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Broadening rules and aligning actions: Children's negotiation while playing hide-and-seek during break time



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ABSTRACT

This article explores the emergence of the children's rule negotiation, while they play hide-and-seek during school break times, and how it transforms the playing. Break times refer to the free-time interspaces between organized scheduled lessons during the school day and are settings among others in children's everyday life where they are able to play and explore. Usually, in Swedish primary schools, there is a morning break, lunch break, and shorter pauses between lessons. Usually children are allowed to spend the break times in a schoolyard. The article provides a micro-level insights of a group of 10 and 11 years old children's negotiation process regarding rules to be followed while playing hide-and-seek, in Sweden the game is called "the jar". Observational data was produced during 11 break periods and was analysed through the lens of cultural historical activity theory (Leontiev, 1978; Vygotsky, 1978). The analysis indicates that the children's negotiation process is a collective embedding of agency. Negotiation concerns children broadening the collective interpretation of rules and making micro-adjustments in their courses of action in order to align them. The negotiation of rules is a collectivudual (Stetsenko, 2013) enterprise of producing and using negotiagENCY in changing the circumstances in play.

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1. Introduction

It is time for a break. Children from the class enter the schoolyard and run to a certain area nearby a lamppost. They engage in a hide-and-seek game, which in Sweden is called "the jar". One player is the seeker and turns to the lamppost, the home base, closes their eyes and counts to thirty while the other players hide in different places in the schoolyard. They hide behind buildings, trees, stones, and playground equipment. When the counter/seeker reaches thirty, he/she tries to locate all the hiders and to "jar" them. When a hider is located the seeker runs to the lamppost and shouts when touching it: "The jar for (the name of the located one), one-two-three!". The first to be "jared", or found, by the seeker will be the seeker during the next round. If the hider is faster than the seeker to get to the lamppost, when located, the hider touches it and shouts: "The jar for me, one-two-three!". If the hider is the first to get there and to touch the lamppost and shout, that child will not be the one who is the seeker during the next round and does not hide again until the next round begins. Some children do not hide at all from start but stay in the area to watch. Sometimes children seem to help the seeker or the hiders during the play and are sort of helpers without taking any other role in the play. It is obvious that the children participate differently.

[(Excerpt from field notes from the first days of fieldwork: 150119; 150120).]

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This article explores children as agents in the jar-play seen as a cultural activity (van Oers, 2014) in order to contribute to cultural historical research on children's play and learning. Research on play by Hakkarainen (2006), Hännikäinen, Singer and van Oers (2013) and van Oers (2013) mainly concern pre-school and younger children in classroom settings. This article attempts to deepen understanding of play, first by focusing older children and second by focusing on play during break times during the school day. These break times are settings with particular regulations, which differ from classroom settings, but still are part of a school activity. The article draws upon the concept of the collectival (Stetsenko, 2005, 2013) which implies that “every individual human being is conceived as profoundly and deeply social” (Stetsenko, 2013, p. 16). Thus, the collective embedding of agency is fundamental in the cultural historical framework. The dialectic relations between child and culture imply that play activity concerns both individual's development and learning to participate in a certain culture, and the forming and transforming of culture as a historical, collective issue (Hays, 1994; Stetsenko, 2013). Furthermore, the article draws upon cultural historical reasoning on research on agency (Edwards, 2005; Edwards & D'Arcy, 2004) concerning the relational aspects of agency. Relational agency refers to “a capacity to align one's thought and actions with those of others in order to interpret problems of practice and to respond to those interpretations” (Edwards, 2005, pp. 169–170). It highlights how actions of individuals relate to the intentions of others. Relational agency affects the object of activity by expanding it (Edwards & D'Arcy, 2004) and is “found in a capacity for engaging in the micro-negotiations which elicit understandings, reveal one's own interpretations and allow for alignments to accomplish the transformation of the object that is being worked on” (Edwards, 2005, p. 171). Here, relational agency is expressed in one's ability to engage in negotiation.

Children's play is largely examined from an individual psychological perspective (see, for example, Frost, Wortham, & Stuart, 2001) which emphasizes the meaning of play in the cognitive development of the child, and from a sociological perspective (see, for example, Corsaro, 2014) which emphasizes the meaning of play in socialization. In the cultural historical field, research on play by van Oers (2014) suggests that play is a cultural historical activity within a certain activity format. He elaborates on the understanding of the relationship between play and learning by focusing on how children role-play. Within the cultural historical framework suggested by van Oers (2014), we can consider the use of rules and the negotiation of rules in games and play, and how they are regulated by culture and history. Further we can explore how the rules are defined in games such as the jar, from the perspective of collectively (Stetsenko, 2005, 2013) motivated activity. If we considered negotiation as expressing the collective embedding of activity we should explore what functions the rules play, the issues children raise during negotiation, and if established rules are followed. This research aimed to better understand the notions of agency and negotiation within the cultural historical research on the collectival.

This article explores the emergence of the rule negotiation among children, ways the rules are negotiated, and the ways play transformed, from the perspective introduced. This exploration serves to address gaps in the research as suggested by van Oers (2013): “further studies are needed on how decisions and evaluations of rules, allowed degrees of freedom, and involvement are negotiated, both by adults and children” (p. 196), and by Edwards (2005): “we still know too little about the micro level negotiations that form the evolving shape of the collective” (p. 180). The three research questions explored were:

- How are the rules negotiated in the jar-play?
- How is the jar-play transformed through negotiation of rules?
- How does the children's agency for negotiation of rules emerge?

Using the concept of the dynamic of demands and motives as an analytical tool, the article seeks to contribute to research on transitions (Hedegaard, 2014; Hedegaard & Fleer, 2013; Zittoun, 2009). Using the notion of micro-adjustments, it seeks to contribute to research on transformations *within* an activity setting (Fleer, 2014). Using the concept of transformative agency, the article intends to contribute to research (Barma, Lacasse, & Massé-Morneau, 2015; Engeström, Kajamaa, & Nummijoki, 2015; Haapasaari & Kerosuo, 2015; Sannino, 2015; Sannino & Laitinen, 2015; van Oers, 2015) based on the Vygotskian model of double stimulation (Vygotsky, 1997b). In following section, the conceptual tools are presented further. The methodology in producing data and in analysing is presented in Section 3. In Section 4, the findings are reported and discussed. Finally, Section 5 provides a summary of the findings and concluding remarks.

2. Tools in unpacking the collective embedding of negotiation

Based on the research questions three key analytical tools are used: the concept of the *dynamic of demands and motives* is used to explore children's negotiation as actions in a play activity, the notion of *micro-adjustment* is used to explore children's motive reorientation, and the principle of *double stimulation* is used to explore the emergence of transformative agency. The tools meet the ambition to “unpack” the collective embedding of negotiation and bring about an analysis from the perspective of children and their play as a dynamic collectival endeavour of micro-adjustments and emerging agency.

2.1. The concept of the dynamic of demands and motives in exploring children's play activity

Negotiation is culturally, historically and socially embedded in activity, which makes it a collectival (Stetsenko, 2005) phenomenon. Activity is concretely realized by goal-directed, mediated (Vygotsky, 1978) actions in an activity setting (Hedegaard, 2014). Goal-directed jar-play actions take shape in a break time activity setting, which is part of the broader school activity or practice. The collective object-related activity relates to the social, historical and cultural values and is oriented towards a certain motive (Leontiev, 1978). The children playing the jar together are not necessarily driven by the same motives as their needs and corresponding motives may differ. Thus, from the angle of the motive, the jar-play may be a tool for children realizing

different needs. The object of an activity is twofold (Leontiev, 1978). First, it refers to what is collectively produced, i.e. the outcome as reflecting the various needs. Second, it refers to the collective ideas of what is produced, i.e. the children's ideas of what is the outcome of the activity, as an image of the object. Needs, rules and regulations are reflected in demands upon the children. Demands and motives form a dynamic (Hedegaard, 2008, 2014), which is reflected in the children's jar-play. In this article, children's negotiation of rules refers to their dealing with tensions in the dynamic of demands and motives.

2.2. *The notion of micro-adjustment in exploring motive re-orientation*

Negotiation take shape in human interaction as children's dealing with tensions in the dynamic of demands and motives. The notion of micro-adjustment (Zittoun, 2009) is used in conceptualizing micro-genetic changes and refers to a change in a person's course of actions, which in turn is seen as a particular state of acting with significant and distinctive traits (Zittoun, 2014). Choice, a term implied in the definitions of agency, points to the fact that there are alternative courses of action available. The term agency here refers to choice as culturally, historically and socially embedded. A micro-adjustment refers to a person's change in course of actions, and of which a deviance from the significant and distinctive traits of acting may be an indication. Therefor, what appears as a deviation in relation to the particular state of acting may indicate a temporary change of course of actions, which in turn may reflect a micro-adjustment. Deviations may be discerned through analysis. It is not necessarily the perceiving of them as deviations by the individuals under study themselves that defines them. Through exploring situations in the jar-play, which reflects micro-adjustments origin from conflicts of motives, children's negotiation of rules may be discernable.

2.3. *The principle of double stimulation in exploring the emergence of transformative agency manifested in negotiation*

The analysis explored situations that reflected the origin of micro-adjustments from the conflicts of motives to make visible how rules are negotiated in the jar-play, how the jar-play is transformed through negotiation, and how agency for negotiation of rules emerges. The notion of transformative agency (Vygotsky, 1997b) refers to the ability of children to negotiate rules, to change acting and to transform the jar-play. Thus, the principle of double stimulation (Vygotsky, 1997b) is used in conceptualizing the mechanisms of the emergence of children's transformative agency (Vygotsky, 1997b). The emergence of the transformative agency manifested in the children's negotiation of rules and their transforming of the play is conceptually linked to the principle of double stimulation. Double stimulation refers to "the mechanism with which human beings can intentionally break out of a conflictual situation and change their circumstances or solve problems" (Sannino, 2015, p. 2). The children's negotiation is seen here as running from tensions in the dynamic of demands and motives. The first stimuli in double stimulation are the initial problem itself. Conflicts of motives refer to the notion of duality, which is "at the very foundation of the volitional act, and this duality becomes especially prominent and vivid whenever several motives, several opposing strivings, clash in our consciousness" (Vygotsky, 1997a, p. 167). Artefacts are used as the second stimuli "with the help of which the subject gains control of his or her action and constructs a new understanding of the initial problem" (Engeström, Sannino, & Virkkunen, 2014, p. 121). The principle of double stimulation is used as tool in exploring the mechanisms in the emergence of transformative agency in the process of children dealing with conflicts of motives. The analysis concerns identifying the first stimuli, the second stimuli, and the manifestations of transformative agency. By identifying these three elements the emergence of negotiation of rules and the transforming of the jar-play becomes visible.

3. Methods

3.1. *Data*

Observations of jar-play were made at a Swedish primary school as a part of a larger study. 27 children in a fifth grade school class were invited to participate in the larger study and 22 of them participated. The children were between the ages of ten and 11. 20 of the 22 children participating in the larger study engaged in the jar-play during the three periods. These 20 children are referred to as the participants of the study presented in this article. Field notes concerning the jar-play were produced in three separate periods during one school semester. The first period was in the beginning of January, the second in the beginning of March and the third in the middle of April. The first period comprised seven school days. The second period comprised four school days. The third comprised two school days. The observational data specifically focused on jar-play was produced during 11 break times spread over six of the 13 days. Furthermore, the data also includes various local school documents with directives on how students should behave respectfully in this particular school and class. The schoolyard was also photographed and 164 audio memos (30 s–five minutes each) were produced during the three periods. Audio memos (Waermö, 2016) are short smartphone audio recordings of the children's verbal reflections on aspects of their actions and experiences. The audio memos were produced continuously during the breaks with the intention to get reflections that made sense for the child in the immediacy of the actions. The use of audio memos enables the children's point of view to be included in the data. Furthermore, it enables a richer understanding of the children's perspectives and complemented the other clues used to identify demands and motives.

3.2. *Children's courses of action and children's negotiation*

The data was initially structured descriptively to get an idea of children's courses of action. The starting point was the idea of the ethnographical analytical process as interpreting other's acting as "an expression of some part of a plan" (Agar, 1986, p. 25). The

ambition was to make a coherent understanding of possible individually expressed motives for engaging in the play, as well as of demands upon the children. The analysis was a process of repeated shifting from focus on individuals to focus on the collective as well as a shifting between the different sources of data in order to get a holistic idea of what was going on. The approach was inspired by how in a choir, a musical score represents a piece of music but each voice plays a part in shaping the meaning in relation to the other voices. What appeared from the perspective of the observer as deviations from the children's courses of action, were considered reflecting children who were engaging in micro-adjustments in dealing with tensions in the dynamic of demands and motives. Descriptively structuring the data made possible tracing changes referred to as micro-adjustments through analysing the deviations. After identifying demands and motives in situations, which reflected children changing courses of action, the children's negotiation was further explored.

Light was put on the constellation of roles in the play as it seemed to shift. The regular roles within the jar-play are one *seeker* and one or more *hidere*s. The constellation changes every time the role *helper* or the role *watcher* appears. As these roles are not always represented in the play they are referred to as temporary. The children addressed the four roles of the jar-play –seeker, hider, helper, and watcher (see Section 1)– differently and they differed in the shifting between them as well. The individual children maintain their role as a hider in a different way than the others because of individually expressed motives and due to the demands upon them both as persons and as holders of that particular role. For example, hidere)s may either hide as long as possible or reveal themselves fairly soon. The constellation of hidere)s changes regularly. The seeker is replaced regularly as well. Every switch of holder of a role has the potential of giving rise to a change in the dynamic of demands and motives due to which individually expressed motive the holder's actions are oriented towards, due to what demands are put upon others by this child, and due to what demands are put upon him/her as a person and as the holder of that particular role from the others. If the dynamic of demands and motives has changed it may relate to the appearance of the temporary role. Such situations may reflect aspects of the children's negotiation as well as of transformations of the play. Accordingly, of analytical interest are situations when a child turns into the holder of a temporary role.

The situations where the temporary roles helper and watcher appeared in the jar-play, were traced. A matrix was developed in which each traced situation was positioned regarding the label of the temporary role as *primary* or *secondary*. Roles reflecting a correspondence between the holder's present course of actions and the individually expressed motive for engaging in the jar-play were labelled as primary. Roles reflecting a non-correspondence between the holder's present course of actions and the individually expressed motive for engaging in the jar-play were labelled as secondary. A secondary role occurs when the child waits for a possibility to change role into a primary role due to what seems to be the dominant motive for engaging. Turning into a secondary role may be a matter of the child acting correspondingly to what is perceived as demands in the situation.

Usually there is a diversity of hidere)s and one single seeker. Groups of holders of the roles were analytically dealt with as separate individuals engaging in play-actions oriented towards a motive, and who put demands upon each other within the group as well as upon the holders of other roles. Demands are put upon each hider from each holder of other roles as well. The dynamic of demands and motives is manifested in children's actions. As actions and collective activity are mutually constituting, tensions in the dynamic may cause changes in the collective direction of activity, i.e. due to the elaboration on the object, and vice versa. Each situation in the children's jar-play is unique in role constellations and, without doubt, complex. Nevertheless, the reasoning emphasizes the unit of analysis: the emerging actor-linking dynamic net of demands and motives.

4. Findings

Two events are chosen for presentation here as they are rich in data and provide a clear narrative. To help explain of the findings identified rules concerning the jar-play are presented. These rules are seen as demands placed upon the children. These demands form the basis of the jar-play highlighted in the introduction (see Section 1). First, there were *formal, basic rules* of the jar-play:

- The roles consist of a seeker and two or more hidere)s.
- A home base is chosen from which the play starts.
- The seeker turns to the home base, hides their face and counts to a pre-defined number while the hidere)s hide.
- When a hider is located the seeker runs to the home base, touches it and shouts: "The jar for XX (the name on the located hider), one, two, three!"
- No new hider can join the round after the seeker has started to count.
- Hidere)s can choose to reveal themselves before they are located. The hider touches the home base, before the seeker does it, and shouts: "The jar for me, one, two, three!". The hider is then safe from being located, safe from being the seeker during the next round, still participates but has no right to hide for the rest of the round.
- When there is one hider left it is possible for this hider to "jar free" everyone else. The hider touches the home base before the seeker does it and shouts: "The jar free, one, two, three!". The seeker has to re-count and everybody else re-hide.
- The first hider to be located by the seeker is the seeker during the next round.

Secondly, the children made up their own rules and added them to the formal, basic rules. These rules are referred to as *group rules*:

- You are allowed to stay in the area to watch the ongoing play and/or to help the seeker and the hidere)s without being a seeker or a hider yourself.
- The first hider to be located becomes the seeker during the next round even if it starts during the next break. If this child does not join the play next break, someone else has to be the seeker.
- The last one arriving to the home base when it is time to start a new round will be the seeker, if not determined earlier.

Table 1

Different nuances of the temporary roles.

	Primary	Secondary
Watcher	1. <i>Primary watcher</i> (9 situations)	2. <i>Secondary watcher</i> (10 situations)
Hider's helper	3. <i>Primary hider's helper</i> (6 situations)	
Seeker's helper	4. <i>Primary seeker's helper</i> (1 situation)	5. <i>Secondary seeker's helper</i> (9 situations)
Hider's & seeker's helper	6. <i>Primary hider's & seeker's helper</i> (4 situations)	7. <i>Secondary hider's & seeker's helper</i> (2 situations)

- If, for some reason, it is still unclear who will be the seeker in a new round it is competition to determine who is. Everybody runs to a spot close to the home base, a tree for example. The last one to reach the spot will be the seeker.

Thirdly, in local documents there were guidelines regarding preferred attitudes. These guidelines are referred to as *local school rules*:

- We have a nice attitude towards each other.
- We are helpful and respectful.
- We help those who are sad or do not join.
- We follow rules.

Every situation where the temporary roles of helper and watcher appeared, were noted (41 in total). The situations represent seven of eight theoretically possible nuances of the temporary roles, referring to the matrix below (Table 1). The labels, numbered 1–7 in the matrix, are used to indicate individually expressed motives for engaging in the jar-play.

Description of each combination in the matrix:

1. A *primary watcher* prefers this role even if there is a possibility to choose another role. A primary watcher usually stays close to the lamppost watching the play while joining the hidens who were found by the seeker or who revealed themselves.
2. A *secondary watcher* prefers another role and waits for a possibility to change roles. In all cases representing this group the children were either found by the seeker or revealed themselves and waited at the lamppost for a new round to start. Others in this combination waited to follow the seeker to see what happens next.
3. A *primary hider's helper* prefers this role even if there is a possibility to choose another role. A primary hider's helper moves, more or less, in the area and communicates quietly, verbally and/or by signs, to help hidens by indicating the seeker's location and how the seeker moves in the area.
4. A *primary seeker's helper* prefers this role even if there is a possibility to choose another role. A primary seeker's helper runs to tell hidens that they are located if they are not aware of it, gives advice to the seeker about how to seek more effectively and, runs to check if the seeker is right or wrong when unsure of who is located.
5. A *secondary seeker's helper* prefers another role and waits for a possibility to change roles. In all cases representing this group, the children were either found by the seeker or revealed themselves and wait for a new round to start. They run to tell hidens that they are located if they are not aware of it, give advice to the seeker about how to seek more effectively and, run to check if the seeker is right or wrong when unsure of who is located.
6. A *primary hider's & seeker's helper* prefers this role even if there is a possibility to choose another role. The help is directed to the seeker as well as the hidens, choosing not to choose sides.
7. A *secondary hider's & seeker's helper* prefers another role and waits for a possibility to change roles. The help is directed to the seeker as well as the hidens, without taking someone's sides.

The first event presented below concerns Alice and Alex and the second concerns Jonas and Edvin.

4.1. Alice and Alex

It is morning break. Six classmates are out in the schoolyard waiting close to the lamppost. They watch Alex, another classmate, who is running quickly from the door to the classrooms hallway in their direction. They wait for him to come without starting the jar-play. Alex is the last one to arrive. When he joins the group at the lamppost he turns to the lamppost, hides his face in his hands and starts counting from one to thirty. The others run and hide. Alice, a girl from the class, shows up and walks across the schoolyard heading for the lamppost. She was not present when the round started. Alex has already left the lamppost and seeks for the hidens when Alice arrives. Alice touches the lamppost with her hand and says:

–The jar for me, one, two, three!

Alex does not comment on Alice but continues seeking. Alice stays close to the lamppost. Alex locates two of the hidens, Valter and Bert. He touches the lamppost and shouts their names and that they are located. They do not either answer or appear. They are maybe too far away in the other end of the schoolyard for being able to hear the seeker. Alex now asks Alice if she wants to help him. Alice answers:

–Yes, I can help you!

Alex says:

–I saw Valter and Bert run for the white house, they may well have moved further by now, but anyway.

Alice runs in the direction pointed out by Alex while Alex himself goes on seeking not that far away from the lamppost. In a couple of minutes, Alice walks in the direction of the lamppost, with Valter and Bert beside her. Alice, Valter and Bert then meet Alex, the seeker, half way back.

[(Field notes 150303:4401)]

When Alice arrives to the lamppost, the seeker has finished counting and the hiders are hiding. The ones who are playing do not restart in order to involve Alice. They seem oriented to ‘continue playing the jar’ while Alice is oriented to ‘join the jar-play immediately’. Referring to one of the basic rules which says that “No new hider can join the round after the seeker has started to count”, she is obviously too late for joining as a hider. It is a demand upon Alice to wait until the next round to join. It is a demand upon all the children to be nice and respectful, which in this situation may be reflected in Alice’s decision not to interrupt the ongoing play. Alice motive orientation ‘join the jar-play immediately’ clashes with the motive reflected in the demand upon her not to interrupt. This conflict of motives serves as first stimuli in the emergence of transformative agency, according to the principle of double stimulation. Alice touches the lamppost and says the phrase “The jar for me, one, two, three!”, which refers to one of the basic rules of the play: “Hiders can choose to reveal themselves before they are located”. Without even being there from the beginning of the round, she engages in the ongoing play by saying the phrase “The jar for me, one, two, three!”. She turns into the role of a hider but with a fundamental difference from traditional: she does not hide. She turns into a primary watcher now standing at the lamppost. Here, the rule “Hiders can choose to reveal themselves before they are located” is the artefact serving as second stimuli in the emergence of transformative agency, according to the principle of double stimulation, whereupon the conditions for participation are transformed through a collective broadening of the interpretation of this particular rule. Alice jars herself and accordingly she is not the seeker of the next round. This refers to the second part of a basic rule concerning hidens who reveal themselves: “The hider is then safe from being located, safe from being the seeker of next round, still participates but has no right to hide the rest of that particular round”. Alice dislikes being a seeker, which is reflected in her comment “Actually it doesn’t matter when I am located, I just do not want to be the first one to be located because then you have to count” (Audio memo 150302:4267).

Another few moments later Alice turns from primary watcher into a primary seeker’s helper when the seeker needs help to inform some hidens far away that they are located and have to return to the lamppost. Alice usually prefers turning from a hider into a watcher or a helper, instead of trying as long as possible to hide in order to be the last one located by the seeker during the round. Since Alice reveals herself it seems to be the motive initially in this particular situation, to ‘join the jar-play’, as well as in general when she engages in the jar-play: to ‘avoid in the longest turning into the role of a seeker’, which is reflected in the following excerpts:

Interviewer: Did you want to reveal yourself early in the round?

Alice: Yes.

Interviewer: Why?

Alice: Because then you are done with it. I kind of like to walk around like this and then they (the hidens) use to ask me like this: “Can you please check where the seeker is located?”

[(Audio memo 150302:4251)]

Interviewer: Hide? But you do jar yourself, so you can join by watching too, don't you?

Alice: Yes, it feels good to be done with it so you don't have to think about the hiding anymore, because you don't want to...you don't want to be located.

Interviewer: No, you don't want to count, do you?

Alice: No.

[(Audio memo 150302:4281)]

According to these excerpts it is reasonable to give the roles, which Alice turns into in this particular situation, the label *primary* (Table 1).

Transformative agency emerges due to a conflict of motives for Alice. Transformative agency is manifested in her use of a particular rule, which normally regulates the hidens’ acting during an ongoing round. Although Alice is not a hider, she acts on the basis of the rule, ‘as if’ she was a hider. Her use of the rule in this situation can be considered a negotiation of the conditions for participation and as a broadening of the interpretation of this particular rule. Alice succeeds and joins. The transformation concerns a broadening of the collective interpretation of the particular basic rule of the play. The negotiation concerns Alice and Alex broadening the interpretation and to Alice actually turning into a temporary role by using the rule without being a hider from the beginning –and Alex accepting it.

Alice’s actions are initially oriented to the individually expressed motive ‘join the play’. Once she joins –first as a hider, then as a primary watcher and finally as a primary seeker’s helper– her actions seem to have shifted orientation, into ‘avoid in the longest turning into the role of a seeker’. The actions now reflect another activity. Each time Alice turns into a temporary role (hider into primary watcher, primary watcher into primary seeker’s helper), she adds a new role to the role constellation whereby the

dynamic of demands and motives are somewhat modified. Thus, these modifications reflect micro-adjustments of Alice's course of actions when she turns from newly arrived, not participating from the beginning of the round, into joining during an ongoing round, when she turns from a hider into a primary watcher, and when she turns from a primary watcher into a primary seeker's helper. Alex is also micro-adjusting his course of actions as well, as he realigns in reaction to Alice —the hider, Alice —the primary watcher, and Alice —the primary seeker's helper. His realignment modifies the dynamic of demands and motives as well. It is apparent that once Alice joined the jar-play-activity, another motive seemed to become dominant.

Alice's and Alex's micro-adjustments of their courses of action stem from the new interpretation of the particular basic rule and the using of the rule as a tool for including Alice in the play. Alice aligns her actions to the actions of Alex and of the others, and Alex aligns his actions to the actions of Alice and of the others as well. From the view of the jar-play activity, the object is still the jar-play but somewhat elaborated as the particular basic rule of the play. The rule "Hiders can choose to reveal themselves before they are located" gets a broadened meaning: "Hiders can choose to reveal themselves before they are located and late arrivers can reveal themselves in order to join an ongoing round".

The play emerges and transforms in negotiation of the meaning and use of a basic rule of the play. It is argued that the children transform the shape of the collective in terms of elaborating the object of activity in negotiation into a play, which character reflects possibilities to include one more player. As the object is elaborated, the dynamic of demands and motives is transformed in order to respond to the needs of this player. In this process the children deal with rules, roles and differing ideas on what kind of jar-play to produce, which is reflecting a fluctuating dynamic of demands and motives. A conflict of motives, functioning as first stimuli according to the principle of double stimulation, triggers the emergence of transformative agency and negotiation in this situation.

Alice's actions reflect a capacity to join and Alex's actions reflect a capacity to affiliate Alice in the ongoing play. The interdependence of these capacities in negotiation of rules makes possible the children collectively changing acting and changing the circumstances in play. Through relating individual action to the actions of others and to the transformation of the play, in analysis, a collectividual ability is reflected. It is argued that transformation of the play does not merely refer to the children using their individual capacities at the same time, but their collectividual ability for negotiation as transforming the object of the play activity. This collectividual ability for negotiation as transforming refers to what is here introduced as negotiagency. Negotiagency is collectividually produced and emerges due to dynamic tensions. As the children negotiate, negotiagency is collectividually used as a tool for elaborating on the object of activity and transforming the play. Consequently, negotiagency is to be understood as a tool from the view of the collectividual —not from the view of the individual. Moreover, the particular jar-play is used by children as a tool in other connected activities, although the motives of these activities do not discern very clear in analysis. However, the children's different ways of addressing the roles of the play are seen as reflecting several different motives operating in the jar-play.

4.2. Jonas and Edvin

It is lunch break. I am standing close to the lamppost watching the children who engage in the jar-play. Jonas is the seeker and he has not yet located any of the hiders. He got the role as the seeker because he was the last one to arrive to the lamppost from the lunchroom. Edvin now arrives to the lamppost. He did not join the play from the start. Jonas asks him if he wants to join. Edvin does not answer but he runs, immediately, quickly to the lamppost and so does Jonas, at the same time. They compete to get there first. Jonas wins and shouts as he touches the lamppost: "The jar for me, one, two, three!". Edvin comes next and he bursts: "I am not even joining!". He seems disappointed. Jonas does not comment on it but continues to search for the hiders while Edvin stays in the area close to the lamppost waiting. I take the opportunity to do an audio memo with Edvin:

Interviewer: Are you joining the jar-play?

Edvin: Yes.

Interviewer: Are you the seeker or is Jonas the seeker?

Edvin: No, I have to wait for the next round because I just came here. They had already started.

[(Field notes and audio memo 140120:2285)]

Already mentioned in the first case, a local group rule of the play says "No new hider can join the round after the seeker has started to count". According to this rule Edvin obviously arrives too late to the lamppost for joining the ongoing round as a hider. Jonas is the seeker and is busy since a while trying to locate the hiders. Nevertheless, at this moment he asks Edvin: "Do you want to join?". It turns out that this question is not simply a polite invitation to join. It is argued that it reflects a conflict of motives.

Normally, the shift of who is the seeker is done when a new round is about to start. Usually, the new seeker is the one who was first to be located the previous round, according to one of the group rules: "The first hider to be located by the seeker is the seeker of the next round". Jonas asks the question and runs to the lamppost, which opens a possibility for shifting the seeker during the ongoing round. Why? Jonas is the seeker in this ongoing round, but seems to prefer to turn into the role of a hider. A motive reorientation is not possible in this situation according to the demands from the other players upon him as the seeker. The actions oriented to 'play the jar-play as the seeker' clash with the wish to act oriented to 'play the jar-play as a hider'.

This conflict of motives serves as first stimuli, according to the principle of double stimulation, in the emergence of transformative agency for engaging in negotiation. What happens next?

When Edvin arrives Jonas uses the competition-rule, here seen as an artefact and second stimuli referring to the principle of double stimulation, in a new way as a tool in dealing with his conflict of motives. The transformative agency reflected in asking the question, which indirectly refers to an idea to compete on the roles, gives rise to a negotiation of who will be the hider and who will be the seeker. Both of them prefer to be hiders but both cannot possibly turn into hiders at the same time. Either Jonas or Edvin has to be the seeker. If Jonas is the winner and Edvin the loser, Jonas has the chance to motive re-orient by turning into a hider. By running to the lamppost Edvin agrees on negotiating. Edvin loses the competition. He is going to be the new seeker and Jonas are going to hide –Jonas solves his conflict of motives.

What happens next with Edvin represents a motive reorientation. He lost and he seems disappointed. He states that the outcome of the competition is invalid by shouting: “I am not even joining!”. Edvin does not agree on being the new seeker. He stays at the lamppost without starting to seek. Jonas does not comment on it and continues to seek. According to the audio memo quoted above, Edvin's actions shift from being oriented to ‘join the round preferable as a hider’ into ‘join the round as a watcher’. This motive reorientation gives rise to a micro-adjustment of Edvin's course of actions from trying to join as a hider into a secondary watcher. This micro-adjustment concerns aligning his actions to the actions of the others by refusing being the seeker in order to join as a watcher instead. He puts a demand upon Jonas to continue as the seeker. The dynamic of demands and motives is changed. Jonas' motive reorients from being wanting to ‘join the play preferably as a hider’ into ‘join the play’ whereby he makes a micro-adjustment of his course of actions to continue as seeker. He aligns his actions to the actions of Edvin correspondingly to the changes in the dynamic of demands and motives. Jonas reacts respectively to the demand to let everyone join, which reflects the expectations in local school rules, though he fails to solve his conflict of motives. His actions reflect his capacity to affiliate Edvin in the ongoing play. This may indicate that the right for everybody to join was the dominant motive, whereby solving his conflict of motives became secondary.

The children play together although their individually expressed motives differ. Transformative agency is reflected here in Jonas's capacity to propose the use of the competition-rule as a tool in a new way. Negotiation here is seen within the suggestion to use the competition-rule, as well as actually using it, as an affirming response from the others. Transformation here concerns broadening the collective interpretation of the competition-rule through using it in negotiation. Further, the transformation concerns an elaboration on the object of the jar-play activity into embracing the temporary role and, thereby, allowing addition of one more player. This analysis emphasizes how the jar-play activity expands in negotiation and change the circumstances in play. Moreover, the capacity to join and the capacity to affiliate –as individually expressed manifestations of transformative agency to align actions to the actions of others by using certain rules as tools by giving them a new collective interpretation– discern as being mutually constitutive. Thus, it is argued that negotiation as transformation is a matter of the collectividual producing and using negotiagency.

4.3. *Negotiation as broadening rules and aligning actions*

Connected activities are apparent in the analysis of these two events. First, there is activity concerning the production of jar-play. Second, there are various activities concerning the production of other things, in which the children use the jar-play as a tool. Arguably, the jar-play activity setting accommodates various processes of production where the activity concerning production of jar-play and the neighbouring activities are interrelated. Negotiation of rules in the jar-play activity concerns elaborating the play, as a tool, into matching a broader field of users and their dealing with corresponding needs. The findings show how the processes of negotiation of rules rise from conflicts of motives. In both events a conflict of motives is the initial problem.

In addition, double stimulation gives rise to negotiation through micro-adjustments of courses of action, changes in the dynamic of demands and motives, and elaboration on the object of activity. The conflict of motives serves as first stimuli in the emergence of transformative agency, according to the principle of double stimulation. A particular rule of the jar-play serves as second stimuli and transformative agency and was manifested as Alice and Jonas use the rules in new ways, through a process of negotiation. The negotiations concern the children changing their courses of action and realigning them. Individually expressed transformative agency is manifested in actions, which reflects capacity to join and capacity to affiliate. The children's courses of action are collectively embedded and refer to the object in terms of the production of the actual jar-play. Furthermore, the children's activity relates to the object in terms of their collective image and idea of the jar-play. The ongoing jar-play reflects a fluctuating dynamic of demands and motives as the children sometimes differ in motive orientation and sometimes motive reorient. Due to the conflicts of motives, negotiation follows, which concerns micro-adjustments of the courses of action whereby the object is elaborated. The object in terms of the collective image and idea of the jar-play has a negotiated content rising from the conflict of motives.

There are six specific findings, which can enrich our understanding of rule negotiation in the jar-play activity setting:

- Transformation refers to broadening of the collective interpretation of basic rules of the play.
- Transformation refers to elaboration on the object of activity, as transforming “the shape of the collective”.
- Micro-adjustments refer to children's change of the courses of action, due to motive reorientation, either to change their situation in the ongoing play or to affiliate someone else with the ongoing play.
- Micro-adjustments are reflected as changes in dynamic of demands and motives.
- Negotiation refers to the suggesting of using a rule in a new way and actually using it.
- Negotiation refers to children micro-adjusting their courses of action as a matter of aligning them.

The fluctuating dynamics concerns the mutual interplay between the children acting towards joining –expressing capacity for connecting with the ongoing play– and, the already playing children acting towards continuing playing –expressing capacity to affiliate someone with the ongoing play in a “field” of demands. The findings summarized in the points above emphasize the interdependence of capacity to join and capacity to affiliate as mutually constituting. Arguably, capacity to join is not solely a matter of one having the right courage to step into ongoing play, and capacity to affiliate is not simply a matter of one having sufficient empathy to let someone else in. These capacities are manifested in the children's actions, according to the children's situational position as not yet joining or as already joining, in a collectividual endeavour changing the circumstances of the play. Capacity to join and capacity to affiliate, as mutually constituting in this negotiation of rules, makes it possible for children to act collectively and change the circumstances in play. Negotiation so to say nourishes the processes of transformation in this break time play.

5. Conclusion

This study discussed the emergence of the children's negotiation of game rules, how the rules are negotiated, and how the jar-play is transformed. The analysis emphasizes the negotiation as expressing the collective embedding of agency. Based on the findings, the term *negotiagency* is introduced as a concept that refers to the *collectividual ability for individuals and collective groups mutually engage in transformation through negotiation*. The findings constitute an empirical basis for the notion of negotiagency. The notion of negotiagency may contribute to research related to transformative agency and relational agency. Negotiagency highlights the collective embedding of individually expressed capacity –here for engaging in negotiation of rules and aligning actions to the actions of others– as fundamental in understanding the emergence of agency. Capacity to join and capacity to affiliate are individually expressed manifestations of negotiagency and reflected in the children's actions. Negotiagency draws attention to the importance of emphasizing the emergence of relational agency –seen as individually expressed capacities in negotiation– as a collective elaboration on the object, in order to reach an enhanced understanding of individual's aligning of actions. According to Edwards, “we still know too little about the micro level negotiations that form the evolving shape of the collective” (Edwards, 2005, p. 180). The findings may be a response to this argument in showing that negotiation within this study concerns proposing the use of a rule in a new way and actually using it. Here, it further concerns children micro-adjusting their courses of action as aligning them. Moreover, the object of activity is elaborated by the children broadening the collective interpretation of rules, negotiating their courses of action and aligning them –in producing and using negotiagency. Negotiagency may be a useful tool in analysis of other micro level negotiations and the transformation of activities in other settings, and may serve as a conceptual tool for reaching an enhanced understanding of micro level negotiations and of the evolving shape of the collective.

Negotiagency does not refer to a set-up of individual capacities for negotiation. It refers to a collectividual ability for negotiation as transformation. The emergence of negotiagency is analytically made visible through grasping individual action related to the actions of others and to the transformation of the activity. Negotiagency is seen as collectively produced. Through engaging in negotiation, as transforming, negotiagency is collectively used as a tool for change. This implies that the process of forming the evolving shape of the collective –here the collective elaboration of the object of activity– and what becomes, should be the unit of analysis to reach an enhanced understanding of individually expressed capacities manifested in negotiation.

The findings of this research indicate that the children in the study co-produced a new form of jar-play that reflected multiple motives. The children did so by developing negotiagency and using it negotiating the circumstances collectively. Thus, the micro level negotiations seen in this study are manifestations of children collectively producing and using negotiagency as a tool in transforming the circumstances of play.

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