting children's relationships with peers. In general, these studies have demonstrated the importance of parental involvement in enhancing their children's social skills. However, findings are sometimes mixed in relation to different variables. For example, Bhavnagri and Parke (1991) found that younger children whose parents helped them in their play with peers were rated as more socially competent than younger

children whose parents did not direct their play. The older children were better able to interact with peers regardless of parental facilitation of play. These age differences may be a factor in the socialization by parents to promote social competence in children. Clearly, the ways in which parents help their children gain social skills are areas that need further research.

In sum, children's early interactions with family are important in the social development of the child. Therefore, it is necessary to examine additional family factors that are related to social competence in children in order to understand the processes and influences on development.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between social competence in children and mothers' beliefs about, and management of, social skills in their children. The investigation studied mothers' beliefs about the importance of social skills in preschoolers. The study also explored maternal beliefs about the acquisition of these skills. In addition to these beliefs, the ways in which mothers facilitate their child's interactions were examined. Finally, the relationship between mothers' beliefs, management of peer interactions, and children's social competence was investigated. Demographic factors, such as age, employment status, and education level of the mother, were also examined.

Conceptual Framework

Ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and attachment theory (Ainsworth et al., 1971; Bowlby, 1969;) guided this research. The hypothesis that the mother has an effect on the child's peer relationships comes from the idea that there are multiple contexts that influence a person's development (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). A child grows up with the influence of these different contexts. The first context, or the microsystem, is the environment of the individual person. This environment includes the relationships and activities in which the individual participates. For a child this includes the home, family members, peers, and preschool. The next level, the mesosystem, includes the connections between the settings, such as the home and preschool, of the individual. The exosystem is not directly related to the individual but affects the individual in some way. The parental workplace, for example, may indirectly affect the child. The macrosystem includes the subculture or the culture, in combination with the belief systems of those cultures. For example, families from different socioeconomic backgrounds also have different home lives, workplaces, and preschools (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Differences in socioeconomic status have been investigated in relation to parental beliefs and the quality of parent-child interaction (Rubin & Mills, 1992). In this study, authoritarian parenting, including the use of directive strategies for socialization, was predicted by lower socioeconomic status. It was found that socioeconomic status may have had an influence on mothers' beliefs about the ways to socialize children. In addition, Rubin and Mills (1992, p. 47) concluded by saying, "Given that beliefs may

mediate parental behaviors and may themselves be influenced by socioecological factors, there is a high probability that these phenomena play a role in the development of social competence.” In addition to the contexts related to the social development of the child, attachment theory is helpful in explaining the relationship between the parent and the child’s social development.

Attachment theory was formulated through the work of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. In contributing to attachment theory, Bowlby developed the basic ideas, and Ainsworth worked to empirically test those ideas (Bretherton, 1995). Bowlby was interested in the behaviors of young children when separated from and reunited with their caregivers, most often the mother. He noticed there was a tie between mother and child and studied the development and behaviors associated with this tie (see Bowlby, 1969). Bowlby proposed that attachment behavior was biological, based upon the infant’s need for protection and survival (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). Behaviors such as crying and clinging help to keep the mother close to the infant. Bowlby’s ideas about attachment have had an even greater influence because of the empirical findings of Ainsworth (Bretherton, 1995).

Ainsworth studied the development of infant-mother attachment (Ainsworth et al., 1971). The quality of the early relationship between infant and caregiver has been shown to affect later relationships. The child forms an expectation of qualities of the relationship and applies that knowledge to later relationships with others (Bartholomew, 1993). Patterns of attachment emerge from studies using the Strange Situation. A securely attached infant actively explores the environment while using the mother as a

safe base, gets upset upon the mother's departure, and greets the mother upon return (Ainsworth et al., 1971). An infant with an insecure-avoidant attachment explores the environment without using the mother as a safe base, does not get upset when the mother departs, and does not greet the mother upon her return. An infant showing the insecure-ambivalent pattern of behavior clings to the mother instead of exploring, gets very upset upon her departure, and is ambivalent upon her return. This infant seeks proximity upon the mother's return, but also pushes away when the mother tries to pick up the infant (Ainsworth et al., 1971). These findings from attachment theory have led researchers to examine how the early relationship with the mother relates to later social development.

Researchers have examined the quality of the parent-child relationship in relation to peer relationships (Cohn, 1990; Kerns et al., 1998; Sroufe, 1983; Youngblade & Belsky, 1992). In one study, Sroufe (1983) found that securely attached children were more socially competent than insecurely attached children. Another finding showed that children's relationships with friends were more positive when the relationship with their parents was more positive (Youngblade & Belsky, 1992). These findings provide support for the importance of a link between the parent-child relationship and children's social relationships. Both ecological theory and attachment theory help provide a viewpoint from which to examine factors relating to the development of social skills in children.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will examine a number of issues related to the family and its relation to children's social development. First, factors that influence parental beliefs about child development will be discussed. Next, there will be a review of the literature on the relation between maternal beliefs and children's social development. A third area of review will be the influence of family factors on social competence. Finally, the relation between maternal beliefs about social development and the management strategies that they use in their children's peer relationships will be explored.

Factors Influencing Beliefs about Child Development

In this section, factors that may influence beliefs that parents have about child development will be reviewed. Some factors related to effective parenting are family socioeconomic status (SES) and maternal education level (Fox, Platz, & Bentley, 1995). Child variables, such as age of the child, behaviors of the child, and the child's gender, will be reviewed.

Parental Characteristics

The beliefs that parents have about their children may be influenced by broader situational factors (Rubin & Mills, 1992). Several researchers have investigated the links between the socioeconomic status of parents and other parental characteristics. For instance, Fox et al. (1995) examined the relations between SES and parenting practices.

These researchers found that mothers from higher SES backgrounds had lower developmental expectations, such as feeding oneself, for their children than did lower SES mothers. Another finding was that higher SES mothers used less discipline and more nurturing strategies with their children than mothers with lower SES. The use of discipline was associated with higher developmental expectations. In addition, the relation between high socialization goals, such as caring about others, and increased discipline suggests that some parents see discipline as an appropriate way to foster these goals (Fox et al., 1995). The differences in the way that parents socialize their children and the emphasis they place on developmental goals may influence child outcomes (Kuczynski & Kochanska, 1995).

In addition to developmental expectations, SES may influence the expectations that the parents have for independence. Flannagan and Hardee (1994) studied the conversations between 77 mothers and their 4-year-old children about the child's day at preschool. It was found that middle SES mothers talked more about situations where the child was working without help from the teacher than did mothers with low SES status. Middle SES children discussed this issue more than low SES children, as well. It may be that mothers in a middle SES situation are more interested in their children doing activities without teacher help than low SES mothers (Flannagan & Hardee, 1994).

Related to SES, an important factor involved when looking at the context of parenting is maternal education. The amount of education a mother has may influence her parenting practices. For instance, Fox et al. (1995) demonstrated that mothers who attained a college education were less likely to use discipline, specifically corporal

punishment, and more likely to use positive nurturing practices with their children than mothers with a high school education. Mothers with a college education were also less likely than mothers with a high school education to report that their children had behavior problems (Fox et al., 1995). Situational factors, such as SES and maternal education, may influence how the mother interacts with her child.

Factors of Children

When examining parental beliefs, it is important to look at individual differences in children and the effects these differences have on parents (Dunn, 1993). Kuczynski and Kochanska (1995) examined the effect of children's age on maternal expectations. The researchers found that as age increased, mothers focused their attention on social issues, and placed less emphasis on physical care.

With mothers' increased interest in the social arena as children grow older, differences can be seen between parents of younger and older children. Bhavnagri and Parke (1991) studied 70 children and their parents to explore the relation between parental facilitation of peer play and children's social competence. The children were divided into a younger group (2 years, 2 months to 3 years, 6 months) and an older group (3 years, 7 months to 5 years, 11 months) to examine age differences. The researchers found that for younger children, in comparison with older children, parents supervised peer interactions more closely and were more active in their supervision. Also, parents with younger children arranged for friends to play more often than parents with older children (Bhavnagri & Parke, 1991). Parents may have involved themselves in their

children's peer relationships based upon the competence level of their child. Bhavnagri and Parke (1991) found that older children were more competent than younger children when it came to interacting with peers. Younger children were more uneasy toward peers and passively observed a peer more than older children. The age differences of the children may influence how the parents facilitate peer relationships.

Another influence that age may have is on mothers' beliefs about social skills. Mize, Pettit, and Brown (1995) studied mothers' beliefs about the importance and acquisition of social skills in relation to their perceptions of children's social competence and strategies to help children's peer problems. The 76 mothers of 3- to 5-year-old children filled out questionnaires about these variables. The researchers found that mothers of 3-year-old children believed that their children's disposition was a more significant cause of their social behavior than did mothers of 4-year-olds. Mothers of 4- and 5-year-olds viewed experience as more influential on social behavior than mothers of 3-year-olds (Mize et al., 1995). This may provide evidence that mothers believe that experience affects behavior more than age-related factors as their children get older.

Another variable of interest is the gender of the child. One finding, that mothers conversed more often with their daughters than mothers did with their sons, emphasizes the differences between boys and girls (Laird, Pettit, Mize, Brown, & Lindsey, 1994). In a similar study, Flannagan and Hardee (1994) found that a greater percentage of mothers and daughters discussed shared activities, such as playing with a peer, while mothers and sons discussed comparisons of the child with a peer, such as the child knowing letters that

others did not. These findings show that parents emphasize different aspects of peer relationships for boys and girls.

Research has shown that there are many influences on parental beliefs depending on the context of the individual. The studies explore certain aspects of child development and behavior and how these aspects vary as a function of child and parental characteristics. Children's age and competence have been studied in relation to parental encouragement of peer relations (Bhavnagri & Parke, 1991). However, this study measures the child's competence only in the context of the interactions between parent, child, and one peer during the observational play sessions. The child's overall competence with peers is not measured. In another study, Mize et al. (1995) studied parents' beliefs about children's social skills and parents perception of social competence, but did not study children's competence with peers. In order to examine possible connections between these two areas of study, the present study assessed children's competence with classroom peers in relation to management strategies of peer relationships and beliefs that parents hold about social skills.

Maternal Beliefs about Social Development

Although there is continued interest in research related to parenting and child development, social development and parental beliefs are areas in which there is little research (Rubin & Mills, 1990). The two categories of previous research on parental beliefs are beliefs about child development and beliefs about the timing of aspects of development (Miller, 1988). However, there has been a growing interest in examining

the relation between parental beliefs about social development and how those beliefs relate to the social development in the child (Mills & Rubin, 1990).

Parents have varying beliefs about how social skills develop in their children. Researchers have explored several factors, such as genes, environment, and parental teaching, that are thought to account for the acquisition of social skills. Research has shown that mothers of preschool children believed that direct teaching or innate characteristics were less influential on social skills than experience with others (Ahn, 1997; Mize et al., 1995). Similarly, differences in the success of regular or special education children were related to the attributions of skills to different factors (Himmelstein, Graham, & Weiner, 1991). Mothers were asked to rate the success of their children in academics, social skills, and personality and indicate the degree to which their child's performance was determined by genetics, environment, or child-rearing practices. This study found that mothers of low success regular children were more likely than mothers of high success regular children to believe that the environment influenced their children's behavior. Mothers of special education children attributed their child's acquisition of skills to the environment while mothers of regular children reported that parenting was the influential factor in their child's behavior.

Researchers have also explored the relation between maternal beliefs and child characteristics in a study of average, aggressive, and withdrawn children. Rubin and Mills (1990) discovered that mothers of average and aggressive children were less likely than mothers of withdrawn children to blame themselves for their children's inability to act appropriately in social situations. However, mothers of withdrawn children believed

more often that a trait in their children was responsible for their lack of social competence (Rubin & Mills, 1990). The mothers of withdrawn children gave conflicting messages about factors influencing development of social skills. It could be that parents are not sure within themselves what influences their child's social behavior. It also could be that parents attribute different factors as influencing different social behaviors. For example, mothers may attribute their children's withdrawal to lack of parental teaching, but they would attribute aggression to a trait in the child. The pathways between the beliefs of mothers and children's social behaviors are still unclear. The beliefs of mothers concerning attributions of social skills needs further research.

Mize et al. (1995) have found a relation between mothers' beliefs and skills of their child. Mothers were asked to fill out questionnaires about their own beliefs about the importance and modifiability of social skills and their own children's social competence. The researchers found that mothers believed that parenting affects social development when they perceive their children as socially competent. These mothers also believed that it was important for their young children to have social skills (Mize et al., 1995). Mothers who perceive their children as less competent may believe that other factors, such as innate factors, are more influential on social skills than parenting efforts and experience with peers, while mothers with socially competent children tend to believe that parenting efforts and experience have positive effects on children's social skills. These findings are similar to research by Rubin et al. (1989), where mothers filled out similar questionnaires to the study above, but social competence was measured through observations at preschool. The findings suggest that mothers who believe social

skills are important and believe that parenting or peer play positively affects social skills have children who are more socially competent.

The previous research shows that mothers have different views on what influences acquisition of their children's social skills. Researchers are only beginning to understand maternal beliefs in connection to children's social development. Previous studies have attempted to find links between mothers' beliefs about the importance and acquisition of social skills in relation to children's social competence. In addition, it is important to understand how mothers' beliefs relate to the strategies they use to promote their children's social skills. The present study examined relations between children's social competence, the beliefs that mothers have about social development, and mother's management strategies of their children's peer relationships.

Family Influence and Social Competence

The impact of the family on the social relationships of children can be categorized into two modes of influence. Researchers suggest that parents indirectly and directly influence their children's social behavior (Parke, MacDonald, Beitel, & Bhavnagri, 1988). Indirect means of influence affect the social skills of the child, but the parent is not purposely helping the child with peer relations. When the parent is actively working to manage the child's relationships, this is considered to be a direct influence. The influence of these two pathways on a child's social competence will be presented.

Indirect Influences

Indirect influences on children's peer relationships include aspects of the parent-child relationship and the family environment (Ladd, Le Sieur, & Profilet, 1993). The quality of the parent-child relationship, including attachment, can be found in the literature as an influential component to children's social competence. Parenting styles are also included as indirect influences.

In a review of socialization literature, Maccoby (1992) found that a major assumption was that the interaction between parent and child affects the later social behavior of the child. Researchers have studied aspects of interaction, such as relationship quality, in relation to child outcomes. For example, Mize and Pettit (1997) explored the interactional style between mother and child through observation of play, along with mother's ability to discuss videotaped vignettes with their 3- to 6-year-old children. Children's social skills were assessed through teacher ratings and sociometric status. The researchers found that the quality of the parent-child relationship, and in particular, responsive and reciprocal exchanges, was related to measures of children's social competence and peer acceptance. Moreover, they demonstrated that the measure of responsive and reciprocal interactions during the laboratory play session was an important component in assessing relationship quality in relation to the development of children's social skills (Mize & Pettit, 1997).

Another measure of the quality of the parent-child relationship is attachment behavior. Attachment theorists believe that parent-child relationships are important beginnings for later relationships (Putallaz, Costanzo, & Klein, 1993). A recent study by

Youngblade and Belsky (1992) examined the mother-child attachment quality at age 1 and age 3 in relation to the child's close relationship with a friend at age 5. It was hypothesized that secure parent-child relationships at age 1 and 3 would be related with positive relationships with friends at age 5. This hypothesis was supported by the finding that securely attached children at age 1 had close and synchronous peer relationships at age 5. This suggests that children gain social knowledge based upon previous relationships with their mothers (Youngblade & Belsky, 1992). Peer relationships are enhanced through positive parent-child relationships as well as certain parenting styles.

Parenting styles and the influences on children's development constitute an area of considerable research. Recently, Maccoby (1992) asked, "Can one trace trajectories in which early parenting styles set a given parent-child relationship in a given direction so that its subsequent characteristics are predictable?" (p. 1014). Even with current research in this area, there are many unanswered questions. However, in the research on the relation between parenting styles and children's social competence there are several interesting findings.

Researchers have explored certain styles of parenting. Baumrind (1973) studied the effects of parenting on children's instrumental competence. The constructs of authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles are a result of her work. Authoritative parents promote prosocial development by encouraging a democratic atmosphere, characterized by the use of reasoning and explanation. Authoritarian parents believe in blind obedience to rules and in restricting children's independence. Permissive parents are accepting of children's behaviors and children are free to make their own

choices. These patterns of parenting may lead to differences in children's social competence. For instance, when mothers placed an early focus on the way they expected their children to act and when these behaviors were of benefit to others, the children were more socially competent at a later age (Kuczynski & Kochanska, 1995). Moreover, mothers who were democratic and child-oriented, who encouraged decision-making, and who used little punishment had children who were more socially competent (Abell, Clawson, Washington, Bost, & Vaughn, 1996).

Research suggests that differences in parenting styles may indirectly influence the child's social competence. In addition, it is possible to see the various influences that environment and parental attitudes have on the development of the child. It is also interesting to examine the ways in which parents directly promote their children's development.

Direct Influences

Parents can directly influence their children's peer relationships in a number of ways. Parents influence the child's environment, arrange for peer play, supervise peer play, and talk to their children about relationships (Ladd et al., 1993). Through these methods parents are managing their children's relationships by the choices that they make for their children.

Parents differ in the amount of effort they put into helping their children with peer relationships. Some parents rely on siblings to interact together while others invite friends to play. Ladd and Golter (1988) found that parents who helped their children

maintain friendships had children with a greater variety and number of friends. A similar finding by Kennedy (1992), measured by observation, showed a relation between the amount of play opportunities promoted by the parents and children's social competence. Another measure of social competence in this study was sociometric status. The researcher found that parents who encouraged peer play had children who were more popular with peers. It seems that by arranging opportunities for playing with friends, the parents may be helping children to develop social skills (Kennedy, 1992).

Another way parents try to influence their children is through supervision. Finnie and Russell (1988) noted that supervising preschool children's peer play is a likely role of the mother and a common part of socialization during this time period. In fact, parents monitor their children's play with peers 94% of the time. Within the category of monitoring, differences can be found.

Ladd and Golter (1988) described two types of parental monitoring in their study of the relation between parental monitoring and preschool children's peer relations. Indirect parental monitoring was defined as the parents knowing what the children were doing but with no direct involvement in the activities. When the parents were directly monitoring, they were present or involved in play with the children. Parents recorded in logs the frequency of their child's peer contacts and the extent to which the parent was involved. Interviewers called the parents to obtain the information in the logs. Teachers filled out a measure of social competence on the children. The researchers found that children's social competence was enhanced by indirect monitoring and inhibited by direct monitoring. According to the researchers, it may be that parents with competent children

are confident that the children can play by themselves whereas parents of less competent children feel they need to assist the children in their play (Ladd & Golter, 1988). In support of this, Laird et al. (1994) found that mothers tend to encourage peer relationships when their children are less competent.

Another way mothers directly influence peer relationships is by talking to their children about these relationships. Mothers who try to teach social skills to their children through conversations influence the child's social competence. In a study examining these conversations, Laird et al. (1994) used telephone interviews to gain information about the conversations between mothers and children about peer relationships. Children's social competence was assessed through teacher ratings and sociometric status. The researchers found that social competence was predicted by the degree of maternal advice-giving during conversations about peers (Laird et al., 1994). In a study mentioned earlier by Mize and Pettit (1997), the degree to which mothers actively helped children interpret and understand videotaped social situations was also related to social competence in children (Mize & Pettit, 1997). Based on these findings, peer relationships seem to benefit when parents discuss social situations with children.

The existing literature on management of children's peer experiences shows that there are differences in the ways in which parents influence competence. The next step for this study was to explore the link between the beliefs that parents have and how these beliefs influence management of social interactions.

The Relations Between Maternal Beliefs about Social
Skills and Management of Children's Relationships

The relation between parental beliefs and behaviors is complex (Goodnow, 1988). Sigel (1992) commented that although it is common to think that one's beliefs will affect actions, it is difficult to find data to support this view. For example, Mize et al. (1995) expected to find links between mothers' beliefs about how a child acquires social skills and the quality of supervision of their 3- to 5-year-old child's peer play. A statistically significant relationship was not found, suggesting a more complicated interaction than expected.

Researchers have indirectly studied the belief-behavior link in their research on parental beliefs about aggression and social withdrawal (Mills & Rubin, 1990; Rubin & Mills, 1990). There have been several findings of interest. For example, mothers who believed that social withdrawal was caused by a trait in their child were less likely to try to change the child's behavior. Another finding was that mothers who believed it was important to teach children how to act, also believed in rewards and punishment in order to influence their child's behavior (Rubin & Mills, 1990). These links between maternal beliefs and maternal behavior are only the beginning of understanding belief-behavior processes.

In a recent study, Ahn (1997) examined the relation between maternal beliefs about social skills and the mother's management of peer relationships in a Korean sample. Ahn found that mothers who reported that social skills were important and

affected by direct teaching were more likely to manage their children's peer interactions. This research provides support for the belief-behavior connection.

With limited research on this topic, it is difficult to understand the relation between the mothers' beliefs and peer management behavior. Further research is necessary to discover connections in this area of parenting.

Summary and Hypotheses

Previous research has shown that mothers are an important part of children's social development, and that mothers' beliefs about social skills and the modes of attaining social skills relates with children's social competence (Rubin et al., 1989). The relation between mothers' management strategies of peer relationships and children's social competence has also been studied (Ladd & Golter, 1988). With the exception of Ahn (1997), previous studies have not examined the relation between mothers' beliefs about social skills, mothers' management strategies, and children's social competence. The present study extended the research conducted by Ahn (1997) by using an American sample. Age and gender of children were examined in relation to the beliefs that mothers have about social development regarding the importance and acquisition of social skills. This study also examined the ways in which mothers are involved with their children's peer relationships. The relation between mothers' beliefs, management of peer relationships, and children's social competence was also explored using the following hypotheses:

Ho 1a: There will be no relation between maternal beliefs about the importance of social skills and social competence in children.

Ho 1b: There will be no relation between maternal beliefs about the modes of obtaining social skills and social competence in children.

Ho 2: There will be no relation between maternal management strategies and social competence in children.

Ho 3: There will be no relation between maternal beliefs about social skills and management strategies.

Ho 4: There will be no relation between children's age and maternal beliefs about social skills or maternal management strategies.

Ho 5: There will be no relation between children's age and children's social competence.

Ho 6: There will be no relation between children's gender and maternal beliefs about social skills or maternal management strategies.

Ho 7: There will be no relation between children's gender and children's social competence.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Research Design and Sample

The design for this study was correlational and cross-sectional. The sample was drawn from children who attended a half-day program in one of five preschools in Cache Valley, Utah. A total of 67 mothers participated in the study. The sample consisted of 41 mothers with male children (61% of the sample) and 26 mothers of female children (39% of the sample). Thirty percent of the sample consisted of mothers of 3-year-olds while the remaining 70% of the sample were mothers of 4-year-olds. Children's ages ranged from 37 months to 59 months ($M = 51.78$, $SD = 6.08$). All mothers in the sample were married. The ages of the mothers ranged from 22 years to 46 years ($M = 32$ years, $SD = 5.65$). Twenty-nine (43.3%) mothers worked outside of the home, for an average of 23.6 hours per week (Range = 2-50 hours per week, $SD = 14.11$). Mothers in the sample were well educated with 43.9% attaining a bachelor's degree and all mothers reporting at least a high school education (see Table 1).

SES was calculated using Hollingshead's Four Factor Index of Social Status (Hollingshead, 1975). With this measure, a score is assigned to families based upon the education level and occupation of the employed members. The possible score ranges from 8 to 66 with social strata ranging from major business and professional to unskilled laborers. The families in this sample ranged in scores from 30 to 66 ($M = 51.5$, $SD =$

Table 1

Mother's Education Level

Highest level of education	Frequency	Percent
High school diploma	3	5
Trade school	5	7
College, no degree	12	18
Associate's degree	6	9
Bachelor's degree	29	44
Master's degree	9	14
Ph.D.	2	3
Total	66	100

9.4). Of the respondents, 31.8% were classified as major business and professional range, while 56.1% were medium business and minor professional range. The remaining 12.1% of the families were in the skilled craftsmen and sales worker strata. None of the families were classified in the semiskilled or unskilled laborers strata.

Data Collection

The directors of five half-day preschools were contacted and asked if they would be willing to allow their school to participate in the study. These five preschools were selected based upon several similarities. In addition to being half-day preschools, these schools are known for a high quality of care and a child-centered, socially oriented atmosphere. These preschools have been willing to participate in previous research and provided a large number of preschool children from which to draw the sample.

Following director approval, the study was explained to the teachers of the classes. After agreement was given by the teachers, a packet was sent home to mothers of children in the class. This packet contained a letter describing the study, consent forms, and questionnaires. Each packet was assigned a code number designated by the researcher. Teachers received questionnaires to complete for each child in their classes, regardless of parent participation. The teacher questionnaires had the same code as the maternal questionnaires, so that the researcher could match the questionnaires when returned. Mothers returned their responses to the researcher in a stamped, preaddressed envelope. After 10 days, a reminder letter was sent to all parents. After picking up the teacher questionnaires, each classroom teacher was given a token of appreciation by the researcher.

Subjects from the Child Development Laboratory included eight 3-year-olds (6 males, 2 females) and twenty-two 4-year-olds (12 males, 10 females). The return rate for this school was 60%. For Children's House, eight questionnaires were returned. There were three 3-year-olds (1 male, 2 females) and five 4-year-olds (4 males, 1 female). This represented a return rate of 22%. Seven mothers from the Montessori school returned questionnaires, including four mothers of 3-year-olds (3 males, 1 female) and three mothers of 4-year-olds (3 males, 0 females). The return rate for the Montessori school was 19%. Out of 32 questionnaires sent to mothers at Melody Lane preschool, 14 were returned. This represented a return rate of 44%. The subjects were one male 3-year-old and thirteen 4-year-olds (7 males, 6 females). The subjects from Bright Beginnings preschool included four 3-year-olds (3 males, 1 female) and four 4-year-olds (1 male, 3

females). The calculated return rate for this preschool was 44 %. Out of 173 total questionnaires distributed to mothers, 67 mothers returned questionnaires. The overall return rate for the sample was 39%. The extremely low return rate for two out of the five preschools and the high return rate for the Child Development Lab may be due to several factors. Perhaps mothers from the Child Development Lab understand that research is a part of the overall lab program, whereas the mothers of the other preschools may not be interested in taking the time to read the introductory letter and making decisions about participation. Once mothers read the introduction letter, the length of the questionnaires and amount of thought that was required to fill out the measures may have discouraged mothers from participating. Another factor may be the time of year that the questionnaires were distributed. They were distributed within two weeks of the end of the preschool, which is a busy time for both teachers and parents. In addition, mothers may have been more willing to participate if they were given an incentive for the time required to fill out the measures. Any one or several of these factors may have accounted for the low rate of return.

Measurement

The classroom teachers filled out a measure of social competence for every child in the class, regardless of maternal participation. The mothers filled out four different questionnaires. In one questionnaire they answered questions related to the importance of social skills. In a second questionnaire, mothers responded to questions concerning their

beliefs about how social skills are acquired. In another questionnaire, they responded to questions about the ways they encourage relationship skills in their children. A final form was a demographic measure for the mothers to complete.

Teacher Rating of Social Competence

The Child Behavior Scale, developed by Ladd and Profilet (1996; see Appendix A), was used by the teachers to rate each child's social competence. This measure has 59 items, which identify children's behavior with peers. The items are divided into six subscales, for example Aggressive Behavior with Peers or Prosocial Behavior with Peers. The teachers rate descriptions of the child (e.g., Kind toward peers; Is disobedient; Tells lies) using a 1 (doesn't apply), 2 (applies sometimes), or a 3 (certainly applies). The range of possible scores for this measure is 59 to 177, with higher scores representing lower social competence. Generally, for ease of interpretation the scores would be reversed, resulting in a higher score representing higher social competence. In order to compare the present study with the study by Ahn (1997), the researcher chose to have the higher scores represent lower social competence. Using Cronbach's alpha, Ladd and Profilet have estimated the internal consistency of each subscale. The range of values reported across two cohorts and two assessments is: Aggressive with Peers (.89 - .92), Asocial with Peers (.87 - .89), Anxious-Fearful (.77 - .79), Hyperactive-Distractible (.88 - .93), Prosocial with Peers (.91 - .92), Excluded by Peers (.93 - .96). The subscales have also been shown to be relatively stable over time (Ladd & Profilet, 1996). The CBS was administered in the fall and the spring to both cohorts in order to obtain these stability

coefficients: Aggressive with Peers ($r = .69, .71$), Asocial with Peers ($r = .54, .59$), Anxious-Fearful ($r = .59, .68$), Hyperactive-Distractible ($r = .82, .83$), Prosocial with Peers ($r = .62, .65$), Excluded by Peers ($r = .72, .67$). The researchers report that validity of the CBS is supported because the subscales related less strongly to measures of dissimilar behaviors and more strongly to similar behavior measures (Ladd & Profilet, 1996). For example, in Cohort 1 the Prosocial with Peers subscale was negatively correlated with the subscales Aggressive with Peers ($r = -.65$), Hyperactive-Distractible ($r = -.57$), and Excluded by Peers ($r = -.46$). In addition, the subscale Aggressive with Peers was positively correlated with the Hyperactive-Distractible subscale ($r = .57$), both of which were designed to assess externalizing behaviors.

Maternal Beliefs about the Importance of Social Skills

Mothers' beliefs about social skills were assessed using a measure developed by Mize et al. (1995; see Appendix B). In this instrument, five nonsocial skills items and six social skills items are rated by mothers, and are used to determine the importance placed on these skills by mothers. The mothers rate each item (e.g., "How important is it for preschool children to learn to be well-liked by other children their own age?") on a Likert scale from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). The sum of the scores on these items represents the importance of social skills. The possible range of scores is 6 to 30. The nonsocial skills are meant to disguise the meaning of the questionnaire and are not analyzed. Mize et al. (1995) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .64 for internal consistency of this measure.

Maternal Beliefs about Modes of Obtaining Social Skills

Mize et al. (1995; see Appendix C) developed a measure to assess beliefs about the causes of behaviors. This measure contains stories of children with positive or negative skills or behaviors. Three stories are related to cognitive or physical areas, while eight stories are related to peer interactions. For example, "Bob is really good at making friends with other children his own age. What might account for Bob's skill at friendship making?" The responses are (a) Bob has had many opportunities to play with other children, (b) Bob is naturally friendly and outgoing, (c) Someone showed Bob how to make friends. Mothers rate the order from most likely (1) to least likely (3) that these attributes contribute to the child's behavior. By doing this, mothers choose whether each behavior is influenced by experience, innate ability, or direct teaching. The values are reverse scored and summed across the positive and negative aspects of the behavior so that the mode with the highest score represents the most likely mode. The possible range of each mode is 8 to 24. Cronbach's alpha to assess internal consistency was reported for each category of acquisition. Coefficients of .87, .71, and .76 were reported by Mize et al. (1995) for innate characteristics, experience, and direct teaching, respectively.

Maternal Management Strategies of Peer Relationships

The Parental Involvement Checklist (Cohen, 1989; see Appendix D) was used to assess the ways in which mothers were involved in their children's relationships with

peers. The items in the checklist represent strategies that mothers use in order to enhance their children's social skills. Therefore, the term maternal management strategies was used for this study to refer to the behaviors assessed by this measure. Four subscales were determined based upon the 27 items. The subscales include: the amount of maternal advice to children about problems with peers (Advice and Support), the strategies when helping children resolve problems with peers (High-Concern Involvement), mothers' attempts to arrange for peer play (Orchestration), and the amount of monitoring of their children during peer interaction (Monitoring). Mothers report on a scale from 1 (never) to 6 (several times per week), the frequency within the last month with which they were involved in each activity (e.g., Given your child advice about how to initiate a friendship; Kept track of your child's whereabouts and playmates). The possible range of scores is 27 to 162. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were reported by Cohen as .87 for Advice and Support, .80 for High-Concern Involvement, .71 for Orchestration, and .61 for Monitoring.

Demographic Questionnaire

This questionnaire asked participants to provide information about the mother's age, marital status, level of education of mother and father, and occupation of parents. There were also questions about the ages and genders of the children in the family (see Appendix E).

Ethical Considerations

This study was submitted to the Institutional Review Board for Protection of Human Subjects at Utah State University for approval. The teachers and parents of the children were informed about the procedures and purpose of the study (see Appendix F & G). They were told that the study was voluntary and that they could stop participating at any time. A promise of confidentiality was made. The data, which were combined and reported in group form, were only used for this study. Informed consent forms were required from the participating parents and teachers.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The major findings, in addition to descriptive statistics, are presented in this chapter. First, the mean and standard deviation related to scores of children's social competence are provided. Then, results concerning maternal beliefs about social skills, including importance of social skills and modes of obtaining social skills, are presented. Next, descriptive statistics, including the ranges and mean scores, are given for maternal management strategies. The coefficients for reliabilities of measures are also reported. Finally, the results of hypotheses testing are examined.

Overall Findings

Children's Social Competence

For the measure of children's social competence, scores ranged from 59 to 117 (see p. 27 for possible range). The computed Cronbach's alpha for the Child Behavior Scale was .93. The mean score for the sample was 80.43 ($SD = 14.07$). In order to compare results with Ahn (1997; Range = 59-120, $M = 82.91$, $SD = 14.26$) higher scores on this measure represented children's lower social competence. Because of the low return rate, a t test was used to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between the social skills of children whose mothers returned the questionnaires and children whose mothers did not return the questionnaires. It was found that mothers who did not return the questionnaires had children who were

statistically significantly more socially competent than children whose mothers returned the questionnaire packet, $t(170) = -2.45, p < .02$.

Maternal Beliefs about Social Skills

In the questionnaire concerning mothers' beliefs about the importance of social skills, the mothers' ratings of six social skills were used to determine the value mothers placed on social skills. A higher score indicated that the mother placed a greater importance on social skills. The range of scores for this study was 15 to 30 (see p. 28 for possible range), with a mean of 23.40 ($SD = 2.99$). Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .62, which is consistent with Mize et al. (1995). Overall, mothers believed that social skills were moderately to fairly important. When entering the data, the researcher noticed differences in ratings based upon the type of social skill. Therefore, the mean score of each social skill was examined in relation to the other social skills to determine whether significant differences existed. A statistically significant difference between the means was found, $F(1,62) = 9.52, p < .003$. The results of Fisher's least significant difference procedure are shown in Table 2. This table shows that the social skills of being able to resolve conflicts, being able to share, and being able to make friends were not found to be statistically significantly different from each other. These three social skills were rated statistically significantly higher than being able to stick up for oneself and learning to be well-liked by others. In addition, being able to stick-up for oneself and learning to be well liked by others were not statistically significantly different from each other but they were statistically significantly higher than being a leader among peers,

which was rated statistically significantly lower than the other five social skills. The social skills that mothers rated as more important than other skills are shown as percentages in Table 3. This table shows that 92.5% of mothers gave resolving conflicts a score of 5 (Very Important) or 4 (Moderately Important), making this social skill the highest rated skill.

Table 2

Results of Fisher's LSD for Social Skills

Social skills		Mean difference	Std. error	p
Friends	Sharing	4.76	.09	.59
	Leader	1.80	.14	.00
	Well-liked	1.00	.10	.00
	Resolving conflicts	-.14	.12	.26
	Sticking-up	.76	.15	.00
Sharing	Leader	1.85	.13	.00
	Well-liked	1.05	.11	.00
	Resolving conflicts	-8.73	.10	.38
	Sticking-up	.81	.13	.00
Leader	Well-liked	-.80	.14	.00
	Resolving conflicts	-1.94	.14	.00
	Sticking-up	-1.04	.15	.00
Well-liked	Resolving conflicts	-1.14	.11	.00
	Sticking-up	-.24	.13	.07
Resolving conflicts	Sticking-up	.90	.13	.00

Table 3

Mothers' Ratings of Social Skills

Maternal rating	Resolving conflicts	Sharing	Making friends	Sticking- up	Well- liked	Leader
Very important (5)	72%	57%	57%	22%	8%	3%
Fairly important (4)	21%	33%	30%	40%	46%	16%
Moderately important (3)	6%	5%	6%	22%	34%	43%
A little important (2)	2%	0%	2%	10%	8%	25%
Not important (1)	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	10%

In the questionnaire about mothers' beliefs about modes of obtaining social skills, mothers rank-ordered three modes of acquiring social skills: experience, teaching, and innate. The range of values found for experience in this study was 10 to 23 (see p. 29 for possible range, $M = 15.74$, $SD = 2.82$). For teaching, the range was from 8 to 24 ($M = 14.78$, $SD = 3.81$). Innate had a range from 8 to 24 ($M = 17.29$, $SD = 4.53$). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for this measure were .85 for innate characteristics, .62 for experience, and .79 for direct teaching. Examining the mean scores for each mode shows that mothers were slightly more likely overall to attribute the acquisition of children's social skills to innate characteristics. Fifteen percent of mothers chose innate as being the most important mode of acquisition of social skills for all eight vignettes. However, mothers ranked the three modes differently based upon the social skills portrayed in the vignettes. Differences in the means for each skill are shown in Table 4, but the small sample size made the use of statistical analyses inappropriate in this case (R. Pfister,

personal communication, August 5, 1999). For the social skill of being a leader, mothers ranked the innate mode higher than experience or teaching. For resolving conflicts, mothers chose the teaching explanation more often than the innate or experience explanation. As shown in Table 4, mothers were inconsistent when ranking the three modes for each social skill.

The researcher used *t* tests to explore differences between maternal beliefs about modes of acquisition based upon whether the children in the vignettes were proficient in the social skill or did not yet possess the social skill. There were no statistically significant differences found between explanations of experience, direct teaching, or innate characteristics for six of the eight vignettes: possessing or not possessing the skills of making friends, resolving conflicts, or being a leader. However, for the vignettes of

Table 4

Mean Scores^a of Modes of Acquisition for Each Social Skill

Social skill	Mode of acquisition					
	Experience		Teaching		Innate	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Making friends	4.66	1.16	2.81	1.17	4.53	1.39
Resolving conflicts	3.18	1.16	4.72	1.23	4.09	1.37
Being a leader	3.98	1.18	3.02	1.34	5.00	1.37
Being considerate	3.98	1.14	4.28	1.44	3.74	1.50

^aRange of possible scores = 2-6

being considerate of feelings, there were statistically significant differences between what mothers attribute behaviors to depending on whether or not the child possessed this skill. Mothers were statistically significantly more likely to choose the experience explanation for children who were not considerate of others' feelings than for children who were considerate of other children's feelings, $t(64) = 5.04, p < .00$. On the other hand, for children who were considerate of other children's feelings, mothers were statistically significantly more likely to explain that this skill was more of an innate characteristic, $t(64) = -3.79, p < .00$. There were no statistically significant differences for mothers using the teaching explanation for children who possessed the skill and those who did not. When all vignettes were combined, there were correlations found between the three modes of acquisition. Specifically, experience and innate were statistically significantly negatively correlated, $r = -.53, p < .01, N = 65$. Teaching was also statistically significantly negatively correlated with innate $r = -.73, p < .01, N = 65$. Mothers who believed that experience or teaching was responsible for their children's acquisition of social skills were less likely to believe that social skills were influenced by innate characteristics.

Maternal Management Strategies

For maternal management strategies, the range of scores was from 53 to 135 (see p. 29 for possible range). The mean score for management strategies was 104.27 ($SD = 17.55$). The Cronbach's alpha measuring internal consistency for this measure was .86. The frequencies for each maternal behavior are listed as percentages in Appendix H. This

table shows that 83.6% of mothers reported that they kept track of their children's whereabouts and playmates several times a week during the past month.

Hypotheses Testing

Maternal Beliefs, Management Strategies, and Children's Social Competence

Ho 1a: There will be no relation between maternal beliefs about the importance of social skills and social competence in children.

Ho 1b: There will be no relation between maternal beliefs about the modes of obtaining social skills and social competence in children.

Ho 2: There will be no relation between maternal management strategies and social competence in children.

Ho 3: There will be no relation between maternal beliefs about social skills and management strategies.

Correlational analyses were used to test the relation among mothers' beliefs about the importance of social skills, modes of obtaining social skills, management behaviors, and children's social competence. The resulting coefficients are presented in Table 5. There was only one statistically significant correlation, and this was a positive correlation between mothers who believed that social skills were acquired through experience and children's social competence, $r = .28$, $p < .05$, $N = 65$. Mothers who attributed social skills to experience were statistically significantly more likely to have children with lower social competence.

Table 5

Correlation Coefficients of Maternal Beliefs about Importance of Social Skills, Modes of Obtaining Social Skills, Management Strategies, and Children's Social Competence

	Importance of social skills	Modes of obtaining social skills			Management strategies	CBS
		Experience	Innate	Teaching		
Importance of social skills	----	.04	-.12	.13	.15	-.65
Modes of obtaining social skills						
Experience		---			-.20	.28*
Innate			---		-.10	-.17
Teaching				---	.23	-.07
Management Strategies					---	-.10
CBS						---

* $p < .05$

Thus, the null hypothesis stating that there would be no relation between mothers' beliefs about the importance of social skills and children's social competence was rejected. The null hypothesis stating that there would be no relation between mothers' beliefs about the modes of obtaining social skills and children's social competence was not rejected. For Ho 2 and Ho 3, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis.

Maternal Beliefs, Management Strategies, and Children's Age

Ho 4: There will be no relation between children's age and maternal beliefs about social skills or maternal management strategies.

The researcher tested the relationship between children's age and maternal beliefs

about social skills through the use of t tests. The association between children's age and maternal management strategies was also tested using t tests. The means and standard deviations, along with the t and p values are presented in Table 6. For each variable, the t tests failed to reach statistical significance, so the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Children's Age and Social Competence

Ho 5: There will be no relation between children's age and children's social competence.

The differences in children's social competence in relation to children's age were analyzed using a t test. There were no statistically significant differences in social competence based upon the age of the child, $t(65) = 1.39, p = .17$.

Maternal Beliefs, Management Strategies, and Children's Gender

Ho 6: There will be no relation between children's gender and maternal beliefs about social skills or maternal management strategies.

Table 6

Results of t Tests for Maternal Beliefs and Management Strategies by Children's Age

Variable	3 years		4 years		t	p
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>		
Importance of social skills	23.38	3.50	23.40	2.78	-.34	.97
Modes of obtaining social skills						
Experience	16.67	3.56	15.38	2.44	1.66	.10
Innate	17.33	4.74	17.28	4.50	.05	.96
Teaching	14.00	4.16	15.09	3.66	-1.03	.31
Management strategies	101.85	20.34	105.30	16.35	-.73	.47

The researcher used t tests to explore differences in maternal beliefs about the importance of social skills, maternal beliefs about the modes of obtaining social skills, and maternal management strategies related to children's gender. There were no statistically significant differences found between the beliefs and management strategies of mothers with boys and mothers with girls (see Table 7).

Children's Social Competence and Children's Gender

Ho 7: There will be no relation between children's gender and children's social competence.

The researcher used t tests to assess differences in children's social competence in relation to children's gender. There were no statistically significant differences in children's social competence based upon gender, $t(65) = 1.46, p = .15$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 7

Results of t Tests for Maternal Beliefs and Management Strategies by Children's Gender

Variable	Boys		Girls		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Importance of social skills	22.94	3.27	24.10	2.37	-1.56	.12
Modes of obtaining social skills						
Experience	15.80	2.95	15.64	2.66	.22	.83
Innate	17.35	4.48	17.20	4.72	.13	.90
Teaching	14.55	3.94	15.16	3.62	-.63	.53
Management strategies	102.66	19.07	106.81	14.83	-.94	.35

Summary of Findings

In summary, mothers believed social skills were important for preschool children. Mothers placed the highest importance on social skills such as resolving conflicts, making friends, and sharing. In response to how children acquire social skills, mothers were slightly more likely to choose an innate explanation. However, mothers' ranking of modes differed in response to different social skills. In addition, there were statistically significant differences in mothers' responses for one of the vignettes. In the vignette of being considerate of other children's feelings, mothers chose an innate explanation for being considerate of others' feelings, but chose an experience explanation in response to children who were not considerate of other children's feelings. Mothers who chose an experience or teaching explanation for the acquisition of social skills were significantly less likely to believe that social skills were an innate characteristic of the child. Mothers choosing the experience mode of social skill acquisition were more likely to have children with lower social competence.

Hypothesis testing showed no statistically significant relations between maternal beliefs about the importance of social skills, maternal management strategies, and children's social competence. No differences were found between children's age or gender and maternal beliefs or management strategies. In addition, there were no differences between younger and older children's social competence. When testing differences in social competence based on children's gender, results did not reach significance.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

One goal of this study was to examine maternal factors in relation to children's social competence. The range and mean of social competence scores of children in the present study were comparable to the scores in the study by Ahn (1997), showing that teachers in the American and the Korean sample rated children as having similar social skill ability. The mothers in this study who returned questionnaires were more likely to have children with lower social skills than children whose mothers did not return the questionnaires, but the actual mean differences are very small. A possible explanation may be that mothers of children with higher social competence may be more confident with their parenting and less likely to be interested in the results of the study.

The finding in the present study that mothers believed that social skills were important is consistent with previous studies by Ahn (1997) and Mize et al. (1995). An interesting finding was that mothers placed different levels of importance on different social skills. For instance, mothers believed that resolving conflicts, sharing, and making friends were more important skills than sticking-up for oneself, learning to be well-liked by others, and leading peers. Mothers may see certain skills as being necessary for children when interacting with peers, while other social skills are not as important for the social success of young children.

In the present study, mothers were slightly more likely to explain the acquisition of children's social skills with an innate explanation, but the differences between modes

were not statistically significant. Mize et al. (1995) found that mothers of 3-year-old children were more likely to choose the innate explanation for their children's social skills than mothers of 4-year-olds. However, in studies with wider age ranges, it has been reported that mothers were more likely to choose an experience explanation for their child's social skill acquisition (Ahn, 1997; Mize et al., 1995). In the present study, the sample size may have been too small to produce statistically significant differences between mothers' beliefs about how children acquire social skills.

Mothers' ranking of the modes of obtaining social skills also appeared to differ based on the type of social skill. For example, for the vignette of making friends, mothers ranked experience first, innate characteristics second, and teaching as third. However, for being a leader, mothers ranked innate characteristics as the first or most likely mode of acquisition, experience as the second mode, and teaching as the least likely mode. These results may suggest that mothers' beliefs about how their children acquire specific social skills differ based on the social skill. Mothers may believe that being a leader is more of an innate quality, while making friends is learned through experience.

When exploring differences between mother's beliefs about modes of acquisition based upon whether or not the child in the vignette possessed the social skill, only one statistically significant difference was found. Mothers were statistically significantly more likely to believe that being considerate of other's feelings was an innate characteristic in the child, whereas not being considerate of other's feelings was a result

of lack of experience. Further research is necessary to examine mothers' beliefs about the determinants of social skill behavior depending on proficiency of skills.

Several interesting correlations were found among mothers' beliefs about modes of acquiring social skills. Mothers who believed that social skills were acquired through experience were less likely to believe that social skills were influenced by innate characteristics. In addition, mothers who believed that direct teaching influenced social skills were less likely to believe children acquire social skills through innate characteristics. In the study by Ahn (1997), the same correlations were found. It may be that mothers have beliefs about whether social skills are learned or whether social skills are inborn characteristics of their children. Mothers who believe social skills are learned may choose the experience or teaching explanation and be less likely to believe that social skills are innate.

In support of the null hypotheses, no relationships were found between maternal beliefs about the importance of social skills, management strategies, and children's social competence. These results are not supported by the research by Rubin et al. (1989). These researchers found that mothers who believe social skills are important and believe that parenting or peer play positively affects social skills have children with higher social skills. In the present study, the only finding was that mothers who believed that experience was responsible for the acquisition of social skills were statistically significantly more likely to have children with lower social skills. This finding is not supported by the previously mentioned research and should be interpreted with caution. Based upon the number of tests for these hypotheses, there is a chance that at least one

test would reach significance due to alpha inflation and this may account for the significant finding.

The lack of support for the relationship between maternal management behaviors and children's social competence is contrary to research by Kennedy (1992), which showed a relation between the management of children's peer play and children's social competence. In addition, Ahn (1997) found that mothers' beliefs about the importance of social skills were related to maternal management strategies. A relation between maternal management strategies and mothers' beliefs that social skills were acquired through teaching was also found. Although there are several studies reporting relationships between these variables, no relationships were found in the present study.

The present study showed no statistically significant relations between children's age and maternal beliefs or management strategies. Ahn (1997) also found no differences between these maternal variables and children's age. Children's age was thought to be a factor related to management of peer relations based upon the research by Bhavnagri and Parke (1991). These researchers found that parents of younger children were more active in arranging and supervising peer interactions than parents of older children. No statistically significant differences were found in the present study between the beliefs and management strategies of mothers of 3-year-olds and mothers of 4-year-olds. Perhaps, the age groups in the present study were not distinct enough for differences to emerge. Of the 3-year-olds, 5 were younger than 42 months old, while 15 were between 43 and 47 months old. Age differences may have emerged if the sample represented younger 3-year-olds in comparison with the older 4-year-olds.

No statistically significant associations were found between children's age and children's social competence, which is consistent with the study by Ahn (1997). According to Bhavnagri and Parke (1991), older children were better able than younger children to interact successfully with peers. However, the children in the Bhavnagri and Park study ranged from 2 years, 2 months to 5 years, 11 months. This age range was broader than the age range in the present study, which may account for the differences and make it difficult to compare results. Another possible explanation is that the teachers rating the children were responsible for ensuring a high quality program, which includes understanding the development of children. These teachers may have age-appropriate expectations for the social development of the children, which may account for the lack of differences between social competence of boys and girls. In addition, the teachers rated each child in their class, regardless of whether the mothers returned the questionnaire packet. It is likely that the children were rated in relation to all other children in the class, instead of being compared with a smaller number of children whose mothers participated. This may have promoted a more realistic rating of social competence for children, when seen in comparison with classmates of similar age. Therefore, the ratings of social skills by teachers who have appropriate expectations for preschool children may account for the similar findings of social competence for boys and girls.

Maternal beliefs about social skills and maternal management strategies were related to the gender of the child in a study by Flannagan and Hardee (1994) about mother-child conversations. The researchers found that mothers more often discussed

peer social situations with their daughters than with their sons. With their sons, mothers discussed more competition-oriented subjects, such as comparisons of knowledge. The null hypothesis in the present study was that there would be no differences in maternal beliefs about social skills and management child's peer relationships depending on the gender of the child. It was found that there were no statistically significant differences in mothers' beliefs about social skills and ways in which mothers were involved in their children's peer relationships based upon gender of their children. This finding is consistent with Ahn (1997), who also found no differences between gender and mothers' beliefs or management strategies. It may be that during the preschool years, mothers recognize the importance of social skills and attribute the same mode of acquisition for both boys and girls. In addition, mothers are involved in managing their children's peer relationships regardless of whether their child is male or female.

Children's social competence did not differ depending on the gender of the child. This finding is not consistent with Ahn's (1997) finding that girls obtained a higher teacher rating of social competence than boys. Possibly, differences between the two studies are due to cultural differences. Ahn notes that Korean girls are highly socialized to act appropriately, while fewer social expectations are placed on Korean boys. For American girls and boys, there may be less of a difference in the ways girls and boys are expected to act in social and school situations. Another possible explanation for the differences between the findings is that overall, in relation to classmates, the children involved in the study were less socially competent. Mothers who returned questionnaires

were more likely to have children with lower social competence. If there was a greater range of social competence, differences between boys and girls may have been found.

In summary, while mothers who returned the questionnaires were more likely to have children with lower social competence, overall, these mothers rated social skills as being important for children. Mothers, moreover, placed higher importance on social skills such as resolving conflicts, making friends, and sharing. Mothers were slightly more likely to choose an innate explanation in response to questions about how children obtain social skills. However, mothers ranked the modes differently in response to different social skills. There were also statistically significant differences in mothers' choice of mode for one of the vignettes. Mothers chose an experience explanation for not being considerate of others' feelings, but chose an innate explanation for children who were considerate of other children's feelings. When choosing modes of acquisition, mothers who chose an experience or teaching explanation were significantly less likely to believe that social skills were an innate characteristic of the child. Mothers who chose the experience explanation were also more likely to have children with lower social competence.

As a result of hypothesis testing, there were no statistically significant relations found between maternal beliefs about the importance of social skills, maternal management strategies, and children's social competence. There were also no differences between children's age or gender and maternal beliefs or management strategies. In addition, there were no differences found between younger and older children's social competence. There were no differences in social competence based on children's gender.

Limitations

The results of this study need to be interpreted with caution due to several limitations. One limitation is that the subjects were drawn from a convenience sample rather than a random sample. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to a larger population. Another limitation is the low return rate of questionnaires. With a larger sample, there may have been more relations between variables. An additional limitation is the representation of mothers of 3-year-olds. The 3-year-olds were unequally represented in the sample, which made it difficult to compare maternal variables and social competence of 3- and 4-year-olds. With equal representation, and a larger overall sample of 3- and 4-year-olds, statistically significant differences may have been found. A final limitation is the nature of the data collection. Questionnaires were used to collect all information, including children's social competence and maternal management strategies. In addition to teacher report of social competence, observations of children's social competence could be used. For maternal management strategies, mothers reported from memory how often during the past month they participated in a behavior. Requiring the mothers to mark their behaviors on a checklist for one month may increase accuracy.

Conclusion and Directions for Further Research

The role of the mother in influencing the development of children's social skills is an area that has many research possibilities. This study explored the importance that

mothers place on social skills and how they believe social skills in their preschoolers are acquired. The extent to which mothers participate in managing their children's peer relationships was also examined. Social competence, age, and gender of children were variables explored in relation to maternal variables.

This study showed that mothers believe social skills are important in the development of their children. However, further research is necessary to examine individual social skills that mothers believe are important for their children to possess. Another finding was the difference between mothers' beliefs about how children acquire social skills depending on the social skill and whether the child possessed the skill or not. Mothers' beliefs about the ways in which children acquire social skills could be further researched to explore differences in beliefs depending upon social skill and proficiency of social skills. Maternal beliefs and management strategies were not related to children's age. Another direction for the future would be the exploration of how mothers' beliefs and management strategies change as their children get older. A larger sample with broader age ranges may make it possible to explore the links between children's age and maternal variables. Although this study focused on mothers in order to be consistent with previous research, fathers play an important role in the lives of their children. A final direction for the future would be to include fathers in the study. The links between children's social skills and beliefs and behaviors of fathers would be an interesting avenue to explore.

The present study may be helpful to parent educators and teachers who are interested in knowing what mothers believe about social skills and the extent to which

mothers are involved in their children's peer relationships. The results may help educators to determine which information about child development and socialization is necessary to present to parents. Mothers who are interested in reflecting on their own beliefs and exploring how these beliefs and behaviors are related to their children's lives may find the results interesting. As interest grows in understanding connections between maternal factors and children's social skills, new links may be discovered.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. The Child Behavior Scale

Child's name or ID _____ Date _____

Rated (teacher) _____ School _____

Child Behavior Scale

Please consider the descriptions contained in each of the following items below and rate the extent to which each of these descriptions applies to this child, particularly in the context of his or her behavior with peers. For example, circle 3- "Certainly applies" if the child often displays the behavior described in the statement, circle 2- "Applies sometimes" if the child occasionally displays the behavior, and circle 1- "Doesn't apply" if the child seldom displays the behavior. Please circle only one response per item.

1 = Doesn't apply 2 = Applies sometimes 3 = Certainly applies

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| 1. Restless. Runs about or jumps up and down.
Doesn't keep still. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. Squirmy, fidgety child | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. Destroys own or others' belongings | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. Fights with other children | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. Not much liked by other children | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 6. Is worried. Worries about many things | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 7. Irritable; quick to "fly of the handle" | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 8. Appears miserable, unhappy, tearful, or distressed | 1 | 2 | 3 |

(Go to next page)

1= Doesn't apply 2= Applies sometimes 3= Certainly applies

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| 9. Has twitches, mannerisms, or tics of the face and body | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 10. Is disobedient | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 11. Has poor concentration or short attention span | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 12. Tends to be fearful or afraid of new things
or new situations | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 13. Fussy or over-particular | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 14. Tells lies | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 15. Has speech difficulty | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 16. Bullies other children | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 17. Inattentive | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 18. Doesn't share toys | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 19. Cries easily | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 20. Blames others | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 21. Gives up easily | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 22. Inconsiderate of others | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 23. Kicks, bites, or hits other children | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 24. Stares into space | 1 | 2 | 3 |

(Go to next page)

1 = Doesn't apply 2 = Applies sometimes 3 = Certainly applies

25. Prefers to play alone	1	2	3
26. Helps other children	1	2	3
27. Peers refuse to let this child play with them	1	2	3
28. Shows a recognition of the feelings of others; is empathetic	1	2	3
29. Tends to react to other children's distress by teasing them or making things worse	1	2	3
30. Not chosen as a playmate by peers	1	2	3
31. Likes to be alone	1	2	3
32. Keeps peers at a distance	1	2	3
33. Peers avoid this child	1	2	3
34. Seems concerned when other children are distressed	1	2	3
35. Aggressive child	1	2	3
36. Taunts and teases other children	1	2	3
37. Often unoccupied	1	2	3
38. Threatens other children	1	2	3
39. Takes turns with play materials	1	2	3
40. Kind toward peers	1	2	3

(Go to next page)

1 = Doesn't apply 2 = Applies sometimes 3 = Certainly applies

41. Can be trusted	1	2	3
42. Listens to classmates	1	2	3
43. Excluded from peers' activities	1	2	3
44. Compromises in conflict with peers	1	2	3
45. Is ignored by peers	1	2	3
46. Cooperative with peers	1	2	3
47. Loses temper easily in conflicts with peers	1	2	3
48. Argues with peers	1	2	3
49. Friendly toward other children	1	2	3
50. Annoys or irritates other children	1	2	3
51. Solitary child	1	2	3
52. Disrupts peers' activities	1	2	3
53. Shows concern for moral issues (e.g., fairness, welfare of others)	1	2	3
54. Ridiculed by peers	1	2	3
55. Avoids peers	1	2	3
56. Offers help or comfort when other children are upset	1	2	3
57. Withdraws from peer activities	1	2	3
58. Will continue to bother or hurt other children even when they are clearly upset	1	2	3
59. Bossy toward peers	1	2	3

Appendix B. Maternal Beliefs about the Importance of Social Skills

Maternal Beliefs about the Importance of Social Skills

How important do you consider each of the following skills to be for preschool children? Please rate, on the 1 to 5 scale, how important each skill is for a preschool child to have. A rating of 1 means not at all important, a rating of 3 means moderately important, a rating of 5 means critically, or most important. Please try to use the entire range of rating points, that is, you should rate some items as 1, some as 2 or 3, some as 4, and some as 5.

1. How important is it for preschool children to develop musical skills, such as learning to sing a few songs, learning to keep rhythm, learning to appreciate a variety of types of music?

Not Important	A Little Important	Moderately Important	Fairly Important	Very Important
1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----

2. How important is it for preschool children to be able to make friends with children their own age?

Not Important	A Little Important	Moderately Important	Fairly Important	Very Important
1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----

3. How important is it for preschool children to learn the alphabet?

Not Important	A Little Important	Moderately Important	Fairly Important	Very Important
1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----

(Go to next page, please)

4. How important is it for preschool children to learn to share toys and other possessions?

Not Important	A Little Important	Moderately Important	Fairly Important	Very Important
1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----

5. How important is it for preschool children to learn basic math skills, such as how to count to 10?

Not Important	A Little Important	Moderately Important	Fairly Important	Very Important
1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----

6. How important is it for preschool children to learn to develop skills to be a leader among other children of the same age?

Not Important	A Little Important	Moderately Important	Fairly Important	Very Important
1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----

7. How important is it for preschool children to learn to sit and listen to a teacher and follow a teacher's directions?

Not Important	A Little Important	Moderately Important	Fairly Important	Very Important
1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----

(Go to next page, please)

Mother Questionnaire #1, page 3 of 3

8. How important is it for preschool children to learn to be well-liked by other children their own age?

Not Important	A Little Important	Moderately Important	Fairly Important	Very Important
1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----

9. How important is it for preschool children to learn to develop good physical skills, such as coordination and being good at physical games?

Not Important	A Little Important	Moderately Important	Fairly Important	Very Important
1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----

10. How important is it for preschool children to learn to resolve disagreements they have with other children without getting angry and fighting?

Not Important	A Little Important	Moderately Important	Fairly Important	Very Important
1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----

11. How important is it for preschool children to learn to stick up for themselves so others don't push them around?

Not Important	A Little Important	Moderately Important	Fairly Important	Very Important
1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----

Thank you!
Continue to next questionnaire.

Appendix C. Maternal Beliefs about Modes of Obtaining Social Skills

Mother Questionnaire #2, page 1 of 4

Maternal Beliefs about Modes of
Obtaining Social Skills

In this section, we will give you a list of things that might account for the child's behavior or ability. We would like for you to rank order from the most (1) to the least (3) what you think would account for the ability or behavior that we describe. Remember, these are all preschool-age children.

Mary

Mary knows the alphabet. She can also recognize all the letters of the alphabet and can read a few words. Please rank order what you believe would account for Mary's alphabet knowledge and reading skill.

- a. Mary's parents taught her.
- b. Mary is very smart for her age.
- c. Mary watched Sesame Street or other educational TV, and had access to books or other educational toys.

Sue

Sue doesn't know the alphabet. She can't recognize any letters and can't read at all. Please rank order what you believe would account for Sue's relative lack of knowledge about the alphabet and low level of reading skill.

- a. Sue is not very smart for her age.
- b. Sue's parents didn't teach her.
- c. Sue did not watch Sesame Street or other educational TV, and did not have access to books or other educational toys.

Bob

Bob is really good at making friends with other children his own age. What might account for Bob's skill at friendship making? Please rank order why you think Bob might be good at making friends.

- a. Bob has had many opportunities to play with other children.
- b. Bob is naturally friendly and outgoing.
- c. Someone showed Bob how to make friends.

(Go to next page, please)

Mother Questionnaire #2, page 2 of 4

Sam

Sam does not make friends well. He doesn't seem to know how to get other kids to let him play or how to get them to play with him. What might account for Sam's lack of ability to make friends and initiate play with other children? Please rank order what you believe would account for Sam's lack of skill at making friends.

- a. No one showed Sam how to get to know others and get them to play with him.
- b. Sam is naturally shy and withdrawn.
- c. Sam has not had many opportunities to play with or meet other children.

Lisa

Lisa is very coordinated for her age. She can skip and climb on the jungle gym better than any one else in her class at nursery school. What might account for Lisa's coordination and motor skill? Please rank order what you believe would account for Lisa's good motor skills.

- a. Lisa has had many opportunities to run, climb, and use her muscles.
- b. Lisa's parents worked with her and had her practice motor skills.
- c. Lisa is naturally well-coordinated and athletically gifted.

Ella

Ella is very uncoordinated for her age. She can't skip and she can't climb the jungle gym very well. What might account for Ella's lack of coordination and motor skills? Please rank order what you believe would account for Ella's lack of motor skills.

- a. Ella is naturally uncoordinated and slow to develop athletic skills.
- b. Ella has not had many opportunities to run, climb, or use her muscles.
- c. Ella's parents did not work with her or have her practice motor skills.

Tony

Tony is good at working out disagreements with other children. He hardly ever gets into fights over toys. Instead, he can always think of a way to compromise but still have fun. What might account for Tony's ability to resolve problems in positive ways? Please rank order what you believe would account for Tony's skills in resolving conflict.

- a. Tony's parents taught him specific things to do when he got in a disagreement.
- b. Tony has had many chances to play with other friendly children.
- c. Tony naturally has an easy-going disposition.

(Go to next page, please)

Kent

Kent often gets into fights during disagreements with other kids. Whenever he wants a toy someone else has, he grabs it or hits them. What might account for Kent's tendency to fight in situations like this? Please rank order what you believe would account for Kent's aggressive behavior.

- a. Kent has played with a lot of aggressive children in his neighborhood.
- b. Kent is naturally strong-willed and very active.
- c. Kent's parents failed to correct him when he grabbed or hit or pushed other children.

Ann

Ann always follows her preschool teacher's directions. She sits and listens during story and usually follows classroom rules. What might account for Ann's tendency to follow classroom rules? Please rank order what you believe would account for Ann's behavior in the classroom.

- a. Ann has always been mature for her age with an easy-going temperament.
- b. Ann has had a lot of experience in group situations such as nursery school.
- c. Ann's parents have stressed the importance of following the teacher's directions and school rules.

Jan

Jan's preschool teacher frequently reminds her to follow school rules. She often talks out of turn during story time, runs inside the classroom, and climbs on the furniture. What might account for Jan's tendency to break school rules? Please rank order what you believe would account for Jan's behavior in the classroom.

- a. Jan has never before had experience in a group setting such as nursery school.
- b. Jan has always been active and rambunctious.
- c. Jan's parents never enforced appropriate behavior.

Matt

Matt is usually the leader of a group of playing children in his preschool classroom. When he organizes a game, other children are eager to play and they usually have fun. What might account for Matt's skills as a leader of other children? Please rank order what you believe would account for Matt's leadership skills.

- a. Matt's parents have encouraged him to develop leadership skills.
- b. Matt has always been self-confident and exuberant.
- c. Matt has had many opportunities to play with both younger and older children in his neighborhood.

(Go to next page, please)

Mother Questionnaire #2, page 4 of 4

Chad

Chad is always a follower in his preschool class. When he plays with other children he just does whatever they tell him to do. He can almost never get other children to go along with his ideas or play the games he wants. What might account for Chad's inability to lead other children? Please rank order what you believe would account for Chad's inability to lead and influence other children.

- a. Chad has always been timid and quiet.
- b. Chad has never had an opportunity to play with younger and older children.
- c. Chad's parents never showed him how to organize games or be a leader.

Lynn

Lynn is unusually considerate of other people's feelings for her age. She usually allows other children to play with her toys and tries to help other children when they are upset or hurt. What might account for Lynn's sensitivity to others' feelings? Please rank order what you believe would account for Lynn's consideration of other people.

- a. Lynn has been in many situations in which she had to share with or help others.
- b. Lynn's parents have helped her to understand other people's feelings.
- c. Lynn has always been a sensitive child.

Kay

Kay is unusually inconsiderate for her age. She almost never allows another child to play with any of her toys and seems unconcerned when another child is upset or hurt. What might account for Kay's insensitivity to other children's feelings? Please rank order what you believe would account for Kay's inconsiderate behavior.

- a. Kay's parents never tried to help her understand how other people feel.
- b. Kay has never been in situations in which she had to share with other people or help out.
- c. Kay has always been self-centered.

Thank you for your help!

Continue to the next questionnaire.

Appendix D. Mothers' Management Behaviors

Mothers' Management Behaviors

In this questionnaire we would like to find out about some of the ways you are involved in your child's relationships with other children. Below we have listed a number of possible activities (or behaviors) that you may or may not do with respect to your child's social relationships. Some of the things on the list you may do on a daily basis and others not quite as often. Don't be surprised if some of the items don't apply to your situation or are things you have never done. Please remember, we are only asking you about your involvement with your child who is participating in the present study.

We would like to know how often you have engaged in a particular activity (behavior) during the past month. Please indicate how often you have engaged in each activity (behavior) by circling one number for each item.

If you circle 6 you have indicated that you have engaged in this activity **several times a week.**

If you circle 5 you have indicated that you have engaged in this activity **about once a week.**

If you circle 4 you have indicated that you have engaged in this activity **about once every 2 weeks.**

If you circle 3 you have indicated that you have engaged in this activity **about once a month.**

If you circle 2 you have indicated that you have engaged in this activity **less than once a month.**

If you circle 1 you have indicated that you have **never** engaged in this activity.

How often during the past month have you:

Item	Never	Less	About	About	About	Several
		than once a month	once a month	once every 2 weeks	once a week	times a week
1. Encouraged your child to invite another child over.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Kept an eye on how things were going when your child had a friend over to play.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Drove your child to his/her friend's house.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Discussed your child's social relationships with your spouse.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Talked to your child about a problem he/she is having with another child or children.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Made arrangements with another mother for your children to play together.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Given your child advice about how to get along with other children.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Invited other children in the neighborhood over to play with your child.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Contacted another parent to talk about how his/her child gets along with your child.	1	2	3	4	5	6

(Go to next page)

Mother Questionnaire #3, page 3 of 4

Item	Never	Less	About	About	About	Several
		than once a month	once a month	once every 2 weeks	once a week	times a week
10. Encouraged your child to invite a friend over for lunch or dinner.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Contacted your child's teacher about how he/she gets along with other children at school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Talked to your child about making new friends.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Planned to spend time with another family because they have a child who is close in age to your child.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. Encouraged your child to go outside and play with others.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Worried about your child's relationships with other children.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. Asked your child about how things are going with other children at school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. Rearranged your family's plan so that your child could spend time with a friend.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. Talked to one of your friends about your child's social relationships.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. Comforted your child when he/she was upset about getting along with other children.	1	2	3	4	5	6

(Go to next page)

Item	Never	Less than once a month	About once a month	About once every 2 weeks	About once a week	Several times a week
20. Given your child advice about how to initiate a friendship.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. Tried to help in some way when your child was involved in a conflict with a friend.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. Kept track of your child's whereabouts and playmates.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. Given your child advice about how to solve a problem.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. Discouraged your child from playing or spending time with a child you don't like.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. Kept track of who phones your child.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. Talked to your child when he/she initiated a conversation about other children.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. Discussed your child's social relationships with a professional.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Thank you for your cooperation!

Continue to the final questionnaire.

Appendix E. Demographic Measures

Demographic Measures

Please answer the following questions.

1. How old are you? _____
2. Are you currently married? Yes _____ No _____
3. What is the highest grade you completed in school? _____
4. If you attended college, what is the highest degree you have attained? _____
5. What is the highest grade your spouse completed in school? _____
6. If your spouse attended college, what is the highest degree he has attained? _____
7. What is your occupation? _____
8. How many hours per week do you work outside the home? _____
9. What is your spouse's occupation? _____
10. Please list the ages and genders of all children in your family from youngest to oldest.

Age	Gender
-----	--------

_____	_____
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_____	_____
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_____	_____
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_____	_____
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_____	_____
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_____	_____
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_____	_____
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Appendix F. Informed Consent Letter and Form for Teachers

Informed Consent

Title of Study: Relating Children's Social Competence to Maternal Beliefs and
Management Strategies of Peer Relationships.

March 24, 1999

Dear Preschool Teacher,

I am working on my master's degree in Family and Human Development. I am interested in children's peer relationships. Specifically, I am studying how mothers' beliefs about social skills and management of peer relationships relates to children's social development.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire on each child in your class. The questionnaire contains descriptions of children's behavior and you will rate the extent to which the behaviors apply to each child. It will take no more than 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire for each child.

All information gained in this study will be kept confidential. There will be code numbers instead of names on the forms. The data will be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked room. There are no risks by participating in this study and you may withdraw at anytime without penalty. A possible benefit will be learning more about how mothers' beliefs and behaviors help children's social development.

You have been given two copies of this Informed Consent. Please sign both copies and keep one copy for your files. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me or my advisor, Dr. Shelley Lindauer.

Sincerely,

Eryn Hamel
M.S. Candidate
435-797-1525

Shelley L. Knudsen Lindauer, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
435-797-1532

Informed Consent

Title of Study: Relating Children's Social Competence to Maternal Beliefs and
Management Strategies of Peer Relationships.

I have read the information about the study and would like to participate. I understand that I will fill out questionnaires about children's peer behaviors for each child in my class. This will take no more than ten minutes for each child. If I choose to do so, I may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please send me the results of this study when completed:

Name : _____

Address: _____

Appendix G. Informed Consent Letter and Form for Mothers

Informed Consent

Title of Study: Relating Children's Social Competence to Maternal Beliefs and Management Strategies of Peer Relationships.

March 24, 1999

Dear Mothers,

I am working on my master's degree in Family and Human Development. I am interested in children's peer relationships. Specifically, I am studying how mothers' beliefs about social skills and management of peer relationships relates to children's social development.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete several questionnaires. It will take no more than twenty minutes to complete the questionnaires. You will be asked questions related to your beliefs about social skills. There are also questions about the ways you are involved in your child's peer relationships.

In addition to questionnaires you will fill out, your child's teacher will be asked to fill out a form with questions about children's relationships with peers. The teacher will rate how often each behavior in the questionnaire is displayed by the child.

All information gained in this study will be kept confidential. There will be code numbers instead of names on the forms. The data will be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked room. There are no risks by participating in this study and you may withdraw at any time without penalty. A possible benefit will be learning more about how mothers' beliefs and behaviors help children's social development.

You have been given two copies of this Informed Consent. Please sign both copies and keep one copy for your files. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me or my advisor, Dr. Shelley Lindauer.

Sincerely,

Eryn Hamel
M.S. Candidate
435-797-1525

Shelley L. Knudsen Lindauer, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
435-797-1532

Informed Consent

Title of Study: Relating Children's Social Competence to Maternal Beliefs and Management Strategies of Peer Relationships.

I have read the information about the study and would like to participate. I understand that I will fill out questionnaires about my beliefs about social skills and my behaviors related to my child's peer relationships. This will take no more than twenty minutes for me to complete. I also give permission for my child's classroom teacher to fill out a form on my child. If I choose to do so, I may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

If you are interested in the results of this study, please fill out the information below:

Name : _____

Address: _____

Appendix H. Frequency Distributions in Percentages for Ratings of Maternal Strategies

Table 8

Frequency Distributions in Percentages for Ratings of Maternal Strategies

Item	Never	Less than once a month	About once a month	About once every 2 weeks	About once a week	Several times a week
1. Encouraged your child to invite another child over.	10.4	6.0	11.9	16.4	32.8	22.4
2. Kept an eye on how things were going when your child had a friend over to play.	3.0	6.0	7.5	6.0	20.9	56.7
3. Drove your child to his/her friend's house.	10.4	13.4	20.9	14.9	31.3	9.0
4. Discussed your child's social relationships with your spouse.	0	1.5	10.4	14.9	31.3	41.8
5. Talked to your child about a problem he/she is having with another child or children.	0	3.0	9.0	16.4	34.3	37.3
6. Made arrangements with another mother for your children to play together.	4.5	10.4	11.9	22.4	35.8	14.9
7. Given your child advice about how to get along with other children.	0	3.0	6.0	16.4	20.9	53.7
8. Invited other children in the neighborhood over to play with your child.	10.4	10.4	7.5	14.9	32.8	23.9
9. Contacted another parent to talk about how his/her child gets along with your child.	31.3	20.9	23.9	10.4	11.9	1.5
10. Encouraged your child to invite a friend over for lunch or dinner.	34.3	28.4	13.4	14.9	6.0	0

(table continues)

Item	Never	Less than once a month	About once a month	About once every 2 weeks	About once a week	Several times a week
11. Contacted your child's teacher about how he/she gets along with other children at school.	14.9	37.3	26.9	10.4	4.5	4.5
12. Talked to your child about making new friends	7.5	19.4	28.4	10.4	22.4	11.9
13. Planned to spend time with another family because they have a child who is close in age to your child.	10.4	13.4	20.9	29.9	20.9	4.5
14. Encouraged your child to go outside and play with others.	3.0	4.5	9.0	4.5	35.8	43.3
15. Worried about your child's relationships with other children.	10.4	29.9	16.4	14.9	10.4	17.9
16. Asked your child about how things are going with other children at school.	1.5	1.5	9.0	7.5	29.9	50.7
17. Rearranged your family's plan so that your child could spend time with a friend.	19.4	22.4	23.9	20.9	10.4	3.0
18. Talked to one of your friends about your child's social relationships.	6.0	25.4	22.4	20.9	22.4	3.0
19. Comforted your child when he/she was upset about getting along with other children.	0	16.4	13.4	31.3	20.9	17.9
20. Given your child advice about how to initiate a friendship.	7.5	23.9	31.3	16.4	11.9	9.0
21. Tried to help in some way when your child was involved in a conflict with a friend.	1.5	10.4	20.9	31.3	22.4	13.4

(table continues)

Item	Never	Less than once a month	About once a month	About once every 2 weeks	About once a week	Several times a week
22. Kept track of your child's whereabouts and playmates.	0	0	4.5	4.5	7.5	83.6
23. Given your child advice about how to solve a problem.	0	3.0	7.5	13.4	23.9	52.2
24. Discouraged your child from playing or spending time with a child you don't like.	35.8	26.9	13.4	7.5	13.4	3.0
25. Kept track of who phones your child.	55.2	7.5	3.0	7.5	9.0	16.4
26. Talked to your child when he/she initiated a conversation about other children.	7.5	6.0	3.0	13.4	25.4	43.3
27. Discussed your child's social relationships with a professional.	73.1	11.9	4.5	1.5	7.5	1.5
