

**Critical Review:**  
**What factors affect social development in children attending child-care?**

Julia Clancy  
M.Cl.Sc (Speech-Language Pathology) Candidate  
University of Western Ontario: School of Communication Sciences and Disorders

This critical review examines the evidence surrounding child-care and the factors that impact children's social development. Study designs consist of cohort studies, longitudinal studies, and case control studies

the current review discusses the underlying

generalizability of results and limited control over individual factors.

with task instructions when compared to the

**Howes et al (2016)** investigated the quality of child-care centers and the effect on peer and adult relationships using a cohort study design. The sample of the current study consisted of 414 children ranging in ages from 14 to 54 months who were currently attending day care. Each child was observed in his or her classroom for at least two hours, which covered both morning and afternoon activities. Licensing standards for ratios were found to make a difference in the quality of care. There was no association found between group size and appropriate caregiving. There was no significant association between security and developmentally appropriate activities. Children's security with teachers was found to be associated with complexity and amount of peer interactions. Overall child teacher ratios, attachment profiles (securely attached, avoidant), and social orientation to adults were associated with competence with peers.

Participants were well described and inclusion criteria specified. Participants represented a full range of social classes, including children in sub-sidized housing and children from two-parent relatively wealthy homes allowing for a representative sample. Methods were described thoroughly and appropriate measures and scales were implemented that comprehensively assess the day to day quality of care provided to children. Interrater reliabilities for structural and process quality were established and deemed appropriate. Multiple measures of peer interaction were derived from appropriate scales and outlined thoroughly. Overall procedures were well described, however no placebo or blinding occurred. Results were statistically sound and compelling made evident by attachment to teachers, regulated ratios, and social orientation to adult all being predictive of peer competence.

#### Case Control Studies

**Peterson et al (1986)** observed mother-child interactions and investigated whether differences in care mediate children's experiences using a case control design. Participants were divided into three groups; 1. High quality, 2. Low quality, 3. Home care with a total of 66 participants being included in this study. Children ranged from three to five years old. The mother and child engaged in three interactional episodes; one where mother attends to child, ignores child, and child is responsible for following a task mother completes. Results found that children attending poor quality child care were less compliant

would have been beneficial to increase generalizability. Screening measures and methods used to ensure the older children in the study had adequate language and cognitive skills to engage in age appropriate pretend play were appropriate. The study was well formulated, with a description of a plausible rationale and gold standard measures employed. Statistics were appropriate. Children were paired with an older peer who they played with regularly. It would have been interesting to see how the children interacted with older peers who they were unfamiliar with and if similar results were found. Overall the validity and clinical importance was compelling made evident by the importance of attendance and older peer exposure in promoting prosocial behaviours and social development in toddlers. This research aided in providing evidence of individual factors that promote social development.

#### Longitudinal studies

**Howes (1990)** completed a longitudinal study following individuals over three time periods (toddler, pre-school, kindergarten). Researchers looked at the influence of age of entry, quality, and family characteristics on social adjustment in children. Participants consisted of 80 children ranging in enrollment in low to high quality care and age of entry. Children were observed at multiple ages either at home, childcare center or in the laboratory during free play. Early entry into low quality child care had the most difficulty with peers, were distractible, less considerate and scored low on task orientation. Family socialization predicted outcomes when children enrolled in care after infancy compared to teacher socialization predicting outcomes of those enrolled prior to 12 months.

There were no significant demographic changes between study groups. Participants were well described, and criteria for high and low quality were set prior to observation. Each observation was performed by a research assistant blind to the group membership or family increasing confidence in findings. During the pre-school stage, each child was observed in random order, again this is a strength of the current study. Measures and procedures were well described, and observers established appropriate inter-observer reliability. One major limitation of the current study was decreased sample size reducing generalizability of findings.

social development of children. It is not a comparison of home care and child-care, but rather delving into the individual factors in child care that promote and hinder social development. This paper reviewed seven articles which looked at a variety of factors that can affect children's social development.

Longitudinal studies completed by Broekhuizen et al (2016) and Howes (1990) provided valuable information on long term outcomes of children's social development over multiple time periods showing the effect of these factors at different ages. Agreement was established between Peterson et al

