The Development of Play during Infancy

- Why do infants play?
  - "Through play, children grow. They learn how to use their muscles; they develop the ability to coordinate what they see with what they do; and they develop a sense of mastery over their bodies.
  - Through play, children learn. They find out what the world is like and what they are like. They acquire new skills and learn the appropriate situations for using them. They 'try out' different aspects of life.
  - Through play, children mature. They cope with complex and conflicting emotions by reenacting real life in play. They make 'their lives more encompassable and endurable (Biber, 1971)."

Development of Play during Infancy

- Play is a pleasurable activity, actively engaged in on a voluntary basis, motivated intrinsically and containing some elements that are nonliteral (using 1 thing to represent another).

Influence of Play on Development

- Muscle coordination
- Social/interaction skills
  - Language
- Logical reasoning
- Problem-solving skills
- Increases exploration
- Releases tension
Milestones in Play

- 2-3 months: objects in environment begin to play role in play
- 9 months: emergence of functional-relational play
- 18 months: emergence of symbolic play
- 2 ½ years: sociodramatic play
  - Miniature dramas
  - Roles/characters
  - Imitation of adults
  - Reenactment of family relationships
  - Expression of needs
  - Outlet for forbidden impulses
  - Reversal of roles

Development of Play:
Cognitive Benefits

- Piaget: Action is basis of knowledge
  - Advances cognitive development
  - Practice competencies and acquire skills
  - Representational play has late onset and slow development
  - Representational play shifts from play involving only self to play involving self-object relations to play involving objects exclusively
- Vygotsky: uses objects in environment as tools to accomplish some activity

Cognitive Play

- Functional Play
- Constructive Play
- Dramatic Play
- Games with Rules
Development of Play: Social Levels

- Mildred Parten (1932) made extensive observations of young preschool children
- Six levels of play: range from nonsocial to highly integrated social play

The Social Levels of Play - Parten

- Six levels identified:
  1. Unoccupied behavior
  2. Onlooking
  3. Solitary play
  4. Parallel play
  5. Associative play
  6. Cooperative play
- Play evolves and changes as children acquire social skills
- Older children able to coordinate play with peers or in a larger group

Development of Play: Emotional Development

- Psychoanalytic: play is expression of wish fulfillment
  - Used to deal with traumas
Contemporary Perspective

• Emphasizes boy cognitive and social aspects of play
  – Sensorimotor play
  – Pretense/symbolic play
  – Social play
  – Constructive play

Influences on Play

• Gender
• SES
• Ability level
• Parental/adult involvement - scaffolding