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## **Organizing Participation in Cross-Sex Jump Rope: Situating Gender Differences Within Longitudinal Studies of Activities**

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This study investigates how children use directives and forms of exclusion to organize play activity. Elementary school children of mixed ethnicity were observed playing the game of jump rope over the span of 1 month. Girls' dominance in the game was observed to change over time. In mixed-sex groups where boys were learning how to jump, girls frequently set the agenda regarding how the game was to be played. However, as boys gained proficiency in the game, they became equal partners in calling plays and making decisions. Rather than finding differences in directive forms related to gender, I find that the ability to use actions that tell others what to do in a very direct fashion in cross-sex interaction changes over time, as children become more skilled in the activity. Ethnographically based studies are essential to examine how the social orchestration of an activity can change over time.

The separate worlds hypothesis (SWH) states that “boys and girls come from different sociolinguistic subcultures, having learned to do different things with words in a conversation” (Maltz & Borker, 1982, p. 200). Girls use language to create and maintain relationships of closeness and equality; their “play is cooperative and activities are usually organized in noncompetitive ways” (p. 205), contrasting with boys' hierarchical

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forms of social organization. Arguing from ethnographic work in the Middle East and southern Europe, where extreme gender segregation exists,<sup>1</sup> Maltz and Borker stated that physical separation and involvement in different types of activities leads to “sexually differentiated communicative cultures” (p. 200), which result in miscommunication between boys and girls.<sup>2</sup>

Recent work has attempted to avoid dichotomies that essentialize sex–gender differences. Ethnographic research on the conversational practices of a working-class African American children’s neighborhood peer group (Goodwin, 1980), for example, finds that boys and girls (ages 4–13) frequently are in one another’s copresence and make use of many of the same argument strategies in cross-sex interaction; moreover, girls hold their own in cross-sex disputes and can top their male counterparts. Although themes of girls as cooperative and boys as conflictual are found in much of the social science research on sex–gender differences (Adler, Kless, & Adler, 1992; Leaper, 1991; Maccoby, 1990; Miller, Danaher, & Forbes, 1986; Sachs, 1987),<sup>3</sup> researchers such as Goodwin (1990, 1998) and Sheldon (1992, 1996) have demonstrated that girls as well as boys can engage in highly assertive exchanges. Sheldon found that girls’ assertiveness frequently was masked. In her studies of the conflict talk of educationally and socially advantaged middle-class American urban preschool children engaging in pretend play, Sheldon (1996) found that girls use “double-voice discourse”—a style that permits speakers to “confront without being very confrontational; to clarify without backing down; and to use mitigators, indirectness, and even subterfuge to soften the blow while promoting their own wishes” (p. 61). Goodwin (1980, 1990) found that African American working-class urban girls (ages 7–12) in their neighborhood engage in highly public disputes called “he said she said.” Power in the girls’ peer group results from being able to orchestrate elaborate realignments of the social order through storytelling. Girls frame their accusations against girls they accuse of having talked about them behind their backs as reports learned about through a third party: “Kerry said you said I said X.” Because the intermediate party rather than the current speaker is credited with authorship of the report of the offense, the defendant cannot bring a counter accusation against her accuser in the immediate encounter, and disputes are not resolved easily. Dispute processes can endure for weeks. Ostracism can result; periods of ridicule and insulting siblings and parents of the targeted girl stemming from disputes can become so intense that families consider leaving the neighborhood.

Kyratzis and Guo (1996) noted that there has been relatively little research examining the reality of children's separate worlds cross-culturally. Studying American and Mainland Chinese preschoolers in mixed-sex interactions, they found that although American boys used more direct unmitigated forms than girls, Chinese girls used more aggravated directives, ratified by boys' compliance, within pretend play. In a study of preschool children in urban Taiwan, Farris (2000) found girls made use of a direct, confrontational style. Goodwin's (1994, 1998) work looking at interaction among bilingual Spanish-English-speaking, working-class, second- through fifth-grade girls playing hopscotch challenges stereotypical notions of girls' cooperative language styles.

This study investigates the use of directives and forms of exclusion among fourth-grade children in mixed-sex groups in an ethnically mixed elementary school in southern California. In previous work (Goodwin 1980, 1990), I found differences in how girls and boys organized task activities, with boys using more aggravated forms that differentiated speakers from recipients. In the midst of a different context—games—analyzed here, I find that the ability to use actions that tell others what to do in a very direct fashion in cross-sex interaction changes over time, as members of a same-sex playgroup become more skilled in the performance of the activity. Both girls and boys in positions of power use direct forms to organize the activity and exclude children.

### THE GROUP AND FIELD SETTING

The study, based on 6 months of fieldwork during 1997, examines directive use within a common cultural activity system: the game of jump rope.<sup>4</sup> It was conducted in collaboration with Jill Kushner, Sarah Meacham, and Fazila Bhimji, who assisted in videotaping over 60 hr of interaction. The elementary school, called Hanley, draws children from various parts of the city, although the children studied here are primarily middle class. In many public schools of Los Angeles, the space where children eat lunch and play is highly circumscribed; children even might have to walk silently in single file from one confined area to another. However, at Hanley, during their lunch break, children are free to eat and move about across various spaces with whomever they choose on either of two rather expansive playgrounds,

with many shady areas affording alternative types of spaces and activities.<sup>5</sup> Girls and boys ate lunch separately on picnic tables, which were located close enough for children to yell back and forth to one another.

During recess, where girls and boys participate in a number of activities in their same-sex groups, they are not separated physically. The model “with then apart,” described by Thorne (1993), characterizes much of children’s play. Fourth through sixth graders had lunch and recess period at the same time. Two sixth-grade girls who were athletes regularly organized basketball games with boys; generally, however, games such as basketball, softball, soccer, or football were played only occasionally by girls. Girls did not enjoy playing with boys, because they felt they played aggressively and only occasionally passed the ball to girls. Boys wolfed down their lunches as rapidly as possible so that they could get balls from an equipment shed and lay claim to the playing field. Until “fair school” policies were implemented, putting into place a rotating schedule for soccer and football including girls as well as boys, one male college student playground assistant supported the boys’ claim that the playing field was rightfully a boys’ rather than a girls’ space.

Fourth-grade boys alternated between basketball, soccer, volleyball, roaming the schoolyard and causing mischief (locking people in the equipment shed), talking with girls, and jumping rope.<sup>6</sup> Several groups of girls with different orientations toward play were evident in the schoolyard. In 1997, although third-grade boys and girls played handball and basketball together quite frequently, fourth-grade boys and girls only rarely participated in these games together. A group of fourth- through sixth-grade girls who were bilingual English–Spanish speakers participated in jump rope, joke telling, or swinging on tires with a bilingual boy. Other fourth-grade girls sat on the swings or jungle gyms and talked among themselves and with boys.

Occasionally, girls played volleyball with boys. The particular group of fourth-grade girls whose interaction is examined in this study preferred the activities of talking and playing jump rope together in their same-sex group. The girls’ group in this report included two Japanese American girls, an African American girl, two White girls, and a South Asian girl. The boys’ group included an African American, a Mexican American, a Japanese American, and five Whites.

Although frequently regarded as a girls’ game, during May and June 1997, jump rope at Hanley was an activity that was promoted by the coaches and played during physical education classes by both boys and girls.<sup>7</sup> Both

groups played three variations on the game. The most common way the game was played involved jumping to a rhyme, such as Teddy Bear, Texaco Mexico, Ice Cream Soda, or Cinderella. In another game called “clock,” children lined up behind each other; each player in turn would jump into the moving rope and jump progressively higher numbers of jumps (1–12). A third version of the game was “speed jumping”: jumping as the rope was turned at a very fast pace. The boys’ favorite version of speed jumping involved multiple children jumping inside the rope simultaneously; when someone missed, he was eliminated from the rope. Each time they jumped, they would try to beat their own former record. Although generally girls jumped with members of their own clique, one recess period fourth-grade girls challenged fifth-grade girls to a contest to see who could jump rope to 100 first.

Because jump rope was played with enthusiasm by both girls and boys, it provides an unusual context for analyzing how different gender groups organize the activity and make use of directives in same- and cross-sex interaction. Although it is commonly considered a game lacking in complexity (Borman, 1982; Borman & Frankel, 1984; Lever, 1976; Piaget, 1932/1965), in fact a great deal of negotiation occurs regarding every aspect of the game. Movements requiring athletic agility take place in the midst of some of the rhymes of jump rope. In the game entitled Texaco Mexico,<sup>8</sup> players must jump in the air while doing kicks, splits, turning around, touching the ground, “paying their taxes” (by slapping the hand of a turner), and “getting outta town” (jumping out of the rope) while the rope is in motion.

### REGULATING ACTIVITY THROUGH DIRECTIVES

Directives, actions that are designed to get someone else to do something, are used to make bids regarding how the activity should proceed. The grammatical shape of directives varies during different phases of the activity. In keeping with Ervin-Tripp’s (1976) perspective, it is important to note that directive forms in no way “lie along a scale of increasing politeness for all social conditions” (p. 60). Bald imperatives such as “Faster. Come on!”, “Not too early!”, “Okay. Turn it!”, or “Get in more!” help regulate the activity. They are the expected or unmarked types of actions in the midst of the activity of rope, as they promote the game’s onward development or critique the style in which it is being played

(Goodwin, 1990). As Brown and Levinson (1978) and Bellinger and Gleason (1982) argued, the situation of the moment itself might warrant the use of a directive format that in other circumstances would be seen as aggravated. At junctures in play activity, however, directives might take a more indirect form (Goodwin, 1990, pp. 316–317); rather than making demands, children make proposals about possible courses of action using “Let’s” as in “Let’s see how many people can get in at one time” (said by a boy during same-sex play) or “Let’s play a game snake” (a girl’s utterance).

Labov and Fanshell (1977) argued that “in all discussions of discourse, analysts take into account the subject’s desire to mitigate or modify his expression to avoid creating offense” (p. 84). Some directive formats suggest that the addressee has complete control over whether the requested action in fact will be performed (e.g., “Can I turn the rope?”). As Gordon and Ervin-Tripp (1984) argued, such “conventional polite requests, with few exceptions, are interrogatives that appear to offer the hearer options in responding. . . . Conventional polite forms . . . avoid the appearance of trying to control or impose on another” (p. 308). Alternative to such “mitigated” types of requests, directives might be formulated in a more aggravated fashion, becoming more demanding while increasing directness (Eisenberg & Garvey, 1981)—as in imperatives (“Give me the rope!”). The embodied ways in which directives are formulated and responded to can create contrastive forms of social organization (Goodwin, 1990). Although many studies of directives ignore responses of recipients, ethologically oriented researchers of children’s dominance hierarchies have argued that a crucial feature of social conflict is its interactional nature, which “requires that equal attention be given to the activity of both participants in the aggressive social exchange” (Strayer & Strayer, 1980, p. 154). Directives and responses to them affirm and ratify who has the right to make decisions about various optional ways that the game can be played. They are especially powerful types of moves in deciding the scope of participation in the game.

Although the children enjoyed playing with their friends in groups of four to six or more, the larger the size of the group, the more time it took for someone to get their next turn at jumping. Children attempted to exclude children who were not core members of their friendship group. Boys had more inclusive groups than girls but limited the participation of those who did not have the same skills as the other members of the play-group—for example, by making them turners. Thus, a critical site for the examination of directive use is in decision making about roles in the game



and the organization of jump rope. In this article, I explore the accomplishment of such tasks in mixed-sex groups where first girls and later boys are dominant. An important dimension of this study is that it investigates changing social roles for defining rules over time; as children become more skilled in the activity, the forms of speech actions they invoke to construct social identities shift as well. Two jump rope sessions held 1 month apart are investigated with respect to how directives are used and provide alternative forms of participation frameworks. First, however, I briefly sketch how the game is played in same-sex groups.

### BOYS' SAME-SEX JUMP ROPE

Different types of social orders are constructed by boys in the midst of jump rope. Analyzing a particular session of jump rope (held May 12, 1997) among members of a group that included six White boys and one Japanese American boy, Wingard (1998) found that a hierarchical structure emerged in which a particular boy's directives were treated as binding, whereas others' were not. One boy had the power to orchestrate participation in the activity, whereas others exercised relatively little control over their own participation. In the boys' group, Malcolm was the leader. His abilities to jump rope were superior to the other boys; he could jump continuously for longer periods of time than any other boy. His superior jumping skill led to his authority to control the activity with respect to (a) commenting on the players' performances ("Everyone's messing up!") and (b) determining who could take which roles in the activity—who could play and turn the rope. Malcolm denied the opportunity to turn the rope to a particular player the group wanted to exclude in utterances such as "NO:: TOM! Tom you can't do it!" (*grabbing the rope from Tom and pushing him out of the way*)

Malcolm delivered directives in the imperative form: "Make it touch the ground! And turn it right!" or "Slow it down Tom!" It was his directives regarding who should turn the rope, what the speed of the rope should be, or who could take the next turn at jumping that are ratified by others in the group; generally, his directives were accepted with minimal contestation. In fact, other boys frequently echoed the directives he gave as they attempt to affiliate with him.

Tom, the least coordinated boy of the group, had great difficulty jumping over the rope and initially was denied his request to participate as a turner. Eventually, he got to play when Malcolm overturned the other boys' mandate that Tom not be permitted to participate. As Tom ran to pick up the rope when someone dropped it, Malcolm stated, "Let Tom DO it." Malcolm changed participant roles at his own whim. He later reversed the group's characterization of Tom as a bad turner and defended him. When a boy said, "Tom's doing it way up here" (*holding rope high*), Malcolm responded, "Watch. Tom's doing it right. Look. See. Tom's doing it right."

Whereas Malcolm's directives were formulated as imperatives, Tom's directives took the form of statements of future action such as "I'll turn." Tom offered to take the ends of the rope rather than demanding that others give it to him. His relative powerlessness was evident in the fact that in 9 out of 10 attempts, the boys refused to give him the ends of the rope. Thus, although Malcolm's directives were either ratified or echoed by other boys, Tom's requests received no uptake and in fact were refuted. The boys also felt at liberty to critique his turning style. Dramatic differences in power thus were made evident through interaction in directive-response sequences.

A quite different type of arrangement occurred 3 days later on May 15, 1997. Rather than refusing Tom a role, Fred aligned with him through several moves: (a) He was coached in his jumping ("Tom you're jumping too late"); (b) he was given a second chance when he failed ("You can go again"); and (c) he was offered the role of turner ("Let's let Tom be an all time turner!"). In a form of "twinning ritual," Fred said that Tom's jumping was similar to his own: "I'm jumping too early too. Tom, I don't blame you." When Tom said "I'd rather spin than jump," Fred replied, "That's like me Tom." Rather than excluding Tom, he was given a role and told that his performance in the game is no different from one of the other principal players. Boys thus can create exclusive or inclusive types of social arrangements through language.

### GIRLS' SAME-SEX JUMP ROPE

Within the girls' group, no clear leader emerged to control the activity in the six-girl clique. Jumping ability did not determine status or roles in the activity. Although Janis was the worst jumper in the group (the reason

for her exclusion in a cross-sex jump rope contest, in example 22), in same-sex play she was as assertive as any other player in the game and assumed the role of spokesperson for the group when boys were onlookers (See examples 2–4, 6–7). Janis and Emi were considered the trendsetters for the group, and their opinions were more respected than those of other group members. (See Emi’s directives in examples 2, 6, 26, and 28.) Dispute among members of the girls’ group was quite common and not restricted to particular girls. In the girls’ group, power to orchestrate the activity (naming the rhyme that would be chanted, deciding who played what roles, determining how many jumps were permitted before someone forfeited a turn, etc.) or challenge turners’ style of moving the rope or a jumper’s moves was distributed more equally among group members than in the boys’ group. (Example 10 shows four of the five girls calling out rules in cross-sex interaction.) By way of example, the following shows the way multiple players rather than one party designating herself as leader dispute a jumper’s complaint about the way the rope is being turned:

Example 1 4/4/97 12:59:00

Sarah: Guys you’re going too slow!  
*((hands extended))*

Lonnie: [ Sarah it’s not their fault!

Emi: [ No they aren’t Sarah.  
 [ It’s ( )

Sarah: [ Well to me it’s slow!

Kesha: Then say faster Sarah.

Lonnie: When you’re jump roping  
 you say faster.

Sarah: Okay. Just turn.

Although ability to direct, critique, and counter was not restricted to particular individuals in the girls’ group (as in many sessions of boys’ jump rope), forms of exclusion occurred more frequently, across a range of activities. One girl, a working-class girl who was older and more physically mature than the other girls, was called a “tag-along” by herself and members of the clique; she attempted to play with the group despite the fact that she was ridiculed frequently and ostracized by them. She was regularly the target of ritual insult or stories of derision by the girls at lunch or in the midst of games. While jumping rope by herself several feet from the group, she was targeted as the cause of players’ missing a turn. When

she was briefly permitted to turn the rope, she was told to quit because of her poor turning style. For several days she decided that jumping with the boys was a preferable alternative and also more fun, joining their group. Thus, although some features of the girls' group showed less hierarchical social organization than the boys', girls' practices of exclusion toward out-group members were more pronounced and provided a way of defining the boundaries of their play group.

### **DIRECTIVES AND PARTICIPATION IN A GIRL-CONTROLLED MIXED-SEX GAME**

At the end of April 1997, the fourth-grade boys in this study had little experience with jump rope and generally participated as onlookers to the girls' game, commenting on their activity. In the first series of examples, I examine five girls from April 28th, Emi, Lonnie, Janis, Sarah, and Kesha (a group that includes two Japanese Americans, two Whites, and one African American) jump while three boys (one African American and two Whites), Kevin, Stephen, and Ron, are standing on the periphery watching the game. When observing the girls, one of the onlookers states that it had been 3 years since he had jumped rope. Another complimented the girls on the extraordinary skill required for the intricate moves of the girls occurring during the Texaco Mexico rhyme. After Kesha executed acrobatic movements in space, Kevin, who was exceptional in the boys' group for his jump rope skills, stated, "I Kesha, I cannot do that." At the same time that boys provided positive assessments of the girls' jump roping, they distanced themselves from the activity. In initial sessions watching the girls, the boys ridiculed the chantlike quality of the rhymes using exaggerated sing-song intonation and mimicked the dancelike movements of the jumpers preparing to jump into a turning rope with exaggerated up-and-down head and arm movements. This activity, however, was ignored by the girls and treated as of no concern to them.

At Hanley School in spring of 1997 boys controlled who played on a team in the midst of games such as softball or soccer. Boys frequently made themselves the captains of the teams. When they picked players, girls were usually the last to be selected, and usually only a small number of girls, generally those who were friends with the captains, were selected to play.

### Asymmetry in Directive Use

Jump rope provides a quite different story because the girls were the ones with the expertise in this activity. In orchestrating participation in jump rope during the April session, the girls used directives and responded to boys' requests to play in ways that demonstrated their control of the activity. Repetitively, the girls told the boys what the ground rules were when asked if they could play. Originally, Kevin, among the best jumpers of the boys, was scheduled to be the fourth jumper in the game. However, when he stated that he did not want to have to jump into the rope while it is turning and that he did not want to have to execute the complicated movements involved in Texaco Mexico (turning around, touching the ground, doing kicks and splits, and slapping the palm of a turner while "paying taxes"), three of the girls in the four-person girls' group told him that he could not play unless he did so.

Example 2<sup>o</sup> 4/28/9711:48:08

- 1 Kevin:        You're jumping in.
- 2 Stephen:      No I ain't jumpin in.
- 3 Janis:         You guys will have to jump with it.
- 4 Emi:          You guys will have to jump in.
- 5 Lonnie:        Yeah.
- 6 Lonnie:        And Now! Now! *((preparing for Sarah to jump in))*
- 7 Kevin:         I don't wanna do that- Mexico Texaco.
- 8 Lonnie/Em:    I Now! Now! Now! Now!
- 9 Janis:         You have to.
- 10 Lonnie/Em:   Texaco I Mexico
- 11 Kevin:        No I don't.
- 12 Janis:         Yes you do.
- 13 Lonnie/Em:   Where far away where they do some  
*((singing chant))*

In response to Kevin's proposals (line 2) that he not have to jump into the rope while it is turning—or jump to a difficult rhyme—the girls counter that the move is obligatory with "You have to" (lines 3, 4, 5, 9) and a retort to Kevin's objection (line 12), "Yes you do." The girls state in no uncertain terms that particular moves have to be made by the boys if they are to play with the girls.

In example 3, Stephen displays his subordinate position vis-à-vis the girls by making a bid to enter the game through a mitigated request—“Can I try it?” (line 4):

Example 3 4/28/97 11:49:11

- 1 Stephen: *((makes a nonverbal bid to join the group))*
- 2 Janis: Stephen we're having a contest.
- 3                    ┌ We're having a contest.
- 4 Stephen:       └ Can I try it?
- 5 Janis:         Well not really because
- 6 Lonnie:        Because there's three against- one.

Inquiries by boys to the girls about joining the game are responded to with refusals. In example 3, opposition first occurs in response to a nonvocal bid with the account from Janis: “Stephen we're having a contest.” Next in response to “Can I try it?” Janis states in line 5, “Well not really”; her utterance is completed by an account from Lonnie: “Because there's three against- one” (line 6).

In example 4 (the continuation of example 3), two boys, Kevin and Stephen, make a second bid to enter the game through a request again phrased in a mitigated form: “Can you guys just- turn the rope?” Although initially Janis (line 2) grants permission, she quickly retracts it when one of her teammates argues that game should be exclusively for the girls: “No:: us” (line 4).

Example 4 4/28/97 11:49:30

- 1 Kevin:         Can you guys just- turn the rope?  
                  eh heh-heh!
- 2 Janis:         Okay fine. You can play.  
                  You can play. You can  
                  ┌ play.
- 3 Stephen:     └ (Hey. Can I play if I?)
- 4 Emi:          No:: us. *((shaking head))*
- 5 Kevin:        I don't want to do that
- 6 Janis:        ┌ Mexico thing  
                  └ Oh yeah. =You're not part of our gang.  
                  So you can't.

In response to her teammate's objection, Janis revises her prior granting of permission to play with first a change of state token—"Oh yeah."—followed by an account that expands on Emi's turn (line 4) arguing for the exclusivity rather than inclusiveness of the game: "You're not part of our gang. So you can't" (line 6). The girls agree to prohibit boys from playing the game.

A form of asymmetry exists with respect to the obligatory nature of rules. In example 5, 2½ min after Janis insisted that the boys had to jump into the moving rope to execute the acrobatic moves of Texaco Mexico (example 2), she herself encounters difficulty in executing the move. While the boys are watching the girls jump, Janis argues that she herself is not bound by the rule and can jump to whatever rhyme she wants to. In example 5, when she misses after one jump to Texaco Mexico, she states, "I don't want Texaco Mexico." Although at first a turner argues that Janis's turn is over ("Okay, Emi's turn," line 4), Janis rejects the statement that it is someone else's turn and stands on the rope so that it cannot be moved (line 5). Another player then proposes an easier rhyme that does not entail turning around or performing acrobatic moves while the rope is in motion: "Ice Cream Soda then" (line 6). When Emi next proposes that it is Kevin's turn (line 7), Janis holds out for getting another turn; she provides a dramatically executed counter with her polarity marker "No" and repeats Sarah's proposed replacement rhyme "Ice Cream Soda" in a pleading gesture with her hands extended.

Example 5 4/28/97 11:50:48

*((Janis misses her jump as she begins  
to jump into the rope during  
Texaco Mexico))*

- 1 Turners: Texaco Mexico
- 2 Janis: Yeuw! *((Janis misses—unsuccessfully  
jumping after her first jump))*
- 3 I don't want Texaco Mexico.
- 4 Lonnie: Okay. Emi's turn. Emi's turn.  
*((looking toward Emi))*
- 5 Janis: No. I don't want Texaco Mexico.  
*((stands on the rope so that they  
cannot start turning for a new person))*
- 6 Sarah: Ice cream soda then.

- 7 Lonnie: It's Kevin's turn. Kevin's turn.  
 8 Janis: No. Ice Cream Soda *((does a pleading gesture with hands extended intensifying her action))*  
 9 Ice Cream Soda guys.  
 10 Not loud cuz-  
 11 *((Girls turn for Janis as she jumps))*

An asymmetrical situation of power develops; the rules invoked by girls for boys as mandatory are ignored by the very girls who articulate their obligatory nature.

The girls display their control of the game not only by rejecting the boys' bids to play with them; in addition, the girls make decisions about an activity the following day, a volleyball game, which would involve the participation of the boys, without even consulting them. With an inclusive "Let's," Emi addresses the girls: "Hey you guys. Let's still have a contest with them."

Example 6 4/28/97 11:49:49

- 1 Emi: Hey you guys. Let's still have a contest  
 with them. *((looking at her teammates))*  
 2 Kevin: ( I would never ever let you call me)  
 3 Alan: ( )  
 4 Emi: We're having a contest with you tomorrow for  
 volleyball.  
 5 Okay. Bye. *((waves them away))*  
 6 Janis: Bye. We don't want you any more.  
 7 Sarah: How many turns do we get. *((boys move away))*

In example 6, line 4, without any input whatsoever from the boys, Emi informs them that the girls and boys are having a volleyball contest together the next day. Following the giving of this directive, the girls tell the boys to leave, through initiating the ritual closing moves of an encounter in line 5; they wave while stating, "Okay. Bye." One of the girls provides an explicit account for why the boys should leave: "We don't want you any more" (line 6). This account depicts the girls' desires rather than the requirements of the current activity<sup>10</sup> and thus constitutes among the most aggravated ways of formulating a directive (Ervin-Tripp, 1982).

The account that Janis provides argues quite forcefully that on this occasion girls control who can play. When the boys return 15 sec later,



now agreeing to the girls' conditions for being a part of the activity—stating that they will execute the difficult moves of Texaco Mexico—Janis once more rejects their bid to join the game.

Example 7 4/28/97 10:50:16

*((Boys return arguing that they want to play))*

Alan: Alright. We (will) have to do that Texaco Mexico. eh heh heh

Janis: Well we don't want you to.

Emi: Go:.. Go:..

*((The girls continue to jump, ignoring the boys.))*

Through their actions, the girls define when they will play with the boys and patrol the borders and boundaries of their play space (Thorne, 1993).

### Controlling a Peripheral Girl's Entry Into the Game

Continuously, girls respond with denials to the boys' requests to play. Bids to join the game are made not only by boys, but also by girls who are peripheral to the play group. In example 8, girls also reject a bid to join the activity made by Kristell, an African American girl who sometimes has lunch with Janis's group but does not regularly play with them. The bid to join is made by asking about who is the last person in line to jump.

Example 8 4/28/97 7 11:53:20

1 Kristell: Who's- last.

2 Emi: Uh- one of them is last *((does a large hand wave in direction of boys on the sidelines))*

3 Emi: Nobody's- Nobody's last.

4 Emi: [ Nobody's last.

5 Janis: [ Nobody's last.

6 Kristell: *((body deflates))*

7 (Boy): (Kevin Go.)

8 Janis: This is kind of like a contest.

9 Kristell: Oh. Okay. *((looks away))*

Here Kristell's inquiry "Who's- last" is interpreted as a bid to play with the girls; asking about the appropriate turn order is only relevant for those who might be participating in the game. The girls forestall Kristell's positioning herself in the lineup by responding that there is no "last" position. Although the girls do not state overtly that Kristell cannot play, they effectively imply it through their "Nobody's last" response (lines 3–5). Because the person who is last is not known, it is impossible to find a place for Kristell in the game. By way of a second account, the girls state that they are having a contest (effectively one that excludes her). The account the girls give to Kristell is more indirect than the explanations given the boys (she is not told they do not want her); nevertheless, it functions in a similar way to exclude her and is treated as a rejection by Kristell, as evidenced by the deflation of her body (line 6) following the girls' refusal to let her play and by her walking away from the game 2 min later.

### Shifting Participation Framework While Maintaining Control

For 6 min the game is played exclusively by girls. Then, in the midst of the girls' jump rope session, the participation structure suddenly shifts from one excluding the boys to one that includes them. In the midst of a dispute between the turners and Lonnie (the jumper) about the direction the rope is to be turned (toward or away from the jumper), Sarah (a turner) suddenly drops the rope to the ground and begins wiggling it (line 9). The dispute stops. Subsequently, through the use of requests and inclusive directives using the modal "can" and the inclusive "Let's," the girls decide to play a game called "snake." In this game, children must jump across the rope as it is wiggling close to the ground. The participation framework suddenly shifts from one in which girls alone were participants to one that is open for anyone to play:

Example 9 4/28/97 11:56:40

*((The girls have been turning the rope toward the jumper making it difficult for Lonnie to jump in.))*

- 1 Lonnie: Other way Sarah!
- 2 Janis: You guys.
- 3 Lonnie: Emi, I don't do that to you.

- 4 Sarah: Emi- Lonnie. That's what you did to me  
 5 [ And I didn't like it either.  
 6 Emi: I know.  
 7 Lonnie: I know but then, *((sigh))*  
 8 I never did it on Emi's turn.  
 9 Sarah: *((Sarah begins to wiggle the rope on the ground. and then Emi sits down and joins her in wiggling the rope))*  
 10 Sarah: La de dah de  
 11 Emi: Now. Can we do snake?  
 12 Sarah: Yeah.  
 13 Lonnie: But this does not count as one of my turns.  
 14 Anyone could do this.  
 15 *((Boys go across wiggling rope))*  
 16 Sarah: Let's play a game of snake.  
 17 No wait! Till we play a game of snake!  
 18 Emi: A game of snake. Anyone could play.

The new activity initiated by Sarah with her wiggling movement of the rope on the ground (line 9) and Emi's subsequent request (line 11) "Can we do snake?" is ratified by others, through Lonnie's "Anyone could do this" (line 14) and Sarah's "Let's play a game of snake" (line 16). The course of the game now shifts, and the participation framework becomes more open, allowing the boys to play. Directives using modals and "Let's" are used at major junctures in an activity to suggest new alignments of participants and seek ratification from others. They propose rather than order.

Girls make the decisions about the activity. In example 10, a continuation of example 9, Emi suggests what a new course of action could consist of through her request "Can we try like limbo or something" (line 7). Girls specify which side of the rope girls and boys should be on as they divide up into teams (lines 1, 2, 6) and tell the boys to hold the ends of the rope:

Example 10 4/28/97 11:57:17

- 1 Sarah: KAY! GIRLS ON THIS SIDE,  
 2 Lonnie: Girls on this side,  
 3 Janis: Here. Get it!  
*((referring to the end of the rope))*  
 4 Kevin: What the heck is it.

- 5 Janis: ONE BOY! HERE! Hold the end.  
Hold it! *((throwing rope to Kevin and pointing))*
- 6 Lonnie: BOYS ON THAT SIDE!  
Get on the other side.
- 7 Emi: [ Can we try like limbo or something.
- 8 Sarah: [ *((kicks Andrew, then pushes him))*
- 9 Lonnie: Okay! (Can we get)
- 10 Janis: Only- no only- the girls!
- 11 Lonnie: Limbo!
- 12 Lonnie: [ We're playing Limbo!
- 13 Andrew: [ *((begins to do wiggling of rope  
as grabs it))*
- 14 Janis: Oh LIMBO! Q::!
- 15 Kevin: [ Limbo!
- 16 Andrew: De op! de wat! de wat! *((sings and does  
dance turning around, changing framework))*
- 17 Lonnie: We're playing Limbo!
- 18 Emi: Lonnie get out!
- 19 Lonnie: Okay! You saw- Tie! Limbo!
- 20 Emi: I'm not holding the other end.
- 21 I kept on holding it.
- 22 Lonnie/Ja: KEVIN. HOLD IT!
- 23 *((several people talk simultaneously))*
- 24 Emi: It has to be one girl one boy hold  
the ends of this. Each for a snake.

In organizing the activity, the girls make use of the most aggravated form of directives, bald imperatives: "Here! Get it!" "One boy- here. Hold this!" (lines 3, 5); "KEVIN. HOLD IT!" (line 22); "It has to be one girl one boy hold the ends of this" (line 24). For the most part, girls agree with each others' directives, affirming a particular version of the game. Differences of opinion regarding what the next stage of the game should consist of are short-lived. Sarah, Lonnie, and Emi affirm that the game of snake is open to anyone who wants to play, and Janis's (line 10) proposal is not upheld. When Lonnie subsequently invokes an alternative game, Limbo (lines 11 and 12), and boys begin to dance and sing "Deop de wat!" this suggestion is, by way of contrast, immediately taken up by Janis (line 14).

With the switch to Limbo, boys become participants rather than mere onlookers. Despite the boys' change in participation status, nevertheless, it is the girls who shape the event through their directives. Although girls

exclude, counter, and command boys, boys ratify the girls' position of authority by posing requests to them. Moreover, when the girls are displeased with the way a move is being executed, they push boys who are turners, swing the beaded ends of the rope like a lasso in their direction, or chase them; boys, however, do not initiate similar physical moves toward girls. The girls' superior position with respect to knowing the game entitles them to dictate how it will be played.

### DIRECTIVE USE IN A MIXED-GROUP CONTEST

During the weeks following the initial session the boys had with the girls, the boys practiced during recess and eventually became quite skilled in jump rope, with the exception of jumping to the rhyme *Texaco Mexico*, a rhyme that involves fancy footwork with the rope. At lunch, the girls talked excitedly about the fact that the boys also were interested in playing rope and made guesses about which boy would be first to run for the rope after lunch. For the most part, the boys pursued their own game apart from the girls. However, Angela, a girl who was treated as an outcast by both girls and boys, would on occasion join the boys; on such occasions, the girls said Angela was "flirting."

#### Boys' Decision Making

On May 29, 1 month after the initial session of boys attempting to join the girls' group in jump rope, as seven boys and seven girls are jumping in separate groups but near each other, the idea for a tournament arises. Angela approaches the boys' group and says, "We'll racing against you two." She is quickly ratified by one of the boys, Malcolm, a boy whom with Ron is the most experienced jumper; Malcolm subsequently provides his definition of the shape of the tournament—one in which only two of the boys (the best jumpers) rather than the entire group of seven will be competing.

Example 11 5/29/9711:50:51

Angela: Okay, We'll racing against you two.

Malcolm: Okay. Me and Ron versus two- (.) girls.

Two girls versus two of the boys.

Although in the April 28 encounter between girls and boys, girls made most of the decisions and boys made requests to the girls, on this occasion the boys have considerably more say in what takes place. The two best jumpers, Malcolm and Ron, initiate many of the decision-making moves. They assert their position of authority through issuing directives (examples 12, 13) and metastatements about the event (example 13).

Example 12 5/29/97 12:00

*((After the girls have practiced several minutes the following occurs))*

Malcolm: All the girls go bye bye.

Girls: *((Girls start to move to another area))*

Malcolm: Okay. Now the boys get to practice.

Ron: This is our home field.

Example 13 5/29/97 12:01:24

Malcolm: The contest is going nowhere fast.  
Start the event.

Both girls and boys ratify Malcolm and Ron's position of authority by posing questions to them.

Example 14 5/29/97 11:57:56

Kesha: Malcolm are we gonna use one rope?

Malcolm: *((nods))*

Kesha: We're using one rope.

Example 15 5/29/97 12:02:59

Michael: Ron. I'm the manager and the- and the-  
the judge. Okay?

Lyle: Screw you. Go away *((play-kicks Michael))*

Although Malcolm and Ron make the more important decisions of the game, two boys, Lyle and Jack, boys with considerably less skill in jumping rope who frequently end up turning the rope, play the role of gatekeepers regarding the group boundaries. They tell those who are not

ratified participants to leave or where to locate themselves in space. In addition they define their addressees as “problems.”

Example 16 5/29/97 11:58:24

Lyle: IF YOU'RE NOT IN THE TOURNAMENT  
GO OVER THERE SOMEWHERE!

Example 17 5/29/97 11:58:35

Jack: If you are not  
Lyle: IF YOU'RE NOT IN THE COMPETITION  
GO OVER THERE!

Example 18 5/29/97 12:00:10

Jack: Come on! You and Karl are the  
biggest problem.  
Too many people around here.  
Malcolm: Jack. Leave him alone.  
What's he doing wrong.

Example 19 5/29/97 12:02:00

Jack: Karl, Stephen, Tom.  
Is it such a hard decision.  
Stay behind the tree.  
Now you can watch.  
But stay behind the way of the tree.

Example 20 5/29/97 12:03:37

Jack: Tom. Where you are right now is perfect.  
Okay?  
Tom: Jack. Does it really matter where I am?

Example 21 5/29/97 12:03:15

Jack: You guys wanna jump rope.  
There's too many people in this rope.  
Tom: Jack. If there's too many people  
why don't you leave

### Negotiation While Specifying Group Boundaries

Malcolm and Ron initially specify that the game will be played with four girls and four boys: “Okay we need a cot- the four goils.” Six girls (Emi, Lonnie, Kesha, Janis, Sarah, and Lisa) then all state that they want to be the four girls in a highly competitive exchange. The intensity with which the girls raise their hands pleading to be among the contestants is mimicked by Malcolm (line 12) next. Because only a limited number of girls are going to play, extensive bidding for the positions among the girls ensues, and one player, Janis (the girl who had been the person responsible 1 month earlier for the boys’ initial dismissal from the game) leaves in tears after she is asked by her girlfriends if she thinks she could actually beat the boys.

Example 22 5/29/97 11:55:13

- 1 Malcolm: Okay we need a cot- the four goils.  
 2 Ron: We need the four girls.  
 3 Kesha: Me, Emi,  
 4 Emi: Okay. Im one of the four girls.  
 5 Malcolm: It’s an authentic way.  
 6 Emi: IM ONE OF THE  
     └FOUR GIRLS.  
 7 Lisa: └Lonnie  
 8 Lonnie: I’m  
     └one.  
 9 Lisa: └I’m one.  
 10 Kesha: I’m one of the four girls.  
 11 Janis: └Im one.  
 12 Malcolm: └Im one of em.  
             *((raising hands and mimicking gestures))*  
 13 Emi: Then get i(hh)n. *((looking at Lisa))*  
 14 Janis: └I’m one of-  
 15 Lisa: └You said four.  
 16 Emi: I know. I told-  
 17 I’m one of the four girls  
     └who’s gonna come in.  
 18 Lisa: └Oh.  
 19 Oh. I am too!



- 20 Janis: [ I want to. *((hands up))*  
 21 Lonnie: [ I am. *((hands up))*  
 22 Kesha: Janis. Do you think you could beat one of the  
 boys?  
 23 Janis: *((goes away crying))*

Although the boys ask the girls to specify who is on their team, no reciprocal action is initiated by the girls to the boys. However, both boys and girls join in ridiculing the outcast girl, Angela. In example 23, when Ron asks which girls are on the team, Lisa specifies that Angela is not (line 3). When Ron then tells the girls to eliminate Angela (line 4), Lisa tells her directly that she is not playing on the team: “Angela go out. You’re not in this” (line 5). This leads to an extensive dispute between Angela and Lisa in which argumentative moves are prefaced with polarity markers (lines 6, 7, 9), among the most aggravated types of dispute turn initiators, and Lisa issues threats to Angela, which are answered by “so what” responses. The boys further insult Angela by stating that she should “work on her jumping” (line 22), although she is one of the best jumpers among them.

Example 23 5/29/97 11:56:36

- 1 Ron: Who’s on the team. You, you, you, *((pointing to Kesha, Lisa, Lonnie))*  
 2 Kesha: Emi and Lonnie.  
 3 Lisa: She’s NOT. *((referring to Angela))*  
 4 Ron: I know. So get her out of here.  
 5 Lisa: Angela go out. You’re not in this.  
 6 Angela: Yes I am.  
 7 Lisa: No you’re not.  
 8 Angela: If you guys can be in it then I can.  
 9 Lisa: No you’re not.  
 10 Angela: Well I’m not leaving the rope.  
 11 Malcolm: Look. There’s a jump rope right there!  
 12 Lisa: We’ll go tell on you then.  
 13 Angela: Tell!  
 14 Lisa: There’s five people allowed in the rope.  
 15 and we’re five people.  
 16 Angela: Tell. I don’t really care. Tell.

- 17 Malcolm: Karl. He's not complaining about anything.  
 18 Tom you're the only stubborn one.  
 19 Lisa: Reggie-  
 20 Lisa: Well Reggie- *((calling a playground aide))*  
 21 Ron: Next time you'll be in the competition.  
 22 Work on your jumping.  
 23 Angela: I know how to jump.  
 24 Malcolm: Look. It's wasting all our time.

In contrast to Janis, who leaves crying when she is told she cannot be on the team, Angela holds her own, coming back with counters to each imperative and exclusionary statement made by Lisa. Further imperatives are delivered to her 1 min later by boys as well as girls (lines 1, 4, 5), although this time she stands silently ignoring them.

Example 24 5/29/97 11:57:26

*((throughout the following Angela stands motionless))*

- 1 Lisa: Move Angela.  
 2 Lyle: Are you in the competition Angela?  
 3 Lisa: No. She's not.  
 4 Lyle: Then MOVE! It's a competition.  
 5 Go get another rope to jump.  
 6 Malcolm: Look. There's one  
                           right there!  
 7 Lisa: REGGIE! I'm gonna go tell on her.  
 8 Boy: Kesha!

In numerous ways they degrade her. Later, when she does get a chance to jump, they tell her to get to the end of the line.

Example 25 5/29/97 12:06:09

- Angela: I'll jump with Raymond.  
 Ron: NO!  
 Lonnie: NO! You gotta go to the back of the line.  
 Angela.  
 Angela: Well don't yell at me okay?

### Girls' Decision Making

While the boys make many of the decisions, power is not completely in the hands of the boys. The girls decide two critical features of the game: (a) how girls will compete with boys and (b) what rhyme will be used. At the onset, multiple people are jumping simultaneously. Malcolm argues that teams of two boys and two girls should compete in the rope simultaneously (line 3).

Example 26 5/29/97 11:59:20

*((Multiple players are jumping at once and having a problem jumping more than one time.))*

- 1 Malcolm: Then there're too many people.  
 2 It should be two-  
 3 It should be like two of the boys vers  
 two of the girls.  
 4 Emi: Hey Kesha do you wanna be- in one- one-  
 5 um of the events?  
 6 Malcolm: Me and Ron together.  
 7 Emi: The other side.  
 8 Emi: No.  
 9 ( ) [ Okay.= We're four girls. Whoever has  
 [ I wanted( )  
 10 We're four girls.  
 11 Kesha: [ Whoever's last-  
 [ Because he just told me to get in  
 12 and I didn't know we were  
 [ jumpin yet.  
 13 Emi: [ GET OUT!  
 14 Emi: OKAY. LIS::TE::N!  
 15 Jack: Bye, bye bye. *((pushing Karl))*  
 16 Emi: We're (.) four (.) gi(hh)rls.  
 17 Sarah: [ The other four girls *((dancing, chanting))*  
 18 [ Whoever  
 19 Emi: WHOEVER (.) GOES (.) LAST (.)  
 20 VERSUS whoever's  
 21 best on your team::.

- 22 Ron: We have.  
 23 Kesha: It should be one at a time.  
 24 Malcolm: It should be two-  
 it could be one boy, one girl.

Malcolm's proposal that two boys should compete against two girls is countered by Emi (line 14), who yells loudly over the others' talk her vision of the contest as one between teams of one boy and one girl rather than two against two, as Malcolm had suggested. After Kesha ratifies this proposal ("It should be one at a time," line 23), Malcolm (line 24) revises his original designation of two against two (line 3) to "one boy, one girl." The intonation that Emi uses in lines 16 and 19, with micropauses after each word, adds to the directness of her statement.

As four girls are jumping simultaneously during a practice session before the official tournament, the boys start turning the rope fast, as if the event were speed jumping. Kesha yells at the boys for going too fast and tells them the rhyme that will be used. This is important, in that the Texaco Mexico rhyme the girls select is one they are expert in.

Example 27 5/29/97 12:00:37

*((Boys turn rope rapidly))*

Kesha: GO SLOWLY.  
 WE'RE DOING TEXACO MEXICO.  
 DON'T GO SO FAST!

During the first real event in the contest, Malcolm asks the girls to confirm his idea that the event is speed jumping. However, Emi (lines 3, 6) and Kesha (line 5) counter his proposal that the event is speed jumping by saying that the event is Texaco Mexico.

Example 28 5/29/97 12:04:21

- 1 Raymond: Malcolm. Go in with Emi.  
 2 Malcolm: What's this one. It's speed jumping?  
 3 Emi: [NO:::,  
 4 Lisa: [What is [this.  
 5 Kesha: [It's Texaco Mexico.  
 6 Emi: No who could- who could get-  
 Texaco Mexico the longer.

Thus, although boys organize the game through imperatives throughout the jump rope session, girls define who will jump against whom and what form of jumping will take place. They win against every contest between a girl and boy when *Texaco Mexico* is the rhyme being jumped to and celebrate their victories with hand slaps, victory signs, and loud scorekeeping. After several rounds of jumping to the rhyme *Texaco Mexico*, the game becomes more chaotic as the contest shifts to speed jumping, with several people in the rope simultaneously (the boys' favorite event) and new girls who are not expert jumpers joining the contest. Eventually, the boys gain ground and win by 2 points.

## CONCLUSIONS

The SWH proposes that because boys and girls grow up in different subcultures, they learn to “do different things with words in a conversation” (Maltz & Borker, 1982, p. 200) as a result of “the very different social contexts” in which they interact in segregated sex–gender arrangements. Alternative styles of communication are related to subcultural differences based on gender and can lead to miscommunication.

In the analysis presented here, boys and girls participating in a similar activity, organizing participation in a game, have no difficulty understanding the moves of one another. Both boys and girls make use of similar types of speech acts. The middle-class 10-year-old girls in this study demonstrated their ability to use bald imperatives—acts that are similar for organizing game activity across sex–gender groups—and speech forms I earlier (Goodwin, 1980) analyzed as characteristic of a masculine organizational style. What differentiates this study from my earlier work (which Maltz & Borker drew on) is that the context (Sheldon, 1996) is not the organization of task activity in a neighborhood play group, but rather the coordination of activity in a game on the playground. The organization of girls' task activity such as making rings from glass bottles, contained little role specialization, and tasks could be completed individually. In games such as jump rope, by way of contrast, there was more role differentiation and a premium on limiting size of the group; the more limited the number of participants, the more frequently one gets to jump.

The way in which jump rope is played demonstrates that the relative skill level of participants is important in determining who has the power to define the rules of the game. In the April 28 play session, boys initially displayed their subordinate status vis-à-vis the girls by making requests to join the activity. Refusing their requests, girls, by way of contrast, issued imperatives and directed counter moves to the boys. The girls told them they could not play, using accounts such as “We don’t want you any more.” When the girls shifted the game to “snake” and Limbo and included the boys in their play, they still maintained control of the play activity, defining who had to hold the ends of the rope and where teams of boys and girls would stand.

In the mixed group situation 1 month later, after they had gained skill in the game, boys had considerably more voice in the organization of the activity. Two boys who were expert in jumping emerged as leaders and were ratified as having control over many features of the activity—organizing practice before the event, determining the timing of the event, deciding how many ropes were to be used, and selecting players. Other less skilled (yet ingroup) players assumed the role of gatekeeper—telling boys who were unrated participants with bald imperatives where to go and what to do. The decisions the girls made—determining how many players from different teams would jump simultaneously and what type of jumping would be used in the contest—were important (in that they favored the girls’ jumping style) but more limited.

In both the jump rope sessions examined here excluding outgroup members, an activity commonly associated with female social organization (Douvan & Adelson, 1966; Eder & Hallinan, 1978; Feshbach & Sones, 1971), constitutes a feature of the interaction. In the initial phase of the April jump rope session, girls refused permission to boys and a girl who was not a member of their clique. The account they provided to the girl—that they were in the midst of a contest—was less direct than the account they gave the boys: “We don’t want you any more.” In the May jump rope contest, boys created a clear separation between participants and onlookers through utterances (primarily directed at boys) such as “IF YOU’RE NOT IN THE TOURNAMENT GO OVER THERE SOMEWHERE!” Although both boys and girls used aggravated, face-threatening directives to an outcast girl, they did not direct such actions to boys.

In other work (Goodwin 1990, 1997), I argued for the relevance of studying speech activities longitudinally. Ethnographically based studies that provide a form of time depth permit us to examine how the social

orchestration of an activity can change over time. With practice, boys became more skilled and were no longer in a position of subordination with respect to girls. Boys began to use the aggravated directive style of girls when they become more proficient in the game. Both girls and boys can make use of a variety of directive forms; the use of imperative forms and aggravated counter moves is related to acquired skill. Rather than being sex linked, features of language use may be closely related to one's achieved position in a specific context, a finding resonates with that made by O'Barr and Atkins (1980) in their analysis of language in an American trial courtroom.

With the development of more playground activities in which girls' games—for example, the highly competitive game of double dutch, which is featured in international athletic competitions—rather than boys' games are promoted, I hope increased opportunities for girls to interact in competitive ways that permit them to develop their abilities as powerful actors in cross-sex interaction will come.

## NOTES

- 1 Harding's (1975) study of gender relations among rural Spanish villagers found that although men worked in agricultural tasks and public arenas, engaging in economic negotiations and political argument, women were concerned with more private realms that involved gossip within networks of friends and relatives.
- 2 In making this claim, Maltz and Borker (1982) cited work by Brooks-Gunn and Matthews (1979), who argued that "a major feature of most middle-childhood peer groups is homogeneity in gender composition" (p. 203).
- 3 DeHart (1996) reviewed research on gender-specific linguistic interaction patterns in preschoolers' peer groups; she argued that by age 5 "girls' discourse has consistently been characterized as collaborative and mitigated, whereas boys' peer discourse has been characterized as controlling and unmitigated" (p. 81).

According to Miller, Danaher, and Forbes (1986), who investigated conflicts among racially and socioeconomically mixed 5- to 7-year-old children, boys are more forceful in pursuing their own agendas than girls; girls were more concerned with maintaining group harmony and made use of strategies that mitigated rather than provoked conflict. Leaper (1991), looking at middle- to upper middle-class children ages 4 to 9 found that girls used more speech acts that demonstrate "mutual coordination, responsiveness and elaboration" (p. 800) compared to boys, whose speech acts were frequently insults, orders, and refutations. Examining the pretend play of 4-year-olds

with siblings, DeHart (1996) found that “children’s use of mitigated and unmitigated forms with siblings is not the same as that reported for peers” (p. 92). See also Sheldon (1996, p. 58) for further citations of work on gender and conflict.

- 4 Before beginning my study, I explained to both parents (through a letter and during a parent–teacher meeting) and children (whom I told in person) in the school my interest in activities children organized among themselves apart from adults; on each occasion of videotaping at play during recess and at lunch, I asked the children’s permission to film them. In that it is not uncommon for researchers to be videotaping the children in other contexts, the children were quite accustomed to the videocamera.
- 5 Similar to what Thorne (1993) described, the largest area of the playground, the playing fields, were occupied primarily by boys.
- 6 One of the coaches believed that the group of boys who played jump rope chose that activity so that they could interact with the girls.
- 7 During 1998 and 1999, the game was not taught in physical education and I seldom saw girls playing it.
- 8 The rhyme for Texaco Mexico is as follows:  
 Texaco Mexico went over the hill and far away  
 Where they do some kicks, kicks, kicks,  
 And they do some splits, splits splits,  
 And they turn around round round  
 And they touch the ground, ground,  
 And they pay their taxes, taxes, taxes,  
 And they get outa town, town, town.
- 9 Each example includes the date the interaction was recorded and the time.
- 10 Among the African American children I studied in Philadelphia (Goodwin, 1990), boys’ directives rather than girls’ frequently dealt with personal desires rather than requirements of the activity.

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