



ELSEVIER

Available online at [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

SCIENCE @ DIRECT®

Applied Developmental Psychology 25 (2004) 3–24

**Applied  
Developmental  
Psychology**

## Maternal and child predictors of preschool children's social competence

Marissa L. Diener<sup>a,\*</sup>, Do-Yeong Kim<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Department of Family and Consumer Studies, University of Utah, 225 South 1400 East, Room 228, Salt Lake City, UT 84112-0080, USA*

<sup>b</sup>*Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia*

---

### Abstract

The present study examined child and maternal predictors of children's social competence in preschool. One hundred ten mothers and their preschool-aged children participated. Mothers completed parent reports of child temperament and self-regulation, and self-reports of maternal separation anxiety. Mothers' interactional style was coded from videotapes during preschool. Teachers rated children's social competence at the end of the first semester of school. Child age, temperament and self-regulation, and maternal characteristics predicted children's social competence. The interaction of anger proneness and self-regulation predicted both externalizing and prosocial behavior. Finally, children with greater risk factors were lower on prosocial behavior and higher on externalizing behavior than children with fewer risk factors. Results indicate that maternal and child characteristics may be used to identify children at risk for lower social competence in preschool, such that interventions may be implemented.

© 2003 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

*Keywords:* Social competence; Maternal behaviors; Temperament; Self-regulation; Maternal separation anxiety; Externalizing behaviors; Social withdrawal; Prosocial behavior

---

### 1. Introduction

In 1999, 46% of 3-year-old and 69% of 4-year-old children were enrolled in center-based preschools, and enrollment in center-based programs has been steadily increasing over the past 10 years (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Furthermore, research indicates that preschool children's social behavior predicts their behavior in kindergarten and beyond (e.g., Eisenberg, Fabes, Shepard et al.,

---

\* Corresponding author.

*E-mail address:* [marissa.diener@fcs.utah.edu](mailto:marissa.diener@fcs.utah.edu) (M.L. Diener).

1997; Ladd & Price, 1987). For example, Howes and Phillipsen (1998) found that both children's aggression and social withdrawal in the preschool period predicted later aggression. Moreover, preschool children who are physically aggressive tend to be rejected by their peers (Coie, 1990). Children high on social withdrawal, that is, those who withdraw from their peers, tend to report higher loneliness and lower self-competence (Hymel, Bowker, & Woody, 1993). On the other hand, prosocial behavior predicts greater social competence in childhood and even into adulthood (Eisenberg et al., 1999; Ladd & Price, 1987). Given the increase in enrollment in preschool programs and the importance of early social competence for later socioemotional outcomes, it is important to understand the factors related to children's social competence. Identifying predictors of individual differences in preschoolers' social competence may help shape early interventions to facilitate more optimal outcomes later.

A large amount of research has focused on individual differences in elementary school children's social competence (Asher, Parkhurst, Hymel, & Williams; 1990; Rubin, Chen, & Hymel, 1993), but less research has examined individual differences in preschoolers' social competence. The present study focused on three behavioral dimensions of children's social competence: prosocial behavior, externalizing behavior, and social withdrawal. These dimensions of behavior were chosen for conceptual reasons. Socially competent behavior with peers reflects effective social interactions such as getting along well with others, initiating play, entering play, and resolving conflict with peers (Asher & Coie, 1990; Howes & Matheson, 1992; Rose-Krasnor, 1997). Thus, externalizing behavior disrupts relations with peers and reflects lower social competence. Similarly, social withdrawal, although less salient and disruptive than aggression, also may be associated with lower levels of social competence (Howes & Phillipsen, 1998). It may be that children who remove themselves from peer interactions also remove themselves from opportunities to resolve conflict and engage in social problem solving. In contrast, prosocial behavior, such as helping peers, reflects greater social competence because it facilitates smooth interactions with peers (Bronson, 2000; Denham, 1998).

This study contributes to the literature on children's social competence by examining both child and maternal factors simultaneously, rather than examining either in isolation (for an exception, see Rubin, Cheah, & Fox, 2001). Furthermore, the present study focuses on individual differences in social competence in the preschool period, whereas most past research on social behavior has been derived from either the temperament and attachment perspectives and focused on the infancy period (e.g., Andersson, Bohlin, & Hagekull, 1999; Fish, 1998) or from the peer relations perspective and focused on middle childhood (see Ladd, 1999, for a review). Thus, there is much less research examining predictors of social competence in preschoolers.

### *1.1. Child characteristics: temperament and self-regulation*

Eisenberg and Fabes (1992) proposed the idea that self-regulation and temperament are crucial for social functioning. A common conceptualization of temperament involves the frequency and intensity of negative emotionality (e.g., Goldsmith et al., 1987). Optimal self-regulation may be especially important for children who are temperamentally prone to experience high levels of negative affect. Temperamentally reactive children may be likely to exhibit externalizing, acting out behaviors if they are low on self-regulation. In fact, recent research has pointed to the importance of children's emotionality and self-regulation for elementary school children's social competence (e.g., Eisenberg, Fabes, Shepard et al., 1997; Eisenberg et al., 1999; Eisenberg, Guthrie et al., 1997). For example, Eisenberg et al. (2001) found that children high on externalizing behavior were low on self-regulation and high on anger. Thus, it is

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

**ISI**Articles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات