

# NON SOCIAL PLAY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD: CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROCHES

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**Key words:** early childhood, nonsocial play, POS, play diagnosis, assessment, development. Without a doubt, children have played through the ages. It the turn of the century, views toward play started to change, and it came to be considered a meaningful activity. Play it is an arbitrary self-motivated activity, providing flexibility in deciding how to use one or the other thing. It has become evident that nonsocial play in early childhood is a complex and multifaceted construct / Coplan & Rubin 1998 /.To begin with , nonsocial play may have different meanings as a function of the context where it is displayed. Nonsocial play is defined as the display of solitary activities and behaviors in the presence of other people, which implies the opportunity to engage in social interaction and group-oriented play. A child who is playing quietly alone in his or her room at home would not be engaging in nonsocial play, as there are no play partners in the immediate vicinity. It has generally been believed that the consistent and frequent display of nonsocial play behaviors in childhood is indicative of psychological maladaptation of some form Thus although the display of nonsocial play in early childhood is quite common. Historically, the behavioral manifestations of social withdrawal have generally been considered to

have limited developmental significance. At present it is widely accepted that children who consistently experience a low quality of peer interaction during the early and middle childhood years may be at risk for later problems in adolescence and adulthood. Thus problems include academic difficulties / poor school performance, school dropout/, delinquency and aggression, and other forms of psychological maladjustment such as depression, low –self-esteem, and loneliness /. There are many different contexts within which children may display nonsocial play behaviors. When displayed within various contexts, the same behaviors may be reflective of different psychological underpinnings. Two factors that have a profound influence on the contexts for nonsocial play are the nature of available play partners, and novelty of the play setting. The necessity of available play partners of social play introduces a host of potentially influential variables. The characteristics of play partners may alter the demands of the play setting, and influence children's play behaviors. From an early age, children vary their social overtures as a function of the age and gender of their playmates / Brownell, 1990 / . Moreover, children as young as 3.5 years direct more social overtures and engage in more social interactions with

friends than with nonfriends / Doyle 1982 / . The presence of an adult may also influence children's social and play behaviors. Another important contextual distinction in the understanding of nonsocial play concerns the novelty of the play partners and setting .When faced with a novel setting / a new environment, unfamiliar peers and/ or adults/ , some children are consistently quiet, vigilant, and restrained. These children have been referred to as inhibited .These behaviors include withdrawal form , or long latencies to interact with , unfamiliar objects or adults , cessation of play and vocalization following the introduction of a novel event , and prolonged proximity to a parent in a unfamiliar setting . In contrast in uninhibited children react with spontaneity, and quickly seek to initiate social interaction, as if they do not distinguish between novel and familiar situations. It was generally believed that the frequent and continued display of nonsocial play in social context was a sufficient criterion for characterizing young children as a socially withdrawn, and therefore as risk for contemporaneous and future social, social-cognitive, and emotional difficulties. The are indeed various subtypes of nonsocial behaviors, each with its own underlying psychological meaning. **Reticent behaviors** is identified by frequent production of onlooking behaviors / prolonged watching of other children without accompanying play / or being unoccupied / wandering aimlessly, starting off into space / . This form of nonsocial play seems to reflect social fear and anxiety in a social context. **Solitary-passive behavior.** This form of nonsocial play includes the quies-

cent exploration of objects and/ or constructive activity while playing alone / Rubin 1982 / . Children who frequently display solitary-passive play / doing puzzles or artwork / seem to be object-oriented, rather than people-oriented. A child with such motivational system might be content to play alone without initiating social contacts, but might also be willing to engage in more socially oriented activities if provided with an attractive social invitation. **Solitary-active behavior** is the third subtype of nonsocial play describes by repeated sensorimotor actions with or without objects and/or by solitary dramatizing. A child engaged in this form of nonsocial play might bang a pair of wood blocks together repeatedly , or „drive,, a toy car around in circles while vocalizing the sounds of the engine. It is important to distinguish solitary-dramatic play in the presence of peers from dramatic when child is alone, as well as from sociodramatic play in the presence of peers. There have been few measures specifically developed to assess the display of children's nonsocial play activities in early childhood. Typically ,nonsocial play has been assessed somewhat incidentally, as one component of a border construct .One the way that methodological tools can be characterized is with respect to the source of information concerning children's behavior. Methodologies for the assessment of nonsocial play are direct observation, the play observation scale, indirect observation, the preschool play behavior scale. We would like to present the play observation scale. A particularly diverse observational protocol that can be employed for the assessment of various forms of

children's social and nonsocial free-play behaviors is the Play observation Scale / POS: Rubin 1989 /. The POS was originally developed as a reliable general taxonomy of play behaviors in early and middle childhood. Thus , the POS can be used to simultaneously evaluate the social participatory and the structural components of children's free-play behaviors. Most of the earliest work on the social participatory aspects of children's free-play behaviors were biographical studies that included observations of social behavior incidental to other "psychic" behavior / Cooley 1902, Baldwin & Stecher 1925, Verry 1923 /. However, the social participatory component of the POS was drawn from the work of Mildred Parten . Parten /1932 / examined the social and nonsocial interactions of preschool children who were observed in nursery school setting over 9 month period. She derived several categories of social participation .Thus categories were adapted to provide the basis for the five social participation codes in the POS; unoccupied, onlooker, solitary, parallel, and group. Unoccupied behavior is characterized by a marked absence of focus or intent. The occupied child is not playing, but instead may blankly stare into space, or wander around aimless. Onlooking behavior, the child watches the activities of others but does not attempt to enter in . This differs from unoccupied behavior in that onlooking specifically involves the observations of another child or group of children . Solitary play is coded when the child plays apart from the other children at a distance greater than three feet. The child is playing alone and independently with toys that

are different from those used by the children within speaking distance. Moreover, the child is entered on his or her own activity and plays little or no attention to any of the children in the area. Parallel play playing independently next to but not with other children. The activity often, but not necessarily, brings the child within three feet of other children . Group play child plays directly with other children. There is common goal or purpose to the activity, with a marked sense of belonging to the group, the efforts of one child are supplemented by those of another. These social participation categories already provide some distinction between the various forms of nonsocial play. Unoccupied and onlooking behaviors are differentiated from solitary play, which is in turn distinguished from parallel, and group activities. However, there is reason to divide solitary play into further subtypes. The POS allows for this possibility because nested within the social participation categories of solitary, parallel, and group play are various levels of the structural quality of play . The POS was developed as a marriage between the theoretical and descriptive approaches of Parten and Piaget. The POS has been used by researchers to study both individual differences in children's play and general age-related and context-specific trends. More, recently, the POS has been adapted for use in study of the various forms of young children's nonsocial behaviors. The meaning of nonsocial play may vary as a function of whether these behaviors are displayed in familiar settings, and with adult or peer play partners. The various structural forms of nonsocial play appear to

reflect different underlying psychological mechanisms, and are associated with decidedly different outcomes. Children appear to play alone for many different reasons. The nonsocial play is complex and multifaceted construct. The assessment of nonsocial play behaviors can provide a window into

children's social and emotional well-being. A continued exploration of this multidimensional construct serves to inform both researchers and clinicians with regard to an understanding of important aspects of young children's development.

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## ԱՄՓՈՓՈՒՄ

### ՈՉ ՍՈՑԻԱԼԱԿԱՆԱՑՎԱԾ ԽԱՂԸ ՎԱՂ ՄԱՆԿԱԿԱՆ ՏԱՐԻՔՈՒՄ : ԿՈՆՑԵՊՏՈՒԿԱԼ ԵՎ ՄԵԹՈԴՈԼՈԳԻԱԿԱՆ ՄՈՏԵՑՈՒՄՆԵՐ

Ասոյան Լ.Է.

Խաչատուր Աբովյանի անվան հայկական պետական մանկավարժական համալսարանի հատուկ մանկավարժության և հոգեբանության ամբիոնի դասախոս

Հոդվածում անդրադարձել ենք վաղ մանկական տարիքում ոչ սոցիալականացված խաղի էությունը և բովանդակությունը: Ներկայացրել ենք „խաղի հետազոտման սանդղակ,, մեթոդիկայի վերլուծությունը :

## РЕЗЮМЕ

### НЕСОЦИАЛИЗИРОВАННАЯ ИГРА В РАННЕМ ВОЗРАСТЕ: КОНЦЕПТУАЛЬНО-МЕТОДОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ ПОДХОДЫ

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В статье мы обратились к сущности и содержанию несоциализированной игры в раннем возрасте.

Представили анализ методики “Таблица обследования игры”.