What is Interpersonal Competence?

A socioemotional outcome that refers to the ability of children to maintain positive relationships with others over time and successfully achieve personal goals in different social situations.

(Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 1998)

Outcomes of Interpersonal Competence

Positive
- Experience of reciprocity & Self-validation
- Cognitive & social cognitive growth
- Peer/Social Acceptance

Negative
- Peer conflicts
- Psychological distress
- Low social status or Peer Rejection

Canadian Perspective on IC

- Positive relationships are important for healthy youth development
- Children with close friends tend to have better social & academic outcomes
- In 2000, 93% of teens aged 10-15 said they had many friends

(Information from (The Progress of Canada’s Children and Youth, 2006))

CCSD Indicators Model
Family Influences.....Parents

Cognitive Social Learning Theory suggests...
- Interactions within the family provide children with the opportunity to learn, rehearse, and refine socioemotional skills that are necessary for successful interactions with peers.
- Socioemotional skills that develop during these interactions generalize to children’s interactions with social partners.
  (Isley, O’Neil, Clatfelter, & Parke, 1999)

Attachment Theory suggests...
- Emotional security within adult-child relationships is associated with children’s peer relationships.
- Expectations, competencies, & attitudes developed within an attachment relationship are expected to influence children’s orientation to peer relationships.
  (Howes, et al., 1994)

Parent-Peer Relationship Model

Parent-child interaction
Parent as instructor
Parent as provider of opportunities
Child’s social competence
Child’s peer acceptance

Adapted from McDowell & Parke (2009)

Familial Correlates

- Negative interaction patterns, less acceptance & support, marital conflict = low IC
- Positive interaction patterns & warmth/positive affect, secure attachment, high quality parenting strategies = high IC (predictive value)
- Both mothers & fathers characteristics, interaction styles & patterns, behaviour & perceptions, & quality of parent-child relationship influence IC
- Pathways will vary in importance, form, & frequency across development

Heuristic Value

Expansion of socialization strategies...
- Opportunities & involvement in extracurricular activities
- Positive & explicit advice for social experiences
- High parental warmth, low controlling interaction style, positive responsiveness
- Acceptance & value of children’s emotional expression
- Encouragement & coaching of emotion
- Be sensitive to developmental levels & needs
- Foster continuity in children’s peer contacts
- Parent modeling of specific interaction styles with social partners

Limitations & Future Research

- Transactional Theory – most research acknowledges the influences the child may have in the relationships, but further research is needed
- Power differential in parent-child relationship may inhibit some behaviour with parents & not peers
- Counterintuitive finding of higher parent instruction to lower IC merits additional research
- Longer term longitudinal studies (assess influences across time)
- Peer outcomes as a function of ethnicity is needed
- Further examination of mother/father influences on gender
- Peer experiences may alter children’s processing, perceptions, and IC

School Influences.....Definition

Social Competence
- Social acceptance by peers & teachers through prosocial behaviours (Wentzel, 1994)
- Prosocial, sensitive, & empathetic behaviour, able to engage in complex play & solve problems (Howes et al., 1994)
- The ability to interact successfully with peers & significant adults (Marchant et al., 2007)
School Influences...

- Educators faced with dual role of optimizing student academic achievement & nurturing children's social development (Brack et al., 2007)
- School is a natural environment that offers repeated opportunities for socialization (Marchant et al., 2007)
- School socialization experiences allow adults to manage peer contacts & interactions (Hawkes et al., 1994)
- Motivational theory of self-system (competence, autonomy, relatedness), & self-determination theory (self-regulation) can be met in a classroom through interactions with teachers (Brack, 2007)
- Group cohesion can assist in adoption of social goals (Wentzel, 1994)

Heuristic Values

- Findings suggest a need for professional development that encourages & trains teachers to respond to emotional & instructional dimensions (Wilburn, 2007)
- Development of multi-faceted interventions targeting both peer & teacher relationships is warranted (Marchant, 2008)
- Initial evidence that models of parent socialization are generalizable to non-familial contexts (Wentzel, 2002)
- Children exposed to interventions in earlier grades & for longer periods of time will make even greater gains socially & academically (Hawkes et al., 2001)

Limitations & Future Research

- Research is not causal
- Developmental & measurement issues (multiple variables)
- Most research suggests additional longitudinal studies
- School is a natural environment that offers repeated developmental & measurement issues (multiple variables)

Summary

Family and School influences have similar...
- Outcomes of interpersonal/social competence
- Theoretical frameworks
- Multi-dimensional & inter-related variables
- Heuristic value
- Conclusions regarding parent and teacher relationships with children and the indirect effects on their peer relationships.

"The only way to have a friend is to be one."

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

References

[Brief list of references related to educational and social development]