

Play and Games in the Peer Cultures of Preschool and Preadolescent Children : An Interpretative Approach

ANN-CARITA EVALDSSON and WILLIAM A. CORSARO

Childhood 1998 5: 377

DOI: 10.1177/0907568298005004003

The online version of this article can be found at:
<http://chd.sagepub.com/content/5/4/377>

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:

Norwegian Centre for Child Research

Additional services and information for *Childhood* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://chd.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://chd.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

Citations: <http://chd.sagepub.com/content/5/4/377.refs.html>

>> [Version of Record](#) - Nov 1, 1998

[What is This?](#)



PLAY AND GAMES IN THE PEER CULTURES OF PRESCHOOL AND PREADOLESCENT CHILDREN

An interpretative approach

ANN-CARITA EVALDSSON
Linköping University
AND WILLIAM A. CORSARO
Indiana University

Key words:
children's peer cultures, children's play
and games, ethnography,
Italy, Sweden

Mailing address:
Ann-Carita Evaldsson
Department of Communication Studies,
Linköping University, Linköping, Sweden

Childhood [0907-5682(199811)5:4]
Copyright © 1998 SAGE Publications
(London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi)
Vol. 5(4): 377-402; 005904

This article is an ethnographic study of children's production and participation in play and games in an Italian preschool and an afterschool program in a Swedish elementary school. Most traditional theoretical and empirical work on children's play and games has focused on the contributions of these activities for children's development of social, cognitive and communicative skills. Other research has extended this developmental focus by examining play and games as valued activities in children's production, organization and maintenance of their peer cultures. This article extends this work by examining play and games as part of a process of interpretive reproduction in children's lives. We demonstrate how children in the production of play and games simultaneously use (as well as refine and develop) a wide range of communicative skills, collectively participate in and extend their peer cultures, and appropriate features of, and develop an orientation to, the wider adult culture.

Introduction

Most traditional theoretical and empirical work on children's play and games has focused on the contributions of these activities for children's development of cognitive and communicative skills and their acquisition of social knowledge. Other research has extended this developmental focus by examining play and games as highly valued activities in children's production, organization and maintenance of their peer cultures. While previous theorizing and research studies are important contributions to our understanding of the place of play and games in children's worlds and their social development, we wish to extend this work by examining play and games as part of a process of interpretive reproduction in children's lives. Our aim is to

demonstrate how children in the production of play and games simultaneously use (as well as refine and develop) a wide range of communicative skills, collectively participate in and extend their peer cultures, and appropriate features of, and develop an orientation to, the wider adult culture.

Traditional theoretical approaches to play and games

Much of the work on children's play and games in developmental psychology has been strongly influenced by Piaget, especially his connection of the play of games with rules (like marbles) to children's moral development. However, it is the social philosopher G.H. Mead and most especially Vygotsky who most directly discussed the relation between play and games as analytic concepts related to children's social development.

Mead's views of the genesis of self have had great influence on theories of socialization in sociology. According to Mead, the individual experiences him- or herself indirectly from the standpoints and responses of other members of the same social group. In this sense, the individual acquires a sense of self 'by taking the attitudes of other individuals toward himself within a social environment or context of experience and behavior in which both he and they are involved' (Mead, 1934: 138; see also Cottrell, 1969).

In his discussion of the genesis of self-consciousness, Mead (1934) distinguishes the nature of play and games. According to Mead 'taking the role of the other' (i.e. taking a perspective that is different from the one habitually or presently held) is a cognitive skill learned in the context and course of play and games. When children engage in pretend play, as for example, being teachers, parents and princesses, they are already 'taking roles', while it is only in rule-governed games that the participating child 'must have the attitude of all others involved in the game' (Mead, 1934: 54). When a child takes the other player's perspectives it will affect the child's own acts which by virtue of this role taking will be constituted as social acts (see Grauman, 1990).

Vygotsky (1966) extends Mead's ideas about the relation between children's participation in play and games in two important respects. First, Vygotsky is careful not to draw a clear demarcation between play and games, rather he sees games as a developmental continuation of play. In this sense, play as well as games are dependent on mutually accepted rules of procedure in a specific frame. The most basic general rule is that of reciprocity in all social interaction. But, except for the general rule of reciprocity, play and games also require specific and local rules applicable to the special context or activity. Both play and games require structuring and management, which are articulated in the ways children initiate play routines and games (e.g. 'Help I'm lost in the forest!', 'You're the mommy and I'm the baby' or 'Want to play marbles?') and the constant recapitulation of local rules (e.g. 'You can't talk if you're dead', 'It's my turn now').

Vygotsky proposes another type of relation between play and games. He emphasizes a continuity between imaginative play and games, noting that there is no such thing as play without rules. He states that only actions which fit the rule of a particular play situation, for example, pretending to be a mother, are acceptable. Yet there is often wide choice in the range of such actions and how they may be coordinated with the responses of others leaving room for a great deal of embellishment and improvisation. Further, and this is important, the 'as-if' feature of pretend play enables children to invent new rules which define the proper behavior of imaginary characters and objects (e.g. what monsters and threatened victims are to do in relation to each other; Vygotsky, 1978: 93; see also Corsaro, 1985: 192–250; Sawyer, 1996).

Regarding games, Vygotsky argues that 'pure games' with rules are essentially games within imaginary or 'as-if' situations, in that as soon as the game is regulated with certain rules, a number of actual possibilities for action are ruled out (see Evaldsson, 1993: 76–7). The difference between play and games is defined in regard to the organization of the activity. In games the explicit organization of the activity, the articulation and negotiation of rules and the implicitness of imagination are central. The difference between play and games is seen as a developmental continuum, where play and games are not totally separate entities. As Vygotsky argues 'the development from an overt imaginary situation and covert rules to games with overt rules and a covert imaginary situation outlines the evolution of children's play from one pool to the other' (Vygotsky, 1966: 10).

Mead and Vygotsky also differ in their conceptualization of the nature of children's participation in play and games. For Mead children take on 'specific roles' in play (such as sociodramatic and other types of pretend play) and the 'role of the generalized other' in games with rules. By their very participation in such coordinated activities, children come to develop a sense of self and their place in society. This view is generally in line with Piagetian constructivism or the notion that children learn by acting on their physical and social environments. Vygotsky, however, goes further than this, and here his general belief of action as social praxis in a Marxist sense is important (see Cole and Scribner, 1978). For Vygotsky (1978), children *appropriate* available cultural resources in their play, games and cultural activities more generally. Appropriation is a stronger notion than active participation. It implies to take over and make one's own. Furthermore, cultural resources (like language and shared knowledge) are used as tools and are often refined, transformed and extended in the process of appropriation. When viewed at the level of collective action (central to Marxist praxis), appropriation can take us beyond the traditional view of socialization as the individual child's internalization of the adult world to a view of interpretive reproduction (Corsaro, 1992). In this view children collectively become a part of adult culture – that is, contribute to its reproduction – through their

negotiations with adults and their creation, with other children, of a series of peer cultures.

Play and games as situated activities in peer culture

In this article we want to use Vygotsky's ideas about play and games and his notion of appropriation differently from the way he himself and most psychologists influenced by his work have. Instead of focusing on the implications of children's play, their participation in games and their general appropriation of cultural resources *for individual development or internalization of culture*, we focus on these processes as *collective cultural productions*. Our emphasis does not mean that we are uninterested in change or development. However, instead of a primary interest in the movement from the interpersonal to the intrapersonal, we wish to focus on how children's interpersonal processes are collectively produced and how they change over time in childhood. The whole time children are developing individually, the collective processes they are a part of are also changing. These processes are best seen as constituted in many interwoven local or micro cultures. When we discuss these collective processes developmentally or longitudinally we need to think about the nature of children's *evolving membership* (Lave and Wenger, 1991) in these local cultures and the *changing degrees or intensities of membership and participation* over time. In short, we are interested in these collective processes of active involvement or membership in a group, how the nature of the membership changes with children's experiences in local cultures, and how those experiences are related to transitions (which are again collectively produced) to other local peer cultures and children's eventual place in the adult world.

Key to the notion of evolving membership is participation in collective routine activities which symbolize that one is part of a group (Corsaro, 1992, 1997). At the same time cultural practices in these routines prepare or prime members for future changes in their lives. In this article we focus on children's play and games as routine practices in their peer cultures. Further, we conceptualize and analyze children's participation in play and games as situated activities (Evaldsson, 1993; Gaskins et al., 1992; Goodwin, 1990; Rogoff, 1990). Situated activities emphasize the interactive actions of separate participants into joint social projects (Goffman, 1961). Moreover, situated activities are produced in real settings with real children who often have long interactional histories. Research that is based on verbal reports of children's participation in games or which relies on analysis of the form and structure of games abstracted from their actual performances misses this situated character. Such research is bloodless, so to speak. It surely tells us something about how children spend their time and the developmental implications of participating in games with various physical, cognitive, language and emotional demands. But if one really wants to capture the rich social

world of children's lives and peer cultures it is necessary to do extended fieldwork. Literally this means that one has to enter children's play and be willing to get pants dirty and shoes muddy.

What is especially important from an interpretive perspective is capturing the meaning and importance of play and games as they are produced over time within local peer cultures. Children who are together over long periods of time produce and participate in shared peer cultures that reflect their general concerns as children and their more specific concerns as a group of children who share an interactional history. Thus, their play and games have multiple meanings as the children not only share the joy of the play, but use play and games to address complexities and ambiguities in their relations with each other and adults. Further, children's play and games help them to prospect about ongoing and future changes in their lives.

This article reports on two lines of research which examine children's play and games from the perspective of interpretative reproduction. First, using Corsaro's comparative ethnographies of Italian preschool children as a base, we examine how children's participation in pretend play contributes to the production and extension of peer culture and provides the children with insights into and predispositions toward the adult world. We also rely on Corsaro's data to look at preschool children's initial attempts at participation in games with rules. The children's involvement in such games was infrequent, but these early experiences can be seen as priming children for coming changes in the nature of their peer cultures. Second, we rely on Evaldsson's work in Swedish afterschool programs to capture the importance of games in the peer culture of preadolescent children. Evaldsson studied two different programs for 6- to 10-year-old children over an 8-month period. She found that the children engaged in games that they repeated day after day, with the children in one center preferring to play and trade marbles while the children at a second often engaged in jump rope. Our analysis of data from Evaldsson's study demonstrates how children relied on repeated performances of the games to create a locally shared peer culture and to display and evaluate selves and identities in that culture.

We have argued that children become part of adult society through their collective production and participation in a series of peer cultures (Corsaro, 1992, 1997). These two research studies of children's participation in preschool and preadolescent peer cultures enable us to capture how play and games evolve in the children's collective actions and how they are embedded as routine, situated activities in the local cultures that are analyzed. Thus, the analysis is comparative in that it looks at specific routine activities in children's cultures in the preschool and preadolescent periods. However, our goal is not to document the children's simple linear movement from play to games, but rather to demonstrate how such development is embedded in the children's collective production and participation in their peer cultures. We are aware that our decision to work with rich ethnographic materials

from preschool and preadolescent cultures is complicated by the fact that the ethnographies were carried out in two different cultures. We are careful to point out how aspects of the wider Italian and Swedish cultures affect the children's cultures both in regard to the children's appropriation and resistance of adult culture. Nonetheless, the two field sites share a basic similarity in that they are part of educational programs in which children are together on a daily basis for long periods of time and in which activities in peer culture are seen as valuable in their own right as part of the overall curriculum (Corsaro, 1996; Corsaro and Molinari, in press; Evaldsson, 1993).

Play and games in the peer culture of preschool children

There is a long history of appreciation of the creativity of and research work on the pretend play of preschool children (see Sawyer, 1996, for a recent review). In fact, Furth has referred to the 2- to 5-year-old children of all cultures as the 'high point of humanity' noting that 'their creativity at all times is the basis for whatever humanness there is in society' (Furth, 1996: 4). In his studies of peer culture in preschool settings in the United States and Italy over the last 20 years, Corsaro has documented children's production of a wide range of play routines. Although difficult to characterize precisely, most of the play routines can be placed into three general categories: (1) spontaneous fantasy or imaginative play; (2) sociodramatic role play; and (3) games with rules. Corsaro has presented detailed analyses of preschool children's fantasy and sociodramatic play in earlier work (Cook-Gumperz and Corsaro, 1977; Corsaro 1985, 1988, 1993). Here we briefly consider these forms of play with an emphasis on their relation to the development and maintenance of local peer cultures in preschools. We present a more extended discussion of preschool children's play of formal games with rules.

We rely on data collected in Corsaro's recent study of 5- to 6-year-old Italian children in a *scuola materna* in Modena, Italy. The *scuola materna*, a preschool education program that exists throughout Italy and is usually administered by local governments, provides childcare and educational programs for children aged 3–6 years old (see Corsaro and Emiliani, 1992). Attendance in the program is high: in Modena over 94 percent of the children in that age group attended regularly. The *scuola materna* Corsaro studied was made up of four classes (a 3-year-old group, a 4-year-old group and two 5-year-old groups) of around 18 children with two teachers and one assistant for each class. The children attended for approximately 8 hours (8:30 to 4:30) each weekday. In his study Corsaro concentrated his observations in one of the 5-year-old groups during the period February through June 1996, when he accomplished field entry and acceptance into the children's peer culture, engaged in participant observation, collected extensive field notes, and recorded numerous episodes of peer interaction on audio- or videotape (see Corsaro, 1985 and Rizzo et al., 1992 for a more detailed

discussion of ethnographic methods for studying young children in natural settings). He also conducted indepth interviews of the teachers of the group he studied and a subsample of parents of the children in this group. Finally, Corsaro made the transition with this group of children from the *scuola materna* to first grade in the autumn 1996, where he observed in four different first grade classrooms from September through December 1996. He also conducted a second set of interviews with parents and interviewed the first grade teachers. Here we concentrate on Corsaro's observations of these children while they were in the *scuola materna*, focusing on the children's spontaneous pretend play, sociodramatic role play and initial play of games with rules.

Spontaneous fantasy play and building solidarity in peer culture

Spontaneous fantasy play, which occurred most frequently among the younger 3- and 4-year-old children in Corsaro's studies, often involved children becoming animals or imaginary characters like monsters, fairies, or princesses through the manipulation of toy figures or physical embodiment. Children also created and shared pretend routines with particular rules governing the nature of the play and the rights and obligations of players in the very course of the play activities. The play is spontaneous in that it is seldom initiated by simply naming an activity (e.g. 'Let's play monsters') and it is rarely tied directly to specific plans of actions or scripts ('Let's pretend this is our house and we'll cook dinner'). Rather, the play is highly improvisational and is often guided indirectly by underlying themes ('danger-rescue', 'lost-found', 'death-rebirth') that generally involve the build-up and release of tension (Cook-Gumperz and Corsaro, 1977; Corsaro, 1985, 1988; Sawyer, 1996). Corsaro has also identified spontaneous fantasy play among older children in his studies (5- to 6-year-olds) which is directly related to children's attempts to gain control over adults and to maintain solidarity within the peer group. It is an example of this latter type of fantasy play that we examine here.

In the following field note example we can see how pretend play is closely connected to local features of the peer and school culture.

Example 1

La Guerra Dell' Erba (The Grass War)

The outside yard has been freshly mowed with cut grass laying all around. Some of the girls (Elisa, Carlotta, and Michela) begin gathering the grass and take it to an area under the climbing structure where they make a bed. After several trips back to the structure the girls innovatively begin to haul the grass for their bed in small cars and trucks used by the children in the 3-year old class when they play in the outside yard. At one point, Michela and then others lay down on the bed and say: 'Che Morbido!' [How soft it is!].

Some boys (Renato and Lorenzo) come over and want to lay on the bed, but are run off by the girls. Renato grabs some grass from the bed and throws it at the girls and they respond in kind as Renato runs away. Several other girls enter the play, but Elisa,

Carlotta, and Michela control the activity. The new recruits are allowed to bring grass, but not place it on the bed. Lorenzo enters for a second time and there is some more grass throwing which is discouraged by the teachers.

Later while the girls are still working on their beds, Carlotta returns to say that one of the boys from the other 5-year-old group at the school hit her while she was gathering grass. The other girls become upset and decide to go get the boy. The girls march over carrying grass, come up behind the boy, and pummel him with the grass. The girls then run back to the climbing structure and celebrate their revenge – especially Carlotta, who is all smiles. Eventually the boy gets a few of his friends and they come by and throw grass at the girls. The girls then chase after the boys who are outnumbered and take the worst of it in another exchange of grass throwing.

The grass war now escalates with girls and boys on both sides becoming involved. In fact, all but a few of the 5-year-old group Corsaro is observing are now in the grass war. The war continues for sometime until Marina suggests to the children in Corsaro's group that they make peace. Carlotta resists this suggestion at first, but eventually agrees. Marina with several children behind her marches up to the boy who hit Carlotta and offers her hand in peace. The boy responds by throwing grass in Marina's face. Marina returns to the group, and Carlotta says: 'They don't want peace!' But Marina says she will try again. The second time she offers her hand the boy throws grass again, but over the objections of another boy who is in his group. The other boy actually grabs his friend's arm to try to prevent him from throwing the grass at Marina.

Marina stands her ground after being hit with the grass. The second boy pulls his friend aside and suggests they make peace. The other boy is against the proposal, but eventually agrees and the two then shake hands with Marina. Marina then returns to our group and declares: 'Peace has been established!' The two groups now meet for a round of handshaking. Corsaro also exchanges handshakes with the kids from the other 5-year-old group who identify him as part of the opposing group.

This play episode is made up of three phases which reveal different but overlapping aspects of the peer culture. In the first phase the children appropriate objects from the adult world and use them to create an innovative pretend play routine. Here they take the freshly cut grass (often transporting it in the little cars and trucks of the 3-year-olds) to make their wonderful, soft beds. This creative activity gives the children a shared sense of control over their social environment. In the second phase, a conflict develops first within the group and later between the groups as Carlotta's peers defend her honor. Gender differences were apparent in both the intragroup and intergroup conflict. In the intragroup conflict the girls resist the entry of two boys in their play with the grass beds. The boys respond by throwing grass at the girls and then run off with one boy, Lorenzo, returning to throw grass later. It is interesting to note, however, that the intergroup conflict, which begins with girls against boys (from the other 5-year-old group), does not remain divided along gender lines. As the battle developed, girls and boys from both sides united in their participation in the grass war and both boys and girls participated in the establishment of peace. So we see that group membership was more important than gender in this instance, and in fact this intergroup conflict served to develop further the strong solidarity that existed in both groups. Finally, Corsaro frequently observed the third (or 'peace negotiation') phase both in conflicts within the group and across groups. In this

instance, the peace negotiation demonstrates the children's awareness of a sense of community in the school, which is marked symbolically by the handshakes.

This activity demonstrates a number of important aspects of spontaneous pretend play and peer culture. First, the activity was totally produced by the children, with the teachers displaying only minimal awareness of its occurrence. In fact, the teachers seemed unaware of the making of the beds, the organized nature of the grass war, and the collective negotiation of the peace. Second, the production and trajectory of this routine is clearly affected by the organizational structure of the preschool and by the sense of belonging or community experienced first by the children in their own group and then by the whole community of children in the peace negotiation phase. Thus, we see how a routine which involves the children's appropriation of elements from and controlled by the adult world (the grass and small cars) becomes embedded in the production, extension, and celebration of peer culture in this setting. This example also demonstrates the strong emotional tenor of such appropriation as part of shared peer culture.

Embellishment of sociodramatic play in peer culture

By sociodramatic play we mean play in which children collaboratively produce pretend activities and routines that are related to organizational features of institutions like the family, school and workplace in their local peer cultures. Several ethnographic studies of children's peer culture have documented the development and embellishment of children's sociodramatic play over the course of a preschool term (Corsaro, 1985; Kane, 1996; Fernie et al., 1995). In his work with 4- to 5-year-old children Kane noted a decrease in traditional sociodramatic play like family and occupational role play and an accompanying increase in what he termed imaginative role play involving animal families or fantasy characters like royalty and knights (Kane, 1996: 85). The latter type of play can be seen as sociodramatic because it is still connected to organizations and institutions in the adult world. However, the imaginative role play elements of adult culture were often 'interpreted so broadly and combined so liberally that the result bore little resemblance to the original source' (Kane, 1996: 83). A good example is animal family play in which the children embodied wild and aggressive animals. Both Kane and Corsaro have observed that children pretending to be baby animals had much more freedom of mobility and were more aggressive than children in animal families. Further, animal mothers had fewer rules for their children, but were more likely to mete out frequent physical punishment (Corsaro, 1985: 105-11; Kane, 1996: 86). Of central importance here is the fact that such play is part of the production and sharing of a rich peer culture among the children over the course of a school term.

In Corsaro's most recent work in Italy, the 5-year-old children rarely engaged in traditional family role play. However, they frequently produced a

play routine in which a group of boys and girls pretended to be baby and adolescent wild dogs and lions who roamed around the school growling and scratching at each other and other children. This pack was normally disciplined by one or two mother animals (usually girls) who were even more physical and aggressive than their charges. Consider the following excerpt from Corsaro's field notes.

Example 2

Animal Family play

Several children (Biagio, Angelo, Viviana, Carlotta, and Luciano) are pretending to be wild dogs moving in and out of a house or den and into the rest of the school where they growl and scratch at other children. A girl, Federica is the mother dog and a strict disciplinarian. She frequently swats her children and shouts at them. I frequently hear the phrase, 'Adesso Basta!' [Now that's enough], an admonition that the children's teachers and mothers use when they are very serious. While some of the baby dogs are good (Mario, Angelo, and Carlotta) doing what they are told and going to sleep, others purposely misbehave. Daniele, for example, ignores Federica and even scratches at her. Biagio and Viviana are also disobedient and constantly in trouble. Federica shouts at them loudly and swats them hard as they cower in a corner of the den. The play is so realistic that I am not sure that Federica, Biagio, and Viviana are not really upset.

Biagio and Viviana whimper loudly while Federica who is now very red in the face falls exhausted to a chair seemingly exasperated with her unruly children. Again I am having difficulty deciding if the children are actually getting upset or not. I comment on the scene with Sonia who is drawing at a table and not participating. She laughs and says that the baby dogs are 'cattivo' [bad] and that Federica is a 'po severo' [a little severe]. The teachers notice the loud play, but do not comment nor do any of the children go to the teachers to complain or ask for help. After cleanup time is announced, Viviana still seems a bit upset and accepts a hug from me, but says she is all right.

In this example we see that the children both appropriate and embellish the adult model and that the embellishment of family role play in animal families leads to heightened aggression and emotion in the play. At one point, the line between pretence and reality becomes blurred as the children, at least from Corsaro's perspective, become upset with one another. However, it became clear to Corsaro that his concern about the children's brief distress was not shared by the teachers, their uninvolved peers, or the children themselves. For the children animal family role play is not a set of scripts to be enacted, but a stretching or plying of the general family role play frame. This plying of the frame gives the children more control over it and allows them to move it in directions in line with values and concerns of the peer culture. At the same time, however, such stretching is unpredictable and risky as the pretend aggression and injury can become too close to the real thing. But such risk is what makes the embellishment of the traditional role play so attractive. We see here an emotional aspect in children's embellishments which is not fully captured in Vygotsky's notion of appropriation.

Preschool children's initial participation in games with rules

In addition to spontaneous fantasy and sociodramatic play, the preschool children studied by Corsaro also engaged in rules with games. Such activities occurred much less frequently than other types of play in all the settings studied and were most common among the older children (5- to 6-year-olds) in their final year of preschool. The games were of three general types: board and card games, sports games and various chasing games like tag. Board and card games were most often played in dyads or small groups of three or four. Some children played these games more than others, but Corsaro found no clear pattern of preference over time or any direct or even indirect evaluation of children's expertise as players. On the other hand, there were frequent disputes about the rules of such games. In a card game (played in all of the preschool settings Corsaro studied), *Memories*, for example, children took turns turning over cards trying to make a match. However, the rule to return unmatched pairs to their original places was frequently violated as children often threw down the cards unhappily when they failed to make a match. Other players were quick to sanction this rule violation, but often went on to make the same error when taking their turns. In more complex board games (either provided by the schools or brought by specific children) turn-taking rules were followed, but the children showed little concern for other rules. In fact, the children at times made up rules as they went along. On some occasions such spontaneous rule making transformed the games into fantasy play in which the board and pieces served as setting and characters in elaborate fantasy themes.

With the exception of soccer among Italian boys, sports games in the preschool were very rare. The Italian soccer games normally involved three to four players on each team and in many instances several children took turns kicking a ball at a goal defended by another boy rather than team play. These games did not have audiences to evaluate the quality of play, nor did the players evaluate themselves much beyond cheering and congratulating each other when goals were scored (or in reverse reprimanding each other for allowing goals to be scored). Like card and board games, sports games also involved disputes over rule enforcement and decisions about who could and who could not play.

The most popular games in all the preschool settings Corsaro studied were various chase or chase and catch games. These games were very similar to a spontaneous fantasy routine that Corsaro has referred to as 'approach-avoidance' play that frequently occurred in all the settings studied among all age groups (Corsaro, 1985, 1988; Corsaro and Heise, 1990). The approach-avoidance routine involves the identification of a threatening agent or monster, the careful approach, and the escape from the monster after an attack ensues. The play routine always occurred spontaneously (that is, it was never named or proposed for play) and there was no formalization or sanctioning of rules. Thus, in adopting run and chase games (like tag and

hide-and-seek) with formal names and rules allowed the older children greater power and control over activities they much enjoyed.

One such run and chase game played frequently by Italian 5-year-olds is especially interesting. Corsaro first identified the game, *La Strega*, in 1984 in a *scuola materna* in Bologna. At that time it involved a sequence of steps in which a child taking the role of *La Strega* (or the witch) covered her eyes as two or more other children cautiously approached. When they were very near the witch uncovered her eyes, shouted a color and pursued the children as they ran to touch an object of the announced color. When Corsaro returned to the school a year later the children were still playing the game, but had developed a new version which was called *La Strega Bibita*. *Bibita* is a generic name for soft drinks and in this version of the game a group of children get together in a huddle and each picks a different flavor of soft drink (orange, strawberry, cherry, cola, etc.) while the witch stands nearby unable to hear the choices. Once the flavors are selected, the children line up alongside one another with their backs turned to the witch who paces up and down behind them. At some point at her discretion the witch calls out a soft drink flavor and the child who has picked that drink begins to run with the witch in pursuit. The child is to flee the witch and get back to the group without being caught. As the child runs, her or his comrades chant for the child to return safely and escape the witch. Ten years later Corsaro found that the children in another preschool in Modena no longer played the original *La Strega*, but still played *La Strega Bibita*, and a new version, *La Strega Frutta*, in which the children selected types of fruit instead of different flavors of soft drinks.

In these examples we can see many of Vygotsky's concepts about play, games, rules, appropriation and the social organization of interpersonal interaction come to life. The specified rules of card and board games as well as sports and chase games facilitate children's initiation of and coordination of play activities in settings like preschools. Children can simply propose to play cards, soccer or *La Strega* with their peers and things can get under way. But these same rules can also be challenging and overly restrictive to preschoolers. In some instances rules like the need to return cards to their proper places in Memories or specific rules of sports games like soccer may tax the cognitive, communicative and even emotion-managing skills of preschool children. However, it is also important to not overemphasize this developmental explanation. For preschool children the many and specific rules of games are often seen as *taking the fun out of play*. The children seem to yearn for the less restrictive and improvisational participant structure of fantasy play. In doing so they appropriate games into the ongoing collectively produced and shared peer culture. Support for this contention can be seen in the children's transformation of board games into fantasy play, their carving out of subroutines in sports games like only kicking for goals in soccer, and their clear enjoyment and multiple transformation of

games like *La Strega* which preserve many elements of spontaneous fantasy play. In short, we see that the children's activities demonstrate the importance of Vygotsky's concepts regarding play and games as they are embedded in the productive–reproductive processes of children's peer cultures.

Games and peer culture among preadolescents

Evaldsson's ethnographic study of children in two Swedish afterschool programs illustrates the importance of games in the peer culture of preadolescent children. Her research is interpretative in that it focuses on specific children in specific places and in consequence provides a more multifarious understanding of the social function and meaning of games in children's peer culture.

Games have been a regular subject matter within studies of children's folklore (see Sutton-Smith, 1995 for an overview of research on games), while informal play has more often been the concern of psychologists. Traditionally studies of children's folklore have had an interest in the origins, survivals and history of games. In addition most studies of games are based on collected records and reports of games (see, for example, Opie and Opie, 1959, 1969, the most famous children's folklorists). While this research is important to our knowledge of games in historical periods or across cultures, methodologically it is limited to surface descriptions of the actions and the official rules of games and idealized statements of the players. This research tells us little about how specific groups of children actually display rules and social competencies in games in situ. Though folklorists today are more interested in living performances, few studies focus on how children play games, and how its form and function vary across social contexts (see Beresin, 1995; Evaldsson, 1993; Goodwin, 1985, 1990; Hughes, 1995).

The notion that play and games have a set of essential and static characteristics, from the romanticized view of play as a free activity, outside ordinary life, not serious, but at the same time absorbing the players (Huizinga, 1955) to the antithetical view of play as rebellious, hierarchical and passionate (Bauman, 1982), is contrasted by the empirical subtleties in studies of how children actually play games. In their studies, Evaldsson (1993), Hughes (1988) and Goodwin (1985, 1990, 1995) show, for example, that the relationship between the real and the unreal are so complex that a set of qualitative abstractions of the game have a quite limited value. Building on the work of Erving Goffman (1974) and Gregory Bateson (1971), these studies illustrate the 'as-if' frame of the game which permits a paradoxical form of expression and communication in which experiences that are both continuous and discontinuous with everyday life are united in games 'in a way that is relatively safe for the participants and that unites them in a social community temporally transcending their ordinary ambivalences' (Sutton-Smith, 1995: 67). This approach indicates the need to pay attention

to the situated character of play and games and the multiple meanings they have for specific children involved in specific play and game activities.

In her study of children's games Evaldsson carried out ethnographic observations over 18 months in two Swedish afterschool programs, the Bumble-Bee and the Panda, attended by 15 children aged 6–10 years, with two teachers for each group. The children attended for approximately 4 hours (7:00–8:00 a.m. and 2:00–5:00 p.m.) each weekday. During the period of December 1989 through June 1991 Evaldsson accomplished field entry and acceptance into the children's peer culture, collected extensive field notes and tape recorded children's conversations in ordinary life and in games. In all, over 100 hours of transcribed tapes of children's everyday activities form the corpus from which examples are drawn. Evaldsson also interviewed the teachers of the two groups and a subsample of parents of the children in both groups. She found that preadolescent children most frequently engaged in games. In one center, the children preferred to play and trade marbles while the children at the second often engaged in jump rope. The present study analyzes children's social interaction in the course of marble activities and jump rope activities.

In Sweden, the afterschool program is administered by local governments, and provides educational activities and caretaking for all school children aged 6–10 years old. Attendance in the program is high with over 70 percent of the children in that age group attending regularly. The programs exist throughout the country and adhere to an homogeneous childcare ideology, which puts great emphasis on children's active participation and democratic rights. Despite an homogeneous ideology afterschools are populated with children from different social class and ethnic backgrounds. In Evaldsson's study, the children who engaged in jump rope were part of the Swedish mainstream. The children at the other center came from an area where the families, according to Swedish standards, had socioeconomic problems. These children were categorized as having special needs, i.e. in need of compensatory education programs. Although external factors played a crucial role in explaining the children's choice of different activities, their actual choices were first and foremost embedded in children's everyday interaction and their long interactional histories.

Appropriating cultural and economic resources in games with marbles
The children from the Panda center engaged in different marble activities such as sharing, trading and playing with marbles. Activities with marbles share in common that the objects, i.e. marbles, are the focus of the whole activity. Moreover, there is a disparity between the value of the objects outside the play activity when compared to their value as focuses of the activity. Since the marbles are not identical, they are assessed relative to each other on a scale of judgments in play activities. Both trading and playing require

an ongoing specification of standards of value as well as the mutual assessment of the relative value of the objects, and the determination of the general preferences and situated motives of the children involved in trading or playing (Mishler, 1979: 223). Such trading was done in verbal exchanges of negotiations, where these children collectively created their own preference system based on a mixture of external reference scales of value such as quality, design, size and price, and personal preferences of the parties involved. In trading sequences the children developed a range of communicative skills. Since they had few available resources or goods, they constantly created and used different types of verbal strategies (i.e. requests), and initiated play activities to get access to marbles. Among peers there was a constant give and take of desirable goods. Any child who had a surplus of marbles shared them with the others. This was done in cultural routines of sharing. The following field note example shows how the children initiate a play activity where they share marbles. Moreover, we see how this cultural routine is closely connected to local features of their peer culture.

Example 3

Kasta kula (Throwing away Marbles)

Several children (Tim, Mats, Fia, Maj, Roy, Jens) from the Panda accompany each other to school. Suddenly Fia, who carries a basket with marbles, stops, picking up a stone marble from her basket. She shows it off to the other children. Then she shouts: 'Who wants a marble?' The others respond, shouting out loud: 'Me, Me, Me'. As a reply Fia aims the marble and throws it with full strength. The other children look in the direction of her throw and then suddenly when the marble hits the ground they all compete to find it. The children spread out all over the space searching for the marble. Jens finds the marble and shows it off to the others. He shouts out loud: 'Yeah, I am the winner!' The others look at him, with no comment, and continue their walk to school. After a short while Fia picks up another marble and the children stop. She shows off the marble to the other children and makes a new announcement. In this way a new round starts where Roy will be the winner of the offered marble.

In line with Vygotsky's definition of play and games, the cultural routine of sharing is dependent on mutually accepted rules of procedure in a specific frame. This play activity is made up of five framed phases that prescribe the participants' acts in the game and the excitement of the game. It starts with an 'opening' or announcement of an intention. When the giver announces her offer she initiates a play activity. This frames the activity as a sharing routine, defining the rules of the game and the participants' moves in the game. It is followed by an 'acknowledgment' by the other children, the throwing of the marble by the proposer, the 'finding' of the marble and an optional 'recycling' of a second round or ending of the play (see Katriel, 1987: 318).

This activity demonstrates a number of important aspects in the local peer culture. By sharing objects in a cultural routine the children could

increase their status, control others and become featured participants in play activities for brief periods of time. Moreover, this routine gives the children control over objects in the peer group. It allows the children to balance resources and to move in the direction of their values and concerns. In cultural routines of sharing peers could balance the unequal economic resources to maintain status of equality among the participants in the peer group. In contrast, giving away objects to others outside the frame of a play activity took away the entertainment of sharing. Instead of establishing social bonds it decreased the giver's status and made other children suspicious about that child as well as the quality of the goods and to not accept the offer of goods. Instead of balancing resources among equals, this at worst led to an outcome in which the giver was marginalized or excluded from the peer group.

Possession and value of objects are also crucial in trading and the actual game of marbles. In contrast to sharing, trading and playing with marbles involve games of chance and risk taking – a potential loss of valuable objects. In sharing routines the giver is usually in control of the objects he or she offers, usually giving away the least valuable objects, while in trading and playing the players are not in control of their fate and the outcomes can have a material importance for their welfare. In both trading and playing with marbles both verbal and physical skills are central. In playing physical skills, such as aiming and shooting marbles at a hole or the marbles of another player, were crucial for the outcome of the game. Players also had to anticipate quickly the flow of play and the various restrictions regarding shooting. This was done in verbal exchanges where players in tempo and loud voices negotiated the rules of the game. Although children actually played marbles in dyads there was always an audience of non-players who observed and commented on the players' performances. The audience often participated in arranging matches, negotiating rules, evaluating the play and marble trading. Trading was sometimes a separate activity apart from playing, but it was also often embedded in the playing. Boys primarily played the games, while girls were more actively involved in evaluating play and in trading marbles.

In her documentation of the history of marble play as a complex series of situated activities, Evaldsson found that the children's developing sense of selves were intimately linked to possessions, and to how they negotiated the value of marbles as objects. Activities with marbles involved children's risk taking such as loss or victory and loss of resources as well as physical skills, verbal competencies and excitement. That is, the children increased and decreased their status in relation to their possession of the valued objects at the same time as they used talk to negotiate the value of objects in play activities (Evaldsson, 1993: 133). The whole process was made even more complex by shifting alliances of children in judgments, offensives and negotiations during playing, trading and sharing. Thus, we see the developing notion of individual identity embedded in this collectively produced peer

culture. In marble activities we also see how the children, in the constant lack of resources, appropriate economic elements from the adult world to control self-interest, take chances, develop social differentiation as well as generalized reciprocity and, what is most important, to promote their social grouping. Thus, we see standards from the adult world become embedded in the production and extension of the local peer culture.

Contrary to a widespread notion that girls do not engage in games with marbles (see, for example, Piaget, 1932/1965: 77; Sutton-Smith, 1979) the girls at the Panda center routinely participated in different marble activities often together with boys. In activities with marbles girls followed as well as negotiated complex rules, argued about the outcome of games, were actively involved in large group collaboration and displayed competitive skills. These abilities traditionally define boys' games and gender identity (see Lever, 1978; Sutton-Smith, 1979). Moreover, studies of games usually portray girls as non-participants in competitive games. Instead, it has been argued, girls engage in activities such as jump rope and hopscotch that are claimed to have less complex rules. Most researchers on gender and games argue that girls prefer to play in intimate groups, are more cooperative and compliant, and that they end their games in the presence of argumentation (see Gilligan, 1982; Lever, 1978: 479).

Traditional research on games have been criticized by Goodwin (1990, 1995) and Hughes (1988). They argue that most studies on gender and games are not based on ethnographic studies of what girls actually do as they play games. Moreover, the relative neglect of girls from lower socio-economic orders and minority racial and ethnic groups in studies of children's games means that research on games mainly build on what white, middle-class girls do. In contrast, in studies of children's social interaction where the focus is on how real children in different social groups actually play games, the traditional gender dichotomies dissolve (see Goodwin, 1995; Hughes, 1988). In Evaldsson's documentation of marble activities both boys and girls engage in the same activities. In sharing, trading and playing with marbles children display physical as well as verbal skills, participate in large groups as well as in dyads, are cooperative as well as competitive. Thus, we see how there is nothing in children's games per se that tells us if the game should be understood as fun or serious, competitive or cooperative, work or play, etc (see Hughes, 1995: 109–10).

In marbles as well as in jump rope, the rules are not totally laid out in advance. Although rules for coordinating activities are highly patterned, the ways in which any particular game is played is open for negotiation on each occasion of its performance, not only prior to the game but also during its course (Goodwin, 1985: 316). In this sense Piaget's notion of rules is problematic. In games the children are constantly exploring what can count as conforming or not conforming to the rules. As Goodwin (1995: 275) has pointed out, rules in games constitute an interpretive framework for making

sense of behavior. If we consider Vygotsky's notion of children's use of rules in pretend play to define the proper behavior of imaginary characters and objects, rules in games have more in common with rules in pretend play than Vygotsky described.

Jump rope and the process of production and reproduction

In our analysis of jump rope we focus on a particular episode of a common jump rope game, named the Cradle of Love. It is produced by the children from the Bumble-Bee center.

The episode we examine illustrates more of the similarities between pretend play and games. The naming of this activity captures how the game is organized around a particular rhyme. During the rhyme the rope is turned into a jump rope rhyme with four beats per line, which is similar in its metrics to rhymes used for counting or clapping games (Burling, 1966). Participants know who 'beats' another when traditional rhymes are used, in that for each party's turn in a particular round the same sequence of rhymes is used (Goodwin, 1985). Both girls and boys participate in the Cradle of Love either jumping or as members of an active audience which comments on and evaluates the activity.

The children learn the game by practicing it with those who know the game, telling others, who are not initiated, just to look at what they do and then to copy their movements and the words: 'Just try it, just do what I do.' As in marble games jump rope operates under a test of practical efficacy (Sachs, 1980) where participants acquire knowledge of the game through participation. Most games also demand some shared contextual knowledge for participants to understand how the game should be performed if a game is played differently.

Jumping rope is realized in different ways, where playing jump rope is an overall name of a set of games, all of which have the jumping in common. Types of activities change during the course of the game, when participants in a game suggest that they should change. Jump rope is like marbles and other games in that the participants have an expected pattern of orientation toward one another (Goodwin, 1985). In jump rope two children hold the opposite ends of a single rope and turn it for a third child, who jumps when the rope hits the ground. The child who jumps is entitled to continue jumping over the rope until she or he fails to do it successfully. This failure should be caused by the jumpers themselves. If upon a miss, the jumper says that the mistake was not her or his own fault, for example claiming that the fault was caused by the turner, the failure is negotiated in social interaction among all the children. Failures in jumping and skillfulness in jumping define the jumpers' positions during the course of the game. Jump rope has two 'least valued' positions, those of the turners, while the 'most valued' position is the jumper. Although the organization of players' positions is displayed more or less competitively among the children, a most interesting

fact of jump rope is that children must cooperate to compete. In jump rope there is a fixed order of rotation for participants, depending upon their positions in the game. The children who jump stand in a line, from first to last one. Following a complete round of rotation of participants the jumper or jumpers with the highest number gradually make progress in line to become the first jumper. Indirectly, the best jumper is indexed through her or his position in line. In all play activities with jump rope there is a built-in motivation to turn the rope fairly for players. If anyone turns too fast or not in synchrony with the beat, then there is a chance that when the jumper next has to turn she or he will do the same for the previous offender (Goodwin, 1985). This is in line with Vygotsky, who considered the most basic general rule in games to be that of reciprocity in social interaction.

The Cradle of Love starts with a jumping where there is a selection of a letter. The jumper jumps while she or he counts the alphabet each time the rope slaps the ground. When the child who jumps fails, the rope will stop on a particular letter, and the name of a person of the opposite sex whom the jumper likes (which must begin with the letter in focus) is chosen. The children in line try to guess the name that the jumper has in mind, in that they negotiate a common reference. The jumper, in turn, validates the guesses. When the children succeed in finding out the name in focus, it is brought into a rhyme. In the second part of the jumping the romance is either confirmed or disqualified. When the jump is over the outcome is usually commented on and evaluated. Such evaluation may involve teasing and joking. Then the second round starts. The child who has jumped goes to the end of the line and a new jumper begins to jump, using the same rhyme. If a jumper fails during the first part of the rhyme, he or she is supposed to change position with one of the turners. Then the children rotate and another child becomes the next jumper.

The following example is from a round where Sara jumps. She succeeds in jumping through the whole alphabet and the other children in line start to propose names. They suggest Danne, one of the most popular boys. Sara moves and acts as if she is embarrassed. All the children in the line are involved and highly engaged in the guessing of names. In guessing they collaboratively construct shared topics. They try out their names with Sara. When she rejects these, the guessing takes new directions. In this excerpt it has changed toward names of children in their local environment.

Example 4

Kärlek vagga (The Cradle of Love)

- 143 *Aina*: Leif ?
 144 *Sara*: No.
 145 *Paul*: Paul?
 146 *Fred*: Someone in your class?
 147 *Rick*: No, it is one of us.
 148 *Paul*: Axel?
 149 *Aina*: Paul?

- 150 *Fred:* Paul?
 151 *Sara:* Nope.
 152 *Axel:* Per-Ola?
 153 *Paul:* We've already had Per-Ola?
 154 *Sara:* Danne (very quietly) I'll take Danne then. Yes, Danne then.
 155 *Mona:* Danne in our class?
 156 *Sara:* Nope.
 157 *Aina:* Danne sitting over there in the green cap?
 158 *Paul:* Is that him?
 159 *Sara:* Tuuurn!
 160 *Paul:* Him! (pointing)
 161 *Fred:* Wowww! Woowwie!
 162 *All:* Danne Danne
 Do you love me
 Tell me truly
 Aye or Nay (turning faster now)
 Yes-No Yes-No Yes-No Yes-No
 Yes (turning stops)
 Yees
- 163 *Several:* Yeesss! ho ho ho (laughing)
 164 *Fred:* Danne (calling to Danne)
 165 *Several:* Ha ha ha ho ho ho ho (laughing)
 166 *Rick:* Danne well that doesn't necessarily mean Danne.
 167 *Fred:* But she said Danne.
 168 *Aina:* Congrats, Danne!

We can see from the above description that jump rope is much more complex than some previous studies like those of Lever (1978) suggest. Lever argues that girls' games like jump rope or hopscotch are eventless, turn-taking games that have much less complex structures and rules than boys' competitive sports games. Moreover, we see that jump rope is not a prototypical example of girls' game. The argument that boys and girls during elementary school years tend to play in separate groups and also to play stereotypically different games are counterpointed by Evaldsson's data. Both girls and boys participate in jump rope as well as in marble activities. In her study boys and girls have more in common than is usually argued. This indicates that there are differences across local peer cultures and social groupings. Such perception is the result of observing, recording and careful analyzing the social interaction in the midst of the games themselves. However, the complexity and significance of the games is even more apparent when their production and place in peer culture is examined over long periods of time.

Jump rope is usually initiated by girls, though the children's actual choice of the Cradle of Love attracts both boys and girls. The topic of love, relationships and emotions preoccupied both boys and girls at the center in other play activities such as secret clubs, love-lists and fortune tellers (Evaldsson, 1993). The 'as-if' frame of the game promotes the children's formation of a social grouping. By participating in the Cradle of Love both girls and boys surround themselves with secrecy. This protects them from

adult control and insight from other children in their nearby surrounding. By displaying intimacy, cooperation and compliance as well as individuality, crucial values in the ideology of the Swedish afterschool program, they expand their local peer culture. The fact that those values define girls' gender identity in most studies of games indicates how the form and function of games vary across social contexts, and that ethnographic studies can enrich our understanding of how different (gender-) identities are displayed in the daily lives of children.

The Cradle of Love provides a type of guessing that gives the participants an opportunity to practice communicative skills and to attempt to find out what the person in focus is thinking (Sacks, 1980). The guesses are offered at a fast tempo in short turns and in well-defined topics. Sara managed to conceal her inner wish from the audience through her appearance. From both positions the game is about the social display of secrets. In line with Mead, these children can be seen to acquire a sense of a private self, with inner thoughts and feelings that either can be revealed or are concealed for an outside world. The fact that the children at the two centers engage in different games where they display different types of behavior means that over time they co-construct themselves as quite different types of social actors (Goodwin, 1995) at the same time they will probably acquire different senses of self and different places in the Swedish society.

Conclusion

A major tenet of Vygotskian theory is that every function of the child's cultural development appears first on the interpersonal or collective level and later on the individual level. It is the movement to the intrapsychological or individual level that has had the most appeal to contemporary developmental psychologists. Developmental psychologists place so much emphasis on the second phase in the process that, for many, the appropriation of culture becomes the movement from the external to the internal. We argue, however, that Vygotsky stressed both external production and internal reconstructions in his theory of children's cultural development. We believe that the development of the full potential of Vygotsky's views in this regard requires careful documentation and analysis of children's collective external productions over time and across a range of cultural settings.

In this article we have examined preschool and preadolescent children's production and participation in peer culture in several cultural settings. We have focused on children's play and games using and refining Vygotsky's ideas in this area and his general concept of appropriation. In both of these analyses we stressed the importance of viewing children's play and games as situated activities that are produced in and articulated with features of the interwoven local cultures that make up the children's lives. In stressing the importance of peer culture we are well aware that aspects of

that culture are different from and are often in opposition to the adult culture. Through adult eyes certain aspects of the play routines of the preschool and preadolescent children we discussed here may seem overly aggressive, risky, inappropriate and even threatening. These features of peer culture are very important because they demonstrate that much of children's appropriation of (and contribution to changes in) the adult world is a result of a major function of the children's peer group: *to establish itself in opposition to adult culture* (Opie and Opie, 1969; Sutton-Smith et al., 1995).

Corsaro's studies of Italian preschool children demonstrated the children's preference for highly imaginative and innovative play routines in their peer cultures. In line with Vygotsky, we saw that these routines can be characterized as overt imaginary situations with covert rules. The children's spontaneous fantasy and sociodramatic role play activities were guided, but not overtly scripted, by underlying themes from fairy tales, movies and the children's real experiences in their families. Yet, the overall 'playful' nature of the activities predominates, with the children constantly experimenting with and transforming the underlying themes in ways that clearly demonstrate their highly impressive and improvisational language and interactive skills. Such transformations also have powerful affective or emotional elements both in the form of communal sharing and personal differentiation that can be both exciting and risky as we saw in the fantasy and sociodramatic play of the Italian preschool children. It can be argued that this blend of overt imagination, covert rules and highly charged emotions in the play routines of peer culture both illuminates and extends Vygotsky's notion of appropriation as a cultural process.

Although the preschool children's participation in play and games was a limited aspect of peer culture, these experiences can be seen as important in priming the children for coming changes in their peer cultures. Because of their overt rule structure, games are easily initiated and highly adaptable in time and space. Preschool children, however, find these overt rules both restrictive of their preference for improvisational imaginative play and overly taxing of their cognitive skills. As a result, there are frequent breakdowns in their games and accompanying disputes over the nature and enforcement of the rules. In dealing with these problems, the children, at times, transform the games to play by pushing the rules back to the covert level (as general guiding frames) and moving imaginary lines of action generally in line with frames to the foreground. We also saw that in cases where children have repeatedly produced and practiced games and seemingly internalized their rule structure, they enjoyed creating new versions or varieties of the game in their peer cultures. This tendency, which was most evident in the Italian children's production and transformation of the *La Strega* game, displays the children's general desire to preserve elements of peer culture in the very process of extending it.

This insight brings us to the importance of seeing the preschool

children's early production and participation in games with rules as *priming* events for coming changes in the nature of their peer culture. As these children move into more structured play environments in elementary school settings and as their cognitive and communicative skills continue to develop, they will find games with rules to be more interesting, adaptable to changing sociocultural settings and coordinated with their growing social competence. Thus, again, we see the fuller implications of Vygotsky's notion of appropriation as a multilevel process.

In her study of two Swedish afterschool programs, Evaldsson found that children frequently played games with rules and that their preference of certain types of games (marbles or jump rope) and the organization of game activities were related both to the children's social class backgrounds and to the history of their friendships and personal relationships. An important finding in Evaldsson's analysis of both the play of marbles and jump rope was how the games were embedded in the children's peer cultures. Small groups of children did not play games just for fun and enjoyment. Rather games were complex *collective productions* in peer culture involving competition in the actual playing of games (shooting marbles and jumping rope), evaluation by ever-present audiences, and the innovative and important activities of background strategists (such as those children who negotiate trades in marbles). Thus, as we saw with the preschool children, these preadolescents appropriate the games to fit with the values and concerns of their peer culture while simultaneously developing social, cognitive and communicate skills in the actual play of games.

We also see in Evaldsson's analysis how aspects of game playing are appropriated by children in their negotiation of social identities. Here Evaldsson takes up and extends Vygotsky's notion that games as well as play have imaginary or 'as-if' features. In her analysis of a specific episode or local production of the jump rope game *Cradle of Love*, Evaldsson shows how the children cooperatively move the imaginary 'as-if' romance from the covert to the overt level where the possible romantic link (between the jumper and the boy she picks) is publicly discussed and evaluated. Again, however, we see the power of the children's appropriation. The 'as-if' character of the game while now overt still protects the girl from embarrassment should she be teased or ridiculed by her playmates or her romantic bid be rejected by the boy she likes. Because, after all, the *Cradle of Love* is just a game.

Finally, as was the case for the preschool children, participation in games in the peer culture of the preadolescent children can be seen as *priming* activities for coming changes in the children's peer worlds. Although we saw an awareness of gender in the play of the preschool children and that the children sometimes divided their activities along gender lines, they did not routinely use their play or games to address their growing awareness of gender relations. As we noted earlier, repeated enactments of games like

marbles and jump rope allow the preadolescent children to explore and test out their friendships and developing relationships with the opposite sex. In short, the preadolescent children constructed self-images, formed images of others and cultivated and enhanced personal relationships (Evaldsson, 1993: 133). Such activities clearly prepare children for adolescence with all its challenges and demands regarding personal and gender identity and sexual relationships.

References

- Bateson, G. (1971) 'The Messages "This is Play"', in R. Herron and B. Sutton-Smith (eds) *Child's Play*, pp. 261–6. New York: John Wiley.
- Bauman, R. (1982) 'Ethnography of Children's Folklore', in P. Gilmore and A.A. Glatthorn (eds) *Children In and Out of School. Ethnography of Education*, pp. 172–86. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Beresin, R. (1995) 'Dubble Dutch and Dubble Cameras: Studying the Transmission of Culture in an Urban School Yard', in B. Sutton-Smith et al. (eds) *Children's Folklore: A Source Book*, pp. 75–91. New York and London: Garland.
- Burling, R. (1966) 'The Metrics of Children's Verse: A Cross-linguistic Study', *American Anthropologist* 68: 1418–41.
- Cole, M. and S. Scribner (1978) 'Introduction', in L. Vygotsky (ed.) *Mind in Society*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Cook-Gumperz, J. and W. Corsaro (1977) 'Social-ecological Constraints on Children's Communicative Strategies', *Sociology* 11: 411–34.
- Corsaro, W. (1985) *Friendship and Peer Culture in the Early Years*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Corsaro, W. (1988) 'Routines in the Peer Culture of American and Italian Nursery School Children', *Sociology of Education* 61: 1–14.
- Corsaro, W. (1992) 'Interpretive Reproduction in Children's Peer Cultures', *Social Psychology Quarterly* 58: 160–77.
- Corsaro, W. (1993) 'Interpretive Reproduction in Children's Role Play', *Childhood* 1: 64–74.
- Corsaro, W. (1997) *The Sociology of Childhood*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Corsaro, W. and F. Emiliani (1992) 'Child Care, Early Education, and Children's Peer Culture in Italy', in M. Lamb, K. Sternberg, C. Hwang and A. Broberg (eds) *Child Care in Context: Cross-cultural Perspectives*, pp. 81–115. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Corsaro, W. and D. Heise (1990) 'Event Structure Models from Ethnographic Data', *Sociological Methodology* 20:1–57.
- Corsaro, W. and L. Molinari (in press) 'Entering and Observing in Children's Worlds: A Reflection on a Longitudinal Ethnography of Early Education in Italy', in A. James and P. Christensen (eds) *Conduction Research with Children*. London: Falmer Press.
- Cottrell, L. (1969) 'Interpersonal Interaction and the Development of Self', in D. Goslin (ed.) *Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research*, pp. 543–70. Chicago: Rand-McNally.
- Evaldsson, A. (1993) *Play, Disputes, and Social Order: Everyday Life in Two Swedish After-school Centers*. Linköping: Linköping University.
- Fernie, D., R. Kantor and K. Whaley (1995) 'Learning from Classroom Ethnographies: Same Places, Different Times', in A. Hatch (ed.) *Qualitative Research in Early Education Settings*, pp. 155–72. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Furth, H.G. (1996) *Desire for Society: Children's Knowledge as Social Imagination*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Gaskins, S., P. Miller and W. Corsaro (1992) 'Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives in

- the Interpretive Study of Children', in W. Corsaro and P. Miller (eds) *Interpretive Approaches to Children's Socialization*, pp. 5–23. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Gilligan, C. (1982) *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Goffman, E. (1961) *Encounters. Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction*. Indianapolis, IN: Bobs-Merill.
- Goffman, E. (1974) *Frame Analysis*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Goodwin, M. (1985) 'The Serious Side of Jump-Rope', *Journal of American Folklore* 98: 315–30.
- Goodwin, M. (1990) *He-Said-She-Said: Talk as Social Organization among Black Children*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Goodwin, M. (1995) 'Co-construction of Hopscotch in Girls' Hopscotch', *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 28(3): 233–60.
- Grauman, C. (1990) 'Perspectival Structure and Dynamics in Dialogues', in I. Markova and K. Foppa (eds) *The Dynamics of Dialogues*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Hughes, L. (1988) '“But That's not Really Mean”: Competing in a Cooperative Mode', *Sex Roles* 19(11–12): 669–87.
- Hughes, L. (1995) 'Children's Games and Gaming', in B. Sutton-Smith et al. (eds) *Children's Folklore: A Source Book*, pp. 93–119. New York and London: Garland.
- Huizinga, J. (1955) *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*. Boston: Bacon Hill.
- Kane, S. (1996) 'The Emergence of Peer Culture through Social Pretend Play', in H.G. Furth (ed.) *Desire for Society: Children's Knowledge as Social Imagination*, pp. 77–97. New York: Plenum Press.
- Katriel, T. (1987) '“Bexibudim!”: Ritualized Sharing among Israeli Children', *Language in Society* 16: 305–20.
- Lave, J. and E. Wenger (1991) *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lever, J. (1978) 'Sex Differences in the Complexity of Children's Play and Games', *American Sociological Review* 43: 471–83.
- Mead, G.H. (1934) *Mind, Self, and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mishler, E. (1979) 'Won't You Trade Cookies with the Popcorn?: The Talk of Trades Among Six-Year-Olds', in O. Garnica and M. King (eds) *Language, Children, and Society: The Effects of Social Factors on Children's Learning to Communicate*, pp. 21–36. Elmsford, NY: Pergamon Press.
- Opie, I. and P. Opie (1959) *The Lore and Language of School Children*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Opie, I. and P. Opie (1969) *Children's Games in Street and Playgrounds: Chasing, Catching, Seeking, Hunting, Racing, Dueling, Exerting, Daring, Guessing, Acting, Pretending*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Piaget, J. (1932/1965) *The Moral Judgment of the Child*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Rizzo, T., W. Corsaro and J. Bates (1992) 'Ethnographic Methods and Interpretive Analysis', *Developmental Review* 12: 101–23.
- Rogoff, B. (1990) *Apprenticeship in Thinking: Cognitive Development in Social Context*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sachs, H. (1980) 'Button, Button Who's Got the Button', *Sociological Inquiry* 50: 318–27.
- Sawyer, K. (1996) *Pretend Play as Improvisation: Conversation in the Preschool Classroom*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Sutton-Smith, B. (1979) 'The Play of Girls', in C. Kopp and M. Kirkpatrick (eds) *Becoming Female*, pp. 229–57. New York: Plenum Press.
- Sutton-Smith, B. (1995) 'Methods in Children's Folklore', in B. Sutton-Smith et al. (eds) *Children's Folklore: A Source Book*, pp. 64–74. New York and London: Garland.

- Sutton-Smith, B., J. Mechling, T. Johnson and F. McMahon (eds) (1995) *Children's Folklore: A Source Book*. New York and London: Garland Publishing.
- Vygotsky, L. (1966) 'Play and its Role in the Development of the Child', *Soviet Psychology and Psychiatry* 12: 6–18.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978) *Mind in Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

