

## THE SOCIAL PLAY CONTINUUM - THE FOUR DOMAINS EXPLAINED (SEE CHAPTER TWO)

THE ASSOCIATIVE DOMAIN	THE SOCIAL DOMAIN	THE HIGHLY SOCIAL DOMAIN	THE COOPERATIVE DOMAIN
<p>In this domain, we can see that the play is for the most part in parallel to peers. The main behaviours are action-based. Watching and imitation may be relatively frequent as shared frameworks of meaning are developing as children play in an Area of Provision.</p> <p>Object play is important in this domain, as it has been for the developing infant; the offering of an object becomes the first recognisable attempt at reciprocity but in this domain it may be ignored or an object may be taken from a parallel player and followed by altercation.</p> <p>Self-talk is recognised as Vygotsky described it, as an indicator of ‘thinking out loud’ rather than as Piaget described it, as a sign of egocentrism. Even as adults we may self-talk when confronted with a bit of a problem.</p> <p>Comment on action is slightly different from self-talk in that it is not an introspective reflection but rather, the head may be lifted or the gaze directed as the child says: ‘I’m putting the car in the garage’ as almost an invitation to play. When directed at a peer, as a comment, or even if the voice lifts a little to carry further, it invites reciprocity. As with object offering, this denotes initial attempts to build reciprocity.</p>	<p>The face remains important for its key signals and smiling and laughter are in evidence, sometimes to self and sometimes others. Play noises may be to self or with others. The play noise is a clearer invitation to respond than the self talk of the Associative Domain because it is designed to attract attention. It is similar to ‘comments on action’.</p> <p>The reciprocity (<b>R</b>) is growing. Eye contact is still in evidence but is now being given <i>and</i> returned. Objects offered are accepted and this action is often accompanied by eye contact as interacting peers register faces and responses. Sometimes, an object is taken without permission but is not followed by altercation as compromise takes its place.</p> <p>Language is used in more complex ways in the Social Domain, to seek approval, to give instructions and, to ask questions. Peers may/may not respond. These are isolated and sporadic interactions.</p> <p>It may not be easy to detect significant differences between a child seeking approval and a child commenting on action. As observational skills develop with time and practice, the capacity to make distinctions also develops.</p>	<p>The offering and accepting of objects is becoming more integrated into the flow of the play but remains important in making and sustaining social connections.</p> <p>In this domain, it becomes apparent that the levels of reciprocity in the play are increasing. As a result, the play is gaining momentum as the exchanges between playing peers become longer.</p> <p>Eye contact and facial expressions remain important but children are now taking the signals for reciprocity from language and action and relying less on facial expressions for sustaining links with peers.</p> <p>These more extended exchanges allow children to communicate and develop their play themes. But, as referenced previously, observers must beware. Sometimes children establish a theme before the observer arrives and have no need to reiterate it. This aspect is discussed in the next chapter.</p> <p>When there is a shared understanding of the play theme, children can begin to incorporate their own experiences, ideas and the available resources into the play. This aspect is discussed in chapter 3.</p>	<p>The main purpose for offering and accepting objects is to develop play themes. Objects become incidental to relationship building and integral to problem-solving activities and goal achievement.</p> <p>Dialogue is activity-related but not necessarily frequent. The children become immersed in their play, wholly absorbed and engaged, all that they say and do is an expression of their united engagement with the play theme and the attainment of their goals.</p> <p>Children no longer comment on action and seldom make play noises but explain and describe what they are doing and why.</p> <p>Children seek out and incorporate resources to extend and expand play themes; resources can bring their ideas and experiences to life.</p> <p>In seeking to achieve goals, children recognise times when peers need help and respond verbally with suggestions and physically with assistance.</p> <p>Role play takes on dramatic qualities. Children remain in character for longer periods, interacting in character. Scenarios emerge; characters make entrances and exits in more formalised ways. Children only ‘break out’ of character to negotiate and agree plot development or integrate new characters.</p>