

Play and Learning in Early Childhood Settings

International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Development

Volume 1

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Early childhood education in many countries has been built upon a strong tradition of a materially rich and active play-based pedagogy and environment. Yet what has become visible within the profession, is essentially a Western view of childhood preschool education and school education.

It is timely that a series of books be published which present a broader view of early childhood education. This series, seeks to provide an international perspective on early childhood education. In particular, the books published in this series will:

- Examine how learning is organized across a range of cultures, particularly Indigenous communities
- Make visible a range of ways in which early childhood pedagogy is framed and enacted across countries, including the majority poor countries
- Critique how particular forms of knowledge are constructed in curriculum within and across countries
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- Critique assessment practices and consider a broader set of ways of measuring children's learning
- Examine concept formation from within the context of country-specific pedagogy and learning outcomes

The series will cover theoretical works, evidence-based pedagogical research, and international research studies. The series will also cover a broad range of countries, including poor majority countries. Classical areas of interest, such as play, the images of childhood, and family studies will also be examined. However the focus will be critical and international (not Western-centric).

Ingrid Pramling-Samuelsson · Marilyn Flear
Editors

Play and Learning in Early Childhood Settings

International Perspectives

 Springer

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Foreword

This book represents the outcome of the joint activities of a group of scholars who were concerned about the lack of international research in play for children from birth to 3 years. The authors are members of the Organisation Mondiale pour l'Éducation Préscolaire (OMEP). For further information, see <http://www.omep-ong.net/>.

The idea of carrying out a research project internationally was born at the OMEP's World Congress in Melbourne, Australia 2004. All member countries were invited and 10 countries decided to participate, of which three have withdrawn during the process. The reason for this might be that in these countries only one person was working with the project, while other seven countries have been working in a team of two or more persons. The countries that have carried out research and contributed to this book with a chapter each are Australia, Chile, China, Japan, New Zealand, Sweden and USA (Wisconsin). For more information about the participating countries and their corresponding addresses, see Appendix I.

This book project started in Melbourne with a discussion about what is general in early childhood education globally, and what is culturally specific. The discussion was inspired by one of the keynote speakers, Nazhat Shameem (2004), judge in the supreme court in Fiji, when she said: "If we all think we are so different and specific in each culture, the role of human rights has no value anymore."

We formulated three questions:

- What is the meaning of play and learning, for 0 to 3?
- How do teachers work to support this?
- What are the families' views of play?

We decided to use Barbara Rogoff's socio-cultural theory as a framework for our interpretations. We used her three foci of analysis: intrapersonal, interpersonal and cultural/institutional.

We also agreed on making an empirical study including at least five children, aged from birth to three, from five different early childhood education settings, typical for each country. Some countries have collected data from more children. Each child is observed by video recordings during one whole day, and the child's teacher and parents are interviewed. The empirical data should be seen as case studies,

and can never represent each country on a more general level. However, we are convinced that different national ethos become visible in these few case studies.

Children aged from birth to three as a target group has received very limited attention in research all over the world. This age group, is increasingly becoming part of the early childhood education system in many countries, and from what we know from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) evaluation (OECD, 2001), the staff taking care of the children in this age group seem to be those with the lowest education. What does that mean for young children's experiences in everyday life in early childhood education? We hope you as a reader of this book will enjoy reading this book as much as we who have in worked with the studies documented in the forthcoming chapters.

Göteborg
Melbourne

Ingrid Pramling-Samuelsson
Marilyn Flear

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Chapter 1

A Cultural-Historical Perspective on Play: Play as a Leading Activity Across Cultural Communities

Marilyn Fler

Introduction

Across the international community, early childhood professionals have generally privileged the place of *play* within both practice and curriculum documentation (Wood, 2004). The term play is almost synonymous with early childhood education (Ailwood, 2003). Yet, there is much debate around what constitutes play, and the theoretical perspectives which drive how play is talked about and made visible to professionals (Fler, 1999).

Although play is very important in the discourse, theory and practice of early childhood education, much of the foundational research which has informed current practice in Western heritage communities (and more recently Eastern countries) (Cooney, 2004; Fler, 1996; Haight, Wang, Fung, Williams & Mintz 1999), are now very dated (Dockett & Fler, 1999). Many of the children who had participated in the early studies of Piaget, Parten and Smilansky (to name a few very influential theorists) have grown up or have died. The socio-political contexts of children and their families are very different to those of Parten's subjects, as the life experiences of children today are diverse, global and technological (see Kaliala, 2006).

In addition, research into play has tended to concentrate upon the play activities of 4-year-old children, with less research effort directed towards how babies and 2-year olds play (Dockett & Fler, 1999). Similarly, research into play has privileged contexts which have been constructed (e.g. laboratories), as apposed to research in more naturalistic settings, such as homes and early childhood centres (see Wood, 2004).

Research into play has also been framed in ways which privilege European heritage cultural practices, rather than seeing play as culturally specific (Cooney, 2004; Fler, 1996; Gaskins and Göncü, 1988; Göncü, Mistry, & Mosier, 2000; Haight et al., 1999; Rettig, 1995). Gaskins and Göncü (1988) argued that 'Cultural and individual variations in quantity and quality of symbolic play (that they noticed in their cross-cultural research) raise questions about the origins, developmental

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outcomes, and functions of play' (p. 107). More recently, Göncü et al. (2000) have noted in their empirical work that 'it is not warranted to assume that all communities value and provide comparable play opportunities for their children' (p. 321). They have found 'community differences in frequency of both the numbers of children who played, as well as differences in children's play partners' noting that 'occurrence of social play presents cultural variations' (p. 325). They suggest that in the past, 'an overlap between Western researchers' conceptualizations 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' (p. 323).

It is timely that an international study of the play activities of children aged 1–3 years be undertaken. In this book, seven studies of the play activities of infants and toddlers are presented, with a view to not only update what we know about very young children's play, but also to gain a more international perspective on how play is framed, sanctioned, theorized, and built into the discourse and documentation of early childhood education across seven countries.

Defining Play

Although most professionals speak about play as though it were a single entity, play has been defined and theorized in many different ways. For instance, Fromberg (1992) suggests that play is characterized by thinking and activity that is symbolic, meaningful, active, pleasurable, voluntary, rule-governed and episodic. Bateson (1972) suggests that play is evident when participants frame events, through attitude, pretence, vocalization and other metacommunicative cues. Göncü et al. (2000) suggests that play is evident when there is a sense of playfulness and fun, but also that we should look carefully across cultures for variations. These examples illustrate the diversity of views on how play is defined. This is not simply a contemporary challenge, but rather something that has been with us as a profession for a long time. For instance, Hutt et al. (1989) found in their review of children's activities, 'some fourteen distinct categories of behaviour were identified, all of which, in one or another context, have been labelled as "play"' (p.10). What is particularly interesting about their review of the literature at that time is that the 14 categories actually represented almost all children's behaviour. In essence, play could be viewed in its broadest sense as describing almost all the activities that young children engage in. This literature suggests that there is no standard definition for play, and that most of the behaviours and activities young children engage in can be termed as play by one theorist or another.

Historically, different theories have been developed to explain the activities of children. For instance, Mitchell and Mason (1948) suggested that play was a way of 'blowing off steam'. Their surplus energy theory explained that play was undertaken when humans had excess energy. In contrast, Lazarus (1883) put forward the Recreation theory of play, whereby children restore their energy levels by playing.

After extensive investigations of human and animal behaviours, Groos (1898) suggested that through play, children practised the skills they needed in adult life. He termed this the Instinct-practice theory of play. Hall (1906) also recognized instinct as an important dimension in play, suggesting that play was important for human evolution. The recapitulation theory of play put forward by Hall (1906) suggests that children enact the stages of human evolution through play. Play has also been explained as an opportunity for the safe expression of pent-up emotions (see Carr, 1902; Claperde, 1911).

The diversity of explanations for play, discussed by these classical theorists of play, can also be mirrored in more recent theorization of play. For example, Psychoanalytical theories of play, based on the work of Freud and his colleagues, and advanced by Klein (1932), support the use of play for helping children deal with emotional problems (e.g. play therapy). Play therapy has a firm place within contemporary early childhood education, and this literature is drawn upon for justifying the place of dramatic play within programmes (Dockett & Flear, 1999).

Cognitive theories of play, such as those of Piaget (1962) and Smilansky (1968), and social theories of play, as put forward by Parten (1932, 1933), are more widely known and used by early childhood professionals in most European heritage communities (see Main editors note for Flear, 1999). These important works have informed researchers and educators interested in young children. Scholars such as Bruce (1991), Gaskins (2005), Göncü et al. (2000), Hutt et al. (1989), Kaliala (2006), Moyles (1994), Paley (1990), Wood (2004), and Wood and Attfield (1996) have drawn upon these works in their support or critique of play within early childhood education. Contemporary researchers have also used these traditional theories of play to frame their studies (e.g. Ailwood, 2003; Clements, 2004; Hagan, Anderson, & Parry, 2001; de Haan, 2005; Lofdahl, 2006; Michalopoulou, 2001; Vejleskov, 1995).

Many of these contemporary scholars have used the foundational research and theorization of Parten (1932, 1933) and Smilansky (1968) to inform their writings and research on early childhood education. For instance, Bruce (1991) in drawing upon the work of Göncü (1987) has espoused a view of play known as 'Free-flow play':

Free-flow play is sometimes called 'imaginative play', 'free play', 'fantasy play', 'pretend play' or 'ludic play'. It is not structured play, guided play, games play, practice play or exploratory play (Bruce, 1991, p. 7).

Beardsley and Harnett (1998) use the terms 'pretend play', 'role play', 'fantasy play', 'imaginative play', 'free-flow play', 'dramatic play' and 'sociodramatic play' in defining the play activities of children in their writings. As a result, we are now seeing a substantial body of literature on play (Vygotsky, 1966), most of which draws upon foundational research undertaken some time ago, and predominantly with European heritage children (notable exceptions are Cooney, 2004; Flear, 1999; Gaskins, 2005; Göncü, 1998, 1999; Göncü et al., 2000; Miller & Harwood, 2002; Tamis-LeMonda & Bornstein, 1992; Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1999). The theories and research that have amassed over time represent a complex and variable set of

designs, findings, theories and definitions. As Wood and Attfield (1996) suggest, play is:

... infinitely varied and complex. It represents cognitive, cultural, historical, social and physical interconnections between the known and the unknowing, the actual and the possible, the probable and the improbable. It is a dialogue between fantasy and reality, between past, present and future, between the logical and the absurd, and between safety and risk. Given, these complexities it is hardly surprising that play has defied neat tidy definitions (p. 4).

In this particular publication, a cultural–historical perspective has driven the framing of the research, and the analysis and write up of the findings across the seven countries. It is through a range of cross-cultural contexts that the complexity and richness of the activities of children can be assembled – albeit in only seven countries, with multiple contexts being illuminated. Nevertheless, the cultural–historical framing of this research allows for a more connected view of play to emerge, as the cultural contexts frame what is possible for children and what is valued by communities.

A Cultural-Historical Perspective on Play

A legacy of Vygotsky's writing has been the interest generated in understanding the social, cultural and historical contexts in which children and adults find themselves today. Of significance is Vygotsky's view that in order to understand the individual, one must also understand the cultural–historical context in which the individual resides. Cultural–historical theory foregrounds those contexts which shape social relations, community values and past practices which have laid the foundations of what participants pay attention to in their communities. In this book, the social, political and historical contexts of the different countries are detailed as an important dimension in understanding the way play is spoken about, researched and positioned within the early childhood profession.

Although Vygotsky wrote very little on the nature of play, we can learn a great deal about his views if we examine his seminal article *Play and its role in the mental development of the child* (Vygotsky, 1966) within the context of his theorization as articulated in *The collected works on L.S. Vygotsky* (Volumes 1–6). Of particular interest for this discussion on play is his writing on development (Volume 5), higher mental functions (Volume 4) and concept formation (Volume 1).

One of the central defining features of Vygotsky's (1966) writing on play is his view that play provides a space for the conscious realizations of concepts. For instance, he gives the example of two children who in real life are sisters, and who play out being sister. He argues that the sisters have an everyday concept of 'being sisters', but may not have a scientific concept of sibling relationships. Vygotsky (1966) states that in the play context, that a space is created in which children can bring together their everyday concept of 'being sisters', with the scientific concept of 'sisterhood'. Through play, the children consciously focus on the concept of 'sisters', thus paving the way for concept formation. He states: 'What passes unnoticed by the child in real life becomes a rule of behavior in play' (p. 9). It is these rules for

behaviour in everyday life that are acted out through play. Vygotsky (1966) argues that, in this way, a zone of proximal development is generated through play.

In Volume 1 Vygotsky (1987) discusses how everyday or spontaneous concepts, such as using language, lay the foundation upon which the study of language (e.g. grammar) can take place. The academic or scientific concepts (e.g. studying language at school) cannot take place without the everyday concepts (of using language) being enacted through life or practice. Similarly, he argued that to only ever study a new language for example, without ever practising it in everyday contexts (i.e. speaking it), meant that concept formation was limited. He suggested that everyday concepts move their way upwards, and scientific concepts moved their way downwards. He argued that through the interlacing of everyday and scientific concepts, that children became conscious of their everyday practice (scientific concepts in practice), thus transforming their everyday practice. For example, knowing to put on a jumper when you are cold (an everyday concept) does not help you when you wish to go surfing and want to keep warm. However, knowing about insulation (scientific concept) will transform how you may go about buying a wet suit to keep you warm in the water. Vygotsky (1966) argued that in play, children are positioned as having to move outside of everyday concepts, and begin to consciously consider the behaviours of everyday practice. Rather than acting unconsciously when 'being a sister', in play children must actively think about the concept of a 'sister' in order to play. Vygotsky's theoretical ideas on play within the context of everyday and scientific concept formation (Volume 1) are very powerful for us as researchers and professionals grappling with how to define play or when debating the value of play. If play provides a conceptual space for the dialectical relations between everyday concept formation and scientific concept formation, then we have at our disposal a whole new way of thinking about play and learning.

I think that in finding criteria for distinguishing a child's play activity from his (SIC) other general forms of activity it must be accepted that in play a child creates an imaginary situation (Vygotsky, 1966, p. 8).

Taking a cultural-historical perspective on play means that we look to define play when we notice that preschool children place themselves into an imaginary situation, with rules, and children act out the behaviours that are associated with those rules (e.g. being a mum or a sister in play). However, Vygotsky (1966) stressed that preschool children do not put themselves in an imaginary world (that would be a delusion), or that children simply copy the real world that they observe. He argues against the strongly held view that play is the child's work, but rather he suggests that play is a leading activity and not the predominant activity of young children.

He suggested that children under three tend to focus on objects and their action is in relation to the objects in their environment. He argued that children under three are constrained by what is visible only. That is, a door suggests you open it, a toy phone suggest you call someone on it. He argued that over time the child begins to act differently in relation to what it sees. Preschool children tend to substitute objects with meaning, such as a stick becoming a horse. Through play, the child is also liberated from real actions – for example, the child makes eating movements

with its hands to represent eating. A child under three is more likely to use actions to explore, such as sucking on fingers or stroking or manipulating objects. Preschool children are not constrained by objects or real actions. Objects are substituted by meaning, and actions are substituted by meaning as the child develops. According to Vygotsky (1966, p. 12) 'play is a transitional stage' in which a separation from an object can take place. He argues that 'It is terribly difficult for a child to sever thought (the meaning of a word) from object.'

Vygotsky (1966) argued that 'whenever there is an imaginary situation in play there are rules, not rules which are formulated in advance and which change during the course of the game, but rules stemming from the imaginary situation' (Vygotsky, 1966, p. 10). He argues that 'In play the child is free. But this is an illusory freedom' (p. 10), because the rules dictate how play is enacted.

Vygotsky also argued that whilst imaginary situations have concealed rules of how to behave in that imaginary situation, that for older children who play with explicit rules, that an imaginary situation is created. Vygotsky (1966) suggested that through playing chess, a school-aged child has to engage with an imaginary world. This is particularly evident in board games, such as Monopoly or Hangman.

Vygotsky's (1966) work on play highlights the differing capacities of children of different ages, for instance:

I think that play with an imaginary situation is something essentially new, impossible for a child under three; it is a novel form of behavior in which the child is liberated from situational constraints through his activity in an imaginary situation (p. 11).

Vygotsky's (1966) theory raises many questions about the nature of play and the development of thinking in play. In this book, contemporary snap shots of play with children under the age of three reveal many contradictions, both with respect to Vygotsky's theory on the role of play in mental development for children under 3 years and also play across cultures. Nevertheless, Vygotsky's (1966) sociocultural-historical work lays important foundation for understanding play across cultures.

Another important theoretical idea that Vygotsky put forward was the zone of proximal development. For Vygotsky (1966) play created a zone of proximal development. As such, play is important in the development of higher mental functioning (see Volume 4). Vygotsky (1966) stated that 'In play a child is always above his (SIC) average age, above his daily behavior; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself' (p. 16). Vygotsky's (1997) writings on higher mental functioning were founded on a belief in the dialectical relations between natural or biological development and historical or cultural development. In Volume 4, he argues that biological development and cultural development are essentially two sides of the same coin. He suggests that biological development makes available to children new ways of interfacing with their environment, such as walking or speaking. However, he also argues that through social relation with people and things biological development is also significantly influenced. In play, children have at their disposal biological and cultural tools that interact to generate development. Understanding the social contexts in which children play is particularly important for interpret-

ing development in and through play. Vygotsky (1997) states that 'higher mental functioning cannot be understood without sociological study' (p. 18). As such, this book seeks also to interpret how staff and families who support children's learning through play understand and value play. Many of the authors of chapters in this book have analysed teacher and family perspectives on play in order to better understand the development of higher mental functioning within the context of play.

As in the focus of a magnifying glass, play contains all the developmental tendencies in a condensed form; in play it is as though the child were trying to jump above the level of his normal behavior. (Vygotsky, 1966: 16)

In Volume 5 Vygotsky (1998) discusses his theory of development, notably the crisis points that emerge as a result of the dialectical relations between biological and cultural development in young children. In the background of Vygotsky's (1966) theory on play lies his thinking on crisis points. For instance, Vygotsky (1966) speaks strongly about the interests, incentives and motives of children to act. These motives and needs are the foundations to his crisis points.

At preschool age special needs and incentives arise which are highly important to the whole of the child's development and which are spontaneously expressed in play (Vygotsky, 1966, p. 7).

Vygotsky (1998) presents progression of critical periods, interspersed with crisis points. For example, there is the crisis of the newborn, followed by infancy (2 months–1 year). At the age of one is a crisis point, as the motives and interests of the infant change. Vygotsky labels the period from 1 to 3 years as early childhood. A crisis appears at the age of three. This is followed by a period known as the Preschool age (3–7 years), with a crisis point at 7 years (see Vygotsky, 1998, vol. 5, p. 196). Vygotsky (1966) has argued that 'Play is the source of development and creates the zone of proximal development' (p. 16). For Vygotsky (1966) play was the 'leading activity which determines the child's development' (p. 16).

The play-development relationship can be compared to the instruction-development relationship, but play provides a background for changes in needs and in consciousness of a much wider nature (Vygotsky, 1966, p. 16).

Vygotsky (1966) argues that 'As play develops, we see a movement toward the conscious realization of its purpose' (p. 16). Vygotsky (1998) suggests that changes in consciousness are evident at given age levels. The motives, interests and incentives change as a result of the dialectical relations between cultural and biological development. He warns that play should not be viewed completely as an intellectual activity, as motives, interests and incentives of children shape the nature of play. Of significance in Vygotsky's writings is the social situation of development.

The social situation of development represents the initial moment for all dynamic changes that occur in development during the given period. It determines wholly and completely the forms and the path along which the child will acquire ever newer personality characteristics, drawing them from the social reality as from the basic source of development, the path along which the social becomes the individual. Thus, the first question we must answer in studying the dynamics of any age is to explain the social situation of development (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 198).

The social situation of a child is determined by the society and cultural context in which the child is embedded. The motives, interests and incentives will be different across cultures, thus influencing the nature of development. If play is the leading activity for the development for young children, and play represents action within an 'imaginative sphere, in an imaginary situation, the creation of voluntary intentions and the formation of real-life plans and volitional motives' (Vygotsky, 1966, p. 16) then examining play across cultures within the birth to 3 years is vitally important.

Participating Countries

In this book seven countries participated in the study of the play activities of children from birth to 3 years. In Chapter 2, play in Aotearoa New Zealand is detailed. The significance of the Maori, Pasifika and Pakeha (British immigrants) history is shown within the context of early childhood curriculum development and professional learning of teachers (all professionals working with very young children are given this title). The nomenclature and specializations within early childhood education is depicted by White et al., through the Playcentres, Education and Care services, Te Kohanga Reo, Pasifika language nests, Home-based education and care, Playgroups and Kindergartens.

In Chapter 3, the Australian socio-political context is given, with the mix of public and private institutions for early childhood education, each being uniquely defined within the seven states and territories of Australia. The culturally and linguistically diverse background of the Australian population, and the previous structural division between care and education, provide for a unique context to understand the nature and discourse of play within early childhood education. Staff in education settings have university qualifications and most programmes which are labelled as care have technically qualified staff. This is consistent with the staffing profiles found in Chile, as discussed in Chapter 4 by Aedo et al. In Chile, enormous political support is given to early childhood education, with politicians believing in the importance of the early years for fostering major educational outcomes for the whole community. Curriculum in Chile is focussed on the birth to six sectors with a special curriculum in place for infants and toddlers. Play is the main methodology for supporting learning in early childhood in Chile.

Early childhood education in Hong Kong China, is also structurally divided between care and education, as is shown in Chapter 5. Nirmala Rao and Hui Li show how the historical context and political belief system of families and authorities shape the way in which play is framed and enacted within early childhood education. Like Aotearoa New Zealand, Hong Kong China has different institutions for the care and education of young children, and like Australia they are administered by either Health or Education Government Departments.

In Chapter 6, Mori et al. give the socio-political background of early childhood education and care in Japan. In Japan early childhood education is organized as Yochien (Preschool/kindergarten), Hoikusho (day nursery/child care centre) and

Nintei Kodomoen (combination of Yochien and Hoikusho). Like other countries with this split in education and care systems, Japan has university-qualified staff in Yochien and a Day nursery licence for Hoikusho. Curriculum for 0–3 years children is play oriented, with a focus on supporting the child to ‘form one’s character’.

Early childhood education in Sweden is detailed in Chapter 7. Unlike Australia, Chile and Japan, most staff working in early childhood education in Sweden are qualified. Ingrid Pramling-Samuelsson and Sonja Sheridan provide rich examples of play in action in Swedish Preschools, many of which exemplify the Swedish National Early Childhood Curriculum. In Chapter 8, Lenore Wineberg and Louis Chicquette discuss their Wisconsin early childhood education in the context of recent Government policies of ‘No Child Left Behind’, the NAEYC accreditation system, and the theoretical writings of Vygotsky and Piaget.

The diverse cultural and geographical landscape provides a complex picture for the findings detailed in subsequent chapters. The cultural–historical context of each of the participating countries, provides a rich and interesting backdrop to understanding the nature of play for children aged birth to 3 years. Much can be gained from an analysis of the data gathered in the seven participating countries. In Chapter 9, Ingrid Pramling-Samuelsson and Marilyn Fleer brings together the similarities and the uniqueness of how play is defined, enacted and theorized for very young children across the participating countries. It is through a cultural–historical study of play that we gain a better understanding of how play is discussed, shaped and privileged internationally within the field of early childhood education.

Methodological Framework for Cross-Cultural Research

Each of the chapters that follow have framed their research following a sociocultural–historical perspective. Vygotsky’s seminal work has focussed attention on the study of the dialectical relations between individuals and their communities. His work has been instrumental in both broadening the research lens, but also in introducing theoretical complexity, as the biological child is considered only in relation to cultural–historical contexts. In order to understand how a child plays, we must also study the sociohistorical and cultural context in which play can occur – that is the institutions, the social and cultural systems, the political and historical practices and activities of particular communities which give rise to or which shape how play may be enacted. The complexity of studying children’s play within a range of cultural communities requires a systematic approach to framing and analysing research data. Vygotsky’s work has laid the foundations for moving the unit of analysis beyond the individual and into the dynamic region between the individual and the society in which the individual lives. Through this process, the child is transformed, but he/she also contributes towards and shapes society. Rogoff (2003) has provided a useful approach for framing the analysis of such dynamic contexts and processes – as first articulated by Vygotsky (see his collected works). All the researchers who contributed to this book were inspired by

Rogoff's analytical framework (see Rogoff, 1998, 2003) to help them to formulate their study designs. Some researchers closely followed her conceptual framework for analysis, whilst others worked more broadly within the principles of cultural–historical theory. However, each researcher sought to investigate the play activities of children aged birth to 3 years within a cultural–historical context. A sample of five children or more was set as the target for the cross-cultural comparison. Each child was videotaped in their early childhood setting (however defined or organized). Filming occurred immediately on arrival in their early childhood setting and concluded when the child was collected by their family and taken home. All the experiences of the target children were captured on videotape. Families and staff were also invited to participate in the study. Although slight variations in interview questions were noted across the studies, most researchers interviewed families and teachers in relation to their beliefs and practices on play. The overall analytical framework that has guided the preparation of this particular book has drawn upon the work of Rogoff (1998, 2003), in particular her three planes of analysis.

Rogoff's diagrammatic representation (shown in Figs. 1.1–1.6) show how her three planes of analysis are constructed. The three lenses illustrate how play can be analysed across cultures (Figs. 1.4–1.6).



Fig. 1.1 Individual plane of analysis (Rogoff, 2003, p. 53)