



## Developmental psychology and early childhood education

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## Developmental Psychology and Early Childhood Education<sup>1</sup>

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**SUMMARY** *Child psychology and early childhood education are closely related, but the relationship is very complex. This is due to the fact that 'child psychology' at the same time covers 1) researchers' scientific psychology, 2) writers' popular psychology, and 3) parents' and teachers' common sense psychology about child development. This article presents current trends in scientific child psychology and recent studies on parents' and teachers' common sense opinions. It is concluded that no clear relationships can be demonstrated between current theories of child development and views on the part of teachers and parents. However it is evident that parents and teachers do have views on child development and education, and even that such views exercise an influence upon their behaviour towards children. Therefore, it is argued that future investigations in this comprehensive, interesting, and complex field will be very relevant.*

**RÉSUMÉ** *La psychologie et l'éducation de la petite enfance sont étroitement liées mais leur relation est très complexe. Ceci est dû au fait que la "psychologie de l'enfant" revouvre en même temps 1) la psychologie scientifique des chercheurs, 2) la psychologie vulgarisée auprès du grand public et 3) la psychologie du sens commun des parents et des enseignants. Dans cet article, nous présentons les tendances actuelles de la psychologie scientifique de l'enfant ainsi que des études récentes sur les conceptions de parents et d'enseignants. Nous concluons qu'il n'est pas possible d'établir de relation évidente entre les théories actuelles du développement de l'enfant et les conceptions des enseignants et des parents. Toutefois il est évident que les parents et les enseignants ont leurs points de vue sur le développement et l'éducation de l'enfant et que ces derniers influencent leur comportement à l'égard des enfants. C'est pourquoi nous pensons que des recherches dans ce champ vaste, intéressant et complexe s'avèreront pertinentes.*

**ZUSAMMENFASSUNG** *Kinderpsychologie und Pädagogik der frühen Kindheit sind eng miteinander verbunden, jedoch sind die Zusammenhänge komplexer Natur. Dies ist darauf zurückzuführen, dass der Begriff 'Kinderpsychologie' gleichzeitig verschiedene Facetten hat: (1) als Gegenstand der Wissenschaft und Forschung, (2) als Popularwissenschaft, und (3) als 'Common sense'-Psychologie und Alltagsstheorie von pädagogischen Fachkräften und Eltern mit Blick auf die Entwicklung von Kindern. Der Beitrag stellt aktuelle Trends innerhalb der wissenschaftlichen Psychologie sowie neue Studien über die Alltagstheorien von Fachkräften und Eltern vor. Zusammenfassend wird festgestellt, dass es kein eindeutiger Zusammenhang zwischen den neuen Theorien über die Entwicklung von Kindern und den Vorstellungen von pädagogischen Fachkräften und Eltern besteht. Sie haben jedoch Vorstellungen über die Entwicklung und Erziehung von Kindern, und diese Annahmen beeinflussen auch ihr Verhalten den Kindern gegenüber. Weitere Untersuchungen in diesem umfassenden, interessanten und komplexen Bereich wären deshalb dringend notwendig.*

**RESUMEN** *La psicología y la educación infantil son campos muy relacionados, aunque estas relaciones no son sencillas. Esta complejidad se debe al hecho de que la psicología infantil abarca: 1) la psicología científica de los investigadores 2) la psicología popular, y 3) el sentido común psicológico de padres y maestros sobre el desarrollo de los niños. En este artículo se presentan las actuales tendencias en la psicología infantil científica y estudios recientes sobre las opiniones más habituales de padres y maestros. Se muestra que no hay una relación muy directa entre las teorías actuales del desarrollo del niño y las opiniones de los padres y los maestros. Sin embargo, es evidente que padres y maestros tienen opiniones propias de la enseñanza y del desarrollo de los niños, y que éstas influyen en su comportamiento en relación con los niños. De ahí el interés por este tipo de investigaciones que deberán seguir desarrollándose en el futuro.*

**Keywords:** Child development; Common sense psychology; Popular psychology; Parents' views; Preschool teachers views.

### 1. Three presuppositions

In the following considerations, it is generally presupposed that the fields of developmental psychology and early childhood education affect each other, although the situation is far more complicated, since both of these fields are also affected by current cultural, societal, and ideological trends.

Secondly, and more important, it is presupposed that the field of psychology forms a continuum from the most advanced *scientific psychology* to the *common sense psychology* of everyday life, and that this fact must be taken into account in order to understand the relationship between child development and child education.

The concept of common sense psychology (or vulgar psychology, or naive psychology) simply reflects the fact that, in a way, every human being acts as a psychologist. Nobody can avoid neither to observe the behaviour of other people, nor to reflect on other people's motives, thoughts, feelings, characters, etc. This everyday psychology of everybody has not been described in detail. Yet Fritz Heider (1958) presented an analysis of naive psychology in general, and, more recently, J. S. Bruner (1990) introduced the corresponding concept of 'folk psychology' with special reference to cultural psychology and narration. A. L. Baldwin (1967, p. 37) summaries Heider's views as far as child psychology is concerned:

"Children, according to naive theory, are primarily ignorant adults. Their behaviour is not governed by laws markedly different from those governing adults; they simply lack much of the knowledge necessary for sensible action. Thus, the socialisation and education of young children is seen as a process of giving them knowledge, either through experience or verbal instruction. At the same time, there is some recognition that children, even if informed, cannot be held responsible for their actions because they are not adequately controlled by their knowledge of right and wrong and of consequences. This responsibility seems to be seen as a result of the maturation that comes automatically with age".

Whether the common sense child psychology of parents and others has changed in the last decades will be discussed later. However, present common sense psychology undoubtedly varies very much, cf. available studies on parents' and teachers' views and attitudes (e.g. Miller, 1988; Andenæs, 1995; Hujala-Huttunen, 1996; Hartmann & Stoll, 1997; Vejleskov, 1997). Further, observations seem to establish that many parents of young children,

- a) are very uncertain as to what is 'the truth' about child development and child education,
- b) are marked by a bad conscience concerning their own efforts as parents, and
- c) feel that they receive little guidance from professional people like psychologists and educationalists.

The third presupposition is that the relationship between common sense psychology and scientific psychology becomes further complicated because that *popular psychology* functions as an intermediary. Most parents, and even many teachers, seldom read original psychological publications. Rather they read popular books and articles, or listen to popular accounts presented on TV or radio by researchers themselves, other psychologists, journalists, educationalists, etc. This implies that the simple dimension from common sense to scientific psychology (Figure 1a) must be supplemented by another model concerning the impact of scientific psychology upon common sense psychology through popular psychology as well as the impact of educational and societal ideology (Figure 1b).

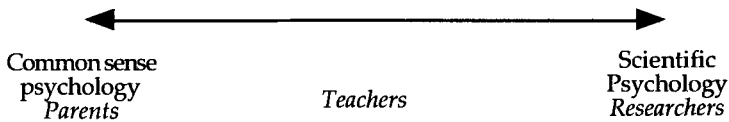


FIGURE 1a

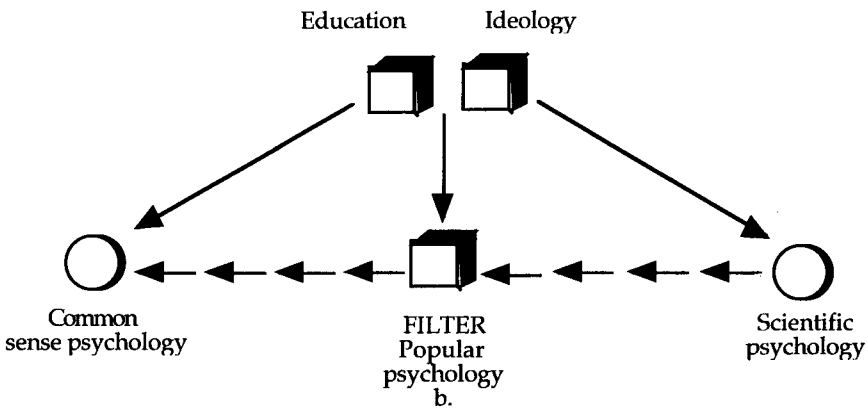


FIGURE 1b

**2. Scientific developmental psychology then and now**

For more than 50 years child psychology has been clearly directed towards clinical psychology, and characterised by several competing schools such as psychoanalysis, behaviourism, social learning theory, Marxist psychology and structural-cognitive psychology. However, as far as popular textbooks are concerned, it has been oriented towards education.

1. The focus on clinical child psychology is very natural as most psychologists earn their living by clinical practice. However, it implies that child psychology often emphasises a variety of risks and their possible results in terms of deviant behaviour, emotional problems, etc., and so leads to increased uncertainty in parents, especially when such studies are communicated in popular articles in which retrospective results (e.g. 10 year old children with emotional problems more often than children without such problems did spend more than 6 hours in day care at the age of 3 years) are 'translated' into prospective conclusions (e.g. if your 3 year old child spends 7-9 hours in day care he will later get into troubles).
2. The different schools with different views on children's learning and development as well as different philosophies of life and of science, undoubtedly contribute to confusion, and, consequently, to uncertainty on the part of parents (and teachers), especially when it is not made clear that a certain theory often deals with rather specific aspects of child development.
3. The fact that many textbooks in the field of child psychology are written for (future) teachers is a simple consequence of economy: in small language areas such as Denmark, the number of students of psychology is small whereas many students populate the teacher training colleges. Thus authors from the beginning (Lehmann, 1913) till now have written books about 'educational child psychology'. Although there is a mutual relationship between child psychology and education, such books may cause an inappropriate overrating of the role of psychology in education.

In recent years heavy developments have taken place in child psychology, only two of which will be mentioned here. The first is that many child psychologists of today are advocates of the hypothesis that even very young children are *competent*, and, especially, that they, through interaction, acquire a certain awareness, however vague, c.f. Stern's (1985) concept of "an emergent sense of self". This idea harmonises with that of a *constructivistic* view on concept formation etc.

The high level of *competence* attached to even very young children is to a certain extent explained by observations of infants by means of new technology and ethological methods. As it is mainly a matter of interactional competence, a direct consequence seems to be that attention and efforts on the part of care-takers become even more important for young children. The assumption that a (vague) self-awareness is present at a very early stage is, on one hand, a natural implication of an early competence for interaction and communication, but, on the other hand, it is difficult not only to prove the existence of an early (non-self-reflexive) sense of self, but also to realise its consequences for early childhood education.

Secondly, many child psychologists are deeply engaged in *social-cultural research*, which seems to imply,

- a) that they do not accept the universality of the great theories of child development such as Erikson's and Piaget's,
- b) that they especially reject the value of developmental stages, and
- c) that they generally stress the importance of social or environmental influences (c.f. for instance Boyes 1994; Wertsch 1989).

This interest in socio-cultural variations, and the corresponding critique of theories assuming the existence of universal stages, take many different shapes some of which are briefly mentioned below:

A positive valuation of Vygotsky's works at the expense of those of Piaget is frequent, and, in addition, both Vygotsky's relativism and Piaget's universalism are frequently overestimated. For example, the anthology translated, commented, and edited by Cole, Scribner & Souberman (Vygotsky, 1978) was called "Mind in

Society" although very little is mentioned about cultural-societal matters. Correspondingly, Piaget's theory is often characterised as extremely individualistic and universalistic, although he wrote about sociological vs. psychological explanations (Piaget, 1965), and attached much importance to children's social experiences (Piaget, 1932; 1965). Here it must be realised that many psychologists and educationalists are not inclined to observe the obviously very relevant distinction between societal (= cultural, ideological, political, etc.) and social (= concretely interactional) variables and influences (Vejleskov, 1998). This affects, among other things, the meaning of *social constructivism*.

In Denmark, a psychologist recently published a book called 'Childhood Psychology' (as an explicit contrast to child psychology), the main thesis of which is that, since the 1960's, a change of paradigm has taken place from a 'theoretical universalism' to a child psychology that is characterised by cultural sensibility, interdisciplinarity, and ideological awareness (Sommer, 1997). In addition, it insists that older child psychology like that of E. H. Erikson or J. Bowlby is 'mother-centred' and ignores the fact that children's development depends on social-cultural conditions, and, accordingly, that such psychology is normative. Although the exposition a) does not observe the social/societal distinction, b) exaggerates the universality and 'mother-centredness' of older theories, and c) is not very clear as to the educational applications of 'childhood psychology', it has been the object of great interest among (future) teachers and even students of psychology (Diderichsen & Vejleskov, 1998).

Another, and related, characteristic is the current interest in the *psychology of narration*, and, more important, the introduction of *narrative psychology* as an alternative to all traditional psychology. Whereas the interest in children's storytelling and understanding of stories is very understandable, especially in connection with the increasing preoccupation with literacy, the virtue of the establishment of a narrative psychology as an alternative theoretical paradigm is less transparent. What is the advantage of substituting, e.g. 'Erikson's theory of child development' by 'Erikson's narrative of child development'? - On the face of it, one manages 1) to level the various theories of child development as it is less subtle to create a story than a theory, and 2) to establish a *relativism* as 'Erikson's theory' is substituted by 'Erikson's story of children's development in the 1950's'.

Thus, present scientific child psychology seems to be in a position marked by a considerable amount of new ideas and discussions.

### 3. Psychology and Education

Like psychology, the field of education forms a continuum from scientific research via popular to common sense educational ideas. In order to illuminate the relation between psychology and educational research, a categorisation of all the 60 articles in 'The European Early Childhood Education Research Journal', Vol. 1-5, was made, c.f. Table 1.

The figures are naturally subject to some uncertainty. For instance, the main theme of the annual EECERA conferences may exercise an influence on the content of the articles in the following volume. Further, all the psychological studies have been made in preschool settings, and most of the educational studies observe aspects of children's development. In addition, studies on methods also involve a certain educational content and vice versa. Nevertheless, some rather clear trends can be observed:

- Most of the psychological studies are concerned with cognitive development, but in 1995-97 studies on play and social development have become more frequent. In

TABLE 1: Distribution of 60 articles in the EECERA Journal 1993-1997 according to their main content.

Content	1993-1995	1995-1997	Total
<b>Ideas: Policy</b>			
- organisation; provisions	5	4	9
- teacher training; support	2	1	3
- views on children; educ.	0	7	7
			<b>19</b>
<b>Education</b>			
- quality; development; organisation	6	5	11
- content	2	0	2
- methods	1	2	3
			<b>16</b>
<b>Child Psychology</b>			
- learning; cognition	7	6	13
- play; social development	2	4	6
			<b>19</b>
<b>Children with Special Needs</b>	5	1	6
			<b>60</b>

most psychological journals, emotional and social development have been the predominant topic for several years, and the same is true in popular books and articles about child psychology.

- In 1993-1995 no studies dealt with parents' or teachers' views on child development and education (i.e. common sense psychology and pedagogy), but 7 articles from 1995-1997 have this topic as their main content. However it must be noted that during the 1980's studies of parents' beliefs were often published in various journals (c.f. Goodnow, 1988; Miller, 1988).
- Only two studies do especially deal with the educational content (curriculum) of day care centres or kindergartens, and no studies at all are concerned with aesthetic education, e.g. the teaching of music and rhythmic, or the teaching of art with preschool children. Here it is interesting to note that when she asked parents what they were concerned about in their child's day care, Roer-Strier (1996) found that "issues related to the curriculum evoked most of the parents' responses (60%), whereas topics related to staff, physical setting and children brought up ... 24%, 10% and 6 % responses, respectively" (p. 80).
- In 1995-97 fewer studies of children with special backgrounds and/or needs (e.g. bilingual children or risk children) are presented.

As far as the role of psychology in the study of early childhood education is concerned, this survey indicates that it is rather important (32% of the articles). This is in accordance with the observation of Blenkin et al. (1996) that experienced early childhood practitioners find that knowledge of child development is the most important

factor. But, unlike child psychology in general, the educational psychology of early childhood gives a high priority to cognitive development, although the topic of play seems to get steadily more attention. Further, studies of parents' and teachers' opinions about child development, i.e. studies on common sense psychology, have been rather frequent in this journal since 1995 (23%). Unfortunately, the same trend does not seem to appear in other journals.

However, the articles do not reflect the new theoretical views on child development focusing on early competencies, early sense of self, and cultural relativism, mentioned in Section 2. This fact supports the observation of Lancaster et al. (1985) that writers in the field of educational psychology not very often use literature from other psychological disciplines. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see whether such views can be explained in terms of societal and ideological changes (Section 4), and whether they have made an influence on common sense and popular psychology and education (Section 5).

#### 4. The background to the new views on child development

The most striking change of the conditions for care and education of young children is that most mothers go to work outside the home so that - although the standard working hours have decreased much since 1960 - the total time children spend together with at least one of the parents is shorter than before, and other persons take care of the child most of the day. This fact makes it natural to assume at least the following implications as to contemporary opinions about child development and education:

a) An increasing interest and confidence in the efforts of day care centres, kindergartens, and other public provisions.

b) An increasing belief in young children's independence and their ability to develop well, harmonious, and all-round through daily interaction with other adults and children.

However, it is equally natural to assume, that the new theoretical suggestions that even very young children are competent, that they develop a sense of self through close interaction with their mothers, and that socio-cultural conditions are very important, imply,

c) that young children are very vulnerable, and

d) that their parents play an important role.

Such beliefs are more or less officially supported by recent improvements of the provisions concerning parents' access to get leave from work to take care of their young children that were introduced in Scandinavian countries several years ago. However, they are not in accordance with the opinions a & b.

The fact that many formerly homogeneous countries have developed into more or less multi-cultural societies must also be taken into account as it may explain the increased interest in socio-cultural matters.

All things considered, it appears difficult to clearly explain the new scientific child psychology in terms of concrete societal conditions. On the other hand, ideological views about modern life characterised by frequent changes, lack of traditions, rapid growth of knowledge, information technology, and a strong tendency to individualism, can possibly explain the new tendencies of child psychology. In that case, an unclear relation, if not a discrepancy, may exist between new ideas and conceptions, and, on the other hand, concrete societal conditions.



It should be noted, that Andenæs (1995) argues that developmental psychology has created two theoretical models: 1) The child as a receiver with universal needs that must be protected from the confusing and complex surroundings by a competent caretaker; it presupposes that an early fulfilment of the needs grants the attainment of trust and independence later. 2) The child as a researcher with an inborn 'inner motor' for development, i.e. to reach more advanced ways of action, and to grasp various concepts at still more advanced levels.

Andenæs further argues that the first model is an effort to separate the interests of children from those of women, whereas the second is an effort to separate the interests of children from those of society, and to obtain equality through education. The two theoretical models seem to harmonise with the suggested opinions a & b above.

However, whereas Andenæs' models are very much to the point as far as psychology in the 1970's and 1980's is concerned, they do not apply to the new child psychology of early competencies and cultural relativism, cf. also Bruner's (1996) claim that child psychology should leave the idea of children's deprivation in favour of the idea of children as active participants in culture.

## 5. The influence of the new views on parents' and teachers' ideas

When one observes the influence of the new trends on the common sense psychology and education of parents and teachers, one has to realise that parents' and teachers' levels of psychological knowledge are different, and that a distinction between common sense opinions on *child development* and common sense opinions on *education* must be maintained.

One is not inclined to think that Heider's conclusion - that common sense psychology of child development considers children as ignorant adults who only become able to be responsible for their own actions through a process of maturation, c.f. Section 1 - holds good 40 years after the publication. However, Andenæs (1995, p. 23-25) suggests that parents' model of development does not make much room for their own active contribution, and holds that maturity implies better practical skills, new interests, and a better understanding of what is going on. This is in accordance with the two theoretical models as well as with opinions a. & b. in Section 4, and, in fact, it is not very different from Heider's view.

In addition, opinion a. is supported by Hujala-Huttunen's (1996) results that most Finnish and American parents felt that their child was highly satisfied with his preschool. Danish survey studies have also shown that, in general, families with young children are positive towards the efforts of kindergartens although, in recent years, the conditions have been poorer in terms of adult-child-ratio.

Lawton et al. (1984) found that parents distinguish between children's physical, intellectual, and social development, and that they paid most attention to their own influence upon the latter. In his extensive research review Miller (1988) concludes that parents have belief systems as to child development, but that they vary considerably, including the beliefs concerning the heredity-environment question. He also concludes that parents' beliefs have some impact upon their behaviour, e.g. that a constructivist view on cognitive development often implies that parents try to help the child to imagine, to anticipate, etc. In another review, Goodnow (1988) is primarily concerned with the many difficulties that arise when one wants to explore parents' beliefs, especially because of the complex relationship between ideas, feelings, and actions on the part of parents. However, she also makes clear that studies so far have shown that parents have ideas about child development, that these ideas are subject to changes, and that they seem to have an impact on their actual behaviour as parents.

In a recent study, Rodrigo & Triana (1996) explored the impact of parents' beliefs upon their inferences rather than their parental practices. Two different beliefs

were contrasted, namely 'environmentalism' vs. 'constructivism'; parents who were told a story of a fictitious couple who was either environmentalistic or constructivistic were able to make correct inferences about the couple's child rearing practice as well as about its educational goals and images. If the parents were told about a couple holding a view that was different from their own, their inferences were more accurate. It was also shown that the inferences became better when the parents had the two conflicting beliefs in mind.

Hujala-Huttunen (1996) compared the opinions about *preschool pedagogy* of parents and teachers in Finland, Russia and USA, and found that parents and teachers in Finland and USA agreed as far as preference for flexible vs. strict rules are concerned, and that - with the exception of USA teachers - they also agreed as to preference for child-centred vs. adult leadership. In Finland, parents more than teachers were inclined to prefer individual vs. group treatment, whereas this difference was not found in USA. A clear difference was seen in teachers' views on their main role as that of teaching (USA) or that of upbringing and care-taking (Finland).

A Danish study seems to indicate that a change has happened as to the opinions of preschool teachers (in Denmark: 'kindergarten pedagogues'). As shown in Table 2, younger pedagogues attach more importance to care taking as well as to the role of play, whereas older pedagogues are inclined to attach more importance to various planned (teaching) activities including creative activities (art, music and rhythmic, etc.).

These tendencies may partly correspond to Scarr & Eisenbergs observations mentioned by Roer-Strier (1996, pp. 78-79) that, since 1970, research on child care has changed from comparative studies of maternal and non-maternal care and studies of individual differences in children's responses, to studies on care quality in relation to distal (socio-cultural) influences as well as individual differences. In a study of Austrian kindergarten teachers' opinions about the main objectives of the kindergarten, Hartmann & Stoll (1997) found that most teachers (52%) are "education oriented", and many teachers (27%) have "a strong socio-pedagogical commitment".

The first group "considered kindergarten primarily as an important place for social interaction and emphasised the importance of fostering individual gifts and talents. Also the compensatory function of kindergarten, and the educational opportunities offered as a complement to family education, were rated highly positive, while the care functions .... generated a lower rate of agreement ....". Most of these teachers were senior-level teachers, and had favourable working conditions.

The latter show "the highest rate of agreement .... concerning the role of kindergarten as a substitute for family education and as a child-care institution for working and single mothers, also stressing the compensatory function ... Social interaction, individual fostering and the educational opportunities offered ... are rated as less important". These teachers were younger, and most of them worked in urban agglomerations where kindergartens are open all day (pp. 80-81).

In summary, this survey of recent studies shows that it is not only difficult to study parents' and teachers' opinions (Goodnow, 1988), but it is also difficult to show the presence of clear tendencies, and, especially, it is not easy to observe a connection between these opinions and the new developmental psychology. However, three findings concerning parents' and teachers' views should be noted:

1. It is still possible, like Heider, to find that parents do not ascribe much effect to their own efforts, even though it is not clear whether this is due to the conviction that inborn characteristics are decisive, or whether it shows that some parents make a virtue of the necessity that other people take care of their children, c.f. the positive valuations of day care centres.

TABLE 2: Per cent answers of different kind to four questions from a questionnaire answered by younger and older preschool teachers

Questions and Answers N:	Age		Finished Training		
	<35 56	35 116	- 1979 69	1980-95 59	1996- 43
<i>To young children, care is just as important as education and learning</i>					
• Yes	39	58	59	54	37
• No, care is more important	57	39	37	44	58
• No, care is crucial to child development	4	4	4	2	5
<i>To 5-6 years old children learning of mathematical concepts and language should be predominant</i>					
• No, not predominant; also other activities	58	79	82	74	59
• Play is the most important	24	9	10	13	20
• Teaching only in the preschool classes for 6 years old (in school)	10	6	0	11	12
• Yes	8	6	8	2	10
<i>To learn through play is at least just as important as to learn through teaching</i>					
• Play is more important than planned activity	78	66	61	67	90
• Yes, play and planned activity are equally important	21	31	36	31	9
• The importance of play may be overstated		0	3	4	2 0
<i>To learn through creative activity is just as important as to learn through play</i>					
• Agreed, play and creative activity are alike	43	60	64	55	37
• Play is a little more important	31	26	27	24	34
• No, play is of special importance	27	14	9	22	29

2. On the other hand, it is also demonstrated that parents do have opinions about child development, however varied, and even that these views have a certain effect upon their parental behaviour.
3. Presumably preschool teachers (kindergarten pedagogues) form a more homogeneous group than parents. However, studies of teachers indicate that different attitudes exist, not only between countries, but also within rather small countries such as Austria and Denmark. Generally, the differences seem to be a matter of the traditional contrast concerning the objectives of preschool education between teaching (pedagogics) and care (socio-pedagogics), c.f. the differences between older and younger teachers, and between teachers working in different areas.

## 6. Discussion

The most conspicuous result of the considerations so far is,

- 1) that no distinct connections have been established between common sense, popular, and scientific psychology and pedagogics, and
- 2) that it is difficult to demonstrate clear relationships between the new theories of child development and current common sense psychology.

However, it seems obvious that such connections exist: on one hand, developmental psychology plays a rather important part in research on early childhood education, and, on the other hand, parents and teachers have opinions about child development; teachers find that knowledge about child development is of much consequence for their work, and parents' views have been shown to affect their behaviour in front of their children.

The main reason for the somewhat meagre result is evidently that no investigations have systematically dealt with the various relationships. For instance, no study has compared the curriculum in developmental psychology at training colleges, preschool teachers' personal opinions about child development, and their practice in day care centre or preschool class, and no study has compared parents' actual knowledge (and from which popular psychological sources it comes), their personal beliefs, and their actions concerning child behaviour.

Such studies would be of equally great interest to researchers in child psychology, researchers in early childhood education, and colleagues who teach at training colleges or, in other ways, promote and popularise child psychology and education. For example, it would be very profitable to know more exactly whether teachers and parents overrate the significance of child psychology, and to better understand the relationship between current scientific theory and the actual views of parents and teachers. Further, it would be useful to see the use made of research in various psychological disciplines in the field of early child education, and, more generally, to explore the relationship between education and psychology at various levels from research to common sense views. Last but not least, it would be very relevant to better understand how the contrast between "the competent young child who can manage to gain from interaction with other adults and children" and "the vulnerable young child" appears from the quarters of parents, day care mothers, teachers, and research promoters/popularisers.

- [1] This article is an condensed combination of a paper read at the EECERA Conference in Munich September 1997, a lecture given at a conference held by the Ministry of Social Affairs in Copenhagen October 1997, and an article, 'In Defense of Developmental Psychology', in a Danish journal (Diderichsen & Vejleskov 1998).

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