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**LIONHEARTS OF THE PLAYWORLD**

**An ethnographic case study of the development of  
agency in play pedagogy**

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Human agency may be frail, especially among those with little power, but it happens daily and mundanely, and it deserves our attention.

D. Holland et al., 1998, p. 5

For play is the laboratory of the possible. To play fully and imaginatively is to step sideways into another reality, between the cracks of ordinary life.

T. S. Henricks, 2006, p. 1



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### **Abstract**

This is an ethnographic case study of the creation and emergence of a *playworld* – a pedagogical approach aimed at promoting children’s development and learning in early education settings through the use of play and drama. The data was collected in a Finnish experimental mixed-age elementary school classroom in the school year 2003-2004. In the playworld students and teachers explore different social and cultural phenomena through taking on the roles of characters from a story or a piece of literature and acting inside the frames of an improvised plot.

The thesis takes under scrutiny the notion of agency in education. It produces theoretically grounded empirical knowledge of the ways in which children struggle to become recognized and agentive actors in early education settings and how their agency develops in their interaction with adults. The study builds on the activity theoretical and sociocultural tradition and develops a methodological framework called *video-based narrative interaction analysis* for studying student agency as developing over time but manifesting through the situational material and discursive local interactions.

The research questions are: 1. What are the children’s ways of enacting their agency in the playworld? 2. How do the children’s agentive actions change and develop over the spring? 3. What are the potentials and challenges of the playworld for promoting student agency? 4. How do the teachers and the children deal with the contradiction between control and agency in the playworld?

The study consists of a summary part and four empirical articles which each have a particular viewpoint. Articles I and II deal with individual students’ paths to agency. In Article I the focus is on the role of resistance and questioning in enabling important spaces for agency. Article II takes a critical gender perspective and analyzes how two girls struggled towards recognition in the playworld. It also illuminates the role of imagination in developing a sense of agency. Article III examines how the open-ended and improvisational nature of the playworld interaction provided experiences and a sense of ‘shared agency’ for the students and teachers in the class. Article IV turns the focus on the teachers and analyzes how their role actions in the playworld helped the children to enact agency. It also discusses the challenges that the teachers faced in this work and asks what makes the playworld activity sustainable in the class.

The summary part provides a critical literature review on the concept of agency and argues that the inherently contradictory nature of the phenomenon of agency has not been sufficiently theorized. The summary part also locates the playworld intervention in a historical frame by discussing the changing conceptions of adulthood and childhood in the West. By focusing on the changing role of play and art in both adults' and children's contemporary lives, the thesis opens up an important but often neglected perspective on the problem of promoting student agency in education.

The results illustrate how engaging in a collectively imagined and dramatized pretend play space together with the children enabled the teachers to momentarily put aside their "knower" positions in the classroom. The fictive roles and the narrative plot helped them to create a necessary *incompleteness* and *open-endedness* in the activity that stimulated the children's initiatives. This meant that the children too could momentarily step out of their traditional classroom positions as pupils and initiate action to further the collective play. Engaging in this kind of unconventional activity and taking up and enacting agency was, however, very challenging for the participating children and teachers. It often contradicted the need to sustain control and order in the classroom. The study concludes that play- and drama-based pedagogies offer a unique but undeveloped potential for developing educational spaces that help teachers and children deal with the often contradictory requirements of schooling.

Keywords: agency, play pedagogy, adult-child relations, video-based ethnography, narrative interaction analysis, activity theory

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#### **Tiivistelmä**

Tutkimukseni avaa tärkeän, mutta laiminlyödyn näkökulman keskusteluun lasten toimijuuden muodoista ja niiden huomioimisesta koulussa. Kyseessä on etnografinen tapaustutkimus 4–8-vuotiaiden lasten ala-asteen kokeiluryhmässä lukuvuonna 2003–2004 toteutetusta *Veljeni Leijonamieli leikkimaailmasta*, jossa sekä aikuiset että lapset seikkailevat, leikkivät ja ratkaisevat erilaisia tehtäviä käyttäen apunaan tarinan juonta ja yhdessä luotuja roolihahmoja.

Leikkimaailman kaltaisten draama- ja leikkiprojektien lisääntynyt suosio opetuksessa heijastelee aikamme laajempaa murrosta, jossa sekä lapsuus että aikuisuus ovat uudelleen määrittelyn kohteena. Lapsuutta ei enää pidetä aikuisuudesta irrallisena elämänvaiheena, eikä aikuisuuden saavuttaminen tarkoita kehityksen määränpäättämistä. Lapsuuden ja aikuisuuden, leikin ja työnteon kulttuurit leikkaavat toisiaan. Tämä kehitys asettaa lasten toimijuudelle uusia mahdollisuuksia ja haasteita, joita tutkin empiirisessä tutkimuskohteessani.

Tarkemmat tutkimuskysymykset ovat: 1. Miten lapset ilmaisevat ja toteuttavat toimijuuttaan leikkimaailmassa? 2. Miten lasten toimijuus kehittyy ja muuttuu leikkimaailman aikana? 3. Mitkä ovat leikkimaailmatoiminnan mahdollisuudet ja haasteet oppilaiden toimijuudelle? 4. Miten opettajat ja oppilaat kohtaavat toimijuuden ja kontrollin välisen ristiriidan ja kehittävät siihen ratkaisuja? Tutkimus sijoittuu toiminnan teorian ja sosiokulttuurisen tutkimuksen viitekehykseen. Työssä kehitetään videotallenteisiin pohjautuvaa juonellisen vuorovaikutuksen tutkimusmetodologiaa, jonka avulla toimijuutta päästään tarkastelemaan sekä tilannekohtaisesti rakentuvana vuorovaikutuksena että yksilön ja yhteisön muutosprosessina. Työssäni osoitan, että toimijuuden käsitteen sisäisesti ristiriitaista luonnetta ei ole tähän mennessä riittävästi käsitteellistetty kasvatustieteellisessä keskustelussa.

Tutkimus koostuu yhteenveto-osasta ja neljästä empiirisestä artikkelista. Artikkelissa I analysoin oppilaan toimijuuden kehittymistä yhteistä toimintaa kyseenalaistavien ja vastustavien tekojen kautta. Artikkelii II tarkastelee leikkimaailmaa sukupuolikategorian kautta analysoiden kriittisesti kahden tytön pyrkimyksiä tunnustetumpaan toimijuuteen. Tarkastelun kohteena on myös mielikuvituksen merkitys toimijuuden tunteen kehittymisessä. Artikkelissa III tutkitaan miten ja millä ehdoilla leikkimaailma tuottaa luokan jäsenille jaetun toimijuuden kokemuksia. Viimeisessä artikkelissa huomio suuntautuu opettajiin ja heidän ju-

onellisiin roolitekoihinsa toiminnassa. Artikkelissa IV pohditaan myös haasteita, joita opettajat työssään kohtasivat.

Tulokset osoittavat, että leikkimaailman juonen ja roolihahmojen avulla opettajat pystyivät rakentamaan avoimen ja tuottavasti keskeneräisen tilan, joka tuki lasten aloitteellisuutta. Tällöin sekä opettajat että oppilaat pystyivät hetkittäin astumaan sivuun perinteisistä rooleistaan luokkahuoneessa. Leikkimaailma oli välittäjä, jonka avulla koulun toimijoiden oli mahdollista muuttaa luokan toimintaa sisältä käsin, muuttamalla itseään ja suhdetta toisiinsa ilman että edellytetään koko koulun laajempaa historiallista muutosta, johon opettajilla oman työnsä osana ei ole suoraa pääsyä. Se myös tarjosi oppilaille vaihtoehtoisia tapoja olla suhteessa koulutoimintaan ilman, että tarvitsee luovuttaa, sanoutua irti tai sopeutua olemassaolevaan.

Tämän epätavanomaisen, vaikeasti ennakoitavan ja vielä kehitteillä olevan pedagogisen toiminnan läpivieminen ei kuitenkaan ollut ongelmaton ja se oli usein ristiriidassa kouluinstituutiolle tärkeiden kontrollin ja hallinnan tavoitteiden kanssa. Työn johtopäätöksenä on, että leikkimaailman kaltaiset toimintatavat tarjoavat ainutlaatuisen, mutta vielä kehittämistä vaativan mahdollisuuden koulun ristiriitaisten vaatimusten kanssa kamppaileville opettajille ja oppilaille.

Avainsanat: toimijuus, leikkipedagogiikka, lapsuustutkimus, etnografia, juonellinen vuorovaikutusanalyysi, toiminnan teoria



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Helsinki, April 20, 2010  
Anna Pauliina Rainio



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## ORIGINAL ARTICLES

- I Rainio, A. P. (2008a). From resistance to involvement: Examining agency and control in a playworld activity. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 15(2), 115–140.
- II Rainio, A. P. (2009). Horses, girls, and agency: Gender in play pedagogy. *Outlines – Critical Practice Studies*, 1, 27–44.
- III Hofmann, R., & Rainio, A. P. (2007). "It doesn't matter what part you play, it just matters that you're there." Towards shared agency in narrative play activity in school. In R. Alanen & S. Pöyhönen (Eds.), *Language in action. Vygotsky and Leontievan legacy today*, (pp. 308–328). Newcastle-upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- IV Rainio, A. P. (2008b). Developing the classroom as a figured world. *Journal of Educational Change* 9(4), 357–364.

In the following dissertation, these articles will be referred to by the Roman numbers I–IV.



# 1 INTRODUCTION

The hours went by; perhaps I would be sitting there still, if I hadn't suddenly remembered what Jonathan had said – that sometimes you have to do things that are dangerous; otherwise you weren't a human being but a bit of filth. So I decided. I banged my fist down on the rabbit hutch so that the rabbits jumped, and I said out loud so there would be no mistake. "I'll do it! I'll do it! I'm not a bit of filth." Oh, how good it felt to have decided!

In this scene cited from Astrid Lindgren's (1988) book *The Brothers Lionheart*, a small boy, Rusky, wonders what makes someone a human being. The question of what it means to be a subject with agency is a persistent enigma that has inspired the work of artists, storytellers, philosophers, sociologists and psychologists. In the field of psychology and education, the question is often formulated from the point of view of development: how do we become subjects capable of participating in, belonging to and changing the world in which we are born? For Rusky, the ability to act as a person who dares to make choices and participate actively in life is a long process of development.

In this study I will examine the issue of agency in the context of education. My aim is to produce knowledge on the ways through which children manifest and develop their agency in interaction with adults in an early educational setting. Although student agency is now a widely discussed topic in educational theory and practice, there is still a lack of systematic knowledge on how to promote it in practice. What counts as agentic action, and how does agency develop? What kind of teacher actions and pedagogical methods are likely to support or hinder the development of children as agentic beings? Can student agency even be seriously promoted in our present educational system?

My empirical research site is a play pedagogical setting called a *playworld*. In the playworld pupils and teachers explore different phenomena through taking on the roles of characters from a story and acting inside the frames of an improvised plot. The pedagogy is based on Gunilla Lindqvist's (i.e., 1995; 2002) aesthetic play theory and Pentti Hakkarainen's (i.e., 2004; 2008) narrative learning theory. I conducted my ethnographic study in a Finnish mixed-age elementary school classroom in the school year 2003–2004. I followed the class, which made a dramatized journey inspired by the original story of *The Brothers Lionheart* acting as villagers from Cherry Valley on their way to rescue the neighboring Wild Rose Valley from the hands of evil Tengil. The children and teachers entered this activity weekly for five months, acting in roles and changing their classroom into the world of the story. I collected video data from the playworld and actively participated in the weekly planning and evaluation sessions with the teachers.

In this setting I specifically ask the following questions: What are the students' ways of enacting their agency in the playworld, and how do these ways change and develop during the activity? What are the potentials and challenges of the playworld for promoting student agency? And finally, how do the teachers and the children deal with what I call the contradiction between control and agency in the playworld?

The argument built in this study is that the playworld activity lies in an interesting "crossroads" of different historical developments that all affect our understanding of children and their agency: the changing understanding of childhood and adulthood in the 21st century, the blurring of the boundaries between work and play, and the changing understanding of the tasks of education in both promoting agency and maintaining control (which reflects what I call the contradiction between control and agency in education). As I will show in my analyses, the playworld pedagogy makes very interestingly *visible* this contradiction, not only to the researcher, but also to the teachers (see Article IV) and particularly to the children (see Articles I and II) in the classroom, and therefore allows its exploration in an educational context. Further, the playworld is a particularly interesting field of study as it aims to provide a transitional and dialogical space, in Kennedy's (2006) words, "a third way of living," in which both adults and children are forced to develop and assess their ways of acting and being together (Lindqvist, 1995; Rainio, 2008b; Ferholt, 2009). I claim that herein rests also the developmental potential of the playworld approach, as I illustrate in the empirical articles (Articles I–IV in Part 2) of this dissertation.

The articles present four case studies in which I have analyzed the video data from a selected perspective. In each article I apply what I call 'narrative interaction analysis' (see Chapter 6) in order to capture the phenomenon of agency as it is dialectically related both to the individual and to the activity that the individual is a part of. Articles I and II identify two very different 'paths to agency' in the playworld data. The focus is on individual pupils and their struggles towards agency. In Article III I analyze how collective (shared) agency becomes possible and emerges in the narrative interaction between the children and adults in the playworld. Article IV turns the focus on the teachers and examines the process through which the teachers' role actions mediate the children's agency development. Article IV also ponders the challenges that the teachers face and asks what makes the playworld activity sustainable in the class year after year despite its obviously dilemmatic nature. What unites all four analyses is that in each of them a struggle between control and agency in the classroom is made visible.

The summary part of the dissertation (Part 1) starts with a review of the concept of agency in recent multidisciplinary literature (Chapter 2). Since the theoretical discussion around the concept is not only diverse but competing and opposing in different academic traditions, I will clarify and open up the argumentation behind different discussions as they relate to the field of education. I will introduce my own understanding of the concept of agency as an inherently contradictory phe-

nomenon. In Chapter 3 I ask why the question of children's agency and its relation to schooling is relevant right now, in this historical time and place. I will give an account – a historically grounded reading – of the development of childhood and adulthood and their relation to institutional schooling in the West, and relate the discussion particularly to the context of play pedagogy. The main argument that I will follow in this chapter is that the possibility of a sustainable change in educational practices lies in the transformation of historically formed adult-child relations and in the reformulation of what we understand by childhood and adulthood in our current society.

Chapter 4 is devoted to introducing the research site and field work. In Chapter 4 I will also describe the playworld method more closely. In Chapter 5 I will foreground the research questions of the study, and in Chapter 6 I will discuss the methodological underpinnings of my work and also explicate the process of data analysis in each empirical article. Chapter 7 summarizes the main findings of my empirical case studies. Finally, the findings are discussed in Chapter 8 in the light of the theoretical argumentation presented in Chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 8 also reflects the nature of the research process and critically examines the validity and ethical questions of the study.



## 2 THE EMERGING DISCOURSES ON AGENCY

Agency is now an enduring topic in the social sciences and particularly in recent educational literature. On a very general level agency refers to human beings' capacity to impact and eventually transform their life circumstances and practices in which they are engaged. Our educational institutions have long been criticized for not supporting their pupils' growth into critical, creative citizens able to contribute to the development of a democratic society (i.e., Sarason, 1996; Pollard, Thiessen, & Filer, 1997). Even though the absence of agency in school learning has been much criticized, it is not always clear what is meant by the concept of agency and how agency can be recognized and supported in the daily activities of school (see, however, Hofmann, 2008).

The background of the debate on agency lies in the political, scientific, cultural and moral programs of liberal humanism and romanticism in the eighteenth century, which celebrated the individual (basically an adult white man) as an autonomous, stable and rational being who had an unquestioned agency – an inborn capacity to make choices and to act freely on those choices. Still today in ordinary Western talk an agentive adult person is often pictured as an independent being, who – despite certain external social and structural constraints – can relatively freely choose how to live her or his life and who in principle always has the freedom “to act otherwise.” Although this view has been systematically questioned since the 1970s, it still prevails not only in our everyday thinking but as an implicit background assumption of a wide range of educational, psychological and sociological research. Even in philosophical debate it is common to relate agency to permanent dispositional characteristics of particular entities such as mind, awareness, consciousness or freedom and to classify all these entities as either having or not having these properties and thus counting as agents or not (cf. Gell, 1998).

In this chapter I will introduce three theoretical debates on the topic of human agency, which are all attempts to overcome the modernist idea of the detached subject and to offer a more dynamic and complex understanding of human agency. I wish to illustrate how these different conceptualizations all reflect but do not sufficiently theorize the contradictory nature of the phenomenon of agency. My aim is to develop a comprehensive and multidisciplinary view on agency for the purposes of empirical educational research, particularly for a study of the development of children's agency in pedagogical settings. That is, my interest here is not to go into the debate on the nature and possibility of human agency in principle, but on the ways human agency becomes possible for different individuals, particularly for pupils in educational settings.

Section 2.1 introduces an approach to agency that comes from the field of social theory and calls for an understanding of agency as a socially and materially

distributed process of complex interaction and hybrid material and social networks. The second approach is based on post-structuralist and feminist theories in which the development of the Western subject is theorized as a production of normality and discipline and in which agency lies in the capacity to recognize, resist and modify the discourses through which we are formed. The third framework is based on the cultural psychological or Vygotskian view of human development in which agency is seen as an outcome of socio-cultural development through the use of collectively created cultural tools and symbols. Finally, this leads us to Section 2.4 in which I discuss recent developments in the field of sociology of childhood. My aim here is to introduce the possibility of overcoming an old debate over whether children should be treated as 'beings' or agents in their own right or merely 'becomings' on their way towards adulthood and agency.

In the final section I will draw together the main contradictions stemming from the debates introduced here. Intriguing in the concept of agency is that it offers the possibility for a dialogue between the historically dissenting disciplines of sociology and psychology (see Prout, 2005). Each of the theories presented in this chapter contains elements that help us to overcome the dichotomous view of human agency as on one hand a psychological or developmental phenomenon, and on the other hand a sociological or cultural one (see in particular Butler, 1990; Prout, 2005; Davies, 2006).

However, none of these perspectives alone offers a sufficient starting point for an *empirical* study that wishes to grasp the dynamics of agency and its development in a real life educational setting. Therefore, building on the theories presented in this chapter, my dissertation is an attempt to formulate a more multidisciplinary and dialectic view of agency conceptualized and operationalized for the purposes of empirical educational research.

## **2.1 Agency as a culturally and socially distributed process**

Here I draw mainly on recent sociological work by Barnes (2000), in which he targets the current understanding of agency in social theory and its prevailing individualism. He aims to develop a 'naturalistic' view on agency, designated as "social agency." I complement Barnes' argument with fairly similar views on social agency developed by Gell (1998) and Taylor (2000). These authors argue that we need to take seriously and theorize the fact that human beings are first and foremost social agents dependent on other people and many, diverse material and symbolic resources beyond the boundaries of our physical or mental selves. They claim that individual agency is merely a construction, even if a needed one, at the level of common everyday language and practice. In our everyday life we typically experience ourselves to be individuals who have matured from the dependence and passivity of childhood to independence and the voluntary control of our own bodies and lives (Taylor, 2000, p. 313). Although this experience is not natural but mediated through particular social discourses typical of Western society, its con-



stituting role in the organization of social life should not be overlooked. Through this “voluntaristic” discourse people treat each other as *responsible and capable of social action*. Institutional order is thus a product of interaction between members who know each other to be responsible agents just because they are taken as such:

One of the main things that sociable human beings do through the voluntaristic discourse with which they bind themselves together is to assign rights and responsibilities to each other as separate, independent units. ... But these are functions that require sociable interdependent human beings to treat each other as discrete points on their social maps, independent statuses toward which to direct the processes whereby responsibilities and rights are allocated. It may well be that the difficulty of understanding persons as social agents (in state) who discursively identify each other as autonomous agents (in status) is the fundamental source of most of the problems encountered in this area. (Barnes, 2000, preface, xi)

As Barnes reminds us, a common difficulty is that we do not take the idea of individual agency as a social status that is artificially distributed between people, but often as a state of being human. This then has created fundamental problems related to the illusion of a detached and separable individual (see also Lee, 2005). Therefore it is of crucial importance to understand and conceptualize the context-dependent, relational and distributed nature of agency. According to this view agency is a process that is distributed and produced in networks and different dependencies between both human and non-human actors, such as artifacts, organisms, technologies and institutions. Human agency is a “hybrid” that can be understood only as a relation between different entities.

To conclude, the fact that we treat each other as independent and responsible individuals does not mean that we are such on an ontological level. This fallacy is, however, an important means through which a collective manifests its agency and creates institutional stability and order. A central term for Barnes (2000) is the concept of responsibility. Collective agency is a product of interaction between subjects who are taken to be responsible members of a collective.

This is a convincing argument that also explains the need for the myth of individual agency in social life. However, highlighting the collective aspect of agency almost exclusively leaves aside the question of access of different individuals to the practices of this collective agency. Agency becomes a matter limited to those who are accredited as responsible agents and are thus already involved in the process of this distributed, social agency. Historically, groups that are not given the status of being responsible members of society have included, for instance, women and children (Smith, 1987; Davies, 1990; 2006; Lee, 2005). These groups have been considered to be irresponsible for their own actions and thus also outside of the collective agency defined by Barnes. The ‘naturalistic’ approach discussed in

this section does not offer a way to understand how these groups struggle their way to more recognized positions in society and how this struggle also can be seen as agentive. If we want to understand the question of agency as a complex phenomenon, we need to take such marginal and excluded groups and their struggle for agency into account, in a way that does not imply a detached and individualistic but a relational and context-dependent view. Elsewhere we have formulated agency as the possibility and willingness of an individual or collective subject to impact (and eventually transform) an activity in whose realization it is engaged (Hofmann & Rainio, 2007). We have further argued, however, that it is crucial to distinguish between the *subject* of the activity and the subject's *agency*:

While the person(s) positioned as the subject, for us, is the 'do-er' of the activity and a potential agent, it cannot automatically *enact agency*. The possible scope of a subject's actions within that activity may be predefined to such an extent that the subject has little opportunity to challenge those expectations. (Hofmann & Rainio, 2007, p. 309, italics in the original)

This is also what the post-structuralist feminist movement has emphasized, and it forms the context to which we will move next.

## 2.2 Agency as access to an agentive position

My focus here is on theories on agency, particularly in the feminist research on education that builds on the post-structuralist movement (Butler, 1997; St. Pierre, 2000; Davies 2004; 2006). The starting point of the post-structuralist movement lies in the 1970s when Michel Foucault declared that the idea of the individual subject with a unique self was a product necessary for normality and order in society. Human sciences and especially psychology were seen as institutionalized ways of producing the disciplined self needed in modern society (Foucault, 1980; Mansfield, 2000). The human subject was seen as a discursively, locally and momentarily produced construction.

In this view, agency cannot be seen as autonomy in the sense of being inherent in an individual who is standing outside social structures and processes. However, similarly to the view of social agency discussed above, poststructuralist researchers admit that a certain level of a sense of individual autonomy is necessary for a person to act as a viable and recognized subject in social life. In line with Barnes (2000), Davies (2006, p. 427), for example, writes that the existence of our statuses as subjects in social discourse is dependent on the mutual acts of recognition through which subjects accord each other the status of viable subjecthood. But the main interest of post-structural feminism lies in understanding groups that do not self-evidently possess such a status in social life and have to struggle for recognition. In this way, their use and understanding of the concept of agency has a slightly different tone:

The agency of the subject is up for grabs, continually reconfigured and re-named as is the subject itself. However, agency seems to lie in the subject's ability to decode and re-code its identity within discursive formations and cultural practices. (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 504)

According to this view, agency lies in the individual or group's capacity to recognize and to resist, subvert and change the discourses through which they are being constituted (Davies, 2004), and in that sense, to master these discourses. At the heart of becoming an agentive subject is the simultaneous act of both submission and mastery: the discourses that constitute us as social beings also condition, shape and dominate us. This contradiction characterizes post-structuralism's subject: it is "a subject that exhibits agency as it constructs itself by taking up available discourses and cultural practices and a subject that, at the same time, is subjected, forced into subjectivity by those same discourses and practices" (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 502).<sup>1</sup>

However, this mastery is not continuously available to everyone; there is a struggle to achieve a position in which one's mastery would be recognized and accepted. Exclusion from agency may also occur through the social categories that pre-exist the processes of positioning (Ibid., p. 434; see also Rainio, 2009). The question is not whether individuals can be said in any absolute sense to have or not have agency, but whether or not there is "awareness of the constitutive force of discursive practices and the means for resisting or changing unacceptable practices" (Davies, 1990, p. 359). Capacity here should not be interpreted as an innate capacity, but a capacity in relation to the particular subject position in the discourse and to the personal history of the subject in that position, and finally in relation to the resources that make that choice realizable.

Davies (1990) specifies three kinds of resources necessary for enacting agency. First, there need to be what she calls *discursive resources* for agency. This means that an individual needs to have access to such recognized or recognizable discursive practices in which a range of alternative ways of seeing and being are available and where there is a real choice between such discourses. By *personal resources* Davies means access to means through which such alternative positioning can be brought about, such as knowledge resources, personal skills and personal experiences. One also needs the desire to be agentive, that is, to have a sense of oneself as one who both can and should position themselves in that way: to make the relevant choices, carry them through and accept the moral responsibility for

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<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, the paradoxical interdependence between human freedom and self-control is also at the center of Vygotsky's (1997) theory of cultural development and formation of personality: through their agency human beings not only create and consciously control their lives, but are also constrained by these same material and social conditions which they help to build and sustain by their collective activity (cf. Roth et al., 2004; see also Wilde, 1989). I discuss this basic dilemma of agency in relation to human development in the next section.

doing so. Finally, *social resources* relate to “interactive others,” who can and will take up as legitimate the positioning of oneself as an agent (Davies, 1990, p. 360).

However, the resources that Davies claims to be central for agency are very demanding. A central question then is how we *develop* into beings able to use these resources and to take up agentive positions in social discourses, beings with both the courage and the desire for agency. This question, I think, is critical particularly in relation to the processes of education and schooling, which can either support or hinder the experiences necessary for persons to enact and recognize their agency (see Hofmann, 2008). This developmental aspect is sidelined in post-structuralism, in which the main interest lies in the local and situational struggles for agency. Therefore, I will now turn to discuss the developmental aspect of agency.

### 2.3 Agency as mediated development

Here I draw on the mediating theories of self and identity formulated through the framework of sociocultural and activity theory (SAT). These branches grew out of research conducted in Russia in the 20th century in different contexts (e.g., literary research and cultural-historical psychology), and the approaches share the principal idea that the use of cultural tools and symbols forms a basis for self-consciousness and is the inevitable starting point of becoming a human being. As do the sociological and poststructuralist theories above, these more psychologically oriented approaches emphasize that we are not born as agentive beings; instead, we gain our agency through participating in social institutions such as language and education. Development is understood as a process of becoming a subject capable of agency, that is, able to contribute, influence and change the environment and the social as well as material circumstances in which the person lives (Vygotsky, 1978; Polivanova, 2001; Bozhovich, 2004a; 2004b; Holland & Lachicotte, 2007).

In the SAT point of view a person’s self, or what is often referred to as the “personality” (Bozhovich, 2004a), is not just a momentarily produced construction but a systemic structure, developing and changing, but nevertheless real and unique, that forms the core of an individual as an experiencing subject. However, this uniqueness of one’s self is not inherent; it develops in and through a particular personal history (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007). It is formed in interaction with others, in the world the person inhabits and experiences. It is mediated through other people, through language and through acting in and with the material environment and its tools. In this process the development of the capacity for self-reflection and self-consciousness is crucial. In ontogenetic development we learn to control and plan our behavior and stand outside our immediate desires and the external constraints of a situation. Instead of being a linear or stable process, development proceeds through the stages of crises related to a child’s changing understanding of her- or himself as an actor and as a subject in the changing relations with other people, especially adults. Each turning point or critical period

in a child's life brings the child closer to a more mediated relation to the world. A contemporary representative of the Vygotskian line of research formulates this principle:

The culmination of each age period is accompanied by the appearance of a level of control over one's own behavior, surmounting of the "immediateness" of behavior and activity, and of impulsiveness, and, in this sense, a nonfreedom from external circumstances. A child becomes more and more independent with each new age period in terms of determining his goals and achieving them. (Polivanova, 2001, p. 54)

Vygotsky (1978) used the term *social situation of development* to describe the importance of the child's own experiences in interaction with others and the environment: the social situation of development is the relation between the child and the surrounding social reality, and "this relation presupposes the active position of the child, a certain form of attitude to reality, and interacting with the social surrounding" (Veresov, 2004, p. 16). The social situation is an embodiment of the relation between the ideal and the real (present) forms at a certain age, with the stable stage in harmony with the environment and the crisis stage in disharmony and contradiction. Thus, not every social situation is developmental, but only when there are certain tasks and challenges that the child is not able to solve without a conflict or a contradiction (Hakkarainen, 2004; Veresov, 2004).

Here another important concept, the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD), becomes relevant. Vygotsky (1978) used this concept to refer to the relation between development and instruction, particularly within the context of school instruction. The idea was that cooperation with an adult or with peers, in order to be developmentally advantageous, should help the child reach a level of development which she or he could not yet reach independently. Veresov (2004) formulated the concept as the distance between the level of potential development and the level of actual development, but existing only in dramatic contradiction in the social situation, as described above. In other words, in the critical period there is a gap between a child's willingness to act and a child's capabilities of acting independently. For this process it is necessary that children and pupils have possibilities to act with agency and to develop a sense of themselves as such actors:

[In] a crisis a child constructs his own action ... [which] then acquires an existence separate from the situation that engendered it. The necessary condition for this separation is that the child has a sense of this own active engagement. For this to come about, an inflated amount of effort is particularly necessary. During a critical period, acting in general must take on a special character that will enable the child to free the particular action and create an internal picture of the action, i.e., to have a sense of this own active engagement. (Polivanova, 2001, p. 56)

As a result of each turning point, a new relationship between the child and her or his social reality is formed. Vygotsky (1998a) and later El'konin (1999) identified the following critical phases on the basis of empirical data: the crises of a neonate, a one year old, a three year old, a seven year old and an adolescent.<sup>2</sup> The critical period between preschool and school, “the crisis of the seventh year,” is particularly important for the differentiation of the child’s internal and external worlds (Hakkarainen, 2006). According to Vygotsky, the child’s experiences here acquire a more generalized meaning, and the child becomes conscious of her or his social position in relation to her social world: “The level of our demands of ourselves, of our success, of our position, arises specifically in connection with the crisis at age seven” (Vygotsky, 1998b, p. 292). What is important to note here is that the growing independence of the child does not mean a detached individuality or separateness from other human beings (Lee, 2005). The unit of development for Vygotsky is not the individual child but the relationship between child and adult (Veresov, 2004). In principle this means that both the child and the adult develop reciprocally (El'konin, 2001; Marjanovic-Shane et al., forthcoming). Unfortunately, the focus has typically been on the child’s development as if an adult would stay the same throughout the pedagogical process.

Different matters have been claimed to mediate this development. Of central importance are the actions of adults and other children or physical artifacts such as toys and tools that the child learns to use in interaction with the social environment. Also play creates for a child a ZPD in which the child is able to reach beyond the level of her actual development (Vygotsky, 2004; see also Hännikäinen, 1995). That is, in and through the creation of an imaginary situation in play the child makes a distinction between the real and imagined, and in this way can overcome the limits of the material conditions, such as her own capabilities or the constraints of the environment:

Action in a situation that is not seen, but only conceived on an imagined level and in an imaginary situation, teaches the child to guide his behavior not only by immediate perception of objects or by the situation immediate affecting him but also by the meaning of this situation. (Vygotsky, 1966/2002)

Therefore, play is an especially interesting arena for the development of human agency. In their own play, children explore the limits of the real world and the fantasy world, and are what they in real life cannot yet be: the authors of their own activity. Through their imagined play worlds children constantly contest and

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<sup>2</sup> These crisis stages and the ages they fit into should be understood as historically and culturally changing. However, approximately the same applies to Western society today (El'konin, 1999).

negotiate their relations with and positions to each other. In this way, play and games can be understood as one of the first media through which human beings enact their agency.<sup>3</sup>

[In play and in games] the children must shift themselves to a conceptual world beyond their immediate surroundings in order to become actors who submit to the game's premises and treat its events as real. A child's desire becomes related to "a fictitious 'I,' to her role in the game and its rules" (Vygotsky 1978:100). It is this competence that makes possible culturally constituted or figured worlds and, consequently, the range of human institutions. (Holland et al., p. 50–51)

To conclude, what I have called sociocultural and activity theories emphasize agency as an intersubjective, socially and historically changing and contradictory process of development through participation in the human community. Seen from one angle, this approach to human development can be interpreted as a "traditional" psychological way of seeing the adult as the mature endpoint of development and the child as raw material to be developed. However, from another angle, many authors who approach this issue from a SAT framework take as their starting point that the human being, including the adult, is constantly developing and in a state of becoming (i.e., Göncü & Perone, 2005). In this process the ability to imagine and collectively create different realities is of central importance, not only in childhood but in human life in general. I will turn back to the importance of imagination for agency in Chapter 7.

## 2.4 Children and agency

Childhood studies could, for the moment, constitute themselves as a meeting place of the disciplines, a process that might encourage the patience, open-mindedness and the capacity to step out of disciplinary comfort zones that the longer-term aim of interdisciplinarity requires. (Prout, 2005, p. 146)

The topic of children and agency and children's relation to adults has received growing interest in our time, which is marked by uncertainty and shifting borders between adulthood and childhood. However, the difference between adults and children is not dealt with in any of the theoretical underpinnings discussed above. For example, Barnes (2000) implied that agency is a phenomenon related mainly to adult society, a practice of those with access to responsible and viable positions

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<sup>3</sup> Vygotsky himself did not use the concept of agency. Actually, the concept of agency as such does not appear in Russian.



in society. Although groups that stand outside of this access are mentioned, their relation to human agency is not further considered. In the poststructuralist understanding, the institutional pedagogical practices of adults supervising children is seen as one of the most powerful sites of the construction of the Western subject, and therefore children's agency is also often the focus of empirical research (see, i.e., Davies, 1990; 2004). However, for the poststructuralist theorists as well, similarities or differences between children and adults have not been a central concern.

As was already mentioned, studies on agency and development in the SAT framework are ambiguous in understanding children's agency. On one hand the Vygotskian approach takes as its starting point the difference between childhood and adulthood. Cultural and social development means that human potential (the child) grows into full adulthood through the mediated mastery of tools and symbols. In line with other developmental theories this implies that children are in a state of 'becoming,' whereas adults are mature and stable beings (Lee, 2001). On the other hand, recent studies in the SAT field too have started to become interested in the "standard adult life" from a developmental perspective (i.e., Silvonen, 1991a; 1991b; Holland et al., 1998; Matusov & Hayes, 2000; Göncü & Perone, 2005).

All in all, the approaches to the question of agency presented in the previous sections all lack a systematic conceptualization of the differences or similarities between children and adults in relation to the question of their agency. As my topic in this dissertation is particularly about children's agency in an educational context, I will now turn to theories that focus more explicitly on the question of children's participation and agency. The approaches are broadly called the "childhood studies" or "sociology of childhood." They emerged in the 1980s and 1990s to criticize the view of children that was constructed both in developmental psychology and in sociology (through the concept of socialization). The childhood studies called for seeing children's life as valuable and interesting as such. Until then, they claimed, children and childhood had been an academic interest mainly from the perspective of their future adulthood. This had marginalized the process of growing up and sidelined children's own actions, meanings and cultures (Prout, 2005; Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2007). Recognizing children as beings in their own right meant also recognizing them as 'agents,' beings capable of agency (Lee, 2001). The sociology of childhood has since concentrated on developing methodology and language to include children's viewpoints, life worlds and voice in social theory.

However, the problem of early sociologists of childhood was that they were abandoning the developmental aspect of human life. In this way the new sociology of childhood risked reconfirming the dichotomous either/or logic of mutual exclusion between 'being' and 'becoming':



So, for example, the distinction between being and becoming has been used to draw a line between the concerns of the sociology of childhood, which wishes (for good reasons) to see children as beings, as those of developmental psychology, which (again with good reason) wishes to see children as becomings. This leads into self-defeating loop in which the very conditions of children's lives, their culture-natures and their being-becomings, are split and denied. (Prout, 2005, p. 143–144)

This dichotomous exclusion between being and becoming endorses the old myth of the autonomous and independent person and has now given rise to a need for a reconceptualization of childhood's ontology and children's agency. Childhood researchers now have started to call for a more interdisciplinary view in which both adults and children can be seen as "becomings" without compromising the need to respect their status also as "beings or persons" (Lee, 2001; Prout, 2005). This would entail seeing not only children, but also adults, as "subjects-in-process" (cf. Kennedy, 2006) and seeing childhood no longer as a specific stage left behind when growing older, but a state of mind or a state of being, parallel to our adult selves.

Prout (2005) calls this approach an "included middle," a heuristic and playful multidisciplinary approach that would combine both developmental and sociological as well as cultural approaches. Children's or adults' agency must not be seen as possessed nor ever fully developed, but as "incomplete and extended, borrowed and dependent." This conceptualization comes very close to Barnes' materialistic and naturalistic social theory that I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, with the difference of including children. Prout's view therefore entails a multidisciplinary approach that overcomes traditional dichotomies of structure and agency, individual and society, or maturity and development. However, Prout leaves in the air how this multidisciplinary and complexity can be depicted and approached in an empirical study. In the next and final part of this chapter I draw together the discussion so far and outline *five central contradictory elements* that the concept of agency entails for conducting empirical research on agency in educational settings.

## 2.5 Conclusion: Contradictions of agency

As I have shown above, the strength and potentiality of the concept of agency lies in the fact that it cannot be reduced either to a sociological or psychological theory of human action or human development. Agency becomes best understandable as a complex and contradictory phenomenon; it can be seen as a culmination of central historical debates in the human sciences. In the following I outline five contradictions that need to be addressed if the multiple manifestations of agency are to be examined in empirical research settings.

*The first contradiction* comes from seeing agency as simultaneously something continuous and enduring as well as situational and contingent. As was taken up by feminist post-structural theorists in Section 2.2, the possibility to act agentically requires a subject position. In this sense agency is related to the concrete social, material and discursive conditions surrounding us. But agency also requires understanding oneself as someone capable of acting in and transforming the taken-for-granted assumptions of the ways the world is organized and of one's own stance in this world (cf. Hofmann, 2008). To conceive of oneself as an agent whose actions count requires experience, learning and development. As Martin (2004) states, agency must be seen both as an emergent capacity of the developing person as well as a characteristic of interpersonal interaction. Respectively, activity and interaction must also be analyzed on these two levels simultaneously (a) on the level of micro-interaction where the social reality is situationally constructed and (b) on the developmental level to grasp the continuity and development of these situational manifestations of agency (cf. Rainio, 2007).

*The second apparent contradiction* stems from the fact that a person's sense and experience of individuality and discrete 'agenthood' are actualities in Western society, but at the same time these are collectively and ideologically created illusions (Barnes, 2000; Lee, 2005). Here a conceptual clarification made by Lee (2005) might be useful. He distinguishes the concepts of separateness and separability. Lee shows convincingly how it is necessary in terms of dignity and human rights that we can be taken as persons separable from each other, but not as totally independent and separate from each other. In this way the unfruitful opposition between dependence vs. separateness turns into a question of separability and its functions in different social situations. It is the contradictory dynamics and struggle for balance between dependence and separability that makes educational settings and learning and development interesting.

This directly entails *the third contradiction of agency*, which lies in the simultaneous need for mastery of and submission to social discourses and practices. The development of self-control enables human beings relative freedom from immediately impinging material circumstances, which is a necessary requirement for human culture (see Veresov, 2004). Somewhat paradoxically, the very same mechanism of self-control and freedom from material surroundings brings us a new constraint, that of culture and social life. To learn to live in a society requires internalizing the traditions and laws received from those who teach them to us. At the same time, being an agentive member of society means renewing and developing these same laws and traditions. This makes social life and human development inherently and necessarily contradictory and dialectical.

This leads us to what I have recognized as *the fourth contradiction of agency*. On one hand, we are dependent upon and bound to material and social reality. On the other hand, we constantly widen our possibilities through imagination and fiction, i.e., through play and art. This means that agency cannot be reduced only to visible, active and productive action in the material world. A disposition

to dream, to improvise and to imagine alternative ways and worlds, “to formulate other social scenes in imagination” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 236), is crucial for the sense of agency. It is necessary to be able to escape the given culture and society binding us. That this element of agency does not lie in practical and productive action makes it harder to grasp in an empirical study, particularly when related to children (Rainio, 2009).

Finally, *the fifth contradiction* that relates to all the other four described above lies in the conditional and imbalanced nature of the adult-child relation. A pedagogical relationship is “a unique complex category of action with its own laws” (Juuso, 2007, p. 229). To exist in the first place, it presupposes some form of coercion from the part of the adult. The next chapter is devoted to this contradiction in relation to education and the historical development of the pedagogical relationship between adult and child.

In order to study the concrete development and manifestations of agency in various empirical settings, these contradictions within the phenomenon of agency must be, if not unraveled or solved, theorized and conceptualized. Until now this kind of interdisciplinary and comprehensive view has not been presented in an educational context, although student agency has recently been indicated in many educational studies. The problem often is that empirical studies tend to take agency for granted, or if they recognize the contradictory nature of our empirical world, they do not build on it. Theoretical debates, on the other hand, often stay in an oppositional position with another conflicting viewpoint and therefore do not capture the internally contradictory nature of the concept or phenomenon itself. This often also makes theoretical accounts weak in grasping the challenges of empirical research.

In the next chapter I will focus on what I see as a “basic contradiction” of the educational relationship (between control and agency) that is manifested in the data but can also be discerned in each of the theoretical accounts that I shortly introduced above. My dissertation is an effort to elucidate this contradiction both empirically and theoretically so that it can be used as a conceptual tool in developing different practical educational settings and student-teacher relations.



### 3 A HISTORICAL READING OF ADULT-CHILD RELATIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL CONTRADICTIONS

The topic of this chapter is motivated by the empirical findings of my study of the playworld pedagogy. The promise as well as the main challenges of the playworld project center around two themes: the changing pedagogical roles of adults and children and the contradictory but simultaneous requirement to both promote agency and ensure order and control in the classroom (see the articles in Part II and Chapter 7 and Chapter 8). However, as neither of these issues is unique to the playworld pedagogy but salient to schooling and education more generally, I will take a brief glance at the historical development of schooling and education in order to better contextualize the findings of my study. Therefore, my aim in this chapter is not to provide a complete historical account of these phenomena but rather to place my empirical study into a broader historical context.

In the first subsection (3.1) I primarily follow Kennedy's (2006) historically grounded reading of the development of the concepts of childhood and adulthood in Western culture. This opens up an interesting perspective on why and how the playworld pedagogy has emerged as it has in the present time. Although I find Kennedy's 'history of ideas' viewpoint quite convincing, I am aware of the fallacies behind this kind of use of history. If only the historical events useful for an explanation of a current problem are found worth studying, our view of history would become biased and narrow (Fischer, 1970; Stark, 2006). Therefore, to enrich and localize the theories in this chapter, I discuss Kennedy's views in the light of certain micro-historical findings on children's life and the development of institutional early education in Finland.

In the second subsection (3.2), I move to discuss the topic from a slightly different angle. I examine a contradiction that has been conceptualized in many different ways in educational theory starting from Immanuel Kant in the 18th century. It has been called a paradox of pedagogy or an educational antinomy, dilemma or practical contradiction of schooling. However, it has been rarely treated dialectically. In this study I call it the 'contradiction between control and agency.' I discuss different forms that this contradiction has taken in different historical periods and how it has developed alongside the development of our school system. My suggestion is to interpret this contradiction in a dialectical way as an initial abstraction, a germ cell (Ilyenkov, 1982) of an educational relationship. The playworld intervention can be interpreted as an effort to solve or deal with this contradiction on a practical everyday level (see Chapter 8). I claim that this interpretation is helpful in conceptualizing the challenges not only of the playworld pedagogy but also for educational practices for schooling in the 21st century more generally. In the last subsection (3.3) I draw together these two themes and relate them to the develop-

ment of the role of play, playfulness and creativity in our time. On one hand, play can be seen as a forum for the meeting of the worlds of adults and children and as an escape from the contradiction between control and agency. On the other hand, our new economic era is also argued to “rationalize” and commodify play and games. At the end of the chapter I represent an argument of the playworld as an interesting meeting point or an intersection of these contrary developments.

### 3.1 The development of the adult-child relation interpreted in ‘the history of ideas’ perspective

They do not see and hear the same. It is not only the interpretation that is different. The sensing of it is too. Where the adults see “war”, a problem, noise or chaos, the children see “play”, i.e. almost the opposite. They see through different lenses. The adult gaze – the pedagogical lens – reads one thing. The child’s case – the lens of play – gives it another sense. They are not only talking at cross purposes, they have crossed sights and crossed courses of action. (Mouritsen, 1998, p. 23)

The separation of the worlds of adults and children is a relatively new phenomenon in Western history and has been associated with the rise of cosmic and psychological mechanistic theories of the 17th century. In medieval societies there was not yet an urgent need to make such a separation, not because there was no conception of childhood but rather because there was not a clear difference in the daily lives, manners and morals of children and adults. Adults had more in common with children than not (Pollock, 1983; Kennedy, 2006). The difference was drawn between the common people and the elite, not between children and adults (Lee, 2005).

As a result of the Copernican revolution and with the rise of a literate culture, children no longer shared a “world” with adults and were assigned an increasingly different role in Western culture. This isolation was most clearly seen in schools. The child had to be inducted into the new cosmos through a process of training and education (Kennedy, 2006). Foucault (1979) has called the 17th century’s form of disciplinary schooling the production of ‘docile bodies.’ Pollock (1983, p. 270) argues that from the 18th century on parents “began to be more concerned with *‘training’* a child in order to ensure that he or she absorbed the *correct values and beliefs* and would grow into a *model citizen*.” Also, more control was relinquished from parents to the state and its institutions.

Here it must be noted that this development refers mainly to the elite population of the European countries. For example, in Finland the modernization process – and the separation process between adults and children – took place much slower and later than in European countries in general. In the 17th and 18th centuries Finland was still for the most part a poor rural society in which only a very small segment of the population was able to participate in some form of official

education. In general, children were raised at home and participated in adult work on farms and in the fields. Despite the early reading and writing skills taught to adults by the Lutheran church (see Laitila Vincent & Tapio, 1994), the transition from oral to written culture in Finland can be said to have taken place on a larger scale only at the end of the 19th century along with the industrial and technical changes in society and the rise of a nationalistic thinking and spirit (elementary school was established in the 1860s, and compulsory education started in 1921; see Stark, 2006).

Despite its varying advent in different parts of Europe, this more general ideological shift in worldview can be argued to have drastically changed the understanding of adulthood and childhood in modern Western society. Kennedy (2006) believes that this separation process between adults and children that started within the Copernican revolution in the 17th century contains in itself a seed for a closer relationship between adults and children, which is witnessed again in our time. He points out two main turning points in this development. The first is the Romantic movement in the late 17th century that came to oppose the Copernican ideal of a rational human being. Artists and writers started to celebrate play, innocence and spontaneity in their work, qualities typically attached to children. Rousseau's (1712–1778) “educational anti-theory,” which has been very influential throughout the West, directly embraced childhood as a unique form of life. For Rousseau “the effective teacher is the one who legitimates childhood as a life phase and empowers children through allowing their forms of knowledge a full play in the world” (cf. Kennedy, 2006, p. 58). Although the child still represented for Rousseau and his contemporaries raw material for the “new man” produced through a systematic socialization, the value of childhood was now recognized and continuity between childhood and adulthood was established.

In eighteenth century Europe the education, training and care of very young children also started to draw more attention. In England “small children’s schools” were established, and a little bit later in Germany Fröbel’s (1782-1852) pedagogical thinking created new forms of kindergartens for small children (Välimäki, 1998). Along with the spread of Fröbel’s pedagogical ideas, the value and importance of children’s well-being became a concern as these new trends spread to Finland too.<sup>4</sup>

A century after Rousseau the Freudian revolution put further value on childhood experiences. Through seeing optimal adult development as in some way a reappropriation of childhood, Freud launched a view in which an adult carries her or his childhood within. Kennedy claims that along with the development of

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<sup>4</sup> The late 19th century was also in other respects a time of drastic societal changes in Finland, and one of the reasons for the small children’s schools becoming more common was the need for a female work force and the liberation of women from home.

psychoanalytic theory, the view of the adult life as a negation of the child's way of being was challenged, and childhood became a permanent or a perennial aspect of adulthood, "a dimension of subjectivity with which the adult is in continual, lifelong dialogue" (Kennedy, 2006, p. 23–24). This is an interesting interpretation of the significance of Freud's work.

Another revolutionary thinker contemporary to Freud was Swedish author Ellen Key (1849–1926), who actively wrote and promoted children's values and rights both in society and in education. The twentieth century has even been named after her famous book as "the century of the child."

However, 20th century Western society and thought still saw adults and children as fundamentally different types of humans. As was already discussed in Chapter 2, the adult was characterized as stable, complete and self-controlling, and the child as incomplete and lacking independence and self-control. Adulthood meant a journey's end in which a stable life begins. As Lee (2001) has illustrated, this was a plausible idea in the early 20th century in which adult life in Western society meant a more or less stable career and family life, a result of the "Fordist" worldview in the West (see also Prout, 2005). The child represented society's future. By controlling children and their upbringing, the future of the human race could be controlled.

The second half of the 20th century was the period of the emergence of life-course developmental theory, life-long learning, psychological self-work and the poststructuralist idea of the fragmented self. Also, the new information society revolutionized – comparably to that of the printed word in the 15th and 16th centuries – the cultural experience of subjectivity as tied to time and place:

The new information environment allows us to understand in a new way the extent to which subjectivity itself is a virtual reality – dependent on fantasy, projection and introjection of "unreal" contents and hypothesis-testing – constructed as an ongoing project that travels across intersubjective boundaries, whose systemic properties include both self and other: an intersubject. (Kennedy, 2006, p. 106)

Kennedy makes an interesting claim that along with these new possibilities, the 21st century offers a dialectical reconstruction and integration of the two older periods, the medieval and the modern, the oral and the literate: "The new information environment is constructed on digital code, like the literate, but is instantaneous, personalized, spontaneous, and interactive like the oral" (Kennedy, 2006, p. 107). Areas dominated by adults – education, working life, politics, and free time – have started to place value on the playful, improvised and imagined, elements typically associated with children. Interestingly, in Finland the development of information technology and further what is called "creative industries" has been outstandingly fast (Florida & Tinagli, 2004). (I will return to this issue in the concluding section, 3.3.)



To conclude, Kennedy's (2006) argument is that our understanding of childhood today can be depicted historically, as a dialectical process in which the adult-child relation develops through its own contradictions. What we call a "child" is first of all a construct through which we are not directly describing the child's nature, but one characteristic of the relation between the adult and the child. In our time there is a new possibility for a dialogue, a new relationship between an adult and a child. It is the dialectical understanding of children as both separate from as well as similar to adults that is crucial in establishing a dialogue between them: "for dialogue is impossible between either identical or fused interlocutors. Dialogue is always with an other" (Kennedy 2006, p. 68).

However, it is at this point that I unfortunately find Kennedy's argument to lose some of its sharpness. It is as if in the present time, contradictions would cease along with harmonious intergenerational dialogue and the fusion of borders. Although this probably is not what Kennedy intends, his picture of our time seems to mean an *end* to dialectical movement.

As Mouritzen (1998, p. 26) writes, Western culture still in many ways characterizes children either as people lacking something, as "not yet real," or as the romantic, authentic and innocent child, and in that sense, the only people who are "real." Respectively, the present time is also curiously marked by two conflicting concerns about the changing lives of children and young people. The gloomiest accounts have declared the disappearance of childhood (i.e., Postman, 1985; Buckingham, 2000). In Finland too, researchers have increasingly argued that children no longer know how to play, that they do not have enough free time or that they are introduced to adult responsibilities too young (i.e., Kalliala, 1999; Oksanen, 2004).<sup>5</sup> Simultaneously, there is a growing popular concern that young adults do not know how to stop playing and to take responsibility and control of their own lives (which is often considered a marker of the transition to adulthood). Developmental psychologists have even introduced a new life period in industrial societies, a period lasting approximately from the late teens to the mid-twenties called "emerging adulthood" that is theoretically and empirically distinct from both adolescence and young adulthood. This period has been characterized as free from the dependence of childhood and adolescence but without the enduring responsibilities normative in adulthood, a time for freer explorations of a variety of possible life directions (Arnett, 2000).

As Kennedy and many other authors (i.e., Mouritzen, 1998; Lindqvist, 2003; Prout, 2005) argue, for the most part the Western educational institution is still stuck in the modern conception of children as objects in the structure of social reproduction. Even so, it is the school itself that they consider could serve in providing a transitional and dialogical space in which old borders are crossed and

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<sup>5</sup> This is, however, a contestable claim since there is convincing research that shows children's life worlds and playing as vivid and alive (see Karimäki, forthcoming).

transformed. It is the promise of such a school that also motivates my study of the playworld. However, the authors I have cited above do not ask why our school system has not been able to keep up with the changes that drive many other parts of our society. This, I think, has to do with the contradiction that is met daily in educational settings, which I call here the contradiction between control and agency. This is the topic to which we will move next.

### 3.2 The contradiction between control and agency in education

One of the greatest problems in education is how subjection to lawful constraint can be combined with the ability to make use of one's freedom. For constraint is necessary. How shall I cultivate freedom under conditions of compulsion? I ought to accustom my pupil to tolerate constraint upon his freedom, and at the same time lead him to make good use of his freedom. (Kant *On Education*, 1803)

In the quote above Kant formulates the classical philosophical problem known by many today as the paradox of pedagogy (see Finkel & Arney, 1995; Kivelä, 2004; Lovlie, 2007). To put it shortly, Kant asks how “educating for freedom”<sup>6</sup> (cf. Finkel & Arney, 1995) through submission to authority is possible. As Kivelä (2004) points out, the paradox must be understood against the context of Western modernistic thinking in which the free subject is the outcome of education and where human society develops towards progress through education. Raising the child is an investment in a better future, better society and a better culture. In this line of thinking, the paradox of pedagogy is considered an unsolvable and inevitable feature of modern education and thus an inherent part of the adult-child educational relationship.

If we consider this paradox (or antinomy, see Bruner, 1996) in a logical sense, then we have to accept that it actually cannot be solved. If the paradox were solved, the whole idea of Western pedagogy would lose its grounds. According to this thinking, the paradox characterizes the nature of the pedagogical relationship:

It is not, then, a paradox to be finally solved, but simply the repeated description of an inherent educational predicament. ... It is at bottom of the memento and, at the same time, the criterion for an enlightened pedagogy. (Lovlie, 2007, p. 10)

Another way to think of it is to see it as *an ideological dilemma* (Billig et al., 1988). Each one of “the pair” is necessary to the meaning of the other, and neither view can survive alone. On the level of research this ideological dilemma appears as a gap between critical sociological theories and optimistic psychological

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<sup>6</sup> Freedom in this context is understood as a basic prerequisite for human beings, as freedom of will and independence of thought.

accounts of schooling. On the level of teaching, it appears as a continuous contestation between child-centered or progressive methods and more traditional authoritative views on learning and schooling.

Also, the structure and organization of the Western classroom typically creates a situation where the (inevitable) need for control and order makes it hard for teachers to support students' personal involvement in and motivation for learning (McNeil, 1986; Jackson, 1990; see also Rainio, 2008a; 2008b). In this sense, the paradox is not solely philosophical or ideological but very practical and developed historically.

Notions that are nowadays common, such as curriculum and age-divided classes, came onto the pedagogical agenda in Europe at the end of the 16th century, a time when teaching and learning were becoming more open to external scrutiny and control – and around the same time that schools in Europe were being opened up to wider sections of society (Hamilton, 1989). In Finland the disciplining of the citizens was under the control of the Lutheran church. From the time that Finland became Lutheran in the 16th century, every person was required to be confirmed in the church (generally confirmation occurred from 14 to 16 years of age), and it was a “Royal law” that every person be taught to read and write before being confirmed. This law remained in effect until the 20th century. Accordingly, a young person was considered a full, responsible adult upon confirmation. Once confirmed, he was allowed to marry and became legally responsible for him- or herself. Every person who was past confirmation age was required to attend the annual reading examination. This practice was to monitor the literary skills of the people and promote their understanding of the Christian faith (Laitila Vincent & Tapio, 1994).

Only after the French and American revolutions, and along with the emergence of state-regulated, compulsory elementary schooling, did the focus of control turn from external discipline to developing the internal compliance and self-discipline of individuals (Hamilton, 1989). Schooling was now seen as having the special task of a *guarantee* of social stability and order. School reformers of the 19th century saw a clear connection between compliant adult behavior and children's schooling. An English school reformer expressed this in the following:

The sole effectual need for preventing [anarchy] ... is, by giving the working people a good secular education, to enable them to understand the true causes which determine their physical condition and regulate the distribution of wealth among the several classes of society. Sufficient intelligence and information to appreciate these causes might be diffused by an education which could easily be brought within the reach of the entire population, though it would necessarily comprehend more than the mere mechanical rudiments of knowledge. (Robert Kay-Shuttleworth, 1839, in Hamilton, 1989, p. 100)

Naturally, to attain this task, the methods of teaching and the contents of learning needed to be well controlled. On the other hand, education was a double-edged sword. Too much education for everybody would also be a threat to society. For example, in the Finnish context in the 19th century there were two conflicting sides in the debate about nationwide elementary schools and kindergartens (Välimäki, 1998; Ahonen, 2003). For one, education was seen indispensable for the well-being of a nation state in which everybody knew their place in the social order (Snellman). For the other part of the debate, education was argued to be a primary vehicle for social change, a way out of poverty, especially for a large Finnish rural population. Equality and the right to education were among the central arguments on this side (Cygnaeus) (Ibid.).

Alongside the scholarly debate, for the majority of the Finnish population of the 19th and early 20th centuries, schooling was harmful or a problem (Mikkola, 2006; Stark, 2006). It was seen as a road to unruliness and laziness, which a peasant could not afford. Adults felt that if they let their children spend their time in schools together with their peers, the children would learn harmful habits and become unruly and wild. The adults would lose control over their own children. Often those who went to school had to do their homework secretly, without their parents' knowledge. There was a difference between younger people who saw education as a door to broadened societal opportunities and the older generation who saw education as harmful to children, who should learn about real life through participating in the working life of the countryside (Ibid.).

This debate reflects the double task of modern education. Our educational system is unquestionably a vehicle for social selection and stabilization, as one of its tasks is to further a dominant culture (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000). But it is also a *right* through which each individual can find her or his creative potential regardless of background or social position.

To conclude, schooling has been in many ways bound around the questions of agency and control. As long as our school organization follows its historical roots, teachers have to deal with this contradiction daily in their work and students in their learning, no matter how child-centered or progressive the pedagogical ideals are. Understood in dialectical terms, the contradiction between control and agency could be tentatively formulated as a primary contradiction, a unit or a germ cell (Iljenkov, 1982; Tolman, 1981) that characterizes the development of a societal human being and a pedagogical relationship. In Chapter 2 I discussed the development of human agency as the simultaneous need to learn to control oneself by internalizing cultural values, traditions and tools, and equally to learn to use these cultural tools to overcome existing constraints and develop something new (also see Rainio, 2009). The contradiction between agency and control cannot be totally overcome as it is inbuilt and a central part of our development as well as of the modern school system and its functions. However, the contradiction needs to be lived and dealt with daily in educational practice, and sometimes it is possible

to overcome it momentarily (see Rainio, 2008a and 2008b). If seen in a dialectical sense, this “paradox of pedagogy” takes new forms in different historical times and develops our school system from within. In this way it turns into a source for development and change (I return to discuss this in the light of the playworld pedagogy in Chapter 8).

### 3.3 Play and the contradiction between control and agency in the new ‘creative age’

The contradiction between agency and control is taking new forms at the end of the first decade of the 21st century. Today we have increased international and national measurements of formal individual learning results (such as PISA). Simultaneously, there is a growing interest in “alternative pedagogical projects” which celebrate creativity and playfulness in areas that cannot be measured in traditional ways. There is also an increased interest in creative subjects such as play pedagogy, drama and art education as integral parts of the school curriculum. In Finland we still have a strong division between “traditional” school subjects that focus on skills and knowledge that can be transmitted (the so-called “knowledge subjects”) and subjects that focus on art, creativity and individual freedom (the so-called “arts and craft subjects”). The problem is that often in everyday work or in public debates these areas do not meet, but are seen as opposing each other, or at best, complementary.

Creativity in learning is also widely supported in official educational documents,<sup>7</sup> and the European Union named the year 2009 the Year of Creativity and Innovation. One of its aims was to educate young people to “act creatively” in society. The European Union has also launched a group of specialists to find out how creativity can be measured objectively and efficiently, and how it can be supported in education and working life.<sup>8</sup> Efforts to measure and control the results of creativity can be seen as one form of the contradiction between agency and control.

In early education the question of agency and control can be seen to culminate in children’s play in relation to other pedagogical activities. In early education and day care, time for “free play” is often considered a guarantee of freedom from otherwise regulated and controlled pedagogical activity. Lindqvist, who in the 1990 developed the playworld pedagogy approach that my study is about, criticized the

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<sup>7</sup> See, i.e., the Ministry of Education of Finland: [www.minedu.fi/etusivu/arkisto/2008/1311/luovuus\\_innovointi.html](http://www.minedu.fi/etusivu/arkisto/2008/1311/luovuus_innovointi.html).

<sup>8</sup> “The EU’s creativity and innovative capacity are vital for our economic prosperity and social cohesion. While it is a real challenge to measure a concept like creativity in figures, it is nonetheless crucial that we learn more about creativity in order to be able to nurture and support it in the best possible way.” Ján Figel, The European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth.

Source: [http://create2009.europa.eu/press/news\\_archive/news\\_singleview/news/can-you-measure-creativity.html](http://create2009.europa.eu/press/news_archive/news_singleview/news/can-you-measure-creativity.html).

Swedish early education system of the time for the dualistic and unclear role that play had in early education curriculum and practice. In Sweden the importance of children's play was widely acknowledged and was based on the historical roots of early education, the ideals in the early twentieth century of Fröbel, who saw the child as a valuable and natural creature to be cultivated and trained to be cultured. Play was considered children's "own world," something natural and pure which could be easily destroyed by too much adult interference. In the day care structure, other pedagogical activities were often separated from free play, such as outdoor or physical activities or a "circle time," and the day was clearly organized into these different units. A similar kind of dualistic approach was prevalent in the Finnish context in the 1990, too (this view of play as separate from other activities in many ways still exists today, see Rutanen, 2009). A Finnish early education textbook from 1994 formulated:

Playing is often a child's spontaneous, autonomic imaginary activity. ... Typically playing is carefree whereas work is performed carefully. This also illustrates how play and work differ from their pedagogical nature. Work is a real activity where a child and an adult are often acting together. Conversely, playing is acting in an imaginary situation; missing tools can be substituted by gestures and speech that are invented by the child. ... [C]hildren also learn in "learning sessions" that are activities organised by an early educator. For them it is natural to have a clear objective, limited contents and methods that are evaluated to be appropriate. (Brotherus, Helimäki & Hytönen, 1994, p. 78–79)<sup>9</sup>

Here, although perhaps without purpose, play is separated from "work," which is seen as the real activity in which the adult has the control. Lindqvist (1995) quotes Dencik (1988) in claiming that the idea of "freedom" of play as opposed to direct adult control obscures the fact that children's play in an institutional setting nevertheless is always under the influence of the preschool structure and its individual procedures for offering children opportunities to play. Strandell (1994), in her research on Finnish kindergartens, has also criticized the concept of "free play" as being more an administrative tool with the consequences that adults are more distant from children's play rather than an opportunity for children to

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<sup>9</sup> Originally in Finnish: "Leikki on usein lapsen spontaania, omaehtoista mielikuvitustoimintaa ... Leikki ja työ poikkeavat pedagogiselta olemukseltaan toisistaan myös siinä, että leikille on luonteenomaista huolettomuus, mutta työlle huolellinen suoritus tapa. Työ on todellista toimintaa, jossa lapsi ja aikuinen toimivat usein yhdessä. Leikki sen sijaan on kuvitteellisessa tilanteessa toimimista; puuttuvat välineet voidaan korvata eleillä ja puheella, jotka ovat lapsen itsensä kehittlemiä. ... [L]apset oppivat myös oppitunneilla, jotka ovat varhaiskasvattajan järjestämää toimintaa. Niille on luonteenomaista selkeä päämäärä, rajattu sisältö ja sopiviksi arvioitua menetelmää" (Brotherus, Helimäki & Hytönen, Opetus varhaiskasvatuksessa, 1994, p. 78–79). The text was translated from Finnish to English by Johanna Hynönen and Steven Spencer.

develop their own understanding of playing and playfulness. Time for “free play” is used for organizing the work and maintaining the daily schedule (for a more recent discussion of the problem of the concept of free play, see Rutanen, 2009 and also Hakkarainen, 2008).

From this it follows that although educators are often aware of these dilemmas or dualisms in their work (see, i.e., Billig et al., 1988; Zeller Mayer, 2001), they just do not have the tools and means to solve or deal with them. Therefore, for example, the teachers did not often know how to act in relation to children’s play. This is how a teacher at my research site described her own past experience as a kindergarten teacher and her relationship to children’s play in a day care setting:

*Data excerpt 1: From a teacher interview, March 22, 2006*

T1: (...) my take on playing and the meaning and the importance of it was entirely different from today. (...) The way I joined in their play, I really didn’t try to join in and the children didn’t ask me to. The children at day care don’t ask an adult to join them in their play, unless they want a sales-clerk or someone to buy with stones something they’ve made at the sandpit. The children didn’t have that option at the day care where I was at, and as far as I know, neither in any other places at the time either. So they didn’t know to ask, because it was unthinkable for an adult to join and play with them. Instead the teachers did something in passing and told them to continue on. Or then according to the standpoint at that time... I think I’ve always been a person who is a lot with the children. So if a child was alone, I might have started to play with her/him and when others joined, I moved back to the sidelines. So that was the pedagogic take on it at the time. (...) So at the daycare... At the time, there still were the teaching sessions and then there was the free time for playing and games for the children. So I did play games with the children a lot, but I didn’t join in their (imaginative, pretend) play.

Lindqvist’s proposal was to develop a cultural approach to solve the problem of free play and to create space for a closer adult-child dialogue in early education. She developed a playworld approach in which aesthetic subjects such as drama and literature were used to enhance and expand the scope and depth of children’s play and interaction with the surrounding culture in institutional settings. The point was to treat play and drama as modes of acting, not just as separate methods:

Playworlds can best be described as adult-child joint construction of imaginary or figured worlds (Holland, Lachicotte Jr., Skinner, & Cain, 1998). In playworlds adults and children enter and exit a common fantasy, together. They do this through a combination of adult forms of creative imagining,



which require extensive experience: disciplines of art and science, and through children's forms of creative imagining, which require embodiment of ideas in the material world. (Marjanovic-Shane et al., forthcoming)

Naturally, there are other comparable projects and alternative pedagogies that have aimed to solve similar kinds of problems and challenges (between control and agency) through applying play, drama and art in early education.<sup>10</sup> In my study the playworld pedagogy represents one such systematic effort to develop existing educational practices. The playworld approach is more thoroughly presented in Chapter 4. Before moving to that, I will discuss on a more general level how the roles of play, playing and playfulness are changing in our society. It is not a coincidence that playing as a form of activity is receiving more attention now.

Play and art have often been described as contexts where children's and adults' ways of living and experiencing meet. For example, play was celebrated by the late 19th century Romantic Movement as the field in which the world of adults comes closer to and learns from children's life worlds (i.e., the poet William Wordsworth 1770–1850). Kennedy (2006) identifies play and art as promising “forums for dialectics of childhood and adulthood.” He examines play as Winnicott's “transitional space” in which both the adult and child can develop reciprocally, and in which there is a fusion of dualities. Kennedy's call for an “intersubject” that the adult and the child will form is equivalent to Lindqvist's (1995) call for a closer adult-child dialogue in early education through a playworld pedagogy.

The present time is particularly favorable for such projects. Western post-industrial societies are characterized by the metaphor of merging boundaries. These borders are crossed not only between childhood and adulthood, but between play and work and fiction and reality. People have always engaged in various play activities during their adult life – just as children have been involved in labor both in Western and non-Western communities (Sutton-Smith, 1997; Göncü & Perone, 2005). The video game industry and the new possibilities of information technology now blur these boundaries more rapidly (Boellstorff, 2006; Yee, 2006; Freeman, 2007). Our society has been called a “fun society” (Castronova, 2007) or a “creative age” (Florida & Tinagli, 2004). In this sense, play seems to be everywhere. There are strong positive hopes for these new ways of organizing life in a more playful manner:

The power of the play of imagination is in its ability to break traditional frames and dichotomies and allow us to explore a space where fantasy and

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<sup>10</sup> Perhaps the closest pedagogical model is called Developmental Education, which was developed in Holland (see van Oers, 2003). Also, Swedish Frame Play (see Brorstöm, 1999) and Play-based Pedagogy (Pramling Samuelsson & Asplun Carlsson, 2008) are models in which the adult has an active role either as a play partner or as a facilitator of children's play. The Montessori, Steiner or Freinet pedagogies have certain similarities with Playworld pedagogy as well.



play are no longer subordinated to reality and work and where we are able to find richer ways of identifying with the other. The ability to play imaginatively and see and experience from many different vantage points, rather than just one, provides a new set of tools for imaginative and innovative thinking. (Thomas & Brown, 2007, p. 169)

On the other hand, the entanglement of the realistic and the imagined, play and productive work also has other consequences. The ability to make a distinction between what is imagined and what is real is one of the most important developmental tasks (Vygotsky, 1978; Hakkarainen, 2006). To lose the ability to differentiate between reality and fantasy can be risky and deconstructive for human society (see Martin, 1988; Oksanen, 2008). An interesting contradiction comes from the fact that although the ability to make such a distinction makes it possible for us to operate in the world, it usually develops in the cost of the other, the imaginative and playful side. Further, the direction is not solely towards play and games transforming our traditional understanding of other spheres, such as work. The experience of play also changes as it becomes more commodified or “rationalized” (Grimes & Feenberg, 2009). The “rationalizing of play” is claimed to be particularly strong in virtual realities called “massively multiplayer online games” (MMOG’s) such as World of Warcraft or EverQuest. Yee (2006) even claims that there is a tendency that the timing and layering of different reward mechanisms in video games “train players to derive pleasure from the work that is being done” and that “video games condition us to work harder, faster, and more efficiently” (Ibid, p. 70). Also, the element of control and institutional order is argued to be a central element of these new forms of play and gaming:

As games and play are transformed into an increasingly rationalized set of activities involving huge populations for extended periods, they institutionalize a form of social order. The mass of spectator-players is now organized by the technology of the game much as markets organize consumers, state bureaucracies organize citizens, and production technology organizes workers. (Grimes & Feenberg, 2009, p. 108)

Grimes and Feenberg claim that although rules are central also in more spontaneous, small scale and less institutionalized forms of play (such as children’s pretend play or adult improvisation, for example), the difference is that they may be more openly modified and negotiated than the new technically mediated massive online gaming and play culture.

Companies and commercial industry as well have started to understand the value of playfulness to making a profit. There are calls for linking product development to virtual worlds, where manufacturers can collaborate with the virtual world’s “avatars” to generate value for their innovation activities:

Connecting the emerging technology of virtual worlds with a customer-centric perspective of open innovation allows unique and inventive opportunities to capitalize on users' innovative potential and knowledge. (Kohler, Matzer, and Füller, 2009, p. 395)

Creativity, playfulness and pleasure are becoming a driving force of our economic growth. This means that our “creative age” needs new kinds of capabilities and new kinds of citizens (see, i.e., Florida & Tinagli, 2004). In this light it is very understandable that educational projects such as the playworld and drama education gain more attention and a foothold. New forms of capitalism need citizens and a workforce who know how to create and play for profit.

Some authors are worried that this trend is threatening the nature of playing and gaming based on imagination and fantasy. Castronova (2004, p. 196), for example, believes that if what he calls the “Earth’s culture” – with its economic logic, policies and law – dominates the fantasy culture (such as the MMOG worlds), “a great opportunity to play the game of human life under different, fantastical rule will have been lost.” The problem of course is that it is questionable whether such a closed and detached fantasy world could ever exist. Taylor (2006) reminds us that the boundary between online and offline is messy, contested and constantly under negotiation. For example, issues of gender or race “do not simply fall away online but get imported into the new space in complicated ways” (p. 153). I have made a similar observation of the playworld activity, but I have also noted that the existence of the freedom of imagination and fantasy provides more possibilities for the actors to influence their own way of acting and being in these worlds (see Rainio, 2008b). Similarly as to what Taylor argues for online games, the richness and the attractiveness of these fictive worlds lie in the fact that different worlds are merged and affect each other, and allow interesting new creations and experimentation. The promise of the playworld activity too lies not in the disappearance of this fine line between reality and fiction, but in becoming conscious of it and examining it in the adult-child dialogue.

I have invested some time in the debate about the gaming culture because it vividly illustrates these new forms and developments of play and fantasy and their sliding boundaries. The fusion of borders between play and work, fantasy and real, subject and object, spontaneous play and institutionalized gaming that seem characteristic of our society forms an interesting third component for the context of my playworld study. Although in a different sense, the playworld activity, too, is a form of institutionalized play and struggles with comparable issues.

In Figure 1 below I draw together the three historical dimensions that I have discussed in this chapter. They form the context against which the empirical findings of the playworld activity can be examined.

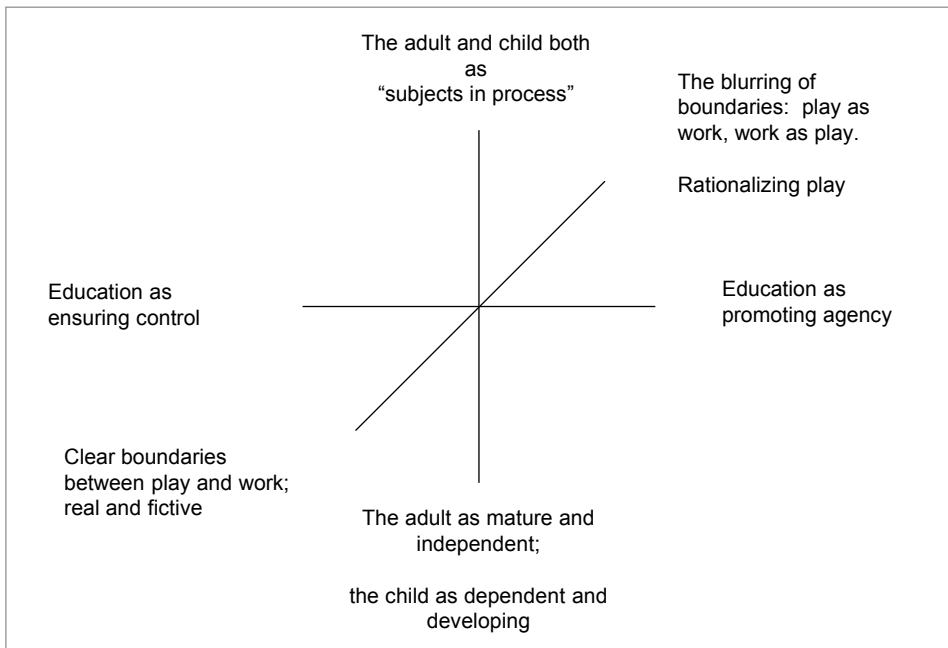


Figure 1. The three historical dimensions

Our societal development appears to be moving towards the right upper corner: the blurring of boundaries, more focus on children's agency and the idea of development and maturation as also characteristic of adult life; all these seem characteristic of our time. However, as I have discussed in this chapter, control and order are an important element of education, and a difference still exists between adults and children and their development, and this boundary needs to be able to be drawn in a pedagogical relationship. Now, it is from this perspective that the playworld as a form of joint activity between children and adults in a school institution becomes interesting. What happens to children's agency as adults participate in their play activity? On the other hand, what happens to the adults' actions as teachers when they are constrained by the same imaginative world and its rules as the children? And finally, in what way are both children and adults able to develop in this process? How does the playworld activity mediate this development? These are among the questions that I have analyzed in my empirical articles.

In the following chapters I will discuss the empirical results of my ethnographic study of the playworld in relation to the three dimensions conceptualized in this chapter. In the next chapter I first describe the research site and the object of the study and then proceed to formulate the research questions for the study (Chapter 5).



## 4 THE ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH SITE AND DATA

In this chapter I will first introduce the research site and the empirical object of my study, the Brothers Lionheart playworld project, and discuss the pedagogical principles and educational intervention that the playworld was based on. Secondly, I will describe the process of entering into the field and collecting data in the playworld. Thirdly, I will discuss the (video) ethnographic approach of my study and examine my role as a participatory ethnographer, or what can be called a “peripheral interventionist” in the field. Finally, I take up some ethical issues related to my field work.

### 4.1 An age-integrated early education classroom

The research site in this study was an experimental classroom located in a typical Finnish elementary school in a small town in southern Finland during the school year 2003–2004. What made this classroom different from the other classrooms in the school was that it integrated children aged from four to eight and was run by a teacher team with professionals from three educational levels. The class was a result of a longitudinal pilot study (1996–2003) that aimed at studying, developing and promoting children’s transition from preschool to school through a model of narrative learning and play pedagogy (Hakkarainen, 2004). The purpose of the pilot study was to develop early education activities by creating an integrated model for learning and teaching for a transitional level of preschool and school (for more on the model of transitory activity, see, i.e., Hakkarainen, 2002; 2004; 2008). It was based on a specific understanding of the relationship between play and learning, and it aimed at developing a model for a more flexible introduction to school. One of the goals was also to create a model for teacher cooperation in multi-professional teacher teams.

The research purpose of the project was to create real life interventions to study the psychological mechanism of and developmental changes in play based on the model developed in cultural-historical theory called the “genetic experiment.”<sup>11</sup> The basic principle of a genetic experiment is that psychological phenomena must be studied when they are generated, that is, “in the process of change” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 65). Vygotsky explained his method with the help of the concept of double stimulation: in a problem-solving situation the subject selects or is introduced to

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<sup>11</sup> Lindqvist’s playworld pedagogy was one of the main experimental environments created in the study. I will return to discuss the model of narrative learning and the playworld in the light of my empirical findings in Chapters 7 and 8.

an originally “neutral” object and uses it as a psychological instrument to achieve a solution.<sup>12</sup> Hakkarainen and his colleagues developed Vygotsky’s method in the following way:

In the study of play motivation we have to experimentally construct environments by promoting new forms of play. We have attempted to balance children’s free choice between different available activities by offering new and challenging play opportunities. In most cases, play is promoted by the use of indirect guidance methods. The main difference with the traditional idea of an experiment is that here children can choose between many different “independent variables.”...Accordingly, our basic principle in constructing the play environment is the continuous enrichment of children’s experience with a cultural content. We do not offer the children new “knowledge of facts” in a condensed form, nor new information, but new narratives – stories and new cultural forms of activity. It is vitally important that all information and knowledge is organized in a very specific, meaningful and contextual form. Egan (2005) writes that story form makes information effectively meaningful and gives a feeling of safety. (Hakkarainen, 2009, p. 66–67)

As a result of the pilot project, three integrated classes were established as a part of the city’s early education system. These classes, also called “small children’s schools,” combined the normally distinct educational levels of Finnish day care (children from four to five), preschool (the preparatory “grade 0” for six year olds) and the first two grades of elementary school (seven- and eight-year-old children), thus including children from the ages of four to eight years and a multi-professional teacher team. The class that I studied was established in 1999 as part of the second phase of the pilot study. It was located in a local elementary school (the other two classes were located at nearby kindergartens).<sup>13</sup>

In the fall of 2003 when I encountered the site, the pilot study was finished, and the class had just been established as a permanent part of the town’s early education system. There were altogether thirty children, of which 15 were five to six years old and the rest (15) were first and second graders. There were 17 boys and 13 girls in the classroom. There were three full-time educators in the class. One elementary school teacher worked with the first and second grades, and the other two (a kindergarten teacher and a nursery nurse) took care of the smaller children and preschoolers. There was also one part-time teacher who helped with the children’s afternoon activities and mealtimes. The teachers selected to run

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<sup>12</sup> On applying the double stimulation method in studying the playworld data, see Rainio, 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Today the class continues the narrative play pedagogy and developmental early education. The ninth playworld started in spring 2010 based this time on the story of *Peter Pan*.

the class were given in-service training on the principles of narrative learning and play pedagogy. They also received counseling for their multi-professional teacher collaboration (collaboration in the classroom was a new thing for many teachers at the time and still is).

The parents were informed of the new classroom, and those who were interested enrolled their children in the class. The idea was that the child could start as a four year old and continue in the class all the way to the second grade, but it was also possible to enter the class at a later point or move to a regular school class earlier.

The pedagogical activities and the daily curriculum of the classroom were developed in cooperation with the researchers and the teachers as a part of their teacher training. The three classes followed their own “developmental education” curriculum based on the national curriculum (see Hakkarainen, 2008). The school children spent one to two hours per day in regular classroom activities (such as reading and math); the rest of the time was spent in common narrative-based activities for the whole group, which included such projects as the Brothers Lionheart playworld.

My video ethnographic study focuses on a play pedagogical activity that the class had been implementing for several years: the playworld pedagogy. The teachers found this activity the most challenging but also rewarding, and the children also anticipated it with excitement and talked about the previous years’ playworlds. It was also the most long-lasting and intensive of their pedagogical activities (in 2004 it lasted for five months). These are among the reasons I ended up focusing my empirical data collection on the playworld project.

Since my research focuses on the playworld project, I will not describe in detail all the other daily routines, although they partly differ from their usual counterparts in the Finnish school system. I will further describe my role in the field and the process of data collection in Sections 4.4 and 4.5. In the following section, 4.2, I will introduce the basic ideas of the playworld pedagogy and in 4.3 sketch the events of the Brothers Lionheart playworld.

## 4.2 Playworld pedagogy

The concept of the playworld was originally developed by Swedish play pedagogue Gunilla Lindqvist (1995; 2001; 2002). In her thesis (1995) she investigated connections between play and other aesthetic forms (such as drama and literature) in order to develop a cultural and aesthetic approach to early education. Although in the Nordic countries play has already formed a central part of early education practices for decades, Lindqvist criticizes the view in which play is considered children’s “own world,” something natural and pure which is separated from other activities in the day care setting. Instead of only praising children’s free play, Lindqvist wanted to create spaces where ideally adult-child joint play could be promoted in institutional settings. She (1995) describes in detail several playworld projects that

were carried out in Swedish day care settings. Together adults and children created a thematic playworld, a common fiction, by using stories, folk tales, music, lights, dramatizations, visual aesthetics, pretending, role figures (played by adults) and scenery settings. The projects often lasted several months and dealt with topics chosen from folk tales that included important elements for children's general psychological development (e.g., fear, friendship, lying etc.). The themes were addressed through playing and acting while constructing the plot of the playworld.<sup>14</sup> Although still relatively marginal, Lindqvist's approach has since spread internationally and has been applied in several countries from Japan and the US to Finland (see Marjanovic-Shane et al., forthcoming). The Brothers Lionheart playworld case in the Finnish context is based on Lindqvist's approach.

Playworld pedagogy is built on Vygotsky's (1971; 1978; 2004) and El'konin's (2005) cultural-historical play theories, particularly on Vygotsky's (2004) less known text on imagination and creativity in childhood (see Ferholt, 2009). According to the cultural-historical view, the potentials embedded in play as a form of activity make it the leading factor of development in childhood. Vygotsky also criticized the common view of play as the world of children, and instead states that "to behave in a real situation as in an illusory one is the first sign of delirium" (1978, p. 102). Instead, he claimed that play, just like art, is "a photographic negative of everyday life" (cf. Lindqvist, 2001, p. 8). In play the child can act *differently* than in real life (Vygotsky, 1978) due to the imaginative component of play. In children's everyday life, action dominates meaning, but in play action is subordinate to meaning.<sup>15</sup>

Imagination, although different from reality, has close connections to it. Our ability to imagine and create is based on our experiences of reality. And vice versa, to broaden our experiences we need the ability to imagine things that are not directly visible or "not yet there." Imagination can also *become* reality: "once it [the construct of fantasy] has been externally embodied, that is, has been given material form, this crystallized imagination that has become an object begins to actually exist in the real world, to effect other things" (Vygotsky, 2004, p. 15; see also Ferholt, 2009). Herein lies the developmental and creative potential of adult-child interaction in playworlds. Lindqvist argues that the main result of her studies was that when adults dramatized roles and actions and invited the children into a playworld, the children knew what was play and what was not, and could investigate the relationship of the real and the imagined:

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<sup>14</sup> As Hännikäinen (2007) notes, the official preschool culture and children's peer culture often intertwine. However, this does not mean that jointly organized adult-child playworlds would make children's spontaneous and "non-pedagogical" play meaningless in their own peer culture (see Corsaro, 2003). For example, in my research site children's mutual playing took place in the afternoons and during recesses, sometimes continuing the playworld theme, sometimes covering other topics.

<sup>15</sup> An interesting review of Vygotsky's play theory is in Ferholt, 2009. See also Marjanovic-Shane & Beljanski-Ristic, (2008) and van Oers (2003) for a more thorough discussion on the theoretical principles of child development in play.



An unbroken storyline inspires play, and this action is closely linked to art and culture. It is the story that creates meaning for the children, not the physical environment and the objects. Songs, stories, films and dramatisations all provide material which children can transform into play, but literary action has proven to be particularly well suited (Whitehead, 1997). If play is allowed to be the pivotal activity in preschools and day-care centres, *sharing* becomes a key word. Both children and adults can be inspired by the culture which surrounds them and create play together. At the same time the children's literature has invited the children into a literary world with a special atmosphere. (Lindqvist, 2001, p. 11, italics in the original)

What adults can bring into the playworld is their experiences from life. On the other hand, children's way of playing gives the adults a dimension otherwise difficult to achieve. Together with the children they can imagine new realities and new ways of being. As Ferholt elegantly formulates in her empirical work on playworlds:

In other words, the children are playing because they cannot yet imagine without play. And the adults are not joining in play only to promote and guide the development of the children's ability to imagine. They are also joining in play because this allows them to experience things they are not able to experience through imagination alone, things which appear too far from the possible to be experienced through imagination without play. In a playworld the great need, the imperative, of children to learn adult forms of imagining, the art and science they traditionally learn in school, is coupled with the adults' desire to "BE" that which they cannot "BE" through imagination without play. (Ferholt, 2009, p. 19)

Hakkarainen developed Lindqvist's method of the playworld to fit his theory of narrative learning as the transitory activity between preschool and school, between imaginative play and what he calls "real" learning. His idea was to create a "specific transitory activity combining an imaginative playworld and realistic problem solving" (Hakkarainen, 2008, p. 292; see also Vygotsky, 1978, p. 98) that would promote the goal in his study. Therefore, in the Finnish context the playworlds have been typically planned so that different real life phenomena are explored within the fictive, narrative plot and then integrated into problem-solving situations faced by the characters (played by both adults and children). Hakkarainen (2002) claims that such narratives or stories in which there is a problem or a contradictory situation that cannot be overcome in ordinary, familiar ways are powerful in creating an emotional stance towards learning and a desire to solve situations. In this way, narrative problem solving is confronted with "reality testing": can the problem be solved in this way in reality? The solution makes sense in a narrative environment, but does it have a general meaning (see Hakkarainen, 2006b)?

Hakkarainen introduced Lindqvist's play pedagogical method to the teachers in the experimental groups as a method for developing a common and shared activity that could be meaningful for both the four-year-old children as well as for the older ones, the first and second graders. As a part of their in-service training the teachers read Lindqvist's texts translated into Finnish (Lindqvist, 1998), familiarized themselves with Vygotsky's educational thinking<sup>16</sup> and participated in drama in education courses. With the help of the researchers, the teachers started to develop small imaginative dramas in the classroom where adults took on certain roles and invited the children to play with them. Slowly these dramatic worlds enlarged, and finally in the year 2002 the adults and children created a playworld that lasted the whole spring. The Brothers Lionheart playworld took place a year after, in 2003.

The playworld pedagogy and narrative learning method have similarities and differences with other drama and play pedagogical methods developed in different educational programs and traditions, such as Developmental Education (van Oers, 2003), Drama in education (see, i.e., Bolton, 1993), Egan's (1986) Teaching as storytelling or the Storyline method (see Hofmann, 2008), and the "Unscripted learning" method (Lobman & Lundquist, 2007). However, I will not go deeper into the similarities and differences between these approaches here as this is not the topic of this dissertation.

### 4.3 The Brothers Lionheart playworld project

The Brothers Lionheart Playworld lasted altogether from January 2004 until the end of the school year, May 2004, and it was based on Astrid Lindgren's book of the same title (Lindgren, 2003).<sup>17</sup> Twice a week during sessions lasting one to two hours the class was turned into the world of Nangiyala, a fantasy world the children knew from the story that they had been reading aloud in the class. Together the children and adults acted out the characters from the story, prepared costumes and props, joined in adventures and faced challenging problems and tasks inside the framework of the playworld. The idea was to use play and drama to organize shared learning tasks and activities. In the following I describe how the Brothers Lionheart proceeded from its start in January until the end of the school year, May 2004. The playworld project as a whole can be divided into three phases: preparing and planning, playing freely and starting the common adventure.

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<sup>16</sup> One of the teachers in the research site told me that when she saw in the playworld Vygotsky's famous phrase "in play it is as though [the child] were a head taller than himself" (1978, p. 102) "in action" she suddenly understood the theoretical idea behind the playworld pedagogy and started to develop the activity for real.

<sup>17</sup> A summary of the plot and the thematic issues dealt with in the book is presented in Appendix 1.

*Phase 1: Preparing and planning – creating a basis for the playworld (January 2004)*

The preparation for the playworld activity had already begun in December 2003 by reading Astrid Lindgren's book aloud in the class. *The Brothers Lionheart* was one of the favorite books in the class. The teachers also considered Lindgren's story to be compelling enough to hold the attention of several extremely active pupils (boys) in the class. The school year 2004 started by watching the film based on the book (*Bröderna Lejonhjärta*, Lindgren, 1977), and the characters and events were discussed with the children. The teachers asked the children to draw or write about a part of the story or a character that was particularly meaningful or interesting to them. The children and teachers also discussed the characters and which of them they would like to act out in the playworld. The adults collected the children's choices and ideas in a notebook. Here is how seven-year-old Mari describes the character that she wanted to develop (this character does not appear in the original story):

*Data excerpt 1: Teacher notebook remark, Jan 9, 2004*

Dove Princess. I want to be a person who is shown moderately – not too much and not too little. She helps the people in Rose Valley who are Tengil's slaves. The Dove Princess and the people in Rose Valley know a secret code. The enemy does not understand it, only Jonathan and Rusky do.

And here is how Anton, 7 years old, described his favorite character:

*Data excerpt 2: Teacher notebook remark, Jan 9, 2004*

The dragon Katla, it's nice when it spews fire and roars. It would be nice to act as Katla because it is a kind of evil.

Based on these preparations, the teachers met for their first planning session on January 9<sup>th</sup>. I participated in this session and audio-recorded it. Several issues were on the agenda, from practical ideas about how to dramatize the plot to establishing the main educational goals for the project or discussing the concept of the playworld in general. A great deal of time was spent on considering individual children's needs and developmental levels and how these could be taken into consideration when building up the playworld and its characters. On the other hand, the teachers wanted to stay open to the children's spontaneous ideas and maintain the improvisational character of the project. Therefore, no fixed plan for the spring was made. Ultimately, the teachers decided only on the very first steps of the project.

It was planned that the playworld would get its start with a short improvised story acted out by the teachers. One morning of the following week the teachers entered the classroom dressed as different characters from the book. They acted

out a little skit for the children. The children were surprised and reacted in different ways. Some were enthusiastic and delighted; others were a bit put out at being taken by surprise. The teachers then told the children that their “dreams would come true”: they would launch a new playworld and create a Brothers Lionheart playworld together. The teachers divided the children into small groups with one teacher helping each group. In these groups different activities took place each week in January. The children played their favorite characters and prepared costumes and props for the playworld. They created and tried out different characters and played freely or improvised parts of the story either by themselves or led by their teachers. (In my empirical analyses the focus on the small group work is mainly on an analysis of the horse girls’ gender categorization and agency development (Rainio, 2009); most of my analyses focus on the third phase, the actual adventure.)

*Phase 2: Improvised playing together (February 2004)*

In February different scenes were built in the classroom of the materials produced in the small groups. Children could now play “freely” in them. Children could either act as the characters that they had already picked out for themselves, or change their roles or just play themselves. Now also the teachers played roles. Quite soon, however, the children started to lose interest. Only offering a context for “free play” did not lead the activity further. There was a need for more challenging learning within the activity. As the Brothers Lionheart involves a great deal of fighting between the Cherry Valleyans and Tengil’s forces, this was an apparent element in the children’s free play. A chaotic atmosphere in the classroom and a clear absence of order evoked a discussion among the children about common rules for playing.<sup>18</sup> At this point the teachers felt that more adult guidance was needed:

*Data excerpt 3: From a teacher discussion, Feb 5, 2004*

T2: I don’t think this will take us far... We’ve been following this for three days now. Well, two days. So beyond that, they just won’t have the strength to concentrate. We need to have something, the kind of...

T1: teacher guidance

T2: Yeah, and the kind where they experience it [the playworld] as a shared thing.

T3: Perhaps that ties in a little bit...

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<sup>18</sup> Children’s discussion on the rules for a playworld activity in another context is examined also in Hakkarainen, 2009.

The teachers and I met for our weekly planning session to discuss the plans for the next steps in the playworld. At the end of the month we then decided that it was time to launch a collective adventure for the whole class. The idea was that during the adventure the children and teachers would act as Cherry Valleyans on their way to Wild Rose Valley:

*Data excerpt 4: From a teacher discussion, Feb 26, 2004*

T1: I think it's a captivating thought that we could form an adventure that could be shared by all. An adventure which would start in Cherry Valley. So there would always be something new. Something new [that] would be interconnected [to the story] by these motivating characters [both the teachers' and the children's own].

Here started the actual playworld adventure on which my empirical analyses in the articles in Part II mainly focus.

*Phase 3: The playworld adventure (March to May 2004)*

The start of the adventure was planned by the adults in the following way: one morning in early March three villagers from Cherry Valley (the teachers in roles) brought news to the children: they had found a wounded dove (a prop made earlier in the class) that carried a secret message under its wings (later it appeared that the message was from Mathias, a grandfather figure played by a teacher). It read: "*Come soon, something terrible will happen here.*" In the message, the teachers had used a code language that some of the children had invented earlier. In the code, different symbols (such as a triangle, a moon and a star) represented different letters.

The group had to decide what to do with the message. Who sent it? Should they take action? How should one prepare for the journey? This was the first learning task for the whole group. The task can be seen as a "platform" that would connect the later learning tasks in their journey meaningfully to an emerging narrative plot. In a collective meeting that was called by a teacher in the role of Jossi of the Golden Cockerel Inn, the group decided to start a journey to Wild Rose Valley to see what was behind the message that they had received.<sup>19</sup> For me, as a researcher

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<sup>19</sup> I have analyzed this meeting in my analysis of Anton's actions and the development of agency in the playworld (Rainio, 2008a). It was a chaotic and contradictory session where the teacher in Jossi's role had to take authority as two boys were leading the situation by acting as "drunks" and several other children were developing the plot and discussing the coming events. It was characteristic of the playworld that several different actions would take place simultaneously and that some of the children were more drawn to the plot than others. This made anticipation of events difficult for the teachers, but it also made the children's agentic actions both more possible and more difficult: I have dealt with this issue in the empirical articles and in the concluding chapters, Chapters 7 and 8.

behind a camera, it was revealing to see the classroom turn into the story's world and how fast some of the children were drawn into the plot. From that point on, the class had a common task in the playworld: to find out who sent the message and why and to discover what was going on in Wild Rose Valley. Here began a long and adventurous journey to Wild Rose Valley with the purpose of rescuing the village from the hands of evil Tengil and his soldiers. Both the children and teachers took on the roles of villagers from Cherry Valley who wanted to help the people in Rose Valley. Some of the children had permanent roles, while some of them played themselves or took on different roles during the journey. Some children assumed a more central position in leading the journey and developing the plot, while others created their own "side stories" inside the plot (see Rainio 2008a and 2008b; Rainio, 2009, and Hofmann & Rainio, 2007). The teachers acted as mediating characters in the story: they addressed new problems and twists in the plot, which the group faced jointly and tried to solve. Each week a new task and a new location were planned by the teachers on the basis of the previous week's events. Finally the group made its way to Wild Rose Valley, managed to "escape" from the soldiers of Tengil and freed the freedom fighter Orvar (played by a pupil called Henry), who was imprisoned in the cave of the dangerous dragon Katla (which was a paper monster constructed in a small group in January). When the last big battle with Tengil's soldiers (played now by one teacher and a group of boys who fancied playing these roles) took place in the nearby forest, the villagers of course won. On the last day of the playworld, May 19<sup>th</sup>, the whole group – including Tengil's soldiers – entered Nangilima, a place in the book where only good exists (it was a campfire spot close to the school where the class made a trip). My empirical analysis focuses on this third phase from March to May 2004 since it forms a coherent and developing set of data; however, data from the two first phases is used as additional, informative data (such as the teachers' planning day and the video data from the small group work).

Maintaining the shared narrative activity required a large amount of preplanning and organization from the teachers (Rainio, 2008b). Simultaneously, it meant tolerating uncertainty, as the results of an activity could not be foreseen. The narrative approach requires improvised acting and careful listening to children's ideas and initiatives. In the Brothers Lionheart playworld this was made possible by a division of labor where one or two adults acted as fictional characters while the other two remained in the background to keep the overall situation in hand. Ideally, the tasks would be shared and negotiated between all four teachers and the pupils. However, in practice this was a difficult task to perform (for more discussion of this task, see Chapter 7). The characters of the teachers became a central tool for organizing the imaginative actions. Through their role actions the teachers set up tasks and "key events" that evoked the children's interest and motivated them to initiate action. At the same time, acting in roles released them from their typical "teacher roles." Appendixes 3 and 4 represent the playworld events and phases in a time line and the data collected in each phase.

### 4.3 Entering the field

I first attended the class in August 2003. I had heard about the group for the first time in the spring of 2003. I had been looking for a school in which I could start an ethnographic study on the questions of children's agency formation in institutional educational practices. I contacted Professor Hakkarainen, who was the head of the narrative learning research project. He consulted the teachers, and they welcomed me to visit their group in September 2003.<sup>20</sup> I spent two to three days in the classroom following their daily activities and getting to know the teachers and the children. The class had – as far as I knew – a particularly interesting way of using drama, literature and play as part of their everyday classroom activities. I noticed that the children and adults seemed to negotiate a large part of the day's organization together. The teachers too seemed to cooperate together on a daily basis, which is not typical in the Finnish school system (although in the kindergarten system it is typical). Also the classroom space itself – this was my first intuition – appeared to be the children's "own space": they moved and occupied the little rooms of the area quite freely (see the pictures in Appendix 7). Although the class belonged to the elementary school, it was curiously separated from it physically and had its own entrance at the back of the school. The old janitor's house of the school had been renovated and connected to a classroom so that the class space now actually contained five separate small rooms, including a living room, small kitchen, recreation room (called in the class the fairy tale room), play room and a traditional classroom (see Appendix 2 for a rough floor plan of the classroom). The class also had their own little backyard where the smaller children could play with more privacy.

After a couple of visits to the class I decided to start an ethnographic research study with this group, and both the children and the teachers welcomed me warmly. They were all curious about me but not really surprised or distracted by my presence. After all, they had been part of a long-term developmental project and were accustomed to having both visitors and researchers in their class. The teachers were also familiar with the videotaping and documenting of their classroom activities. As this was their first year without the regular support of the university or teacher training, and since the pedagogy was still relatively new for them,<sup>21</sup> I noticed that they reacted to my presence as extra help: although I had not been part of the pilot project earlier, I could be an extra eye and a "mirror" for them

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<sup>20</sup> Normally in ethnographic studies, particularly in educational institutions, access to the field is considered one of the biggest challenges. In my case it was not a problem due to the pilot study conducted with the teachers and children in the group earlier. Although different in its approach, my study was a natural continuation of this study.

<sup>21</sup> One larger and several smaller playworlds had previously been organized in the group. In the school year 2002–2003 the teachers had for the first time independently and without researcher support planned and organized a playworld based on the book *Ronia the Robber's Daughter*. In earlier years they had created playworlds either with the help of Professor Hakkarainen or his students in the pilot project.



and the pedagogical solutions they found, and in this way they would not need to document their activities themselves.

During the fall of 2003 I visited the classroom regularly. At this point I did not yet collect video data but used participant observation and wrote regular field notes. The main purpose was to familiarize myself with the classroom culture and practices and to get to know the students and the teachers. I also had many discussions with the teachers about the planned playworld activity that would take place in the coming spring.<sup>22</sup>

#### 4.4 Data collection

After the playworld started in January 2004 I spent Wednesday and Thursday mornings (the days devoted to the playworld activity) in the classroom for the following five months.<sup>23</sup> I had one to two video cameras with me each time, and I videotaped the project in its entirety. The videos together with my field notes form the main data. They show a diverse set of activities from the three phases of the playworld, varying from the children's and adults' improvised play to the whole group discussions and negotiations of the playworld events. I also audio-recorded the meetings held by the teachers each Thursday afternoon after the week's playworld sessions. I had an active role in these planning and evaluation meetings: I participated in the teachers' discussions and sometimes suggested ideas for developing the playworld. The teachers often asked me how things looked from my point of view, and I in turn asked the teachers to share their feelings about the week's events and if they had suggestions for the documentation. Sometimes I reported on my observations from the field and showed my videos to them. (I come back to my role in the field in the following section, 4.5.)

All the data I collected was within the framework of the playworld. Thus, I have not included the children's play and interaction outside the "official" playworld time into my empirical analyses, although I know from my own and the teachers' observations that the children's play in their own time was often related to the playworld activity. However, I have decided to focus on the children's and adults' interaction within the playworld setting and the development of children's agency in it.

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<sup>22</sup> The decision to focus on the playworld came after five week's participation in a similar kind of playworld project at the University of California, San Diego, which I visited in the fall of 2003. During my visit I planned and collected data for a local playworld project called *Baba Yaga* that was implemented by a group of researchers interested in applying narrative learning methods and Lindqvist's play pedagogy in the US preschool system. The difference from the Brothers Lionheart project was that the Californian project was a researcher-led experimental pilot study, whereas in Finland the playworld now was a teacher-led part of regular school activities. This experience gave me a good basis for running a respective project independently in the Finnish site, and it also directed my interests and observations towards the playworld in the Finnish classroom. The Californian playworld data, however, is not included as research material for this study.

<sup>23</sup> I soon became a "symbol" of the playworld for the children: when I came in the door with my camera equipment the children would know that it was time for the playworld and often yell, "Hey, today is the playworld day!"



The overall data for my study consists of:

- Videotapes of diverse playworld activities from the spring, ca. 60 hours with respective field notes and field diary
- The teachers' weekly planning and evaluation meetings, which were tape-recorded and transcribed (altogether approximately 200 pages of transcriptions)
- Interviews with the children at the end of May (videotaped) and several discussions with the children along the way (not recorded, only notes made)
- Photocopies of four of the children's school journals from the playworld days (the school journal was a daily school task where the children wrote about each day's events informally in their notebooks)
- As additional data (not used in the actual analysis): photographs of the drawings, props, artwork and other materials that were produced as a part of the project (see Appendix 8)
- A stimulated-recall interview with the key teacher (T1) (March, 22, 2006)

I applied for official permission from the students' parents, the teachers and the city administration for my study (see the permission forms in Appendix 5a-c). The school's principal gave oral permission for the study. I met the parents in school meetings where I informed them about the study, and we also organized a session for the parents where I told about my initial findings and showed some data from the playworld. I also visited the city administration and presented my initial work on the playworld data.

One child's parents did not give me a permission to videotape their child so I tried to avoid directly filming activities where the child was an active part. However, in some of the collective events of the classroom the child necessarily appears in my video data. I have not shown this data in presentations nor have included the child in any of my empirical analyses. From the point of view of my data gathering I did not find the fact that I could not videotape this one child in the group to be very problematic or complicating. However, for the child the situation was sometimes confusing. She/he seemed to notice that I tried to avoid filming him/her and often sought a way to be in front of my camera or directly asked me to film her/him. In these cases I often turned off my video camera and continued "filming" without recording or just listened to what she/he was saying without collecting data.

Obtaining the children's permission for the study was a more complicated issue as many of them could not yet read or write (for a thorough discussion of the ethical questions in studying children, see Strandell, 2005). I explained why I was at the school, that I wanted to learn from their activities in the classroom and that I particularly wanted to write about their playworld activity. I told them that I would write a book about the playworld. If I videotaped the children's playing or other activities I normally asked before entering the room or setting up my camera. Also, if I clearly saw a need for privacy or felt that my camera would have interrupted something, even though nothing was said aloud, I decided not to film.

From the children whose actions I followed more carefully in my data analyses (Anton in Article I, Helen and Sara in Article II, and Emil and Tom in Article IV) I have not asked specific permission for doing so. However, these children have given me their general (oral) permission for me to be involved in the project and to videotape. The reason for this was that while doing the field work I did not yet know where my analysis would lead me or what hints I would follow later on. During the field work I did not yet pay special attention to these children and I did not videotape them more than the other children; instead my interest in studying their actions developed after leaving the field. However, during the parents' evening I did tell Anton's and Emil's parents that I might focus my analysis on their actions, and we discussed how I would do this and the anonymity of their children in my study. They gave me their oral permission.

In the following section I will specify my role in the field and discuss the ethnographic approaches that have inspired me or guided me during the field work.

#### **4.5 The ethnographic approach of the study and the researcher's position in the field**

The research site of this study crosses the borders of day care, preschool and elementary school. All of these contexts have been the focus of several (sociological or educational) ethnographic studies in recent years in Finland. Studies inspired by the sociology of childhood have focused on understanding children's life in institutions and the meanings children themselves give to their life circumstances and experiences (i.e., Strandell, 1994; Törrönen, 1999). The way children manifest themselves as agents in day care (Lehtinen, 2000) and how classroom culture is constructed during the first year in elementary school (Salo, 1999) have been studied ethnographically. Extensive ethnographic school research has been conducted in Finland also from the feminist and post-structuralist perspectives focusing on the production of difference and normality on questions such as gender and nationality in education (see Gordon et al., 2006; Lappalainen et al., 2007). In these studies the main data collection method has been participant observation.<sup>24</sup> Also children's play has been studied through the ethnographic approach (Sawyer, 1997; Corsaro, 2003; in Finland, i.e., Riihelä, 2000 and Rutanen, 2007).

I share with these studies many similarities in the way data collection, field work and data analysis were carried out (see later in this section). However, my researcher position and ethnographic attitude in the field also differs from these

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<sup>24</sup> The roots of educational ethnography as participant observation go back to Paul Willis's study of working class boys in England published in 1979. An even earlier version of school ethnography is Roger G. Barker's (1951) study of "One boy's day" in which Barker followed a school boy through his day both at home and at elementary school, aiming at a detailed account of the everyday life circumstances of children. These studies used participant observation as their main forms of collecting data. Today, video and other technical research tools have become common in data collection in ethnographic settings.

recent ethnographic accounts conducted in Finnish educational research. As Lahelma and Gordon (2007, p. 29) note, Finnish school ethnography has been interested in the issues of unpacking stereotypes or inequalities in educational practices and is related to the British critical sociological research tradition. It has produced several important findings on today's educational system and its unsatisfying practices. However, the interest in changing these practices has not been part of the research interest in this approach. Further, the analyses conducted have not typically focused on the detailed micro-interaction of small and focused activities but rather on larger institutional levels involving different sets of data. The collection of video data has been relatively rare, and the researcher is equipped primarily with a pen and a notebook when entering the field (see, however, Kankkunen, 2004).

In my study audio-visual data plays a central role. I am on one hand interested in the moment-to-moment interaction as it unfolds in the playworld activity. My study comes therefore close to a socioculturally oriented interactional video-based ethnography where the focus is on the way "members of a social group construct local knowledge and patterned ways of communicating, knowing, being and doing" (Green et. al., 2007, p. 118). On the other hand, my study is also influenced by the cultural-historical and activity theoretical tradition and what in the context of developmental work research has recently been called the "ethnography of change" (Kerosuo, 2006), the "sensitive ethnography of change" (Hasu, 2005) or "developmental ethnography" (Engeström, 2000). What is typical of this approach is that the ethnographic interest lies not only in understanding or unpacking the existing practices but in understanding the dynamics of change through actively producing it in practice and in dialogue with the participants. In developmental ethnography the data serves the intervention: it is used as "mirror data" against which the need for change can be articulated and reflected; it is used as a tool to stimulate development.<sup>25</sup>

Although my study is not developmental work research, it has certain similarities to the ethnography of change approach. First, the playworld project can be understood as an intervention (Hakkarainen, 2009). It was carried out in a pilot class that was based on certain theoretical and practical understandings of learning, development and children's play (cultural-historical play theory and

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<sup>25</sup> Further, based as it is on dialectics, in the developmental ethnography/the ethnography of change approach the researcher focuses not only on the present activity but locates the change through tracing the theoretical-historical development of the activity. According to the principles of activity theory, the developmental ethnographer often focuses on the disturbances and contradictions as a source of development. The analytical interest is on the level of the whole activity system. Although my analytical focus in this study is not at the level of the activity system but on the level of individual participation, I still locate this individual participation at the level of the activity and its historical development. That is, I offer an *explanatory context* that makes the individual actions understandable and meaningful. My attempt to locate the playworld site in a theory-historical framework can be found in Chapter 3. The methodological principles that guided my data analysis are introduced in Chapter 6.

narrative learning, Lindqvist 1995; Hakkarainen 2004), and it also aimed at developing children's play according to these principles. It was a real life experimental setting and offered a unique opportunity to study these developmental and social processes as they unfolded in situ (Hakkarainen, 2006a; Lecusay & Ferholt, 2008). On the other hand, the playworld project was also a part of the actual, daily activities of the school class.

Although I was primarily a participatory ethnographer in the field and had not been involved in the earlier intervention phase, my role in planning and developing the playworld activity was active and participatory. However, I did not collect the ethnographic data for the purposes of an intervention but to understand the development of the children's agency within the activity. To summarize, my role could be called a "peripheral interventionist," and the research paradigm that I followed could be called, following Wardekker (2000, p. 269), "transformational, collaborative research." An important element here is dialogue: the field work is not only about the researcher one-sidedly gathering data, but of developing the practice together so that both share the responsibility:

We should note that the term *dialogue* has a wider meaning here than usual. It implies not only talking, but also acting together, and in it the wider cultural and historical contexts of both the activity system and the participants resonate, so that it is probably more accurate to speak of a polylogue. Moreover, the goal of this polylogue has not been one-sidedly determined by the researcher who wants to assemble data, but it is about possible development of a practice. Its intention is to establish a "discursive rationality" in which alternative practices are discussed and tried out. (Wardekker, 2000, p. 270, italics in the original)

I am an active supporter of the play pedagogy of Gunilla Lindqvist and Pentti Hakkarainen, and my research interest – critical though it is – also relates to making this practice work better and become more common in the Finnish early education system. Therefore, I was not and I still am not neutral in relation to the research field. This makes me co-responsible for both the research results and the practice changes (compare Wardekker, 2000). On the other hand, particularly in this kind of situation, a critical and distanced position to the activity becomes highly important, and this is what I strived for in my empirical analyses (for more of this, see Chapter 6 and Chapter 8).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> I deeply respect the teachers in this classroom and their attitude to and expertise in their work, as well as their way of interacting with the children. On the other hand, my interest in my study is to understand how children's agency is manifested and developed, supported or hindered by the activity and by the pedagogy. This means that a critical and distanced view of the activity was necessary for me in order to proceed. However, due to my active participation in the planning of the activity, I find myself simultaneously responsible for the choices and decisions made in the playworld.

Certain basic characteristics can be said to be similar in different ethnographic traditions. First, people's actions are studied in the circumstances where they live and work. The data is typically gathered from a range of sources, although the focus can be on a few fairly small scale cases, even on single settings (however, see, i.e., Kerosuo, 2006 for a multi-site ethnography typical of developmental work research). Intensive participation, close observation and emotional and physical presence and experiencing play a central role in the research process and in the way knowledge is produced (Hasu, 2005; Lappalainen et al., 2007). This makes the data collection in an ethnographic research setting time consuming and relatively "unstructured." That is, the ways of collecting data, the methodological and analytical choices made, and the theories used to interpret the data are generated out of and alongside the research process; there is no fixed research design (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Lappalainen et al. (2007, p. 10) elegantly describe an ethnographic attitude as "an ethical encountering," meaning that the researcher sets herself to listen to the people of her study, appreciating their ways of knowing and meaning making, and simultaneously recognizing that the research subjects' knowledge can never be the researcher's knowledge. In research with small children this encountering faces special challenges (Strandell 2005; Nikander & Zecher, 2006).

Harriet Strandell (1994) describes the day care reality as a stream of actions and events that are composed of creating and maintaining social relationships. Activities are layered and often diffuse and fragmented, and the assemblages of children can change fast. Children's actions are concrete, and verbal communication forms only a small part of their interaction. More central are movements, gestures, eye movements and sounds (see also Riihelä, 2000). This makes it more difficult for adults to comprehend what children do, mean or intend. Strandell's illustration is also a good description of the nature of the playworld site from a researcher perspective. In the playworld even the children's movements were sometimes very challenging for an adult with a video camera as they could run from one place to another through and across very small and rambling places. My field notes sometimes contained my distress over the chaotic nature of the data collection:

*Data excerpt 5: Field Journal, Feb. 5, 2004*

I was at the school until 4 pm, there were lots of things going on today. Overall I remember the enormous chaos and noise: the children tried out any characters they wished and could do what they wanted with them. This was very visible and audible. The whole classroom felt like an uncontrollable battlefield. I tried to film in this hubbub but the outcome was poor; I could not concentrate on anything. Too much hassle.

One of the central problems was on what to focus, in Susan Newman's (1998, p. 236) words, "how to locate the site," which constituted of constantly changing locations and assemblages. Although the playworld was realized in the classroom and rooted in the original story of Astrid Lindgren's book, it was simultaneously constructed in the imagination and fantasy of the participants. This meant that the children and teachers acted in several parallel worlds at the same time, and in parallel roles, too (i.e., as a teacher of the classroom and as Mathias of the playworld). The activities were always partly improvised in situ. It would have been impossible to grasp the playworld through field notes and written observations only. The actions in the playworld were so immersive and rapid that I could not take notes while following the activity. A video camera was an easier way to follow along without having to be cut off from the stream of actions. This is characteristic also of the "ethnography of change" where many instant and uncertain decisions have to be made on short notice:

[I]n the practice of the ethnography of change, much tinkering and improvisation falls to the individual researcher – instant reasoning and spontaneous decision making about which of the many configurations of interaction to follow, and which one could be a significant new interaction or initiative. Because the activity focused on is still in its early stages or in the process of emerging, new activity appears on rare occasions and in short spells. For the ethnographer, this means intense presence at the sites and hunting (sometimes simply waiting) for traces, "hunches," to keep track of where to move next. This also calls for new means of reflection on the interpretation of the research process, which does not happen in research settings in which the activity forms a fixed work pattern and constellation of participants (such as courts of law and general practitioners' work at health care centers). When focusing on such stable work patterns, the researcher can more easily stop to reflect on his or her past actions and the next step without fear of losing track of the pattern. (Hasu, 2005, p. 96-97)

As Hasu above points out, in the activities without a "fixed work pattern and constellation of participants" the researcher needs to make instant and spontaneous decisions of what interaction to follow and where to move next.

For me, video data from at least two different perspectives (setting up the cameras in different locations) was necessary for an analytical understanding of my research site. There were cases in which only a later review of the video data revealed something that had happened right under my nose when I had been focusing on following another interaction at that moment (an example of this is how I constructed Helen's case in Article II, see Chapter 6). At the same time my physical presence at and personal experience of the activity was necessary in order to interpret the videos. When I have shown some of my data to colleagues who have not been involved in the playworld, it has been almost impossible for

them to grasp the sense of these parallel and changing events that the video has captured. They make sense only if one has lived through them (of *perezhivanie* in the playworld, see Ferholt, 2009). Also, the atmosphere or the scale of emotions lived through by the participants is rarely visible in the video data. Therefore, the combination of my very personal field notes with the video recordings and discussions with the participants can capture what was going on in the playworld site.

As I already mentioned, I chose an active role in the field. This meant that my data collection was secondary to my being present for the teachers and the children. Contributing and being available was also a way of obtaining my place in the classroom and of reciprocating the teachers' and children's open-mindedness and hospitality. In ethnography the physical experiencing of and living through the research site are important parts of knowledge creation. Creating personal relationships with the research subjects should not be bypassed as irrelevant phases of the research: they are necessary not only ethically but also for attaining valid knowledge from the field (Gordon et al., 2006). Although a central topic in ethnographic literature, this side of ethnographic research has been neglected in the intervention studies that use ethnography as a part of data gathering (Hasu, 2005).

On the other hand, close relationships can also create problems and challenges that the researcher needs to be conscious of in every phase of the research. In my case study for example I had to consider my relationship with the children: how close I could become with them and how I would respond to them, what kind of a responsible adult I would be. Here is an excerpt from my field notes:

*Data excerpt 6: Notes from Field Journal, Sept. 26, 2003*

Outside Raisa climbed into my lap and asked me to hold her. I did. At the same time I was trying to see what a group of children were doing in the forest. Raisa wants to be with me more than the other children and clearly wants to be just with me. The following episode could describe the situation:

R: Who do you know the best out of everyone?

AP: You mean from this class?

R: Yes.

AP: Well, I think I know everyone more or less the same. I'd at least like to know everyone equally well.

R: But who do you know the best? Well you're here with me now, just with me. Isn't that right?

AP: Yeah, in a way I am, yes, I'm here with you now...

(I don't remember what Raisa said next.)



AP: But, err, well my task or job here is that I'm not like with anyone specifically. So I kind of just follow and observe. Like watch whatever everyone is up to and doing. My boss at work wants me to do it like that.

R: Where do you work?

AP: At the university.

R: My sister goes to university too.

AP: Oh really?

Ethnographers often describe their roles as being somewhere in between an insider and outsider (i.e., Hasu, 2005; Gordon et al., 2006), requiring a balance between participation and distanciation (cf. Wardekker, 2000). I chose to be present for the children, to respond to their needs and not to treat them only as research objects. However, I still needed to keep a distance to be able to sustain my "flexible" researcher role, and I was careful not to become too attached to any individual children. This was not easy, as can be seen above.

In the playworld adventure I was the only one without a fictive role (although I often became a part of the playworld in some improvised ways, such as my camera turning into "a terrible monster" etc.). One of the teachers described my role in the field in a very revealing way: she had noticed how I was "on the threshold," not really coming in but not staying out either. The classroom was composed of many small rooms and had many doorways. I often leaned on a doorway with my camera – from that position I could see two rooms simultaneously but would not disturb the play session taking place in the rooms. "On the threshold" was also a mental state – being on the border of different worlds. I was not a teacher, but not a child either. I did not have a fictive character in the playworld, but I was there. I did not feel a part of the academic community while in the school, but the school was not my world either. The children pondered my in-between position, too:

*Data excerpt 7: Notes from Field Journal, Sept. 24, 2003*

In the afternoon, Joel asked me again whether I was an adult. The conversation went something like this:

J: Hey Pauliina, can you drive a car?

AP: Oh you mean do I know how to drive a car? Yes I can.

J: No I mean are you allowed to?

AP: Yeah I am, I'm that old.

Another child (I don't remember who): So do you have a driver's license then?



AP: Yes I do.

Child: So then you can drive because you have to have one in order to drive.

J: Are you an adult?

AP smiles. (The other children are explaining something that I start listening to.)

Joel asks again: Are you an adult?

AP: Yeah, I am. I suppose since, among other things, I can drive a car.

Similarly to, for example, Lappalainen (2006) on her study in Finnish day care, I too actively avoided becoming “one of the teachers” so that the children would be able to build a relationship with me without the typical pupil-teacher burden. If the children asked me to solve some of their quarrels or asked me for directions or permission, I directed them to their teachers if that was possible. As I wanted to listen to the children, I often “hung around” with them. For example, at lunch time I sat with them at their small tables, and during breaks when I observed their play I found myself being involved in it. On the other hand, I also acquired the teachers’ habits in many ways too, including drinking coffee and having meetings for “adults only.” I also wanted to hang around with the teachers so that they would become acquainted with me and find it easy to work with me. The children certainly knew of the adults’ weekly Thursday gatherings where the playworld was planned, and they also knew that I had an active role in these meetings. It is no wonder then that my role confused the children at the beginning.

When I left the classroom in the end of the school year in May, the teachers organized a small “farewell party” for the children and me. This made it easier for us to end our year-long friendship.



## 5 THE RESEARCH TASK

The aim of this study is to produce empirical knowledge of the different ways in which children struggle to become recognized and agentive actors in early education settings and how their agency develops in their interaction with adults. Particularly, the aim is to examine how a playworld as a form of activity mediates both the development of students' agency and a relationship between adults and children that promotes agency.

The main objectives for implementing the playworld activity in the classroom were the following: (a) to make learning, teaching and classroom work a more meaningful and shared experience for everyone in the classroom through the use of play, improvisation and drama; (b) to develop teacher-student relations in the classroom by creating a joint activity; and therefore (c) to enhance students' involvement, responsibility and motivation towards the class's activities <sup>27</sup> (see Figure 2 in Chapter 7, see also Rainio, 2005; 2008b). Through these objectives, the playworld pedagogy explicitly aimed at developing and changing the routines of early childhood education through promoting student agency (see Chapter 4). Therefore its application can be argued to make visible some of the problems, challenges and possibilities that relate to the development of students' agency in early education in general and in play pedagogy in particular.

The research task consists of the following intertwined empirical research questions:

1. What are the children's ways of enacting their agency in the playworld?
2. How do the children's agentive actions change and develop over the spring?
3. What are the potentials and challenges of the playworld for promoting student agency?
4. How do the teachers and the children deal with and struggle with the contradiction between control and agency in the playworld pedagogy?

The first research question focuses on the small scale micro-interaction between the adults and children and the situational manifestations and hints of student agency in the playworld data. The second research question moves on to grasp the *development and continuity* of these separate, local actions of the individual children. Articles I and II focus on these two research questions explicitly – they identify two very different 'paths to agency' in the playworld data. In Article I the data is analyzed from the perspective of a boy who is categorized in the classroom as a "problem child." The focus is on the way he uses the narrative structure of the activity in enacting and developing his agency and how the class and the teachers

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<sup>27</sup> The formulation here is the researcher's, but the objectives were articulated by the teachers in the planning session on Jan. 9, 2003.

respond to his agentive actions. In Article II I deal with the question of agency from a gender perspective and analyze the multiple ways in which two girls struggle for agency in the activity. The focus is also on the significance of imagination and private play for the development of agency.

Although all four articles contribute to the third research question, it is more specifically dealt with in Articles III and IV. In Article III we discuss the playworld as a potential space for what we have called ‘shared agency’ – the prerequisites and possibilities for a collective sense of agency between the students and teachers in the class. In Article IV I take the teachers’ point of view and examine the playworld as a teacher-led intervention. I ask what the potentials and challenges of the playworld are for promoting students’ agency in school and what makes the teachers’ committed to developing this activity in the classroom year after year, despite its obvious challenges.

As was already taken up in Chapter 3, a central finding in my empirical analyses is that both the struggle for and promotion of student agency in the playworld were often confronted with the adults’ need to manage the classroom and to control the activities. In Chapter 3 I further argued how schooling and the pedagogical adult-child relationship inevitably means balancing between control and agency, reflecting the so-called ‘double task’ of education. In the data this balancing was visible in many ways. Therefore, I formulated my fourth research question to address this issue specifically. The contradiction between control and agency is a theme particularly in Articles I and IV. My hypothesis is that the contradiction between control and agency not only challenges the activity but also creates fruitful places for development and learning in the activity.

To conclude, the empirical analyses introduced in Articles I–IV each deal with these questions from different perspectives (see Table 1 in Chapter 6 and Table 3 in Chapter 7). Although each article offers only a partial view of the problem at hand, together they create a more complementary view. The results are introduced in Chapter 7. Next, I will discuss the methodological choices of the study.

## 6 METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

In Chapter 4 I introduced the ethnographic methodology of this study. In this chapter I will further discuss the basic methodological underpinnings that guided my analysis of the ethnographic data in the four articles that form the empirical part of this dissertation. I will first introduce the general methodological framework for studying the development of agency from the sociocultural and activity theoretical perspective. Then I will describe the process of data analysis and the central principles guiding the process. I will discuss the abductive process of developing research ideas, the formation of the unit of observation and the unit of analysis for the analyses as well as the principles for conducting a qualitative narrative analysis of the data from different perspectives.

### 6.1 Methodological framework: Studying agency from the perspective of individuals

This study can be located in the broader theoretical framework of sociocultural and activity theory (abbreviated as SAT, see Section 2.3). These approaches are typically interested in the processes of learning, development and change, but consider the traditional psychological analysis that focuses on individuals – or better, on individual psychological properties – as problematic for capturing these processes (Rogoff, 1995; Matusov, 2007; Edwards & Mackenzie, 2008). The ‘first generation’ activity theoretical researchers (i.e., L. S. Vygotsky, A. N. Leontiev, A. Luria, and B. Mescheryakov) focused on individual *mediated action* as their unit of analysis in experimentally constructed research settings. Since then, the tendency in SAT has been to bring the study of development from experimental settings to real-life environments and practices and to expand the unit of analysis. For example, in the Finnish application of the activity theoretical approach the unit of analysis is typically formulated as “the collective, artifact-mediated and object-oriented activity system” (Engeström, 2001, p. 136).<sup>28</sup> The claim is that activity as a unit of analysis enables a holistic view of the study of the change and development of historically developed activities. Engeström (1995) points out that a focus on the individual action level does not capture the larger activity, its rules, historical development and other people involved, which all play a crucial role in understanding change.

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<sup>28</sup> And further, in what Yrjö Engeström (2001, p. 136) calls “the third generation of activity theory,” the unit of analysis is “the collective, artifact-mediated and object-oriented activity system seen in its network of relations to other activity systems.”

In this study my focus is on the *subjects* of the activity: individuals and their developing possibilities for agency in their participation in the creation of the playworld (in which the creation of the playworld is taken to form the collective, mediated and object-oriented activity; compare Figure 2 in Chapter 7). Following the framework of SAT I understand individual development as socially and historically constituted, taking place in collective activity systems that the subjects are and have been a part of (see Chapter 2).

As I took up in Chapter 2, it is problematic to talk about agency as an individual phenomenon. Agency is a complex and contradictory process of interaction with material resources, social institutions and the collective efforts of individuals. On the other hand, I also argued that individual efforts and individuals' understanding of themselves as *agentive* is crucial for agency to become possible. Often a need for change starts from a small scale resistance that requires individual courage and individual (mediated) actions, the contribution of what we have elsewhere called *carriers of agency* (cf. Hofmann & Rainio, 2007, p. 320). Therefore, it is of utmost importance to understand how individuals participating, for example, in institutions of education gain experiences of agency and how they develop into agentive actors. In order to capture this process, one needs to study the phenomenon of agency as it is related both to the individual and to the activity that the individual is a part of (see also Edwards & Mackenzie, 2008). Another central methodological problem is how the analysis should be conducted in order to capture agency – and individuals' possibilities for agency – as developing over time but also as situationally constructed and constantly under negotiation, as a local negotiation of power and control (Martin, 2004).

The problem then is how to define the unit of analysis for the study in such a case – without falling back on a traditional psychological study of solitary and detached individuals, but avoiding also the problem of holism or 'gigantism' that can conceal the varying individual perspectives and often leads to the problem of managing the research object (Matusov, 2007). In my study the collective activity system, for example, is not the appropriate level to capture changes taking place "inside the subject corner" of the activity: the individuals' developing perspectives and orientations towards the joint activity. Instead, the individual's participation and orientation forms the "foreground level" (cf. Rogoff, 1995) of my analysis, where the "background level" making these individual perspectives understandable and meaningful stems from the larger activity that the individuals are engaged in and its historical development (see Chapter 3). The four empirical analyses (the articles in the second part) each offer an "incomplete" or a partial view of the problem of agency in early education, but together they help to understand the phenomenon dynamically from multiple perspectives. Matusov suggests that this kind of "partial methodology" appreciates diversity and avoids monologic and hegemonic interpretations:

[It] does not claim to be certain and does not try to accomplish certainty within one given study but rather transforms the certainty one way or another, making some statements more or less likely, more or less certain before based on the findings. In the proposed partial methodology, certainty (in Latour's sense of becoming a 'black box') can be achieved through many studies focused on different parts of the system. ... Similarly, each study can provide 'weak evidence' with a lot of uncertainty of possible alternative explanations due to the incompleteness of their units of analysis but together they may provide a rather convincing story, making alternative explanations implausible. (Matusov, 2007, p. 327–328)

In this kind of study the *theoretical concepts* do not usually direct the data collection or the data analysis, but rather *sensitize* (Blumer, 1986) the researcher to look at the data and its multiple and contradictory layers from certain angles. Accordingly, research findings help to develop and enrich the theoretical concepts. In this study my central theoretical concepts were 'agency' (discussed in Chapter 2), 'contradiction' (discussed in Chapters 2, 3 and 8) and the idea of the 'developmental potential of play' (introduced in Chapter 4).

Although the theoretical concepts usually help to see what is relevant, they do not yet allow the researcher to "move directly to the instance and its relevant content" (Blumer, 1986, p. 148). Concepts that can fill the gap between the more systematic theoretical phenomena (i.e., agency) and the often intuitive or "weak" observations or ideas from the data are needed. These concepts can be called *middle level analytical tools* (Engeström, 1995, p. 141), and this process of analyzing can be called abductive: it is a dialectical reading both of the theoretical discussion as well as of the empirical data. An abductive analysis is different from an inductive process in that the aim is not directly to generalize the findings, but to seek interpretations, models and arguments that will make these hints and separate observations meaningful and comprehensible in a larger framework. Abduction<sup>29</sup> means seeking new and meaningful ways to piece together what otherwise would stay irrelevant or inexplicable (Paavola & Hakkarainen, 2006). The analysis moves simultaneously from above and from below: from reconstructing a historical or a theoretical view or model of the activity or problem at hand and from analyzing the particular, ethnographically and analytically reconstructed, local activity that forms the object of study (Engeström, 1995; Silvonen, 2000; Rainio, 2003). The collective activity in and through which the individual actions are interpreted in this study is the pedagogical activity called a playworld (see Figure 2 in Chapter 7) as located in the institutional and historical frameworks of school and early education (see Figure 1 in Chapter 3).

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<sup>29</sup> Abduction was first introduced by C. S. Peirce's (1839-1914) as a third form of inference between inductive and deductive ways of gathering knowledge. For more about abductive data analysis in qualitative research see, i.e., Paavola (2003), Hakkarainen & Paavola (2005) and Rainio (2003).

## 6.2 The process of data analysis

In this section I will try to explicate the processes of the data analyses in the empirical articles. The main method for analyzing the data was a qualitative narrative analysis of the development of micro-interaction in the video data, contrasted with the teacher meeting data, other interview data and the field notes. This method has similarities with Green et al.'s (2007) video-based interactional ethnography and was inspired by Linell's (1998) dialogic interaction analysis, practice theories (see Holland & Leander, 2004) and narrative method (i.e., Polkinghorne, 1995; Bruner, 1996; Czarniawska, 1997; Lawler, 2002). Although in empirical qualitative research, the methodological choices of the researcher, the methods and tools for the analysis, the theoretical concepts and the interpretations of the data usually evolve in a dialectic or hermeneutic process, some steps in the analytical process can be described. The data analyses presented in the four articles followed approximately the following phases:

1. Organizing and managing the overall data after the field work (with the help of Transana)
2. Forming initial empirical research questions (the research focuses of each article) and selecting the data for each analysis
3. Dividing the selected data into analyzable units (the unit of observation and the unit of analysis, see Section 6.2.3)
4. Constructing the 'middle level analytical concepts' that describe and capture the studied phenomenon in each analysis
5. Conducting a systematic narrative analysis of the development of micro-interaction: reconstructing the starting point, critical turning point and the "endpoint"/"outcome" of an event or path
6. Writing the article: reporting and discussing the findings, refining the research questions; redeveloping the sensitizing concepts in dialogue with the data findings and the literature

I will next discuss each of these research phases in detail by taking examples from the articles.



## 6.2.1 Organizing and managing the data

A central question when working with a vast quantity of ethnographic data is how to organize it so that it is manageable. After finishing the field work in the summer of 2004 I had gathered approximately 60 hours of video data from diverse playworld events and interactions and dozens of recorded tapes of teacher meetings and student interviews. I first organized the video data with a free software program called Transana.<sup>30</sup> This program offered a practical way to keep track of the video records and index their contents. The video data of 30 children and four adults participating in various multiple and overlapping activities would have been too laborious to be transcribed. Also, Transana offered a good basis to move across levels of scale and to “focus in on particular moments without losing the larger context on a given record or expanding levels of context across records” (cf. Green et al., 2007, p. 123). All the teacher meeting records were also transcribed (by a research assistant of our research center) and indexed so that it was easier to review the discussions.

During the field work I often quickly reviewed the day’s videos and marked down the time codes for such episodes, events or interactions that had seemed important or interesting for a closer look. These “video logs” together with my field notes proved to be an invaluable help in indexing and organizing the video data in Transana. Text box 1 is a shortened excerpt of a video log.

### **Text box 1: Example of a video log (translated from Finnish)**

#### **Thursday 4.3.04 (Hand-held camera)**

About 0:00:12 Starting the day, dressing up as Cherry Valleyans.  
0:04–0:07 Girls select role clothes in the fairytale room, Helen, Sara etc. present.  
0:07:41 The party at the Golden Cockerel Inn starts.

#### Special:

0:09 Jossi wants to get to know Rusky and asks him to stand at the table.  
0:26 Jossi throws the drunken guys out (Anton, Joel, for some reason also Topias).  
The group discussion continues.

See the end: A sense of group spirit when the group starts a journey to Rose Valley to see what is happening there and who sent the message

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<sup>30</sup> Developed by Chris Fassnacht and David Woods.

## 6.2.2 Forming the initial empirical research ideas and selecting the data for analysis

A question that is often left vaguely stated in research reports is how the initial research ideas were developed. Another important but also neglected part of ethnographic studies is making the grounds for selecting data for a closer analysis clear when using typically very diverse, subjective and often chaotic and large sets of data. How does one select what to study in more detail? This phase of the study was traditionally called the “context of discovery,” a realm that for long was considered to be something that could not be tackled with conceptual means (cf. Hakkarainen & Paavola, 2005, p. 236). This abductive “seeking” of the research ideas is often guided by hints and cues from the data, from observing intriguing but problematic, unpredictable and contradictory notions and phenomena.

In my study, my experiences and intuitions in the field work helped me to create a sense of where to focus and what to follow in the data. Also, the general theoretical interest in the development of student agency guided my initial work with the data. I started by reading through the field notes and the teacher meeting transcripts; I watched the videos and read literature sensitizing me to the concept of agency. Although what I had chosen to follow with my camera during the field work directed and constrained what could later be analyzed, the video data also captured much interaction that I had not recognized or was not aware of before reviewing the data after leaving the field.

My general focus was on the participants’ interactions and encounters as well as their changing positions, locations and stances (Dreier, 1999) and their (agentive) actions and efforts in developing or taking an active stance towards the playworld. Since I was especially interested in how the playworld activity enabled the children’s participation and agency, I concentrated on elements such as creating and following the common playworld plot, acting as the fictional characters of the story, negotiating the rules of the playworld either inside or outside the plot, and using materials and tools such as props and costumes. This can be described as the process “hunting of traces” (cf. Hasu, 2005), which is very typical of ethnographic study. In two of the empirical analyses (Rainio, 2008a; Rainio, 2009) I followed one or two individual children as they moved across space and time, tracking how their participation changed or developed during the spring and in different settings. In the other two articles (Hofmann & Rainio, 2007; Rainio, 2008b) I focused on the emergence of a small scale interaction of the whole group in a certain limited playworld situation.

The first set of data on which I decided to focus related to a boy named Anton and his participation in the playworld. I wanted to look more closely at one episode in particular: the day that Anton was named Rusky’s bodyguard in the playworld. After this particular day, the teachers and I noticed a change in Anton’s way of acting in the playworld. I started to go through the videos both before and after this episode. I also started to read the teacher meeting transcripts and my own field notes tracing all the data in which Anton was mentioned. Slowly, I gath-

ered a set of data in Transana on what I came to call “Anton’s participation path,” consisting of all the video clips in which Anton was present and taking initiative (see Table 3 in Article I, Rainio 2008a, p. 137–140).

The data on Helen and Sara in Article II (Rainio, 2009) was gathered in a similar fashion. In the playworld, Helen and Sara had often stayed in the background, and I had not paid much attention to their actions. My interest in following their participation was awakened by two surprising details in the data. The first was the way Sara talked to me about her various fictive roles in the story at the end of the playworld when I interviewed her (see Excerpt 8 in Article IV). The other was one episode in the video data in which Sara’s close friend Helen had tried to enter the boys’ play with the new and improvised role of a “horse soldier” (see Excerpt 6 in Article IV). The theoretical interest in this article was inspired by my various notes on the role of gender in the playworld activity. First I started to closely analyze the micro-interaction in Helen’s horse soldier episode and presented the initial analysis of this episode at two conferences (see Rainio 2006; 2008c). This episode was, however, difficult to interpret without locating it within the wider stream of actions in the playworld. I decided to gather together all the video material I had on Helen and Sara. I wanted to see how they were positioned and categorized by others, the way adults and other children talked about them, and how they responded to this.

My research interest and the selection of the data for Article IV sprang initially from an episode that I had found particularly “catching” during the data collection and in which I had felt the atmosphere was somehow “different” than usual (this was the episode of April 21 where the roles of two pupils, Hubert and Julius, take the role of a teacher, Jossi, to Katla cavern, see Rainio 2008b). In this episode the teacher’s actions in her fictive role helped the two boys to take initiative and to take active positions in the playworld. I had also written in my field journal that the day revealed how central and guiding the adults’ roles were in the story. On the other hand, in the journal I also expressed my concerns that some other children may have had limited possibilities for agentive positions in the activity. There was something contradictory in this playworld event that I wished to conceptualize.

Finally, the data was selected and the analytical perspective developed in a slightly different fashion in Article III. My colleague Riikka Hofmann and I had been interested in the emergence and possibility of what we ended up calling “shared agency” in narrative play pedagogical activity in our respective research projects. We wanted to analyze this phenomenon more closely. We decided to compare Riikka’s interview data with my video interaction data to analyze the prerequisites for a sense of shared agency to develop. The students in Riikka’s research site had talked to her about what one student phrased “a sense of a shared mission” (see Hofmann & Rainio, 2007. p. 313; see also Hofmann, 2008). Related to this, I remembered one event during the playworld in which I had felt that something similar to that of a “shared mission” formulated by the student in Riikka’s data had taken place. I decided to analyze this event more closely to see

whether the vague idea worked: was it only in my imagination, or was there something more grounded in it? How did the event emerge, and what were the external signs of ‘a sense of a shared mission’ in this episode?

Curiously, in each of the four empirical analyses the initiator for a more detailed and comprehensive data analysis was what can be called a “critical” or “transitional” moment, or what I have called “a critical turning point” (Rainio, 2008a).<sup>31</sup> After establishing a starting point and a perspective for the analysis, it was time to systematize the data analysis, to create comparable units for the analysis and to find theoretically grounded concepts through which to conceptualize what was visible in the data. In the following two sections I briefly describe these phases of the study.

### 6.2.3 Dividing the data into analyzable units

In order to explicate the analytical process, I apply here Ritva Engeström’s (2002) definition of two different units in the study of human activity: the unit of observation and the unit of analysis. According to Engeström, what she calls “a unit of observation” represents a longer temporal process through which the researcher defines a beginning and an end for the observed activity. The unit of observation covers the sequences of the activity “that are constructed by the actors’ reciprocal actions and these actions’ relations to each other” (p. 41). For me, the importance of defining the unit of observation is to grasp the continuity and development of the phenomenon under study. In the narrative research method this unit of observation is typically called a “plot” based on the constructive work done by the researcher to make individual events meaningful and connect them to each other:

*Plot is the basic means by which specific events, otherwise presented as lists or chronicles, are brought into a meaningful whole. ... The difference lies in the temporal ordering, and thus in a suggested connection between the two. (Czarniawska, 1997, p. 18, italics in the original)*

In my study two different ‘units of observations’ can be discerned. In Articles I and II I organized the data by reconstructing what I called a *participation path*. It represents one clear continuum through which an individual child’s actions and others’ responses to these actions develop in relation to each other and in relation to the larger playworld activity that they are a part of. Here the time span is within weeks and months. In Articles III and IV the unit of observation is confined to

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<sup>31</sup> This comes close to the idea of *rich point* used by Judith Green and her colleagues: “A rich point is both a physical (a point in time) and a discursive place where a person has an opportunity to learn about the others’ viewpoint or cultural practices, and a place to learn through contrasting personal expectations with observed actions of others” (formulated by Green et al., 2007, p. 121 following Agar, 1994).

turns of events within one day, the unit of observation being *a playworld session* with its moment-by-moment emergence.

The unit of observation (a playworld session or a participation path) consists of what I call *interactive episodes*. An interactive episode forms the ‘unit of analysis’ for this study, and with it I try to capture the situational manifestations of agency in the data. A unit of analysis is the most basic (analyzable) entity or object that represents the phenomenon under study (Matusov, 2007).

The unit of analysis, according to R. Engeström (2002), is formed by the interpretive work in which the researcher gives cultural meaning to the data. Also, the unit of analysis must be consistent so that the data selected are comparable to each other. In narrative analysis these interactive episodes can be seen as turns of events through which the researcher constructs the plot, which is then interpreted, discussed and theorized from the perspective of the research question. In my analysis particularly important were the episodes in the interaction in which a child or an adult took initiative or actively constructed the playworld plot and the activity – either collectively or independently. For example, in my analysis of Anton’s participation path the unit of analysis – the interactive episode – was defined in the following way:<sup>32</sup>

It is a [turn of] event in the playworld with a clear starting and ending point. The length and nature of an episode can differ. There must be at least two persons present in the episode, and often the whole group is involved. ... For the final analysis, I selected 40 episodes in which Anton was either taking an initiative or the episode emerged from one of Anton’s previous initiatives. (Rainio, 2008a, p. 125)

Here we must remember that what counts as a unit of analysis or a unit of observation can be only defined post hoc by observing changes in the activity. Its size is a theoretical decision within a particular level of analysis depending on the scale being used (cf. Green et al., p. 121). The unit of observation together with the plot consisting of interactive episodes forms the *narrative*, which is discussed and interpreted in the light of the theoretical concepts.

#### 6.2.4 “Narrative interaction analysis” of the development of agency

The data divided according to the principles I explicated above forms the material for a more systematic narrative analysis in each article. According to Polkinghorne (1995), narrative inquiry refers to a subset of qualitative research designs

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<sup>32</sup> Although in my article about Anton (Rainio, 2008a,) I speak about the unit of observation in practical terms, I here follow R. Engeström (2002) in understanding the unit of analysis to be the smallest analyzable unit, and the unit of observation instead refers to the larger unit that these units of analysis are observed against and that refers to the process nature of the activity under study.

in which stories are used to describe human action. In this context, the term narrative refers to a “discourse form in which events and happenings are configured into a temporal unity by means of a plot” (Ibid, p. 5). Lawler (2002) sees narratives as constructed accounts which have transformation (change over time) and some kind of ‘action’ and characters, all of which are brought together within an overall plot. Events recounted in a story take their meaning from the story as a whole: the sequence of the story carries the meaning of its events. In my study I use the structure of a narrative to relate together and interpret the different situational manifestations of agency in the playworld interaction. With this I aim to grasp the emergence of agency, not only as a situational, but also as a developmental phenomenon.

Using dialectical terms, I try to grasp agency “in its process of becoming” (see, i.e., Tolman, 1981). However, a difficult question is how to distinguish development from mere change or growth. On what basis can certain events be connected and then shown to have development in this connection? In principle, development refers to a qualitative change, where stage by stage something new emerges (Engeström, 1996). A dialectical solution is to understand phenomena in the world as necessarily and internally contradictory (Iljenkov, 1982; Tolman, 1981) and to develop means to tackle and resolve those real contradictions in the world, both intellectually and practically (Engeström, 1996). This dialectical mindset turns contradictions into the driving force of development. Also, in a narrative method the solving of problems, conflicts and unexpected situations is often considered to “move the story forward” and to create its dynamics (in Article III we call this solving the “dramatic tension,” see Hofmann & Rainio, 2007, p. 316). Ultimately, however, what is considered development is a normative question and depends on the interests and values of the researcher or the research paradigm. Development can have several potential directions, and it is up to human beings what choices are made and what decisions are promoted. Similarly, in narrative analysis, the produced stories are always the product of narrators with “a point of view” (cf. Bruner, 1996, p. 123). It is up to the researcher to explicate the points of view she or he has in telling the story. I hope to have made sense of these points of views by explaining the selection of the theoretical and methodological perspectives in this research.

However, (contrary to a typical interpretation of dialectical theory) narrative methodology does not wish to *explain* development but rather to offer different interpretations of the events and their connectedness:

It is intrinsically difficult to “explain” exactly why it is that human agents, impelled by intentional states, do as they do or react to each other as they do – particularly in the unexpected or non-canonical situations that constitute stories. (Bruner, 1996, p. 123)

Czarniawska (1997, p. 18) points out that although some kind of causality may be inferred, it is crucial that narrative interpretation leaves open the nature of this connection (and its direction, I would add). The “hermeneutic circle” between parts and the whole is what causes stories to be subject to interpretation, not to explanation. Therefore, Bruner (1996, p. 122) argues that stories should be judged on the basis of their verisimilitude or “lifelikeness.” The validity of the narrative interpretation lies in the coherence between its parts and the whole.

In my empirical analyses the video episodes were contrasted and discussed in the light of other data such as teacher meeting talk or the students’ interview data. For example, in my analysis of Helen and Sara in Article II I contrasted the girls’ concrete actions in the video data and how they themselves talked about their roles with how the teachers interpreted the girls’ actions. In Article IV I contrasted the video episodes with the teachers’ talk about their work.

Further, I systematized and justified my data analysis and its findings with the help of ‘middle level analytical concepts.’ For example, in my analysis of Anton’s participation path (in Article I) I categorized the interactive episodes according to Anton’s initiatives in them. In order to do this, I needed to develop “categorization devices.” These categorization devices are represented in the two tables in Article I (Rainio, 2008a, p. 123–124). All the episodes selected for a closer analysis in Anton’s participation path were categorized according to these two tables. The tables enabled me to relate Anton’s separate actions to each other in the form of a narrative and also helped me to see how his actions changed and developed over the spring – and what their connection was to the concept of agency. What I have called the critical turning point was central in depicting the direction of change, turning it into development.

In each of the four articles I carried out a systematic narrative analysis of the development of the micro-interaction with the data that was chosen: I reconstructed the starting point, the critical turning points and the “endpoint” or what could be called an “outcome” of the playworld session or participation path (the unit of observation). To summarize, the empirical narrative interaction analysis that I followed included the following:

- Identifying the ‘interactive episodes’ through which the playworld and the plot emerge and which form the basic unit of analysis for the study through which student agency is analyzed
- Reconstructing and analyzing the process of interaction in these episodes: the acts of positioning, categorizing, taking initiatives and responding to initiatives among the playworld participants (the situational construction of the possibilities or limitations for agency) with the help of middle level analytical tools

- Constructing from these episodes the unit of observation or the plot: a participation path of one or two children as they become visible in my video data (Articles I and II) or the emergence of one day or one playworld session (Articles III and IV) representing the development of agency from the viewpoint taken in each article
- Identifying the critical and transitional moments that characterize a point of change or development within the plot (these were often the moments at which I *started* the analysis as they represented an interesting turn of events that was in need of interpretation)

This process can be called a qualitative narrative analysis of the development of micro-interaction: reconstructing the starting point, critical turning point and the “endpoint” or “outcome” of the playworld session or participation path that characterizes the development of agency from a particular perspective. The following Table 1 summarizes the research questions, the unit of analysis and the unit of observation, the method, and the central middle level analytical tools that I used in each empirical article.



Table 1. Research questions, data and methods used in the articles

Article	Research questions	Specific focus of the article	Data	Unit of observation; Unit of analysis	Method	Analytical tools
I From resistance to involvement (Rainio, 2008a)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the children's ways of enacting their agency in the playworld?</li> <li>2. How do the children's agentic actions change and develop over the spring?</li> <li>4. How do the teachers and the children deal and struggle with the contradiction between control and agency in the playworld pedagogy?</li> </ol>	<p>Development of individual agency</p> <p>Resistance as a form of agency</p> <p>Involvement as a form of agency</p> <p>The contradiction between control and agency</p>	<p>Video data of the playworld adventure phase (March-May 2004) in which Anton is present or referred to</p> <p>Transcripts of teacher meetings at which Anton is mentioned</p> <p>Field notes</p>	<p>Anton's participation path in the playworld</p> <p>Interactive episodes</p>	<p>Narrative interaction analysis</p> <p>Initiative analysis</p>	<p>Forms of orientation (initiative, responsive, passive)</p> <p>Modes of communication (enacted, meta-communicative, breaking the fourth wall)</p>
II Gender in play pedagogy (Rainio, 2009)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the children's ways of enacting their agency in the playworld?</li> <li>2. How do the children's agentic actions change and develop over the spring?</li> <li>3. What are the potentials and challenges of the playworld for promoting student agency?</li> </ol>	<p>The role of <i>gender</i> as a social category in shaping the students' possibilities for agency</p> <p>Forms of agency in a seemingly passive or hidden action on the sidelines of the classroom/playworld</p>	<p>Video data of the playworld phases (January-May 2004) in which Helen or Sara is present or referred to</p> <p>Transcribed interviews with Helen and Sara; Helen's school journal; transcripts of teacher meetings at which Helen or Sara is mentioned</p> <p>Field notes</p>	<p>Helen and Sara's participation path in the playworld</p> <p>Interactive episodes</p>	<p>Narrative interaction analysis</p> <p>Categorization analysis</p>	<p>Categorization, restrictive and generalized action potency, double stimulation</p>
III Towards shared agency in play pedagogy (Hofmann & Rainio, 2007)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the children's ways of enacting their agency in the playworld?</li> <li>3. What are the potentials and challenges of the playworld for promoting student agency?</li> </ol>	<p>The emergence of and prerequisites for <i>shared</i> agency in the playworld activity</p>	<p>Video data of one playworld day, May 6, 2004 (Compared and contrasted to pupil interview data from another narrative project, see Hofmann, 2008)</p>	<p>Emerging playworld session</p> <p>Interactive episodes</p>	<p>Narrative interaction analysis</p> <p>Thematic conceptual analysis</p>	<p>Interdependence, the dynamics of mutuality, the sense of a shared mission, an open-ended script, carriers of agency</p>
IV Developing the classroom as a figured world (Rainio, 2008b)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the children's ways of enacting their agency in the playworld?</li> <li>3. What are the potentials and challenges of the playworld for promoting student agency?</li> <li>4. How do the teachers and the children deal and struggle with the contradiction between control and agency in the playworld pedagogy?</li> </ol>	<p>Adult roles and teacher actions in the playworld</p> <p>The potentials and contradictions of a playworld as an <i>intervention</i></p>	<p>Video data of one playworld day, April 21, 2004</p> <p>Transcribed teacher meetings at which the adults' own relation to the playworld is discussed</p>	<p>Emerging playworld session</p> <p>Interactive episodes</p>	<p>Illustrative data selection and narrative interaction analysis</p>	<p>A figured world, contradiction, productive incompleteness, open space</p>



## 7 SUMMARY OF THE EMPIRICAL FINDINGS IN ARTICLES I-IV

In this chapter I will summarize the main findings of the study. As was discussed in Chapter 6, each article deals with the problem of agency from a particular perspective and represents a detailed case study of the emergence and manifestation of student agency in the playworld. Each article also shows how the teachers and children face the contradiction between agency and control and create solutions for it. In Articles I and II my focus is on the emergence and development of individual children's access to agency during the spring in the collective playworld activity. What connects Articles III and IV is that in both of them the analytical focus is on the construction of a single playworld session and the way student agency is constructed in the participants' reciprocal, local actions. In the following I will answer the research questions formulated in Chapter 5 by discussing each of the four articles. Table 2 at the end of this chapter summarizes the findings. I will deal with Research Questions 1 and 2 first.

### 7.1 Answering Research Questions 1 and 2

*What are the children's ways of enacting their agency in the playworld?*

*How do the children's agentive actions change and develop during the spring?*

The first two research questions are specifically addressed in Articles I and II, in which I reconstruct two quite different paths to agency. My focus is on how individual students, Anton in Article I and Helen and Sara in Article II, struggle to become agentive and recognized members of the collective playworld activity. The fictive characters that they had chosen to play were more or less background figures in the playworld reality. The role Anton had selected, the dragon Katla, was difficult to realize in the activity in which the whole group was playing Cherry Valleyans. Anton could not act out the role of the dragon, but seemed not to invent a new one either. The girls' horse roles (Rimma and Fjalar) on the contrary were quite central in the original story of the Brothers Lionheart but were not recognized as such in the playworld by other players. What also combines these two cases is that in both of them the playworld activity was motivating and appealing for the students. They wanted to belong to it and to become recognized in it, but had to find a way to do it in a way that was personally significant to them. I analyze in detail this process and the ways in which the students' relationship to the activity developed during the time of the playworld.

## Article I

Anton's ways of enacting his agency in the playworld developed from active and visible resistance and questioning of the activity to contributing to the construction of the plot and events in the playworld. Through a careful analysis of Anton's initiatives in the playworld, it was possible to examine agency as a developing movement between a struggle for agency and a need for control (see Chapter 3) in an interaction between an individual and the collective in the classroom. Anton was an active and visible pupil who knew how to use the narrative framework to make himself seen and heard. His actions easily drew the teachers' and the other pupils' attention and managed to confuse the classroom activities. However, his agency through resistance was relatively limited as it started to exclude Anton from the shared activity (compare Willis, 1979). Also, the teachers' first reactions to Anton's "problem behavior" by punishing him led to more reluctant and passive behavior. Only when the teachers started to listen to Anton in a new way and started to understand that through his actions he was actually trying to gain a recognized position in the activity did Anton's actions start to take a new shape. By offering him a mediating channel to the playworld activity in the form of the invented role of the bodyguard, the teachers helped him to expand his agency. As my analysis demonstrates, after this "critical turning point" the focus of Anton's actions seemed to orient to others and to the collective activity rather than to his own position in the activity. As I argue in my article, it was through resisting and questioning, however, that he had been able to develop a personally meaningful relation to the playworld activity in the first place.

As I discuss in the article, in recent socio-cultural literature three different but overlapping routes to agency are recognized as central in educational settings: (a) agency through transforming the object of activity and through self-change (Edwards, 2009), (b) agency through developing responsible and intentional membership (i.e., Olson, 2003), and (c) agency through resistance to and transformation of the dominant power relations (i.e., McFarland, 2001). All these different ways of developing agency were visible in Anton's path. Resistance was a starting point for Anton to become a responsible member of the activity. This happened only when he could develop a personally significant position in the activity through which he could contribute to the construction of the object of the activity, the creation of the playworld script. Anton, however, had to struggle with this new position as he had to learn to control his own behavior and immediate desires in favor of the activity. The teachers' reciprocity and openness to Anton's actions were central elements in this process.

However, it has been shown that at the same time as visible and non-compliantly behaving pupils such as Anton easily gain attention and thus also perhaps agency in relation to class activities, many other children are left in the background, even those that have positions that can potentially be rather agentive (see, i.e., Gordon et al., 2005). Therefore, my second article focuses on these less visible forms of student agency in the playworld data.

## Article II

The results in Article II show that the playworld pedagogy that explicitly aimed at developing children's agency and collaboration was also strongly gender categorized and thus contained constraining elements. My analysis focused on Helen and Sara, two seven-year-old girls who took on the roles of horses in the playworld project. Horses and riding were also an important part of their free time. In the article I illustrate how the gender-related categorization of a 'horse girl' shaped and limited the girls' possibilities for action. On the other hand, I also show how the girls turned this category into a resource to expand their agency. The girls had to struggle for agentive positions, but they lacked such social resources that Anton, for example, had (because of his visible resistance, the teachers were forced to focus on Anton and offered him important resources for action). Although the teachers tried to "activate" Helen and Sara to participate in the playworld, there was an implicit assumption that "the horse girl activities" (i.e., grooming each other, sleeping, eating and galloping) were not constructive or proper activities in a pedagogical sense and did not contribute to the construction of the plot. Also, the pedagogical organization of the small group work made it hard for the girls to develop an active and responsible membership (see Rainio, 2008b), as I argue in the data analysis.

The girls' solution was to turn inwards and distance themselves from the class activity (I call this a form of 'restrictive action potency,' following Holzkamp, 1991; 1992). But in my analysis I demonstrate that instead of becoming passive or indifferent, the girls still had a strong sense of agency. What they did was turn to their imagination to create alternative realities, so-called imagined "figured worlds" where they could become agentive on their own terms (Holland et al., 1998). These private worlds took place on the sidelines of the collective playworld activity but were related to it and inspired by it. However, these micro-worlds also isolated the girls due to the fact that they were not acknowledged and supported by others. The girls' private world and the reality surrounding it (the categorized practices of gender) clashed.

Finally, the girls started actively resisting the prevailing situation by generalizing (cf. Holzkamp, 1991) on the way girls and boys were treated in the playworld activity. In the article I use the idea of double stimulation (Vygotsky, 1978) to discuss how Helen and Sara used different and unexpected elements from the playworld as mediating artifacts to escape from the constraining situation and to develop personally significant and agentive positions in the playworld activity. For example, by acknowledging gender as an issue, the girls were able to turn the confining category into a psychological instrument (Vygotsky, 1978) that helped them to change the direction of the activity and their own place in it. In this way they finally made others – the teachers – react to them. As in Anton's case, the adults now started to listen to these children and help them to find an alternative channel through which to become involved in the collective activity (in this case it was the episode with the dragon Katla that the teachers arranged).

In Holzkampian terms, the above can be interpreted as a development of generalized action potency, in which the girls questioned what was taken for granted and used the categories that bound them as a tool to assess their “relation to the world and the possibilities that the latter offers, and then finally to extend these possibilities” (Tolman, 1994, p. 123). I argue in the article that it was the private, inward turning play activity that gave the girls not only joy but also the courage and self-awareness necessary to extend their action possibilities by articulating to others how constrained the playworld was for them. The development of the girls’ agency in the playworld must thus be understood as a movement between these two different modes of action potency: from turning inward and developing alternative realities in one’s imagination (the so-called “restrictive” action potency) to actually materially impacting and changing the existing situation (the “generalized” action potency).

### **Summary of the findings for Research Questions 1 and 2**

What can one learn from these two case studies on children’s agency development in the playworld pedagogy? In both cases the individual children were very inventive in using the narrative framework to make the activity meaningful for them and to become recognized and heard in it. A basic difference between the two cases was that while Anton first took action in the form of resistance and counteractions and thus gained everyone’s attention, the girls’ solution was to turn inwards and to distance themselves from the activity. The girls’ resistant acts were a result of their development, whereas for Anton, they were a starting point. Anton had drawn the attention of others by using the narrative plot in a very inventive way to confuse the group’s play (i.e., by acting as a drunk and by questioning the teachers’ or the other children’s role actions). As I show in Article II, the girls too were very inventive in developing their new role figures and trying to gain an active position through them (Helen’s horse soldier, and later the trio of the horse, dog and owner). What also differed in these two cases was how the teachers and other children responded to these actions. In Anton’s case it was the teachers (although first reacting to Anton as a problem kid and threatening to exclude him from the activity) who realized that Anton needed a motive to become included in the story: they offered him the role of the bodyguard, and several times during the spring came back to this role and reminded Anton and others of its importance. Helen and Sara’s struggle to find active positions was less salient and went unnoticed by the adults for a longer time. The girls’ actions were interpreted through the passive “horse girl” category and evaluated against the pedagogical objectives of the project. Unlike Anton, the girls lacked what Davies (1990) calls “interactive others” who would recognize and support their struggle. Perhaps not surprisingly, both articles reveal that the adults played a central although not determining role in making possible or hindering the children’s agentive actions through their ability to listen and respond to the children’s different needs. Finally, when Helen and

Sara, together with several other girls (as the “interactive others”), turned the focus on the restricting category of gender to actually impact the way the playworld was realized in the class, their actions led to recognition.

What happened in both cases was an expansion of agency from an individual struggle for recognition towards developing the shared activity in a more collective fashion. Anton, Helen and Sara all started with a relatively limited way of enacting their agency: by resistance or by turning inwards, which both can have rather excluding consequences. Their paths to active agency were a result of complex negotiations and power struggles between them and the teachers, the school and the other children. Finally, the importance of the existence and realization of the children’s own, closed and private worlds should not be undermined as a source for agency.

## 7.2 Answering Research Question 3

*What are the potentials and challenges of the playworld for promoting student agency?*

First I will discuss very briefly Articles I and II in relation to the third research question. Secondly, I will focus on Article III and the possibility of *shared agency* between pupils in the group and the way the playworld activity makes shared agency possible. Thirdly, I will deal with the role of adults in promoting children’s agency in the playworld based on the empirical findings in Article IV.

### Articles I and II

The above presented articles (I and II) dealt with individual pupils’ paths to agency in the playworld. Although the focus was mainly on the problems and challenges that the students faced while struggling for active positions in the classroom, certain features in the playworld can be depicted that helped to promote their actions. In Anton’s case, the playworld contained the *flexibility* necessary for Anton to test, question and resist the activity. As I point out in the article, the playworld and particularly some of the adult roles (Tengil’s soldier Ingvar and the betrayer Jossi) even encouraged resistance and questioning. In that regard the playworld as an activity provided Anton with a context to develop his motivation and test the limits of the activity.

For Helen and Sara, then, the playworld offered a *rich and imagined narrative* to which the girls could easily connect their personal interests and desires. Although the pedagogical objectives of the playworld (such as focusing on engaging active and resistant boys) made the teachers somewhat blind to the girls’ struggles in the classroom, the activity still sustained its meaningfulness for the girls. The playworld activity also – finally – offered a context for the girls to question and redefine the activity and to be heard in that. Ideally, then, playworld activities could enable multiple ways to act and relate to the shared classroom activity.

### Article III

The starting point in Article III was the reported lack of shared learning experiences in school. Research has suggested that shared learning is not something that can be achieved easily or through simply giving pupils the opportunity to work together (Rainio, 2003; for a review of this line of research, see Hofmann, 2008). This remains so for much of the supposedly collaborative work in the classroom: the subject constructed by and for these activities is an individual one (Rainio 2003; Sawyer, 2006; Hofmann & Rainio, 2007; Hofmann 2008).

Therefore, as collaboration and reciprocity were among the central objectives in the narrative pedagogical approaches that the other author and I both studied,<sup>33</sup> we wanted to analyze the conditions under which a collective subject of learning with shared agency could become possible – even momentarily. In our respective research projects we had both noticed that there was a sense of a shared, agentive “mission” that the classroom as a collective had, a sense of ‘togetherness’ (cf. van Oers & Hännikäinen, 2001; Hännikäinen & van Oers, 2003; Hännikäinen, 2007) in the group, sometimes even a momentary disappearance of an individual subject (of school learning). We wanted to analyze why these narrative approaches seemed so promising in providing such shared learning experiences.

Here it became important to differentiate between the central terms. By *subject* we referred to “the doer” of the activity, which in school is often limited and predefined (that is, the subject of the activity cannot self-evidently enact agency). By *collective subject* we referred to an experience of doing something “genuinely” together, that is, needing others for that doing and having a sense of ‘we-ness’ in that doing (cf. Hofmann, 2008). However, we were not only interested in the sense of togetherness between the students but also in the possibility of this collective subject to enact *agency*, that is, to actually impact the activity and be taken seriously. Finally, by *shared agency* we meant the possibility of the collective to enact agency; we as a group with agency.

In the analysis we focused on one playworld episode. We asked to what extent and in what ways the participants – the teachers and children in their roles – formed a collective subject in this episode, how it emerged and how and in what sense it was possible for this collective subject to enact (shared) agency. Even if the emergence of shared agency, both as an experience of the ‘we-ness’ as well as the actual possibility to have an impact as a group, was momentary, it can still be considered a relatively rare experience in the context of schooling (see Sawyer, 2006).

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<sup>33</sup> Our research collaboration was based on an in-depth analytical dialogue between two ethnographic research projects that shared a focus on narrative activities, particularly dramatic play. Riikka Hofmann studied ethnographically embedded pupil interview talk in the context of the construction of dramatic play and the use of the story-line method in a fifth grade classroom in England (see Hofmann, 2008). In our article we compared and contrasted Hofmann’s interview data findings with the video data from the playworld activity.



In the episode the children (acting as a group of Cherry Valleyans) unexpectedly met Jossi (a role played by a teacher), a controversial figure in the playworld. Earlier the children had found a “trust certificate” in which Jossi had sworn an oath that he would abide by Tengil’s will, even if it meant betraying his own people, the Cherry Valleyans. The children wanted to find out why Jossi had betrayed them and whether they could trust him anymore. On the other hand, at the narrative level, Jossi did not know that the children had found his trust certificate. Although the situation was difficult for the children, the power of the narrative was strong: none of the children or teachers once stepped outside the shared fiction (in other situations this was a way to confuse the play or lead it into a different direction; compare Anton in Article I). The teacher acting as Jossi patiently waited without taking action until the children made a move. In the article we analyze in detail how the children proceeded in taking initiative in this uncertain and unscripted situation in which the teacher (as Jossi) was bound by her role and could not solve the situation for the children.

The selected episode took place in the final part of the playworld where a *shared mission* for the group (to rescue the people from Wild Rose Valley) had already been established. The group also already had a *shared history and experiences of being together* in the playworld. We argue that the fact that the episode was based on the previous weeks’ turns of events and was carefully preplanned by the teachers was crucial to enable the experience of ‘we-ness’ in the group. The situation was meaningfully connected to earlier events in the playworld. This kind of explicit continuity and connectedness between individual learning tasks has been emphasized as central for advancing learning in and through collaborative activity, and is rare in school (cf. Howe 1997; Mercer 2004).

Another central feature of the activity was that it was *open-ended* enough to enable improvisation in situ. In the article we illustrate how, in order for the group as a collective subject to take up and enact agency in such an open-ended activity, individual action was, however, needed. In the situation Joel, Eve and JP’s individual but reciprocal actions – to which the teacher in the role of Jossi carefully responded – helped to lead the situation further. In the analysis we called these individuals the *‘carriers’ of the group’s agency*. What was crucial was that these individual actions achieved their meaning only *in the light of the collective subject*; they needed to be significant for the collective activity. Mutual support and scaffolding by others was also needed. That is, the carriers of agency needed the others’ “backup” to help to co-construct their initiatives, as we have shown in detail in the analysis. Focusing solely on the level of explicit actions by individuals (such as Eve, Joel and JP) would not reveal the level of engagement of the group as a whole. It has been argued that in open-ended, improvised collective learning situations “each turn of dialogue, although spoken by a single actor, eventually takes on a dramatic meaning that is determined by a collaborative, emergent process” (Sawyer 1999, pp. 453–454). In this sense different positions and actions can be thought of as *complementary* (John-Steiner, 2000; Hofmann, 2006a, 2006b).

Edwards and D'Arcy (2004) have called this kind of collective agency *relational agency*, that is, “a capacity to engage with the dispositions of others in order to interpret and act on the object of our actions in enhanced ways” (p. 147, see also Edwards, 2009). They argue that such an affective perspective on school experiences that involve pupils’ engagement with each other and to the content of learning is crucial but often missing from classroom work. To achieve this kind of reciprocity in a class, there must be what in the field of activity theory is understood as a shared motive and object for the collective activity (Leont’ev, 1978; Engeström, 1987). In the playworld situation the prerequisites for relational agency were created by the partly pre-planned, partly open-ended plot and by ‘the dramatic tension’ that developed from the simultaneous appearance of Jossi and the children’s discovery of his oath and their need to speak about the situation to Jossi. Together with the already established shared mission of the class, these elements created a needed object and motive for the pupils as a collective to enact shared agency in the situation.

Our findings from Article III show that shared agency in the playworld was constructed on two levels. On one hand it was constructed *within the fictional, collectively imagined and realized world*: children gained agency in relation to Jossi as they subjected him to their judgement, making him admit and justify his betrayal. The children and Jossi reached a common agreement in situ that was connected to the shared mission of freeing Orvar from Katla Cavern and finally saving the people in Wild Rose Valley. Only the children as a group could do this. The children’s initiatives moved the narrative forward. However, as we point out in the article, the issue of shared agency was not limited to the fictional level. The children were also agents *in the context of school-going-activity* (cf. Engeström, 1987) as pupils: their actions impacted the direction and shape of the narrative plot that was a part of a classroom activity. Without their collective effort to keep the drama unfolding, the activity would have ceased. In contrast to many other school activities, the consequences of the pupils’ efforts were real in the sense that they had actual power over the flow of the events in the playworld; the children’s initiatives were essential for the situation to proceed.

Furthermore, we argue that narrative approaches such as the playworld provide opportunities for kinds of engagement and creativity normally not accessible to children in school or in society more widely (see also Hofmann, 2008). This opportunity is related to the potential of a dramatized narrative to create a personal lived-through experience for pupils and teachers in classrooms, which is also typically absent from institutional learning (cf. Baumer et al. 2005). Finally, in narrative playworld activity the teachers’ actions necessarily include an improvisational attitude. Although still rare, improvisational teaching has proved to have the potential to transform teacher-pupil relations in classrooms (see Baker-Sennett and Matusov 1997; Lobman 2003; Sawyer, 2004; 2006). This implies a change in the institutional roles of the participating pupils and teachers, which I claim is the primary potential but also the main challenge of the playworld activity. This is a central theme of Article IV, a theme which I will next discuss more closely.

#### Article IV

In this article my vantage point to the playworld was to analyze it as a figured world (cf. Holland et al., 1998) with the help of which the adults and children tried to go beyond and expand their institutional roles and practices. In the article I claim that one reason why the playworld was sustained in the class year after year was its character not only as an educational intervention and pedagogical method, but also as a meaningful *world* in which to belong and within which to develop one's identity. This world had the potential to challenge the traditional ways of acting and being that are available to pupils and teachers through their pedagogical roles in the classroom.

As our findings in Article III showed, a central element of the playworld was the relative open-endedness and improvisational character of the activity. I have attempted to make visible in all four articles that this open-endedness and improvisation together with the desire to contribute to the activity forced the participants to develop as agents in the activity. However, this process was not easy, and much scaffolding and reciprocal support was needed. Now, in relation to my research findings in Article IV, I will concentrate on the way that the teachers helped the children to take active positions in the narrative playworld activity. The episode analyzed in Article IV took place in the corridor outside the class. The two boys, Emil and Tom (in the roles of Hubert and Julius of Cherry Valley), were taking their teacher (in the role of Mathias as a captive of Tengil) to Katla's cavern. The boys wanted to free Mathias as he was their friend from Wild Rose Valley. On the other hand, Mathias did not recognize that the boys were his "old friends" from Cherry Valley and was at first very suspicious of them. Similarly to the case presented in Article III, also in this episode it was the children who had to take action, as their teacher was bound by her fictive role and as there was no ready-made script to follow. The activity had to be imagined and realized in situ. In the article I illustrate in detail how the teacher's and the students' reciprocal discursive and material actions led the situation forward and how the children "overcame themselves" and took initiative.

The standpoint of these two students in the episode and the challenge that they had to face were very different from the other two cases presented in Articles I and II (Anton, Helen and Sara). Emil, who is the other boy in the data here, had been in the class since he was four years old and knew the playworld method by heart. He often helped the teachers in developing and planning the playworld. He was often also selected by the other students to represent them and to do responsible tasks in the playworld. In that sense his position in the classroom was very agentic from the beginning. It was also clear from the data that Emil and Tom were aware that, in the end, the main directors of the common narrative playworld were the teachers. On the other hand, Emil often stressed what the correct "answers" and solutions to the playworld situations were and waited for the teachers to answer them. Presumably, the teachers reinforced this as they considered him a competent student who could be given responsible tasks.

As I demonstrate in the article, the challenge for Emil and Tom in the situation was not to wait for a ready solution from their teacher but to start improvising alongside with her and to grasp her subtle verbal cues. The challenge for the boys was *to let go* of their role as students and to become the ones who know what to do on the level of the playworld narrative. Although instant improvising and playing is what children constantly do in their reciprocal play and games, in a school context it was a challenge. This fact reflects the contradiction between control and agency that is very vividly lived through in this example (I come back to this issue in relation to Research Question 4). In the article I also argue that the very fact that the situation was contradictory for the boys facilitated development in both them and the adult.

In this developmental process the teacher's role was of central importance. In the data analysis I show how the teacher acting as Mathias helped the boys to proceed and take action. What was crucial was that the teacher did not leave the boys to their own devices, but by her very subtle and reciprocal actions in the situation produced for the boys an imaginary "open space" (B. D. El'konin, 2001) in which to step and carry the situation further. El'konin (2001, see also Silvonen, 2004) calls the adult's action in such a situation "productive incompleteness." Through her role actions and verbal cues the teacher challenged the boys to act with her on the fictive, narrative level, but she had to be careful not to complete the task for them and fall back into a typical 'teacher position.' She had to leave the situation productively incomplete. The teacher did not take control of the situation, but reacted to the children's movements and in uncertain situations gave cues with which she helped them construct the shared "figured world." Finally, the situation changed so that the boys became the ones who knew what to do. Later they were proud to tell the group how they had solved the situation, saved Mathias from captivity and in this way contributed to the shared mission of the group to beat Tengil and save Wild Rose Valley. During the following playworld weeks, this episode was referred back to several times.

### **Summary of the findings for Research Question 3**

The case studies presented in this chapter show that children's agency develops when the pedagogical roles of adults and children change and momentarily turn upside down. In the case of Emil and Tom (in Article IV) the boys were able to take up agency in their fictive roles with the help of the adult's reciprocal actions and the "productive incompleteness" that she produced in the situation. This became possible when the adult withdrew from the action and at the same time helped the children to act with her and complete her actions. However, it was critical that the way to proceed was not predetermined by the adult for the child, that is, that there was not only one way to complete the adults' actions. The adult had to stay open to whatever direction the situation would take. Ideally, in such cases, the future events would be created reciprocally between the children and adults, although

based on the children's initiatives and on the adults' preplanning. The fact that the teacher in the situation was in the role of Mathias, an ignorant character who was dependent on the children's help, made the process possible, or at least easier. The situation was similar in the analyzed data in Article III, in which the adult in the role of Jossi needed to subject herself to the improvised and uncertain situation to let the children take initiative collectively.

It can be concluded that critical to children's agency in the classroom is that adults create and offer safe spaces for such transitions to take place and within these spaces challenge and help the children to act. This is not a new idea (compare Lane, 1928; Meshcheryakov, 1979), but I argue that it has not been fully recognized and utilized in the context of institutional education and classroom learning. I further argue that the potential of the narrative playworld pedagogy lies in the fact that it helps to make such transitions possible within the narrative, imagined and collectively realized pretend play space that the playworld at its best represents.<sup>34</sup> As I have shown in my empirical data analyses, the open-ended and emerging narrative plot with its flexible fictive characters and problem-solving situations, which create for the class a sense of a "shared mission" and shared history (cf. Hofmann & Rainio, 2007), mediates and makes possible this developmental process between the adults and the children. I argue that when these positional changes between the roles of adults and children take place within the narrative and fictive framework (or in a meta-communicative space around it, see Rainio, 2008a), they become productive for the group and for individuals. As was discussed in Chapter 2, according to cultural-historical theory, the use of tools and symbols forms the basis of human agency but requires a voluntary subjugation to their power. Pretend play is an important activity in rehearsing this ability (Vygotsky, 1978).

This process can be described with Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), particularly as it is formulated by van Oers (1996, p. 214) as "the process of accomplishing an activity in cooperation with another person." Crucial in the episodes that I analyzed in Articles III and IV was that the adult did not produce the ZPD for the child, but that the ZPD was produced collectively between the adult and the children with the playworld as a mediator. For the adult, the developmental challenge in the ZPD was to tolerate incompleteness and to learn to wait for and respond to the children's initiatives (see El'konin, 2001; also Silvonen, 2004).

However, there are several difficult challenges in making such safe and productive spaces as the playworld successful in early education practices. First, as my analyses of Anton in Article I and Helen and Sara in Article II illustrated, these

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<sup>34</sup> However, I acknowledge that playworld pedagogy and narrative learning represent only one, although powerful, example of such spaces that would help produce this "productive incompleteness" in the interaction between teachers and students in classroom settings. It is a task both for research and practice to develop more such pedagogies in the context of early education.

spaces are not always possible, desirable or accessible to the subjects in classrooms. Typically this is due to a well-known “fact” of classroom life: learning to be in school requires acceptance of living in a crowd and having one’s words and deeds constantly evaluated by others (Jackson, 1990). Often in these unsatisfying situations pupils either stay passively in the background or take an outsider position. The outsider position can be taken either by withdrawing into one’s own private world (Helen and Sara) or by resisting and deconstructing the activity, which happened in Anton’s case in the beginning (I have called it “breaking the fourth wall”; see Rainio, 2008a; see also Sawyer, 2003). Although also these outsider positions can be rather agentive and even liberating for the subjects, as we saw, they are often limited and can lead to exclusion.

Another clear challenge of the playworld is that it is not easy or self-evident for the teachers to realize. To step into such an open-ended and uncertain position as the teachers in their fictive roles did in the Brothers Lionheart playworld was not only brave and risky, but required years of learning and professional development as well as reciprocal trust between the students and teachers and support from the wider organization, such as the school administration and the children’s parents. However, despite this challenge and the fact that the playworld pedagogy too had to struggle with what I in Chapter 3 called the contradiction between control and agency, the teachers were committed to developing the activity year after year. I will now discuss this issue more closely in relation to research question 4.

### **7.3 Answering Research Question 4**

*How do the teachers (and the children) struggle with the contradiction between control and agency in the playworld pedagogy?*

All three research findings that I discussed above are intertwined with this fourth research question. As the contradiction between control and agency is more explicitly analyzed in Articles I and IV, they are my primary focus here.

#### **Articles I and IV**

In Article IV my analysis was based on an understanding of school as a historically and culturally formed activity system (Engeström, 1987; 1998), and a playworld as a collective imagined and materialized representation, a figured world (Holland et al., 1998) that was meaningful to the participants and that had the potential to challenge traditional ways of working in a larger system of schooling. The implementation of the playworld (from the teachers’ perspective) can be depicted with the help of the activity system model:

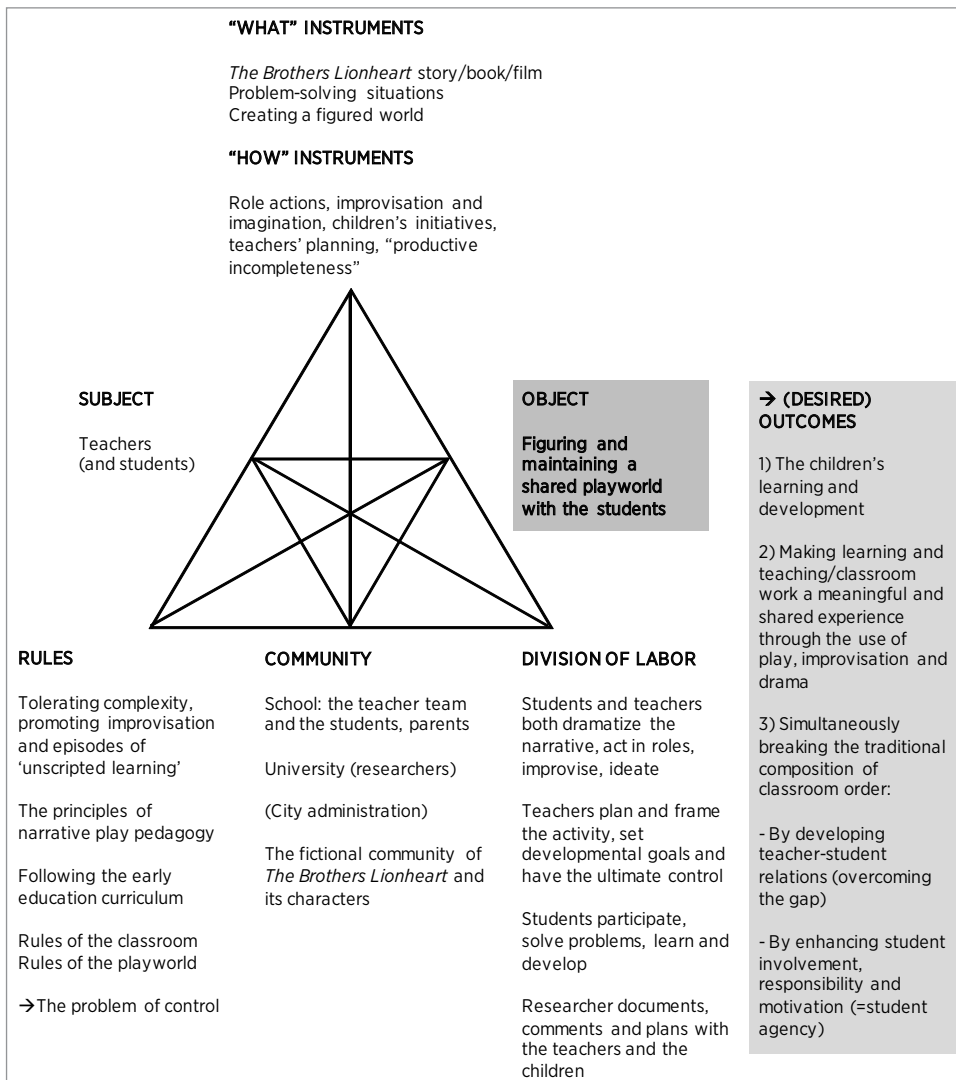


Figure 2. Implementation of the Brothers Lionheart playworld as an activity system from the teachers’ perspective (modified from Engeström, 1998)

Following the activity theoretical terms depicted above, maintaining the playworld in the classroom together with the children was the object of the studied activity. The desired outcome of the activity was to create a meaningful context for shared learning and accordingly to develop the working methods in the classroom. The aim was also to develop the teacher-student relations so that they would enhance students’ involvement and agency in their own learning.

This configuration already brings the question of contradictions to the fore. According to Engeström (1987; 2001), collectively facing and solving contradictions is the driving force of the development and transformation of activity systems. Holland and her colleagues (1998) developed the concept of a figured world to il-



lustrate processes through which people in different circumstances try to develop and transform their ways of acting within the constraints of the activities in which they participate. These as-if worlds provide resources (characters, artifacts, rules and collective stories) that help to mediate behavior and identity in conditions that are not easily modifiable. I claim that a figured world is a powerful tool to solve or at least deal with contradictions that arise in activity systems. As I took up in Chapter 3, one such foundational contradiction in an educational relationship is that between ensuring control and supporting agency. Based on my empirical findings, I further argue that the playworld worked for the teachers – and in many ways for the pupils too – as a figured world through which they tried to develop their classroom activity by momentarily overcoming or escaping the contradiction between control and agency. At the same time as the playworld meant bringing a more complex, open-ended and partly improvised world into the classroom, it was necessarily also more difficult to manage and therefore actually made the contradiction more visible in the classroom.

In Article IV I argue that there was a contradiction between *the rules* of the playworld and *the division of labor* needed to keep it unfolding. As I illustrate in Articles III and IV, the precondition for the existence of the playworld was that both the students and the teachers accepted and collectively agreed to believe in it (rules). This involved a voluntary subjugation to the rules of this imagined figured world, and this was possible due to the teachers and children assuming dramatic roles, tolerating complexity and improvisation, and the relative open-endedness of the activity. Simultaneously, however, the teachers' task within the activity of schooling was to plan the activity and set its pedagogical and developmental goals, whereas the students' task was to participate in its realization and, accordingly, to learn and develop (division of labor).

The teachers articulated that in order to ensure the “pleasure of playing” for everybody in the playworld, they had to manage the contents and have the ultimate control of the activity. Simultaneously, this need for control and the need to follow the preplanned pedagogical objectives made it harder to listen to the students' spontaneous ideas and suggestions and to act on them (see Articles I, II and IV). This contradiction presented a problem with which the teachers struggled. They balanced improvisation and control as well as promoting student initiatives and following their own preplanning. After all, it was the teachers' explicit desire that the playworld would help to develop the classroom work in a more child-centered direction.

The children, on the other hand, were not automatically competent actors in the playworld and needed support and attention. In Anton's case (in Article I) the contradiction between control and agency became visible in relation to the typical problem in classrooms of how to deal with resistance and reluctance on one hand as behavioral problems, and on the other as signs of agency. I follow McFarland (2001) in Article I, who argues that student defiance should be seen as a context-related matter depending on the formal and informal organization of classroom



settings. McFarland claims that the loosening of classroom control may enable young people to express and spread their discontent instead of simply becoming passive and uninterested. In this way not only membership, but resistance or defiance at its best becomes a productive force for agency. However, in order to be recognized as such, these resistant acts must have a responding audience able to take them seriously instead of directly rebutting them.

The emphasis on the “creativity of student resistance” (Schutz, 2004) is central to what I interpreted as the teachers’ way of dealing with the problem of agency and control in relation to Anton’s case.

Starting to listen and build from Anton’s resistance and responding to it on the fictive level helped to change Anton’s orientation to the activity. On the other hand, by resisting, Anton managed to confuse the play and lead the situation in his own direction by using the narrative as a tool, which also meant that the teachers, according to their own words, were left with no other choice than to use discipline through their fictive playworld roles. What is often forgotten in the critical analyses of classroom interaction is that students can be also manipulative, take control and make the whole classroom follow their rules. This illustrates well the dilemma of classroom interaction in which teachers often find themselves: balancing between the use of authority and control and allowing children to explore and test their limits and to find their own ways of working together.

These examples address not only the problem of the division of labor and the complex institutional arrangements and obligations of teaching, but also the diversity of perspectives that would have to be taken into account to develop student agency. Learning to be in school also requires accepting living in a crowd, having one’s words and deeds constantly evaluated by others, and being under the influence of relatively stable relations of power (Jackson, 1990). Accordingly, students are necessarily afforded different social positions through their participation in, identification with and development of expertise within the class’s activities (Holland et al., 1998). Pupils also have different histories and interests in the class, as the cases of Anton (Article I), Helen and Sara (Article II), and Emil and Tom (Article IV) show. To promote agency, that is, to give more responsibility and authority to the students, *simultaneously* makes the distribution of it more difficult for the teachers.

The episode I analyzed in Article IV with the teacher in the role of Mathias and the pupils in the roles of Hubert and Julius is a good example of this. On one hand the situation is a powerful example of a reciprocal and productive interaction between children and adults that promoted development. On the other hand, the situation only had three participants and therefore was in many ways atypical and would be challenging to produce in a regular classroom with 20 to 30 children and one teacher. In the case I analyzed, all the other children were waiting in the classroom while Emil and Tom (as Hubert and Julius) were fulfilling their mission. Also, not all the pupils had access to such active positions as Emil and Tom in the example. Although belonging and membership in a community is necessary for

the experience of agency (as was taken up in Section 2.1), my empirical analyses also show how individuals often lack the social and personal resources to become agentive members of such communities and that the teachers often also lack the resources to realize this and to make these resources available to the pupils.

However, the picture is not that simple: my findings also show that the playworld pedagogy offered important spaces to overcome this contradiction. This is what made the playworld so compelling: it provided the teachers with the possibility to follow the moment, to let go and to improvise within a fictive role and within a fictive world, and this helped them to orient to their pupils in an altered way. This potential in changing the adult-child relation has been acknowledged by other playworld researchers, too (see, i.e., Lindqvist, 1995; Ferholt, 2009; Marjanovic-Shane et al., forthcoming). These moments of an alternative way of seeing and being are present in all four articles of my dissertation. The emergence of shared agency in Article III, for example, represents the possibility to overcome the contradiction between control and agency momentarily with the help of the imagined plot, the imagined world and its characters. Nevertheless, it involves a risk and is difficult to achieve: in this episode the students needed to take action without any predetermined rules or behaviors. In this, they needed each other reciprocally to construct the situation, and they needed the contribution of individual children as ‘carriers of agency.’ The playworld pedagogy requires patience, improvisation and courage. It also requires experience and trust between the participants in the class. These are among the great challenges for developing new forms of playworlds between adults and children in institutional contexts.

## **7.4 Summary of the findings**

I will summarize the findings from the empirical articles in the following two tables. First, Table 2 gathers together the forms of student agency, their consequences for the pupils, and the potential of the playworld for enabling student agency. Secondly, Table 3 summarizes all four research questions and the findings in each of the four articles that answer each question.

**Table 2. Summary of the forms of agency in the playworld**

Ways of manifesting student agency	Consequences to the student	Potentials of the playworld for supporting student agency
Resisting counter-acting Questioning and teasing Testing boundaries Redrawing boundaries <i>(Anton; partly Helen and Sara too)</i>	Helps to become visible and seen Draws attention in order to be taken seriously and responded to Creates a risk of becoming excluded and being misinterpreted Creates a risk of becoming labeled as a problem child Can lead to reduced motivation	Enables students to rehearse resistance within the narrative setting: within the fictional plot and characters Enables flexibility for testing and redrawing boundaries The plot and its characters can be built to invite resistance within the narrative.
Contributing to the construction of the common object (Edwards & D'Arcy, 2004) Taking action and initiatives Taking responsibility Asking help from others and giving help to others (Edwards & D'Arcy, 2004) <i>(In all four articles: Anton; Emil and Tom, Helen and Sara, shared agency)</i>	Helps to receive an active position or a membership in the activity Opens up new possibilities for acting Creates a sense of belonging Requires submission to authority and 'taming' oneself	One of the central objectives of the playworld activity The narrative plot helps to construct a shared mission, shared history, collective experiences and a meaningful object of activity for the group. Helps to create a sense of togetherness and membership (but may be possible only to those already in central positions)  Challenge: In the playworld it is hard to control whose initiatives are listened to and promoted.
Overcoming oneself Learning to control oneself in order to take action Becoming conscious of oneself and the world and oneself in the world <i>(Emil and Tom, Anton, Helen and Sara)</i>	Helps to develop abilities necessary for societal participation and self-change Requires submission to authority and 'taming' oneself	Enables rehearsing and developing this ability, which is argued to be a central developmental task of play
Reflecting on the activity critically Exploring the cultural categories and stereotypes <i>(Helen, Sara and the other girls)</i>	May be demanding for the student Develops often through negative experiences Helps to develop abilities necessary for societal participation and self-change Can lead to the expansion of agency	Enables rehearsing and developing this ability, which is argued to be a central developmental task of play Can be built to promote critical reflection, but it can also become blind to the stereotypes of culture
Creating space around oneself Distancing or excluding oneself Becoming passive and withdrawn <i>(Helen and Sara, also Anton)</i>	Creates personal space and boundaries and the relative freedom to act Compared to active resistance does not disturb others or the collective activity Leads easily to exclusion and being unnoticed Can lead to invisibility and reduced motivation	Does not expect everybody to participate in the same way; also background figures are needed Enables the creation of parallel personal stories or worlds within it (but to be meaningful, the collective narrative activity must be motivating and inspiring for the whole group)
Imagining alternative realities and selves Creating a sense of agency if only through imagination (= represents the passive and invisible side of agency) <i>(Helen and Sara, also Emil and Tom, possibly all the students in the class)</i>	Creates personal space and the freedom to act Does not easily lead to concrete action Creates a risk of becoming excluded Leads to withdrawal Can blur the boundaries between the real and imagined	Enables rehearsing and developing this ability, which is argued to be a central developmental task of play Enables the creation of parallel personal stories or worlds within it (but to be meaningful, the collective narrative activity must be motivating and inspiring for the whole group)

Table 3. Summary of the research findings in the empirical articles

Article Research question	ARTICLE I (Rainio, 2008a) From resistance to involvement (Anton)	ARTICLE II (Rainio, 2009) Gender in play pedagogy (Helen and Sara)	ARTICLE III (Hofmann & Rainio, 2007) Towards shared agency in play pedagogy	ARTICLE IV (Rainio, 2008b) Developing the classroom as a figured world
<p><b>1. What are the children's ways of enacting their agency in the playworld?</b></p>	<p>Creating an "outsider position" by resisting and counter-acting Using the narrative framework to draw attention Anton's agency manifests (a) through transforming the object of activity and through self-change, (b) through developing responsible and intentional membership, and (c) through resistance to and transformation of the dominant power relations.</p>	<p>Creating an "outsider position" by turning inwards and taking distance ("restrictive action potency") Creating alternative realities in the imagination; closed and privately shared worlds through which a sense of agency is developed Assessing, modifying and finally resisting the prevailing cultural categories ("generalized action potency")</p>	<p>Developing a sense of "togetherness" and the experience of "we as a group with agency" (shared agency) Requires individual "carriers" of the group's agency who, in turn, need others' backup to help to co-construct their initiatives (compare "relational agency," Edwards, 2009) Shared agency is constructed on two levels: a) within the fictional, collectively imagined narrative level and b) within the context of school-going-activity as pupils.</p>	<p>The adults play a central role in making possible or hindering the children's agentic actions through their ability to listen and respond to the children's different needs (this is visible in all four articles).</p>
<p><b>2. How do the children's agentic actions change and develop over the spring?</b></p>	<p>Anton's agency developed from an active and visible resistance (as an individual struggle for personal recognition) towards developing the shared activity in a more collective fashion. In this process Anton had to learn to control his own behavior and immediate desires in favor of the activity. The teachers' reciprocity and openness to Anton's actions created an important mediating channel in the form of the fictive role of the bodyguard. The development of Anton's agency was closely related to the contradiction between the need for control and the need to enable children's agency.</p>	<p>The development of agency for Helen and Sara was a movement between two different modes of action potency: from turning inward and developing alternative realities in one's imagination to actually materially impacting and changing the existing situation. The private, inward turning play activity gave the girls the courage and self-awareness necessary to extend their action possibilities by articulating to others how constrained the playworld was for them. The girls used different and unexpected elements from the playworld as mediating artifacts ("double stimulation") to escape from the constraining situation and to develop personally more significant and agentic positions in the playworld activity, and finally to change the direction of the activity and their own place in it. In this way they finally made others – the teachers – react to them.</p>	<p>The children's agency developed when the pedagogical roles of adults and children turned upside down. The children as a group in the analyzed situation had to take action, as their teacher was bound by her fictive role and as there was no ready-made script to follow. The teachers' and students' reciprocal discursive and material actions led the situation forward so that the children and adults could "overcome themselves" to take initiative. The open-endedness and improvisational character of the playworld together with the desire to contribute to the activity forced the participants to develop as agents in the activity. However, this process was not easy, and much scaffolding and reciprocal support was needed.</p>	<p>The children's agency developed when the pedagogical roles of adults and children changed and momentarily turned upside down. The developmental challenge for Emil and Tom in the situation was to <i>let go of their role as students</i>, that is, not to wait for a ready solution from their teacher but to start improvising along with her and to grasp her subtle verbal cues. The children were able to take up agency in their fictive roles with the help of the "productive incompleteness" that the teacher produced in the situation. With the help of the fictional plot and improvised role actions it became possible for the teacher to withdraw from the action and at the same time help the children to act with her and complete her actions in a way that was not predetermined by the adult for the child. That the situation was contradictory facilitated development in both them and the adult.</p>

<p><b>Article</b> <b>Research question</b></p>	<p><b>ARTICLE I</b> <b>(Rainio, 2008a)</b> <b>From resistance to involvement (Anton)</b></p> <p>Potentials: Offered the flexibility necessary for Anton to test, question and resist the activity Provided Anton with a context to develop his motivation and test the limits of the activity → The playworld and particularly some of the adult roles (Tengil's soldier Ingvar and the betrayer Jossi) encouraged resistance and questioning. Challenges: Bringing a more complex, open-ended and partly improvised world into the classroom meant that it was more difficult to manage and control the activity.</p>	<p><b>ARTICLE II</b> <b>(Rainio, 2009)</b> <b>Gender in play pedagogy (Helen and Sara)</b></p> <p>Potentials: Offered a rich and imagined narrative to which the girls could easily connect their personal interests and desires Offered a context to question and refine the activity critically, to develop self-awareness and social consciousness Challenges: A strong gender-related categorization (i.e., of a horse girl) shaped and limited the girls' possibilities for action. Also, the pedagogical objectives of the playworld (focusing on engaging active and resistant boys, a need for collaboration) made the adults blind to the girls' struggles in the classroom. Was very demanding for the girls</p>	<p><b>ARTICLE III</b> <b>(Hofmann &amp; Rainio, 2007)</b> <b>Towards shared agency in play pedagogy</b></p> <p>Potentials: Enabled explicit continuity and connectedness between individual learning tasks and developed a shared narrative history for the group Created a shared motive and object for the activity by the partly pre-planned, partly open-ended plot and by the dramatic tension Created personal lived-through experiences for pupils and teachers Enabled an experience of 'we-ness' in the group The consequences of the pupils' efforts were real in the sense that they had actual power over the flow of the events in the playworld; the children's initiatives were essential for the situation to proceed. Challenges: Required patience, improvisation, courage and risk-taking Required experience and trust between the participants in the class</p>	<p><b>ARTICLE IV</b> <b>(Rainio, 2008b)</b> <b>Developing the classroom as a figured world</b></p> <p>Potentials: Created also for the teachers a meaningful "figured world" in which to belong and within which to develop one's teacher identity Challenged the traditional ways of acting and being available to pupils and teachers in school Was open-ended enough to enable improvisation in situ Enabled the adults to create places for "productive incompleteness" through which the children could enact agency and develop Challenges: Not easy or self-evident for the teachers to realize or the students to step into Requires years of learning and professional development Requires reciprocal trust between the students and teachers</p>
<p><b>4. How do the teachers and the children deal and struggle with the contradiction between control and agency in the playworld?</b></p>	<p>The contradiction between control and agency became visible in relation to the typical problem in classrooms of how to deal with resistance and reluctance on one hand as behavioral problems, and on the other as signs of agency. The playworld, through its fictive roles and plot, helped to deal with this contradiction. The teachers were balancing between the use of authority and control and allowing the children to explore and test their limits and to find their own ways of working together.</p>		<p>The emergence of shared agency represents a possibility to overcome the contradiction between control and agency momentarily with the help of the imagined and improvised plot, the imagined world and its characters.</p>	<p>Bringing a more complex and open-ended activity into the classroom made the contradiction more visible in the classroom. A need for control and the preplanned pedagogical objectives made it harder for the teachers to listen to the students' spontaneous ideas and suggestions and to act on them. That is, there was a contradiction between the rules of the playworld and the division of labor needed to keep it unfolding. But the playworld was also a "figured world" through which the teachers and children could momentarily overcome and escape the contradiction between control and agency.</p>



## 8 DISCUSSION

Chapter 7 summarized and discussed the main empirical findings of this study (Articles I–IV). In this chapter I will come back to the theoretical framework introduced in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 and outline the playworld as a potential space for dealing with the contradictions of agency in education. To do this, I will first briefly discuss the concept of contradiction in the dialectical method. In the second part of the chapter I will reflect on the research process and discuss the validity and ethical questions of the study. I will also evaluate the empirical and theoretical significance of my study and set questions for further research.

### 8.1 The playworld as a dialectical space for dealing with the contradictions of agency in education

In the theoretical chapters of the summary part of this dissertation I suggested that agency is an inherently contradictory concept and therefore poses a challenge to empirical educational research (see Chapter 2). This can also be formulated the other way round that the complex and contradictory empirical world poses a challenge to the concept of agency if understood only through one paradigm. I argued that in order to study the concrete development and manifestations of agency empirically, the contradictory nature of the phenomenon of agency must be theorized and conceptualized. This need became apparent when I started a dialogue between my data and the vast theoretical literature on agency. Theories that seemed essential for understanding the manifestations of agency in the empirical data seemed to contradict each other in certain ways. Often the use of many apparently opposite theoretical perspectives is considered eclecticism, a superficial use of non-commensurable theories in the same study. However, I claim that in my case the selected theoretical perspectives were needed as they reflected the contradictory nature of the investigated phenomenon itself. In Chapter 2 I identified five separate but connected contradictions in the discussion of the concept of agency: (1) between continuity and contingency, (2) between dependence and separateness, (3) between the simultaneous need for mastery and submission, (4) between passive and active manifestations of agency, and finally, (5) between the simultaneous need for control and for promotion of agency in an educational relationship. In my empirical articles I developed a methodology for studying agency that would grasp these apparent oppositions holistically and dialectically (see Chapter 6).

The basic principle of dialectics is that things in the world are in the process of becoming. To gain knowledge of phenomena in our world, we must grasp them in their movement. We can analyze how things have evolved, the principle that moves them forward and the direction of their movement. The problem is that

at the exact time that we start a scientific or a conceptual analysis, we freeze the living movement as we make it the object of study – and thus easily lose its dynamics. The dialectical solution is to grasp the movement in the interconnections that the phenomenon has with the world. What follows is that things cannot be conceived of independently of their relations; they do not pre-exist their relations (Tolman, 1981). Student agency in the playworld is a good example of this. In order to grasp it, I needed to focus on how the students were in relation to the playworld and how this relation developed as the activity developed. But it is not only the external relations that dialectical logic is interested in. Internal contradictions are at the core of interconnections, and therefore to face and solve these contradictions in concrete practical activity is crucial for the development of the activity and its individual members (Engeström, 1996). In what follows I will discuss the playworld as a potential dialectical space for recognizing and dealing with educational contradictions. To explicate the role of contradictions as a source for development, I will apply Glassman’s (2000) notions of the steps in the Hegelian dialectical method.

The first step in this dialectical process is a state of dualism or non-contradiction. In such a case the natural positive and negative inherent in the idea are not seen as contradicting each other because they are artificially conceived of as a duality (Glassman, 2000, p. 6; see also Ilyenkov, 1982). The two principles are simply not seen to “belong to the same situation,” and the problem is therefore bypassed. Related to the discussion on agency above, to keep opposing theoretical interpretations of agency separate and non-connected would represent a dualistic solution. I will take another example from the context of early education. As I argued in Chapter 3, there has been a long-lasting tendency to separate children’s “free play” from pedagogical activities in which adults are expected to intervene and take control. In this case the background assumption is that these two activities are independent of each other.

The second step in the dialectical process is to recognize unity in such apparently non-connected things. In Hegelian dialectics this is called a ‘dialectical moment’: the positive and the negative in the idea are seen as a part of the same thing, or the same idea. This means that the idea, torn apart by the simultaneous positive and negative, can no longer survive: it is negated (Glassman, 2000, p. 6). An example of this is to recognize that the idea of “free play” in a pedagogical context is an illusion and cannot – as such – exist. The discussion on the concept of the “paradox of pedagogy” that I reviewed in Chapter 3 also represents this stage. However, instead of treating this concept dialectically, it is taken to be an unsolvable logical paradox: theoretically the idea of educating for freedom through simultaneous coercion cannot exist and is therefore a paradox. It is crucial to note that this “paradox” is not *created* in the pedagogical situation (i.e., between different and clashing values or pedagogical ideals), but that these different and clashing values express the contradiction already inherent in the pedagogical relationship.



The problem with the concept of paradox<sup>35</sup> is that it leaves these contradictions universal and static, and therefore does not offer any potential for developing beyond them either in theory or in practice. The third step in the dialectical process therefore goes beyond the logical definition of the concept of paradox. This step is what Hegel calls the affirmation of the negative and the creation of a new idea (the so-called negation of negations):

All ideas, all concepts, all modes of thought contain within them their own contradiction, their own negative. ... Too often opposition or contradiction is seen simply as two issues, two things, two ideas that do not agree. But Hegel is careful to point out that simple non-agreement does not lead to a true dialectic. In other words, you cannot arbitrarily, or artificially bring one idea into contradiction with another and expect an important “dialectical moment”. Understanding must be faced *with its own* negation. (Glassman, 2000, p. 6, italics in the original)

As I suggested in Chapter 3, it is possible to formulate the contradiction between control and agency as a foundational contradiction that characterizes the development of a societal human being. To develop means to learn to control oneself by internalizing cultural values, traditions and tools, but equally to externalize them, to learn to use these cultural tools to overcome existing constraints and to develop something new (see Engeström, 1987).<sup>36</sup> The contradiction itself does not totally disappear, although it takes new forms in new historical times. Struggling with this contradiction can trigger societal change (Ibid).

I claim that the playworld pedagogy makes very interestingly *visible* this dialectical contradiction, not only to the researcher, but also to the practitioners themselves, to the teachers (see Article IV) and to the children (see Articles I and II) of the classroom. As I have shown (i.e., Article III), the playworld expects some level of student agency in order to be realized, but it also requires from the teachers specific management and control of the unpredictable activity (see Article IV). In certain sense all classrooms can be thought of as small “figured worlds” with their implicit plots, characters and rules “written” typically by teachers and curriculum developers. What is specific in the playworld pedagogy is that it brings to

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<sup>35</sup> In the philosophical tradition of analytical logic the concept of paradox is defined as such: “an apparently unacceptable conclusion derived by apparently acceptable reasoning from apparently acceptable premises. Appearances have to deceive, since the acceptable cannot lead by acceptable steps to the unacceptable. So, generally we have a choice: either the conclusion is not really unacceptable, or else the starting point, or the reasoning, has some non-obvious flaw” (Sainsbury, 1995, p. 1).

<sup>36</sup> Compared to internalization, the process of externalization has received relatively little attention in post-Vygotskian research on development. However, see Harré (1983, p. 258) for an interesting discussion on the role of externalization (or more precisely, what Harré calls “publication”) in the formation of individual agency and social identity.

the fore the contradiction in the classroom and allows us to examine openly the negotiations taking place when children try to become members of these figured worlds (internalization) but also are learning to question, develop or change them (externalization).

Further, I will suggest that the playworld pedagogy not only makes visible the contradiction between control and agency in education but could be taken to *represent a momentary resolution* to it. As I have illustrated, in my data the teachers as well as the children constantly struggled with this contradiction, but at the same time the playworld also offered them the possibility to momentarily overcome or at least escape it. I play here with the idea that the creation of a playworld represents “a third step” in the dialectical process. On what grounds do I claim this? I argue that the playworld interestingly catches something of a wider societal transformation that is taking place and that enables children’s agency to be taken seriously and spaces to be offered to it in different areas of social life. My argument is that the playworld activity lies at an interesting “crossroads” or on the boundary of the different historical developments that I depicted in Chapter 3:

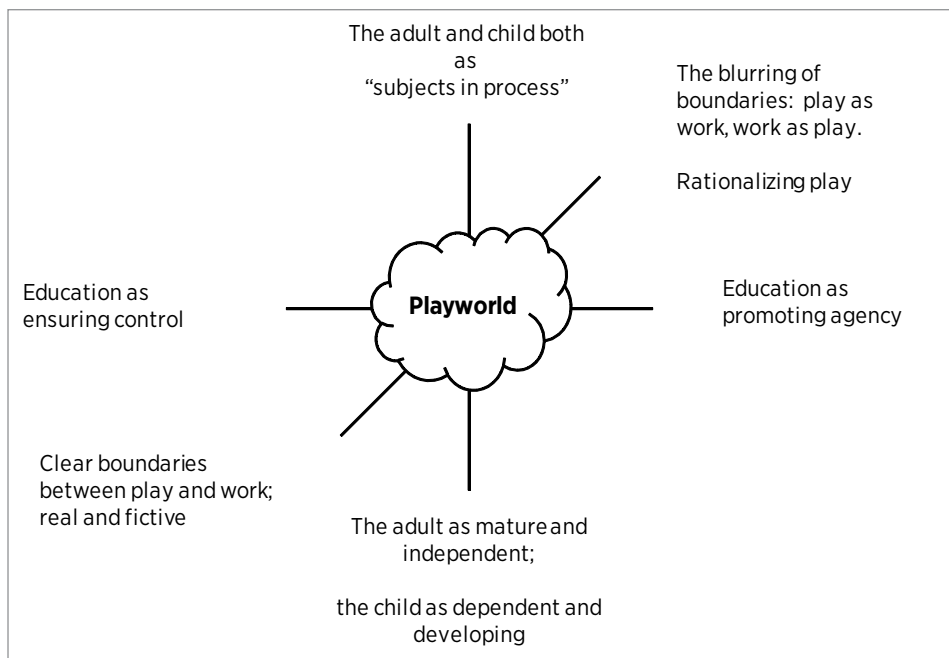


Figure 3. The playworld at the crossroads of the three historical dimensions

The explicit idea behind the playworld approach is to develop a dialogue between the fictional characters that the children and adults dramatize (see Lindqvist, 1995, p. 211) and to play with the idea of boundaries between play and work, the fictive and the real (see, i.e., Hakkarainen, 2006a; Ferholt, 2009; Marjanovic-Shane et al., forthcoming;). Therefore, it could be said that the playworld is an effort to create a world in which both adults and children become “subjects in process” (Kennedy, 2006) and that enables the crossing of the boundaries between childhood and adulthood (see Chapter 4). As I have illustrated, this collectively imagined “figured world” (Holland et al., 1998) offers alternative roles, rules and ways of acting and being in the classroom through which teachers can develop their professional identity and children their identities as pupils. In order to transform and develop, the participants need to submit to this world that mediates their change. It is the connection of the fictive level to the everyday life in the classroom that helps to recognize and deal with contradictions in the educational relationship.

However, it is also important to notice that although we move towards the right upper corner (see Figure 1 above), the other end of the arrow does not disappear. There still remains a need to draw a boundary between the fictive and the real when necessary and to accept that children because of their age and lack of experience are dependent on adults and that this makes the adult-child relationship specific (see Lee, 2005; Juuso, 2007). It is the movement between these opposite ends that is critical. If children’s voice, subjectivity, citizenship and agency are to be taken seriously, more attention needs to be paid to the different ways through which this movement takes place. New forms of creativity and play that aim to transform the existing borders between adulthood and childhood, play and work, and the fiction and the real play a key role in this. Based on the empirical findings discussed in the previous chapter (Chapter 7), I have suggested that the playworld approach is one potential place in which this balance between these opposing ends becomes possible.

Although play and different forms of art have been long recognized as arenas for working with the contradictions and impossibilities of human life (i.e., Vygotsky, 1971; Henricks, 2006; Kennedy, 2006), they have not yet been given enough thought in educational endeavors. Giving more value to and taking seriously new forms of play and art between adults and children are important implications of my work. However, it will remain a task for future research to test and develop this idea further in new fields, for example, in contexts now relevant in our society: various public spaces where adults’ and children’s worlds actively interact and merge (i.e., commercial video games or different virtual meeting places). What are the problems, challenges and problems of these worlds, and on the other hand, what benefits and insights do they bring?

## 8.2 Reflecting on the research process

Although I have touched upon the issues of validity and ethics in relation to my field work and data analysis in Chapter 4 and Chapter 6, I will now further reflect on the overall research process. I will utilize Kvale's (1995) criteria for three kinds of validity that need to be considered in a qualitative research process: validity as a quality of craftsmanship, communicative validity and pragmatic validity. The guarantee of validation and ethicality in a qualitative study relates in many respects to the question of "craftsmanship" (Kvale, 1995). By craftsmanship Kvale refers to the whole process of knowledge production from the way the research setting is organized and the data collected and analyzed, to the way the theoretical framework is created and the results generalized. An important aspect of this type of validity relates also to the classical problem of whether the study actually investigates what it promises to investigate. Also, the academic and public audience must be able to follow and analyze the process and choices made throughout ("communicative validity"). By "pragmatic validity" Kvale refers to the significance and applicability of the study for both academic and wider purposes.

### 8.2.1 The validity and credibility of the overall research process

In a dissertation that consists of independently published separate empirical articles, it is of particular importance to assess whether the study forms a coherent whole, that is, whether there is internal coherence and "harmony" (Larsson, 1993) between the theoretical framework, literature review, methodology and the interpretation of the results. In my study the empirical cases analyzed in the articles were not unrelated or accidental but complementary and inspired by each other. The findings and choices made in one article contributed to the selection of the perspective in another. For instance, my findings on the power of student resistance in Article I led me to analyze the data from a gender perspective in Article II. Also, since Articles I and II focused on individual students' actions, I found it important to turn the focus more on the collective and shared formation of agency in Article III. Finally, partly because of the relevance of the teachers' subtle actions to the children's agency so apparent in Articles I, II and III, I decided to focus on the teachers' viewpoint more explicitly in Article IV. Each article offers a particular perspective on the contradictory and ambiguous phenomenon of the development of agency in play pedagogy. However, these four perspectives, although they together form a coherent whole, do not represent the entire playworld. In that sense my dissertation, like any research, is partial, unfinished and open to other interpretations (Matusov, 2007). This is also what makes it "true": it does not try to be exhaustive by uncovering one real essence of the reality under study.

What, then, makes my data analyses and conclusions plausible and valid? Central is of course that the data analyses were carried out in a systematic, explicit and theoretically well-grounded way. This meant a continual process of re-examining the data and choosing among competing interpretations, and of examining

and providing arguments for the credibility of the different knowledge claims (cf. Kvale, 1995). I have tried to create explicit and warranted criteria for the selection of data used in each article and to make sure that the selected data is commensurate (see Chapter 6 for the discussion on the unit of analysis and unit of observation).

An important aspect of the validity is the “perspective dependence” of the researcher. In ethnographic work especially the researcher is likely to develop close bonds and relationships to the research subjects and even to the activity under study. In such cases it is important to examine these personal relationships and their possible influence on the way the research is conducted and the results interpreted. In Chapter 4 I described in detail my role as a “peripheral interventionist” in the field. Particularly in this kind of process in which the researcher also participates in developing the activity, an active distancing is needed for the reliability of the analytic work:

To be able to work toward a better practice and still evaluate the results, researchers need to strike a balance between participation and distantiation. They have to be stimulating partners in a dialogue, but at the same time they must not be carried away by their enthusiasm. The French sociologist Touraine, for instance, has developed a method in which he splits up these functions over two persons, one the participant and the other the analyst (cf. Dubet & Wiewiorka, 1996). (Wardekker, 2000, p. 270)

For me the challenge of switching between being a participant and becoming an analyst was a process of development as a researcher. This process involved letting go of the “first hand intuitions” developed in the field, even though they were often important starting points for the analysis (see Chapter 6). I needed to develop distance from my field work experience. First, it meant acquiring the necessary temporal and physical distance. Secondly, it required an in-depth theoretical reading as well as a critical and continuous dialogue with and feedback from colleagues and the research community (creating the so-called “epistemological rupture”; see Bourdieu, 1988, p. 7). This included critical evaluations from my supervisor, research group, conference audiences and the reviewers of the manuscripts. Particularly when I was writing about the results of my data analyses in the articles, I had to work hard to keep myself distant enough to take a critical perspective on the data. In a review of the first version of Article II (Rainio, 2009), a reviewer wrote the following:

On one hand, the author seems to be “outside” the pedagogical practice, studying its developmental constraining of children’s activity as an interested researcher. At other times the author seems to be an “insider” in the pedagogical practice and the agenda and ideology of the playworld-methodology, employed by the adults. (Review statement, Feb. 14, 2009)

Although *subjectivity* is now considered a necessary element and strength in a qualitative research approach, the researcher also needs a certain level of “objectification” to justify her or his work. However, this process does not mean becoming neutral in relation to the object of the research. Instead, as Bourdieu (1988) writes below, the only means of acquiring the understanding and self-reflexivity necessary to evaluate the constructed research object is to go through the research process itself and to face the “problems, failures and expectations” that the process brings to light:

[T]he renunciation of first-hand intuition is the end product of a long dialectical process in which intuition, formulated in an empirical operation, analyses and verifies or falsifies itself, engendering new hypotheses, gradually more firmly based, which will be transcended in their turn, thanks to the problems, failures and expectations which they bring to light. The logic of research is an intermeshing of major or minor problems which force us to ask ourselves at every moment what we are doing and permit us gradually to understand more fully what we are seeking, by providing the beginnings of an answer, which will suggest new, more fundamental and more explicit questions. (Bourdieu, 1988, p. 7)

I had three different ways of using theory in my work. First, I used the concept of agency to sensitize myself to the data (Blumer, 1986). Secondly, in order to connect the abstract and “loose” concept of agency to the set of contradictory and sometimes opposing observations and interpretations of the events and episodes in the data without having to fall into simplifications or shortcuts, I needed so-called “middle level analytical concepts.” That is, I conducted the data analyses in a close dialogical reading between the empirical evidence and theoretical literature and used multiple methods and multiple sources of data to create a more diverse picture of the phenomenon (this is what Bourdieu (1988, p. 27) calls “epistemic polyonomy” and “empirical polyonomy”). This approach is *abductive* in the sense that the concepts and data observations are developed in a close interplay with each other. I have discussed this process at length in Chapter 6. The chosen middle level analytical concepts are presented and discussed in the articles. Finally, a third way of using theory was to locate my empirical findings *in a larger framework*, thus giving historical and theoretical weight to the findings (this framework was introduced in Chapters 2 and 3). This gives “generative power” (Warderkker, 2000) to my study.

An important sign of validity is also the openness and credibility of the reporting in each step of the study. In a qualitative research process, validation is typically based on “a logic of uncertainty and of qualitative probability, where it is always possible to argue for or against an interpretation, to confront interpretations and to arbitrate between them” (Kvale, 1995). Therefore, it is especially important to report and explicate the choices made during the process so that they can be

critically examined by the scientific community. Chapter 6 provides grounds for the empirical, theoretical and methodological choices that guided me during the data analyses.

It is also important to let the reader weigh and evaluate the data interpretations through having access to the original data. This is particularly important if one claims to demonstrate change or development on the basis of video data. In scientific articles with strict word limits this is often difficult. I was however lucky to publish three of my articles (I, II and III) in journals that accept relatively long papers. In this way I was able to include substantial empirical evidence and direct examples from the data in the reporting. Another problem is how to do justice to the data if its original language is different from the language of the report (in my case the data was in Finnish). Particularly difficult is the exact translation of children's ways of speaking into another language. Therefore the original Finnish Data excerpts have all been translated into English with the help of native speakers of both Finnish and English.<sup>37</sup> I have attached the original Finnish Data excerpts in Appendix 6 to be read parallel to the English transcriptions used in the articles.

Finally, the research reporting always also has an *aesthetic* dimension. The research report should do justice to the field studied – in my case the playworld with its literary, artistic and playful character. It is up to the readers to decide whether this study has succeeded in preserving the aesthetic quality of the studied activity instead of obscuring it.

## 8.2.2 Research ethics and issues of power

An important theme in reflecting on the research process is the question of ethics and power relations in research work and its reporting. Although I do not want to repeat the discussion in Chapter 4, I will briefly deal with the questions on the rights of the research participants, the children and teachers in my study, as well as my responsibility as a researcher.

The first question is the participants' right to the protection of anonymity. In my research reports and articles I have tried to write so that the person that I am writing about cannot be identified. I have not used the participants' real names, and I have not shown the video data in any local conferences or other domestic situations where someone may be able to recognize the participants. I also decided to leave out of my analyses the data or knowledge that related to the children's life outside the classroom or, for example, to their relationships to their families.

With regard to the teachers, the playworld approach is actually the teachers' accomplishment, and they are its experts. There is therefore no reason why they could not appear with their own names. However, in my data analyses I have not

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<sup>37</sup> I would like to thank Jamie Donovan, Steven Spencer and Johanna Hynönen for these transcriptions.



used the teachers' own names. On the other hand, the pilot study and even the classroom in question would be easy to trace as they have been written about in the media and Professor Hakkarainen's team openly talks about the city and the class using real names. I have also presented the playworld method and our work together with a teacher from the playworld site at several seminars. However, here in my thesis I felt it was unnecessary to speak about the class or the teachers with their real names.

There are other complicated issues in relation to the reporting of the study. One is the researcher's responsibility and respectfulness towards the research subjects. It is not unimportant how and what the researcher writes about the practice into which she has been invited. The relationship between the researcher and the participants who let the researcher into their world is based on trust. This trust extends also to the way the reporting is done. Therefore, writing critically about a practice must be done so that it respects the research subjects involved. On the other hand, the reporting must be accountable and valid. In my writing I have tried to point out the value and importance of the teachers' work as well as the challenges they face. Simultaneously, I have been critical of some of their choices and have also dealt with more problematic parts of the activity. On the other hand, as I have taken up, I was also one of the adults in the field, so any criticism relates to me as much as to the other adults in the field.

I have also discussed my observations and initial findings both during and after the field work phase with the teachers. The results in Articles I, III and IV have all been discussed in depth with one of the teachers in the research site, and she has "accepted" my interpretations. Article II, which was finalized last, has not yet been subjected to such discussion. The problem now is that a long time has passed since the Brothers Lionheart playworld took place. The teacher, who has implemented several playworlds since then, might find it difficult to recall the events in a playworld carried out six years ago. However, the gender issue in general (the topic of the article) was already discussed among us during the field work phase. As Matusov (2007, p. 328) reminds us, the question is not whether the research participants agree or disagree with the researcher's interpretations, but rather the issue is that the research participants should have *a chance to reply* to the analysis and its findings. In relation to the children this issue is again more complicated as small children lack the verbal means through which they could evaluate what is written about them by the researcher.

Knowing how to listen and interpret children's thoughts and actions in a study that concerns them and is conducted with them is a challenge (see Strandell, 2005). I used the children's own phrasing, thoughts and perspectives directly only in one article (Article II). In this article the girls' perspectives colored the studied activity, and the result differed from what it would have looked like if I had only relied on the video data. One clear deficiency of my study is that although I study the possibilities and constraints of children's agency, my case studies mostly lack the children's own interpretations and perspectives on the activity and on



my findings. One reason for this is that when I completed my data analyses, the children had already left the group for other classes and schools. On the other hand, having children analyze their own actions from the video data for research purposes during the playworld process felt both unnecessary and difficult. I did not want to disturb the emerging collective, fictive and improvised playworld setting. However, as my analysis of Helen and Sara (Article II) showed, it is not that the children would not be capable of understanding and reflecting on the activity that they are a part of already early in their lives, they just have to do it in ways that are meaningful and comfortable to them. Conducting studies on children with the children's perspectives taken into serious consideration has recently been acknowledged as central in educational research (i.e., Goldman-Segall, 1998; Hofmann, 2008). This kind of participatory research with children is one of the future challenges for research on playworlds too.

An important ethical question relates also to whose knowledge is considered legitimate – and who has the power to make this knowledge heard. Research is always about power and about values (Kvale, 1995). In my case a central question is what counts as development and what counts as a valuable direction of change. In my analyses I tried to be explicit on the grounds on which I based my understanding.

### **8.2.3 The relevance and applicability of the research findings**

Finally, I will deal with what Kvale (1995) calls pragmatic validity, that is, the relevance and applicability of the study. Why was the study worth conducting? What is its value both academically and within the larger educational field? Traditionally, pragmatic validity relates to the generalizability of the research findings. Ideally, the results of a project should not be limited to just the situation in which that project took place. My study is a case study of a specific and atypical educational experiment that cannot be directly generalized. Wardekker (2000, p. 270) reminds us that although the results of a transformative, participatory study cannot be transferable in the classical way, they ought to have “generative power.” As I have already pointed out, particularly my way of theorizing in this study contains strong “generative power.” Although the empirical case of the Brothers Lionheart playworld is singular and particular, the phenomenon of agency and the theoretical concepts used for understanding it are more general.

Further, my study investigated the prerequisites and challenges of developing classroom work and adult-child relations so that children's agency can be promoted. It made visible the contradictions that educators struggle with on a daily basis and brought forth the complex nature of educational work. As I argued in Section 8.1., not only this particular playworld experiment, but all classrooms can be taken to be small “figured worlds” in which children and adults have to learn to participate and to find ways to deal with the problem of agency and control. It is this more general process that is made visible and under investigation in the playworld.

My study also locates the empirical site in a historical location. As I argued in Chapter 3, the studied playworld approach represents an interesting cultural historical phenomenon – studying it can reveal interesting and important aspects of our time. As Wardekker formulates:

Thus, the product of research is not knowledge in the sense of a product that can be transferred to other persons and situations; it is an understanding of the change processes in a specific situation that may or may not have implications for other situations. Knowledge is a mediational means for focusing our attention on specific aspects of a practice. (Wardekker, 2000, p. 269)

Together my four data analyses make evident that it is not possible to simply state whether the playworld approach was successful or not in promoting and supporting children’s agency and its development; the answer is more complicated and open-ended. The playworld both enabled and closed possibilities for children’s agency. The importance of my findings is in the careful examination and clarification of the *processes* through which these openings and closings emerged and became possible.

Finally, I hope that my study has “heuristic validity” (Kvale, 1995) in that it contributes to the academic field by developing applicable theoretical concepts and multidisciplinary methodology for studying adult-child interaction in different institutional settings. I also hope that my study is useful for practitioners in offering the vocabulary for and ways of recognizing an important part of today’s education, the development of agency within schooling. Pragmatic validity relates not only to the already finished research report but also to the concrete work of the researcher in distributing knowledge through the findings. This relates to my future activity as a researcher: how to translate the findings so that they will be read and utilized by different educational audiences, teachers, administrators and policy-makers. Promoting this will be an important next step of the study.

## EPILOGUE

Six years have passed since the Brothers Lionheart playworld. Today the same class still continues to apply and develop the playworld method. Two of the teachers that were in the classroom during the Brothers Lionheart playworld have now left the group to continue their teacher studies. The teacher who stayed in the class (“T1”) has continued to develop the playworld pedagogy with her new colleagues and with new children every year. This year, the school year 2009–2010, the group created the world of Peter Pan in the classroom. Other playworlds have included, e.g., the stories of Narnia, Alice in Wonderland and two fairy tales written by Finnish author Aili Somersalo (Päivikin satu, Mestaritontun seikkailut). Nina Putro-Ukkola from the University of Oulu is also preparing a dissertation study of the Alice in Wonderland playworld that was implemented in the class in 2008–2009. The playworld takes a different shape in the classroom every year, but there have been two dramatic changes in the practice since the Brothers Lionheart playworld took place. First, the teachers now take regular notes (their so-called “logbooks”) where they reflect on and document the playworld activity critically each year. Secondly, now the parents are also involved in the planning and realization of the playworlds. They are able to follow the playworld events from notebooks written by the children and the teachers weekly. The parents can write their comments in the notebook and suggest new turns of events for the playworld together with their children.

Although the class is unique and one of a kind in Finland, there are, however, several other classes in the northern part of Finland that apply Pentti Hakkarainen’s narrative learning method (e.g., in Suomussalmi and in Kajaani). In addition, individual teachers graduating from the Kajaani Teacher Education Consortium learn to apply play in a specific manner as a part of their teaching. A current threat to this pedagogy is the fact that the University of Oulu is closing down the Kajaani Teacher Education Consortium in 2010 as a belt-tightening act as a part of the new university reform. This means that the years of experience of applying and developing developmental play in teacher education will end. This unfortunate trend, I think, reflects the contradiction of our present time that I discussed in Chapter 3: the simultaneous need to both promote creativity and playfulness (at least on a rhetorical level) and to control and standardize the educational system and university work. There remains much political and institutional work to do in order to make developmental play a regular part of schooling.

Despite these short-sighted plans, the playworld pedagogy, even if still rare in Finland, has recently gained a foothold in many countries, including Sweden, Japan, Serbia and the US. We have also established a Playworld Network for researchers interested in studying and developing as well as promoting adult-child joint play in different institutional contexts.



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# APPENDIXES

## Appendix 1.

### Summary and principle themes of Astrid Lindgren's book *The Brothers Lionheart* (1988)

The story is told in retrospect and in the first person. Karl Lion, nicknamed Rusky, is a small boy confined to a sofa-bed in the kitchen because of his severe lung disease. In the beginning of the book Rusky loses his brother Jonathan when his brother tries to save him from their burning home. Shortly after Jonathan's death, Rusky is carried off to Nangiyala, a land of dreams and magic familiar to him from his brother's stories. There the brothers are reunited in Cherry Valley, where they experience bliss, but only for a short time. Lord Tengil, who reigns over the neighboring Wild Rose Valley with the help of a dragon named Katla and scores of soldiers, threatens to bring Cherry Valley under his power. A long and dangerous struggle for freedom ensues in which both brothers play key parts. In the battle between the forces of liberty and the forces of oppression, Tengil is finally killed by his own dragon, Katla. In this final battle the fire-spewing dragon also manages to paralyze Jonathan. It is up to Rusky to save Jonathan from terrible suffering by jumping into the looming abyss, carrying Jonathan on his back. This leap, Jonathan assures him, will take both brothers to the paradise of Nangilima and reunite them forever. The book ends with Rusky's words, "I can see the light." (For a more detailed summary, see Metcalf, 1995.)

There are two heroes in the story. Jonathan is a 13-year-old boy, who is very prince like. He is very kind and brave, more an ideal image of goodness and courage than a real person. But as Edström (2000) points out, Jonathan's caring role and pacifistic attitude are not typical of male heroes in adventure stories. Rusky is a nine-year-old, sick and lonely boy, who describes himself as weak, ugly and not at all heroic. Both boys play important roles in fighting against evil, with Rusky constantly overcoming his fears. The book can be understood as a developmental journey in which Rusky faces his fears and his life situation and thus grows as a person. In the process the reader can follow how different the painful image is that Rusky has of himself from the way he actually acts and makes decisions in the story. *The Brothers Lionheart* can be read as the story of Rusky becoming an active subject – an agent of change in his own life. In all the turns in the plot, Rusky has to make decisions on his own and direct events. This is shown metaphorically when Rusky decides to follow his brother into battle because Jonathan has called to him in a dream. Rusky is alone in his journey into the unknown. But at the same time he now feels united with the world, being part and present, thinking of "all the campfires that have burned in all the wilderness of the world since the begin-

ning of time, and how they had all gone out long ago. But mine was burning here and now!" (Edström, 2000, p. 247).

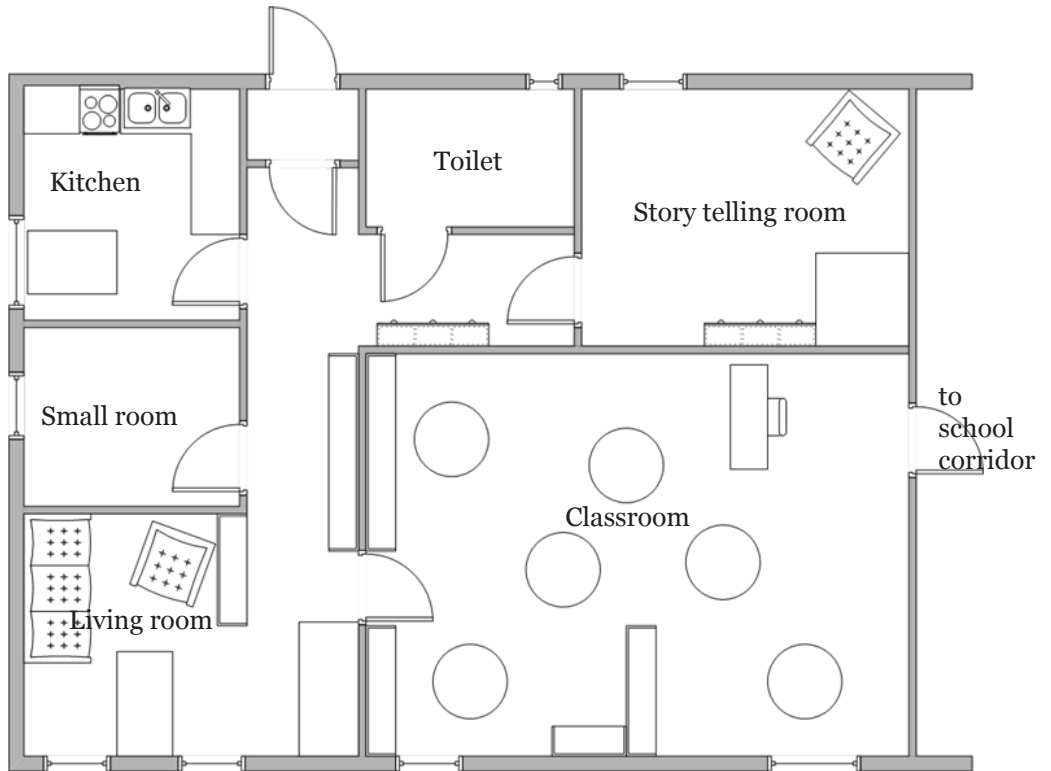
In the book courage, humanity and responsibility are central themes that culminate in Jonathan's words when he explains why he has to go on a dangerous and scary journey even when he does not want to. The same words are repeated by Rusky when he makes his final decision to leap into the unknown: "Well if you don't dare now, I thought, then you're a little bit of filth, and you'll never be anything but a little bit of filth." As Edström (2000, p. 263) writes, the stories of Astrid Lindgren, especially this one, can reinforce "the sense of identity and self-confidence in the young, because young people are placed at the center of the story and gain importance in a way they do not, as a rule, in their life." What is also central in the story is that even if the strong and brave big brother Jonathan plays a crucial role in the fight against evil, he is not fighting alone: it is not a mission of an individual. Jonathan has the whole village's resistance movement with him, and most importantly, he is dependent upon his younger brother Rusky, who finally comes to save Jonathan's life. The hero in this book is not acting with the help of magic powers only, as is often the case in traditional folk tales (El'koninova, 2001).

Finally, there is a constant interplay between fantasy and reality, imagination and realism in the book. The story is actually anchored to a kitchen sofa-bed: "it is from there that the escape takes place, a swift and extra ordinary flight through the heavens" (Edström, 2000, p. 238). Lindgren uses the transitions between these worlds as an important symbolic effect in the story. She shows the power of imagination in transforming reality, reflecting on oneself and in making change possible. Imagination offers an important means, even if for a short while, for overcoming reality and seeing things in a different light: "the events in the tale ought probably to be regarded as allegorical transpositions of everyday experiences, a coming to terms with difficult psychological problems" (Ibid, p. 245).

## Appendix 2.

### The floor plan of the classroom

Backyard, playground



## Appendix 3.

### The summary of the playworld project, spring 2004

When?	What?	How?	Data gathered
December 2003 and January 5, 2004	Getting to know the story	The story is read aloud chapter by chapter, and the class watches a film of the story.	Field notes
January 7-8, 2004	Groundwork for planning the playworld: finding the children's interests	The children drew pictures depicting stories based on the book or the film. They also worked in small groups choosing a favorite character or a character to try out.	Videotaped data of the children's drawing process and storytelling The teachers' notes of the children's talk The teachers' descriptions of the children's choices Pictures, written stories, props, photos (No videotaped data from the small group work)
January 9, 2004	Teachers' planning evening	Discussions about: How is the story of the Brothers Lionheart to be turned into a playworld? What are the reasons for doing the playworld project - what are our goals? What are the individual children's needs and developmental levels? What does the group need as a whole? How will the playworld be started?	Tape-recorded data of the discussion
January 15, 2004	Starting the project with the teachers' dramatic play	The teachers dress up and dramatize a scene from the book with Rusky, a Dove, Katla and a soldier by Tengil. The children are the audience. Afterwards, small groups for further work are established.	Videotaped data
Wednesday and Thursday mornings, January 2004	PLAYWORLD PHASE I Working with the characters and developing motivation towards the playworld Creating the basis for the playworld actions	The children are divided into small groups according to their characters. The teachers assist the children with their roles. The groups meet several times and do diverse things together: create materials and props for the characters and around the story (a horn, swords, a huge dragon) and play their characters, write stories, design a play for other kids, etc.	Videotaped data and complementary tape-recorded data focusing on one group at a time. Tape-recorded planning sessions Pictures, written stories, props, photos

<p>Wednesday and Thursday mornings, February 2004</p>	<p>PLAYWORLD PHASE II Common play in the framework of the story</p>	<p>Different <i>worlds</i> from the story in the classroom are created and played with: Wild Rose Valley, Cherry Valley, Tengil's castle, Katla's cave, Karmafalls and mountains. The teachers and children act in roles. There is not yet a continuous plot, but a certain part of the story works as an inspiration.</p>	<p>Videotaped data of the sessions (two cameras at different places) Observations and field notes Tape-recorded planning sessions Pictures, stories, props</p>
<p>Wednesday and Thursday mornings, March 3 to May 19, 2004</p>	<p>PLAYWORLD PHASE III Entering the actual playworld Acting according to a continuous plot</p>	<p>A long and adventurous journey to Wild Rose Valley is started. The common playworld is established and implemented through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the teachers' actions in their roles</li> <li>- turns of events planned by the teachers beforehand or improvised</li> <li>- the children's actions in their roles</li> <li>- mediated artifacts such as secret messages, maps, magic articles</li> </ul>	<p>Videotaped data of the sessions Observations and field notes Tape-recorded planning sessions Pictures, written stories, props, photos</p>

## Appendix 4.

### The adventure phase III: The Journey to Wild Rose Valley

<p>March 3 to May 21, 2004</p>	<p><b>The narrative events</b></p>
<p><i>Wed, March 3</i> <i>Thu, March 4</i></p>	<p><i>Life at Cherry Valley</i> The teachers (playing their roles) suddenly join the morning group session, and a transition from a normal school day to the play session occurs. The Cherry Valley people (the teachers) have found a wounded pigeon which has a note from Rose Valley under its wing: "Come soon, something awful is about to happen." The children now dress up as the people of Cherry Valley (into their costumes). The teachers have changed the classroom into "Cherry Valley" during the morning group session. It has different activity points and places (fishing at the river, a rest place at Mathias' etc.). The children play and move between the places, some in their roles, some outside them. Towards the end, led by Jossi of the Golden Cockerel Inn (a teacher in a role), the Cherry Valley people gather to discuss the situation and the message. They decide to leave for a joint voyage towards Rose Valley. On Thursday, the innkeeper of the Golden Cockerel, Jossi, invites all of Cherry Valley to join him for a feast at his inn. The moment is filled with food, drinks, songs and speeches. The children are, by and large, outside of their roles, and some of the teachers are as well. There's also some tension over the fact that in the book, Jossi is a traitor (the children have read it), but in principle, they do not know that yet in the play session.</p>
<p><i>Wed, March 10</i> <i>Thu, March 11</i></p>	<p><i>The journey to the mountains and towards Rose Valley begins</i> The school's attic has been changed into Nangija's mountain range. A joint discussion is held with the children over what should be taken along for the journey. Outdoor clothes are changed into. It is long way across the yard and up the mountain. Up on the mountains the teachers have set up a campfire out of a flashlight and crepe paper. As a background effect, a tape player plays sounds of galloping horses (there are a lot of Tengil's men in the surroundings). On the mountains, the people of Cherry Valley hear Jossi and Veder (Tengil's soldier) talking (the teachers in their roles). Jossi swears an oath to Tengil. Jossi has betrayed Cherry Valley! The next day the people of Cherry Valley return to the mountains and find a written oath to Tengil. It is recovered as evidence. Suddenly a terrible roar echoes from the mountains: Katla is somewhere near! The people of Cherry Valley hurry down the mountain. How do the children know that it's Jossi who they heard speaking, when they didn't even see him? This is being thought over.</p>
<p><i>Wed, March 17</i> <i>Thu, March 18</i></p>	<p><i>The villagers end up in Katla's cavern</i> After the morning group session they dress up as people of Cherry Valley once more. In the mean time, the teachers have modified the classroom so that it looks like all hell broke loose (dry ice and fabrics). The children suddenly hear loud noises from the classroom (the sound effect of a volcano erupting from a tape). The trip to Rose Valley is put on hold since the volcano eruption is blocking the primary route. The villagers have to change direction, and the only other route goes through Katla's cavern. The school's basement has been transformed into Katla's cavern. The sound effects are played from a tape. Even Katla has found its way into its lair - Katla is a large dragon built by the children from chicken wire and paper pulp. A "lurker alerter lamp," invented by the children in a previous activity, tells them when it is safe to pass. On Thursday, the journey isn't advancing, but the school is transformed into a huge Katla's cavern. The children can build and design their own caverns with "horror routes." The children check out each other's caves, and there is a lot of playing and building stuff out of fabrics and furniture.</p>



<p>Wed, March 24 Thu, March 25</p>	<p><i>The journey continues towards the aquatic monster's waterfalls</i> During the 2<sup>nd</sup> grader's class, a pigeon flies in (actually just drops through a window). With it came another coded message, which must be deciphered with the code note. The teacher appears in the form of Karma. The school's locker rooms have been transformed into Karma's waterfall with various props. There's also a horrifying spider's web through which one must travel. The children bump into Karma on the way, which startles and vanishes from sight. Not many got to see Karma. After the children came back and were drawing phases of the adventure "as themselves," Karma suddenly appears at the classroom and is paralyzed with fear. Everyone starts screaming and shouting and tension soon fills the classroom – until Karma disappears once again. Now everyone has seen a real, live Karma, and the children are in high spirits. On Thursday the classroom has been changed once more during the morning group session, this time into Karma's waterfall. The teachers instruct the children to make their own performances and plays on the waterfalls in groups of their own choosing. Finally, the children perform their plays for each other.</p>
<p>Wed, March 31 Thu, April 1</p>	<p><i>As soldiers of Tengil</i> The people of Cherry Valley meet Ingvar, Tengil's vicious executioner, on the way, and they end up being drafted into the army! The villagers manage to hide the fact that they are actually on their way to Rose Valley to help the others. Ingvar keeps the villagers under harsh discipline and in order. On Thursday Ingvar has received an order from Tengil: they must perform some duties so their loyalty will be proven. The unwilling will be put under arrest. Finally, the soldiers get Tengil's blood mark on their arm, which signifies loyalty (a stamp of a picture of a dragon). The children are truly terrified and describe how "they feel that the blood mark burns their skin." The spirit of rebellion begins to make its way into the heart of the villagers.</p>
<p>A break during the Easter holidays</p>	<p>On Thursday, a digest of the footage taken by the researcher so far is watched. When asked, many of the children believe that all will end well for the people of Cherry Valley and that good will win over evil.</p>
<p>Wed, April 14 Thu, April 15</p>	<p><i>Infiltrated as Ingvar's soldiers</i> Tengil still wishes to check the level of his new troops, so he arranges fencing trainings and some courage, intelligence and strength tests for the people of Cherry Valley. (The teachers have arranged different activity points outside. They compete against each other, and they practice cooperation and being courageous. The tests include tug-of-war, capture the flag, adventure track etc.) <i>The researcher was away this week so a school assistant does the filming.</i></p>
<p>Wed, April 21 Thu April 22</p>	<p><i>The release of Mathias and the unravelling of coded messages!</i> Ingvar has caught a citizen of Rose Valley, old Mathias, and is about to feed him to Katla. However, the people of Cherry Valley manage to set him free. (Out of the children, the characters Hubert and Julius are chosen to take Mathias to Katla's cavern. But after several turns of events, they set him free.) Mathias tells them of a leader of the freedom fighters, Orvar, who is held captive at Katla's cavern and of the disappearance of Tengil's war horn. The war horn, which can be used to keep Katla in check, is required to save Orvar. On Thursday, Tengil sends the people of Cherry Valley to search for the horn. Mathias has managed to leave coded messages on his way which the villagers find and manage to keep hidden from Ingvar. They create a group of five to figure out the messages with success: "I have heard that the Horn of Tengil is in Rose Valley. Hurry, quickly. - Mathias."</p>
<p>Wed, April 28 Thu, April 29</p>	<p><i>Crossing the wall over to Rose Valley</i> The people of Cherry Valley are trying to fool Ingvar to get over to the other side of the wall. In a classroom, Ingvar (a teacher in her role) and his lackey (a role played by a child) guard a door leading to the living room. In small groups, the children try to think of ways to fool Tengil's men into letting them through to Rose Valley. In the end, after frustration and several disappointments, everyone is allowed to pass. On Thursday, the people of Cherry Valley meet Mathias on the other side of the wall and tell him of their experiences. The reunion can be described as relieved and happy. A plan to free Rose Valley is being made.</p>

<p><i>Wed, May 5</i> <i>Thu, May 6</i></p>	<p><i>In Rose Valley!</i> It's time to produce some "still photos" as a drama exercise. This happens on the "play level" and is directed towards the folk of Rose Valley so that they will believe that the children are speaking the truth. However, the idea behind it is for the teachers to be able to show stages of the adventure during a coming parent-teacher meeting. In addition to the people of Cherry Valley showing up during the meeting, also Mathias will be seen in his assumed character. On Thursday we suddenly meet Jossi, the traitor, at Mathias' hut. The children are dumbfounded after meeting with Jossi, and after some hesitation they show Jossi his "oath of allegiance" to Tengil, which they found on the mountains. Jossi claims to be repentant and says he's sorry. A confused deliberation is being held over whether Jossi is a traitor, if he can be trusted and whether he should be helped in saving Orvar. Jossi knows the location of the hidden war horn, and finally, the children decide to forgive Jossi and take him along. But where has Mathias disappeared to?</p>
<p><i>Wed, May 12</i> <i>Thu, May 13</i></p>	<p><i>The finding of coded messages and the freeing of Orvar</i> Mathias is found. Jossi has told Mathias the location of the hidden war horn. So the quest for the war horn begins, this time led by Mathias. The children find messages and hidden hints in the forest. In the end, the horn is found, and the journey into Katla's horrifying cavern can begin. In it the great freedom fighter Orvar is being imprisoned. On Thursday we move to save Orvar while protected by the horn. A few of Tengil's men (children in roles) and Ingvar are in the school basement holding Orvar captive (a child in a role). A great final battle follows in which Orvar is freed and Tengil's men are caught. Finally, some use for the well-prepared swords! It's decided that Ingvar and the rest of the soldiers are allowed to join in the final fight.</p>
<p><i>Wed, May 19</i></p>	<p><i>The last battle and the campfires of Nangiyala</i> In the morning, the girls find Katla at the schoolyard and charge it with conviction. The boys are still looking for clues in the caverns. They find some remains of Tengil's clothing. It appears that Katla has had his evening snack. We move to the water tower to look for the remains of Tengil's forces. The feelings ran high – why on earth did the girls destroy the paper dragon the boys made?!</p> <p>Finally they face Ingvar and his soldiers (some of the children are acting as Tengil's men). A final battle is fought where many are "wounded" (a rule is in force where one is to lie down when struck three times by a play sword). After the scuffle, a rope is used to join everyone, and they head towards Nangiyala. Everyone gets to come. Both the good and the evil, and also the wounded and the sick.</p> <p>The play session ends in a closing ceremony at Nangiyala's eternal campfires. There is some shared grilling at the campfires in the forest next to the school and some casual playing. The role characters are abandoned (and some throw their swords into the fire).</p>
<p><i>Fri, May 21</i></p>	<p>The feedback from the children: The children tell what the most interesting and the most boring aspects of the playworld were. The researcher interviews the children.</p>

## Appendix 5a.

### The permission forms

Helsingissä 9.10.2003

#### **Hyvät vanhemmat,**

Työskentelen tutkijana Helsingin yliopiston kasvatustieteen laitoksella. Olen suunnittelemassa väitöskirjatutkimusta lasten ja aikuisten vuorovaikutuksesta ja yhteistoiminnasta eri-ikäisten lasten integroidussa opetusryhmässä.

Seuraan luokan toimintaa pääasiassa kevätlukukauden 2004 aikana. Tässä yhteydessä tekemäni havainnot muodostavat tutkimukseni aineiston. Havainnoin lapsia niin ohjatussa toiminnassa kuin vapaan leikin aikanakin. Koska lasten toiminta on varsin nopeatempoista, käytän videonauhoitusta havaintojen tallentamiseen. Vuoden kuluessa tulen todennäköisesti myös haastattelemaan lapsia aiheeseeni liittyen. Haastattelut ovat lapsille vapaaehtoisia. Haastattelut teen päiväkodin tiloissa koulupäivän aikana.

Videotallenteet, kuten myös muut muistiinpanoni, käsittelen ehdottoman luottamuksellisesti, ja niitä käytetään ainoastaan tutkimustarkoitukseen sekä luokahuonetoiminnan kehittämiseen. Lasten tai henkilökunnan nimiä ei käytetä tutkimuksesta tehtävissä tutkimusraporteissa. Kaupunki on myöntänyt tutkimukselle tutkimusluvan vanhempien suostumuksella.

Lapsenne osallistuminen on tutkimuksen onnistumisen ja luokan toiminnan kehittämisen kannalta erittäin arvokasta ja lapsellenne toivottavasti mukava ja mielenkiintoinen kokemus. Toivon, että täytätte liitteenä olevan tutkimuslupalomakkeen ja palautatte sen koululle.

Tulen vierailemaan luokassa joulukuusta lähtien tutustumassa lapsiin ja ryhmän toimintaan. Sekä minä että luokan henkilökunta vastaamme mielellämme kysymyksiinne. Pyrin osallistumaan myös tuleviin vanhempainiltoihin ja muihin yhteisiin tapahtumiin, jolloin voitte myös keskustella kanssani.

Mukavaa syksyä toivottaen,

Anna Pauliina Rainio

Tutkija

Kasvatustieteen laitos / Toiminnan teorian ja kehittävän työntutkimuksen yksikkö

Helsingin yliopisto

<http://www.edu.helsinki.fi/activity/people/parainio/>

Helsinki, Oct. 9, 2003

**Dear Parents,**

I am a researcher at the Department of Education, University of Helsinki. I plan to conduct a study about children and adults' interaction and collaboration in the mixed aged groups.

I will follow the practices of the classroom during spring 2004. Notions and observations from the classroom form the main material for my study. I will observe the children both in their guided classroom activities as well as during their free play. Because children's actions are rapid, I will also use video recording in the data collection. Within the coming year I may also interview the children in relation to my study. The interviews will be conducted in the classroom space during the school day, and they are voluntary for the children.

The video recordings as well as my field notes and other data will be handled confidentially and used only for the purposes of research and for developing classroom practices. The names of the children nor the teachers will be mentioned in any reporting of the study. The City of X has given me permission to conduct the study on the condition that the parents will give their consent.

Your child's participation in this study is very important and valuable both for the study and for developing classroom practices. I think it would also be a nice and interesting experience for your child. I ask you to fill out the attached permission form and return it to the classroom.

In December I will visit the classroom regularly to familiarize myself with the group and to get to know the children better. Both the teachers and I are happy to answer any of your questions. I will also try to participate in the parents' evening and other events so that you will have a chance to meet with me and speak with me.

With warm autumn greetings,

Anna Pauliina Rainio  
Researcher

Department of Education / Center for Activity Theory and Developmental  
Work Research  
University of Helsinki  
<http://www.edu.helsinki.fi/activity/people/parainio/>

## Appendix 5b

### The permission forms

#### LAPSEN VANHEMMAN / VANHEMPIEN SUOSTUMUS

##### Väitöskirjatutkimushanke

Lapsemme voi osallistua koulussa keväällä 2004 toteutettavaan väitöskirjatutkimukseen. Edellytämme, että kuvanauhoittamalla ja haastattelemalla kerätyt tiedot pysyvät luottamuksellisina ja niitä käytetään ainoastaan Pauliina Rainion väitöskirjatutkimukseen ja siihen liittyvään tieteelliseen toimintaan, kuten tutkimuksen esittelyyn tieteellisissä kongresseissa ja tieteellisen yhteisön sisällä.

**Paikka ja aika:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Vanhemman allekirjoitus:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Nimenselvennys:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Vanhemman allekirjoitus:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Nimenselvennys:** \_\_\_\_\_

***Palautetaan koululle***

CONSENT FROM THE PARENTS

A doctoral research project

Our child can participate in the study that will be conducted in the classroom in Spring 2004. We understand that the video and interview data will be used confidentially and that they will be used only for Anna Pauliina Rainio's doctoral study and the related academic practices such as reporting of the findings in scientific congresses and within the academic community.

**Time and Place:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name clarification:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name clarification:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Return to the classroom, thank you*

## Appendix 5c.

### The permission forms

Helsingissä 29.9.2003

#### Tutkimuslupapyyntö XX kaupungille

Työskentelen tutkijana Helsingin yliopiston kasvatustieteen laitoksella. Olen suunnittelemassa väitöskirjatutkimusta lasten ja aikuisten vuorovaikutuksesta ja yhteistoiminnasta eri-ikäisten lasten integroidussa opetusryhmässä. Tutkimukseeni on jatkoa kaupungissa vuosina 1999-2003 toteutettuun narratiivisen oppimisen ja 4–8 vuotiaiden lasten pilottikokeilujen kehittämishankkeeseen. Hankkeen vetäjä professori Pentti Hakkarainen osallistuu väitöskirjatyöni ohjaukseen. Toinen ja pääasiallinen väitöskirjatyöni ohjaaja on professori Yrjö Engeström Helsingin yliopistosta.

Tulen keräämään tutkimusaineistoni koululuokassa pääasiassa kevätlukukauden 2004 aikana, jolloin luokassa on tarkoitus suunnitella ja toteuttaa yhteinen ”juonellisen leikkimaailman” opetuskokonaisuus. Juonellisen leikkimaailman toteuttamisen ja minun väitöskirjatyöni avulla on tarkoitus kehittää uusia tapoja integroida leikki ja juonellinen oppiminen entistä kiinteämmäksi osaksi koulun käytäntöjä ja lasten yhteistä toimintaa. Kuluva syksyn aikana vierailen luokassa tutustumassa lapsiin ja luokan toimintaan.

Tulen havainnoimaan niin ohjattua toimintaa kuin lasten vapaata leikkiäkin. Käytän videonauhoitusta havaintojen tallentamiseen. Vuoden kuluessa tulen todennäköisesti myös haastattelemaan lapsia aiheeseeni liittyen. Haastattelut ovat lapsille vapaaehtoisia. Haastattelut teen päiväkodin tiloissa koulupäivän aikana.

Kaikki tutkimusmateriaali käsitellään ehdottoman luottamuksellisesti, ja sitä käytetään ainoastaan tutkimustarkoitukseen sekä luokahuonetoiminnan kehittämiseen. Kerättyä aineistoa voidaan käyttää myös väitöskirjatutkimuksen esittelyyn tieteellisissä kongresseissa ja tieteellisen yhteisön sisällä luottamuksellisesti. Lasten tai henkilökunnan nimiä ei käytetä tutkimuksesta tehtävissä tutkimusraporteissa. Tulen pyytämään myös vanhemmilta erillisen luvan lasten osallistumiseen tutkimukseeni (ks. liite 1 ja 2).

Pyydän täten XX kaupungilta tutkimuslupaa aineiston keräämiseen. Sekä minä että luokan henkilökunta vastaamme mielellämme kaikkiin kysymyksiinne.

Kunnioitavasti,

Anna Pauliina Rainio  
Tutkija

Toiminnan teorian ja kehittävän työntutkimuksen yksikkö  
PI 47, 00014 Helsingin yliopisto  
<http://www.edu.helsinki.fi/activity/people/parainio/>

Helsinki, Oct. 9, 2003

## **Research permission request for the City of X**

I am a researcher at the Department of Education, University of Helsinki. I plan to conduct a study about children and adults' interaction and collaboration in mixed aged groups. The study would continue the longitudinal pilot study in the City of X (1996–2003) whose purpose was to develop narrative learning and preschool practices for four to eight year old children. The leader of the research project, Prof. Pentti Hakkarainen supervises my study. My main supervisor is Prof. Yrjö Engeström from the University of Helsinki.

I will follow the practices of the classroom during Spring 2004 when the class implements a shared *narrative playworld* project. The purpose of the project as well as of my study is to develop new ways to integrate play and narrative learning to the daily activities of the classroom. Within this Fall I will visit the classroom regularly to familiarize myself the group and to get to know the children better.

I will observe the children both in their guided classroom activities as well as during their free play. Within the coming year I may also interview the children in relation to my study. The interviews will be conducted in the classroom space during the school day, and they are voluntary for the children.

The video recordings as well as my field notes and other data will be handled confidentially and they will be used only for the purposes of research and for developing classroom practices. The data may also be used within the academic community such as in scientific congresses. The names of the children nor the teachers will be mentioned in any reporting of the study. I will also ask for the parents' consent for the study (see Appendix 1 and 2).

I hereby request the city's permission to conduct the study. Both the teachers and I are happy to answer all your questions.

Sincerely yours,

Anna Pauliina Rainio  
Researcher

Department of Education / Center for Activity Theory and  
Developmental Work Research  
University of Helsinki  
<http://www.edu.helsinki.fi/activity/people/parainio/>



## Appendix 6.

### Original transcriptions of the Data excerpts in Finnish

#### PART I (Summary Part)

#### CHAPTER 3

*Data excerpt 1:* From a teacher interview, March 22, 2006

T1: Mutta tota mun silloinen (ennen vuotta 1999) käsitys leikistä, sen merkityksestä ja sen tärkeydestä oli täysin erilainen ku mikä mulla on tänä päivänä. (...) Mutta se, miten mä silloin menin leikkeihin, ni en mä todellakaa edes hakeutunu niihin leikkeihin, eikä lapset pyydä. Lapset ei pyydä päiväkodissa aikuista leikkeihin, ellei ne halua kaupan tätiä tai asiakasta ostamaan kivillä jotain, mitä ne on tehny hiekkalaticolla. Lapsilla ei ollu sitä vaihtoehtoo siinä päiväkodissa, missä mä olin, eikä mun käsittääkseni siihen aikaan muuallakaan. Ett ei ne osannu pyytää, koska aikuinen ei ihan oikeesti menny niitten kaa leikkimään, vaan se meni tekemään jonku näennäisjutun, ja sano, ett no nii, jatkakaapa tästä. Tai sitten silloisen näkemyksen mukaan... mä oon mielestäni aina ollu ihminen, mikä on niinku paljon lasten kanssa, ni jos joku lapsi oli yksinään, ni mä saatoin alottaa sen kaa jonku leikin, ja sitt ku siihen tuli muita, ni mä vetäydyin takavasemmalle. Eli se oli se pedagogiikka siihen aikaan. Siellä oli siihen aikaan vielä niinku opetustuokiot, ja sitten oli se lasten vapaa-aika, se oli sitä pelailua ja leikkiä. Ett kyll mä pelasin paljon lasten kaa, mutten mä leikkiny lasten kaa.

#### CHAPTER 4

*Data excerpt 1:* Teacher notebook remark, Jan 9, 2004

Kyyhkysprinsessa. Haluan olla jokin ihminen, joka näkyy sillee keskikoisesti, ei liian paljon eikä liian vähän. Se auttaa Ruusulaakson väkeä. Ne on Tengilin orjia. Kyyhkysprinsessalla ja kyyhkyskuningattarella ja Ruusulaakson väellä on oma salakieli. Vihollinen ei ymmärrä sitä. Joonatan ja Korppu ymmärsi.

*Data excerpt 2:* Teacher notebook remark, Jan 9, 2004

Katla, on kiva kun siitä syöksee tulta ja se karjuu. Katlan roolia olisi mukava esittää kun se on sellainen paha.

*Data excerpt 3:* From a teacher discussion, Feb 5, 2004

T2: Mä oon kanssa sitä mieltä, että tää ei pitkälle kans (kanna)...Että tätä nyt on katottu kolme päivää. No, kaks päivää. Että ei tää pitemmän päälle...nääh ei jaksa, niitten täytyy saada siihen jotain.

T1: Ohjaus myös mukaan

T2: Joku semmonen, semmonen juttu minkä ne niinku sitten kokee yhteiseksi...

*Data excerpt 4:* From a teacher discussion, Feb 26, 2004

T1: Toisaalta se ois kauheen kiehtova juttu, et me tehtäis niinku kaikkien yhteinen seikkailu, mikä alkaisi Kirsikkalaaksosta. Aina olis joku uus juttu, uuden tyyppin (roolihahmon) kautta, et me käydään...

*Data excerpt 5:* Field Journal, Feb. 5, 2004

Olin koululla klo 16 asti ja päivään mahtui kaikenmoista. Päällimmäisenä mielessä valtava kaaos ja melu: lapset saivat kokeilla mitä tahansa halua-miaan hahmoja ja tehdä niillä mitä halusivat. Se näkyi ja kuului. Koko luokassa tuntui vallitsevan hallitsematon taistelun tuoksina. Yritin saada jotakin kuvattua tässä melskeessä, ei kovin hyvää jälkeä tullut enkä pystynyt keskittymään mihinkään. Liikaa toimintaa.

*Data excerpt 6:* Field Journal, Sept. 26, 2003

Ulkona Raisa kiipesi syliini ja pyysi pitämään sylissä. Pidin. Samalla yritin tavoittaa katseella mitä ryhmä lapsia teki metsässä. Raisa haluaa muita lapsia enemmän olla minun kanssani ja haluaa sitä selvästi ”kahdestaan”. Seuraava episodi kuvannee tilannetta:

R: Kenet sä tunnet kaikkein parhaiten?

AP: Ai siis täältä luokasta?

R: Niin

AP: No mä taidan tuntea kaikki vähän niinkun yhtälailla. Yhtä hyvin kaikki ainakin haluaisin tuntea.

R: Mut kenet sä tunnet parhaiten? Ainakin sä oot nyt mun kanssa, mun kanssa kahestaan. Eiks nii?

AP: Joo, kyl mä siinä mielessä oon, niin oon mä nyt sun kanssa tässä...  
(en muista enää mitä Raisa vastasi tähän)

AP: Mutta tota mun tehtävä tai työ on täällä sellainen, että mä en niinkun oo kenenkään kans erityisesti. Että mä tavallaan vaan seuraan ja tutkailen. Niinkun katselen mitä kaikki puuhaa ja tekee. Mun pomo töissä haluaa että mä teen niin.

R: Missä sä oot töissä?  
AP: Yliopistolla  
R: Mun siskokin on yliopistolla  
AP: Aijaa, niinkö?

*Data excerpt 7: Field Journal, Sept, 24, 2003*

Iltapäivällä Joel kysyi minulta toistamiseen olenko aikuinen. Keskustelu meni suunnilleen näin.

J: Hei Pauliina saaksä ajaa autoo?

AP: Ai osaanko? Osaan.

J: Eiku saaksä?

AP: Saan joo, oon mä sen verran vanha jo.

Toinen lapsi (en muista kuka): Onks sulla ajokortti sit?

AP: On kyllä.

Lapsi: Sit sä saat ajaa, kun se täytyy olla jotta voi ajaa.

J: Ootsä aikuinen?

AP hymyilee. Muut lapset selittävät jotakin, jota ryhdyn kuuntelemaan.

Joel kysyy uudelleen: Ootsä aikuinen?

AP: Oon, oon mä. Siinäkin mielessä, että mä saan ajaa autoa.

## PART II (Original articles)

### ARTICLE I

*Excerpt 1: Litteroitu opettajapalaveri 9.1.2004*

1. T1: Siis Anton ja Tomi, ne pitää saada toimimaan yhdessä mielekkäällä tavalla yhteisen päämäärän eteen. Me ollaan koitettu... uhkailla ja uhitella: ”joudutte erikseen ja meette eri ryhmään”. Eikä päästetty (niitä) prosessissa samaan ryhmään, mikä oli varmaan kauheen hyvä,
2. T2: Joo.
3. T1: tai projektissa,
4. T2: Joo.
5. T1: tässä auringonkukkasysteemissä. Anton ainakin teki töitä ihan uskomattoman hienosti. Mutta se, että nyt ne toimii erikseen, vois sanoa, että niitten seuraava juttu olisi se, että ne sais toimimaan yhdessä järkevällä tavalla ilman, että kohde on jonkun toisen kiusaaminen, mollaaminen...
6. T2: Joo.
7. T1: tai jotain muuta yhtä älytöntä. Vaan että ne saadaan toimimaan sen Katlan eteen, ja pistämään panoksensa siihen järkevään juttuun.
8. T2: On.
9. T1: Mutta se vaatii kyllä meiltä sen motivaation luomisen sille tasolle, että... huh huh! Mutta joka tapauksessa pistetäänkö tavoitteeksi, ett me saadaan pojat toimimaan yhdessä?
10. T2: Se on kuulkaas aika haastava tavote.
11. T1: Niin on.
12. AR: Anton ja Tomi.
13. T1: Anton ja Tomi, nää ihanat koulupojat, mitkä pistää kaikki matalaks.

*Excerpt 2: Litteroitu opettajapalaveri 18.3.2004*

1. T1: ## Mun mielestä nää testaa myös siis, esimerkiks Anton, niin eihän se ole mikään tyhmä lapsi.
2. N: Ei.
3. T1: Siis se nimenomaan testaa sitä. Ja sen näkee oikein, esimerkiksi silloin kun mä olin Jussi Kultakukkona, niin sen näki siellä Kievarissa, että se veti ihan kuus-nolla, takertui niihin leikin asioihin. Takertui niihin ”join liikaa olutta kievarissa”, ja niihin juttuihin...
4. T3: ## Niin.
5. AR: Niinpä.

6. T1: Mutta toisaalta siinä leikissä niihin asioihin se ei ottanut mitään ulkopuolelta, vaan se käytti äärettömän taitavasti niitä juttuja, ja perusteli sen tyhmän käyttäytymisensä niillä leikin jutuilla.
7. T3: ## Niin, sillä leikillä. Näin on.
8. AR: Totta.
9. T1: Ja ihan samalla koko aika sivusilmällä tsiigas, että mitä mä voin tehdä...
10. AR: ## Meneeks läpi.
11. T1: Niin, että miten mä reagoin. Ja se tietää, että mä en voi antaa sen mennä näin. Mutt se tietää, että mä en myöskään nosta niskasta ja sano, että Anton ulos.
12. AR: Niin.
13. T1: Että Jussi Kultakukko tekee mitä se tekee. Musta sillä oli koko ajan semmoinen niinku pelaaminen. Toisaalta vähän semmosta niinku älypeliä kaiken aikaa. Että kyllä se tajus, mitä se teki. Se teki sen ihan... no, en mä tiedä onks väärin sanoa ihan tietoisesti, mutta sanotaan, että venytämällä venytti, testaamalla testas.
14. T2: ## Aika selvillä vesillä ihan varmasti oli ittensä kanssa siinä. Että tiesi tarkkaan, että missä mennään.

*Excerpt 3:*

1. T3 Ingvarin (Tengilin pyöveli) roolihahmossa ilmestyy yhtäkkiä huoneeseen. "Mitäs väkeä täällä on? Te olette Tengilin mailla! Mitäs te täällä teette?" Anton nousee sohvalta miekka pystyssä Ingvaria vastaan, Ingvar komentaa Antonin alas. Kaikki muut lapset nauravat riemuissaan. Erityisesti pojat nousevat vastarintaan Ingvaria kohti. "Otetaanko nyrkkeilymatsi?!" Ilmassa on kovasti tunnetta ja jännitettä. Useampi poika nousee kohti miekka pystyssä. Yleinen kaaos nousee. Ingvar on autoritaarinen ja käskävä rooli, ja se saa lapsissa aikaan vastustuksen halua.
2. Ingvar (Antonille): SINÄ ensimmäisenä joudut kyllä sellaiseen sotaharjoitukseen kanssani, että sinusta tulee kunnan sotilas. Minä värvään teidän kaikki sotilaiksi.
3. Eve: Iihhaaa!
4. Ingvar: Ja sinut hevoseni minä otan sotaratsukseni.
5. Eve iloisena: EI käy!
6. Anton tulee Ingvarin viereen ja ilmehtii Ingvarille.

*Excerpt 4: 25.3.04 Opettajapalaveri*

T1: Mutta toisaalta, mä aattelin taas niinpäin, että mun mielestä se lasten tuoma lisä (leikkimaailmaan) on jo se, että me ei olla mietittykään tämmöstä vaihtoehtoo. Ja lapset sitten miettiikin, että ihan oikeesti, että jos tossa sattuu jotain --- niin noustaan siihen kapinaan. Että lapset uskaltaa tehdä tällasia ratkasuja. Ne tietää, että niitä kuitenkin kuunnellaan siinä. Ja uskaltaa heittää ja ehdottaa. Samalla Iris, joka ei uskalla tuolta pikkuhuoneesta vaeltaa sinne kyyhkysenä, kun on vaaroja matkalla, se tulee ja sanoo, että nyt kuule aletaan (kapinaan).

*Excerpt 5: 22.4.04 Nauhoitettu leikkimaailmaepisodi*

1. T2: Hei, pitääkö laittaa piiloon, jos se Ingvar näkee nuo. Jonnekin erittäin... Et sinä noin voi sitä kuljettaa, et voi (*sanoo Antonille, jolla on yksi salaviestin paloista käsissään*)
2. T1: Hei --- Eiku tuo tänne, pannaan ne samaan paikkaan. Korpulla oli viesteistä vastuu, se on meidän... sillä on niin paljon salattavaa, että meillä menee kaikki, jos me menetetään Korppu.
3. *Anton näyttää haluttomalta antamaan salaviestiä, mutta antaa sen siten, ja on tympääntyneen näköinen. Opettaja tuntuu huomanneen Antonin pettymyksen.*
4. T1: Korppua me suojellaan hengellämme tästä eteenpäin, eiks niin? Olisitko Korpun ylin henkivartija? Korppu tarvii tosi riskiä miestä rinnalle.
5. Anton: Ihan sama. En mä tiä.
6. T1: Voisitko olla?
7. Anton: En mä tiä ---
8. T2: Sinulla on paljon puolustettavaa kyllä nyt.
9. Joku lapsista: Eikä ku ---
10. T2: Erittäin haastava tehtävä.
11. *Muutamit lapset koputtelevat miekoilla Antonin kypärää. Anton katselee maahan mielteliäänä.*
12. T1: Oliskohan sinusta siihen?
13. Joku lapsista: Eikä kun kaikki vastaan kaikki.
14. *Opettaja laskee oman miekkansa ensin Antonin toiselle olkapäälle ja sitten toiselle ja sanoo: Kruunaamme sinut Korpun henkivarijaksi, näin kun entisaikaan lyötiin ritarit tuolla meren toisella puolella. Tästä eteenpäin olet Korpun ylin henkivartija.*
15. *Anton katsoo ystäväänsä Tomia, joka seisoo vieressä ja hymyilee hie-man. Sitten hän lähtee hyppien ja pomppien ja miekalla huitoen pois porukan keskeltä.*
16. T1: Älkää uskaltako mennä lähelle!

*Excerpt 6: 13.5.04 Nauhoitettu leikkimaailmaepisodi*

1. Anton: Hei hei, jonkun pitäis olla Joonatanin suojelija!
2. Matias (T1): Nii hei. Kukas rupeis Joonatania suojeleen, se on ihan totta. Suojeletko sinä yhä hengelläsi Korppua? (Anton nyökkää totisena) Onko varma? Sä olet valan vannonut. (Sami kietoo käsivartensa Antonin ympärille, seisovat vieretysten)
3. Matias: Isoveli on päätään pitempi ja suojelee Joonatania. Hieno homma (Matias pitää Andyn olkapäältä kiinni, Andy hymyilee Joonatanin roolissa) Mikäs tän isovelin nimi on? (kysyy Paulilta, joka on ilmoittautunut "Isoveljeksi")
4. Pauli: Emmä tiedä.
5. Joku lapsista: Keksitääks vaikka! (Lapset miettivät nimiä. Lopulta hänestä tulee Pertti)
6. Matias: Meill on uusi uljas henkivartija nimeltä Pertti. Kolme hurraa huutoa Pertille! (HURAA HURAA HURAA) Näin minä kruunaan sinut Pertin henkivartijaksi (lapset nauravat) ...eikun Joonatanin, tässä jo vanha mies menee sekasin.

*Excerpt 7: 19.5.04 Nauhoitettu leikkimaailmaepisodi*

*Lapset ovat vesitornilla etsimässä Katlan torvea. Pojat ovat edelleen suutuksissaan tytöille. Matias (T1 roolissa) pyytää tyttöjä kertomaan, mitä tapahtui kun tytöt hetkeä aiemmin kohtasivat Katlan ja voittivat tämän miekoilla taistellen. Iris tulee keskelle kertomaan. Matias kysyy miten he uskalsivat ilman torvea nousta karjuvaa Katlaa vastaan.*

1. Anton: Se oli pelkkää paperia!
2. Toiset pojat: Ei se tehnyt yhtään mitään. Me rakennettiin se..
3. Anton: Siinä oli hirvee työ ja me tehtiin se.
4. Matias (T1, Antonille): Kuule, jos sinulla on asiaa niin siinä on puhujan paikka. Ole hyvä! *Anton ei kuuntele vaan jatkaa:* Epistä me tehtiin ja sit noi mäsää sen...
5. Matias: Mene siihen puhumaan niin me kuunnellaan.
6. *Anton siirtyy nyt keskelle:* Me tehtiin se ja sit noi mäsää sen!
7. Matias: Missä on Korpun henkivartija? Onko pupu tulossa pöksyyn?
8. *Anton vaikenee, miettii hetken ja sanoo:* No ei...
9. *Anton astuu pois puhujan paikalta. Jotkut pojat hihittävät.*
10. Matias: Oletko mukana viimeisessä taistelussa?
11. Anton: No olen tietysti.
12. Matias: No sitten rutinat pois, yhtä köyttä -yhdistys pitää olla.
13. Helen: Pitäähän tyttöjenkin saada jotain tehdä kun pojat saa aina...

14. Ella: Niin, ne sai viimeksi rikkoo sen seitin ja tytöt ei saanu paljon mitään.
15. Matias: Pojat viimeksi pelasti meidät hämähäkeiltä ja nyt tytöt pelasti meidät hurjalta Katlalta.
16. Mika: Ihan tyhmää!
17. Joku toinen: Se oli ihan vaan paperikatla...
18. *Anton on vaiti ja katselee.*

## ARTICLE II

### *Excerpt 1. Jan 9, 2004: Transcribed teacher discussion*

T1: (Sara) perusteli mulle, että Rimman kaa vaan juttelis eli vois tehdä kaikkia kepposia. Sillä oli pilke silmäkulmassa. [...] Ja tota sitten vois päättää ketä tottelee. Että se ois Korpun hevonen, Korppuu se tottelis, mut Joonatania jonkun verran, ehkä muitakin kilttejä, muttei ketään pahoja. Ja pahoja se ei tottelis ollenkaan. Ja niitä pääsis karkuun, koska hevonen laukkaa lujaa.

### *Excerpt 2. Jan 9, 2004: Transcribed teacher discussion*

1. T2: Toi on ihan tyypillistä Saraa niinku sen tuntien. Ett tosiaan että niillä keskenään olisi oma kieli, kun tietää, että se ratsastaa.
2. T1: Ei kun mä kysyin siltä.
3. T2: Ahah.
4. T1: Kato kun mä sanoin, ett se ei riitä, ett sä tykkäät hevosista ja ratsastat. [...]
5. T1: Eli niinku musta ne perustelut kyllä ihan puolsi sitä roolinottoa eikä pelkkää sitä, että ”hevosen kuva, jippii, ihanaa!”
6. T2: Ei. Mut hei, toi oli hevosen luonnekin ihan oikeesti.

### *Excerpt 3. Jan 9, 2004: Transcribed teacher discussion*

1. T3: Ei mutt ihan oikeesti, tää porukka tarvii kyll aikuisen - enemmän ku tää hevosjengi.
2. T2: Eiku hevoset tietää, mitä ne tekee.
3. T3: No nehän laukkaa pitkin tupaa siellä --- eihän ne muuta tee. (nauraa) [...]
4. T1: Nii.
5. T3: # Keskustelevat keskenään omalla salakielellään ja
6. T1: Letittää toistensa rusetteja.
7. T2: Joo.



*Excerpt 4. Jan 9, 2004: Teacher discussion*

1. T1: Niillä on ehkä just, sanotaan, et niiden vaikeudet tulee just siitä, että kun ne on vaan ja ainoastaan kahestaan. Ni niill on kanssa just se, että ei ne tarkotuksella niinku kellekään mitään pahaa varmaan tarkoitakaan, mutta kun ne ei vaan osaa olla mitään muuta kuin keskenään. Toinen-- (ei saa selvää puheesta) toista ja toinen on orpo piru.
2. T3: Niin.
3. T1: Ja kolmas kun tulee mukaan, niin se on heti uhka sille heidän suhteelle.
4. T2: Joo. Ja niillä on kauhee pelko siitä.

*Excerpt 5. Jan 21, 2004: Videotaped playworld session*

1. AR: Ai tää on teijän talli? Mä vähän kuvaan teitä. (Tytöt istuvat tallissaan ja katsovat minua.)
2. AR: Kumpi on kumpi?
3. S: Mä oon Fjalar.
4. H: Mä oon Rimma.
5. AR: Ahaa. Mitä teidän hommiin kuuluu?
6. S: Nukkuminen, katseleminen ja laukkaaminen.

*Excerpt 6. Feb 4, 2004: Videotaped playworld session*

1. Helen: (Suunnittelee pöydän ääressä hevospäähinettä, kommentoi El-lalle) Sun hevosella ei oo korvia. Heppa on naurettava ilman korvia!
2. (Ella ei kommentoi)
3. Helen: (Nousee pöydästä, sovittaa päähinettä ja lähtee laukkaamaan polvillaan maassa huudellen) Heppasoturiii! koppotikoppotikoppoti.. heppasoturiii! (termi ilmaantuu mielestäni nyt ensimmäisen kerran).
4. Andy: (huomaa Helenin ja huutaa): Sam tuu kattoo Helenii! (Kääntyy Helenin puoleen) Helen tee se taas, tee taas se Helen. Sillei nytte.
5. (Sam ja Mikael seuraavat hetken, Helen laittaa pahvin päänsä ympärille ja ratsastaa polvillaan ja huutaa "heppasoturiii!")
6. (Andya naurattaa ja hän hyppii tahdissa.)
7. (Taustalta kuuluu opettajan huuto "Mikael!" ja Sam ja Mikael lähtevät).
8. (Helen ratsastaa toiseen huoneeseen.)
9. Andy menee opettajan luo ja jatkaa: "Tina, Tina, Helen leikkii heppasoturia!
10. (Opettaja työstää toisen lapsen asua eikä huomaa.)
11. (Andy lähtee huoneesta.)

12. Helen: (palaa heppasoturina askartelupöydän luo ja sanoo Iinalle ja El-lalle) Nyt mun täytyy tehdä tästä heppasoturi. Mä oon heppasoturi. Mä näytin hyvältä, eiks nii? Mä näytin heppasoturilta
13. (Tytöt eivät tähän oikeastaan kommentoi)
14. (Helen jatkaa pähkineen työstöä)

*Excerpt 7. March 3, 2004: Helen's school diary*

Kesken aamupiiriä tuli ruuslaakson asukkaita yksi kyyhkynen oli ammuttu siitä alkoi ruusulaaksoleikit. Olin koira lämmittelin leikkinuotilla söin kalaa. Ronja oli minun omistjani. Söin myös vihanneksia. ruusulaaksoon oli tullut tennililäisiä. illalla kokoonnuttiin nuotion viereen paistamaan kalaa ja juttelemaan.

*Excerpt 8. May 21, 2004: Interview with Sara*

1. AR: Ootsä leikkinyt tätä kotona tai muuten ollu...
2. S:# joo
3. AR: aijaa? joo, mitä sä oot leikkiny?
4. S: no sitä varsaa, joka mä olin tossa. Mä oon joskus leikkiny vaikka et jos joku (puhe keskeytyy kun joku käy ovella)
5. AR: Niin mitä sä leikit?
6. S: (Ei saa selvää)
7. AR: Niin, et sä oot ollut varsa koko ajan tässä?
8. S: Joo
9. AR: Onksun mielestä se rooli jotenkin muuttunut tän kevään aikana? Tai se varsa. Onks sille tapahtunut jotain sille varsalle?
10. S: Noo ei.
11. AR: Onkse ihan sama varsa kun sillon alussakin? (Tauko) Et se ei oo rohkeempi tai pelokkaampi tai...
12. S: No ehkä vähän rohkeempi. Et Helenin ja Ronjan kaa, Helen oli toi koira, että me koko ajan mentiin Ronjan taakse koiran kaa, mut nytte mä oon taistellu ennen Ronjaa ja Heleniä.

*Excerpt 9. May 13, 2004: Videotaped playworld session*

1. T1: Hei! Minä olen vähän sitä mieltä, että.. MINÄ OLEN SITÄ MIELTÄ ETTÄ. Täällä on kaksi uljasta henkivartijaa tehny niin hienoo hommaa, että he varmasti rohkenevat mennä. (Useat lapset ovat pettynein ilmein, mutta menevät opettajan ympärille ja anovat: ”Mäkin haluun mennä, mäkin haluun!” T1 katselee ympärilleen ja miettii, sanoo) Henkivartijat, kuinka monta miestä tarviiatte matkaan?

2. Eve (Antonille): Ota Korppu!
3. Anton: Korppu, Hubert...
4. T1: No niin elikkä monta teitä lähtee?
5. Mari: Pojat ottaa vaan poikia.
6. Ronja: Pelkät pojat lähtee! Miksi aina JP?
7. T1: Me jäämme odottamaan. Mennäänköös tuonne toiselle puolelle...  
(Tytöt ovat silminnähdessä pettyneitä ja puhuvat T2:lle)
8. Helen: Miks aina Hubert ja ne kaikki aina ---
9. T2: ## Niillä on ehkä voimaa enemmän?
10. Helen: Ei oo!
11. T2: Mut oisko niil sit ällii?
12. Mari: Vaan pojat pääsee kun vaan pojat ottaa vaan poikki mukaan.
13. T2: Kuulkaas... mitäs me tehdään sille Ingvarille sitten?
14. Eve(?): Miks ne ei ottanut hevosta mukaan?
15. T2: Meidän varmasti pitää sanoa sille Hubertille, ja Juliukselle, ettei ne aivan unohda meitä naisia. Eikös niin? Meissäkin on voimaa.
16. Helen: --- hevoset ja --- (ei saa selvää)
17. T2: Meillä on ehkä aika vakavaa puhuttavaa niille meidän kylän miehille, eikös ookin?

*Excerpt 10. May 19, 2004: Videotaped playworld session*

1. Mikko: (Pojat saapuvat paikalle, huomaavat tilanteen) Te rikotte meidän tekemän!
2. Helen (kääntyy Mikkoa kohti): Nii-in! Se oli tarkoituskin! Tytöt saa rikkoo! Hahaa! (Kääntyy uudelleen Katlan suuntaan hajottamaan sitä)
3. Mikko: Noi alkaa rikkomaan. Anton, noi alkaa rikkomaan meidän tekemää.

*Excerpt 11. May 21, 2004: Interview with Helen*

1. Helen: (Aloittaa uuden aiheen pienen tauon jälkeen) Paitsi et se oli tylsää, kun pojat sai aina, aina Hubert sai niinku hämähäkinseitettä rikkoo, ja sitte se sai aina kaikkee tehdä, mennä ensimmäisenä, ja se vei Matiaksen sinne Katlan luolaan Juliuksen kanssa, kun Ingvar käski. Ja sitte se sai vähän niinku kaikkee aina, pojat. Ja ainoa mitä tytöt sai tän koko vuoden aikana, oli se Katla minkä ne sai rikkoo ja tappaa.
2. AR: Nii.. mistäköhän se johtu?
3. Helen: Emmä tiä.
4. AR: Mmmm... nii-i. Niillä oli jotenkin sellaiset roolit, että niistä muodostu sen tarinan kannalta tärkeitä. Se on usein tommosissa tarinoissa...
5. Helen: ## Vaikka tytöt on yhtä rohkeita kun pojat!

### ARTICLE III

*Excerpt, p. 313-314*

- Jussi (T1): Sitten käydään saman tien viimiseen taisteluun samalla matkalla. Me ei voida tehdä niin pitkää matkaa montaa kertaa. Kuinka moni lähtee minun kanssa tälle matkalle?
- Lapset: Minä minä minä! (lapset viittaavat ja nousevat pöydille)
- L: Hevonen!
- L: Ja minä!
- Jussi: Hyvä! Kolminkertanen huraa-huuto rohkeille kirsikkalaakso-laisille!
- Kaikki: Huraa! Huraa! Huraa!
- Jussi: Tasan viikon päästä olkaa valmiita, sitten lähdetään. Ja kiitos vielä kerran!
- Lapset: Olkaa hyvät!

*Excerpt, p. 316-317*

- Jussi: Täältäkö pääsis lähtemään?
- Joel: Ei ei!
- Jussi: No mitäs, lähdenkö minä sen Matiaksen hakemaan vai...  
(Joku lapsista sanoo joo, mutta Eve on nyt hoksannut mitä Joel ajaa takaa)
- Eve: Ei vielä!
- Jussi: Ei vielä?
- Joel: Ei.
- Jussi: No miksei vielä? Onkos sulla mulle jotain...
- JP huutaa: Jussi! Jussi!
- Jussi: No, mitä?
- JP: Me tiedetään susta jotain!
- Jussi: Minusta?
- Joel: Tässä se on! (Heiluttaa valaa Jussin edessä. Emilkin nousee ylös tuolilta, tulee tilanteeseen ja yrittää ottaa itselleen lappua nyt Joelin kädestä)
- Jussi: Mikäs se...
- Joel: No lue!

- Christopher: Tuolla on paperi! Mä näin.  
Jussi: Ei siellä ole kuin nenäliinoja. Mutta ihan oikeesti ne ei antanu mulle mitään vaihtoehtoja. Mun oli ihan pakko, ne ois muuten otanu mut hengiltä. Mutt kyll mä ihan oikeesti oon teiän puolella.  
Sami: Miks sull on sitte tollanen ilme? (katsoo hieman hymyillen Jussia)  
Jussi: No ku... mua vähän nyt alko pelottaa. Ku teiän pitää uskoa, että mä oon teiän puolella.  
L: Etkä oo.  
Jussi: Ihan varmasti oon. Mä vaan hetkeks hairahduin. Mutta kyllä jos mä tuun teiän kanssa taistelemaan ni...  
Andy: Ei me uskota!  
Jussi: Mitä mä voin tehdä Joonatan, että te uskoisitte?  
Joel: Sun täytyy näyttää merkki  
Jussi: Ei se merkki mitään auta, mä tunnustan.  
L: Pelasta Orvar!

#### **ARTICLE IV**

##### *Excerpt 1*

1. Lasten huutoa: Se on Matias!
2. T2: Voidaaks me viedä Matiasta sinne Katlan luolaan?
3. L: Ei --- (yhteen ääneen selitystä)
4. T2: Kuunnelkaas Hubertia! Kuuntele!
5. Emil (Hubert): Jos me joudutaa viedä se, ni me ei viedä sitä sinne Katlan luolaa, ku me mennään vaik siit ohi, ja viedään se takasin Ruusulaaksoon tai tänne.
6. T2: Millä me päästään sinne?
7. ...
8. T2: Kerropa! (Evelle, joka viittaa)
9. Eve: Niin tota jos tota semmoset lähtee viemään sitä, niin tota kenet Matias tuntee, ne sanoo sille Ingvarille, ett ne voi viedä sen kahestaan, ett ei --- tule sen mukaan, ja sitt ne päästää sen.
10. T2: Hei, muistakaa, eihän me saada paljastaa sille Ingvarille, ketä me ihan oikeesti olla. Mehän ollaan sotilaita nytte. Ei se Ingvar saa tietää, että me ollaan kirsikkalaaksolaisia. Nyt me ollaan niitä Ingvarin sotilaita. Muutenhan me paljastutaan ihan kaikki, ja varmaan ei saada tota Matiasta pelastettua. Mutt hei, ketä me pistetään matkaa sinne Katlan luolaan?
11. Lapset (viittaavat ja ehdottavat yhteen ääneen): Mä, mä...

### *Excerpt 2*

1. T3: Täällä sanottiin, että mitäs jos Julius ja Hubert lähtisivät sinne kuljetamaan, kun Julius on muutenkin selvittänyt niitä viestejä.
2. Topias: Eii...aina noi vaan saa
3. T3: Ja mitäs me tehdään sen Ingvarin kanssa täällä sitte sillä välin? Meill on kyllä aika visanen pähkinä purtavaksi. Aika huono... Mites Huubertille...
4. JP: jos kaks lähtee, ni loppu joukko lähtee niinku salaa seuraamaan ---
5. Eve: Niin tai ottaa köyttä mukaan ja köyttää Ingvarin.
6. T3: Mut mitäs jos se Ingvar tuleekin tänne, ja tääl ei oo ketään, ni mehän paljastutaan heti sitte.
7. JP: Niin, mut me lähetään niitten jälkeen!

### *Excerpt 3*

1. T3: Silloin [tammikuussa] tuntui, että tämä [leikkimaailma] on ihan levälään kuin ”jokisen eväät”, kauhean sirpaleista. Me haettiin ja mietittiin silloin niitä roolihaamoja. Silloin olisi ollut tosi vaikea uskoa, että tästä tulikin tämmöinen.
2. AR: Niin, ei sitä etukäteen voikaan tietää.
3. T3: Että tää tuntuu ainakin itsestä paljon jäsentyneemmältä nyt.
4. T1: Mutta toisaalta kyllä mä perustelen [aikuisten isoa roolia leikkimaailmassa] silläkin, että siinä vaiheessa kun me laitetaan muksut tekemään jotain, niin sitten ne, joiden me kuvitellaan, että hahaa, nehän tekee ihan mitä vaan...
5. T2: Niin.
6. T1: ..niin sitten juuri se onkin täyttä kaaosta ja semmosta ”krääk apua”! Ja samaten sitten aika usein se menee siihen, että ne muutama [lapsi] kärsii siitä kaaoksesta tai jostain.
7. AR: Niinpä.
8. T1: Että sen takia me [opettajat] halutaan pitää ne piuhat kiinni, että siinä olisi kaikille [taattu] se mielekkyys ja leikkirauha.
9. T1: Ja sitten taas semmoset tilanteet, mistä kuvitellaan, että no tää nyt on tosi tämmöinen ”helppoheikki”-juttu, mutta että pakko tehdä se, kun luvattiin vanhemmille... niin tämmöset päivät sitten ottaakin (tulta alleen) niinku että ”tsak”! (tauko) Mutta sitten tämmöisetkin pikkujutut, että jos kolmestakymmenestä [lapsesta] kolme tekee jotain...
10. T2: Näin on.
11. T1: ...niin se häiritsee koko sakkia.
12. AR: Sepä se!

13. T2: Kyllä sen huomasi, kun Kim --- (ei saa selvää) niin Lina kanssa nyki sitä paidasta. Niitä häiritsi hirveästi se sen sähläys, kun ne olisivat halunneet kuunnella...
14. T3: Kuunnella ja keskittyä.

#### *Excerpt 4*

1. Tomi: Se oli tuolla alhaalla.
2. Emil: Siellä kellarissa.
3. Matias (T1): Minne? Tännekö?
4. Emil: Vai mistä se piti mennä... Missä se oli, missä se oli? Se oli... se oli... se oli... (pohtivan näköisenä, naputtaa soremlla poskeaan ja katsoo kohti kattoa)

#### *Excerpt 5*

1. Matias (T1): Jaa, taitaa olla mutkia matkassa, tuoll on sortuma tullu Katlan luolaan. Satunpas tietämään. (Tomi katselee kaytavan paahan, jossa on liikuntasali eli ”sortuma”, lahtee kavelemaan sinne ikaan kuin katsomaan)
2. Emil: (pieni tauko) No sitte pitää mennä takasin. (lahtevat kaveleksimaan takaisinpain)
3. Matias (T1): Takasin, jaa, vai takasin. Sitä Ingvaria minä en kyllä enää viittis katella. Tämä nyt vallan kummallista! Minä en kyllä tosta luolasta pääse, jos ei joku vieritä tota kiveä edestä pois. Mull on kädet sidottu.

#### *Excerpt 6*

1. Emil: Mitä me nyt tehdää? (kysyy Tomilta. Tomi ei vastaa)
2. Matias (T1): No, mistäs nyt on kyse? (lapsia hiukan naurattaa. Mutta he eivät vastaa.) Hei mutta, ette kai te ole... oletteks te Hubert ja Julius? Miten te ootte täällä? Kuinka te ootte Tengilin roskasakkii ruvennu?
3. Hubert: No, me vaan soluttauduttiin ett me päästiin muurista
4. Julius: --- Nii.
5. Hubert: --- Ruusulaaksossa.
6. Matias (T1): Siis huijaatteks te Tengiliä?
7. HubertT: Joo.
8. Matias (T1): Ilmankos! Ja nyt te vasta sanotte! Annoitte ukkorahjuksen luulla, että se joutuu tonne lohikäärmeen ruuaks. No missäs muut kirsikkalaaksolaiset on?
9. Hubert: No ne kaikki on siellä Tengilin satureina.

## Appendix 7.

### Pictures from the classroom space



7.1 Studying at the small room April 22, 2004



7.3 Studying and talking at the story telling room April 22, 2004



7.2 Studying and talking at the story telling room April 22, 2004



7.4 Studying and talking at the story telling room April 22, 2004



## Appendix 8.

Drawings, props, artwork and pictures from the playworld project



8.1 Looking for Tengil's horn April 22, 2004



8.3 Tengil's horn



8.2 Looking for Tengil's horn; the researcher filming April 22, 2004



8.4 Ingvar, the horse Fjalar, and Tengil's soldiers May 19, 2004



8.5 A map sent by Jossi



8.7 Dragon Katla



8.6 Children's pictures depicting  
The Brothers Lionheart Jan 4, 2004



8.8 Swords