Part VII

Play

Children's play is an important part of children's life, taking up a considerable percentage of their time and interest. While it has not always garnered an equivalent interest from developmental researchers, there has now emerged considerable research literature in children's pretend play, and, more recently, in rough-and-tumble play.

Artin Göncü, Michelle B Patt, and Emily Kouba review much of the literature on pretend play. They focus especially on transitions into and out of pretence, for example, via the use of metacommunication and framing, and the kinds of symbolic transformations involved. Age and sex differences are carefully addressed. Social class and cultural differences in the expression of pretend play are fully explored (cf. also Chapter 4 on anthropological perspectives). The authors refer more briefly to the literature on what may be the cognitive functions of pretend play in development, an aspect which is covered more in a chapter by Angeline Lillard on "Pretend play and cognitive development" in the companion *Blackwell Handbook of Cognitive Development*.

Unlike pretend play, rough-and-tumble play shows more continuities with animal play. It is more characteristic of middle childhood, and it is less well liked by adults, especially teachers! Anthony D. Pellegrini describes the nature and developmental trajectory of rough-and-tumble play. He also devotes considerable space to the likely functions of R&T (as it is often abbreviated), which are probably more social than cognitive. Pellegrini argues that the sex differences, similarity to real fighting, and developmental trajectory of R&T support a function linked primarily to assessment and assertion of dominance. The sex differences in R&T and role of hormones are also considered in the chapter on sex differences (Chapter 7).

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Understanding Young Children's Pretend Play in Context

Artin Göncü, Michelle B. Patt, and Emily Kouba

The discipline of developmental psychology has been ambivalent in its embracing of the study of children's pretend play. This is evident in the inconsistent recognition given to it. The 1983 edition of the *Handbook of Child Psychology* included a review on the description, correlates, and possible developmental consequences of pretend play (Rubin, Fein, & Vandenberg, 1983). However, significant conceptual and methodological advances made in the study of pretend play did not receive coverage in the 1998 edition of the *Handbook*. The Society for Research in Child Development previously included the word "play" as a review panel descriptor in its call for papers, but not in the call for the 2001 conference. The values that underlie this inconsistent practice remain unavailable to us. However, play continues to be a major activity of many children in the world, and researchers continue to publish about it in developmental journals. We therefore welcome the opportunity to organize the knowledge that has emerged since 1983 in the study of pretend play.

The publications on pretend play since 1983 reveal an enormous amount of research effort. Some untangle the cognitive, communicative, and affective developmental processes in pretend play (e.g., Bretherton, 1984; Göncü & Kessel, 1984; Howes, Unger, & Matheson, 1992; Power, 2000; Sawyer, 1997; Singer & Singer, 1990; Stambak & Sinclair, 1993; Sutton-Smith, 1996). Others forcefully bring to our attention that occurrence and frequency of pretend play can best be understood by taking into account the gender, social class, and cultural as well as developmental context of children (e.g., Goldman, 1998; Göncü, 1999;

Haight & Miller, 1993; Lancy, 1996; Liss, 1983; Roopnarine, Johnson, & Hooper, 1994). Yet more illustrate the developmental and educational significance of pretend play and discuss ways to promote it (e.g., Göncü & Klein, 2001; Roskos & Christie, 2000).

Here we bring together findings on the pretend play of preschool children, 3 to 6 years of age, covering only research in which children were observed as they engaged in *pretend play*. Studies conducted before 1983 or with children older or younger than preschool age will be referenced only if they shed a particular historical or developmental light. The review focuses on developmental, gender, social class, and cultural differences.

Defining Pretend Play

In the Western world, most adults consider pretend play as a valuable activity with developmental and educational significance, and a commonly accepted definition of pretend play emphasizes this. Pretend play is a pleasurable and intrinsically motivated activity in which participants transform the meaning of objects, identities, situations, and time. However, advances of the last two decades call for an expansion of this definition. Pretend play is an activity framed by metacommunicative messages and it embodies representation of emotionally significant experiences. In what follows, we describe the development of pretend play in the Western world on the basis of this expansive definition. We present research findings on the communicative, transformational, and affective dimensions of pretend play and then move onto the discussion of gender and class and cultural differences in pretend play.

Developmental Context of Pretend Play

Communication

The majority of studies on the development of social pretend play use a combination of Parten's (1932) categories of social participation and Smilansky's (1968) categories of cognitive play (Rubin et al., 1983). Parten's play categories include solitary play, parallel play, associative play, and cooperative play. Smilansky's categories are functional, constructive, and dramatic or pretend play. Of interest are age differences in the frequency with which categories of social participation and pretend play jointly occur. Consistent with Parten's and Smilansky's expectations, preschool-age children spend a good deal of their play time engaging in cooperative-dramatic play whose frequency increases with age (Howes & Matheson, 1992; Pellegrini & Perlmutter, 1989). Findings on solitary and parallel pretend play are less clear, since the frequencies of these categories of play do not change in a predictable pattern with age (Power, 2000).

Recent attempts to understand the emergence of cooperation in social pretend play and to explicate the inconsistency of results on solitary and parallel play lead to three important insights regarding Parten's categories. First, nonsocial play categories may occur as a result

of children's preference rather than their inability to engage in social pretend play. Thus, without additional contextual information, the causes of children's play performance cannot be interpreted either as a result of their choice or ability to engage in certain play forms. Second, Parten's categories reveal information about the interactional context of play. However, these categories do not allow us to examine how children negotiate their interaction with one another to construct social play activities. For instance, coding children's play as cooperative indicates the presence of a mutually acceptable plan but such coding leaves open the investigation of how children express and negotiate their ideas with one another regarding having a mutually acceptable plan. Third, Parten's methodology calls for observation of children for a brief period of time. This enables us to categorize the social play of older children accurately, but brief interactive sequences of younger children's social play may be overlooked when we use her categories to describe the predominant play kind in a given observation scan (Fein, Moorin, & Enslein, 1982). In a related vein, unless the relationship between social and solitary play states is taken into account children may appear to engage in solitary play when such solitariness is actually precipitated by an ongoing social play (McLoyd, Warren, & Thomas, 1984).

Much research effort has been devoted to the understanding of the processes by which children make transitions to and from social pretend play and how they maintain it. This led developmental psychologists to draw from anthropology, sociology, and sociolinguistic approaches to children's play. Following Bateson (1955) and Goffman (1974), significant advances have been made in our understanding of the development of how children exchange and negotiate metacommunicative messages that their actions should be interpreted at the representational level rather than at face value. Also, although we did not have a guiding developmental theory two decades ago, a series of theories on the development of children's play communication have emerged (Corsaro, 1985, Göncü, 1993a; Sawyer, 1997).

Research on the framing of social pretend play has addressed two main concerns: first, the development of metacommunication on the basis of molecular units such as utterances, actions, or time sampling; second, using molar units of analyses, and being concerned with event representations.

Among the first group, Howes and her collaborators (Howes, 1985, 1987, 1988; Howes & Matheson, 1992; Howes, Unger, & Matheson, 1992; Howes, Unger, & Seidner, 1989) showed that development of pretend play follows a predictable pattern from infancy to preschool years. A combination of longitudinal and cross-sectional studies revealed that children's complex social pretend play, including adoption of reciprocal and complementary roles such as doctor–patient role play framed by metacommunicative messages, emerges around 3 years of age, reflecting children's developing ability to understand and expand one another's intentions.

McLoyd and her collaborators (McLoyd, Thomas, & Warren, 1984; McLoyd, Warren, & Thomas, 1984) examined preschoolers' pretend play between 3.5 and 5 years. One purpose of this work was to explore the distribution of solitary, dyadic, and triadic states of pretend play and the role of metacommunication in the initiation and maintenance of different forms of social pretend play. Older children were more likely than younger children to engage in interactive forms of pretend play. Also, older children used explicit metacommunication in maintaining their play.

Doyle and her collaborators (Doyle & Connolly, 1989; Doyle, Doehring, Tessier, de

Lorimier, & Shapiro, 1992) examined the transitions to and from social pretend play and its coordination between 4 and 6 years. The most notable finding was that metacommunication in the form of negotiations occurred in conjunction with enactments serving to maintain social pretend play rather than to initiate it. Also, the proportion of time devoted to pretend play did not change from 4 to 6 years although 4 year olds spent more time coordinating their activity than 6 year olds (de Lorimier, Doyle, & Tessier, 1995).

Göncü (1993a, 1993b; Göncü & Kessel, 1984, 1988) examined the initiation, maintenance, and termination of social pretend play in the play of 3 and 4.5 year olds. The purpose here was to explore the distribution of different kinds of metacommunicative statements at these two age levels and also to explore their conversational function and complexity. The distribution of invitations, plans, transformations and their acceptances or rejections by the partners as well as termination statements included the focus of research. Consistent with McLoyd and Doyle's findings, Göncü also found that children at both age levels used metacommunication in maintaining their pretend play rather than in initiating or terminating it. There were no age differences in the frequency of metacommunicative utterances (also see Black, 1992). However, older children were more likely to establish connections between their own and their partners' pretend play ideas. Also, older children were more likely than younger children to express two or more ideas in the same metacommunicative utterance than younger children.

Sawyer (1997) provides the most extensive analyses of 3- to 5-year-old preschool children's construction of social pretend play. Data collected over an 8-month period in a preschool classroom present a complex picture of children's use of metacommunicative messages in ranges varying from implicit to explicit and from about-play to in-play. Consistent with previous qualitative work on children's play actions (Giffen, 1984), Sawyer's correlational analyses showed that children at all ages were likely to use all kinds of messages in negotiating their play frames. However, older children were more likely than younger children to be explicit in negotiating their pretend play frames.

The second line of research addressed developmental differences in event representations and the psychological significance of the events represented in pretend play, using molar units of analyses such as texts (Schwartzman, 1978), action plans (Garvey & Berndt, 1975), or scripts (Nelson & Seidman, 1984) rather than isolated utterances or units of actions. These findings show that children begin to represent events before 3 years of age (cf., Fein, 1981). However, between 3 and 5 years of age, children's pretend scripts become elaborate (de Lorimier et al., 1995; Garvey & Berndt, 1975; Miller & Garvey, 1984; Nelson & Seidman, 1984; Sachs, Goldman, & Chaille, 1984). Also, there is increasing evidence that social pretend play is an expression of events of affective and cultural significance, and such significance can be captured through semiotic analyses (Ariel, 1992; Göncü, 1993a, 1993b; Sawyer, 1996). We return to this issue below in greater detail.

To sum up, the research findings indicate that 3 years of age mark the beginning of shared pretend play (cf., Stambak & Sinclair, 1993). The use of explicit metacommunicative messages increases with age (cf., Lloyd & Goodwin, 1995). Children use metacommunication to maintain their play interaction more than to initiate or terminate it, and to establish coherence and continuity in social pretend play. Finally, there are increases with age in the expansiveness of event representations. These findings should be extended in future work to examine whether or how children's age, events represented in

play, and their use of play communication are related to one another. Addressing this question will enable us to describe developmental patterns in children's play performance in an integral fashion as well as help us identify the variability across children's play performances.

Symbolic representation

The most extensively studied feature of pretend play is symbolic representation. Pioneered by Fein's (1975) transformational analysis of pretending, considerable effort was made to understand the development of symbolic representation during infancy. The wealth of knowledge acquired in this arena is documented in several reviews (Fein, 1981; Power, 2000; Rubin et al., 1983). However, research on the development of symbolic representation during the preschool years did not receive as much attention. Recent work has tackled three related questions.

The first was whether or not there are increases with age in the degree of symbolic representations expressed in play. Research addressing this revealed findings consistent with previous ones, that from 3 to 6 years of age social pretend play increases in quantity (Cole & LaVoie, 1985; Connolly & Doyle, 1984) and in complexity (Göncü & Kessel, 1988).

The second question addressed was whether or not there are developmental differences in the mode of transformation, that is, the means by which the signified is represented in pretend play through a signifier. Following the work of Matthews (1977), the mode of transformation in the study of symbolic representation with preschoolers has been categorized as material or ideational. The material mode of transformation refers to the use of an actual object as the signifier. The ideational mode of transformation refers to use of ideas as the signifier without use of objects.

The claim of developmental theories (Piaget, 1962; Vygotksy, 1978) that the material mode of transformations decreases and ideational mode of transformations increases with age generated a considerable amount of research. Both Piaget and Vygotksy believed that infants and toddlers are not able to separate meaning from the concrete environment. Therefore, infants' symbolic transformations are not detached from the physical world. However, with the emergence of semiotic function during preschool years, children become able to use the ideational mode of transformations.

Cole and LaVoie (1985) examined age differences in children's play transformations in a study of 2 to 6 year olds. Basically, the results were in the expected direction; children's use of material transformations decreased and the ideational transformations increased with age. Consistent with these findings, some scholars reported increases with age in the amount of ideational mode of transformations from 5 to 6 years (Doyle, Ceshin, Tessier, & Doehring, 1991; Wall, Pickert, & Gibson, 1990). However, Göncü and Kessel (1984, 1988) and Werebe and Baudonniere (1991) did not find significant differences between 3 and 4.5 year olds in the amount of ideational mode of transformations.

The third question on symbolic transformations was motivated by the thesis that young children's play symbols emerge from their own daily experiences (Piaget, 1962). It was plausible to expect that with increasing age children's symbolic representations would ex-

tend from events directly experienced by children to those in which they do not directly participate. For example, it is likely that a toddler will pretend to feed her doll in the adopted role of a mother, whereas a preschool child can adopt the role of a "witch," a role not directly experienced in real life. In support of this, McLoyd, Warren, and Thomas (1984) reported that children's transformations become increasingly distant from their daily experiences from 3.5 to 5 years.

To sum up, with certain exceptions, research indicates that preschoolers' play transformations become increasingly ideational with age. Absence of age differences remains inexplicable due to procedural and sample differences across studies. One profitable way to extend research on symbolic transformations is to examine age differences separately in particular modes of transformations. In work where this kind of analytical strategy was followed, age differences appeared consistently in role play that became increasingly frequent and complex with age (Cole & LaVoie, 1985; McLoyd, Warren, & Thomas, 1984; Wall et al., 1990). A second important issue to address is whether or not developmental differences in transformations appear in the quality of the way in which transformations are expressed. For example, older children may adopt a role and elaborate it in a complex sequence of events when younger children may merely enact the role in isolated sequences of actions. Finally, it would be invaluable to determine if transformations are determined by children's ability or by their choice. It may well be that children prefer material modes of transformations despite their ability to use ideational modes of transformations.

Representation of affect

An aspect of social pretend play receiving increasing research attention during the last decade is that pretend play is an activity of affective significance. This interest emerged from developmental theories stating that pretend play regulates the inner affective life of children. Vygotksy (1978) claimed that children pretend in order to fulfill unrealizable tendencies of real life, and Piaget (1962) and Erickson (1972) stated that children pretend in order to gain mastery over emotionally significant experiences.

Motivated by these theories, researchers have begun to explore the types of affect represented in pretend play and the development of shared representation. Some studies sought to establish whether or not there is an identifiable relation between children's day-to-day experiences and their play representations. For example, Corsaro (1983) observed that a 3-year-old girl tried to recreate her actual experience of viewing her baby brother on a television screen in her pretend play with her peers. Field and Reite (1984) reported that 2 to 5-year-old first-born children pretended that their mothers and newly born siblings were in traffic accidents, expressing their envy, aggression, and anxiety about having siblings. Heath (1983) reported that a 22-month-old child recreated in her play the conversation she had with Heath about having ice cream.

A second set of work has begun to explore the kind of affect being represented in children's play. Some studies explored the relations between children's interpersonal relationships within and outside of pretend play, and illustrated that children's roles and relationships in pretend play are reflections of their relationships in the community in which they live.

Schwartzman (1978) illustrated that the pretend interactions of a kindergarten girl reflected her dominance that she routinely exercised over her peers. Ariel (1992) presented a detailed analysis of two girls' pretend play interactions at ages 4.5 and 5.5 years, illustrating that the girls used pretend play as a way of structuring and regulating their relationship.

Another group of studies also acknowledged the role of pretend play as an interpretive activity. However, interpretation in this case emphasized working through experiences of emotional significance to individual children rather than regulating interpersonal relationships with the play partners. Drawing from psychoanalytic theory, Fein (1989) proposed the first systematic theory and illustrative data on the kinds of issues children work through in their pretend play. According to Fein (1989), children work through five issues that she conceptualized in five bipolar scales: connectedness (i.e., attachment vs. separation); physical well-being (i.e., health vs. body harm);, empowerment (i.e., mastery vs. helplessness); social regulation (i.e., support for social rules vs. defiance); and respect for or aggression against the material world. In her sample of 4- to 5-year-old middle-class children the most frequently expressed issues were connectedness, empowerment, and physical well-being. De Lorimier et al. (1995), using the scheme developed by Fein, added that the expression of psychosocial issues was facilitated as the pretend play communication increased in its coordination. However, the possible developmental changes in these issues and their significance remain to be addressed in future research.

The third set of work provides a theoretical framework for the examination of how representation of affect becomes a shared endeavor in pretend play. Göncü (1993a) argued that with the advent of metacommunicative and transformational competence, children become able to evoke potential scripts for their pretend play around 3 years of age. These proposals are symbolizations of emotionally significant experiences of individual players. A belief among players that they are all familiar with the pretend proposal leads them to engage in negotiations with the purpose of constructing shared pretend play. Agreed-upon proposals get elaborated both within the context of a given activity and with age. From 3 to 5 years of age, children's pretend scripts and the affect represented in them become increasingly varied and elaborate.

To sum up, research on early childhood reflects the daily lives of Western children. Since most children between the ages of 3 and 6 attend school, and are encouraged to engage in play interactions with their peers, most research focused on social pretend play with peers in preschools rather than play at home or in other settings. Also, possibly reflecting the Western world's emphasis on verbal communication, most research focused on children's development of verbal rather than nonverbal behaviors. Research using quantitative analyses of actions and utterances, revealed age differences in children's symbolic transformations and metacommunication.

Gender Context of Pretend Play

Research on the relationship between pretend play and children's gender has traditionally focused on choice of toys and materials and the themes around which pretense is organized (cf., Huston, 1983; Liss, 1983; and Rubin et al., 1983). Current research on gender differ-

ences, however, focuses on the interaction between the participants as well as the relation between characteristics of the play environment and gender.

There is no theory that guides the study of gender differences in pretend play. Work on gender segregation provides a general framework for understanding differences between boys' and girls' play (Leaper, 1994; Maccoby, 1990). By examining why preschool children choose to interact in same-sex groupings and the dynamics of those groupings, research on gender segregation brought to our attention the significance of participation and communication in pretend play as a dimension of gender comparison. Below, we first discuss the research findings that emerged in this area and then move on to gender differences in symbolic representations.

Gender differences in participation

Findings on participation in pretend play by preschool age boys and girls have been inconsistent. Some studies with 4- to 6-year-old children revealed that girls engaged in pretend play more than boys. These findings were obtained in semistructured and laboratory settings where the play materials were selected or peer partners were assigned by the researchers (Lindsey, Mize, & Pettit, 1997; Wall et al., 1990; Werebe & Baudonniere, 1991) and during naturalistic observations in children's classrooms (Jones & Glenn, 1991; Weinberger & Starkey, 1994). However, several other researchers found no gender differences in the amount of pretend play in naturalistic classroom settings (Connolly, Doyle, & Ceschin, 1983; Pellegrini & Perlmutter, 1989) and in engaging in an assigned pretend task with siblings at home (Howe, Petrakos, & Rinaldi, 1998) or found that boys pretend more than girls in a play room (Doyle et al., 1991). No clear explanation is possible for the inconsistent findings. However, since the studies did not utilize identical methodologies, aspects of the research design or characteristics of the play settings may have resulted in different findings.

Several researchers addressed how features of play context may be responsible for gender differences in pretend play, reporting inconsistent results. Pellegrini and Perlmutter (1989) found that pretend play for both boys and girls occurred most frequently in the classroom area that contained dramatic play props. In contrast, Howe, Moller, Chambers, and Petrakos (1993) reported that 2 to 5-year-old girls preferred to play in traditional housekeeping centers (e.g., dolls, kitchen, dressing up), while boys preferred novel centers (e.g., pirate ship and hospital). Dodge and Frost (1986) examined play behavior of 5-year-old children in a playroom containing materials for a home, store, and office, finding that while the girls played with all the materials, the boys played mostly in the store, and avoided the more stereotypically feminine home area.

Lloyd and colleagues (Duveen & Lloyd, 1988; Lloyd, Duveen, & Smith, 1988; Lloyd & Smith, 1985) examined whether the specific play materials themselves influenced rates of play during observations of 2- to 4-year old children. In these studies, children were provided with a selection of stereotypically masculine (e.g., trucks and hammers) and stereotypically feminine (e.g., dolls and kitchen toys) materials. Lloyd and colleagues found that for girls, feminine materials were more likely to elicit pretense than were masculine materials, but that there appeared to be no differences for boys.

Neppl and Murray (1997) examined whether or not gender differences in pretend play occur when boys and girls are assigned to play with a masculine toy (pirate ship with figures) and a feminine toy (dollhouse with dolls) rather than playing with toys of their own choosing. Inconsistent with the findings of Lloyd and colleagues, Neppl and Murray reported that both girls and boys in 4 and 5-year-old same- and mixed-sex groups were most likely to engage in pretend play when using toys appropriate for their own gender.

In general, the differences in findings seem to indicate that the design of the play environment, availability of the play materials, and the agency in toy choice seem to be responsible for gender differences observed in participation in pretend play. However, this interpretation remains to be substantiated in future theoretical and empirical work.

Gender differences in interpersonal communication

Gender differences in the communication of pretend play has received increased attention. The two areas addressed are gender differences in use of language forms, and in broader aspects of social interaction such as the complexity, length, and style of children's interactions during play. Sheldon (1992, 1996) examined negotiation strategies of 3 to 5-year-old girl triads. Sheldon identified mitigation (i.e., modifying one's expression to avoid creating offense) as a predominant characteristic of girls' play discourse. Sheldon stated that girls' use of mitigation was similar to those observed of adult females.

Other researchers have found patterns that are not consistent with those of Sheldon. Lloyd and Goodwin (1993) performed naturalistic observations of 4-year-old children playing in their preschool classrooms, finding that overall girls used more directives than boys. However DeHart (1996) failed to note any gender difference when observing 3- and 4-year-old children in home settings, each playing with a sibling whose age was within 2 years of the child's age; the pattern of gender differences in use of mitigation usually reported for peer interactions was not evident in these interactions. These findings suggest that contextual characteristics of the play setting influence children's interactions during play.

Other researchers focusing on contextual characteristics of play have suggested that differences in verbal communication between boys and girls are a function of combination of gender and contextual variables rather than gender itself. Ausch (1994) presented the same and mixed gender dyads with similar masculine and feminine toys and examined their verbal interactions, finding that girls expressed higher levels of confrontational speech when playing with an army themed play set than with a dollhouse, while the level of boys' confrontational speech did not differ with the play materials, suggesting that, at least for girls, characteristics of the play materials may elicit particular interactional styles. Comparing children playing in both mixed- and same-sex dyads, Duveen and Lloyd (1988) found no gender difference in analysis of children's pretend scripts, and found that differences in mean length of utterance were not related to the gender of the speaker, but to the gender of the play partner. These inconsistent findings suggest that a combination of gender and varying social contexts may influence children's discourse during play.

The group of studies concerning interactions found that girls' interactions were generally more sophisticated than boys, in that girls' play was longer, more complex, and had

more of a social orientation. Black (1989, 1992) observed that girls had a higher level of coherent discourse and used a style of turn taking in which turns were related to each other interactionally and topically and they suggested topics and roles to others in play. Other research reported similar findings, such as girls engaging in longer episodes of dyadic interaction (Benenson, Apostoleris, & Parnass, 1997), and in more cooperative pretense groups (Neppl & Murray, 1997) than boys. Boys' play was characterized by egocentric speech and rejection of others' ideas (Black, 1992). In general, these findings reflect the gender differences in children's social interaction that have been found both in play and nonplay settings (cf., Huston, 1983).

Gender differences in symbolic representation

Inconsistent results were obtained in research that examined gender differences in material and ideational fantasy. Some studies reported that boys engaged in material fantasy play more than girls (Cole & LaVoie, 1985; Jones & Glenn, 1991) whereas others reported the opposite (Wall et al., 1990). Moreover, in some research girls engaged in different forms of ideational fantasy more than boys (Göncü & Kessel, 1988; Jones & Glenn, 1991) whereas in others no differences were observed between boys and girls (Cole & LaVoie, 1985).

One particular area of inquiry has been gender differences in role adoption. Again, some studies reported that girls adopted pretend roles with significantly greater frequency than boys (Doyle et al., 1991; Jones & Glenn, 1991; McLoyd, Warren, & Thomas, 1984; Wall et al., 1990) while others did not find a gender difference in role play (Cole & LaVoie, 1985; Göncü & Kessel, 1988).

Gender differences have also been examined in the types of roles that boys and girls enact. McLoyd, Warren, and Thomas (1984) examined the distribution of domestic (e.g., mother), occupational (e.g., doctor), fantastic (e.g., Superman) and peripheral roles (i.e., roles that are represented only in terms of actions without explicit identification such as driving). Girls took almost only domestic roles whereas the distribution of different kinds of roles was more even with boys. These findings are consistent with those of Wall et al. (1990) and Connolly et al. (1983) who found that girls often enacted familial roles while boys often enacted character roles.

Some studies examined gender differences in role play in relation to the play objects available for children. Black (1989) found gender differences in the enactment of themes, particularly that girls generated themes elicited by props more than did boys, while boys were more likely to generate themes unrelated to props. Wall et al. (1990) reported that girls incorporated easily animated objects (e.g., horses) more frequently than not easily animated objects (e.g., blocks). The opposite pattern was true for boys.

Finally, consistent with emerging interest in gender differences in the communication of pretending, some researchers began to examine the relation between gender and role play by means of discourse analyses. For example, Sawyer (1996) found that girls used a communicative style of "direct voicing," in which each player acted out a role different from the roles of partners, while boys tended to collectively perform a single play role.

In summary, the existing findings suggest that gender differences may emerge as a function of various contextual features such as the type of play materials, setting, and gender of

play partners. However, this interpretation derives from the inconsistency of results rather than the systematic examination of gender within its context. Therefore, future research should address the role of context in the emergence of gender differences.

An additional concern is the lack of naturalistic studies in this area. The majority of the studies involved some sort of intervention or structure imposed by the researcher, such as selection of play materials, and assignment to play partners or groups. Thus, these findings may not reflect play behavior occurring in naturalistic setting without intervention, where children have a wide range of choices, and decide play themes and choose toys independently.

Social Class and Cultural Context of Pretend Play

The work that examined the class and cultural differences in children's pretend play emerged from a concern that children from low-income and non-Western communities may have been misunderstood in the developmental literature. McLoyd's (1982) and Schwartzman's (1978) reviews on class and cultural differences indicated that the studies on class and cultural differences were flawed on methodological grounds. The conclusion that low-income and non-Western children do not play as imaginatively as their middle-income or Western counterparts should be re-examined.

Taking care of the methodological problems alone to properly address class and cultural differences may not be sufficient. Understanding the presence or absence of pretend play requires understanding the economical structure of children's communities and the significance attributed to pretend play. The variations across communities in pretend play can be the result of variations in adults' and children's workload and values about pretend play rather than children's ability to engage in it (Göncü, 1999).

The prevailing belief in this approach is that play is one of the childhood activities that socialize children into their communities' existing system of myths and meanings (Brougere, 2000; Clark, 1995; Goldman, 1998). In order to draw conclusions about children's play behavior, we need to understand the larger community context in which pretend play is embedded. As a result, many scholars have adopted an *emic* approach to understand the opportunities afforded for children's pretend play and its occurrence. This meant going beyond Western theory and research tools. Extensive interviews and observations were conducted to identify unique local definitions, significance, and occurrence of pretend play.

The role of the community structure and adult values as they relate to the occurrence of pretend play has been examined in a number of studies. Below, we first describe the play of children in non-Western village communities, and then move on to the description of children from Western and non-Western urban communities.

Pretend play in village communities

That adults' values about pretend play are closely related to their level of schooling, income level, and sources of income has been shown in a study of toddlers (Göncü, Mistry, &

Mosier, 2000). Caregivers in peasant communities in Rajastan, India and San Pedro, Guatemala, considered adult–child pretend play as either inappropriate for adults or a waste of time due to their workload. Children in these communities engaged in play activities with other children in mixed-age groupings. In contrast, middle to upper middle income parents with numbers of years of schooling in Salt Lake City, USA, and Ankara, Turkey, valued pretend play and pretended with their children, engaging in various forms of verbalizations.

 Gaskins (1999) provided an ethnography of Mayan children's activities in a village in the Yucatan. Gaskins stated that three principles of cultural engagement guide the rare manifestation of pretend play in this village. These are the primacy of adult work, importance of parental beliefs about nature and child development, and the independence of child motivation. Based on her observations of 1- to 5-year-old children, Gaskins reported that pretend play occurred rarely in the lives of Mayan children from 1 to 5 years of age. Gaskins states that this is due to the fact that work life occupies a major portion of Mayan adults who do not consider pretend play as a valuable activity of childhood. Also, children themselves are expected to contribute to the work life of the family. Therefore, the caregivers do not make time provisions for pretend play. However, because of their respect for the independence of children's motivation, when children engage in pretend play on their own, parents tolerate this activity. Thus, Gaskins concludes that the relative infrequency of pretend play and its occurrence in the company of other children in this Mayan village is not an indication of children's deficiency to engage in symbolic activity. Rather, it is a consequence of the lack of opportunity and the insignificance attributed to pretend play.

Lancy (1996) illustrated that Kpelle adults in a farming village in Liberia do not serve as children's teachers or make specific efforts to engage in pretend play with their children. However, children from 4 to 11 years pretend in what Lancy calls the "motherground," a village plaza where children can be easily monitored by the adults. Children's pretend play themes are less varied than their Western counterparts and consist of themes of daily life such as pretending to be a blacksmith or a rice farmer.

Goldman (1998) noted that adults did not participate in the social pretend play of children during observations of 4- to 11-year-old Huli children's play in the Southern Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea. Working in a community where adults are subsistence farmers, Goldman stated that through adult activity and adult–child interactions such as metaphors, rhyming, motherese, and proverbs, adults presented themselves as pretend role models to the children. Goldman's naturalistic observations described the communicative and metacommunicative processes by which Huli children constructed pretend play frames and roles just like their Western counterparts. In addition, Goldman observed that Huli children used pretend play as an interpretative activity in which they practiced their understanding of the particular symbols of Huli myth such as "ogre" and "trickster."

Martini (1994) described the play activities of 13 children in the island of "Ua Pou," Marquesas Islands. Children varied in age from 2 to 5 in this stable play group. In the valley where the research took place, men fish and women do house work. Consistent with the studies cited above, Martini also reported that adults did not participate in children's play activity. The observations revealed that children engaged in social pretend play occasionally. Children's pretend play scripts were simple, and repetitious across different play

occasions and across different players. According to Martini, keeping pretend simple and repetitious is the result of children's desire not to create situations of conflict and negotiations and to maintain the harmony and hierarchy established in the peer group in their pretend activities.

Bloch (1989) in her description of 2- to 6-year-old children's activities in a village in Senegal noted that Senegalese children engaged in different kinds of play including pretend play as much as their U.S. counterparts. Children's playgrounds were populated by people of different ages but children's play partners were other children rather than adults. Senegalese adults supported children's play but due to their workload they did not engage in play with their children.

In summary, these findings support the expectation that pretend play occurs in the lives of non-Western village children. In village communities where adult workload is overwhelming children serve as play partners for one another.

Pretend play in urban communities

Most work in urban communities was conducted in the United States and such work described the play of middle- to upper-class children. For example, Haight and Miller (1993) examined the development of pretend play of affluent children from European-American households. The data were collected at children's homes from 12 to 48 months of age. The mothers were the primary caregivers and did not work outside of their homes. They had at least college education, and reported that pretend play is an important activity in the development and education of their children. The mothers provided space and toys for children's play. Pretend play occurred mostly with objects, reflecting this community's value about material possessions. Children's play was not limited to their playrooms; they played in the living rooms and in the kitchens.

Consistent with Dunn's (1988) work with middle-class mothers and infants in England, Haight and Miller's findings showed that mothers contributed greatly to the maintenance of pretend play during infancy by asking probing questions and elaborating children's initiations. In addition, in this U.S. community, mothers enthusiastically initiated pretend play at 12 months when half of the children in the sample were not even pretending. After 24 months, mothers and children shared initiations. However, children played with their peers equally as much at 48 months as they did with their mothers. Also, children's pretend play episodes with the peers were the most sustained.

Haight (1999) and her collaborators (Haight, Wang, Fung, Williams, & Mintz, 1999) examined similarities and differences in the play of middle-class Irish-American and Chinese children from 2.5 to 4 years of age. Interviews with parents revealed that parents in both communities considered pretend play as an important activity that contributes to children's development and socialization. Consistent with their reports, parents in both communities engaged in pretend play with their children. However, the way in which parents played with their children differed across the two communities, reflecting the differences in the value they attributed to pretend play. Chinese caregivers considered pretend play as a medium of teaching children culturally accepted forms of conduct, and to do so they adopted a didactic approach and demanded mature behavior from their chil-

dren, emphasizing social routines in their play. In contrast, Irish-American parents took a "child-centered" approach of meeting their children's needs and supporting their interests, engaging in fantasy play with their children. Irish-American children initiated play with their parents and played with other children more than the Chinese children.

Farver (1999) and her collaborators examined differences in the play of middle-class Korean- and European-American preschool children. Farver, Kim, and Lee's (1995) interviews with mothers revealed that European-American mothers thought of play as a learning experience whereas Korean-American mothers considered play as primarily amusement for children. Their observations indicated that European-American children engaged in social pretend play more than the Korean-American children. In a follow-up study, Farver and Shin (1997) illustrated that the differences in the frequency of social pretend play between the two cultural groups was not due to differences in the ability of children to engage in pretend. Rather, the opportunities provided by children's cultures resulted in the differences in their pretend play. Korean-American children grow up in home and school environments that encourage structured academic work, whereas the European-American children grow up in environments that consider pretend play as an educational opportunity. Thus, European-American children engaged in pretend play more than their Korean-American counterparts during free play but in a controlled experimental setting the differences in the amount of play between the two communities disappeared.

Farver and Shin (1997) also showed that the European-American and Korean-American children differ in their communication of social pretend play. Children in each community communicate with one another in ways that are consistent with their communities' values. Consistent with U.S. values about independence and individualistic orientation towards self, and previous findings (e.g., Garvey, 1990; Göncü & Kessel, 1984), the European-American children were direct and explicit in expressing themselves with their partners. In contrast, Korean-American children's communication reflected their values about interdependence and collective orientation towards self as evidenced in their description of the partners' actions, tag questions, polite requests, and lesser degree of rejection of their partners' ideas than the European-American preschoolers.

Efforts to compare the play of children from different income levels have been rare. Doyle et al. (1991) reported social class differences and concluded that class differences are likely due to cultural rather than cognitive differences associated with income. Tudge, Hogan, Lee, Tammeveski, Meltsas, Kulakova, Snezhkova, & Putnam (1999) examined the distribution of play, work, academic lesson, and conversation activities in day-to-day living of preschool age children with working- and middle-class children in Greensboro (USA), Obninsk (Russia), Tartu (Estonia), and Suwon (Korea). These authors' definition of play included different kinds of play. Therefore, no particular conclusions can be drawn with regard to pretend play. However, it is noteworthy that the most frequently occurring activity was play in all of the communities.

Unfortunately, hardly any effort has been made to describe the play of low-income children since McLoyd's (1982) review. There have been only few efforts to describe the play of low-income African-American (McLoyd et al., 1984; Weinberger & Starkey, 1994) and Puerto-Rican children (Soto & Negron, 1994). These studies provided evidence that low-income children of color also engage in pretend play like their middle-income and European-American counterparts. This information is a valuable contribution to the

literature. However, it is limited in that our knowledge of low-income children of color is determined by observational devices developed on the basis of middle-class children's play. A fuller understanding of low-income children's play is possible when we examine these children's activities from their own cultures' points of view. Adopting such an emic approach, Göncü, Tuermer, Jain, and Johnson (1999) reported that low-income European-American, African-American, and Turkish children engage in forms of pretend play such as teasing that have not been observed either conceptually or empirically in the play of middle-class children.

Conclusions

The work of the last two decades on pretend play of preschool children has resulted in important conceptual and empirical advances. Pretend play is a universal activity of childhood with its own definitive features involving symbolic representation of experiences and affect framed by metacommunication. However, variations in pretend play occur as a function of children's social class and cultural background as well as their age and gender. Inquiry into these variations indicate that we need to understand the extent of play opportunities afforded to children before we make judgments about children's ability to engage in pretend play, and make decisions about the need for interventions.

Our efforts to understand variations, especially class and cultural variations, will be productive if we integrate the priorities of Western and cross-cultural research traditions. Western research on play considered largely the microstructures of pretend play (e.g., pretend roles) whereas cross-cultural research on play considered largely the macrostructure of play (e.g., cultural patterns of belief and practice.) If Westerners work on how Western children's culture relates to the internal structure of children's pretend play, and cross-cultural researchers explore in more depth how the environment of play shapes the particular experiences of individual children's play, we will be able to better understand cultural variations in children's pretend play and their sources. We need to conduct research that will simultaneously recognize the cultural structure and the individual instantiation and use of play in all children.

Two tasks qualify as the appropriate beginning points for the immediate future inquiry: The first relates to the most definitive feature of pretend play. We need to explore cultural variations in how children differentiate pretend activity from nonpretend activity. Western experimental research on children's understanding of pretense and their theory of mind shed some empirical light on this issue (e.g., Harris & Kavanaugh, 1993; Lillard, 1996; Woolley, 1997). However, how children's culture and language guide their differentiation of pretend activities from those that are not pretend and how children communicate their differentiations remain unknown.

A second task is to address the contribution of pretend play to children's development and education. Relations have been reported between pretend play and language (Cole & LaVoie, 1985), literacy skills (Roskos & Christie, 2000), story recall (Pellegrini, 1984), and social and affective skills (Connolly & Doyle, 1984; de Lorimier et al., 1995; Doyle & Connolly, 1989; Howes, 1988; Howes & Matheson, 1992; Maguire & Dunn, 1997).

However, it is important to expand examination of these relations to include children's social class, ethnic, and cultural background in an integral fashion so that we have fuller information about whether or how these significant relations exist in different communities.

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