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Power to imagination:

An ethnography of imaginary play between children and adults

at an afterschool program

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Education

by

Lilia Rodriguez

2019

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Power to imagination:
An ethnography of imaginary play between children and adults
at an afterschool program

by

Lilia Rodriguez

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles 2019

Professor Marjorie E. Orellana, Chair

In this dissertation study I employ ethnographic research methods to explore play at a multi-generational, multi-cultural afterschool program. Drawing on the New Childhoods perspective and drawing on sociocultural and cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT), I explored the ways that children enacted and transformed their social worlds in and through play with peers, undergraduate college students, and researchers. The study analyzed the development of activities in the afterschool program, and the ways that adults employed mediation strategies that facilitated, supported, or constrained children's play. Findings show that adults had to (re)learn how to play and re-imagine themselves as

collaborators of play. Findings have practical and methodological implications for anthropological research and afterschool programming.

The dissertation of Lilia Rodriguez is approved.

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2019

Para Lilia, Ricardo, y Alicia, quienes me enseñaron a soñar y tener fe.

To my brave nieces and nephews,
who teach me about creativity, love, and compassion.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

“You have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world. And you have to do it all the time.” (Davis, 2014)

Intellectual trajectory across space and time

The intellectual trajectory guiding this study has been shaped by my involvement in a summer leadership program for migrant high school students and two afterschool programs serving elementary school students from non-dominant communities in Southern California. Spanning from 2005 to the present, each of these programs unfolded in a different context; however, they were guided by sociocultural perspectives of learning, and a commitment to equitable access to knowledge and to social justice. Each of these spaces was designed to build community by re-imagining how educators facilitated learning and centered the epistemologies of immigrant youth and families.

I attended Migrant Student Leadership Institute (MSLI) the summer between my before my junior year of high school. MSLI was a statewide 4-week residential program at UCLA designed for students whose families, like mine, worked in agriculture, fisheries, and canneries across California. Many of the program’s participants were children of immigrants or had recently arrived to the United States from Mexico, and other countries in Latin America. MSLI was the first time that I was part of a multi-lingual, multi-cultural community. The program was also my introduction to Paulo Freire’s (1970) notion of emancipatory education and Augusto Boal’s (1979) Theatre of the Oppressed, both aimed at empowering communities that live on the margins of society due to oppressive

governments and systems of oppression. We held theater workshops in a large garden on campus. In these workshops we discussed different situations at home or school that manifested ways we experienced oppression in everyday life. Then we broke off to small groups to work on a theatrical representation of the world as it was and as it could be. This was an opportunity for us to think together about social problems and brainstorm solutions leaning on each other's experiences and resources. In our performances we embodied our visions for a better future. I remember feeling empowered to return home to put our visions in to action. In this context, our past, present, and future merged in our theatrical performance in ways that empowered youth to imagine a better future and be agents of change in their communities. There was also a feeling of empowerment because together, young people were able to come up with solutions to problems we faced at home. In that moment we made the world as it could be feel real.

Education 194 and Las Redes

In college I sought out opportunities to further explore emancipatory education in hopes of building the *world as it could be*. In my sophomore year of college I enrolled in Education 194: Language, Culture, and Human Development, a course that explored sociocultural learning theories and the iterative relationship between theory and practice as a tool for educators. As a student of Education 194, the same course I partnered with in this study, I learned about the ways that deficit thinking and racism can become normalized in educational policy and classroom practice (i.e. Proposition 227 "English for the Children"). However, I also learned about the possibilities for learning that emerge when educators value children's cultural and linguistic repertoires. This was my first introduction to psychologist Lev Vygotsky, sociocultural perspectives of learning, and the

relationship between learning and play. I also learned about mediation and how it can drive learning in different directions. Take, for example, the teacher in Gutiérrez, Banquedano-Lopez, and Tejeda's (1999) work on Third Spaces where a teacher's mediation created spaces where children's curiosities were valued and could be used to shape classroom discussions and lesson plans. The course also helped me understand the relationship between theory and practice by pairing lecture with participation at Las Redes, a play-based afterschool program in South Los Angeles.

At Las Redes I had my first opportunity to work with elementary-aged children and experience the power of play. Specifically, I learned about the role of rules in gameplay and the new possibilities that emerged when children broke rules or made new ones as they played board games with peers and college undergraduates. The experience ignited my interest in exploring play and learning. In my honors thesis entitled *Playing with the Rules: Building Agency Through Student Participation at an Afterschool Program*, I showed how children at Las Redes created new rules or "bended" rules in order to negotiate conflict, challenge social norms, and (re)invent identities within a play frame. Most importantly, I learned about how in play, children can enact different worlds, real and imaginary, purposely and creatively.

B-Club

As a graduate student I sought out opportunities to further explore the possibility of non-traditional programming for youth. This led me to B-Club, a play-based afterschool program for TK-5 students at a school in one of the most densely populated areas in Southern California. At B-Club I experienced play from a different perspective—a child perspective. I learned to observe, ask questions, follow children's leads, learn new games, and gain a fresh perspective on games from my childhood. I developed new strategies to

talk with children, and, most importantly, I learned to listen deeply and attentively (Clark, 2011). My participation at B-Club strengthened my research interest in play and learning, this time focusing on the possibilities for learning that may emerge when children collaborate to create activities and transform different spaces around their school. My extended participation at B-Club allowed me to learn about children's lives beyond B-Club and school, including their relationships with migration. Many of the children I met, like me, were immigrants or children of immigrants growing up in working class homes. As a Mexican-American, self-identified Chicana, I saw parts of myself in the children at B-Club. I wondered about the differences and commonalities of our immigration and educational experiences and those of our families. I grew up in Calexico, a small town with a predominantly Mexican population. Calexico's geographic proximity to the U.S-Mexico political border made immigration visible and palpable in overt ways, with daily border crossings and policing. Children at B-Club live in a large city, in a diverse and densely populated community far from the US-Mexico border. However, their stories of migration, their sustained relationships with family across borders, their cultural and linguistic diversity, and the continued immigration raids and deportations make immigration visible in different, yet very real ways.

I share my intellectual and personal trajectory as a Chicana student and scholar to highlight my cultural intuition or insight into how I have come to understand the power of play and its potential to empower children imagine and create a better world (Delgado Bernal, 1998). I view B-Club as a play laboratory where children and adults engaged in imaginary play in both creative and intentional ways to create a more just world.

The State Of Play In Schools Today

Playtime in urban schools is severely at risk despite research that supports its importance for socio-emotional and cognitive development. As a consequence of the pressures of standardized testing, even early childhood classrooms have turned to direct instruction and away from play (Pellegrini & Bohn, 2005; Smirnova & Gudareva, 2004). In schools play has become an earned reward for good behavior and is often replaced by academic instruction, tutoring, and disciplinary measures. The lack of opportunities to play extends into children's free time, including recess and afterschool programs, which are being replaced with test preparation and academic tutoring (Brice-Heath, 2013; Halpern, 2002; Hirsh-Pasek, K., Golinkoff, Berk, & Singer, 2009; Nicolopoulou, 2010). This shift may be attributed to an attempt for educators to address gaps in the academic achievement of non-dominant groups (Nicolopoulou, 2010; Zigler & Bishop-Josef, 2004). In other words, the emphasis on increased academic support is in the name of service to students who need it most. However, research reveals that greater emphasis on direct academic instruction does not guarantee academic success and "may even exacerbate children's problems in social and emotional areas" (Bodrova, 2008, p. 358; Golinkoff, Hirsh-Pasek & Singer, 2006; Marcon, 2002). Therefore, this shift does not solve the issue it was intended to address and non-dominant groups are furthered affected.

Furthermore, replacing playtime with instruction reinforces a dichotomy between play and learning that gives a false illusion that play and learning are mutually exclusive. In other words, that when children play they are not learning. Research shows that play provides a platform for "children to act a head taller than themselves" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.

102) and engage in important skills such as planning, negotiation, cooperation, and creative problem solving (See: Goodwin, 2006; Orellana, 2016; Thorne, 1990). In regards to academic skills, research demonstrates that engagement in play leads to the development of literacy, language, and metalinguistic skills important for writing (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). Play in school can be an opportunity for educators to intentionally mediate play as part of children's learning, but as Bodrova (2008) and others underscore this requires training in the pedagogical possibilities of play and a disposition to see the value of play in and for learning (McInnes, Howard, Mile & Crowley, 2011). I say this with caution, as my goal is to use play as leverage for learning not to design a new kind of instruction that loses sight of the inherent joy of play. This study aims to challenge the dichotomy of play and learning by looking at how undergraduate students, trained to see play as learning opportunity, mediate play for children at an afterschool program.

Arriving To The Research Questions

The questions guiding this study emerged from my collaboration with children to design club activities for the 2014-2015 school year. This collaboration included three group meetings with five children who had been club members for a minimum of one year. During these meetings we brainstormed ideas of the activities we could launch when B-Club began to meet later that month. The goal of these meetings was to ensure that children had a voice in the activities offered in the program and that their visions would be supported. We met in a classroom, sat around a table and wrote our ideas on large poster paper. My role was to facilitate the planning and execution of the activities we brainstormed. This group of participants became club leaders tasked with supporting and socializing new members to club practices. An unexpected outcome of these meetings was

the new agentic role that students adopted once B-Club launched. More specifically, leaders felt comfortable pitching new activities. One of these activities was a beauty salon that initiated momentum for the creation of a bank, art stores, a courtroom, and a jail. The children continued to take ownership of the space for several weeks by posting signs on the walls, making currency, and creating jobs for each other. On one occasion, a college student was accused of taking a loan for an amount higher than what was allowed. He was sent to an improvised jail, and some children and adults organized a protest for his release. What ensued was a court case led by the children. The agency and creativity that children displayed during this period led me to reflect on ways that adults participated in the play in ways that supported or constrained the social worlds that children were creating in play. This play episode, coupled with my experience with my experience as instructor and coordinator of the afterschool program helped me arrive at the research questions that guided this dissertation study. The first research question is aimed at understanding what inspires children's play. Therefore I ask, what social worlds do children create and enact in and through imaginary play at the afterschool program? The second question relates to the role of adults in children's social worlds; and thus I ask, in what ways do adults at B-Club participate in ways that support, constrain, or expand children's play?

Overview Of The Chapters

In the chapter two I discuss the role of play in learning from a sociocultural perspective in the context of B-Club, an afterschool program. I start by discussing the principles of sociocultural approaches of learning, its historical origins, and its strengths and limitations. I then focus on Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as a theoretical frame to analyze and understand play activities at B-Club. It is important to note that

sociocultural theory and CHAT are sometimes used interchangeably, but I have come to understand the former as an approach to how people learn and the latter as an analytic tool of how people organize learning. In this study I discuss sociocultural theory broadly, and turn to CHAT to take activity as the unit of analysis and as a tool to analyze change or transformations in play. I will then discuss how the New Childhoods perspective informs how I see children's agency and role in creating social worlds. Finally, I give an overview of the literature on play across two disciplines — developmental psychology and anthropology. I aim to bridge both disciplines by thinking about what children learn through play and how ethnographic methodology further informs this by centering play in natural occurring interaction as opposed to experimental settings. In chapter 3 I provide a summary of the data collected and my analytic approach. I discuss how I addressed consent to participate in the study for parents, children, and undergraduates in ways that were accessible to different audiences, particularly to families who are living in fear of being “investigated” in ways that are dehumanizing and dangerous for the well-being of their families. Then, I address how activities emerged from children's interests. This informed my use of video cameras, including wearable technology, in the context of children's play at the afterschool program. The use of wearable cameras was aimed at capturing children's perspectives of the activities. My perspective and participant observations were recorded in ethnographic fieldnotes, attending to how play activities emerged, who lead them, and how they developed overtime. Undergraduate perspectives were captured in their own ethnographic fieldnotes based on their participation and observations at the afterschool program. In chapter four I discuss the ways in which undergraduates participated in children's play. I describe the different ways adults supported children's interests and the

challenges they encountered when doing this work. In chapter five, I present two cases of imaginary play created by children where adults, including myself, participated. Video games such as Lego Ninjago and Fortnite inspired these cases. Although these games are unrelated, both include battles, fights, and the use of weapons. In each case, I highlight the strategies implemented by children to co-create imaginary worlds, and the strategies used by adults to understand the game from the children's perspective. Lastly, in chapter six I discuss the implications, the methodological contributions of the study and my recommendations for afterschool programs.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Perspectives and Review of the Literature

In this chapter I discuss how sociocultural and cultural-historical perspectives of learning, and the New Childhoods perspective can facilitate seeing the process of learning through play for children and undergraduates at B-Club. Sociocultural theories of learning and development discuss learning and development as processes that occur through participation in cultural practices (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Lave & Wenger, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978). Cultural-Historical Activity Theory provides an analytical perspective that considers the interconnectedness and possible transformation of different networks. The New Childhoods perspective asserts children as full social agents and aims to understand children's social worlds and perspectives as full social participants, not as adults in the making (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998). I argue that this commitment to comprehend how children organize and experience their social worlds can expand our view of learning and development and move us towards pedagogical practices that center children's interests. Together these perspectives offer tools to discern the learning and unlearning that may occur in and through play as young adults and children play together.

Sociocultural Perspectives Of Learning And The Zone Of Proximal Development

Sociocultural perspectives of learning direct us to think about learning as a process or change that occurs overtime in interaction with other people and their environments. This perspective highlights "the importance of context, or the idea that individual thought and behavior are always situated in and organized by local resources and circumstances" (Shah & Leonardo, 2017, p. 52). This perspective, rooted in the work of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, has been adopted by scholars across different disciplines and led to several theoretical perspectives including situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1998),

figured worlds (Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998), and cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) (Engeström, 1999). Each of these perspectives focuses on a different unit of analysis such as identity, community, or activity; but what they all have in common is that they attend to the “features and dynamics of the local settings in which social interactions take place, and how mediation by cultural tools and signs produces transformation of knowledge and in the self” (Shah & Leonardo, 2017, p.53).

Lev Vygotsky’s (1978) work on the development of human higher psychological functions is the foundation of sociocultural perspectives of learning and development. The sociocultural perspective focuses on the “interrelated roles of the individual and the social world” and the way that “cultural tools (i.e. language) mediate the world for us in social practices” (Saljö, 2010, p. 499). According to Vygotsky, learning occurs first at the interpsychological level in interaction with others, and is then appropriated at the intrapsychological or individual level. Individuals learn from and through their participation in everyday social practices and in turn, they influence what these practices look like. For example, a child may, over time, learn to cook by being part of the range of social activities that occur in a kitchen space and by engaging with a range of tools (i.e. pots, spices, recipes) that are part of these cultural practices. Thus learning can be understood as transformation in forms of participation (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). In this example, the child may first lean on the support of an adult or older sibling and later do things on their own as their participation shifts (Rogoff, 2008). Perhaps this support is better understood when framed in what Vygotsky (1978) called the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which he defined as:

The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (Italics in original) (p. 86)

This notion asserts that collaboration or interaction with expert others at the interpsychological level allows novices to stretch beyond what they can already do. In other words, with the support of expert others (peers or adults), children can stretch themselves in new directions. In formal learning contexts such as schools in the United States where learning is traditionally organized in asymmetrical power relations position the adults (teacher) as the expert and children (students) as the novice. From this perspective, organizing learning implies that “teachers assist children and give them challenges in order that children may attain the top level within their zone of proximal development” (Tzuo, 2007, p. 35). Furthermore, it can disregard “assistance provided by a peer group” (Bodrova & Leong, 2015, p. 376).

The Zone of Proximal Development and Play

According to Vygotsky (1978) sociodramatic play, also referred to as pretend or imaginary play in the literature, is instrumental in the development of higher mental functions. In play, children “can act a head taller” than themselves, creating imaginary situations, taking on different roles, and following a set of cultural rules. For example, children may take up the role of teacher and act according to their understanding of how teachers generally act. Thus in play, children are moving between what they already know about the social world and what they are trying to make sense of.

Cultural Historical Activity Theory

Rooted in Vygotsky's work, classical German philosophy, and the writing of Marx and Engels, cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) understands learning as a social process where “tools, practices, and habits of mind are developed through joint participation in culturally mediated and organized activity” (Engeström, 1999; Vossoughi & Gutiérrez, 2017, p.609). CHAT is a dialectical approach between individuals and social structures that studies the dynamic nature of culture by focusing on “activity” as the unit of analysis. This dialectical approach refers to the ways that individuals are shaped by society, but also the ways that they resist, move in unexpected directions, and incite change in society (Engeström, 1999). This change may be the process of co-creating knowledge by moving across different activity systems or by creating a collective activity system. In a later section I will return to this potential for change in the individual and their social worlds, as the potential for social transformation is at the core of this study.

Activity Systems

From a CHAT perspective, society is a multi-layered network of activity systems. An activity system “is centered around an object (roughly speaking, an overarching goal), and encompasses all the people, artifacts, social norms and relationships that interact towards that object” (Esmonde, 2017, p.14). In other words, the objective or goal of the activity guides how people participate or move. Artifacts refer to the tools or resources that people use to participate in the activity. The meaning and purpose of artifacts are context specific. For example, in a household a broom might serve the purpose of sweeping, but in play the same broom can take on different meanings like that of a horse. Contextualizing the activity

calls for a more complex view, including situating activity within a community and attending to rules, norms, and division of labor.

It is through participation in cultural practices that novices interact with expert others and overtime shift their participation and understanding of the purpose of the tools available. People, including young children, participate in multiple activity systems or cultural practices, and build their repertoires of practice. This speaks to the way knowledge flows across time and space as people move across activities. Activity systems are multi-voiced formations that are re-orchestrated, however, we know that this flow can be blocked by deficit notions that dismiss or undermine the knowledge of underrepresented groups. This is one of education's longstanding issues since many children go to school with extensive repertoires of practice that are dismissed rather than leveraged, and in some cases attempts to erase or correct them. In the context where this study takes place, all participants are encouraged to use their full range of repertoires and the goal is to expand, imagine, and transform these repertoires (Orellana, 2016).

Mediation

The dialectical approach of CHAT emphasizes mediation by people or tools in a shared context. It is through mediation that tools, people, and goals come together in an activity system. Esmonde (2017) stated, "when artifacts mediate human activity, they do some of the work of seeing, remembering, and problem-solving. We use mediational means to think for us" (p. 9). A tool can mediate or guide the way that people organize themselves within a particular activity. For example, at B-Club, a list of agreements guide the different ways in which individuals participate and interact with one another; thus this list is an artifact that mediates our practice. Mediation can also come from people as they share their

expertise with others. To disrupt the notion that expertise lies within an individual, I suggest that expertise should be seen as a tool that can be shared and made public and accessible to all participants. This expands the notion that expertise lies in one “expert”, but rather that all participants bring forth some expertise when they come together in an activity system. This notion aligns with Wertsch’s (1998) metaphor of a “toolkit” where individuals have a range of tools available to use rather than one correct tool. Individuals make decisions based on their own understanding of the context and the socio-historical conditions. The in-between nature of the afterschool program in this study is particularly rich to explore this notion since it can be a space to reinforce “school-like” mediation as well as a space to explore other possible forms of mediation. This study will explore the range of tools that children and undergraduate students bring to the afterschool program, paying particular attention to how these tools mediate the participation in ways that block or expand social worlds. This analysis must situate tools in a socio-historical context in order to consider notions of power and normative pathways.

Opportunities For Transformation and Innovation

CHAT is a framework to study innovation because activity systems are multi-voiced, multi-layered formations that are organized and re-orchestrated with innovation (Engeström, 1999). This speaks to the interactional work that constructs context and the networks between activity systems that “provide for the movement of artifacts” or resources that “can be combined, used, transformed in novel ways in local joint activity” (Engeström, 1999, p.7). As individuals shift their understanding, they begin to appropriate cultural tools and re-invent or innovate (Rogoff, 2008; Vossoughi & Gutiérrez, 2017). Vossoughi & Gutiérrez (2017) added that this “reinvention can open up new

understandings of the self, and of possible trajectories” (p.609). This underscores that sociocultural perspectives see learning and culture as dynamic. As such, the concept of activity opens up a new way to understand change that can come from seemingly mundane everyday interaction.

New Childhoods Perspective

The New Childhoods perspective is a sociological approach guided by the notion that research can move beyond seeing children as vulnerable or fragile, and instead recognizes their “agency and competence” (Laoire, Carpena-Méndez, Tyrrel, & White, 2011, p.3). This perspective highlights the active role children have in society by seeing childhood as socially constructed and recognizing children as “social actors who actively engage in the creation and development of their own social and cultural worlds” (Butler, 2008, p. 2; Corsaro, 2005). The New Childhoods perspective helps us move away from seeing children as adults in the making and instead challenge researchers to see “children’s social relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right, independent of the perspective and concern of adults” (Jenks, 2009, p. 93). In other words, the New Childhoods perspective implies that researchers working with children should attempt to understand what social practices mean to the children themselves, not only what they mean when seen through an adult lens. Seeing children’s worlds as significant encourages researchers to look at children’s practices as meaningful and avoid jumping into assumptions that interpret them as fantasies, games, or mere imitations of adulthood (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998). This is one reason why this study centers children’s play.

Agency

Another fundamental element of the New Childhoods perspective is children’s agency or “the fact that children are much more self-determining actors than we generally

think” (Pufall & Unsworth, 2004, p. 8). Kockelman (2007) expanded on this notion by adding that agency could be “understood as the relatively flexible wielding of means toward ends” (p.375) and having more agency means having more flexibility. Children’s agency can be constrained or freed across different contexts, but this does not make them passive. For example, in her study of gender socialization in the playground, Barrie Thorne (1993) stated that even in schools where adults may have more power, children still “act, resist, rework, and create” (p.3).

Thus far, I have illustrated the foundation of the New Childhoods perspective. Unlike sociocultural theories of learning, the New Childhoods perspective does not have a particular focus on learning and development. However, this perspective can help us build a lens to see more of the competencies and practices that are authentic and important to children across contexts. Centralizing children’s agentic role in their social worlds can offer insight on how children transform participation, negotiate power, and contest meanings in their own terms. Adopting this lens will allow us to see the development and transformation of practices led by children themselves (Clark, 2011). The focus on children as social agents of the New Childhoods perspective encourages us to move away from seeing children only as the leaders and problem solvers *of the future*, and provides an opportunity to study their active role in creating social change in the present. The emphasis on the “here and now” of the New Childhoods perspective is in tension with the interest of shifts in participation over time that sociocultural perspective values. This study will put both perspectives in conversation by positioning children as active social agents and attending to the learning process in interaction.

Review of the Literature: Play and Learning Beyond the Laboratory

Children's play has been studied from different disciplines and perspectives including developmental psychology and anthropology. Developmental studies of play tend to be based on cognitive development. These studies are based on normative outcomes or the correlation between play and cognitive development. Developmental studies demonstrate that play leads to the development of executive functions (self-regulating behavior, and attention) and socio-emotional skills (Control of emotions, cooperation, and social understanding) (Hirsh-Pasek & Golinkoff, 2008). Cultural-historical psychology adopts a Vygotskian perspective that considers the development of higher psychological functions such as self-regulation and generalization of emotions (Bodrova & Leong, 2015). These studies consider the socio-cultural context, but they tend to be experimental, comparing children's behavior under different conditions (Manuilenko, 1975). On the other hand, anthropological studies of play approach play as naturally occurring interaction and as the context for peer culture (Corsaro, 2003; Schwartzman, 1976; Sawyer, 2002). In this section I will describe how anthropological studies of children's play that, I argue, better capture play as complex social action and children's active roles.

Defining Play in Cultural Context

Definitions of play are intimately related to culture, and as Schwartzman (1978) stated, in western cultures, play has been understood as what it is not. For example, "play is not work, play is not real, play is not serious, and play is not productive" (p. 5). Such an approach to play misses how work can be "playful" or how one can experience play as work and to deal with serious issues (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; García-Sánchez, 2010). Another problem with such an approach is that it diminishes the value of play as it becomes trivial

and inconsequential. Anthropological studies of play challenge notions of it as trivial, or simple imitation of adults, by studying children's play as natural occurring interaction and as the context for peer culture (Corsaro, 2003; Sawyer, 2002; Schwartzman, 1976).

Ethnographies of children's play contribute to a paradigm shift of the New Childhoods perspectives. This paradigm shift "begins with a construction of the child as an active participating presence in the social world, rather than mere passive spectator, and envisages children as having some part in determining the shape their lives take" (James, 1993, p. 85 as cited in Goodwin, 2006, p. 23). In other words, these studies aim to understand children's social worlds and their role in the construction of such worlds.

Play in Peer Groups

Early anthropological studies of children's play focused on peer groups in homogeneous groups. These studies were a foundation to further investigate children's play. Linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistic studies of children's play attend to children's creative use of language such as instances of playful talk as performance (Butler, 2008; Lytra, 2007). Most importantly, ethnographic studies of children's play underscore play as a scenario for children to construct imaginary worlds that interweave everyday experience with extraordinary instances. In other words, in play, children create imaginary instances that may reproduce, challenge, and transform the social world (Poveda & Marcos, 2005).

Goodwin's (1990; 2006) studies of girls across different contexts, ethnicities, and social class, demonstrated children's social competence in shaping their social worlds across contexts including school playgrounds, and children's neighborhoods. In her ethnographic account of girls' play in the school playground Goodwin offers insight into

play away from adult supervision and the formation of the peer group (2006). The findings that emerged from this study challenged gendered notions of the passivity of girls in rule-governed activities and demonstrated the complex ways that girls organized play, dealt directly with conflict, and created exclusionary practices in peer groups by using language and multi-modal forms of communication.

In her work with Moroccan immigrant children in Spain, García-Sánchez (2010) found that girls would use a range of linguistic tools to negotiate, transform, and subvert social-cultural norms in imaginary play. The episodes of play in her work show that girls took on identities that were beyond their reach economically or were deemed as culturally unacceptable by adults. García-Sánchez's work highlights the level of agency and awareness that children displayed when they trespassed sociocultural norms. This aspect of imaginary play is important for the proposed study because it shows how imaginary play can be a platform where children move towards transforming the world as it is in their own terms.

Goodwin and García-Sánchez both studied play among peer groups with similar cultural backgrounds and close in age. In a study of Gypsy and non-Gypsy children in Spain who co-exist in a community despite a longstanding history of discrimination and marginalization of Gypsy families David Poveda and Teresa Marcos' (2005) analyzed a stone fight, a conflict that originated over access to play spaces in their neighborhood. Similarly to Goodwin's work, Poveda and Marcos' work demonstrated the multi-modal resources that children drew on, including teasing and mainstream media, to mark difference between ethnic groups. Most importantly, this work sheds light on the importance of looking at inter-group contact of children from ethnic minorities as a way to

understand their social development and their construction of ethnic identity in everyday interaction (Hirschfeld, 1996).

Gilmore's (2016) study of the creation of Kisisi, a Swahili pidgin, captures children's ingenuity in co-creating their own social world, transcending social norms in and through imaginary play. In this study, Gilmore focused on two boys from different cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds. Stark differences made their friendship seemed unlikely but unlike Poveda and Marcos' study, play served as common ground for the boys to create a social world. The proposed study will contribute to these anthropological studies by exploring play beyond the peer group, in a multicultural, multilingual, multi-generational space.

Beyond the Peer Group

So far, I've discussed ethnographic studies that demonstrate children's complex play within the peer group. It is also important to note the roles that adults take (or fail to take) in children's play. Adults, particularly in the context of school, can get children in trouble for playing a certain way or may impose adult ways of being that limit children's imagination. The aforementioned work underscores the kinds of re-imagining that children already do in peer groups. In the context of the proposed study, I argue that the pedagogy behind B-Club matters since it encourages adults to re-think how and why they engage in play with children at the afterschool program. An example of this is a 2015 study where I collaborated with a research team at B-Club. In our study of pre-service teachers, we showed that seeing children in informal learning spaces, including B-Club, helped pre-service teachers see children in different ways (Orellana, Johnson, Rodríguez-Minkoff, Rodríguez, & Franco, 2017). By engaging in ethnographic work, pre-service teachers

learned sociocultural theory and learned to see children as active social agents, rather than just as learners; thus shifting how they mediated children's play and learning. If we are to consider how educators can support children's play as a platform for social transformation we must study the different ways that adults can or do mediate imaginary play. This study aims to do this by looking at the interactions between children and adults at B-Club.

Chapter 3: Methods and Analysis

In this qualitative study of children's play I employed a range of ethnographic methods in order to capture children's social worlds, imagination, and their joint collaboration with undergraduate students. Two ideas are at the heart of this study. The first is a focus on the social worlds that children enact and create in play. Secondly, I looked at the collaboration between children and college undergraduates at the afterschool program, paying attention to the forms of mediation employed by peers and undergraduates. For the purposes of clarity I will discuss these as separate components of the project, although in practice children's worlds, collaboration in a multi-generational space, and mediation are intertwined, and from previous experience, rarely function exclusively. Ethnographic methods, such as participant observation field notes, informal interviews, and video recording of natural occurring interactions were employed to document the social practices and meanings of the afterschool program (Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland, & Lofland, 2001).

Pink (2015) defined ethnography as "a process of creating and representing knowledge or ways of knowing that are based on ethnographers' own experiences and the ways these intersect with persons, places and things encountered during that process." In other words, ethnography is an iterative process where as the researcher, I consider how different experiences and epistemologies, including my own, intersect in a given context and temporality. My extensive experience with play-based afterschool programs, including five years at B-Club, allowed me to move past "mere" observational methods and towards an embodied ethnography. I was not a newcomer to B-Club, its practices, and its theoretical

foundation. I had been fully immersed in its design and practices for 4 years prior to starting this dissertation study.

Context

The proposed study was situated in B-Club, an after-school program housed in a public school located in an urban neighborhood in Southern California. The neighborhood is a community in transition and one of the “most diverse and densely populated” areas of Southern California (SCAG). It is largely an immigrant community with two out of every three residents born abroad. According to a 2012 report, 58% of the residents were from Mexico, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Many of them immigrated to flee war, economic hardships, or to reunite with family (KIWA). In 2014, the neighborhood was designated part of Los Angeles Promise Zone, an initiative to introduce “programs that would catalyze economic opportunities, prioritize public safety, jumpstart educational adventures and improve quality of life” (Los Angeles Promise Zone: 2015 Annual Report). The school where B-Club takes place serves 80% Latino students, a majority that is reflected in B-Club attendance. The program serves 40 students ranging from transitional kindergarten to fifth grade (roughly 5-10 year-olds). B-Club is a play-based afterschool program that is “situated somewhere within the ‘home-school’ divide” and between the university and the classroom (Orellana, 2016, p.16). Building on the design of the Fifth Dimension, B-Club brings together children, college undergraduates, and university researchers (Cole & Distributed Literacy Consortium, 2006; Vásquez, 2002). B-Club met twice a week for two hours in a large multi-purpose room that resembled a dance studio with a wooden floor, spotlights on the roof, and two dressing rooms or large closets. The dressing rooms served as storage space for B-Club as well as for other extracurricular activities in the school. On any given

day, participants engaged in a range of activities including outdoor exploration, playing tag, writing letters to their families, building houses, organizing interest-based clubs, and making variety of arts and crafts. Undergraduates participants visit B-Club to meet course requirements for Education 194: *Language, Culture, and Human Development*. As part of their praxis, undergraduates, or UGs, as childrens call them, write weekly ethnographic fieldnotes. As a graduate student researcher in the course, I have read and given feedback on these fieldnotes. My feedback was aimed at supporting undergraduates make connections between theory and practice, and led me to raise questions about undergraduate learning and their role in mediating *playful* activities in ways that honored children's perspectives but also encouraged them to expand their thinking.

Research Participants and Consent

I was a coordinator, participant, and researcher at B-Club for the past five years. During this time I built relationships with children, some parents, and afterschool staff. Prior to the period of data collection, I visited the site afterschool and supported the afterschool staff in everyday logistics, including parent pick-up. This allowed me to meet the parents and families of children who participated in B-Club. I also attended special events such as luncheons and movie nights where I could further meet families and share my work. Several parents shared their immigration stories and expressed their commitment to support their children thrive in educational endeavors. These interactions were valuable to build rapport with families and gain insight into children's life beyond the boundaries of school.

Parent consent

I supported the research team in organizing parent meetings to describe the study

in a discourse familiar with parents in order to demystify the research process and answer any questions. At these meetings I met with attending parents one-on-one to talk about my interests in video recording and studying the play that their children participated in at B-Club. I described some of the activities that had been popular in the past such as cardboard world, an activity where children build imaginary worlds with recyclable material.

Understandably, parents were concerned about homework completion and academic support. I explained how common practices at B-Club were designed to promote language and literacy and how the research team and college students would work on supporting children in engaging with literacy in fun ways. Most of these *platicas* with parents were done in Spanish, which I had assumed was the primary language of most parents. However, one mother shared that her primary language was Mayan language from her native Guatemala, and she was in the process of learning Spanish in order to facilitate her communication with her children and school staff. I followed these conversations by reviewing the consent form and giving them time and space (physically removing myself) to decide if they consented their child's participation. Parents had the option to grant consent for their child to participate in some or all aspects of the study.

Children consent

The multi-generational aspect of the program is significant for this study. I invited all children enrolled in B-Club to participate in the study. The process of obtaining children consent was ongoing. Most children were returning members who had some familiarity with my role as a researcher at site. I often framed my dissertation work as a large homework assignment where I could study and learn from "the cool things" they did at B-Club. I repeated this message throughout my time at B-Club, reminding children that they

could participate in some or all aspects of the research process. On several occasions children wanted to read and add to my jottings. Sometimes they made corrections, added details about their games, played hangman, or drew hearts and happy spaces accompanied by “I love you” messages. The goal of having open conversations about the research process as it unfolded was an important strategy for inform and empower youth and families.

College Undergraduates

I also recruited undergraduate students enrolled in the Education 194: *Language, Literacy, and Human Development* course. On the first day of class, Dr. Orellana described the purpose and overall goal of the research team. She discussed our collective interest in what students learned, how that might change over time, and emphasized that we were NOT judging their learning. Then I described aspects particular to my study, the focus on imaginary play and the use of go-pro cameras, and my intention to support students’ learning and turn to them as research collaborators. I reminded them of their right to choose the extent of their participation. One student, who unfortunately ended up dropping the course, raised questions about the possibility of reviewing data analysis that included them. I shared my own experience as a research participant and what I learned from my participation in a YPAR project when I was in high school. I told them I would maintain contact via e-mail, if they wished to receive updates of my findings. Finally, I emphasized that their identities would remain anonymous and passed a list where they could write in a preferred pseudonym. I typed first names and their pseudonym in password protected document and disposed of the sheet of paper. My goal was to employ ethical strategies to position undergraduates as voluntary participants in the research process. I emphasized that their decision to participate in all or some aspects of the research project would not

impact their grade in the course.

Institutional power, children, and adults

I have been a participant at the afterschool program in different capacities including program coordinator and researcher. These roles can be interpreted differently by different participants. Children and school staff primarily saw me as a coordinator responsible for the everyday functions of the program and the overall safety of participants. A new coordinator joined the team to ease this responsibility during the data collection period. In addition to the power granted to adults in a school settings, I also acknowledge the power dynamics of child participant and adult researcher. I realized that this role positioned me as an active participant of the site in a position that held some institutional power. As I positioned myself as a researcher, I employed several strategies to ease power imbalance and humanize the research process. One of these strategies, inspired by child-centered inquiry, was to follow children's agendas and let them "take over" and drive research activities such as informal interviews (Clark, 2011; Kromidas, 2012). In the field, I shared my jottings, allowing children to read, edit, and contribute to them - giving them an opportunity to act as collaborators. I also moved away from central research activities to play with children who were alone, or to mediate conflict. With these strategies I also aimed to center children's active roles in at B-club.

Summary of the data

Data collection included ethnographic fieldnotes and video recording. Fieldnotes were based on my active participation and observations of play at the afterschool program, including conversations with children about their participation in different playful activities in the program. I actively played with the children primarily as a researcher, but

became a facilitator and resource for the afterschool program when needed. Video recordings, via wearable cameras captured my own participation as well as the participation of children and UGs'. Additionally, I read the fieldnotes written by undergraduate students on weekly basis who participate in the afterschool program to gain an insight into the forms of mediation employed by undergraduates and their reflections on such actions. In the following sections I will describe each of these data collection in depth.

Table 1: Summary of the Data			
Data Source	Sets/Length	Perspective	Analysis
Ethnographer Fieldnotes	14 sets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Grand tour” record of daily program activities • Informal discussions with participants 	Mapping Activity (See Appendix A)
Undergraduate Fieldnotes	61 sets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how UGs experienced site • Reflections of interactions at site • Connect theory to practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedagogical and analytical perspective • Initial memos after weekly read • Coded for ACTIVITY, TOOLS, and ROLES
GoPro Video	16 Hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UG Cardboard world • Researcher angle of imagined social worlds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video log with description of activity and points of entry to gameplay, negotiations, and shifting participation. • Simultaneous analytic description and transcription • Line by line analysis of transcripts

Ethnographic Fieldnotes

Researcher fieldnotes: I attended B-Club twice a week as a participant observer, writing fieldnotes immediately after my visits at a local coffee shop. My fieldnotes were divided into three main sections : General Site Observations, Narrative/Activities, and

Analytic Reflections. The first section included my observations, including what I observed along my commute to the school and as I walked across the campus to the MPR. I also wrote about my emotional state when I entered site, and any interactions with school staff that occurred before B-Club. The second section included a narrative of activities that I participated in at the site as well as a list of activities that I observed from afar. The list of daily activities allowed me to keep a historical record of all activities that unfolded at the time of this study, which I used in a mapping analytic activity. Description of activities included details of who was participating, sequence of events, and my observer comments. In my fieldnotes I described informal discussions or “hangs outs” that I had with the children to discuss the scenarios that occurred during play. Embedded in my narrative I used bracketed observer comments as a way to engage in what Kleinsasser (2000) called reflexivity, which is “a methodological process of learning about self as researcher, which in turn illuminates deeper, richer meanings about personal, theoretical, ethical, and epistemological aspects of the research question” (p. 155). I used observer comments as to tease out tensions, and to acknowledge my multiple roles and prior personal and professional experiences that inevitably shaped how I participated and experienced B-Club. Finally, I used the final section of fieldnotes as a place to write short analytic memos, further discussing any emerging topics, wonderings, and ethical or theoretical tensions.

Adopting Pink’s (2015) notion of sensory ethnography, I turned to my fieldnotes to describe my sensory experiences at B-Club. I attended to changes in temperature, noise, smells, and feelings of concern that arose in my interactions with children. That is, I turned to fieldnotes to make sense of situations that felt strange or challenging to me, especially when I navigated my role as researcher, honoring childrens’ interests, and my

responsibility for their safety and wellbeing. For instance, when the research team introduced magnifying glasses with the purpose of outdoor exploration, some of the childrens demonstrated an interest in using them to ignite fire. Of course, as an adult responsible for their safety, and that of the school, I was concerned. The following excerpt demonstrates my account of an interaction with Carlos after I expressed my concern for his safety when he tried to catch a piece of cardboard of fire using a magnifying glass. My intervention began when I physically approached Carlos and Armando and asked a series of questions that eventually led Carlos to think I was exaggerating or ‘dreaming too big’. He also alluded that I cared more about the school building than cared about him and the children at B-Club. Notice that in my bracketed observer comments I reflected on my relationship with him and the impression my questions might have had at the moment.

I asked them a few questions: are you making fire? Is this safe? Shouldn't we have at least a cup of water nearby? Carlos responded to my questions telling me I was dreaming too big. I probed for more but eventually he just told me I should go away. My questions did lead to a discussion about the school burning and Carlos insinuated I was worried about the structure of the school not them. I told them that I was not too worried about the school being burned down, but much more worried about them and other people being hurt. [OC: I also asked Carlos why he was so mad at me. I felt like his tone changed when he responded to my questions and I could really feel as if my presence bothered him. Something that I've been feeling since last quarter. It's also interesting to see how this differentiates from the relationship I have with his brother.]

In this example, I entered an activity without an invitation from the childrens, and I was guided by my responsibility to keep childrens safe. In reflecting on my relationship with Carlos I allude to what he might have been feeling when I expressed my concerns. Fieldnotes documented how I physically navigated site, but most importantly, helped me make sense of how to navigated my role as an adult and researcher at site. I had known the childrens in this interaction for at least two years and had built rapport with them by supporting their interests and actively responding to their comments about B-Club getting boring. However, this excerpt shows that my role was complicated since regardless of the rapport I had with them, children could interpret my role in different ways at different times.

Overall, my ethnographic fieldnotes allowed me to have a written account of my own experiences at site and became a platform to engage in an iterative reflective process. Fieldnotes became my thinking tool in the data collection process and allowed me to assert my history with the program, my relationships with participants, my familiarity with program practices, and the challenges I encountered as I navigated this context. Furthermore, these field notes served as an ongoing record of the range of activities that emerged at site.

In the initial stage of the study, one purpose of fieldnotes was to document the playful activities that emerged and who participated in them in order to identify key participants. Based on prior experiences and pilot studies I knew that every quarter new activities emerged and transformed. For example, in data collected for a pilot study one student started a game of beauty salon that led to the creation of several stores, a bank, and a trial. These activities were emergent and Baby Corazon was the key participant guiding

the imaginary situation by employing others to run the different businesses. Based on pilot data, I knew it was possible for new activities to emerge aside from activities planned by program coordinators. To inform my understanding of the activities that emerged and children's participation in them I identified key participants based on their active and constant participation in imaginary play activities such as playing house. As activities emerged and transformed in Winter of 2018, by the Spring of 2018 I had identified three main group of childrens who showed an interested in imaginary play. One of them was a multi-aged multi-gendered group who built homes every week. The next group was a multi-aged girls group who organized a fashion show. Another group was a multi-aged group of boys who engaged in pretend play modeled after mainstream media. Another group was a multi-aged girls group who organized a fashion show. Lastly, was two 6 year olds who created characters and designed costumes with the help of undergraduates. It is important to note that the last two groups caught the attention of undergraduates who expressed an interest in following up with the children in every visit.

My fieldnotes documented the range of activities that emerged in every visit and occasionally included a map of where activities unfolded, but their focus was on my interactions with different participants including UGs, children, parents, and afterschool staff. My interactions included informal meetings with childrens that were meant to be ongoing conversations with children about their participation at site. During these conversations I asked children exploratory questions like *Where did that idea come from?*, and *Where have you seen that happen before?*. I also used these conversations as opportunities to present children with "*What if's*" scenarios or questions to raise topics of social justice such as access to resources, news, homelessness, workers' rights, and

immigration. Overall, informal talks with the children are meant to give me insight into any experiences they've had with similar situations, their understanding of these situations, and the potential for transformation.

UG Fieldnotes: Undergraduates were required to write weekly ethnographic fieldnotes based on their participation at B-Club. As seen in my collaboration with Orellana's research team, the goal of these fieldnotes was not to train undergraduates to become ethnographers, but rather to use fieldnotes as a tool to make connections between theory and practice and make learning visible (Orellana, et al., 2017). Fieldnotes are divided into several sections: General Site Observations, Narrative, and Reflection and Analysis. In class, UGs practiced fieldnote writing and discussed the difference between telling and describing an event or interaction. Furthermore, we advised UGs to include brackets around their observer comments, or "OCs," which included their thoughts or questions about their experiences at site, connections to theory, and brief reflections. The final reflection and analysis section was an opportunity to expand on OCs, raise questions to the instructional team, and make plans for the following site visit. Rather than a comprehensive overview of what occurred at site, this fieldnotes show *how* UGs experienced site and how they interpreted their experiences, generally thinking about where their attention went and how they made sense of their opportunity to work with children. I read these notes on the weekly basis for all students enrolled in the course Spring quarter and wrote initial analytic memos.

At the time I read the notes from both pedagogical and research perspectives. From a pedagogical standpoint, I engaged in conversation with UGs and prompted them to say more about their interactions with childrens by raising questions as "food for thought".

Occasionally, I elaborated on their connections to theory or shared some of the connections I noticed or shared advised on how to respond to difficult interactions.

From an analytic perspective, I attended to who initiated the activity, why it was initiated, how it was initiated and how it was received by other participants. I attended to any shifts in their role from the periphery to central activities or vice versa. I developed an open coding scheme that I refined after coding two sets for each participant, and I hand coded all fieldnotes. My first coding pass I aimed to gain understanding of the activities that UGs participated in. I created codes for activities including: SOCCER, OUTDOOR EXPLORATION, CARDBOARD DESIGN, WRITING, HOUSE, LEGO, READING, HOUSE, ARTS AND CRAFTS, and FORTNITE. I also circled any tools, materials, and artifacts used in the activities. These could be the materials used to make an artifact, such as tape, balls, chairs, blankets, Legos, cardboard, paper, markers, and pipecleaners. Artifacts included, ninjas, weapons, letters, costumes, and toys. With these codes focused on the activity level, everything in the narrative section of UG fieldnote was included in a code, broadly aiding the organization of data by activity. I developed codes to see the organization of the activity, such as when UGs or children entered and exited activities and how these events were initiated for example, questions, requests for support, and invitations to play. I also used codes that accounted for interactions between children and undergraduates, these included UG-Kid Support, Kid-Kid Support, Kid-UG support. In parenthesis I included the extent of the support. For example, in the activity of making a cardboard costume when a child asked an UG for support cutting the cardboard, the code would be "UG-Kid Support (cutting)" indicating that an UG helped a kid cut. Then I identified the patterns that emerged from the coding scheme. These patterns led me to identify additional activities

that UGs experienced or identified as play and the extend of their participation across all activities. It was here that I began to think about the process of making as part of play since making artifacts or assisting children in making acrtifacts was predominat in the fieldnotes. I groups excertps into categories of making such as Making for children, making in collaboration with children, and playing with children. I organized these excerpts in a table with four columns. The first column included the name of the UG and the date the fieldnote was written. The second column included the fieldnote excerpt. The third column included one of the following categories: Making WITH children, Making FOR children, and Playing WITH children. My goal was to organize excerpts into these exclusive categories, reading through them and working on a defenition for each one. This analytic process let me to see that Makign WITH children and Making FOR children were not exclusive since UGs did not make any artifacts without guidance or direct instruction from the children. The difference was the variation of the collaboration with children. I discuss these findings in Chapter 4.

Along with this process I noticed that in the Observer Comments and the Analysis and Reflection section of UG fieldnotes required their own codes for two reasons. The first reason was I called a quantitative challenge since reflections about an activity could be misconstrued as additional accounts of an activity. The second reason was an analytic challenge of working with fieldnotes that were not written by the primary researcher. While researcher reflections form initial analytic memos, the reflections of UGs served a different purpose. Their reflections were a meta-analysis of their interactions with childrens. these reflections offered insight of how they experienced an activity and in some instances explained why they made particular decisions. In some occasions, the reflections were retrospective thoughts of how they would approach similar situations in the future or

what they perceived they could improve or do differently. It was also here that a few UGs raised questions and wonderings about how to transform activities to address social issues such as environmental sustainability and inclusion.

Video recording

Social scientists have utilized video recording technology, especially wearable cameras such as GoPros to gain an “extended first-person perspective” that centers participants’ perspectives (Kindt, 2011; Marin & Bang, 2018; Waters, Waite, & Frampton, 2014). In other words, wearable cameras allowed me to capture an experience from the perspective of the person doing and moving through an activity as opposed to the angle of a camera being held or controlled by someone else. Pink (2015) elaborated on the purpose of wearable technology for social research adding that first-person recording allows for experiences to be recorded as they “emerge on the fly, in the flow of actual activity, and from the very perspective of the actor” (as cited in Kinsley, Schoonover & Spitler, 2016). The use of wearable cameras in research allows us to capture the experiences of people as they move through the world and capture such movement from their perspective. The dynamic nature of B-Club, with participants constantly moving across different physical spaces and activities it became important to choose a video recording method that gave continuity and insight into how other participants experienced B-Club and the spontaneity of playful activities.

Initially, I intended to have children wear the GoPro cameras as a way to gain insight into how they experienced and oriented themselves at B-Club. I had two GoPro Hero 4 cameras.¹ The cameras were small and felt less intrusive or distracting than a handheld

¹ Buying cameras was possible with a grant from the UCLinks network

device. There was one button to starts and stops recording and a small digital screen with a timer. Unlike the handheld camera that the children at site were accustomed too, the GoPro did not have a screen where one could see what was being recorded. I also purchased mounting accessories to wear the camera at chest or shoulder level. I introduced wearable cameras gradually. I first took a wearable camera in Winter of 2018 when I was learning to use the technology. I took one GoPro camera to B-Club and explored the equipment with the children. At the time, I downloaded an application that allowed remote access to the camera using a mobile phone. Such access would allow me to view what was being recorded in real-time and have remote control of stop and start functions. However, connectivity at the school was restricted and the application did not function. This was unfortunate because children at site enjoyed being able to watch what they were recording.

After identifying the children who were most often involved in imaginary playful activities, I asked them if they wanted to wear one of the cameras either mounted at chest level or shoulder level depending on comfort and fit. Children were initially enthusiastic or curious about the technology but did not seem to like the fact that they were not able to see what they were recording. Thus, children wore the cameras for short periods of time and for the most part their attention was on activities, not the technology. Upon reviewing these recordings I also realized that childrens spent a lot of time either sitting or laying down on the floor which meant that the angles they recorded would capture some audio of their interaction and a moving image of the ground or their feet.

For this reason I began to invite UGs, who played with the selected group of children to wear the cameras. Due to an uneven ratio of childrens and adults I often found myself playing with children who were not with UGs. These were the scenarios where I felt

my role as researcher became more complex. I was able to document how I mediated play with children and perhaps modeled different strategies for UGs who recognized me as an experienced educator. In these cases I would wear the camera if none of the children wanted to. In summary, video cameras captured three different perspectives: children, UGs, and myself, but these perspectives were variable; not all were captured for every episode of play and they occasionally intersected. When this happened I turned off my camera, a decision guided by my ethical commitment to use cameras only when necessary in order to avoid a creating a culture of surveillance as explained in the following section.

These videos captured the multi-modality of interactions and the range of resources and tools that were present across interactions. Since the purpose of UG fieldnotes was not to address my research questions, the video recordings by UGs offered details of their interactions with children that may not be accounted for in fieldnotes. Therefore, I approached analysis of video data similar to my approach to fieldnotes – looking to points of entry to gameplay, negotiations, and shifting participation. I collected approximately 16 hours of video recording. In a latter section I addressed how I organized and analyze video recordings.

Consent and video recording

Given the current political climate that favors surveillance of immigrant communities, and the pressures presented by test-centered educational policies, it is important to attend to the different ways that participants may experience the presence of video cameras in the context of this study (Vossoughi, Escude, Kong, & Hooper, 2012). As with the other ethnographic tools, I employed strategies to guide the use of cameras in respectful and responsible ways. One of these strategies was to be transparent about what

is being recorded and always asking participants if it was okay for the camera to be recording. I also encouraged this as a practice for all participants with cameras. Another strategy was to constantly review start and stop functions of the camera with all participants, reminding them that they could stop recording at any time. The objective was to inform participants of their right to turn cameras off and address possible concerns of surveillance. I showed all participants, especially children, how to turn the camera on and off and encouraged them to try doing so a few times in order to become familiar with the features that signified the recording status. I also reminded UGs that wearing a camera was one way that they could support my work, but it was completely voluntary.

Video Analysis

I created a log for digital data including photographs and video recordings. In the log I included the length of the video, a file name, name or names of person wearing camera, activity or activities being recorded, and a detailed description of what transpired in the recording. The log lists video recordings in chronological order. Creating this log became the first step of a preliminary analysis of the video data. After viewing all video data I followed an analytic structure similar to the one I used in undergraduate fieldnotes. First, I took inventory on what activities were recorded. Unlike, undergraduate fieldnotes, the activities recorded were guided by who wore the camera and what activities I followed. Based on my focus on imaginary play, I marked videos that included episodes of the imaginary play activities such as playing house, Fortnite, zombies, and Mr.E Ninjago. I will describe these activities in detail in a latter section. To further manage the volume of video data I focused on two play activities, Fortnite and Mr. E Lego Ninjago. Both of these activities exemplify the imaginary worlds that children enacted in imaginary play as well as

provided insight of how they created those imaginary worlds and the different ways that adults (both UGs and me) participated in play. In fieldnotes, adults reflected on how they experienced these play episodes and reflected on pedagogical moves and possibilities. I then watched the video on a split screen so I could watch and transcribe video simultaneously. I would pause the video to transcribe and write a description of the interactions, transcribe, and make analytic notes. This process helped me construct episodes of the play as well as analyze video attending to multimodal communication, including spatial organization, verbal communication, gesture, and body language. After transcribing, I did a line by line analysis to understand the function of each utterance and action.

Triangulating data

In order to triangulate the different forms of ethnographic data I made a map of the spaces where B-Club activities took place in order to identify primary activities, visualize how children and adults navigated the space and to learn about the ways activities connected to each other. I mapped out the activities that unfolded every day and included details of who participated in the activity in order to understand the continuity of activities across space and time. These maps were divided into the three spaces where B-club met: the multi-purpose room (MPR), the playground and the upper field. I used arrows to make note of activities/people that moved across these different spaces. B-Club met in the MPR where some “stations” or “centers” were set up weekly by adults. These included an arts and crafts table, a LEGO station, a reading center, a cardboard world corner, a board game center, and a photo board. Supplies for outdoor exploration and gardening, included magnifying glasses and shovels were placed outside the storage room in the MPR and made

available to children. Children were allowed to leave the MPR and play in the playground and the upper field as long as they were in the company of an adult. The playground included a jungle gym with a slide, a tic-tac-toe board, and a small rock-climbing wall. The floor had a painted bicycle path and several hopscotch patterns. Physical location was between the MPR and the upper field. In other words, anyone who wanted to go to the upper field had to pass through the playground. The upper field was the largest space; it included a large concrete open area, large gardening pots, and wooden picnic tables and was connected to an open grassy area where the schools' soccer and baseball teams played. Some activities, like houses, board games, and Legos remained in the MPR, while others, like Fortnite and cardboard world, traveled across at least one of the other two spaces. Interestingly, few students stayed at the arts and crafts table, but participants working on other projects returned to the arts and crafts table when they needed additional supplies for their respective activities. For example, on several occasions, Ben10 went to the arts and crafts table to get supplies he needed for his several cardboard projects. Find a description of these primary activities in Table 2.

Additionally, this analytical mapping also made visible the ways that participants moved from the periphery of activities and between several activities. Participants could be part of several activities simultaneously, sometimes taking central role, and other times a more peripheral role. For example, one day Ben10 played with Legos, instructed an UG to make toys, and briefly played Twister with another UG. Finally, I used post-its to write small notes about the ways that adults supported children.

Activity	Description	Primary participants
Fortnite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A multi-player game where players enter battles, also known as Battle Royale, with the purpose of being the sole survivor. The game is available on different platforms including smartphones, tablets, PC, and several game consoles. • The game is free, with different artifacts for sale. Players may also purchase subscriptions to have access to additional resources. Each player can collect different “skins”, “dances”, “campfires”, “bandages” and “shields”. • Paid subscriptions gives you extra skins and dances and v-bucks which gives you game money to purchase tools in the “item shop” where you can purchase “axes”, and “gliders” Most tools are meant to protect a player and/or make other players vulnerable. • The battle Royale includes 100 players, who may join in a Squad (four players), Duo (two players), or Solo (one player). Players can also play in a “Creative” mode, where one can play with friends and practice for Battle Royal. 	David, Brody, Jack, Supersonic, Tucker, Bruno, Julia (UG), Lilia
Houses/forts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built primarily using tables (against the wall) covered by yoga mats and colorful sheets. • One common characteristic of these houses was their privacy, or the “feeling” of privacy. • Adults were rarely invited inside the houses and some of the older children raised their voices to express their need for privacy to relax. • Children wanted houses to be completely covered and they decided who could live and go into the house. Sometimes putting up signs of who was allowed to go inside. • Houses were temporary, both in that they were put up at the beginning of club and taken down at the end, but also in that children used them at the beginning of club and subsequently found other activities. • Inside the houses, children would hang out, eat snacks, work of homework, watch videos, play board games, and take naps. 	Kassy, Mia, Jair, Karola, Leo, Richy, Camila, Jacky, Josephine
Fashion Show	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fashion shows were organized by some of the younger girls, but became an opportunity for others to showcase their work. • The fashion show was the culmination of a series of activities including selecting an outfit from “dress up” bag, getting hair done at a hair salon, building the runway, and advertising the event. 	Heidy, Melany, Hope, and Siena

Table 2 (Continued): List of primary B-Club activities		
Activity	Description	Primary participants
Cardboard World	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children used repurposed cardboard to make costumes, build forts, make toys 	Ben10, David, Tucker, Brody
Arts and Crafts Table	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Common activities included letter writing, painting tiles, and making paper creatures. Available materials included colorful gel pens, markers, scissors, tape, and pipe cleaners, and stationary. Tape being very popular. Children making artifacts visited the arts & crafts table to get supplies they needed to draw the blueprint of a cardboard creation. 	All members visited the table at least once.
Letters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letters written to friends and family Most letters included messages of love and appreciation 	Camila, Jacky, Susy
Mr.E Lego Ninjago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cartoon series, movie, and video game enacted by boys in the upper field. Mr. E is character with mysterious characteristics and identity. The storyline includes a mission to keep villains from obtaining the Masks of Oni. E. Young fighters train with elders. 	Supersonic, Andres, Lilia

Exiting the field

After five years of constant participation at B-Club I had to consider what finalizing data collection meant for my relationship with children, families, and the school. The end of Spring quarter for the university seems like an artificial temporal boundary, but an important one that marked a transformation in my own participation at B-Club. I believed it was important to let the children know that I would not be returning to site the following year. At the time, I was not certain about the future of the afterschool program and I wanted to show a simple token of appreciation to the children that did not feel somber. I opted to hand write individual letters, modeled after the many letters some of them wrote

for their families or El Maga². Each letter included my favorite memory with them and at least two personal traits about them that I appreciated. My intention was to deliver those cards personally during the end-of-the-year celebration and explain to the children how my role was changing, but my plan shifted when some of the children were interested in helping me deliver the letters. Children had different reactions. Some asked me to read the letter for them; others simply walked away. However, when I talked to Supersonic, who was moving on to middle school, he said it was the “end of an era”, the “end of the dynamic duo” which crystallized the longstanding relationships I developed with the children who participated in the program over the years. That day I also coordinated with the children to distribute certificates to UGs and all the children. At the end of the presentation of certificates I reminded the children that it would be my last day at B-Club. In the initial stages of data analysis I planned to visit the school to watch excerpts of video with children and ask clarifying questions. However, I encountered an unforeseen challenge and after speaking to program coordinators I decided not to conduct these visits. The primary reason was my initial discomfort with the violent tone of some of the games I observed. When I shared preliminary findings with program coordinators I learned that given innovations in the design of the program, children were no longer playing the same games and I feared that my visit would re-ignite these forms of play without clear understanding and recommendations.

² The research team took on the identity of El Maga, an all-wondering friend who wrote letters to club members. Letters were often questions to learn more about children’s interests and experiences at B-Club

Chapter 4: Making and Playing

In this chapter I analyze a range of activities that offer insight of how undergraduates facilitated and participated in play in ways that both supported or constrained the social worlds that children created at B-Club. As part of the university course, UGs were introduced to the Community of Learners model where adults and children participate in “active but often asymmetrical roles” in shared and desired endeavors (Rogoff, 2003, p. 209). At B-Club, power did not solely fall on children or adults, and everyone performed an important role in the development of club activities. In the context of play, children initiated the activity based on their interests and undergraduates were asked to participate in ways that ideally supported children. This disruption of traditional adult-child power dynamics positioned undergraduates in a unique space. In this chapter I describe the different ways that undergraduates participated in children’s play at B-Club by drawing primarily on undergraduate fieldnotes, which provided their perspectives and reflections of their experiences at B-Club, and offers insight into their own learning and development.

Undergraduates discussed the process of writing letters, drawing creatures, building houses, and making costumes as play. While I initially perceived these activities as *playful*, not as cases of imaginary play, analysis of undergraduate fieldnotes demonstrated that undergraduates perceived and experienced such activities as actual play. In other words, undergraduates perceived the process of making artifacts *for play as part of play*. From a sociocultural perspective, this process of making was an integral contribution to common practices at B-Club, especially since members had to re-build the physical space and re-launch activities before every meeting. Undergraduates threaded between being

new to club practices and sharing their knowledge and expertise. As such, undergraduates followed children leads and stepped in when the children required their expertise. Children's interests guided the design of artifacts, but the extent of collaboration between undergraduates and children varied. It was common for undergraduates to act as facilitators who provided assistance when it was needed and requested by children. These forms of assistance included cutting cardboard, holding tape strips, performing Google searches, and writing messages dictated by children. Undergraduates also contributed ideas for the design of artifacts or addressed problems with the design of artifacts and in some occasions they contributed in ways that transformed or expanded children's play. An overview of these different forms of participation, including the forms of collaboration that occurred less often is significant for understanding of developmental trajectories of undergraduates (Figure 1). Although the emphasis of the analysis in the forthcoming examples is on the role of adults, it is also important to note that across these examples children enacted agency and demonstrated comfort and confidence to direct and instruct adults. As you read through each example consider how children and undergraduates position themselves as directors, facilitators and collaborators of play.



Figure 1: Range of undergraduate participation in play

Example 1: Making Toys

One common way to support children's play was by making toys out of paper and arts and crafts materials. In this example, Carlos, and undergraduate (UG) helped Ben10 make toys. Ben10 drew different creatures on pieces of paper and Carlos was responsible for cutting the creatures and adding pipe cleaners to create 3D figurines. In this type of activity it was customary, even for adults to sit on the floor. On this occasion, Carlos and Ben10 sat on the floor across from each other while Carlos worked on the figurines and Ben10 played with Legos (Figure 2). He intermittently checked on Carlos' progress by asking how much time it would take to complete the tasks and giving further directions once a task was completed. On one hand it appeared that Carlos was making a toy *for* Ben10 rather than making the toy *with* Ben10. However, this interpretation would diminish Ben10's agency in the making process since Carlos followed Ben10's instructions for every step in the process. The following transcript is from an interaction between Carlos and Ben10 after Carlos announced he was done cutting one of the figures. Ben10 furthered instructed Carlos to make holes and Carlos probed for precise directions.



Figure 2: Carlos makes toys while Ben10 plays with Legos.

Ben10 instructed Carlos to make holes where they would later insert the pipe cleaners. In lines 5, 6, 9, and 12, Carlos requested more precise instructions with questions like, *"Where do you want me to make the holes?"* (Line 6), and *"Where do you want it?"* (Line 9). He also handed Ben10 a marker and asked him to actually mark where he wanted the make the holes. Ben10 used the marker to point at the paper without making a mark and added, *"You just have to make it over here, over here, over here"* (Line 10). In line 12, Carlos directed Ben10 to mark the paper. Ben10 followed the directive, but quickly re-established control of the activity when he said, *"Tell me when you are done."* (Line 14). Carlos went on to cut the holes into the paper as Ben10 instructed, and Ben10 continued to play with Legos. After completing task, Ben10 directed Carlos to place pipe cleaners through the holes and tape them. Carlos continued to ask for precise instructions with statements like, *"Just to verify. You want me to do it here?"* and *"Are you sure?"*

1. Carlos: Finished
2. Ben10: So you need to make the holes
3. Carlos: You want me to make what?
4. Ben10: The holes
5. Carlos: The holes. How? Show me.
6. Carlos: Where do you want me to make the holes? Mark it down.
7. *((Carlos passes marker to Ben10))*
8. Ben10: Just a little dot. Okay.
9. Carlos: Where do you want it?
10. Ben10: You just have to make it over here, over here, over here
11. *((Ben10 points to paper with marker))*

12. Carlos: Mark it so I can do it.
13. *((Ben10 marks paper))*
14. Ben10: Yeah. Tell me when you are done.

In this interaction we see Carlos take on a passive role in the creation of the toy. He followed Ben10's lead and even requested constant clarification and verification to ensure Ben10's vision of the toy would become tangible. Carlos did not propose new ideas to the design and thus this was not a co-creator, but it was an activity where responsibility was distributed. Ben10 was responsible for the design of the toy and Carlos was responsible for its execution. Additionally, it can be argued that this division of labor made it possible for Ben10 to engage in other activities and return recurrently to supervise the creation of his toys. Providing labor was one of the ways that adults supported children' play since it opened up opportunities to participate in other activities. I argue that while this kind of support displays children's enactment of agency, we should seek for more dynamic and collaborative forms of participation. The examples that follow demonstrate undergraduates move towards more dynamic and active participation in children' play.

Example 2: Sharing Strategies

A common practice at site was to ask adults for help to secure access to tape since it was widely used and only a few rolls floated around the MPR. Children sought out support to obtain a roll of tape and to cut multiple strips so the roll could keep moving between groups as they worked on different making activities. In this example, three girls asked Rosa (UG) if she could help them cut strips of tape that were to be used to tape yoga mats to a table in order to build a house. The girls wanted to use tape to hold one end of the yoga mat to the table so the other end would roll down and serve as a wall. Instead of simply

cutting the pieces of tape, Rosa opted to share a strategy that would help the girls build the house. She observed the girls and noticed that they were placing the majority of the tape strip on the yoga mat with only a small piece remaining to stick to the table. Given the weight of the yoga mat, the mat easily slid down the table and fell. In the following excerpt, Rosa described the strategy she shared with the girls and reflected on shifting her role from a novice to a “teacher”. Rosa wrote:

When they asked me to help them, I suggested that we could tape the mats differently by attaching half a piece of tape on the mat and the other half on the table. That way it would latch on to the table more. They agreed, and we were eventually able to produce the [house] they wanted. Within this interaction, I would say I acted as a novice and then as a teacher. I had never seen any of the other children use tape to make their forts, so I had them explain what their goals were with the tape. That was when I realized that the tape was their strategy in making the most out of scarce amount of materials.

Notice that Rosa was intentional about her interaction with the girls and her role as a participant observer. She recognized she was learning something new about making a house, and also recognized that she had something to contribute to the activity. First, she asked the girls to explain their goal and she identified the purpose of using tape to build the house. Then she realized that even as a novice she could contribute to the design of the house. She had a strategy that would help the girls achieve their goal of holding the yoga mats in place. Rosa modeled her strategy and made it explicit so the girls could apply the strategy as they continued to build the house.

In this interaction we see the difference between passively following children’s lead

and taking an active role in the design of the artifact — in this case a house. Similar to example 1, the activity was initiated by the children, who had a clear vision of what they wanted to make. In this example the girls also had a strategy to maximize the area that would be covered by the yoga mats. Rosa identified her suggestion as *teacherly*, which gives insight into her view of children at B-Club as “students” and her role as the “teacher” was to step in when she identified an issue that she could resolve. Even outside the lens of the teacher-student dichotomy it is clear that Rosa shifted her participation from that of an observer to that of a collaborator. Her contribution helped solve a problem but did not change the game as a whole.

Example 3: Intentional artifact design

In this example, we see an undergraduate use the process of making an artifact as an opportunity to contribute to the fashion show and re-define boundaries of the activity by inviting more children, especially boys to be part of the fashion show. Marissa (UG) suggested making posters to announce an upcoming show that a group of girls was organizing. These posters were paraded and posted around the MPR and the playground area. Marissa noticed that only the girls were participating in the fashion show and looked for opportunities to make the activity more inclusive. Bianca, Hannah, and Marissa headed to the arts and crafts table to make posters. Marissa helped Hannah make three posters by writing and drawing whatever Hannah wanted to see on the posters. The first poster read “Fashion Show” surrounded by hearts. In each subsequent poster she implemented different strategies to encourage the girls to invite the boys in participate in the activity. Marissa wrote:

Hannah asked me to make another sign that said 'Fashion Show' on it. I asked her if she wanted me to draw anything else. She said she wanted hearts on it. For the last poster [OC: I thought that hearts were generally associated with femininity so I wanted to push her to put pictures that were considered more inclusive. I didn't say anything to sway her thinking but asked her if she wanted to include pictures of anything else. She said she wanted to add stars. For the last sign, Hannah asked me to write 'Fashion Show girls' [OC: I wanted to stretch the possibilities for a fashion show again and told Hannah that boys were also going to be involved in the fashion show too. Okay write 'Fashion boys, girls, and UGs'.

Notice Marissa's shifting role as a participant and mediator. First, she strictly followed Hannah's instruction and drew hearts despite noticing this would potentially place constraints on the activity. Marissa later subtly shifted the types of questions she asked, moving away from asking children for precise instructions and moving towards *what if* questions that suggested expanding the boundaries of the activity. For example, she asked if there was anything other than hearts she could draw. The girls reinforced the exclusivity of the activity when they asked Marissa to write, "Fashion Show Girls" on another poster. Rather than asking more questions, Marissa reminded Hannah that boys could also be part of the fashion show. She did not make it optional. Hannah aligned with that statement and changed the message of the poster to include all the children and even undergraduates. Moreover, Marissa went on to talk to some of the boys to let them know that they could "*show off their cardboard costumes and their tricks*" in the fashion show. In this instance, the design of an artifact was a site for possible transformation of the activity.

Marissa straddled between following children's lead and enacting some of her power as an adult towards generative directions that expanded the boundaries of the activity.

Enacting roles in play

Thus far, I have shown that adults participated in the process of creating artifacts as a way to support children's play. In this section, I will discuss instances where adults embodied an imaginary role within play, such as that of a babysitter or hair salon patron. These instances occurred less often, but are worth attending to because they required adults to fully immerse in children's play and re-imagine traditional adult-child roles. The fact that these instances were rare is telling of the developmental trajectories of undergraduates and the tensions they experience as they worked towards supporting children in the context of B-Club.

Example 4: Playing House

In this example, Emelia (UG) played "house" with Richy, Karola, and Leo. Emelia could barely fit in the house but nonetheless decided to go along with their play. The children trusted her enough to invite her into their house. She accepted their invitation but was unsure of her role and she had to make several attempts to get some clarity. She described going into the "house", which meant getting under a table where she did not quite fit. Emelia entered the game and quickly encountered physical discomfort. She made an attempt to address her discomfort by suggesting opening doors or windows, using language of traditional house features. Richy, immediately shut down her request informing Emelia that the house did not have a door or windows. Despite Richy's response, Emelia made another attempt to create an opening and lifted one of the yoga mats that made up a "wall". When she lifted the yoga mat she noticed that the mat was actually

dividing two separate houses or rooms. She asked the children to clarify if they were in different rooms in the same house or in two separate houses, but nobody responded. In the following excerpt Emelia reflected on her confusion and the impact of her questions:

I was confused what we were playing I kept asking if we lived in the same house in different rooms or if we lived in different houses but no one really answered [oc: then it occurred to me that I was restricting their play with my preconceived ideas about family and houses but perhaps their play doesn't have to follow these ideas.] It was very frustrating for me to try to let go and just go with the flow of their play, especially because they weren't really communicating with [me].

Emelia remained in the house under the assumption that the children were playing normative family roles and unclear about what roles participants represented. Despite her confusion and frustration, she continued to play and eventually received more direction from the children to make sense of the game. Emilia wrote about her ongoing confusion with the game and how she found out she was playing the role of the babysitter:

Karola peeked over and said it's time to go to sleep, I said what time is it and she showed me the [ipod] with a timer counting down it said 3:24 and I asked so does that mean we only have 3 minutes to sleep? She said just go to sleep. Richy said ok tu tambien te tienes que dormir. Then I thought maybe they are the parents and we were the children. [...] Karola later clarified that Leo was the dad, Karola was the mom and Richy was the son and I was the babysitter [OC: I wonder what it is about playing house that motivates these children to play every b-club. Or why they needed a babysitter if both parents were there and it was sleep time and that they don't live with their son?] I ended up leaving

*because Richy and Leo had ran off to the other side of the MPR
where the other house was at.*

Notice that Karola set the rules of the game and used the timer on the iPod times to let the others know that it was time to sleep. Emelia continued to ask clarifying questions that the children ignored. Richy reinforced the rules when he informed Emelia that she also had to go to sleep. Per Emelia's request, Karola made their roles explicit, but Emelia was still confused. From her perspective, it was not necessary to have a babysitter if the parents were in the house. Once the activity transformed into something beyond the boundaries of the house, Emelia walked away from the group, perhaps because she was unsure how to move forward in her role as a babysitter when the house was empty. Despite her ongoing confusion, Emelia patiently listened to children. Her questions were mostly meant to clarify the context and her own role in the game. She did not attempt to correct or change the game. She also did not seem to know how to enact her role as the babysitter and she felt that her ongoing questions were restricting play rather than making any form of contribution.

Example 5: Beauty Salon

Another example of playing with children occurred between Julia(UG), Heidi, and Danielle when they pretended to be in the hair salon. In this instance, Julia was invited to participate in a makeshift hair salon that originated with the girls' plan to have a fashion show. Heidi was a hairdresser and Julia assumed the role of the client. Notice that Heidi set the context for Julia when she introduced herself and added, "*pretend I work here*". As the play continued Julia noticed Danielle. Danielle was one of the younger girls who I often found playing on her own. Julia, without consulting with Heidi, invited Danielle to play.

Initially Heidy disagreed to the idea of another person joining the game. Julia responded by telling them they could split her hair in half. Heidy then directed Danielle to use her half of the hair in ways that aligned with her original vision. However, Julia reminded Heidy that she was the client in the salon and wanted her hair to be styled in a way that would allow both children to follow their vision. Julia wrote:

I was called over to the 'salon' by Heidy. I sat there and asked her what her name was and she said 'Shannon Rose' and then said, 'pretend like I work here' [...] I then saw Danielle underneath the table watching Heidy do my hair. [OC: she looked a little sad, and she was alone so I assumed she wanted to play too.] After seeing Danielle under the table by herself I asked her if she wanted to join. At first Heidy didn't want [her] to join but I said 'I have enough hair for both of you to split and work on' [...] Then Heidy kept telling Danielle that she had to do braids on my hair and nothing else. Danielle wanted to do something different with her half so I told Heidy, 'well if I'm at a hair salon then I would appreciate if you do what I want with my hair. What I'd want one side to look different from the other? Can you do that?' and so Heidy agreed to my suggestion. [OC: When Heidy didn't allow Danielle to do what she wanted with my hair I used the pretend play to show Heidy that it's okay for her to do that because I wanted that for my hair 'at the salon'.

In this example we can see Julia immerse herself in the play and maintain her role as a mediator. This allowed her to negotiate the boundaries set forth by Heidy. She played along with being a client but used her role as a mediator to continue to observe what other children were doing. When Heidy disagreed Julia diverted back to her pretend role. Heidy, in her role as head stylist, instructed Danielle to do Julia's hair a certain way. When another

disagreement emerged, Julia used her pretend role to resolve the issue. In contrast to the previous example, Julia straddled between playing “hair salon” and mediating play between two children. By enacting the role of the patron she made the boundaries of the game permeable. This allowed Danielle to join the game but forced Heidi to modify her original vision. Julia was able to use her “teacher” lens to identify points of tension that she resolved by asserting her role as a client of the salon.

Challenges

In this section I want to honor the difficult task of undergraduates as mediators of learning in a non-traditional space such as B-Club. The design of the program encouraged them to observe and listen to children, follow and support their interests, and develop their own role as mediators. In the university course they discussed issues of educational inequity and the ways that inequity can be reinforced in micro interactions. In undergraduate fieldnotes I learned about some of the challenges that they encountered at site and how they responded and reflected, if at all, to these challenges. Common challenges included difficulty entering activities, difficulty accepting child direction, difficulty transforming activities to re-distribute responsibility, and feeling overwhelmed when working with a group or across groups of children. Undergraduates wrote about these challenges in their fieldnotes, but it is plausible that they encountered other challenges that they chose not to write about.

Example 6:

Undergraduate students expressed feeling overwhelmed when working with multiple children or groups of children at the same time. This included instances where children asked them for help while they were already working with someone else. For

example, Janet (UG) reflected on her struggle to divide her attention when working with two different groups of children. First she was only working with one child who was making play dough figurines. The second group included three girls who asked for help to write letters to their families. Notice that Janet perceived both of these activities as play and used the word *students* to refer to children at B-Club. Initially she tried to move between both activities since both groups shared a table; however, children were getting impatient and upset, and Janet opted to invite another undergraduate to help the girls write letters so she could focus on making playdough creatures. The following excerpt is Janet's reflection of the challenge she encountered as she tried to attend to the needs of different children:

I found myself in many situations unsure of how to properly divide my attention amongst the students so none of them felt neglected. I wanted to make sure that I was pleasing everyone and everyone was having fun. I soon learned and I know I will definitely learn it again in the future that this is not an easy task and something that cannot always be done. However I wonder if there are any techniques or strategies on how to go about these situations where multiple children want to play with you?

In this reflection, we learn about Janet's goals in her role as a mediator. She wanted to make sure children felt attended to and that all participants were having fun. Notice that she reflected on feeling unsure about how to divide her attention in order to uphold her goals and the interest of the children she interacted with. Furthermore, she recognized the how difficulty it was to accomplish this and raised questions about potential strategies she could employ in the future.

Another example of this occurred when Jasmine worked with three boys making costumes out of cardboard. On this occasion she was working with David, Angel, and Ben10, who were each making a different cardboard costume. Even though they were all working on the same activity, each one was working on their own costume and turned to Janet primarily for help cutting the cardboard and searching for Google images. Janet expressed feeling overwhelmed because she realized she was *'responsible' for creating costumes for all three boys*". In contrast to the previous example, Jasmine decided to keep working with all three boys but set turn-taking parameters in an attempt to re-organize the activity and make it a shared endeavor. She was transparent about how she would divide her attention and wrote:

I told all of the children that I would help each person one at a time [...] This way I would be able to cater to all of their needs and potentially have them work together rather than having me do all the work [...] As I was cutting this, David went to help Ben 10 tape his body on him (OC: I thought this was awesome because they were finally helping each other and not only relying on me.)

An important commonality across these examples is the concern of ensuring children's interests was supported even when the tasks felt overwhelming for adults. They both reflected on interactions from a traditional child-adult perspective where it is implied that expertise lies in the adult. However, they strategized to address the needs and interests of different children. Janet called on the support of a colleague in order to ensure that all children pursued their individual projects. On the other hand, Jasmine employed a pedagogical strategy in order to move towards a collective activity that encouraged more peer collaboration and less reliance on the adult.

Undergraduate Developmental Trajectories

The examples in this chapter demonstrate how undergraduates moved through two interrelated developmental trajectories: Learning to be a collaborator, and (re)learning how to play. While B-Club centered play in order to provide children with more opportunities to be experts and express agency in activity, it still functioned within the context of a school. This made it difficult to re-imagine adult-child relations beyond teacher-student dichotomies. Undergraduates demonstrated familiarity to traditional teacher-like roles and were in the process of developing other more collaborative forms of participation. One of the challenges encountered by UGs in this developmental trajectory is that they want to support children without disrupting play. They raised questions to either clarify the context or to confirm they are supporting children. They also focused their participation in the process of making artifacts since it is where they can directly and immediately help children. New members, especially early on, asked for precise instruction, stepped in to resolve logistics, and refrained from asking clarifying questions when they felt it disrupted play. They remained cautious about jumping into actual play because children did not seem to need help to play. The fact that undergraduates rarely adopted roles in play sheds light into a second, developmental trajectory. Namely, that they are (re)learning to play. This required developing trust and friendly relationships with children in order to become “friends” or “mentors” who played together.

Chapter 5: Masks and Paper Guns: Adults Participating In Children's Play

In this chapter I turn to episodes of play that further exemplify children's agency at B-Club as it was created and sustained in imaginary play. The examples in this chapter are the outliers in the data, which in itself is an important finding that alludes to the difficulty of adult engagement in children's play, particularly in the context of school where adult agency and authority is upheld. The adults participating in these examples were returning members who had more time to build relationships with children and had a disposition to take on pretend roles in play. In chapter four I gave an overview of the primary ways that undergraduate students participated in children's play. Participation ranged from undergraduates facilitating the creation of artifacts to taking a pretend role in games. In this chapter I share examples of times when undergraduates (and myself) joined play by taking on a role in imaginary play. Even though these instances did not occur as often as those described in chapter four, they are important because it gives us insight into the possibilities and challenges of using play as a context for social transformation.

Reasons for these instances to be outliers in the data

There are several reasons that explain why these instances of adult immersion in imaginary play were less common. One reason was that imaginary play remained an "important [site] of peer socialization and development" and a site for the "elaboration of peer culture" (Reynolds, 2010, p.467-468); and adults have limited access to peer culture. It is also plausible that these forms of play were more common between the children but adults did not participate, so these instances were not documented in fieldnotes. Additionally, these examples were primarily recorded with GoPro cameras, which as discussed in chapter three, were primarily worn by Jasmine (UG) and me. Furthermore, the

adults who participated in these examples were all returning members with at least one academic term of experience getting to know children at B-Club and engaging with sociocultural theory in the university course. This supports what Stone and Gutiérrez (2007) found in their study of adult mediation at a similar afterschool program, where more experienced participants demonstrated an emergent model of teaching and a “growing understandings about teaching and learning”, as compared to new members who were more passive (p. 28). In my study, novice adult members often acted as facilitators, supporting children to create an artifact, but they did not follow children once the artifact was completed, presumably to play with it. Perhaps they were more comfortable in their role as facilitators and it made more sense to support children’s visions in that way than to engage in play in a more active manner. This raised one of the biggest challenges of this study: How, if at all, should adults mediate play and support children’s interest?

Finally, the themes of gun violence, fighting, or confrontation seen in these examples were difficult to mediate and made adults feel uncomfortable. The examples in this chapter demonstrate children’s interest in video games and mainstream media including Fortnite, Call of Duty and Lego Ninjago, which include physical confrontation, and the use of weapons. Throughout my participation at B-Club I learned about children’s interests in video games. The older boys constantly voiced their interests in video games and often requested to have access to computers where they could play games because B-Club was getting “boring”. Prior to Spring 2018, when this study began, I worked with the older children to build an arcade using cardboard boxes and plastic balls. The arcade captured their interests for a few days, but did not carry over to the Spring term. However, the interest in video games did transcend time and some of the boys began to engage in

play inspired by video games. At the time of the study, children shared that they did not play these games themselves but they saw older siblings or family members play at home.³ This indicated a sense of curiosity about the games. Despite the violent themes of these video games, it is important to note that at B-Club, children did not physically harm themselves or each other. Their interest in these violent video games presented an important tension for adults since they had to thread between supporting children's interests and the implications of violence, particularly in the context of school. In this chapter, I discuss the different ways that adults responded to this tension as well as their attempts to participate in these cases of imaginary play in order to foster peace and social justice.

Case 1: Mr. E Ninjago

The first case was a 12 level game inspired by Mr. E Ninjago from Lego⁴. I saw two boys from afar playing in the upper field without an adult. The two boys were Supersonic and Andres, both 9 years old. When I arrived I saw them pretend fight, throwing punches in the air without touching the opponent and making action sounds. The game was solely designed by Supersonic and Andres and followed the format of a video game divided into different levels, "freeplay" periods and long-cut scenes. Players verbally announced the beginning and the end of each level. The primary tools were a small stick and an eraser, both items that they found on the ground. A small black drawstring bag that I carried with GoPro supplies became a water bucket in one of the levels. For one the levels, they designated a patchy grass area as quicksand, and the baseball field briefly became their

³ In the 2018-2019 I spoke to program coordinators who said they heard some of the boys talk about setting up times to virtually play Fortnite together.

⁴ Ninjago is accessible through multiple platforms; movies, cartoon series, video games.

grandparents' house. There were brief moments of planning, mostly to decide what the name of the next level would be, but the game itself developed through a range of linguistic tools including directives, corrections, stage directions, narrative, and embodied actions, to co-create an imaginary world and play narrative. Similar to the plot of the original Lego Ninjago, the goal of the game was to collect three masks known as the Masks of Oni, which include the Mask of Vengeance, Mask of Deception, and Mask of Hatred. Each mask had unique superpowers that are passed on to the person wearing it.

First Person Action Sequence and Corrections

Since Supersonic and Andres did not have physical masks, the boys verbally announced that they would wear a mask saying *"I'm going to put on the mask of vengeance"* then placed both hands on their face for a few seconds and waved their arms to signify they were wearing a mask (Figure 3). A statement about their newly acquired powers such as *"I have four arms now"* often followed their initial announcement. This sequence was common of first person action, since participants narrated their own action as means to communicate shared understanding of the game.

The following excerpt shows the moment that Andres took away one of the masks from Supersonic. Notice that Andres first narrated the intended action when he said *"tranquilized."* (Line 1) followed by more precise directions for Supersonic like *"I tranquilized you."* (Line 2). Supersonic continued to move, walking in small circles and sticking his tongue out as if he was hurt. Andres corrected this response by narrating joint actions and physically arranging Supersonic's body (Figure 4).

Example 1

1. **Andres:** Tranquilized.
2. I tranquilized you.
3. **Supersonic:** ((Walks in circles. Sticks tongue out))
4. ((Andres runs after Supersonic))
5. **Andres:** No. dude dude dude. Gets hands ((Moves Supersonic's arms))
6. Take off.
7. [Inaudible]
8. Take it off.

Figure 3: Supersonic pretending to place mask of face



Figure 4: Andres moves Supersonic's arms to remove mask



After he took the mask, Andres said, “*Yes! I got the mask of vengeance.*” (Line9) letting Supersonic know that Andres had the mask now. Supersonic raised the question “*or did you?*” (Line 10) and went on to narrate the goal of the game. He pretended to wear a different mask and narrated the newly acquired powers they both had. They continued to pretend fight and Andres initiated another first person sequence when he said, “*Time to throw stuff.*” (Line 15) and pretended to carry and throw a large object. Supersonic aligned with Andres and added, “*Oh yeah time to throw stuff.*” (Line 16) and imitated the action of

carrying and throwing a large item. Even though they seemed to align, Andres made another correction when he said “Wait. *I can throw stuff*” (Line 17), as if to remind Supersonic that throwing stuff was his superpower. Supersonic responded to this correction with the clarification, “No. *With the Mask of Vengeance you have ninja skills*” (Line 18), and added that he had four arms, to underscore that he could throw stuff. Andres again aligned with Supersonic and initiated another first person action sequence in lines 20 and 21 when he said, “*Ultimate ninja skills*” and “*time for my ultimate ninja skills*” followed by the action of rolling on the ground in towards Supersonic.

Example 1.1

9 **Andres:** Yes! I got the mask of vengeance.

10 **Supersonic:** Or did you?

11 You have to get all four masks.

12 ((*Palms to face*)) The mask of deception.

13 So now you have four arms and I have the force.

14 ((*Supersonic and Andres pretend fight*))

15 **Andres:** Time to throw stuff.

16 **Supersonic:** I’m a big figure. Oh yeah! Time to throw stuff.

17 **Andres:** Wait (.) I can throw stuff.

18 **Supersonic:** No with the mask of vengeance you have Ninja Skills.

19 I have four arms.

20 **Andres:** Ultimate ninja skills. Activate?

21 ((*Inaudible*)) ultimate ninja skills,

22 Time for my ultimate ninja skills.

The first person action sequence started with an announcement that foreshadowed action followed by the action, and ended with a contribution to the narrative of the game. This sequence was used to coordinate actions with the other player and to develop the narrative of the game. By narrating their action prior to performing the action gave the other player a frame of reference to interpret the action and preform their next move.

Long-cut Scenes and Co-creating the Narrative

Long-Cut scenes followed the levels where Supersonic and Andres fought each other. These scenes, as in traditional video games, were narrative periods that guided the player into the next phase of the game. Supersonic and Andres used a sequence of questions to co-create the setting and the narrative of the long cut scene.

Supersonic and Andres ran towards a “house” which was the school’s baseball backstop fence and Supersonic initiated the narrative by stating it felt good to be home followed by the question, “*Don’t you think?*” (line 1). This helped create an imagined context for the scene and the question was a discursive tool to reassure Andres shared the same play-frame. What proceeded was a series of questions that Supersonic and Andres used to co-create the imagined context and collaborate to build the narrative of the long-cut scene. In lines 8-9 Supersonic introduced a third character, grandpa, who he said had gone missing. Andres picked up a baseball base and told Supersonic to pretend there was a hole under the base and added, “*There’s a hole under here*” (line 10). Supersonic aligned with Andres and added, “*I know what those are*” (line 12) referring to the hole on the ground. Then Supersonic made another contribution to the narrative that explained the meaning of the hole and added that the mole hogs “*stole grandpa*” (line 13). Andres asked, “*what do we*

do know?" (line 14), seeking more direction for the narrative. Supersonic said he did not know what to do and added details to the narrative of the long-cut scene including finding a letter with a message from grandpa which gave them instructions on what they should do next, which was to *"go down the hole"* (line 17) with *"digging suits"* (line 18) that grandpa left for them to wear. At this point the goal of the game was to get to grandpa before the groundhogs got to him. Then, he added a time stamp (line 20) to the event adding temporality to their narrative. Andres repeated the question, *"What do we do?"* (line 21) and proceeded with directions to a pretend situation in which he got pulled into the hole and then *"popped out as a mole"* (line 23). Supersonic immediately aligned with him shouting *"No!"* (line 24), accompanied with arm waving and slashing sounds. Supersonic paused for a second and asked, *"What happened? I just heard a ((screeching sounds)) and I started slicing it. Then invisible mole hogs"* (lines 26-28). Finally he added that [grandpa] could have told them the groundhogs were invisible (line 29). As he finished his statement Andres walked behind Supersonic and pretended to strike his head. That action prompted a short battle that marked the end of the long-cut scene and the start of the new level where Supersonic fought Andres until he came back to his senses.

Example 2

- 1 **Supersonic:** It feels good to be home. Don't you think?
- 2 **Andres:** Yeah
- 3 **Supersonic:** I miss this place
- 4 Is that our house?
- 5 **Andres:** Are they gonna sell it?
- 6 **Supersonic:** It's destroyed. They're not going to sell it.

7 **Andres:** What happened?

8 **Supersonic:** And worse of all where is grandpa?

9 Grandpa are you here?

10 **Andres:** Whoa what's this? Pretend there's a hole *((lifts base over head))*

11 There's a hole under here

12 **Supersonic:** So I know what those holes are.

13 They're the mole hogs. They stole grandpa

14 **Andres:** What do we do?

15 **Supersonic:** I don't know. But I still can't believe this happened in our village.

16 Look there's a note

17 Dear grandchildren. I want you to go down that hole.

18 I gave you digging suits

19 Please, before the groundhog gets me.

20 This says 9:53 A- P.M

21 Not long after we left.

22 **Andres:** Mmm what do we do?

23 I got pulled in then I popped out as a mole

24 **Supersonic:** No::

25 *((Slashing sounds. Supersonic waves arms in slashing motion))*

26 What happened? I didn't see anything (.)

27 I just heard a *((screeching sounds))* and I started slicing it.

28 Then invisible mole hogs.

29 Oh my god he could've told us it was invisible

Adults Making Sense Of The Game

So far I demonstrated the process of creating an imaginary context and narrative. In the next examples I describe my attempts to enter and participate in the game. It is important to note that prior to this occasion I was not familiar with the plot or characters of Lego Ninjago. I knew that some of the boys played Lego Ninjago computer games and watched episodes on YouTube and on television. I also briefly talked to Supersonic about the Lego Ninjago Movie he watched during spring break. It is plausible that this conversation prompted the play episode, but I arrived to the game once it had already started. Initially, I approached the boys because they were in the upper field without an adult, which was not allowed in the afterschool program for security reasons. It was common for children to walk to the upper field with an adult and then break off into smaller groups. I approached Supersonic and Andres with a sense of curiosity and wonder since they were pretend fighting, and I saw fighting as a point of tension that I could observe and mediate towards transforming the activity to become peaceful or less violent. When I approached the boys they continued to pretend fight and run across the grassy area. They did not stop when I approached them, but I followed them across the field and observed their actions and listened for potential clues that would help me understand the game. Thus, I joined the activity as a peripheral participant, observing from the margins and occasionally asking questions to learn more about the game. I asked them why their games always involved fighting but they dismissed my question.

After my questions were dismissed I continued to be an observer and I listened for clues about the roles that each player enacted. As Supersonic and Andres developed their

narrative, they talked about being Motorcycle Man, Motorcycle Woman, and Mr. E., but I was confused about which characters each of them embodied. From my perspective, Supersonic was Motorcycle Woman. Instead of asking questions to clarify this, my first question was “*Why [do] your games always involve fighting?*”, which the boys dismissed. In comparison to the questions raised by Supersonic and Andres that contributed to the game, this question interrogated the game and did not create an entry point nor provide details about the narrative and characters. Understandably, the boys dismissed my question and continued to pretend fight. I briefly stepped away from the game to talk to another student and to pick up a bag with research materials. When I returned to the game, Supersonic and Andres continued the battle. Supersonic stated that he “got” Motorcycle Man, and that Motorcycle Man was actually Motorcycle Woman. He also provided details about stealing her Motorcycle and riding away, which he accompanied with actions such as holding imaginary handlebars and walking in a circle. This furthered my confusion because I thought Supersonic was playing the character of Motorcycle Woman. At this point I interfered with a clarifying question, I asked, “*So you got motorcycle woman?*” followed by “*I thought you were motorcycle woman?*” (lines 2-3). These questions demonstrated my lack of comprehension and my attempts to understand the game. In line 5, Supersonic responded to my question with a quick “*No*”, to which I responded with another question, “*You’re not?*” (line 6). Notice that this question further confirmed my confusion, but it is framed as a correction. In other words, it implied that Supersonic was not giving me the answers I wanted to hear. Supersonic was receptive to my confusion and stepped out of the play frame to explain the narrative. He said, “*I was [Motorcycle Woman] but then*” (line7), and before he could finish the statement, Andres added that he needed to do

something and ran in the direction away from Supersonic. This pulled Supersonic's attention back into their shared play frame. He followed Andres, but I insisted and asked, "Wait. **What?**" (line 9). Supersonic paused, turned around to look at me and said, "*This is the story. You could've seen it if you were there*" (line 11). He went on to explain that he had to rescue Andres, who had been captured by someone who they first assumed, was Motorcycle Man, but who turned out to be Motorcycle Woman.

Based on the assumption that Motorcycle Man was actually Motorcycle Woman I raised more clarifying questions and asked Supersonic if he was simultaneously playing two or three characters (lines 21-23). He said he was "*all of the bad guys and [Andres'] partner*" (line 25). I asked yet another clarifying question, "*so you were the bad guy and the good guy?*" (line 28) to which Supersonic responded, "*Yeah because we did not have four people*" (line 29).

Example 3

- 1 **Supersonic:** Motorcycle man is actually motorcycle woman.
- 2 **Lilia:** So you got motorcycle woman?
- 3 I thought you were motorcycle woman. ((*No Response*))
- 4 I thought you were motorcycle woman.
- 5 **Supersonic:** No.
- 6 **Lilia:** You're not?
- 7 **Supersonic:** I was, but then
- 8 **Andres:** =I gotta do something. ((*A runs away*))
- 9 **Lilia:** Wait **what?**
- 10 ((*Supersonic walks toward Andres then pauses and turns to Lilia*))

- 11 **Supersonic:** This is the story. You could've seen it if you were there.
- 12 Andres and me were like teammates but then I was captured by
- 13 Motorcycle but then I was captured by Motorcycle Man ((*air quotes*))
- 14 Which turned out to be Motorcycle Woman
- 15 So I acted as both of them.
- 16 So then I became his partner's brother actually.
- 17 ((*Supersonic points to Andres*)).
- 18 And then I got the rope and I [inaudible] and I had cool aim.
- 19 I threw it into the jail van and then I tried to grab Andres
- 20 to save him but I crashed because he didn't grab my hand.
- 21 **Lilia:** Oh: So you were two people then?
- 22 **Supersonic:** Yeah
- 23 **Lilia:** Or three?
- 24 **Supersonic:** I was two.
- 25 I was all of the bad guys. And his partner. But then it's his turn to
- 26 be the bad guys.
- 27 **Lilia:** Oh::
- 28 Wait, so you were the bad guy and the good guy?
- 29 **Supersonic:** Yeah because we did not have four people.

These interactions are important because they demonstrate my role as a peripheral participant and the different attempts I made to understand the imaginary play world that Supersonic and Andres constructed play-by-play. I repeatedly asked clarifying questions while the boys continued to play seamlessly. My clarifying questions were my attempt to

understand the game altogether and functioned outside of the play frame. My questions actually pulled the boys out of the play frame. Andres resisted all of my “pulls” and physically moved away (line 8). Supersonic was more flexible, but reminded me of my position as an outsider with phrases such as, “*You could’ve seen it if you were there*” (line 11). Supersonic stepped out of the play frame to address my inquiries of the game and explain the narrative of the game. Additionally, the questions I asked functioned outside of the established play frame. In comparison to the types of questions the boys used to in *example 2*, my questions did not contribute to the narrative of the game. Instead, my questions were meant to clarify my own confusion. Supersonic and Andres did not need clarifications since they were attuned to each other’s actions, which functioned within the play frame. Each of their moves in the interactions functioned as contributions to build the complex narrative of the game. They were immersed in the game and did not appear confused about the role that each of them played, even when one person performed multiple characters without costumes or props.

Adult Attempts to Enter Games

Along with finding opportunities to ask clarifying questions, I also sought out opportunities to enter the game. Supersonic and Andres took on several roles while I remained a peripheral observer. As seen in the previous examples, sometimes they simultaneously took on more one character instead of inviting me to join the game. Perhaps because they would have to describe role and closely guide my participation, and this would pull them away from playing. Also, inviting a novice adult to play might feel unfamiliar, especially in a game that required play fighting. In these examples, I describe my attempts to join the game and contribute to its narrative, and how Andres and

Supersonic responded to these attempts. The first attempt occurred early in the play episode when the boys launched a new level of the game. There was a patch of dirt in the upper field where the grass had dried up. Andres and Supersonic co-created a new meaning for the terrain. First, Andres stood on the patch of dirt and announced he “*dissolved into sand*” (line 1). Supersonic further elaborated on the narrative and added, “*You turn all the sand into quicksand. If I go on sand I die*” (line 2). Andres stood on the patch of dirt and Supersonic stood on the edge, seemingly strategizing how he would get to Andres without sinking into the quicksand. In line 3, I attempted to enter the game by standing in the patch of dirt and announcing that I was in the sand, with a sense of urgency imitating the action register the boys used in the play frame. Andres smirked and said “*Your friend*” (line 4) as he pointed in my direction and waved, signaling that he was asking Supersonic to respond to me request. Supersonic dismissed both of our statements and simply continued to play. I make a second attempt and narrated that “*I [would] just melt*” (line 6). The second attempt is also dismissed and Supersonic and Andres continued to play without me.

Example 4

- 1 **Andres:** I dissolved into sand.

- 2 **Supersonic:** You turn all the sand into quicksand. If I go on sand I die.

- 3 **Lilia:** Oh no I’m in sand. I’m in **sand!**

- 4 **Andres:** *((smile))* Your friend. *((Raising arm pointing in Supersonic’s direction))*

- 5 *((Andres and Supersonic continue playing))*

6 **Lilia:** Aww I will just melt *((pause))* and I'm gone.

Notice that in this occasion I did not ask questions. Instead I actively listened and observed Supersonic's and Andres' play. Once they assigned a new meaning to the patch of dirt, thinking that I understood the game, I intended to enter the narrative by pretending I would sink in the sand (line 3). Andres' arm motion is important because it was used to communicate with Supersonic to explore my position within their narrative. By saying "*Your friend.*" (line4) he initiated a subtle negotiation with Supersonic to decide if I would be able to play a role in the game. Andres created a permeable boundary that did not shut me out of the game but waited for Supersonic's response. Supersonic's response was to continue to play without engaging with me as a player. My response was to remain in the play frame, waiting for a possible re-adjustment, but once I noticed they continued to play I exited the play frame and continued my peripheral participation as an observer. Although arguably I was never really given access to the play frame altogether.

After completing two levels of the game, Supersonic referenced a letter he found at grandpa's house during the long-cut scene to set the context for the next level. He said the letter said something about Motorcycle Woman. He added, "*you know how we kind of arrested her crew. I think she kinda took our grandpa*" (lines 9-10). Andres aligned with the statement and furthered contributed to the narrative. He added, "*It's revenge*" (line11). Supersonic aligned with Andres' contribution and in the next talk turn he asked Andres if he had the Mask of Vengeance. Andres responded, "*Yeah it's right here*" (line15) as he reached to down to his pocket. Supersonic whispered to Andres, "*You didn't have it, you didn't have it*" (line 16). Andres corrected his previous statement "*Oh no it's not*" (line 17). This correction allowed Supersonic to make another contribution to the narrative, namely

that Motorcycle Woman took the Mask of Vengeance. Upon hearing this, I sought for another opportunity to enter the game, this time contributing to the narrative by laughing like a villain and pretending to be Motorcycle Woman. Andres and Supersonic said, “*there she is*” (line 20) and “*Run for your life! You can’t catch her she’s a mask*” (line 21). These utterances served as cues that the boys had accepted me into the play frame, presumably as Motorcycle Woman. Additionally, line 22 was a cue of what I should do next in the role of Motorcycle Woman, which was to chase them.

Example 4.1

- 7 **Supersonic:** I saw something on the letter.
- 8 **Supersonic** It said something Motorcycle Woman.
- 9 **Supersonic** You know how we kind of arrested her crew.
- 10 **Supersonic** I think she kinda took our grandpa.
- 11 **Andres** It’s revenge
- 12 **Supersonic** Revenge!
- 13 **Andres** It always gets me
- 14 **Supersonic** Wait! Do you have the mask of vengeance?
- 15 **Andres** Yeah it’s right here
- 16 **Supersonic** (*Whispering*) You didn’t have it, you didn’t have it.
- 17 **Andres** Oh no it’s not.
- 18 **Supersonic** She took the mask of vengeance. That gives you the master of
- 19 **Lilia** (*Evil laugh*)
- 20 **Andres** Oh there she is.

21 **Supersonic** AH! Run for your life! You can't catch her she's a mask. AH:!

22 **Supersonic** You better run bro I'm telling you now!

23 **Supersonic** And you really are my bro not my friend.

Notice that similar to my previous attempt, I did not make an explicit request to enter the game. Yet, this time I demonstrated more knowledge or understanding of the game. I laughed like a villain following the boys' narrative. I entered with the intention of taking on the role of Motorcycle Woman. I understood the game's narrative enough to know that in my role as Motorcycle Woman I had to hold on to the Mask of Vengeance, which the boys no longer had. I also had knowledge of the meaning of the mask. I knew that having the mask meant I had special powers that the boys wanted. On one hand, I demonstrated that I knew enough about the game to shift my participation from the margins to the center of the activity. On the other hand, as a central participant I could make pedagogical decisions to transform the narrative of the game from a game of fighting to a game of peace or reconciliation.

Supersonic continued to make statements to build up the narrative and guide my participation. He made statements like "*Wait a minute you are not ground woman. You are running just like us*" (lines 25-26). This implied that Motorcycle Woman would ride her motorcycle instead of run, further expanding the narrative and the role of my character. Even though it appeared that these statements were directed at me, Supersonic added, "*No. You're*" (line 28), which he whispered directly to me. Notice that he whispered his explicit instructions, indicating a brief moment in which he stepped out of character to ensure I proceeded to participate accordingly. However, I interrupted his instruction when I responded, "*I'm floating*" (line 29). This response did not align with Supersonic's narrative

since I was supposed to be “*running*” not “*floating*”. Furthermore, this indicated his awareness of my role as a novice in the game. He did not immediately correct me. Instead he raised a possible new scenario for my role. He asked if I could be their “*long lost mother*”, told me to stop following them, and asked why I had the mask (lines 30-32). This created a window of opportunity where I could contribute to the narrative. I responded that my best friend gave me the mask. Supersonic asked me for her name and Andres asked, “*Is it Motorcycle Woman?*” (Line 35). I said “*no*” (36) and Supersonic subtly corrected me. He added, “*I know it’s Motorcycle Woman*” and asked for her real name (lines 37-38). This discursive move was a strategy to keep my character in line with the narrative. I responded that my friend’s name was “*Claudia*”, further taking the narrative in an unintended direction. Andres asked, “*Claudia?*”, as if he was unsure about where the narrative was going. Supersonic corrected me again and whispered, “*Motorcycle*” (line 41). This correction is important because it signifies that my contributions did not align with the game’s narrative and Supersonic had to explicitly direct my next move in order to realign my participation to their narrative. I aligned with his instructions and responded, “*Claudia Motor(.)cycle*” (line 42). In line 43, Supersonic confirmed that I finally aligned with the narrative saying, “*No wonder she’s called Motorcycle Woman. It’s in the last name.*”

Example 4.2

- 24 **Supersonic:** There they are. There she is.
- 25 Wait a minute you are not ground woman.
- 26 You’re running just like us.
- 27 Who are you?
- 28 ((whisper)) No you’re

29 **Lilia:** = I'm floating
30 **Supersonic:** Are you our long lost mother? I don't believe that.
31 You! Stop following us.
32 And one, why do you have the mask of vengeance?
33 **Lilia:** It was given to me by my best friend.
34 **Supersonic:** You're best friend huh, what's her name?
35 **Andres:** Is it motorcycle woman?
36 **Lilia:** No
37 **Supersonic:** I know it's Motorcycle Woman.
38 I know it's her but what's her real name. We need to know.
39 **Lilia:** Claudia
40 **Andres:** Claudia?
41 **Supersonic:** Motorcycle ((*Whispers to Lilia*))
42 **Lilia:** Claudia Motor(.)Cycle
43 **Supersonic:** What? No wonder she's called motorcycle woman.
44 It's in the last name. **Ah::**

This example demonstrates two important aspects of how Supersonic and Andres opened up an opportunity for me to enter the game. First, although they did not explicitly invite me, they opted to let me join once I demonstrated some understanding of the game. Secondly, I demonstrated a lack of expertise in the game and the boys used overt and implied directions in order to maintain the flow of the game. Supersonic asked known answer questions that built up the narrative and served as opportunities for me to re-align with the narrative. On multiple occasions I failed to recognize the subtle or implied

corrections and Supersonic decided to step out of character and whisper explicit directions to guide my participation. As the expert in the interaction Supersonic was able to identify the points in the interaction where I needed support.

Additionally, once I was an active participant in the game, I attempted to incorporate my agenda of transforming the game to foster social consciousness in and through play. Recall that early in the play episode I asked Supersonic and Andres why the game had to be about fighting. Once I had an opportunity to join the game I made an attempt to initiate a move towards transforming the pretend fighting into a narrative of world peace. Supersonic and Andres wanted me to return the Mask of Vengeance. Unexpectedly, Andres said we all had to wear gas masks, which prompted us to run around for a brief moment. Then I told the boys that I would give them the Mask of Vengeance if they promised me world peace (line 47). Supersonic responded, "*Fine peace. We're the good guys*" (line 48). I continued to build my own narrative of peace by adding, "*for the world*" (line 49). Supersonic repeated that they were the good guys (Line 50). Andres asked, "*You want peace for the world?*" (line 52), to which I responded "*yes*" (line 53). Andres' question appeared to be a point of alignment where other players would contribute to my narrative of peace. However, Supersonic re-directed the narrative. He said that I had to go with them to safety and shouted that the gas was not gone and that we had to put our masks back on. This was Supersonic's strategy to recover their original narrative and dismiss the narrative I proposed. There was no further mention of world peace or the Mask of Vengeance.

Example 4.3

45 **Lilia:** I will give you the mask of vengeance. *((Holding up notebook.))*

46 **Supersonic:** Good give it to us.

47 **Lilia:** If you promise me peace.

48 **Supersonic:** Fine peace. We're the good guys.

49 **Lilia:** For the world.

50 **Supersonic:** We are the good guys here. So let's just take this and

51 *((Supersonic takes notebook))*

52 **Andres:** =You want peace for the world?

53 **Lilia:** Yes.

54 **Supersonic:** You're coming with us in safety. Let's go people. The gas is gone.

55 Ah::! The gas is not gone. Put it back up. Put your mask up.

56 *((S Tosses notebook)).*

Notice that I assumed my shift to world peace aligned with the overall narrative since I used it as a condition to return the Mask of Vengeance. However, Supersonic reminded me that they were actually the good guys, which further confirmed my status as a novice participant who did not fully understand the story and each other's role. Initially, I interpreted their identity as the "good guys" as an alignment to my proposed narrative of world peace. However, since they made no further contributions, and returned to the original narrative it appears they were actually making attempts to correct my misunderstanding. Reflecting on my attempt to shift the narrative I learned that I had an oversimplified understanding of the game altogether. I prescribed my definition of violence to the game, but "children do not think about the violence they bring into play in the same way adults do" (Levin, 2003, p. 3-4). By attaching my own perspective I overlooked the very thing that Supersonic and Andres could be wrestling with — the multidimensionality

of the “good guys” who have to fight the “bad guys”. Rather than take a leap to change the narrative of the game I could have explored how they made sense of the role of the “good guys”. These examples illuminate our understanding of how children protect the social worlds they co-create in play from adults who may attempt to transform them without recognitions of the complex narratives they creatively build. This is not to say that these forms of play could not be the foundation of a greater discussion about violence in the real world. On the contrary, this is an example of the pedagogical risks that adults can take to participate in children’s play in ways that honor children’s agency.

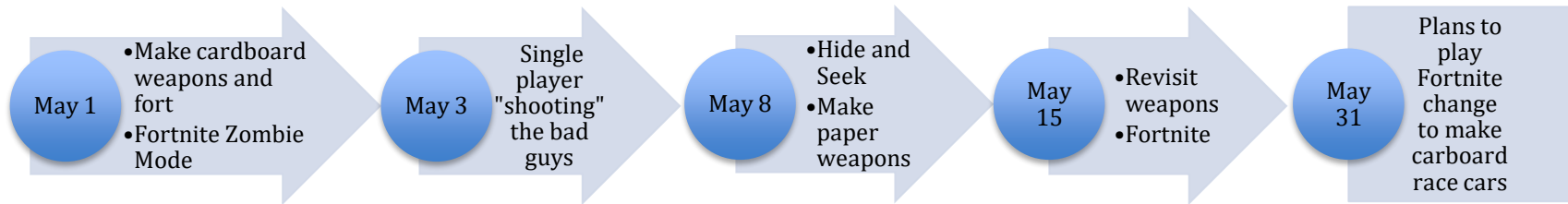
The game ended a few minutes after this interaction when Supersonic and Andres got tired. We sat on the concrete steps by the upper fields and wrote the title to each of levels in the game. In the weeks that followed I asked the boys if they wanted to play Lego Ninjago again but their interests shifted into other activities. Andres grew interested soccer and Supersonic was interested in writing a stories or playing Fortnite.

Case 2: Fortnite

A second case of creating a social world was seen when children at B-Club played Fortnite. As described in Chapter three, Fortnite is a video game that some of the children, especially the boys were interested in. This case is interesting for several reasons. The first reason is that unlike the previous case, this game developed over a period of five weeks (Figure 5). It is unclear who initiated the game since it appeared that two separate groups played the game at different times and were motivated by different events. However, it was clear that the boys at B-Club expressed interests and knowledge of the game. Carlos, Francisco, and Janet, all UGs, mentioned they knew about the video game and would either play it themselves or had younger siblings that liked to play the game. The first group of

children who played Fortnite included Supersonic, Tucker, Bruno, Janet (UG), and me. The second group included David, Brody, Jack, Bruno, Julia (UG), Marissa (UG), Jessica (UG), and me. Another reason this case is interesting is that adults expressed feeling confused and even uncomfortable about the game given its violent theme. I also learned from the course instructor that they engaged in several course discussions about possible ways to mediate such games and that the school prohibited such forms of play. This concern is understandable given the rise of school shootings in the United States with 63% of the youth who commit violent acts had an interest in violence in movies, video games, or books (Lee, 2013). Thus, we encountered ethical concerns about allowing students to enact Fortnite in play as a means of expression and socio-emotional development. Lastly, this case is interesting because it merged making activities with imaginary play. Unlike, Lego Ninjago, children and adults engaged in the process of making artifacts to play Fortnite, which gives insight into different ways adults mediated this type of play through the making process and in actual play. In the next examples I will demonstrate how adults participated and their attempts to transform the game.

Figure 5: Timeline of events related to Fortnite



Genesis of the Game

The construction of this episode included two primary activities at different times and included different people. The first mention of the game was on May 1 when Tucker built a cardboard fort in the MPR. He seemed to be working alone and asked Jasmine for help to cut a piece of cardboard. Jasmine was working with Ben10 and David who were making a cardboard truck near Tucker's fort. When she helped him, Tucker showed her he was making a gun because he was playing Fortnite. Jasmine responded that she did not like guns (Line 1), which prompted a brief discussion of the meaning of weapons in Fortnite. Tucker responded *"It's just Fortnite, there's no blood."* (line 2). Then Jasmine asked, *"So it's just a game not anything bad, not trying to be vindictful, not trying to be evil, right?"* (lines 3-4), to which Tucker responded, *"You can be evil but not like a savage. Like let other players kill other players. Like hide ((shooting noises)) Shot, headshot, down. Destroy"* (lines 5-7). Jasmine responded, *"Okay. As long as you're only making it as Fortnite and not real life because I don't like guns in real life"* (lines 8-9), and she returned to work with David and Ben10, who were in close proximity to Tucker's fort.

Example 5

- 1 **Jasmine:** I don't like guns
- 2 **Tucker:** It's just Fortnite there's no blood.
- 3 **Jasmine:** So it's just a game not anything bad, not trying to be
- 4 vindictful, not trying to be evil, right?
- 5 **Tucker:** You can be evil but not like a savage.
- 6 Like let other players kill other players.
- 7 Like hide. ((*Shooting noises*)) Shot headshot down. Destroy.

8 **Jasmine:** Okay. As long as you're only making it as Fortnite and not real life,
9 Because I don't like guns in real life.

Later that day I joined Tucker, Supersonic, and Bruno to play Fortnite. They each had cardboard guns, modeled like the one Tucker made in the excerpt above. As we exited the MPR and walked onto the playground area, I suggested the weapons could shoot bubbles.⁵ Tucker and Bruno ignored my suggestion and ran to the jungle gym in the playground. Supersonic acknowledged my suggestion but dismissed it as we walked to join the others in the jungle gym. Once there, Tucker directed the spatial organization of the game. He told Supersonic and Bruno where to stand in an action voice register. Each of the boys stood by the different openings on the jungle gym (Figure 6). I used the same action register to ask them what I should do. In the following transcript, notice Tucker continued to lead the game. The humming in line 6 shows that he acknowledged me as a player but was hesitant to stop the game to guide my participation. He stopped to think what direction to give me, and my quick response was to offer a possible move. Tucker denied my suggestion and said “No” followed by a directive to “*defend with zombies*” (line 6). In the same talk turn Supersonic shouted “*Stand down*” (line 7), followed by “*zombies!*” (line 8). Almost instantly, they all moved to the same side of the jungle gym, held up their weapons and pretended to shoot some of the children that were hanging out by the gym (Figure 6). It is unclear if Supersonic added, “*Stand down*” to align with me or if that was his strategy to get me to move and leave a clear path to get to the zombies. At that point I stepped outside of the play frame to ask some of children if they needed sweaters. When I returned to the

⁵ I suggested shooting bubbles as seen in the Marvel film Avengers Infinity War, which was released in April 2018. Supersonic and I had a prior talk about the movie since we both enjoyed talking about Marvel comics.

play frame I continue to make statements such as, “*To be honest I have no idea what’s going on*” — further evidence of my lack of knowledge of the game. All the while Tucker, Supersonic, and Bruno continued to point their cardboard guns at each other and run up and down the jungle gym. Unfortunately, there was another programmatic issue that prevented future attempts to join the game or observe how it came to an end.

Example 6

- 1 **Lilia:** Oh My God What should I do?
- 2 **Tucker:** Mmm
- 3 **Lilia:** Stand down
- 4 **Tucker:** No
- 5 **Lilia:** No stand down. What do I do?
- 6 **Tucker:** Mmm defend with zombies
- 7 **Supersonic** = Stand down
- 8 Zombies!

((All run to one side of the jungle gym. Make shooting sounds and point guns at children standing by the jungle gym))



Figure 6: Boys playing Fortnite on jungle gyms and holding cardboard weapons.



Figure 7: Boys playing Fortnite and pointing cardboard weapons at "zombies".

In examples five and six, notice that Jasmine and I, the only adults who participated in the activities, asked questions in order to learn about the game. Jasmine's questions demonstrated her concern with the violent nature of the game. She engaged in conversation around the use of guns and gained insight into Tucker's perception of violence in Fortnite. Jasmine associated guns with violence and vindictiveness, but Tucker showed awareness about a difference between the guns in the play world of Fortnite and guns in real life. This short interaction is important because it became the foundation of an ongoing discussion about the use of guns and the pain they cause in real life. In comparison to Jasmine's questions, my questions were guided by my lack of knowledge of the game. Unlike Jasmine, I attempted to adopt a role in the game and shift my participation from a peripheral observer to an actual player. My unfamiliarity with the imaginary world they created was reflected in my questions along with my lack of noticing the cues that the three boys quickly aligned to. For example, I was told to fight the zombies but did not know what

that zombies look like or who was a zombie, meanwhile the boys seamlessly coordinated their bodies and actions with each other.

In the weeks that followed a second group of boys began to play Fortnite. The second group included three boys Brody, Jack, David, Bruno; and four adults, Julia, Marissa, Jessica, and me. Interestingly, the trajectory of the activity was different. It started with a spontaneous game of hide and seek and evolved into Fortnite. As part of the university course, UGs were encouraged to initiate new activities after a few weeks of observation. They were also asked to reflect on how they could expand the ways they participated and encourage the children to do the same. Jessica, Marissa, and Julia carpooled to site that week and decided they would set up arts and crafts materials in the upper field. For Jessica and Marissa, this would be an opportunity to go outside and play with different children since they were used to staying inside with the same children. This also encouraged children who were commonly in the upper field to participate in arts and crafts. Julia, Marissa, and Jessica proceeded with their plan drawing the attention of a few children including Brody, Jack, and Bruno. In the following excerpt, Julia described how they unexpectedly started to play hide-and-seek and eventually started to pretend they had guns and shields, which led to making weapons with the arts and crafts she supplies:

When the boys saw Jessica and Marissa come up the stairs and walking toward the bench we were at, Brody and Bruno both started to yell "AHHHHHH!" They both got up and ran towards the pillars in the courtyard. Jessica and Marissa had confused expression on their face. We went to go look for them because the boys were out of our sight. We eventually found them hiding behind the walls and pillars and so we began to do the same

thing. Marissa, Jessica, and I hid behind the wall corners and pillars [...] This gradually turned into playing with pretend guns as a weapon or shield from the others. When they began to imagine these guns, I remembered that I had paper and markers outside. I told them that we should go make weapons for protection and shields. The boys followed and so did Marissa and Jessica.

In this fieldnote excerpt Julia alludes to the gradual development of a game of hide-and-see and its transformation into a game of shooting. At first, the children used their hands and arms to represent the imaginary guns and shields. Then Julia suggested using the arts and crafts materials to make weapons, which she framed were to be used as protection. In future fieldnotes and through personal communication, Julia (Appendix B) reflected on her discomfort with weapons, but in this instance, the artifacts appeared to be a way to support the game and connect imaginary play to making. Thus, to a certain extent they achieved their goal of encouraging children to shift their participation from pretend play to an arts and craft activity.

Unexpectedly, the following week, the boys still had their paper guns and went to the arts and crafts table to refine their design. Tucker, Julia, Jack, David, Bruno, and Brody gathered at the arts and crafts table to modify their guns in preparation of a game of Fortnite. Tucker asked Julia for help to attach a paper cylinder to his gun. He explained that the cylinder was a silencer so you would not hear anything when you shot the enemy. As seen in the transcript below, I interfered to ask Tucker how this game was different from the game he played a few weeks before. Recall that in example five, Tucker said Fortnite

was not violent because there was no real blood. However, before I could complete my question, Tucker said:

Example 7

- 1 **Tucker:** What? It's not violence.
- 2 You teleport. You just teleport.
- 3 It's just holograms. Holograms. It's like Fortnite.

Again, I raised my concern with the violent nature of the game and asked, "*So the head is not a real head? And that makes it okay?*" to which Tucker responded:

- 4 **Tucker:** ((*Nodding*)) It's not real it's just holograms.
- 5 It looks like real people but it's not. It's like actual holograms.

This exchange was short, but it became a point of convergence in the development of the Fortnite activity, where we connected a previous discussion of violence to new concerns. I said, "*I thought last time you said*", in order to reference our previous conversation, and before I could complete my question Tucker reinstated reasons why the game was not violent despite the use of guns. He added that the game did not equate to real life because the players were holographs, who would reappear, or teleport, after getting shot. His quick response, demonstrated collective memory as well as a level of frustration. Perhaps he appeared frustrated because he constantly had to explain why a game he enjoyed should not be considered violent since there was, in his perspective, a clear distinction between real life, real violence, and the game.

After Tucker left the table, Julia initiated a similar conversation with Brody and Steve as they continued to work on their weapons in preparation to go outside to play Fortnite. Julia asked the boys if they could transform the game into something fun and

asked if the game always had to be about killing (lines 1-2). Brody nodded, signaling that the game had to be about killing. Julia probed for more information and asked “*why?*” (line 4). In line 5, Brody responded that him and his friends “*love games like that.*”

Example 8

- 1 **Julia:** Can we make this like a fun game?
2 Does it always have to be about killing you think?
3 **Brody:** *((nodding))*
4 **Julia:** why?
5 **Brody:** Because we. Me, Jack, David love games like that.

This example shows Julia’s struggle to include the children in a possible transformation of the game and learn about children’ interests. Notice that Julia’s close ended, yes/no, questions in lines 1 and 2 are meant to transform Fortnite into a different game. Julia’s questions alluded to a possible game that was not only more entertaining, but that did not involve killing others. For Julia, a game that did not involve killing would be more fun, but that did not align with Brody and his friends who “*love games like that*”. In this instance, participants did not discuss violence in the same manner that was discussed with Tucker. With Tucker, Jasmine and I discussed the game’s violent theme without trying to explicitly transform the activity. In this instance, it is implied that the adult wants to change the game. Brody dismissed any attempts to transform the activity and reinforced his interest in the game and added that the other boys aligned with his interest as well. This created an alliance with his friends. Additionally, these examples show how adults used questions to initiate a discussion about the problematic themes of the games and this created a point of tension between children and adults. Adults tried to use these points of

tension as possible moments of transformation, which I have come to see as *seeds of transformation*, that similar to Vygotsky's buds of development, can be furthered cultivated and nurtured. In the context of B-Club, these points of tension were also important because any attempts to transform an activity were framed as a collective endeavor, proposed, not imposed by adults; and children recognized they could express and enact agency in the activity.

Adults' Attempts to Transform Fortnite

Thus far, I have shared examples of how adults mediated the game of Fortnite through brief discussions embedded in the process of making the artifacts used to play. In the following examples, I will show the meditational strategies employed by adults as they participated in the game of Fortnite. As it was common, after making artifacts in the MPR, the children moved to the field to play Fortnite. The following examples took place in the upper field. Participants included David, Brody, David, Julia, and me. Julia and I were clear novices in the game, but we were both invited to be part of the game. Recall that Julia had supported making weapons at least on two separate occasions. This meant she had established a relationship of trust, where the children knew she would not shut down their game. On the contrary, in her fieldnotes she expressed her disposition to immerse in the game: *"If playing gun games interests them then I will immerse myself in that play with them, rather than telling them that it's wrong to play violent games"*. Julia recognized that in her role as an adult she could shut down the game altogether. However, she opted to immerse in the game in order to understand the game and eventually participate in ways to potentially transform the game. I was new to the group, but shared Julia's goal of transforming the game from a social justice perspective.

As the game of Fortnite unfolded, Brody, David, Jack, Julia, and I walked around the upper field and the children distributed the artifacts that were to be used in the game. Brody used directives and took the lead in distributing the artifacts that they created and borrowed from the MPR. Such artifacts included paper cones, paper guns, paper bombs, a basket, and a football. David wore paper cones around his fingernails, which he used as claws. They also carried crumpled up paper that represented the boogie bombs commonly used in the Fortnite video game. Brody invited me to play the game and we spent a few minutes discussing the premise of the game. First, he asked me what weapon I would use. As seen in the transcript below, I suggested my heart could be a weapon (line 6). He expressed some confusion but then said I could be Iron Man. Iron Man is one of the Marvel's superheroes, who created a machine that functions as his heart and his source of super powers. I asked Brody if Iron Man used his heart as a weapon, to which he responded with a demonstration of how Iron Man used his heart to shoot. Then, after a brief interaction with Steve, Brody went on to introduce the boogie bomb, which was a crumpled up paper. He explained that you throw the bomb at others in order to make them dance. Then Julia asked, "*What? They dance?*" (line 18). David confirmed this and Julia followed with another question to clarify the use of the boogie bomb. She asked, "*So we can just make people dance?*" (line 20), to which Brody responded, "*Yeah and then you could shoot them*" (line 21).

Example 9

- 1 **Brody:** Miss are you playing?
- 2 **Lilia:** If I can. Would you let me?
- 3 **Brody:** Yeah.
- 4 **Lilia:** Okay.
- 5 **Brody:** But what weapon are you going to use?
- 6 **Lilia:** I'm going to use my heart.
- 7 **Brody:** How? You could be Ironman dangit.
- 8 **Lilia:** *((laughter))* He uses his heart?
- 9 **Brody:** Yeah.
- 10 **Lilia:** Okay then.
- 11 **Brody:** Yeah. He goes like this.
- 12 He does like that and umm like things come out of it.
- 13 And it starts shooting.
- 14 [...]
- 15 **Brody:** Miss you could use these *((hands over crumbled paper))*.
- 16 The boogie bomb.
- 17 You shoot, you throw it to somebody and they start dancing.
- 18 **Julia:** What? They dance?
- 19 **David:** Yeah.
- 20 **Julia:** So we can **just** make people dance?
- 21 **Brody:** Yeah and then you could shoot them.

Julia's questions point to her lack of knowledge of the game and her clarifying questions about the use of boogie bombs came with a sense of relief since there was a weapon that would presumably "just" make people dance. Julia and I interpreted the function of the boogie bomb as positive since the act of dancing did not appear violent. This interpretation confirmed our role as novices in the game. In the actual video game, when a player was hit with a boogie bomb, players are forced to dance for a few seconds and opponents use this frame of vulnerability to shoot them, which is what Brody alluded to in line 21. It is also important to note that this introduction to the boogie bomb seemed to be a moment where the goal of the adults aligned with goals of the children. In other words, making people dance was something adults would feel comfortable doing and made us reconsider our initial concern and interpretation of the game. Perhaps after all, the game was not just about shooting with a goal to hurt the enemy. While this interaction did not lead to any seeds of transformation, it informs our understanding of the elements and meanings of the video game that children may be interested in and that then get represented in the creation of the imaginary social world of Fortnite at B-Club. It is important to note that drawing on children's interests in making, along with the use of holograms and artifacts that make people dance, mask the problematic violent nature of the game.

Transforming Tools

As the game of Fortnite progressed Julia and I made several attempts to transform the game by transforming the meaning of the tools. Brody had a football, which he introduced

as a “miracle grenade”.⁶ In the following excerpt, notice Brody’s use of directives to organize players and distribute artifacts. Most importantly, notice the negotiation for the function of the artifacts. Brody introduced a new weapon that I can use — the miracle grenade. My initial response was to the name of the weapon and I asked, with a sense of curiosity and excitement, if I could make *any* miracle (line 3). Brody explained that the miracle grenade “explodes” and destroys the area where it lands. Then I initiate an attempt to relate the miracle grenade to real life events by asking the children if they had “*seen the news lately*”. I asked the children if they had seen anything in the news, assuming that maybe they had some knowledge of the recent bombings in Syria. The boys denied watching news and one of them claimed that he only watched video games (line 13). I further made a connection to real life when I stated that “people that I care for[...] are getting hurt with real bombs” (lines 16-17). Then I asked the boys if we could use the grenade in ways that did not hurt people. David aligned with my request, stating he was not using bombs, “*just using claws*”. In line 21, Brody also aligned with my request by tossing the ball away from the group and he added, “*This is not going to be nothing*”.

Example 10

- 1 **Brody:** Miss you can use this miracle grenade.
- 2 **Jack:** Miss I want to use the claw.
- 3 **Lilia:** Oohh will it make **any** miracle?
- 4 **Brody:** Miss(3x) if somebody’s right there it explodes the whole part
- 5 right there .

⁶ In Fortnite, grenades were explosive weapons used to damage or distract an opponent. However, there were no “miracle grenades” as Brody called it.]]

6 **Lilia:** I don't want to talk about explosions because (.)
7 Have you seen the news lately?
8 **All:** Huh?
9 **Lilia:** Have you seen the news lately?
10 **All:** No.
11 **Lilia:** No?
12 Oh okay.
13 **David:** I just watch video games.
14 **Lilia:** You just watch video games?
15 Yeah.
16 **Lilia:** Well like, a lot of people that I care for.
17 They are getting hurt with real bombs.
18 So can we make it so this miracle bomb does not hurt people.
19 **David:** Yeah.
20 I don't have a bomb. This is just claws.
21 **Brody:** This is not going to be nothing *((tosses ball away from group))*

In this example we see adults attempting to challenge and re-define the artifacts used in the game. Both Brody and David aligned, even if only momentarily, with my requests to re-define how we used weapons in the game. Brody, who led the game acknowledged my concern and without further discussion and decided we would not use the miracle grenade at all. It is also worth noting that David demonstrated his alignment by pointing out that his weapon was different. In other words, rather than tossing out all weapons, David expressed how his paper claws and boogie bomb would be less harmful,

than the miracle grenade. Presumably his claws would not be used to destroy and his bomb was used to make people dance not to hurt others.

In the following excerpt I re-introduce the ball and attempt to add a new rule to the game. I proposed that whoever held the ball had to share what miracle they would like to make (line 22). Notice that none of the players aligned with my new rule. Instead, the boys continued playing and throwing boogie bombs. Julia immediately accepted my new rule and enforced the new rule when she asked, "*How are you gonna save someone instead of hurting them?*" (line 27). David aligned with our new rule and asked, "*How am I gonna save someone?*" (line 29), as if he was processing and brainstorming ways to help other people. Then he added, "*Putting them inside a hotel?*" (line 30). Julia probed for more details asking if putting someone in a hotel was about providing shelter. David responded that he would put the person in a "*laundry machine*" and then "*put it on fire*" (line 32 and line 34). Julia expressed confusion and added that doing that would not save someone (line 35), but before we could probe for more, the boys saw a hawk approach the playground and the game ended.

Example 10.1

- 22 **Lilia:** If you get the miracle ball you need to.
- 23 You need to tell us what your miracle would be.
- 24 **Julia:** Like how are you going to save people.
- 25 How are you gonna help people?
- 26 **David:** Okay. Boogie Bomb!
- 27 **Julia:** How are you going to save someone instead of hurting them?
- 28 **Brody:** We're playing Call of Duty.

- 29 **David:** Okay how am I gonna save someone?
- 30 Putting them inside a hotel.
- 31 **Julia:** A hotel for shelter?
- 32 **David:** I'll put on in a laundry detergent machine.
- 33 **Julia:** What?
- 34 **David:** We'll put it on fire.
- 35 **Julia:** That's not saving people.

I introduced the new rule with the intention to build on our previous conversation about the harm caused by bombs in real life. The children in this interaction did not push back to my suggestion, and unlike the case of Lego Ninjago, they quickly invited adults into the game. However, adults threaded between the imaginary world and the real world while the boys remained in the frame of imaginary play. There were brief moments of alignment accompanied by moments where children reasserted control of the imaginary world of Fortnite. For example, tossing out the miracle grenade, demonstrated children had some consideration of the real harm that weapons have in real life, and David even pitched his own “miracle”. However, they followed these moves with actions that re-instated the original objective of the game — to shoot opponents. Additionally, the re-introduction of the ball as a “miracle ball” did not result in a transformation of the narrative that Julia and I envisioned.

Chapter 6: Discussion

In this study, I used a range of ethnographic tools and an interdisciplinary approach to examine learning and discuss play *as* learning for both children and adults. I looked at children's enactment and creation of social worlds in play in order to understand their interests and agency. I also attended to the role that adults played in mediating social worlds and supporting children's interests. In the context of B-Club, the role between expert and novice were often blurred because the children in this study had been at B-Club longer than undergraduates, and had a "leg up" on the cultural practices at the site. Additionally, children were the experts in play and were "adept at exercising control over participation" (Hoey, DeLiema, Chen, & Flood, 2018, p.3). Lastly, play activities were a suitable context for studying learning in a dynamic and bi-directional manner where both children and adults learned. Looking at children's enactment or creation of social worlds in play provides a glimpse into peer culture and positions children as active agents.

Initially I set out to explore the transformational possibilities of play. My findings show that adults supported children's play and attempted to imagine social transformation. I recognize that the innovation or transformation may take time and that the proleptic visions we may foster through play at B-Club need to be furthered nurtured in children's in classrooms and communities. The examples presented in this study help us identify the *seeds of transformation* that we can harvest in seemingly mundane play. Nonetheless, an analysis guided by the principles of CHAT offered insight into the tensions encountered by adults and children at site, and a further discussion of these tensions is important for said transformation to be fostered. One tension seen across the examples presented in this study is that of expanding teacher-student interactions. As I discussed in chapter four, one

of the developmental trajectories of the adult participants in the study included learning how to participate as collaborators rather than facilitators of play. Undergraduates supported children's play by facilitating the creation of artifacts, but rarely fully immersed themselves in play. Furthermore, as seen in chapter five, in the instances where adults immersed in play they struggled to fit in or to align to children.

In this concluding discussion I will revisit the idea of the transformative power of play as well as dissect the anxieties, doubts, or tensions experienced by adults and children at B-Club. I will follow this discussion with consideration of the methodological and practical implications of this study. Lastly, I will offer a set of guidelines and recommendations for future iterations of similar practicum courses and after school programs.

Adult anxieties

My role at B-Club was multifaceted, particularly in my work with undergraduates. As an instructor of the course for several years, I developed a sense of the theoretical concepts that undergraduate students commonly struggled with and the challenges they encountered at B-Club. As seen in chapters four and five, one of the challenges undergraduates encountered was having to re-imagine or expand their understanding of their role as teacher and learner in playful interactions with children. This was in part due to a lack of experiences interacting with children altogether, especially outside of formal learning contexts. The findings in this study, particularly the difference in the participation between more experienced adults and new club members, point to an ideological shift, a need to develop a disposition to see children as knowledgeable humans and (re)learn how to play. It also speaks to our adult anxieties about being perceived as the novice in a

learning interaction in a school setting. Furthermore, this anxiety speaks to what Erickson (2012) described as the social gravity of teaching and learning. The adults in this study were not *just* playing with children, they were part of a community that engaged in discussions about how children learn and how learning was organized in formal and informal contexts. Thus, adults straddled between being partners in play and being educators, constantly reflecting on the impact of their actions. The fact that B-Club existed within the context of a school tended to mark adults as teachers and reasonably may have impeded adults from fully immersing in play. Participation as facilitators remained the most common way to support children's play. I conclude this was in part due to a sense of comfort when children were able to pursue their interests and undergraduates make clear connections to the literacy skills developed in the process of making. For example, writing letters or making posters offered opportunities to support students in reading and writing, skills that are highly valued in formal learning settings. Sometimes, as in the case of the fashion show, adults leveraged the process of making artifacts to make contributions that expanded the boundaries of an activity. Adults struggled to take on a collaborative role in other forms of imaginary play.

Another concern or anxiety that emerged for adults resulted from seemingly violent themes embedded in the social worlds children created at B-Club. Adults were concerned with the implications and consequentiality of violence in play. They asked questions and made statements that alluded to the reality of people across the world getting hurt by weapons. Children did not relate the use of weapons (i.e. Boogie bombs) or actions like shooting to real life warfare and violence. Instead, they expressed an "in the moment"

perspective and a clear distinction between reality and the imagined social worlds they created in play (Table 3).

Table 3: Adult and Child Perspectives of Violence In Play	
Adults	Children
- “So it's just a game not anything bad, not trying to be vindictful, not trying to be evil, right?”	- “It's just Fortnite there's no blood.”
- “Can we make this like a fun game? Does it always have to be about killing you think?”	- “[we] love games like that.”
- “Okay. As long as you're only making it as Fortnite and not real life because I don't like guns in real life.”	- “It's just holograms.”

The incongruence between adults and children perspectives aligns with adult anxieties further supports that adults were concerned about the broader implications of the violent themes they perceived in play. As shown in chapter five, adults connected violent actions to real world events in the context of imaginary play. Adults blurred the boundaries between real life and the imaginary world of play in ways that children did not and thus were anxious that playing along was a way of supporting children in developing violent practices in real life. This is especially important considering that the children participating in these games were immigrant brown youth who, in the current sociopolitical context, have been criminalized by the media and law enforcement. Adult anxiety is grounded in the broader questions such as: *How would the social world, outside of B-Club, react to brown boys holding cardboard weapons? Are we fomenting violence and the supporting the normalization of violence?*

As an educator and advocate of children's rights, I believe it is important to address the anxieties that surfaced in the study, as I anticipate these can also raise flags for some readers. I also felt uncomfortable about using paper weapons in the play episodes I described in chapter five, and about writing about violence, even if it was symbolic or playful. In hindsight, I regret not being more proactive, taking a stance and scheduling time for intentional discussions with children and other stakeholders. On the other hand, playing with children and the analysis that followed restate a need to learn more about *why* it is important from a pedagogical perspective, to understand these forms of play as challenging as well sites of possibility. Given the persistence of violence in mainstream media, increased accessibility to video games, the current sociopolitical context, and the militarization in schools, it is important to understand how children grapple with symbolic and systemic violence and the role of adults in supporting children to do so. My training in ethnography, particularly for the study of children living in conflict, guided me to sit with my own discomfort, to recognize that children will find a way to enact these forms of play, either as a form of entertainment, of expression, or most importantly, as a way to make sense of their social worlds. Engaging in this work, in partnership with children and young educators, strengthened my perspective of the importance of recognizing the humanity of children, the emotional weight of teaching and the need to further develop a generous lens to see children.

Children's joy

Children used the flexibility and agency afforded at B-Club to create social worlds that were otherwise restricted or unavailable to them. Taking the lead in the creation of imaginary worlds allowed children to create their own rules and boundaries, ones that

often differed from the actual video games. It also meant that they had the power to decide who could enter their imaginary worlds and in what capacities. For example, building a house at B-Club was both part of an imaginary world and a way to physically create boundaries and establish privacy in a society that rarely grants that to children. Adults had to negotiate their way into these activities. On the other hand, the boys demonstrated an eagerness to participate in a form of play inspired by video games that required technology that we did not have at B-Club and that only few of them had access to at home. Children resorted to imaginary play to fulfill their interests, leveraging knowledge of video game to construct imaginary contexts, imaginary narratives, artifacts, and to embody different characters. Additionally, B-Club was a space where children were able to be the experts and guide the participation of adults, something rarely available to elementary-aged children at school. Thus, I conclude that children's sense of joy was related to this newfound freedom to make, imagine, and control adults' access to imaginary social worlds. This raises an important question for future research: What are children protecting? What may children lose when adults enter their world with anxieties? What do adults need to learn before they attempt to transform children's social worlds?

Methodological Contributions

As part of the research group I was responsible for supporting undergraduates at B-Club. My support varied from mediating conflict between children⁷ to stepping into play

⁷ Conflict between children included concerns about access and distribution of supplies, occasional scrapes, children crying, name-calling, and the negotiation of boundaries and consent. Undergraduates were advised to turn to instructors and school staff to address these issues since program coordinators and school staff had discussed a collective restorative approach. Since the focus of this study is on teaching and learning I exclude discussion of mediation of behavior, but want to acknowledge that as a community we

with children who were playing alone, or supporting undergraduates in play episodes that were challenging. Thus, I decided to expand the scope of my research questions to include my own participation and not just the participation of the undergraduates. This decision was guided by ethical and analytical parameters that led to significant methodological contributions. The use of a variety of ethnographic tools were initially adopted with the intention to address power asymmetries between the adult researcher(s) and children. Including an analysis of my participation in children's play furthered recognized undergraduates as learning partners and collaborators. An unanticipated outcome of including instances where I am the only adult present or where I participated alongside another undergraduate, allowed an in-depth view of the complexity of children's play and the pedagogical challenges encountered by adults at B-Club. I was an experienced participant at the site with extensive knowledge of the program's design. I had also developed trusting relationships with the children. Children at the site knew me and this plausibly granted me access to forms of play that were not readily available to new members. Furthermore, analyzing my own participation favored an in-depth understanding of why it was difficult to participate in play in transformative ways. In other words, a meta-analysis of my participation allowed for in-depth view of the pedagogical challenges encountered at B-Club rather than infer that this lack of transformation was a result of inexperienced educators.

My multifaceted role also illuminates new possibilities for the role of the ethnographic researcher and educator. In ethnographies of children's play the researcher enters a new context and studies what children do and how children play in that context, discussed disciplinary concerns through a restorative justice perspective rather than through a punitive lens.

rarely playing with them (i.e. Correa-Chávez, Mejía-Arauz, & Rogoff, 2015; Corsaro, 2003; Gaskins & Paradise, 2010; Goodwin, 1990, 2006). In the present study, adults were formal and informal ethnographers, who actively contributed to the everyday practices of the context we studied. Undergraduates acted as informal ethnographers, making use of ethnographic tools to learn about learning and reflect on their participation. As the formal ethnographer of the study I used ethnographic tools to address my research questions and to document my own participation in play, the activity that I set out to study. Furthermore, I analyzed my own participation, which guided an in-depth analysis of the social meanings of the participation of other adults. Research on one's own practices, such as action-based research (Mills, 2002), where practitioners or community stakeholders design and participate in systematic inquiry in order to enact positive change is an innovative approach to ethnographies of children's play. Furthermore, the findings that resulted from taking such approach yielded to empirical examples of children's agency where the focus is on adults learning to enter children's social worlds rather than children learning to enter the social worlds of adults, an area that can furthered be explored. Future researchers may adopt this methodological framework to explore different dimensions of children's social worlds such as social order, gender, and cultural and linguistic diversity.

Recommendations

Findings also underscore the need for spaces like B-Club where adults interested in careers with children, can interact with children in a flexible environment. Students of color are growing up in a time of constant surveillance of their bodies and actions, coupled with increased academic pressures and lack of support. Across my own experiences in formal and informal learning contexts and through my multi-dimensional role at B-Club, I

have come to see afterschool programs as spaces of liberation for children. Achieving this requires thoughtful and innovative collective planning. Below are my recommendations informed by the findings of this study for afterschool programs for children. Notice that I contextualize these recommendations for a theory-practicum college course, following the B-Club model, but it would also be possible to implement these recommendations in staff training and professional developments⁸.

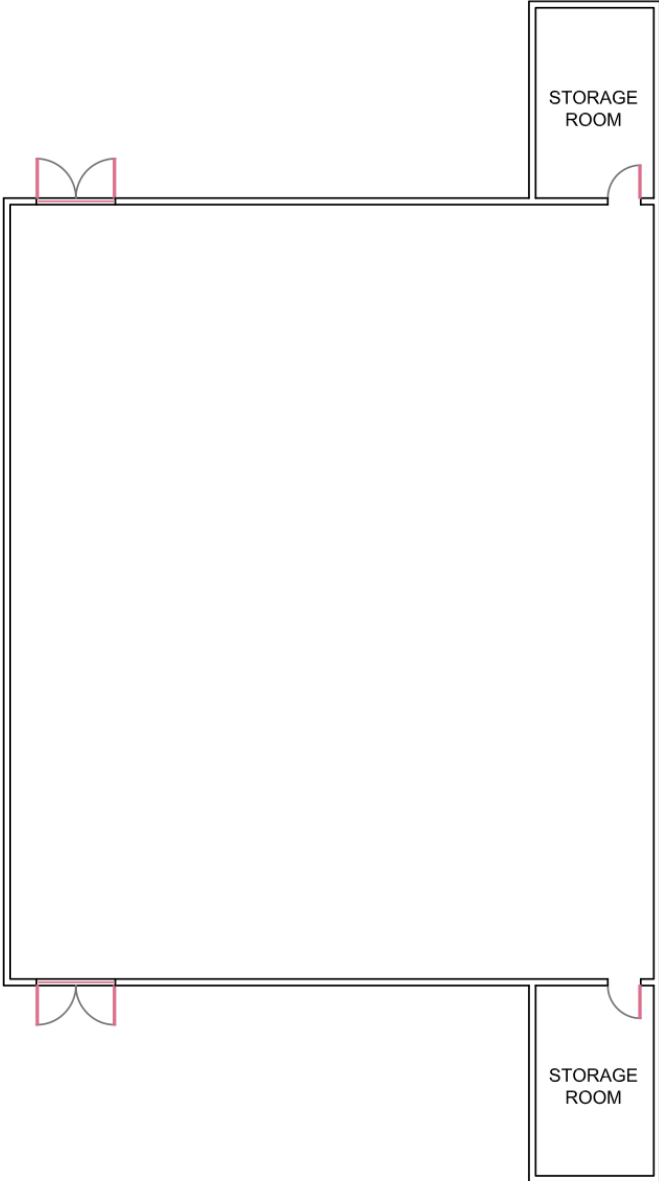
1. Provide constant opportunities for adults to play with colleagues and to analyze play in conversation with each other. Adults may have fresh experience with icebreakers or name games, but may be disconnected from other forms of play and imagination. This practice will help adults re-connect to the joy of play and minimize the weight of being a mediator and mentor children. Additionally, this can be an opportunity for different experiences and cultural perspectives (i.e., educators, camp counselors, parents) to come into the conversation with one another. Collective analysis may include discussions of what they found fun, levels of difficulty, the role of rules, and the implementation of strategy.
2. Disposition to see children's intellectual brilliance may not come easily to adults across contexts. It is important for program coordinators and leaders to overtly discuss their approach to childhood(s). Putting theories of learning in conversation with different cultural perspectives of childhood will contextualize childhood in the current socio-political landscape. Furthermore, this practice can be an opportunity to unpack and reflect on deficit perspectives of children, teaching, and learning.

⁸ For additional recommendations for the design of transcultural and multi-lingual programs see (Orellana et al., 2019)

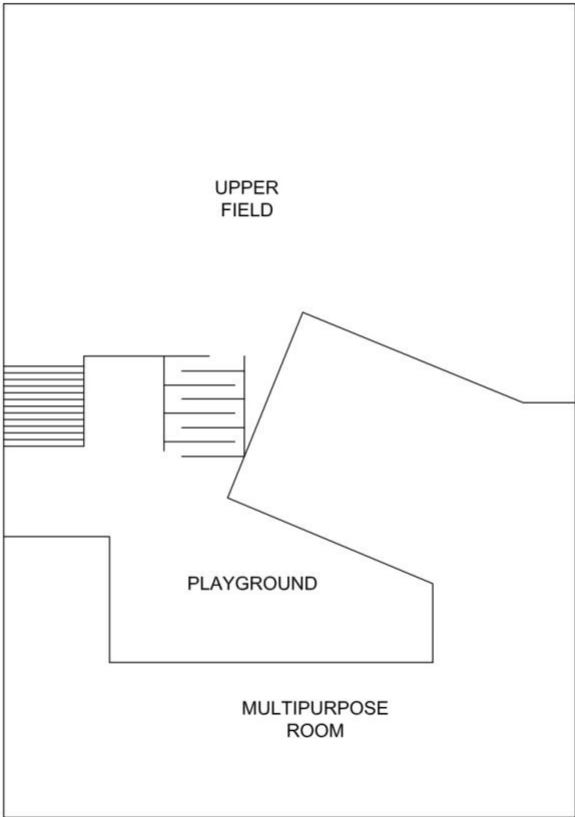
3. Be constant innovators. Activities across different sites will and should look different. Program coordinators should remain attuned to the trends they encounter at their site in order to inform the design of activities and practices. One may ask, what artifacts are children creating? What themes are emerging in play? What do club members struggle with?
4. Maintain open avenues of communication with community partners and stakeholders in order to collectively address any concerns that may arise in the social worlds children enact and create. Ask if children are engaging in these forms of play outside of the afterschool program. Children are active participants across a variety of spaces. Together, teachers, families, and afterschool staff can make sense and mediate curiosities, issues, and concerns.
5. Listen and talk to children. Talk to kids to learn about their perspectives. Adult stakeholders can make assumptions, sometimes our assumptions are valid and grounded in our broader understanding of the world, but do children interpret our assumptions? We can express our anxieties and concerns to children and have honest discussions. This relates to my previous recommendation. Children are stakeholders in afterschool programs, and should be, in their way, part of the discussion. It does not always just have to go their way, it is about creating more opportunities to collaborate with children.

Appendix A: Layouts for mapping activity

Layout of Multi-Purpose Room



Layout of Outdoor Area



Appendix B: A conversation with Julia

In the Fall of 2018, after two quarters as a student in the course. Julia joined the research team as site coordinator. I inquired about the possibility to meet up on to watch video and discuss some of the emerging findings. We observed a video where Julia and I played Fortnite with some of the boys. In this meeting we discussed some of the tensions we experienced playing this game. One tension was trying to understand why the boys wanted to enact a game that is free. Julia raised the possibility that they wanted to be like older siblings or friends. However, they do not have access to the technology necessary to play the game. This lack of access can be due to economic reasons or to restrictions set forth by caregivers. Another tension was that of her role between being an educator and trying to be a friend. She reiterated that she struggled to know how to respond to children on the spot. She wanted to understand them, moving past judgment and discomfort, and she wanted to maintain their trust. Julia shared that she sometimes felt frustrated for not knowing how to respond and appreciated when she saw other team members model different ways to intervene. In regards to the questions she asked while playing with the children, Julia said she did not always ask questions from an educator's perspective. Some of the questions she asked during the game were questions in disbelief or genuine curiosity in order to make sense of the game. Like me, she did not have prior exposure to Fortnite or video games. Perhaps of most interest is she underscored the notion of trust, as well as her discomfort with the violent undertones of the game. She shared that she knew she could stop the game instead of going along with it, but wanted to maintain their trust and be their friend to then maybe be able to do something about the violence.

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