

# Children's play in different cultures

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# Acknowledgments

- To Jerome Bruner, mentor and friend, on the first anniversary of his death.
- To the hundreds of boys and girls who, over many years, and very different places, have taught us the importance of play in their lives.

# Play and Games in the World

- In all cultures there are exercise games, imaginative play and rule games.
- And there are objects that serve to support and stimulate each of these types of games: toys, made by children or by adults
- Some of them may have had sacred ends, rituals, before they became just toys

# Play and games in Spain and England

- My first studies on traditional games:
- Hide and seek, Bulldogs, Marbles, Football
- Differences between boys and girls
- Differences in relation to the players' age
- Differences in relation to countries (cultures?)
- (Peter Smith, 1981)

# Construction (not the teaching ) of values

- From games of social interaction.
- Adult's recognition of child as the protagonist.
- Always adapting complexity to their abilities.
- Brunerian scaffolding as an extension of the Vygotskian zone of proximal development.
- From scripts regulated by the "real" to the awareness of the ludic as conventional (Elkonin).
- Rules and democratic awareness (Piaget).

# Play and games by the pasiego children

- Film director Manuel Gutierrez Aragón (The life that awaits you “La vida que te espera) .
- Exercise games: the pasiego’s pole jump
- Symbolic or fictional play: Cows but not dolls (caring for calves)
- The difficulty of observing directly their play
- Dolls and a cup of tea. It became canonical play.
- With Ofelia García at Vega de Pas, Cantabria.  
Spain

# Play dolls at the Llano venezolano.

- Livestock activity, and social isolation in the “fundos” (haciendas or large estates).
- The Role of Mothers in Parenting: Dolls and Moms
- With Beatriz García Andrade at San Fernando de Apure (Venezuela)

# Play dolls in Madagascar

- One stone hitting another and then moving on.
- A Malagasy nun, very much ashamed to have to "explain" in French the meaning of a game that any child on the island knows: a girl (a stone that strikes) asking permission from her mother (beaten stone) to leave...
- To play (without having to carry her little brother with her)



# Libyan children's pretend play.

- Early pretend play taking care of dolls and imitating her aunt with her baby cousin
- Pretend scripts related to rites and social practices of adults (social meetings, religion celebrations, etc.)
- Pretend play of guerillas against Gaddafi
- Last week in Brussels my niece-granddaughter pretending to read a story-tale to her brother, a few hours after his birth
- With Massaouda Ahmed in Tripoli, Libya

# Tojolabales Play

- The spontaneous stories in their diaries showed the continuous presence of play in their lives, while they work in the milpa (orchard), bathe in the river (for hygiene but also for fun), or when they perform any of the activities assigned to them by adults. Of course, also at the school!.
- With Martin Plascencia in Chiapas, México

# Imaginative Play of the “Visits” among the mapuche children

- The performance of children reproducing very complex cultural elements of a scattered population, in a very large territory.
- The announcement of the visit, get on to prepare the welcome ceremony (killing an animal, collecting firewood, etc.) while keeping on with the daily activities of the family.
- Ceremonies that accompany the “visits” (to build a ruka (house), to arrange a wedding, to celebrate a Guiyatun or a Machitun, to play a palin game (field hockey), ..
- Script of “mapuche and carabineros” (police) in conflicts for the recovery of their lands.
- With Nilsa Rain in Chile

# Rule game: palin mapuche

- Skills with the güeño (stick) to throw the ball. Similar to field hockey
- Neither a game nor sport
- Difference between playing soccer and palin (the naked leg). Mapu = earth Che = people
- Fair play and the “con” (your “opponent” but also your best friend (fair play)
- With Ignacio Garoz at the Lago Budi, Temuco, Chile

# Ludoteca: toy library?, playgroup?

- No toy library.
- The relevant element are children playing, not the toys
- Reading is as important for a Library as playing for a ludoteque

# Red de ludotecas (playgroups Network) in 3 different contexts in Peru

- In the mountains, as in many parts of America and Africa, children learn most important things by practicing it. They like to handle the machete very young and the play with it. At the ludotecas they also embrace and kiss their rocking horses (to reach their places one need a horse or a mule).
- The Shipibo and the Ashaninka enjoy to play the fish-rockers.
- Those on the coast pile up small stones, lying in a puddle on the shore, and carry them (as if they were piles of fish) on pieces of wood that they imagine fishing boats.
- Any child can invent a game with “fire trucks” with stairs they have never seen.
- With Juan José Ramírez and Fundación Educación y Desarrollo in Piura (coast), Pucallpa (forest) and Ayabaca (mountain), and soon in Ayacucho (the Andes too.)

# Play International Day in Catacaos (Peru) April 2017





# Give me back the 31 !!





# Playgroups Network in Piura

- Just space and time for children to play 2 hours, for 2 or 3 days a week, since 2011.
- Volunteers (mothers, sisters, university students from Peruvian and Spanish universities, adolescents,..) to offer the “space” (some times in a comunal building, some times at one family’s home, or just outdoors in the neighborhood
- AND CHILDREN!!!

# Piura Playgroups Network (Peru)

Distrito	Sectores
Piura	Caseríos San Juan de Curumuy, A.H Pachitea, Upis Los Faiques
26 de Octubre	A.H: Los Polvorines, Nueva Esperanza, Ampliación Kurt Beer, Túpac Amaru, Enace, Micaela Bastidas, Santa Julia, San Martin, Santa Rosa, Villa Perú Canadá.
Castilla	A.H: Las Montero, A.H Pecuario Nuevo Horizonte
El Tallan	El Tabanco, Nuevo Tallan, Sinchao Grande, Caserio Piedral
Paita	A.H. Los Laureles
Catacaos	Catacaos Urbano, A.H Buenos Aires – La Legua, Monte Castillo
Huancabamba	Sondor, Tacarpo, Cashacoto

# Piura Playgroups Network (Peru) II

## A.H.= Asentamientos Humanos

Nº	Piura	Beneficiarios
01	A.H Nueva Esperanza Sectores 2	100
02	A.H Nueva Esperanza Sectores 4	90
03	A.H Polvorines Sectores A,	70
04	A.H Polvorines Sectores B	65
05	A.H San Martin – Itinerante	190
06	A.H Villa Perú – Canadá	90
07	A.H Ampliación Kurt Beer	80
08	A.H Túpac Amaru I	70
09	A.H ENACE	60

# Number of children in each playgroup

10	A.H Micaela Bastidas	70
11	A.H Santa Julia I.E Nstra Señora del Carmen	300
12	A.H Santa San Martin I.E Nstra Señora del Pilar	420
13	A.H Santa San Martin I.E 14012	380
14	A.H Santa Rosa I.E Leonor Cerna	350
15	A.H Santa Rosa I.E Luis Alberto Sánchez	80
16	A.H Santa Pachitea I.E Víctor Rosales	400
17	Caserío San Juan de Curumuy	100
18	UPIS Los Faiques	70
19	A.H Las Montero	90
20	A.H Pecuario Nuevo Horizonte	70
21	Catacaos	130
22	A.H Buenos Aires La Legua	70
23	A.H Monte Sullom	90
24	A.H Los Laureles - Paita	130
25	Caserío Tacarpo – Sondor Huancabamba	60
26	Caserío Cashacoto – Sondor Huancabamba	50
27	Sondor - Huancabamba	50
28	Caserío El Tabanco	80
29	Caserío Nuevo Tallan	70
30	Caserío Sinchao Grande	70
31	Caserío Piedral	70
TOTAL	31	3750

# Always the bolinchas (marbles)





“Wait for the old man to cross”





# A boy playing hopscotch



# Volunteers

## POBLACIÓN INDIRECTA QUE PARTICIPAN

- Madres y Padres de los Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes asistentes a ludotecas
- Voluntarios / Voluntarios locales y extranjeros
- Integrantes de Juntas Vecinales.
- Estudiantes de Universidad e Instituto

## DISTRIBUCION POR ZONAS

Nº	Zonas de Intervención	Población Indirecta	Total
1	Piura	70	70
2	Castilla	50	50
3	26 de Octubre	280	280
4	Catacaos	60	60
5	Huancabamba	60	60
6	Paita	35	35
7	Tallan	100	100
Total			735

## VARONES/ MUJERES - EDADES

Nº	Edades	Varones	Mujeres	Total
01	16 a 40	85	650	735



# Volleyball for girls and volunteers





# The little ones in the tent





Playing we become friends



# Run farewell





# Children's Gender distribution

N°	Total Ludotecas	Varones	Mujeres	Total
01	31	2010	1740	3750

Drawing what happened in the floods.





# Mixed Football





# Farewell picture





# With Juan José Ramírez in Piura



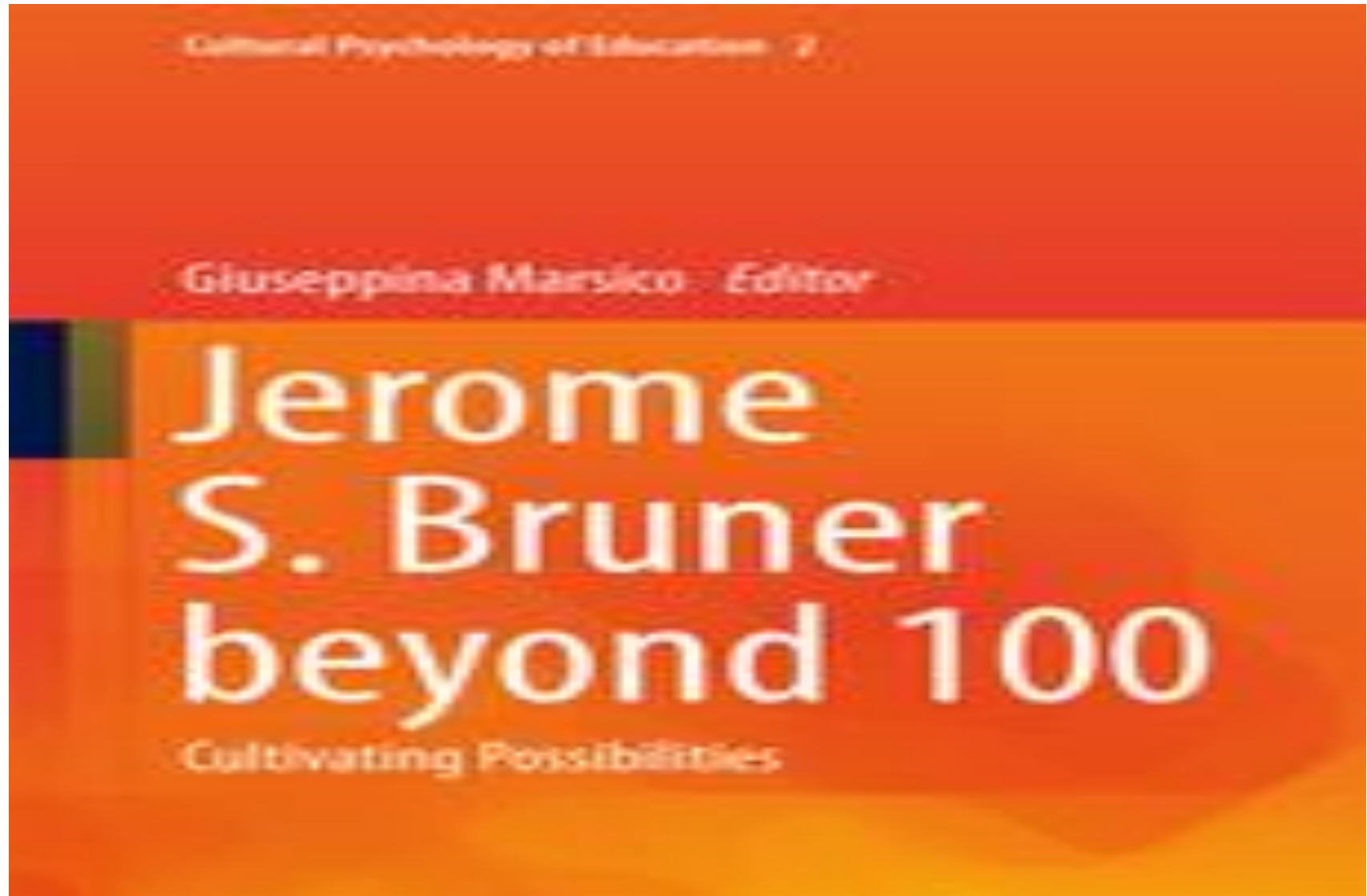
# Play, games and gender differences

- In each type of game there are biases due to the gender of the players, exercise games, scripts and rule sets more characteristic of boys or girls.
- Children are very influenced by adults in transmitting those biases
- The social division of labor influences it too
- There are games that practice both genres but for years they prefer to play with the same genre.
- At the Playgroups Network all toys are both for boys or girls.

# Bruner

- Real worlds and possible worlds.
- Play as a child culture.
- Similarities and differences with the adults culture.
- Genesis and construction of human capacities.
- [“What psychology should study” \(2012\)](#)

# Jerome Bruner beyond 100



# Jerome Bruner beyond 100

- ***Education is not and should not be devoted exclusively to the transmission of established knowledge. It should also dedicate itself to cultivating awareness of the human condition and to generating skills in understanding the nature and sources of knowledge. That is to say, education is not only about mastering content, but also about gaining insight into the nature of knowing and understanding.***

# Jerome Bruner beyond 100

- *Yes, I am saying that we should cultivate an appropriate epistemological sensitivity in our school children, an awareness concerning the processes involved in learning and thinking and not just in the finished products that we call a curriculum. It is absurd to say that children are not capable of understanding such matters.*

# Jerome Bruner beyond 100

- ***Their spontaneous play activities are full of explorations of the possible, of what might be and why it sometimes is and sometimes isn't. I strongly urge that we cultivate that sense of the possible in our educational practices.***

**(International Journal of Educational Psychology,**  
2012, 1, 1-13)

Linaza, J. The Oxford's years in **Jerome Bruner**  
**beyond 100: Cultivating possibilities** (J.Marsico (Ed).  
2014)

# Conclusions: Play and epistemology

- Simultaneous representation of fiction and reality is a condition of the symbolic play, but not its goal. The goal of all play, is action, to act, not to imitate.
- Some of these plays are a kind of summary, or simplified version of social reality, observed or experienced, by children themselves.
- Bruner (2006) emphasizes the role of play as a mechanism of cultural transmission, placing the child as a more active member of the culture in which he/she develops.



# Conclusions: Play and Development

- Development as an evolutionary strategy (Bruner, 1972; Gomez, 2015).
- Longer childhood means more complex learning
- Immaturity requires, at the same time, the protection and care
- Play as a attitude to interact with physical reality and with others.
- Play is linked to development and to prolonged childhood

# Conclusions: Children's right to play

- We are born so helpless and immature that we can only survive by the care, nourishment, and affection that adults provide us
- Attachment as a necessity in the asymmetrical relationship with the adult.
- Play as a paradigm of the symmetrical relationship with equals
- We would not be viable, as biological organisms, without such care, provided in local cultures.

# Conclusions: universal and local play and games

- Exercise games, fiction play and rule games in all cultures.
- Content might be linked to cultural skills and practices that vary from one culture to another.
- Children are very opportunistic and need just to play some time to learn how to play them.
- Certain social skills and practices are very universal.
- At urban and large cities the school yard will become the reserve of many traditional games.

- THANKS!!!!