

You're Not the Boss of Me: An Observational Study of Peer-to-Peer Negotiations on the Playground

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Authors: Ben Domingue, Rachel Prosser, Molly Shea, Kate Starbird, and Chao Wang

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“Disputes and conflict are an inevitable part of life. While some believe that learning to deal with these daily challenges is something that can wait until adulthood, it is actually on the playground, as pre-schoolers, where dispute resolution skills are first developed” (Abrams, 2003, p. ?) [great quote to use!]

RESEARCH PROBLEM

[No need to repeat quote.] At three different elementary schools in the Denver Public School District, we observed situations where children were negotiating rules and

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handling disputes using a range of techniques. This study aims to explore some of the ways in which elementary school children negotiate rules on these three playgrounds. By studying ways in which students interact in groups over rules? on the playground, we hope to document some of the diversity of student experiences of conflict/dispute and resolution? on the playground. Our analysis may provide a lens through which other researchers and, more importantly, child supervisors can view playground disputes.

Some playground researchers would like to trace a rise in violence in schools to a lack of ability to adequately negotiate disputes on the playground and suggest that one way to reduce incidents of violence is to counsel students on how to mediate disputes (Johnson, 1994). Many research studies are exploring ways to mediate unstructured play to help children develop socially. While interventions to mediate violence [your topic seems to be school violence, but here you switch to bullying—why? If your topic is bullying, then start with it rather than violence] may be instructive, they may further limit the amount of unstructured play time for children because...?. In addition to creating interventions for preventing violence, 40% of schools in the United States are "reducing, deleting, or considering deleting recess (according to American Association for the Child's Right to Play)" (Fielden, 2002, p.1), perhaps as a means of reducing the potential for school violence?. Is an increase in instructional education a good solution to decrease violence in schools? Is the elimination of unstructured play a good solution to decrease violence? What are the implications of or alternatives to these approaches?

Abrams (2003) contends that unstructured playground time (as opposed to mediation instruction) is the key component for developing skills to deal with disputes. In addition to developing skills to handle disputes, Clements notes that "children [in unstructured play?] will demonstrate increased levels of independence, resourcefulness and competence as a result of creative play" (MacPherson, 2002, p. ?; you need a page number if you quote) Given the conflicting opinions about the role of unstructured play on the playground this research will explore peer negotiations to better inform the understandings of the nature of unstructured play on playgrounds at three public elementary schools in Denver, Colorado. Observational research on unstructured play is a productive contribution to the body of literature (Clements & Fiorentino, 2004) because...?

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[This section of your paper is not very well written. It seems that your basic point (research problem) is that there are 2 views of playground conflicts—one that focuses on the potential for children who experience playground conflicts to learn from them; one that focuses on the dangers to children of playground conflicts. Your study is an attempt to further investigate this issue by closely examining how children handle conflicts on the playground. What you have written above does not convey this problem very clearly.]

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

To investigate the ways in which children on an elementary school playground negotiate the rules and boundaries of their group activities [or is it their negotiation of rules in conflict situations? All of the Research Problem seems to be about conflicts specifically and not activities in general, so why move to the more general level of activities here? Your research proposal is supposed to narrow (not broaden) as you go along!]. The research will discuss negotiations that arise within peer-to-peer situated activities (see the definition of situated activities in the conceptual framework). In particular, we are interested in how the varieties of negotiations seen for students of differ between genders.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Rules and rule systems are key features of the elementary school playgrounds. [Confusion remains about whether you will focus on rules as manifested in conflict/dispute situations or on rules in general as in games, etc. What you say above points toward the first topic, but now you seem to have switched to the second. Which is it?] Game participants, elementary school children in our research, have been shown to willingly subject themselves to these rule structures in order to keep playground games running smoothly (Chaille & Silvern, 1996). Furthermore, children are concerned with rules as they enter school and pay close attention to the rules that will guide their actions in the classroom (Dockett & Perry, 1999). On the playground, rules may be constructed differently, but they are nonetheless, used to guide games and play. Without rules, the games could not progress, and might not exist at all. Understanding the intricacies of

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these rule structures is a much more complex task than proving their existence. Some researchers (Smetana, 1981) have looked at the ways in which children view different kinds of rules; those with a moral basis versus those with a conventional basis. In particular, this research studied how children thought punishments should vary depending on the nature of the transgression. Although our research will not try to categorize types of rules in this way, it is useful to recognize that children have a complex relationship with the rules on the playground. This complex relationship between children and their understanding of the rules affects playground negotiations. Adding to the complexity of children's relationships with the rules, as well as the rules themselves, is the notion that neither the rules nor the children's relationship with the rules are static. Rule systems on the playground are constantly being constructed and reconstructed, as children experiment with new rules and test existing ones (Hurwitz, 2002).

In order to investigate negotiations of rules on a playground, a clear understanding of the existing rule systems and the participants is quite helpful. Although the origin and development of the rule systems cannot be fully fleshed out, nor can their subtle specifics be fully described, in a limited number of field observations, one way to begin to explore rule systems is as situated activities (Goffman, 1961). [Would be helpful to provide Goffman's definition of situated activities here.] For our purpose, the "rules" of each game are the systems [of what? Are you using "situated activities" synonymously with "systems"? Why introduce Goffman here? What purpose does Goffman's concept serve in your study? Perhaps this mention of Goffman would be better placed in the next paragraph. What constitutes a "rule" in your framework?] that we observe as they develop on the playground, within the time frame of our own observations. Each system is located inside the particular playground, game area, and interpersonal space of the specific participants.

Previous research in the realms of sociology, education, and cognition has used the concept of situated activity, which states that social interactions are situated in a specific context, as a frame for investigating behavior (Brown & Collins, 1989). Situated action models focus on "the emergent, contingent nature of human activity, the way activity grows directly out of the particularities of a given situation" (Nardi, 1995, p.36). The games of children can be effectively viewed as evolving in this way, inside the context of school, game, and episode. Each action, or play (Goffman, 1961), builds on

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top of the last action. This sequence of events creates a shared conception of the game. The terms of play, which we call the rules, are created through this process. [Preceding sentence is out of place here; may fit better in the next paragraph where your focus is on the rules.] Goffman created this rubric, categorizing jointly sustained physical tasks as situated activity systems, while working on the social structures inherent in games. More recently, Evaldsson (2004) used this framework of situated activity in her investigation of children's foursquare games in Sweden. She chose to study not merely what games are being played and by whom, but how individuals actively contribute to the organization of games through every day game participation. She describes how children's identities emerge during these day to day interactions.

Our research takes a similar approach. We are primarily interested in the negotiations that take place during the sustained group games of children and how they define and redefine the rule structures on the playground. For every game, there is a set of rules. Some are constructed as fixed. The others are constantly in motion, open to both challenge and negotiation. Consistent reconstructions of the rule as well as the rejection of a challenge to a rule act to reinforce the existing rule system, while an accepted challenge allows for a redefinition of the system. Our observations show many of these rules [not clear why you need the concepts of "rules" and "rule systems;" what is the difference between them?] are in constant flux, continuously constructed and reconstructed by the activities unfolding, play by play, on the grass fields and black tops.

Rules in the classroom have clearly defined parameters where physical interactions between children are most often discouraged. The playground is a less structured setting where physical negotiations (among other types of negotiations) are observed. Some research has been conducted suggesting that children jockey for power differently based on the degree to which the environment is controlled. Jordan, Cowan, and Roberts suggest that, "rules are also invoked strategically by children to exercise power over others or preserve their own autonomy in institutional settings where physical violence is forbidden" (1995, p.339). The playground is a unique space where physical play and physical negotiation are not strictly forbidden. Children can flirt with different styles of negotiating with each other during situated play. The types of games, rules, and negotiation styles present on the playground are varied.. However, in each situation our group found children attempting to negotiate rules within situated play.

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Each playground has its own variety of games, and within these games are individuals and groups of different races and genders that may act to create a myriad of different rule and negotiation structures. Although inter-gendered and inter-racial patterns may well exist, our observations illuminate the shortcomings of behavioral stereotypes, specifically in the realm of gender. Early research on games often focused on perceived differences between boys and girls in both competition styles (Lever, 1978) and dispute styles (Gilligan, 1982). One aspect of these style differences was thought to be aggression. Research has long contended that males are more aggressive than females (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1980; Kimura, 1992). Other findings indicate that males are more likely to express physical aggression while girls are more likely to express verbal aggression (Archer et al, 1998). These gender differences in aggression correspond to theorized differences in play, with girls' games being more verbal in nature and boys' games being more physical (Pellegrini, Kato, Blatchford, & Baines, 2002). In our work, we consider whether these differences extend to negotiation styles as well. Our findings will show that clear gender classifications [distinctions?] are hard to determine. For visualization purposes, we use a verbal/physical model to illustrate negotiation style differences. However, instead of black and white [either/or?] categorization, we conceive of each playground negotiation as occurring somewhere along a spectrum of behaviors. This spectrum has aggressive or physical acts at one end and verbal or mechanized [what do you mean by "mechanized" in this context?] acts at the other end.

Previous researchers have examined differences in the ways in which children play based on gender. Lever (1978), for example, claims that girls tended to play cooperatively and that disputes were unlikely to occur in predominantly female games. She went as far as to contend that, "girls have far less experience with interpersonal conflict. The style of their competition is indirect, rather than face to face, individual rather than team affiliated. Leadership roles are either missing or randomly filled" (p. 481). Using recent research (e.g. Goodwin 2001; Evaldsson 2003, 2004) on playgrounds and games as a template for our work, we will illustrate some shortcomings with Lever's theory based on our field work. In her research on a variety of different play groups, Goodwin suggests that the verbal ways in which children resolve disputes may have more to do with their abilities in certain contexts than with their gender (2001). Aligned with

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that assertion, our observations find girls, as well as boys, involved in a large range of interpersonal conflicts, competitive disputes, and leadership roles.

Playground negotiations manifest themselves in a variety of different forms, from audible “out” calls in four-square to physical confrontations. Clearly, the complete range of rule types is impossible to classify using our limited observations. We have found the most visible, and therefore observable, rule categories to be turn mechanisms, “out” calls, movement violations, and restrictions on physical aggression. The negotiations we describe involve violations or challenges in one of these four rule categories. Each event is seen to occur along a verbal-physical spectrum, and to exist within a malleable rule system specific to the series of unfolding events.

[This conceptual framework has pretty clearly been a struggle for you. After reading it, I *should* have a clear idea of what Research Questions you will ask and why (based on the previous literature), but unfortunately I do not. As written, the conceptual framework seems to be a jumble of loosely connected points that do not (yet) build to a coherent approach to a specific research problem.]

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Negotiations are ongoing during children's play on the playground, and these negotiations are about many things: the rules, changing the rules, winning and losing, and whose turn it is. In what ways are students negotiating the rules and boundaries of sustained group activities on the playground? What forms do these negotiations take? Do they tend to be physical, verbal, mechanical, or some combination of the three? Do members of the different genders seem to have preferences for negotiation styles? [On a superficial level, your questions are good ones, but it's not at all clear how these questions were derived from your review of the literature in your conceptual framework, i.e., your conceptual framework does not provide a rationale (support) for these particular questions, and it should.]

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Observational data for this research was collected at three elementary schools in the Denver Public School District. The three schools are all situated on the west side of Denver. Some basic demographic facts about these schools are listed below. These

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schools were designated as a triad due to when they had new playgrounds built by the Learning Landscape (LL) Project. Adams had an older LL playground, Washington one of the more recently built playgrounds, and Jefferson had not yet had their new playground built.

	Students	White Students	Non-White Students	Free & Reduced Lunch Eligibility
Adams	325	14	307	76.83%
Jefferson	427	18	413	89.18%
Washington	358	55	303	83.38%

Source: 2006 CDE Statistics

The three schools had, as can be seen above, similar proportions of minority students. Differences between the schools are discussed below.

Adams has a new Learning Landscapes playground that is about 5 years old, but is very well maintained. This school's playground was considerably smaller than Washington but about equal in size to Jefferson. The physical education teacher at the school was very involved in the activities on the playground, and was seen telling the kids which group activity would be played on the playing field area. He often spent the entire lunch recess surveying the playground and helping children when necessary. Another distinctive feature of this playground was the presence of fifth grade children, easily recognized in their bright orange shirts which labeled them as "Aces," who acted as facilitators for the activities of the younger students. These fifth graders would help set up games as well as keep them going by initiating play, enforcing rules and keeping the general progress of the game going forward.

Jefferson is the smallest playground without a grassy play area, though the students did seem to enjoy a very lively tether ball tradition. This is the only playground in the study that is not a Learning Landscapes playground. A teacher at this school was active on the playground [how?], but did not take an active role in setting up and/or dictating the games that were played on the playground.

Washington had a much bigger playground than the other two schools. The students took advantage of the large grass field with several games of football. Teachers

Reconstructions by Chao Wang or teacher's aides were present during recess, and commonly played with the children, while others supervised without participating in activities. The football games we observed on the large grass field often involved full contact tackling. This activity seemed to be acceptable behavior on the playground, because adults frequently monitored the area without objecting to the contact.

The majority of the observations were done during lunch recess, though some also occurred during the recess time before the start of school. We used three styles of observations: open-ended, guided, and structured. The open-ended observations took place during initial visits, and were intended to provide us with some initial data about the school as well as to help us develop an overall feel for what activities were happening at the various playgrounds. Once this was accomplished, guided observations came next in order to focus on a specific set of activities. [What specific activities did your guided observations focus on?] The final observations conducted were structured observations. These were intended to provide data about the frequency of various events on the playground. The amount of observations done using the different formats at the various schools is shown below.

	Open Ended	Guided	Structure
Adams	5	4	4
Washington	5	5	4
Jefferson	2	4	4

Observations lasted from 30 minutes to an hour with the majority taking approximately 45-50 minutes. Since our focus was on games involving several students, we tended to spend the bulk of the observation time around the basketball courts (frequently to observe groups of students jumping rope), tether ball & 4-square areas, and grass fields. At any given time there were from 15 - 50 kids on the playground in the various areas. In the beginning, observations were conducted at a variety of pre-determined spots on the playground to get a feel for the types of activity happening on that particular playground. As our research interests became more focused, we concentrated on the various games occurring on the playground. Condensed field notes were taken on site in a variety of forms. Some researchers took written notes. Others

Reconstructions by Chao Wang utilized voice recorders, which were later transcribed. A few also used laptops. These condensed notes were expanded at a later time, though we took pains to minimize the amount of time which went by between the observation and the expansion of the condensed notes. After this initial write-up process, researchers worked through a validation process individually. [What was involved in doing this “individual validation”?] Finally, an individual's notes were distributed to the group so that a peer check could be done. [What was the purpose of the peer check?]

The other primary form of data collection for this project was a set of interviews. Each researcher conducted one interview. Interviews were conducted with 2 teachers, 2 parents of elementary aged children, and one elementary aged child who does not attend any of the 3 schools observed. These interviews were all recorded and then transcribed. These interviews were all done in an attempt to understand what parents, children, and teachers thought about playgrounds. We asked questions about what types of games kids played, who they played with, and what equipment they used.

As an additional measure to monitor our thinking on this project, all researchers engaged in private journaling at least twice a week. These journals were meant to further our thinking about this project and qualitative research as a whole. Various steps of the research were recorded and the group received periodic feedback from a more experienced qualitative researcher that helped to guide the ongoing investigation.

Our observations are limited by several factors. First, data collection was done during a brief period of time. Our time constraint limited the number of observations that we were able to carry out; extra observations may have helped us to identify new patterns in children's behavior. The time limitation also made the group work a challenge. The brief time we spent together as a group may have affected the depth and quality of our study.

Second, there were numerous language barriers during our observations. The large number of students speaking Spanish on the playground was a challenge as only one of our researchers speaks fluent Spanish. Furthermore, one of our researchers had recently arrived from China and had difficulty understanding conversations in English on the playground. The students also used phrases and words on the playground which were unfamiliar to all of the researchers. This made it difficult for us to understand what was happening during the recess periods we observed.

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Third, we were unfamiliar with many of the games that we observed on the playground. This limitation became clear during one of the interviews in which a first grade child discussed an imaginative game in which she participated during recess. The researcher recognized that had she been observing this game, it would be nearly impossible to understand all of the rules and interactions because they involved both prior knowledge of the game and role playing during the game. A limitation like this may distort the observers' understanding of the children's interactions. The extent to which these types of errors were present during our observations remains unknown.

Fourth, though all of the individual observers had some observational experience, this was the first time that we had used the formal observation techniques described above. Finally, except for one interview each, we only used observational data for this research, which limited our ability to get close to the children. For example, we do not know their personalities, character traits, family backgrounds, and other factors relating to their behaviors and interactions on the playground. [good discussion of limitations]

METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

The data from the observations was reconstructed using a process inspired primarily by Carspecken (1996). There were three basic steps to this method of reconstruction. First, data was coded in an attempt to understand the broad categories of activities, which had been witnessed. Second, individual researchers constructed meaning fields for specific incidents in the observational data. These meaning fields were possible reasons or meanings for the behaviors displayed by individuals or groups. Third, pragmatic horizons were constructed to correspond with the meaning fields. These horizons consisted of the underlying reasons for the meanings explored above. It should be noted that sometimes researchers used first and second steps in different orders. Also, individual researchers reconstructed their own data. [Ok, but because many (other) readers could be unfamiliar with reconstructive analysis, it would be helpful here to give more detail about how each step was carried out and to illustrate the process by reference to your reconstructed notes in the appendix.]

There are some potential limitations to the data collected and interpreted by our research team. One problem involves the group nature of our work. Each individual member of the research team spent a fairly limited amount of time at each site. While the

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large size of our team does give us the benefit of lots of data from each site, it is not always clear where this data overlaps. For example, it is not clear if a single student is showing up repeatedly across our data. Quite possibly this one student would appear as five different students in the five different observations. This limitation also makes it very hard to generalize any potential findings. [Note that re: validity, you don't really need to know whether it was the same student every time or not; what's more important is whether patterns are repeated across observations and researchers.] The other major limitation to our data is that our limited amount of time spent on the three playgrounds makes some of the interpretations of our data quite speculative. While our best efforts were made to understand what was happening, it was not always apparent why the children behaved as they did.

[What about the validity of your analyses and the claims you make?]

RESULTS

From the collective set of observations and field notes, the group found several different types of negotiations over rules? to be present among children on the playground. After reviewing our data, we divided the observed negotiations into three major categories. These categories include physical, non-physical, and a combination of both behaviors. The categories proposed in the research were often fluid and the children we observed often moved from one form of negotiation to another and back again. It may be more accurate to visualize the negotiation categories as a spectrum of behaviors rather than distinct categories. This spectrum can be visualized in the following manner. Physical acts fall on the left side of the spectrum and can be defined as: the uses of bodily force to persuade, retaliate, guide, challenge, or manipulate play. This type of negotiation also includes the physical control of an object of play, such as a ball or jump rope. The right side of the spectrum is where the non-physical negotiations lie. These acts shape children's play using verbal or gesture based communication. In the center of the spectrum, we see acts that include a combination of physical and non-physical. In order to be considered this type of act the child must attempt to use both forms of persuasion to negotiate. It should be noted that if the child simply screams in anger or frustration and then conducts a form of physical negotiation this would not qualify as a combination because the verbal act was not used in the process of negotiation.

Physical Negotiations

Beginning at the left end of the spectrum, some children choose to negotiate through physical actions. While these acts vary in the level of physical aggression, they commonly share an aspect of physical negotiation, with limited use of the verbal interaction. At the extreme end are physically violent acts. We noted examples of physical negotiation in the form of retaliation or the challenging of an event that had just occurred. In this first example we see a group of boys playing football at Washington.

One kid hits his head when he is tackled. He doesn't like it and goes to tackle the original tackler (still holding the ball).

This example shows a boy using a physical act to negotiate [express?] his challenge or retaliation to being tackled. [Why are you calling this a “negotiation”? I can see it as a challenge or a form of retaliation but not a negotiation. What is being negotiated?] He uses physical force to challenge the play and does not utter a word throughout the entire event. In this observation, the boy seems to be upset by the aggressive nature of the tackle. Whether or not the group had a tacit or stated agreement about the acceptable level of aggression during the game [or of acceptable tackles], the boy holding the ball communicates a disapproval of the act by using physical force to push the other boy while still in possession of the football. [This doesn't seem to be evidenced in the excerpt but should be, especially since you are calling the behavior a negotiation.] This example accounts for one type of negotiation present on the playground. Although this interaction denotes two boys interacting in the physical negotiation, our research found other examples of females participating in physical negotiation.

Previous researchers observed that males rather than females primarily use physical negotiations in order to negotiate play (Lever, 1978). In our observations, we found that female participants on the playgrounds also used this form of negotiation. The next example occurred at Adams Elementary on the grassy play field area. There was a group of students gathering to start a football game.

A female player is mainly standing next to a boy in a yellow jacket, occasionally saying something to him, but not doing anything else. A boy who has also gathered to start play throws a ball at the girl and she pushes him back. The boy

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doesn't respond with more than a laugh, and the girl walks back toward the boy in the yellow jacket.

In this example the game has not yet started. When the boy throws the ball at the girl she chooses to retaliate through physical force in the absence of any verbal communication. In both cases the children used physical force to challenge the other student. The initial use of force to throw the ball at the girl could have been communicating any number of meanings. The boy could have been vying for attention from the girl and did not want to directly state his desire for attention. Or he could have been trying to prod the female to begin playing rather than chatting with the boy in the yellow jacket. It is also possible that the boy did not want the girl to be playing with them and therefore threw the ball in order to deter her from remaining near the field of play. The rationale for children's use of physical negotiation is not clear, however, the use of physical negotiation [challenge?] by both males and females was present during structured play on the playground.

Non-physical negotiations

The next type of negotiations appears on the right side of the spectrum and looks at verbal negotiations. These types of negotiations are happening almost exclusively through language. The following example illustrates a verbal challenge that takes place during a game of tether ball. It takes place at Jefferson and is an example of a verbal challenge that fails.

The black female is still dominating on the tether ball court. She has not lost. A white male (larger than she is) is competing against her and is winning. The rope is wrapped around a few times in his direction.

The white male is winning the game – the rope is wrapped around in his direction, and the girls are cheering. As the black female makes a motion to stop the ball from being wrapped around completely, she crosses the white hemispheric line on the court. One of the watching players points at her and yells. She moves backwards, back into her own space, but does not quit playing.

In this example we see that a child observing the game yells out to reinforce a rule about staying in one's territory on the tether ball court. The dominant female who has been winning games throughout the recess period hears this and moves back to her respective zone. However, the verbal challenge fails in the aspect that play continues without penalization. It is possible to analyze this event using Goodman's [Goodwin's?] theory

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that skilled players are able to overcome challenges made by other players. In this example it appears that skill can, in fact, trump a verbal challenge.

Similar to the physical category, we see here that this type of negotiation/challenge is used by both genders. In female dominated groups and male dominated groups non-physical negotiation was observed. Below we see an example from Washington Elementary in a group of male football players with one female present.

Upon looking back at the first football game we see that the girl has just scored a touchdown. After she scores the touchdown the tall boy comes up to her and says something. Both boy and girl turn and walk the other way; as they walk away another boy approaches them and says something to the girl. She has no reaction. The tall boy still has the ball as all the boys approach the girl, yelling something at her.

Observer comment: It looks like all the boys are yelling that she did not actually score a touchdown. Maybe she was close but did not actually cross the touchdown line to officially score?

All the boys begin to argue. After arguing they bring the ball back as one boy takes the ball to replay.

Here we see that the group did not use any type of physical act to negotiate the challenge. Their verbal challenge was successful and the play was replayed.

The last type of non-physical negotiation involves formal mechanisms. Often times, these types of negotiations occurred before play began and were used to decide who would be in control at the start of a game. The most common non-physical negotiation came in the form of rock-paper-scissors. Often the children did not verbally utter a word, but rather they used only hand motions to represent a particular stance (rock, paper, or scissors) in order to complete the mechanism and decide who gained control. This was the preferred method of starting games of tether ball at Jefferson Elementary.

Combination negotiations

The final category includes a combination of both acts covered in the previous sections. We give an example from Adams that occurs during a kickball game. It is a game of both female and males, with one female taking a dominant role. We enter the game after the female has just pitched the ball to home plate.

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A boy kicks the ball and he runs over to a cone (acting as first base). The girl runs after the ball, as do 3 other boys. The girl yells for the ball, "Hey! Hey!" asking to be thrown the ball, positioning her by second base. As the girl sees that the runner is nearing second base she kicks the cone further away from the runner, so that he has further to run to get to the base. At the same time a boy throws the ball at the cone, hitting the boy. The girl yells, "You're out! You're out!" The runner yells back and pushes the girl. (He is a little bit bigger than her but not by much). The girl immediately pushes back, and screams, "You're out!" The boy yells back something and she yells, "No! You're out! You have to go!" As the boy leaves the field he says, "No! I'm not out!" The girl follows him and pushes him, he pushes back, and the girl pushes him one last time. The boy throws his hands up in the air, as if to say, "Let's go! Come on!"

Observer Comment: He is almost acting like he wants to fight her.

The girl also puts her hands up in the air and says something. Meanwhile 3 boys have gathered around the girl, all on "her side" and argue with her. After arguing for a minute they return to play.

The event begins with verbal reinforcement [challenge?] as the girl is yelling, "You're out! You're out!" Then the event moves to the physical as the boy challenges by pushing the girl. Not backing down, the girl reinforces the rule both physically and verbally. As the play moves off the field it continues to be both physical and verbal, ending with verbal reinforcement that the original boy was in fact "out." We can see that the girl prevailed in her reinforcement of the rules by using both physical and verbal negotiations.

The next example occurs at Adams elementary school and occurs during a game of jump rope:

Sue yells out the rules [for taking turns in jump rope] from the line. Sue tries to skip in line and go next under the jump rope. Eva pushes Sue out of the way. She and Sue face each other. No one is jumping under the rope but other kids are starting to make their way to the center of the rope. Eva yells at Sue, "You're not the boss of me." Sue stands near and says something that I cannot hear. Eva again yells, "You're not the boss of me!" Sue does not say anything, but Eva yells one more time, "You're not the boss of me."

During this interaction, another little boy came over to the far end of the rope that is tied to the fence. He unties the rope and starts to pull on the rope. One of the girls yells at him, "We're trying to play jump rope". Now the game turns into a tug of war with one boy pulling on each side of the rope, a few girls join in on the side of the boy that was spinning the rope. This continues until an adult intervenes, after which Sue is nowhere to be found, and Eva, who was yelling at Sue a few minutes earlier, is now spinning the rope.

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In this event, we can see that Sue gives reinforcement, and then Eva challenges her through physical and then non-physical negotiations. Simultaneously we see that another female verbally reinforces the structure of the game as it begins to turn into a physical negotiation during the game of tug o' war. The result of this exchange ends with a change of leadership: Sue leaves the jump rope game and Eva gives directives to the group (much like Sue had previously been doing).

Field notes also confirm that negotiations using a combination of physical and non-physical acts are present in groups of female and male groups. Again, we find ourselves in disagreement with Lever (1978), who claims that females rarely use physical negotiations.

[It does not seem that you have taken much advantage of the reconstructive analysis. Your findings are based mainly on a simple 3-part coding scheme (mainly physical, mainly verbal, both) which is ok as a place to start, but I think you could have provided much richer patterns and interpretations if you had relied more on your reconstructive analyses of possible meanings.]

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we have viewed student negotiations as lying along a spectrum of possible behaviors, from the physical to the verbal. One strength of this perspective is that it allowed us to document a wide variety of negotiation types. [Is 3 a “wide variety”?] One weakness with our research is that we do not have much information about the frequency with which children use the different negotiation styles. Later research could certainly expand upon this, especially using more structured observations. Again, it would be hard to say with the research presented here whether there is a gender preference for the different styles. While we would say that both genders seem to use all styles, our research at the moment would not allow us to go farther than that. Our research provides a vantage point on the diversity of negotiation tactics one can witness on the playground. The concept of situated play is clearly useful when studying playground behavior. [Why?] The broad use of observations to explore peer-to-peer negotiations on the playground allows other researchers and the larger education community to draw their own conclusions about the importance of allowing children the room to negotiate situated activities without adult intervention taking into consideration

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the spectrum of negotiation techniques that we observed in this study. [Ok, fine, but what are your conclusions about this?]

Throughout our observations, negotiations [I'm still having trouble seeing these instances as "negotiations."] were used to establish, reinforce or challenge rules of the game. It is important to note that these findings are specific to the schools where we conducted our field work. We are not suggesting that the observed patterns would occur in the same way at other schools. Our classification of the observed negotiations leads us to believe that, for the schools we observed, the negotiations were not as gendered as some researchers have previously suggested. While this conclusion is tentative, the idea that gender will largely predict what negotiation style one will witness seems insufficient to explain the interactions that we saw.

Ben, Rachel, Molly, Kate, and Chao: I'm sorry not to have a higher evaluation of this work. I know you put a lot of time and energy into this project, but the written report falls short in many ways as detailed above. Margaret

Grade for Final Report = B

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