

Intersubjectivity Without Agreement

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In this paper, there is an attempt to construct the notion of intersubjectivity as a process of a coordination of participants' contributions in joint activity. This notion incorporates the dynamics of both agreement and disagreement. I argue that a traditional definition of intersubjectivity as a state of overlap of individual understandings overemphasizes agreement and de-emphasizes disagreement among the participants in joint activity. It disregards disagreement at two levels: 1) by focusing only on integrative, consensus seeking, activities, in which disagreement among participants of joint activity often is viewed as only the initial point of the joint activity that has to be resolved by the final agreement (macro-level), and 2) by considering disagreements as only nuisances or obstacles while focusing on integrative activities (micro-level). To illustrate how disagreement can constitute intersubjectivity at macro- and micro-levels, examples of children's development of a classroom play are examined. Diversity and fluidity of intersubjectivity will be discussed.

Epigraph

I know that I am wrong but I do not know where exactly I am wrong, to what degree, or why. I hope people who disagree will help me clarify these questions. The author.

In this paper, I argue that in the traditional definition of the concept of intersubjectivity, agreement among participants, is overemphasized while disagreement is de-emphasized. This emphasis on agreement orients researchers to focus only on particular agreement-bounded phenomena in sociocultural activities and to disregard other aspects of the phenomena, such as non-integrative activities (macro-level) and non-integrative elements of integrative activities (micro-level). I argue that disagreement and agreement are both aspects of one process rather than separate phases of micro-development of sociocultural activity portrayed as progressing from disagreement (or a lack of agreement) to agreement among the participants. Each aspect of the process cannot be fully understood without understanding the other. In this paper, the main question discussed is not so much how understanding among people becomes possible, but what forms dynamic understanding can take.

Here, I will try to develop a coherent notion of intersubjectivity that appreciates both agreement and disagreement among the participants in sociocultural activity. In doing so, I will consider several examples of sociocultural activities where evidence of disagreement as a characteristic of the intersubjectivity process is clear and central for the activities: straight speech *durgi* in Israel (Katriel, 1986), learning disability in schools (Mehan, 1993), and children's playcrafting (Baker-Sennett, Matusov, & Rogoff, 1992).

The approach undertaken in the paper is not new in the social sciences (see Aberle, 1960; Bakhtin, 1986; Durkheim, 1933/1964; Hanerz, 1992; Lemke, 1995; Lotman, 1988; Maxwell, 1994; Smolka, De

Goes, & Pino, 1995; Wallace, 1961; Wertsch & Toma, 1995). Many anthropologists, sociologists, and, more recently, psychologists, argue against an exclusive focus on agreement (i.e., “sharing”) among individuals involved in sociocultural practices and suggest alternative concepts for capturing a unity of diverse participants in sociocultural activities, such as “organization of diversity” (Wallace, 1961), “organic solidarity” (Durkheim, 1933/1964), “organized heterogeneity” (Lemke, 1995), “heteroglossia” (Bakhtin, 1986), and “intersubjective relationship” (Smolka, De Goes, & Pino, 1995). For example, Rogoff (1994, ms) stressed the importance of both agreement and disagreement in her definition of culture:

Members of a community are not homogeneous. They do not have precisely the same points of view, practices, backgrounds, or goals. Rather, *they are part of a coordinated organization*. They often are in complementary role—playing parts that fit together rather than being identical—or in contested relationships with each other, disagreeing about some features of their own roles or community direction while requiring some common ground that community members share (even if they contest it) that I regard as culture. (p.15; italics added)

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that intersubjectivity is more usefully defined as a process of coordination of individual participation in joint sociocultural activity rather than as a relationship of correspondence of individuals’ actions to each other.

Traditionally, intersubjectivity has been defined as a state of overlapping individual “subjectivities” or “prolepses” (Rommetveit, 1979, 1985). The term “prolepsis” refers to a communicative move in which a speaker presupposes or takes for granted something that has not yet been discussed by the time of the move. For example, prolepsis can take the form of the speaker’s assumptions about the listener’s background knowledge of the topic, about the listener’s perception of how serious the conversation is, and so on. Intersubjectivity is achieved when participants of an activity have similar prolepses. Although researchers who traditionally focus predominantly on agreement and shared presuppositions may keep in mind limitations of such approach that may lead to the following implicit forms of reductionism:

- 1) intersubjectivity is viewed as *a state of symmetry* among individuals;
- 2) intersubjectivity is *reduced* to individual subjectivity (i.e., prolepsis) via comparison of individual subjectivities (prolepses);
- 3) joint activity is regarded as a simple *sum of individual activities*; and
- 4) joint activity progresses *from heterogeneity to increasing symmetry* among the individuals’ perspectives and prolepses.

The new approach to intersubjectivity does not reject traditional research or studied phenomena, but rather raises new questions, points out new phenomena, and provides different explanations. Traditional and participatory approaches to intersubjectivity generate important implications for both conceptual frameworks and research methodology. The traditional approach based on the notion of “sharing” (understood as overlapping, “having in common” such as “shared understanding”) seems to limit researchers to study only consensus-oriented activities and to focus on processes of unification of the participants’ subjectivities (Smolka, De Goes, & Pino, 1995). Unlike the traditional approach, the participatory approach allows researchers to study any joint activity—consensus - and non-consensus-oriented (such as dispute, fights, etc.)—and focuses on how the participants coordinate their contributions in the joint activity through agreements and disagreements.

In the rest of the paper, I will discuss the role of intersubjectivity in sociocultural activities, briefly reviewing the main lines of research on intersubjectivity in the psychological literature, discussing

traditional and participatory notions of intersubjectivity, and providing examples of sociocultural activities that are not consensus-oriented. Finally, I will analyze children's playcrafting activity to illustrate the participatory notion of intersubjectivity as a process of coordination of participants' contributions.

Intersubjectivity as "Having in Common" Versus as Coordination

What happens in a sociocultural activity when participants have different goals, prolepses, and understandings of the situation? A traditional approach addresses this question at the level of individual action by referring to some constructed "common" or "shared" action that reconciles the differences between participants' diverse goals, prolepses, and perceptions. However, in many cases, sociocultural activity is constituted by a diversity of individual actions, and the reconciliation of these individual actions is not only undesired but can destroy the activity (e.g., the examples of *dugri* speech below). But how can the diversity of individual actions (i.e., goals, prolepses, and perceptions) unite people in the activity? To address this question it is necessary to shift the analysis from the level of individual action to the level of participatory contribution, from a focus on what each individual actor tries to accomplish to a focus on how individual contributions are coordinated with each other during the activity.

Traditionally, intersubjectivity has been defined as sharing subjectivities among participants. Here the term "sharing" refers to both "having in common" and "dividing up" (Cole, 1991).¹ I argue that this narrow definition of intersubjectivity can lead to a static comparison of individuals (e.g., their action, perspectives, goals) and the collapsing of individuals into each other by focusing only on what is in common among them. It assumes that increasing homogeneity of participants in a joint activity is the outcome of the activity (Lemke, 1995). Anthropologist Hannerz (1992) called for an alternative approach that embraces diversity:

Rather than trying to find, somewhere in the structure of social relations, a common denominator for the widest possible range of cultural phenomena—an enterprise which even in its more successful versions tends to be quite incomplete in its coverage—I am interested here in the sources of diversity, and in its consequences. This is a matter of confronting a customary commitment, in anthropology and elsewhere, to one particular understanding of culture as collective, socially organized meaning—the idea of culture as something shared, in the sense of homogeneously distributed in society. (p.11)

The metaphor of sharing as "having in common" implies intersubjectivity in a sociocultural activity as a process of unifying or standardizing all the participants' contributions. According to this approach, "to share subjectivities" means that all the participants hold the same vision of activity in terms of what and how to act, so that they can act as one individual. Semiotician Lotman (1988) referred to the unification of individual viewpoints as the first function of text (i.e., any semiotic corpus that has significance, see Wertsch & Toma, 1995). He wrote, "the first function [of text] is fulfilled best when codes of the speaker and the listener most completely coincide and consequently, when the text has the maximum degree of univocality" (Lotman, 1988, p. 34). However, it is impossible to achieve a complete overlap of psychological perceptions of a situation despite the commonality of the participants' biological equipment, cultural history, and experience of physical surroundings because of the process that constitutes unique individual experience (e.g., each time each person uniquely experiences the sourness of a lemon). It is also doubtful that the core interest that people have in each other is to "share" something (i.e., to unify or even, pushed to an extreme, to collapse into each other) (Wallace, 1961). As Lotman (1988) pointed out, the first function of text does not exist without the second function of creating new meanings.

The second function of text is to generate new meanings. In this respect a text ceases to be a passive link in conveying some constant information between input (sender) and output (receiver). Whereas in the first case a difference between the message at the input and that at the output of an information circuit can occur only as a result of a defect in the communications channel, and is to be attributed to the technical imperfections of this system, in the second case such a difference is the very essence of text's function as a "thinking device." What from the first standpoint is a defect, from the second is a norm, and vice versa. (pp. 36-37)

The methodology of the traditional understanding of intersubjectivity as sharing is based on a comparison of individuals' actions through observation or by asking the participants themselves about the degree to which they agreed with each other in their joint activity (e.g., Kelly-Byrne, 1984; Leadbeater, 1988). This overlapping of individual understandings is regarded as constituting intersubjectivity in the object of the joint activity (e.g., "shared" focus of attention), intersubjectivity in communication (i.e., individuals' agreement about their engagement in communication), and intersubjectivity in meta-communication (i.e., individuals' agreement about the nature of the communication—joking vs. serious conversation) (Göncü, 1993). In this approach, individuals are often considered to be separated from each other with boundaries and involved in dyadic Ping-Pong type interaction, with reduction of culture to societal tools and social partners (see Tomasello, Kruger, & Ratner, 1993, as an example of such an approach, and Rogoff, Chavajay, & Matusov, 1993, for a critique of it). Traditional research on the micro-development of intersubjectivity usually proceeds from defining an initial overlap in individuals' understandings of the activity object, activity communication, and meta-communication, to a description of how this overlap has increased in joint activity, as in the case of adult-child guidance (see Wertsch, 1979, 1984 as examples).²

If the overlapping has not increased, it is often considered as evidence for a lack of intersubjectivity (Göncü 1993). An example of a lack of understanding that was considered a lack of intersubjectivity can be drawn from Corsaro's (1983) observation of a 3-year-old girl, whose bid for pretend play reconstructing her experience of viewing her baby brother on a TV screen was rejected by her friends because they were unfamiliar with the girl's experience. Here the lack of common experience inhibited joint activity. However, a lack of understanding does not automatically lead to a lack of intersubjectivity. In the playcrafting study (Baker-Sennett, Matusov, & Rogoff, 1992), children's different experiences with different versions of the traditional fairy tale *Snow White* led them to intensive disputes and discussions that underwent different productive phases of the process of intersubjectivity.

Bruner (1983) implicitly suggested a good criterion for detecting the process of intersubjectivity: intersubjectivity lasts as long as joint activity. In his example, a physicist mother and her 4-year-old child probably do not have identical notions of "electricity," however, it does not matter for their conversation about electrical shocks to continue. Because immediate joint activity is embedded in and overlapped with other joint activity with different people, in different time and circumstances, bigger joint activities last and, thus, bigger intersubjectivity lasts even when specific joint activity is over. Intersubjectivity involves and exceeds immediate joint activity in the form of resulting experience from the joint activity: the participants learned new skills, roles, knowledge that are still coordinated with the former joint activity. Recall the 3-year-old girl who unsuccessfully tried to involve children in her pretend play—it was possible that the girl learned the need to explain her previous experience to the children, or to choose a theme for pretend play that would be more familiar to other children, or to go to play with adults who can easily adjust and facilitate the play, or to avoid bidding for play, and so on. Thus, even an unsuccessful bid for joint activity, or interrupted joint activity, can provide a basis for future coordination of participant contributions and thus intersubjectivity.

Smolka, De Goes, and Pino (1995) strongly argue that misunderstandings, conflicts, “divergent perspectives, opposition of ideas, resistance to communication, and other disharmonious instances” (p. 172) should not be viewed as failed attempts at intersubjectivity but as special forms of intersubjectivity. This view was also supported by many social psychologists who studied group dynamics and conflict resolution (Deutsch, 1973; Lewin, 1948). In the alternative, participatory perspective on intersubjectivity, differences, disagreements, and misunderstandings among the participants are no less relevant to the joint activity than similarities, agreements, and understandings (Blanco, 1995; Hawkins, 1987; Lemke, 1995; Smolka, De Goes, & Pino, 1995; Wertsch, del Rio, & Alvarez, 1995).

The participatory notion of intersubjectivity as a coordination of individual contributions to the joint activity allows researchers to incorporate both participants’ understandings and misunderstandings of each other, and their similarities and differences as the participants are simultaneously in agreement and disagreement. Moreover, at the bottom of any agreement, there is a momentary disagreement that promotes communication (otherwise, people would not need to communicate) and it is the dynamic for change in the activity. Similarly, at the bottom of any disagreement, there is an agreement that grounds the disagreement. Agreements and disagreements provide the basis for dynamics at the micro level of the joint activity as well as at more global levels (Lotman, 1988). For instance, a prosecutor and a defender in court do not usually seek consensus with each other but are involved in persuasive argumentation for the judge and jury who coordinate the prosecutor’s and the defender’s contributions in court argumentation (see Stein & Miller, 1993 for more discussion of this case). I argue that intersubjectivity as a coordination of individual contributions in joint activity more accurately captures the dialectic relationship between understanding and misunderstanding in joint activity than does intersubjectivity as sharing.

Role of Intersubjectivity in Sociocultural Activities

The intersubjectivity process organizes individual goal-directed efforts in joint activity. In the psychological literature, intersubjectivity is usually referred to in three sequential moments of joint activity: the beginning, the intermediate, and the end (Cervantes, personal communication, November 1993; see also Smolka, De Goes, & Pino, 1995). The beginning moment is about having common backgrounds that participants are engaged in before joining the communication. From this point of view, intersubjectivity preexists or should be established before a specific joint activity and is a precondition of any meaningful communication (Brazelton, 1983; Rogoff, 1990; Trevarthen, 1979; Wells & Chang-Wells, 1992). The intermediate moment of intersubjectivity is about creating a common ground of engagement among the participants who are directly involved in the joint activity. Here, intersubjectivity is defined in terms of mutual understanding and engagement in participants’ definitions of the situation (i.e., their perceptions and understandings of the situation) and sensitivity to each other’s perspectives of the ongoing joint activity (Clark & Haviland, 1977; Rommetveit, 1985; Trevarthen & Hubble, 1978; Wertsch, 1979, 1984). The end moment is about a common outcome of the joint activity, what is learned in the activity by all the participants. In this moment, intersubjectivity is defined as updated common background such as a child learning from a caregiver how to consider and perform a task (Wertsch, 1984).

Different researchers emphasize different moments of intersubjectivity in joint activity. For example, Wells and Chang-Wells (1992) were primarily interested in the preconditions of joint classroom activity, in having a common background and channel of communication by the participants. Murray and Trevarthen (1985) focused more on the emerging intersubjectivity in the mother-

infant joint activity and showed that 6- to 12-week-old infants coordinated their movements and established eye contact with their mothers in live face-to-face interaction mediated by video equipment, but the infants turned away and showed signs of distress when they were presented with a video replay of their mothers' interactions with them. Wertsch (1979) concentrated on the intermediate and the end moments of intersubjectivity in joint activity by looking at the growing commonality of participants' definitions of the situation, and the outcome of guidance as the child becomes an independent problem solver during sessions where a mother helped a 2-year-old boy work a puzzle. Piaget's theory of perspective taking defined intersubjectivity as an outcome of socio-cognitive conflict resolution (Forman, 1987; Rogoff, 1990; Tudge & Rogoff, 1989), focusing on the end moment—intersubjectivity as outcome of the joint activity.

It appears that the phenomenon of intersubjectivity transcends any specific and time-limited joint activity—it is not only the basis and derivative of the joint activity but also the social glue of different sociocultural activities. For example, a 4-year-old child joining pretend play with her playmates has already been engaged in general scripts of pretend play with their conventional metacommunicative rules separating fictitious and real worlds as well as in many diverse sociocultural practices that can be available material for the pretend play (e.g., family chores, school, shopping routines) (Göncü, 1993). Through participation in sociocultural practices mediated by other people organized in social groups and institutions and by sociocultural tools (e.g., books, computers, technologies, goods), people establish intersubjectivity without direct contact with each other.³ This function of intersubjectivity as the social glue of sociocultural activities makes possible the development of communicative discourses, languages, and finally cultures that constitute the global sociocultural and historical fabric of the human world.

Studies on Intersubjectivity: Socio-Cognitive Conflict and Cultural Guidance.

Historically, there have been two strong conceptual traditions in developmental psychology that focus on intersubjectivity in joint activity. First, the theory developed by Piaget and his followers focused mainly on the role of disagreement in socio-cognitive conflicts that promote development of qualitatively new cognitive forms of actions in children. Second, the theory developed by Vygotsky and his followers primarily emphasized the role of agreement about cultural goals, means, and functions in cultural guidance. Both these conceptual traditions have been interested in how a gap in individual understanding of the situation among the participants has been covered in a joint activity.

The Piagetian notion of intersubjectivity is based on the idea of cognitive decentering through perspective taking. According to the notion of perspective taking, an individual in joint activity has to deal with not only his/her own perspective on problem solving but also with the perspectives of the other participants as well. When the individual perspectives differ, it might cause a socio-cognitive conflict in the individuals (disequilibrium). The socio-cognitive conflict is based on disagreements among the participants and might occur in several participants during the activity and is intensified by the participants' constant communication. It can lead to mutual understanding between the participants and usually to a new, more correct and, thus, advanced, perspective shared by the participants. This new perspective is shared due to the assumption of universality of cognitive process in each individual.

There were many studies in the 1970s and 1980s that explored Piagetian theory about the role of socio-cognitive conflict for cognitive and moral development (see for example, Ames & Murray, 1982; Doise, Mugny, & Perret-Clermont, 1975; Light & Glachan, 1985; Mugny & Doise, 1978).

Johnson and Johnson (1989) performed a meta-analysis of studies on cognitive and moral reasoning in joint activity and concluded that “these studies provided evidence that disagreements among members of cooperative groups can promote transitions to higher stages of cognitive and moral reasoning” (p. 49). Recently in the literature, there is increasing attention to persuasive argumentation and reasoning: what argument is good, what skills are important for successful argumentation, what might be the goals and the strategies for argumentation, how argumentation can serve for collaboration, and so on (Forman, 1992; Miller, 1987; Stein, Bernas, Calicchia, & Wright, in press; Stein & Miller, 1993). There has been also growing interest in studying the process and role of conflicts in peer relations (Hartup, Laursen, Stewart, & Eastenson, 1988; Shatz, 1993; Youniss & Volpe, 1978).

The Vygotskian notion of intersubjectivity is based on the premise that interpsychological processes of communication precede the process of internalization, and through it are transformed into intrapsychological processes of an individual’s self-regulation. Higher mental functions of memory, counting, reading, and so on initially exist in social interaction and are distributed among the participants. Through learning sociocultural tools (e.g., system of written signs, numerical system, maps, and so on) in joint activity, individuals become capable of producing higher mental functions completely by themselves. Intersubjectivity develops from the earliest and most peripheral form of individual participation in joint activity, where a higher mental function is distributed among the participants, to a full possession of a culturally advanced mental function by the individual. Here the individual processes are regulated by socially distributed functions defined by culture (Wertsch, 1985). The highest level of intersubjectivity is achieved when a child takes over full responsibility for the task from a culturally more advanced partner and performs the whole task by her/himself without needing the partner anymore. Individual mastery of working alone is the final aim of individual microgenesis in joint activity. Growing interest in Vygotsky’s theory in the 1980s led to a variety of studies focused on guidance in support of Vygotsky’s claims that working with a more capable partner provides an access to cultural functions for a child (see for example Ellis & Rogoff, 1986; Koester & Bueche, 1980; McLane, 1987; Radziszewska & Rogoff, 1988).

However, the researcher-designed structure of the joint activities in their labs often remained unnoticed for the researchers in the 1970s and 1980s. These activities were usually structured in such a way so as to be with only one (non-negotiable) goal and with the task unilaterally controlled by the researchers. Typically, the activities were consensus-oriented and were supposed to end with agreement among the participants (including the researcher). If agreement did not occur, the researchers often considered the joint activity a failure (see Smolka, De Goes, & Pino, 1995; Wertsch, del Rio, & Alvarez, 1995 for more discussion and critique of this methodology and conceptual framework). In addition, the organization of the highly-controlled experiments on conflict and guidance in the psychological labs was promoted by the academic requirements of the experimental methodology of that time (this structure of activities also looked suspiciously similar to those in traditional school institutions). The researcher’s own participation in the institution of academia often remained transparent and, thus, unseen for the researcher (Rogoff, Radziszewska, & Masiello, 1995). Part of the problem in psychology seems to be assuming an “objective” science independent from its institutional and cultural environment. When the researcher as an organizer of the joint activity in the lab (e.g., testing, treatment) is considered to be included in the analysis of the experimental joint activity, it becomes clear that the assumptions about the unilateral, non-negotiable, academically-rigorous nature of the experimental activity in psychological labs are questionable (Lave, 1988).

It appears that any joint activity has multiple agendas, goals, contexts, tasks, and actors with different intentions. It involves dynamics of agreements, disagreements, and coordination of partici-

pants' contributions. Because the researchers in the traditional experiments on conflict and guidance often tried to unilaterally control the studied joint activity, the inherent nature of joint activity seemed to escape the researchers' attention and was considered as a "nuisance" of the experimental setup. Such "nuisance" could involve participants' non-cooperation with the researcher, their mis- or alternative understanding of the task, and/or their deviation from the experimenter's task. It also could involve means, themes, and agendas from distant contexts and practices by the participants, different meanings of the experimenter-participants interaction for different participants, attempts to involve the researcher in the task, and so on (Elbers, Maier, Hockstra, & Hougsteden, 1992; Hendrick, 1990; Lave, 1988; Matusov, Bell, & Rogoff, submitted; Perret- Clermont, Perret, & Bell, 1991; Smolka, De Goes, & Pino, 1995; van der Veer, Ijzendoorn, & Valsiner, 1994).

To take into account the inherently multifaceted and sociocultural nature of activities in which people are involved, it would be much easier to study joint activities when they are not organized by the researchers. Starting from the second half of the 1980s, there has been an increasing number of studies on joint activities occurring in "naturalistic" institutional environments (often schools) without much control by the researcher (see, for example, Moll & Whitmore, 1993; Newman, Griffin, & Cole, 1989; Wells, 1990). However, in considering "naturally" occurring activities, many of the studies have focused on either consensus-oriented activities or consensus in activities (for an exception to the latter, see Wertsch & Toma, 1995). This focus on consensus has limited researchers in their consideration of intersubjectivity processes.

Examples of Activities with Discord Coordination

Some cultural forms of discourse openly elaborate, institutionalize, and even ritualize such features of intersubjectivity as dynamic transformations of degrees of agreement and disagreement. Sociolinguist Katriel (1986) described *dugri* speech (an approximate translation is "straight talk") in Israeli Sabra culture, discourse that is based on a direct confrontation of different paradigms. In this type of speech, participants seek not an agreement or reconciliation of their confronting positions, but rather their personal and community integrity. The *dugri* discourse usually announced by one of the participants at the beginning of the conversation ("I'll tell you *dugri*"), implies that the following confrontation will be beyond their personal idiosyncratic positions and will concern instead the collision of different paradigms existing in the community. That is why it is expected that the interpersonal relationship will be tightened after the *dugri* speech rather than be deteriorated. Katriel stressed that no change in the participants' position is expected in the course of (or after) the *dugri* speech; rather, they acknowledge their own and each other's stands, and thus reach more harmonious relations with themselves and their opponents. This harmony is based on acceptance, acknowledgment, and respect for differences, rather than on agreement and "sharing." Talking *dugri* is both a safe and risky business. It requires both a deep understanding and agreement about this discourse and a no less deep disagreement about matters of the talk. Through this paradoxical move, the community maintains itself through its own challenge. By talking *dugri*, a legitimate diversity of voices is established in the community.

Unlike intersubjectivity as sharing, the participatory notion of intersubjectivity is joint-activity-oriented rather than individual-oriented. The notion of individual contribution transcends the notion of individual perspective on the joint activity. This is especially evident in joint activity that is based on misunderstanding and misreading. The fact that individual contributions and intersubjectivity can transcend individual perspectives on joint activity opens up the possibility for the phenomenon of institutional and communal intersubjectivity separate from any individual intentionality. This

phenomenon may be seen negatively as vicious circles, groupthink, and bureaucracy, or positively as unforeseen group or institutional development (Argyris & Schon, 1978). In this phenomenon, the direction of the activity is not foreseen or desired by any of the participants: what participants refer to as an institutional or group consensus might be, in fact, a coordination of their contributions separated from any individual participant. For example, Mehan (1993) described a case in which an elementary school student was evaluated as having a learning disability despite confusing and contradictory data and even despite the will of some of the major participants in the decision making. Mehan specifically focused on three main players in the event: the student's mother, the student's teacher, and the school psychologist who produced three descriptions of the student's behavior based on three different voices.

What coordinated all three (and other) voices were the circumstances of the meeting. It appears from Mehan's description that before the meeting the mother and the teacher had been against labeling the student as disabled, despite the fact that it was the teacher who initiated the process (there was a large lapse of time between the teacher's referral and the meeting). The psychologist also had seemed not to be completely sure of the diagnosis of the boy as learning disabled. However, the event of the meeting was organized in such a way as to detect evidence of learning disability in the participants' discourse about the student. Any ambiguity in the stories as well as deviations from the listeners' expectations were automatically counted as evidence of the disability. The disability detection was what bounded and glued participants' contributions in the discourse. While presenting his or her story to the others, each participant tried to understand the student's behavior across different contexts (e.g., at home, in the classroom, at the testing lab) but, while listening to others, each participant was focused on determining signs of learning disability. In this case, intersubjectivity can be defined as the institutionalization of learning disability.

In these examples, the dynamic unity of individual contributions in the joint activity defines intersubjectivity. Unlike individual perspectives on the activity (in Piagetian terms—see Forman, 1992; Johnson & Johnson, 1989), where each individual perspective makes sense on its own without needing to know the perspectives of other participants, individual contributions to the joint activity mutually constitute each other and do not make sense without taking into consideration the whole ongoing activity.

The gap between individual perspectives on the activity and individual contributions to the joint activity constitutes the zone of proximal development for the participants of the joint activity. According to the traditional view on intersubjectivity, this gap decreases during joint activity, which is considered to be evidence for increasing intersubjectivity and learning. However, in the alternative participatory approach, this gap is simultaneously decreasing in one regard and increasing in another (but perhaps not to the same degree). The child who learns new sociocultural tools, such as gesture communication, language, literacy, etc., not only decreases possibilities for cultural misunderstanding with people of her community, but also increases them. Vygotsky's (1978) example of writing development provides a good illustration of this: when a child's scribbles are reduced to the letters by the teacher, the child gets a new opportunity to express and work, with her ideas on paper, which provides new areas and levels of teacher-child misunderstanding that might have been impossible before [cf. Valsiner's (1987) notion of canalization of development].

The traditional concept of intersubjectivity as sharing stresses reproductive aspects of learning and culture as a whole at the expense of their productive, creative aspects. This notion of sharing is designed to describe stable, preservative trends in the culture. It is very difficult to use this notion to

describe how something new develops in a joint activity and explain an emerging diversity among the participants beyond considering it as an error or a deterioration of communication that requires a repair (Lotman, 1988). However, the problem is not so much in finding a balance between reproductive and productive aspects of learning and culture when these aspects are taken separately, but in finding a description of the joint activity that keeps these aspects as a unity. The participatory concept of intersubjectivity as a coordination of individual contributions to the joint activity provides such a description. According to this concept, participants in the joint activity can diversify and/or unify their perspectives while contributing to the joint activity.

From the prospective that I propose, there is nothing wrong in studying agreement, growing consensus, or processes of unifying individual perspectives. However, it appears that a problem with the "sharing" approach arises when agreement or consensus among the participants of the joint activity is seen as the definition of intersubjectivity and/or as the highest and best type of intersubjectivity. In contrast, the participatory concept of intersubjectivity is defined as a process of coordination of individual contributions to the joint activity rather than as a state of agreement between the participants (Smolka, De Goes, & Pino, 1995). The unit of analysis of intersubjectivity is joint activity (that defines individual contributions and their coordination) rather than individual perspectives or functions (Rogoff, 1990; Wertsch, 1991).

Analysis of children's coordination around a class play has led to my call for new methodologies that would involve ten planning sessions (10 days) over one month as a part of the school's reading/writing workshop (see Baker-Sennett, Matusov, & Rogoff, 1992). While working on developing their own play on the basis of the traditional version of *Snow White*, children were involved in numerous disagreements and agreements with each other.

The children spent their first day disputing different versions of the traditional story of *Snow White* that they had seen. With the help of the teacher, the group decided to modify the traditional fairy tale rather than to reconstruct it. On the second day, the children worked in close collaboration on a specific modification written by one of the girls, Robin,⁴ at home and mainly based on the idea of making everything opposite to the traditional fairy tale (e.g., *Snow White* became *Black Night*, deer's heart became ant's heart, kiss became punch, the desire to be the prettiest became the desire to be the ugliest) or to make everything weird (e.g., poison apple became poison banana). The children tried to translate Robin's script into their own actions and lines and to check the logic of the events. The third playcrafting session started with an acute dispute and ended up with the children working in close collaboration. I focus on this third session because it helps to illustrate how disputes and close collaboration fueled one another and to illustrate how the micro-fabrics of dispute and close collaboration were based on both agreements and disagreements.

Dispute

Here I consider intersubjectivity at the macro-level. I try to demonstrate how the development and, especially, the resolution of the dispute in the third day of the children's playcrafting transcended children's individual understanding of ongoing situations and how this transcendence was important for the activity process and progress.

The dispute among the children at the beginning of the third session seemed to be pre-arranged by the second session when one of the girls, Stacy, was missing and the rest of the girls worked in close collaboration with each other and made great progress in their decision making and development of

the new play, leaving the absent girl far behind them. On the third day, Stacy was back with the group (while another girl, Heather, was absent). For Stacy, her previous playcrafting session ended with the group's clear realization of the existence of two versions of the traditional *Snow White* and the group agreement to modify the play somehow. However, for the rest of the group, their previous playcrafting session ended with agreeing to the specific modification proposed by Robin of making everything opposite, weird, and funny under the tentative title *Black Night*. This gap in the group experience created a "classical" dilemma for Stacy (see Deutsch, 1973; Shatz, 1987): either "quietly" join the group process, accept the group decisions made in the second session without her, catch the logic of these decisions later and gradually through "peripheral" participation in the consecutive decision making process, or to "noisily" disrupt the group playcrafting and denounce the decisions made in her absence.

Stacy chose a disruption and was actively supported by Carol and indirectly supported by Kim, who said that she did not care which version of the play they performed (these two girls seemed to have problems with the "reversed" logic of *Black Night*, but their concerns were overruled by the other girls, Robin and Leslee, who were very excited about making everything opposite, weird, and funny). It was clear that Stacy's and Carol's (and Kim's, to some degree) synergy was sufficient to block the playcrafting process at the beginning of the third session.

The inherent nature of close collaboration among people is to differentiate people outside and inside the activity group. Collaboration allies people in a unique way. The close collaboration of the group allied Robin and Leslee in their acceptance of the directions and solutions developed in the second session. The same process allied Stacy, Carol, and, to some degree, Kim in rejection of the directions of which they did not feel much ownership.

The point I am trying to make here is that the children perceived, stated, and attempted to resolve the dispute among themselves as a dispute about differences in their ideas about playcrafting. However, the analysis of their discourse and activity on day three shows that the dispute was about ownership of the playcrafting process rather than about the preference for individual ideas. Moreover, the children did not have alternative ideas about the play but they acted *as if* they were stating and resolving a dispute over different ideas. This factually wrong assumption about the diversity of the ideas that the children held helped them to create conditions of a respectful inclusion for all the members into the group decision making process. I suggest that it would be difficult to understand the children's ambiguous discourse and its flow in the dispute if we assumed the traditional notion of intersubjectivity as overlapping individual goals, prolepses, and perceptions of the activity because meaningful dynamic patterns of the children's misunderstanding and miscommunication would be left out of the analysis. However, the participatory notion of intersubjectivity as coordination of participants' contributions allows us to see how children's discourse about difference in ideas contributed to and was shaped by coordination of their contributions in the dispute. In the following pages, I will demonstrate the evidence that was used to draw the inferences and conclusions presented here.

Excerpt #1. Developing and resolving a dispute.

The beginning of the third session. Robin, Stacy, Carol, Leslee, and Kim are sitting around the table. Heather is not there. They start off talking about the script Robin wrote. Leslee has just asked everyone who wanted to do Robin's script. Most say they don't care. Leslee then explains that she (Robin) took a lot of time to write her script. Stacy, having been absent for the last group discussion asks, "who?" Leslee then answers, "Robin, she wrote Night Black." Stacy begins an argument.

1. **Leslee:** (asking Kim) Do you xxx?
 2. **Robin:** I don't care.
 3. **Kim:** I don't care which play we do.
 4. **Leslee:** xxx
 5. **Stacy:** Well, she shouldn't have done it until all of us liked it.
 6. **Leslee:** I know, but...
 7. **Robin:** (interrupts) Well no, I couldn't have memorized the whole story before I wrote it and go, (in a mocking, sarcastic voice) well, I memorized a story and it goes like this, (pretends to be reading) la, la, la, la, la.
 8. **Leslee:** (To Stacy) Yeah...
 9. **Robin:** (To Stacy) And we were gonna change it.
 10. **Stacy:** It's supposed to be *Snow White* not *Black Night*. (Kim and Carol are listening)
 11. **Leslee:** (To Stacy) I know, but it . . .
 12. **Robin:** (To Stacy) Yeah, but remember? We were gonna change it!
 13. **Stacy:** Yeah, but it's supposed to be called *Snow White*!
 14. **Leslee:** Except it could be called *Black Night*. (Robin mumbles something) Let's ask Cathy [the teacher]. (Leslee yells over to the teacher) Cathy, can you change the name? Can you change the name like to *Black Night* instead of *Snow White*? (The teacher comes over to the table)
 15. **Teacher:** Sure. That can be your thing. Just do whatever you want.
 16. **Carol:** (interrupts) But we don't like it!
 17. **Robin:** Well, some . . . most people do!
 18. **Stacy:** (pointing her hand at Robin and addressing the teacher) Robin said we had to do it.
 19. **Robin:** (upset) We didn't say, "we had to do it."
 20. **Teacher:** When people don't agree, how do you solve a problem?
 21. **Leslee:** We had, we had the last play. Heather liked it, everybody liked it and then . . .
 22. **Robin:** (interrupts) last week she (Carol) liked it this week she doesn't.
 23. **Carol:** No, I didn't.
- ***
24. **Teacher:** Now who's not happy? (Stacy and Carol raise their hands) Can you think of how would you like it?
 25. **Stacy:** I'd like to change the form. Like make it exactly opposite.
 26. **Leslee:** But it's not opposite.
 27. **Robin:** Yes, it is.
 28. **Teacher:** We need to hear out Stacy and Carol. I think it is real important that you put your ideas in front of them.
You know, you have definite ideas. (Everybody is listening to the teacher)
 29. **Robin:** (interrupts) Why don't we mix them (ideas) up. ***
 30. **Stacy:** Can we use a piece of paper?
 31. **Teacher:** (Holds her hands out to her sides) It's your choice. ***
(Everybody leaves to get a piece of paper)
 32. **Robin:** I'm going to write something . . . I'm just gonna write down this . . .
 33. **Stacy:** What are we going to do?
 34. **Robin:** (to Stacy) Why don't we mix them, mix the ideas.
 35. **Stacy:** Yeah.
 36. **Leslee:** (to Robin) What sort?
 37. **Robin:** Like we can get everybody, we can mix all the ideas so everybody will have their own idea and then we can mix them up together.

38. Leslee: (interrupts) I don't have an idea. (Shrugs her shoulders)
So I like the play just the way it is. So if they (points to Stacy and Carol) have an idea we can change them.
39. Robin: (interrupts) So if you write down the idea and then like . . . ***
40. Carol: (writing) I'm writing mine down.
41. Leslee: Well, you (Carol) can't change ours. Then we would have to start all over with Kim . . . So we could have a little of Robin's *Snow White*, or whatever you want to call it . . . We could change it xxx.
Then we could have it *Snow White / Black Night*.
42. Stacy: *Blue Skies*.
43. Kim: *Blue Sky*. (Carol is still writing)
44. Stacy: *Blue Sky*.

45. Leslee: How about *Blue Night*, cuz some of your (points to Robin and Stacy) idea and some of my idea.

What is the evidence that the dispute was about ownership for the decision making and not about alternative ideas? Stacy seemed to propose two alternative ideas to Robin's modification of *Snow White*: 1) to perform the original *Snow White* (lines 6, 9, 12) and 2) to make everything "exactly opposite" (line 25). However, these alternatives were not serious. The idea of reconstruction of the traditional *Snow White* had been already rejected by the group, including Stacy—the reconstruction of the traditional fairy tale would put the group back to the familiar dispute of day one about different versions of *Snow White* they saw. (See Robin's critique of the reconstruction on line 7.) As to making everything "directly opposite," Robin's modification was already heavily based on making everything opposite. When Robin suggested to write and then mix different ideas (lines 29, 32, 34, 37, 39), the Stacy-Carol coalition did not produce alternative ideas since they seemed not to have any. The dispute was full of gaps between individual actions (e.g., Stacy's proposal for "alternative") and their contributions in the activity (blocking the group from building on the group decisions of day two). It seems that only Leslee suspected that there were no alternatives to Robin's modification on the table (lines 26, 38, 41). However, it was Robin's suggestion (to mix ideas) based on misreading the situation⁵—not Leslee's apparently correct interpretation of the situation—that led the group out of the dead end.

Thus, in the absence of alternatives, the power of Robin's proposal to write and mix ideas was not a compromise⁶ of ideas between the Stacy-Carol and Robin-Leslee coalitions; there was no diversity of ideas, rather an invitation of the Stacy-Carol coalition to joint decision making and shared ownership for the playcrafting. By doing that, Robin did not dismiss the group decisions made on the second day of playcrafting, but demonstrated that these decisions were not written in stone and revisions by the whole group were welcomed. This invitation for shared ownership of the playcrafting was accepted by the Stacy-Carol coalition and by Kim (lines 30, 33, 35, 40, 42-45) and was finalized (and symbolized) in the change of the play title to *Blue Night* constructed jointly by the whole group (line 45). The dispute turned into close collaboration, the coalitions produced by the previous collaboration were dissolved.

Close Collaboration

The children spent the rest of the third playcrafting session working in close collaboration mainly on role distribution. Using this portion of the activity, I will focus on intersubjectivity at the micro-

level and demonstrate that the fabric of this close collaboration was also full of both agreements and disagreements among the participants as well as other interesting forms of coordination.

The children's role distribution was an important vehicle for developing and probing the play themes and considering the coordination of actions and dialogue lines. As Robin realized at the end of the session, "We almost already have [a story]. When we just think of a part [i.e., a role], we think of a play." The children's collaboration had a non-systematic progression involving interruptions in the development of specific activity directions. I define *activity direction* as a segment of the activity in which participants worked on a coherent theme. As I will try to show below, the lack of systematicity in progression of the activity directions or disjunctions of ideas within an activity direction do not indicate poor intersubjectivity. On the contrary, disjunctions and interruptions within activity directions and jumping and drifting between consecutive activity directions can (and did) constitute meaningful patterns of the activity progression. The new notion of intersubjectivity as coordination shifts the focus of discourses and activity analysis from how well participants understand each other to what they contribute to the activity.

The following example, extracted from the middle of the session, consists of six consecutive activity directions involving role distribution (activity directions #1, #4, and #6), main events (#2), props (#3), and characters' names (#4).

Excerpt #2. Close Collaboration on Role Distribution and Main Events

Activity direction #1: Deciding how many queens there would be in the play

1. **Leslee:** Okay. So who are the characters? Bad queen, . . .
2. **Robin:** (Leslee and Robin say "queen" and "bad queen" in unison) Queen.
3. **Robin:** (Robin and Stacy say "no" in unison) Let's just have one queen.
4. **Leslee:** But is it going to be good or bad?
5. **Robin:** (Extends her hand out to tell her point) It's gonna be both. So just put queen and witch (begins to write on her paper)
6. **Stacy:** Yeah. Well the queen . . . well maybe a queen could play two parts of bad queen and good queen.
7. **Some girls:** Yeah, yeah.
8. **Kim:** That's what she's going to be.
9. **Stacy:** Because a good queen could die.

Activity direction #2: Developing a main event of a bad queen killing a good queen

10. **Robin:** The bad queen could stay alive.
11. **Leslee:** And then she could like take over and trick the . . . the girl [i.e., Blue Night].
12. **Kim:** (to Leslee) Who is the girl? (Carol whispers at Kim, "It's you," but keeps listening to Robin)
13. **Stacy:** And he [the king] has two wives.
14. **Robin:** (interrupts) Yeah, and the bad queen finds out about her. So when . . .
15. **Stacy:** (interrupts) Yeah, and so she will kill her.
16. **Leslee:** So one's a pretty bad queen and one's a . . .
17. **Robin:** (interrupts, and says, "no" in unison with Stacy) No. One's a good queen (puts her

arms on the table to one side of body) and one's a bad queen (puts her arms to the other side of her body).

18. **Stacy:** Yeah.

19. **Robin:** And the bad queen finds out about the goo . . . finds out about the other queen that the king's married to.

20. **Stacy:** Yeah.

21. **Robin:** And so when she's sleeping we could have somebody under the covers pretending like they're (Robin smiles and Leslee laughs) the queen or something and pretend to go (fist clenched around pencil as if it were a knife and pretends to stab the pencil in someone) shoooo with a pencil. And then go (pretends to pound on someone with her fist) pow!

Activity direction #3: Considering props for knife that would kill the good queen

22. **Leslee:** You could put like some silver tinfoil around it (pretends to put something around her pencil as a cover) and then make it like a knife. (She pretends to poke her pencil in someone).

23. **Robin:** (interrupts) But make it only soft at the bottom (taps on the bottom of her fist).

24. **Leslee:** We have this hard paper is called um . . .

25. **Stacy:** (interrupts) Well let's not talk about the props right now. (Leslee moves her head in agreement as she makes some comment to Stacy)

26. **Robin:** Well see what we could do, we could do that and then, and then you (points to Leslee) would be dead. I mean you wouldn't be dead but . . . (Everyone laughs)

Activity direction #4: Defining the role of the messenger

27. **Leslee:** Can I be a messenger? Cuz I want to be a messenger and a queen.

28. **Kim:** I wanna be . . .

29. **Carol:** The messenger's(?) new xxx (shakes her head no) isn't Snow White.

30. **Leslee:** Messengers can be . . . they could be stupid, they could be dorky, they could be funny, they could be weird . . .

Activity direction #5: Considering names for the dwarfs

31. **Robin:** Hey, you (points to Leslee with her pencil) just told us the names of the seven dwarfs; stupid, dorky, funny and weird. (Kim and Stacy laugh along with Robin while there is no response from Carol)

32. **Leslee:** Yeah, stupid, dorky, funny and weird.

33. **Robin:** (now Leslee really thinks about using the names, Robin acts like she was just kidding) No.

34. **Leslee:** But not such xxx names.

35. **Robin:** No, that would be [too] weird.

36. **Stacy:** (Tries to get the group's attention by holding up her hands, palms towards the group moving her hands back and forth like a policeman halting traffic) Wait. Wait just a minute.

37. **Carol:** No, I don't want dorky names like stupid.

Activity direction #6: Deciding how many roles each person could have

38. **Stacy:** I want to be two parts. Okay?

39. **Robin:** Okay. (This direction went on for a while.)

In the excerpt (and throughout the children's close collaboration), the group decision making process can be characterized as lacking systematic relations between the consecutive activity directions and by rather intensive integration of children's ideas within activity directions. Lines 9-21 are a good example of children's building on each other's ideas within the direction of considering a main event of the bad queen killing the good queen (direction #2). This integration and building on each other's ideas involved both agreements (e.g., lines 19-20) and disagreements (lines 16-17) among the children as well as elaborations (lines 14-15) and disjunctions. The disjunctions are referred to by Lemke (1995, p. 176) as relations among contexts that have gaps, discontinuity in themes, ideas, or approaches. Consider, for example, Robin's lines 17, 19, and 21 where she tried to develop the scene of the bad queen killing the good queen when the two queens were supposed to be played by one actor. The idea of one actor playing two queens and the idea of the bad queen killing the good queen are in disjunction with each other because of "the absence of certain contextualization" (Lemke, 1995, p. 176) (i.e., being in connection and incompatible at the same time).

The transition from one direction of the activity to the next could be seen as idiosyncratic and arbitrary (for an observer) with regard to the previous direction. In some cases, such transition involved a dialogue line of one child put in a different context by another child (drifting). For example, Robin reinterpreted Stacy's justification for having one actor for two queens (line 9) as a shift to consideration of main events (see similar drifting transitions in lines 21-22 between directions #2 and #3 and in lines 30, 31 between directions #3 and #4). In the other cases, the transition was abrupt (jumping) (see transitions in line 27 between directions #3 and #4 and in lines 36, 38 between directions #5 and #6).

Drifting and jumping from one direction of the activity to another often could have a potential for both the exploration of possibilities for new goals and the exploration of ways of approaching them; but there is an accumulative progression in the activity. Although the group might not return immediately to the event or the direction they discussed previously (this is called "denotational discontinuity" by Wortham, 1995), the children remembered their previous decisions (e.g., Leslee in line 4 reminded the group of the previous decision making) and used these decisions as "building blocks" in their playcrafting activity. During this jumping and drifting from one playcrafting issue to another one, the children covered a lot of playcrafting aspects. In a way, the playcrafting was done by the children in a mosaic fashion in a flexible and dynamic way without a pre-planned design.⁷

This form of collaboration without systematic progression for playcrafting development was very sensitive to personal (e.g., who wants what roles) and contextual (e.g., incorporation of members of the group who missed the previous session into ongoing decision making process) needs.

Eventually, the children employed collaboration with systematic progression in the activity as well. This way of collaborating involves a collaborative decision making process that is characterized by a systematic transition from one activity direction to another. This systematic transition in the activity progression can have a "from global to local" structure (i.e., transitions from deciding global issues to specifying details) or a "from local to global" structure, or some other linear and/or non-linear types of structure. (See Kaplan (1966) on cultural patterns of systematic thought progression.) For example, the transition from direction #2 (lines 10-21), considering a main event of a bad queen killing a good queen, to direction #3 (lines 22-26), considering props for the knife that would kill the good queen, was systematic. It involved children's movement from a global direction of considering main events to a local direction of considering details (props). Although collaboration with systematic

progression seems to be more economic, collaboration with drifting-jumping types of progression seems to be more flexible.

What Have we Learned from the Playcrafting Example?

I examined the children's playcrafting session at three levels. The first (macro) level involved transitions from one type of coordination of participants' contributions (e.g., a close collaboration during the second session) to another (e.g., a dispute at the beginning of the third session). We have learned that collaborative decisions made by the group not only united the participants but also created differences based on the gradient of participation of group members in the decision making process. We also learned that one phase of coordination could pre-arrange the following phase. The second level of our analysis involved transitions between directions of the playcrafting activity inside a phase. We saw that these transitions could have a systematic and/or a drifting-jumping pattern of activity progression. These types of activity progression within a coordination phase could provide systematicity, economy, and flexibility for the activity and the participants. Thus, intersubjective flow can be both linearly systematic and mosaically accumulative. The third (micro) level we touched upon, involves the relationship between and within participants' immediate contributions within an activity direction. We saw that even building on each other's ideas included a broad range of relations such as agreements, disagreements, elaborations, and disjunctions. These relations constitute the process of meaning making and activity development.

In sum, I chose this particular example to illustrate the diversity and fluidity of the concept of intersubjectivity as well as to show that coherent mutual understanding is not *the only* form of intersubjectivity and that other forms of intersubjectivity are worthwhile to study. Intersubjectivity might also include lack of agreement or continuity in activity progression. The evidence of sociocultural reactions and building on each other's contributions, which may involve jumping and drifting in themes and even disagreeing, rather than increasing overlap among individual subjectivities.

I want to conclude with rewording Rommetveit's (1979) important statement, "Intersubjectivity has in some sense to be taken for granted in order for it to be achieved. It is based in faith in a mutually shared world" (p.96). I would comment that, indeed, intersubjectivity has to be taken for granted but it requires neither "faith in a mutually shared world" nor constant suspicion of misunderstanding. Intersubjectivity among participants in a sociocultural activity is always there at some degree (see Fogel, 1993, for more discussion of low degree intersubjectivity), it does not need to be achieved. The questions are: what is involved in the process of intersubjectivity, what dynamics does it have, and how is this process embedded in bigger practices and community life?

Notes

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¹ Sharing as "dividing up" is usually referred to as division of labor or distributed cognition (Cole, 1991; Cole & Engeström, 1993). This notion is based on the complementary and integrative character of the participants'

contributions in a sociocultural activity. It again seems to overemphasize the integration type of coordination and de-emphasize discord among the participants even in a case of division of labor and distributed cognition

Another, and probably more promising, alternative for the term "sharing" is "co-involvement," i.e., being involved with somebody in something. Star and Griesemer (1989) introduced the term "boundary objects" that seems to fit this understanding of the term "sharing" as "co-involvement." Boundary objects have common borders and different contents. The notion emphasizes that the very same material or symbolic object can have different functions and means for different participants. For example, rare animals of California were mainly objects of hunting, profit for trappers who provided expositions for the museum, and objects for the study of ecological evolution for biologists who were involved in developing the museum. Different contents of boundary objects establish complex and dynamic relationships between different communities involved in "shared" practices.

² The purpose of my critique is not to invalidate the criticized research—the studied phenomena are real, the inquiries are important—but to question methodology of the studies, focus, descriptions, and explanations that they provide. I also want to express my appreciation of the criticized approaches—although I disagree with them I acknowledge that they are important part of my voice as being a background, a topic, and an addressee.

³ A four-year old immigrant from Russia is ready for pretend play about family with American preschoolers, whom he never saw before, despite the language and other cultural barriers (personal observation of my son).

⁴ The names of the children and the teacher in this section are pseudonyms consistent with those used in Baker-Sennett, Matusov, and Rogoff (1992).

⁵ As Rogoff pointed out (Rogoff, personal communication, September, 1995), it is an open question whether Robin indeed had misread the situation or this "misreading" had been her political strategy to move the group ahead. I could not find evidence to support or reject any of these possibilities (or their mixture). These possibilities can be also applied to the situations when a caregiver "misreads" child's action as cultural signs or gestures, the caregiver does or does not use it as a teaching strategy or both. The effect of this behavior seems to be the same with or without awareness of and active use by the actor (see Lock, 1980 for more discussion).

⁶ The notion of compromise was suggested and supported by the teacher. See lines 20, 24, 28, and 32.

⁷ Michaels and Cazden (1986) found that somewhat similar episodic structures, with emphasis on developing themes in studying African-American children's narrative style, are used in "sharing time" in elementary school classrooms.

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