Stockholm Institute of Education

Interaction in Outdoor Play Environments –

Gender, Culture and Learning

Jane Brodin & Peg Lindstrand (Eds.)

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Foreword

In Sweden most children attend preschool as a majority of the parents work. In preschool they have access to toys, educational material and outdoor play. Most of the children are active and competent and use all opportunities they get to play during the day. They interact with peers and adults and they are supposed to get a social competence. Free play is, in many countries the prevailing activity of early childhood education, but research has shown that in Sweden opportunities for free play are often limited. Free play in Swedish preschools seems to occur before breakfast, between the planned activities before noon, and during outdoor activities during the day. This is an area of interest for future research as children's informal learning in outdoor environments have been undervalued for many years.

The Nordic Educational Research Association (NERA) organizes conferences in the educational research field, and NERA has drawn the attention to the importance of play in outdoor environments. In 2006 a seminar on outdoor play was organized and this resulted in the creation of the "Outdoor group", a network with researchers from the three universities involved in that special session. The research cooperation in this field resulted in two decisions: to publish a book on interaction in outdoor environments and to publish a report on outdoor play for an international public at large. The articles presented in this report are based on the contributions from the members of the Outdoor group working at different universities in Sweden with focus on outdoor play in preschools and schools. Children's outdoor play is an underestimated area in child development and essential knowledge is to a great extent still missing.

The main reason for publishing this report is therefore to spread information about ongoing activities and to pay attention to a fairly young research field. The following contributions are included:

From hayloft to own room – girls play environments in our time
Anette Sandberg & Tuula Vuorinen

Gender, playing and learning in natural outdoor environments
Eva Ärlemalm-Hagsér

Play and interaction in two preschool yards
Karin Engdahl, Jane Brodin & Peg Lindstrand

The schoolyard as a place of meaning – children's perspective
Birgitta Davidsson

Outdoor play in a cross-cultural perspective
Jane Brodin & Peg Lindstrand

We hope that this report will contribute to enhancing the interest in and knowledge about children's outdoor play and that it will be a resource for those who work with children in everyday life. The main target group for this report is thus students in teacher training with emphasis on early childhood and school children.

Stockholm in November 2006

Jane Brodin and Peg Lindstrand

Abstract

Interaction in Outdoor Play Environments – Gender, Culture and Learning
Report No. 47, Technology, Communication and Disability, Child and Youth Science, Stockholm Institute of Education.

Children's outdoor play has been undervalued for a long time. The purpose of this report is thus to compile contributions from the Outdoor group concerning research on this topic. The contributions are based on articles from three universities and seven researchers are involved. The following contributions are presented: Sandberg, A. & Vuorinen, T. (2006). From hayloft to own room – girls play environments in our time; Ärleman-Hagsér, E. (2006). Gender, playing and learning in natural outdoor environments; Engdahl, K., Brodin, J., & Lindstrand, P. (2006). Play and interaction in two preschool yards; Davidsson, B. (2006). The schoolyard as a place of meaning – children's perspective; Brodin, J. & Lindstrand, P. (2006). Outdoor play in a cross-cultural perspective. The contributions focus on gender, culture and learning in different outdoor environments. The articles show that the field is still young and that many research questions still need to be answered. For this reason the Outdoor Group will continue to work and deepen the research in collaboration.

Keywords: outdoor play, interaction, playground, gender, culture, learning

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CONTENT

Foreword

Abstract

From hayloft to own room – girls play environments

Anette Sandberg & Tuula Vuorinen

INTRODUCTION

Today, children in Sweden spend most of their everyday life in pre-school and school. In 2004, children enrolled in preschool 1–5 years old of all children in the whole population were 86% (Skolverket, 2005). This means that children are primarily referred to environments created for children by adults. However, there are often differences in what children need and what adults want. Environments the adults consider nice and safe lack the qualities children need in order to develop. For example, children do not only need space for play but also for more independent exploration.

This article reports from a study "Play in our time" (Sandberg & Vuorinen, 2005), that investigates children and adults memories of play. This article focuses on childhood play environments from 1940's until today. It describes research about play and memories from different play environments. The purpose of the study was to investigate, describe and analysis adults and children's experiences of the play environment.

Play and memories from environments
The content of play definitions thus consists of diverse variations of meanings. Definitions of play are often multidimensional. What defines play can be interpreted as variations of definitions, which give play its value.

Nostalgic memories are often experienced as one visits one's childhood environments – the house where they grew up, the school they attended etc. This results in positive feelings if these places are associated with positive memories.

Scientists have shown (see for example Hart, 1979; Skantze, 1989, 1996; Nordström, 1990; Grahn, 1991; Chawla, 1992; Sandberg 2003a; Tammemäe-Orr & Sandberg, 2005) the importance that children, especially in the seven to twelve years age range, give to outdoor environments and nature. Some spaces are more highly valued than others, for example contained spaces, like an attic, a box, or a small room, as well as places with vegetation, sun or water, and spaces from which you can see but not be seen – secret places (Hester's, 1979). Secret places also emerged in Sandberg's (2003b) studies involving students majoring in education, preschool teachers, and disabled adults. Cooper Marcus (1978) had students of architecture and landscaping draw and write essays about their memories of childhood environments and the most important places. Despite participants having different backgrounds and having grown up in different areas, as well as having different socio-economical background and being of different cultures, the essays had several similarities; favorite memories concerning play outdoors as well as the creation of secret places were present in the majority of the essays. According to Cooper Marcus (op.cit), all participants in the study had place memories from secret places from the age of six years into their teens. Participants described looking for places where they could hide from their parents, alone or with friends. In these secret hideouts, they could for example read forbidden magazines.

The empirical studies by Korpela (1992) on childhood memories of favorite places show, just like Ladd (1977), Hester (1979), and Cooper Marcus (1978), that strong emotions belong to places. Places might represent feelings such as privacy, control, and security. To get away from social pressures, to be alone,

and the significance of hidden spaces seem to be a reoccurring result in these studies. Korpela and Hartig (1996) found that individuals often returned to their favorite places to rest or when something negative had occurred, to reflect in peace and quiet. In Ladd's (1977) study, 100 planners and students of design and architecture were asked about their residence memories, and to describe parts of their past environment. He wanted to help students see a connection between their personal experiences and their professionalism. Students wrote down their home addresses from their earliest memory to their current address. They wrote their age on every address and describe who lived in the residence. Then, they described prominent features that they had liked or disliked and which value they associated with each residence. Most of the students focused on physical descriptions of the home and its surroundings. Descriptions of their childhood homes were mostly related to play environments, siblings, and family events. Memories from both childhood and teenage homes emphasized the kitchen and the cooking and eating rituals. As for a feeling of "a place of my own", memories from the attic and basement were described as important.

Memories of positive places also brought a sense of freedom. Cooper Marcus (1978), Chawla (1986), Dovey (1990), and Sandberg (2003b) have noted that importance placed on the outdoors and freedom coincide. Indoors is the adults' domain, where children are bound by rules and that everything has to be well kept, right and well. Because of this, children turn to outdoor activities. Dovey (1990) base his study on university students in the United States and Australia, who were asked to draw their earliest place memories. Many remembered places where there was freedom from the adults' world and a growing feeling of self-determination and independence. Memories of places with peace and quiet emerged. The most common calm place was found by the trees in the garden. Trees certainly play an important part in the places with peace and quiet that children gravitate towards, and trees are often the environment of creative play

(Francis, 1995; Sandberg, 2003a). Freeman (1995) feels that play has changed over time and points to tree climbing as an example. He mentions that parents say children do not play in the same way as earlier, that today they have many more material items to use. This was also displayed in a study conducted by Sandberg and Pramling-Samuelsson (2003), where pre-school teachers described their own experiences of play and also compared them to children's play today. Even in Vickerius and Sandberg's (2006) interview study with staff, parents, and children from the age of three to five years, these results were visible. Sandberg's (2003a) study also shows that climbing in trees commonly occurs earlier when children were three to twelve years old.

METHOD

This study is based partly on child interviews, and partly on interviews of retrospective character analysis from adults being asked to look back and recount how they remember their childhood play environments. Retrospective interviews have a number of methodology problems. Not only do people forget information over time, but they may also remember the past through ideas that they have acquired far later in life. In this study the participants have undeniably been influenced by different pedagogical and philosophical factors regarding play and play environments. Furthermore, adults have a tendency to idealize their childhood. Kristjánsson (1995; 2001) states that adults can never maintain an objective view of childhood, partly due to overestimating and "mis-representing" memories, and partly due to their intellectual skills developing. A way to allow people to recall back to their childhood is to let them relate to concrete events, especially to important events, since the memory will rarely fail in this case. However, thoughts and feelings become more influenced by other factors over time.

Child interviews on the other hand have both practical and ethical dilemmas. The practical difficulties can consist of how to create the correct condition for the interview. It is an advantage if the interviewer is familiar with the child (Doverborg & Pramling-Samuelsson, 2000; Saywitz, 2002; in Cameron, 2005) and has fundamental knowledge about children's development and how to talk with them (Johansson, 2003; Cameron, 2005). Furthermore, the interviewer should know which conclusions are reasonable to draw from the interviews. For example, a bored child can give answers that are only fantasy (Doverborg & Pramling-Samuelsson, 2000). Cooperating children can formulate an answer in most cases even if the child would want to respond with "I don´t know" (Cameron, 2005). The ethical dilemma is foremost that children participating in interviews are susceptible to be influenced by the adults conducting the interviews. Therefore it is easy to lead the child to feel inclined to participate rather than have a desire to (Doverborg & Pramling-Samuelsson, 2000). Consequently, open questions are preferable because they not only have the ability to show children's ways of comprehending the world around them, but can also contribute to the fun factor of the interview for the child (op.cit).

The purpose of this study is not to paint a "true" picture of play in former times, but to compare the picture that adults have created through the years with the picture children create today.

This study builds on two separate interview investigations that were undertaken at Mälardalens University. In the first investigation adults were interviewed about play memories, and in the second investigation children were interviewed about their play experiences.

Subjects

There were 154 participants in total, of which 111 were adults and 43 were children. The adult group consisted of women between 22 and 63 years of age, which means that the oldest lived their childhood in the 1940's, and the youngest in the 80's. 59 of these were preschool teachers while 52 of them studied pedagogic or the teacher education programme. The children that contributed were all girls, between 3 and 12 years of age. 21 of the girls are 6 years old or younger, while 22 of them are 7 years or older.

Table 1. Subjects

Women	Number	Children	Number
34 years and younger	56	6 years and younger	21
35 years and older	55	7 years and older	22
Total	111		43

Analysis

Within qualitative research, there are no general established and delimitated methods for the practical analysis work, other than that the scientist is expected follow the general rules that are established within all research. However, as there is a lack of uniform analysis methods, it gives the reader the possibility to form an opinion of the studys credibility themselves (Repstad, 1993; Trost, 1997; Bryman, 2002).

In this investigation, the two initial phases in the research process (data gathering and transcription) were accomplished with students at the teacher education programme plus students majoring in education. They followed a standardized template for interviews that had been constructed for the purpose. The questions were half structured in their design, therefore enabling participants' freedom to formulate their answers. The students interviewed the

preschool teachers and they also wrote down their memories in narrative form with the standardized template for interviews as a base. This process was then followed by the step that Bryman (2002) describes consideration coding of data. This means that the transcriptions and narratives were read through, but no notations were made other than deleting repetitions and irrelevant comments. It could be seen that during this phase, patterns began to emerge in responses, such as play in the countryside, which had been described mainly by older participants. The thoughts and findings that were evident in the reading were taken note of in the form of notes in the margin, while keywords and themes were marked (op.cit).

Trustworthiness and authenticity

Lincoln and Guba (2000) claim that qualitative studies, which are based on a constructionist perspective, should be judged on two basic criteria: trust-worthiness and authenticity. The latter contains three different criteria, as research results should be fair in the sense that they balance the different standpoints and opinions brought forth in the study. The results should also contribute to an increased awareness in the people included in the research [ontological and educative authenticity] and contribute to an increased knowledge on how they might change their social situation [catalytic and tactical authenticities]. The latter has, according to Bryman (2002), not had a major breakthrough when it comes to judging the validity of studies, as the criterion is mostly concerned with more general questions concerning research politics. Lincoln and Guba (2000) describes further the trustworthiness criterion and shows how it encompasses four different sub criteria which are persistently discussed in judging qualitative studies: reliability, transferability, credibility as well as a possibility to verify and confirm. By using this method, it is important that research results are a "true" representation of participant responses. This implies that the scientists have interpreted actions and statements correctly from

participants' perspectives. In this study, quotations are used not only in order to enrich and give a concrete form to the result, but also in order to show that the result has support in the participant's statements**.** Alexandersson (1994) states that this is a ways to confirm the study's validity.

The trustworthiness of this study is also based on results being transferable, i.e. possible to be generalized to being valid also outside the unique context that a qualitative study encompasses. This transferability is made possible by the researcher giving a thick description of both participants and environments, that is, the context which the results include. The readers may then judge the transferability of the results for themselves through comparing the different contexts (Bryman, 2002; Larsson, 2005).

A demand for credibility pertains to the "transparence" of the research process, as all phases in the same should be accounted for as thoroughly as possible, as well as the decisions made during the research process. The possibility to verify and confirm means that, in the end conclusions made by the researcher should be well rooted in the research sample. These conclusions should thus not be twisted to fit the researcher's personal values or theoretical preference. In this article, a broad theoretical frame of reference is initially given, where different perspectives concerning play are presented.

RESULTS

Early descriptions of children's play environments
In this study, the result displays how children's play and access to different environments has changed in the latter part of the 1900's**.** The oldest participants that grew up in the 1940's often describe play in environments from the country-side more so than the younger participants. For example, they mention haylofts

and farms as environments for play. A characteristic for the older participants' statements is that they foremost refer to outdoor play, often in environments that were not implicitly intended for play. They remember play from the forest, farm and from backyards in town. Environments for play were often big stones or stone walls, hills and mountains, also huts that were built in the forest, with or without the help of adults. Participants illustrate their play memories:

The best was to jump, make tunnels and crawl in the hay at home on the farm. In the forest I built huts.

Furthermore, in the country play was near adults' work. One participant had for example "a cabin under the crib when daddy milked" and another participant played in the forest on their own while their parents picked berries for sale. The farm was not only an environment for play out in the countryside, but also impacted the content of children's play indoors, such as playing animals or with materials from nature.

I was sitting in the forest /.../ I played farm with cones, bark, pegs, [and] all that was around me.

In town, play occurred on the street or nearby forests, and also in gardens where they had their own playhouse, which had a special importance. In winter, play was distinguished by play with snow, both in town and the countryside. The participants remembered that they went kick-sledding and built huts and forts of snow. The older participants' memories of play also include indoor play. However, indoor play was limited then because the space available was not always sufficient. The play indoors that is mentioned took place in the home's general space, in attics, basements and different warehouses. However, some participants also remember play in preschool or at childminders. Here the play

environment was more interfered with by adults for example with play properties.

Participants of the school age still referred to the forest in their statements. However, possibilities to explore the environments on their own came to expand the participants play ideas and several participants describe how they gained access to new, sometimes dangerous play environments. Descriptions of water play in creeks and waterfalls become more frequent. A participant tells:

When spring came and the creek flowed, we built a water wheel and devoted our time to lots of other water play.

The forest is an environment for rule-play as hide-and-seek but also for imaginary play such as Cowboys and Indians. Further, the school yard and sports ground, even outdoor schooldays, is described as new environments for play. Participants also remember the environments that worked as meeting-places. It could be the school yard or garage space.

In school age winter play is still characterised by play with snow, which is usually play in snow huts and snow castles. Several participants also remember slides in the schoolyard or how they went skating, sledding or reindeer sleighing down the big hills that existed. Indoor play is described to a lesser extent by school age participants than in preschool age. They play that is described is foremost play with cut-out and Barbie dolls, plus circus or theatrical performances.

Later descriptions of children's play environments
Younger participants that grew up in the late 60's and later, when industrialization and the welfare state were under upbuilding, play is often

described in environments in the town. The younger participants give a more varied description of play environments than the older participants. They not only mention play in the forest, garden and residential premises, but also mention play in preschool and, in playground plus in their own room.

The participants that refer to preschool foremost mention the "doll-corner", "pillow-room" and lego-work in the "preschool-corridor", swimming in the "preschool-pool" and play in the preschool yard, especially in sandboxes but also slides and swings. Play in housing areas are dominated by statements including stairwells and plantations. The participants illustrate:

[We] played Pedi cab. The apartment where we lived was formed like a horse shoe. We went around and around, while friends stood by the front doors and did not cycle around. The taxi asked if we needed a lift but sometimes the taxi was full so they had to wait a lap.

The younger participants statements from environments also include indoor play both at home and preschool, plus at friends' houses. The participants show that they have had rich possibilities to create exciting play environments indoors. They tend to have developed a more permitting attitude to indoor play, even though outdoor play contains more tranquil activities that the older participants describe. One of the younger participants tells:

We drew electric cable in granny's hall. Mum and daddy were constructing a house and we would usually mimic them. Our electric cable consisted of plastic tape in different colours and it was impossible to move around.

The occurrence of indoor play increases in the younger participants environment statements. Not only does the forest and schoolyard become environments for

play, but also nearby playgrounds. Water-play is not described by the younger participants to the same extent as the older participants. Statements of winter-play are almost equally divided among the older and younger participants; however, the younger participants include other children in their play to a greater extent than the older. A participant tells:

We [lived] as many children together in a residential area. In middle of the garden bushes grew that were planted in squares and we pretended that it was our house. In the winter there were stairs that became our house, and each child had their own staircase. The greatest was that since we all lived there the play continued day after day. We had a store, and you could buy with leaves. We were all together. We were a gang, mostly girls but also a couple of guys.

Outdoor play in town and the countryside have not only different environments to offer but play also acts under different circumstances. A couple of participants describe how their play was influenced by a move, notably from town to countryside and countryside to town, during school-age.

When I was of school-age I moved with my family to a small village /.../ and my play environment possibilities outdoors expanded suddenly. Now, could I play alone or with friends, in dark forests, open fields, on stone-walls, or in creeks for example.

[I played] mostly indoors. We had moved to town and I couldn't be out alone by myself in this environment.

Play environments today

The youngest participants, i.e. girls that have grown up in today's society dominated by massmedia, mainly appreciate indoor play when they are of preschool age. This is understandable, considering that rough weather and a wide selection of toys has led to increased indoor play at home. Indoor play was

described similarly in preschool and home environments, with the difference that play in home is described as play by oneself, while play in preschool always includes peers. The earlier generation's possibility to freely choose indoor or outdoor play has partly disappeared due to planned activities in preschool instead of deciding the roles for play. One participant illustrates:

I like best to be indoors and play in my room with my dolls. But if it's summer it's fun to be in my garden. I don't like to be out in the winter and play because it's so cold outside. At my preschool, the preschool teachers always say's that one must be outdoors, but we children don't like it.

The children that refer to outdoor play foremost reflect on play in the forest with peers in preschool. They tell:

I think that it's fun to play outdoors, because when we [in preschool] go to the forest we build huts or play tag.

Several girls also describe how they play in the preschool yard and the dug in a sandbox, climbed on a climbing frame, and went on a slide and swing. The playhouse and warehouse is also an environment for play. A participant tells about play in preschool:

I like to play in the playhouse at preschool mostly, and then I play with other girls as well. We usually play families with a mum, dad and child. It's fun. Otherwise we must go on a slide [and] play in sandbox.

In the school-age, girls tend (like girls in earlier generations) to substitute indoor play for play out doors to a lager extent. Outdoor play is most popular in

summer and winter, and it's often play in the forest that is described. In the forest, girls mostly built camps and huts. One girl described:

It's not fun to play [outdoors] when it becomes autumn and when it becomes spring, it is dirty and bleek. It's fun in summer and winter. The forest is good to play trolls in.

It's mostly during leisure-time that girls receive access to play in the forest. Their own garden or backyard tends to lose importance when they get older, as they begin to find the garden joyless.

It's delightful and pleasant to be outdoors rather than indoors. Indoors is nice because it's warm. In the forest it's also nice.You can hear the forest, the trees and the birds. In the garden [at home] it is boring. One wants to be somewhere else.

The schoolyard is seen foremost as an environment for group and ball-play. A participant describes how they also have access to a "school forest" where they play horse and built camp. A girl tells:

I usually swing, go on a slide on the hill or hide from the boys. /.../ Jump using a skipping-rope and climb on the climbing frame.

The access to indoor play is described as minimal during schooldays. There is often equality between playing and having a break; therefore children refer foremost to the home environment in this case. Few of the participants describe their own room as an environment for play, possibly because today it is regarded as natural to have your own room. Younger school-age participants who include indoor play often play with Barbie and/or Bratz-dolls, lego and different pottering. Nevertheless, the older girls potter as much as the younger girls, but

pop-culture tends to hold a greater importance in play. Several participants included both song and dance in their play.

DISCUSSION

Children's upbringing has changed in recent years, and children in Sweden today have relative safety and physical health. Today, childhood is organized, and the medial, material and communicative development has changed childhood (Sandberg, 2003a). Further, 20th century welfare has increased plus the transition between farming, industry and information society reflects in the participant's play environments**.** This increased prosperity been visible in children's access to larger spaces indoors. Most of the younger women describe for example how they have access to their own room and in some cases also a larger playroom. However, girls in this investigation tend to take the room for their own, as granted since having a private room is not mentioned in their statements. Access to an own room means that indoor play have become more common and play that formerly only took place outdoors have moved indoors such as building huts. In principle, among the older women all play took place outdoors.

Women's entrance to the work force contributed to an increased welfare, but it also contributed to an increased number of children taking part of preschool activities. Children gained access to a larger number of peers, and to an environment that is intended and adjusted to children's play. A preschool's playroom, pillow room, doll corner and the preschool yard became new arenas for play. Today's children tend to neglect mentioning playground environments in their immediate surroundings, and refer foremost to preschool and schoolyards. The older womens' play memories are centred on the forest, while younger women and girls also refer to play in more planned play environments such as playgrounds and school yards. Several scientists (Blatchford & Sharp,

1994; Hartle, Campbell, Becker, Harman, Kagel & Tibali, 1994; Zinger, 2002; Brodin & Lindstrand, 2006; Davidsson, 2006), points out that playgrounds are both important informal learning environments and social play environments for children. Also the younger women remember play in less planned environments such as in bushes and stairwells. They also refer to breaks at school. The importance of breaks outdoors is emphasized by both Walte-Stupiansky and Findlay (2001) and Smith (enl: Blatchford & Sharp, 1994). They call attention to the children's abilities to meet friends and practice their social skills. However, in this study, the schoolyard environment encourages a more enclosed play choice since group play dominates. In the home environment, girls' play expands and they receive access to more "forbidden" forms of play and receive access to more variable play environments.

Girls and boys have qualitative different experiences from playing in the outdoor environment (Ärlemalm-Hagsér, 2006). In this study, the girls show play environments as being dependant on climate. The majority of the girls prefer outdoor play when it's warm outside or when there is snow. But in Davidsson, (2006) study the girls, six to nine years old, mostly draw motives from indoors.

The girls mention indoor play in preschool age, but later on they receive a larger freedom to choose their play environment. A question that undeniably arises is to what extent they receive access to, for them, interesting play environments outdoors at preschool age? For example, girls' play in the forest seems to take place in school-age when they receive the ability to choose. Girls' preference of the forest can depend on its positive effects on play. Also in (Davidsson, 2006) study both girls and boys prefer to go to the forest in breaks during the school day, there they experience freedom. Björklid (2005) maintains that children become more involved and show endurance when they receive access to natural

environments. Lastly, another question that inevitably arises is do adults ascribe girls and boys the same need to participate in outdoor play? Children of preschool age are enclosed with space, their freedom is limited because of security. Consequently, the importance adults place on girls playing outdoors is a direct factor affecting their possibility to be outdoors.

In this study the results are based on women's and girls perspective. Therefore, in the future, it would be interesting to study men's and boy's memories about play from different play environments and compare the results with each other in order to analyze and describe differences and similarities.

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Gender, playing and learning in natural outdoor environments

Eva Ärlemalm-Hagsér

INTRODUCTION

In the Swedish preschool history, play in outdoor environments has always been considered an important part of the educational program. Playing and learning in outdoor environments is one of the assignments in the Swedish preschool curriculum (Lpfö-98). Preschool play has an important part in how children sense the possibility to develop as democratic, responsible and equal citizens in the contemporary time and in the future. If playing and learning in preschool outdoor environment is seen as a gender-neutral activity and if there is no gender awareness from the teachers in what children learn and play during outdoor play, it is difficult to know what the context means for the children in the long run. Thoughts about the outdoor environment as pedagogical content and practise have not been discussed and analysed in any bigger extents in scientific research and especially from a gender, playing and learning perspective. This article is a contribution in developing this issue.

This study is part of a project with focus on fundamental values at Mälardalen University in Sweden. The aim of the study is to investigate outdoor play in nature environments connected to boys and girls playing and learning in a gender perspective. During spring 2005 and winter 2006, Swedish preschool children have been interviewed (55 girls and 51 boys). The result reveals three different sorts of play. *Play as physical*, *Play as construction* and *Play as fantasy* are categories that hold different aspects of togetherness and distance

between girls and boys where power and possible actions is part in a horizontal and vertical framing of play and play themes. As gender equality also is an important part of the Swedish preschool curriculum fundamental values this issue must be discussed and analyse as it appear in the preschool child's everyda Play and learning are inseparable dimensions in preschool practise (Johansson & Pramling Samuelsson, 2002; Pramling Samuelsson & Asplund Carlsson, 2003). The Swedish preschool curriculum points out that play is important for the child's development and learning and the use of play to promote development and learning has an important part in everyday preschool practise. The curriculum also stresses that the children learn through exploring the environment with inquiry and curiosity and that it should be enjoyable, secure and fulfilling learning and that the preschool must lay the foundation for lifelong learning.

"Children should be able to switch activities during the course of the day. Their activities should provide scope for the children's own plans, imagination and creativity in play, and learning both indoors and outdoors. Time spent outdoors provides opportunities for play and other activities, both in a planned and natural environment" (Curriculum for the Swedish preschool. Lpfö-98. pp.7).

Outdoor play in the sense of a 'good' nature, describes as important for children's play and learning. The nature has defined as 'good' in Swedish outdoor life tradition and history (Sandell & Sörlin, 2000) and it's still few studies that problemize this assumption. This is a prominent feature in the descriptions of out door play in general. The outdoor play describes as physical play that fulfils children's need for gross and fine motor activity, space, adventure, risk-taking and freedom (Johnson, Christie & Wardle, 2005). It also depict as a possibility to learn natural science by exploring the nature (Björklund & Elm, 2003). Some studies point out the health dimension in outdoor play as

reducing infections among preschool children and in the last years the discussion of child obesity been stressed in the media. Grahn et al (1997) stresses that play in outdoor environment develop children's concentration abilities and hasten development. Further, natural outdoor play can be seen as one part in developing a caring attitude for the environment and a sustainable development (Angelöv & Jonsson, 1994; Sundell, 2000)

Play in a gender perspective

Results from studies on gender differences in play during the early years indicate that girls and boys play and learn different things in preschool settings (Månsson, 2000; Odelfors, 1998, 2002; SOU 2006:75; Svaleryd, 2003). Boys are engage in more outdoor play and more rough-and-tumble play and are more often involved in physical play (Johnson, Christie & Wardle, 2005). Mårtensson (2004) observers that the girls and the boys use space in the outdoor environment in different ways. The boys move further away in the outdoor environment and the girls stayed mostly at the same place. There are also researches about different play-styles/themes were girls play everyday life, and relations while boys play adventures and superheroes (Browne, 2004; Knutsdotter Olofsson, 1998; Löfdahl, 2004).

During play children understand themselves, others and the possible role of being a girl or a boy (Browne, 2004; Nordberg, 2005). How children describe their play in a gender perspective has not yet been investigated in any bigger extent. There are just a few studies. Browne (2004) interviews children in Britain, aged between 3 and 7, about their understanding of gender and play. Both girls and boys had knowledge of the gender structures that appeared in their everyday life in the preschool. They described a clear gender based pattern in choice of playmates, in same-gender groups, girls play with girls and boys play with boys. They also told the researcher that there were girl-games and

boy-games. The girls play mothers and with Barbie dolls and the boys play superheroes. The children also had a clear opinion about how the opposite sex should do or play, in stereotype construction way of gendering. Browne also points out that it is a complexity in the children's content, interpreting and understanding, and problemizes the multiple identities (femininities and masculinities) that appear among the children.

"A possible explanation for the differences in the imaginative role play of girls and boys lies in the fact that imaginative role play does not only function as a means through which children can explore and overcome fundamental fears and anxieties. Imaginative role play or dramatic storying is also a way in which children can explore who they are, what and who they would like to be and how they would like others to se them and position them". (Browne, 2004, pp. 83)

Gender structures are also structures of hierarchy and power (Davies, 2003; Johansson, 1999; MacNaughton, 1999; Sutton-Smith & Kelly-Byrne, 1984; Sutton-Smith, 2001) and these are always present in children's play. MacNaugthon (1999) stress that crossing the gender boundaries can sometimes be very risky for the children with '*peer rejection, peer aggression and loneliness'* (pp.81).

Theoretical framework

The theoretical ground of the study is built on sociocultural and gender theories. Sociocultural theory suggests that children understand and develop in the special context of social interactions and relationship with others in their own culture in a situated learning (Hundeide, 2006; Rogoff, 2003; Säljö, 2000; Vygotsky, 1995).

'people develop as participants in cultural communities. Their development can be understood only in the light of the cultural practices and circumstances of their communities – which also change.' (Rogoff, 2003, pp.3–4)

Rogoff (2003) emphasis play and development in three totality levels, *personal lens*, *interpersonal lens* and *the community lens,* that always is a parts in children's play and as mutual parts embrace the children's everyday life. In the light of the child's *Personal lens* lies the individual understanding of itself. The *interpersonal lens* sets focus on the interaction between the child and peers, teachers, parents and others in the child's world. In *the community lens* views the cultural rules, understandings and values. As it is a holistic view of understanding play, learning and development, it appears to be a fruitful way to understand gender processes in preschool settings.

Gender as a scientific tool gives possibility to understand how gender defines and organizes in different contexts and it consequences (Thurén, 2003). The gender perspective also problemizes questions of power in social relations between men and woman, boys and girls (Davies, 2003; Johansson, 1999; MacNaughton, 1999; Sutton-Smith, 2001). It also makes it possible to understand relations as aspects of cultural, historical and social constructions of everyday live in a hierarchical structure, a symbolic and individual meaning of gender (Harding, 1986; Hirdman, 1988, 2003).

Methodical approach

The studies methodical approach is inspired by phenomenografic research methods. Phenomenography has essentially been a study of variation between different ways of seeing, experiencing and understanding the same phenomena. Phenomenography is a research orientation which attempts to identify, formulate and tackle certain types of research questions about learning and understanding

in an educational environment (Alexandersson, 1994; Marton & Booth, 2000; Pramling, 1994). The results are present in categories of descriptions of variation in understanding the same phenomena. Interview as a research technique makes it possible to reach new knowledge of the respondent's different understanding (Doverborg & Pramling Samuelsson, 2000; Kvale, 1997) Ethical aspects of general principles are discussed in the whole research process (The Scientific Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences, 2002). This is also of especial importance when the respondents are children there is both practical and ethical dilemmas (Backe-Hansen, 2002). All names in the study are fictive names in accordance with the ethic rules.

In the crucial steps in sampling procedure it is very important to define the respondents and their possibility to give meaningful information about the study subject. With this awareness the children was selected out of purpose decision of meaningful information from respondents (Kvale, 1997; Patton, 1990).

During the spring of 2005 a pilot study was accomplished with Swedish preschool children. The purpose of the pilot study was to test the rehabilitee of the interview questions and to develop an interview guide. In the main study during the winter of 2006, students of the teacher programme at Mälardalen University interviewed 102 children age 3–7 years old. All together the number of respondents in the pilot and main studies were 106 children (51 boys and 55 girls).

The aim of this study *Gender, playing and learning in natural outdoor environments* is to investigate play in natural outdoor environments (forest) connected to girls and boy's playing and learning in a gender perspective. Study questions were:

How do the preschools children understand and describe playing in natural outdoor environments? What do they think about playing in a gender perspective? Do girls and boys learn the same things from the natural outdoor play?

RESULTS

In the present study the girls and boys descriptions of playing in natural outdoor environments seems rather alike in the categories, *Play as physical, Play as construction, Play as fantasy*, but in the understanding of meanings of '*shared play-worlds*' the categories holds different aspects of togetherness and distance between girls and boys where power and possible actions are part of a horizontal and vertical frame of play and play themes. The children's descriptions of their playmates show that the children's playmate preference is same-gender peers; it is especially significant in the boys group. In the results the preschool children's playing appears in different ways. The children had large knowledge of their gender identities and a sensitive awareness power and possible actions.

The children´s play categories

In the interviews the girl's and the boy's answers reflect three different sort of play. *Play as physical*, *Play as construction* and *Play as fantasy.* In each play categories different levels of togetherness and distance between girls and boys come into sight in the children's narratives.

Play as physical

In the physical play both girls and boys describe locomotor's play as running around, climbing in trees and on rocks and stones, leaping and chasing each others. They often emphasize games with rules like hide and seek, play tag and

other typical Swedish chasing games. At first in the games with rules the level of togetherness is most frequent in the children's narratives.

I: What do you play when you play in the forest?
Natalie (G)[1] aged 5: We play ' knock, knock is Mulle home and the bear is sleeping '
(Typical Swedish games for children).
I: Tell me about the children that you playing with.
Natalie name several girls and boys.
I: What do you play when girls and boys play together?
Natalie: The same games and sometimes hide and seek.

I: What do you play when you play in the forest?
Filippa (G) aged 6: We climb on stones and in trees.

Natalie and Filippa say 'we' in the meaning of togetherness, as they play rules games and climb girls and boys together.

In contrast to the first example the second description of climbing both togetherness and distance appears.

Klaaus (B)[2] aged 4: I climb and climb on large rocks ...the girls are also allowed to climb, but they are a bit afraid sometimes, but I am not!
Klaaus make a clearly distance between him and the girl, when hi confirm his courage to climb on large rocks.

A third example of physical play is about running and chasing. In the girls and the boys descriptions in the interviews it is significant that boys more often chase girls and girls often get chased by the boys.

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[1] (G) =Girl
[2] (B)=Boy

Kirsi (G) aged 7: I play horses with Anna (G) and Lotta (G) sometimes Kalle (B) is playing with us, and then he chase us.

Mats (B) aged 4: Its only boys that are allowed to chase girls.

I: What do you play when girls and boys play together?
Kasper (B) aged 7: We use to play that the boys chase the girls.

I: What do you play when girls and boys play together?
Malin (G) aged 5: We run and the boys are police and we are thieves.

Play as physical shows the complexity in outdoor play where togetherness and distance is part in every move and activity. Patterns of gendered roles of femininity and masculinity hide in complicated assumptions of how the children define their play and possible action in the play to chase and get chased.

Play as construction
Building huts is very often described in the interviews. Both the girls and the boys say that they are building huts with twigs and sticks. They also talk about build snowball lanterns and snowmen. In this category as it is in the category of physical play togetherness and distance takes part in the children's answers. Here in Fanny's answer lies togetherness but also distance.

I: What do you play when girls and boys play together?
Fanny (G) aged 7: I don't know (thinking), I am not in habit of playing with boys, but sometimes I and Simon (B), Iriz (G) and Victor (B) build huts together.

I: What do you play in the forest?
Samuel (B) aged 4, 5: We build huts and I am the king when I play with Alexander (B) but when I play with Nell (G)I am a cat.

In this category both girls and boys describe the same play activity in building huts but in the narratives it shows patterns of distance, togetherness and power. As Fanny says in the quote, she states very clearly that she is not the habit of playing with boys (distance), and it's just occasionally it happens (togetherness). It also describes different roles in what is possible to play with different children. Samuel has different roles depending on who he is playing with. One understanding of this is from power dimension and this horizontal power is part of what is possible to be in the play situation.

Play as fantasy

The girls and the boys describe varieties of pretend play. Both girls and boys say that they play adventure games such as pirates, Tarzan and Jane and castles and knights. They tell about shop plays and family plays and how they pretend being animals and birds. In the children's descriptions of their play themes it appears that the children are playing the same plays and at the first glimpse the plays seems to be gender neutral. But even if the themes are the same for the children as in the other categories, roles and performing is different for the girls and the boys and also here is togetherness and distance visible, but also power and possible/impossible actions.

One of several examples is the pirate play:

Fredrik (B) aged 5: At the rock we play pirates and I am the crocodile in the play.
I: Is it just boys in this play?
Fredrik: Yes and girls. The girl is going to be kidnapped by the pirates and they have to 'walk the board'. Then they fall down and the crocodile eat them.
I: Are the girl pirates also?
Fredrik: Yes, they are if they climb up.

Fredrik explains the pirate play. The other boys in the play are the pirates and he is the crocodile. The role that is available for the girls are the one to get kidnapped and to fall overboard. The children are playing together in togetherness of the play theme, but there are different roles that are available for the girls and the boys.

Josefina explains the same in this way:

Josefina (G) aged 5: When we played at the field yesterday, Isaac and Gabriel were pirates and they caught us, we were rabbits.

These descriptions of power highlight different values in the available roles between the girls and the boys. Togetherness and distance in horizontal and vertical frame. The horizontal frame includes the meaning of power relations and the vertical frame as possible actions.

The second example of play as fantasy is family-play, both girls and boys tell about how they play mummy, daddy and child.

I: What do you play in the forest?
Cecila (G) aged 6: in the hut we play mummy, daddy and child

I: What do you play in the forest?
Samuel (B) aged 5: ... mummy, daddy and children. There is a mummy and a daddy and maybe they have two children, big sister or big brother and maybe they have a little brother. We sleep, eat and sometimes someone have birthday.

Kalle (B) aged 4: I play with Sara (G), we play mummy, daddy and child
... when I play with Olle (B) I also play mummy, daddy and child.

Cecila´s, Samuel´s and Kalle´s answers describes the family-play as together-ness, in the interviews there is no visible power relation or distance between the children.

In the last example of Fantasy play, the play theme is war games. This is most frequent among the boys in the study but it is worth mentioning that a few girls also say they play war games.

I: What do you play when you play in the forest?
*Sixten (B) aged 6: I play war.*
I: How?
Sixten: We have twigs as swords and guns…and pretend that we kill each other.

Sebastian (B) aged 7: ...war games with twigs, there is someone who's the good one and another who's the evil, then we have pretend fights with our twigs.

Tove (G) aged 6: I'm just playing with boys sometimes, because they always play war games, so instead I play with the girls.

In the theme of war game the boys express togetherness and common understanding of meaning, in several answers from the girls is it clear that the girls not feel at ease in this play theme and they distance themselves from the play. In the interviews the girls and the boys talk about three different sort of play. *Play as physical*, *Play as construction* and *Play as fantasy*. In each play category different levels of togetherness and distance between girls and boys come into sight in the children's narratives. Power relations and possible/impossible actions are also part of children's play, described as horizontal and vertical frames. The children in the study have different play-worlds but also share play-worlds with each other. The different categories are

also mixed in the children's play. The result shows that the play in the forest is multifaceted and both girls and boys have possibilities and limits in the way that play understands and defines in the peer group and among the individuals.

Horizontal frame

Play as physical

Distance

Play as construction

Vertical frame

Togetherness

Play as fantasy
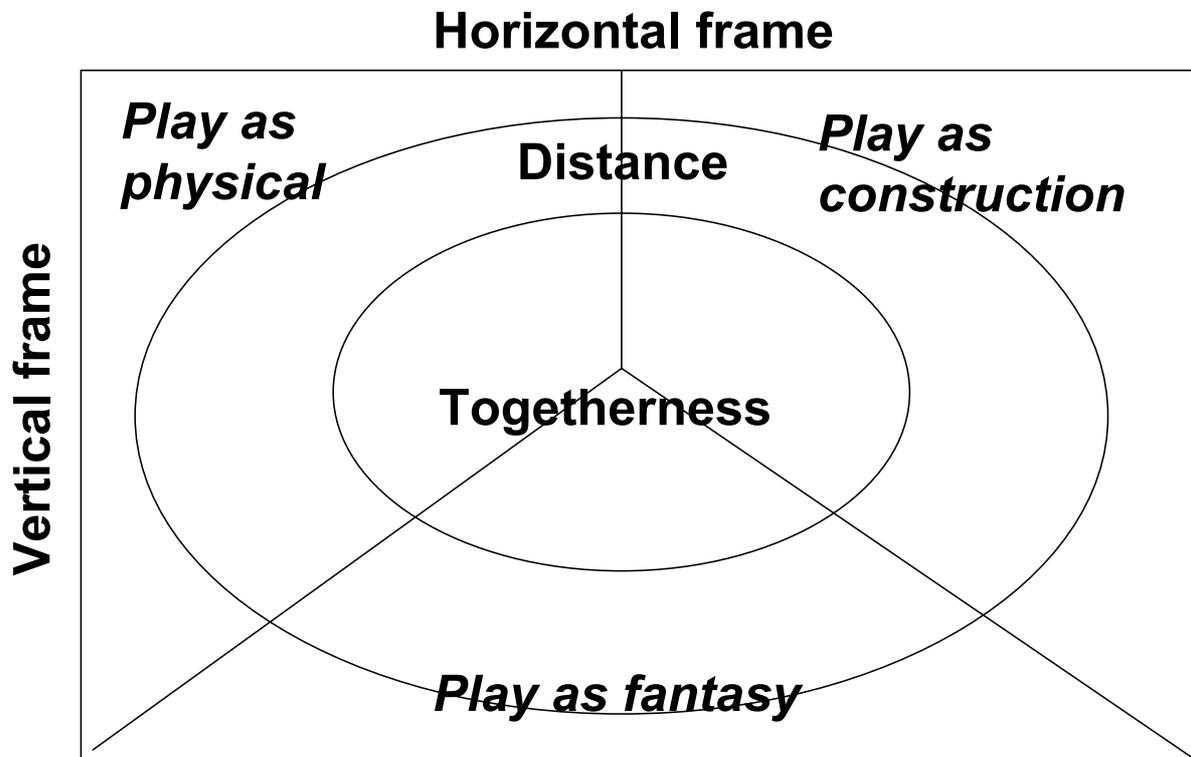
CONCLUSION

The aim of the study *Gender, playing and learning in natural outdoor environments* is to investigate play in a natural outdoor environment as forest play connected to boys and girls playing and learning in a gender perspective. Children's descriptions of play are rich with information about how they understand play and learning in a gender perspectives.

The result reveals three different sort of play. *Play as physical, Play as construction* and *Play as fantasy.* At the first glimpse the plays seems to be gender neutral but these categories holds different aspects of togetherness and distance between girls and boys where power and possible actions is part in a

horizontal (power) and vertical (possible actions) frame of play and play themes. More often power seem to be connected to vertical terms, but in this study power has the function as a glass ceiling, often used in management research as an hidden invisible barrier for women (Morrisson, White & Van Velsor, 1987). The horizontal power in this study expresses it self as power in both girls and boys play as hidden possibilities and limitation in their play worlds. Power is a part in children's play and daily life experience is an issue that often neglects in descriptions of natural outdoor play, maybe because of the strong discourse of the 'good' natural outdoor play. Good in terms of healthy and developing and that play in generally in natural outdoor settings is problemized to a lesser extent, of course power and play has been discuss and analyzed in scientific research (Davies, 2003; Johansson, 1999; Lövdahl, 2003; MacNaughton, 1999; Sutton-Smith, 2001) but its still in need of additional knowledge in further research.

In the childrens answer there are descriptions of playing in natural outdoor collection of joy and happiness and both girls and boys seem too appreciated play in the forest. Davidsson (2006) also stress freedom as one part in childrens outdoor play. It was obvious that *Play as physical*, *Play as construction* and *Play as fantasy* are part of children's play worlds. Where movement and locomotor's play is not just preferred by boy in the forest play as has stated before, compare Johnson, Christie & Wardle, 2005.

The complexity to understand and analyse children's play can be understood in the light of hidden cultural, social and historical structures of femininity and masculinity as play is part of children's understanding of the world. Children learn, develop and understand their own gender identities in relation to others as playmates, teachers and parents but also as a part in the community (Browne, 2004; Johnson, Christie & Wardle, 2005; Nordberg, 2005). In recent years has

childrens play changed and children in Sweden today has more possibilities to play inside then before. Sandberg & Vuorinen (2006) study play memories in outdoor play and the result from their study show that the adult participants in the study often describe forest play while the children more often describe play in planned environments as playgrounds and school yards.

The children's narratives indicate that girls and boys gain qualitative different experience from playing in the natural outdoor environment. The fact that frames of power and possible actions is part of the children's daily life must indicate an importance to further deeper studies to understand the consequences of gender diverse patterns of play and learning in natural outdoor environments. Problems with this sort of studies in dichotomies of girls and boys can support a deterministic essential way of understanding children's play and learning instead of exploring its multi faceted shape.

Preschool children are always dependent on the expectations, possibilities and affordances their teachers give them (Browne, 2004; Lenz Taguchi, 2004; Månsson, 2000; Nordin-Hultman, 2003; Svaleryd, 2003). The preschool staff has a defining role over the learning situation and its development in the preschool. If there is awareness of thought about learning and development and the way in which learning situations are organised from a cultural and gender perspective the preschool staff can be conscious and wider in their perspective.

The development of the learning environment and the learning situation demand time for reflection and discussion within the preschool team of teacher and child minder (Lenz Taguchi, 2004; Pramling Samuelsson & Johansson, 2003). The staff team in preschools negotiate constantly about the content of activities and how they can be shaped. If the activities will be meaningful for teachers and children they will have to be discussed.

Of great importance is if the teacher listens to the children (Johansson, 2003), their questions and ideas. They create possibilities to learn from the children and develop understanding of learning and which strategies for learning children use. The children's own understanding of learning plays a big role in what learning that takes place and if they find it meaningful (Pramling Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2003). Children's thoughts about boys and girls playing and learning in outdoor environments can give knowledge for further understanding of gender constructions and it gives possibilities for challenge and development in the preschool for equal opportunities for girls and boys. It also gives an opportunity to develop a deeper learning for everyone. Researchers and teacher in the preschool have a lot to learn from children's spontaneous problem solving, creativity, playfulness and ability to communicate in order to bring into consciousness that which adults take for granted.

As playing and learning in outdoor environments is an important part of Swedish everyday life in preschool (Johansson & Åstedt, 1996; Lpfö 98), the sociocultural theoretical approach and the lenses that Rogoff (2003) suggest and gender perspective can elucidate the process in everyday life practice and offer researchers and teacher possibilities to get insight in the children's under-standing of gender in a holistic cultural and individual perspective. The pedagogical implications can affect the preschool teachers opportunities to increase every child's individual possibilities to meta-learning and development in the zone of proximal development (Hundeide, 2006; Pramling Samuelsson & Asplund Carlsson, 2003; Vygotsky, 1995) without gender limits and borders.

. ..play is like language: a system of communication and expression, not in itself either good or bad. (Sutton-Smith, 2001. pp 219)

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Play and Interaction in two Preschool yards

Karin Engdahl, Jane Brodin, & Peg Lindstrand

INTRODUCTION

Children's outdoor environments are of great importance for their mental health and motor development. Play is a development area where many different functions are involved. Some children are not able to play or do not have opportunities to play in a constructive way. In these cases it is relevant to ask how they can develop the skills often demanded by adults. Here, though, it is primarily the children's surroundings that are in focus. The play process differs in various preschools, and the question is how and in what ways it differs. Why do conflicts seem to dominate the social interaction in some of the preschools? What does this mean and how can the preschool teachers and other staff members influence the situation?

The environments where children grow up can be health-promoting or, on the contrary, hazardous for the children's health. There is an awareness of the fact that favorable conditions strengthen children's health and decrease the risk of illness, in both the short and long terms. Some of the illnesses that affect children, e.g. physical illnesses, infections, injuries, and allergies, can be prevented by changes in the immediate environment. SCAMPER (Sunshades and children's mental, motor and physical abilities in skill-promoting environments) was a project in which the outdoor environments of preschools were studied from different perspectives. In this article we report the results of one of the sub-studies with focus on outdoor play in the preschool.

Free play outdoors at a preschool yard gives children great opportunities to develop, explore, and discover the world around them and to enhance the development of their senses and motor skills (Davidsson, 2006; Sandberg & Vuorinen, 2006). In outdoor play, children are not as bound by rules and restrictions as they are normally are in indoor play. Children experience a greater freedom to run, jump, and climb when they are outdoors and have larger areas to move around in. Indoors the play activities are often restricted by limited space and more rules (Björklid, 2005; Brodin & Lindstrand, 2006). This study is about social interaction between children, and has been conducted with observations of children playing in two preschool yards. Answers to questions concerning with *whom* they play, *what* they play, and *where* they play have been collected.

For many children in Sweden, preschool is the first meeting place for interplay outside the family. At the preschool children often establish their first peer relations, and all forms of interplay involve moments of inclusion and exclusion in the community. In the social collaborative processes the children are "used" both by other children and adults in different situations and this is expressed in many ways. Interaction is a concept involving interplay and co-action. This action is a conscious behavior with a special intention, a goal, or a meaning, as opposed to an unconscious reaction. Interaction exists when two or more people are co-active about something, and the central point is the interaction between the individual and the environment. The interaction is therefore the most important prerequisite for child development, and often starts from the relationship with the caregiver. Generally, children are happy to play and be together with other children. Lökken (1996) uses the concept "the other interaction" to point out that interaction between children is not the same as interaction with adults. The preschool is an arena that constitutes a basis for various meetings and many children gain their first experiences here of interplay

with other children (Engdahl, 2005). In preschool the requirement of a good communicative ability is emphasized, and children need to be able to express their own wills in both words and actions.

Social competence is a concept that has come up in recent years, and it is related to both persons and contexts (Pape, 2001). Friendly relationships between young children have often been regarded as being connected to the peer with whom they are currently playing, but many researchers state that social competence is the key to success. They have introduced different dimensions of the characteristics of popular children with whom everyone wants to play, i.e. those who have a high status among friends. Cooperation, self-control, and empathy have been shown to be important elements. Preschool children are often restrained by pleasure and impulses although they train their social competence in different play activities, especially in role play that demands cooperation, mutuality, and taking turns. It might be difficult to define social competence, but the concept is central in preschool and is often connected to communicative competence. The ordinance for preschool says:

Preschool shall be a living social and cultural environment that stimulates children to take initiatives, and develops their social and communicative competence (Lpfö98, p 9) (authors' translation).

Besides the interplay and interaction in different environments, the complexity of play is a phenomenon of interest to many researchers, but the main question is how various activities in preschool can be interpreted.

Play and the importance of play
The concept of play changes over time and space, Play is a universal phenomenon and many games are played in the same way all over the world,

although the contents and names of the games might be different. Many researchers (e.g. Brodin, 1999; Brodin & Lindstrand, 2003) have studied play from different perspectives in order to categorize it; these perspectives include solitary play, parallel play, cooperative play, construction play, symbolic play, and play with rules. For the youngest children solitary and parallel play are the first steps taken toward cooperative play. One question is if it is possible to define objectively what play is and what it is not (Ärleman-Hagsér, 2006). The only way is probably to ask the child him/herself. As soon as children are aware of the fact that play is not "real" they can decide whether they are playing or pretending. To try to interpret and explain the inner essence of play is like opening the proverbial Russian dolls – inside each doll you find another (Engdahl, 2005). Knutsdotter Olofsson (2001) states that it is almost impossible to explain what play is, but agrees with Brodin (1999) and with Pramling Samuelsson and Asplund Carlsson (2003) that some criteria for play are valid, for instance that play is enacted by free will, is pleasurable, and not goal-directed. Also when children with disabilities are involved, Brodin and Lindstrand (2003) stated that play is primarily joyful, although play sometimes is used as a means to strengthen different functions in children with difficulties. A requirement of children's play and development is that the need of basic trust has been covered. Play has always had a central position in preschool activities, but it appears that the focus has changed from play to a stronger emphasis on learning (Skolverket, 2004). This study focuses on the everyday context in preschool. The activities may look different but their common denominator is outdoor play. Interaction and interplay outdoors are highlighted.

AIM AND METHOD

The overall aim of this study was to gain knowledge about children's interactions in outdoor play environments. The environments studied are two

different preschools located in two different parts of Stockholm. The aim was also to capture a number of questions from children's perspectives concerning how children play and interact in the preschool arenas. We focused on what and with whom they played, how they interacted, and which spaces of the preschool yard they used. How did they show their social and communicative competencies at the two preschools called, respectively, the Swan and the Gull?

The Swan is a municipal preschool located in an area of owner-occupied houses. Five groups and one private preschool group are located in the building. The Swan is divided into two five-year groups, one group for the four-year-olds and one for the youngest children. The Gull is located in an area of rented houses and has access to small green areas outside. In the building there are four groups, all for siblings, which means that the children are between one to five years old. Those who are included in our study are between four and five years old. Observations were done for two months in the middle of the summer. The choice of time for the study will probably not be regarded as representative, as many children were away on vacation with their parents. The aim of this study has not been to generalize but to highlight how some of the children play and interact during a limited period of time in two preschool yards. In other words, the study could be described as a quick glimpse of reality. However, we are aware of the fact that other realities can be found that are different. The starting point has been to observe and interview the children about the social interplay and interaction outdoors in a play context and to use a qualitative approach.

RESULTS

The children used the outdoor environments differently. The use of the play equipment was limited at both yards. Similar observations were made in other studies of children's outdoor play; Norén-Björn showed as early as 1977 that the

children did not use the play equipment on the playgrounds. Despite the fact that her study was conducted thirty years ago, research has shown that no special changes have been made in children's outdoor play environments. They look more or less the same today as they used to, and a number of studies stress that the play equipment was used minimally (Björklid, 2005; Brodin & Lindstrand 2006; Lindstrand, 2005; Mårtensson, 2004). Children need space to play freely in an environment where nature offers opportunities, stimulates the child's imagination, and can be used for many different and unplanned activities.

Building of a channel in the sandbox at the Swan

The sandboxes are the most frequented places in the preschool yard. The structure and the consistency of the material attracted the interest of the children, as seen in the following observation. A couple of boys have collected spades from the storeroom and jumped quickly into the sandbox, where they started to dig frenziedly. The time of each observation is indicated below:

10.30 The whole sandbox was full of children (eight boys). They all dug intensively, some with the spades, and some with their hands. They eagerly discussed how to build different channels and roads. Mike, Andy, and Charles circled the sandbox on their tricycles, then they slowed down and watched more attentively.

10.35 Some of the boys ran to the storehouse to get some buckets. They looked around and discovered some big puddles close to the ball wall. They ran away to fetch more water and ran back again with the water splashing from the buckets. They poured it out in the channels and hurried back for more water.

10.44 At that point the cycling boys could not hold their interest back any more. They jumped down into the sandbox, which now became definitely overcrowded. All the children dug intensively.

10.54 A conflict arose between two of the boys concerning how to dig in the community pit and one of them got very upset and screamed loudly.

10.55 Lina (teacher) came up and tried to sort it out. She spoke to the boys but made no progress. She then moved one of the boys to a corner of the sandbox, where he continued to scream and cry.

11.00 The crying boy stayed in the corner and started to dig by himself, while the other boys ignored him and shared their digging job.

11.05 The crying boy returned to the others and the channel building and they all continued to dig. Some of the boys left the sandbox.

11.30. Six boys were still in the sandbox constructing channels. The other boys left, three of them talked to one of the staff members, and the rest of them moved to another part of the yard.

The boys who were working with the construction in the sandbox were engaged for a long period of time. The high number of boys at the limited area really tested the need for cooperation and tolerance within the group. A small incident occurred between two of the boys, but it was quickly solved and they continued to work together. A lot of activities went on at the same time around the sandbox. Observing the boys, two girls were walking together around the sandbox, talking about the doll they had been allowed to take outside to play with. Two of the boys were sitting on the grass talking to each other, and Mia, the teacher, was engaged in chalking up a new hopscotch game on the asphalt walk running around the sandbox. Erik (another of the teachers) was talking to some of the other children. The sandbox is a central place to meet for activities or plan other activities.

The ball board at the Swan

Another place at the preschool yard where the children play for longer periods of time is the ball board, which is placed in one of the corners of the yard. Due to the placement it is possible to throw balls hard against the board without taking a risk that other children or any objects are hit or damaged. Behind the ball board there is a pile of old car tires and planks where the children can construct different things or just carry the material around and use it wherever they want to. This place is always attractive for the children. They play in different constellations and for different lengths of time. Another observation was that you could constantly see someone playing around alone or in cooperation with other children, moving or dragging heavy objects behind them.

10.15. Albert turned up at the ball board with a football. He stood alone and started to shoot – shot by shot, he dribbled a little and shot again. After about five minutes he left the board and joined some peers. Behind the ball board, Kalle, Jocke and Tina were sitting on the tires close to the pile of planks.

10.20. Kalle dragged away some planks and Jocke and Tina started to move the remaining planks in different directions.

10.24 Lina (teacher) arrived, took a broom and started to sweep away the rainwater left in puddles in front of the ball board.

10.25. Kalle and Tina wanted to join them in sweeping the water away, and ran to fetch more brooms.

10.30. Kalle, Tina and Lina continued to sweep the water away.

10.35 Kalle and Tina returned to the pile of planks, where Jocke continued building in the absence of the other children.

During the whole observation Jocke has concentrated on the construction despite the two other children leaving him for a while to take part in another activity which suddenly appeared to be more interesting, i.e. to sweep the water away. Water seems to have a great attraction for all children, and when Tina and Kalle came back the previous work continued and the three children continued to build for another half hour without any break.

Chase, chase – run, run – at the Gull

The outdoor play on the preschool yard seems to be disjointed. When the boys are running around on the yard it is often because they have teased or intend to tease someone in the group. If they succeed they need to run away from the place so the bullied child would not catch them. During this observation all departments of the preschool were outdoors and there were about 50 children moving on the yard, which means that it took a little time to get control of the children in the study. After a while the observer has scanned the yard and gotten an overview. The girls were sitting in the swings and the boys were running around between the small playhouses, to the climbing equipment (a boat), from the boat and toward the fence in the upper left corner of the yard. The boys suddenly investigated something on the ground, then quickly stood up and ran away to the sandbox.

9.50. Arvid was the first one in the sandbox. He stayed and looked around over his shoulder.

9.52 Lucas and Marcus arrived at the sandbox next, then stopped and stared at Arvid.

9.53, Arvid rushed into the sandbox, ran straight through it and almost stepped on some of the infants from another preschool group.

9.54 One of the pedagogues who saw Arvid's advance called out that he had to pay attention and be careful, and take notice of the infants.

9.55. Arvid was running on the grass and Lucas and Marcus were running after him. They chased him. Suddenly Marcus grabbed Arvid's sweater, and Arvid pushed Marcus so he fell on the ground.

10.00 Arvid ran away and fetched a fistful of sand, which he threw at Marcus and Lucas.

10.03 Arvid fetched more sand, but one of the teachers noticed this action, took him by the arm and gave him a talking-to.

10.05. Now Marcus was throwing sand at Arvid, who ran away and sat down in front of the small houses.

During the rest of the observation, which continued until 10.45, the boys avoided each other. Arvid climbed into the boat, and the two other boys played in one of the playhouses until it was time to wash their hands before lunch. Several times during the observations the role of the researcher felt that she had to enter the action. Before the study started, the researcher had stated that she would not interfere in the activities in the preschool if the situation was not dangerous for the children. The problem was that the limit was not really clear and many times the decision had to be made without any time for reflection. In theory this is an easy decision, but not in reality.

Two worlds – A concluding reflection

The study highlights interaction in two preschool yards. By observation and interviewing some randomly selected children we have tried to create an image of children's social conditions in everyday outdoor life. We are aware of the fact

that the outdoor environments vary between different children and groups of children.

When looking at different preschools and the children's play, it is tempting to believe that the games and the interaction on the yard are very similar. The whole scenario and children's games change constantly, depending on whom the child is playing with. The tempo is fast, and several researchers have compared the social life of a preschool to that at a cocktail party (Corsaro, 1985). The intensive movements among the children are remarkable. When the children are studied in an outdoor environment, the focus changes all the time. This observation is similar for both preschools, as is the different patterns for boys and girls and how they move around. That they move differently is a well-known fact, and this has also been confirmed by Norén-Björn, Mårtensson and Andersson (1993). Our study also reinforced the different play patterns on the preschool yards we studied. The girls were quieter and often played two by two, while the boys ran away and chased each other, often with load voices. What we noticed is that the children from the two preschools had one common trait, and that is that the children gravitated to the outer edges of the preschool yard close to the fences to watch with great interest things going on outside the yard.

The observations showed that the interaction between the children in the two preschools also differed. There was a tendency for the children to play together for longer periods of time with minor conflicts at the Swan than they did at the Gull. Many conflicts arose at the Gull, but this was not seen at the Swan. There is nothing special about children having conflicts in an environment like the preschool yard. Children explore how far they can go in order to extend their own rights and integrity. The preschool affords many opportunities for this, especially in outdoor environments. The question we may ask is how different children can handle the conflict of which they have been a co-creator, or have

been involved in. Ivarsson (2004) stresses this problematic issue and states that it is necessary that the researcher study the whole context; the focus is on the children, on how conflicts arise, and how they are solved. A comment from one of the preschool teachers was that the observer had better control of the action than she had.

From the observations it appeared that the same children were always involved in the conflicts. They often started the quarrels and they reacted like bullies and troublemakers. The only way out was to fight, to use physical violence. Some children had difficulties being included in play activities and then reacted aggressively. The children at the Swan could play for hours, and they formed strategic activities together as the eight boys did in the channel construction. Another example is when some children took a break and went away and then just came back and continued again. The children at the Gull did not develop any play sequences of that kind. In the preschool environment conflicts often arise between children at an interpersonal level, where two or more children cannot cope or have different views of organizing the play/work. Children have different capacities to stand up for their rights. One way to facilitate this action is to realize that the communicative competence of the child is essential in order for him/her to be able to solve problems. Those children who have communication difficulties may react aggressively and use physical violence to solve problems.

One important factor to deal with is how adults react to children who are at risk of being excluded. This study from two preschool yards generates a number of new questions with regard to the complexity of children's interactions and play in preschool environments. Some questions that arise include those of how adults react to these children, and how adults can help children who are not accepted in play interaction. The conditions for play and play opportunities are

also a responsibility of the teachers at preschools, and the outdoor environments must not be overlooked. Competent children need competent adults who meet them in their different realities – who meet the child in the world where he/she is just then.

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The schoolyard as a place of meaning – children's perspective

Birgitta Davidsson

INTRODUCTION

During the 1990s, the Swedish parliament and government decided a number of reforms with the purpose of changing both the organization and content of preschool and school. The preschool for children up to age 5 now has its own curriculum, Lpfö 98 (The Ministry of education and Science, 1998a) and the preschool class and the compulsory school now share a common curriculum, Lpo 98 (The Ministry of education and Science, 1998b). The aim of these reforms was to bring the two school forms closer together, both organizationally and educationally – in other words, to integrate them. Earlier studies of integration have focused on program organization and educational practices, and on the physical environment of the school building, but the schoolyard has seldom been addressed in studies of integration. A number of studies of the physical environment in preschools versus schools show that rooms are architecturally laid out, furnished, and used in very different ways (Davidsson, 2002, 2004, 2006; Davidsson, Reis, Kärrby & Hägglund, 2001; Gustafsson, 2003; Nordin Hultman, 2003). However, no studies have been done of how children in integrated programs use their common schoolyard. Nor are there any studies that ask children in integrated programs to describe what they think of their schoolyard and what they do there.

In one article, Maria Nordström (2002, p.21) addresses the importance that children's outdoor environments can have as a resource for development and

learning. She argues that outdoor areas, like the schoolyard, should serve as a context that develops children's learning and allows children to experience how the environment works and how it is used by others. In contrast to the past the schoolyard has gained a new importance now when kindergartens and after-school programs are integrated into the school. In other words, the schoolyard should be designed to allow children of all ages who attend the same school to enjoy and benefit from the schoolyard. All should feel that they belong and can take advantage of at least some part of the schoolyard.

This article reports from a study that investigates how physical and social environments influence children's learning in integrated programs (Davidsson, 2003).[3] Here the focus is on the schoolyard as a part of Children's learning environment. The article handled with different aspects of the school's outdoor environment and reports how children from 4 to 9 years of age describe how they use the playground and the meaning they give to different places within it.

The schoolyard and children's play

"The schoolyard has never been treated as a self-evident element of the school's daily educational life in the way that school buildings, classrooms, and laboratories have been," according to Susan Paget and Petter Åkerblom (2003, page 245). These authors also write that few studies have focused on schoolyards or preschool outdoor areas. One example is a dissertation by Gunilla Lundholm (1995), others include Mårtensson (2004) and Lindholm (1995). Lundholm (a.a.) has studied the design and use of schoolyards, and one of her conclusions is that schoolyards are seldom designed to match the ideas that children and youth have about what a playground should be. Adult perspectives dominate. Mårtensson's dissertation (a.a.) is about preschool outdoor areas, and she has investigated how the design of outdoor areas relates

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[3] The project is financed by the Swedish Research Council, The Committee for Educational Research.

to the ways small children use the environment. In this case, the focus is on children's opportunities for developmental play.

Rasmussen (1998) and Skantze (1986, 1995) have found that children assign both social and psychological meanings to the physical environments in which they spend time and play. According to Titman (1994), this applies to the playground as well. Titman's research shows that different materials and architecture indicate which activities and interactions are possible. A common theme in several of these studies is that they describe relationships between the physical environment and children as they play and learn. Gunilla Lindholm's study (1995) shows, for example, that more varied forms of play arise and develop in schoolyards where natural spaces have been preserved, compared with schoolyards that lack natural areas. A similar finding emerged in a Norwegian study of how children would like their schoolyards to be designed (Schmidt, 2004). Here, the younger schoolchildren preferred natural areas over manufactured play equipment – especially the girls. Natural areas, according to Schmidt, offered the children protected spaces where they could be alone. Like other researchers, Schmidt argues that natural areas offer a wide variety of places children can choose among, and that natural areas are easily to change – with nature's own assistance. This, according to the same author, is in contrast to most manufactured schoolyards. See also Brodin and Lindstrand (2006), Sandberg and Vuorinen (2006) and Ärlemalm-Hagsér (2006) as well as Gitz-Johansen, Kampman & Kirkeby (2005), who reached similar findings in studies of Danish schools.

Just like indoor environments, outdoor environments are important for children's play and learning. An example of a study of the schoolyards as a learning environment is Bodil Lindblad's study from 1993. She shows that recess is an opportunity for learning – but for informal learning – learning that

happens in a different way than classroom learning. One of her assumptions is that learning during recess involves the child's whole body, and takes place on the child's own terms. During recess, children have the power and influence to decide what happens and thereby to determine their learning. In her study, Lindblad also found that children believed that the purpose of recess was to rest their brains and instead use other parts of their bodies. According to Lindblad, the playground should be considered an open area where children can create and change spaces as their games develop, they should be able to influence the environment's design, its contents, and what they want to do in it. She points to a risk if adults begin to organize new schoolyards around instruction and thereby deprive children of the only environment they can directly influence. This argument runs in part in opposition to research which holds that the schoolyard should be used as another space for instruction (for instance, see Paget & Åkerblom, 2003).

In their book about outdoor learning, Dahlgren and Szczepanski (1997) write that there is a sharp contrast between what happens in the classroom and what happens in the schoolyard. In the classroom, the teacher is directly responsible, while it is the children who provide the content in the games and activities of recess. The teacher's role is usually restricted to one of schoolyard duty, when one does not participate in children's play but watches the whole area to ensure that nothing forbidden happens. Adults often see recess as a break from schoolwork; and one can compare the adult view of children's school activities with how the concepts of work and break are used in adult worklife.

The project

As indicated earlier, this study is part of a larger investigation using the theory of social representations as a theoretical framework (Duveen & Lloyd, 1998; Jodelet, 1995; Moscovici, 1984, 2000). The theory is grounded on the

observation that our ideas about the world around us are shaped by the experiences we have in interaction with other people. The theory addresses how human beings, individually and together, construct a collective conception of reality, and it addresses how knowledge is constructed in relation to local, social, and cultural contexts. According to the theory, we can assume that children who spend their time together in a specific environment, such as an integrated program with a specific indoor and outdoor environment, will develop common conceptions, or social knowledge about this environment, how it can be used, and what is permitted there.

This article is based on data gathered through field studies during the spring of 2005 in a school, called F-school, where preschool and school were integrated. Approximately 140 children attend the school, in five classes, one preschool class and four integrated school classes. The children in one of the four school classes participated in this study. The article is based on 34 drawings done by children between ages four and nine years. The children were asked to draw a picture of a place or a room where they like to be and which they usually pick if they can decide themselves where to be. The children sat together in a large room together with their three teachers. Some children wrote the name of the place, along with their own name and age on the drawing, while others wrote what they usually do in the place and described why they like to be there. In some cases, the children dictated for one of the teachers who wrote down what the child said. The children's drawings of the outdoor environment served as the basis for a conversation with the children about their drawings and about what they usually do during recess. On these occasions, two or three children participated in each conversation. The conversations were tape-recorded. In this presentation, the children have been given fictive names in accordance with the ethical rules of the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet) (2002). The descriptions are also based on observations of activities during recess.

As noted above, the children were asked to draw a picture of a room or a place where they like to be and which they choose when they can decide what they want to do and where they want to be. In other words, the task does not explicitly focus on indoor or outdoor environments, but leaves that choice to the children. My data include themes from both indoor and outdoor settings. I analyzed the themes in two steps. First, I categorized all the drawings according to the choice of setting, that is, what place the children drew in their motive. The results of this analysis are presented in Figure 1. Subsequently, I continued with only the drawings of motives from outdoors. This part of the analysis is presented in the text as narrative accounts of the places the children chose and drew in their theme.

Children's choices of place and motives

The 34 children drew 37 different motives, 19 from indoor environments and 18 from outdoor. Of the 19 classified as indoor environments, two drawings are of the "outer entryway" where boots, extra shoes, and play equipment are kept. Two four-year-olds drew these pictures (they were not sitting beside each other when they drew). One of the four-year-olds commented on the motive. The drawing was marked "Shoeroom, because that's where you go outside." It is interesting to speculate what the two children mean to say with their pictures. Is the entryway an important place to be in itself, or is it a link to the schoolyard and everything that one can do there? Despite this uncertainty, I classified both pictures as indoor. The table below reports the different places from which the children chose to draw their motives. This categorization includes all 34 drawings and 37 motives.

Table 1: Number of motives chosen by girls vs. boys.

Chosen places	Number of motives, Girls	Number of motives, Boys	Total
Pink room	3	0	3
Entryway	2	0	2
Library	3	2	5
Game room	3	1	4
Computer room	0	2	2
Activity room	2	1	3
Swings	1	5	6
Climbing equipment	3	1	4
Castle	1	2	3
Woods	1	3	4
The Soccer field	0	1	1
Total	**19**	**18**	**37**

The table shows that the children have drawn themes from 11 places, including 19 motives drawn by girls and 18 drawn by boys. As the table shows, there is a gender difference in the places from which the children draw their motives. The girls draw more motives from indoors and the boys draw more from outdoors. This is an interesting and thought-provoking result in itself. When it comes to the girls, places in the indoor environment were chosen primarily by the older girls (six to nine years of age). But it was primarily the younger boys, ages four, five, and six, that drew their themes from indoors. The fact that older girls focused on indoor environments echoes the results of Lindholm's (1992) study. As for outdoor places, we find no differences by age or gender, the children were between five and nine independent of gender. The data include several pictures where the children drew more than one place. Martin, age 4, is one example. He drew motives from two outdoor places, the swings and the castle, and from one indoor place, the computer room. Robin, also age five, drew the

swings and the castle – two places outdoors. (The boys did not sit at the same table when they drew and could not see one another's choice of motive.)

Children's accounts about the schoolyard

The children have drawn motives from five different places in the outdoor environment. All these places invite physical activity, and in some cases, exciting and dangerous activities – how dangerous depends on how the children perceive their encounter with the place. Differences arise related to gender and age in terms of the meaning assigned to different places, and in terms of children's descriptions of what they do there. The pictures and accounts indicate the different feelings and experiences children have when they go to the place they chose.

A feeling of freedom

If as a schoolchild, you want to experience freedom during the school day, you can go to the Woods during a break. The Woods is a place located just outside the school's fenced area but the older children (from age 7 up) are allowed to go there during recess. All the drawings of the Woods show trees, flowers, and greenery, they are full of atmosphere and a sense of freedom. In some of the pictures there is a cottage that can perhaps be seen as a symbol of children's desire to be "away from the eyes of adults" when they are in the Woods. Sara writes on her picture in large letters "I like being in the woods!" She has drawn several types of trees, a stone wall, and many different flowers. The stone wall also appears in Alexander's drawing. You can see the stone wall as a frame around the place that belongs to certain children, where the younger children are not allowed to go. Alexander has also drawn many different types of trees and he too has a shed in his picture. Marcus and Felix settle for drawing different trees in the woods – the variety of trees seems to be important for everyone. When the children talk to each other (including those who didn't draw this

theme but who participate in the discussion of the Woods), they say they like to go to the Woods and the shed during breaks.

The observations show that many of the older children quickly decide to go to the Woods when the break begins, and they remain there the whole break. It is interesting to note that there are no differences between girls and boys in what they choose to do in the Woods. Both observations and the children's accounts show that they sneak around, they talk, and they build shelters. During the conversations I have had with the children, it seems that girls and boys lend the same meaning to the Woods, it is a place for secrets, for building, or for just being. It seems that the children choose to be in the Woods instead of the rooms inside the school building where usually a teacher decides what happens.

Exciting and challenging

A place filled with challenges is, by to children's accounts, the Castle. The Castle was drawn by one girl and one boy, but several children joined in the conversation about the Castle. The two drawings have details that indicate how the Castle is built, and that show its different parts. The children's drawings show that you can climb around inside the castle and in its tower, and there are windows through which you can look out. The drawings, observations, and interviews reveal that the Castle gives the children varied challenges; they can climb ropes and run over a bridge, they can creep around in the passageways, and play hide and seek. And they can share secrets with each other.

At the interview, Johan and several girls explain what they usually do in the Castle. They say that it is fun to play in the Castle, go inside it and go to the inner rooms where you can be left alone. Johan explains that often many boys play together. The Castle is therefore an important place for social learning. He explains that it is scary to be there and play, and that they usually play that they

have to shoot a lot of monsters, and then they are in different teams. The rules of that game are that they have to kill the others, but at the same time the rules say that all who participate are immortal. The game's rules have been constructed so that, even though it is scary, it is safe to play. The rules say that everyone who plays the game has to die at the same time, which according to the children is impossible. Therefore no-one dies.

The girls are somewhat frightened of being in the Castle at the same time as the boys, but when the boys are doing something else, the Castle is a good place for telling secrets. The inner rooms that the boys use as a jail are, for the girls, a place to sit together and tell secrets.

As a place for children's games, the Castle turns out to have different significance and meaning for girls and boys, and for younger vs. older children. For the older boys, the Castle is a place where they can test their "strength" and try out something that both they and other children think seems dangerous. The girls and younger boys see the Castle as a dangerous place that is best avoided. At least if the older boys are there. Even if not all the children drew the Castle, the interviews showed that they had opinions about the Castle as a place to be.

The two places, the Woods and the Castle, are linked by the fact that children can play there without an adult always seeing what they do. There you can have secrets. For certain children, however, the Castle feels dangerous, since certain games can be experienced as dangerous to children who cannot control the actions of their peers. The Woods is more open and everyone sees everyone, except when you go into the shed. And that can be avoided.

Physical challenges and social togetherness

The Swings and Climbing Structure are two other places that seem important and are often used by the children. The fact that swinging and climbing are popular can be seen in the fact that six children drew motives from the swings, and four from the Climbing Structure. The pictures are drawn both by girls (4) and boys (6), and by children in different ages (5,6,7,8 years of age). As for the Swings, the children have typically drawn the swing set with several swings; one drawing includes a child. The child is standing in the middle of the picture, looking straight out at the viewer. What the children say about their drawings is that they "like to jump from the swings" and that they "like to swing". Observations of what happens around the swings show that the swings are almost never unused. They also show that the children like to sit together when swinging, either side by side in separate swings, or two-by-two in the same swing. They talk together or sing different songs when swinging. The children who are waiting for a turn on the swings join in the singing. It also turns out that certain children in the group choose swings every recess. Swinging is seen by the children as a social activity, you don't swing alone but together with others, and you decide together whether or not to change activities.

The drawings of the Climbing Structure show a net to climb into and several rings that the children can hang from or flip around in. There is also a ladder to climb on to reach the rings. The motives on all the drawings show the structure, and each drawing also shows there a child doing something, in other words, each theme shows an active child. The children in all the drawings are hanging in some way from the rings, and all the pictures show happy children, children who are laughing towards the viewer. You can see from the expressions on the faces in the drawings that this activity is popular and fun. The children's interviews reveal that they think it is exciting and challenging to be spending recess playing on the Climbing Structure. Fanny explains that she has just

learned to flip over in the rings, and she tells how they climb up the ladder and in the net, and then hang from the rings. Then they let go. The children also explain that they can spend the whole recess climbing up and jumping down. They do it over and over. Both in the drawings and in the children's accounts, you can see that it is exciting to be in the Climbing Structure, but the excitement can be controlled. Being there is not, according to the girls, as dangerous as being in the Castle.

What the children have drawn and reported, along with my observations, show that the swings and climbing structure give children a chance to experience togetherness and play together. They also show that the children are proud of what they can master themselves. The children can control how dangerous it is to climb in the net or on the rings, or for that matter to swing. The children decide how high to climb and they decide how many times to jump, and they decide whether to swing alone or with a friend.

Desire to belong to a group

At the F-school there is a large lawn that is suitable for many different activities, primarily games with balls. Part of the field is a football field. The football field gives very different messages to children than the other places the children have drawn in their themes. The football field is on one side of the open area. Only one child, a boy, has drawn a theme from the football field. He drew the green lawn, a football, and a child standing on the grass and looking out at the viewer. In one short end of the lawn there is a goal with a suggestion of the netting. But there is no football match. The boy's account was about the fact that he likes football and he also plays football at home. For him it is important to be together with other children and to have fun, but in a different way than at the swings or in the woods. To play football requires that many children want to join in "the match" and that everyone follows set rules. The other places in the playground

invite more or less free play in which the children can negotiate about rules and what to do. During my field studies, I saw few occasions when the children played football, which may be associated with the children's age.

Concluding remarks

The design and rules for the schoolyard influence how children play and how they use the environment, and they influence what the children learn. Based on this observation, one can wonder what the children's drawings and their accounts say about the F-school's schoolyard as a place where children can play and learn. The children's drawings and accounts point to a varied physical and social environment, in terms of the different places that exist in the schoolyard, what is available at each place, and how the children use the places. In addition to the places that the children drew in their themes, there are several sandboxes, backboards, sitting areas, and paved bicycle paths.

The analyse show that children assign both common and different meanings to the places they chose for the motive of their drawings. Certain differences are related to age, others to gender. What links the drawings and accounts is the freedom that the children experience when they are in these different places. The places give children the right to decide the rules as they play. The Castle is a good example. The children negotiate rules that ensure that although the game is exciting (and even "dangerous") it always ends well. The children's accounts about the Castle point to social understanding that is about the ability to negotiate and reach agreement, and about how to trust one another (cfr. Lindblad, 1993). We can also conclude that children choose both places with manufactured play equipment and places with natural areas. This is true of both girls and boys. Schmidt (2004) concluded from her study of Norwegian schoolyards that primarily girls preferred natural areas for their games. Schmidt argues that natural areas offer more opportunities for variation and for

imagination to develop. At the same time, we see in my results that even in the three "structured" places that children chose for their motives, the children together develop variations of the games they play.

Another conclusion that can be drawn is that the children develop different social competencies by playing in different types of environments. The different environments permit the children to develop knowledge about the rules for their games, and learn about how the equipment and natural areas can be used. In this study, no differences emerged between gender in what the children did in the places they chose. One exception was the Castle, where there were differences between the older boys, and the girls and younger boys. When it comes to swings and the climbing structure, there were no differences in how the place and equipment were used. One can further conclude that when the children play in the playground as it is described in these drawings and conversations, they have opportunities to play together with children of various ages. The drawings show that the children focus on what one can do in each place. This can be interpreted to mean that children consider their activities to be an important part of recess. The children use the schoolyard's physical environment in a concrete way in their games, and the different places they chose to draw and describe inspire different games.

The designed environment is a part of the content of children's play. Based on the design of the physical environment and their own imaginations, the children work together to create a special play world, their own social environment. The places in the schoolyard have more open social rules than do the rooms and places within the school building. The children's choice of motives can be taken as a sign that they choose places that contrast with the rooms where adults have clear and self-evident claims to power. We can also see that the physical environment with its various artefacts both challenges and provides a secure

framework for the children's games, and that the places give the children themselves the right to decide the rules of the game. The Castle is a good example of this. The children's accounts about the Castle show social understanding concerning negotiations, agreement, and how to trust one another (cfr Lindblad, 1993). We can also note that the children choose places with manufactured equipment and places with natural areas. This is true of both girls and boys. At the same time, it is evident that in all three of the "manufactured" environments, the children together develop variations of how to play there (cfr. Schmidt, 2004).

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Outdoor Play
in a Cross-cultural Perspective

Jane Brodin and Peg Lindstrand

INTRODUCTION

Most cultures regard play as an important component in child development. How children play and what kind of games they play seems to be related to culture, and depend primarily on prerequisites, access to play material and how play is valued by their social environments (Brodin & Lindstrand, 2006). Play has always symbolized life and it appears in many shapes during all phases of life. During the past century many theories have been developed to explain play, its origins and its meaning to human life. Brodin (1991, 1999) points out that when it comes to child development the concepts of play, communication, and development are closely connected. In this article a few examples of the view of play from India and Botswana will be presented.

A new paradigm for the concept childhood has emerged (James & Prout, 1988), one in which children are seen as having power and authority in their own rights, and not simply in relation to the social constructions to which adults in the immediate environment assign them. We emphasize children as active and competent co-constructors of knowledge and culture within their own identities as individuals and learners in outdoor settings.

The results are based on two studies. The first study was conducted in Mapusa in the south of India concerning children's play in outdoor environments (Brodin & Lindstrand, 2005). The second study was conducted in Gabarone in

Botswana in the south of Africa (Brodin & Molosiwa, 2000). The results confirmed that children's play and games were different but in some respects similar with children's play all over the world although the living conditions influenced their opportunities. Play reflects everyday life and the specific norms, values and culture in a certain society and for this reason, children's leisure time interests vary.

For young children learning often starts in nature with its richness, and the child learns by exploring different objects in the nature. Outdoor play and adventure activities are thus in focus for learning and for child development (Brodin & Lindstrand, 2006; Ärleman-Hagsér, 2006). From the very beginning of the 19th century play and physical competition outdoors were closely connected to daily life for children and adults in the western world. These activities were related to work and festivities during the different seasons, e.g. the harvest time. Play was as a matter of fact an integrated part of life in all social classes and children and adults played together and participated in the same games and competitions outdoors. The child was present in everyday life and also present as a fellow-worker side by side with the adult. Time for play was always there as many children worked instead of attending school. Children were regarded as "small adults" who had the same demands and expectations as adults, which is also visible when looking at paintings from that time. Art has always illuminated the existing views on human beings and the social values at a certain time in society.

Play research often highlight the positive relation between play and learning for young children and how different play experiences affect the child later in life. Today many teachers stress that learning is the main activity in preschool – not play – and this may make it even more difficult to understand that outdoor activities have a value per se. It is obvious that educators tend to valuate indoor

activities much more important than outdoor activities which can be explained by the fact that outdoor activities are strongly connected to recreation and leisure time while indoor activities are connected to learning. This is also supported by Davidsson (2006) in a study of the schoolyard and children's play. Generally, outdoor activities are not interpreted as learning and therefore the value is low, which is complicated. There is also a tendency in the western society to push children forwards instead of letting them be "just" children, with children's rights to "just play". Although opportunities to play and learn in outdoor environments have been included in the curriculum in the early childhood education, the value of outdoor education has sometimes been overlooked. From the extensive database Libris, hosted in Sweden, a search on the keywords *outdoor education* gave 111 hits (December 28th 2005) and out of these 50 have been published from 2000 and onwards. A conclusion of this is that the research field is still young although an increasing research interest can be noted during the last five years. Another aspect is that when *outdoor education and children* were used the number of hits decreased till 25, and when *preschool* was added only seven hits were given, but none of these were relevant for this study as focus was on other issues.

Children's playground

The playground can be seen as an informal educational setting for social learning, where important interaction takes place between children. From two different studies we will describe outdoor play, what it could be or what a lack of play opportunities often results in (Brodin & Lindstrand, 2006). Children's playground is an informal educational setting where many kinds of social learning take place. We mean that it is what happens when children interact that makes their playground powerful and revealing. Children learn to engage others, develop conversational skills, and cultivate and maintain friendships. It is also a place where children can exchange information, ideas, jokes, gossip, and

opinions (Zinger, 2002). What a playground is or could be depends on a plethora of social and cultural aspects. Sanford (1991) for example, reports that children and young people in cities around the world are increasingly cut off from using and enjoying their neighborhoods.

There has been a steadily increasing trend of parents keeping their children under supervision longer with succeeding generations. Some building superintendents no longer allowed children to play in the courtyards, and park employees chased older children from playgrounds intended for young children. Parental restrictions departed from the pattern, seen so far, of freedom becoming more restricted over the generations. Most of the parent-imposed restrictions have to do with traffic, the woods, or the rivers, all of which are also environmental barriers (Björklid, 2005). Girls were sometimes warned to beware of unfamiliar men. The availability and popularity of professionally supervised activities for urban children was one of the most significantly changed parts of their play patterns. An interplay of forces has worked to restrict children's unsupervised neighborhood activities. Most prominent were the number and variety of places children can or may visit and the increasingly adult-directed nature of outdoor play (Sanford, 1991).

Research on children's activities in the western world today address four key areas of children's activities: school and day-care, time for free play versus organized activities, time in extracurricular learning activities, and time spent in family activities (e.g., Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001). Children do not learn in formal settings only – children develop motor skills, initiative, self-regulation, and social skills in play. Pellegrini and Smith (1998) point out that play is a broad category that includes playing cards and board games, and doing puzzles. It also includes playing social games such as jump-rope, playing pretend games, playing with toys, and unspecified indoor and outdoor play.

Hofferth and Sandberg point out that a related category, outdoor activities, includes gardening, boating and camping, picnicking, pleasure drives, walking, and hiking. They stated that the types of activities in which children engage are likely to be shaped by their current family context, including maternal employment, education, and family structure. The results presented in Hofferth and Sandberg's study from the USA are based on 2,818 children between birth and age 12 whose parents had completed time diaries for them (or with them) for two days of a special week. The children had, on average, 22 to 24 activities on a weekday and 24 on a weekend. The results showed that instead of spending their time on unstructured activities, children today may be spending a large percent of their time in highly structured activities, such as sports programs, church-sponsored activities, and a broad category called "visiting." Time spent in personal care, eating, sleeping, and school amounted to 51 hours or 30 percent of the children's week. About half of this free time was spent on unstructured play (15 hours) or watching television (12 hours). One interesting result is that only half an hour was spent on outdoor activities. In contrast, 4 3/4 hours were spent in sports, one hour was spent in church, and three hours were spent visiting.

Aim and methods in the two studies

From two different studies, one conducted in India and one in Botswana, we will give some examples where children are portrayed as active and competent co-constructors of knowledge and culture within their own identities as individuals and learners in outdoor settings. The aim of the study in India was to study play from children's perspective and the study was conducted with interviews with seven children. Field notes were taken at place and the interviews were then transcribed. Three children between 8 and 10 years old will constitute the Indian children. The overall aim of the study in Botswana was to increase the understanding and knowledge of children's play among teachers attending a

special education training program at the university in Gabarone, and the concrete aim was to find out how special teachers in Botswana defined the concept play, what the most popular games were and whether the teachers related children's play activities to childhood only or if they also included play in adulthood. Thirty-two teachers answered the questionnaire. This study was completed with a workshop with twelve teachers (2 M, 10 FM) concerning play memories. The idea of this was to increase the understanding of play and to catch the participants memory of their own play experiences in different ages (0–7 years, 7–12 years, 12–18 years and 18– to adulthood). This workshop was based on a play memory study originally developed by Dr. Freda Kim, Korea (1990) and has also been used by Sandberg (2003) in her dissertation and in a study by Sandberg and Vuorinen (2006). The method used was to make drawings of the games or play activities from the four age groups. The material was discussed in the class and the teachers explained what they meant. The more they worked the more they seemed to remember, and the more they heard when they listened to colleagues, the more they remembered. The material was compiled and reported according to age groups (Brodin & Molosiwa, 2000). Observations of children's play were also made outside the preschools and schools and field notes were taken. The results from our studies in India and Botswana are limited and the results can only exemplify how play can be regarded in other cultures.

Theoretical approach

From our point of view there are no objective facts that are possible to study from outside that describe a truth. *The good* or *the truth* can only be experienced in practice and only by the individual in his/her own reality. The researcher's *interpretation* of this reality must therefore be executed in a close collaboration with the practice. Alvesson and Deetz (2000) claim that theoretical pre-suppositions that are of use for an individual or a group and the choice of theory

always must pose the question of "how great the values of different goals are and to whom" (ibid., p. 53).

Culture can be described and explained in many different ways. Children in these studies live their lives in different surroundings and have different experiences of their lives. A plethora of variations appears – cultural background can therefore not be described as a determined variable that creates predetermined answers. A common phenomenon is that cultural backgrounds of different varieties create metaphors and myths (Lindstrand, 2004).

In this article the personal, interpersonal, cultural and societal processes are included and the individual gains different competencies in different contexts. The individual and the group are part of a cultural context that provides certain opportunities of development. The family, the individual, and the institutions of society are formed and express themselves differently depending on the cultural context. The politics and economics of the societal level have an influence, but the results appear differently in the different environments. The surrounding world provides us with information, depending on the context we are in and we could also say that the world is constructed in the eyes of the viewer (Brodin & Lindstrand, 2003). An important aspect is the point from which the theoretical perspective starts out but the analysis of the information received is also important. What is the core of what we set out to understand and comprehend and how do we experience the objects on which we focus? Viewing results from our point of view, means that we will describe how the relationship between the individual and the surrounding world can be understood.

Results from two studies

Results reported constitute examples and are not valid for all children in India nor for all children in Botswana. The cultural norms and opportunities set the

conditions for the way in which play is stimulated by the physical and social environment. Whether adults encouraged work versus play, or if children have freedom for exploration and motivation to practice adult roles through play differ. Whether the environment provides easy access to models and materials for creative and constructive play is an essential question. We assume that children have a developmental need to make and combine things, to make marks and draw, and to handle and reshape materials. Children often continue in their self-directed, constructive activities with mud and cloth also when told to stop. But do all children get the opportunity to play? This quotation highlights some aspects of being a child in a developing country.

Could growing up in the streets, rather than just being a negative experience for children, also show new and potentially positive ways, and even provide a new paradigm, for children's lives and growing up in disintegrating societies?
(Glaser, 1997. p 163).

A concept like street children is problematic and it becomes necessary only in response to the desire to speak about children who fall outside the frame of what is not a street child and what is considered normal in that particular society. Glaser (1997) states that the need of a name seems to arise when the situation departs from current social norms. In a lot of studies the concept street children is examined. A common way is to divide the concepts between children *in* the street and children *of* the street. Children in the street may earn their living working in the street but return and belong to a family, a parent or group of adults. Children of the street live there lives in the street and do not return to or belong to a family. But it is more complicated than that a child may stay in the street for a period of time and than return to the family. Glaser points out that the fact that societies have normally found no need to distinguish between different subcategories of street children leads to the suspicion that their main

concern did not start with the children themselves. The complexity and variety of children's situation is seldom analyzed.

Children in India

India is huge country divided into many provinces. Our study took place in the Goa province, on the western part of India. When visiting India you will find many slum areas, homes consisting of simply a polythene sheet as a roof held up by two branches. Some of the people living there have come to the city with the hope of earning more money and to find jobs such as rag picking, where they collect any recyclable material from the streets and rubbish bins to sell. Some mothers and children find work in markets while the men often load and unload lorries. Many of the children can earn between 10 to 40 rupees (2–8 SEK) a day working in the markets selling plastic bags to customers buying fish and meat.

A common problem through most of the Indian children's life is the demands from parents or the group the child live with and depend on. Many times the children have to find their own food and clothes and therefore take to the streets to work or beg and have to give the money to their parents. If the child does not bring home enough money it is a problem. This is a never ending cycle, with a complete lack of education and family support. Of course we see this with western eyes.

Conduction of the study

Lindstrand and Brodin (2005) collected data in Mapusa, in Southern India. The target group was both children *in* the street and children *of* the street between three and ten years old. They had earned their own living from early age and had not attended school. Information and knowledge concerning the children's living conditions were collected trough interviews with two social workers in the town of Mapusa, and interviews with seven children. Focus in this study is children's

right to play in accordance with the Convention of the Childs Right (UN, 1989) and to find out if play is an option for these children.

Interviews with three Indian children.

The study is thus based on interviews with seven children and we have selected three of them to exemplify children's daily living. The main reason why these children were selected was that they were eight and ten years old and could speak for themselves. The younger children were much more difficult to interview. The interviews have been compiled and are reported as brief narratives.

Shanti is an eight year old boy. His father had died in AIDS and his mother is also infected. He has moved from home and lives alone in the streets. He works from early morning in the marketplace carrying peoples bags for a few rupies. He sleeps in the empty market place, sometimes in a night shelter set up by social field workers. Play has never been an option for Shanti and when we talked to him about play he did not understand why we asked questions about it.

Laxmi is a ten year old girl that we met for the first time when she was two years old. She lives with her father, mother, an elder brother and a sister who is seven years old. The family lives under a shelter of palm leafs and pieces of cloth near the beach. Already when she was two years old she went with her mother from early morning to sell as she says herself "rubbish" to the tourists. Now she is working by herself selling keyrings and painting nails on female tourists. Her sister is in school and her brother is working as a lorry louder. Her father is not working and it is difficult for Laxmi to go home in the evenings because "he is drunk all the time" she says. We gave her a present, colouring book and pencils, paper and some small dolls. She got embarrassed and told us that she would give that to her sister. We said "it is for you". She went away and we saw that she

was red in her face. We kept contact with Laxmi for four days and we could not see that she had any contact with other children. Focus was on selling her things to the tourists and she was very clever charming the tourists, this seemed to be her life.

Maxi is a ten year old boy selling handbags to tourists. He is a good salesman and despite his low age he knows how to make customers interested in his objects. He works every day from early morning till late evening. The heat is often heavy and his working conditions not very good. When we asked him why he was not attending school he answered "my brother goes to school". Straight and simple. He then told us that they were five siblings and that his brother who was the youngest boy in the family went to school. He did not comment why his brother had been chosen to attend school, and no comments on issues about that he would rather go to school. Only one child in the family could go to school and Maxi had to support the family. Every family needs to earn and save money for the winter season. It seems to be a matter of self and accepted that one child per family could learn to read and write. Maxi did not explain what he thought about it but he seemed to be quite satisfied with this solution. He seemed to be proud of being a salesman. He smiled and said he was happy with his life. We never saw him play (from our western viewpoint) but being a little salesman might be a play for him. A pretend play in real life– with many laughs and jokes.

Reflections

In the preschool/school system in India most children don't have an opportunity to play and do not have access to toys. The children in our study contributed to supporting daily living – to survival of the family. It is reasonable to believe that the minds of these children were actively constructing stories or event scenarios for themselves. Thus either role play, fantasy play or play with toys was taking place implicitly – but pretend play seemed to be there and work. Only work

allowed children to build their repertoires of skills and schemes and to exercise and extend their knowledge and control over their environments. Social and economic circumstances and opportunities determined the degree to which play was stimulated by the physical and social environments.

Children in Botswana

Botswana is a small country in Southern Africa. The authorities report that there is a compulsory school attendance which means that all children are expected go to school but in reality many children do not attend school. The main reason for this is that children are often needed at home to take care of younger siblings when the parents are working. A common observation when visiting Botswana is the image of people walking along the roads, carrying bags, wood and children. Toddlers are often seen carrying their infant sisters or brothers on their back. The women in Botswana have a great responsibility for home and children but also to contribute to the provision of work and food for the family.

Brodin and Molosiva (2000) conducted a minor study based on data collected in Gaborone, Botswana. The target group was teachers in special education training at the University of Botswana. Thirty-two teachers answered a brief *questionnaire* about play, focusing on the meaning of play in childhood and the most popular games among children in Botswana. Twelve special teachers also participated in a workshop on play memories. The concrete aims were to find out how teachers in Botswana defined the concept of play, and what their favorites were among the games they played in childhood.

The results showed that the teachers regarded play as important and that many games were universal. Most cultures regard play as an important component in child development. How children play and what kind of games they play seem to be related to culture, and depend primarily on prerequisites, access to play

material and how play is valued by their social environment. When looking at the results from Brodin and Molosiva's (2000) study it is evident that many of the replies are universal and could have originated from teachers anywhere in the world. The results showed that the concept of play primarily meant joy, pleasure, motor activities, and participation in different games and sport activities. The teachers said that they were aware of the importance of play in child development and it was evident that all games mentioned (hide and seek, ready, hopping and skipping, role play etc.) trained and stimulated physical, emotional, cognitive and social abilities. Small balls and ropes were used; easy to understand as this kind of play material is cheap and can easily be found everywhere. "Hide and seek" and "Ready" were the most popular games. Soccer was on the list but the shortage of men in the study was probably reflected in the answers.

The results from the *workshop on play memories* confirmed that the games the teachers remembered that they used to play in childhood were the same as children play all over the world. It is supposed that playing reflects daily living; the spare time interests were similar for all young children and adolescents, and the only differences were that looking at video or TV was not mentioned at all (op. cit.). During the first period, up to seven years, children imitated adults in daily activities through role play. From 7–12 they continued to imitate adults through role plan e.g., family, home, cooking, but also construction games using clay and pieces of cloths. The rule games such as hide and seek also started at this period. At the end of the period focus was on school, wedding, hospital, police etc. During 12–18 the children seemed to be more interested in sport activities, to play cards, and attend parties with friends.

Reflections

We also made observations of children outside the preschools and schools. and noted that they did not have any toys but were often together with adults, talking and singing. The climate in Africa is dry and water is scarce. Most children are fond of playing with sand and clay and this was true also in Botswana. We saw children who played and built with sand, and how they just sat down and used their urine instead of water in order to be able to build in the sand. Young girls were often engaged in cleaning the houses but sometimes they played with dolls. Rossie's studies (e.g., Rossie, 2005) in northern African countries have shown that the dolls often consisted of a piece of wood wrapped in a piece of cloth, sometimes they only had a piece of cloth. The dolls had no names and when the game was over, they through the dolls away as they had lost their attraction. Our interpretation of this is that the girls had no personal or emotional relation to the doll. We also noticed children helping their parents to collect wood, to brush the red soil away from the yard outside the African huts/houses. But the children we met, did not play as children in our cultures. At some occasions we saw young persons playing soccer. No play tools or toys were available but they created things to play with from rubbish which was found everywhere around them e.g. a broken wheel or empty water bottles.

DISCUSSION

For many children in developing countries the streets function as agents of socialization and provide a setting that conducive to child development. This affects the personality, character, and ability of a child. The importance of street play lies in the central role that play occupies in the physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development of a child. One suggestion could be that third world countries today should elevate the streets in the residential neighborhood as a social institution for children like that of a playground in the western society.

The design of a street could help children to identify concepts, shape, size, number, relationship between pairs, and so forth.

We need new ways to study and understand playground or outdoor life. We believe that it is necessary to focus on human activities, and this is another way to stress this field. We therefore suggest an activity theory approach to be used. Activity theory can be seen as an utterance or philosophy with a social constructivist theory as its base but it can also be seen as an philosophy that can be used when studying different forms of human activities. Apparent resemblances can be found between activity theory and a socio-cultural perspective. An activity theoretical effort spans a wide field and can be seen as border crossing tool. The thought is that all human activity is embedded in a social context consisting of people and objects. Wertsch (1998) highlights the fact that activity theory is a theory that mediates action with focus on the relation between cultural tools and the individual.

Social and cultural diversity is an important aspect to highlight. What is missing in research concerning outdoor play is that the subject for the activity is only the individual. We have to include the individual, the group, or those who are engaged in the activity. All activities are object-related and objects can, for example, be artefacts like play tools, signs, systems, theories or whatever helps to mediate the activity. Limited meaningful activities are executed individually. Knowledge in an activity system is distributed among the members of the group and in this context among the playing children (Brodin & Lindstrand, 2003). Understanding is created in a communicative context where relations and the social reality are woven together. Evidently our social world and our communication with the world around us also includes a form of communication with the material world. Social relations are guided into material contexts and the material influences the social reality. The context of this knowledge is given

a new dimension (Lindstrand 2002). Play can be seen as a tool for communication that can construct bridges. From a social constructivist perspective, we can ascertain that we perceive the present time and the world in different ways. What we want to pass on to children and young people is based on the understanding of what significant information is. There is always a view of mankind and a view of society somewhere in the background. Of course values play a decisive role for our view of knowledge, and of what knowledge is important. There is no body of knowledge nor is there any educational system that cannot be questioned. The studies have shown that we have to deal with an abundance of variations of viewpoints in today's society, and that various viewpoints can be understood on the basis of different experiences and perspectives.

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FORSKNINGSRAPPORTER I SERIEN TEKNIK, KOMMUNIKATION, HANDIKAPP, ISSN 1102-7967, ISRN LHS-SPEC-H--No--SE

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