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Revelations in bodily play

A study among children in an after-school programme

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is based on a project that investigates children's bodily play in a Norwegian After-School Programme (ASP). The project uses a life-world approach and the theoretical perspective is phenomenological. The dissertation focuses on the children's own experiences of bodily play and discusses the role such activity plays in their understanding of the world. Qualitative material was gathered from close observation and qualitative research interviews of eight- and nine-year-old children participating in an ASP in Oslo. The dissertation consists of four articles that should be read as independent in-depth studies in the ASP children's life-worlds. Each article focuses on particular parts of the gathered material and aims to answer an attached research question.

Article 1 aims to investigate the relationship between ASP children and places where self-managed bodily play occurs. The findings show that the children's understanding of place is associated with their own bodily play. Bodily play appears to be meaningfully directed toward places and offers the children opportunity to experience fulfilment of motor intentionality in an immediate way. Such activity can play an important role in constituting and adjusting a pre-reflective background for later actions.

Article 2 investigates how body movements in children's play are related to their interaction with others. The study shows that body movements in the children's self-chosen and child-managed play outdoors are extensive. The body movements arise out of play situations where children spontaneously seek interaction with others. Such bodily interaction occurs largely in small groups of best friends or in larger groups that come together as the participants enjoy undertaking the same activity. The children's body movements play a significant role in the interaction with others and appear to be a fulfilment of their search for interaction.

In Article 3, the question of how children learn body movements in informal social situations during ASP time is investigated. The study shows that learning body movements is usual during child-managed bodily play in the ASP and occurs frequently as imitation. The imitation process is characterised by joint attention and turn-taking. In best-friend groups, joint attention, characterised by shared involvement along with spontaneous turn-taking, is predominant. In activity groups that come together occasionally, considerable initiative is required on the part of the imitator to become an active part of a mutual process.

Article 4 investigates how bodily play affects the children's sense of coherence (SOC). The study shows that bodily play in the ASP has considerable potential to promote the children's SOC. Negative thoughts and feelings are reduced during bodily play. Play offers particularly strong opportunities for the children themselves to shape outcomes and be together with other children whom they know well. If a child is excluded from joint bodily play or experiences repetitive unfriendly reports, the experiences of comprehensibility and manageability are reduced and SOC decreases.

The four articles are concerned with specific questions about the children's bodily play in the ASP. The general topic, however, is that all the articles circle around the child's openness toward the world and how this openness contributes to the understanding of the world. Thus, the four articles together provide an answer to the main research question. Bodily play appears to be children's spontaneous way to seek and achieve interaction with places and other human beings in the surroundings. The play appears as a self-driven and autotelic activity where children can fulfil their motor intentionality, and where they grasp and create meaning in a pre-reflective manner. During bodily play in the ASP, a child's grasp and creation of meaning emerge in a complex and continually interplay within a world of places, equipment, freestanding things, and other human beings. The child is open toward the world,

and meaning is revealed to the child in bodily play in complex processes of interplay within the world.

Many situations that the children meet during bodily play are habitual and are experienced as homelike. Other times they are in situations that are not habitual, and they have to re-establish their pre-reflective backdrop for existing and possible actions. This may lead to the emergence of adapted body movements and increased understanding of the world. The children's interplay within the world in such situations may invest places and fellow human beings with meaning and lead to a more finely meshed, pre-reflective backdrop for later actions. In this way bodily play contributes to the children's experience of a coherent, homelike being-in-the-world.

Based on the findings of the study, it appears crucial for the future ASP that self-chosen and child-managed bodily play together with other children is encouraged. Such an encouragement should influence the practical accomplishment of the ASP time. This requires professionals with comprehensive and practical knowledge of children in the respective ages, coupled with a sound ability to make appropriate judgments and adaptations for all children in the group. An outcome of these findings should be the development of a special education programme for ASP professionals.

Keywords: Children, after-school programme, body movement, bodily play, phenomenology

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Research question

This dissertation is based on a project that investigates children's bodily play in a Norwegian After-School Programme (ASP). The project has a life-world approach and the theoretical perspective is phenomenological. The dissertation focuses on the children's own experiences of bodily play and discusses the role such activity plays in their understanding of their physical and social worlds. The research question is: *What is the significance of bodily play in the ASP for children's understanding of the world?*

Background of the study

Today childhood is in the forefront of both academic and political agendas, and research focusing on children and childhood has grown in several scientific disciplines. This situation is influenced by the concern that rapid changes in time-use and activity-habits might have negative implications for children's development (James, Jenks & Prout, 1998, p. 5-6). Children of primary school age (6-10 years) spend much of their time in institutions (Frønes, 1994, p. 150-151, 1998, p. 66-67; Moss, Dillon & Stathan, 2000, p. 241; Näsman, 1994, p. 177-178, 187; Prout, 2005, p. 32-33; Zeiher, 2001, p. 143-144, 2002, p. 66-67). In Norway, the school and the ASPs are the institutions where children spend most of their time. In addition, many children in that age group participate in organised leisure-time activities. Discussion is currently underway on how to adapt the content of the institutions to the best interests of the children. The debate is underscored by distinct education-political and health-political undertones.

One theme discussed is how children's learning can be optimised. Norwegian schools have scored relatively low on international performance tests (Kjærnsli et al., 2007, p. 18, 24;

Kunnskapsdepartementet (KD), 2006, p.16; van Daal et al., 2007, p. 104), and this is a main reason why Report No. 16 (2006-2007) to the Parliament *(Storting)* supported a gradual extension of the primary school day to increase pupils' learning benefits (KD, 2006, p. 75, 97). This has led to a higher number of weekly teaching periods in theoretical subjects, and subsequently, assisted homework in the ASP. An unintended result of increased time for teaching and supervised homework can be reduced time for child-managed activity.

In discussions regarding learning benefits, learning and play are often seen as inherently oppositional. Learning is commonly seen as a product of teaching or a path toward formal aims. The increased interest in how interaction among children affects learning (Damon, 1984, p. 331; Ward & Lee, 2005, p. 206) to only a minor extent includes activities that occur in informal situations. Learning, referred to as "peer learning," is actively used in school education, but is most often associated with situations that are initially controlled by a responsible teacher. As such, this must be considered a formal learning situation. Ward and Lee (2005, p. 206) emphasise this: "Merely placing students in groups is insufficient to ensure that learning will occur." Such a statement excludes self-chosen and child-managed play as learning activities. Children acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes during such activity and this occurs within informal situations without direct adult supervision. From a formal educational point of view, the learning benefits in self-chosen and child-managed play will be incidental. If time requirements for adult-managed teaching toward formal aims are being increased, such play might come under pressure.

Concern has also been expressed as to whether children have sufficient physical activity within their institutionalised day (Helsedepartementet (HD), 2003, p. 28; Undervisnings- og forskningsdepartementet (UFD), 2003, p.143). Many researchers interested in this area commence from a biological point of view and focus on physiological parameters. Based on

the argument that physical activity positively affects the child's health and development (Blair et al., 1989, p. 402, 409; WHO, 2002, p. 59, 73; WHO, 2004, p. 8, 11, 17), steps are taken to ensure that children achieve the recommended daily dose of physical activity. Such changes are likely to influence the content of the school's curriculum and the activities in the ASP (KD, 2006, p. 75). If objectives related to physical activity can be attained by extending the school day and more adult-managed activity in ASPs, opportunities for self-chosen and child-managed bodily play may be reduced.

As we have seen, children's "time for play" is pressured from attempts to meet specific aims regarding learning benefits in theoretical subjects and increased physical activity. Therefore, it is highly relevant to discuss what role play should have in the life of primary school children, and whether they miss important qualitative aspects of life if time for such activity is reduced. Such a debate should focus on a basic, theoretical understanding of children and their activities. This might complement empirically-based arguments about learning and health-promoting activity and could contribute to a philosophical-pedagogic debate with regard to the structures and the contents of these institutions for children. In the larger scheme, this will be a discussion about pedagogy with philosophical undertones (Bengtsson, 2004, p. 11). It is as part of such a discussion that this project has its place: It aims to contribute to an understanding of the role self-chosen and child-managed play has in children's lives.

The Norwegian after-school programme

In Norway, the ASP is a public programme available to children in the first four years of their schooling. The programme is voluntary and is organised in close association with the individual school. When the ASP was introduced as a national programme in Norway in the 1990s, importance was attached to the children's leisure-time activities (Haug, 1994, p. 24;

Kirke-, utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet (KUF), 1993, p. 53-54; Øksnes, 2009, p. 5). Any extension of the school's function and tradition was to be avoided; there was no desire to combine school and leisure-time activities into an entity based on the school programme.

Guidelines indicated that the children themselves select and manage the activities in the ASP. *The law and regulations about the after-school programme (Lov og forskrifter om skolefritidsordningen),* launched in January 1999, established that the programme provide the opportunity for play, cultural, and leisure-time activities and provide the children with care and supervision (KUF, 1998, p. 1). This is still one of the current formulations in the *Education Act* (*Opplæringsloven*) (KD, 2009). No formal educational objectives are associated with ASPs. Despite the close connection between the two institutions, the division between school and leisure time is noticeable. The school's focus is learning, and the ASP is supposed to be leisure time characterised by child-managed play.

However, there are reasons for asking whether the children's lives should be characterised by a polarised dichotomy between learning-focused school and playful leisure-time. In her doctoral dissertation, Maria Øksnes (2008) argues for an alternative and dialectical way of understanding play and leisure time, and thus she questions such a dichotomised understanding. On the one hand she questions how free the "leisure time" in ASPs is actually supposed to be in the current educational discourse. She claims that the ASP is ascribed an obviating and social-pedagogical role to support the school's culture and pedagogy (ibid., p. 5-6). On the other hand, her research indicates that children create "escape routes" in the form of play, when the pressure from their environment becomes excessive or when they do not want to participate in imposed tasks (ibid., p. 320, 327-328). We must assume that such "breathing space" is also made available during teaching toward formal aims.

Previous research carried out at four ASPs in Oslo showed that the physical activity during children's play was extensive and characterised by child-managed body movement (Løndal & Bergsjø, 2005, p. 99, 102). Although bodily play most often occurs in child-managed activities, the activities are commonly initiated by the ASP staff, by making time, locations, and equipment available. A quote from an interview with one ASP leader is a typical example: "We really emphasise freedom and the children's ability to manage their own leisure-time. We are supposed to do our best to facilitate opportunities so that the kids can spend meaningful leisure-time where they are in charge themselves" (ibid., p. 52; translation mine). This corresponds with the guidance and aims provided in government documents for Norwegian ASPs: It is expected that the ASP staff will facilitate child-managed activities (Haug, 1994, p. 23-24; Øksnes, 2001, p. 95-111). Øksnes' recent research shows that children experience the ASP as positive leisure-time and that they are provided with opportunities to choose their own activities. Children report that they "play almost all the time at ASP, and can carry on with things which are fun" (Øksnes, 2009, p. 155; translation mine).

In contrast with the sports-dominated extra-curricular physical education (PE)[1] in several other European countries (Green, 2008, p. 68-72), Norwegian ASP staff members are expected to stimulate self-managed activities in the children's leisure-time. In the current political debate, however, distinct demands are heard for more quality in ASPs and the need to integrate ASP time in an extended school day. When the concept of "quality" is used, it seems to be a request for systematic structures and teaching toward formulated objectives; it is a call for stronger emphasis on homework and adult-managed activities. Recently such arguments resulted in the renaming of the ASP in the City of Oslo to "The Activity School" (Aktivitetsskolen). The authorities of Oslo want to develop an institution based on an entity

[1]Extra-curricular physical education (PE) is physical activity beyond the curriculum for the school subject Physical Education (PE). The activity is defined as extra-curricular PE when it is initiated or organised by professionals (Penney & Harris, 1997, p. 42).

that includes teaching, leisure-time, and assisted homework, and claim that The Activity School will contribute to strengthening children's competence in school subjects. The Activity School will provide children opportunities for supportive learning activities, homework, physical activity, and play, and is supposed to be characterised by structure and predictability (Oslo kommune, Utdanningsetaten, 2008a, 2008b). It remains to be seen whether this is a development toward a general pedagogising of ASPs and a sportisation[2] of the children's extra-curricular PE, including adult-managed activity. Until now, ASPs have been used as a sphere in which children of primary-school age have time and opportunities for daily self-chosen and child-managed bodily play with other children. In this project the phenomena studied is children's bodily play. Thus, I found it appropriate to conduct my investigation at this type of institution, an ASP.

Physical activity, movement, body movement, bodily play

In research, the concept of physical activity is commonly defined as "any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that results in energy expenditure" (Caspersen, Pereira, & Christenson, 1985, p. 126) and is described through activity type, intensity, frequency and duration (Ekelund, 2002, p. 2). This definition shows the close connection to physiology and natural science. Research with this focus provides important knowledge to interpret and evaluate physical health benefits; however, the living human body is considered an object in such research. When focusing on children's own experiences, subjective aspects of their lives should be included (Leder, 1998, p. 17-29; Rothfield, 2008, p. 219-220; Svenaeus, 2000, p. 90-118), and it is necessary to find an alternative to the strict biological understanding of the body, which is characteristic of medical and physiological research. Theoretical viewpoints, which consider the human being an embodied subject, point out that the human being is both

[2]The transformation of pastimes and play into modern sport and the creation of rules to control the behaviour of participants and achieve equality and fairness has been referred to as *"sportisation"* (Dunning, 1999, p. 73-74).

object and subject and are prepared to offer an alternative. Such a theoretical perspective is introduced in Chapter 2. This perspective has consequences for concepts used in this dissertation, most important of which are "body movement" and "bodily play," which are used as key concepts instead of "physical activity." The concepts refer to activities that involve locomotory movements, stabilising postures, and manipulative movements that involve various objects or substances (Gallahue & Ozmun, 2006, p. 187); in that way they are concurrent with physical activity. In addition, the concepts of "body movement" and "bodily play" include the subjective and experienced aspects of the movements. To clarify this, reference is made to the theoretical account of the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961). In *Phenomenology of Perception* (2002, p. 162), Merleau-Ponty writes about bodily experiences of movement: "It provides us with a way of access to the world and the object, with a 'praktognosia,' which has to be recognized as original and perhaps as primary." When the concept of body movement is used in this dissertation, it includes bodily experiences of movement that provide access to the world. The attention is not directed toward energy expenditure or the movement as such; rather, it is the bodily experiences of the movement and the surroundings in which the movement happens that are the focus of this particular project. This is why I chose to use the concept of body movement instead of "physical activity" or just "movement."

Much of the body movement that happens during ASP time can be characterised as play (Løndal & Bergsjø, 2005, p. 99, 102; Øksnes, 2009, p. 155), and it is such playful body movement that is the focus of this project. Theories of play have introduced a few concepts of play that include movement or physical activity; for example, "movement play" or "physical play" is used as one of several play categories (Lillemyr, 2009, p. 11-12). For this project, having a demarcation that excludes play without body in movement/physical activity is important, as is highlighting the bodily experiences of movement that emerge in play. The

phenomenologically-inspired philosopher Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (2003, p. 409-430) uses the concept of bodily play in a similar demarcation of children's play. In an analysis of children's and young animals' play without objects,[3] she relates the concept of bodily play to play characterised by "kinetic markers." At the same time she points to the inextricable anchoring such play has in the experience of being a body. Sheets-Johnstone's focus on *movement* and *being a body* is closely related to my desire to emphasise the bodily experiences of movements that emerge in play. Thus, I chose to borrow the concept of bodily play for this project.

To point out the distinction between the terms "body movement" and "bodily play," I find it appropriate to refer to German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer's phenomenological description of play (Gadamer, 1989, p. 102-110). According to Gadamer, play has a self-driven character and is oriented toward autotelic values[4] (ibid., p. 102, 105). Play is considered neither an objective nor a subjective action. It is playing itself through the player; it is the play itself that is the subject. Thus, if the children's body movement is to be considered bodily play, it has to be characterised by such self-driven and autotelic dimensions. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

Understanding

When the research question asks for the children's *understanding* of the world, this is not with reference to the pure cognitive understanding of an objective world; it is rather the embodied understanding that Merleau-Ponty (2002) refers to when he writes about bodily experiences of movements: "My body has its world, or *understands* its world, without having to make use of my 'symbolic' or 'objectifying function'" (p. 162, emphasis mine). This kind

[3] For example, rough and tumble play and locomotor-rotational play.
[4] "The term "autotelic" derives from two Greek words, "auto," meaning self, and "telos," meaning goal. It refers to a self-contained activity, one that is done not with the expectation of some future benefit, but simply because the doing itself is the reward." (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 67)

of understanding implies that the movements are meaningful; they grow out of the human being's ability to grasp and create meaning in the world spontaneously. This includes an immediate understanding of themselves, others, the physical surroundings, and the relationships among these dimensions. Such a grasp of meaning is possible because there already is an integral coherence in the world. Human actions play a relational role in this integral coherence: They have *significance* to the pre-reflective understanding of the world (Heidegger, 1962, p. 120). The concept of "significance," as used in the research question, refers to such a relational role. This is not a rejection of the human being's ability to integrate cognitive, rational understanding, but is the recognition of a deeper, meaning-constituting level that appears prior to conscious reflection and that is immediately sensible (ibid., p. 67-68). This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

In summary, this project has its background in our earlier research findings that showed that ASP time is characterised by child-managed physical activity in play (Løndal & Bergsjø, 2005, 2006) and in political signals regarding changes in school and ASP structures that attempt to promote learning of school subjects and physical health among children. In this context, it is relevant to consider the consequences for the children. Will the changes contribute to children's understanding of the world, or will such changes threaten such qualities? This is why I focus on the significance of bodily play in children's lives. The theoretical perspective on which the project is based involves certain ontological and epistemological premises with methodological implications. The following two chapters discuss the theoretical perspective and the methodological appraisals relevant to the project.

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical perspective

The theoretical perspective, introduced in the following pages, includes the presumption of reality and knowledge on which the research project is based. The project is conducted using a life-world approach, and the theoretical perspective is based on phenomenological theory. The history of the concept of life-world dates back to the 1920s and the 1930s, and its origin can be found in Heidegger's exposition of being and in Husserl's theoretical account on a "natürlicher Weltbegriff." Heidegger used the concept of "in-der-Welt-sein" (being-in-the-world), and Husserl used the concept of "Lebenswelt" synonymous with a "natürlicher Weltbegriff" (Carr, 1977, p. 203). "Lebenswelt" was later translated to "life-world." The concept of life-world has been important for the development of phenomenological theory. A life-world approach asks that the researcher attempt to enter relevant phenomena in human existence by focusing on concrete real-life situations. As Bengtsson (2006) suggests, "A life-world approach involves research directed toward the world in its full concretion, as it shows itself to the concrete, existing human being" (p. 38; translation mine). Thus, the researcher presupposes that relevant phenomena can manifest themselves as they actually are in human life, and that they might be investigated by focusing on human experience. In this project, the choice of a life-world approach is grounded in a desire to consider an integral view of the human being and the world, which is in line with phenomenological theory (Mattews, 2002, p. 28; Zahavi, 2003, p. 19, 26-28). As a basis for such a view, the point of commencement is taken from the theoretical account of Merleau-Ponty.

The human being as an intentional bodily subject

In *Phenomenology of Perception* (2002 [1962/1945]), Merleau-Ponty provides a phenomenological description of human perception, through which he contributes

significantly to the understanding of human action. He takes his point of commencement from the concept of life-world (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. vi-vii), describing how perception is actually experienced in human life. By using such a description, he intends to show that the experience of perception is "that vital communication with the world which makes it present as a familiar setting of our life" (ibid., p. 61). Merleau-Ponty rejects the notion that the human being lives in an object world where acts are causal. He criticises both what he calls empiricism (ibid., p. 15-29) and intellectualism (ibid., p. 30-58) for starting at the wrong end in the analysis of perception. In the concept of empiricism he includes any view that conceives of perception as based on non-intentional, qualitative sensory-content (Carman, 2008, p. 44). In the concept of intellectualism he includes views that conceive of perception as consisting in a process where objects are constituted through intellectual actions (ibid., p. 47):

> *Both take the objective world as the object of their analysis, when this comes first neither in time nor in virtue of its meaning; and both are incapable of expressing the peculiar way in which perceptual consciousness constitutes its object. Both keep their distance in relation to perception, instead of sticking close to it (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 30).*

Merleau-Ponty's alternative to the objective world as a starting point emerges in his exploration of the phenomenal field (ibid., p. 60-74). He draws attention to a pre-reflective backdrop and claims that this forms the basis both for perception of isolated qualities and for formulated, explicit judgments (Carman, 2008, p. 53):

> *This phenomenal field is not an "inner world", the "phenomenon" is not a "state of consciousness" or a "mental fact" and the phenomena is not an act of introspection or an intuition in Bergson's sense (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 66).*

Things, other people, and phenomena in the phenomenal field are experienced as wholes, invested with immanent meaning (ibid., s. 67). According to Merleau-Ponty, this is possible

because the perception has an intentional structure; the perception takes place in a field to which we are already directed. The meaning is immediately sensible and does not depend on intellectual, reflective processes (Carman, 2008, p.53):

> *More generally it is the very notion of the immediate which is transformed; henceforth the immediate is no longer the impression, the object which is one with the subject, but the meaning, the structure, the spontaneous arrangement of parts (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 67).*

The human being is referred to as closely related to its surroundings. Merleau-Ponty emphasises the body when it comes to perception and claims that humans are related to their surroundings on a perceptual, bodily level that comes prior to conscious reflection; the relationship is pre-reflective. Thus, the world is experienced as available and already known, before it is reflected upon intellectually. This is possible since the human being first and foremost is *bodily* present in the world:

> *The body is the vehicle of being in the world, and having a body is, for a living creature, to be intervolved in a definite environment, to identify oneself with certain projects and be continually committed to them (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 94).*

To understand this point fully, it is necessary to study Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological description of the body. His account of the body makes it possible to go beyond the traditional conceptual divisions between subject and object and between first-person and third-person perspectives (Morris, 2008, p. 113). The body can be described neither as a mere biological object (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 84-102) nor as a mere carrier of subjectivity (ibid., p. 103-111). Merleau-Ponty (2002, p. 173) emphasises that I *am* my body: "I am not in front of my body, I am in it, or rather I am it." We cannot speak of a mere objective body, but rather about a body that is invested with "lived experiences," about a "habit-body" (ibid., p. 95). Merleau-Ponty (2002, p. 97) builds upon this when he uses the concept of "inborn

complex." This understanding also forms the basis when the concepts of "lived body" or "body" only are used in this dissertation.

The lived experiences that invest the body with meaning are not to be interpreted as immanent representations on a psychological level. Rather, they can be understood as sedimented ways of feelings, actions and imaginations from earlier bodily engagement, which intertwine the lived body and its world, forming a whole that creates meaning to other situations with bodily actions (Morris, 2008, p. 114; Thompson, 2007, p. 33):

> *It is this global presence of the situation which gives a meaning to the partial stimuli and causes them to acquire importance, value or existence for the organism. The reflex does not arise from objective stimuli, but moves back towards them, and invests them with a meaning which they do not possess taken singly as psychological agents, but only when taken as a situation (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 91-92).*

Merleau-Ponty (ibid., p. 94-95) claims that the lived body is the central medium to grasp meaning in the life-world, or in being-in-the-world, as he puts it. The concept of "being-in-the-world" is borrowed from Heidegger (1962, p. 78-90) and refers to an ontological structure, fundamental to the indissoluble reciprocity in human being, the reciprocity between the human being, the world, and the relationship of "being-in" (Morris, 2008, p. 114). This is an irreducible and meaningful structure in human life and is also irreducible with respect to traditional subject-object dualism.

Thus, when investigating how the human being understands meaning in the world, the point of commencement should not be the knowledge-centred question "How can the human being *know* about the world?" The relevant question should be "How does the world *reveal itself* to the human being through encounters with it?" (Dourish, 2001, p. 107). It is crucial to consider such a view when reading the research question of this project.

According to Merleau-Ponty, *the body* is the central medium when the human being is opening toward the world. This is possible because the lived body *inhabits* the world as a subject; the body is not present only by its determinate position in a geometrical coordinate system. The human being lives in the place and relates being to lived experiences: "My body has its world, or understands its world, without having to make use of my 'symbolic' or 'objectifying function'" (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 162). According to this statement, inhabiting the world involves a spontaneous understanding. Thus, Merleau-Ponty claims, "We must therefore avoid saying that our body is *in* space, or *in* time. It *inhabits* space and time" (ibid., p. 161, emphasis in original). Bodily movement is ascribed an important role in human inhabitation of the world (Morris, 2008, p. 114). This means that movement has significance related to understanding of the world; it possesses a relational character in relation to other phenomena. Bodily movements are not causal actions in an object world from which the human is separated, but grow out of intentions that are not explicitly formulated prior to the action:

> *Movement is not thought about movement, and bodily space is not space thought of or represented. … Consciousness is being-towards-the-thing through the intermediary of the body. A movement is learned when the body has understood it, that is, has incorporated it into its "world", and to move one's body is to aim at things through it; it is to allow oneself to respond to their call, which is made upon it independently of any representation (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 159-161).*

Merleau-Ponty refers to "being-towards-the-thing through the intermediary of the body" as *motor intentionality* (ibid., p. 127), which is a central aspect of his philosophy. By revealing it as motor intentionality, he argues that intentionality as existence is bodily (Morris, 2008, p. 115). On the one hand, bodily movements are invested with meaning; they are meaningful toward things in the environment; they are intentional. On the other, since motor

intentionality is being-toward-the-thing, bodily movements invest things with meaning. Thus, the perceptual synthesis is not a mere cognitive process, but rather a process rooted in bodily movement itself (ibid., p. 116-117). Merleau-Ponty (2002) clarifies this point when he describes what role the body schema plays in perception:

> *What we have called the body schema is precisely this system of equivalents, this immediately given invariant whereby the different motor tasks are instantaneously transferable. It follows that it is not only an experience of my body, but an experience of my body-in-the-world (ibid. p. 163-164).*

The concept of body schema refers to the pre-reflective knowledge that is sedimented in the body and that intuitively comes into account when the human being undertakes actions adapted to relevant places and situations in the life-world (Gallagher & Cole, 1995, p. 371; Morris, 2008, p. 116). In this way, the human being is able to understand its world in a pre-reflective manner and is thereby receiving predictable responses to its actions (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, pp. 161–162, 292). This is a comprehensive process where perception, lived experience, and consciousness are closely interwoven in "an 'intentional arc' which projects round about us, our past, our future, our human setting, our physical, ideological and moral situation, or rather which results in our being situated in all these respects" (ibid., p. 157). Merleau-Ponty emphasises that this synthesis is not limited to interpretation and judgment of sensations, but has its basis in the movement itself. It is an interactive synthesis made possible by the body schema in situations where the body interacts with the world. Thus, the theory of the body schema is, implicitly, a theory of perception (ibid., p. 239).

A central point in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is that human perception is meaningful. In *Phenomenology of perception*, Merleau-Ponty (2002) shows how meaning is related to the intentionality of bodily movement and how it emerges through bodily openness toward the world. This openness is accomplished by the motor intentionality and is fulfilled through

bodily movement. In his last work, *The visible and the invisible*, Merleau-Ponty (1968) describes in greater detail how human openness toward the world is possible. He develops the understanding that the human body and the world are two aspects of a single reality, "*the flesh"* (Evans, 2008, p. 187). The flesh embraces the human being, and is mentioned to be a basic element of being:

> *The flesh is not matter, is not mind, is not substance. To designate it, we should need the old term "element", in the sense it was used to speak of water, air, earth, and fire, that is, in the sense of a general thing, midway between the spatiotemporal individual and the idea, a sort of incarnate principle that brings a style of being wherever there is a fragment of being. The flesh is in this sense an "element" of Being (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 139).*

The flesh encompasses the phenomenal field where all perceptions and experiences occur. According to Merleau-Ponty, the human being is pre-reflectively open toward the world through an intimate intertwining of the flesh: "The thickness of the flesh between the seer and the thing is constitutive for the thing of its visibility as for the seer of his corporeity; it is not an obstacle between them, it is their means of communication" (ibid., p. 135).

In the flesh there is "a carnal adherence of the sentient to the sensed and of the sensed to the sentient" (ibid., p. 142). The process of perception includes a mutual exchange between "my flesh" and "the flesh of the world," a process characterised by *reversibility*. Using the concept of "reversibility," Merleau-Ponty articulates how and where inner-outer, exterior-interior, subject-object, and sense-sensible are hinged together (Sanders, 2008, p. 149). However, it is important to note that despite the intimate intertwining, the human being does not "blend into" the world, nor does the world "pass into" the human being. It is not easy to locate precisely where one ends and the other begins. As a metaphor that can explain the difference, Merleau-Ponty writes about the closeness between the sea and the strand (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 130-131).

Merleau-Ponty's details in *The visible and the invisible* how the human being is related to the world, which leads to further development of the understanding of how meaning in the world may be grasped. In *Phenomenology and perception*, emergence of meaning is seen as binary dialogical exchange between pairs of elements; for example, between the perceiving and the perceived object. This is explained as a fairly simple process of interaction with reciprocal give-and-take exchanges in a limited perceptual field. In *The visible and the invisible*, the perspective is much broader: The perceptual field is extended to "the flesh of the world" that human beings perceive and participate in as sensitive "fleshly beings." By participating within "the flesh of the world," the human being is being intertwined with the perceived objects and the whole milieu s/he perceives in – including relevant invisible phenomena that are present (Adams, 2001, p. 207; Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 130-155). Harry Adams (2001) clarifies the description of the differences between Merleau-Ponty's early and late account of perception:

> *[W]e might define ambivalence as a back-and-forth vacillation between two options, and ambiguity as an insuperable cross-up (or "chiasm") between numerous options and indeterminable, invisible forces. Accordingly, it seems that Merleau-Ponty came to view perception less as an ambivalent event occurring between subject and object, and more as an ambiguous event occurring within the flesh of the world (ibid., p. 209).*

In the latter and broader perspective, meaning is not seen as arising only from binary dialogues between two subjects or between a subject and an object, but rather from innumerable dialogues that continually criss-cross in a world of places, things, other human beings, and invisible phenomena. These dialogues take part in an ambiguous interplay that creates meaning. The interplay is characterised by reversibility: The human being simultaneously is sensing and is being sensed – s/he touches the world and is being touched by the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 134, 154-155).

Children's bodily play

As we have seen, the body is the central medium utilised to grasp meaning in the world (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 94-95). For both children and adults, the body is open toward the world through a motor intentional perception, and meaning in the world reveals itself in a process wherein bodily movement plays an important role. Merleau-Ponty (2001[1949-1952]) understands childhood as an independent period with special lived experiences (p. 249). The child's perception is meaningful, even though it is not as structured as that of an adult. Childhood can be regarded as a period in life with specific activity forms and development characteristics. In this project, bodily play is regarded as one of those specific forms of activity.

Many people concerned with children in daily or professional life mention play as a characteristic and natural way of being. Representatives from different theoretical disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, sociology, and pedagogy, have described, interpreted, and explained this phenomenon (Rasmussen, 1992; Tuft, 1996, p. 4). In light of the theoretical view of the human being and the world that has been introduced, Hans-Georg Gadamer's (1989 [1960]) account on play is interesting and compelling. With reference to Huizinga (1955 [1938], p. 25), he relates children's play to "holy play" and emphasises the primacy of play over the consciousness of the player:

> *Play clearly represents an order in which the to-and-fro motion of play follows of itself. It is part of play that the movement is not only without goal and purpose but also without effort. It happens, as it were, by itself (Gadamer 1989, p. 105).*

Play is described as neither an objective nor a subjective action. The play is playing itself through the player; the subject is the play itself. Gadamer (1989) articulates the significance of play: "The primordial sense of playing is the medial one" (p. 104). The main emphasis put

on play is self-presentation. The play does not represent an idea or a phenomenon; it is rather a presentation of itself to and/or through the player. In his analysis of Gadamer's account on play, Karsten Tuft (1996) relates his theory as a psychological and pedagogical reinterpretation of play, in relation to the understanding prevalent in the 20th century:

> *Psychological considerations based on the question about function are replaced with considerations based on the question about meaning/significance (Sinn) (psychological reinterpretation), and there has been a separation between meaning and aim-objective-purpose (pedagogical reinterpretation (ibid., p. 16-17; translation mine).*

According to Gadamer, play cannot be interpreted as a purpose or as a path toward formal pedagogical aims. However, this does not mean that play does not influence children's development; on the contrary, children *experience* play without comprising a thought-out object (Gadamer, 1989, p. 105). This agrees with Merleau-Ponty's theory about an embodied and pre-reflective intentionality. Gadamer's claim about the primacy of play over the consciousness of the player is emphasised by the pre-reflective dimension of human understanding and action. Thus, it makes sense when we talk about child's bodily play as a pre-reflective fulfilment of an embodied motor intentionality. In this way play is a genuine experience that leads to an understanding of the world (ibid., p. 483-484); thus, play has the potential to create meaning in the child's life.[5] Peter J. Arnold (1979, p. 26-29) mentions child's play in particular when he writes about primordial meanings in spontaneous

[5] Gadamer (1989) does not stop by describing play as an activity, using the phenomenon in a universal exploration of human beings. As a starting point, he shows how science's criteria for rationality and methodology fall short in explaining the aesthetic quality of art. He emphasises the importance of experiencing art, something that is not the same as the science of art (ibid., p. 84). Thus, a piece of art cannot be perceived as a mere object: it has its true being in the fact that it becomes an experience that *changes* the person who experiences it (ibid., p. 86, 103). This characteristic of a piece of art, change, is explained through its relation to play. In this way, Gadamer uses the piece of art as an *example* of what the concept of play implies universally and generally. One of his main objectives is to reveal the close relationship between play and human understanding. He claims that play is the best word we have to describe the process of understanding in relation to human action. Gadamer simply sees human understanding as play rather than an objective or subjective action (ibid., p. 484; Steinsholt, 2001, p. 41). In this project, however, the focus is not on play as understanding but on child's play as bodily action in the ASP.

movements. Such meanings are not only a question of being aware of what is being experienced when moving, but also of attaching some value to that awareness, such as spontaneous joy and satisfaction. According to Arnold, spontaneous, meaningful movements that emerge in play are

> *[T]he most authentic evidence a person has of what he is, because what that can reveal to the person is something of his own uninhibited, vital, and unguarded self. ... Such departures from the constraints and controls of my ordinary existence are illuminating discoveries of what I am really like (ibid., 1979, p. 27-28).*

In summary, we can say that motor intentionality and the attached actions are directed toward the world that embraces the human being. In the following four sub-chapters, I introduce theoretical accounts that form the basis for the study of the children's interaction with places and other human beings in their surroundings and the immediate outcomes of such interaction. An additional research question is formulated at the end of each chapter.

Interaction with place

We have earlier seen how Merleau-Ponty rejects the notion that human perception is a mere collecting of objective sense-data. He has taught us that the body *inhabits* space (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 161). Through perception, human beings grasp meaningful things, including other living people and the meaning of open spaces between them (Carman, 2008, p. 45). This is previously accounted for as sedimented lived experiences in the phenomenal field. In ecological psychology, James J. Gibson (1986) provides a similar explanation of how the human being opens toward its physical surroundings:

> *The world of physical reality does not consist of meaningful things. The world of ecological reality, as I have been trying to describe it, does. If what we perceived were the entities of physics and mathematics, meanings would have to be imposed on them. But if what we perceive are the entities of environmental science, their meanings can be discovered (ibid., p. 33).*

Gibson uses the concept of "affordances" to describe meaningful conditions in an environment that offers the individual possibilities for action (ibid., p. 36-41). Affordances are described as complementary sizes that depend both upon the individual and the environment, a notion much akin to Merleau-Ponty's explanation of the phenomenal field (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 60-74):

> *An important fact about the affordances of the environment is that they are in a sense objective, real and physical, unlike values and meanings, which are often supposed to be subjective, phenomenal, and mental. But, actually, an affordance is neither an objective property nor a subjective property; or it is both if you like. An affordance cuts across the dichotomy of subjective-objective and helps us to understand its inadequacy. It is equally a fact of the environment and a fact of behavior (Gibson, 1986, p. 129).*

Although Gibson postulates that events, other persons, and artefacts can also act as affordances, he first and foremost describes how the physical characteristics of an environment encourage action. His account is thus an appropriate starting point for understanding human actions in specific locations. Examples of affordances are surfaces, objects, and substances that offer individuals different forms of bodily action. Paths, obstacles, barriers, steps, slopes, shelters, and objects, in different ways, afford the individual "something to do"; for example, rapid locomotion, climbing, grasping or avoiding. The complementary dimensions of affordances, where both individual and environmental factors interact, make them unique for each person. The environment does not afford the same actions to all individuals.

Gibson uses the concept of place when he refers to a more or less extended surface or layout in the environment, as contrasted to a point in space (ibid., p. 34). He writes that a place can be located in relation to other places and can be located by its inclusion in a larger place. Places can be named, but they don't need to have sharply defined boundaries. Later, Casey

(1997, 2001) investigates the concept of place, and his account concurs with those of Merleau-Ponty and Gibson in that he gives the concept of place a broader meaning than the concept of space:

> *I shall presume the distinction between place and space, taking "space" to be the encompassing volumetric void in which things (including human beings) are positioned and "place" to be the immediate environment of my lived body, an arena of action that is at once physical and historical, social and cultural (Casey, 2001, p. 683).*

Place is described as an interaction between humans and their surroundings, rather than a specific, delimited location. Thus, Casey's understanding is similar to the mutual interaction between body and world that Merleau-Ponty (1968) writes about in *The visible and the invisible:*

> *One can say that we perceive the things themselves, that we are the world that things itself or that the world is at the heart of our flesh. In any case, once a body-world relationship is recognized, there is a ramification of my body and a ramification of the world and a correspondence between its inside and my outside, between my inside and its outside (ibid., 1968, p. 136n).*

In *The sense of space,* David Morris (2004) provides an interesting contribution to the understanding of the relationship between bodily movement and place. His point of departure is Casey's definition of place, and he supports Merleau-Ponty's philosophy when he affords movement a special role in the interaction between the body and the world. In addition, he draws on the framework of dynamic system-theory, an offshoot of Gibson's ecological psychology. The dynamic system-theory looks at the knowledge embodied in the body schema as inseparable from movement; the body schema is *in* movement (Carello & Turvey, 2000). Morris (2004, p. 45) agrees with this when he claims that human perception arises in close interaction between the body and the place and that this *presupposes* bodily movement.

He also emphasises that bodily movements are not predetermined by a specific system in a closed subject:

> *What has been called the body schema is not a possession of the subject but a structure-in-movement. We must keep things open on the side of the perceiver and the world, and seek our schema as arising within movement that crosses body and world, prior to the distinction between the two (ibid., p. 80).*

Following this line of reasoning, human action can be seen as a close intertwining between the body and the place where the action happens. This view is underlined by the claim that embodied knowledge arises in the movement itself, not in the body or in the place, but in *the interaction* between them, or in *the flesh* as Merleau-Ponty suggests in his last work (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 141-142). It is, however, not only individual interaction with the physical environment that is relevant: Social and cultural dimensions play important roles in how the human being is related to place. These are dimensions that contribute to point out the difference between a geometrical space and a place for human action:

> *So always there will remain a tension between space and place, a tension that directs us back to that opening in which our bodies cross with the world, others and place, an opening in which we in turn cross places with life and our social world (Morris, 2004, p. 181).*

Based on this theoretical perspective, one objective of this project was to investigate the relationship between the child and the activity place as it emerges in bodily play. An additional research question was formulated: What is the relationship between the child and the activity place in bodily play? The results are introduced and discussed in Article 1, *Bodily play in the after-school programme: Fulfilment of motor intentionality in interaction between body and place.*

Interaction with others

As discussed, Merleau-Ponty explains the human being's subjectivity as a pre-reflective, bodily openness toward the world, but the human being does not live in a mere physical world: It is also social and cultural. This *interworld* is shared with other human beings with the same bodily openness as ours, which creates possibilities for an overlap between the subjective and the intersubjective dimensions of human existence: "In so far as I am born into the world, and have a body and a natural world, I can find in that world other patterns of behaviour with which my own interweave" (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 416). This opens for us an interpersonal interaction based on pre-reflective perception. In *Phenomenology of perception* Merleau-Ponty writes:

> *Between my consciousness and my body as I experience it, between this phenomenal body of mine and that of another as I see it from the outside, there exists an internal relation which causes the other to appear as the completion of the system. The other can be evident to me because I am not transparent for myself, and because my subjectivity draws its body in its wake (ibid., p. 410).*

The pre-reflective relationship among human beings is experienced as a completion of the system, which is what makes the embodied reciprocity in intersubjective contact possible: "The other is for me no longer a mere bit of behaviour in my transcendental field, nor I in his; we are collaborators for each other, and we co-exist through a common world" (ibid., p. 413). In Merleau-Ponty's (1964) essay *The child's relations with others,* he further develops his notion of how a pre-reflective reciprocity between human beings is possible:

> *The consciousness I have of my body is not the consciousness of an isolated mass; it is a postural schema. … [T]he experience I have of my own body could be transferred to another much more easily than the cenesthesia of classical psychology, giving rise to what Wallon calls a "postural impregnation" of my own body by the conducts I witness (ibid., p. 117-118).*

This opens the possibility of a reciprocal process of communication in which the perception of one's own body can be transferred to the other, and where one's body schema can understand the body schema of the other immediately (ibid., p. 118). Thus, there is reason to discuss direct body-to-body contact with pre-reflective interchange of actions, gestures, and expressions. This is further emphasised in Merleau-Ponty's theory of reversibility introduced in *The visible and the invisible*. He describes a pre-reflective intersubjectivity as a reciprocal process in the flesh, as reversibility in the field between "my flesh" and "the flesh of the other" (Sanders, 2008, p. 150).

Shaun Gallagher (2001, p. 86-91), when he writes about how the child's relationship with others develops during the first years of life, begins from Merleau-Ponty's explanation of a pre-reflective intersubjectivity. He uses the concept "primary intersubjectivity" to refer to bodily, emotional, and perceptual processes that determine the child's ability to comprehend others through observation; this includes the child's ability to see meaning in others' actions. Correspondingly, the concept of "secondary intersubjectivity" is used when the child begins to interact with others in social situations (Gallagher, 2006, p. 41). This is described as an embodied phenomenon that does not disappear during later development, but is strengthened through various intersubjective experiences. In such a perspective, the children's interaction with others is relevant for studies of their body movements. Therefore, a second objective of this project is to investigate how body movements in children's play are related to their interaction with others. An additional research question was formulated: How are body movements in children's play related to their interaction with others? The results are introduced and discussed in Article 2, *The after-school programme: An arena for interaction with others through body movements in play.*

The emergence and adjustment of movements in interaction with the world

In *Phenomenology of perception* Merleau-Ponty (2002) writes:

> *The body is our general medium for having a world. Sometimes it is restricted to the actions necessary for the conservation of life, and accordingly it posits around us a biological world; at other times, elaborating upon these primary actions and moving from their literal to a figurative meaning, it manifests through them a core of new significance: this is true of motor habits such as dancing. Sometimes, finally, the meaning aimed at cannot be achieved by the body's natural means; it must then build itself an instrument, and it projects thereby around itself a cultural world (ibid., 2002, p. 169).*

As mentioned, Merleau-Ponty states that the human being is intentionally open toward the world. The quote above shows that such openness is expressed on different levels; it can be restricted to internal structures and basic skills that are necessary for living or can refer to cultural skills (Dreyfus, 1996, p. 2). The skills, which Merleau-Ponty (2002) describes as habits, are acquired in bodily interaction with the world:

> *[I]t is the body which "catches" (kopiert) and "comprehends" movement. This acquisition of a habit is indeed the grasping of significance, but it is a motor grasping of a motor significance (ibid., 2002, p. 165).*

He does not go into detail on how this acquisition occurs, but states that

> *Consciousness is being-towards-the-thing through the intermediary of the body. A movement is learned when the body has understood it, that is, when it has incorporated it into its "world", and to move one's body is to aim at things through it; it is to allow oneself to respond to their call, which is made upon it independently of any representation (ibid., p. 159-161).*

The human being as an intentional bodily subject is emphasised. The interconnection between the human being's perception of the world and habitual movements occurs via an intentional arc (Dreyfus, 1996, p. 1):

> *[T]he life of consciousness - cognitive life, the life of desire or perceptual life - is subtended by an "intentional arc" which projects round about us our past, our future, our human setting, our physical, ideological and moral situation (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 157).*

Morris (2004, p. 93-103) supports Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and explains the process toward habitual movements. In his exposition he assumes that the body schema expresses habitual ways to move the body, and that the movements are developed in a dynamic interaction between the human being and the world (ibid., p. 47). He emphasises, however, the *labile* character of the body schema and thus also of the habitual movements:

> *This too is characteristic of habit: habits reestablish themselves, and to have a habit is to have a way of moving that is not responsive to the world as it actually is at this moment; a habit precisely anticipates the world to which we are habituated (ibid., p. 47).*

Thus, human body movements can be habitual or in a process where they undergo change. To what extent the movement is habitual or changing is indicated along a continuum ranging from basic movements through adaptive movements, skills, and styles to idiosyncratic adjustment (ibid., p. 94). The child's body movements will, as such, be either habitual or located somewhere along the continuum described; they are always changing. In this dissertation such changing movements are called "barrier-breaking movements."

A third objective of this project is to investigate how movements emerge and change in informal social situations. An additional research question was formulated: How do children's body movements develop in informal situations in the ASP? The results are introduced and discussed in Article 3, *Barrier-breaking body movements in the after-school programme: Children's imitation through play.*

Experience of coherence in the world

The theoretical perspective discussed in this chapter advocates a view of how human beings meet and experience the world and existence that is emphasised by interaction and interplay. The human being does not have a mere objective body; it *is* a body saturated with lived experience (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 95). The experiences are not to be regarded as intrinsic representations at the psychological level but may be regarded as layered emotions, actions, and conceptions from previous bodily engagement. They intertwine the living body and its world into a coherent, personal entirety that gives meaning to new, practical situations (Morris, 2008, p. 114; Thompson, 2007, p. 33). On other occasions Merleau-Ponty describes lived experiences as a basis for pre-reflective *understanding* of the world (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 162). The *intentional arc* plays a central role in this interwoven entirety: "an 'intentional arc' which projects round about us our past, our future, our human setting, our physical, ideological and moral situation" (ibid. p, 157). Experience of meaning affects all situations in human life and forms the basis both for perception of isolated qualities and for formulated, explicit judgments (Carman, 2008, p. 53). Merleau-Ponty (2002) states that illness affects the coherent entirety that the human being experiences: "It is this intentional arc which brings about the unity of the senses, of intelligence, of sensibility and motility. And it is this which 'goes limp' in illness" (p. 157). This understanding emphasises the notion that health problems cannot be detached from the biological body as an isolated object. It would be reductionist to focus solely on the physiological parameters when evaluating a person's health. There is a need for an understanding of health, which is drawn into this interwoven entirety in the lived body, which Merleau-Ponty has described as a body that "inhabits" and "understands" its world (2002, p. 161-162). Fredrik Svenaeus (2000) refers to such a view when, in his exposition of the phenomenology of health, he writes that good health implies that the body is attuned and transcending (p. 90-118). The interaction between individual and

environment is understood as placement of the individual within a meaning-structure. He uses the concept of "homelikeness" as a general characteristic of health; health implies homelike ways of being-in-the-world (ibid. p. 115). Respectively, illness is seen as "unhomelike being-in-the-world." He writes: "What breaks down in illness are the meanings-patterns of being-*in*-the-world" (ibid. p. 115, emphasis in original), and that "Ill being-in-the-world is characterized by defective transcendence, in the sense that not being coherent – that is, not offering comprehensibility, sense of order and meaningfulness" (ibid., p. 97). In relating this statement to Merleau-Ponty's (1968) account of how the human being is related to the world (cf. p. 16-17), bad health may emerge in situations where the ambiguous meaning-constituting interplay between the human being and a world consisting of places, objects, other human beings, and invisible phenomena is experienced as incoherent.

With his exposition of a salutogenetic orientation, health sociologist Aaron Antonovsky (1979) developed an approach that has similarities to the account introduced above (p. 12-37). Instead of asking the traditional question about biological causes of disease, he asks what qualities in human life create good health. He was amazed that life does not fall apart for some human beings despite challenging situations, while others do not cope well in similar circumstances. Antonovsky came to understand that people, in varying degrees, experience order or disorder in themselves and their relationship to the external world. Antonovsky (1979, p. 123-128; 1987, p. xiii) considers that a *sense of coherence* (SOC) is an important assumption for well-being and good health. SOC is defined as "an enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that one's internal and external environment are predictable and that things will work out as well as can be expected" (Antonovsky, 1979, p. 123) and is presented as a "global" orientation. The notions of human openness to the physical and social environment and the experience of themselves in relation to this environment can be seen in relation to Merleau-Ponty's claim that meaning is created in interaction with the world. By

introducing a set of underlying dimensions of SOC - comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness - Antonovsky operationalises the concept of coherence for research (1987, p. 76). For this reason, his theory is used in this project.

A fourth objective of this project was to investigate the role bodily play has in the experience of coherence in the world. An additional research question was formulated: What is the role of bodily play in children's experience of coherence in the world? The results are introduced and discussed in Article 4, *Children's lived experience and their sense of coherence: Bodily play in a Norwegian after-school programme.*

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The research question (cf. p. 1) and the theoretical perspective (cf. Chapter 2) have clear implications for gathering and analysing research material. The research approach used in this project is partly phenomenological and partly hermeneutical. In line with the theoretical perspective introduced in Chapter 2, the research is sensitive toward the children's lived experiences. In that sense the approach is phenomenological (van Manen, 1990, p. 9). To provide answers to the primary and additional research questions, the children's lived experiences are interpreted by me, as a researcher. In this sense the approach is hermeneutical (ibid., p. 25). A life-world approach implies that both the researcher and those who participate in the study are closely related to their life-worlds. All persons, including researchers, find their true ground in a *historically effected consciousness* (Gadamer, 1989, p. 336-341): History and culture are always at work in the act of interpretation. Thus, investigating a human being's life-world implies a meeting between different life-worlds. The aim is to create favourable conditions for a *fusion of horizons* by creating a bridge between the researcher's life-world and the life-world of the person studied (ibid., p. 305).

The life-world approach made it necessary to gather qualitative material from the children's everyday lives. I wanted to follow Bengtsson's (2006, p. 38) arguments about focusing on the world in its full concretion as it shows itself to the concrete existing child. For this reason I was engaged in following the children in an ASP group during autumn 2007, and I used the opportunity to gather qualitative material.

It is worth reflecting on how much of the child's life-world is possible to access in a research project. The human lived experiences and the structures of meaning in which these experiences can be described and interpreted are endlessly complex (Schütz & Luckmann,

1973; van Manen, 1990, p. 101). Strictly speaking, there are no single things or separate events in that a large number of things, qualities, fellow human beings, and social situations contribute to the present context of experience and action. One particular event in the ASP can never be fully objective or universal, as it is related to the individual person's life-history and situation. However, research has to imply reduction of complexity because the researcher lacks access to the complete life-world of the person studied. Based on *Phenomenology of perception* (Merleau-Ponty, 2002), it may be argued that human existence can be studied related to a fundamental thematic structure. This is what Max van Manen (1990, p. 101-106) advocates when he points out four themes in an existential structure: Lived body, lived space, lived relationality, and lived time. I find it relevant to describe and interpret children's actions related to these existentials, and this may contribute to clarify the significance of bodily play in the children's lives. It is emphasised that the four life-world existentials always form an intricate unity and cannot be separated in real situations (ibid., p. 105). In this project, a unity-oriented perspective is given weight but is related to the additional research questions, where particular themes of the unity are focused.

Van Manen (1990, p. 53-76) describes concrete methods for phenomenological-hermeneutical research, stating that such research is to borrow other people's experiences, and their reflections on their experiences, in the context of the human life-world (ibid., p. 62). As researchers we focus on other human beings' experiences to acquire more experience ourselves. Van Manen (1990, p. 63) distinguishes between *gathering* and *analysing* material from lived experiences. However, the two acts are not considered fully separate processes. Depending on the stage of the study, an interview can, for example, serve as mainly a gathering of life-world material, or it may be a bilateral, conversational reflection on experiences. Van Manen (1990) describes several methods suitable for the gathering of

human life-world material: Protocol writing, interview, observation, biography, and diaries/journals/logs, among others.

Merleau-Ponty (2002, p. 202-232) argues that bodily actions, gestures, and speech are complementary forms of expression and communication. In this project, I wanted to capture such interwoven components; therefore, I chose to gather both visual and spoken material. The participants in the study were eight- and nine-year old ASP children, and this was an argument against self-generated, written descriptions. Generally speaking, children of that age find it easier to speak about their experiences. The necessary reflective attitude, and the linguistic demands of the writing process, can reduce the freedom needed for life-world descriptions (van Manen, 1990, p. 64). I decided to use two methods, observation and interview, that complemented and supported each other.

Sampling and consent

The aim of the project was to contribute to the understanding of children in bodily play, not to compare institutions. For this reason, the investigation was delimited to a single ASP that was related to a single public school. The study was concentrated on the upper two age groups who were permitted to attend the ASP: Children in the 3rd and 4th grades in school. The children were eight- and nine-year-olds, and thus had had several years' experience as ASP participants, which was why I chose this age group. Additionally, I expected that children at that age would be able to recall and articulate experiences.

I also wanted to conduct the investigation without having to collect consent from individuals other than the participants in the study and their parents/guardians. Therefore, the choice fell to an ASP where the upper two age groups are placed in a separate pavilion with its own outdoor area. This is an ASP in which I had conducted studies earlier, which was advantageous in preparing for the project. For example, I already had information about daily

routines and how different places in the area are commonly used by the children (Løndal & Bergsjø, 2005, 2006). Before the investigation started, I requested and received formal consent from the administration of the ASP (Appendix 1, 2), and a notification about the project was sent to the Data Protection Official (Appendix 3). The project has been conducted according to the notification and the comments received (Appendix 4).

The current ASP building comprises a recreation room with a dining area, a small computer room, a reading room, and a cloakroom. In front of the entrance to the ASP building are a flat asphalt area and a large sandpit. Immediately to the side of the building is a small playhouse surrounded by some trees. Otherwise, a slope surrounds the building. Approximately half the area comprises grass; the rest comprises trees and rugged terrain. The outdoor area does not have traditional playground apparatus. A peripheral part of the school's play area is located in the immediate vicinity of the ASP site and is available to the ASP children. There are areas for ball games and different types of swings.

During the period of the study, 41 percent of the children in the 3rd grade and 47 percent of the children in the 4th grade in the selected school attended the ASP, a total of 40 children. Prior to the start of the study, I arranged two separate meetings where I provided oral information about the project to the staff members and the children. Then a letter containing information and a request for written consent concerning participation in the study was sent to the children's parents/guardians (Appendix 5, 6). Parents/guardians of four children had reservations about participation. Consequently, the study is based on qualitative material gathered from 22 girls and 14 boys, of whom 19 were born in 1998 and 17 in 1999.

The observation

I used an observation method that van Manen (1990, p. 68-69) describes as *close observation*, and which is recommended for gathering qualitative material in phenomenological-

hermeneutic research. Using close observation, one can attempt to break through the researcher-informant distance. Instead of observing the informant from the outside, one attempts to enter the life-world through direct participation. Close observation involves an attitude of acknowledgement of closeness to the participants' life-worlds, but simultaneously allows the researcher to retain a hermeneutic distance by taking a step back and reflecting on the meaning of relevant situations. The researcher has to capture the roles of participant *and* observer at the same time and must retain a reflecting orientation without manipulating social situations and relations. The researcher's aim of close observation is to gather anecdotes that may contribute to an understanding of the phenomenon studied (ibid., p. 69). It is crucial that the anecdotes gathered convey cogency related to the phenomenon, and that relevant points contribute to the grasping of meaning related to the situation.

In this project, it was important that the observations generate information about the ASP children's bodily play (lived body) related to other life-world existentials (lived space, lived relationality, and lived time.) To contribute to structure and variation, the observations were linked to six places within the ASP area that emerged as particularly interesting in respect to the children's bodily play: The asphalt area, the sandpit, the climbing area, the Bunker,[6] the Wheel,[7] and the recreation room indoors. The choice of places for observation was made based on a two-week observation during ASP hours (three hours each day) in August 2007 and field notes made during that period.

In qualitative observation research, situations and events have commonly been registered in field notes, which is been considered a reliable way to "save" the observations until further

[6] "The Bunker", as it is called, is an area for ball games covered with artificial grass, surrounded by a fence.
[7] "The Wheel," as it is popularly called, is a sling suspended from a pulley (the wheel) on a wire line between two poles. The poles are about 25 meters apart; one is higher than the other. The child drags the pulley to the higher frame, climbs a ladder, and sits in the sling. S/he is then virtually launched into space as the pulley runs down the line towards the lower pole. The lower support is so designed that when the pulley comes to abrupt halt, the child is then left swinging in the sling. Altogether this is a considerable feat of daring for many children.

analysis (Silverman, 2004, p. 354). However, this has been criticised due to a lack of confidence in the researcher's ability to express life-world situations in written form. Thus, it is now usual to record conversations related to qualitative research. The same argument can be posited with regard to field notes from bodily play in authentic situations: Important details may be difficult to recall and express in written words (Heath, 2004, p. 266-267). The development of light equipment for audio- and video-recording makes it possible to save information from situations permanently and in a detailed form. In this project both field notes and audio/video recordings were used. Focus was concentrated on one place each observation day, and the observations were recorded or noted when one or more of the 36 children were present at that place. I used a main camera that allowed me to vary the focus and the zoom, and a supplementary camera to record the general situation of the place being observed. The two cameras had attached microphones. One hour of observation was recorded each day. Parallel to the recording, field notes were made. During the investigation period, 24 such observations were carried out over a period of five weeks. The number of observation days was decided upon according to an appraisal of achieved saturation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 408). After each observation session, the video tapes were marked, logged, and archived, and the field notes were rewritten in a narrative form with complete and understandable sentences. When the observations were concluded, the recordings were digitalised and saved on an external hard-drive. The equipment used for recording, transmission, and saving is listed in Appendix 7.

I wanted to gather qualitative material from everyday life in the ASP and did not want the children to express themselves to me *in particular*. Therefore, the children were told that I did not have any pedagogical responsibility or any right to give orders or sanctions. Otherwise, I tried to appear as a participating and interested adult, which was also the situation during the observation sessions. My impression is that I was perceived as a person

who belonged in the ASP, but who had a different role than the other adults. On many occasions when I was with the children, I saw them act against the valid rules of the ASP, and it seemed as though they trusted me not to tell the other adults.

The interview

After the observations were concluded, five girls and four boys were selected for individual interviews. The interviews were planned and conducted as qualitative research interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The aims of the interviews were 1) to provide depth to situations and events that had emerged in the observations, and 2) to gather material directly related to the fourth additional research question in the project (cf. p. 30).

Prior to detailed planning of the interviews and selecting the subjects to be interviewed, the field notes and video-recordings were closely examined. Specific themes were identified that were to be closely followed up. The themes were related to the children's bodily play in specific places, the child's interactions with other children, and particular events that affected their play. The children selected for interviews had been involved in particularly interesting situations related to these themes. Both girls and boys from the two relevant age groups were selected, and it was assumed that they would represent a variety of preferred activities. Prior to the interviews, an interview guide (Appendix 8) was prepared with a list of themes to be covered, together with proposals for introducing questions and follow-up questions. When the interview guide was developed, the 13 questions in the shortened form of the Sense of Coherence Questionnaire (Antonovsky, 1987, App.) were revised to suit the particular group and the specific context.

Bengtsson (2006, p. 46) advocates conducting research interviews in the field where experiences, ideas, and actions are embodied in concrete situations. Eder & Fingerson (2001, p. 183-184) argue that interviews with children should be conducted as conversations in

places with which the children are already familiar. We can, for example, take the children back to concrete places where interesting events have happened and conduct the interviews there. Another possibility is to use audio- and video-recorded material of relevant bodily-play situations, allowing these to provide a basis for the conversation. These examples are related to the challenge of helping the child recall experiences prior to oral description. I chose to conduct the interviews during the ASP hours in a room familiar to the children. The interviews commenced with situations in which the children had participated and been audio- and video-recorded. These were edited to form a four-minute film for each individual. This film was shown during the course of the interviews and provided a basis for the conversation. I also showed the children pictures (still frames) of particular places that I wanted them to speak about. By giving the interviews the character of a one-on-one conversation, I tried to stimulate the children to search for their own experiences and thoughts related to the themes studied. During the interviews the children responded in their own words, and I used follow-up questions when required.

Qualitative material from interviews has to be saved; it has to be written down or recorded. In such two-way interviews as referred to here, it is important that the researcher be able to concentrate on the substance of the interview and the dynamics, rather than on taking notes (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 197). In addition, it can be difficult to memorise the details from the conversations (Silverman, 2004, p. 154-155). Sound recordings may contribute to rectify this situation, but important non-verbal signals will not be saved. Several researchers have pointed to the necessity of the body "being included" in the material when life-world is studied (Engelsrud, 2005, p. 280-281; Finlay, 2006, p. 2). I wanted to bring the embodied subject from the child's life-world into the saved material. Based on this reasoning, I chose to video-record the interviews as well as make sound recordings. After the interviews were concluded, the recordings were digitalised and saved on an external hard drive.

Transcription and analysis

In this project we speak of both *gathering* and *analysing* qualitative material from the ASP children's lived experiences. In line with van Manen (1990, p. 63), these two acts are not considered fully separable processes. Since the gathering itself involved choices and reflections, an analysing process had already begun in the field and, after the material had been gathered, the field notes and recordings were transcribed and prepared for a *further* qualitative analysis. The saved material comprised 156 handwritten pages of field notes, the sound- and video-recordings from 22 hours of observations, and five hours of sound- and video-recordings from the interviews.

Structuring the observation material to transcripts was itself the beginning of the analysis, and I tried to be conscious of my role as both creator and interpreter of the text (Brekke, 2006, p. 19-22). The main task was to localise meaningful situations that could contribute to understanding the significance of children's bodily play. As mentioned, such situations can be seen as narratives with relevant points related to the phenomena studied. During the transcription process, these narratives were written down and prepared for further qualitative analysis. This analysis started with a systematic reading of the transcripts where I dealt with themes that I found particularly relevant to the research questions. The reading was followed by a description of recurrent themes. In this work I used a graded approach comprising several writings. At first the recurrent themes were described in ordinary language. Afterwards meaning units were localised and incorporated into a theoretical perspective with relevant professional terminology. Finally, the meaning-units were written into a consistent text where the phenomena studied emerged. This writing process was inspired by the structure of a descriptive phenomenological analysis that Giorgi (1985, p. 8-22) designed and

describes.[8] However, it is important to emphasise that I do not consider my writings to be pure description. Each stage of the process includes interpretations. The process should be seen as "pointing out the meaning of something" rather than "a pointing to something" (van Manen, 1990, p. 26), and in that sense it can be seen as an interpretive or hermeneutic-phenomenological process.

Despite all the observation material being transcribed, the text did not fully substitute for the sound- and-video recordings. The recordings preserved the experienced situations and the lived body more concretely. Therefore, I looked at the recordings on several occasions in all stages of the analysis, believing that they could provide complementary understanding related to the text analysis.

The aim of transcribing the interviews was to establish a conversation product for further analysis. The transcribing process involved several appraisals and decisions, and the product became a substitute for a living process. Jette Fog (1997, p. 130) writes: "As written text the speech becomes an object with solidity and duration" (translation mine). In the transcribing process the children's statements were, to some extent, reformulated and condensed. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p. 183-187), this is a legitimate way to transcribe interviews, if one manages to formulate the meaning of the interviewees' viewpoints.

As discussed, I wanted to bring the embodied subject from the child's life-world through the saved qualitative material and include it in the discussion. The interview recordings showed that there was supplementary information in the form of non-verbal gestures. To include these gestures in the analysis, the transcript notes were set up in two columns, the spoken word in one column and the non-verbal signals described in the other.

[8] Giorgi represents a Husserlian tradition and insists that phenomenological reduction is an invariable demand in phenomenological research and that interpretation falls outside of phenomenology (Giorgi, 1997, p. 235-243; van Manen, 1990, p. 26-27).

Trustworthiness

The traditional method to evaluate the quality of research is related to concepts such as validity and reliability; however, it is debatable whether these concepts are relevant to qualitative research. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p. 241-265) argue for using the classical concepts when quality is evaluated, but they ascribe them a meaning that is adapted to qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 289-331) maintain that there is a need for concepts that emphasise quality requirements that are specific to qualitative research and propose terms such as creditability, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Regardless of the concepts used, literature about qualitative method links the research quality to its *trustworthiness*.

As discussed in this chapter, gathering and analysing material is seen as a partly overlapping process that leads to fusion of horizons. The observations and the interviews are not to be regarded as collections of pure reality, but are supposed to reflect the life-world of the children studied. Thus, it is important that the findings of the study are trustworthy with regard to reflecting the children's life-world. Therefore, the research process should be made available for review and appraisals (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 253, 260). In this project, this is taken care of by a thorough explanation of the theoretical perspective and a description of how the various stages of the study are accomplished.

During the research process, several steps were taken to ensure that the findings in the study reflected the children's experiences. Different types of qualitative material were gathered in the field, and in this way, triangulations strengthened the study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 141-144; Johnson, 1997, p. 283). I intended to enter the children's life-world through direct participation; therefore, I followed the ASP group over a four-month period. Gathering

material over such an *extended period* increased the possibility of *saturation* (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 408).

During the conversation in the qualitative research interviews, the interviewees were asked about my interpretations of specific situations in the observations. I explained my interpretations of the children's statements and asked whether they had been correctly understood. Such *interpretation through conversation* can be compared with *participant feedback* and *member checking* in other qualitative designs (Johnson, 1997, p. 285). According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p. 255), such interpretation through conversation increases the trustworthiness of the study. Because of the children's ages, they were not asked for feedback on written transcriptions and analysis, which I undertook as a researcher; however, this can possibly limit the trustworthiness of the study. Nevertheless, I tried to bracket my own beliefs and understandings and focused on finding *cases that did not conform* to my preconceptions (Johnson, 1997, p. 284). In addition, the design of the study, the theoretical framework, and the analysis were discussed with two experienced supervisors during the research process, who challenged me to provide solid evidence for any interpretations and conclusions.

CHAPTER 4

Results and discussion

The four articles attached to this dissertation should be read as independent in-depth studies in the ASP children's life-worlds. Each article focuses on particular parts of the gathered qualitative material and aims to answer an attached research question. The research questions were formulated as follows (cf. p. 23, 25, 27, 30):

Article 1: What is the relationship between the child and the activity place in bodily play?
Article 2: How are body movements in children's play related to their interaction with others?
Article 3: How do children's body movements develop in informal situations in the ASP?
Article 4: What is the role of bodily play in children's experience of coherence in the world?

The four articles deal with how the *lived body* is related to one or more of the other life-world existentials: *Lived space*, *lived relationality*, and *lived time*. It is worth noting that the life-world existentials always form a unity, the lived world, and can never be totally separated from each other in real situations (van Manen, 1990, p. 105). This is accounted for in the articles, but the complexity is reduced by a particular focus on selected themes. Article 1 and Article 2 focus on lived body related to *one* other life-world existential, respectively lived space and lived relationality. In Article 3 and Article 4 the focus is broader; they investigate development through practical experience. Thus, lived time is also brought into the discussion.

This section discusses how the findings in the four articles elucidate the main research question introduced in Chapter 1: *What is the significance of bodily play in the ASP for children's understanding of the world?*

In this broader discussion, the unity of the life-world existentials is emphasised. The four articles are concerned with specific questions about the children's bodily play in the ASP, but they can also be placed within a common, main theme. They all circle the child's openness toward the world and how this openness contributes to an understanding of the world. Thus, they are closely related to the main research question. While Article 1 and Article 2 focus on how children in bodily play *grasp meaning* in their physical and social world, Article 3 and Article 4 focus on meanings that are *created* in such play over time. The following discussion is related to the basic theoretical understanding of the children's actions that were introduced in Chapter 2.

This study indicates that bodily play is a specific form of activity in the life-world of the children studied; bodily play appears as a spontaneous way to open toward the world. The play emerges in a positive and self-driven process and seems to be maintained without being a thought-out object. As described in Article 1 and Article 2, the bodily play appears to be a natural way of seeking interaction with places and other human beings. Thus, the findings support Gadamer's (2002, p. 105) claim that children experience play as a natural way of being.

Fulfilment of motor intentionality in bodily play

In exploring the theoretical perspective of the study, it was emphasised that human perception is not a mere collecting of objective sense-data. The human being grasps meaningful things, including other living people and the meaning of open spaces between them (Carman, 2008, p. 45), and opens intentionally toward these. Article 1 and Article 2 clearly indicates that the ASP children display a spontaneous search for interaction with the world, and that this seeking is fulfilled in bodily play. The children are directed toward the physical characteristics of different places in the ASP area and are clearly influenced by an

experience-based awareness that the places are meaningful. Both bodily actions carried out at the places on earlier occasions, and interactions with children they have played with, are included in this experience-based awareness. We can see this clearly when two girls take on the "obstacle course" through the so-called Climbing Area:

> *Toni and Karen follow their permanent "obstacle course" in The Climbing Area. They swing up to tree number 2 from the broken branch, jump onto the roof, and then into tree number 3, continuing from the slim branch down to the ground. It is a challenging exercise that not all dare to do, nor can carry out as yet. The girls complete the exercise with speed and skill.*

The children meet the place with an apparent intentionality and initiate bodily movements spontaneously and immediately. The movements are adapted to earlier lived experience, and they emerge in a world that the children are already bodily open toward (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 67, 161-162). It can be seen as an example of *motor intentionality* (ibid., p. 127), as being-toward-the-thing through the intermediary of the body.

Merleau-Ponty emphasises that the world, besides being physical, is also social and cultural. The human being lives in an *interworld* that includes interpersonal interaction based on pre-reflective perception (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 416). Article 2 shows the close relationship between the children's bodily play in the ASP and their interaction with others. Playing with others is the most common type of activity during ASP time. The ASP appears to be an arena where the children are provided opportunities to fulfil their spontaneous search for interaction with other children.

The children studied speak about what "we" do in different places in the ASP area. They agree about the importance of opportunities for different types of play together with others. This underlines the fact that not only the physical characteristics of a place are relevant, the social dimensions appear to play a crucial role for the children's actions in the places in the

ASP area. Besides the desire that the ASP activity be characterised by self-selected and child-managed body play, the children emphasise that playing with friends should be the most important feature of ASP time. This finding is concurrent with that of Maria Øksnes' study of how children experience leisure-time and play in the ASP (2009, p. 156). A large part of the body movement that occurs in the ASP time arises from play situations where the children seek interaction with others. The children's search for such interaction seems to be a significant part of their motor intentionality.

The ASP children's immediate intentionality toward places and other children in their bodily play can be interpreted in relation to primordial meanings (Arnold, 1979, p. 26-31). Their emphasis on the importance of such activity in ASP time may indicate that play has an important significance related to their fundamental existence. The bodily play simply implies experience of deep joy, fun, and satisfaction. This is evident in the children's body language in bodily play and was seen many times during the observations. The following example illustrates a situation where eight-year-old Rebecca plays on The Wheel:

> *Eight-year-old Rebecca remains erect for half the length of the run. She then releases her hold slightly and extends her body just as the wheel reaches the end-point. She makes a violent swing, "stands" upside down shouting "wow!" and laughs gleefully as she makes her way back. As she hops off The Wheel, she appears happy and enthusiastic.*

This spontaneous and deep joy of body movements in play suggests that they are closely related to primordial meanings (ibid., p. 27). Besides being aware of what about the movements are being experienced when moving, the child also attaches some positive values to that awareness.

Further discussion is structured according to the meaning-grasping and the meaning-creating character of bodily play. In Chapter 2 (cf. p. 27) the dichotomy between "habitual" and

"barrier-breaking" is used to explain the process of how human body movements may change over time, and it is emphasised that the changes may be indicated along a continuum. In the following discussion, the term "meaning-grasping character of bodily play" is used about situations that are experienced as habitual. Such habitual experiences may also be characterised by the concept of "homelikeness" (Svenaeus, 2000, p. 92, 94-95). "Meaning-creating character of bodily play" refers to constituting meaning in situations that are experienced as barrier-breaking: Those that lead to experience-based changes over time. Despite the analytical distinction between the meaning-grasping and the meaning-creating character of bodily play, I emphasise that these two acts are not considered fully separable processes. I will return to this later in the discussion.

To grasp meaning in the world

Article 1 shows that the children's understanding of different places in the ASP area is closely related to their own bodily play in those areas. The strong impact of own body-movement supports Morris' (2004, p. 45) statement that human perception arises in close interaction between the body and the place, and that this presupposes bodily movement. Equipment and other children, who are normally in the place during the play, are included in their understanding of the place. Even when the children were shown photos of places in the ASP area devoid of equipment and people, their comments were consequently associated with subjective experiences. Eight-year-old Ida's remark related to the asphalt place in front of the ASP building is an example:

> *That's the place where we go into the ASP building (points at the picture and nods)*[9]*. We often play with scooters there or with skipping rope, and with the hula-hoops. It is fun when there are things there (points again and smiles slightly).*

[9] The content of the parentheses in this and in later interview quote describes the nonverbal signals that were observed during the interview and which were written in a separate column in the transcript.

The body movements are meaningful for the child within the contextual framework where they are normally carried out. Within this framework, the ASP's institutional role, physical characteristics, available equipment, and other human beings may play a central role; the child has to engage in body movements relevant to these factors (Arnold, 1979, p. 34). The child does not seem to make a distinction between the place as such and the body movements performed there. Thus, contextual meanings are included in the understanding of the place. Therefore, places in the ASP area should be understood as an interaction between the bodily active child and the world (Casey, 2001, p. 683).

As we have seen, ASP children are open to the world by motor intentionality, and body movements and bodily play arise from such intentionality. The intentionality may be directed toward physical characteristics of a place, and the children spontaneously grasp affordances that are present (Gibson, p. 36-41). The earlier cited situation where Toni and Karen used the playhouse and the trees as an obstacle course may serve as one example (cf. p. 45). We have also seen how the motor intentionality can be directed toward other children. Some children participate within a small group of best friends. They seek interaction where they can communicate reciprocal feelings and enjoy close relationships with a few best friends. In one interview, Rebecca describes a close relationship with Sophie:

> *Rebecca:* *Most of all I like playing with Sophie. We play together the most as she is my very best friend. (She appears happy and satisfied.)*
>
> *Interviewer:* *Do you choose to do what Sophie does, or do you do what you want, irrespective of what Sophie would like?*
>
> *Rebecca:* *I do the same as Sophie, and sometimes Sophie does what I am doing. We decide a bit each – sometimes me, sometimes her. (She responds quickly and looks self-confident.)*

Children in such pairs or small groups of best friends express a special joy in being together, and it seems to be quite obvious for them to include bodily play in their relationships. The play emerges in a mutual process between the friends and fits well into Gallagher's (2006, p.

41) description of secondary intersubjectivity. The children's ability to grasp meaning in the best friends' actions is embodied, and they interact immediately and spontaneously. Sometimes the mutual process of choosing activity implies verbal arguments, but often this process occurs spontaneously without spoken language. The children are engrossed and intuitively follow the inconsequential to-and-fro-movement of the play (Gadamer, 1989, p. 105).

According to Merleau-Ponty, the body schema forms the basis for accommodating actions toward the world (2002, p. 380-381). In a unitary process where perception, lived experience, and consciousness participate, the body schema makes it possible to grasp the world in a pre-reflective manner. Meaning in the world is related to the intentionality in bodily movement and is available through bodily openness toward the world (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 157). Child-managed bodily play seems to be crucial in the ASP children's openness toward their physical and social world. The observations of ASP children in daily bodily play reveal how spontaneously they open toward the world. This makes sense if we follow Merleau-Ponty's explanation of the human being as a lived body who *inhabits* the world as subject. During ASP time, the child inhabits the ASP environment and relates its being to the physical and the social world in interactional activities. According to Merleau-Ponty (2002, p. 162), we can underline the inextricable reciprocity between the child and the world. The child understands its world without having to use a "symbolic" or "objectifying" function. One important finding in this study is the children's intentional openness toward their physical and social world when seeking bodily play. They devote themselves to the bodily play, and the world *reveals* itself in the play. This finding emphasises the pre-reflective dimension of play. To understand this better, a passage in which Merleau-Ponty (2002) writes about how the world reveals itself to the human being in language may be helpful:

> *[T]he intention to speak can reside only in an open experience. It makes its appearance like the boiling point of liquid, when, in the density of being, volumes of empty space are built up and move outwards. As soon as man uses language to establish a living relation with himself or with his fellows, language is no longer an instrument, no longer a means; it is a manifestation, a revelation of intimate being and of the psychic link which unites us to the world and our fellow man (ibid., p. 228).*

This study indicates that situations in bodily play may be interpreted as equivalent revelations that relate the children to their physical and social world. As soon as the play is used to establish a living relation between the child and the world, it may no longer be seen as an instrument, but rather as a way of being where the world reveals itself to the child.

Thus, we can say something about how children *understand* the physical and social world that embraces them. The child's bodily play can simply be regarded as a genuine experience that implies understanding of the world. Such understanding appears to emerge as pre-reflective revelations and not as a result of a cognitive process.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Article 1 and Article 2 focus on the lived body related to *one* other life-world existential. These articles conclude that there is a close reciprocity between the children's lived body and place and other children. However, the life-world existentials always form a unity in the lived world, and thus bodily play concerns the children's situation in its entirety. The children's bodily play in the lived world does not consist only of binary interactions between two subjects or between one subject and one object: The children interact with places, things, other human beings, and invisible phenomena simultaneously. In *The visible and the invisible* Merleau-Ponty (1968) offers a broader perspective than in earlier writings about how processes of meaning-grasping may occur in the human life-world. This account could illuminate the revelations that emerge in children's bodily play and how they lead to understanding the world. Merleau-Ponty

develops an understanding of the human body and the world as two aspects of the same reality - *the flesh*, which he describes as a basic element of being, and which encompasses the phenomenal field where all perceptions and experiences occur. By participating within this basic element of being, the person is intertwined with the perceived objects and the whole milieu s/he perceives in (Adams, 2001, p. 207; Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 141-142). The following description of a typical situation from children's bodily play in the ASP may serve as an example of the complexity in the children's world:

> *Andreas, Jonathan, and Edward are playing with scooters on the rough terrain that leads to the asphalt area. This is something where they are experts – scooting fast down to the asphalt area, straight across, then between the sandpit and the playhouse, continuing behind the main building. They pass several other bodily active children during the race. They do this several times. Amanda watches the boys' activity and also wants to have a go.*

The three boys who play in this situation participate in a complex whole consisting of each other, the shape of the place, the equipment they are using, the girl who is watching, and objects and other children they pass during the race. To grasp meaning in this situation would be insufficient with a binary interaction between one subject and a few objects. There is a need for a lot of criss-crossing "dialogues" that continually involve the child, the friends, the place, equipment used, objects, and other human beings. According to Merleau-Ponty, such continual criss-crossing is possible since the human being is pre-reflectively open toward the world through an intimate intertwining in the flesh (ibid., p. 135). Rather than occurring as a binary interaction between subject and object, meaning emerges as an event within the flesh of the world where innumerable dialogues take part in an ambiguous interplay (Adams, 2001, p. 207). Such an understanding makes sense related to the immediate, and seemingly obvious, interplay in children's bodily play. Bodily play appears to be a typical form of activity of the children studied. This is the form of activity they most commonly choose when time and

space are made available and is the form of activity they mention as the most important for experiencing the ASP time as meaningful. Thus, bodily play appears to have crucial significance according to the children's abilities to grasp meaning in a world consisting of places, things, fellow human beings, and open areas between them.

Bodily play as meaning-creating activity

We saw earlier that the body schema makes it possible for the child to understand situations in bodily play by *grasping meaning* in the world; the lived body spontaneously interplays within its physical and social world and grasps meaning based on previous experiences. In this way, the body schema plays an important role in the intentional arc between perception and action (Dreyfus, 1996, p. 1; Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 157). Based on previous experiences, the world already has meaning when the child opens toward it with motor intentionality. The child *understands* the world in an immediate manner, and thus s/he is able to carry out spontaneous, adapted actions.

Since motor intentionality in play is directed toward the world, including places, things, and other human beings, the attached actions are *given* meaning (Morris, 2008, p. 116). This opens the way for experience-based changes over time. It indicates that meaning is *created* through experience: The child creates and adjusts the understanding of the world related to specific situations. This can be interpreted in relation to adjustments of the body schema (Morris, 2004, p. 47), which has its roots in a naturally developed body, a body that draws conclusions on perceptual meaning through experience. Besides being restricted by the body's topology and its relation to the place where the movement occurs, experiences are socially conditioned by interaction with other human beings (ibid., p. VIII). Thus, the emergence of new body movements and the adjustment of earlier acquired movements are

closely related to human interaction with both places and other human beings. The following section discusses how such processes arise out of children's bodily play in the ASP.

The emergence and adjustment of movements through imitation

In this dissertation bodily play is considered a self-driven phenomenon oriented toward autotelic values (Gadamer, 1989, p. 105; Huizinga, 1955, p. 13). Movements in bodily play are conducted in a spontaneous interplay within the physical and social world, and they can be placed on a continuum between barrier-breaking and habitual movements (Morris, p. 98-99). Maxine Sheet-Johnstone (2002, p. 344) explains the emergence of new movement-patterns in informal situations as spontaneous and natural dispositions characterised by imitation, joint attention, and turn-taking. This is employed as a point of departure in Article 3. Article 3 shows that barrier-breaking movements are usual in bodily play in the ASP and that these occur both in best-friend groups and in activity groups. While the best-friend groups consist of a few children with strong reciprocal feelings, the activity groups consist of children who come together because they want to take part in the same activity.

The barrier-breaking body movements in the best-friend groups arise from the joint try-out of new movements and imitation of other children's habitual movements. Joint try-out of new movements occurs in a spontaneous exchange of activity and observation within the group, through new suggestions, and by imitating others' suggestions for activity. The following is a typical example:

> *Gloria comes out to the asphalt area with a hula-hoop. She attempts to "rock" and spin the hoop. After a short while, her friends, Pernille and Siv, join her. They attempt to spin the hoop around their waists, chests, and ankles. They throw the hoop and roll it along the ground. None of the girls appear to be experts. They stand facing each other in a circle, showing what they can do and challenging each other in various ways.*

This emergence of movement-patterns is unstructured and incidental and the imitations of others' movements occur spontaneously. The most salient pattern appears to be joint participation and turn-taking. When there is an expert in the best-friend group, the other children imitate the expert's habitual movement. The expert has an accepted tutor function, but the situations have a clear bodily-emotional structure characterised by a strong, mutual association between model and imitator. Also in the activity groups, the emergence of new movements occurs as imitation of others' habitual movements. Both the imitator and the model focus joint attention on the actual body movement, but they do not have the same degree of reciprocity as observed in best-friend groups. A greater degree of personal responsibility is required of the individual for participation in an imitation process. After participation has been entered into, it appears that joint attention is characterised by a greater degree of shared involvement, something that appears to favourably impact the imitation process.

Article 3 shows that motor intentionality and the interplay in bodily play lead to acquisition and adjustment of body movements. During the play, the child's world, including places, objects, equipment, and other children, are given meaning related to specific body movements. The body schema is being invested with lived experience, which is crucial for meaning grasped on later occasions. Such spontaneous processes of sedimentation of experience lead to emergence and adjustment of movements in bodily play, despite the absence of formulated objectives and formal teaching. This study shows a comprehensive emergence and adjustment of movements in informal social situations in the ASP, and that this largely occurs in processes where children imitate others' movements. The ASP is characterised by children interacting in bodily play, and thus it appears to be a favourable place for such imitation.

This chapter distinguishes between the meaning-grasping and the meaning-creating character of bodily play. These two acts are not considered separable processes; they occur simultaneously. In familiar situations in the ASP children's play, adjustments of the body schema may be needed; for example, when using a new scooter at a familiar place or when playing a well-known game with a new friend. On the other end of the continuum, for example, when trying a new technique on The Wheel, there will be familiar aspects of the situation. By participating in the play, the child participates within the flesh of the world and is intertwined with the whole milieu s/he perceives in (Adams, 2001, p. 207; Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 141-142). Depending on the situation, the criss-crossing "dialogues" that continually involve the playing child, the friends, the place, equipment used, objects, and other human beings will reveal small or large new meaning-patterns within the world; habitual meanings are grasped and new meanings are created simultaneously.

Experience of a coherent, homelike being-in-the-world

This investigation shows that bodily play has a much deeper and broader relevance related to creation of meaning than the emergence and adjustment of movements. Such play has a central significance in the children's experience of a coherent, homelike being-in-the-world. In the Chapter 2 sub-chapter, "The emergence and adjustment of movements in interaction with the world," habitual movements are described as labile: They re-establish themselves (cf. p. 27). Merleau-Ponty (2002, p. 114) describes the body schema as a dynamic system: "my body appears to me as an attitude directed towards a certain existing or possible task." The re-establishment of habits is experience-based and related to situations where the impression of a coherent whole is challenged. Therefore, the pre-reflective web of habitual attitudes directed toward existing and possible actions has to be adjusted (Morris, 2004, p. 47). This investigation indicates that the children's bodily play in the ASP has considerable potential in contributing to such a process.

In Chapter 2 I suggest, with reference to Svenaeus (2000, p. 90-118), that there is a relationship between experience of a coherent, homelike being-in-the-world and health (cf. p. 28-29). This relationship actualises the question of how such being may be promoted. In Article 4, the children's experience of a coherent, homelike being-in-the-world[10] is operationalised using Antonovsky's concept of SOC. By focusing on the underlying dimensions of comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness, if the ASP children experience coherence in the world in bodily play was investigated. Antonovsky (1987, p. 94-101) states that specific situations during childhood may contribute to the development of a "global" SOC that promotes certainty related to new and unfamiliar situations later in life. Article 4 discusses what significance bodily play may have for the development of children's SOC. In the following discussion the development of SOC is also related to the children's experience of a coherent, homelike being-in-the-world.

Most of the children studied provide a positive picture of the bodily play that occurs during ASP hours. They experience the world as comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful, which their participation in the ASP contributes to. The ASP represents an arena where the children experience a close relationship with their surroundings and where they have opportunities to participate in bodily play with other children. They act with a personal certainty in their surroundings and, as a matter of course, choose from the affordances that the different places offer (Gibson, 1986, p. 127-128). Elaine's answer to a question in the qualitative research interview demonstrates this:

Interviewer: *How do you like it in the ASP? Are you ever uncertain and shy there?*

Elaine: *No, never - not at all. (The response is immediate and definitive.)*

[10] In Article 4 the concept of "coherent, personal entirety" is used related to situations that bind together the living body and its physical, social, and cultural environment and give meaning to existing and possible actions. Later, I came to the understanding that the concept of "homelikeness" is appropriate to clarify such coherent experience.

Interviewer: *Not when you are very active either, for example when running or climbing?*

Elaine: *No. Then I am definitely not uncertain. (Shakes her head vigorously)*

These statements concur with the theoretical understanding of the child introduced earlier in this dissertation, which indicates that Elaine manages to grasp and create meaning in the world during her actions.

This study indicates that both interactions with the activity place, and with others, play a crucial role for the ASP children. Their total sense of coherence does not seem to be sufficient unless the interactions are experienced as good within both these fields. That the children seek favourite places with typical, adapted activities indicates that their interaction with the physical characteristics of the places functions well. However, the children emphasise that bodily play should occur with others. All the children interviewed pointed out the importance of opportunities for playing with friends, indicating that they want a degree of predictability related to established habits and attitudes. According to the children, they experience bodily play at familiar places and together with friends in such a way. The play itself may well be inconsequential and unpredictable, but they understand the affordances of the places and their friends' behaviour. They manage to grasp and create meaning related to places and friends, and this forms the basis for an immediate understanding that gives certainty to the play situations. Further, the children stated that they experience participation in shaping their own situations during the play in ASP, meeting the demands and challenges they encounter with themselves or others. The children's expressions of opportunities for shaping their outcomes and meeting current demands and challenges indicate that possible disturbances of their experience of the world as a coherent, homelike being-in-the-world are within acceptable frames. Thus, necessary adjustment of the pre-reflective web of habitual movements and attitudes can be fulfilled without being experienced as problematic. Bodily

play appears to contribute to the children's experience of their being-in-the-world as coherent and homelike.

Although the children so often seek favourite places and close friends, they do not avoid challenges and development. In the observation material we found numerous examples of children adapting their actions relating to varied situations. During the bodily play they constantly meet the needs of new skills and less familiar places. In spontaneous choices of specific activities, they also interact with children they do not know so well. The children interviewed agreed that bodily play promotes understanding and friendship. Eric's statement is an example of this:

> *Interviewer: How do you find it easy to make friends and to get to know new children?*
>
> *Eric: If, for example, they like playing football then perhaps I can be selected for their team. Then I can talk with them when we play. (He responds enthusiastically and looks directly at the interviewer.)*

In bodily play, immediate communication is apparent; it emerges as a mutual interchange of actions, gestures, and expressions that is pre-reflectively understood. According to Gallagher (2006, p. 41), such experiences promote the children's ability to grasp meaning in others' actions, and in this way they contribute to the experience of a coherent, homelike being-in-the-world. In summary, bodily play in the ASP appears to have a comprehensive significance related to the children's ability to grasp meaning in their surroundings immediately and spontaneously. The play also contributes to making the constitution of meaning more finely meshed, by re-establishing the pre-reflective backdrop. In addition to constituting favourable situations for grasping already habitual meanings in the world, the bodily play appears to be important for *meaning-creation* over time. Thus, Merleau-Ponty's claim that bodily movements are meaningful in two different ways is emphasised: They are both meaningful, directed toward the world, and are *given* meaning related to the world (Morris, 2008, p. 115-

116). The relationship between homelikeness and health (Svenaeus, 2000, p. 90-118), and SOC and health (Antonovsky, 1979, p. 226; 1987, p. xiii; Eriksson & Lindstöm, 2005, p. 60-66), indicates that it is particularly relevant to stimulate activities that promote experience of coherence. This investigation shows that self-chosen and child-managed bodily play, because of its meaning-grasping and meaning-creating character, has a comprehensive potential to contribute in such a way.

The findings of the investigation do not, however, sketch an unambiguously positive picture of the situation in the ASP. Article 4 discusses divergences that may contribute to the knowledge of how child-managed bodily play in a group can influence children with specific problems. The article describes two such examples. One example is Oscar, who is positively influenced by the bodily play in the ASP, even though he has problems in other areas of life. Another example is Richard, for whom exclusion from bodily play has negative effects. For Oscar, bodily play in the ASP represents a sphere in life that is experienced as manageable and this gives meaning to existence. Thus, for Oscar, bodily play has the potential of promoting SOC. For Richard the tendency is the opposite. Repetitive exclusion and unfriendly reports result in experiences of unpredictability, a lack of load-balance, and little participation in shaping outcomes. This contributes negatively to the components of comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness, thereby hindering SOC.

Both examples can be related to the child's ability to grasp and create meaning in situations that occur in the ASP. The question is whether the lived body and its world are sufficiently experienced as coherent and homelike (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 91; Svenaeus, 2000, p. 92). If this is not the case, it may contribute to considerable uncertainty in managing situations. One child described specifically in Article 4, Richard, experiences the situation in this way: He does not manage to grasp meaning in the other children's behaviour. Thus, the

intersubjective interaction with the other children is problematic (Gallagher, 2001, p. 85; 2006, p. 41). The situation results in his exclusion from bodily play, something that gives Richard "sad feelings." For Oscar, the result is the opposite. Although he experiences much uncertainty in other arenas of life, the bodily play in the ASP is meaningful. "In the Bunker, I feel just tip-top. Then I'm happy," he explains in the interview. He acts with personal certainty in such situations because he manages to grasp meaning; thus, he experiences homelikeness.

It is worth noting that disturbances between current experience and an existing pre-reflective backdrop may have both positive and negative consequences for an individual child. Such disturbances may lead to favourable adjustments to the body schema. It could entail valuable adjustments that are crucial for later grasping of the world as a coherent, homelike being-in-the-world. It seems, however, as if the disturbances must be within acceptable frames to allow for such a gain. Large disturbances seem to negatively impact the interplay within the world, and the experience of homelikeness may not appear.

CHAPTER 5

Concluding remarks

This investigation sketches a picture of how children grasp and create meaning in bodily play, and thus what significance such activity has for their understanding of the world. Bodily play seems to be a spontaneous form of activity where the children seek and achieve interaction with places and other human beings in their surroundings. Bodily play appears as self-driven, autotelic activities in which the children can fulfil their motor intentionality and where they grasp and create meaning within the world.

When focusing on how the playing child is related to one single life-world existential, for example, lived space or lived relationality, the grasping and creating of meaning appear to emerge in fairly simple binary interactions. When we focus on children's bodily play with a broader perspective and include all relevant interplaying phenomena simultaneously, the complexity of the world comes into sight. While participating in bodily play in the ASP, a child's grasp and creation of meaning emerge in a complex and continually interplay within a world of places, equipment, freestanding things, other human beings, and open spaces between them. We may say that the child is open toward the world, and meaning is revealed to the child in bodily play in complex processes of interplay within the world.

Many of the situations that the children meet during their bodily play in the ASP are habitual and experienced as homelike. Other times they meet situations that are not habitual, and they have to re-establish their body schema. This may lead to the emergence of adapted body movements and increased understanding of the world. The children's interplay within the world in such situations may invest places and fellow human beings with meaning and lead to a more finely-meshed, pre-reflective backdrop for later actions. In this way bodily play contributes to the children's experience of a coherent, homelike being-in-the-world.

In Chapter 1, I raised the question as to whether children would miss important qualitative aspects of life if the opportunities for self-chosen and child-managed play were reduced. This project has pointed at several gains that children may acquire by participating in bodily play, and these gains may also give an impression of what they can miss if such activity is reduced. As is apparent in this project, bodily play leads to the spontaneous fulfilment of motor intentionality directed toward activity places and other human beings. Bodily play seems to be a form of activity that leads to understanding of the world. The self-chosen and child-managed bodily play is a different form of experience as compared with experiences that emerge in formal teaching. This form of experience may suffer if time and space for child-managed bodily play is reduced.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, children create breathing space in the form of play when the pressure from their environment becomes excessive or when they do not want to participate in imposed tasks. However, I must stress the importance of recognizing the children and giving them authority related to their own experiences. As indicated, the children who participated in this study emphasise the importance of opportunities for self-chosen bodily play in ASP time. The children are not offered recognition if they experience repetitive obstruction of bodily play in ASP time.

In closing, the findings in this project should have some consequences for Norwegian ASPs. It appears crucial that self-chosen and child-managed bodily play with other children has a recognised place in the lives of primary school children; therefore, such play should be encouraged in future ASPs. Such encouragement should influence both how the ASP time is allotted and the education of ASP employees.

In a time of increased focus on adult-managed teaching and learning toward formal aims, the ASP has appeared as an arena where child-managed play has been stimulated and

encouraged, and this should be maintained and strengthened in future ASPs. However, this study shows that some children fall by the wayside with regard to child-managed play, and that this may have negative consequences for their opportunities to experience a coherent, homelike being-in-the-world. It appears to be important to create and maintain good conditions for self-chosen and child-managed play, but the framework for the children's activity should be adapted and adjusted to minimise the situations in which individuals may be excluded from play. This study shows the importance of broad and flexible limits that encompass the incidental to-and-fro movement in play. Nevertheless, attention must be given to the individual child's needs for sufficient predictability, load-balance, and participation in shaping outcomes. These factors tug in opposite directions on the scale between complete freedom and strict organisation. In such a situation it is important to have professionals who can make balanced judgments and adjustments. This requires comprehensive and practical knowledge of children in the respective age groups, coupled with a sound ability to make appropriate evaluations and adaptations for all children in the group. This is a profound, pedagogical competence that characterises wise and mature professionals. The need for a special education programme for ASP professionals, in which these perspectives are specifically emphasised, is vitally important to our children.

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LIST OF ARTICLES

Article 1: Løndal, K. (Submitted). Bodily play in the after-school programme: Fulfilment of motor intentionality in interaction between body and place.

Article 2: Løndal, K. (Resubmitted). The after-school programme: An arena for interaction with others through body movements in play.

Article 3: Løndal, K. (2010). Barrier-breaking body movements in the after-school programme: Children's imitation through play. *Nordic studies in education, 30*(1), 1-17.

Article 4: Løndal, K. (Accepted). Children's lived experience and their sense of coherence: Bodily play in a Norwegian after-school programme.

Article 1

Løndal, K. (Submitted). Bodily Play in the After-School Programme: Fulfilment of Motor Intentionality in Interaction between Body and Place.

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Bodily Play in the After-School Programme: Fulfilment of Motor Intentionality in Interaction between Body and Place

Abstract

The aim of this article is to investigate the relationship between After-school programme (ASP) children and places where self-managed bodily play occurs. The study has a life-world approach, and the theoretical perspective is based on phenomenological philosophy. Qualitative material was gathered from qualitative research interviews among children in a Norwegian ASP and from close observation of their activities at two selected places in the ASP area. The findings show that the children's understanding of place is closely associated with their own bodily play. Bodily play appears to be meaningful directed toward places, and offers children the opportunity to experience fulfilment of motor intentionality in an immediate manner. Such activity can play an important role in constituting and adjusting a pre-reflective background for later actions and should be encouraged in ASP. It is recommended to emphasise the ASP as a complimentary niche in contrast to the school. This requires pedagogical judgments of educated staff members.

Keywords: *After-school programme, bodily play, motor intentionality, place*

Introduction

Asphalt, a rugged hillock with bushes, a sandpit, a grassy area, and a small playhouse among some trees surround the after-school programme (ASP) pavilion. The doors to the pavilion open and the asphalt place is immediately filled with active eight- and nine-year-olds. One girl runs across the asphalt place to one of the trees. She swings up with customary movements – grabs a small branch with both arms, swings one leg up and around a branch stub. She grasps firmly with her arms at the same time she swings one leg firmly down. She now sits on the lowest branch. Her expedition rapidly ensues – up into the tree before she jumps onto the roof of the playhouse. She runs across the roof and swings onto a tree on the other side. She seizes a long, thin branch with both hands and quickly lowers herself the five or six feet down to the ground. A number of other children join her in this game.

Activity is lively on the asphalt place. Two boys are playing with a tricycle to which they have attached a small cart. Six children are playing with scooters. Up on the sloping part of the asphalt, they kick energetically. They freewheel down again while balancing in various positions on the scooters. Sometimes they run laps on the path around the ASP building. Four girls are playing with hoops. They swing the hoops around their waists, their underarms, and their ankles. The girls throw them, catch them, and spin them along the ground. One girl joins two hoops together such as to make one twice as large. After a few attempts, she manages a "hula-hoop."

The narrative above is based upon observations of children's bodily play at two locations at a Norwegian ASP – places that the children call "The Climbing Area" and "The Asphalt Place." This article is based on observations of the children's activities at these two locations, and the aim is to investigate the relationship between the children and places where self-managed bodily play occurs. Bodily play is understood as self-driven and autotelic-oriented activities (Gadamer, 1989, p. 103; Huizinga, 1955, p. 13) that include extensive bodily movements expressed through locomotory movements, stabilising postures, and/or manipulative movements (Gallahue & Ozmun, 2006, p. 187). The observations were part of a fieldwork carried out in an Oslo ASP in 2007.

The ASP is being politically debated in Norway. Among issues discussed are the content of the ASP and the management of the children's activities during ASP time. Currently, the ASP is a public institution for children in their first four years of school. It is a voluntary programme outside of normal school hours and is organised and closely related to the public schools. Despite the close relationship, the ASP contrasts with the school: Child-managed play is emphasised before learning toward formal aims. Such activities correspond with guidance and aims in government documents for Norwegian ASPs (Haug, 1994, p. 23; Øksnes, 2001, p. 100). The Education Act specifies that the ASP shall offer the children opportunity for play, cultural and leisure-time activities, and provide them with care and supervision (Department of Education and Training, 2008, § 13-7). No formal educational objectives are associated with ASP, and the government does not require staff members to have formal pedagogical education. This has resulted in a significantly higher number of children per employee in ASP than in primary school; only a minority of employees has pedagogical education (Kvello & Wendelborg, 2002, p. 43, 67).

In the school, children's physical activity is related to aims of the National Curriculum for Physical Education (PE) (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2008), but also

appears in various situations and places beyond the formal curriculum, in a continuum from free play to strictly organised PE and sport. Such activities can be defined as extra-curricular PE when they are initiated or organised by professionals (Penney & Harris, 1997, p. 42); in fact, many activities in the ASP can be regarded as extra-curricular PE. Results from research conducted in Oslo show that the children's physical activity during ASP hours is extensive and characterised by child-managed bodily play (Løndal & Bergsjø, 2005). Although the bodily play most often occurs in child-managed activities, the activities are commonly initiated by the ASP staff. In contrast with the sportisation of extra-curricular PE in several other European countries (Green, 2008), the staffs in Norwegian ASPs stimulate self-managed activities in the children's "leisure time." In the present debate about ASP, such practice is questioned, and arguments for a stricter organisation and management of the ASP time are discussed. In this way, the child-managed bodily play that characterises ASP comes under pressure. However, the debate suffers from a lack of arguments based on a basic, philosophical understanding of children and their activities. This article aims to contribute to a philosophical-pedagogic debate about the children's activities in ASP and focuses on the children's own experiences of the ASP activities. The theoretical perspective is based on phenomenological philosophy.

The theoretical perspective

This article is written with a background in a study of a life-world approach. Thus, the intention is to investigate the children's experiences as they are lived in real-life situations (Bengtsson, 2006, p. 38). The theoretical perspective is phenomenological, and is based on the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In *Phenomenology of perception* (2002 [1962/1945]), Merleau-Ponty phenomenologically describes perception and substantially contributes to the understanding of human action. He begins with the concept of life-world (2002, p. vi-vii), and describes perception as it is experienced in human life. The

phenomenological description shows that perceptual experience is "that vital communication with the world which makes it present as a familiar setting of our life" (ibid, p. 61). Merleau-Ponty rejects the notion that humans live in an object world where they act causally. Instead, he draws our attention to the pre-reflective background underlying the perception of isolated qualities and our formulation of explicit judgments, to what he calls the "phenomenal field" (Carman, 2008, p. 53). He claims that the world of objects is the place we as subjects inhabit; that is, meaning in the world comes to us because we act and live in it (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 161). The phenomenal field presents objects, other human beings, and phenomena as wholes invested with immanent meaning (ibid., p. 67). According to Merleau-Ponty, this is possible because the perception has an intentional structure; the perception occurs in an environment that humans already are directed to. The meaning is immediately sensible, and does not depend on intellectual, reflective processes (Carman, 2008, p.53): "My body has its world, or understands its world, without having to make use of my 'symbolic' or 'objectifying function'" (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 162). The relationship between the human being and the world comes prior to reflection; it is constituted on a perceptual, bodily level. According to Merleau-Ponty, this is possible since the human being first and foremost is bodily present in the world: He claims that "the body is the vehicle of being in the world, and having a body is, for a living creature, to be intervolved in a definite environment, to identify oneself with certain projects and be continually committed to them" (ibid., 2002, p. 94).

Bodily movements are ascribed an important role in human inhabitation of the world (Morris, 2008, p. 114). They are not causal actions in an object world that the human being is separated from, but intentional movements that are not explicitly formulated prior to the action:

> *Movement is not thought about movement, and bodily space is not space thought of or represented. ... Consciousness is being-towards-the-thing*

> *through the intermediary of the body. ... [T]o move one's body is to aim at things through it; it is to allow oneself to respond to their call, which is made upon it independently of any representation (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 159-161).*

Merleau-Ponty refers to "being-towards-the-thing through the intermediary of the body" as motor intentionality (ibid., p. 127). He shows how intentionality as existence is bodily, by revealing it as motor intentionality (Morris, 2008, p. 115). On the one hand, the bodily movements are invested with meaning; they are meaningful toward things in the environment, they are intentional. On the other hand, the bodily movements invest things with meaning in being-toward-the-things.

A central point in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is the statement that human perception is meaningful. He shows how meaning is related to the human intentionality and how it emerges in a bodily openness toward the world. He states that the intentional openness can be fulfilled through bodily movement (ibid., p. 161). It is such bodily openness toward the activity places in the ASP, and how it eventually is fulfilled, that this article describes and discusses.

Merleau-Ponty rejects the notion that human perception is mere collecting of objective sense data. Through perception, the human being "grasps" meaningful things, including other living people, and the meaning of open spaces between them (Carman, 2008, p. 45). In ecological psychology, Gibson (1986) uses the concept of "affordances" about meaningful conditions in "the world of ecological realities," which offer the individual a possibility for action (p. 33-44). Affordances are described as complementary sizes that are dependent both upon the individual and the environment (ibid, p.127), something that is much akin to Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. Gibson first and foremost describes how the physical characteristics of an

environment encourage action, but emphasises that events, other individuals, and artefacts also can function as affordances (ibid., p. 36).

When Gibson uses the concept of place, he refers to a more or less extended surface or layout in the environment, as contrasted to a point in space (ibid., p. 34). Places can be named, but they don't need to have sharp boundaries. Casey (1997, 2001) has investigated the concept of place, and his account concurs with that of Merleau-Ponty and Gibson. He gives the concept of place a broader meaning than the concept of space:

> *I shall presume the distinction between place and space, taking "space" to be the encompassing volumetric void in which things (including human beings) are positioned and "place" to be the immediate environment of my lived body – an arena of action that is at once physical and historical, social and cultural (Casey, 2001, p. 683).*

Place is described as an interaction between humans and their surroundings rather than a specific, delimited location. This is the understanding of place that is used in this article.

Morris (2004) has made an interesting contribution to the understanding of the relationship between human movement and place. His point of commencement is Casey's definition of place, and he supports Merleau-Ponty's philosophy when he affords movement a special role in an interaction between the body and the world. Morris claims that human perception, which he refers to as "the sense of space," arises in close interaction between the body and the world, and that this presupposes movement (ibid., p. 45). In line with Merleau-Ponty, he emphasises that bodily movements are not predetermined by a specific system in a closed subject:

> *What has been called the body schema is not a possession of the subject but a structure-in-movement. We must keep things open on the side of the perceiver and the world, and seek our schema as arising within movement that crosses body and world, prior to the distinction between the two (ibid., p. 80).*

The body is invested with meaning through lived experiences, and these experiences are not immanent representations on a psychological level. They can, rather, be understood as sedimented ways of feeling, actions, and imaginations from earlier bodily engagement, which intertwine the lived body and its environment, forming a unity that creates meaning for other situations with bodily actions (Morris, 2008, p. 114; Thompson, 2007, p. 33).

This article is based on the theoretical perspective introduced above. Thus, the lived body is seen as the main "medium" to grasp the meaning in the world, and bodily activity is seen as a close intertwinement between the body and its surroundings. Bodily play is seen as a typical form of activity in childhood. Based on an understanding of the human being and the world that is introduced, Gadamer's (1989 [1960], p. 102-130) description of play is interesting. One of his central discoveries is the primacy of play over the consciousness of the player:

> *Play clearly represents an order in which the to-and-fro motion of play follows of itself. It is part of play that the movement is not only without goal and purpose but also without effort. It happens, as it were, by itself (Gadamer, 1989, p. 105).*

Play is described as neither an objective nor a subjective action. The play is playing itself through the player; the subject is the play itself (ibid., p. 104). This corresponds well with Merleau-Ponty's claim that the relationship between the human being and the world is constituted on a perceptual, bodily level, which comes prior to reflection (2002, p. 162).

Method

The phenomenological perspective requires information to be gathered in the life-world. The researcher has to evolve a way of looking at the subjects in concrete, real-life situations (Bengtsson, 2006, p. 38). For this reason I was engaged in following the children in an ASP group for an extended period. During a four-month-period in autumn 2007, I used the opportunity to assemble qualitative information, among others the material used in this

article. Merleau-Ponty (2002, p. 202-232) argues that bodily action, gestures, and speech are complementary forms of expression and communication. In this study, qualitative material from the children's experience, which captured these interlinked components, was gathered, and two complement methods were used – close observation (van Manen, 1990, p. 68-70) and qualitative research interview (Kvale, 1996).

Participants

The aim of the project was to contribute to an understanding of children in bodily play, not to compare institutions. For this reason, the investigation was delimited to a single ASP that was organised related to one single public school. Due to the need to be able to recall experiences and articulate them verbally, the study concentrated on the upper two age groups who were permitted to attend the ASP. Thus, the study included children in grades three and four. During the period of the study, 41 percent of the children in the 3rd grade and 47 percent of the children in 4th grade in the selected school followed the ASP, a total of 40 children. Permission was sought from the parents and the children concerning participation in the study. Parents of four children had reservations about participating. Consequently, information was gathered from 36 children, of whom 19 were born in 1998, and 17 in 1999; 22 girls and 14 boys participated. The children followed the ASP between two and three hours each day.

The context

The ASP that is the basis of the study is located in the suburbs of Oslo. The associated building includes a recreation room with a dining area, a small computer room, a reading room, and a cloakroom. All the rooms are available to the children during ASP hours. In front of the entrance to the ASP building is a flat asphalt place (The Asphalt Place). There is also a big sandpit. Immediately to the side of the main building is a small playhouse surrounded by trees suitable for climbing (The Climbing Area). Otherwise, a slope surrounds the building.

Approximately half the area is comprised of grass; the rest is trees and rugged terrain. The ASP area does not have traditional play apparatus. A peripheral part of the school's play area is located in the immediate vicinity of the ASP site and is available to the ASP children.

Gathering qualitative material

Using close observation to gather qualitative material, one attempts to break through the researcher-informant distance (van Manen, 1990, p. 68-69). Instead of observing the informant from the outside, one attempts to enter the life-world through direct participation. The observations relevant for this article were linked to two places within the ASP area that emerged as particularly interesting in respect of bodily play: The Asphalt Place and The Climbing Area.

Video and sound recordings were used to register situations and events. Focus was concentrated on one place each day, and the observations were filmed or written down when one or more of the 36 children were present at that place. A main camera could be zoomed and the focus varied; a supplementary camera was used to record the general situation of the place under observation. The two cameras had attached microphones. Up to one hour was recorded each day. Parallel to the recording, field notes were made.

After the observations were concluded, nine children, five girls and four boys, were selected for one individual qualitative research interview. The interviews were intended to provide depth to situations and events that had emerged in the observations. Prior to a detailed planning of the interview and selection of the subjects to be interviewed, the field notes and video recordings were closely examined. Specific themes were identified that were to be closely followed up. The themes were related to the child's bodily play at specific places, the child's interactions with other children, and particular events that affected the child's bodily play. The children selected for interview had been involved in particularly interesting

situations related to these themes. Both girls and boys from the two relevant age groups were selected, and it was taken into account that they should represent a variety of preferred activities. Against this background, the expectation was to obtain valuable supplementary information. In line with Kvale's (1996) recommendations (p. 125), the interview was given the character of a one-to-one conversation where the child could relate his/her own experiences to relevant themes. Prior to the interviews, an interview guide was prepared with a list of themes to be covered, together with proposals for introducing and follow-up questions. During the interviews there were opportunities to change the sequence and structure of questions.

The interviews were conducted with one child at the time in a room with which they were well acquainted. The interview commenced with situations the child had participated and been video recorded in. These were edited so as to form a four-minute film for each individual. This was shown during the course of the interview and provided a basis for the conversation. During the interviews the children were asked about my interpretations of specific situations from the observations. Several times I also pronounced interpretations of the child's statements and asked if they were understood correctly. The interviews were video- and sound-recorded.

Transcription and analysis

A distinction is made between gathering and analysing qualitative material from the children's lived experiences, but this distinction is in line with van Manen's (1990, p. 63): The two acts are not considered as fully separable processes. Since gathering involved choices and reflections, an analysing process began in the field. After the material had been gathered, a further qualitative analysis was conducted. This analysis included a systematic reading of the transcript by dwelling on phenomena studied, followed by a description of recurrent themes. To ensure that the material was suitable for further analysis, it was

transcribed. The gathered information relevant for this article was comprised of the video and sound recordings in two examples from 6.5 hours of observations; 5 hours of video and sound recordings from the interviews; and 44 pages of handwritten field notes.

The transcriptions of the interviews were written down in note form so that the significance of the conversation emerged. The interview recordings showed that there was supplementary information in the form of non-verbal gestures. To include these gestures in the analysis, the transcript notes were made in two columns: the spoken word in the left-hand column, and the non-verbal signals described in the right-hand column. Examples will be given in the presentation of the findings. The recordings from the observation period were also transcribed and prepared for analysis.

In the further analysis, I used a method inspired by the structure of descriptive phenomenological analysis (Giorgi, 1985, p. 8-22). The interview transcriptions, the transcribed situations from the video recordings, and the field notes were included in the process. Through a stepwise analysis comprised of four chronological sets of written notes, I moved from 1) a basic description, via 2) localisation of the meaning units and 3) incorporation into a theoretical perspective with relevant professional terminology, to 4) a synthesis of the meaning units to a consistent text where the phenomena studied emerged. It is important to emphasise that I do not consider my writings to be pure description. Each stage of the process included interpretations, and in that sense, the process can be seen as an interpretive (van Manen, 1990, p. 26).

During the process of transcription and analysis I tried to bracket my own beliefs and I focused on finding cases that did not conform to preconceptions. The analysis was also discussed with two academic supervisors during the process, who challenged me to provide solid evidence for any interpretations.

Findings and discussion

The results of the study will be introduced as selected situations from the video recordings and in the voices of the interviewed children. As a result of the analysis of the qualitative material, and based on their significance in relation to the entirety in the material, specific situations that show the characteristics and significance of the relation between the children and the activity places are introduced. Examples include boys and girls in both age groups. The children used in the examples are anonymised.

Understanding of place

The introductory narrative in this article commences with a short description of the empty area surrounding the ASP pavilion. The area is described as an objective model into which I as a researcher am peering – a model that may be sketched as a geometric system with a specified number of objects at measured distances and of different sizes (Gibson, 1986, p. 33; Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p.115). Such a model does not consist of meaningful things. This is not the way the ASP children experience the area: They play in it, and they divide it into different places with appropriate names. They speak about The Climbing Area and The Asphalt Place as special places. In the qualitative research interviews, the children were shown photos of the two locations, devoid of people and equipment, and asked to comment on them. The children did not comment on the surfaces, the objects, or the substances within the delimited locations. Their comments were associated with subjective experiences. By way of example here are Hannah's and Ida's remarks:

The Asphalt Place:

Hannah: *That's the place where we normally play with the scooters and other things (points at the picture).*

Ida: *That's the place where we go into the ASP-building (points at the picture and nods). We often play with scooters there or with skipping ropes and with the hula-hoops. It is fun when there are things there (points again and smiles slightly).*

The Climbing Area:

Hannah: *I am often around there, by the playhouse. We often play there as it is like a house where we live. Sometimes we cycle around the trees there (nods energetically and points toward the playhouse).*

Ida: *That is The Climbing Area. Climbing trees is one of my hobbies, so I often play there. I climb that tree, [and] that tree, and also that tree by the little house there, and then I get on to the roof (self-confident explains while she leans against the window and points).*

Although the children were shown pictures of empty places, it is their own bodily play they indicate. All the interviewed children use the word "play" about bodily activity related to ASP. Merleau-Ponty (2001[1949-1952]) describes childhood as a period in human life with special, lived experiences and specific forms of activity and development (p. 249). Bodily play seems to be such a specific form of activity in the ASP hours. Bodily play appears to play an important role in ASP children's life, and their understanding of the two observed places is closely associated with those play activities in which they normally are engaged when there. Hannah and Ida have different impressions of The Climbing Area. Hannah first associates the description of the area to a role-play where the playhouse is a dwelling. As such, the area around the playhouse is not included in the description. Then, she retreats a little, and points out that she normally cycles around there. The place thus extends its boundary. In contrast with most of the other children, she does not call that area The Climbing Area. This is understandable, as she mentions that she does not normally climb there. Ida sees this in a different light. Climbing is one of her hobbies, and for her this area is precisely The Climbing Area – including the trees and the small playhouse. The comments made by Hanna and Ida coincide well with that which we observed in the video-recordings. The various places have their own typical activities, but they can vary considerably from one child to the next.

Equipment and other people that normally take part in the children's activity are included in their understanding of place. In terms of The Asphalt Place, bodily play that is related to

freestanding objects is typical. Those activities described in the introductory narrative sketch a good picture of this. All the activities are in one or another manner linked to the freestanding objects: scooters, the tricycle, the wagon, and the hula-hoops. Without the equipment that is normally available, the children do not find the place particularly interesting. Their statements during the interviews confirm this. When Rebecca and Eric were shown a picture of The Asphalt Place, devoid of people and equipment, and asked to comment on it, they replied:

1. *Rebecca:* *It is there, just where the shed is, where we play on the scooters (points energetically at the picture).*

   Interviewer: *Is it just like the picture shows? Here, the shed door is closed.*

   Rebecca: *That's boring. We must have some things such that it is fun there (appears disappointed).*

2. *Eric:* *Sometimes we play on the scooters there, and then we scoot round the asphalt place (points at the picture). It's fun. The scooters are good (smiles slightly).*

   Interviewer: *If it had been like it is in the picture, without any equipment. What would it have been like then?*

   Eric: *I don't know (seems a bit hesitant). It would not have been fun. You have to have something there.*

In the conversation the children spontaneously include the equipment they are accustomed to use at the places. When they are reminded that the pictures do not show any of this equipment, they tell us that The Asphalt Place is "useless", or "no fun" without equipment. When equipment is not available at The Asphalt Place, the affordances required for bodily play are not present for the ASP children. The observation tapes show that there is only transient activity at that place in such situations. This is not the case for The Climbing Area. Initially, that place has all that is required, which Ida sums up:

Interviewer: *When you climb the trees, do you need any equipment?*

Ida: *I just use my fingers and my body, together with the branches and such things (appears happy and satisfied).*

The interviewees also indicate the importance in being together with other children when playing. All the interviewed children emphasise that bodily play in ASP should be together

with friends. This impression is strengthened through the observations; the children's seeking for bodily play together with other children is a predominant feature during ASP hours. This is also reflected when the children are encouraged to speak about the two relevant places. Very often they mention the friends they often play with at the places by their names, and they say "we are playing" instead of "I am playing."

These findings concur with Casey's (2001, p. 683) definition of place: Place is an interaction between the child and her surroundings, rather than a defined locality. A place is not just a place within itself; it must be seen in relation to those people who live and move within the place (Morris, 2004, p. 180). The children describe and delimit the ASP area in places, first and foremost based on those play activities in which they themselves are involved, and they include familiar equipment and their friends in the understanding of the places.

Bodily intentionality toward the place

It was predominately child-managed activities that were observed while qualitative material was gathered at The Climbing Area and The Asphalt Place. This concurs with the vision of the ASP that emerged in a survey conducted in 2003 (Løndal & Bergsjø, 2005). The observations from this survey showed that 95 percent of total ASP time was comprised of child-managed activities, a trend that the current investigation confirms. Of the activities observed at The Climbing Area and The Asphalt Place, only one was adult-managed: When one of the staff initiated a dance session for the children at The Asphalt Place.

What is it that leads to the child-managed activities at the two places? In respect to Gibson's (1986, p. 127-143) theory on affordances, the play activities at The Climbing Area can be explained by the children's acceptance of the affordances on climbing and swinging and the opportunities for balancing. At The Asphalt Place the activities can be explained as acceptance of affordances on manipulative movements where varied equipment is involved.

This is an acceptable explanation if the children are already at the place; they accept spontaneously the affordances they meet at that particular moment. We can see such examples in the observation material:

> *The Climbing Area:*
>
> *Jane and Mari-Ann each come to the place on a scooter. During the first minute they are scooting under and between the trees. They then lay the scooters down and Mari-Ann climbs into tree no. 1. She swings herself up using the lowest branch and balances on it.*
>
> *The Asphalt Place:*
>
> *One boy stops playing with the tricycle, which rolls into the group of girls who are dancing. Sophie seizes the opportunity and commences cycling instead of dancing.*

In the first example, the girls casually enter the area and stay there. The affordances of the place are in the immediate vicinity, ready to be taken advantage of – which spontaneously they are. In the sample from The Asphalt Place, a situation suddenly arises that creates a new affordance where Sophie is standing. She seizes it.

When we study the video-recordings, we can often see children enter The Climbing Area with a distinct intention. They come running directly to the place and immediately commence with appropriate bodily movements related to the place. Children may come alone, or together with others. They can come to the place when there are no other children, or they may come when an activity already is established. This corresponds well with Merleau-Ponty's account of bodily intentionality. When the child captures objects, other people, or phenomena in the perceptual field, she sees wholes invested with immanent meaning (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 67). The perception has an intentional structure and occurs in an environment that the child already is directed to. The children's bodily activities can be interpreted as a fulfilment of such intentionality. Merleau-Ponty refers to such "being-towards-the-thing through the intermediary of the body" as motor intentionality (ibid., p. 127). Let us look at two examples from The Climbing Area:

> *Roger comes running from The Asphalt Place and directly to The Climbing Area. He is alone and begins immediately to climb tree no. 2. He swings up into the tree using the broken branch on the left, and tries out the tree through balancing and careful climbing.*
>
> *Toni and Karen follow their permanent "obstacle course" in The Climbing Area. They swing up to tree no. 2 from the broken branch, jump on to the roof, and then into tree no. 3, continuing from the slim branch down to the ground. It is a challenging exercise that not all dare to do nor can carry out as yet. The girls complete the exercise with speed and skill.*

Even though we can observe typical trends in bodily movements that occur at The Climbing Area, it is not only the structure and organisation of the delimited place that determines the movements. These are clearly determined by the individuals as well. Roger is a newcomer to this ASP, and he uses much time of his first ASP weeks in The Climbing Area. In the observed situation he comes running directly toward this place and grabs the affordances for climbing and balancing. He prefers careful bodily movements at this time. Probably he is in a process where this particular place is being invested with meaning. His situation sharply contrasts to the girls' in the second situation described. Toni and Karen constitute a social couple often seen at The Climbing Area. They quickly follow a familiar "obstacle course": rapidly ascending one tree, a "jump through space" to the playhouse roof, across the roof, over to a new tree, and from there, via a long thin branch, down to the ground. This is an advanced bodily exercise where the girls combine self-taught techniques in climbing, stabilising postures through balance, and daring hops through the air. The clear intention of these girls is associated with the special characteristics of the place, characteristics that afford special bodily movements, but is also influenced by previous lived experiences at the place (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 95). Their bodily movements are already invested with meaning toward the trees and the playhouse that makes The Climbing Area; meaning is adapted in their earlier bodily play there and is sedimented in their bodies (Thompson, 2007, p. 33). Thus, we can say that their motor intentionality toward the place arises in the interaction between the child's body and the place.

Bodily play as fulfilment of motor intentionality toward places

In this article, bodily play is seen as a typical form of activity in childhood. Within the play activities observed at the two actual places, the ASP children performed their bodily movements with a conspicuous spontaneity and homelikeness. They were never stationary for more than a few seconds at a time. Either they were active at the place, or they were passing through in transient movement on their way to another place. Their activity concurred well with the "to-and-fro motion of play" that Gadamer writes about (1989, p. 105). The children appeared to move along home territory, irrespective of their level of experience or development. Among the children interviewed, there was no doubt about what to call the bodily activities they perform in ASP: they were consequent in using the word play. As shown in the following example, the spontaneous conduct in the bodily play does not imply that development and performance is similar for all children or in all situations:

> *The scooters were ridden from the grassy knoll down to The Asphalt Place. Andreas, Jonathan, and Edward take part in this play. This is something where they are experts. They race at considerable speed down toward The Asphalt Place, continue across it and directly between the sandpit and the house on the path around the ASP building. They pass several other bodily active children during the race. They do this several times. Amanda watches the boys' activity and also wants to have a go. She is more cautious than the boys on the first trip, but dares to go down to the place more slowly. On the second trip the speed is increased, and she follows the boys around the house.*

The movements in this play activity occur within a framework that attends to the place, but they are clearly influenced by each individual and the situation. The three boys are engrossed in an activity with which they are familiar and which they carry out as a matter of course. Amanda's joining in her first attempt shows that this is a barrier-breaking activity for her. But by the second trip she is following the boys, and thereafter shows much self-confidence and races at high speed. The children's motor intentionality during this play is related to the activity place, but they are also influenced by an awareness that the place is meaningful, based on previous experiences (Benswanger, 1979, p. 117; Smith, 2007, p. 50-53). The three

boys certainly are more experienced in the described exercise than Amanda, but she quickly developed her performance. Although this is a barrier-breaking activity, the place seems to be meaningful for her. There is an established relationship between Amanda and the place that comes prior to reflection. That it is constituted on a perceptual, bodily level makes her very quick adaptation of the exercise possible. In Merleau-Ponty's words, her perception has an intentional structure; the perception takes place in an environment that she already is bodily directed to (2002, p. 67, 162), and in Gadamer's words this can happen so spontaneously because she is played by the play activity itself (1989, p. 105).

The experienced boys also had to adjust their exercise according to the particular situation; as in the example of the playing children passing during the race across The Asphalt Place. Thus, their motor intentionality is not recalling ready-made representation saved on a psychological level. Morris (2004, p 116-117) cites Merleau-Ponty when he describes the human perception in such situations as not mere cognitive processes, but rather a synthesis rooted in bodily movement itself. Merleau-Ponty explains this synthesis when he writes about the "body schema":

> *What we have called the body schema is precisely this system of equivalents, this immediately given invariant whereby the different motor tasks are instantaneously transferable. It follows that it is not only an experience of my body, but an experience of my body-in-the-world (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 163-164).*

What Merleau-Ponty describes as the body schema is not a possession of the subject but rather a structure-in-movement (Morris, 2004, p. 80). It can be understood as a primary, present awareness that is embodied; it has its roots in bodily inhabitation and is thus closely associated with those places toward which motor intentionality is directed (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 162). The body schema is spontaneously in play when humans conduct actions that are adjusted to particular places and situations in their life-world (Gallagher & Cole, 1995, p.

371; Morris, 2008, p. 116). Thus, when the children ride their scooters from the grassy knoll and directly across The Asphalt Place, they percept their world in a pre-reflective manner, and when their motor intentions unfold, they "receive the responses they expect from the world" (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 292).

The spontaneous and child-managed play that is observed in this investigation seems to fulfil the children's bodily opening toward their environment. Their bodily play is directed to places in the ASP area and can be seen as a fulfilment of the motor intentionality that Merleau-Ponty writes about (2002, p. 127). Their bodily play is meaningfully directed toward these places, and the play experiences invest the places with meaning. The play experiences will be sedimented in the pre-reflective background underlying the perception of isolated qualities and the formulations of explicit judgment. Thus, the interaction between children and places that occurs in bodily play can play an important role in constituting a background for later actions.

Concluding remarks

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between ASP children and places where child-managed bodily play occurs. The study has its basis in the children's life-world; importance has been attached to their own experiences in concrete, real-life situations. The study shows that the children's experiences of places are closely associated with their own bodily play there. Their concept of place is not linked merely to a specific, delimited locality. Also included in their understanding of place is the equipment that normally is used in bodily play and others who normally are involved in their play at the place. The children's understanding of place largely agrees with Casey's (1997) definition: A place occurs as an interaction between individuals and their surroundings. In addition, the ASP children always associate their own bodily actions to the understanding of place.

The investigation clearly shows that the children carry a bodily openness toward their surroundings; they carry an immediate, motor intentionality directed toward the observed places. The children's bodily play and the involved movements are already invested with meaning about The Climbing Area and The Asphalt Place. The motor intentionality is related to the characteristics of the place, but is also influenced by an awareness of the meaningfulness of the place based on previous experiences. Children's bodily play, as it appears in the ASP, can be interpreted as a fulfilment of motor intentionality toward places. Through the child-managed play, they fulfil their pre-reflective bodily openness toward the world; through the play the children conduct immediate, bodily movements related to meaningful places in their surroundings. Such interaction between children and places that occurs in bodily play can play an important role in constituting and adjusting a pre-reflective background for later actions.

The findings in this study can increase the general understanding of child-managed bodily play in ASP. They show that children in such activities grasp the opportunity to interact spontaneously in interaction with their surroundings; surroundings that happen to consist of meaningful places. Child-managed bodily play in ASP offers the children opportunity to experience fulfilment of motor intentionality in a spontaneous, childish manner; experiences that are crucial in the personal process of investing places with meaning. In this way, child-managed bodily play fills a complimentary niche in relation to physical education and sport and should be encouraged in the ASP in the future. This requires professional pedagogical judgments that are based on a wider perspective than mere learning toward formal aims. Thus, there is a need for educated staff members who are able to do such judgments. Based on the findings in this study, the recommendation is to emphasise the ASP as a potential complimentary niche in contrast to the school in educating professionals for the ASP.

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Article 2

Løndal, K. (Resubmitted). The After-School Programme: An Arena for Interaction with Others through Body Movements in Play.

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The After-School Programme: An Arena for Interaction with Others through Body Movements in Play

Abstract

This article investigates how the body movements in children's play are related to their interaction with others. Qualitative material was gathered from close observation and qualitative research interviews among eight- and nine-year-old children in an after-school programme (ASP) in Norway. The theoretical perspective is phenomenological. The study shows that body movements in the children's self-chosen and child-managed play outdoors are extensive and arise from play situations where children spontaneously seek interaction with others. Such bodily interaction occurs largely in small groups of best friends or in larger groups that come together as the participants undertake the same activity. The children's body movements play a significant role in their interaction with others and can be interpreted as a fulfilment of their seeking for such interaction. Based on the findings, it is recommended that self-chosen and child-managed play outdoors be encouraged in the ASP. While extensive body movements arise out of interaction in play, the play may also contribute to the children's health and development. The ASP can fill a complementary function to institutions with structured and adult-controlled activities.

Introduction

Societal changes in recent generations have resulted in children of early school age spending much of their day in institutions (Frønes, 1998; Moss, Dillon, & Stathan, 2000; Näsman, 1994; Prout, 2005; Zeiher, 2001, 2002) including the school, the after-school programme (ASP), and leisure-time organisations. Based on the argument that physical activity positively affects children's health and development (Blair, Clark, Cureton, & Powell, 1989; WHO, 2002, 2004), concern has been expressed whether children have sufficient activity within the institutionalised day. This has resulted in increased research into children's activities. The studies have often been based on the perspectives of biology and physiology, which focus on the effect of the child's physical activities upon formulated recommendations about intensity, frequency, and duration (Ekelund, 2002). "Physical activity" is commonly defined as "any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that results in energy expenditure" (Caspersen, Pereira, & Christenson, 1985, p. 126), a definition that illustrates the close connection to physiology and natural science. A review of 26 studies from several countries worldwide show that children 12 years or younger attain two hours of daily physical activity

(Epstein et al., 2001). This is important for interpreting and evaluating physical health benefits, but such research incorporates the child's own experience with their activities to only a minor extent.

In Norway the ASP is a public institution that is administered by the school or the municipality outside of normal school hours. It is a voluntary programme for children in the first four years of schooling and is organised as closely related to the public schools. Physical activities in schools in Norway are related to the National Curriculum for Physical Education (PE), but also appear in various situations and places beyond the formal curriculum. Such activities can be defined as extra-curricular PE when initiated or organised by professionals (Green, 2008; Penney & Harris, 1997). Many activities in the ASP are initiated by the staff and can be regarded as extra-curricular PE. In contrast with the sportisation of extra-curricular PE in other European countries (Green, 2008), the ASP staffs in Norway are expected to stimulate self-chosen and child-managed activities in the children's "leisure time." The Norwegian Education Act specifies that the programme shall provide the opportunity for play, cultural, and leisure-time activities and provide the children with care and supervision (KD, 2009). There are no formal educational objectives associated with ASP and no governmental requirements for formal pedagogical education for staff. This has resulted in a significantly higher number of children per employee in ASP than in primary school, with only a minority having pedagogical education (Kvello & Wendelborg, 2002).

Results from a survey conducted in Oslo in 2003 showed that body movements in children's self-chosen activity during ASP time are extensive (Løndal & Bergsjø, 2005). This article is based on a fieldwork carried out in Oslo in 2007, and the aim is to investigate how the body movements in children's play are related to the child's interaction with others. The article focuses on children's life-world and emphasises their own experience of the activities. For this reason, the concept of "body movement" is used instead of physical activity. Body

movement can imply changing positions and then can be designated as locomotory movements (Gallahue & Ozmun, 2006), examples of which are running and climbing. Body movements where the child undertakes balancing exercises or engages in special physical postures can be characterised as stabilising. A third variant comprises manipulative movements, which are related to unique objects or substances; for example, when the child plays with a skipping rope or plays in the sandpit. In this article, activities where the child is sitting or standing with minor movements are excluded from the concept of body movement. When focusing on the children's own experiences of body movements, it is necessary to find an alternative to the strict biological understanding of the body that emphasises physiological research. Theoretical standpoints that consider human consciousness as embodied offer an alternative understanding. Such a theoretical perspective is introduced below.

Theoretical perspective

The article is based on a phenomenological standpoint and is written with a background in a study of a life-world approach. The intent is to investigate the children's experiences as they are lived in real-life situations (van Manen, 1990). The theoretical perspective is based on Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the human being and its relation to others.

Merleau-Ponty (2002 [1962/1945]) refers to the human being as an embodied subject that is closely related to the world: "man is in the world, and only in the world does he know himself" (p. xii). Consciousness and understanding are embodied, something that establishes the basis for spontaneous actions that are adapted to the world. That world within which the individual lives is not merely physical, but is also social and cultural and includes experiences shared with others. The subjectivity does not exist inside the child, but rather in an inter-world of shared meanings: "Thus it is in this conduct, in the manner in which the other deals with the world, that I will be able to discover his consciousness" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 117). Thus, the children express their experiences in a shared world where they can

understand each other. Expressions can take form as actions, gestures, facial expressions, and language, and are part of an initial pre-communication that is understood spontaneously (Busch, 2008; Merleau-Ponty, 1964). It is worth noting that Merleau-Ponty (2002) speaks about a *bodily* intersubjectivity. Human beings can only understand themselves and others as living bodies.

> *Between my consciousness and my body as I experience it, between this phenomenal body of mine and that of another as I see it from the outside, there exists an internal relation which causes the other to appear as the completion of the system. The other can be evident to me because I am not transparent for myself, and because my subjectivity draws its body in its wake. (p. 410)*

According to Merleau-Ponty (1964), the child's perception of others emerges early in life. The infant does not grasp the exact meaning in emotional expressions presented by others, but facial expressions can be perceived at a very early age. In "The first smile of the child" Buytendijk (1988) delivers a good phenomenological example of such an early, intuitive, reciprocal contact. Merleau-Ponty (1964) rejects the classical explanation, which claims that the infant child's reprisal smile is a consequence of a complicated process of visual perception, feelings, projections, cognition, and motor action:

> *The consciousness I have of my body is not the consciousness of an isolated mass; it is a postural schema. [T]he experience I have of my own body could be transferred to another much more easily than the cenesthesia of classical psychology, giving rise to what Wallon calls a "postural impregnation" of my own body by the conducts I witness (pp. 117-118).*

This opens the way for a reciprocal process of communication where the perception of my own body can be transferred to the other, and where my body-schema can understand the body-schema of the other immediately and spontaneously. The communication consists of a body-structure with an interchange between my meaningful actions and the other's

meaningful actions (Merleau-Ponty, 1964; Rasmussen, 1996), and provides a basis for tacit face-to-face or body-to-body contact.

Gallagher (2001, 2006) takes his point of commencement in Merleau-Ponty's understanding of intersubjectivity. He claims that "the understanding of the other person is primarily neither theoretical nor based on an internal simulation, but is a form of embodied practice" (Gallagher, 2001, p. 85), and that "There is … a common bodily intentionality that is shared across the perceiving subject and the perceived other" (p. 87). He uses the concept of "primary intersubjectivity" when referring to bodily, emotional, and perceptual processes that determine the child's ability to comprehend others through observation, including the child's ability to see meaning in others' actions. Correspondingly, the concept of "secondary intersubjectivity" is used when the child begins to interact with others in social situations. This is described as an embodied phenomenon that does not disappear during later development, but is strengthened through various intersubjective experiences (Gallagher, 2006). In this article, the concept of intersubjectivity is used in accordance with Merleau-Ponty's and Gallagher's.

Participation in the ASP involves a variety of situations where the children interact in large or small groups during play and where body movements are part of the interaction. In this article, their body movements in such situations are described and discussed based on the theoretical perspective introduced above.

Method

The phenomenological perspective requires information to be gathered in the life-world. The researcher has to evolve a way of looking at the subjects in concrete real-life situations (Bengtsson, 2006). For this reason I was engaged in following the children in an ASP group during an extended period. During this four-month period in autumn 2007, I assembled

qualitative material. Merleau-Ponty (2002) argues that the body and language are complementary forms of expression and communication. In this study, qualitative material from the children's lived experience that captured these interlinked components was gathered, and two complementary methods were used – close observation (van Manen, 1990) and qualitative research interview (Kvale, 1996).

Participants

The aim of the project was to contribute to an understanding of the children's body movements in play and not to compare institutions. For this reason, the investigation was delimited to a single ASP that was organised related to one single public school. Due to the need to be able to recall experiences and articulate them, the study was concentrated on the upper two age groups who were permitted to attend the ASP: children in the 3rd and 4th grades in school.

During the period of the study, 41 percent of the children in the 3rd grade and 47 percent of the children in 4th grade in the selected school followed the ASP, for a total of 40 children. Permission was sought from the parents and the children concerning participation in the study. Parents of four children had reservations about participation; consequently, information was gathered from 36 children, 19 of whom were born in 1998 and 17 in 1999; 22 girls and 14 boys participated. The children followed the ASP between two and three hours each day.

The context

The ASP, which is the basis of the study, is located in the suburbs of Oslo. The associated building comprises a recreation room with a dining area, a small computer room, a reading room, and a cloakroom. All the rooms are available to the children during ASP hours. In front of the entrance to the ASP building are a flat asphalt place and a large sandpit. Immediately

to the side of the main building is a small playhouse surrounded by trees suitable for climbing. The children refer to this as “The Climbing Area.” Otherwise, the building is surrounded by a slope. Approximately half the area comprises grass; the rest is trees and rugged terrain. The ASP area does not have traditional play apparatus.

A peripheral part of the school’s play area is located in the immediate vicinity of the ASP site and is available to the ASP children. Here is “The Bunker,” as the children call it: an area for ball games covered with artificial grass and surrounded by a fence. A gravel football pitch is also located nearby. On the edge of the pitch are various types of swings and “The Wheel.”[1]

The children are offered full freedom to move from one area to another, but they have to tell the staff members if they want to go to the school’s play area. They can also choose whether they to be indoors or out. However, irrespective of weather and temperature, the children have to be outdoors for a period of ASP time.

Gathering qualitative material

Using close observation to gather material, one attempts to break through the researcher-informant distance (van Manen, 1990). Instead of observing the informant from the outside, one attempts to enter the life-world through direct participation. The observations were linked to six places within the ASP area that emerged as particularly interesting in respect of body movements: the asphalt place, the sandpit, The Climbing Area, The Bunker, The Wheel, and the recreation room indoors. The choice of places for observation was based on a two-week study during ASP hours in August 2007.

Video and sound recordings were used to register situations and events. Focus was concentrated on one of the selected places each day, and the observations were filmed or noted when one or more of the 36 children were present at that place. A main camera could be zoomed and the focus varied; a supplementary camera was used to record the general

situation of the place under observation. The two cameras had attached microphones. Up to one hour was recorded each day. Parallel to the recording, field notes were made.

After the observations were concluded, nine children comprising five girls and four boys were selected for one individual qualitative research interview. The interviews were intended to provide depth to situations and events that had emerged in the observations. Prior to a detailed planning of the interview and selection of the subjects to be interviewed, the field notes and video recordings were closely examined. Specific themes were identified that were to be closely followed up. The themes were related to the child's body movements at specific places, the child's interactions with other children, and particular events that affected the child's body movements. The children selected for interview had been involved in particularly interesting situations related to these themes. Both girls and boys from the two relevant age groups were selected, and it was taken into account that they should represent a variety of preferred activities. Against this background, valuable supplementary information was expected to be obtained. In line with Kvale's (1996) recommendations, the interview was given the character of a one-to-one conversation where the child could relate his or her own experiences to relevant themes. Prior to the interview, an interview guide was prepared with a list of themes to be covered, together with proposals for introducing and follow-up questions. During the interviews, the sequence and structure of the questions could be changed.

The interviews were carried out with one child at the time in a room with which they were well acquainted. The interview commenced with situations in which the child had participated and been videoed. These were edited to form a four-minute film for each individual, which was shown during the course of the interview and provided a basis for the conversation. During the interviews, the children were asked about my interpretations of specific situations from the observations. Several times I also pronounced interpretations of

the child's statements and asked whether they had been correctly understood. The interviews were videoed and sound-recorded.

Transcription and analysis

This article distinguishes between *gathering* and *analysing* qualitative material from the children's lived experiences but, in line with van Manen (1990), the two acts are not considered separable processes. Since the gathering involved choices and reflections, an analysing process had begun already in the field. After the material had been gathered, a further qualitative analysis was conducted. This analysis included a systematic reading of the transcript by dwelling on phenomena studied, followed by a description of recurrent themes.

To ensure that the qualitative material was suitable for further analysis, it was transcribed. The material comprised the video and sound recordings from 22 hours of observations, five hours of video and sound recordings from the interviews, and 156 pages of handwritten field notes.

The transcriptions of the interviews were written in note form such that the significance of the conversations emerged. The interview recordings showed that there was supplementary information in the form of non-verbal gestures. To include these gestures in the analysis, the transcript notes were made in two columns – the spoken word in the left column, and the non-verbal signals described in the right. Examples will be given in the presentation of the findings. The recordings from the observation period were also transcribed and prepared for analysis.

In the further analysis, I used a method inspired by the structure of descriptive phenomenological analysis (Giorgi, 1985). The interview transcriptions, the transcribed situations from the video recordings, and the field notes were included in the process. Through a stepwise analysis comprising four chronological sets of written notes, I moved

from 1) a basic description, via 2) localization of the meaning units and 3) incorporation into a theoretical perspective with relevant professional terminology, to 4) a synthesis of the meaning units to a consistent text where the phenomena studied emerge. It is important to emphasise that I do not consider my writings to be pure description. Each stage of the process included interpretations, and in that sense the process can be seen as interpretive or hermeneutic-phenomenological (van Manen, 1990).

During the process of transcription and analysis I tried to bracket own beliefs, and focused on finding cases that did not conform to preconceptions. The analysis was also discussed with two academic supervisors during the process, who challenged me to provide solid evidence for any interpretations.

Findings and discussion

The results of the study will be introduced as selected situations from the close observation outdoors and in the voices of the interviewed children. As a result of the analysis of the qualitative material, and based on the significance in relation to the entirety, specific situations that show the characteristics and significance of body movements in the children's play are introduced. The examples include boys and girls in both age groups. Importance is attached to presenting situations showing how the children's body movements arise from a variety of everyday situations in the ASP. As a result of the analysis, the following themes appeared as typical for situations where body movements emerged: 1) self-chosen and child-managed play, and 2) interaction with others.

Self-chosen and child-managed play

The following description was written in the field notes on a September day:

> *Two boys are swinging in the car-tyre swing, some girls are using the bird-cage swing, a large group of children are playing football on the gravel area, two girls are role-playing in one end of the gravel area, four girls are climbing*

in a tree, three girls are playing with The Wheel and one girl is sitting alone on one of the swings in the gravel area.

All the children in the area are engaged with play that includes one or another form of body movement. Such extensive bodily activity is typical of the ASP time during the observation period. As described, the observations were linked to five locations outdoors and one location indoors. Most of the observed body movements occurred outdoors, which corresponds with findings about activities in four ASPs from an earlier study (Løndal & Bergsjø, 2005).

Jennifer is a nine-year-old girl in the ASP group. In the interview, she clearly expresses how important it is that the ASP provides opportunity for activities that include body movements:

Jennifer: *When I am at ASP I like to play football, and we play tag and hide and seek, and sometimes I play with a skipping rope. It is mostly football (smiles). It is important that we can do such things here at ASP (nods energetically).*

Interviewer: *How would it be if you could not do such things?*

Jennifer: *Oh, that would be boring (looks disappointed).*

She uses the term "boring" when she refers to negative experiences and unhappy situations, and this is typical for the children studied. They all agree that play that includes body movements is important such that the ASP does not become boring. Jennifer's conduct during the interview indicates that body movements are closely associated with emotional circumstances. The non-verbal gestures emphasise the range of emotions, from boring to enjoyable, and differ from one activity to the next. The physical-emotional association is also manifest many times during the observations. The following example illustrates a positive emotion and is taken from a situation involving The Wheel.

Eight-year-old Rebecca remains erect for half the length of the run. She then releases her hold slightly and extends her body just as the wheel reaches the end-point. She makes a violent swing and stands upside down shouting "wow!" and laughs gleefully as she makes her way back. As she hops off The Wheel, she appears happy and enthusiastic.

Buytendijk (1988) refers to a physical-emotional relationship in association with movement. Rebecca's bodily bearing and her shouts when playing on The Wheel seem to be expressions

of pure joy. In the interview she responds to this situation: “I feel it is so fun! I feel like I have lots of butterflies in my stomach.” The actual self-chosen body movement is a positive physical-emotional experience.

Nine-year-old Elaine emphasises that the activities must be self-chosen and child-managed not to be boring:

> *Elaine:* *Actually, I like it best when we are outdoors and around the ASP building. Elsewhere, the adults decide what to do, and it easily becomes a bit boring. It is important for me to play what I want together with my friends. I do not like to be forced to (responds fast and nods enthusiastically).*
>
> *Interviewer:* *As long as you can decide yourself?*
>
> *Elaine:* *No, it is not only me who decide … but I want to play something that I want together with my friends (smiles and looks self-confident).*

This applies not only to Elaine. The children interviewed simply do not want to be told exactly what to do in the ASP time; they want self-chosen and child-managed activity. As Elaine, they all use the word “play” for such “unboring” self-chosen and child-managed activity. Information from the observations seems to confirm this. During the observation period there are only two adult-controlled activity sessions outdoors. Even though the children appear to enjoy it when someone in the ASP staff participates and manages activities, they tend to drop out of these more quickly than in child-managed play. It seems like the children to a greater extent are so engaged in self-chosen and child-managed play that they forget about time and purpose than in adult-controlled activity. This can be seen in association with Gadamer’s (1989) understanding of the concept of play: He does not emphasise the player or her intentions, but rather focuses on play itself. The subjective expression is transposed from the playing subject over to the play itself. It is the play that is the subject. Self-chosen and child-managed play “places demands on” the player, and the player allows herself to be swept away. The video-recordings reveal many examples where

such play activities can last for almost an hour, and that these have a spontaneous transition to other activities. This contrasts with the adult-controlled activities where the majority of children drop out after just a few minutes unless the activity is "obligatory."

It is worth noting that the formulated vision for the present ASP is that the free choice of the child shall be the main rule. This also corresponds with important management documents for the Norwegian ASP (Haug, 1994; Øksnes, 2001). The staffs of Norwegian ASPs are expected to stimulate self-chosen activities in the children's "leisure time." This study indicates that the children appreciate this, and that body movements arise out of self-chosen and child-managed play as long as they spend time outdoors. Nevertheless, members of the ASP staff play an important role in initiating activity. Some of the observed places outdoors need appropriate equipment that stimulates the children's play. If the adults did not make such equipment available, a substantial decrease in the children's bodily play at the asphalt place and in The Bunker was observed.

Interaction with others

In interviews the children were asked which social settings they prefer during ASP time. Jennifer's answer is offered as an example:

> *Interviewer: How do you like it best? To do activities together with others, or do you prefer to be alone when you are active?*
>
> *Jennifer: I prefer to be together with others (answers quickly and spontaneously). Then I have someone to play with. It is boring to be alone (smiles and looks self-confident).*

Jennifer's answer does not seem to be incidental. The earlier quoted example from the field notes (cf. p.10-11) may serve as an example: the situation is emphasised by intersubjective contact between the children. They interact in large or small groups dependent upon the activity in which they are involved. This can be seen in association with the concept of secondary intersubjectivity as described by Gallagher (2006): The children's interaction is

strengthened through variable intersubjective experiences. The observations in the ASP show broad variation in intersubjective situations in the children's play. In the quoted example (cf. p. 10-11), only one child was not engaged in play with another or a group: she was sitting alone on a swing on the gravel area. This does not mean that she was not involved with the others. The video shows that she just came from play together with the girls who were role-playing, and that she intensely followed the activities of the girls on The Wheel. As such, she was influenced by the other children. The observed situations in the survey show that body movements with intersubjective contact are typical in the ASP, which interviews indicate is not incidental. It seems very important in all the interviews that body movements can occur together with other children. The fact that children seek body movements in play together with other children is a predominant feature during ASP hours. In situations with body movements, a distinction is made between two main categories of interaction: Situations where the child's demonstrative expressions in the presence of others are predominant and situations where shared activity seems to be the most important. Both of these categories can be interpreted as interaction, as common situations with intersubjectivity (ibid).

Expression

When playing at the observed places the children often shout "Look at me!" The following example is taken from activity on The Wheel.

> *Rebecca is ready to jump from the top level of the start ramp. While she is preparing to jump, the other girls are discussing anything else but her activity. Rebecca wants attention and asks: "Do you think I dare take off from here?" "Yes, of course. Everybody knows that," Sophie replies, a bit irritated. "Jennifer, watch me," says Rebecca. She waits to see that nine-year-old Jennifer is watching her. And then she leans to the side with her body extended, getting a soft start with a tight rope.*

Rebecca demands attention from the other children to show that she is *able* to do something. This is not just anything – it is an activity that commences high up, with considerable speed and with precise physical action. It is calculated as an act of daring among the ASP children.

Sheets-Johnstone (1999) gives the movement the honour for the sense of "I can." This is in accordance with that which Rebecca expresses on the start ramp. Through the repeated movements on The Wheel, Rebecca discovers what she can do with her body on the apparatus. The movement appears to result in a typical feeling of excitement and fascination that she wants to share with others, simultaneously receiving acknowledgment for her feat. Her "significance of movement" is associated with the attention by others (Smith, 2007; van den Berg, 1952). The movement is to position her in relation to other children in the vicinity. The others' attentions toward the movements she is executing on The Wheel seem to be important in gaining acceptance and recognition. Seeking understanding and recognition is an important element of the child's body movements in the ASP. It shows a strong desire to reveal her movement solution to her peers and the adults in the vicinity and to receive an acknowledgement of these.

One example where children who are participating in the ASP seek recognition by adults is given in the following example.

> *Eight-year-old Sophie is preparing to take a trip on The Wheel. When she is ready, she sees Linda (one of the ASP staff) passing by on a nearby path. She shouts loudly: "Hey, Linda. Look at me!" She then undertakes a strenuous motion on the apparatus. "I am surprised that you dare," Linda responds. "Me too, Linda!" Rebecca calls. Linda stops and watches. Rebecca then makes a breathtaking trip on The Wheel. Linda smiles in acknowledgement. When this exercise is finished, she waves, and goes on her way. The girls continue with their testing and barrier-breaking activities.*

Linda's recognition of the children's activity appears to be important for carrying out the exercise. She takes time to watch their efforts and through comments and gestures acknowledges their choice of activity, including their daring.

The adults' approval of the children's activities appears to be important where the children demonstrate their physical skills in front of the staff. In their account of child-oriented communication, Fattore and Turnbull (2005) draw upon the work of Merleau-Ponty, stating

that the inter-world of shared meanings creates a space to understand others and the social world, and that "Children, therefore, enter the 'intersubjective order' as active participants, providing a basis upon which children and adults can understand each other" (p. 52). Merleau-Ponty (1964) emphasises that the development of the self involves experiences through which children recognise themselves via the reactions of significant others (Fattore & Turnbull, 2005). According to this viewpoint, the child should be considered as an authority in respect to her own experiences and actions. Linda clearly exhibits the will to grant the children authority. Her attachment to the importance of "daring" as something positive appears to increase their desire to conduct more experiments. This is a way the ASP staff can encourage body movements in self-chosen and child-managed play.

The attention of peers toward these expressive movements appears to be equally decisive for the child that *someone* observes as to *who* observes. Consider the previous example of Rebecca on The Wheel. When her best friend ignores the invitation to watch, she quickly turns to another girl. As soon as she has ensured that *someone* will watch her, she carries out the exercise. An example from The Climbing Area shows the reverse output:

> *Roger is climbing in tree nr. 1. He moves quickly to the roof of the playhouse, and from there he climbs over to tree nr. 3. After this he only moves with small movements. He shouts repeatedly to get attention, first to all the children in general, later to named individuals. He does not get any contact, so he is standing motionless on the roof for a while. He jumps down and disappears from the place.*

Roger is a newcomer to this ASP, and he tries out various movements in The Climbing Area. He wants someone to observe that he manages the climbing. When none are willing to observe, the movements are not carried out.

How can the strong desire of a child to be observed when carrying out particular movements be explained? As mentioned, Merleau-Ponty (2002) considers that there is an essential association between individuals. Meaning is in the expression; expression and meaning are

inseparable values (Busch, 2008). When a child expresses a movement to the others, this can be regarded as a form of communication. Such bodily communication is especially clear among children. The first 10 - 12 years of their life they communicate more directly and immediately through their bodies and body language than later (Adams, 2008; Merleau-Ponty, 2002). The child bodily communicates her skills in different places and wants acceptance for this. To ensure that someone reacts to this expression, a direct approach is made: "Watch me!" Before commencing the exercise, the child ensures that someone is watching. The other children spontaneously understand the meaning of the expression and communicate appropriate reactions through cheering, facial expressions, or gestures. The meaning in the reactions will spontaneously be understood as a degree of acceptance and recognition. In this manner there is a dynamic mutuality in the interaction in that it assumes that the children know that they share something in common. In the child's self-managed activity in the ASP, such expressions and observations go both ways: Sometimes the child will be observed, other times she will be the observer.

In the observations, "required reception of expression" is most often seen in two categories of movements: 1) movements that require an element of "daring"; for example, high take-offs on The Wheel or challenging climbing in The Climbing Area, and 2) technical movements that require precise adaptation to place, body, and equipment. Examples of this are the balancing exercises undertaken on the scooters and swinging a hoop around the waist. In this study, the expressions of movements that require "daring" are more manifest among girls, something that breaches the stereotyped image of boys as the most vigorous. According to the findings in this study, the desire to exhibit one's skills and achieve recognition seems to be very strong both among girls and boys. However, the experience of carrying out such exercises is not as strong when they are not being observed. This clearly shows that the body movements in such situations are closely connected to the fact that the children want to

communicate something about themselves to the others. If none are willing to interact by observing and responding to "the message," that in this circumstance is a body movement, the message will not be presented.

The communication that occurs in the situation of expression can be said to be two-sided. It is not important who is observing, but that *someone* does. For many children, however, it is important *who shares in* the execution of the exercise. A typical example is shown earlier in Elaine's statement in the interview (cf. p. 12); it has to be someone she considers a friend. "Friend" is a term or designation to which all the children interviewed attach importance in choice of activity, but different interpretations are given to the term. This also appears to affect the intersubjective interplay in which the body movements occur. On the one hand, there are strong bonds in pairs of best friends or small groups of close friends. On the other, we find larger groups of children with less defined relationships. These groups come together as the participants enjoy taking part in the same activities. In this article, I refer to these as "best-friends groups" and "activity groups." Observations at the selected places in the ASP show a clear connection between the genders and the types of group. I observed mostly girls in the first category and boys in the latter.

Shared activities in best-friends groups

Elaine tells about friendship during the interview:

Elaine: *My best friends are Cecilia, Ellen, Kari and Jane (she appears happy and satisfied).*

Interviewer: *Are these the girls you are mostly together with at the ASP?*

Elaine: *Yes, we are normally together. There are some who I am not together with very much – Anne and others. We are not unfriendly toward each other, but we don't play together. It is the others I play together with most (she explains quickly and looks directly at the interviewer.)*

Interviewer: *Why is this?*

Elaine: *I don't really know. It's like when you like being together with*

someone. Then you play with them a lot as well (she smiles, a little uncertain at first, then she answers enthusiastically and with a serious facial expression).

Friendship relations are revealed in different forms of activity in the ASP. Elaine's statements strongly emphasise the mutual relationship between herself and her best friends. It is apparent that she attaches a different meaning to friendship than merely sharing the same activity. When she wants to do something active *together* with her best friends, demands are made on reciprocity. The close friends have a common desire to be together, and they find it quite natural to do activities that include body movements together. This corresponds with the concept of secondary intersubjectivity (Gallagher, 2006). Their ability to see meaning in the friends' actions is embodied, and they respond immediately and spontaneously.

Some children are almost constantly together with one special friend or with a few close friends. Sophie and Rebecca are an example of such a pair. The relationship between them emerges in the following passage from the interview with Rebecca.

Rebecca: *Most of all I like playing with Sophie. We play together the most, as she is my very best friend (she appears happy and satisfied).*

Interviewer: *Do you choose to do what Sophie does, or do you do what you want irrespective of what Sophie would like?*

Rebecca: *I do the same as Sophie, and sometimes Sophie does what I am doing. We decide a bit each – sometimes me, sometimes her (she responds quickly and looks self-confident).*

Interviewer: *Do you also play together with others, or is it just you two?*

Rebecca: *It is mostly us two, but sometimes when Dorothy is alone, we play with her. Or if May or Ida is alone, then we play with them (she looks as if this is a matter of course).*

This is an example where the activity is based on reciprocity of affection in a close friendship. It appears that being together is more important for them than the activity in which they are engaged. The girls *want* to be together and *then* they agree about which activity. It is important for personal satisfaction that it is precisely that person they are with, and the choice of activity is determined as a mutual process. Sometimes this includes verbal

discussion, other times the activity emerges spontaneously without speaking. According to Rebecca's statements in the interview, the relationship with Sophie does not exclude playing with others, but it is not incidental who the others are. Developmental psychologist Dunn (2004) emphasises reciprocity of affection when she defines children's friendship, and this seems to be in accordance with the understanding of friendship in the best-friends groups in the current ASP. Dunn maintains that friendship occurs only between two individuals at a time, but this is not seen in the interview with Rebecca. Dorothy, May, and Ida are also regarded as close friends, and it frequently occurred that one or more of these are with Rebecca and Sophie. Sophie and Rebecca engage in a range of activities but are virtually always together as a couple, either alone or together with other friends. Mutual tolerance and the will to adapt appear to be important within the group.

Should someone who is part of a closely-knit group of friends or a pair of best friends be on their own for one reason or another during the ASP hours, the intensity of the body movements is affected. Children who are otherwise active can become passive and dispirited in such situations; play becomes boring. Children finish at different times during the ASP hours and go home, resulting in some groups of friends breaking up. The last phase of the ASP day is often emphasised by individual children wandering around, wondering what to do. It is at this time the children who are active and self-inspired look for quieter and adult-controlled activities indoors.

Such situations reflect how the body movements are related to the interaction with other children in the best-friends group. The children seek interaction where they can communicate reciprocity of affection with their best friends. The study shows that such communication appears as body movements when the children have the opportunity for self-chosen and child-managed play outdoors. The communication, that in these situations takes form as body movements, ceases when one part of the communication process disappears.

Shared activities in activity groups

It is important for the children that activities that include body movements can occur together with friends, but different demands are placed according to how close these friendships must be. Nine-year-old Oscar and eight-year-old Eric spend much time in The Bunker, and they tell about activity and social relationships at this place:

1. *Oscar:* *Mostly, I play in The Bunker. That's where I like being best (responds quickly).*

   Interviewer: *Is it important for you who else is there, or do you go there in any case?*

   Oscar: *I go there anyway. I can play with several boys and girls (looks self-confident).*

2. *Interviewer:* *How do you find it easiest to make friends and to get to know new children?*

   Eric: *If, for example, they like playing football so perhaps I can be selected for their team. Then I can talk with them when we play (responds enthusiastically and looks directly at the interviewer).*

These statements indicate that it is the activity that is decisive for their presence in The Bunker, and that it is the activity taking place there that leads to friendship. These boys don't emphasise reciprocity of affection as strongly as do members of the best-friends groups.

The children who spend much time in The Bunker mention others who are there a lot as their closest friends or those whom they know best. As indicated in Eric's statement, friendship is a consequence of a preferred activity. They do not depend upon the presence of specific persons for participation in the activity to the same degree as children in the best friend category. As long as there is activity at their preferred place, intensity is maintained. They have experienced that friendships can be developed through shared activity. Some scholars are sceptical to call relationships in groups larger than two or three as friendship (Dunn, 2004; Greve, 2007). Nevertheless, "friend" is the concept that the interviewed children who participate in such activity groups use. However, they don't emphasise reciprocity of

affection as strong as members of the best-friends groups. They participate in larger groups based on the activity taking place at that time. The most common activity in this group category is unquestionably football in one or another form.

As indicated in the quoted statements of Oscar and Eric, the group who keeps to The Bunker appears to be open regarding participation. Initially, anybody in the ASP can join in the game. Depending upon how many are present, the type of game varies. Discussions and negotiations in connection with choice of game and team members are often time-consuming, but rarely end in conflict as long as only the ASP children are present. Also in this group category, body movements play a significant role in creating interaction with others, but communicating reciprocity of affection is not the most important. The participants seem to regard the body movements in the play to be important enough in themselves. Nevertheless, friendships are developed through the interaction in such bodily play.

Observations and interviews reveal, however, that these activity groups are not completely open. In autumn 2007, Richard – a boy in the fourth grade – was a new member of the ASP. During the past three years this had been his third school and third ASP. In August, he had no friends here, and he sought activity and social contact in The Bunker. One early observation showed the problems he had gaining entry.

> *Richard comes to The Bunker and joins in the game together with the oldest ASP children. Richard is ignored, and after just two minutes he withdraws from the game. He gets his own ball and plays with it. There are now three parallel activities: one group around each of the goals, and Richard alone in the middle. I note Richard's problems of joining the children's group. Sometimes he is conflict-oriented and calls out some rude remarks to the other children. Then, after a while, he asks if he can participate in a game with the children who are a year younger, but is rejected. "No, you are nasty toward us. You are rude in my opinion."*

To a certain extent, friendship is a condition for participation in the activity groups. Richard is not defined as a friend as understood by the children and not included. He withdraws from the group of similarly aged peers when he does not achieve a sufficient response. He is

refused participation in the younger group because he is “nasty” and “rude.” Richard engages in his own activities, but the exclusion affects his level of activity.

Richard mentions this in the interview. He gives the impression that he prefers to join in activities with others, but at the beginning of school year he must often play by himself. He speaks quietly and appears dejected when he relates this. He explains how difficult it is to acquire new friends when he changes schools. He thinks that it is easiest to gain new friends through activities such as football, and explains that he becomes disappointed and disconsolate if he is not allowed to participate. In observations from the early autumn it can be observed that the other children regard his attitude as anything but seeking friendship. He can barge into an activity group brusquely and frequently makes rude comments to the others, which results in exclusion from the activity, often in clear terms by the other children. This is an example of a child who acts in such a manner that the others cannot grasp his meaning. Gallagher (2001, 2006) attaches importance to an intuitive ability to see meaning in other’s actions as a basis for intersubjective interaction. Richard wishes to participate in the activities to establish friendships, but his attitude is regarded as disrespectful. He does not understand the point of the others’ reactions and regards his exclusion as unjust and unfair. This results in verbal or physical conflict, something the others consider nasty. This appears to be a vicious circle.

When we make a similar observation a month later, the situation has changed: Richard is now in the group that plays football. He is often the one who brings the ball, and his attitude is more relaxed. At times he may still “explode” negatively, which occasionally results in hard exchanges, although it does not lead to deep conflict and exclusion as previously. It appears that the others understand the meaning in his action, and that this has largely led to his acceptance in the activity group. Now he refers to some of the boys who play football as

friends. This may suggest that the interaction in bodily play over an extended period has established a mutual understanding of one another's actions.

Unsystematic interchange between main categories and activities

I have recognised two main categories of children's groups who engage in a variety of body movements in play: Best-friends groups and activity groups. However, not all ASP children can be placed within either of these categories. Some children switch rapidly and unsystematically between activities and groups, depending upon what activity appeals to them at the time. This occurs mainly close to the ASP building: on the asphalt place, in the sandpit, in the climbing area, and on the grass. Edward, Jim, and Amanda are active eight-year-olds who are constantly involved in one or another form of body movements. They may act as individuals, change between those they are with, and rarely keep up the same activity for any length of time. They switch quickly between activities with the tricycle, the scooter, the sandpit, climbing, the ropes, and so forth. They concentrate on what they are doing, but run quickly to another activity as soon as the opportunity arises. It appears that this occurs spontaneously, that they seize the opportunity for action wherever it arises. Gibson (1986) uses the concept of "affordance" for the relationships in an environment that offer the individual the opportunity for action. Affordances can be associated with the activity place, but are just as frequently associated with the children becoming aware of an activity in which other children are involved and engage themselves in this instead. This corresponds well with Merleau-Ponty's (2002) understanding of intersubjectivity. Through a transfer of body-schema, the child can understand the action of the other immediately. The other's action is part of the pre-communicated inter-world and can serve as an affordance in the environment. For Edward, Jim, and Amanda, the new activity affordance appears to be more important than who is participating. For this reason they frequently switch between those they are with.

The body movements in these children's play may be understood in relation to their search for interaction with the world in which they live: interaction with the physical environment and interaction with other human beings. Their spontaneous body movements can be interpreted as a way to fulfil their search for interaction. This article emphasises interactions with the others. Another article related to the current project focuses on the child's interaction with the activity place.

Concluding remarks

This article investigates how the body movements in children's play are related to their interaction with others. The relationship emerges clearly when the body movements are interpreted in light of intersubjectivity. The children emphasise that play that includes body movements together with friends is important for their experience of a meaningful ASP time. The observations reveal that such activities are typical for the ASP hours when the children have opportunities to chose and manage their own activities outdoors. Body movements seem to arise from play situations where the children spontaneously seek interaction with others. The extensive activity may also contribute to the children's health and development.

The body movements give the children the opportunity to achieve recognition through expression. This is an intersubjective interaction where the active child immediately and spontaneously communicates skills and daring, and the observer communicates degrees of recognition. The body movements also give the children an opportunity to interact in best-friends groups and in groups that come together as they all enjoy undertaking the same activity. The play activities in the best-friends groups emerge from mutual processes between the participants, while participation in the activity groups is determined by the choice of play activity. These forms of bodily communication occur frequently during the ASP hours when the children are outdoors and choose and manage their activities themselves.

The body movements in play are closely connected to their significant role in the children's interaction with others. The body movements can be interpreted as a fulfilment of their search for interaction. Based on the findings in this study, it is recommended that self-chosen and child-managed play outdoors be encouraged in the ASP.

The intersubjective dimensions in play appear to have a crucial significance in the life-world of the ASP children. Among children in the relevant age group, bodily communication is especially clear. They communicate directly and immediately through their bodies and body language. Thus, it is important that arenas exist that ensure the children's possibilities for body movements in self-chosen and child-managed play. There are reasons to believe that such arenas are few in the institutionalised everyday in which the child exists. The school is emphasised by structured programmes and adult-managed activity, and much of the leisure time is emphasised by adult-controlled leisure-time activities. As children's activities have appeared in this article, the ASP can have a complementary function to the arenas with structured and adult-controlled activities. Nevertheless, this depends upon the children's opportunity for self-chosen and child-managed play outdoors where they can interact in best-friends and activity groups. Members of the ASP staff have important roles in relation to facilitating, initiating, and encouraging sufficient time, places, and equipment for this to occur. In addition, they have to pay attention to individual children, who for one reason or another, are excluded from the activities. There is need for further research that focuses on the ASP staff's role as it relates to the children's play.

The findings in the study may be used as an argument for a greater input of self-chosen and child-managed bodily activities also in circumstances other than the ASP. We have seen body movements arise from children's spontaneous seeking for interaction and expression in play. Such a motivation source could also be applicable to curricular PE in primary school and in extra-curricular PE. This requires, however, a willingness to recognise self-chosen and child-

managed play in situations that usually are strictly managed and controlled by adults. This is an issue for further research.

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Endnote

[1] 'The Wheel', as it is popularly called, is a sling suspended from a pulley (the wheel) on a wire line between two poles. The poles are about 25 meters apart; one is higher than the other. The child drags the pulley to the higher frame, climbs a ladder, and sits in the sling. He or she is then virtually launched into space as the pulley runs down the line toward the lower pole. The lower support is so designed that when the pulley comes to abrupt halt, the child is left swinging in the sling. Altogether this is a considerable feat of daring for many children.

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Article 3

Løndal, K. (2010). Barrier-breaking Body Movements in the After-School Programme:

Children's Imitation through Play.

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Barrier-breaking Body Movements in the After-School Programme: Children's Imitation through Play

Abstract

This article investigates how children learn body movements in informal social situations, and is based upon close observation and qualitative research interviews undertaken among eight- and nine-year-old children in an after-school programme (ASP) in Oslo. The learning process is described and discussed in relation to the concepts of imitation, joint attention and turn-taking. The study shows that learning body movements is usual during child-managed activities in the ASP, and occurs frequently as imitation. The imitation process is characterized by joint attention and turn-taking. In best-friend groups, joint attention, characterized by shared involvement along with intuitive turn-taking, is predominant. In activity groups that come together occasionally, considerable initiative is required on the part of the imitator in order to become an active part of a mutual process. It is recommended to encourage child-managed activities in ASP, and emphasize the ASP's complimentary role in contrast to the school.

Keywords: *Body movement, peer learning, informal social interaction, child-managed activity*

Introduction

When the 'after-school programme' (ASP)[1] was introduced as a national programme in Norway, importance was attached to the children's leisure-time activities. Any extension of the school's function and tradition was to be avoided; there was no desire to combine school and leisure-time activities into an entirety based on the school programme (Haug, 1994; KUF, 1993). Guidelines indicated that the children themselves should select and manage the ASP activities. In the Education Act it is specified that the programme shall provide the opportunity for play, cultural and leisure-time activities, and provide the children with care and supervision (KD, 2009). There are no formal educational objectives associated with ASP. Consequently there is a strict division between school and leisure-time.

Surveys in Oslo have shown that physical activity in the children's play during ASP time is extensive and characterized by child-managed bodily movements and social interaction (Løndal & Bergsjø, 2005). An interesting question is whether valuable learning occurs during the play, in spite of the absence of formal aims. The Norwegian ASP is currently under

debate. The discussion focuses on whether ASP time should be used systematically to increase learning in school subjects, for example through supervised homework and adult-managed activities. Such a discussion should include appraisals about what the children can lose if the time used to child-managed play is reduced. This article argues for the inclusions of for such appraisals.

Within educational research there has been increasing interest in how interaction between children affects learning. Damon (1984) maintains that children can have a strong influence on each others' intellectual development, and refers to the agreement between a number of theoretical traditions on the positive effects of self esteem, school performance and social behaviour. Within the sphere of education this form of learning is frequently referred to as 'peer learning'. Peer learning may be ascribed to one of two categories: 'peer tutoring' and 'peer collaboration'. Peer tutoring occurs when one of the participants is an expert and functions as an instructor to the others. In peer collaboration, the participants work together to solve a problem, but without any one individual possessing the status of expert. Ward and Lee (2005) have presented a review of empirical literature relating to education in general, and physical education in particular. The review refers to the fact that a large number of research projects have documented the positive effects of peer learning within a broad spectrum of subjects and situations. Among other things, they conclude that peer tutoring is an effective method of advancing the learning of motor skills in physical education.

Peer learning is actively used in school education, and is most often associated with situations that initially are under control of a responsible teacher. As such, this must be considered as a formal learning situation. Ward and Lee (2005) emphasize this point stating: 'Merely placing students in groups is insufficient to ensure that learning will occur' (p. 206). This statement assumes, however, that learning must be directed towards a specific aim, and will exclude typical ASP activities. In the ASP it is the individually-selected and child-managed activities

that are predominant (Kvello & Wendelborg, 2002; Løndal & Bergsjø, 2005). ASP time is regarded as the child's leisure time, and activities normally take place within informal situations without direct supervision by adults. Learning which occurs in such situations will be incidental, and in contrast to that form of learning encountered within the formal school programme. One objective of this article is to contribute to an understanding of how learning of body movements can occur when children interact in situations that are not based on a formal learning programme. This assumes that learning must be regarded as something more than a product of teaching or a path towards formal aims. The discussion is based on a fieldwork conducted in Oslo in 2007. The research question is: What is the process by which children learn movements in informal social situations within the ASP?

Theoretical framework

When referring to learning in this article, it is associated with the concept of 'barrier-breaking movement' (Morris, 2004). The child's body movement can be habitual, or part of a barrier-breaking process where the movement pattern is undergoing change. To what extent the movement is habitual or barrier-breaking is indicated along a continuum ranging from basic movements, through adaptive movements, skills and styles, to idiosyncratic adjustment (Morris, 2004). This is a learning process involving a dynamic interaction between the body and the place where the movement occurs. The child's body movement will, as such, be either habitual or located somewhere along the continuum described.

Barrier-breaking body movements, as described in this article, do not occur within a formal learning context or in the direction of formulated aims. Informal and unstructured situations predominate during ASP time. Nobody has a declared expert or beginner status in these situations, something which is regarded as a characteristic feature of so-called 'apprenticeship learning' (Nielsen & Kvale, 1997). Seen from this standpoint, relevant barrier-breaking situations in the ASP are preferably limited to the concept of 'informal and incidental

learning'. 'Informal and incidental learning' is defined as being contrary to formal learning, and the term is used in research related to experience-based learning (Marsick & Watkins, 1990). Such research focuses on experiences in everyday situations, and argues that learning can occur in a variety of contexts, including informal, social settings without expert-novice-relations. The child's body movements in ASP normally occur as informal and incidental experiences in everyday situations. In this connection Wenger's (1998) description of social learning in 'communities of practice' is relevant. He refers to the fact that humans form their identity through social participation, one that is built on a common repertoire of resources. Learning in communities of practice is called 'situated learning' (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and is not restricted to situations where a novice learns from the experiences of an expert. In communities of practice resources for learning will be encountered at all levels of experience, from novice to expert.

With its informal character, characterized by child-managed activities and social interaction, the ASP environment appears as a meaningful context where the participants have the opportunity to be accepted and recognized by other children for their performance. This concurs well with the definition of 'communities of practice'. In barrier-breaking body movements during the ASP time, tips are picked up from other children's movements. In this connection, Jespersen's (1997) account in the article *Modeling in sporting apprenticeship* is particularly relevant. He associates the imitation of others' movements in sport to the idea of a habitual phenomenological field: 'Thanks to the role of the body itself we find ourselves situated in a phenomenal field constantly trying to change our existence by creating new fields' (p. 185). Jespersen supports Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty, 2002 [1962]), and maintains that physical actions in situations where sports activity is imitated can be explained as direct bodily processes where other's movements are immediately comprehended. This does not imply direct imitation, but rather a creative and innovative

process (Jespersen, 1997), and appears to be a useful approach in the analysis of children's experimental and barrier-breaking body movements. Children learn movements in interactive situations even without competent teaching and without formulated objectives whereby particular movements ought to be learned.

Sheets-Johnstone (2000) describes learning of movement as occurring in informal situations as spontaneous and natural dispositions, characterized by joint attention, imitation and turn-taking. The concept 'joint attention' implies something more than regarding seeing the same as another person; it assumes that 'two individuals know that they are attending to something in common' (Tomasello, 1995, p. 106). This implies a common focus and a *shared involvement* characteristic of situations where several participate in the same activity. In addition, the participants have a basic understanding that their attention is coordinated with that of the others (Racine, 2005). Joint attention is presented as the basis of the mutual interaction between the participants and is, as such, an assumption for social practice (Sheets-Johnstone, 2000).

Imitation refers to the individual's ability to imitate movements and thus corresponds with Jespersen's account (1997). Imitation is already observed in infants (Meltzoff & Moore, 1983), and is also relevant in children of higher ages when learning movements and techniques. Smith (2007) associates this phenomenon to the concept of *mimesis*: 'a formative impulse of human rationality that finds similarities and forges identifications with others' (p. 55). He sites Benjamin (1978) when mimesis is included among natural phenomena: '[The human] gift of seeing resemblances is nothing other than a rudiment of the powerful compulsion in former times to become and behave like something else' (Smith, 2007, p. 68). The recent discovery of the mirror neuron mechanism supports this view. It appears that certain cells in the brain that control the body react to other persons' movements as though they themselves have carried out this action (Rizzolatti & Craighero, 2004). According to

those who discovered this mechanism, it plays an essential role both for understanding the movements of others and in imitating them. It can explain why others' intentions are so rapidly recognized and that movements are imitated intuitively. This permits a mutual communication process where the perception of one's own body can be transmitted to the other, and that the image of the other can be immediately understood by one's own body schema (Merleau-Ponty, 1964). The concept of 'body schema' here refers to the implicit knowledge which is linked to the body and which is used intuitively with body movement (Gallagher, 1986). Seen within the context of ASP, children's social interaction and bodily presence provide possibilities for communication of perception, and also to mimic other's movement in a spontaneous and intuitive manner.

Turn-taking is a phenomenon which is often associated with the development of the child's language (Bloom, 1993), providing the basis for the spontaneous exchange in a conversation where two or more individuals are participating (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974). Without turn-taking, the fundamental, mutual understanding which enables the conversation to flow will not be present. Sheets-Johnstone (2000) considers that turn-taking has a much deeper and broader relevance than language. As an example, she points to the alternating non-verbal communication that occurs between individuals, and maintains that such situations are frequently affective occurrences. Further, she describes the phenomenon as basis for apprenticeship learning.

In this article the process by which children learn movements in informal social situations is discussed in relation to the concepts *imitation, joint attention, and turn-taking*. The discussion concerns whether these phenomena are relevant for situated learning in the community of practice that the ASP context implies.

Method

Materials for this study were gathered in the children's life-world. I was engaged in following an ASP group during the autumn of 2007, and used the opportunity to gather qualitative materials. Merleau-Ponty (2002) argues that the bodily action, gestures and speech are complementary forms of expression and communication. In this study, materials that captured these interlinked components were gathered, and two complementary methods were used – close observation (van Manen, 1990) and qualitative research interview (Kvale, 1996).

Participants

The aim of the project was to contribute to an understanding of the children's body movements in play, and not to undertake a comparison of institutions. For this reason, the investigation was restricted to a single ASP. Further, the study was concentrated on the upper two age groups who were permitted to attend the ASP. Thus the study comprised eight- and nine-year-old children in the 3rd and 4th grades in school. Forty children were included at the selected location, and attended the ASP between two and three hours each day. Permission was sought from the parents and the children concerning participation in the study. Parents of four children made reservations about participation. Consequently, information was gathered from 36 children of whom 19 were born in 1998, and 17 in 1999. 22 girls and 14 boys participated.

The context

The ASP studied is located in the suburbs of Oslo. The associated ASP building comprises a recreation room with a dining area, a playroom, a reading room, and a cloakroom. In front of the entrance to the ASP building is a flat asphalt area. Otherwise, a grassy slope surrounds the building. Approximately half the area comprises grass: the rest is trees and rugged terrain. Immediately to the side of the main building is a playhouse surrounded by trees suitable for climbing. The children refer to this as The Climbing Area. The area does not have traditional

play apparatus. A peripheral part of the school's play area is located in the immediate vicinity of the ASP site, and is available to children participating in the ASP. Here are areas for ball games, various types of swings and 'The Wheel'[2].

Gathering materials

Using close observation for gathering materials, one attempts to enter the life-world through direct participation (van Manen, 1990). The observations relevant for this article focused on specific places within the ASP area. These were chosen because they appeared particularly interesting in respect of the children's body movements. Video and sound recordings were used to register situations and events. Focus was concentrated on one place each day, and the observations were filmed or noted down when one or more of the 36 children were present at that place. Up to one hour was recorded each day. Parallel to the recording, field notes were written.

After the observations were concluded, five girls and four boys were selected for one individual qualitative research interview. The interviews were intended to provide depth to situations and events that had emerged in the observations. The children selected for interview had been involved in particularly interesting situations related to these themes. In line with Kvale's recommendations (1996), the interviews were given the character of a one-to-one conversation where the child could relate his or her own experiences to relevant themes.

The interviews were carried out with one child at the time in a room with which they were well acquainted. The interview commenced with situations in which the child had participated and been video recorded. These were edited so as to form a four-minute film for each individual. This was shown during the course of the interview and provided a basis for the conversation. The interviews were video and sound recorded.

Transcription and analysis

In order to ensure that the video and sound recordings were suitable for qualitative analysis, these were transcribed. The transcriptions of the interviews were written down in note form in such manner that the significance of the conversation emerged. The video recordings from the observation period were also transcribed and prepared for analysis. Giorgi's method (1985) was used in the analysis, and the interview transcriptions, the transcribed situations from the video recordings, and the field notes were included in the process. Through a stepwise analysis comprising four chronological sets of written notes, I moved from 1) a basic description, via 2) localization of the meaning units, and 3) incorporation into a theoretical perspective with relevant professional terminology, to 4) a synthesis of the meaning units to a consistent text where the phenomena studied emerge.

Results and discussion

The results are described and discussed in relation to specific situations in the ASP time. These are presented as numbered situation examples in the text. The observation materials reflect many situations where children imitate others' movements. The situations are selected on the basis of their significance in relation to the entirety in the group studied. Importance is attached to presenting situations showing how barrier-breaking body movements emerge as part of children's social interaction. The description and discussion are structured according to the concepts *imitation, joint attention and turn-taking* (Sheets-Johnstone, 2000).

Barrier-breaking body movements - characterized by imitation

The observation materials reveal a large number of situations with barrier-breaking body movements; situations where the children's movements are associated with developing skills and adaptation to the activity place, their body and the equipment. This occurs in many different situations and the learning processes in such activity are for the most part characterized by *imitation*. Individual children *can* be alone when developing barrier-breaking

movements, but this appears to be unusual during ASP time. Social interaction between the children is characteristic of the activities in the ASP context. Children interact socially in small or large groups, dependent upon the activity at that time, and with whom they wish to associate. They participate either in a small group of best friends, or in groups which emerge as a consequence of the chosen activity. In this article, we refer to these as 'best-friend groups' and 'activity groups'. In the following, selected situation examples from the transcripts are introduced.

1. *Roger comes running alone towards The Climbing Area. He swings up using the broken branch on tree number 2 and experiments with the tree alternatively climbing and balancing, first on the lower branches, thereafter a bit higher. After a few minutes he jumps carefully from tree number 2 and onto the roof of the playhouse, thereafter directly to the ground, and then leaves the area. During this period of activity, he has not been in contact with anybody else.*
2. *Andreas, Jonathan and Edward are playing with scooters on the rough terrain which leads to the asphalt area. This is something where they are experts – scooting fast down to the asphalt area, straight across, then between the sandpit and the playhouse, continuing behind the main building. Amanda watches the boys' activity and also wants to have a go. She is more cautious than the boys on the first trip, but dares to go across the asphalt area at a moderate speed. The second trip is faster and she follows the boys round the house. Soon she is driving together with the boys – and just as fast.*

In the first example Roger is alone while he attempts to develop skills which he has seen other exhibit in The Climbing Area. In the second situation Amanda joins in and imitates the boys' movements on the scooters while the models are present.

The Climbing Area is a popular activity place. Every day, there is much going on here, mainly in pairs or small groups. The activities are often advanced, but surprisingly similar from each time. The same routes are followed, but with varying degrees of difficulty and varying styles. The first situation is an example from the second week in the ASP. Roger is new in the ASP group, and it is clear that The Climbing Area arouses his curiosity. During the first week, I observed that he hung around The Climbing Area much of the time and carefully followed the other children's habitual climbing activities. He keeps close to the other children

but is not an integrated member of any group. In the episode described, Roger goes to the area with clear intentions. He experiments with balancing and simple climbing. He does this on his own. It is nevertheless interesting to observe how his activities follow the pattern of the other children he had previously observed. The manner in which he swings into tree no. 2 is his personal approach to the manner in which the more experienced children normally enter The Climbing Area. The same applies to the jump onto the roof of the playhouse. Even though 'the new boy' is carrying out his own barrier-breaking tests, he is strongly influenced by the others' habitual movement patterns. He has clearly observed some of the key points in their exercises and is in the process of imitating them.

The second situation describes one associated with the asphalt area where a large group of children are engaged with various activities. Three boys enjoy themselves scooting over the rugged terrain. These boys are not a best-friend group; they have come together as they have chosen the same activity. The way in which this is carried out suggests that they have done this many times before. The skills are habitual. Amanda has become aware of this activity and observes the boys several times before doing it herself. Right from the first time, she carries out the activity – scooting – the same way as the boys, although not as fast. The second time, she scoots more quickly. Soon, she does the same as the boys, showing equal proficiency. It is amazing how quickly this imitation occurs. This is a typical example of how a child with less skill imitates more experienced children while the models are present, conducting their own habitual activity.

Both situations concur with the view of imitation of movements that Jespersen (1997) presents. He explains how the movement is transferred from one to another without being a direct copy. Regarding sports movement, this imitation can occur at very different stages. It is normal that 'testing' occurs at the same time and place between the model and the imitator, although this does not necessarily have to be the case. Numerous examples have been seen in

the body movements taking place at the ASP location. There are, for example, repeated occurrences in the football area where children who have watched football on TV attempt to imitate their heroes' shots, feints and celebration rituals. The situation with Roger in The Climbing Area is comparable in so far as he imitated the movements that he has observed on previous occasions. What was special about Robert's situation was that this occurred when he was alone. In the ASP it is more normal that such barrier-breaking activities occur in interaction with other children. Consequently, the situation that describes Amanda's imitation of the boys on the scooters is more representative of the ASP time than Roger's 'private' imitation in The Climbing Area.

Joint attention to the movement which is imitated

Roger's and Amanda's imitation actions in the two described situations occur without that they initially undertake these in participation with the children they are imitating. Roger is alone in his activity while Amanda joins the activity group from the sideline.

Roger's activity can be interpreted as an early adaptation of the more advanced course in The Climbing Area. As he is new to this activity environment, he has a need to become accustomed to the basic skills before attempting movements undertaken by the more experienced children, and before he can participate as an equal. Nevertheless, this activity does not occur within a vacuum. Even though he is undertaking this activity alone, his movement is influenced by the fact that he has observed what the other children do in this area. The influence in this particular situation is not, however, characterized by mutual attention. He has carried out a discrete observation of other children and attempts to imitate these on his own.

Concerning Amanda, it is only when she has undertaken the first attempts to imitate that she is included in the group on a mutual basis. In the first part of the situation Amanda's attention

towards the boys' activity is unilateral – the boys are engaged in their own and others' activities, but it does not appear that they notice Amanda on the sideline. Model and imitator are both focussing their attention on the same activity, but this is not a situation where 'two individuals know that they are attending to something in common' (Tomasello, 1995). It is only when Amanda has made her first attempt at speeding that she becomes part of the group. It is then that attention becomes mutual: involvement is *shared*. The model and the imitator are both engaged in each other's activities. We see that the entrance to the imitation process has become a personal responsibility for the imitator. Those who are engaged in an activity first and foremost share their attention with others involved in the same activity. The beginner must take the first step into that activity in order to gain mutual attention. Amanda's imitation of the boys' movements nevertheless seems surprisingly effective, and can be explained whereby the image of the other can be understood immediately by one's own body schema (Merleau-Ponty, 1964; Rizzolatti & Craighero, 2004). When the first imitation has been carried out, the process gains tempo. It can appear as though this *shared involvement* of model and imitator, which occurs when the imitator is included in the group, has a favourable effect. The observation does not reveal any form of instruction on the part of the experienced boys, but Amanda nevertheless becomes a natural part of their mutual activity. She becomes part of a natural process with turn-taking (Sacks et. al, 1974; Sheets-Johnstone, 2000) where this alternates between the active participants and the observers, and so forth. It appears that the shared attention, and the subsequent turn-taking which arises after Amanda has been accepted into the group, is positive for rapid imitation.

A new example shows an imitation process already defined by a best-friend group.

3. *Toni, Karen and Ellen follow the permanent 'obstacle course' in The Climbing Area. They swing up to tree number 2 from the broken branch, jump on to the roof, and then into tree number 3, continuing from the slim branch down to the ground. It is a challenging exercise which not all dare to do, nor can carry out as yet. Toni and Karen complete the exercise with speed and skill. Ellen does not dare to jump from tree number 2 to the roof. She asks how to do it and Karen shows her. All are*

> *focussed on Ellen, but she does not dare to jump. Roger has been watching from the ground level and points out that it is easy to jump from tree number 2 to the roof. When his turn comes, he swings up using the broken branch and jumps securely onto the roof. Karen follows from her position on the roof and, apparently somewhat impressed, asks 'Have you done this before?'*

In this example, the children's joint attention and shared involvement clearly emerges from the start of the activity, thus distinguishing it from example no. 2 where Amanda herself had gained access to mutual participation. In the best-friend group it appears that the joint attention is a matter of course right from the start. Even though the exercise relates to the individual's own skills, all four children are deeply focussed on their own and others' performances. They observe, and follow the movements commenting before, during and after the exercises have been performed. According to Sheets-Johnstone (2000), this joint attention is characteristic of situations where several are participating in the same activity. This enables mutual influence to take place and such that the advanced course through The Climbing Area becomes the joint property of the ASP participants. This explains why this course has become established as a standardised activity carried out by many children, with increasing refinement and personally adapted style. It is interesting to observe Roger's behaviour in this example. In the first situation, which was filmed nine days prior to the third situation, he was observed alone in the area. Now he is ready to enter into a mutual communication process, and the activity is carried out in a situation of joint attention and shared involvement. Roger is now part of an activity where several focus their attention on something in which they are jointly involved (Tomasello, 1995). The whole course is not yet habitual, but he has commenced with this. The three girls follow his action, and Karen gives a clear expression of acknowledgement.

The third situation can be said to be typical for barrier-breaking body movements in the ASP; this occurs in interaction between children with a close association with a best-friend group. The ASP environment appears to be a community where the activities encourage social

learning processes (Wenger, 1998). These are not learning processes that are directed towards formal educational aims. Nevertheless, the learned movements appear to be important to the individual child. Such learning is situated; it emerges as a consequence of informal situations in the ASP-practice. It is situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) that fosters movements that the children experience as important in their everyday activity. Interaction in this community of practice shows, however, that interaction may occur in different ways according to type of activity taking place, the structure of the group, and individual expectations. Joint attention among children participating in a social group appears to increase the processes of learning movements during bodily play.

Turn-taking in social imitation processes

As mentioned, there is much bodily activity in the ASP, either in best-friend groups or in large groups based on activity choice. The best-friend groups comprise just a few children with close and mutual relations. One characteristic of the best-friend groups is the shared involvement in joint activities (Dunn, 2004). The activity is determined jointly by the participants, and may cover a wide range of interests. Occasionally, the children become involved in activities in which none of them has any particular prior experience: at other times there may be one or more 'experts' in the group. The first of these results in a joint experiment of new body movements while the other is characterized by imitation of movements that are familiar to some in the group. This has a strong effect on the imitation process. The following example, which took place on the asphalt area in the front of the ASP building, illustrates an experimental activity where all participants are at the level of beginner.

4. *Gloria comes out to the asphalt area with a hoop-la. She attempts to 'rock' and spin the hoop. After a short while her friends Pernille and Siv join her. They attempt to spin the hoop around their waist, their chest and their ankles. They throw the hoop and roll it along the ground. None of the girls appear as experts. They stand facing each other in a ring showing what they can do and challenging each other in various ways. During the minutes they keep up this activity, their level of skill is considerably increased.*

This is a group activity that occurs at the initiative of Gloria, and has not been agreed upon by any of the girls. Rather, it was an impulse by Gloria when she went to the equipment shed and discovered that all the scooters were being used. When she commenced with the hoop-la, this was a tempting affordance (Gibson, 1986), also for the two other girls. The hoop-la became a substitute for the scooter resulting in an activity where they experiment with the different ways in which the hoop-la can be used. There is no imitation involved of any previously developed skills. None of the girls has any particular experience with the hoop-la such that this is a barrier-breaking activity for all three. This results in a profusion of physical solutions. The girls focus their attention on a joint activity and the shared involvement is manifest. They compete in finding different ways in which to use the hoop-la and try out each other's solutions. All this occurs as a natural exchange between the three girls where they partly find their own solutions and partly imitate those of the others. They involve themselves intuitively when it seems appropriate; there are no pauses in the activity and no verbal exchange takes place regarding whose turn it is to display their skills or imitation. This appears to take place intuitively from non-verbal signals. This continues for about ten minutes. It is a form of communication that can be explained as a circular, intuitive exchange between each other's meaningful behaviour (Merleau-Ponty, 1964; Rasmussen, 1996). The similarity to a conversation with improvised exchange is remarkable. The girls' natural exchanges in presenting their activities and imitation can be explained by the concept of *turn-taking* (Sacks et al., 1974; Sheets-Johnstone, 2000), and is a phenomenon which is observed on repeated occasions in the ASP children's body movements. This is most clearly manifest in the best-friend groups when there is just a few children who are undertaking the same experimental activity. This exchange of body language appears to be most compatible and intuitive when the participants have reasonably similar levels of skill. This does not, however, need to be an

activity in which they are new-beginners. It is also observed that the most skilful climbers challenge the others with advanced climbing in The Climbing Area.

Where one or several in a group are notably more skilful than the others in executing an activity, the bodily conversation becomes distorted and the natural mode of communication becomes less predominant. This is observed both through skills that the children have developed themselves, and in exercises developed by adults. In the video materials there is an episode where the nine-year-olds, Karen, Ellen and Toni imitate the basic gymnastic skills 'cartwheel' and 'bridge', something which Toni had learnt previously. The situation arose impulsively when the four girls, who were initially playing in the sandpit, began to speak about the gymnastics in which they were to participate that evening. This inspired them to try out the actual exercises. Suddenly, they ran over to the grass area and commenced. Toni had already attended the gym class for several years, and was considered as something of an expert. The others were at a considerably lower level. Toni immediately took charge; she showed the exercises, introduced assistance exercises, and assisted the other girls in the exercises. The similarity with an adult gym teacher was remarkable. The other girls immediately accepted Toni's expert role. They study her execution of the exercises, listen to her explanations, attempt to imitate the exercises and listen to her comments. The situation is characterized by joint attention and mutual involvement. Turn-taking appears, however, to be less intuitive than in the fourth example where none of the participants are experts. In this situation turn-taking more closely resembles that which occurs in a formal learning situation: it follows established rules based on who is the instructor and who is the imitator (Sheets-Johnstone, 2000). The situation thus resembles that which occurs in tutoring in formal learning situations. The youngest of the girls has an accepted instructor role that she appears to enjoy. It can appear as though she is imitating her own adult trainer when she adopts this role herself. The situation illustrates how children can gain experience when incorporating

different roles into the informal social setting. These may be positive experiences, both for those giving instruction, and those who are imitating. Research has shown that peer tutoring can develop the ability to associate the development of skills to personal imitative (Sprinthall, 1994). 'The child expert' achieves advantages through increased understanding of the activity in which instruction is being given, boosting confidence and which can be carried over in a desire to learn other subjects (Ehly & Larsen, 1980).

The situation described above bears the characteristics of taking place in accordance with a model of adult-controlled children's sport. Observations show, however, a corresponding pattern when movement developed by the child itself are imitated. The fifth situation, which took place at The Wheel, illustrates this.

5. *Rebecca is to launch herself from the top platform, and wants to be observed. She calls to Ida and Dorothy: 'Watch me! Aren't I crazy?' Ida is interested and watches. Rebecca does an advanced manoeuvre, making a good deal of noise while executing it. Afterwards, she is happy and in high spirits. Ida now wants to try and goes straight up to the top platform. 'Are you going to start form there?' Rebecca asks. 'I'll try – it's my first time,' Ida replies. When Ida is ready, Rebecca shouts: 'Sophie, look at Ida!', and to Ida: 'Go on, Ida!'. Ida breathes in a couple of times and launches the sling. The rope is slack, so it was a sudden start. Rebecca and Sophie are excited and run to Ida and clap her on the back. 'Wow, that hurt a bit,' says Ida. Sophie hears this and asks: 'Wasn't that cool?' 'Yes,' says Ida, and smiles. All three then run back to the start platform. Now Rebecca will show Ida how it should be done. She climbs up to the top platform and tells Ida how to prepare to jump while she carries out this exercise herself. She emphasises that it is important to lean backwards and to the side at the start. She shows this taking one trip. It is then Ida's turn again. 'That's quite dangerous what you are doing now.' Rebecca says confidentially. Ida takes the sitting board, manoeuvres it into place with her left hand, and stands still at the top for a moment. Then Rebecca shouts: 'Dorothy, watch Ida now'. The girls remind Ida that she must lean backwards. She does precisely what she is told and makes a good start. The girls are excited. When she comes back Sophie acknowledges the performance: 'You are clever, Ida!'*

This is a skill that the children in the ASP have developed themselves. Sophie has helped Rebecca before to imitate the skill, and the situation in example 5 describes how Rebecca assists Ida in her imitations. This is a typical example of a child functioning as tutor when another child wishes to imitate a skill that requires 'daring'. The sequence contains several

interesting elements with the child as tutor. At the first attempt the most important appeared to be getting Ida off the platform such that she could overcome her nerves. Rebecca's attention was directed towards motivating her to 'swing out'. After the first trip had been made, this was greeted with loud ovation. It is first and foremost the bodily emotional feeling the two more experienced girls emphasise in their acclaim. 'Wasn't that cool?' Ida emphasises in her tone of voice that that *was* 'cool'. Buytendijk (1988) has pointed to a clear bodily-emotional association in the experience of movement, and this is manifest in the current situation. The bodily-emotional enjoyment can be observed in all three girls after Ida's first swing from the top platform. It is an example of the joint attention and shared involvement which is so characteristic of body movements in best-friend groups. Ida experiences the enjoyment of having carried out this 'daring' exercise, and her two friends identify themselves with a similar emotion. In this situation, Rebecca does not give any immediate response concerning what was done correctly – or incorrectly. Nevertheless, she has a clear impression of what the correct procedure was. This emerges clearly in her expression when, during an interview, she is shown the entire episode on a video.

Rebecca: *Ida attempted to swing from right up there. It was her first time.*

Interviewer: *Is that so? That was tough.*

Rebecca: *Yes. It was me who told her what to do. There she managed to do it properly.*

Interviewer: *Did she do it properly? Tell me what that means. Is it difficult to swing out from there?*

Rebecca: *Yes. When you go up there, it is quite difficult. It's difficult because one thinks it is scary. It is a long way from up there.*

Interviewer: *I understand. But how do you do that?*

Rebecca: *First you have to climb up. Someone then gives The Wheel [pulley] to us. Then you must sit on that round board, and then push off.*

Interviewer: *You said that Ida did it properly the second time. What was it she did that was right?*

Rebecca: *Yes. The first time, she jumped down. Actually she should not have jumped down. One should lean backwards and a bit to the side. That's what she did the last time.*

On the next trip she is more focussed on skills in her instructions. The ‘daring’ has been carried out and the focus is now on the skills. There are several elements in Rebecca’s instructions that are often pointed out as ideals within sports didactics. Proficiency is comprehensively presented as an exchange between demonstration and explanation, and where a direct and immediate response is given to the exercise. Turn-taking appears to follow the unwritten rules that apply in a formal learning situation. This is especially interesting as there is no mention of a standardised skill but one that the children themselves have developed. What is it then which determines what is right or wrong? Why shouldn’t one just jump from the platform just as Ida did on her first attempt rather than leaning backwards and to the side? Ida commented that it hurt a bit when she just swung out with a sudden start. As such, it is the safety aspect that Rebecca is referring to when she says ‘to do it properly’. In addition, it appears to have something to do with control. When the experienced girls demonstrate complete control, this implies a gradual transition from a stationary position to one of full speed. We observe that balance and flow are those features that arouse the most positive response of the children who are watching. This is an important aspect of children’s imitation; it is not a matter of uncritical copying. The movement has an aesthetic dimension that is taken into consideration when the proficiency is evaluated. The children have the possibility to choose the action that is to be imitated; this enables an aesthetic evaluation of the imitation. This is in accordance with previous findings within sporting apprenticeship, where creative imitation is demonstrated (Jespersen, 1997). Thus, imitation is not pure copying. The different possibilities in an innovative practice have to be included in the evaluation (Sheets-Johnstone, 2000).

As mentioned, there are certain aspects of Rebecca’s behaviour that are in accordance with recognized didactic principles. In addition, there are a number of surprising elements: 1) importance attached to the risk of a daring action, and 2) the energy which was attached to

drawing the attention of others to the first attempt. It appears to be important that others are watching when the barrier-breaking exercise is performed. Further, Rebecca attached importance to the risk associated with this exercise. The introductory comment before Ida's trip, 'What you are doing now is dangerous', emphasises this. Neither is this the only example. Observations from the ASP time reveal many similar occasions when daring and technically advanced exercises are performed on The Wheel, in The Climbing Area and the asphalt area. Both of these points can probably be explained by the significance that the physical actions have for being accepted and recognition by the peer group. Children use this when placing themselves in relationship to other children who are present. It also has a role when the children construe their identity through participation in social practice (Wenger, 1998). When Rebecca tells Ida sensitively about the risk aspect of the exercise, this is certainly because she is intuitively aware that carrying out the exercise will mean status among the children. Ida does not appear to react negatively to this. The attention of the other individuals is part of 'the significance of movement' (van den Berg, 1952), and is basic in children's physical actions. It is therefore quite normal for children to draw the attention of others when they are going to execute a 'daring action'. Considerable importance is attached to this in the barrier-breaking situation that Ida has performed. For Rebecca, who has functioned as tutor in this situation, calling the attention of others is a natural part of the instruction.

Joint attention is a characteristic of barrier-breaking body movements among best-friends. Mutual appreciation, which is so typical of best-friends relationships (Dunn, 2004), appears to establish shared involvement that is favourable for the imitation processes. This applies both to activities where all are at approximately the same level, and those where one is an expert. The imitation processes on the other hand arise differently. If all are at the same level, the

process of turn-taking appears to be intuitive and spontaneous, more so than when an expert is present.

Concluding remarks

This study shows that much barrier-breaking body movement occurs in the informal social situations in the ASP. Situations arise in two categories of group formation: best-friend groups and activity groups. In both categories body movements of both habitual and barrier-breaking character take place. The barrier-breaking body movements in the best-friend groups can be characterized according to two categories – joint try-out of new movements and imitation of other children's habitual movements. Both categories are characterized by shared involvement and have a clear body-emotional expression. Joint try-out of new movements occurs in a natural exchange of activity and observation within the group – through new suggestions and by imitating the others' suggestions for activity. The development in the movement patterns is unstructured and incidental, and imitation of others' movements occurs spontaneously and intuitively. The most salient pattern appears to be joint participation and turn-taking. When there is an expert in the best-friend group, the weight is on imitation of his or her habitual movement. In such situations we have seen that the expert has an accepted tutor function. The situations have a bodily-emotional character characterized by a strong mutual association between model and imitator.

Barrier-breaking body movements in activity groups with looser social relations occur more frequently as a personal imitation of other's habitual movement patterns. In such groups we have not observed examples whereby the model acts as tutor as with best-friend groups. The imitator and model focus joint attention on the actual bodily movement, but do not have the same degree of reciprocity observed in best-friend groups. A greater degree of personal responsibility is required of the individual for participation in an imitation process. After participation has been entered into, it appears that the joint attention is characterized by a

greater degree of shared involvement, something that appears to have a favourable impact on the imitation process.

Ward and Lee (2005) have emphasised that peer learning within education where 'merely placing students in groups is insufficient to ensure that learning will occur' (p. 206). This conclusion is certainly a consequence of the form of peer learning which is frequently used in schools. It is not the intuitive imitation to which importance is attached, but rather peer-assisted learning directed towards specific objectives. The results of this study suggest that the citation from Ward and Lee (2005) should be modified, and that the school's physical education can be compared to movement-learning through imitation of child-managed play. In spite of the absence of formal objectives and without a strict supervision of responsible pedagogues, children learn valuable movements in the ASP. Learning in such informal social situations, which is so typical of the ASP, largely occurs in processes where children *imitate* others' movements. *Join attention* and *turn-taking* are characteristic features of such learning processes. Each of these three phenomena is expressed to different degrees, dependent upon the context in which the learning process occurs. In best-friend groups, joint attention, characterized by shared involvement along with intuitive turn-taking, is predominant. As such, it appears that the best-friend group is a very favourable situation whereby learning of body movements can occur. In the activity groups it is the imitation process itself that emerges as the central feature, and considerable initiative is required on the part of the imitator in order to become an active part of the mutual process. Following the first initiative we observe both shared involvement and turn-taking, frequently with a rapid adoption of the movement pattern as a result. The advantage with these groups is that they are open for participation and that there is often an expert who can be imitated.

The findings in this study should be taken into consideration when the future organisation of the Norwegian ASP is discussed. If ASP time is to be used systematically in order to increase

learning in school subjects, for example through supervised homework and adult-managed activity, the time used for child-managed activities would be reduced. Such a situation would decrease the children's opportunity for learning in informal, social situations. The findings of this study suggest that greater emphasis should be placed upon ASP activities as being complementary to those in the school. Future training of ASP professionals should encourage an understanding of learning processes in informal, social situations that particularly characterize the ASP.

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Notes

[1] The 'after-school programme' (ASP) [*skolefritidsordning*] is a voluntary programme of cultural and play activities administered by the school or the municipality outside normal school hours.

[2] 'The Wheel', as it is popularly called, is a sling suspended from a pulley (the wheel) on a wire line between two poles. The poles are about 25 meters apart; one is higher than the other. The child drags the pulley to the higher frame, climbs a ladder and sits in the sling. He or she is then virtually launched into space as the pulley runs down the line towards the lower pole. The lower support is so designed that when the pulley comes to abrupt halt, the child is then left swinging in the sling. Altogether, a considerable feat of daring for many children!

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Article 4

Løndal, K. (Accepted). Children's Lived Experience and their Sense of Coherence: Bodily Play in a Norwegian After-School Programme.

Children's Lived Experience and their Sense of Coherence: Bodily Play in a Norwegian After-School Programme

Abstract

This article is based on materials gathered from qualitative research interviews among eight and nine years old children participating in an After-School Programme (ASP) in Oslo, and investigates how bodily play affects their sense of coherence (SOC). In line with Maurice Merleau-Ponty, children's lived experiences are regarded as layered emotions, actions and conceptions from previous bodily engagement. They bind together the living body and its environment into a coherent, personal entirety that gives meaning to new practical situations. The study is based on Aaron Antonovsky's theory of SOC. The concept of SOC expresses the extent to which an individual has a feeling of confidence in existence as comprehensible, manageable and meaningful. SOC is regarded as an important assumption for managing the world. The study shows that bodily play in the ASP has a considerable potential of promoting the children's SOC. Most of the children in the study experience their world as comprehensible, manageable and meaningful. Negative thoughts and feelings are reduced during bodily play. Play offers particularly strong opportunities for the children themselves to shape outcomes, and for being together with other children whom they know well. If a child is excluded from joint bodily play or experiences repetitive unfriendly reports, the experiences of comprehensibility and manageability are reduced, and SOC decreases. The study demonstrates the importance of pedagogical competence among ASP professionals in terms of establishing an inclusive framework that encourage and stimulate child-managed bodily play. Future training of ASP professionals should encourage an understanding of the potential of developing SOC through bodily play.

Keywords: *Children, bodily play, sense of coherence, lived experience, qualitative method*

Introduction

Physical activity has a positive effect on children's health (Blair et al., 1995; WHO, 2002, 2004). Researchers interested in this area have a medical point of commencement, and focus on appropriate activity types, intensity, frequency and duration in the prevention of physical health problems. The living human body is considered as an object, and there is a danger that the subjective aspects of health are overlooked (Leder, 1998). When an alternative is sought, it is important to avoid attaching unilateral importance to the subjective aspects of human existence (Rothfield, 2008). Theoretical standpoints which consider the human as an embodied subject can offer an alternative which avoids such polarisation. This article is based upon such a standpoint; the point of departure is the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

The article builds upon a survey with a life-world approach, focussing on how children participating in a Norwegian After-School Programme (ASP) experience their physical activity in play, and discusses how this affects their sense of coherence. The concept of 'sense of coherence', based on the work of medical sociologist Aaron Antonovsky, is regarded as an important assumption for managing the world (Antonovsky, 1979; 1987). In order to emphasise the theoretical perspective, the concept of 'bodily play' is used rather than 'physical activity'. Bodily play implies self-driven activities that are oriented towards autotelic values (Gadamer, 1989; Huizinga, 1955), and includes locomotory and manipulative body movements together with stabilising bodily postures (Gallahue & Ozmun, 2006).

In Norway, the ASP is a public programme available to children in their first four years of school. Participation is voluntary and is organised in close association with the individual school. The Education Act specifies that the ASP shall provide the opportunity for play, cultural and leisure-time activities, and provide the children with care and supervision (Department of Education and Training, 2008). According to government documents, it is expected that the ASP staff will initiate child-managed activities of their own choice (Haug, 1994; Øksnes, 2001). The ASP does not have formal educational aims, and neither are there any essential requirements of formal education for the ASP staff. This has resulted in a lower adult/child ratio than in the school, and that only a minority of staff have pedagogic training (Kvello & Wendelborg, 2002).

The theoretical perspective

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology provides a theoretical basis to circumvent the opposing views of the body as an object or a subject. This can contribute to a nuanced account of health. In his statement that the human being has a lived, bodily subjectivity, Merleau-Ponty (2002) rejects the division between subject and object. He asserts an integral view of how the human being meets and experiences her world and existence. The human being does not have

a mere biomechanical objective body; the body is saturated with lived experiences (ibid.). The experiences are not to be regarded as intrinsic representations at the psychological level, but may be regarded as layered emotions, actions and conceptions from previous bodily engagement. They bind together the living body and its physical, social and cultural environment into a coherent, personal entirety which gives meaning to new practical situations (Morris, 2008; Thompson, 2007). Merleau-Ponty (2002) has described the lived experiences as a basis for pre-reflective understanding of the world. This is a comprehensive process where perception, lived experience and consciousness are closely interwoven. According to Merleau-Ponty (2002) it is this interwoven entirety which 'goes limp' in illness. Health problems cannot be detached from the biological body as an isolated object. Neither can we focus solely on the physiological parameters when we are to evaluate a child's health. There is a need for an understanding which is drawn into the interwoven entirety in the lived body which Merleau-Ponty has described.

The medical sociologist, Aaron Antonovsky, argues for an understanding of health that is much similar to Merleau-Ponty's view. In what he describes as a salutogenetic orientation, he goes beyond the traditional illness-related understanding (Antonovsky, 1979, 1987). He proposes that health and well-being are shaped by socio-cultural factors of the individuals, their closest social network and their community, and that life experiences influence how the individual responds and adapts to the situation. Antonovsky considers that a sense of coherence (SOC) is an important assumption for managing the world and to improve human health and well-being:

> *SOC is a 'global' orientation, a way of looking at the world, a dispositional orientation rather than a response to a specific situation. Explicit commitment is made to the hypothesis that one cannot have a strong (or weak) SOC about this one area of life and be at a different level with respect to other areas of life (Antonovsky, 1987, p. 75).*

Based on a series of in-depth interviews of people who had experienced serious traumas, but who nevertheless managed their existence, Antonovsky introduced a set of underlying components which operationalises the SOC concept. He showed that SOC expresses the extent to which an individual has a pervasive and permanent, yet dynamic feeling of confidence that existence has *comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness* (Antonovsky, 1987; Lindström & Eriksson, 2005, 2006). Comprehensibility is a cognitive component that refers to the extent to which sense and order can be drawn from the situation. It is associated with that one's world is experienced as understandable, structured, consistent and clear. Manageability is a behavioural component and refers to those resources required such than one can cope with demands and challenges that arise in the daily life. The sense of meaningfulness is emotional and refers to the person's ability to participate fully in the processes of shaping their future life. Meaningfulness is associated with demands which are experienced as challenges where engagement and investment are considered worthwhile. It is emphasised that Antonovsky (1987) considered the three components as inextricably interwoven and that SOC must be regarded as an entirety in spite of the operational focus on certain dimensions.

Although Merleau-Ponty and Antonovsky have different theoretical starting points, they both point to an underlying coherent, personal entirety or a sense of coherence that gives meaning to lived life. I will argue that the lived experiences that Merleau-Ponty has written about are of fundamental significance for SOC. This implies that lived experience is regarded as layered emotions, actions and conceptions from earlier bodily engagement that forms the basis for a pre-reflective understanding of the world.

Antonovsky (1987) described the types of experience in the childhood which can result in a stronger – or weaker – SOC. He attached importance to the fact that development occurs in close association with the environment, and that the experience of predictability is the basis

for comprehensibility, that a good load balance is the basis for manageability, and that participation in shaping outcomes is the basis for meaningfulness. The experience of predictability implies that in the interplay with the environment and fellow human beings, the child encounters stable and predicted reactions. A good load balance implies that the child experiences the possibility to meet those demands and challenges they encounter with themselves or others, thereby having the possibility to choose whether they will live up to these, or not. Concerning how participation in shaping outcomes is associated with meaningfulness, Antonovsky (1987) states that experience, which follows the action which one has chosen to take, and which results in positive experiences, will encourage meaningfulness. The experiences from the childhood are thus considered important for the development of SOC, and which can promote health.

Merleau-Ponty (2001) understands childhood as an independent period with special experiences. The child's perception is meaningful even though it is not as structured as that of an adult. Childhood can be regarded as a period in life with specific activity forms and development characteristics. In this article, bodily play is regarded as one of these specific forms of activity. Gadamer (1989) focuses on the self-driven dimension of play. Play is considered neither as an objective nor a subjective action. It is playing itself through the player; it is the play itself which is the subject. According to Gadamer, play is a universal phenomenon. He points to the fact that animals play. But we can say that the human being too plays. Her playing too is a natural process (ibid.). Children thus experience play through their natural behaviour, without that this comprises a thought-out object. This conforms well with Merleau-Ponty's (2002) claim that human understanding is embodied. The entirety of the play situation comes to the child in a spontaneous manner where the child experiences the play without a cognitive recognition or an intellectual analysis of the actions.

Another characteristic of play is its orientation towards autotelic values (Gadamer, 1989; Huizinga, 1955). This means that play is a self-contained activity that is done simply because the doing itself is the reward; it makes the player feel good. This autotelic orientation has similar characteristics as what is termed 'subjective well-being' (Diener et al., 1999), and which Antonovsky (1987) related to the human being's ability to manage her world.

Antonovsky developed a scale whereby SOC could be measured (Antonovsky, 1987), and through which he provided empirical support for his hypothesis. This scale was subsequently widely used in many research projects (Eriksson & Lindstöm, 2005), and the association between physical activity and SOC is among those relations which have been investigated. The results show that people with a high activity level have a tendency to score higher on SOC than those with a low level of activity (Poppius et al., 1999; Wainwright et al., 2007). Further, a Swedish study showed that youth with a positive attitude to physical education scored high on SOC (Sollerhed et al., 2005). The researchers conclude that experience with physical activity during youth can contribute to SOC. This concurs with Antonovsky's (1987) life course perspective on the development of SOC. He attached importance to the composition of life experience, and describes the types of experience which constitute the driving force in the direction of a stronger – or weaker – SOC. Childhood and youth are considered important in the development of a SOC which can foster good health later in life. The aim of this article is to provide an understanding of the role of the child's bodily play in development of SOC, and it is based on a study employing a qualitative research approach.

Method

The theoretical perspective requires information to be gathered in the life-world. The researcher has to evolve a way of looking at the subjects in concrete real-life situations (Bengtsson, 2006). For this reason I was engaged in following the children in an ASP group during an extended period of time in 2007. During a four-month-period I used the

opportunity to gather qualitative materials. Two research methods, which complemented each other, were used; *close observation* (van Manen, 1990) and *qualitative research interviews* (Kvale, 1996). The analysis and discussion in this article is based on the materials gathered in the interviews, but the observations were important in order to understand the context, and were crucial to the development of the interview guide and the accomplishment of the interviews and the analysis.

The research method used in the study differs from the standardized, quantitative scale normally used in research related to SOC. This is due to the theoretical perspective that is basis for the study. There are weighty arguments related to the complexity of the research theme for using qualitative methods in gathering materials about children's SOC. It might be appropriate to connect the questions directly to the children's life-world, and to adjust them to the relevant age group. A better understanding can also be ensured when materials are gathered in a face-to-face conversation between the researcher and the child.

The aim of the study which this article is a part of was to contribute to an in-depth understanding of the children's bodily play, and not to undertake a comparison of institutions. For this reason, the investigation was restricted to a single ASP which was organized related to a single state school. Due to the need to be able to recall experiences and to articulate them verbally, the study concentrated on the upper two age groups who were permitted to attend the ASP. The study thus comprised 22 girls and 14 boys who were eight or nine years old.

The ASP studied is located in the suburbs of Oslo. The associated building comprises a recreation room with a dining area, a small computer room, a reading room, and a cloakroom. In front of the entrance to the ASP building is a flat asphalt area and a large sandpit. Immediately to the side of the building is a small playhouse surrounded by trees suitable for climbing. Otherwise, a slope surrounds the building. Approximately half the area comprises

grass; the rest is trees and rugged terrain. A peripheral part of the school's play area is located in the immediate vicinity of the ASP site, and is available to the ASP-children. Here is 'The Bunker', as the children call it: an area for ball games covered with artificial grass, surrounded by a fence.

Before the investigation started I received a formal consent from the administration of the ASP, and a notification about the project was sent to the Data Protection Official. I arranged two separate meetings where I gave oral information about the project to the staff-members and the children. A letter containing information and a request for a written consent concerning participation in the study was sent to the children's parents/guardians.

The observations focused on specific places in the ASP area. Video recordings and field notes were used to register situations and events. After the observation period was concluded, five girls and four boys were selected for an individual qualitative research interview. Prior to a detailed planning of the interview and selection of the subjects to be interviewed, the field notes and video recordings were closely examined. Specific themes were identified which were to be closely followed up. The themes were related to the child's bodily play at specific places, the child's interactions with other children, and particular events that affected the child's play. The children selected for interview had been involved in particularly interesting situations related to these themes.

Both girls and boys from the two relevant age groups were selected, and it was taken into account that they should represent a variety of activities. Against this background, it was expected to obtain valuable supplementary information. In addition the interview focused on how the children's play is connected to the components which Antonovsky (1987) indicated as substantially for SOC; comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness. Prior to the interview, an interview guide was prepared with a list of themes to be covered together with

proposals for introducing and follow-up questions. When the interview guide was developed, the 13 questions in the short-form of the Sense of Coherence Questionnaire (Antonovsky, 1987) were revised in order to suit the particular group and the present context. During the interview the children responded in their own words, and the interviewer used follow-up-questions when required.

In line with Kvale's (1996) recommendations, the interview was given the character of a one-to-one conversation where the child could relate its own experiences to the relevant themes. The interviews were conducted during the ASP hours in a room that was familiar to the children. In order to gather nonverbal signals as well as spoken words, the interviews were filmed and sound recorded.

In order to ensure that the interviews were suitable for further analysis, these were transcribed in note form in such a manner that the significance of the conversation emerged. The interview recordings showed that there was supplementary information in the form of non-verbal gestures. In order to include these gestures in the analysis, the transcript notes were set up in two columns, – the spoken word in one column, and the non-verbal signals described in the other.

In the further analysis I used a method inspired by the structure of descriptive phenomenological analysis (Giorgi, 1985). Through a stepwise analysis comprising four chronological sets of written notes, I moved from 1) a basic description, via 2) localization of the meaning units, and 3) incorporation into a theoretical perspective with relevant professional terminology, to 4) a synthesis of the meaning units to a consistent text where the phenomena studied emerge.

Several steps were taken to secure that the findings reflected the children's lived experience. Different types of materials were gathered in the field, and in this way triangulations

strengthen the study (Cohen et al., 2007; Johnson, 1997). I intended to enter the children's life-world through direct participation. Therefore, I followed the ASP-group over a four-month-period. Gathering of materials over such an extended period of time increased the possibility for *saturation* (Cohen et al., 2007).

During the conversation in the qualitative research interviews the interviewees were asked about my interpretations of specific situations in the observations. I also pronounced interpretations of the child's statements and asked if they were understood correctly. Such *interpretation through conversation* can be compared with participant feedback and member checking (Johnson, 1997). According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) such interpretation through conversation increases the trustworthiness of the study. Because of the children's age they were not asked for feedback on written transcriptions and analysis. These were accomplished only by me as researcher, and this can possible limit the trustworthiness of the study. Nevertheless, I tried to bracket own beliefs and understandings, and also focused on finding *cases that did not conform* to my preconceptions (Johnson, 1997). In addition, the design of the study, the theoretical framework, and the analysis were discussed with two experienced supervisors during the research process, and they challenged me to provide solid evidence for any interpretations and conclusions.

Results and discussion

The results are presented and discussed with the point of commencement in qualitative research interviews with the nine ASP children. The children used in the examples are anonymized. Importance was attached to establishing how the children experience bodily play in the ASP. The presentation is structured so as to focus on the SOC dimensions – *comprehensibility*, *manageability* and *meaningfulness*. The discussion concerns how bodily play affects SOC through these interwoven components.

In order to preserve both the entirety and the range of material, three different child profiles are presented and discussed: one main profile and two alternative profiles. The three profiles are a result of the fourth writing in the analysing process, and as such are based directly on the gathered materials. In the main profile the characteristic features of the conversations with seven of the children have been included. The two alternative profiles represent two boys who give another impression than that of the main group.

Main profile

The children in the main profile feel 'at home' in the every-day activities of the ASP, and are comfortable in their actions. This applies particularly in situations involving bodily play. They know all the children and the adults in the ASP, and can play with many of them. It is emphasised as important that play may occur with those children they know particularly well. They thrive best with their friends, and they state that close relations develop most easily through bodily play. The children experience changes in mood, but seldom experience markedly opposing emotions and thoughts. Scared and sad are words they use about emotions which they would rather not experience. The children can describe situations which arouse positive or negative emotions. They say that both positive and negative experiences can be incidental, and things cancel each other out over time. The children enjoy being in the ASP, especially when they are experiencing bodily play. They consider themselves clever in skills necessary to carry out preferred activities, but do not consider themselves more unfortunate or unjustly treated than other children. They have experienced disappointment about someone they know well. In isolated instances a conflict has arisen involving close friends. Such episodes make an impression, and the child has a tendency to exaggerate the consequences. The children rarely have emotions which are difficult to control in association with play. They do not go round and think about difficult or unpleasant experiences. Bodily play together with friends is the best remedy for enjoying oneself again. The possibility for self-chosen bodily play together with other children is regarded as important, resulting in pleasure and satisfaction. The children enjoy themselves in the ASP, and the activities taking place emerge as important in that life shall have a meaning. It is seldom for the children to consider that there is no meaning in

what they are doing – and almost never during the ASP hours. Self-chosen bodily play in social situations contributes to counteracting negative emotions.

The main profile is generally positive to ASP, particularly in respect of bodily play. In the interviews, the children mention situations in school and during leisure time when they feel uncertain or shy, and that it may then be difficult to know how to react. However, this does not apply to bodily play in ASP time. A typical example is Elaine's response to questions relating to uncertainty in these activities:

Interviewer: *How do you like it in the ASP? Are you ever uncertain and shy there?*

Elaine: *No, never ... not at all. (The response is immediate and definitive.)*

Interviewer: *Not when you are very active either, per example when running or climbing?*

Elaine: *No. Then I am definitely not uncertain. (She shakes her head vigorously.)*

For the main profile play is characterised by familiarity with the environment. They express personal confidence in interacting with the surroundings, and choose those activities which they are accustomed to. The child sees meaning in the world as they live and act within it; the lived experience creates meaning through mutual interaction with the surroundings (Gibson, 1986; Merleau-Ponty, 2002). This not only applies to familiarity with the physical surroundings. Children are dependent upon a sense of certainty in their social interaction with other children, and the ASP staff. They experience the structure of play as predictable, but emphasise that the activity should occur together with other children they know well. Activity which involves interaction with the activity place is not regarded as sufficient in itself in order to establish a satisfactory play situation; play must occur in social company built upon intersubjective interaction. This is not something which the child consciously considers during play. It is a mutual bodily communication pattern which is understood pre-reflectively; it is based on the mutual exchange of meaningful actions, gestures, facial

expressions and language (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). In such situations, participation in the ASP is experienced as comprehensible.

Antonovsky (1987) emphasises that the SOC component, comprehensibility, has its basis in predictability. This component is strengthened when the child experiences a predictable response to her actions. The child in the main profile experiences this during bodily play of ASP, both in respect of the physical surroundings and in relation to those with whom she associates herself. It may nevertheless be important to note that it is not the play activity itself which is predictable. As Gadamer (1989) has pointed out, there is a chance element in play. Play is characterised by an effortless to-and-fro motion, and it is inconsequential where this leads. The child experiences it as a natural process. This is something which they *expect* to happen in bodily play. Nevertheless, it appeared as though some of the children interviewed actually wanted *frameworks* within which the vicissitudes of play shall take place. These frameworks appear to embrace degrees of predictability concerning the place of activity and their companions. This may be the reason why the children strongly emphasise the importance that play should occur with those who he or she knows well. Nevertheless, the children in the main profile experience these frameworks as being well within the bounds of what are acceptable in the ASP.

All children who were included in the main profile considered that bodily play has the advantage of encouraging acquaintance and friendship with others. This emphasises Merleau-Ponty's (1964; 2002) argument that intersubjectivity must be understood as intercorporality; this means that humans understand themselves and each other through their bodily existence. Communication comprises a meaningful body structure where the child's meaningful behaviour is exchanged with others (Merleau-Ponty, 1964). In bodily play, immediate bodily communication is apparent, and encourages an intersubjective understanding between children. This results in children relying on their playmates to take each other into

consideration. Since it is unusual for them to experience a serious breach of these expectations, they are negatively surprised when this does happen, and it leaves a deep impression. Unfriendliness is difficult to cope with, and children have a tendency to overreact to such events. The situation is regarded as a break with their spontaneous comprehension of events, and they feel that the unfriendly atmosphere arising in these circumstances has a broader effect than it does in reality. Rebecca's responses to the questions about what has to be done in order to become friends again provide an example of this: "One can ask if we can play together. One can say 'sorry' and ask if we can be friends again. But if he does not answer, then one is never again friends with him. Then I am very sad." (She looks directly at the interviewer and appears sad.)

The experience of those in the main profile is that they have access to resources required to cope with relevant demands and challenges in connection with play. The children consider themselves competent in those skills needed in those activities they choose. Managing such skills in bodily play appears to be important for the child in order that he or she shall experience life as manageable. This seems to result in a noticeable feeling of pleasure and satisfaction. In addition, this is associated with attention from other persons. The movement contributes to locating the child in relation to others when someone responds with an immediate reaction to the accomplishment (Fattore & Turnbull, 2005; Smith, 2007; van den Berg, 1987). The reactions are experienced as degrees of acceptance and recognition. This appears to be important for the child experiencing the ASP as manageable. This is also in agreement with Antonovsky's description of experiences which encourage SOC. The satisfaction of the activity on the one hand, and the acceptance by other important persons on the other results in a double reward which is favourable for finding a good load balance. Such situations can promote the SOC component of manageability (Antonovsky, 1987).

Children in the main profile provided accounts of situations involving accidents, disappointment and antagonism, although they do not consider themselves more unfortunate or are more unjustly treated than others. Elaine expresses this: “Sometimes it is not fair for me; other times it is not fair for them.” There is a certain amount of coincidence and children accept that things even themselves out over time. It is also important to note that self-chosen bodily play is thought of as being one way to bring about a change in mood from negative thoughts and low spirits. “When I play football, then I don’t think in this way. I just forget it,” Jennifer steadfastly maintains. Children forget that which is negative by participating in bodily play together with persons they know well. Such a change can be said to be a typical characteristic of play as a phenomenon. The play breaches the boundary of “common sense” and places demands upon those participating in the game; the players become engrossed and forget that which is not relevant to the play itself (Gadamer, 1989). Bodily play is, as such, an activity which has the potential of drawing children away from negative thoughts and emotions. Thus, bodily play can contribute to strengthen their subjective well-being.

The main profile experiences that the demands made in connection with bodily play during the ASP are worth the effort. They really become involved in what is going on around them. The activities are experienced as important and meaningful. They particularly mention the pleasure and satisfaction derived from the bodily play which they themselves have chosen. They attach importance to the fact that they must have the opportunity to select both the type of activity and the point in time when they choose to do this. This may well occur in agreement with other children, but they do not like to be dictated to. Antonovsky (1987) considers that the experience which is based on participation in shaping outcomes provides the basis for experience of the SOC component of meaningfulness. It appears that this agrees with the children’s experience of the ASP hours. Play is a natural human form of activity (Gadamer, 1989), and the children express that this form of activity is important such that

their existence shall be regarded as meaningful. The ASP hours emerge as a stage in life where they have the possibility to undertake this important form of activity.

On the basis of this survey, we can say that children in the main profile experience situations of bodily play as predictable and have a good load balance, simultaneously to enjoying a sufficient degree of self-determination and participation in shaping outcomes. According to Antonovsky (1987) this provides important fundamental experience such that their existence will be regarded as comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful. Experience of these components will merge in an overall sense of coherence, and which can be decisive for the child's health later in life. To put it into Merleau-Ponty's vocabulary we may say that the lived experiences merge in a coherent, personal entirety that forms the basis for a pre-reflective understanding of later situations in life.

The main profile presented a positive picture of the bodily play which occurs in the ASP. The five girls and the two boys who form the basis of this profile generally experience the world as coherent, and the ASP makes a positive contribution to this. They mention bodily play as an activity which encourages comprehensibility, makes life more manageable, and which is important if their existence is to be experienced as meaningful. The two alternative profiles emerge as important modifiers to the positive picture given by the main profile. For different reasons, Oscar and Richard do not have the same SOC in their existence.

Alternative profile – Oscar

Oscar is a nine-year-old boy who occupies much space in the ASP environment. He expresses vehemently that he does not feel uncertain in the ASP, but it is imperative that he can do precisely what he wants. He thinks that most of what goes on at school, and much of what is done at ASP is "boring". His preferences are associated with self-chosen bodily play – he would rather play football in The Bunker. Oscar does not know many of the ASP children particularly well, and he has difficulty in pointing out persons whom he would prefer to be together with.

Oscar is often negatively surprised about children he associates with. He is subject to negative treatment, and this results in conflict. He has contradictory emotions and thoughts; this is related to the existence he regards as boring. He is bothered by emotions which he does not want to recognise; he calls these unpleasant feelings. These emotions disappear when he is involved in bodily play; he forgets that and becomes content. Oscar is able to explain something about what arouses the positive or negative emotions. He considers that both positive and negative feelings can be fortuitous, and that they balance out over time. Oscar considers that he is clever in his self-selected activities and does not consider himself more unfortunate than other children. He does not feel that he has been treated unjustly, but he has experienced deep disappointment about the children he associates himself with. He is teased although this seldom occurs when he is playing in The Bunker. Oscar often has emotions which he thinks are difficult to control. He becomes angry and flares up expressing his emotions. Such episodes occur less frequently in connection with bodily play. Oscar states that he does not go round thinking about difficult and unpleasant situations. It helps to go to The Bunker and play a ballgame following one of these episodes, or when he has problems controlling his temper. Oscar does not give an unconditional verification that he enjoys the ASP; much is boring. He particularly likes that part of the ASP which involves self-chosen bodily play; this gives meaning to his existence, and he becomes happy and content.

Oscar considers that much of life is boring and occasionally he has a problematic relationship with other children. He frequently has that "unpleasant feeling" which can be difficult to control. These circumstances do not seem to originate in situations which are directly associated with bodily play at the ASP. He has a particular positive attitude towards activities in the Bunker: "In the Bunker, I feel just tip-top. Then I'm happy," he expresses in the interview. It appears, however, that he takes with him the feeling of a lack of predictability into active play situations, and this results in conflicts with other children. He points out that such conflicts occur less frequently in the ASP than at other times, and that he forgets his problematic thoughts and emotions during bodily play. This indicates that he takes the play

seriously and that he "loses himself in play" (Gadamer, 1989, p. 103). He considers himself clever, and is generally easy-going and happy when he is active, particularly when playing football. This indicates an adjusted load balance, something which contributes to the activity being experienced as manageable (Antonovsky, 1987). Football is a self-chosen activity; this gives him pleasure and satisfaction, and contributes to him finding the situation meaningful.

A limited activity is, however, not enough to reverse his general impression of life. The self-chosen activity in the ASP only represents a breathing space. Conflicts are less frequent than normally, he forgets his problematic thoughts and emotions, and he feels happy and relaxed when he plays football in the Bunker. For this reason he visits the bunker as frequently as possible, without caring who else is there. It is the activity itself which gives Oscar a positive feeling. The self-chosen bodily play which occupies him during the ASP time thus represents a limited part of life where existence has become more manageable and meaningful, and which emerges as important for him. The activity contributes to promoting SOC. But it is nevertheless important to note that SOC is a total orientation, and that one cannot have partial orientations linked to each individual activity category or each individual institution where one is located at any given time (Antonovsky, 1987). Consequently, Oscar's experience with adjusted load balance and self-determination during bodily play may not modify his SOC completely, but it can contribute in a positive direction.

Alternative profile – Richard

Richard has changed schools and ASP several times, most recently three months prior to the interview, and he is uncertain how he should react to this new environment. He feels unfamiliar with the situation, even during play. Generally, he considers bodily play as a good opportunity to become acquainted with the new surroundings, to make new friends and to become contented. He considers that this is dependent upon everybody being pleasant towards each other – something which he has experienced as not merely being a matter of course. Richard does not know

so many children at the ASP, and it is difficult for him to point out friends. He is often negatively surprised about other children; they speak rudely to him and he is excluded from joint activities. These negative incidents result in conflict. He struggles with conflicting emotions and thoughts and is troubled by thoughts that he tried not to recognise. He calls this a 'sad feeling', and states that this has its origin in negative signals by other children in association with play. His mood is at its best when he is active in bodily play. It is however not enough for him to be active. He is dependent upon the other children wanting him to participate. Richard is able to explain what gives him positive or negative emotions, and he considers that he knows what has to be done to initiate these. Richard considers that he is clever in physical skills and does not consider himself more unfortunate than other children. However, he has experienced occasions when he has been seriously disappointed over other children and where he feels he has been treated unjustly. This encourages emotions which are difficult to control. He becomes angry and it is difficult for him not to become physically violent. The disappointments are directly associated with the bodily play in the ASP, and he thinks a lot about these episodes. He considers that bodily play together with others helps when he has these thoughts, but this is dependent upon the others wanting to play with him. The situation is difficult, but he states nevertheless that he enjoys the ASP. Voluntary bodily play is important in order for Richard to feel that his existence has meaning. He considers that there should be plenty of opportunities for this in the ASP.

Richard is generally positive to bodily play. He expresses that he enjoys such activities, and that these have the potential to make him happy and satisfied. During the interview he became happy and high-spirited when he saw an edited video playback of himself in bodily play together with other children. Contrary to Oscar, he attaches much importance to social interaction during the activity. He states that it is decisive that they are friendly towards each other. This reflects his painful experiences. He arrived as a newcomer to this ASP and has other experiences than those described by the main profile. Where the main profile describes a situation characterised by predictability, Richard states that he is not familiar with the situation and feels uncertain how to respond. He admits that he does not know so many

children, and that he is constantly surprised by their behaviour. The situation does not appear to be very predictable; he has not yet broken the code as to how he is to act in front of the other children. This is an example of a child who does not manage to see the meaning of other children's actions. The basis for intersubjective interaction is not present (Gallagher, 2001; 2006). According to Antonovsky (1987), these experiences with repeated unpredictability in childhood can contribute to weakening the SOC component of comprehensibility. Richard's experience is that he does not have access to those resources required to meet the specific demands of the situation. He considers that he is clever where skill is required, and wants to experience the enjoyment of the activity simultaneous to receiving acknowledgement by the other children. When he approaches the other children, he experiences rejection or indifference. This creates a poor load balance. His own demands create an overloading and results in negative reactions (Antonovsky, 1987). He feels that he does not manage to do anything properly. On account of these negative experiences at the ASP, his life is quite difficult. This situation is experienced as particularly difficult since the self-chosen bodily play is important to him. He mentions that such activities are important in order to experience pleasure and satisfaction – to give a meaning to life. The fact that he is excluded results in him feeling that life is less meaningful.

It is worth noting that the problems, as Richard describes them, have a direct basis in that which he experiences as a 'lock-out' for joint bodily play. Here, the difference between Oscar and Richard clearly emerges. Oscar has problems with several aspects of his life, and this results in him having a reduced SOC. Self-chosen bodily activities are positive for Oscar. These provide a breathing space where he enjoys pleasure and satisfaction, and where he participates in decision-making and experiences good load balance. His experience is that one sphere in life is manageable, and this gives meaning to life. This contributes to his SOC. For Richard, however, the experiences of play in the ASP have the opposite effect. The play

situations are experienced as unpredictable and he experiences little joint participation and poor load balance. According to Antonovsky (1987), repeated incidents of this nature can reduce his SOC. Whether this will have the consequence that Richard will actually develop a weaker SOC will be dependent upon future developments. It is worth noting that his expressions are not unambiguously negative. In spite of his difficulties, he attaches importance to bodily play together with others. He states that now, three months into the ASP season, it is better than it was in the beginning. In addition, he speaks positively about the ASP staff. He says that he knows all the adults in the ASP well, and that he would certainly do something together with them if he was not allowed to play with the other children.

Concluding remarks

This article takes up the question of how bodily play affects the child's SOC. The main emphasis of children who took place in the survey provides a positive picture of bodily play which occurs in the ASP hours. They experience the world as comprehensible, manageable and meaningful, to which their participation in the ASP contributes. They emphasise the importance of being together with other children whom they know well, and of having an impact on what they are doing. Situations with bodily play together with other children are experienced as predictable, and they experience a good load balance. The children also enjoy a sufficient degree of participation in shaping their own situation. All this establishes important basic experiences for a positive development of the SOC components – comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness, and which consequently will promote SOC. This can be decisive in the development of the child's health later in life (Antonovsky, 1987).

The results of the survey are not, however, unambiguous: two alternative profiles emerge. The first of these profiles experiences much negative in life and this contributes to reduced SOC. Self-chosen bodily play in the ASP hours has a positive effect on this profile. It implies

a breathing space with pleasure and satisfaction, with participating in shaping outcomes and good load balance. Bodily play in the ASP represents a sphere in life which is experienced as manageable and gives a meaning to existence. For this profile, this type of play has the potential of promoting SOC.

The other profile reflects the opposite tendency. Negative experiences of bodily play in the ASP, with repetitive exclusion and unfriendly reports, result in this profile experiences unpredictability, a lack of load balance, and little participation in shaping outcomes. This contributes negatively to the SOC components of comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness, thereby hindering SOC.

In general, a pattern emerges which shows that bodily play during the ASP has a considerable potential in promoting SOC. For most children, this form of play activity has a stimulating effect. This applies where initially they either experience their existence as generally comprehensible, manageable and meaningful, or that they struggle with a weak SOC. As such, the ASP emerges as an important institution for children in this age group. It is an institution characterised by participation in shaping outcomes and association with other children (Løndal & Bergsjø, 2005). This appears to be favourable when bodily play shall take place. Nevertheless, it can occur that some children fall by the wayside, and this may have a restrictive effect on SOC. It appears as particularly important that there is an element of pedagogic skill among the ASP staff such that they are able to adapt the framework for the children's activity simultaneous to child-managed bodily play being preserved. This survey shows that it is important with broad limits which encompass the incidental to-and-fro movement in play (Gadamer, 1989). Nevertheless, consideration must be made of the individual child's needs for sufficient predictability, load balance and participation in shaping outcomes. This requires comprehensive knowledge of children in the respective ages coupled with a sound ability to make appropriate evaluations and adaptations. Themes associated with

the role of the ASP staff are outside the focus of this survey, but will be an element for further research.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Request for consent from the ASP administration.

Appendix 2: Consent from the ASP administration.

Appendix 3: Notification to the Data Protection Official.

Appendix 4: Receipt and comments from the Data Protection Official.

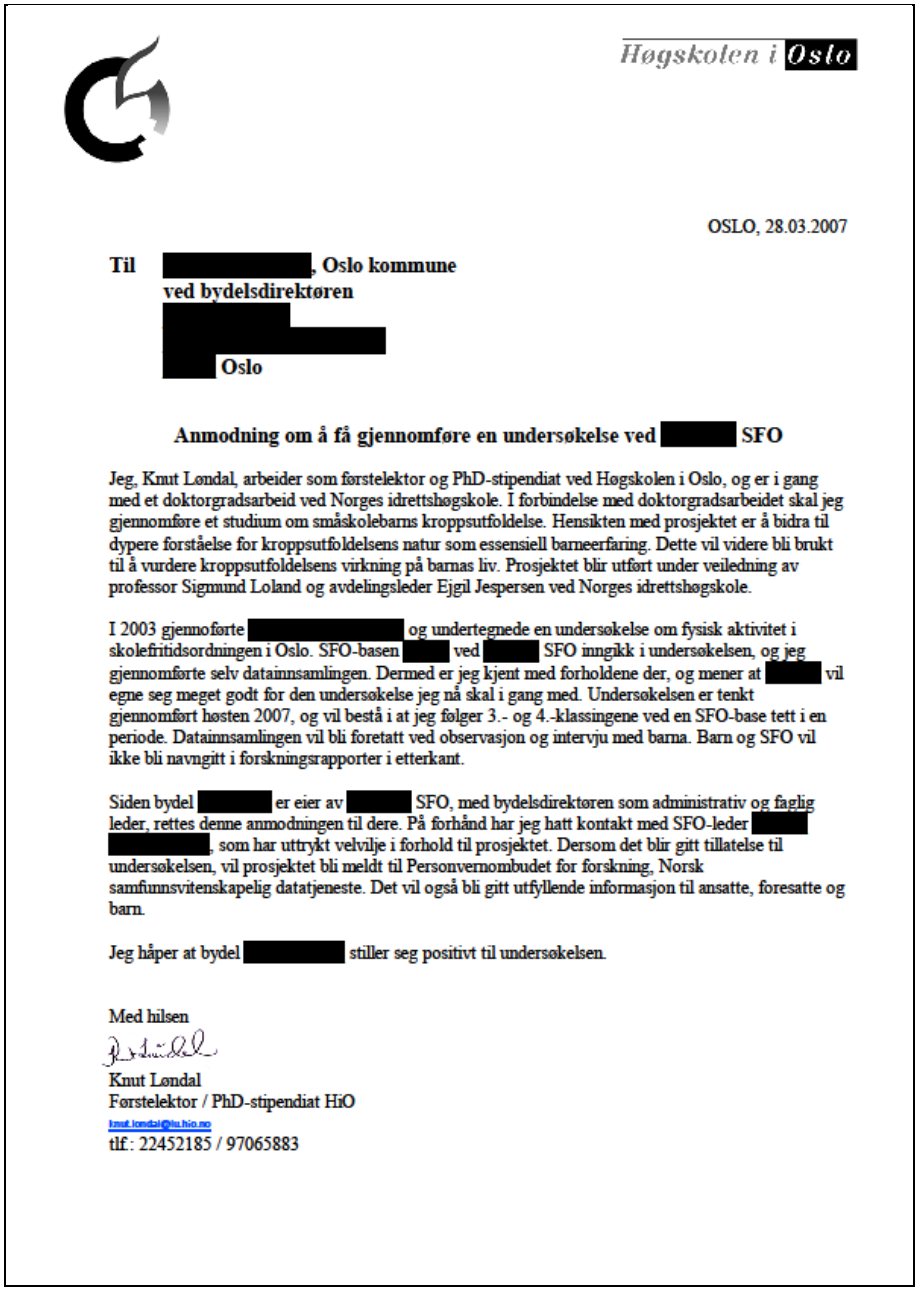
Appendix 5: Information letters to the children's parents/guardians.

Appendix 6: Form for consent from the parents/guardians concerning participation.

Appendix 7: Equipment used for recording, transmission and saving of qualitative material.

Appendix 8: The interview guide.

Appendix 1: Request for consent from the ASP administration



Høgskolen i Oslo

OSLO, 28.03.2007

Til [redacted], Oslo kommune
ved bydelsdirektøren
[redacted]
[redacted] Oslo

Anmodning om å få gjennomføre en undersøkelse ved [redacted] SFO

Jeg, Knut Løndal, arbeider som førstelektor og PhD-stipendiat ved Høgskolen i Oslo, og er i gang med et doktorgradsarbeid ved Norges idrettshøgskole. I forbindelse med doktorgradsarbeidet skal jeg gjennomføre et studium om småskolebarns kroppsutfoldelse. Hensikten med prosjektet er å bidra til dypere forståelse for kroppsutfoldelsens natur som essensiell barneerfaring. Dette vil videre bli brukt til å vurdere kroppsutfoldelsens virkning på barnas liv. Prosjektet blir utført under veiledning av professor Sigmund Loland og avdelingsleder Ejgil Jespersen ved Norges idrettshøgskole.

I 2003 gjennoførte [redacted] og undertegnede en undersøkelse om fysisk aktivitet i skolefritidsordningen i Oslo. SFO-basen [redacted] ved [redacted] SFO inngikk i undersøkelsen, og jeg gjennomførte selv datainnsamlingen. Dermed er jeg kjent med forholdene der, og mener at [redacted] vil egne seg meget godt for den undersøkelse jeg nå skal i gang med. Undersøkelsen er tenkt gjennomført høsten 2007, og vil bestå i at jeg følger 3.- og 4.-klassingene ved en SFO-base tett i en periode. Datainnsamlingen vil bli foretatt ved observasjon og intervju med barna. Barn og SFO vil ikke bli navngitt i forskningsrapporter i etterkant.

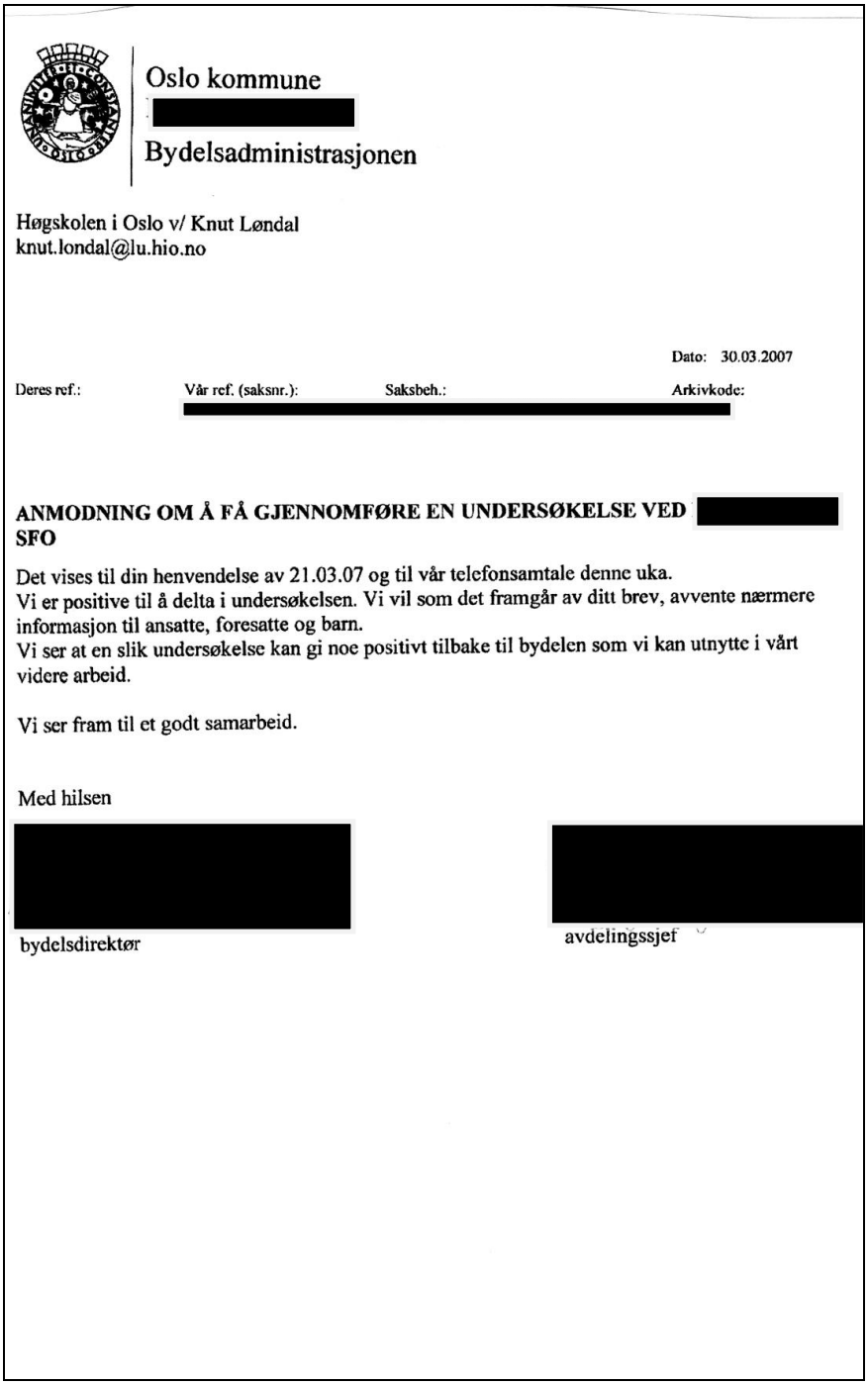
Siden bydel [redacted] er eier av [redacted] SFO, med bydelsdirektøren som administrativ og faglig leder, rettes denne anmodningen til dere. På forhånd har jeg hatt kontakt med SFO-leder [redacted], som har uttrykt velvilje i forhold til prosjektet. Dersom det blir gitt tillatelse til undersøkelsen, vil prosjektet bli meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste. Det vil også bli gitt utfyllende informasjon til ansatte, foresatte og barn.

Jeg håper at bydel [redacted] stiller seg positivt til undersøkelsen.

Med hilsen

Knut Løndal
Førstelektor / PhD-stipendiat HiO
knut.londal@lu.hio.no
tlf: 22452185 / 97065883

Appendix 2: Consent from the ASP administration



Oslo kommune
[redacted]
Bydelsadministrasjonen

Høgskolen i Oslo v/ Knut Løndal
knut.londal@lu.hio.no

Dato: 30.03.2007

Deres ref.: Vår ref. (saksnr.): Saksbeh.: Arkivkode:
[redacted]

ANMODNING OM Å FÅ GJENNOMFØRE EN UNDERSØKELSE VED [redacted] SFO

Det vises til din henvendelse av 21.03.07 og til vår telefonsamtale denne uka.
Vi er positive til å delta i undersøkelsen. Vi vil som det framgår av ditt brev, avvente nærmere informasjon til ansatte, foresatte og barn.
Vi ser at en slik undersøkelse kan gi noe positivt tilbake til bydelen som vi kan utnytte i vårt videre arbeid.

Vi ser fram til et godt samarbeid.

Med hilsen

[redacted]
bydelsdirektør

[redacted]
avdelingssjef

Appendix 3: Notification to the Data Protection Official

Meldeskjema[i]

for forsknings- og studentprosjekt som medfører meldeplikt eller konsesjonsplikt
(jf. personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter)

Meldeskjema sendes per post, e-post eller faks, i ett eksemplar, til:

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
Personvernombudet for forskning
Harald Hårfagres gate 29
5007 BERGEN
personvernombudet@nsd.uib.no / *Telefaks: 55 58 96 50 / Telefon: 55 58 21 17*

Vennligst les veiledning bakerst

1. PROSJEKTTITTEL			
Småskolebarns kroppsutfoldelse. En undersøkelse om kroppsutfoldelsens natur som barneerfaring.			
2. BEHANDLINGSANSVARLIG INSTITUSJON[ii]			
Institusjon: Høgskolen i Oslo			
Adresse: Postboks 4, St. Olavs plass		Postnr.: 0130	Poststed: Oslo
3. DAGLIG ANSVAR[iii]			
Navn (fornavn - etternavn): Knut Løndal			
Institusjon: Høgskolen i Oslo			
Arbeidssted (avdeling/seksjon/institutt): Avdeling for lærerutdanning		Akademisk grad: Idrettskand.	Stilling: Førstelektor
Adresse – arbeidssted: Postboks 4, St. Olavs plass		Postnr.: 0130	Poststed: Oslo
Telefon: 22452185	Telefaks: 22452135	Mobil: 97065883	E-postadresse: Knut.Londal@lu.hio.no
4. VED STUDENTPROSJEKT[iv] *(studiested må alltid være samme som arbeidssted til daglig ansvarlig)*			
Navn (fornavn - etternavn) på studenten:			
Studiested (avdeling/seksjon/institutt):			Akademisk grad/utdanning:
Adresse – privat:		Postnr.:	Poststed:
Telefon:	Telefaks:	Mobil:	E-postadresse:
5. FORMÅL MED PROSJEKTET			
Problemstillinger, forskningsspørsmål, eller lignende.	Hvordan framstår kroppsutfoldelse som barneerfaring, og hvordan virker dette inn på barnets opplevelse av sammenheng i tilværelsen?		

Er det spørsmål i forbindelse med utfylling av skjemaet, ta gjerne kontakt med Personvernombudet hos NSD, telefon 55 58 21 17

6. PROSJEKTOMFANG

☒ Enkelt institusjon — En enkelt skolefritidsordning

☐ Nasjonal multisenterstudie

☐ Internasjonal multisenterstudie

Angi øvrige institusjoner som skal delta:

7. UTVALGSBESKRIVELSE[v]

Beskrivelse av utvalget *Gi en kort beskrivelse av hvilke personer eller grupper av personer som inngår i prosjektet (f.eks. skolebarn, pasienter, soldater, personer med redusert eller manglende samtykkekompetanse).*	Utvalget består av barn (7-9 år) ved en utvalgt skolefritidsordning i Oslo.
Rekruttering og trekking *Oppgi hvordan utvalget rekrutteres og hvem som foretar rekrutteringen/ trekkingen.*	Utvalget rekrutteres ved at de er tilknyttet en utvalgt base ved den valgte skolefritidsordningen. Enkeltbarn blir utvalgt etter sentrale kjennetegn.
Førstegangskontakt *Oppgi hvem som oppretter førstegangskontakt med utvalget.*	Førstegangskontakt med utvalget vil bli foretatt av prosjektansvarlig (Knut Løndal) sammen med en ansatt i skolefritidsordningen.
Oppgi alder på utvalget	☒ Barn (0-15 år) ☐ Ungdom (16-17år) ☐ Voksne (over 18 år)
Antall personer i utvalget.	15-25 barn

8. INFORMASJON OG SAMTYKKE[vi]

Informasjon *Oppgi hvordan informasjon til respondenten gis.* *NB. Se veiledning for krav til informasjon.*	☒ **Det gis skriftlig informasjon (legg ved kopi av informasjonsskriv).** Det skal gis skriftlig informasjon til foresatte til alle barn ved den aktuelle basen (kopi av informasjonsskriv er vedlagt).
	☒ **Det gis muntlig informasjon.** Det gis muntlig informasjon til barna ved den aktuelle basen (deltakende og ikke deltakende), de deltakende barnas foresatte, samt ansatte i skolefritidsordningen. **Beskriv hva det informeres om.** Det informeres om prosjektets målsetning, hvordan utvalget blir gjort, hvilke metoder som blir benyttet, anonymisering og frivillig deltakelse. Informasjonen tilrettelegges til gjeldende gruppe (barn, foresatte, ansatte)
	☐ Det gis ikke informasjon. **Forklar hvorfor det ikke gis informasjon.**
Samtykke *Innhentes samtykke fra den registrerte?*	☒ Ja — Oppgi hvordan samtykke innhentes (legg ved ev. kopi av samtykkeerklæring). Det innhentes skriftlig samtykke fra foresatte (kopi av samtykkeerklæring er vedlagt), samt muntlig samtykke fra barna.
	☐ Nei — Gi en redegjørelse for hvorfor det anses nødvendig å gjennomføre prosjektet uten samtykke fra respondenten.

9. METODE FOR INNSAMLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER[vii]

Gi en kort beskrivelse av alle datainnsamlingsmetoder og datakilder som skal benyttes.	**Observasjon:** Barn i gruppen observeres gjennom hele SFO-dager. Data blir sikret ved feltnotater og videoopptak. **Intervju:** Det gjennomføres et konverserende intervju et utvalg av tredjeklassebarna. Intervjuet lagres som digitalt lydopptak og tas opp på video.

10. DATAMATERIALETS INNHOLD[viii]

Gjør kort rede for hvilke opplysninger som skal samles inn. *Legg ved spørreskjema, intervjuguide, registrerings-skjema e. a., som foreligger ferdig utarbeidet eller som utkast.*	Målsetningen er å samle inn innholdsrike situasjoner som kan gi utvidet forståelse for barnas kroppsutfoldelse som levd kroppslighet, levd romlighet, levd tid og levd intersubjektivitet. Dette samles inn i form av feltnotater og videoopptak fra observasjon og lydopptak/videoopptak fra intervju.

Behandles det sensitive personopplysninger?	☐ Ja ☒ Nei Hvis ja, oppgi hvilke: ☐ Rasemessig eller etnisk bakgrunn, eller politisk, filosofisk eller religiøs oppfatning. ☐ At en person har vært mistenkt, siktet, tiltalt eller dømt for en straffbar handling. ☐ Helseforhold. ☐ Seksuelle forhold. ☐ Medlemskap i fagforeninger.
Behandles det opplysninger om tredjeperson?	☐ Ja ☒ Nei Hvis ja, hvordan blir tredjeperson informert om behandlingen? ☐ Får skriftlig informasjon. ☐ Får muntlig informasjon. ☐ Blir ikke informert.

11. INFORMASJONSSIKKERHET[ix]

Merk av identifikasjons-opplysninger.	☒ Direkte personidentifiserende opplysninger Oppgi hvilke: ☒ Navn ☐ 11-sifret fødselsnummer
	☒ Indirekte personidentifiserende opplysninger Oppgi hvilke: Alder, kjønn, videoopptak, lydopptak.
Dersom datamaterialet behandles elektronisk, oppgi hvordan direkte person-identifiserbare opplysninger (navn, 11-sifret fødsels-nummer) registreres.	☒ Direkte personidentifiserende opplysninger *(spesifiser hvilke over)* erstattes med et referansenummer som viser til en manuell/elektronisk navneliste som oppbevares atskilt fra det øvrige datamaterialet. Oppgi hvordan koblingsnøkkelen lagres og hvem som har tilgang til denne. Koblingsnøkkel lagres på liste på papir. Lagret i dokumentskap på låst kontor. Bare prosjektleder har tilgang til koblingsnøkkelen.
	☐ Direkte personopplysninger lagres sammen med det øvrige materialet. Oppgi hvorfor det er nødvendig med oppbevaring av direkte identifikasjonsopplysninger sammen med det øvrige datamaterialet:
	☐ Annet Spesifiser:
Hvordan skal datamaterialet registreres og oppbevares? *Sett flere kryss dersom opplysninger registreres flere steder.*	☒ Fysisk isolert pc tilhørende virksomheten ☐ Pc i nettverksystem tilhørende virksomheten ☒ Pc i nettverksystem tilknyttet internett tilhørende virksomheten ☐ Isolert privat pc ☐ Privat pc tilknyttet internett ☒ Videoopptak/fotografi ☒ Lydopptak ☒ Manuell/papir ☐ Annet: Hvis annen lagring, beskriv nærmere:
Sikring av konfidensialitet.	**Beskriv hvordan datamaterialet er beskyttet mot at uvedkommende får innsyn i opplysningene?** Opplysningene lagres på prosjektansvarliges brukerområde i nettverksystem tilhørende virksomheten, samt på innelåst PC tilhørende virksomheten. Alt er passordbeskyttet.
Vil prosjektet ha prosjekt-medarbeidere som skal ha tilgang til datamaterialet på lik linje med daglig ansvarlig?	☐ Ja Oppgi hvilke: ☒ Nei
Innhentes personopplysninger ved hjelp av e-post/internett?	☐ Ja Hvis ja, beskriv hvilke opplysninger og hvilken form de har. ☒ Nei
Overføres personopplysninger over eksterne nettverk (som Internett)?	☐ Ja Hvis ja, beskriv i hvilken situasjon dette gjøres og hvilken form opplysningene har. ☒ Nei
Vil personopplysninger bli utlevert til andre?	☐ Ja Hvis ja, til hvem? ☒ Nei

12. VURDERING/GODKJENNING AV ANDRE INSTANSER[x]		
Er prosjektet fremleggelses-pliktig for Regional komité for medisinsk forskningsetikk?	☐ Ja ☒ Nei	Hvis ja, legg ved eller ettersend kopi av tilråding/tillatelse.
Dersom det anvendes biologisk materiale, er det søkt Regional komité for medisinsk forskningsetikk om opprettelse av forskningsbiobank?	☐ Ja ☐ Nei	Hvis ja, legg ved eller ettersend kopi av tilråding/tillatelse.
Er det nødvendig å søke om dispensasjon fra taushetsplikt for å få tilgang til data?	☐ Ja ☒ Nei	Hvis ja, legg ved eller ettersend kopi av tilråding/tillatelse.
Er det nødvendig med melding til Statens legemiddelverk?	☐ Ja ☒ Nei	Hvis ja, legg ved eller ettersend kopi av tilråding/tillatelse.
Andre	☐ Ja ☒ Nei	Angi hvem.

13. PROSJEKTPERIODE[xi]	
Oppgi tidspunkt for når datainnsamlingen starter – prosjektstart samt tidspunkt når behandlingen av person-opplysninger opphører – prosjektslutt.	Prosjektstart (ddmmåååå): 01.08.2007 Prosjektslutt (ddmmåååå): 31.07.2010
Gjør rede for hva som skal skje med datamaterialet ved prosjektslutt.	☒ Datamaterialet skal anonymiseres. Gi en redegjørelse for hvordan datamaterialet anonymiseres. Personopplysningene skal slettes ved prosjektslutt. ☐ Datamaterialet skal oppbevares med personidentifikasjon Hvor skal datamaterialet oppbevares? Gi en redegjørelse for hvorfor datamaterialet skal oppbevares med personidentifikasjon.

14. FINANSIERING
Prosjektet er finansiert av Høgskolen i Oslo i form av et doktorgradsstipend.

15. TILLEGGSOPPLYSNINGER
Prosjektet gjennomføres som et doktorgradsstudium ved Norges idrettshøgskole. Veiledere er professor Sigmund Loland og avdelingsleder Ejgil Jespersen.

16. ANTALL VEDLEGG	
Oppgi hvor mange vedlegg som legges ved meldeskjemaet.	2 (to)

Appendix 4: Receipt and comments from the Data Protection Official

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES

Harald Hårfagres gate 29
N-5007 Bergen
Norway
Tel: +47-55 58 21 17
Fax: +47-55 58 96 50
nsd@nsd.uib.no
www.nsd.uib.no
Org.nr. 985 321 884

Knut Løndal
Avdeling for lærerutdanning
Høgskolen i Oslo
Postboks 4 St. Olavs plass
0130 OSLO

Vår dato: 11.06.2007 Vår ref :16814/SF Deres dato: Deres ref:

KVITTERING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 25.04.2007. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

16814	*Småskolebarns kroppsutfoldelse. En undersøkelse om kroppsutfoldelsens natur som barneerfaring*
Behandlingsansvarlig	*Høgskolen i Oslo, ved institusjonens øverste leder*
Daglig ansvarlig	*Knut Løndal*

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredsstiller kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, eventuelle kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven/-helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/endringsskjema. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/register/

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 31.07.2010, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Bjørn Henrichsen Sølve Fauskevåg

Kontaktperson: Sølve Fauskevåg tlf: 55 58 25 83

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Personvernombudet for forskning

Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

16814

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen kan hjemles i personopplysningsloven § 8, første ledd.

Ombudet finner informasjonsskrivet til barnas foresatte tilfredsstillende forutsatt at det tilføyes informasjon om:
- hva det skal spørres etter i intervjuene
- at foresatte har rett til å få se intervjuspørsmål/intervjuguide før intervjuet
- at ved prosjektslutt anonymiseres også øvrig datamateriale (i tillegg til at lyd- og bildeopptak slettes)
- vi gjør oppmerksom på at ved meldepliktig prosjekt er den korrekte betegnelsen at prosjektet er meldt til personvernombudet, og ikke tilrådd

Ombudet ber om at revidert informasjonsskriv ettersendes før utvalget kontaktes.

Vi forutsetter at det kun tas lyd- og bildeopptak og registreres opplysninger om barn der foresatte har samtykket til dette.

Ved prosjektslutt 31.07.2010 skal datamaterialet anonymiseres. Anonymisering innebærer at direkte og indirekte personidentifiserende opplysninger slettes eller omkodes (grovkategoriseres), samt at lyd- og videoopptak slettes og koblingsnøkkel makuleres.

Appendix 5: Information letters to the children's parents/guardians

Høgskolen i Oslo

Oslo, 20.06.2007

Til foresatte til barn ved [redacted] SFO

Informasjon om forskningsprosjektet "Småskolebarns kroppsutfoldelse".

Jeg, Knut Løndal, arbeider som førstelektor og stipendiat ved Høgskolen i Oslo, og er i gang med et doktorgradsarbeid ved Norges idrettshøgskole. I forbindelse med doktorgradsarbeidet skal jeg gjennomføre et studium om småskolebarns kroppsutfoldelse. Hensikten med prosjektet er å bidra til dypere forståelse for kroppsutfoldelse som barneerfaring. Dette vil bli brukt til å vurdere kroppsutfoldelsens betydning for barna. Prosjektet blir utført under veiledning av professor Sigmund Loland og avdelingsleder Ejgil Jespersen ved Norges idrettshøgskole.

Vi har rettet en forespørsel til bydel [redacted] i Oslo kommune og til SFO-ledelsen om å få gjennomføre forskningsprosjektet på [redacted] skolefritidsordning, og har fått tillatelse til dette. Derfor går denne informasjonen til de foresatte til barna ved [redacted] SFO. Prosjektet innebærer at barn som er tilknyttet basen [redacted] blir observert i sin SFO-aktivitet, samt at et utvalg av dem blir intervjuet om deres opplevelse av aktiviteten. Undertegnede vil stå for observasjoner og intervju. Det blir tatt videoopptak av kroppsutfoldelser som skjer i observasjonstiden, og det blir tatt lyd-/videoopptak av intervjuene. Undersøkelsen blir gjennomført høsten 2007.

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet, og barnet kan på hvilket som helst tidspunkt trekke seg uten å måtte begrunne dette nærmere. Hvorvidt barnet deltar i prosjektet eller ikke har ingen betydning for SFO-aktiviteten videre. Det er ingen andre enn doktorgradsstipendiaten og hans veiledere som vil få tilgang til de personidentifiserbare opplysningene. De er underlagt taushetsplikt og opplysningene vil bli behandlet konfidensielt.

Resultatene av studien vil bli publisert uten at skolefritidsordningen eller det enkelte barn kan gjenkjennes. Doktorgradsprosjektet forventes å være avsluttet sommeren 2010. Etter at prosjektet er avsluttet vil personopplysninger i form av video- og lydopptak bli slettet, og alt datamateriale vil bli anonymisert. Prosjektet er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste A/S.

Etter sommeren vil jeg ta kontakt med foresatte til aktuelle barn for å avklare om deres barn kan/vil delta i undersøkelsen. Da vil det, om ønskelig, bli gitt detaljert informasjon om gjennomføringen. Foresatte vil bli tilbudt å se intervjuguiden før deres barn eventuelt blir intervjuet.

Med vennlig hilsen

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Høgskolen i Oslo

Til foresatte til barn ved [redacted] SFO

Forskningsprosjektet "Småskolebarns kroppsutfoldelse".

I juni ble det sendt ut et informasjonsskriv der det ble orientert om forskningsprosjektet "Småskolebarns kroppsutfoldelse" som jeg skal gjennomføre ved [redacted] SFO (vedlegg). Prosjektet innebærer at barn som er tilknyttet basen blir observert i sin SFO-aktivitet, samt at et utvalg av dem blir intervjuet om deres opplevelse av aktiviteten. Undertegnede vil stå for observasjoner og intervju. Det blir tatt videoopptak av kroppsutfoldelser som skjer i observasjonstiden, og det blir tatt lyd-/videoopptak av intervjuene. Undersøkelsen blir gjennomført i løpet av høsten 2007, og vil innebære at jeg er til stede det meste av SFO-tiden. Uke 35 og 36 (27.8.-7.9) vil jeg bruke til å gjøre meg kjent med barna, samt til å prøve ut forskjellig utstyr. Selve datainnsamlingen vil starte 10. september. Den første måneden skjer datainnsamlingen ved observasjon og videoopptak, mens intervjuene blir gjennomført i oktober/november. Foresatte vil bli tilbudt å se intervjuguiden før deres barn eventuelt blir intervjuet.

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet, og barnet kan på hvilket som helst tidspunkt trekke seg uten å måtte begrunne dette nærmere. Hvorvidt barnet deltar i prosjektet eller ikke har ingen betydning for SFO-aktiviteten videre. Ingen andre enn undertegnede og hans veiledere som vil få tilgang til personidentifiserbare opplysninger (som lyd og videoopptak). Vi er underlagt taushetsplikt og opplysningene vil bli behandlet konfidensielt. Resultatene av studien vil bli publisert uten at skolefritidsordningen eller det enkelte barn kan gjenkjennes. Etter at prosjektet er avsluttet vil personopplysninger i form av video- og lydopptak bli slettet, og alt datamateriale vil bli anonymisert.

Dersom det er ønskelig, gir jeg gjerne detaljert informasjon om gjennomføringen. Ta i så fall kontakt via telefon/e-post (se under), eller ved å ta kontakt med meg direkte på [redacted]

- Vi håper på deltakelse i prosjektet og ber om at den vedlagte samtykkeerklæringen signeres av foresatt(e) og returneres til SFO i konvolutten dette brevet kom i.
- Dersom barnet ikke kan/vil delta, ber vi om at konvolutten dette brevet kom i returneres tom.
- I de tilfeller hvor det ikke blir gitt tilbakemelding via konvolutten innen en uke etter utdeling, vil foresatte bli kontaktet per telefon.

Med vennlig hilsen

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Appendix 6: Form for consent from the parents/guardians concerning participation

Samtykkeerklæring:

Vi har mottatt informasjon om forskningsprosjektet **"**Småskolebarns kroppsutfoldelse" og samtykker i at …….. kan delta i undersøkelsen.

Underskrift: …… (Foresatt)

Underskrift: …… (Foresatt)

Appendix 7: Equipment used for recording, transmission and saving of qualitative material

Utstyr til innsamling, overføring og lagring av observasjons- og intervjumateriale

Hovedkamera		Sony PD 150
	Vidvinkel linse	Sony LSF-S58
	Mikrofon	Sennheiser K6, med kabel
	Trådløs mikrofon	Sony VWP-C1
	Stativ	Manfrotto 075
	Videobånd	Panasonic digital video cassette – AY-DVM83PQ
Brukt ved alle videoobservasjoner. Brukt ved alle intervju. Parallelt med lydopptaker.		
Tilleggskamera		Sony PD 100, med adapter for ekstern mikrofon
	Vidvinkel linse	MC-Video 0,5x
	Mikrofon	Sennheiser K6, med kabel
	Trådløs mikrofon	Sony VWP-C1
	Stativ	Libec TC-6
	Videobånd	Panasonic digital video cassette – AY-DVM83PQ
Brukt ved alle videoobservasjoner.		
Videospiller		Sony GV-D1000E MiniDV recorder
Brukt ved overføring av videomateriale fra bånd til harddisk via Windows Moviemaker.		
Lydopptaker		Olympus DS-4000 Digital voice recorder
Brukt ved alle intervju. Parallelt med hovedkamera. Brukt til overføring av lydfiler til harddisk via DDS Player Pro.		
Ekstern harddisk		Maxtor One Touch III – 60 GB
Brukt til lagring av alt video- og lydmateriale.		

Appendix 8: The interview guide

Intervjuguide

Spørsmål som skal fungere som igangsettende for samtalen:

- Liker du å være i SFO?
- Jeg har lagt merke til at mange av barna beveger seg mye (løper, hopper, klatrer, spiller ball og leker) når de er i SFO. Bruker du å gjøre det?
- Er det viktig for deg å drive med slike aktiviteter som du har fortalt om (løpe, hoppe, klatre, spille ball, leke)?
- Hvordan blir det dersom du må være stille/rolig lenge da?

Viser et videoopptak (ca 4 min) av barn i aktiv lek i SFO der det intervjuede barnet deltar. Deretter fortsetter samtalen mellom intervjueren og barnet. Det blir lagt vekt på å la barnet fortelle. Intervjueren skal være lyttende, men vil samtale der det er nødvendig for fortellingens retning, eller der det framstår som ønskelig for barnet.

- Fortell om det du så på filmen.

  Knyttet til aktivitetssted
  - Er dette et sted du pleier å leke mye på?
  - Fortell litt mer om hva du pleier å gjøre der.
  - Trenger du noe utstyr når du leker der?
  - Hvordan har du det inne i deg (glad, ivrig, spent, nervøs el)når du leker (løper, hopper, klatrer, spiller ball osv) på dette stedet?

  Knyttet til å leke sammen med noen
  - Liker du best å leke sammen med noen eller alene?
  - Hvem pleier du / liker du å være sammen med på SFO da?
  - Fortell litt mer om hva dere pleier å gjøre.
  - Velger du aktivitet etter hvem du vil være sammen med, eller velger du å være sammen med dem som leker det du vil leke?

  Knyttet til aktivitetstype
  - Fortell om hvordan du liker å være med på slike aktiviteter som skjer til vanlig på SFO?
    - Fortell litt mer om disse aktivitetene.
  - Fortell om hvordan du liker å være med på aktiviteter som ikke skjer til vanlig på SFO? (helåpne dager, spesielle opplegg, voksenstyrte opplegg, turer)
    - Hvilke av slike aktiviteter liker du best da?
    - Fortell litt mer om slike aktiviteter.
  - Er du mer aktiv (løper, hopper, klatrer osv) på spesielle SFO-dager (helåpne dager, spesielle opplegg, voksenstyrte opplegg, turer) enn på vanlige dager?

Viser stillbilder av et og et av observasjonsstedene og ber barnet fortelle om stedene, hva de gjør der og hvem de er sammen med.

- Fortell om dette stedet.
  - Hva pleier du å gjøre der?
  - Hvem pleier du å være sammen med?
    - Dersom han/hun/de ikke er der da?
  - Trenger du noe utstyr på dette stedet?
    - Dersom der ikke er noe utstyr da?

Det følges så opp med spørsmål som skal belyse hvordan aktiv kroppsutfoldelse virker inn på barnets opplevelse av tilværelsen.

- Er det viktig for deg at det er aktiviteter her på SFO som du liker å drive med, eller bryr du deg ikke noe særlig om hva som skjer her?

- Er det ofte at du føler deg usikker og sjenert, og at du ikke vet hva du skal gjøre?
    - Hvordan er dette når du er her ved SFO?

- Når du er aktiv her på SFO, når du løper/hopper/klatrer/spiller ball/leker. Hva slags følelse har du inne i deg da?

- Bruker du å være i veldig forskjellig humør?
    - Hvordan er dette når du løper/hopper/klatrer/spiller ball/leker her ved SFO?
    - Blir du i bedre humør da, dersom du var lei deg eller sint på forhånd?

- Hender det at du har følelser inne i deg som du helst ikke ville kjenne (sint/skuffet/lei deg)? Har du slike følelser når du løper/hopper/spiller ball/leker her ved SFO?

- Har du av og til følelser inne i deg (sint/skuffet/lei deg) som du ikke klarer å kontrollere? Har du det slik når du løper/hopper/spiller ball/leker i SFO?

- Hvor ofte føler du at det ikke skjer noe morsomt/interessant der du holder til, at det bare er kjedelig? Er det ofte slik i SFO, eller er det oftest morsomt/interessant her?

- Har du skiftet skole og SFO noen ganger? Synes du det har gått greit å finne seg til rette og få nye venner? Har du fått nye venner ved å være på SFO?

- Er det noen ganger slik at du føler deg urettferdig behandlet mens du løper, hopper, klatrer, spiller ball og leker her ved SFO?

- Har du noen gang blitt veldig overrasket over oppførselen til noen ved SFO?
    - Har noen som du stoler på, som du pleier å leke med, gjort deg veldig skuffet?

- Dersom det hender noe som du synes er veldig leit mens du leker her ved SFO. Bruker du å gå rundt å tenke veldig på det, eller blir du fort glad igjen?
    - Kan du gjøre noe for at du skal bli fortere glad igjen?

- Er det noen ganger slik st du føler deg som en ”ulykkesfugl” (at du er veldig uheldig) mens du løper, hopper, klatrer, spiller ball og leker i SFO?

- Tenk på de menneskene du er i kontakt med her på SFO. Syns du at du kjenner dem godt? Alle sammen?
    - Blir du bedre/fortere kjent med de andre dersom du løper, hopper, klatrer, spiller ball og leker sammen med dem?