

# Communication and ludicity: Spontaneous Social Play, a child's power

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## ABSTRACT

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The goals of this paper are: first, to present a conceptual framework for understanding human ludicity; second, to outline a strategy for reflecting on ludicity's various manifestations and, more precisely, on Spontaneous Social Play (SSP); third, to apply this understanding to the results of a study conducted by me in 1998, concerning the real-life context of twelve children's from two kindergarten classes in the Aveiro public school district, each staffed by an educator, whose students ranged in age from 3 to 6; fourth, to present a methodology for the promotion and further development of SSP as it is manifested and as it can be analyzed through the collection of relevant data; fifth and, lastly, to demonstrate SSP's potential in contributing to the social apprenticeship of children autonomously, in solidarity with other children, and in their relations with adults. Notably, one of the two educators observed in the study had prior professional training in ludicity and communication, while the other educator, at the time of the study, had not yet had the opportunity to receive this training.

## Keywords:

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ludicity, consequentiality, spontaneous social play

During their first years, children, due to their bio-physical and psychological conditions, necessarily depend on adults for their survival. Children are affected by the adults' educational choices, which mold their individual and social identities. As such, children must be made aware of their autonomy and of their human

rights, with social apprenticeship taking center stage in their education.

We may couple this idea with an acknowledgement of the human condition's ludic dimension. Ludicity may be apprehended through its various manifestations, namely through Spontaneous Social Play (SSP). In

SSP, children play amongst themselves, without adult intervention, and together develop means of communication and collective apprenticeship, in autonomy and solidarity. In this sense, SSP is crucial in catalyzing a child's human energies in all of its manifestations – philosophical, scientific, creative, artistic and ethical.

The idea of catalyzing what is human in children through social apprenticeship speaks to the importance of a child's active participation in the construction of his or her identity. The apprenticeship, I will advocate, is linked to the emotion and happiness associated with a child discovering, appropriating, and reconstructing his or her world. Furthermore, apprenticeship is tied to a child's experience of discovering, along with his or her peers, how to learn from and intervene in the world. Notably, this active form of learning triggers the child's awareness of him or herself, as well as of others, and of the relationships he or she, as a child, builds with different types of communities. These different types of community, in which the child actively participates, include the family, kindergarten, neighborhood, organizations and church, among other entities.

Moreover and highly relevant to this discussion are the ideas that, first, education has an active, ongoing influence over the individual, and second, that it constitutes one of the reasons for human communication. According to Myers and Myers (1990), the four reasons for communication are: to know oneself, to know oneself in the context of others and in the world, to influence, and to amuse oneself. In turn, this idea leads to an understanding that education may be used to predict individual behavior, as well as foster communication.

Understanding education as such, we may acknowledge the influence educators have on a child's education; educators are implicated in the decisions they make for children and are responsible for the effects of such decisions. A child's state of dependency does not merely legitimate the decisions made by adults, but,

moreover, implies that adults recognize the child's autonomy, as well as the common good. Adults demonstrate their acknowledgment of these principles in allowing children to freely draw on ludicity as a central part of the human condition and engage in ludicity as a social and interrogative practice to which they are entitled. The necessary components of ludicity, and more specifically of SSP, from the standpoint of its participants are: sharing, mutual comprehension, meta-communication and the active use by equal participants of liberty in enacting or playing out certain aspects of adult life and in collectively reinventing their world.

Regardless of whether educators working with children dedicate the time and energy needed to understand ludicity as an individual and social phenomenon and as an essential feature in children's education, and also regardless of whether they learn to actively promote, develop and analyze SSP, the truth remains that, like it or not, children play. As such, it is regrettable when children cannot count on professional educators - who de-ontologically serve, or should serve, as accomplices to their apprenticeship in social life and also in what regards autonomy and solidarity. Ideally, educators should contribute to the further humanization of a child's world (by allowing him or her free access to ludicity and, namely, to SSP).

We may define SSP as children's spontaneous social enactment of ludic manifestations, collectively termed play, which occurs without the intervention of educators.

In understanding SSP it is vital that we draw on the pragmatics of communication field. Communication pragmatics is implied in the binomial of ludicity-communication and in the recognition that ludicity and communication alike are consequences of our shared humanity, or, in other words, indicate a state or quality shared by all humans. This justifies the assertion that *ludicity is communication*. Furthermore, we may claim that both ludicity and communication manifest themselves in numerous ways. Ludicity

manifests itself through play, game-playing, recreation, leisure, humor, celebrations and the construction of toys, games and other ludic artifacts. Both ludicity and communication result in a diverse range of effects, with specific manifestations of ludicity and communication producing specific effects.

## What is ludicity? Conceptual Horizon for the Human ludicity Experience

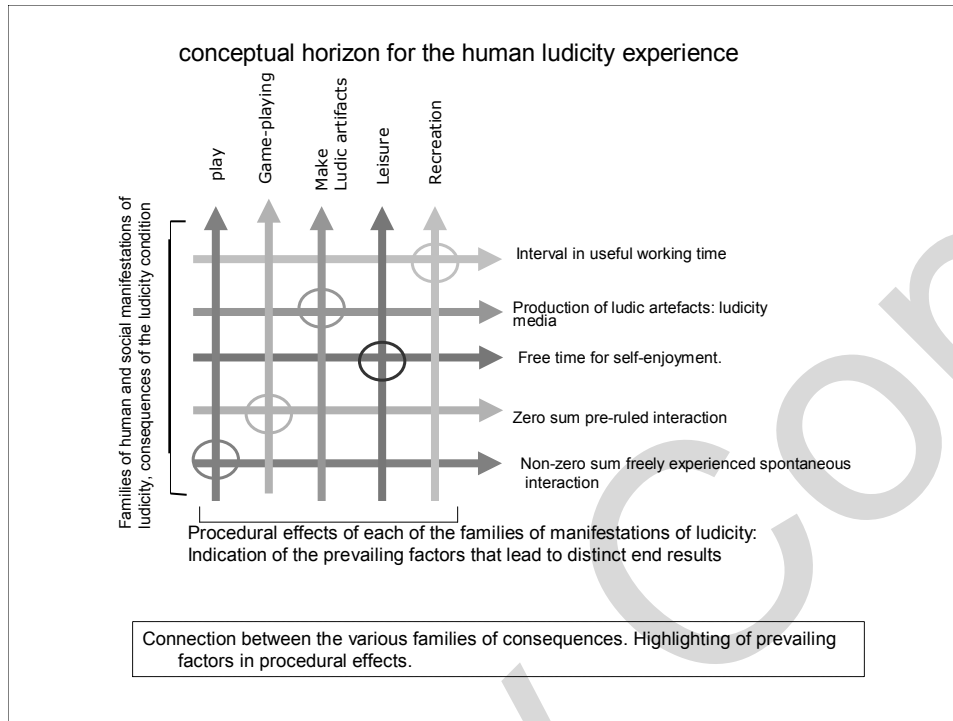
Ludicity as a quality and state is not exclusively an attribute of childhood, but it is inherent to the human condition. As such, it is part of individual and social existence, generally speaking, and it can manifest itself at any stage of the life cycle. As a consequential phenomenon, ludicity is subject to the consequentiality of communication, a condition discussed by Sigman et al. (1995) and which comprehends not only the ludic condition, but moreover, entails many diverse manifestations and a similar multiplicity and diversity of effects on the individuals involved in situations of ludicity. From this point of view, ludicity can be divided into three dimensions, which interact with each other and, indeed, cannot be disassociated from each other. These are: (1) the human condition, consisting in the being of the individual and which is prior to all ludic manifestations; (2) ludic manifestations, resulting from the individual's human condition *as ludic*, and also as the products of various, collective or individual-authored actions in the area of ludicity. These actions can be classified in terms of celebrations, game-playing, play, recreation, leisure, building ludic artifacts and humor; (3) the effects of ludicity, which comprise a diversity of results and owe their particularities to the specific manifestations and procedures that lead to them them, as well as the final results of these procedures, which are regulated by the nature of ludic interaction.

By conceptualizing the consequential character of ludicity, we may arrive at the ludicity-communication binomial and affirm that ludicity

is communication. It makes sense to equate the studies concerning ludicity and communication, because they can be comprehensively analyzed in terms of common dimensions. These dimensions are: the ontological dimension, which corresponds to the conditions of the communicator, and of ludicity as a condition of a human's being; the aesthetic dimension, which refers to the existence of beauty in the context of communication, whether this communication is face-to-face, institutional mediated or mediated technologically and through mass media and, finally, the ethical dimension in which communication and ludicity are involved, which plays host to their guiding values and which allows for the differentiation of right and wrong.

Understanding the conceptual and operative mediations established by joining communication and ludicity allows for the recognition that communication and ludicity are both consequential/existential to humans, as well as consequential in relation to each other. The nature of the connection between communication and ludicity is apprehended by individuals when they, intentionally and consequentially, decide to participate in communicative pacts that allow for the development of situational contexts in which participants attribute another, ludic meaning to their actions, as well as when they build analog and electronic artifacts to use in these interactions. Thus, the essence of ludicity is found to a much greater extent in the variety of dynamic, inter-relational and interactive procedures undertaken by individuals who attribute a distinct, ludic meaning to their behavior, rather than in the final effects of these processes. Individuals who establish these pacts experience ludicity's transformative capacity and become aware, by engaging in the meta-communication that is part and parcel of ludicity, of their contribution to the co-production of a new imagined world and of their increased capacity to intervene in the world of non-fictional symbolic realities.

The theoretical proposition I would like to advocate here is that in order for ludicity to be understood, it must be studied concerning its



**Figure 1**

three dimensions, so as to identify and further understand the objects in which ludicity may be contained, and to systematically reorder these in terms of the phenomenological field describing the human condition, which is prior to all manifestations and effects of ludicity.

Figure 1 contains an overview, expressed as a horizon of the human and social ludicity experience. It highlights the connection between the various consequence families of the phenomenon. It shows the features of the prevailing procedural effects registered in each of the semantic families given: game-playing, playing, recreation, leisure and the construction of ludicity artefacts. It differentiates the manifestations from which procedural effects and a variety of end results are produced.

Thus, the vertical lines represent the five axes of the families of manifestations of ludicity that are the subject of this article. These are semantic family axes that differentiate the various consequences of the human ludicity condition that precedes any of the manifestations: play,

game-play; recreation; leisure; building ludic artefacts.

The horizontal lines refer to the five axes of effects that occur during the process of manifestation for each of the ludicity families listed on the vertical axes. A prevailing mark of the procedural effects for each manifestation family can be seen in each of the horizontal axes.

This diagrammatic horizon for the human and social ludicity experience allows one to see, not only the differences that are to be found between each of the manifestation families, but also the differences between the specific procedural effects of each of the manifestations of ludicity. This clarity of expression makes it much easier to predict the end results of the various procedures incorporated within a single phenomenon.

I hope this semantic analysis and classification clarifies our attempt at a closer view and understanding of a theoretical structure designed to incorporate the different consequences and effects of human ludicity.

The horizon metaphor illustrates the conceptualisation of the human and social ludicity experience, in order to favor the unveiling of the various paths it takes. Thus, and as one approaches the defined horizon, new horizons open up as do new paths of reflection and action. This metaphor of the conceptualisation of ludicity opens us up to the unknown and strengthens our desire to carry on and explore this phenomenon which has proven to be so elusive. It operates in contrast to the metaphor of the framework which limits us to that which is within.

Moreover, I contend that we must grant visibility to and foster greater understanding of Spontaneous Social Play as the privileged experience of ludicity in children, and as the phenomenon that contains all other ludic manifestations. Bringing a theoretical understanding of ludicity to bear on the analysis of Spontaneous Social Play allows for the new understanding of SSP as a singular, privileged childhood manifestation, which is significantly different from Organic Social Play (OSP), a phenomenon structured and ordered by the authority of an adult. OSP is closely related to childhood education centers, in which educators decide when and how children should play.

## **Spontaneous Social Play Design: a Dynamic Iterative Path Towards Adult Promotion and Development of SSP in Children**

Interactive communication as it is fostered during SSP increases the likelihood of mutual understanding – the ideal of human communication. The field of reference I will draw on in this section and in articulating a methodology is based on the theory of orchestral communication outlined by Paul Watzlawick et al. (1967), as well as Goffman (1959) and Miller & Steinberg (1975). Additionally, and in what concerns intimate relations, I refer to Knapp & Vangelisti (1984), for whom interaction between

individuals is subject to an evolutionary process. In this way, and bearing in mind that ludicity promotes greater communication, this dynamic methodology values: first, the co-production of situational meaning, as defined by participating individuals; second, adults' promotion and development of SSP in children; and third, the co-production, by adults and children, of ludic situations and artifacts that foster SSP.

The verbal path taken by adults and children in together producing ludicity as a social interaction, and by children in playing with each other, is the key to understanding SSP. We may distinguish four developmental stages for ludicity as a social interaction, namely: approximation, intensified environmental circumscription, emerging interpersonal solidarity and the collective movement toward autonomy, as well as co-fraternization of mutual autonomy. Each stage can be divided into various sub-stages, which evolve and achieve ever-greater complexity as the children participating in SSP are educated in their autonomy and solidarity with others.

**Stage 1** - the stage of approximation is led by adults. It entails contact between adults and children and it implies that adults would promote four different moments fostering communication and ludicity in a kindergarten setting. Interactions evolve in terms of increasing complexity, from the first to the final stage;

**Stage 2** - comprising intensified environmental circumscription, this stage is also adult-led. It entails social interactions occurring between adults and children in terms of communication and ludicity. These interactions are oriented towards the promotion and development of manifestations of ludicity (ML) by each participating child and they imply the existence of five situations of differentiation and complementarities between adults and children;

**Stage 3** - the stage of emerging interpersonal solidarity is centered on



the initiatives of both children and adults, though with an intensification of child-led initiatives. Additionally, this stage witnesses the complementarities that the differences between children and adults establish. It also implies the existence of three phases of solidarity – emergent, convergent, and divergent -which are distinct, considering who takes the greater share of the initiative - adults or children. During the phase of emergent solidarity, the manifestations of ludicity are, for the most part, initiated by children. In the convergent phase, children deliberately involve adults in their manifestations of ludicity. Finally, in the divergent phase, children actively and spontaneously interact with each other, as well as reflect on the practices of meta-communication they utilize, with the purpose of delineating differences between their manifestations of ludicity. In this phase, adult participation is limited to active observation.

**Stage 4** – it entails a collective movement towards autonomy, which leads to increased autonomy for children, the latter achieved in the context of small groups. This final stage witnesses an intensified engagement in SSP by children, in what concerns the enactment of SSP, meta-communication and celebration. It should be noted that video recording equipment plays a role in the settings that give rise to SSP. That being said, only recorded material from Stage 4 was used in my analysis. During this final stage, children undertake their own initiatives towards autonomy and intra-group solidarity, enacting SSP. This material can be productively analyzed.

## **Settings that Give Rise to Ludic Manifestations – SSP in Kindergartens or Pre-Schools**

The term setting refers to a place (time – space) where something occurs.

Space induces and conditions communication processes, as well as personal growth and change. In terms of childhood education, Zabalza (1987) discusses how space reflects how childhood is perceived and how childhood development is understood. According to Zabalza(1987), space in this way creates structure and, moreover, opportunities for children. Gardner (1994) reflects on pre-school children, who he names “natural learners” and who construct and develop practical theories for their physical reality and considering the reality of the world (p. 25). They create these theories based on the configurations offered them by the spaces of reference and orientation they inhabit. These spaces and theories, in turn, contribute to the production of SSP and to children’s behaviors towards SSP.

SSP is made possible by the spatial and material conditions of various settings, which children enact and transform in the context of play. Settings, when logically and thematically organized and when clearly identified, constitute the material for children’s decisions, given that scenarios for communication and ludicity, whether previously conditioned by educators, children, or both, provide content suitable for transmitting messages related to actions. When children decide to play out the activities that might occur in a home, a store or an office, for example, and within a dialectic of individual and group action, they know how to act in accordance with behavior appropriate to each setting. The three settings chosen for this investigation are: the home, which refers to the representation of family life, as well as the store and the medical office, both of which are settings in which social mediation is represented. These three settings boost curiosity and focus in the children who enact them, and are indeed common virtual sites of play for the children who are the target subjects of this study.

### **The Home**

The home, as a setting in which kindergarten instruction occurs, is easily recognized by the

physical objects common to it. These physical objects are essentially kitchen objects, adult-sized closets and dressers, tables and chairs scaled to children size, as well as other utensils. The home, as the setting for familial interaction, is also the site of familial ludic and communicative activity. The home is the quintessential first space, active in the child's existential and autobiographical self-construction. From the child's point of view, the home is a shelter, a refuge, and his or her second skin, which the child progressively differentiates from the rest of the world through communication and action within the home, both looking outward from the home, and looking inward back into it. Thus, the home functions as a privileged reference for children in terms of information, codification, organization, selection, comprehension and the construction of an individual, outward-looking imaginary. Additionally, the home, as an important source of information and codification for the child, provides information regarding his or her fellow family members, as well as the universe both within and beyond the home.

In the context of SSP, the home provides situations structured around the social roles of parents, children, grandparents, cousins, etc., as well as their daily routines, outward personalities, roles, and physical appearances. In these situations, children explore, structure, interact and participate in systems and habits of family life.

The home setting is ideal for studying SSP, due to its dimensions, the familiar feeling experienced by children in it and for the opportunity it provides children to apply the representation of social roles to self-understanding, as well as to the greater comprehension of others and of the self with others and in the world. Enacting the home setting, children take on a number of roles – those of the father, mother, children and grandparents, among others – and create verbal and active signposts, which work to reinforce each other by applying what is known about the world to how one interacts with it, and vice versa.

## The Store

The store, as one of a local community's spaces for social mediation, becomes a setting for SSP as well. In addition to providing consumers with goods and services, the store, as a space of communication for excellence, is also the setting for neighborly encounters and for the circulation of information. Here, one can learn what's new, share information pertaining to family members, neighbors and outsiders, comment on events communicated by the mass media, form and undo relationships and cement fellow-feeling with others.

When children act out events occurring in the store, one can witness the awareness they take with regard to their communities. This setting allows for both communication and ludicity and reinforces the practices and routines children must observe as consumers, namely, the use and valuing of money and products, the identification of necessary goods, the matching of a good with its use, as well as a wide range of skills associated with selecting products for potential purchase – negotiation, self-control, asking for information, managing one's finances, paying bills, exchanging products, etc. While playing the role of venders, children demonstrate how to sell, weigh, measure, manage finances, read, become familiar with products, organize the store, display products, and so on. Also, children's reading, writing and math skills are reinforced by acting out both roles mentioned above.

## The Medical Office

Like the store, the medical office is a space of social mediation. Associated with the human experience of physical and psychological suffering, brought about by sickness or unease, the medical office serves as the community's health center. In essence, the medical office is visited by children who are brought there by parents and adult caretakers and who attend check-ups and more specialized medical appointments with their parents.

In the medical office's waiting area children first wait to be attended, silently or noisily participating in adult conversations. Like adults, they wait for their turn to enter the examination room. After the appointment ends, children may wait again in the waiting area, thinking through what just occurred. In the medical office, adults speak of sicknesses, pain and death. They exchange information and instructions regarding natural treatments and home remedies for the body's aches and pains. They listen to each other's complaints about the performance of this or that doctor or nurse. They advise each other, prescribe things to each other, and share in each other's physical and psychological pains. Listening to all of this in the office, and enacting this experience in their play, children learn about this dimension of the human condition.

The medical office, as a setting for SSP, privileges physical interaction between children, placing the body at the center of the action. In these terms, the medical office serves to promote and organize information received by children regarding the bodies of others, as well as their relation to each other and with the medical office as a space to be lived. Thereby, it promotes the self-construction of identity - of the bodily "I" - and promotes the corporeal dialog referred to by Vayer (1976).

The behaviors the medical office brings forth, as a site for SSP, are consonant with its function as a community health center. They are defined first by the doctor - his or her social role, professional routines and practices, outward personality, actions, physical appearance, interactions with patients and situational reactions - who deals with the sick person (for instance, the child) and those who accompany him or her (adults). In this context, children feel, interact, test the limits of the situation, act and learn to act within the rules of the situation as they are developed. Among other actions and experiences, individuals rendered active in the medical office, whether medical professionals or patients, may undress, see, touch, give information, provide prescriptions, pay attention

concerning curative methods, listen and give and receive injections. As with the store setting, playing out scenarios occurring in the medical office reinforces the child's writing, reading, and math skills.

## **Case Study: Analysis of the Spontaneous Social Play (SSP)**

This study is based on two hypotheses: (1) SSP is a manifestation of human communication and ludicity. SSP results in greater, mutually produced self-development on the part of children, achieved as they play with each other in kindergarten groups; (2) educators' attitudes, professional experience and pedagogical methods influence the processes of communication and ludicity, as well as the manifestation of SSP. The present study was undertaken so as to: develop an observational and analytical methodology for studying the components of SSP as a communicative process; achieve a broad understanding of the consequences of the interactions undertaken by children during SSP; defend SSP as a valuable part of children's education; and, finally, evaluate the effects of educators on SSP in children. The present study takes the form of a comparative analysis of results obtained from two kindergartens, designated as alpha (A) and omega (Ω).

## **Components for Codifying and Analyzing the SSP**

This section's definition of components for codifying and analyzing SSP draws on the communicational perspective presented in Bateson and Paul Watzlawick's *Orchestral Model of Communication*. Keep in mind that the primary purpose of this study is not to know the child who plays, but to understand the effects of a child's social and spontaneous play, how this play affects children's behavior and what they learn as they engage in SSP.



Furthermore, it should be noted that this understanding of codifying and analytical components derives from the pragmatics of communication area, as opposed to other fields that have already been applied to studies of children's play (Johnson, Christie, Yawkey, 1987). This includes linguistics, psychology, anthropology, sociology, and education.

Both non-verbal and verbal components were studied – the first captured on videotape and in interviews and the second recorded on videotape. The specific non-verbal components studied were Duration (D) and Frequency of Use (FU). The verbal component considered was the Verbal Repertoire Produced (VRP) and its respective sub-components – Quantity of Language Produced (QLP), Communication Themes (TC) and the Nature of the Relationship between the Communication Themes and the Settings (NRCTS).

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Video recording equipment was used to record the children's speech in each of the settings for SSP. Moreover, the sound and image, were recorded by a microphone worn on the collar. This strategy for use of recording technology was adapted from Florin, Lamesch-Braun and Boucheron (1985).

### Diagrams used in Data Collection

In selecting diagrams to be used in this study, we must consider the need for educators to acquire relevant pedagogical skills. (Therefore, diagrams should be designed to maximize accessibility for educators).

In the data collection relating to the components D, FU, and VRP, the diagrams pictured below were used. The three settings in

- i) Duration (D) designates the time "spent" by each child (C) in the three settings. The reason for analyzing D is to quantify and identify which setting is most sought after by each child for the purpose of play.
- ii) Frequency of Use (FU) refers to the frequency with which each C "visits" each setting, relative to his or her play in general. The goal here is to discover the number of times each C "visits" each setting.
- iii) The priority in analyzing the Verbal Repertoire Produced (VRP) is to study how verbal communication is produced, as a tool for interaction and for relations with others. In this study, analysis of VRP focuses on each child's verbal participation. The purpose is to evaluate the role of SSP in generating linguistic activity. Here I refer to studies on language in young children by A. Florin, Braun-Lamesch and Bramaud du Boucheron (1985) in defining the sub-components of VRP, which are: Quantity of Language Produced (QLP), Communication Themes (CT) and

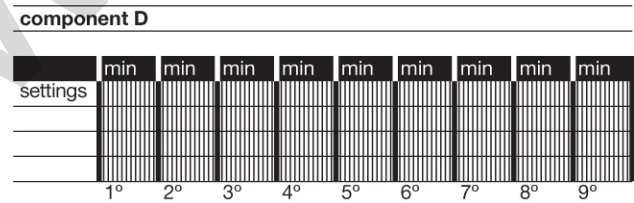


Diagram I

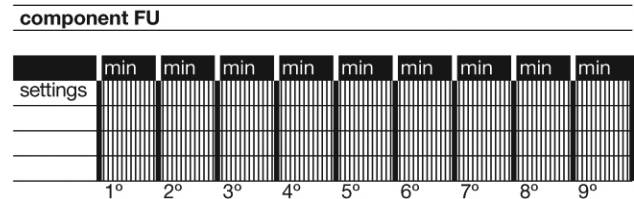


Diagram II

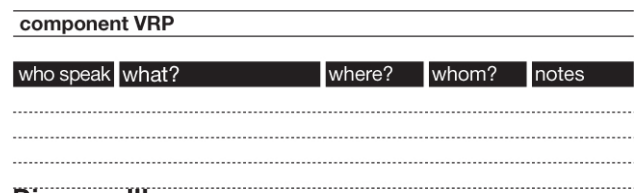


Diagram III

which SSP occurs are designated by different colors: red for the home, blue for the store and yellow for the medical office. These diagrams are divided spatially and subjected to a temporal analysis of 120 total seconds, divided into analytical units of 5 seconds each. These divisions are designed to show variations in the children's behavior (over time and across the settings).

## Results of the Analyses of the Components of Children's SSP in Each Kindergarten Group

### SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR DURATION (D) IN KINDERGARTEN

For the children in this group, the most frequently enacted setting was the store and the home was the least frequently enacted. Interestingly enough, the results for the medical office were similar to those for the store. Moreover, as SSP continued, the results showed a reduction in D from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> observation period (OP), and from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup>. In terms of the home setting, the results obtained in terms of D show an increase from the 1<sup>st</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup> (OP). For the office scenario, the results show relatively consistent D from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> (OP), and a reduction in the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

### SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR DURATION (D) IN KINDERGARTEN $\Omega$

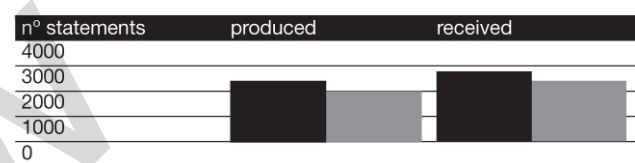
The data obtained indicates that the most frequently enacted setting for the children in kindergarten  $\Omega$  was the home, followed by the medical office and then the store. Notably, the home remained the most frequently enacted setting throughout the observation period. The results for the medical office in terms of D decreased between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> (OP), while an increase in D was registered for the 3<sup>rd</sup> (OP). Likewise, the results for the store decreased from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> (OP), with an increase registered for the 3<sup>rd</sup> (OP).

### SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR FREQUENCY OF USE (FU) IN KINDERGARTEN A

In terms of FU, the results varied most for the store setting, followed by the medical office and then by the home. The general tendency is towards a decrease in FU from the 1<sup>st</sup> through the 3<sup>rd</sup> (OP) over which SSP is analyzed, though stable results are observed for the store and the medical office between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> (OP), as well as for the home and the store during the 3<sup>rd</sup> (OP). The stability implied by these results may indicate an increased level of interactivity between the settings.

### SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR FREQUENCY OF USE (FU) IN KINDERGARTEN $\Omega$

fig. 2

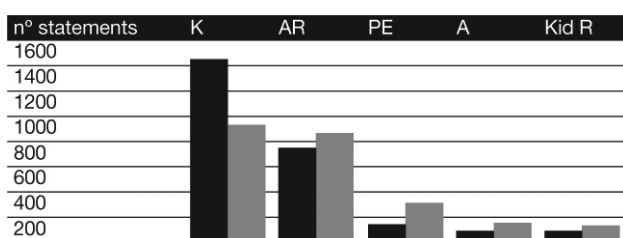


**Figure 2:** Comparison of Results for VRP – Quantity of Language produced during SSP in kindergartens A and  $\Omega$

What is notable here is the amount of variance between the three settings, despite the fact that, interestingly enough, all three settings register an elevated level of FU. The store registers the highest level of FU, with the home approximating the results for the store and the medical office also registering an elevated level. Furthermore, there is a decrease in FU across the settings between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> occasions and an increase for the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Figure 2 shows a difference in the overall results obtained for kindergartens A (black color) and  $\Omega$  (gray color), with a greater quantity of language produced in group A than in group  $\Omega$ . Furthermore, the difference in results is greater in the “received” category than in the “produced” category.

fig. 3



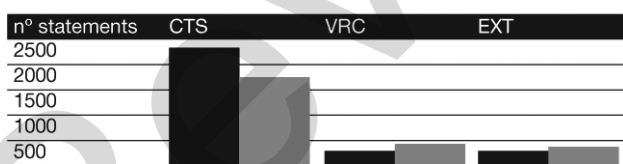
**Figure 3:** Comparison of Results for VRP – Communication Themes (CT) for SSP in kindergartens A and  $\Omega$

Figure 3 indicates a greater result for kindergarten A for K - knowledge - the first communication theme. However, kindergarten  $\Omega$  achieves greater results for the categories AR-activity relationship; PE- personal expressivity; A- artifact; and Kid R- Kindergarten routine.

The results presented in Figure 3 show a greater result for kindergarten A in terms of the concomitant relationship between communication themes and settings (CCT). Kindergarten  $\Omega$  shows greater results for the categories describing the varieties of relations of contact (VRC) and the external relationship between communication themes and settings (EXT).

Overall, these results indicate a key difference between the educators working in the

fig. 4



**Figure 4:** Comparison of Results for VRP: Nature of the Relationship between Communication Themes and Settings (NRCTS) for SSP in kindergartens A and  $\Omega$

contexts of kindergartens A and  $\Omega$ . Along with the children for which they are responsible, these educators constitute one of this study's principle analytical targets. The educator working in kindergarten A had prior professional training in

communication and ludicity, while the educator working in kindergarten  $\Omega$  did not. These results are consistent with the differences seen for SSP between the two groups.

## Final Comments

The data obtained confirm the study's initial guiding hypotheses. Both kindergarten groups show an increase in the three analytical components from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> observation period. [To review, these components are Duration (D), Frequency of Use (FU), and the Verbal Repertoire Produced (VRP).] These components, which are identified so as to observe and evaluate SSP, showed a greater level of co-production of self-development for the children in kindergarten A over kindergarten  $\Omega$ , which was maintained over the course of my observation. Furthermore, group A shows stable results for the components FU and D, while group  $\Omega$  shows instability with regard to the same. For VRP, the amount of language is progressively increased, as are the results in terms of knowledge (K) and the concomitant nature of the relationship (CTS).

Furthermore, and in terms of this study's hypothesis regarding educators, the observation and evaluation of SSP demonstrates the consequences of educators' behaviors, experience and pedagogical practices. The fact that the educator working in kindergarten  $\Omega$  had not yet had the opportunity for professional training in communication and ludicity, whereas the educator working in kindergarten A had been trained in these areas, over the course of three years, may explain the former educator's tendency to foster ordered social play (OSP), rather than allow SSP to occur. This would logically impact the results collected for kindergartens A and  $\Omega$ , and underscore the habit of the children in group A to play with each other and without the ordering influence of the teacher.

In closing, I would like to reassert my contention that SSP is a unique manifestation of a child's power to activity participate with others and in the world, in his or her apprenticeship in

autonomy, as well as in fostering solidarity among children. SSP impacts a child's development and contributes to the assertion of his or her social autonomy. This occurs over and against children's dependency on adults, as well as adults' ways of seeing, organizing and intuiting the world and their ways of mediating children's access to the world.

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