

Cultural variations in the play of toddlers

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The present study examines differences in the social play of toddlers from four communities. Fourteen children, between the ages of 12 and 24 months, from four cultural communities (San Pedro, Guatemala; Kecioren, Turkey; Dhol-Ki-Patti, India; Salt Lake City, United States) participated in the study. This paper is based on an analysis of data from a larger study, which was designed to examine guided participation between caregivers and toddlers during daily routine activities (Rogoff, Mistry, Göncü, & Mosier, 1993). This study specifically examines episodes of social play which occurred during various activities. We addressed community differences in the occurrence, frequency, partners, and dynamics of social play. We also examined whether or not the kinds (i.e. pretend, object, physical, language, and games) and themes of children's play varied as a function of the activity (i.e. exploring novel objects, dressing, free activity, and adult conversation) in which the play activities were embedded. The results indicated that social play occurred in each of the four communities, although the frequency and partners of social play presented cultural variations. Also, there were cultural variations in the numbers of children who engaged in the various kinds of play examined. Based on our results we conclude that developmental play theory should be extended to take into account cultural variation.

The study of children's play has gained increasing legitimacy in the Western world due to the emergence of strong theoretical claims about the function of play in children's development. For example, play is essential for the development of language (Vygotsky, 1978), for the mastery of affective experiences and the physical world (Bruner, 1972; Erickson, 1972; Piaget, 1945; Vygotsky, 1978), for learning to interact with peers (Parten, 1932), and for the development of the ability to categorise experience (Bateson, 1955). Following these claims, many researchers have made efforts to find out whether or not play experiences are correlated with advances in language, problem solving, role taking, and creativity (Rubin, Fein, & Vandenberg, 1983).

There appear to be two reasons for this focus on the developmental functions of children's play. First, researchers seemed to value play's contributions more than play itself. Children's play has not received much research attention as an activity that is worthy of investigation in its own right; perhaps play was seen as a trivial fun activity that is easily understood. Second, play was assumed to be a universal activity (Piaget, 1945; Vygotsky, 1978). Implicit in this was the belief that the frequency and the developmental course of play presented similar patterns across different cultural communities. Given this assumption, it made sense to seek research evidence for a set of claims about the significant developmental functions of play.

Cross-cultural studies are now beginning to question assumptions of universality about children's development (Bruner, 1990; Cole, 1989; Gauvain, 1995; Greenfield & Cocking, 1994; Lancy, 1996; Rogoff, 1990; Shweder, 1990).

There is a growing body of evidence indicating that communities vary in what activities they deem as valuable for their children's development (Göncü, 1999). Therefore, it is not warranted to assume that all communities value and provide comparable play opportunities for their children.

In this paper, we examine variations in toddlers' social play according to how communities structure their activities and the significance given to play. Two research questions guided the present effort. First, do the occurrence and frequency of social play and the nature of play partners vary as a function of children's cultural communities? Second, are there community differences in the kinds and themes of play as a function of the activity context in which play is embedded?

Our interest in the investigation of social play emerged from our larger study of how toddlers and their caregivers collaborate in shared activities from four cultural communities (Rogoff et al., 1993). In that study, we examined patterns of interaction and communication between toddlers and their caregivers in the context of the arrangement of children's activities in each community. We visited the families of toddlers in an urban community in the United States (i.e. Salt Lake City), an urban community in Turkey (i.e. Kecioren), a Mayan peasant community in Guatemala (i.e. San Pedro), and a tribal peasant community in India (i.e. Dhol-Ki-Patti). The four communities were selected to represent variation in child-rearing arrangements, in terms of the extent of children's segregation from or integration in the adult activities of the community.

With each family, we conducted an interview that was focused on child-rearing practices. The interview included

observations of caregivers helping the toddlers work with novel objects, and put on clothes at our request, as well as spontaneous play during adult conversation. We documented two patterns that varied with community differences in the extent to which children were integrated in the adult activities of the community. In the two communities that relied on subsistence economy and in which children were not segregated from adult activities, children appropriated the skills necessary for their functioning through active observation and participation in community activities, with the caregivers supporting children's efforts by responsive assistance. However, in urban, middle-income communities such as Kecioren and Salt Lake City where parents were schooled and their activities were segregated from those of children, adults took the responsibility for managing learning through organised instruction. Prompted by these findings, we questioned whether or not variations across these communities would also be reflected in variations in children's play. Thus, we decided to conduct in-depth analyses of children's play episodes from the data set of the larger study.

In the present study, we use the term "cultural communities" to refer to our sample of four communities to avoid the dangers of generalising to the nations represented in our sample, or on the basis of social class or urban-rural dimensions. Consistent with our previous work (Rogoff et al., 1993, p.3), we define community as a "group of people with some common local organization, values, and practices." We argue that many features of a community operate in constant interaction with one another, rendering the community as an integral system of meanings which provides a framework for children's development (Göncü, 1999). According to this conceptualisation, it is not possible to isolate different features of a community as independent variables that influence children's development. However, when communities are seen as a collection of variables, the explanation of community differences is reduced to only that variable which is considered in the comparisons. For example, features such as social class and adult schooling go hand in hand, making it difficult to consider the influence of each on children's development separately from one another. Thus, we consider each of our samples as a cultural community, which vary from each other on several features—economic resources, family size, maintenance of traditional ways, urbanisation, and so on (Rogoff et al., 1993).

The four communities in our study represent variation in the extent of children's segregation from adult activities, which we believe is a key difference between communities in the arrangement of children's activities. The communities also vary along other related dimensions, such as economical resources, schooling, and age segregation, which will allow us to consider simultaneously the interrelated features of communities that may have a shared influence on the development of an activity such as play. In what follows, we discuss how our previous findings and the research literature on children's play led us to the expectations of the present study.

Occurrence of social play and partners

Our research is guided by work that suggests that communities may have differing ideas about the meaning of play. For instance, middle class parents in New Delhi, India (Roopnar-

ine, Hooper, Ahmeduzzaman, & Pollack, 1993), Britain (Dunn & Dale, 1984), and the United States (Farver & Howes, 1993; Farver, Kim, & Lee, 1995; Haight & Miller, 1993; Morelli, Rogoff, & Angelilo, in prep; Tudge, Lee, & Putnam, 1995) view children's play activities as an appropriate socialisation context, and often serve as play partners to their children. These findings indicate the middle class parents' view (Farver & Howes, 1993; Haight & Miller, 1993) and the Western scholars' emphasis (Sutton-Smith & Sutton-Smith, 1974) that play has developmental and educational significance. Emerging evidence suggests that in urban middle class communities in which children's activities are segregated from the activities of adults and where adults encourage children's independent functioning (cf. Greenfield & Cocking, 1994; Kagitcibasi, 1996), schooled caregivers may use play as a means of instructing their children (Haight & Miller, 1993; Rogoff et al., 1993).

However, children in some non-Western or in low-income communities may not have opportunities for play. Gaskins (1990) has shown that preschool age Mayan children in Yucatan do not have much time to play due to their work responsibilities. Also, when these children engage in play, their play partners may not be adults (e.g. Gaskins, 1999), a pattern also observed in a Mayan community in Guatemala (Morelli et al., in prep) and in a Mexican community (e.g. Farver & Howes, 1993). In these communities, adult and child members function in an interdependent manner, supporting their activities as an integral part of their daily living (Kagitcibasi, 1996; Greenfield & Cocking, 1994). Children's learning occurs in the course of their participation in the community activities with adults. This, combined with adults' workload, may render adult-child play unnecessary. Rather, young children's play is often imitative of and guided by older children's play in some village communities (Farver & Howes, 1993; Gaskins, 1990; Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo, 1989; Zukow, 1989).

Our interest in examining differences in the occurrence of play in the present research was motivated by these findings, as well as our own findings on how caregivers and children jointly explore novel objects and participate in children's dressing. Rogoff et al. (1993) reported that caregivers in San Pedro did not play with children; rather, they delegated such roles to other children. Also, caregivers in Dhol-Ki-Patti did not see the interview context as conducive to adult-child play, possibly due to differences in interpretations about the meaning of play, its purpose, and about when it is appropriate to play with children. For example, Dhol-Ki-Patti caregivers appeared to interpret activities such as exploring novel objects, as an appropriate context for children to play with the objects independently, not as a context for adult-child interaction or play. Thus, caregivers would let the child play independently when the novel objects were presented, while they returned to their chores. However, parents in Kecioren and Salt Lake City did not see the interview context as inappropriate for joint play activity with their toddlers. In fact, parents from Kecioren and Salt Lake City engaged in discourse with their toddlers as playmates more than the San Pedro and Dhol-Ki-Patti caregivers during the exploration of novel objects. With this information, we expected that there would be higher instances of social play during the interview in Kecioren and Salt Lake City than in San Pedro and Dhol-Ki-Patti. Further, we expected that in San Pedro and Dhol-Ki-Patti, children would be more likely to serve as play partners for the toddlers, than in

Kecioren and Salt Lake City, where adults would be more likely to serve as play partners.

Variations in social play kinds and themes according to activity

With respect to our second question, our interest in examining community differences in specific types of play emerged from the research literature examining evidence for the presumed universals in pretend play (e.g. Piaget, 1945). In this effort, features of Western children's play often serve as the norms against which the play of children from non-Western communities is compared (Schwartzman, 1978; Sutton-Smith & Brice-Heath, 1981). Ultimately, this approach does not consider the unique local definitions, significance, and manifestation of play that may differ from Western communities (Bloch, 1989; Gaskins & Göncü, 1988, 1992; McLoyd, 1982; Slaughter & Dombrowski, 1989). The end result has been an overlap between Western researchers' conceptualisations of play and the play of children from other communities, often generating misrepresentations of non-Western children's activities as lacking if they did not have the pretend features of Western children's play. Indeed, some scholars have developed intervention programmes to teach non-Western or low-income children how to play according to the norms, so that their development would benefit from this activity just as does Western middle class children's development (for a review, see McLoyd, 1982).

Our goal was to examine the kinds of play and themes that were likely to occur in the four communities of the present study. We included object, language, and physical play, as well as games, along with pretend play in the present analyses. Our decision to include these categories of play, was based on our knowledge about the kinds of play activities present in the communities included in our study, as well as on the descriptions of children's play provided by ethnographic and psychological literature in diverse communities (e.g. Fein, 1981; Garvey, 1990; Göncü & Kessel, 1988; Miller, 1986; Schwartzman, 1978).

Based on previous research documenting that middle class parents encourage play as a valuable activity that facilitates development (Haight & Miller, 1993), we expected that caregivers in Kecioren and Salt Lake City were more likely to integrate all five kinds of play into their activities than caregivers in San Pedro and Dhol-Ki-Patti. As an extension of this, we expected the play themes to reflect the Kecioren and Salt Lake caregivers' view that play contributes to their children's development.

Method

Children and their families

The sample included 14 families from each community, with children from 12 to 24 months of age. In each community, equal numbers of boys and girls participated in the study except in Kecioren where the number of boys was 6 and the number of girls was 8.

The specific four communities were selected for the present project because of the researchers' familiarity with them and with the local languages spoken in the communities. We deemed that our familiarity with the communities would

facilitate our access to working with caregivers and children. At the time of the data collection, all the researchers were living in Salt Lake City and were involved in different aspects of the data collection there. Göncü collected the data in Kecioren, where he grew up, and thus was known by most of the participants. Mistry is a native of India and she had familial connections with Dhol-Ki-Patti. Rogoff who has years of experience in San Pedro collected the data there. Mosier participated in data collection in San Pedro and collected most of the data in Salt Lake. We provide a broad description of each community in an effort to establish an interpretative framework for the features considered in the comparisons.

San Pedro is a Mayan Indian town of about 8000 in the highlands on the shore of Lake Atitlan. Most of the families lived in compounds including several other related families sharing a small courtyard. Most homes had a single sleeping room for the family and another room for a kitchen. The men were often involved in agriculture and the women were based at home, with children participating in household chores by the age of 4 or 5 years of age.

Dhol-Ki-Patti is a rural tribal village in the state of Rajasthan that is based on a subsistence economy. Approximately 100 households in the village were spread out in clusters of 10 to 20 households. Extended families lived in a set of one-room mud huts constructed around a central courtyard. Nuclear units consisting of children and parents lived in each hut, and cooked and ate separately. Many of the men and some women worked as day labourers in a nearby city. Children began to participate in the families' economic activities at an early age.

Kecioren is a densely populated district of the capital city, Ankara. The residences generally consisted of three- or four-storey apartment buildings with three or four apartments on each floor. The middle- and upper middle-income, mostly nuclear, families lived in apartments. Most families had kin living nearby. Most of the men and women commuted to work in the capital. Children often stayed at home before they began primary school if the mother did not work. A family member took care of the children at home if the mother worked.

The Salt Lake community consisted of middle- and upper middle-income families who lived in their own homes. Family structure was almost exclusively nuclear, with some families having kin living nearby. Some of the mothers had jobs outside of home while most stayed at home raising children. Men held a wide variety of occupations including medical doctors, lawyers, carpenters, and merchants. Most mothers stayed home to care for their children until they became of preschool age at about 3 years.

Procedure

In each culture, we interviewed mothers about their child-rearing methods. Interviews occurred in the family home or yard, with the mother and the child present, along with any other caregivers, family members or neighbours who happened to be there.

In the course of the interview we asked the caregivers to engage in play and games, dressing, feeding, and exploring novel objects with their toddlers. We collected all the data on one occasion with only a few exceptions where we had to visit the families a few times to complete the interview protocol. We videotaped and transcribed the interviews. (We refer the interested reader to our monograph for a detailed description of our communities, procedures, and transcription methods:

Rogoff et al., 1993.) We elaborate later those aspects of the interview context that are relevant to the present analyses.

Definition of play and identification of play episodes

We define play as an activity of having fun identified on the basis of partner's adoption of a play face, smile or laughter which accompanied their nonliteral use of ideas, language, motion, or use of objects with the purpose of having fun. We also included games in our coding scheme because they were one of the means by which children had fun. A segment of the interaction was coded as a social play episode if it included at least two interactive turns of having fun between the target child and a partner. A turn included everything that a play partner said and did before another partner began to speak or respond in action. An episode of social play occurred when one of the partners made an overture for play and the other partner responded in the same manner. The social play ended when one of the partners terminated responding to the interaction in a playful manner.

We identified the play episodes in two phases. First, we reviewed eight transcripts from San Pedro, Dhol-Ki-Patti, and Salt Lake City and marked the beginning and ending of interactions of play episodes. Then, we identified the partners, kinds, the activity context in which play occurred, and its theme. The kappa reliabilities were found based on Mistry and Göncü's coding of the Dhol-Ki-Patti transcripts and Mosier and Göncü's coding of the San Pedro and Salt Lake transcripts. The average Kappas were .81, .69, and .65 for Dhol-Ki-Patti, San Pedro, and Salt Lake data, respectively. Acceptable Kappa is .60 (Hartmann, 1977). We resolved all the disagreements by discussion.

During our reliability coding, we decided that using transcriptions alone might be misleading because we did not always describe all play interactions in detail in the transcriptions. Therefore, we coded all the data from the videotapes. Due to language limitations not all of us could code the data from different communities. Mosier coded the Salt Lake and San Pedro data and Mistry and Göncü coded Dhol-Ki-Patti and Kecioren data, respectively. Comparison of codings from the transcriptions with those from videotapes revealed that codings from the videos had only a few more play episodes.

Partners in play

We first coded social play as either *dyadic* involving the target child and somebody else or *group* play involving at least three people including the target child. In addition, we coded the partners according to their age status as adult or child. Only a few play partners were teenagers whom we coded as children.

Play kinds

Pretend play (PR) referred to using an idea or an object to represent the meaning of something else with the purpose of having fun. This included pretending to be something or somebody else, pretending that something exists, pretending that a situation exists, and attributing animate or inanimate properties to objects. For example, a Kecioren mother said to her daughter, "Frighten Ayse", referring to child's doll. The child said "boo" twice and brought the cloth puppet to her doll's face to scare her.

Object play (OP) referred to using an object or a toy to have fun. Object play included such actions as throwing, squeezing, shaking, and banging of objects for *amusement* purposes. Object play differed from exploration where the child's action was directed towards finding out the function or the structure of the object. Thus, the interactions involving exploration of objects were not included in the present analyses. For example, a Salt Lake City father playfully set a ball on his child's head, letting it roll off behind her. The ball hit the floor and bounced away. "Go get it" father whispered excitedly, the baby contentedly turned and toddled over to get the ball.

Language play (LP) referred to having fun with words and sounds. This included creating sound effects (e.g. making engine sounds), changing the structure of words (e.g. lengthening or shortening words), making up words, and singing. For example, a San Pedro mother made sounds for the cloth puppet when the baby threw it and later continued singing as they made the puppet dance.

Physical play (PP) referred to having fun in terms of sensory and motor actions, including tickling and bouncing children up and down, touching them with or without objects, smiling back and forth, and "rough-and-tumble" play such as wrestling. For example, a Dhol-Ki-Patti father took the child's hands in his own and tapped her right hand on her left hand to their amusement.

Games (G) referred to both conventional and unconventional routinised activities of having fun in which actions of the partners were co-ordinated by implicit (e.g. taking turns without explicitly stating so) or explicit rules (e.g. saying "okay, it's your turn now"). The partner's actions could be imitative or complementary. This category included games such as peek-a-boo and hide-and-seek as well as bouncing a ball back and forth between the partners. For example, a San Pedro mother asked the child "Where is Tina?" The child found Tina in response. The mother continued the activity by asking the child to find other people in the crowd.

Identification of play context

Play occurred within four contexts embedded in the family interview, including Novel Object exploration, Dressing, Free Activity, and Adult Conversation.¹

Novel objects was a semi-structured activity context in which we asked the caregivers to explore with their toddlers some unfamiliar objects. This activity was structured to create a situation that would require joint action or interaction between caregiver and toddler. Because the objects were unfamiliar and were too difficult for a toddler to operate independently, we hoped that they would facilitate joint activity between caregiver and toddler. The seven objects used in all four communities were an embroidery hoop, pencil box, cone puppet, a transparent jar with a doll in it, a simple wooden marionette, a cigarette case, and a videotape case. In addition, some objects

¹ Feeding was not always a part of the interview in all four communities. Thus, we did not consider few instances of play in feeding in our analyses on variations in play according to activity, although we included them in our analyses on the frequency of social play.

were specific to a community, including a toy giraffe in Dhol-Ki-Patti, a toy dog in Kecioren, and a baby doll and play-dough in San Pedro and Salt Lake City.

Dressing involved changing clothes or putting clothes on the child. In Dhol-Ki-Patti dressing sometimes included bathing the children as this is a part of the dressing activity.

Free activity included unstructured activities, such as playing with children's own toys and games that were local to a given community, as well as interactions taking place between children and family members and people passing by.

Adult conversation referred to those parts of the interview where the primary focus of the adults was the conversation going on among them. This portion was not videotaped in some interviews conducted in Kecioren due to shortage of videotapes. Therefore we did not include data from Kecioren in analyses of play during adult conversation.

Theme of play episodes

We identified the play themes in an exploratory fashion using brief descriptors such as "playing peek-a-boo with mom using the hoop," at times the researchers were familiar with the theme being identified. Otherwise, we described the theme of each episode in more detail such as "the child pretends to make tortillas with the play-dough and tears it into little pieces to give them to others."

Results

Frequency of occurrence and partners of social play

All of the children from middle class communities of Salt Lake City and Kecioren, and those from the rural community of Dhol-Ki-Patti engaged in social play. Two children in San Pedro did not provide any play episodes and two children in Dhol-Ki-Patti had only one episode of social play. One of these children was recovering from an illness. The number of children who engaged in social play episodes with three or more turns in Dhol-Ki-Patti, San Pedro, Salt Lake City, and Kecioren were 13, 12, 14, and 12, respectively.

All the children who participated in play in all four communities played with adults at least once. However, higher numbers of toddlers in Dhol-Ki-Patti (11) and San Pedro (9) than in Salt Lake City (6) and Kecioren (3) played with other children. There were no children available as potential play partners for 8 Salt Lake toddlers. Of the 11 Kecioren toddlers with no episodes of play with other children, only 4 had other children available as potential play partners. This finding suggests that toddlers in Kecioren and Salt Lake City may have had less opportunity to play with peers than in San Pedro and Dhol-Ki-Patti.

The fact that social play occurred in all of these four diverse communities, supports the theoretical claim that play occurs universally. However, community differences in frequency of both the numbers of children who played, as well as differences in children's play partners, suggest that occurrence of social play presents cultural variation.

The average number of social play episodes varied across the four communities. Following our expectation that there would be greater frequency of social play episodes in Kecioren and Salt Lake than Dhol-Ki-Patti and San Pedro we conducted *t*-tests in our comparisons. There were no differences in

Table 1

The mean numbers and (standard deviations) of social, dyadic, and group play episodes

Community	Social Play	Dyadic Play	Group Play
Dhol-Ki-Patti	8.0 (5.0)	6.8 (4.3)	1.2 (1.6)
Kecioren	13.1 (5.5)	12.4 (5.4)	0.8 (0.8)
Salt Lake City	17.0 (8.3)	15.4 (7.80)	1.6 (2.1)
San Pedro	8.6 (5.6)	6.8 (1.2)	1.8 (1.7)

Kecioren vs. Salt Lake City or San Pedro vs. Dhol-Ki-Patti (see Table 1). Children in Salt Lake City engaged in social play with significantly more frequency than children in Dhol-Ki-Patti ($t = 3.47, p < .002$) and San Pedro ($t = 3.11, p < .004$). Also, Kecioren toddlers engaged in social play significantly more than the Dhol-Ki-Patti ($t = 2.58, p < .016$) and San Pedro children ($t = 2.13, p < .04$).

Although all the children engaged in dyadic play involving only one other person, the frequency of dyadic play episodes varied across the four communities significantly (see Table 1). Children in Salt Lake City engaged in dyadic play with significantly more frequency than children in Dhol-Ki-Patti ($t = 3.59, p < .002$) and San Pedro ($t = 3.5, p < .002$). Also, Kecioren toddlers engaged in dyadic play significantly more than the Dhol-Ki-Patti ($t = 3.04, p < .005$) and San Pedro children ($t = 2.92, p < .007$).

With respect to group play, there were not any significant differences across the four communities in the frequency of group play episodes (see Table 1). However, the numbers of children who engaged in group play differed somewhat across the communities. Ten toddlers in San Pedro, eight toddlers in each of Dhol-Ki-Patti and Kecioren, and seven toddlers in Salt Lake City engaged in group play with at least two other people.

There were community differences in who were toddlers' partners in dyadic and group play. With respect to dyadic play, the average number of episodes in Salt Lake City involving only adult partners was significantly greater than in Dhol-Ki-Patti ($t = 4.27, p < .0001$) and in San Pedro ($t = 4.75, p < .0001$). Similarly, Kecioren toddlers engaged in dyadic play with adult partners with significantly greater frequency than Dhol-Ki-Patti ($t = 4.34, p < .0001$) and San Pedro toddlers ($t = 5.10, p < .0001$). However, the average number of dyadic play episodes involving child partners was significantly less in Salt Lake City than in Dhol-Ki-Patti ($t = 2.17, p < .047$) and in San Pedro ($t = 2.33, p < .036$). Also, Kecioren toddlers engaged in dyadic play with other children with significantly less frequency than Dhol-Ki-Patti ($t = 2.53, p < .025$) and San Pedro toddlers ($t = 2.56, p < .024$). (See Table 2.)

With respect to the composition of group play episodes, a preliminary examination pointed towards community differences. In Salt Lake City and Kecioren the play groups involved

Table 2

The mean numbers and (standard deviations) of dyadic play with adults and children in each community

Community	Adult	Children
Dhol-Ki-Patti	5.0 (3.37)	1.8 (2.5)
Kecioren	12.3 (5.3)	0.7 (0.2)
Salt Lake City	15.0 (8.1)	0.2 (0.6)
San Pedro	4.1 (2.7)	2.7 (3.8)

only adults or a combination of caregivers and children's siblings as play partners to the children. The Dhol-Ki-Patti and San Pedro play groups were more complex in their composition with family and sometimes community members being present. Nine children in Dhol-Ki-Patti and seven children in San Pedro had play episodes involving people who were not family members, possibly reflecting involvement in the larger social milieu in which these children develop.

Activity context and social play

Our interest was primarily in whether or not social play would occur in any given activity. To address this, we conducted Chi-square analyses on the numbers of children with social play episodes in each activity. The number of children who engaged in play during dressing varied significantly, with higher numbers of Salt Lake and Kecioren toddlers engaging in play than San Pedro and Dhol-Ki-Patti toddlers. There were no other significant differences. (See Table 3.)

We also explored whether or not the play type in question would occur in a given activity. To do so, we performed Chi-square analyses on the numbers of children who engaged in a specific kind of play during that activity. For example, to determine whether or not there were community differences in the numbers of children who engaged in pretend play during the exploration of novel objects, we conducted a Chi-square analysis on those numbers.

The results were in the expected directions. Greater numbers of toddlers in Salt Lake City engaged in pretend and language play as well as games during exploring novel objects and free activity than in Dhol-Ki-Patti and San Pedro. (See Table 4.) Consistently, higher numbers of Salt Lake toddlers engaged in games during dressing and in language play during adult conversation than toddlers in the other communities.

Kecioren toddlers' play was similar to that of Salt Lake toddlers. Higher numbers of Kecioren toddlers engaged in pretend, language, and game play in novel objects than the San Pedro and Dhol-Ki-Patti toddlers. The same pattern held for pretend play and games in free activity.

In addition to differences in the numbers of children who engaged in different kinds of play, there were community differences in the play themes of children. The three themes of pretend play that occurred in all four communities were as follows: attributing animation to inanimate objects (e.g. pretending that a toy animal was alive); substitution of objects (e.g. using the embroidery hoop as a bracelet); and pretending that an imaginary situation exists (e.g. pretending that it's mealtime). However, higher numbers of children in Salt Lake and Kecioren than in Dhol-Ki-Patti and San Pedro engaged in

animation (Dhol-Ki-Patti 4, Kecioren 11, Salt Lake 13, San Pedro 9), substitution (Dhol-Ki-Patti 3, Kecioren 7, Salt Lake 10, San Pedro 5), and pretend situations (Dhol-Ki-Patti 1, Kecioren 7, Salt Lake 8, San Pedro 3). The kind of pretend play that occurred only in Salt Lake and Kecioren involved adopting pretend roles where parents entered into play as actors with their children (Dhol-Ki-Patti 0, Kecioren 8, Salt Lake 7, San Pedro 0). This was most apparent in the roles of Salt Lake City parents who pretended to be monsters, etc.

Regarding language play, participants in Salt Lake City and Kecioren engaged in making up words (Dhol-Ki-Patti 0, Kecioren 3, Salt Lake 3, San Pedro 0), mimicking child's vocalisations (Dhol-Ki-Patti 0, Kecioren 4, Salt Lake 6, San Pedro 0), and creating sound effects (Dhol-Ki-Patti 5, Kecioren 9, Salt Lake 13, San Pedro 2) more than their counterparts in Dhol-Ki-Patti and San Pedro. Further, Salt Lake caregivers labelled objects (Dhol-Ki-Patti 0, Kecioren 1, Salt Lake 6, San Pedro 0) and used language metaphorically more than the caregivers in the other communities (Dhol-Ki-Patti 0, Kecioren 0, Salt Lake 2, San Pedro 0). Language play involved singing (Dhol-Ki-Patti 0, Kecioren 3, Salt Lake 4, San Pedro 3) and engaging in playful question-answer sequences in some communities (Dhol-Ki-Patti 2, Kecioren 0, Salt Lake 1, San Pedro 0). In addition, there was fun-filled teasing of children in Dhol-Ki-Patti (2), and book reading (1) and play with words (1) in Salt Lake.

Regarding games, it is noteworthy that hiding games with or without objects occurred in each community although they presented some variations. For example, in Dhol-Ki-Patti a mother and son dyad played peek-a-boo using mother's "ghunghat" (sari covering the mother's face), whereas in Kecioren the same game was played using a doily.

Toddlers and partners in Salt Lake City and Kecioren engaged in games involving objects (Dhol-Ki-Patti 7, Kecioren 8, Salt Lake 13, San Pedro 4), or versions of peek-a-boo and hide-and-seek more frequently than those in Dhol-Ki-Patti and San Pedro (Dhol-Ki-Patti 1, Kecioren 10, Salt Lake 6, San Pedro 3). Further, greater numbers of Salt Lake toddlers and their partners engaged in labelling games (e.g. name the pictures on the pencil box) (Dhol-Ki-Patti 0, Kecioren 2, Salt Lake 6, San Pedro 2) and games of gesture and motion (e.g., chasing) than those in the other three communities (Dhol-Ki-Patti 0, Kecioren 2, Salt Lake 7, San Pedro 2). Teasing games occurred only in Dhol-Ki-Patti and Kecioren. This was most apparent in Dhol-Ki-Patti, where the caregivers would sometimes jokingly try to "scare" the child with a "pretend growl" or by saying "look the millipede is coming to get you".

With regard to object play, when the objects or toys were available all the children and their partners engaged in manipulation of objects including shaking, banging, and

Table 3

The number of children who engaged in social play in dressing, exploring novel objects, adult conversation, and free activity

Social Play	Community			
	Dhol-Ki-Patti	Kecioren	San Pedro	Salt Lake City
Dressing	5	8	2	10*
Novel objects	11	14	10	13
Adult conversation	9	—	11	11
Free activity	9	12	9	14

* $\chi^2 = 10.6; p < .01.$

Table 4

The number of children who engaged in different kinds of play in different activity contexts in each community

Context	Type of Play				
	Pretend	Object	Language	Physical	Games
<i>Dressing</i>					
Dhol-Ki-Patti	2	2	1	2	1
Kecioren	2	5	2	4	2
Salt Lake City	3	3	5	5	5
San Pedro	0	0	2	1	0
					($\chi^2 = 8.1$; $p < .04$)
<i>Novel objects</i>					
Dhol-Ki-Patti	5	11	3	4	5
Kecioren	12	14	8	6	11
Salt Lake City	12	13	14	8	13
San Pedro	9	11	3	7	3
	($\chi^2 = 10.8$; $p < .01$)		($\chi^2 = 23.4$; $p < .00003$)		($\chi^2 = 19.8$; $p < .0001$)
<i>Adult conversation</i>					
Dhol-Ki-Patti	0	7	0	4	2
Salt Lake City	5	8	5	8	3
San Pedro	5	7	1	7	3
	($\chi^2 = 6.5$; $p < .03$)		($\chi^2 = 8.1$; $p < .01$)		
<i>Free activity</i>					
Dhol-Ki-Patti	2	5	4	7	4
Kecioren	5	9	4	6	11
Salt Lake City	11	13	13	11	13
San Pedro	1	1	2	4	3
	($\chi^2 = 19.3$; $p < .0002$)	($\chi^2 = 22.8$; $p < .0004$)	($\chi^2 = 21.4$; $p < .0008$)		($\chi^2 = 21.6$; $p < .0008$)

rolling. Community differences in object play emerged only during free activity when greater numbers of Salt Lake and Kecioren toddlers than San Pedro and Dhol-Ki-Patti toddlers engaged in object play. This suggests that differences in object play derived from toy availability versus how they were used. In Salt Lake City and Kecioren object play included store-bought toys and objects not present in Dhol-Ki-Patti or San Pedro. These varied from a piano, xylophone, and toy letters of the alphabet in Salt Lake City to a backgammon set and electric train in Kecioren.

Physical play was likely to occur with some regularity in all communities. There were games of touching involving hugging, kissing, and patting in all four communities (Dhol-Ki-Patti 8, Kecioren 10, Salt Lake 11, San Pedro 7), and dancing (Dhol-Ki-Patti 2, Kecioren 5, Salt Lake 3, San Pedro 4). San Pedro toddlers and their partners engaged in games of smiling back and forth more than the others (Dhol-Ki-Patti 2, Kecioren 0, Salt Lake 4, San Pedro 6). Salt Lake families included physical play in other activities such as hide and seek more than the others (Dhol-Ki-Patti 5, Kecioren 2, Salt Lake 10, San Pedro 3). Finally, playful exercise of some kind (e.g. chasing, boxing) occurred only in Kecioren (3) and Salt Lake (3).

Generally speaking, these findings indicate that in Kecioren and Salt Lake City participants used the activity contexts in the present study as appropriate to engage in social play. However, in San Pedro and Dhol-Ki-Patti either due to considering play

as mostly children's activity (San Pedro) or possibly due to their uncertainty in interpreting the interview context as appropriate for play, participants engaged in fewer instances of play (Dhol-Ki-Patti). Greater numbers of participants in Kecioren and Salt Lake City engaged in pretend play, language play, and games than those in Dhol-Ki-Patti and San Pedro. Also, differences emerged in children's play themes, reflecting possible differences in these communities' goals for children's development.

Conclusions

Our data were collected only on one occasion and our observations of children's play were not completely naturalistic. However, our analyses of social play that occurred during a semistructured interview and observation session were still instructive in revealing similarities and differences in the frequency, type, and themes of toddlers' social play, and the nature of their partners, thus offering important questions for future research.

As we expected, caregiver-child play was not equally likely to occur across the four communities. Consistent with descriptions of themselves as playmates to their children (cf. Rogoff et al., 1993), Kecioren and Salt Lake City caregivers engaged in play with the toddlers. However, consistent with their reports of not playing with children, San Pedro caregivers

were not as likely to engage in play with their toddlers. In a similar vein, Dhol-Ki-Patti caregivers may have acted with reserve or interpreted the interview context as that in which children should play with one another, thus not revealing to its fullest extent whether or how they play with their children. It will be important in future research to examine the meaning and value of different kinds of play in diverse communities as well as the natural contexts in which play occurs. Our findings raise the possibility that caregivers in non-Western and rural communities may have an understanding of play that is not yet captured in existing work, a question that remains to be addressed in future ethnographic work. Nevertheless, encouraged by our findings, we feel that a more complete future study of children's play should focus on peer interaction in San Pedro and on other contexts of ordinary life rather than a child-rearing interview in Dhol-Ki-Patti.

When play occurred, it presented similarities as well as differences across communities. Whereas play categories were exemplified in each of the four communities, frequency of social play episodes and the number of children who engaged in a given category of play differed across communities. We found that dyadic play was more common in Kecioren and Salt Lake City than in San Pedro and Dhol-Ki-Patti. This finding reflects the realities of these children's lives, and is consistent with our previous results (Rogoff et al., 1993) as well as the previous patterns reported by other scholars (e.g. Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984; Rabain-Jamin, 1994). In communities such as Kecioren and Salt Lake City where children are segregated from adult activity, children's language and play are confined to dyadic interaction with adults. However, in communities such as Dhol-Ki-Patti and San Pedro where children are an integral part of social life, they have greater opportunities to engage in group activity with adults and other children.

We feel that our findings are also consistent with Kagitcibasi's (1996) description of urban middle class communities as encouraging development of independence and subsistence-based communities as encouraging interdependence. In the former, parents value play and perhaps use it as an instructional medium to teach children skills whereas in the latter adults see play as children's business and let children keep each other's play company as they engage in work life.

Another community difference was in the activity context in which play occurred. That Kecioren and Salt Lake City caregivers valued play was evident in that these caregivers engaged in play with their children even during dressing with their toddlers. The pervasiveness of play in different activities reflects the belief expressed by some of the caregivers that play contributes to children's development and prepares them for school. This interpretation finds further support in the frequency and kind of language play and games (e.g. labelling pictures) that occurred in Salt Lake City and Kecioren. Finally, we speculate that their emphasis on pretend play may be due to their familiarity with the educational significance of pretend play.

A community difference that requires further inquiry is playful teasing of children. This form of play, most visible in Dhol-Ki-Patti, is consistent with the observation that adult-child play in this community may involve interaction with focus on the partners without use of objects or toys (cf. Rogoff et al., 1993). Teasing may not be common in the middle class Western communities. However, ethnographic work indicates that teasing occurred in mother-child dialogue in a working class US community (cf. Miller, 1986). Also, teasing emerged

as a form of play in low-income African-American, European-American and Turkish preschool age children (Göncü, Tuermer, Jain, & Johnson, 1999). The forms and the function of teasing in the development of children remain as interesting questions for future research.

In conclusion, our findings indicate that children's play reflects adults' beliefs about children's development and the social structure of the community in which children develop. Our findings can be used to call for the expansion of developmental theory which brought play to the attention of researchers in the following five specific ways (e.g. Piaget, 1945; Vygotsky, 1978). First, partners of children's play vary according to whom adults deem as appropriate play partners for toddlers. Second, children's access to family and nonfamily members influences the size as well as the composition of play groups. Third, activities in which toddlers' play occurs vary from one community to another. Fourth, the types of play in which toddlers engage depends on the value attributed to them in a given community. Fifth, the cultural variations that we observed suggest that absence of a certain play type may not mean that children are deprived of the benefit provided by a given type of play. There may be other play types or nonplay activities that serve the same developmental function. Therefore, future work should make the concerted effort to identify the play partners and a full range of activities available to children before observations and conclusive statements about the play of children are proffered.

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