

TALKING TO ADULTS

*The Contribution of Multiparty
Discourse to Language Acquisition*

Edited by

Shoshana Blum-Kulka
*Hebrew University, Jerusalem***Catherine E. Snow**
*Harvard University*Peer-Group Culture
and Narrative DevelopmentAgeliki Nicolopoulou
Lehigh University

Drawing on my analysis of a storytelling and story-acting practice that I have studied in a range of preschool classes, this chapter explores some of the ways in which peer-group activities can serve as a powerful context for promoting young children's language development, and in particular their narrative development. One implication of this analysis, I argue, is to reinforce a central organizing theme of the present volume: the need to rethink, refine, and broaden the conceptions of the "social context" of development now employed by most psychological research in this area. Explicitly or implicitly, this context tends to be conceived too exclusively in terms of adult-child interaction (usually dyadic), in which the more knowledgeable and capable adult takes on the role of instructing, guiding, correcting, and/or "scaffolding" the efforts of the less capable child. Even when interaction between children is studied, it is usually assimilated to the one-way expert-novice model, with the older sibling or other peer taking on the "expert" role.

The developmental significance of these kinds of interactions between unequals is undeniable; but this overly narrow focus on the model of dyadic adult-child (or, more generally, expert-novice) interaction has meant a neglect of other crucial dimensions of social context. These include the role of peers, and in particular of the peer *group*, in the process of development. In this respect, the role of peers is not limited to one-way transmission or facilitation, but also includes modes of genuine peer *collaboration*. Furthermore, such collaboration is not restricted to dyadic (or

even multiparty) interaction between individuals; children, like adults, also create, maintain, and participate in *fields of shared activity* that provide both resources and motivations for development, including narrative development.

The present chapter offers one concrete illustration of these processes. It presents evidence indicating that participation in a peer-oriented practice of spontaneous storytelling and story-acting contributed significantly to enhancing young children's narrative skills; and it seeks to delineate some of the ways that these effects were achieved. This discussion focuses on a study conducted in a Head Start class made up of children from poor and otherwise disadvantaged backgrounds, but these positive results are consistent with findings from preschools serving children from middle-class backgrounds where I have studied the use and effects of this storytelling and story-acting practice. In addition to confirming the potential value of peer-group practices in promoting narrative development, these results underline the need for developmental research to move, both conceptually and methodologically, toward a more fully sociocultural perspective.

The Social Context of Narrative Development: Adult-Child Interaction and Beyond

A great deal of developmental research is still conducted with little or no systematic consideration of the social context of development. In the field of language acquisition and development, however, major tendencies have long addressed the important role of "input" from the adult world (Galloway & Richards, 1994; Snow, 1995). A substantial body of research has sought to specify those features of adult-child interaction (in practice, most often mother-child interaction) that most effectively promote and facilitate the development of linguistic skills. Initially, this work focused primarily on very young children (for a useful review, see Snow, 1989), but it has increasingly been extended to language development in later years, including narrative development. One impetus for this kind of research has been a series of findings suggesting that the mastery of narrative skills by young children serves as a crucial foundation for their later acquisition of literacy and success in formal education (e.g., Snow, 1983, 1991; Snow & Dickinson, 1990, 1991; Wells, 1985, 1986). These studies have established the importance of social context for narrative development, and have begun to delineate the interactional styles that best facilitate it (e.g., Fivush, 1994; McCabe & Peterson, 1991; Peterson, Jesso, & McCabe, 1999).

But so far the focus of this research has generally been limited in two key respects: (a) it has dealt largely with "factual" narratives of past experi-

ences and has neglected fictional or fantasy narratives (a point to which I return later); and (b) the "social context" of narrative development has, with some notable exceptions, been conceived narrowly in terms of modes of adult-child interaction.¹ Adult-child interactions obviously play an important role in children's development, education, and socialization. However, other researchers, including myself, have argued that this one-sided picture of the "social context" of development must be expanded to take systematic account of the complementary role of children's peer relations and group life (e.g., Corsaro, 1985; Davies, 1989; Nicolopoulou, 1996a, 1997a, 1997b; for a valuable overview of the role of the peer group in socialization, albeit one that excessively deemphasizes the impact of adult-child interaction, see Harris, 1995, 1998).

Narrative research that addresses the developmental significance of peer-group activity can draw on powerful theoretical resources, but these have not yet been exploited fully or effectively. A good deal of work on preschool children's peer interaction and its role in development has been inspired, directly or indirectly, by Piaget's seminal insight that the developmental significance of adult-child relations—necessarily asymmetric and hierarchical—is in important ways qualitatively different from that of peer-group relations, which are potentially more egalitarian and cooperative (Piaget, 1923/1959, 1932/1965; for endorsements and applications of Piaget's position, see Damon, 1984, 1988; for a useful critical overview of developmental peer-interaction research that compares the influence of Piagetian and Vygotskian perspectives, see Tudge & Rogoff, 1989; and for a more comprehensive overview that critically assesses the strengths and limitations of current approaches in cognitive research from a socio-cultural perspective, see Rogoff, 1998). However, this Piagetian inspiration has so far generated more work on middle childhood than on the preschool years; and research on young children from this perspective has focused predominantly on children's play (e.g., Garvey, 1990; Stambak & Sinclair, 1993) and has rarely been integrated with the study of their narrative activity.

Some reasons why such integration would be useful are suggested by the work of Garvey, who has systematically examined both child-caregiver and child-child interaction, and has extended the concerns informing her play research to issues of language development and communication (1984). As Garvey's synthesis of the relevant research (1986) makes clear, children learn in different ways from each other—and develop different

¹Nor is this second tendency restricted to narrative research; in a recent survey of work on language and socialization—that is, both socialization through language and socialization in the use of language—Ely and Gleason (1995) documented this basic pattern for the field as a whole, while also indicating some of the exceptions.

skills in the process—than when they learn from adults (see also Paley, 1986). More recently, Judy Dunn, studying young children in family contexts, has argued that interaction with siblings can play a distinctive and important role in promoting the development of communication and social understanding (Brown & Dunn, 1992; Dunn, 1988, 1989). However, even Garvey and Dunn do not systematically address *narrative* activity and development; and their analysis tends to stay largely at the level of dyadic interaction, with only scattered attention to group life and peer culture.

On the other hand, much of the research investigating the role of social context in narrative development has drawn theoretically on a Vygotskian perspective. Vygotsky was powerfully struck by Piaget's insight regarding the distinctive character of children's autonomous peer-directed activity, and in some respects he pushed it further, particularly in his seminal treatment of children's play (see especially Vygotsky, 1933/1967; for discussion, Nicolopoulou, 1993). Furthermore, Vygotsky's approach is more fully sociocultural than Piaget's, emphasizes the cognitive value of children's imaginative and symbolic activity, and offers a natural bridge between the study of play and of narrative (as I have argued in Nicolopoulou, 1993, 1996a, 1997a, from which I am drawing in the present discussion). In practice, however, much Vygotskian-inspired research, including narrative research, has utilized a weak and truncated conception of the sociocultural dimension in Vygotsky's theory. In particular, it has tended to interpret his key notion of the "zone of proximal development" rather narrowly, in terms of the direct effects of dyadic interaction between the developing child and adults—or, in some cases, more knowledgeable children. Even in research on peer collaboration linked with this paradigm, peer relations have usually, in effect, been conceptually assimilated to the dyadic adult-child model, being treated as another case of expert-novice interaction. (For some elaboration of the arguments behind these critical remarks, see Nicolopoulou, 1993, 1996a; Nicolopoulou & Cole, 1993. These points are also brought out by Rogoff, 1998.)

One partial exception that helps prove this rule is the valuable body of cross-cultural research, emerging at the intersection of anthropology, sociolinguistics, and developmental psychology, that has emphasized the distinctive role of siblings in socialization, including language socialization (two relevant collections are Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986; Zukow, 1989a). This research has an anthropological lineage going back to the work of Whiting and Whiting (1975) on sibling caregivers, but some key figures have also drawn explicitly on Vygotsky's theoretical approach (e.g., Ochs, 1988; Zukow, 1989b). It is therefore significant that most of this research has, once again, tended to view these sibling relationships in terms of an expert-novice model (for an especially clear and instructive example, see Zukow, 1989b).

Rethinking Social Context: The Limits of Interactional Reductionism

A less restricted vision is suggested by Vygotsky's (1933/1967) assertion—often noted, but insufficiently pondered—that, in the preschool years, "Play is the source of development and *creates* the zone of proximal development" (p. 16; emphases added). That is, it is a form of activity that pushes the child beyond the limits of development that have already been achieved and provides opportunities for further development. In saying this, Vygotsky was *not* referring to assisted problem solving in expert-novice interaction. Rather, the crucial feature of play from a developmental perspective is that in play children collaborate in constructing and maintaining a shared "imaginary situation" in an activity that is simultaneously voluntary, open to spontaneity, and structured by rules—but rules that are recognized and accepted as necessary by the children themselves rather than imposed from above by adults. That is, in play the child confronts a situation where the rules are not so much externally imposed as inherent in the structure of the activity itself, and are necessary in order to be able to carry out a practice or form of activity that is valued by its participants. The shared symbolic space of the play-world (Huizinga, 1938/1955) creates a field of activity for children's imagination that generates both opportunities and motivations for development.

This analysis offers a valuable starting point for building up an approach that can situate children's narrative development more effectively and comprehensively in sociocultural context. As I have argued (Nicolopoulou, 1996a, 1997a), what Vygotsky said of children's play also applies to their narrative activity: Both represent the union of expressive imagination with rule-governed cultural form. And in both, as Vygotsky emphasized with regard to play, the elements of imagination and fantasy are closely linked to the *cognitive* significance of the activity, in terms of both its motivations and its developmental value. It is through the creation and elaboration in imagination of a symbolic world dominated by meanings, with its own inner logic, that children are first able to emancipate their thinking from the constraints of their immediate external environment and thus, to take the first steps toward organizing thought in a coherent and independent way. At the same time, children *use* these symbolic activities to help them make sense of the world and their own experience, and to deal with themes and concerns that preoccupy them emotionally. These considerations indicate why we should avoid a one-sided concentration on children's "factual" narratives of past experience, which has marked the bulk of current narrative research conducted in naturalistic settings—important as these narrative genres undoubtedly are for children (Fivush, 1994; P. J. Miller & Moore, 1989). By fostering the development of chil-

dren's symbolic imagination and providing a field for its exercise, pretend play and fictional narratives help prepare the way for the development of abstract thinking and "higher mental processes."

As children come to realize the possible purposes and satisfactions that can be pursued in narrative activity—which are symbolic, expressive, emotional, and social-relational as well as instrumental—they are driven to learn and appropriate the narrative forms culturally available to them and to turn these to their own ends; and they gradually discover that, in order to do so, they must attend to and grasp the (mostly implicit) rule-governed structures inherent in these narrative forms. Children are both impelled and enabled to do this through their participation in practices of shared symbolic activity that serve as collectively constituted fields within which to use and master these narrative forms, to explore and extend their inherent possibilities through performance and experimentation, and to push on to greater narrative range and proficiency. It is in these ways, if we follow up Vygotsky's insights, that certain types of peer-group activity can serve as especially powerful contexts for promoting development.

Two implications of the perspective outlined and advocated here are worth highlighting further. The first is the need to integrate the study of children's play and narrative more fully and effectively than is now generally done. In fact, it is probably most useful to see both pretend play and storytelling as falling within the field of narrative activity, on a continuum ranging from the discursive exposition of narratives in storytelling (full narrativity) to their enactment in pretend play. Of course, the analytical distinction between the two is important. For the issues considered in this chapter, a key difference is that storytelling represents a more fully *decontextualized* use of language, in the technical sense of this term emphasized by such scholars as Snow, Dickinson, and Wells (e.g., Snow, 1983, 1991; Snow & Dickinson, 1990, 1991; Wells, 1985, 1986). Language use is decontextualized to the extent that it involves explicitly constructing, conveying, and comprehending information in ways that are not embedded in the supportive framework of conversational interaction and do not rely on implicit shared background knowledge and nonverbal cues. For young children, stories, especially fictional stories, are an especially important example of decontextualized discourse in that they pose the challenge of explicitly building up a scenario or picture of the world using only words. To put it another way, free-standing stories are *self-contextualizing* (Wells, 1985, p. 253) to a considerably greater extent than other forms of discourse that young children typically experience and construct. On the other hand, play and storytelling are also closely interwoven and often mutually supportive in children's experience and development, and developmental research needs to grasp the ongoing interplay between them.

Second, more is at stake than simply adding child-child interactions to the analysis of adult-child interactions. Even more fundamentally, socially situated research needs to overcome its prevailing temptation to *reduce* the social context of development, conceptually and/or methodologically, to interactions between individuals (Nicolopoulou & Cole, 1993; Rogoff, 1998). To move from the isolated individual to the interactional pair (or even a sequence of interactional pairs) as the unit of analysis is a useful first step, but by itself it is incomplete and misleading. Interactions are themselves embedded in—and simultaneously help to constitute and maintain—various types of sociocultural context that enable and constrain them, and that structure their nature, meaning, and impact. At the most intimate or immediate level, these contexts may include families, peer groups, classroom minicultures, and socially structured practices and activity systems—for example, the shared symbolic space of the play-world. And these are in turn enmeshed in larger institutional and cultural frameworks ranging from organizations and communities to culturally elaborated images of identity, conceptual tools, and systems of meaning. (One justly celebrated analysis that captures these multiple layers of embedded contexts, situating culturally specific narrative styles and modes of socialization within the larger ways of life of different communities, is Heath, 1983.) These sociocultural contexts, both small- and large-scale, have to be understood as genuinely *collective* realities that, in manifold ways, shape the actions and experiences of those who participate in them. An effective approach to understanding development requires that we pay systematic attention to the ongoing interplay between three dimensions of the human world that are at once analytically distinct and mutually interpenetrating: individual, interactional or relational, and collective (for elaboration, see Nicolopoulou & Weintraub, 1998).

Toward a More Fully Sociocultural Perspective

As the work represented in this volume demonstrates, several tendencies in current research point the way toward a more comprehensive approach. One good example is the body of research that has studied the joint construction and uses of narratives in multiparty, multigenerational talk between family members during mealtime conversations (e.g., Aukrust & Snow, 1998; Blum-Kulka, 1997; Ochs, Smith, & Taylor, 1989; Ochs, Taylor, Rudolph, & Smith, 1992). Beyond its attention to the socializing role of multiparty (rather than exclusively dyadic) interactions, what is notable about this research is that it treats the narrative construction of reality as a collaborative enterprise, involving both adults and children; it situates these conversational practices and interactions in the context of the family group; and it examines how these practices are institutionalized differ-

ently in different national cultures, as well as different class and ethnic subcultures within particular societies. As Ochs et al. (1989) nicely put it, the “dinnertime” setting can be seen as an institutionalized *opportunity space* (pp. 238–239), culturally defined and collectively maintained, which enables and promotes certain forms of shared narrative and cognitive activity.

This line of research has continued to focus primarily on adult–child interactions (or conversations between adults witnessed by children). The research reported in this chapter seeks to broaden the picture further by examining peer-group relations among children themselves as a context for narrative activity, socialization, and development.

PEER-GROUP ACTIVITIES AS A MATRIX FOR DEVELOPMENT: A CONCRETE EXAMPLE

The study on which I will focus was one of several that examined the operation and effects of a storytelling and story-acting practice pioneered by Vivian Paley (see Paley, 1986, 1988, 1990) that is integrated as a regular—but entirely voluntary—component of the curriculum in the preschool classes involved. At a certain period during the day, any child who wishes can dictate a story to a teacher, who records the story as the child tells it. (These are overwhelmingly fictional or imaginary stories, rather than “factual” accounts of personal experience of the sort one hears in “show and tell” or “sharing time.”) At the end of the day, each of these stories is read aloud to the entire class at “group time” (or “circle time”) by the same teacher, while the child/author and other children, whom he or she chooses, act out the story.

Several features of this practice are especially worth noting. One result of “group time” is that children tell their stories, not only to adults, but primarily to each other; they do so, not in one-to-one interaction, but in a shared public setting. In contrast to the artificial situations that predominate in much research on young children’s narratives, here the children’s storytelling and story-acting is embedded in the ongoing context of the classroom miniculture and the children’s everyday group life. Their storytelling is also voluntary, self-initiated, and relatively spontaneous: The stories are neither solicited directly by adults nor channeled by props, story stems, or suggested topics. Furthermore, to a certain degree this practice combines two aspects of children’s narrative activity that are too often treated in mutual isolation: the discursive exposition of narratives in storytelling and their enactment in pretend play. There is strong evidence that these conditions lead children to produce narratives that are richer, more ambitious, and more illuminating than when they compose them in isolation from their everyday social contexts and in response to agendas shaped directly by adults (Nicolopoulou, 1996a; Sutton-Smith, 1986).

Adults certainly play an important role in this storytelling and story-acting practice, but in terms of the narrative activity itself their essential role is indirect. In the classrooms I have studied, teachers who transcribe and read out the children’s stories offer very little feedback, commentary, guidance, or other direct input as they do so. Instead, their key contribution is to establish and facilitate a child-driven and peer-oriented activity that develops its own autonomous dynamics, within which the children themselves can take an active role in their own socialization and development. This storytelling and story-acting practice creates a framework of shared symbolic activity that draws on preschoolers’ emerging abilities to tell and enact fictional stories—and their enthusiasm for doing so—and helps these develop by serving as a collectively constituted field for narrative performance, experimentation, and cross-fertilization. To borrow the useful formulation of Ochs et al. (1989), this practice provides an institutionalized *opportunity space*. Its activation, and the realization of its developmental potential, depend on the engagement and enthusiasm of the children themselves. The role of adults is to help create and maintain the social framework within which these activities can flourish, rather than to intervene in them directly.

Research Sites and Data: An Overview

I have studied the use of this storytelling and story-acting practice in 12 preschool classrooms differing by geography and by social class background. The first stage of this line of research analyzed a body of 582 stories generated by a preschool class of 4-year-olds attending a half-day nursery school in northern California during the 1988–1989 school year. From 1992 to 1996 and (in collaboration with Elizabeth Richner) in 1999–2000, I collected an additional body of more than 3,000 stories from classes in two preschools in western Massachusetts, where I simultaneously conducted ethnographic observations of the classroom activities, friendship patterns, and group life of the children involved. (For some analyses based on material from these California and Massachusetts preschools, see Nicolopoulou, 1996a, 1997b; Nicolopoulou, Scales, & Weintraub, 1994; Richner & Nicolopoulou, 2001.)

In the preschools just mentioned, almost all the children in the classrooms examined came from middle-class or upper-middle-class families, largely professional or academic. In most cases, they lived with two parents, both of whom worked outside the home. During the 1997–1998 school year I was able to broaden the comparative scope of this research by collecting equivalent data—including 166 stories—from a Head Start class in western Massachusetts (ages 3 to 5); these children, of course, came from poor and otherwise disadvantaged backgrounds. In the present

chapter, I focus primarily on this Head Start study. However, to establish some necessary background for that analysis, I will first outline some of the broad findings from my studies of middle-class preschools.

Spontaneous Storytelling in the Middle-Class Preschools: Narrative Development and the Uses of Narrative Activity

The key patterns have been strikingly consistent in all the middle-class preschool classes I have studied, in both California and Massachusetts. In all cases, the children became enthusiastically involved in this storytelling and story-acting practice, and brought considerable energy and creativity to their narrative activity. As the school year progressed, the children's stories became more complex and sophisticated, manifesting significant advances in both narrative competence and cognitive abilities. Within a short time, the stories of almost all the children involved displayed a degree of narrative complexity and sophistication that, according to the overwhelming consensus of mainstream research in narrative development (usefully summed up by Hudson & Shapiro, 1991), 4- to 5-year-old children should not be able to achieve (see Nicolopoulou, 1996a). In part, this substantial discrepancy is probably due to a tendency for research conducted in more or less isolated experimental settings to systematically underestimate young children's narrative capabilities. But the evidence strongly suggests that the children's participation in this storytelling and story-acting practice also significantly enhanced their narrative skills.

In the process, the children drew themes, characters, images, plots, and other elements from each other's stories; and they also incorporated elements into their narratives from a wide range of other sources including fairy tales, children's books, TV (and popular culture more generally), and their own experience. However, they did not simply imitate other children's stories, nor did they just passively absorb messages from adults and the larger culture. It is clear that, even at this early age, they were able to appropriate these elements *selectively*, and to *use* and rework them for their own purposes.

This process of active and selective appropriation is brought out especially well by patterns of differentiation in the children's narrative activity and development. Therefore, let me offer a brief and extremely schematic consideration of one important example: the emergence of systematic gender differences in the children's storytelling, linked to the formation of two gendered peer-group subcultures within the classroom that define themselves, to a considerable extent, against each other (see Nicolopoulou, 1997b; Nicolopoulou et al., 1994; Richner & Nicolopoulou, 2001). I should emphasize that all the preschools involved make strong and delib-

erate efforts to create an egalitarian, nonsexist atmosphere, and most of the children came from families that seemed to share this orientation. Furthermore, one of the teachers' intentions in using this storytelling and story-acting practice was to help generate greater cohesion and a common culture within the classroom group. The children did indeed use their narrative activities to help build up a common culture; but they also consistently used them to build up gendered subcultures within this common culture.

Although the stories were shared with the entire group every day, my analysis demonstrated that they divided sharply, consistently, and increasingly along gender lines. They were dominated by two highly distinctive gender-related *narrative styles*, differing in both form and content, that embodied different approaches to the symbolic management of order and disorder, different underlying images of social relationships and the social world, and different images of the self.

The girls' stories, for example, characteristically portrayed characters embedded in networks of stable and harmonious relationships, whose activities were located in stable and specified physical settings. One common genre revolved around the family and family activities. In contrast, the boys' stories were characteristically marked by conflict, movement, and disruption, and often by associative chains of extravagant imagery. Whereas the girls tended to supplement their depictions of family life by drawing on fairy-tale characters such as kings and queens or princes and princesses, boys were especially fond of powerful and frightening characters along the lines of large animals, cartoon action heroes, and so on. In short, the boys and girls developed and elaborated two distinctive styles of narrative representation that pointed to distinctive modes of ordering and interpreting the world, particularly the social world. Correspondingly, they presented two contrasting images of the self: in the girls' stories, a socially embedded and interdependent self, and in the boys' stories, an essentially isolated and conflictual self.

Furthermore, this narrative polarization was one aspect of a larger process by which two distinct gendered subcultures were actively built up and maintained by the children themselves. These subcultures were marked by the convergence of gendered styles in the children's narratives, gender differentiation in their group life, and increasingly self-conscious gender identity in the children involved. At the same time, the crystallization of these subcultures within the microcosm of the classroom provided a framework for the further appropriation, enactment, and reproduction of crucial dimensions of personal identity as defined by the larger society, including gender.

These findings suggest some broad conclusions that go beyond the specific subject of gender. The narrative construction of reality is not a purely

individual process but a sociocultural one, whose cognitive significance is inextricably linked to the building up of group life and the formation of both individual and collective identities. Children participate—by way of narrative practices—in the process of their own socialization and development, and they do not do this *only* through the individual appropriation of elements from the larger culture. They also help to construct some of the key sociocultural contexts that shape (and promote) their own socialization and development.

Including Disadvantaged Children: A Study of a Head Start Classroom

Until recently, I was able to conduct this kind of research only in preschools with children from predominantly middle-class families—and, with very few exceptions, this remains true of other research as well.² A major reason is that this type of spontaneous storytelling and story-acting practice is used relatively rarely in preschools serving poor and otherwise disadvantaged children (or even children from working-class backgrounds). However, in 1997–1998 I was able to study a Head Start classroom in Massachusetts where this practice was being introduced (Nicolopoulou, 1999). The central dynamics and results of this practice in the Head Start class were fundamentally consistent with those found in the middle-class preschools; in particular, the evidence strongly indicated that it promoted the narrative development of the children involved. On the other hand, the specific patterns also differed in several ways between these two kinds of preschool settings. Both the similarities and the differences are instructive.

One important difference in the background preparation that the two populations brought to this practice is worth emphasizing before we proceed: The Head Start children began the school year with significantly weaker narrative skills than did the corresponding middle-class children I have studied. Specifically, the Head Start children showed less familiarity with the basic conventions for telling a free-standing self-contextualized story and less mastery of the relevant language skills.³ Thus, relative to the

²McNamee (1990, 1992) studied a Head Start program using this practice, but did not include a systematic examination of the effects on children's narrative and other language skills.

³I realize that the whole subject of social class differences in narrative skills is controversial, and in fact the overall picture is complex, but I will not attempt to engage that massive controversy directly. Suffice it to say that this contrast has emerged sharply in my research (as my later discussion should make clear) and that the kinds of social class differences in early narrative skills that I have just described have also been found in a substantial body of other research (e.g., Heath, 1982; Peterson, 1994; Snow & Dickinson, 1990).

middle-class children, they were much more in the position of building up the basic foundations for their participation in this narrative activity from scratch, rather than simply applying and expanding narrative skills they had already mastered. As a result, the analysis of the storytelling and story-acting practice in the Head Start setting brings out some of the basic developmental dynamics in especially illuminating ways.

A PEER-ORIENTED NARRATIVE PRACTICE AND ITS EFFECTS IN A HEAD START CLASS: DATA COLLECTION, EVALUATION, AND RESULTS⁴

The Classrooms, the Children, and the Site

The participants in this study were children attending two half-day preschool classes, consisting of 3- to 5-year-olds, in the same Head Start program in western Massachusetts during the 1997–1998 school year. That year the storytelling and story-acting practice was introduced into one class (the *target class*). (This was the first time that this practice had been used in any of the classes in this Head Start program.) This activity took place an average of 2 days out of the 4 days per week that the class met (59 days out of 120).⁵ A second class, housed in the same building, was selected to serve as the *control class*. Except for the introduction of the storytelling and story-acting practice in the target class, the two classes used the same curriculum, and were even supervised by the same Education Coordinator.

Each class began and ended the school year with 17 students, but both had turnover in between (which is normal for Head Start classes), and only children present for the whole year were included in the analysis. In addition, four full-year children in the target class were not included for various other reasons.⁶ The sample used for the analyses were 10 children from the target class (4 girls and 6 boys) and 15 from the control class (7 girls and 8 boys).

⁴For the sake of brevity, these are presented here in highly compressed form. For further details, explanation, and elaboration, see Nicolopoulou (1999).

⁵By contrast, in the middle-class preschools I have studied this practice generally took place almost every day. The fact that this practice was operating at only half-capacity, so to speak, in this Head Start class helps make the positive results described later especially impressive.

⁶One suffered from microcephalia and had minimal language skills; one was Spanish monolingual and therefore not suitable for comparison; one child was mistrustful of adults in general, and refused to be tested; and one child was not tested in the fall due to a tester's oversight.

All the children in both classes came from poor families that qualified for Head Start assistance, with reported annual incomes ranging from \$5,000 to \$10,000. In most cases, there appeared to be some degree of family difficulty or instability. Slightly less than a third of the children in each class lived in a household with two married parents; the majority lived with mothers who were single, separated, or divorced. With regard to ethnic and racial background, about three fourths of the children in these two classes were non-Hispanic White (a category that made up 97% of the community as a whole), mostly born and raised in Massachusetts. In the target class, about one third of the children included in the analysis were Hispanic (meaning that one or both parents were immigrants from the Caribbean), but all of these spoke English. There were no non-Hispanic Black children in either class.

Data Collection

Three main types of data are reviewed here. The first consisted of the spontaneous stories generated by the storytelling and story-acting practice—a body of data pertaining, by definition, only to the target class. The children in the target class generated a total of 166 stories during the school year, of which 118 were included in the analysis. As explained earlier, these stories were transcribed by the teacher as part of the practice itself. (She also recorded which children acted in each story performance and what roles they played.)

To allow systematic comparison between the target and control classes, two tests were administered to children in both classes at the beginning and end of the school year: the Expressive Vocabulary Test (EVT)⁷ and a story-production task devised for this study, the Figurine-Based Narrative Task (FBNT). The EVT was included because there are good reasons to believe that the productive vocabulary skills it measures are, along with narrative skills, part of an interconnected and mutually reinforcing cluster of decontextualized oral-language skills that provide critical preparation for literacy and long-term school success (Dickinson, Cote, & M. W. Smith, 1993; Snow, 1991).

Evaluating Children's Narrative Development

The overall hypothesis informing this study centered on two key expectations: First, regular participation by young children in this storytelling

⁷The version of the Expressive Vocabulary Test provided by the American Guidance Service (Williams, 1997) was used.

and story-acting practice should promote the development of their narrative abilities; and, second, it should also (directly and indirectly) promote the development of a broader range of decontextualized language skills, specifically including productive vocabulary skills. Analysis of the three types of data just outlined strongly confirmed these expectations. By a range of criteria, the narrative skills manifested in the spontaneous stories of the children in the target class improved quite significantly over the course of the year. And the comparisons between the target and control classes linked the advances by the children in the target class to their participation in the storytelling and story-acting practice. The scores of the children in the target class on both the EVT and the FBNT increased significantly more between September and May than did those of the children in the control class. In fact, on both measures the children in the target class began the year with lower mean scores than those of the children in the control class, but they improved sufficiently that by the end of the year their mean results were significantly higher than those of the children in the control class.

In short, the analysis yielded three mutually supportive types of evidence for the developmental benefits of the storytelling and story-acting practice. I briefly discuss each in turn.

Promoting Narrative Development: Analysis of the Children's Spontaneous Stories

The stories composed by each child in the fall and in the spring were compared using five measures I constructed (in collaboration with Elizabeth Richner) to capture various dimensions of narrative development.⁸ These fell into two broad categories:

1. The first two measures (loosely adapted from work in functional linguistics and sociolinguistics) attempted to capture the *linguistic complexity and sophistication* of the children's storytelling.
2. The other category focused on the *representation of character* in the children's narratives; ongoing work suggests that examining the selection, portrayal, and coordination of characters is especially useful for capturing the development of specifically narrative sophistication and coherence in young children (Nicolopoulou, 1998; Nicolopoulou & Richner, 1999; Richner, 1999).

⁸Fully satisfactory standard measures still need to be designed for capturing *young* children's narrative abilities and development, and particularly for assessing their spontaneous stories. For some discussion of the limitations of currently predominant approaches, see Nicolopoulou (1996b, 1997a, 1998).

Linguistic Complexity and Sophistication.

• *Types of Utterances: Clauses vs. Non-Clauses.* For this analysis, each story was broken down into its basic expository units, or *utterances* (loosely adapting the terminology of Berman & Slobin, 1994). Utterances can be *clauses* (which contain a verb) or *non-clauses* (which do not). (Examples of non-clause utterances include disconnected names and other nouns, simple lists of characters, and more complex but still incomplete fragments of clauses—e.g., “A whole bunch of big dinosaurs,” “Then the wedding boy again,” etc.) One dimension of narrative development is that young children should be able to handle an increasing number of clauses effectively within a single story; furthermore, narratives should increasingly be made up of clauses, as opposed to non-clauses. The results (see Table 5.1) indicated that the number of clauses per story per child did increase significantly during the year. The mean proportion of clauses vs. non-clauses per story also increased, although this increase was not statistically significant.

• *Types of Clauses: Narrative vs. Non-Narrative.* This distinction is loosely adapted from one introduced by Labov and Waletzky (1967/1997). Essentially, *narrative clauses* move the narrative ahead by depicting a series of events in temporal sequence. *Non-narrative* clauses may be of several

TABLE 5.1
Development of Spontaneous Stories Produced
by Children in Target Class (Mean Proportions)

	Fall	Spring
<i>Linguistic Complexity and Sophistication</i>		
• <i>Types of Utterances:</i>		
Number of Clauses	4.67	7.73*
% Clauses vs. Non-Clauses	63 vs. 37	77 vs. 23**
• <i>Types of Clauses:</i>		
Number of Narrative	2.32	6.23**
% Narrative	51	83**
% Narrative vs. Non-Narrative	51 vs. 49	83 vs. 17***
<i>Representation of Characters</i>		
• <i>Types of Characters:</i>		
% Active	35	62***
% Passive	13	24
% Inactive	51	14***
% Active vs. Passive	35 vs. 13*	62 vs. 24***
% Active vs. Inactive	35 vs. 51	62 vs. 14***
• <i>Depth and Complexity:</i>		
	1.79	3.45***
	(Level 2)	(Level 4)
• <i>Interaction and Coordination:</i>		
	1.82	3.09**
	(Level 2)	(Level 3)

* $p < .01$. ** $p < .001$. *** $p < .0001$.

types. In this sample, the non-narrative clauses were overwhelmingly simple descriptions, stage directions, and random comments tangential to the story—varieties of what might be termed “junk” clauses. Thus, an increasing proportion of narrative clauses in the children’s stories would be an indicator of development. The results indicate that this development did occur (see Table 5.1). The mean proportion of narrative clauses per story increased quite significantly during the year.

Representation of Character.

• *Types of Characters: Active vs. Passive vs. Inactive.* The results (Table 5.1) again show clear and significant improvement. From fall to spring semester, the mean proportion of inactive characters per story decreased dramatically (fall $M = 51\%$, spring $M = 14\%$), whereas the mean proportion of active characters increased (fall $M = 35\%$, spring $M = 62\%$). In the fall, inactive characters were most frequent; in the spring, there was a low proportion of inactive characters, and a higher proportion of active than of passive characters.

• *Character Depth and Complexity.* This analysis focused on the *depth and sophistication* with which children portrayed characters in their stories. A scale with seven levels was constructed, ranging from simple actions (Level 1) and purely external descriptions (Level 2) to an increasing depiction of internal states and motivations (Levels 3–4) and the explicit depiction of intentions, desires, and beliefs mediating characters’ actions (Levels 5–7). (For a more detailed presentation of the coding scheme, see Nicolopoulou, 1999; Nicolopoulou & Richner, 1999; Richner, 1999). This conceptual scheme draws, in part, on research dealing with children’s social understanding and their “theories of mind” (for useful overviews, see Astington, 1993; Flavell & P. H. Miller, 1998).

The results (Table 5.1) indicated that the children significantly improved their level of character representation over the course of the year. In the fall, most children’s level of optimal character depiction did not go beyond simple external descriptions (Level 2); by the spring, most children were capable of depicting characters who exhibited a perspective on the world (Level 3), and half were able to depict characters who also reacted emotionally and evaluatively to other characters (Levels 4–5).

• *Character Interaction and Coordination.* This measure attempted to capture one aspect of structural complexity and coherence in the narratives, by examining children’s ability to *coordinate* characters in an effective way. A scale with six levels measured whether characters in a story interacted with other characters (Levels 2–4) and whether these interactions were fully coordinated to each other so that a coherent plot began to emerge (Levels 5–6).

The results (Table 5.1) indicated that the children significantly improved their abilities to manage character interaction during the year. In the fall, most of the children depicted character interaction at Level 2, at best (from no interaction to low interaction between characters), and only two children achieved Level 3 (medium interaction: some interaction among some of the characters). By the spring, almost all the children in the sample had achieved either Level 3 or Level 4 (high interaction). Most of these children still needed to go further before they could produce narratives with coherent and well coordinated sets of characters; but their improvement was significant.

Summary. Over the course of the year, the narrative capabilities of the children in the target class improved consistently and significantly along four of the five dimensions I have just discussed (with positive but less decisive results on the remaining dimension). It is necessary to add a cautionary note. In terms of the narrative competence and sophistication they displayed, the stories told by the children in this Head Start class in the spring were still considerably less advanced than the stories I have collected from children of equivalent ages in middle-class preschools. Despite the progress these children made in developing their narrative skills during the year, they still had a substantial amount of catching up to do in this respect. But the key point here is that the children in the target class did show a clear and significant pattern of narrative development.

Promoting Narrative Development: Figurine-Based Narrative Task

Did the use of the storytelling and story-acting practice in the target classroom help to promote this development? To address this question more directly, I now turn to evidence that allows for systematic comparison between the target and control classes: the children's performance on the FBNT.

This task was administered individually to each child in both the target and control classes in September (*pretest*) and in May (*posttest*). During a session, an adult tester sought to elicit two stories from the child. In each case, the tester began by suggesting an orienting theme and presenting a set of small figurines to illustrate the theme. One set of figurines represented a family, the other several big and powerful animals; the corresponding themes are ones I have found to be especially popular in children's own spontaneous stories (with girls particularly favoring family life, and boys the actions of powerful animals).⁹

⁹Of course, this procedure remains subject to some of the methodological limitations of constrained story-elicitation tasks that I mentioned earlier. However, it seemed necessary to

All children included in the sample eagerly produced responses to this task, often lengthy ones, but these were not always narratives. For purposes of analysis, each response was divided into discourse units, which were classified into three categories: *narrative*, *pretense*, and *other non-narrative*. "Narrative" and "pretense" discourse units both present (more or less) coherent fictional scenarios through symbolic means. What distinguishes them is the extent to which they constitute decontextualized discourse, in the sense referred to earlier in this chapter. A *narrative* discourse unit builds up a complete scenario (or portion of it) using words—a scenario that a listener could (in principle) understand without seeing the gestures of the child or physical manipulations of the figurines. To draw again on a formulation by Wells (1985), it is effectively "self-contextualizing" (p. 253). A *pretense* scenario is verbally incomplete in this sense. The child uses the figurines and other nonverbal elements to demonstrate (not merely illustrate) the actions, events, or characters being described; a significant number of elements are left implicit in the verbal account. *Other non-narrative* is a heterogeneous residual category that includes conversational interactions irrelevant to the task, nonsymbolic comments about figurines, simple counting or description, and so on. The analysis examined the mean proportions of different types of discourse units in each response—and, specifically, the relative proportions of narrative vs. non-narrative discourse units.

The results (see Table 5.2) showed a clear contrast between the target and the control classes. In the target class, the children's responses to the FBNT moved significantly and substantially in the direction of greater narrativity between the fall and the spring; the responses of the children in the control class did not. In the target class, the mean proportion of "narrative" discourse units increased dramatically (from 5% to 34%), and the proportion of "other non-narrative" units decreased correspondingly (from 69% to 33%), with a slight (and non-significant) increase in the proportion of "pretense" units. In the control class, by comparison, the proportion of "narrative" units increased only slightly (from 9% to 16%), and the change was not statistically significant; the decrease in the proportion of "other non-narrative" units was somewhat greater (from 60% to 43%), but still not quite significant; and there was a non-significant increase in the proportion of "pretense" units. In short, the children in the control class, unlike those in the target class, showed no significant improvement in the narrativity of their responses. Thus, these results strongly support

complement the analysis of the spontaneous stories with data that allowed for controlled comparison between the two classes; and it seemed plausible that any bias in the results toward underestimating the children's narrative capabilities should affect both classes roughly equally.

TABLE 5.2
Mean Proportions of Discourse Types Per Story-Elicitation
Response (Figurine-Based Narrative Task)

	Pretest (September)			Posttest (May)		
	%N	%P	%O	%N	%P	%O
Target Class	5	27	69	34	34	33
Control Class	9	31	60	16	42	43

Note. N = Narrative, P = Pretense, O = Other Non-Narrative.

the conclusion that participation in the storytelling and story-acting practice significantly enhanced the children's narrative development.

Building Decontextualized Language Skills: Expressive Vocabulary Test

Of the range of vocabulary tests available for use with young children, the EVT was selected because it focuses on vocabulary production rather than just comprehension, and it tests the ability of children to retrieve appropriate words, apply them, and provide synonyms for them rather than merely to recognize them. Like the FBNT, the EVT was administered to children in both the target and control classes at two times during the school year, in September and May. The scores reported here for both pretest and posttest are age-adjusted scores standardized on the basis of national norms according to the usual practice.

The results were both striking and statistically significant. In September, the mean standardized scores for the control class were significantly higher than for the target class (target $M = 92$, control $M = 96.26$). But over the course of the year, the performance of the children in the target class increased sharply, and that of the children in the control class did not, so that in May the relative positions of the two classes had actually reversed themselves (target $M = 95.33$, control $M = 92.94$).

Overall Results

Taken together, the results of these three analyses strongly support the conclusion that participation in this spontaneous storytelling and story-acting practice promoted the development of children's narrative skills (and of related decontextualized oral-language skills). As noted earlier, these positive results are consistent with those I have found in middle-class preschools where this practice is used.

EXPLAINING THE BENEFITS OF THIS PRACTICE: PEER-GROUP CULTURE AND THE DYNAMICS OF NARRATIVE COLLABORATION

In short, the evidence indicates that this storytelling and story-acting practice can significantly advance young children's narrative development. The next questions to be addressed are *how* and *why* it achieves these effects. It is clear that the kinds of mechanisms usually emphasized in the context of expert-novice interaction, such as scaffolding, expert guidance, or conversational fine-tuning, do not play an important role here. So how should the developmental benefits of children's participation in this practice be explained? Let me offer a brief, incomplete, and partly exploratory response.

As I have argued throughout this chapter, the heart of the matter is that this storytelling and story-acting practice provides the framework for an ongoing, socially structured, and collectively constituted field of shared symbolic activity. The children themselves help to generate and sustain this activity system through their participation in the storytelling and story-acting practice; and it serves, in turn, as a sociocultural context that shapes their activity and offers them opportunities, resources, and motivations for narrative development. In this respect, several (interconnected) features of this practice seem especially critical.

The first is the public, peer-oriented, and peer-evaluated character of the children's narrative activity. The stories are presented to the class as a whole, and at one point or another all the children also participate in acting out their own stories and each other's. As a result, this activity engages the children and creates a public arena for narrative collaboration, experimentation, and cross-fertilization. Let me make it clear that when I speak of collaboration here I am not referring primarily to forms of direct cooperation, such as multiauthored stories. These are common enough in the middle-class preschools I have studied (though, as it happens, there were no jointly authored stories in this Head Start class), but they are not the main point. Rather, the key vehicle for narrative collaboration in this context is the children's participation in the public arena of the storytelling and story-acting practice itself. Even in a small class of children from similar backgrounds, different children come with distinctive experiences, knowledge, skills, concerns, and temperamental styles. This practice allows these individual skills and perspectives to be transformed into shared and publicly available narrative resources, so that each child can benefit from the variety of these resources that the other children bring with them. Also, to borrow a phrase from Paley (1986), this public arena offers children an "experimental theater" (p. xv) in which they can reciprocally try out, elaborate, and refine their own narrative efforts while getting the

responses of an engaged and emotionally significant peer-group audience.

Therefore, this practice can effectively integrate individual spontaneity with peer-group collaboration and mutual support. As children participate in it, they contribute to, draw on, and work with a growing common stock of themes, characters, images, plots, and other cognitive, symbolic, and linguistic resources. But at the same time, individual children can participate in this field of shared activity according to their own pace, rhythm, and inclination. Because the children are given control over what stories to tell, when to tell them, and who should act in their stories, it provides them with the opportunity to use and elaborate their narratives for their own diverse purposes—cognitive, symbolic, and social-relational.

Furthermore, the public arena of this storytelling and story-acting practice is itself enmeshed in the more general framework of the children's peer relations and group life. Again, a mutually reinforcing dynamic is at work. On the one hand, this practice helps to form and sustain a common culture in the classroom (while also facilitating the expression and articulation of differences within this common culture); and, simultaneously, this practice is shaped, supported, and energized by its embeddedness in that peer-group culture. In all the preschool classes I have studied, the emotional significance of the peer group and peer relations for young children is clearly part of what draws children into this practice and fosters their intense engagement with it.

Finally, the developmental value of this practice is greatly enhanced by the fact that its mode of combining *storytelling* with *story-acting* effectively integrates elements of narrative discourse and of pretend play. I argued earlier that we need to recognize the close affinity and interdependence between the two in children's experience and development. This practice is able to utilize the interplay between them in a manner that promotes and facilitates narrative development. It does so, I would argue, in two important ways that are analytically distinct but ultimately interconnected.

First, the storytelling and story-acting portions of this practice represent two forms or dimensions of narrative activity that involve complementary cognitive and linguistic skills: (a) the highly *decontextualized* use of language in composing and dictating the stories, and (b) highly *contextualized* narrative enactment, which is characteristically a central feature of children's pretend play. The contribution of this practice lies in the way that it links these two dimensions. On the one hand, the storytelling component of the practice poses for the child an exceptionally challenging demand for decontextualized discourse, because the child is called on to construct a complete, self-contextualizing fictional narrative using only words. The child's storytelling is not embedded in an immediate framework of conversational interaction and response (which means that in certain respects the demand

for decontextualized use of language here is greater than, for example, in the conversational elicitation and construction of narratives of past experience), and the composition of the story is typically several hours removed from its enactment. On the other hand, my analysis of this practice has made it clear that the reading out and enactment of the children's stories not only helps to motivate the children's storytelling, but also serves some important educative functions. In particular, it helps bring home to the child in a vivid way what is required for a narrative scenario to be effectively complete, self-contextualizing, and satisfying.

The second major implication of this integration of narrative discourse and enactment brings us back to some key factors we have already discussed. The story-acting portion of this practice puts the children's storytelling into a public arena and embeds the practice as a whole in the framework of the children's peer relations and group life. For example, choices about who acts in whose stories, and which roles they are given, express and help structure patterns of friendship, affiliation, and group inclusion; and one concern that influences the children's storytelling is the effort to provide roles that actual and potential friends will find desirable, or that can give the author a claim on desirable roles in the future. In these and other ways, the children's engagement in the activity is reinforced and partly channeled by a range of powerful social-relational motivations.

In combination, these features help explain why this storytelling and story-acting practice can be a powerful context for promoting the narrative development of young children. To flesh out this analysis a bit, I offer a brief and selective account of how some of these dynamics operated in the concrete setting of the Head Start class.

The First Phase: Searching for Narrative Form

As soon as the storytelling and story-acting practice was initiated in the target class in early October, most of the children were immediately eager to tell stories and all were eager to participate in acting them out. Within a short time, almost all the children were participating enthusiastically in both components of this activity, and their enthusiasm remained undiminished throughout the year. During a storytelling session, there were always several children gathered around the story table, waiting their turns fairly patiently while other children dictated (and these were not, on the whole, very patient children). When characters were being chosen, many children vigorously advertised their desire to be picked, even waving their hands and shouting "me, me" to request desired roles.

At first, however, their enthusiasm outran their narrative competence. As noted earlier, by comparison with the children in the middle-class preschool classrooms I have studied these children began the year consider-

ably less prepared to compose free-standing fictional narratives. This was not entirely surprising, though I was a little surprised by the extent to which it was true for this sample. Whitehurst et al. (1994) cited other studies estimating that “a typical middle-class child enters first grade with [previous experience of] 1,000 to 1,700 hr of one-on-one picture book reading, whereas the corresponding child from a low-income family averages 25 such hours” (p. 679). And Peterson (1994) found that young children with the weakest narrative skills tended to come from households that combined low income with “family disorganization,” which was true for almost all the children in both the target and control classes. This chapter has argued against a one-sided focus on the role of adult-child relations in children’s socialization and development, but it would also be foolishly one-sided to overlook their importance. In terms of their narrative capabilities, these Head Start children started out at a disadvantage due to weaknesses in narrative knowledge and skills that the corresponding middle-class preschoolers had acquired more fully in their earlier years, primarily (one can assume) in the context of relations with adult caregivers.

Thus, at the beginning of the year, most of the children did not display effective familiarity with many of the basic, minimal conventions of telling a story, such as beginning with a setting statement, explicitly relating events in temporal sequence, and so on. Even more fundamentally, most of them did not seem to fully grasp the principle that their stories needed to be explicitly self-contextualizing—that is, that they needed to construct a complete narrative scenario using words. In their first attempts at storytelling, the children simply listed a string of characters (and sometimes mentioned other potentially relevant elements), usually without providing any actions or descriptions for the characters, let alone relating them to each other or integrating them into plots. For the first 3 weeks of storytelling, all the “stories” were of a type captured by this example:

That is a book. The Rex, Tyrannosaurus Rex. A longneck, tigers. Now bear, fish. Now alligator. Big fish. Now polar bears. Next is butterflies, flower, and—I know it’s a secret—a Rex, two Rexes. And that’s how much animals, and another. A tiger, a boy. (Darren, 4-4)¹⁰

At times, the teacher transcribing these protostories tried to elicit some elaboration from the child, by asking, for example, “What does this character do?” But in most cases the children answered “I don’t know” or ignored her questions. The few who did respond seemed to understand this question as a request to describe a characteristic or stereotypical action of the character (e.g., the snake goes “ssss,” the frog goes “ribbit,” the dino-

¹⁰Pseudonyms are used for all children quoted or otherwise discussed here.

saur wags his tail), and they usually demonstrated these actions rather than explaining them verbally—that is, they were showing rather than telling. The teacher’s interventions did not seem to move the stories toward an adequate narrative form.

However, the story-acting component of this practice appears to have played a major role in helping the children move toward more fully self-contextualizing discourse in composing their stories. This was true in part because the enactment of the children’s stories often brought home to them why listing characters was not enough to create a satisfying story. For example, one child, whose dictated “story” had consisted only of a set of characters with no actions, became upset when the teacher asked her and the other child-actors to sit down after this list had been read out (Deena, 4-6). The child turned to the teacher with surprise and said emphatically, “But we didn’t do it!” She had obviously envisioned her characters performing some actions, even though she had not explicitly given them any. When the teacher let them proceed, the children acted out stereotypic actions associated with each character role. Another child (Bianca, 3-4), in her first storytelling attempt, listed a set of characters and other story elements (“a frog, a log”) without indicating how they were related. However, when the teacher read the story to the class for its enactment, and Bianca was preparing to act out her own role as frog, she turned to “correct” the teacher’s reading of her story by announcing what had originally been implicit: “The frog *sits* on the log.” In short, the acting-out of their stories helped the children to understand the need to construct a complete and explicitly self-contextualizing narrative scenario when they composed the stories.

But the most crucial feature of the story-acting was its role in making the children’s storytelling a public and peer-oriented activity; this allowed the children to use the storytelling and story-acting practice as a shared public arena for narrative collaboration and cross-fertilization.

Finding the Story: The Emergence of a Shared Genre Through Narrative Collaboration

The dynamics of this peer collaboration become apparent when we consider the process by which the children were able to move beyond their initial phase of protonarrative groping. About 3 weeks after the initiation of this practice, one of the girls, April, produced a story that for the first time met the minimal standards for a free-standing fictional story.

Wedding girl and wedding boy, and then there was a baby. And then there was the person that brought out the flowers. And then there was some animal that wrecked the house, the church house that people were getting married in. And a person was listening to a wedding tape. And that’s all. (April, 5-1).

Clearly, this story was not yet very sophisticated. It lacked such basic devices as a formal beginning, and the sequence of events was laid out in a loose and partly implicit way, by bringing in a series of characters and assigning actions to each in turn. However, in comparison with the stories that preceded it, this one displayed some important strengths. It constructed a relatively coherent and explicit scenario, presenting a set of interrelated characters and integrating them within a sketchy but readily discernible plot. In the process, it introduced, and combined, a set of organizing themes that were to prove powerfully appealing to other children in the class: first, a wedding, featuring the two linked characters of Wedding Boy (WB) and Wedding Girl (WG); and second, animal aggression.

The major significance of April's story is that this story paradigm was gradually taken up, with variations, by other children in the class, until it became pervasive in the children's storytelling. But it is worth noting that April herself did not immediately repeat or elaborate this storyline. It was first taken up and reused, with variations, 3 weeks later by Anton, a boy who had been given the role of WB in April's first story; in Anton's story, the wedding couple got married and then went on to have children (an event that, incidentally, happens very rarely in boys' stories). It was not until the day after Anton's story, following this recognition and appropriation of the storyline by a classroom peer, that April told a second story. She again used the WG/WB + animal aggression model, but with her own variations; most notably, the animal aggression was directed explicitly against one of the wedding couple: "And the animal wrecked the house that people were getting married were dancing in. And the animal ate the wedding girl." April's second story was part of a flurry of similar stories by other children, and stories using this cluster of themes became increasingly popular as the year went on.

This story paradigm thus became the common property of the classroom peer group. By the end of the fall semester, it had become a hegemonic model for the children's storytelling, and a shared point of reference even for stories that used different themes wholly or in part. By the spring semester, all children who told stories had used versions of this model, or at least some of its elements, in a number of their stories (see Fig. 5.1); and the overall proportion of stories that incorporated this model and/or drew on its central themes, in various configurations, was quite high (100% for some children; see Fig. 5.2).¹¹ Furthermore, within a short time following the group's adoption of this model in the fall, the

¹¹One of the children included in these figures, Marcus, was a newcomer who joined the class in the spring; for this reason, his stories were not included in the statistical analyses discussed earlier. (The stories by Lettrice were also not included in the previous analyses, because she was not administered the EVT and FBNT in the fall due to a tester's oversight.)

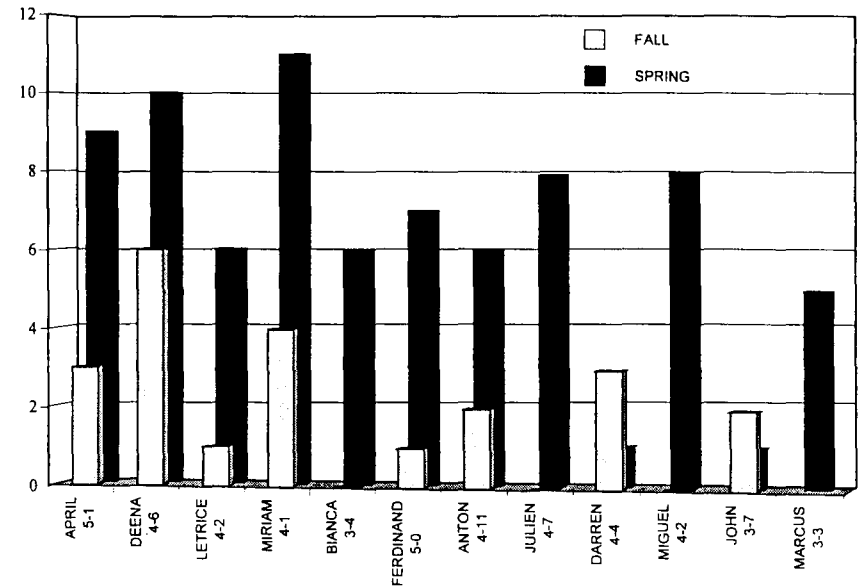


FIG. 5.1. Number of stories with wedding girl and wedding boy (with or without animal aggression).

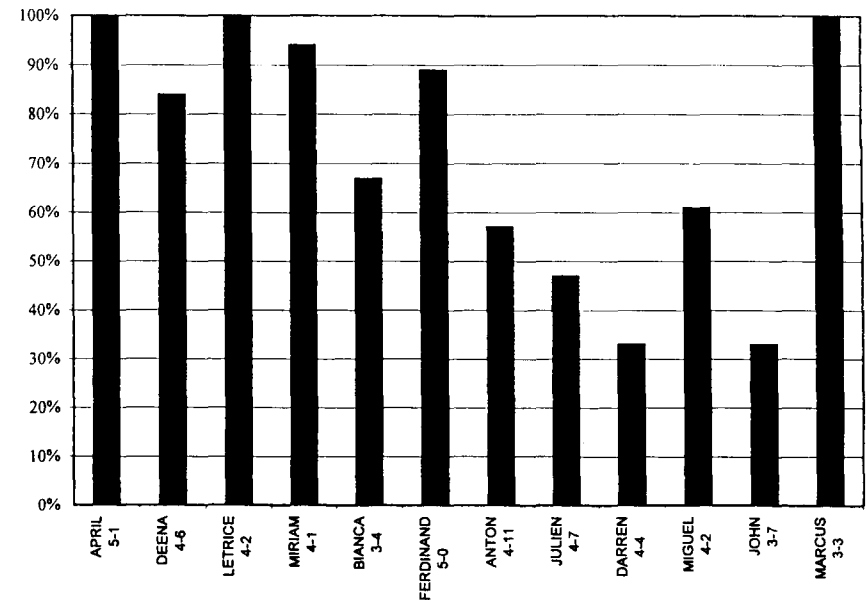


FIG. 5.2. Percentage of stories with wedding girl and wedding boy (with or without animal aggression).

children largely ceased to dictate protostories consisting of simple strings of inactive characters; with a very few exceptions, all their stories became more advanced, even when they used other kinds of storylines.

In short, this narrative paradigm became a cultural tool that was shared and elaborated by the classroom peer group as a whole. This is a major example of the way in which the storytelling and story-acting practice helped to create a shared body of publicly available narrative resources from which different children could draw, and to which in turn they could contribute, in the course of their participation.

Constructing a Common Culture as a Framework for Narrative Experimentation

In the process, the storytelling and story-acting practice helped the children to build up a common culture in the classroom, and the shared narrative paradigm just described became a key unifying feature of their common culture. This process was reinforced by the fact that children who joined the class during the year were almost always included in the classroom peer group by being given parts in story-acting performances, and then usually made their own bids for inclusion by drawing on versions of the dominant story paradigm to compose their first stories. At the same time, this common culture, and the narrative activity with which it was enmeshed, provided a framework for narrative experimentation and diversity. Children drew elements from each other's stories, but they also used and developed them in somewhat different ways, and generally managed to put their personal stamp on them. Even when children told stories using this central narrative paradigm, they developed variations on it over time—which could then be used and elaborated by other children.

These patterns of elaboration and reshaping were complex, and can only be touched on here. For example, whereas April's first stories had described a generic "animal" as the source of violence, a tendency soon developed to give the aggressing animal greater specificity. This took several forms. Darren, one of whose primitive protostories was quoted earlier, was the first child to tell a WB/WG + aggression story in which the aggressing animal was identified as a dinosaur; the dinosaur motif became sufficiently popular that dinosaur aggression emerged as a major shared theme in its own right (see Table 5.3). Other animals (T-Rex, tiger, shark, elephant) also came to be used for this purpose, in a range of variations and combinations, sometimes fighting each other as well as attacking the wedding couple. Some children, primarily girls, gradually elaborated the description of the wedding ceremony, adding new details and characters. Other children, primarily boys, elaborated the themes of violence, aggression, and disorder, sometimes with only a perfunctory mention of WB and WG.

TABLE 5.3
Mean Proportions of Some Common Themes
in Stories Told by Children in the Target Class

	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>
Wedding Girl & Wedding Boy	80%	51%
WG & WB + Aggression	68%	49%
Dinosaur Aggression	52%	62%

(For some patterns of variation in the use of the different themes, see Table 5.3). In stories expressing this tendency, the configurations of conflict and disruption became more detailed, complex, and imaginative.

Here is one example from the spring (3/24/98), which displays considerable narrative exuberance, though not much formal elegance:

The police. And the wedding girl and the wedding boy get married. And the police get the wedding girl, and the people were there and killed the wedding girl. And then they put her in the dirt. And then they turn like vampires. And then the police put the girl in the water. And then the dad with the gun killed the police. And then the grandma comes, and she opened the house, and the girl goes upstairs, and they close the door. And then the bad guys kill the police—all of the police. The bad guy gets the girl in the car, and then the ambulance comes, and the fire at home, and they went walking through the water at home. (Ferdinand, 5–5)

Note that Ferdinand begins the story with a fairly compact and coherent scenario, but he then cannot resist elaborating further, mostly by multiplying images of violence and disruption, and this elaboration pulls the coherence of the story apart. Despite these and other weaknesses, the ambition and the quality of this story contrast sharply with those of the protostories that predominated in the first phases of the children's storytelling (including Ferdinand's first attempts, which consisted of very simple lists).

Thus, the processes of narrative collaboration and variation were intertwined and mutually supportive. One of the key features that helped make this peer-group practice such a powerful context for promoting the children's narrative development, I would argue, is precisely the way it allowed and encouraged this interplay.

Narrative Elaboration, Development—and Limitations

The thread I have followed in this account, centering on the role of this key story paradigm within the peer-group culture of the class, captures only a portion of the overall picture. But it does bring out some important

dynamics. It is worth reemphasizing that the process just outlined was not initiated or directly furthered by the adults in the classroom—who, in fact, were surprised and puzzled by the appeal of the WB/WG/animal aggression story model. Nor can it be attributed directly to the child who first used this storyline, April. She did introduce this narrative paradigm into the classroom miniculture, but then other children took major roles in its diffusion and elaboration; and within a short time it had become the common property of the peer-group culture as a whole. It thus became a shared resource that was used as a basis for continuing narrative experimentation and cross-fertilization. Different children were able to appropriate the themes it provided and to work them over and elaborate them in their own ways. The pattern of repetition, variation, and elaboration that this involved appears to be one of the important tools that children use to gain a sense of the possibilities inherent in narrative form and to achieve a greater mastery of these possibilities.

In the process, the overall quality of the stories produced by the children in this Head Start class improved significantly over the course of the school year (as demonstrated by the results presented earlier). The stories became more ambitious, complex, coherent, and effective. Characters were portrayed more sharply and substantially; and both the characters and their actions were coordinated more effectively. Of course, some children were more successful than others; and the patterns of improvement in the stories of individual children were invariably complex rather than simple or unilinear, not least because they reflected an interplay of partly competing priorities. In some cases, for example, when children had mastered the ability to compose simple but fairly coherent stories, they would begin pushing their stories further, adding more characters, themes, and actions, and in some cases trying to move from single- to multiple-episode stories. When this happened, the result was usually increased tension between the richness and complexity of the stories and their coherence, with the coherence of the stories temporarily losing ground. But, overall, the children's pattern of narrative improvement was clear and significant.

It is important to recognize the continuing weaknesses and limitations in the narrative skills of the children in this class, even at the end of the year. Compared to middle-class preschool children I have studied, they still displayed considerably less ability to use narrative in flexible, confident, and sophisticated ways. This was not only true in terms of criteria of linguistic and structural complexity and sophistication. It was also reflected in the narrower range of themes, plots, and other cultural elements that the Head Start children were able to incorporate and use effectively in their stories. It is striking that this Head Start class developed only one powerful shared genre, whereas the classes I have studied in middle-class preschools invariably develop and elaborate a number of such genres.

The relative weakness in the Head Start children's mastery of narrative skills and resources probably also helps account for the curious fact that the themes used in their stories were less sharply polarized along gender lines than in those of the middle-class children. Although this matter requires a more extended analysis than can be offered here, it is likely that one crucial reason for this result was that the children in the target class were simply not yet able to elaborate fully distinctive narrative styles of this sort. (It would be intriguingly counterintuitive if the reason were that the worldviews of the Head Start children were less gender-differentiated and gender-stereotyped than those of the middle-class children. But a substantial amount of evidence, from classroom observations and other sources, renders this interpretation quite implausible.) The experience of this Head Start class suggests that it is first necessary for the children to establish a common culture as a framework for narrative experimentation and collaboration, before they can go on to articulate and elaborate narrative subcultures within the group; these children were presumably still working in the first stage.

But despite these reservations and limitations, it remains true that participation in the storytelling and story-acting practice promoted a quite significant improvement in the narrative skills and performance of the children in this Head Start class. This is especially impressive given the children's relatively weak mastery of narrative skills and conventions at the beginning of the year. Because these children did not begin with a strong foundation of narrative skills and resources, one might have expected that they would be especially dependent on further adult input and scaffolding—and, of course, such forms of adult-child interaction can play an important role in promoting their development. But in fact, the children contributed quite effectively to promoting each other's narrative development through a process of collaboration in the context of this peer-oriented narrative activity.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The research reported in this chapter has demonstrated that a peer-oriented storytelling and story-acting practice of the type analyzed here can serve as a powerful context for promoting young children's narrative development. I submit that these findings have important implications, both theoretical and practical.

First, they provide strong evidence that certain forms of peer-group activity, when carefully and appropriately integrated into the preschool curriculum, can contribute to young children's development and education in ways that usefully complement the role of more direct adult-child interactions. This opens up valuable possibilities for early childhood education.

For example, Peterson et al. (1999) reported that an intervention program aimed at changing mothers' styles of conversational interaction with their children in poor families increased the children's narrative skills, but when similar intervention programs were attempted in preschools, "None of them had any effect" (p. 65). The reasons, they argued, are that effecting such changes requires a much greater frequency of sustained adult-child interaction than teachers or other school professionals can realistically provide, and that teacher-child interactions lack the emotional importance of the mother-child relationship. This failure "suggests that it is very difficult to change narrative skills in school-based programmes" (p. 65). This may be true if one focuses exclusively on modes of dyadic adult-child interaction. But precisely the two factors they mentioned are among the most important that help explain the success of the storytelling and story-acting practice in improving children's narrative skills. Because it utilizes a resource that is plentiful in the classroom (other children) rather than one that is relatively scarce (adults and their time), it can generate a very high volume of peer-oriented participation, interaction, and collaboration; and the emotional importance of peer-group relations for young children heightens their engagement in this activity, its impact on them, and its developmental value.

More generally, this chapter has sought to suggest some concrete ways that developmental research can, and should, move beyond an exclusive focus on dyadic adult-child interaction for understanding the role of social context in development. Both narrative research and educational practice should treat children's group life as a developmental context of prime importance and great potential, and should seek to identify, understand, and facilitate those forms of peer-group activity that can most effectively engage children in ways that promote their narrative development.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research discussed in this chapter was partly supported by a Spencer Foundation Small Grant and a Junior Faculty Fellowship from Lehigh University; and portions of it were carried out in collaboration with Elizabeth Richner. I am grateful to the editors of this collection, Shoshana Blum-Kulka and Catherine Snow, for their useful comments, queries, and suggestions. And I am indebted to Jeff Weintraub for extensive advice, constructive criticism, and theoretical guidance.

REFERENCES

Astington, J. W. (1993). *The child's discovery of the mind*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Aukrust, V. G., & Snow, C. E. (1998). Narratives and explanations during mealtime conversations in Norway and the U.S. *Language in Society*, 27, 221-246.
- Berman, R., & Slobin, D. I. (Eds.). (1994). *Relating events in narrative: A crosslinguistic developmental study*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Blum-Kulka, S. (1997). *Dinner talk: Cultural patterns of sociability and socialization in family discourse*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Brown, J. R., & Dunn, J. (1992). Talk with your mother or your sibling? Developmental changes in early family conversation about feelings. *Child Development*, 63, 336-349.
- Corsaro, W. A. (1985). *Friendship and peer culture in the early years*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Damon, W. (1984). Peer education: The untapped potential. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 5, 331-343.
- Damon, W. (1988). *The moral child: Nurturing children's natural moral growth*. New York: The Free Press.
- Davies, B. (1989). *Frogs and snails and feminist tales: Preschool children and gender*. North Sydney, Australia: Allen & Unwin.
- Dickinson, D. K., Cote, L., & Smith, M. W. (1993). Learning vocabulary in preschool: Social and discourse contexts affecting vocabulary growth. *New Directions for Child Development*, 61, 67-77.
- Dunn, J. (1988). *The beginnings of social understanding*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Dunn, J. (1989). Siblings and the development of social understanding in early childhood. In P. G. Zukow (Ed.), *Sibling interaction across cultures* (pp. 106-116). New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Ely, R., & Gleason, J. B. (1995). Socialization across contexts. In P. Fletcher & B. MacWhinney (Eds.), *The handbook of child language* (pp. 251-270). Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Fivush, R. (1994). Constructing narrative, emotion, and self in parent-child conversations about the past. In U. Neisser & R. Fivush (Eds.), *The remembering self: Construction and accuracy in the self-narrative* (pp. 136-157). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Flavell, J. H., & Miller, P. H. (1998). Social cognition. In W. Damon (Gen. Ed.) & D. Kuhn & R. Siegler (Vol. Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 2. Cognition, perception, and language* (5th ed., pp. 851-898). New York: Wiley.
- Galloway, C., & Richards, B. (1994). *Input and interaction in language acquisition*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Garvey, C. (1984). *Children's talk*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Garvey, C. (1986). Peer relations and the growth of communication. In E. C. Mueller & C. R. Cooper (Eds.), *Process and outcome in peer relationships* (pp. 329-345). Orlando, FL: Academic Press.
- Garvey, C. (1990). *Play* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Original work published 1977)
- Harris, J. R. (1995). Where is the child's environment?: A group socialization theory of development. *Psychological Review*, 102, 458-489.
- Harris, J. R. (1998). *The nurture assumption: Why children turn out the way they do*. New York: The Free Press.
- Heath, S. B. (1982). What no bedtime story means: Narrative skills at home and school. *Language in Society*, 11, 49-76.
- Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hudson, J. A., & Shapiro, L. R. (1991). From knowing to telling: The development of children's scripts, stories, and personal narratives. In A. McCabe & C. Peterson (Eds.), *Developing narrative structure* (pp. 89-136). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Huizinga, J. (1955). *Homo ludens: A study of the play element in culture*. Boston: Beacon Press. (Original work published in Dutch in 1938)
- Labov, W., & Waletzky, J. (1997). Narrative analysis: Oral versions of personal experience. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 7, 3-38. (Original work published 1967)
- McCabe, A., & Peterson, C. (1991). Getting the story: A longitudinal study of parental styles in eliciting narratives and developing narrative skill. In A. McCabe & C. Peterson (Eds.), *Developing narrative structure* (pp. 217-253). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- McNamee, G. D. (1990). Learning to read and write in an inner-city setting: A longitudinal study of community change. In L. C. Moll (Ed.), *Vygotsky and education: Instructional implications and applications of sociohistorical psychology* (pp. 287-303). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- McNamee, G. D. (1992). Vivian Paley's ideas at work in Head Start. *The Quarterly Newsletter of the Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition*, 14, 68-70.
- Miller, P. J., & Moore, B. B. (1989). Narrative conjunctions of caregiver and child: A comparative perspective on socialization through stories. *Ethos*, 17, 428-449.
- Nicolopoulou, A. (1993). Play, cognitive development, and the social world: Piaget, Vygotsky, and beyond. *Human Development*, 36, 1-23.
- Nicolopoulou, A. (1996a). Narrative development in social context. In D. I. Slobin, J. Gerhardt, J. Guo, & A. Kyratzis (Eds.), *Social interaction, social context, and language: Essays in honor of Susan Ervin-Tripp* (pp. 369-390). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Nicolopoulou, A. (1996b, July). *Problems, strategies, and intentions in young children's narrative genres*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Congress for the Study of Child Language, Istanbul, Turkey.
- Nicolopoulou, A. (1997a). Children and narratives: Toward an interpretive and sociocultural approach. In M. Bamberg (Ed.), *Narrative development: Six approaches*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Nicolopoulou, A. (1997b). Worldmaking and identity formation in children's narrative play-acting. In B. D. Cox & C. Lightfoot (Eds.), *Sociogenetic perspectives on internalization* (pp. 157-187). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Nicolopoulou, A. (1998, June). *The elementary forms of narrative coherence in young children's storytelling*. Paper presented at the 1998 Annual Meeting of the Jean Piaget Society, Chicago.
- Nicolopoulou, A. (1999). *Mobilizing the untapped potential of peer-group practices in preschool settings to promote narrative development and emergent literacy in low-income children* (Final Report to the Spencer Foundation). Unpublished research report, Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA.
- Nicolopoulou, A., & Cole, M. (1993). The generation and transmission of shared knowledge in the culture of collaborative learning: The Fifth Dimension, its play-world, and its institutional contexts. In E. A. Forman, N. Minick, & C. A. Stone (Eds.), *Contexts for learning: Sociocultural dynamics in children's development* (pp. 283-314). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Nicolopoulou, A., & Richner, E. S. (1999, September). *Narrative development and emergent literacy in social context: Integrating peer-group practices in the education of low-income children*. Paper presented in an invited symposium on "The collaborative classroom as a context for development" at the IXth European Conference on Developmental Psychology, Spetses, Greece.
- Nicolopoulou, A., Scales, B., & Weintraub, J. (1994). Gender differences and symbolic imagination in the stories of four-year-olds. In A. H. Dyson & C. Genishi (Eds.), *The need for story: Cultural diversity in classroom and community* (pp. 102-123). Urbana, IL: NCETE.
- Nicolopoulou, A., & Weintraub, J. (1998). Individual and collective representations in social context: A modest contribution to resuming the interrupted project of a sociocultural developmental psychology. *Human Development*, 41, 215-235.

- Ochs, E. (1988). *Culture and language development: Language acquisition and language socialization in a Samoan village*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Ochs, E., Smith, R., & Taylor, C. (1989). Detective stories at dinnertime: Problem-solving through co-narration. *Cultural Dynamics*, 2, 238-257.
- Ochs, E., Taylor, C., Rudolph, D., & Smith, R. (1992). Storytelling as a theory-building activity. *Discourse Processes*, 15, 37-72.
- Paley, V. (1986). *Mollie is three: Growing up in school*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Paley, V. (1988). *Bad guys don't have birthdays*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Paley, V. (1990). *The boy who would be a helicopter: The uses of storytelling in the classroom*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Peterson, C. (1994). Narrative skills and social class. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 19, 251-269.
- Peterson, C., Jesso, B., & McCabe, A. (1999). Encouraging narratives in preschoolers: An intervention study. *Journal of Child Language*, 26, 49-67.
- Piaget, J. (1959). *The language and thought of the child*. London: Routledge. (Original work published in French in 1923, 3rd ed. 1945)
- Piaget, J. (1965). *The moral judgment of the child*. New York: The Free Press. (Original work published in French in 1932)
- Richner, E. S. (1999). *From actors to characters to persons: The development of character representation in young children's narratives*. Unpublished master's thesis, Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA.
- Richner, E. S., & Nicolopoulou, A. (2001). The narrative construction of differing conceptions of the person in the development of young children's social understanding. *Early Education and Development*, 12, 393-432.
- Rogoff, B. (1998). Cognition as a collaborative process. In W. Damon (Gen. Ed.) & D. Kuhn & R. S. Siegler (Vol. Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 2. Cognition, perception and language* (5th ed., pp. 679-744). New York: Wiley.
- Schieffelin, B. B., & Ochs, E. (Eds.). (1986). *Language socialization across cultures*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Snow, C. E. (1983). Literacy and language: Relationships during the preschool years. *Harvard Educational Review*, 53, 165-189.
- Snow, C. E. (1989). Understanding social interaction and language acquisition: Sentences are not enough. In M. H. Bornstein & J. S. Bruner (Eds.), *Interaction in human development* (pp. 83-103). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Snow, C. E. (1991). The theoretical basis for relationships between language and literacy in development. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 6, 5-10.
- Snow, C. E. (1995). Issues in the study of input: Finetuning, universality, individual and developmental differences, and necessary causes. In P. Fletcher & B. MacWhinney (Eds.), *The handbook of child language* (pp. 180-193). Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Snow, C. E., & Dickinson, D. K. (1990). Social sources of narrative skills at home and at school. *First Language*, 10, 87-103.
- Snow, C. E., & Dickinson, D. K. (1991). Skills that aren't basic in a new conception of literacy. In E. M. Jennings & A. C. Purves (Eds.), *Literate systems and individual lives: Perspectives on literacy and schooling* (pp. 179-191). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Stambak, M., & Sinclair, H. (Eds.). (1993). *Pretend play among 3-year-olds*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Sutton-Smith, B. (1986). The development of fictional narrative performances. *Topics in Language Disorders*, 7, 1-10.
- Tudge, J., & Rogoff, B. (1989). Peer influences on cognitive development: Piagetian and Vygotskian perspectives. In M. H. Bornstein & J. S. Bruner (Eds.), *Interaction in human development* (pp. 17-40). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Vygotsky, L. S. (1967). Play and its role in the mental development of the child [Translation of a stenographic record of a lecture given in Russian in 1933]. *Soviet Psychology*, 12, 6–18.
- Wells, G. (1985). Preschool literacy-related activities and success in school. In D. R. Olson, N. Torrance, & A. Hildyard (Eds.), *Literacy, language, and learning: The nature and consequences of reading and writing* (pp. 229–255). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Wells, G. (1986). *The meaning makers: Children learning language and using language to learn*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Whitehurst, G. J., Arnold, D. S., Epstein, J. N., Angell, A. L., Smith, M., & Fischel, J. F. (1994). A picture book reading intervention in day care and home for children from low-income families. *Developmental Psychology*, 30, 679–689.
- Whiting, B., & Whiting, J. (1975). *Children of six cultures: A psycho-cultural analysis*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Williams, K. (1997). *Expressive vocabulary test*. Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service.
- Zukow, P. G. (Ed.). (1989a). *Sibling interaction across cultures*. New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Zukow, P. G. (1989b). Siblings as effective socializing agents: Evidence from central Mexico. In P. G. Zukow (Ed.), *Sibling interaction across cultures* (pp. 79–105). New York: Springer-Verlag.