Sociocultural Context of Play: Experiences of Indigenous Children in the Sierra Nevada De Santa Marta, Colombia

Sociocultural Context of Play: Experiences of Indigenous Children in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia

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Dedication

To Olivia Margot,

because children are truly our hope for a better tomorrow

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Abstract

Research on children's play has been predominantly conducted in industrialized, Western societies (Göncü, Tuermer, Jain, & Johnson, 1999). While this approach has been fruitful in demonstrating the role of play in development, it is limited in scope and can lead to misinterpretations of the everyday realities of children across the world. Documenting indigenous children's play is of particular importance given the sharp contrasts between their daily experiences and those of children in urbanized societies who are typically represented in research. By gaining insights into historical, cultural, and ecological pressures that shape play, we can surface its local and universal manifestations and incorporate play into educational approaches in a manner that respects local knowledge, tradition, and identity and helps build a strong educational foundation for young children (Moland, 2017).

Thus, the present ethnographic study employed a sociocultural lens to explore the influences that structure play experiences of Arhuaco, Kogi, and Wiwa children in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (SNSM), Colombia. Indigenous communities of the SNSM have preserved their customs and traditions; however, the introduction of formal schooling provides a unique opportunity to study play in evolving traditional societies. Through naturalistic observations and interviews in three indigenous communities over nine months, this study investigated children's play in and out of school; the factors that impact the availability of play resources; and the beliefs that shape play opportunities.

I found a complex system of competing priorities and visions of childhood that all shape when and how children engage in play. Following a description of the study's conceptual framework and research methodologies, I first present three ethnographic

sketches that describe how children's lives in each of the communities are characterized by a variety of behaviors and responsibilities, changing cultural contexts, and material and social resources that provide the space and opportunity for play. Next, I report on the range and frequency of children's daily activities and demonstrate that social interactions and play, which often coincide, are the most common activities across research sites, and that formal schooling is an important setting shaping play experiences. Finally, I summarize the beliefs and attitudes about play of parents across the research sites; parents shared reservations about children's participation in play but also named potential affective, intellectual, practical, and physical benefits, and this was true regardless of parent education level. This investigation contributes to a growing literature on play across cultures and informs efforts to design educational opportunities that promote a strong foundation for the children of the SNSM and beyond.

CHAPTER 1

Dissertation Introduction & Methods

Play is a universal activity that has been documented in children's lives across cultures (Callaghan et al., 2011; Sawyer, 2002; Schwartzman, 1976) and has been shown to promote a variety of physical, cognitive, and social-emotional developmental outcomes (Pellegrini, 2009). As such, play appears to be not only a whimsical peculiarity of development but a critical indicator of children's wellbeing (Singer, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2006). In fact, Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) recognizes every child's right to engage in play and recreation, with special regard for children living in poverty, from indigenous and minority communities, and in situations of conflict (Shackel, 2015). Interventions to promote the developmental and educational outcomes of young children in low-income and middle-income countries often incorporate a play component (Engle et al., 2011). That said, questions still remain regarding the role and nature of play in the lives of children from diverse contexts. Despite its universality, research on play focuses almost exclusively on children from European and North American middle-income societies (Dender & Stagnitti, 2011; Gaskins, Haight, & Lancy, 2007; Göncü, Jain, & Tuermer, 2007; Göncü et al., 1999; Roopnarine & Johnson, 1994). Systematic accounts of variations in the sociocultural factors (e.g., childrearing practices, household economics, physical ecology) that shape play in specific cultural settings are limited yet crucial to explore the appropriateness and effectiveness of play-based educational approaches and interventions for young children around the world (Dender & Stagnitti, 2011; Gaskins et al., 2007; Göncü et al., 2007; Haight, Wang, Fung, Williams, & Mintz, 1999; New, 2008; Roopnarine et al., 2015).

From this sociocultural perspective, documenting indigenous children's play is of particular interest given the sharp contrasts between their daily realities and those of urbanized societies typically represented in research. Studies conducted in small-scale societies provide accounts of indigenous children's play activities and the cultural and social factors that influence them (e.g., Boyette, 2016; Gaskins, 1999; Mapara & Nyota, 2008). Even so, "literature on indigenous children's play is almost non-existent" and much of what we do know from research about play "ignores or simplifies" indigenous children's play (Dender & Stagnitti, 2011, p. 35). Furthermore, understanding play in indigenous settings is important given that it is often an approach used in early childhood education pedagogies and interventions. If implemented without regard for the local context, play can become part of a toolbox of educational practices that have historically operated explicitly and implicitly to reject indigenous ways of knowing and a "means of assimilating and integrating indigenous peoples into a 'national' society and identity at the cost of their indigenous identity and social practices" (May & Aikman, 2003, p. 143). Studying traditional, small-scale communities can shed light on their particular experiences as well as broaden our views on universal manifestations of play (Gosso, Morais, & Otta, 2007). Ultimately, if we can gain insights into historical, cultural, and ecological pressures that shape it, play can be incorporated into early childhood care and education in indigenous settings in a manner that respects local knowledge, tradition, and identity and helps build a strong educational foundation (Moland, 2017).

The ethnographic study I present in this thesis employs an in-depth, sociocultural lens to characterize and examine the influences that structure play in the daily lives of indigenous children of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (SNSM), Colombia. While

largely preserving their way of life, the Wiwa, Kogi, and Arhuaco ethnic groups of the Sierra Nevada often interact with mainstream Colombian culture, perhaps most notably through a growing system of government-sponsored indigenous schools. The complex interrelation between informal cultural activities and formal schooling in these communities provides a unique opportunity to study play in an ever-changing society. Employing participant observations and interviews, this study elucidates the play experiences of children in Wiwa, Kogi, and Arhuaco communities, provides insights into relevant similarities and differences between the communities based on social and cultural factors, and sheds light on the alignment (or misalignment) between their experiences and those described in the literature.

In this chapter, I first review the existing literature that informs and supports the sociocultural rationale and design of the study. I also describe the geographical, historical, and cultural context of the indigenous communities of the SNSM as it informs the investigation. Next, in the Methods, I provide descriptions of the research sites, the procedures I followed to conduct observations of children and interviews with adults, and the analytical approaches I employed to interpret the data. I conclude the chapter with a preview of the results chapters that serves as a roadmap to the rest of this dissertation and its findings.

Conceptual Framework

Play refers to a constellation of informal, spontaneous, flexible, and enjoyable activities that children engage in as they navigate their physical and social environment (Pellegrini, 2009). However, as opposed to an all-encompassing definition, play may be best conceived of as a continuum of behaviors from more to less playful, depending on a

number of criteria, including: *flexibility* in the flow of activities and behaviors; demonstrated *positive affect*; *intrinsic motivation* to engage in the behaviors; *non-literality*, pretending, or make-believe; and a *means/ends distinction* in which the individual is more concerned with process than the outcome of the activity (Rubin, Fein, & Vandenberg, 1983). In addition, play may take place in an independent or social context. Behaviors meeting more of these criteria may be considered higher on the play continuum while behaviors exhibiting fewer of the criteria may be lower on the continuum but nonetheless considered playful. This is a useful framework for thinking about the study of play across cultures given that the frequency of commonly identified categories of play (e.g., pretend play, object play) or more specific, context-specific manifestations (e.g., humor and friendly teasing, music play) may vary across settings (e.g., Gaskins, 1999; Göncü, Mistry, & Mosier, 2000; Trawick-Smith, 2010). By considering children's play activities as existing on a continuum, we are able to identify playful behaviors not by how well they compare to a prototypical characterization drawn from other settings but by determining how well they fit along the different criteria to different developmental outcomes.

As discussed above, extensive theoretical and empirical work, conducted mostly in Western settings, has argued for the relationship between young children's play activities and developmental outcomes in a variety of domains, including motor development (Fjørtoft, 2004), problem solving and creativity (Pellegrini & Gustafson, 2005), and social-emotional regulation (Diamond, Barnett, Thomas, & Munro, 2007). For example, children's play with blocks has been linked to the development of convergent and divergent problem-solving skills (Pepler & Ross, 1981), spatial language (Ferrera,

Hirsh-Pasek, Newcombe, Golinkoff, & Lam, 2011), logico-mathematical knowledge (Kamii, Miyakawa, & Kato, 2004), spatial visualization abilities (Caldera et al., 1999), and math achievement in middle and high school (Wolfgang, Stannard, & Jones, 2001, 2003). Play has also been shown to be an effective intervention for children experiencing stress and trauma associated with poverty, violence, and abuse (Ogawa, 2004). What these and myriad other studies supporting the benefits of play suggest is that play is a "laboratory of the possible" (Henricks, 2008, p. 168) where children are free to explore, manipulate, and practice skills that prepare them to navigate and make sense of cognitive and social tasks in the real world (Pellegrini, 2009; Smith, 2010).

Although the evidence on the benefits of play is extensive and compelling, it is also important to consider that much of the research reflects a Western "play ethos" (Smith, 2010, p. 28), or the perspective that play is critical and essential for development; yet, the benefits and outcomes of play may not be recognized, fostered, or desired in non-Western, non-middle-income settings (Kazemeini & Pajoheshgar, 2013). Whether play is cultivated, accepted, or discouraged is largely determined by children's ecology—the physical, social, and cultural realities of their communities (Gaskins et al., 2007). Reviewing existing research, Whitebread and Basilio (2013) explain:

> All five types of play in which human children engage (physical play, play with objects, symbolic play, pretence/sociodramatic play and games with rules) are found in different manifestations, depending on available technology, in all cultures. However, there are variations between cultures and subcultures in attitudes to children's play, arising from cultural values about childhood, gender and relations with the natural world, which are often linked to economic conditions, religious beliefs, social structures and so on. (p. 79)

In order to understand the play experiences of children around the world, research must look closely at their developmental context and experiential niche (Harkness &

Super, 2002; Larson & Verma, 1999)—the physical and social settings, culturally regulated customs and rules, and psychology of adults in children's lives—and be rooted in "children's unique personal experiences, traditions, histories, and worldviews" (Trawick-Smith, 2010, p. 538). As described in the next section, an ecological approach that takes into account children's sociocultural context, "can broaden our understanding of the individual and environmental influences on children's play" (Veitch, Bagley, Ball, & Salmon, 2006, p. 384).

Play from a Sociocultural Perspective

Children are active cultural participants, deeply embedded in, influenced by, and constantly shaping the practices, priorities, environments, and institutions of their communities (Gurholt & Sanderud, 2016; Lancy, 2016a; Larson & Verma, 1999; Rogoff, 2003). As Vygotsky (1966) argued, these practices and priorities frame the implicit and explicit rules that dictate children's play experiences. Fleer (2010) elaborated on Vygotsky's argument by explaining that "a cultural-historical perspective would show that the rules of everyday life and the child's experiences of everyday practice shape how play is enacted" (p. 26). Furthermore, children's everyday play experiences are influenced by what Bronfenbrenner (1979) theorized to be nested systems within which children interact, from the contexts that more directly impact children's lives, such as family and school (microsystem), to broader cultural contexts (macrosystem) and events and transitions over the life course (chronosystem). That said, "broader contexts of environmental influence, such as the macrosystem (e.g., cultural norms and values) and exosystem (e.g., educational institutions)" are often missing when examining the factors that determine children's participation in play (Han & Christie, 2001, p. 159).

Thus, when understood as a phenomenon that is both universal but deeply embedded within children's social and cultural interactions and contexts, studying play requires a lens that accounts for individual behaviors as well as environmental influences. Göncü et al.'s (1999) sociocultural theory of play suggests that we should explore 1) the ways children represent their world through play activities and narratives; 2) the social and economic structures that impact the availability of play objects and spaces; and 3) the community beliefs about the purpose of play that may shape play opportunities. Gosso (2010) further identified a number of factors that contribute to cultural similarities and differences of play, including: the time available for play; play companions and the available objects; the social and physical environment; and the nature of adults' involvement in children's play. Finally, children's individual variables such as gender and age differences and how these are viewed in their communities can also affect play (Smith, 2010; Whitebread & Basilio, 2013).

A growing cultural and cross-cultural literature illustrates how these sociocultural and individual factors can affect play experiences (Roopnarine, Johnson, & Hooper, 1994; Roopnarine et al., 2015). As a form of cultural learning (Garvey, 1990; Lancy, 2016a), play can be central to the transmission of knowledge, rituals, and history in communities. For example, in an attempt to re-awaken, maintain, and impart indigenous knowledge in younger generations, the Ewes of Ghana rely on traditional games, dance, and songs to "educate, nurture, shape and equip the youth or children to take up future adult roles in the society" (Amlor, 2016, p. 63). Similarly, among the Shona of Zimbabwe, children's games and songs reflect the indigenous knowledge, virtues, and values that are cherished by their society, including discipline, hard work and competitive

spirit, dealing with failure, and assuming leadership roles (Mutema, 2013; Nyota & Mapara, 2008). For example, Shona children play the singing game of *Dede zangara uyo mutii?* (What type of tree is that?), in which children are expected to identify different trees and have an understanding of their biophysical environment (Nyota & Mapara, 2008).

At the same time, we find that cultural priorities can also constrain play. Research in other small-scale societies in Central Africa, such as the Aka foragers, Ngandu farmers, and Bofi foragers and farmers, demonstrates that community economic structures and activities influence the frequency, nature, and themes of children's play; for example, researchers found that children's pretense play involved work themes that reflected the subsistence patterns of their families and communities and that the frequency of play differed between foragers and farmers (Boyette, 2016; Fouts, Bader, & Neitzel, 2016). Gaskins (1999, 2000) found that the play activities of Mayan children in Yucatan, Mexico were affected by three cultural principles: primacy of adult work, parental beliefs about the nature of the world and children, and respect for the independence of child motivation. While play was often discouraged in favor of housework, when it did occur, it was independently organized by children and entailed manipulative object play, large-motor play, and imitation of adult life. Adults' prioritization of work over play, especially as children get old enough to take on more household responsibilities, the emergence of play during children's work activities, and the encouragement of work-themed pretend play has been observed across small-scale cultures (Chick, 2010; Fouts et al., 2016; Gaskins et al., 2007; Göncü et al., 2000; Gosso,

2010; Lancy, 2001; Rogoff, Mistry, Göncü, & Mosier, 1993; Whitebread, Basilio, Kuvalja, & Verma, 2012; Whiting & Edwards, 1988).

An important finding that emerges from this literature is the role of parents and other adults as the "gatekeepers" of children's participation in play (Veitch et al., 2006). As Kazemeini and Pajoheshgar (2013) argue,

> the amount of attention devoted to play in a particular society depends in part on the cultural beliefs about the nature of childhood, and on the adults' specific goals for their young children. Implicit in a cultural-ecological model of parenting is the idea that culture shapes the development of parents' beliefs, perhaps involvement in the play activities of their children, and acceptance of play as a valuable and essential component for school readiness. (p. 265).

Adults' ethnotheories, or cultural belief systems, about childhood and development, then, can affect how much play is viewed and whether it is encouraged and supported in a society (Gaskins, 1996; Gaskins et al., 2007; Whitebread et al., 2012). For instance, in a cross-cultural study of parental beliefs about play, Kazemeini and Pajoheshgar (2013) found that European American mothers viewed play as important for cognitive development, whereas Asian mothers rated play as more valuable for social and physical development and Mexican and Indonesian mothers viewed play as important just for amusement. Göncü, Mistry, and Mosier (2000) compared cultural variations in the social play of toddlers from Guatemala, Turkey, India, and the United States. They found that while play categories (i.e., pretend, object, physical, language, and games) were present in all four contexts, children in the US and Turkish middle-class, urban communities tended to play in dyads and were often engaged in play by their caregivers while children in low-income, rural communities in Guatemala and India tended to play in groups and were rarely engaged in play by their caregivers. Göncü and colleagues (2000) explained that their findings seemed to suggest that,

> [urban middle class] parents value play and perhaps use it as an instructional medium to teach children skills whereas adults [in subsistence-based communities] see play as children's business and let children keep each other's play company as they engage in work life. (p. 328)

The authors speculated that the ways caregivers in rural communities interacted with their children around play may have revealed a different understanding of the role of play in development that is still not well-represented in literature and that future ethnographic work could help to elucidate.

Taken together, cultural and cross-cultural research illustrates how the beliefs, priorities, economics, and institutions of children's families and communities can help us to explicate children's participation in play and inform a better understanding of its possible influences on development (Gaskins et al., 2007; Göncü et al., 2007, 1999, Roopnarine et al., 1994, 2015). Like prior cultural work, the present study situates Wiwa, Kogi, and Arhuaco indigenous children's play within the context of the beliefs and practices of their communities.

Studying Play in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta

The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta is the world's highest coastal mountain formation (5,700 m or 18,700 ft) located on the Caribbean Coast of Colombia, in the Departments (or States) of Magdalena, Cesar, and La Guajira (Figure 1.1). The mountain range, or sierra, derives its name from the snow-capped peaks, "Nevada" or "snowed," and the closest major city and capital of the Department of Magdalena, Santa Marta: that is, Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. It is the setting of incredibly rich biodiversity and houses a number of eco-regions that vary according to their elevation, from the seacoast to tropical rainforest, cloud forest, and ice caps (Figure 1.2). In 1979, the area was

declared a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO for the variety of its ecosystems and cultural-historical wealth (Parques Nacionales Naturales de Colombia, n.d.).

Figure 1.1 Map of Colombia and the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (circled in black), by Shadowxfox and Alexrk2, 2010, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Colombia_relief_location_map.jpg. Public domain.

Figure 1.2 View of the vegetation and snow-capped mountains (in the distance) of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

The Tayrona were one of the few pre-Columbian societies that survived the plunder of Spanish colonization by escaping to the highest parts of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta in the 17th and 18th century (Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1982, 1985, 1990). The descendant tribes of the ancient Tayrona—the Wiwa, Kogi, Arhuaco, and Kankuamo—with their history, spiritual beliefs and rituals, and contemporary political, economic, and cultural challenges, provide a distinctive opportunity for this investigation.

It is estimated that 70,000 indigenous people from these ethnic groups inhabit the area (Parques Nacionales Naturales de Colombia, n.d.). The present study focused on the first three, the groups that have a sizable population in the Department of Magdalena where the study took place.[1] Limited in-depth accounts of these ethnic groups exist and even fewer records of children's daily lives within these changing communities. To my

[1] The Kankuamo population resides largely in the Department of Cesar.

knowledge, no developmental or anthropological research has previously focused primarily on the experiences of Wiwa, Kogi, or Arhuaco children.

Living in straw-thatched huts or simple wood constructions with corrugated tin roofs, the Wiwa, Kogi, and Arhuaco practice subsistence farming (growing cacao, potato, yucca, plantain, and sugar cane), raise livestock, fish, hunt small game, and sell or trade artisanal crafts, such as hand-woven *mochilas*, or bags. Indigenous settlements, or *resguardos*, mostly populated by a few dozen extended families each, are distributed throughout the Sierra Nevada. Each of the ethnic groups has its own language derived from the Chibchan language family spoken in the Isthmo-Colombian Area: Damana (Wiwa), Kogi or Kagaba (Kogi), and Iku (Arhuaco). And although specific ceremonies and rituals differ across the groups, they have maintained a shared heritage of customs and spiritual beliefs centered on their responsibility for maintaining the balance of the universe (Esmeral Ariza, 2015; Giraldo, under review; Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1974, 1982, 1990).

On maintaining the balance of the universe. In the worldview of the Wiwa, Kogi, and Arhuaco, the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta is the place where the Great Mother, or creator force, began her creation and thus, is believed to be the Heart of the World. There exists an "extended kinship system" among human beings, other-than-human entities, animals, and objects that all originated with the Great Mother. As such, these ethnic groups believe themselves to be the "Elder Brothers," responsible for maintaining the equilibrium of the world and sharing their understanding with the rest of us, the "Younger Brothers." Other-than-human entities that exist in the "plane of pure spirit-thought," called Aluna, own everything that exists in this world—from rain to crops

to fertility and disease—and can reside in particular sites or locations, such as rivers and stones (Giraldo, under review, n.p.). Through the guidance and divination of politico-religious leaders called *mamos* (also known as *mamas* or *mamus*), these supernatural beings must be appeased with offerings (or *pagamentos*) and confessions in order to avoid the disease and other misfortunes they might cause (Giraldo, under review). These spiritual beliefs spread throughout community life and guide everday activities, relations, and customs. Children are introduced early on to their participation in rituals and ceremonies and to their role in maintaining the universal balance undisturbed. As explored in the present study, spiritual beliefs can even inform community members' reactions to children's engagement in play.

On the unfulfilled promise of ethno-education. In addition to rich histories and traditions, indigenous communities are dynamic, and with the passage of time they undergo changes to their social order and belief system that define their culture anew (Uribe, 1990). Although historically secluded from the industrialized Colombian society, the indigenous groups of the Sierra Nevada have interacted with and been affected, both positively and negatively, by the sociopolitical events and institutions of the country.

Since the 20th century, the indigenous communities have been victims of displacement by armed groups and the exploitation of their lands for illicit business and drug trafficking (Agencia de la ONU para los Refugiados [ACNUR], 2011). Although today the region largely experiences peace, these communities continue coordinated political efforts to regain access to lands and sacred sites they lost to colonization and armed conflict. For decades now, they have leveraged their spiritual beliefs to communicate and negotiate with the Colombian Government, non-governmental

organizations, academic institutions, and media over representation, lands, and resources (Giraldo, under review). Catalyzed by the 1991 Constitution that recognized the sovereignty of indigenous peoples and through a series of resolutions, the Colombian Government has granted protections over lands deemed as sacred sites for the indigenous people of the Sierra Nevada.

The introduction in recent decades of ethno-education, or formal education for ethnic minorities supported and funded by the Ministry of Education, offers additional opportunities for the self-determination through social, cultural, and economic development in the indigenous communities of the region. Despite the promise of an integrative ethno-education, however, schooling continues to follow a largely Western model that explicitly and implicitly rejects local knowledge and language (Aikman, 1997; Ferrero Botero, 2015; May & Aikman, 2003). As Ferrero Botero (2015) argues,

> For the state and mainstream Colombian, [ethno-education] means the materialization of the push for modernity and inclusion, as 'other,' of indigenous peoples into a neoliberal multicultural nation. While for indigenous peoples, it is a pivotal mechanism of resistance, based on their struggle to maintain their ethnic identity, seek self-determination, and gain the necessary knowledge to successfully adapt to an intercultural context. (p. 288)

Furthermore, the national political agenda incorporates play as a vital component of the early childhood pedagogical approach to serve the multicultural populations of Colombia (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2014), but arguably with little attention to how these ludic practices may be perceived or received by local communities. Thus, tensions arise as children and families access information and resources through formal education yet strive to preserve their local knowledge and practices.

The current activities, rituals, and beliefs of the Wiwa, Kogi, and Arhuaco evolve as their priorities and preoccupations shift, and so do their implications for children's

daily lives. Studying the relation between play and children's and parents' participation in school in a context where schooling is relatively new yet central to how communities define themselves is an important endeavor, as we aim to understand how play is organized and experienced.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The social and cultural milieu of Wiwa, Kogi, and Arhuaco children as manifested in their shared heritage, idiosyncratic local practices and traditions, and particular schooling experiences has important implications for the nature of play in these communities. Taking a sociocultural approach to study play in these indigenous contexts, the present investigation addressed two sets of research questions:

Question 1: (a) *How are play experiences shaped by the physical, social, and educational settings, culturally regulated customs, and beliefs of their communities as observed in daily community activities and expressed by parents, teachers, and community leaders in Wiwa, Kogi, and Arhuaco communities?* (b) *What is the range and frequency of play experiences of Wiwa, Kogi, and Arhuaco indigenous children of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta? (c) What similarities and differences exist in children's play experiences across the communities based on community factors, home and schooling contexts, and gender?*

Children's participation in the subsistence activities, cultural practices, and spiritual rituals of their communities has implications for the frequency and nature of their play, as has been documented in other indigenous settings (e.g., Gaskins, 1999; Gosso, 2010; Rogoff et al., 1993). By addressing this first set of questions, the study aimed to portray children's day-to-day activities and play interactions, documenting commonly utilized spaces and materials, social interactions, and community activities that determine children's opportunities for play. These aspects were particularly explored when comparing children's play as they navigated home and formal schooling spaces, cultural expectations, and gender differences.

Question 2: *(a) What are parents' beliefs and attitudes about play in indigenous communities of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta? (b) What is the relationship between parent education, beliefs about play, and the opportunities that children have to play in these communities?*

By addressing this second set of questions, the study aimed to characterize parents' beliefs and attitudes about play and surface the interrelation of cultural and environmental factors that affect play as expressed by parents. One area of particular interest was parents' own schooling background and how these prior experiences appeared to shape their attitudes and practices regarding play.

Based on existing literature and my own preliminary observations, I hypothesized that play would represent and be shaped by the roles children are expected to fill as contributing members of their community. I predicted that adults' views about play would likely center around children's need to navigate the social order of the community, including their participation in work and schooling. As observed in other indigenous settings, play would perhaps be tolerated but not encouraged or fostered and surreptitiously emerge in children's everyday activities: as they engaged in daily chores and work; as they participated in cultural and spiritual rituals; and as they explored and manipulated the natural environment.

I also hypothesized that formal schooling would shape the opportunities, range, and frequency of play through two mechanisms: children's own experience of formal schooling and their parents' experience of formal schooling. The demands and expectations of schooling—both from teachers and community members—would likely affect the ways children's lives are organized and the opportunities children have to play in and out of the school context. On the one hand, play could emerge less frequently or obviously in school settings given the strong focus on formal learning in schools and the

priority given to school responsibilities. However, it is also possible that pedagogies involve playful forms of instruction that have not been traditionally part of Wiwa, Kogi, and Arhuaco children's informal activities. By providing a space that focuses on children, schooling might provide "the opportunity to redirect the daily attention of youth from repetitive labor to activities that offer new possibilities for learning and psychosocial development," including play (Larson & Verma, 1999, p. 701). Further, as demonstrated by the work of LeVine and colleagues (2012), mothers' schooling can have profound implications for childrearing practices and child outcomes. Perhaps the more experience parents have in a formal model of schooling, the more accustomed they become to a view of development that incorporates beliefs about the benefits of play (Roopnarine & Jin, 2012; Sempek, Kelly-Vance, & Ryalls, 2012).

Together, the research questions addressed in this study aimed to draw a portrait of children's play in the SNSM and characterize how physical environments and available materials, daily activities and cultural customs, and adults' attitudes and behaviors influence, promote, or constrain children's playful experiences.

Methods

Miles and Huberman (1994) proposed that a grounded approach to qualitative research design is appropriate when "exploring exotic cultures, understudied phenomena, or very complex social phenomena" (p. 17). Given the paucity of research investigating the ecological influences on indigenous children's play, an ethnographic, grounded qualitative approach was employed to "generate rich data and provide an opportunity to gain important insights into poorly understood areas (Ritchie, 2001)" (Veitch, Bagley, Ball, & Salmon, 2006, p. 384). Importantly, ethnography allowed for capturing detailed

data of behaviors within specific moments or activities (microanalysis) as well as data of behaviors across space and time (macroanalysis). As Gaskins (2000) argued,

> To characterize a child's engagement in the world accurately, one needs at least two kinds of data: a macroanalysis of how different types of engagement are distributed across time and place and a microanalysis of the systematic characteristics within individual acts of engagement in particular activities…Both will be organized by cultural beliefs and practices, and thus, both must be interpreted by ethnographic understanding. (p. 376)

To capture both the macro- and micro-details of children's engagement in play, the ethnographic investigation consisted of 1) naturalistic observations of children's daily activities and play and 2) interviews with adults in their communities.

Research Sites

The present study was conducted in one settlement from each of the Wiwa, Kogi, and Arhuaco communities in the Sierra Nevada that differed on a number of factors, including accessibility, schooling structure, and number of students. I gained access to communities through personal and professional connections who had extensive experience working with the indigenous communities and schools of the Sierra Nevada. As such, they were trusted individuals whose endorsement of my research plan and intentions was respected by community leaders and school staff, which enabled my entry.

Although children's lives across the three communities exhibit many similarities, differences in the particularities of the three groups (e.g., their language, daily practices, specific spiritual rituals) can influence children's play in subtle yet meaningful ways. Having three sites provided opportunities for comparisons to explore similarities and differences across settings. That said, the sites included were not intended to be prototypical or representative of the ethnic group or region from which they were selected but rather be illustrative of how community sociocultural factors can create

unique contexts that affect children's play (Maxwell, 2005). Here I provide brief descriptions of the research sites but further details regarding each of the communities and their sociocultural context are discussed in Chapters 2-4.

Each of the communities is located in a settlement that has a formal school funded by the Ministry of Education (see Table 1.1 for a summary of research site characteristics). The school year runs from January to November, with major school breaks in June/July and December/January. In addition to classroom supplies, schools provide up to three meals a day and snacks to students. Classes are generally taught in Spanish and follow a formal curriculum, adapted by teachers to meet the language and educational needs and abilities of their students. Teaching staff include both non-indigenous teachers with varying degrees of experience teaching in indigenous settings and indigenous teachers with varying degrees of formal pedagogical training. When teachers belong to the local communities where they teach, they incorporate instruction in the local language, although no formal bilingual curriculum or materials exist.

Table 1.1

Descriptive Details of the Research Sites

Research Site	Ethnic Group	Distance from Santa Marta (in Travel Time)	Grade Levels	Number of Students
Ableizhi	Kogi	2-hour drive, 3-hour hike	Preschool - 5th Grade	40 - 60
Katanzama	Arhuaco	1-hour drive	Preschool - 5th Grade	40 - 60
Gotsezhi	Wiwa	2-hour drive	Preschool - 11th Grade	120 - 150

Because formal education is not compulsory, children first enter school at various ages and classrooms are often mixed-age and mixed-grade. For example, children first enter "prescolar," or preschool, as young as four or five and as old as eight or nine. Instructional activities in this initial grade are equivalent to those in preschool and kindergarten in the U.S. or *kinder* and *transición* in Colombia urban settings, and students often remain two or three years until they are deemed prepared for first grade. Due in part to the fact that schooling is not compulsory and in part to the transient nature of communities as they travel throughout the Sierra Nevada to farm or to visit other settlements, participation in schooling can be sporadic, as has been observed in other indigenous settings (Windisch, Jenvey, & Drysdale, 2003). Similarly, the dropout rates are high for a number of reasons, including children's home responsibilities, expectations to help with family responsibilities, and juvenile marriage. Furthermore, female student attendance is still novel; fewer girls attend school and tend to complete fewer grades than boys.

Ableizhi is a Kogi community and was the most remote of the three sites. Located along the Buritaca river basin in the Sierra Nevada, getting there required a two-hour, off-road drive and a three-hour hike through the sierra. In general, the Kogi ethnic group is known to be the most traditional, secluded, and impenetrable of the ethnic groups in the Sierra Nevada. Compared to the other two sites, Ableizhi has the least regular contact with outsiders. The school at Ableizhi was founded in 2004 but when I began my visits in 2015, it had been open for only three years after being closed for a few years. The school is located near a community meeting place; however, children and their families live in

smaller compounds at various distances from the school. Initially, 40 students were enrolled in preschool through fifth grade; by the time I ended my fieldwork, 60 students were enrolled in the school. The two teachers I met during my research are Kogi and taught in multi-grade classrooms in a two-room building.

Katanzama is an Arhuaco community and the most accessible site. Community members have constant interactions with non-indigenous individuals and governmental and nongovernmental organizations regularly visited the site. It is located only a one-hour drive from the city of Santa Marta. Sitting at the foot of the Sierra Nevada, next to the beach, Katanzama is a new settlement that, at the time of my research, had been established three years prior, specifically to serve as a school site for Arhuaco families living lower down in the Sierra. The school opened in February of 2015, the same year that I began my observations. As a residential program, a small number of students are sent to live at the school and return home on weekends or during school breaks. When I began my fieldwork, a total of 40 students were enrolled in preschool through fifth grade and by the end 60 students were enrolled. One Arhuaco teacher taught preschool and two non-indigenous teachers taught grades 1-2 and 3-5, respectively. Only two extended families lived onsite but many others lived along the main road leading to the settlement or in the lower parts of the Sierra Nevada.

Gotsezhi is a Wiwa community and the site of the school with the longest history. Located along the Guachaca River, about a two-hour drive from Santa Marta, interned in the Sierra Nevada, Gotsezhi was established in the 1980's and the school has been open for almost 15 years. During my observations, there were 16 indigenous and non-indigenous teachers who taught single grades and specialty courses, such as PE or

computing. The school served close to 150 preschool through high school students, including Wiwa, indigenous children of other ethnic groups, and non-indigenous farmer children. Although several dozen families lived on site, some students lived on campus away from their families during the school year. This school was the only one with electricity and a computer room powered by solar panels. It also had an onsite clinic with a nurse on staff. Although physically distant from the Colombian majority society, Gotsezhi was relatively accessible and in constant interaction with outside visitors, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations.

Data Collection

In February 2015, I made my first of several preparatory visits to the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. Initial visits to settlements involved meeting with the *mamos* and school administrators to request permission to conduct the study. In my meetings with them, I explained the nature of my research and answered any questions they had about my involvement in the community and school and my data collection methods. I also gathered formal written permission to conduct research in the community. During these initial visits, I met with guides and interpreters who accompanied me to the villages, facilitated interactions with children and community members, and helped in the preparation and translation of study materials.

Participant observations and interviews took place over nine months from August to November 2015 and February to June 2016 to align with the end and beginning of the school year, respectively. During my first research visit to each site, I introduced my research to the school community and received verbal consent from parents and assent from children to conduct the research. I visited each research site for approximately one

week each month, including weekdays and weekends, for a total of 7-8 visits at each site and immersed myself in the daily life of the community (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). This long-term involvement allowed me to observe children's everyday activities and witness a diversity of play situations, considering alternative hypotheses about play and the sociocultural environment, as I recorded my observations and impressions over time. The careful recording of behaviors and participant responses provided detailed, rich data that revealed a "picture of what [was] going on" as children played (Maxwell, 2005, p. 110). In addition, by paying attention to the experiences and perspectives of children, caregivers, and other adults in the community, I was able to consider multiple perspectives on play (Buchbinder, Longhofer, Barrett, Lawson, & Floersch, 2006).

Participant observations. To understand children's play behaviors, it was necessary to observe them in practice, within the contexts and interactions that children regularly engage in (Gaskins, 2000). As an active participant and observer of day-to-day life in each settlement—during meals, chores, informal conversations, and classroom activities—I became a fixture in the community and became acquainted with the settings children frequented. Initial visits were critical to build rapport with children and community members, familiarize myself with the play environment, and make my presence as routine as possible. I observed children as they went about their everyday business and spontaneously engaged in play, sometimes following them closely and interacting with them directly and other times by being part of the larger rhythm of activities of the village. Observations followed individual and groups of children in interactions with each other and adults that revealed the social dynamics surrounding play.

I focused on children enrolled in preschool (approximately 4-8 years old) as well as children who were not yet enrolled in school (approximately ages 3-5 years old) because children in these brackets are mobile and independent enough to initiate as well as respond to play activities and have been shown to be a peak age for a variety of play categories (Gosso et al., 2007). Furthermore, because I was interested in the schooling context, observing children enrolled in school and not enrolled in school, allowed me to investigate how the experience of schooling might influence participation in play. Because age is not a clearly demarcated construct in these indigenous settings, it was likely that young children, both those enrolled and not enrolled in school, interacted with older peers in their play, and these older peers were also included in observations as part of the social context of play.

Observations addressed four levels of children's ecology: physical setting, children's daily routines, social interactions, and cultural practices (Veitch et al., 2006). I conducted observations in three accordion-like phases, drawing from sampling methods described by Altmann (1974) and as I discuss next (see Appendix A for detailed descriptions of the sampling approaches). Initial observations followed *ad libitum sampling,* which consisted of informal, non-systematic observations, documenting individuals and events that were surprising or interesting given the research questions. These observations oriented me to relevant influences on play at each settlement. As the study progressed, observations of certain individuals or situations became purposeful and followed a variety of sampling strategies and observation procedures. First, I used *incident sampling* to observe groups of children and document any occurrence of play behavior, identified using the criteria of play discussed above (i.e., flexibility, positive

affect, intrinsic motivation, pretending, means/ends distinction). Second, using *focal-person sampling*, I conducted spot observations of individual children's activities and play behaviors throughout the day (during daylight), which allowed me to calculate time budgets detailing the range and frequency of children's play activities (Gaskins, 2000; Larson & Verma, 1999). At the end of the study, I returned to *ad libitum sampling* to capture big-picture impressions with newfound understanding of the field. The purpose in employing various sampling methods and looking at various levels of children's ecology, was to gain a multifaceted understanding of the same basic phenomenon (play) and provide a layered understanding of the context of play.

My presence and willingness to join children in their daily activities undoubtedly encouraged children's playful behaviors. I wanted them to see me not as an adult figure but a potential play companion in order to gain a sort of insider perspective of their play. However, it is not my impression that children's behaviors were drastically different when I joined them than when playing with each other. Perhaps their play was amplified, as children realized I was interested in what they were doing, but their preferred playful activities, the makeup of their playgroups, and the spaces where they found opportunities to play seemed to remain constant and largely undisturbed by my presence, whether I observed them from afar or joined them in their pastimes.

Data consisted of written fieldnotes and completed protocols for individual child observations. Following Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011), I jotted down actions and language in as much detail as possible and then dedicated time at the end of the day or visit to expand these jottings. Audio recordings, photographs, and videos were also

employed at designated times during observations to provide samples of behaviors and situations that complemented fieldnotes.

Interviews. In addition to continued observations of activities, customs, and resources that may influence play, the second component of the investigation consisted of informal conversations with adults in the communities and semi-structured interviews with parents, teachers, and community leaders. Conversations and interviews elicited beliefs and attitudes about children's role in the community; learning and development; schooling; the value and nature of play in children's lives; cultural traditions, historical knowledge, and expectations that impact children's engagement in play and other informal activities; and economic and environmental factors that determine the availability of these opportunities. I asked parents about their own experiences with schooling to better understand the relationship between caregiver education, beliefs about play, and the nature of children's play experiences.

I conducted the interviews in Spanish with participants who felt comfortable speaking this language and with the help of an interpreter with individuals who preferred to speak the local language. Data consisted of detailed interview logs (including, description of the context, participant responses, and analytic notes), audio recordings, and transcriptions of interviews.

Data Analysis

Each visit to a research site was followed by a brief period in Santa Marta where I organized data, expanded fieldnotes and interview logs, and wrote interpretative memos making connections across observations (Emerson et al., 2011). Once I completed

fieldwork, I employed three separate analytical approaches that drew from the various data sources and addressed different aspects of the research questions.

First, I analyzed my fieldnotes and interviews for each community using emic, thematic coding to characterize how play experiences were shaped by the physical, social, and educational settings, culturally regulated customs, and beliefs of their communities as observed in daily community activities and expressed by parents, teachers, and community leaders (RQ 1a). By identifying emergent patterns in the data, I produced ethnographic sketches that contextualized children's play within the sociocultural milieu of their communities. In these accounts, I drew from Portraiture, a methodological approach that merges systematic, rich description with an attention to the aesthetic whole of the narrative to tell the unique stories and lived experiences of the participants being portrayed (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). This approach to the first part of the analysis was fitting because, in Portraiture, ethnographic narratives are "designed to capture the richness, complexity and dimensionality of human experience in social and cultural context, conveying the perspectives of the people who are negotiating those experiences" (p. 3), just as was the goal in this study.

Central to the practice of Portraiture is the presence of the portraitist-researcher's voice in the narrative and the attention to the relationships she builds with her participant-actors. Thus, this first analytical approach was especially focused on the themes and "convergent threads, illuminating metaphors, and overarching symbols" that surfaced as I spent time in communities and shared everyday experiences with children, families, teachers, and other community members (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 185). Furthermore, Portraiture focuses on "the search for goodness," both a "generous and

critical stance" to interpret the data. Therefore, in the three sketches I name tensions and challenges regarding play that arise in each site while also conveying "what is working here" in children's lives and in their communities (p. 147).

The second set of analyses followed Berry's (1999) three-pronged approach of imposed etic, emic, and derived etic coding. This approach allowed me to determine the range and frequency of children's daily activities and play experiences as recorded in individual child spot observations (RQ 1b). It also allowed for an exploration of the similarities and differences in children's play activities based on community factors, home and school contexts, and gender (RQ 1c). First, spot observations were interpreted using existing theoretical frameworks (*imposed etic*). I identified play activities based on Rubin et al.'s (1983) criteria of play (flexibility, positive affect, intrinsic motivation, non-literality, and means/ends distinction) and compared the activities identified in observations with categories of play that already exist in the literature. Second, I identified *emic, grounded* categories that emerged both in the field and as I read and re-read the data and identified themes. Although analysis during this second phase was inevitably informed by the research questions, previously established etic categories, and prior research, the focus was on allowing unexpected themes to surface directly from the data as opposed to imposing prior findings. With these newfound emic insights and themes combined with etic categories, I ultimately developed *derived etic* analytical frameworks to look for patterns across the data and research sites. This three-tiered approach was an iterative process as I continuously compared data to play and sociocultural research and developed and revised coding protocols based on emergent patterns.

Finally, I used a grounded thematic approach to analyze parent interviews (Charmaz, 2002, 2006) to investigate the relationship between the opportunities children have to play, parent beliefs and attitudes about play, and parental education (RQ2). As I read through transcripts, I developed descriptive categories that were applied to the data and that I then described and synthesized with illustrative example in memos. I identified prevalent themes across memos and compared them against observation fieldnotes and individual child observations to come up with the categories that best addressed the focus of the study.

Ongoing data processing guided fieldwork and data analysis as I tested initial insights, triangulated among different data sources, looked for potentially confirming or disconfirming evidence, and solicited feedback from participants regarding my preliminary understandings (Maxwell, 2005). As part of this process, my own reflexive stance was critical (Luttrell, 2009; Maxwell, 2005). As a female Mexican-American researcher from Harvard University, I was an outsider to the communities I interacted with. I was foreign to them and they were foreign to me, yet we became increasingly familiar with the passage of time and through our continued interactions. Reflecting on my experiences as I entered the communities, navigated relationships and built trust, and made sense of my shifting role in these communities, with children and families, was central to the way I wrote memos, analyzed data, and made sense of the results given the developmental and anthropological traditions that inform this work.

Results Roadmap

In the following chapters, I present the results of this investigation. Chapters 2-4 provide ethnographic sketches of each of the Wiwa, Arhuaco, and Kogi research sites,

respectively, situating children's activities and playful behaviors within the physical, social cultural, and historical contexts of their communities. In these ethnographic sketches, I weave together data from fieldnotes and interviews to chronicle children's play from my vantage point. Each sketch opens with my journey into the communities, which was significant to my introduction, relationships, and experiences in each community. In the stories and vignettes I recount in each sketch, I highlight and illustrate themes that emerged as children engaged in play and adults in their community reacted to play throughout the duration of my fieldwork.

In Chapters 5 and 6, I dive deeper into the nature of children's play behaviors and parents' thinking about play, respectively, across the three research sites. In Chapter 5, I report on the results of the individual child observations, providing a picture of the range and frequency of children's play behaviors within the milieu of their everyday activities and interactions. In Chapter 6, I report on a thematic analysis of parents' interviews, characterizing the tensions in their beliefs and attitudes about play as informed by their cultural values, community practices, and priorities for their children. Finally, in Chapter 7, I conclude by drawing connections across the results of this study and discussing the implications of this work for research on the sociocultural influences on play and for education in indigenous settings.

This ethnographic study aims to contribute to the growing knowledge of children's play experiences around the world and the ways that participation in their communities shapes these experiences. The research elucidates how Wiwa, Arhuaco, and Kogi children navigate their cultural environment—one that is shaped by both history and modernity—and how their play is embedded within social and cultural interactions that

are critical to the relationship between play activities and children's developmental trajectories. It highlights both the particularities of play in each research site but also points to possible alignments with other cultural contexts recorded in existing work. Furthermore, looking specifically at play as it relates to the schooling of children and caregivers, it informs the continued effort to provide educational experiences that are developmentally appropriate yet culturally relevant. Ultimately, it is my hope that this investigation will support the productive collaboration between indigenous communities, educators, researchers, and nonprofit and governmental agencies in designing formal and informal early childhood educational approaches that are sensitive to children's contexts and encourage a strong foundation for the children of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta and beyond.

CHAPTER 2

Windows of Opportunity: Finding the Time and Space to Play in a Wiwa Community

The Journey

Most of my research trips to Gotsezhi, the Wiwa settlement, involve coordinating rides with teachers who make the trip from Santa Marta to the school every Monday at dawn. Typically, teachers, who stay at the school for the week, take an hour-and-a-half bus ride that drops them off in Guachaca, a small town just at the foot of the Sierra Nevada and near the mouth of the Guachaca River. There they begin their ascent to the indigenous settlement. The mountainous topography is so impenetrable that in the past, vehicles could not get through and teachers had to hike for two or three hours to make it to the school. Nowadays, improvements that made the mountain path more accessible have made it possible for teachers to pay 15,000 Colombian pesos (about US $5) for a motorcycle ride that will get them up to the school in half an hour. This is not a negligible amount to pay for motorcycle rides every week—in addition to the bus fare—given the modest teacher salaries. Some teachers have secured their own motorcycles but most pay for rides or look for opportunities to catch a ride with visitors whenever they can. On my research visits, several teachers join Waldir, my brother-in-law who is extremely adept at steering in the unforgiven terrain of the Sierra Nevada, Señora Ana, my mother-in-law an occasional companion, and me in a 1990's forest green Mitsubishi van to make the trip without having to worry about catching a bus or hiring a motorcycle. I'm happy to offer some relief to teachers on their weekly commute but also see this as an opportunity to build a relationship with them. For a week every month, I share mealtimes with them,

sleep in a hammock in the preschool classroom, use their dedicated faculty bathroom facilities (the only ones with running water in the settlement), and participate in the myriad daily activities that constitute life in a rural indigenous school. Getting to school together feels like part of sharing this experience.

We meet at the informal transportation hub, locally referred to as "la bomba de Mamatoco," the gas station at Mamatoco, a neighborhood on the outskirts of Santa Marta. It is located right at the entrance to La Troncal, the main highway that connects this area of the Caribbean coast and borders the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. Riding in the car does not mean that the trip is always smooth or comfortable. Once we are off road and begin making our way into the Sierra Nevada, the road is treacherous, and the ride is bumpy. On my first visit to Gotsezhi, six teachers join the ride. I'm excited that I will be arriving as part of the school team, hopefully providing a means to gain the trust of children, parents, and leaders from the outset given that teachers are respected members of the community. With a verdant abyss to one side and the majestic sierra to the other, we pile into the old van that painstakingly makes its way through the narrow, winding dirt path. We come upon river streams, encounter steep, slippery hills, and traverse large potholes and sharp rocks. The road is almost never the same from one visit to the next; rain, cattle, and vehicles constantly reshape it. Mishaps await at every turn; it takes a very skilled driver and brave passengers to make this trip on a regular basis.

As we near the school community on this first trip, a sharp turn and a sudden landing on unleveled ground make a loud burst that is a sure indication that something is terribly wrong with the car. This is the third, and arguably the most serious, accident on the road we have encountered today. It almost seems routine to step out and find out what

is wrong. When we do, we realize that all six screws that held the back, left tire in place have fallen off and the tire has now landed a few feet away. As we brainstorm ways to fix the tire, one of the female teachers and Señora Ana walk back through the last few yards we have driven looking for the lost screws and are able to collect five out of the six of the screws that flew off. They bring them back and Waldir gets to work on getting the tire back on as best as he can. I am both relieved that this will only end up being a minor emergency and astounded at how calm and solutions-oriented the teachers remain when we encounter challenges on the road. They have obviously adapted to the rugged nature of their work and learned to creatively address discomfort, lack of resources, and crises as par for the course. This adaptability is something I observe in both their living and teaching in this setting.

The Context

The teachers mention we are close enough to the settlement and we decide to walk to the community, while Waldir fixes the tire and joins us later. As we walk along the road and turn to start descending toward the settlement, I can see Zalemaku Sertuga, the school at Gotsezhi, and people in their white typical attire made of sturdy cotton twill walking around the school grounds and community. From the hill, I can see the large brown wooden shed with weathered tin roof that houses the upper school classrooms (grades 6-11). On the side of the building, are painted large white letters, “Institución Etnoeducativa Distrital Zalemaku Sertuga,” proudly announcing the name of the school. Just beyond it, is a white concrete building that is divided into the preschool and first grade classrooms; other elementary classrooms (grades 2-5) find a home in various structures around the community (see Figure 2.1).

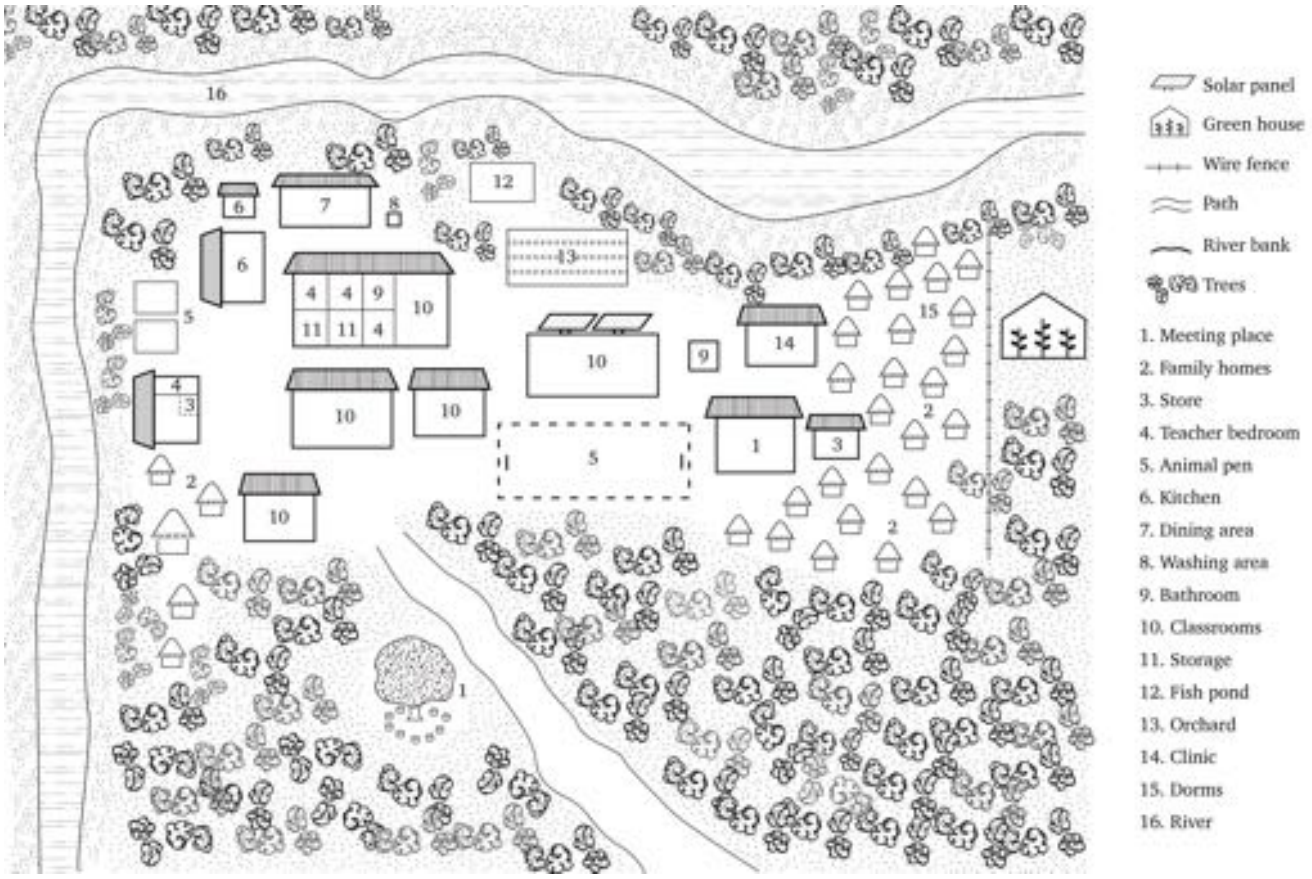


Figure 2.1 Representation of Gotsezhi community layout (not drawn to scale).

As I continue walking, just off to the right, I can see the tops of the mud brick and palm roof homes where families live (see Figure 2.2). Gotsezhi was established in the 1980's when Mamo Ramón Gil, the eldest spiritual authority in the community, settled with his family in this part of the Sierra Nevada, along the Guachaca River. They worked the land and as others migrated here, Gotsezhi developed into a thriving cultural center for the Wiwa community. In 2002, Zalemaku Sertuga began as an ethnoeducational institution with various locations in Wiwa settlements, including the one in Gotsezhi, serving mostly indigenous children but also the children of mestizo farmers who have settled in the region.

Figure 2.2. Community homes.

The school at Gotsezhi serves nearly 150 students from preschool through high school. While many of the children live with their families in Gotsezhi proper, some travel here from family compounds that are a distance away from the settlement. Other children, mostly the oldest students, board during the school year and only travel home during school breaks. The school is relatively well resourced compared to other schools (although still far from having all its infrastructural needs met), with classrooms and teachers for each grade, which is not always the case in rural, indigenous schools, in addition to specialty courses in agronomy, physical education (PE), and computing, each with their assigned teachers. The school receives educational materials (e.g., books, pencils, notebooks) from the Ministry of Education as well as food supplies, which allows them to serve breakfast, lunch, and dinner at school. Various agricultural projects have also made it possible for the school to raise livestock and cultivate fruits and vegetables that provide a diverse diet for children, something that is also unusual in other indigenous contexts. In recent years, the school received donations of laptops, tablets, a

large screen TV, and solar panels from government agencies and NGO's that have made technology a part of children's lives. Most of these items are housed in the computer room powered by the solar panels. Thus, education and interactions with outsiders—teachers, local farmers, government representatives, nonprofit organizations, and visitors—have a long history in Gotsezhi and this history constantly shapes children's experiences with play.

The School Day

As I enter the community, I see a few children moving about in their white tunics made of the same cotton materials as the adults (although some children also wear a combination of traditional clothing and non-indigenous clothes, including shorts, pants, and undergarments). Their faces are framed by long, dark hair that has not been cut in months, sometimes years. It is initially hard to distinguish girls from boys from far away, and only later do I learn that girls wear brightly colored beads and red scarves, which becomes my way of differentiating them, until I recognize children by face and name.

Most children are already in their classrooms waiting. A few are flipping through books or talking in small groups. Some of the older elementary children are raking the dirt on the ground around the school grounds or sweeping classroom floors. I soon learn that raking or sweeping the floor is a common chore around the school and at home. I follow the preschool teacher, Ms. Cristina,[2] a plump cheerful woman in her mid-30s, into her classroom. The large rectangular classroom walls are made of white concrete on the

[2] I use pseudonyms to refer to participants throughout the study. When I met with mamos, they requested that I name them to provide credit for the knowledge they and their communities granted me; they are the only ones who I call by their given name. Furthermore, although individuals I met had names given in their local language, they introduced themselves to me with their Spanish names. Therefore, pseudonyms follow a Spanish naming convention.

lower half and chain link fence on the top half allowing for natural ventilation. Desks and tables are lined up in rows from one end of the room to the other, with little more than a foot between rows (see Figure 2.3). Furniture and decorations are sparse. There is a white board at the front, some plastic numbers and shapes are pasted around the white board, and a small floating storage cabinet next to the board. I find a spare plastic chair and sit in a corner of the classroom. I have a small green notebook that I pull out to begin documenting my observations.

Figure 2.3. Preschool students and classroom

Ms. Cristina merrily greets her classroom and begins counting the number of students. She is surprised that 39 children have shown up, given that about five of them had not been coming to school in the past few weeks. This is a very mobile community and student attendance can be inconsistent. Children may stay home because they do not have clean clothes, are taking care of younger siblings, are helping parents with agricultural work, or the family has traveled to visit relatives in other areas of the Sierra Nevada. While Ms. Cristina is not quite prepared for these additional five students, she

does not appear flustered and promptly rearranges the classroom to find seats for all the children who have come to school. As she moves tables and chairs around, I notice the first indication of play in the classroom: three preschool boys arm wrestling. As I will discover soon, arm wrestling is a favorite pastime for boys. They find pockets of downtime during class or after school to challenge each other into arm wrestling matches.

The teacher finally gets everyone settled into their seats. As Ms. Cristina explains later, the age range in the classroom is wide; she has students as young as 4 and as old as 8 or 9. Education here is not compulsory and because parents see the home as the first and primary educational context, if they choose to enroll children in formal education, they prefer to send them at 6 or 7 years old. Even at this age, they will be admitted into "preescolar" or preschool, which is akin to Western kindergarten, an introduction into formal schooling and a transition into elementary school. With the passage of time, as older children attend school, parents may send 4- and 5-year-old siblings along, and these children also enter preschool. Therefore, Ms. Cristina has at least three learning and developmental levels in her classroom that can roughly be arranged into the youngest children (4 or 5), older children (6 or 7) who will remain in preschool for a year or two, and the oldest children (7 or 8) who will likely enter 1st grade within a year. Ms. Cristina arranges her classroom accordingly. Younger children are seated in groups around plastic tables and older children are seated on individual desks, divided into the introductory and more advanced learning levels.

The preschool routine is similar every day: Ms. Cristina hands out notebooks or worksheets and the children begin on their pre-literacy or pre-math assignments. This might mean completing *planas* by copying letters or numbers until they fill up a page,

working out math problems, coloring, and rolling tissue paper balls or spreading modeling clay to cover a drawing. On this particular day, older children are assigned single digit subtractions that they copy from the board (6 – 4 =____ , 9 – 4 = ____). Younger children are assigned a number tracing activity that the teacher writes by hand in each child's notebook. As I look around the classroom, most children are writing or waiting patiently for their assignment. With nearly 40 children and multiple learning levels, Ms. Cristina is constantly having to manage several assignments and learning needs at a time, which naturally creates a lot of waiting for children as she tries to attend to everyone's needs. I am surprised that children this young are able to sit still for extended periods of time. At first glance, there is no obvious sign of the kind of raucous or mischievous behavior I have come to associate, from my experience in other cultural contexts, with a group of young children with nothing to do.

However, over time, I will discover the surreptitious activity, like arm wrestling, happening just under the apparently calm surface of the classroom flow. During lulls in classroom lessons and assignments, during transitions and extended work periods, a few children might move around, run, push and pull each other, switch seats, talk with one another or simply look around distracted. They might find an object in the classroom or pull one out from their *mochila*, a traditional woven bag, that they quickly turn into a play opportunity. On this day, I observe one of the younger boys playing with an orange toy car. He quietly pushes it back and forth across the plastic table with another boy. On another day, I see a group of girls pretending that their toothbrush and toothpaste bottle, given as part of a campaign to promote oral hygiene, are people that are walking together and talking to each other. One of the girls pretends that her toothbrush is playing a sing

along game she learned in school and she sings out loud, “agua limonada, vamos a jugar…,” “lemonade water, let’s play.” On yet another day, I see two boys who seem to have finished their assignments, playing “soccer” on their desk using a marble and metal pencil sharpener. One moves the marble around and the other blocks it with the sharpener. They make noises as if they are kicking and blocking the ball in real life.

I’m not entirely sure Ms. Cristina notices the extracurricular activity taking place, but if she does, she is patient and mostly turns a blind eye as long as children are not blatantly disturbing others or causing harm. Despite the clandestine moments of play, however, I begin to wonder why I see such little play intentionally incorporated into the day’s learning activities. I don’t see a block corner or centers dedicated to child-directed exploration and discovery. I see rows of desks and piles of notebooks but not many activities or manipulatives to help make the learning more tangible and appealing. As a being of my own culture, with preexisting Western beliefs about play and learning, I have come with prior experiences and expectations of playful learning in a preschool context, but my questions are not rooted in trying to dissect the appropriateness or quality of the preschool instruction here. I am rather intrigued by the factors that are shaping this classroom, the choices the teacher makes, children’s behaviors, and resulting spaces and opportunities (or lack thereof) for play. It is obvious to me that instructional resources are limited; there is barely any room for children to sit and the limited materials the school does provide are devoted to conventional learning activities. Is Ms. Cristina not interested in explicitly incorporating play in her classroom? Is there just too little opportunity, either created or spontaneous, for children to be inspired to play?

I soon discover that the answers to these questions are complicated. Ms. Cristina tells me she values play and wants to incorporate more of it in her classroom. After all, she is trained in preschool education—in all its ludic pedagogy glory typical in early childhood—and taught in Santa Marta until 2009 when a personal connection landed her a temporary substitute position at Gotsezhi that became permanent. Although she wishes she could be more intentional about play in her classroom, there are practical constraints on her time and resources, instructional demands placed on her by the Ministry of Education, and cultural expectations from the community that she must also consider. She was not formally trained in indigenous education contexts and does not speak Damana, the local language, which makes it hard for her to communicate with children, especially those who have not yet learned Spanish. However, she has become quite comfortable with managing the cultural and linguistic challenges of teaching indigenous children entering school for the first time and communicating with then and their parents. This requires sometimes compromising on how she will run her classroom. With time, I will understand how teachers, parents, and leaders at Gotsezhi coordinate their priorities for children and how children navigate these different expectations.

Children's Play is their Work

Later when I visit Ms. Cristina in her bedroom, I casually ask her "Qué piensa del juego en esta comunidad? (What do you think of play in this community). She is resting on her twin bed and I sit on another bed in the room she shares with three male teachers—a true testament to her dedication to this work. This informal conversation starter is an initial foray into understanding what adults think about play in the

community and my question is intentionally open-ended to invite her to speak about anything that feels salient or important to her.

She starts by explaining that what she has heard from community leaders in the past is that "play and games are not part of the Wiwa culture." Play activities are not encouraged and there are no traditional games passed down through generations. She also tells me that, "soccer was banned at the school for some time because children would focus on playing soccer and would not help at home after school." I'm a bit surprised because I have seen boys playing soccer throughout the day; there is even a dedicated soccer field that is used during PE and other free periods. However, I begin to grasp the concessions that are made around play as the community has interacted with the school. Although soccer has been a point of contention, as teachers, parents, and community leaders have explicitly and implicitly negotiated expectations for children's activities, play in the form of soccer has been allowed in school and seeped into play during out-of-school hours.

As I continue asking teachers, parents, and other community members to describe beliefs about play, I hear variations on the same theme, "In this community, children's play is their work." The responses are given matter-of-factly and without much elaboration but seem to imply that for adults, children attending to tasks and work at home and around the community is all the physical activity and recreation they need. From a very young age, children are involved in the collective responsibilities of the family and community, from sweeping floors, to carrying wood and water, and tending to livestock, to taking care of younger siblings, and washing clothes.

Figure 2.4. Luisa carrying water.

On my first visit, I watch Luisa, a five-year-old, carrying water in three jugs—one in each hand and the last one in a netted bag she holds with her head (see Figure 2.4). Her body strains with the weight of the water but she slowly waddles back home. After school one day, Oscar, who is seven, invites me to accompany him to tend to the family chickens and turkeys. He leads me to a wooden shed located about a 20-minute walk from the settlement. When we arrive, he demonstrates how he cleans out the shed and prepares the animals' meal, which consists of soaking chunks of potatoes, yucca, and plantains in water in an old pot. On yet another visit, preschoolers participate in watering the sugar cane crop by carrying containers filled with water up a steep hill and then walking around on the side of the mountain watering individual sugar cane plants. It is hard work, it seems the children find the opportunity to make it an enjoyable experience with their peers. When watering the sugar cane plantation, they run and chase each other on their way up and down the hill, laughing and making it a friendly competition.

Children's participation in work does not stop while they are in school. Interrupting the regular school day in order for children to participate in some kind of community work activity is a common occurrence. Teachers have to be flexible and manage the interruptions to the day's lessons in order to honor children's responsibility in their community. For example, one morning during class, preschoolers are sent home to collect *bastimento*, crops grown in the region, including plantains, yucca, and malanga that will be used to prepare lunch. The children run home and return to the kitchen minutes later smiling, apparently pleased with the opportunity to be out of class and back home, if only for a few minutes. As students get older, these work activities, like tending to crops or collecting firewood become part of the formal middle school and high school curriculum. On one visit, I observe young children engaged with the older students and teachers in slaughtering chickens as part of their agronomy curriculum. The young children are responsible for carrying the chickens from the coop to hand over to a teacher who slits their neck and hangs them to bleed out (see Figure 2.5). Children then help with cleaning off the feathers and insides to get them prepared for butchering. That day students help slaughter over 100 chickens that provide food for the school.

Figure 2.5. Boy carrying chicken to be slaughtered

These work activities are part of children's community life and, although it can be physically strenuous, it can also be fun. The physical activity and social interaction provides opportunities for play. When they are taking care of a younger sibling, they might find a pebble to throw back and forth; when they are watering a crop, they might organize an impromptu game of chase; when helping with farm animals, there is always an opportunity to jump off tree stubs or explore in the bushes. However, a tension between children's role in the community and their opportunities for play is ever present. Several times in my observations, I hear an adult telling a child to stop playing—to get off a tree branch, to come take care of a baby brother, to help with cleanup around the community, or stop playing soccer. I also hear teachers reminding students that they are only allowed to play soccer at a specific time during the week when they can be supervised. There are constant negotiations between the school and the community and between the responsibilities children have and the autonomy they are afforded when

attending to chores. The strains that arise from these negotiations are evident in the way parents and community members describe their expectations for their children and their thoughts about play.

Negotiating Expectations, Concerns, and Beliefs about Play

I begin to see that parents have certain expectations for their children's behaviors based on their own experience and understanding of what is accepted in the community. However, this interacts with their hopes for their children as they attend school and prepare to navigate the world outside their community. When I speak to Isabel, one of the school cooks and a community mother, whose children range in age from four to eighteen, she begins by describing what I have heard before, that "indigenous people do not play very much" but she adds that typically infants and very young children are not given work and are allowed to play. She explains that when her own children return from school, she wants them to "rest, study or complete their homework, and help with household chores, like cooking and looking for wood." At the same time, she explains, she sees play as a way of building a relationship with the *civiles*, non-indigenous Colombians. Therefore, once her children have met their responsibilities at home, she allows them to play. She says her children like to play with toys, like cars or dolls, and that she will buy them toys herself sometimes.

Elvia, another mother, who has six children ages one to twelve, explains that her children "hacen lo que ellos quieran," do whatever they want during their free time and are allowed to play whatever they like. "They bathe and swim in the river, they find any little rock and play with it; basically, with anything they find, they can and do play. They play with marbles and they play soccer." However, she then adds a caveat, saying that

she does not allow them to play every day, all day. They can play for an hour or half an hour at a time. “They can’t play too much,” she says. If they do, she will call them to help out with household duties, like feeding the pig or the chickens. When she is busy cooking in the school kitchen, she will ask her children for help, “take care of a chore, play a little, and then come back home. They go collect water or take care of their younger brother. Manuel and Felipe [the two oldest boys] are also responsible for the mule. After they take care of these things, they can play. When they’re tired, they need to rest. They also need to bathe with shampoo.” Elvia acknowledges that her children play, and even considers their participation in play as part of their routine activities; however, she also sees children’s work and self-care as priorities in how they spend their time.

The tensions between the community expectations and children’s play are not limited to children’s involvement in work. In addition to concerns about children wasting their time playing instead of attending to their responsibilities, parents and other community leaders are concerned about children getting dirty or hurting themselves when they play. Families have limited resources to provide their multiple children with one or two clean white tunics. The fabric to make them is financially and logistically hard to come by given that it has to be purchased in the city; therefore, its upkeep is of utmost importance. When they talk about being worried that children will get dirty when they play, they are concerned about the longevity of the garments, the soap and the physical work needed to keep them clean, and what this means financially and practically for them. In addition, with limited access to medical attention, keeping children safe and healthy is extremely important. When I talk to them, both Isabel and Elvia are concerned

that their children are spending too much time at the river playing in the water; they worry the children might get a cold or make an existing cold worse.

Other actions by community members and leaders illustrate the community's concern that play can be unsafe. For example, when a third grader, Ernesto, accidently runs over another child with his bicycle (which was a gift from the school for Ernesto's outstanding academic performance during the previous year), the community leaders decide to take the bicycle away. When I ask Isabel about the leaders' actions, she tells me that although they accept that the children play and receive toys from teachers and other people who visit the settlement, if there is ever an issue with one child's toy, or an accident like the one with Ernesto's bicycle happens, or there is any kind of misunderstanding around the object, they ask all children to bring their toys and then burn them. I am unable to verify Isabel's claims, but there does seem to be this constant tug-of-war between tolerance for play in the community and an expressed disagreement with it and some actions that actively limit it.

Given the different concerns and priorities that teachers, parents, and community authorities consider and negotiate, adult-sanctioned opportunities for play come with a number of qualifications. On the one hand, parents and adults in the community accept children's play as long as it does not conflict with their responsibilities and does not put their health at risk. On the other hand, the community still places a great deal of importance on children behaving, following directions, and helping with chores. If play distracts them from what they are expected to do or puts them in harm's way, play can be chastised or suspended. The school and teachers have introduced some play as part of their curriculum and interactions with students. This has provided opportunities for

children to play in and out of school; however, teachers also respond and adapt to parents' and community members' regulations on children's activities.

Children' Play Disturbing the World's Equilibrium

While children's participation in work activities and concerns about safety and wellbeing are issues I expected to encounter given previous research on play in indigenous settings, the community's spiritual worldview and how this affects their beliefs about play was something that took me months to comprehend. Over several visits, I begin to hear from parents and leaders that a reason they discourage play is that children might disturb the balance in nature with their play actions. For example, when I return to the community after a school holiday, I hear from Ms. Cristina that children are again not allowed to play soccer. For several reasons, including the worry that children can get hurt, but also the belief that running can disrupt the spiritual entities that reside in natural elements, the leaders decided that children could not play soccer unless it was supervised by teachers during PE.

In trying to understand more regarding parents' and leaders' concern about children' play disturbing the world's equilibrium, I meet with Victor, a previous teacher at Zalemaku who now works with the Ministry of Education on approaches to ensure the quality of education in indigenous schools of the Sierra Nevada. He explains that the belief is that when children play, they are not aware or mindful of the spiritual plane that exists in their environment. They might hit a tree, or dive into a river pool, or step on rocks and damage or somehow defile the spiritual balance of spiritual beings without realizing it. Confession rituals with the *mamos* allow individuals to restore this balance, but because children are often unaware or forget what they did during play, they are

unable to confess their actions. Because adults are often not present when and where children play, they fear that children can cause a disruption in the spiritual forces in that area and forget to confess it either as children or adults, which can then bring with it negative physical and personal consequences. For example, Victor explains that "disrupting the spiritual order can get in the way of individuals' relationships with their spouses or families."

I hear a similar account from a Kogi nurse, Rosa, who travels with a group of medical professionals to different indigenous communities of the Sierra Nevada and happens to be stationed at Gotzeshi for a few days during one of my research visits. She explains that when she was young, the community elders did not approve of children's play. The leaders thought children would disturb the earth, and that could bring negative repercussions for the children in the future. She explains that the traditional thought in her community was that, "the Earth is held up by a string on the shoulders of two beings. When children run or stomp, they throw off the beings' balance and the Earth sinks." Despite the elders' warnings, however, Rosa and other children would, "stomp on the dry ground, where we could hear it the most." They would do their chores as quickly as possible so that the parents would not notice when they had gone to play. As an adult, she believes that it is important for children to "recrearse," to have some recreation, as long as they have taken care of their responsibilities and their studies, first. She explains that she thinks differently than many in her community; she believes play "allows children to express and define who they are for themselves. Through play, children enact the person they will be in the future." When she played as a young girl, she would "not pretend to carry babies," rather, she would, "be a leader and tell other children what to do." Now she

is a nurse and considers herself a leader in her community; when she speaks, people listen.

Against the backdrop of the tensions in the adult beliefs and attitudes about play, it is initially difficult to find examples of children's play in the community. Children in Gotzeshi are aware of adults' concerns regarding spiritual balance, cleanliness, and safety. As Rosa explains, children try their best to stay under adults' radar and to appease them by meeting their responsibilities. However, children also find the time and space to play. It took time for play to reveal itself to me—or for me to really notice it—not only because the children took time to grow comfortable with me and include me in their activities. As I came to understand more about their environment, I was able to see how play takes shape here.

Finding the Time and Space to Play

Because there are so many places where children can go in and around the settlement out of my sight and I observe very little child activity during my first couple of visits other than children carrying on with chores or household responsibilities, I initially have the impression that little play or recreational activities are happening at Gotsezhi. It is manageable to follow the almost 40 preschoolers when they are contained in the classroom, and even in that setting, play is not readily apparent. Once children are outside the classroom, it is hard to locate them and find out what they are doing with their free time. At lunch for example, once children finish their meal in the dining area, I try to follow them, but they quickly disappear into their houses. The school is located on one end of the community and the children's homes are located on the other side; outside the confines of the school, it is harder for me to determine where they have gone, especially

because it takes me months to achieve the trust with families that allows me to follow children into their homes. During this time in the early afternoon, the community feels very still and quiet, as if most people, including children are resting or enjoying some refuge from the midday sun. Many children seem perfectly fine standing or sitting and watching the activity around them at home and the community, without much apparent interest in engaging in play. As I keep looking, however, I start to find pockets around the community where children spend their free time.

The most evident place where children gather during out-of-school hours is the soccer field (see Figure 2.6). It is a large dirt plot flanked by two wooden goalposts and located right in the center of the community, essentially functioning as a border between the school and the homes in the settlement. When permitted, children play soccer in this area. Although soccer balls are available during teacher-sanctioned games, children tend to get creative with the objects they kick around; they might use a rock, lime, or roll-on ball from a deodorant container they find. On my first visit, as I look around for play after school, I see two boys playing “soccer” with a pencil sharpener on the soccer field. One kicks the pencil sharpener and the other one stands at the goal to stop the “ball.” Other groups of boys go down to the river and play soccer in the water kicking around an old, ratty soccer ball. Preschool children and girls tend to be left out of official soccer matches organized by upper school boys or teachers, but they pepper the sidelines attentively watching matches and will organize their own games kicking around found objects when the field is not occupied.

2.6. Older boys playing soccer

Large open areas, like the soccer field or river, also serve as the setting where young children spontaneously organize physical games like tag or races. One day, I discover a group of boys playing freeze tag in a large dirt field at the far end of the village where a massive greenhouse is being built as part of a governmental project to support the cultivation of crops that are not typically grown in the region (see Figure 2.7). A large yellow tractor drives back and forth on the field leveling the ground for the construction. The boys run after each other, sometimes getting uncomfortably close to the tractor, but apparently unfazed by the heavy machinery nearby. Other children sit on the ground watching the tractor and the boys chasing each other.

Figure 2.7. Children playing freeze tag in an open field.

Boys often engage in physical play choices that make it easier for me to notice when they are playing. During initial visits, I keep wondering what girls are doing during their free time. I begin to look specifically for girls outside of school setting to document their activities. Girls often interact with each other in less vigorous ways than boys, sitting in groups, conversing or playing singing games with others. However, I also start to notice instances when they engage in more active play interactions.

During recess one day, two early elementary girls playfully taunt me. They are responding to my attempts to nonverbally communicate with them. Because our communication can be limited due to language barriers, when children come near me out of curiosity, I will poke them, lightly step on them, or put my hand on their head. They find this amusing and begin to respond to my prodding. They touch my foot or arm, and when I turn around to look for them, they run away. I start chasing them around the school and community, and before I know it more girls join and eventually a group of 10-15 children (boys and girls) run around the soccer field waiting for me to come after them. I trick them by walking away from the group and suddenly turning around to chase

them again. I am panting and gasping for air, but the children seem to enjoy our game. I see it as a way of continuing to build a friendship with them and showing them that I'm open and responsive to their playfulness, which I hope will make them more comfortable to my presence when they're playing amongst themselves. We only stop playing because the bell rings to resume classes, and I am grateful for the opportunity to catch my breath.

One afternoon, I settle in the kitchen and watch as the cooks prepare dinner. As I do this, I notice Elmira, a four-year-old preschooler, playing around the pile of firewood that has been collected for cooking (see Figure 2.8). I see her gathering pieces of tree bark from the pile and placing it on tree branches and trunks. She then moves to constructing a series of bridges by balancing the bark in the space between different pieces of wood. She places one large piece of tree bark crossing from one tree branch to the other, and then places another, and begins to put smaller pieces across the two until the open space formed by the two parallel pieces of bark are covered. She moves to another area and repeats the process. Elmira places each piece carefully to ensure that they hold up. She does not tell me what she is building when I ask, but once she realizes I am watching, she continues this process and looks at me as if checking that I am noticing. It is through my paying attention to furtive play activities, and children's noticing of my noticing, that I begin to gain access to children's play here.

Figure 2.8. Elmira building bridges in the woodpile

I become a lot more aware of children's play happenings as they invite me to play spaces normally not visible to adults. The children grow comfortable with me and include me in their play and I also develop a better understanding of their cultural context, which allows me to more readily discern the shape play takes in this context. On one visit, in early June, it is mango season and children seem to be on a mission to find the most and sweetest mangoes around. Every day that week, I receive several gifts of mangoes children have collected. I am surprised to find out that there are so many varieties of this delicious fruit here. There are large, juicy mangoes; there are thin, stringy mangoes that are perfect to suck on; and there are small, meaty, and delicately sweet mangoes called "mango de azúcar," sugar mango. The mango trees scattered around the settlement, among the houses and throughout the school grounds, are generous, providing sufficient fruit for the entire community. However, children have inside knowledge of trees located outside the settlement, in the depths of the tropical forest surrounding the area. In pairs or groups, children go on excursions to these offsite locations where they find trees that are heavy with mangoes of just the variety the children are craving.

One afternoon, a group of several preschool and first grade girls, Elena, Margarita, Luisa, and Sandra, and a first-grade boy, Oscar, invite me to go visit one such mango tree hideaway. We start walking along the river, on a narrow dirt path, lined with tall, imposing trees and bushes of all shapes and sizes. The path winds, crossing the river several times. As we walk, the children expertly climb on boulders, jump across steppingstones, sometimes jumping into the river, and back on the path. Luisa and Elena decide to swim down the river for a short distance before joining the troop again. Children are comfortable jumping into the river and getting wet, whether they're wearing their white tunics or just their underwear, they seem used to walking around in damp clothes. I, on the other hand, am slow and careful to step from one rock to the next to avoid slipping. I am trying my best to stay dry and also avoid falling on my already-battered knee from previous falls.

In the months I have spent with the children, I have come to trust them as guides in this environment they know so well but that is so foreign to me. I follow them faithfully along the path. I keep my eyes fixed on their every move until we suddenly come upon a clearing in the forest. A natural river pool surrounded by large trees forms a peaceful oasis. As the group of children gathers around one specific tree. This is the mango tree we have come to raid. Children pick mangoes off the ground and look for ripe ones still hanging from the trees. They gather their picks into little mounds on the nearby rocks and sit around eating them while they talk.

Once they have satisfied their mango cravings, one by one, they go into the river (see Figure 2.9). They find one specific rock that becomes their diving platform. They form a line to jump into the deeper part of the pool and then swim to the shallow end. I

look on as the children swim and they call out to me to join them. I initially decline but when I consider the cool dip in the river and the opportunity to observe the children from the perspective of a fellow swimmer, I jump in. I start swimming on my back and look up at the blue sky with a few scattered white clouds that move slowly across my field of vision. I see the luscious leaves perched on large branches that form a soft shade overhead. Partly submerged in the water, I can hear the sound of my own breathing and the muffled voices of children jumping and swimming nearby.

Figure 2.9. Children swimming in the river after eating mangoes.

Going to the river is a popular activity. Although it is a place where parents send their children for chores or to bathe, it is also a setting for relaxing and enjoying a refreshing time with siblings and friends after school. Children gather in different pools up and down the river to bathe and wash clothes but also play, swimming and jumping in and out, floating on branches, and chasing each other and making up games. One afternoon, I see a group of boys swimming and hanging out at the river. After a while of being there, they pour shampoo on their heads and lather to clean up before heading back home; an everyday task turned into an opportunity to play.

On one occasion, I follow Elmira to the river and watch as she swims and collects rocks to throw into the water. As she tosses one rock after the other, I start counting. She seems encouraged by the fact that I am noticing and continues collecting and throwing rocks, looking for me to react. As it gets later in the afternoon, we head back to the kitchen to help with dinner preparation. After some time in the kitchen, though, Elmira asks me to return to the river with her. "Vamos a bañar," she says. Initially I think she is telling me she is going to bathe, and I nod acknowledging this information, but after a few moments she doesn't walk away. She keeps saying, "vamos a bañar," until I understand that she wants me to go with her ("vamos," let's go) and we head down together.

We walk by her house on our way, and Oscar and Felipe, her older brothers join us as we head down. Once on the riverbank, Elmira jumps right in and does a belly flop, with her arms and legs extended as wide as she can. Oscar jumps in after her and so does Felipe. They get out and jump in again over and over. Soon this turns into the children pushing each other in. Among the boys, this turns into a friendly tussle as they push each other into the river by pulling and choking one another. Elmira joins the struggle, and as the boys shove each other, she pushes them both into the river pool. The children are obviously enjoying both the water and the rough and tumble as they laugh and jump in over and over.

Except for the school teachers, it is rare for adults to engage actively with children in their pastimes; my figure as a close observer and sometimes participant provides a window for me to see how children engage spontaneously in play but also how they react when responding to the social encouragement to play. My attention to children's

behaviors opens up the landscape of their play to me, and although my interest seems to be welcomed, I believe these are activities they would be doing even if I wasn't there. Over nine months, I discover many such spaces and opportunities children find to play. Some play activities—like soccer in the school field—are open for the entire community to see. Children and adults will watch from the sidelines as games take place. Even community leaders and women with infants, who gather on a hill overseeing the settlement, will stop to follow games. Other activities are tucked away, in river pools and sandbanks, hidden corners of the settlement, or concealed dirt plots and trees.

There is one activity that is both, visible and hidden, obvious yet surreptitiously playful. A lot of community business gatherings happen at night, and children are often a part of the adult conversations and rituals, music and dances, as spectators. I am not initially privy to these events. What I do hear from teachers is that children can be awake until very late participating in community activities and then have to wake up early in the morning to go to school. At times, they are so tired that they fall asleep in class. At Gotsezhi, Wednesday nights are usually dedicated to children's dancing and singing—children gather and participate in traditional dancing.

Once I have been at the community for a few visits, children ask me to come watch them dance. I arrive at the gathering place in an open space among the community homes one Wednesday night. It is only 7:30pm but it is already pitch black. I have to strain my eyes to make out what is in front of me, and although I have a flashlight, it seems inappropriate to turn it on when the dances usually take place in the dark. The children's vision has adapted to nocturnal activities and they fluidly move about. They can recognize faces, and they call out to each other arranging to begin their dance. As the

children—mostly girls—gather in a circle, two figures in the center begin to play traditional flutes and rattles. The sound they create is an undulating ceremonial rhythm that seems to elicit both reverence and celebration. The group of children moves in a circle, each crossing their legs and bowing to the slow rhythm of the music with every step and humming along with the music. I can make out some smile and hear laughter; the children revel in the moment, the music, and the gathering. Off to the side, younger children pretend to dance but really, they jump and fall, make silly moves, and laugh. Other children and adults gather around the circle, participating by watching.

In this dancing (or pretending to dance) I see children fully immersed in their traditions, in the activities that are expected by adults, but also completely involved in a fun, rewarding experience. While they are engaged in the forms of the dance ritual, there are also windows of opportunity for flexible and rewarding exertion of energy, social interaction, and present-mindedness that is reminiscent of play. That night, I leave the gathering around 8pm; children continue dancing perhaps until 11pm or midnight. As I fall asleep in my hammock, I hear an orchestra of toads. In the distance, I hear a chorus of music and children's voices.

Recreation and Play in School

Just as I begin to notice play around the community, with the passage of time, I also begin to see how recreation and play are intentionally incorporated into the school curriculum. Preschoolers attend school from 7am to 12pm. Most of these hours are spent in class, but they also have PE and computer lab time once a week and a half-hour morning recess every day when they receive a snack and have free time. These

intentional breaks in the regular instruction schedule provide planned and unplanned opportunities for children to play and participate in recreational activities.

Mr. Samuel, the PE teacher, starts every class session with stretching exercises on the soccer field. As children stand in a circle, he has them touch their toes, lift their knees, and run in place. He then organizes soccer games and other kinds of chase and tag games. He intentionally includes girls in the day's physical activities; he organizes mixed-gender teams, or sets up a soccer game just for girls, or arranges girls-only games of hopscotch or dodge ball. Mr. Samuel introduces the games rules and coaches children as they learn the rules and moves of specific activities. For example, when playing hopscotch, Mr. Samuel gives girls specific instruction on the rules, how to hop, and strategies for getting through the most difficult parts (see Figure 2.10). When playing tag, he illustrates and encourages children to use strategies for catching more children at a time. He will play along and demonstrate the proper form or tactics to do well in the game. He explains to me that as part as his educational training, he completed a project that investigated the physical, social, and cognitive benefits of games for children. He is intentional about the physical activities he chooses and sees the games he incorporates into PE as important for children's development. Seeing children participate in these organized, guided games in school helps me see that many of the physical games children organize themselves outside of school, like tag games, are modeled after the sports and games Mr. Samuel introduces during PE.

Figure 2.10. Mr. Samuel teaching girls to play hopscotch

Ms. Cristina shares beliefs about play similar to those of Mr. Samuel. One afternoon, I sit with her at the school's dining shed, sitting on a wooden bench, to formally interview her. She tells me that although they have heard from the Wiwa authorities that play and games are not part of their culture, she implements playful learning in her teaching because she believes children must play. She believes that play and games make learning easier. "The more they play, the more they learn," she says. She also believes that, "what they learn at school, they take home. They repeat at home what they learn at school." As time progresses, she believes, parents and community members begin to lose the idea that when children are playing they are misbehaving. In fact, over time, she feels the community leaders and parents have realized that play and playful activities ("actividades lúdicas") have helped children to "loosen up," and feel more comfortable or socialized within non-indigenous people and activities.

Ms. Cristina explains that, in class, she implements childhood games ("juegos infantiles") such as rounds and singing games. She has the children repeat the words to

the songs and rounds throughout the school year until they can repeat them on their own. Although, teacher-guided playful activities do not occur often, I see children participating in singing in the classroom at least once or twice a week. Ms. Cristina will sing a song and show corresponding hand gestures as the children follow along.

> ♪*Saco mis manitas, las pongo a bailar. Las cierro, las abro, las vuelvo a guardar.*
>
> [I take out my hands, and make them dance. I close them, I open them, I put them away again.]

They will make rain sounds with their hands, by clapping with one finger, then two, then three, and so on until they are making a torrential sound, and then slowly emulate the dissipating rain by clapping with four fingers, three, two, and one. Or they pretend to collect stars, by putting their hands in the air and making reaching and grabbing gestures, and then throw the collected stars toward any direction they choose. Ms. Cristina says that these exercises with their hands are used to prepare them for learning activities, whether it's writing, working with modeling clay, or tissue paper.

She will also sometimes lead more active rounds and singing games outside the classroom. One day, when preschoolers miss PE because of a whole-school gathering in the morning, Ms. Cristina takes the children out for physical activities. The children hold hands and move in a circle, singing,

> ♪*Agua limonada, vamos a jugar. El que quede solo, solo quedará, eh!*
>
> [Lemonade water, let's play. The one standing alone, will stay alone, eh!"]

When the singing ends, children scatter to look for a group of a predetermined size, and whoever is left outside a group leaves the game. The winners are the last two children

standing. They also play by forming a circle around a child who has volunteered to be a wolf and sing,

♪*Juguemos en el bosque mientras el lobo está, lobo está?*

[Let's play in the forest while the wolf is, wolf is?]

The child in the middle will respond by saying an activity the imaginary wolf might be involved in before heading back to the forest, such as "bañándose," taking a shower or "vistiéndose," getting dressed. The group and the wolf will go back and forth, and each time the responses get closer to the wolf coming out of the house. When the wolf finally says, "saliendo," coming out, everyone runs away as the wolf chases them. All the children participate and laugh as they play these games led by their teacher.

Once children have learned these songs and games, they will play them at home. Mothers have told Ms. Cristina (and she has also seen) that the children will learn a song or round and sing it at home, teaching their own younger siblings and mothers the words and accompanying gestures. I see the children engaging in these singing games too. One afternoon, I follow a group of preschool girls, to their house. Angela, Luisa, and Margarita gather in and around a hammock, conversing, laughing, and repeating the jingles and playful activities they did in class that morning—catching stars, making it rain, and the barn owl song:

♪*La lechuza, la lechuza, hace shh, hace shh. Todos calladitos, hacen shh, hacen shh.*

[The barn owl, the barn owl, says shh, says shh. Everyone quiet, says shh, says shh.]

Ms. Cristina also introduces toys into the classroom because she has seen children already playing with objects outside of school. Girls, for example, use rags as babies. She has observed them in their homes acting out scenes of adult life, like building a fire, cooking, or taking care of babies. She wants to show children that there are other representations they can incorporate into play aside from what they have seen at home. She says that she wants them to, "continue developing their imagination" and she believes toys can help children develop it. On the first day I visit, she tells me that she has been building a collection of toys for her classroom. For months, she gathers dolls, cars, tea sets, blocks, and puzzles, buying some herself and also asking for donations. She asks a carpenter to build her a wood storage cabinet to store the toys in the classroom, locked until they are ready to be used. This is a plan that she seems to have thought of prior to my arrival but I do wonder if my investigation further catalyzes her efforts. Nevertheless, she moves forward with her plan without much of an indication of when she will start bringing the toys into the classroom; it is months after my initial visits that she first brings out the toy collection.

On the morning that Ms. Cristina decides to bring out the toys, she has everyone sit in their chairs around the perimeter of the classroom. She stresses to the class that the toys are meant to be used and taken care of at school; for no reason, should the toys be taken home. She then begins pulling out the objects: brightly colored, plastic toy cars, helicopters, dolls, cooking play sets, etc. She arranges them by genders on a table—toys meant for boys and toys meant for girls—and then hands them out one toy at a time to individual children. She hands out cars and aircrafts to boys and dolls and household play sets to girls. Once everyone has received something, children find a spot on the floor or

walk around with their toy in hand; some play individually and others gather in groups. Almost immediately, the once quiet classroom transforms into joyous commotion. Boys who received cars move them around on surfaces on desks, chairs, and walls. Those who have helicopters walk around, flicking the helicopter blades and making flying noises with their mouth. Two boys sitting on the floor locate a set of play tools in the leftover stash on the table that they use to pretend they are fixing their cars. A group of girls finds a semi-secluded space in a storage closet where they share their baby dolls, pots, and pans. Another group of girls gets a toy car and uses it to give their dolls a ride. This is the first time that children have ever used toys in their classroom; and for some of them, this is the first time they have ever played with a toy. However, most children almost immediately respond to the objects by playing and pretending. During the hour-long free play period, they flexibly and jubilantly form groups or sit individually, acting out storylines that emulate real life, such as cooking, but also creating make-believe scenarios, like a Spider Man figurine stealing cars (see Figure 2.11).

Figure 2.11. Girls playing with dolls and kitchen sets

The following day, Ms. Cristina divides children into girls and boys and hands out building blocks, board games, and puzzles from the toy stash. There are only a handful of these manipulatives, and she asks children to sit in groups to share them. Children jump into creating with blocks and exploring the board games and puzzles (see Figure 2.12). They connect linking blocks and stack wooden blocks. Both girls and boys build cars and other structures with them. There is a hum in the room. It is soft and quiet as children build and create, a contrast to the previous day's energetic interactions.

During the next few months, I don't see the cars and dolls come out again, but on a handful of occasions, I do see Ms. Cristina pulling out the blocks. She allows children to free play at their tables while she gets assignments in the notebooks ready. Girls and boys build together and enjoy showing both Ms. Cristina and me their creations. Although free playtime in the classroom occurs only a couple of hours a month, which I imagine is a function of the demands of the curriculum, the large classroom numbers, and limited play resources, it is an indication of Ms. Cristina's attempt to incorporate playful activities into an otherwise conventional instructional plan. Play appears to still feel like a luxury rather than central to children's learning.

Figure 2.12. Building with blocks

There are two types of activities within the school context, yet outside regular instruction, that promote child-focused recreation: interactions with books and television watching. This is important because it diverges from the community's focus on children's productivity and introduces new ideas about how children can spend their time, highlighting a commitment to children's informal learning and diversion. There are two shelves in the 1st grade classroom filled with books on a variety of topics and representing a range of reading levels that have been donated to the school by the education ministry and other non-profit organizations. The classroom remains open all day and children have the freedom to look through books during out-of-school hours. As early as 5am before school, during recess, and as late as 7 or 8pm after school, young children will come into the classroom to look at books. Most preschoolers do not read, but they do enjoy flipping through the books, looking at pictures, and pointing at interesting images. They will often gather in groups looking through "search and find" or "I spy" books and searching for specific items on a page cluttered with images of objects on a theme (e.g., "find 3 sheep" in a two-fold image of a farm with a variety of farm animals and other related objects) (see Figure 2.13). I have never seen Ms. Cristina use one of these books during classroom instruction and there is no adult overseeing or structuring children's interactions with books in the 1st grade classroom. It is an activity that young children seek out spontaneously and enjoy informally and that parents, teachers, and leaders condone as a safe and educational pastime.

Figure 2.13. Children looking through an I Spy book.

Perhaps the most surprising of children's recreational activities in the indigenous context is watching films and videos. Every grade spends a period or two a week learning to use technology in the computing room. Older elementary and high school students learn to navigate different technology platforms and use various software programs, but young children typically watch an educational or popular movie during their turn at the computer room (see Figure 2.14). In fact, the first time I watch the popular 2016 Disney movie Zootopia was, dubbed in Spanish, sitting on the floor of the computer room with the preschool class. The children watch attentively, reacting to what they see on the screen and following along trying to make out the sometimes, unfamiliar images or anticipating the next scene if they are watching a familiar film. When I interview Ms. Cristina about play, she refers to movies and films as part of her approach to incorporate playfulness into her teaching. In her view, the videos introduce main subjects, like Spanish vocabulary, colors, and numbers in a fun way and bring the outside world to children's present reality.

Figure 2.14. Preschoolers watching movie in computer classroom.

Even beyond the computer room, teachers will bring out the big screen TV to a larger gathering place for the entire school to watch a popular film, like Hollywood blockbusters Jurassic World or The Martian and educational features like the Colombian documentary Colombia: Magia Salvaje (Colombia: Wild Magic) about the incredible biodiversity in the country. Teachers see this entertainment as offering educational value beyond instruction that offers amusement they believe is important in a child's life. When the film events are public, it also draws adult spectators, which further socializes the community into entertainment as an acceptable activity.

Although children's reading of books and watching TV is not something I would categorize strictly as play given the criteria I employed in this study, the activities do seem to signify teachers' commitment to provide the time, space, and resources to celebrate childhood and introduce children to various playful activities, games, and entertainment. This is best exemplified on Children's Day, celebrated in April in Colombia, when the teachers prepare a daylong celebration. The morning of the event, there is an air of excitement and anticipation the teachers have built up by reminding

students that today is their fun day. They involve the older students in the planning and executing the organized games and races that will take place throughout the day. They fill up bags with sand and balloons with water, build a wood structure for a balancing game, and prepare bags with necessities (such as, soap and underwear) that will serve as prizes for game winners. Whether children are racing in teams to fill up a soda bottle with water they collect from the river and carry in a cup with their mouth (see Figure 2.15), or are tossing rings into pole, or carrying balloons on sticks, teachers are involved in all the games, cheering students on and giving them tips on how to play the games.

Figure 2.15. Children competing during Children's Day.

They have waves of students playing the different games so that both older and younger students, and boys and girls, participate in the activities. The teachers make over 200 cookies and milk ice pops as a special treat and choreograph a dance to popular music in brightly colored costumes and funny animal hats that they perform in front of students. They serve a festive meal of pork and rice, bring out a sound system to play traditional and popular Colombian music for children to dance, and at night show a movie and hand out popcorn. It is a truly a day of celebration that is encapsulated in the introductory words given by the technology teacher, Mr. Gadiel. As students sit and stand

on a dirt mound and expectantly wait for the day's events to start, Mr. Gadiel, the oldest of the faculty members in his 60s, speaks for the teaching body when he says,

> "Today you are children but reflect for a moment on who will be the adults in 15 years. You will be, right? What we are doing here today is shaping you so that these children will be the adults, the ones who will replace us in the future. I congratulate you on this new day and we are going to make an oath. Place your fingers like this. [He makes a cross with his right thumb and index finger, the Colombian sign for an oath.] Ready? 'I promise to have fun and be happy in this, our event, participating and collaborating in all the activities.'"

The children repeat after Teacher Gadiel and cheer when he is done. I can no longer think about these children as quiet and calm, the way I once characterized them. Although I suspect this has been learned as teachers have introduced them to non-indigenous forms of games and entertainment, I also see the children who I have observed swimming in the river, climbing trees, and playing in the sand.

With his words, Mr. Gadiel, speaks of the school's commitment to form the adults who will lead this community—as future teachers, doctors, and nurses—but also to create the opportunities for children to let loose and have fun. Adults are standing nearby, hear this message, and watch as children participate in activities especially designed for them. At one point, a young man from the community comes near me looking perplexed and asks, "Why is a day dedicated to children?" I am startled by his question, because it is not at all a question I would think of formulating myself. I fumble through an unsophisticated answer about a day like today providing space for children to have fun but also wonder if it is just a marketing ploy by capitalist society for selling toys and candies. The confusion on his face lingers and imprints on my mind. In his inquiry, I sense an honest puzzlement at the idea that all these activities would be prepared solely

for children's enjoyment. With this question, the reality of two worldviews colliding materializes.

History, Present, and Future

A single stream of sweat trickles slowly down the back of my right leg. I'm leaning against the left side of the car in the back seat, next to the half-open window, trying to breathe in as much air as I can. I share the space between my legs and the driver's seat with a large white plastic sack filled with large green avocados, two freshly butchered chickens, yucca, and malanga. I'm also careful not to squish the fragile fresh eggs that were a gift from one of the kitchen mothers. As with most of my returns from Gotsezhi, I'm not the only passenger in the car. Just like teachers join me on my way up to the settlement, teachers, students, and community members take advantage of the ride to get to various points along the road and all the way to Santa Marta. Pablo, one of the community fathers, dozes off next to me, inadvertently leaning the weight of his body against me as he relaxes; his head bobs up and down and around looking for a place to rest. Two of Pablo's sons are also riding with us. Oscar will stay in Guachaca with his civilian godmother and Manuel will accompany his father to the city where they will stock up on supplies to bring back to the settlement. Other passengers include three of the teachers, two young men from the community who are making their way to other parts of the Sierra, and two peasant students who are making their way back to their farms at the end of the school week. Everyone in the car is carrying bags and sacks filled with personal belongings or the produce and farm goods collected throughout the week. The twelve of us, including the driver and loot, pile in the car. There is no room for personal space or possibility of escaping the reek of sweaty human bodies.

As I look around, I realize that the scene in the car represents Gotsezhi perfectly. Gotshezhi is a true melting pot of individuals and worldviews: from the Wiwa community that relocated to this place in the Sierra Nevada decades ago and continues to experience shifts in migration in and out of the settlement; to the local farming community and mestizo students and families whose own everyday reality has had to accommodate sharing land, resources, and bargaining powers with the indigenous population; to the civilian teachers who navigate their own philosophies about child development and education with the Wiwa worldview and priorities for children.

My observations have revealed children playing throughout the day and throughout the community, and the interactions between the various groups create the ecology that surround young Wiwa children and shape their play experiences. It seems to me that one factor influencing play as observed today in this community is the longevity of the interactions between the indigenous practices and beliefs and the practices and beliefs introduced by those from outside the community. Zalemaku Sertuga has been around as an educational institution for close to 15 years. During this window of time, the school infrastructure and Western educational philosophies that drive it have implicitly and explicitly presented ideas about child development and play that help make play more familiar to parents and community leaders. Perhaps seeing children involved in play in school for much longer in this setting than in other indigenous settings helps adults feel more comfortable with children's play behaviors. However, it is likely that interactions between the community and the school will continue to evolve and will define children's play opportunities, not only today but in the future.

CHAPTER 3

The Gate on the Road: Negotiating Play in an Arhuaco Community

The Journey

At 5am, Antonio, my husband, who is driving, and I meet Ms. Rosa and Ms. Josefina at the "bomba de Mamatoco," the gas station that has unofficially become the gateway to La Troncal, the highway that borders the Sierra Nevada. We are headed to Katanzama, an Arhuaco settlement where Ms. Rosa and Ms. Josefina teach. The settlement is only an hour's drive from the city, and sometimes, I travel back and forth with the teachers, riding on buses or hitching a ride on our way back. Other times, I travel with them at the beginning of the week and stay overnight in the community for the remainder of my visit. Spending time with children, parents, *and* teachers on routine tasks helps me experience different perspectives on life in the settlement, as I try to understand the context of people's experiences with play. The journey to and from Katanzama is not only the teacher's daily commute but also illustrates their stepping in and out of the indigenous context, a metaphor, I believe, to the way they balance their own and the community's beliefs about play.

As I doze off in the front seat on our drive, only interrupted by the sporadic comment from one of the teachers in the back, I see the shadows around me turn into a luscious forest canopy. The two-lane road winds along the Sierra Nevada, flanked by modest homes and shops. By the time light breaks, business is bustling. Children are walking to school, vendors are organizing piles of sweet, brightly colored fruit—papaya, guanabana, plantains, and tangerines—on their makeshift stands, and workers are off to

the day's labor on bicycles, motorcycles, and buses. The hustle and bustle are a stark contrast to the quiet mountains above.

We pass the entrance to the Tayrona National Natural Park, one of the most popular tourist attractions in the region. Backpackers from all over the world line up to hike along trails that lead them to hidden coves and enchanting beaches that have remained untouched by resort developments. It is interesting to think that just a short distance away, is Katanzama, a community that feels in some respects far and in other ways close to this international scene.

By the time we drive by what seems like endless fields of plantain plantations, I know we are near. It's easy to miss our entrance, and I'm always looking out for signs that we are nearing our destination. Just past a few houses and a breakfast stall that has become an informal trucker stop, is the non-descript metal gate that leads to the dirt path to the settlement. Instead of turning into the Sierra Nevada, we turn away from it toward the land near the ocean.

I have to get down from the car to undo the chain and lock that have been surreptitiously left open for us. The gate used to be wooden and flimsy, but the community decided to construct the metal gate to keep unwanted visitors out. The school at Katanzama is meant to serve the Arhuaco children whose extended families have, over time, moved to live lower on the Sierra Nevada and along La Troncal, perhaps searching for different economic and educational opportunities. Given its proximity to nearby towns and its easy access—just a short drive from the road toward the beach—strangers and tourists have been showing up at the settlement, unannounced and without

permission from the mamo. Having a working gate allows them to have better control of who comes and goes.

On my first visit to Katanzama, we come upon the group of men building the metal gate. I quickly recognize Mamo Camilo who we met in February during my initial scoping visit. He does not remember me and later explains that they have so many people coming through visiting Katanzama that it's hard to remember people and faces. I re-introduce myself and my project, and he soon recalls our previous conversation and says that one of the teachers had reminded him I was coming. He is serious yet welcoming.

The gate that the community has built represents their constant struggle to remain open to the outside yet have control of how much and to whom they should be open. Without the protection of the almost impenetrable mountains of the Sierra Nevada, this community has to find other ways to manage their children's exposure to outside culture while trying to instill in them their customary ways of life, values, and traditions. It is this negotiation that I see reflected in the community's reflections and reactions to children's play.

The Context

To drive into the settlement, we enter the gate and drive off-road through the rocky path that fills up with river water when there are heavy rains. Soon we arrive at a large clearing where we find the compound of huts enclosed by a wire fence. Katanzama, which the mamo explains translates to "center of knowledge," was established only three years ago on reclaimed land near the beach that the Arhuaco community has been recuperating through negotiations with the government as culturally sacred sites. The school at Katanzama, Tirúmake, was established even more recently; when I begin my

research in August of 2015, the school is in the latter half of its first academic year. The previous site was about an hour walking-distance from the road and it was harder for children to reach from where their families live along La Troncal. This new location has now become the hub for large community gatherings, education, and exchanges with visitors and organizations. Arhuaco community members come and go on a daily basis and for special celebrations; therefore, Katanzama can sometimes feel very quiet and other times feel very busy.

The settlement is sparse, with a few huts that make up the family living quarters and the community kitchen (see Figure 3.1). Larger huts serve as gathering places and eventually, I'm told, one will be a school dormitory. A large tree serves as a meeting place where the *mamo* sits with his counsel of leaders and many of the community assemblies are held. As a new settlement, very few people live in the compound, deciding rather to live along La Troncal. Only two extended families live in the settlement, including Mamo Camilo's family—his wife, children, and nieces and nephews—and Catalina and Benjamín's family, who work in the community kitchen and help maintain the grounds. Catalina and Benjamín have two older daughters who each have children, and they too live on site.

The school also includes a boarding option. Children who are boarding go home further away on weekends and school breaks but spend most of the academic year in the settlement. Including the children who board and those who live with their families on site, there are 20 children and six adults who live in Katanzama full time. During my visits, my observations focus on those children whom I can observe throughout the day and not just during school hours; therefore, my insights are drawn mostly from the 20

children or so who spend the majority of their time in the community, while I'm able to observe close to 60 children during the school day.

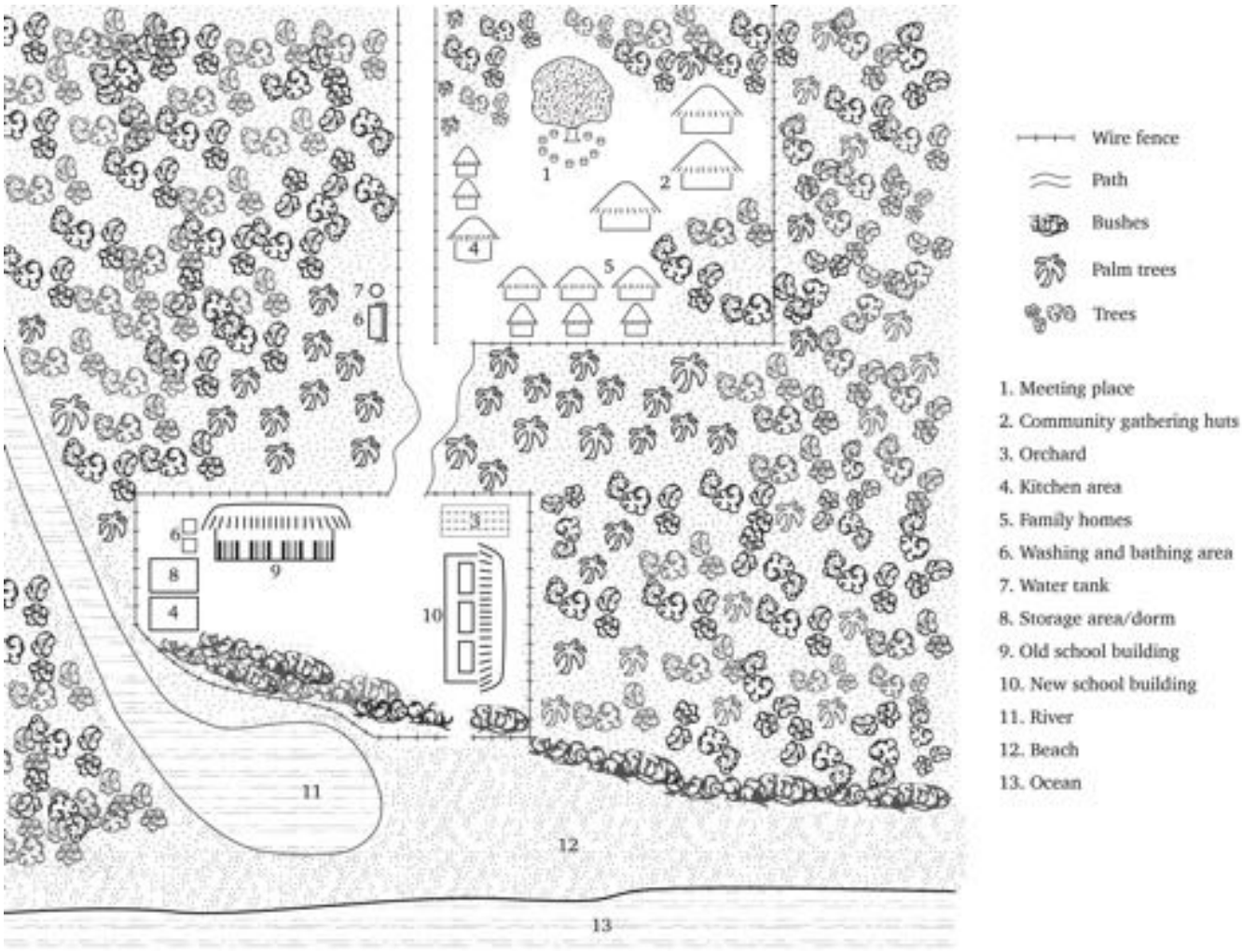


Figure 3.1 Representation of Katanzama community layout (not drawn to scale).

Figure 3.2. Old school building.

As with other communities I have visited, Katanzama is divided into the indigenous settlement and the school, and there is fluid movement between the two. The school is located closest to the beach, a three-minute walk from the settlement. When I begin my research, classes take place in a three-room schoolhouse made of wooden panels and palm tree roof (see Figure 3.2). Large openings on the walls allow for air circulation. The cool ocean breeze flows through the classrooms providing a much-needed respite from the suffocating heat and humidity. But this is a school and community still in transition, growing and changing, and by the time I complete my research, the school location will have moved to several places.

For a few weeks, classes are held in the open, under the large gathering tree while an international organization builds a new concrete school building next to the old wooden structure (see Figures 3.3 and 3.4). As the finishing touches are being completed on the new school roof, classes resume in the old structure, before making their final move to the three-room, concrete school. Throughout all this, students and teachers make a smooth transition from place to place, carrying tables, chairs, and desks, to continue with lessons. With each of my visits, I realize the constant changes—physical, social, and

cultural—that are underway in Katanzama. It is a community that is trying to uphold local, traditional knowledge and ways of life while preparing children to learn and incorporate new knowledge and ways of knowing through schooling and interactions with outsiders. Children's play as a concept and as a behavior is lodged in the midst of this negotiation.

Figure 3.3. Classes under the tree.

Figure 3.4. New school building.

Mamo Camilo tells me about the history of ethnoeducation for Arhuacos. As he recounts it, starting in 1916 the religious order of Capuchin Franciscans educated indigenous people as if they, "had to rid them of the savages within them." They tried to evangelize them, prohibited them from speaking their mother tongue, and beat them, until they were ousted by the Arhuaco in the 1980s. The more recent resurgence of a formal educational system came from indigenous leaders' desire to educate their children so that outsiders would not "take advantage" of them. All they wanted was for their children to know how to communicate in Spanish and conduct mathematical transactions for business. With that, the mamo tells me, an "occidental" or Western style of education has entered their communities and is robbing them of their culture. They recognize that the future of their community is in their children, and that as part of this future, children will need to communicate with the non-indigenous world. This requires both allowing outside knowledge to enter the community but also for traditional knowledge to be shared with the world. The mamo tells me that he hopes the Ministry of Education will support a system of schooling where children learn the traditional ways of their people as they learn academic skills.

I hear something similar from parents when I join them for a community gathering and ask to describe their educational priorities for their children. I hear the following from one father:

Primero conocer lo nuestro, y si va a aprender una segunda lengua, que la aprendan bien para que pueda defender la comunidad…La razón de estudiar es para que pueda defender lo nuestro. Que no se olviden de lo propio. Que conozcan los dos. La educación primera está en la casa, y segundo sería en el colegio. Y que un niño no confunda la parte occidental y la parte espiritual. Que aprenda la parte occidental, pero que defienda su cultura. Ese sería el sueño de un padre indígena.

[First, know what is ours, and if they are going to learn a second tongue, learn it well so they can defend the community. The reason to study is so they can defend what is ours. That they do not forget what is ours. That they know both. The first education is at home, and second it would be school. A child should not confuse the occidental [Western] part and the spiritual part. That s/he learn the occidental part, but that s/he defend her/his culture. That would be the dream of an indigenous parent.]

It is this vision of a thriving local culture while learning to navigate outside pressures represented by formal education that is at the core of Katanzama's existence.

The School Day and Play

The school day begins with the same routines most days. Children who board make their way to the kitchen for breakfast—eggs, yucca, potatoes, or rice—around 6am, although morning activity has been going on since 4am or 5am. When the teachers don't ride with me, they typically arrive between 6 and 7am after making their way on a bus from Santa Marta and walking for half an hour through the dusty road to school. They join children in the kitchen and have coffee and breakfast. They offer me food and I will often have a little bit, even if I have had my own breakfast already, to join in the communal meal. The mood is relaxed; the teachers openly talk about the school, classroom plans, community news, and recent events as children sit around them, putting on shoes or packing their school bags, completing homework, or listening to the adult conversation. Children who live off the settlement also trickle in from home.

Classes commence at 7am, although without a bell to announce the start of the school day, this is more of a guideline than a hard start time. Once the teachers determine that it's time to start—by looking at their watches or cell phones—they stand and instruct children to head to class. The children slowly make their way into their classrooms.

In preschool, twelve children sit at small plastic tables and chairs, their brown hair thin and long, most wearing the traditional white tunic (although some boys wear graphic t-shirts and pants). Girls have their tunic hems embroidered in colorful patterns and wear an assortment of brightly colored bead necklaces. The hand-woven *mochilas* in which children carry their notebooks and school supplies are strewn about on the tables or hanging from the back of their chairs.

Ms. Josefina, their teacher, is a stocky woman in her forties with smooth skin and shiny, black hair usually twisted into a bun. She is Arhuaco and wears a pristine traditional white dress with a thick white belt embroidered in blue; at the beginning of class she takes off her collection of red, blue, green, and yellow beaded necklaces and hangs them in any makeshift hook she finds on the walls of the classroom. Ms. Josefina completed high school as a teen and is currently taking curriculum and instruction courses through the local university in Santa Marta; she tells me she would like to continue her training in early childhood education. The fact that she is from the same ethnic group as the students she teaches, means she can help the young children entering school for the first time make the transition from their home culture and language to the school culture and Spanish, the language of instruction.

Most days, class time looks the same. There is little direct or whole group instruction; instead, Ms. Josefina, assigns an activity that the children copy from the board or she writes out individual exercises for each child separately that they then work on in their notebooks. As with other schools, there are multiple ages and ability levels represented in this group of preschoolers and the teacher assigns tasks accordingly. Children at the most basic level color and count different shapes that Ms. Josefina has

drawn in their notebook, and then write the correct number in a blank space. They may also work on a coloring sheet and cut out shapes, letter, or numbers and glue them onto their notebook (see Figure 3.5).

Many of the assignments consist of *planas*, repeating the same phrase or number over and over until a page is filled. For example, children might be writing numbers 1-10 on a sheet until they have filled the page. Children who have made further academic progress may be working on addition and subtraction exercises that the teacher has painstakingly written in each of their notebooks. Children work individually on their notebooks and as they finish one exercise, they go to the teacher who is either sitting at a large plastic table or walking around the classroom, to have her check their work and give them a new exercise. Ms. Josefina has an easy-going attitude that seems to help her stay calm despite the multiple demands on her attention. She mixes Iku with Spanish as she teaches and communicates with the children. I can tell children like her; she will sometimes poke children playfully or joke with them as she checks their work or goes around the classroom, and they laugh and poke her back.

Figure 3.5. Preschoolers completing and coloring worksheets.

Despite their interactions with Ms. Josefina, there is still a lot of quiet time in the classroom with children's head down, working in their notebooks. There is also a lot of time spent waiting for the teacher to check their work. There seems to be a semi-regular flow to the day: children are focused on their assignments, finish or get bored, and then become distracted as they wait for the next activity or class transition. It is during these down times of waiting for their next assignment or boredom that play tends to occur.

Children furtively engage in teasing, games (e.g., tic tac toe), rough and tumble, or play with an object around the classroom and at their tables (see Figure 3.6). One morning, as a group of three boys waits for their next assignment, they start arm wrestling. They take turns seeing who can beat their opponent and quietly cheering each other on. Another time, Josías, one of the older boys in the classroom, puts his arm out so Claudia, an energetic girl who is sitting next to him, can hit him on his upper arm to check how strong he is. They both laugh, even though she hits him pretty hard. On another occasion, Elias, who is six, plays with his metal pencil sharpener; he moves the rectangular sharpener on his table as he makes siren sounds and pretends that he is driving an emergency vehicle. Nearby, Erik and Manuel, who are both eight, tie together plastic bracelets and use them as slingshots, shooting at things around the classroom, like tables and the whiteboard, and pretend to hit one another. Erik even designates me as a bird and pretends to shoot me (the bird) with his slingshot.

Figure 3.6. Preschooler playing with toy cars in the classroom.

Children's extracurricular behaviors are playful—physically active, spontaneous, and good natured—but the physical nature of much of it also points to a level of boredom or desire to expend energy. This is perhaps understandable because, before lunchtime, children only have a ten-minute snack break at around 9:30am. The children leave their classroom to drink "colada" (a sweet milk and cornstarch drink) and sometimes to eat cookies. They sit or stand gulping and chewing but there is hardly any time for recreational activities. The morning break is meant to be for a light snack and perhaps a quick mental break from academic activities, but children are not encouraged to engage in any other informal activities. After their quick meal, they are back in the classroom.

Ms. Josefina is often too occupied to attend to children who seem "off task." In fact, during my observations, students often leave the classroom, either to secretly eat something they brought from home (e.g., a drink or fruit), wander over to the next classroom, or simply walk around the school premises. One morning, Elias doesn't want to work anymore. He is usually good spirited but now that he is frustrated with his work, he starts crying. He eventually leaves the classroom and walks back to the settlement

where his mother and grandmother are working in the kitchen. He is gone for about an hour and returns to his desk right before lunchtime but doesn't go back to his work. It's unclear whether Ms. Josefina notices he was even gone. She rarely goes after the children, and although she might ask students to sit down, pay attention, and do their work, she will not insist that they do. In this sense, children have quite a bit of autonomy to decide to be on or off task.

Soon lunch time comes around and this is the longest break children have during the school day, about 30 minutes. They walk up to the kitchen and grab their plate with meat soup or rice and beans and sit all around the kitchen area, sometimes on chairs but often on the floor or on a rock. As with breakfast, many children linger listening to the teachers talk; others find quiet places in the classrooms or around the school yard to read a book, color, or chat in small groups. This is also a time when children might find some opportunity to play—organizing a game of chase around the school building, climbing on trees, or playing with marbles on the dirt floor. Lunchtime passes quickly, and it is again time to return to the classroom.

After lunch, Ms. Josefina will continue to assign tasks. She might hand out worksheets or coloring books. In the afternoon, she may also show educational Youtube videos in Spanish—of classic children's stories like Little Red Riding Hood or the Three Little Pigs, math concepts, colors, or letters—on her phone or tablet while she assigns work in the notebooks. As children watch, they laugh, make sounds, and jovially respond to the images and sounds on the screen. Children know many of the videos well and will anticipate what will happen next, yelling out the next scene or responding to the words and actions of the story or music. One child says, "ahi es donde se atora," "that's where

he gets stuck," when the wolf gets stuck coming down a chimney in a video about the three little pigs (see Figure 3.7).

Figure 3.7. Preschoolers watching Youtube videos.

The children seem very comfortable with the technology. Ms. Josefina leaves the videos running as the children huddle around the screen and click and scroll through Youtube videos with ease, replaying a favorite clip or choosing the next video. Ms. Josefina explains that she uses the videos and music as pedagogical tools. The children are drawn to these videos and respond excitedly while informally learning content. It is interesting to observe the use of technology in the classroom; it seems to be in such contrast to the austere surroundings. It is also a reminder of how close we are to modern-day luxuries here in Katanzama. Being located at the foot of the Sierra also means that the teachers and some parents have access to cell phone signal and Internet connection, and children are exposed to it on a constant basis even in the educational context.

The Youtube videos also reflect Ms. Josefina's desire to introduce new educational experiences to children that are enjoyable and recreational. When I interview her about play in the community and her classroom, she tells me that play is important for children, and that she has observed this not only in her students but also in her own

children. Ms. Josefina actually lives in Santa Marta and all her children have attended schools in the city. Through their engagement in play, she has seen that play is important for children to become more outgoing and express themselves more openly when they encounter others and when they need to express what they know. However, she explains that in the community, parents and leaders are concerned about children getting dirty or hurt during play and prefer that children learn the cultural activities that are expected of girls and boys instead—girls weave bags and boys help out with the heavy work, like cleaning up around the settlement and gathering wood. Nevertheless, Ms. Josefina understands from her education in early childhood that playful learning is beneficial, so she has tried to use music and learning through songs as one playful way of engaging children in the classroom. She also says that singing games and music are a form of play that ensures that children don't get dirty or hurt, abiding by parents' desires but also providing children with some playful opportunities to learn.

Tensions Between the Community and School Regarding Play

When I first start visiting the school, the teachers almost immediately express that although they wish they could incorporate more play and playful activities into instruction, the parents and community leaders have very clearly and adamantly expressed that they do not want their children playing at school. Ms. Rosa, the upper school teacher and de facto lead of the school, shares that there is a tension between their pedagogical practice and what *mamos*, parents, and community members value. According to Ms. Rosa, the community sees play as a waste of time when students are expected to be studying in school and working at home. She tells me,

Lo que he podido ver es que ellos piensan que con el juego los niños pierden el tiempo. Y por eso no dejan que ellos jueguen ni con trompos, ni con cuerdas. Porque ellos

desconocen la verdadera razón del juego. Osea ellos piensan que uno como "bonachi" viene a quitarles algo que ellos creen que es como lo verdadero.

[What I have seen is that they think that with play children waste time. And that's why they do not let them play with tops or ropes. Because they do not know the real reason of play. That is, they think that we as non-indigenous (or outsiders) are coming to take something that they believe is true.]

In a recent meeting with community authorities, Ms. Rosa tells me she tried to explain some of the developmental benefits (social, cognitive, physical) she saw in play but was told by the authorities that although she had her reasoning for wanting play as a pedagogical tool, they had their own cultural reasons for not wanting children to play.

Ms. Rosa explains that play objects are taken away and areas in the school that serve as clandestine play spaces are closed off, to limit children's play. She tells me that once the school moved to the new concrete classrooms, the old school structure was boarded up and closed off because children had started using that area to organize marble games (see Figure 3.8). Some community parents complained about it, so they decided to close it up to prevent children from loitering or playing there. For similar reasons, students do not have recess and only have the short morning snack break and half-hour lunch.

Figure 3.8. Boys playing with marbles.

The teachers struggle to conform entirely to the community desires to discourage play and have to carefully navigate their relationships with parents and community leaders. At lunch one day, a group of older boys is playing with marbles. Ms. Rosa notices that I'm watching them and tells me, "Do you see that they are playing something that is not theirs [meaning not traditionally from their culture]? But they [parents, leaders] don't want it. I don't say anything because, first, they are taking turns, and second, they socialize and have fun. As long as they are not hitting each other or damaging something [I let them play]." Although Ms. Rosa wants to follow the community's desires, she also believes in the benefits of play and finds ways of permitting play although she might not outwardly foster it in her classroom.

Ms. Josefina tells me that her community does not accept play.

No, que no, que eso no es permitido para nosotros, no es de nosotros. Que eso es de los hermanitos menores.

No, that is not permitted for us, it is not ours. That belongs to the younger brothers [meaning, the non-indigenous].

The community would rather have children engage and learn traditional activities and crafts than play. In fact, as a decision at a recent meeting with leaders and parents, from now on, on certain Fridays, Ms. Josefina will lead girls in learning to weave and boys will help to clean up around the community. This seems part of the community's desire to continue to foster traditional pastimes and activities for children, call on the help of teachers to institute this in the school, and perhaps resist children's engagement in play, which they perceive to be a waste of time.

Figure 3.9. Boys carrying wood.

This desire to instruct children in the ways of their community is apparent also in the work and various chores children are involved in around the settlement, sometimes during school hours (see Figure 3.9). One morning as I pull up to the settlement, I observe the school children moving about the settlement raking leaves and throwing them into the brush; sweeping the dirt floor so it is nice and smooth; and collecting and throwing away trash. A few adult males and older boys are also involved in the morning chores, cutting grass and brush with their machetes. I am told that the children are helping with preparations for the large community gathering that will take place the next day, a special meeting with UN representatives leading efforts to make reparations for victims of the civil war conflict over land and drugs in the country that affected populations living in the Sierra Nevada. When the teachers come out of the kitchen to start gathering children for the school day, Benjamín who is leading the cleanup efforts asks the teachers to let the children continue cleaning around the settlement. The teachers seem hesitant to take children away from the school day, but they agree to have children continue cleaning until around 10am. This is the continuous negotiation that teachers, parents, and the community engage in as they try to determine how children should spend their time.

When it comes to play, Ms. Rosa says that children enjoy playing and do engage in play, and so it is their job as teachers to find opportunities to provide play that is permitted by the community. One day, I do observe some physical games and songs that teachers lead on the school yard, mostly for physical and recreational purposes. I wonder whether the teachers could be doing more to find ways of infusing their teaching with playful opportunities to learn that are safe and clean. As Ms. Josefina expressed when I talked to her, by incorporating music, pretend activities, and various materials for learning (rather than the more typical notebook and pencil tasks), school can perhaps be made more accessible and motivating for children. At the same time, I realize the fine balance that the teachers must strike. As a new school, the families, teachers, and community leaders are still building trust. They are still defining how they will work together on behalf of children's education and figuring out how to meet the priorities of the community while incorporating a model of education that considers play an important tool for learning.

Parental Beliefs about Play

Katanzama is the community that is most expressively dismissive of play out of the three communities included in this study. It is the only community where I am told that parents, community leaders, and teachers have met to explicitly discuss the topic of play, and where teachers were told that children should not be playing at school, even after teachers explained their rationale for why play might be positive for children.

The first parent I meet on my first visit to Katanzama is Catalina. She is a petite woman in her late forties. She is standing next to the community bathing and washing area when I step out of the car. She is welcoming when I introduce myself, interested in

knowing what I'm doing at the settlement. I briefly explain that I'm here to conduct an investigation and explain that I have discussed my research with the *mamo* and the teachers. She seems very willing to talk, and when I casually ask her about play in her community, she tells me that children like to play. They like to kick balls and run around, but the *mamo* does not allow them to play. She can't quite articulate why, when I ask her to explain further. I ask her whether children have to help with work and she says that young children are not necessarily expected to work or capable of helping out with work in the community. She then explains that some parents complain that their children get hurt when they play, and this is one of the reasons why parents or the *mamo* don't like children to play. She also says parents complain that when children play they return home dirty.

At one point, I have an opportunity to have an informal conversation about play with a gathering of school parents. There are about 40 parents and community members in the meeting. I ask them about their preferred activities for their children and their thoughts about play, and what I hear from them is that for children, their play, their free time, should be spent helping their parents to clean, work around the farm, and search for wood. They tell me that playing is a waste of time ("Jugar es falta de oficio") and that children only start playing, in the first place, because they have nothing productive to do; in these cases, the parents should give their children chores to complete instead of spending their time playing and getting dirty or injured. That said, parents do share that certain physical activities, like taking children to swim against the river current, may be acceptable because they help children strengthen their physical abilities to complete the chores and responsibilities they have at home and around the community. They also

explain that when the community met, parents agree that if any play happens at school, it has to take place within certain norms and with discipline.

When I interview parents individually, I begin to hear more varied opinions about play. Consistent with what I first hear, some parents share that play is not allowed and that it can be dangerous; according to their belief in other-than-human entities that can reside in nature and must not be disturbed, trampling the ground and their surroundings through play activities can have repercussions in their physical and spiritual health later in life. Parents' concern seems to be on helping their children be successful in life, which poses a higher burden on children to be studious and obedient over engaging in play and other forms of recreation. In contrast, other parents express that play is good for children to have some recreation and that play can actually have some benefits in preparing children to interact and do well beyond their community. They believe play, as a Western activity, can help children develop communication skills necessary for navigating the outside culture and work through their "shyness" when speaking to others. So, even though as a community, parents and leaders agree that it should not be encouraged, especially during school hours, individual parents express differing beliefs about play.

One morning, I interview Ana who has two children in preschool. She feels play is important for children, especially to help children be outgoing and not be embarrassed when communicating with others. She allows her children to play and likes when they pretend to be engaged in daily activities, like cooking or carrying wood, or playing while actually doing these activities. She says that she does play with her children, mostly through songs that she has heard them learn at school. However, she also understands that

there are mixed feelings about this issue in the rest of the community and tries to balance the time her children spend playing and helping around the house and community.

It seems that even parents who believe children can engage in play believe that it should be kept to a minimum, and that children should concentrate on their studies and on their responsibilities at home, first. Despite what Ana shares about engaging with her children around play, I do not actually see any parents engaging in play with their child. One mother even tells me that it would be embarrassing for her if anyone thought she played with her children or actually saw her playing with them.

Interestingly, in the community, I also meet Liliana, a 17-year-old Arhuaco girl who has just graduated from Normal school—high school level education that aims to prepare high school graduates to become teachers by focusing on pedagogy and instruction training. Liliana has attended all her schooling in Santa Marta and, although she has decided to pursue political sciences in university instead of teaching, she has a pedagogical understanding of play. She says that she believes that the community is hesitant about play because they have not been exposed to "outside" (or non-indigenous) education where play is seen as a motivational and pedagogical tool to engage children in education. She believes play is important to motivate children in school and encourage them to continue studying. Liliana also comments on the position of the *mamo*. She recognizes his wisdom, but she also believes that there are areas (like play and children's education) where he may not be the most qualified to mandate what children should be doing. In hearing Liliana's comments, I think about the next generation of parents, ones who complete all their primary and secondary schooling, perhaps pursue higher education, and have more extensive experiences in educational contexts and interactions

outside Katanzama. Few parents have attended school or attend adult classes up to now, but if Liliana's responses are any indication, it is possible that in the future, with continued exposure to ideas about learning and development through formal education, compounded with each passing generation, the community will be increasingly accepting and encouraging of children's play.

Right now, however, I wonder if part of the resistance to play is due to the fact that the community is so accessible and open to outsiders. The community might want to preserve their typical ways from being disrupted by mainstream Colombian and non-indigenous culture, and play may be one manifestation of this culture they are trying to confront. At the same time, precisely because they wanted the school to be close to students who live along the main road, the children have very easy access to forms of entertainment and pastimes that are not typical indigenous activities, including watching TV, having access to toys, and seeing other children play. These outside influences within local limits are reflected in children's play and present a dilemma that parents, teachers, and children contend with every day as they negotiate how children participate in their community.

The Role of Children in the Community

Children spend their days either at school, at home, or walking around the various open spaces of the compound. School children typically spend 7am-2pm at school and the time before—which starts at 4am on most days—and after that, which winds down at 7pm or 8pm—is spent engaging in household chores or finding ways of entertaining themselves. These times in the settlement are quiet, either as the dark morning sky becomes light or as the afternoon glow turns into a starry night. When at home, they

sweep and rake the dirt floors, take a shower or wash clothes, deal with the water line and hoses, tend to the horses and mules, and take care of younger siblings.

While older children may be responsible for more household responsibilities, preschool children have fewer obligations, even if they may have small chores or tag along when older siblings engage in bigger tasks. I once watch Elias (only six years old) making himself fried plantains on a hot skillet in an open fire (see Figure 3.10). I watch in amazement but am not concerned as he peels the two plantains, uses a knife to cut them into small rounds, puts the oil in a pan and the pan on the blaze, and drops the plantain chunks into the sizzling oil. He seems quite sure of himself and although adults and older children are around and watch him do this, they don't seem overly preoccupied with what he is doing. On another occasion, Claudia tells me that school is almost over and that she is going "pa' arriba" (up the mountain) with her grandparents when school is out. I ask her what she will do there. She tells me that she will help plant yucca and will help water the plants, cook, sweep, and wash clothes.

Figure 3.10. Elias frying plantains.

As I continue my observations, I find the intricate ways in which children participate in the life of their communities. When I return to Katanzama from being away visiting other sites, I begin to hear stories from children telling me that they had participated in divination rituals ("adivinar" and "encantar.") with the *mamo*. I'm never allowed to witness these ceremonies, and only get a glimpse of what takes place from what I hear from the children and community members. On one occasion, the children tell me that one particular child was chosen to help the *mamo* with his spiritual work. The child is Sara, an eleven-year-old third grader, and when I ask her what it means for her to help the *mamo* she tells me that she is "special" and she helps the *mamo* to "see things." When I ask her to describe what that looks like, she says "hice gusanitos de algodón y el mamo adivinada" [I made little worm-like figures with cotton and the *mamo* divined], as she made a motion with her thumb and index finger. Later that day, I ask Laura, a ten-year-old, what spiritual work means. She explains that,

Todos los que cogen un lapiz hacen trabajo tradicional. Los niños llaman las nubes y curan los peces, cangrejos, sapos, todo lo natural, la tierra con el pensamiento.

[All those who pick up a pencil do traditional work. The children call the clouds and cure the fish, crab, toads, everything natural, the earth with their thought.]

She makes a circular hand gesture in front of her to demonstrate how they use their mind and body to do the traditional work. In their descriptions, both Sara and Laura express a serious understanding of their role and responsibility for "seeing things" and caring for nature. When Laura talks about "all those who pick up a pencil do traditional work," she means that all children who are deemed ready to begin school, also participate in the traditional work of the community.

Diana, a mother of two preschool boys, further explains,

Hay que recuperar la tierra, todo el trabajo tradicional, que hay muchos lugares que se están dañando, que espiritualmente están desequilibrados. Entonces lo que se busca es que los niños tomen consciencia de eso y trabajen para la recuperación de la tierra.

[We have to recuperate the earth, all the traditional work, there are many places that are damaged, that spiritually are in disequilibrium. Therefore, what we look for in children to be conscious of this and to work to recuperate the earth.]

Children's responsibility to guard the equilibrium of nature is at odds, at least according to some community members, with their play. At the same time, they are also given the freedom to come and go as they please throughout the day, and with the liberty they are afforded, they move along different spaces fluidly that provide them the opportunities to play.

Children's Participation in Play

School seems to be somewhere children might feel more comfortable playing during downtimes, but even there, play is restricted because of children's school responsibilities and the resistance toward play expressed by the community. I also find few toys or materials specifically intended for children to play. The toys that children do have, have been introduced by outsiders, and children seem quite protective and hesitant to show that they have a toy, presumably because adults might take them away or get them in trouble for playing with them.

But even early on, I see demonstrations of playful behaviors. I first meet Elias on my first visit to the settlement when I speak to Catalina. As Catalina tells me about her community's resistant view on play, behind her, I watch Elias climbing a tree and hanging from its branches. He laughs as he hangs and sits on the branches, enjoying this physical activity.

One afternoon, I ask a group of children who are boarding if they play with Mamo Camilo's children, and two of the older girls tell me that they don't really play with them because the *mamo* does not allow his children to play. But as we walk up to the settlement from the school, I observe several of the *mamo*'s boys and their cousins running with wooden sticks, pretending to fight with swords, chasing each other, running around in the brush, and pulling on trees with yellow string. On another day when preschoolers do not have classes and several of the *mamo*'s children were off, I see them playing most of the morning, finding opportunities to play—chasing each other, collecting sticks, and running after baby chicks—even when sent on various household chores or self-maintenance activities, like collecting firewood or bathing. Their mother is around but she does not instruct them to stop playing at all during the time I'm observing.

The juxtaposition between Catalina's account of parents' attitudes against play and Elias's obvious play behaviors and even the children's accounts of the *mamo*'s children and their actual behaviors indicate the continuous contrast I find between what I hear from people and what I observe children doing.

During downtimes and informal activities, children engage in spontaneous play, whether it means climbing a tree, arm wrestling, pretending to be cars, chasing each other and squirting each other with water, or spinning jacks (see Figure 3.11). Children even play during work activities. They play as they bathe or wash clothes. One night, as women clean fish by the river near the beach, children tend to the fire that's providing lighting for this evening work. The children jump around in the sand and around the flames, bathe in the river, watch as women clean fish, and lie down near the warmth of the fire (Figure 3.12).

Figure 3.11. Boys climbing a tree.

Figure 3.12. Girl watching the fire.

When Erik and Elias help with cleanup in preparation for a community event, they are responsible for collecting leaves that others have raked into a wheelbarrow that they push to brushy areas where the leaves are dumped. Once the cart is empty, Elias rides inside and as Erik runs around pushing the wheelbarrow, they make car sounds as if they are riding in a racecar and both laugh. Sometimes Elias runs alongside or behind Erik as he guides the cart around the compound. On that same occasion, as older children clean, some of the younger boys gather around a trash bin with the top on and twirl around neon orange toy jacks (Figure 3.13). They have about three jacks and they take

turns spinning them. As some of them spin the jacks, others make the spinning gesture with their fingers. It is unclear to me who gave them the jacks, but it is evident that they are excited to be using them. When I first walk toward the boys to see what they are doing, they try to hide the activity from me. I wonder whether they do this because they are afraid I will make them stop playing or get them in trouble, or simply because they are not used to an adult watching them when they play. When I do and say nothing but continue watching, the boys lose interest in me, however, and return to the game.

Figure 3.13. Children playing with toy jacks.

Instances of play seem even more abundant, once the new school year begins, and I start staying overnight at Katanzama. It seems to me that children are playing all the time. I think part of the difference I observe from the previous academic year is that there are more children at the school (now there are closer to 60 children) and many of them are siblings. This allows for more possibilities for play partners. A few of the children who joined the school are ones who have lived outside their indigenous communities, in mainstream Colombian areas along La Troncal, who I also imagine can introduce games and objects for play.

One day, I watch two boys play an elaborate marble game inside one of the new classrooms. They gather in one corner, kneel, and flick their marbles. A third boy joins them. As their marbles land in different places, the boys discuss the rules of the game. One boy hits two other marbles with his and says, “bummer, two injured.” One boy throws and his marble lands right next to another. “Pileup,” says the first boy and throws his marble to hit the other two marbles at the same time. When the two collide by hitting one that then hits the next one, he says, “dead.” The children are teaching each other the rules that they have picked up from other children and use Spanish words as reactions to the different events in the game showing that these are games they have learned from either visitors or others outside their community.

Children find opportunities all throughout the day. As they hang around the kitchen or bathing areas, they find ways to entertain themselves either independently or in groups. They also play throughout the school day, as they find breaks or are distracted during class or during free periods. After school, the children spend time playing around the school area, but they also move their activities to the settlement, at home with adults, or walking around the different buildings in the community. Beyond that, children play in spaces out of adults’ direct watch, at the beach, in the river, and in the surrounding vegetation (see Figure 3.14). They tend to be outside the household during the afternoon and evening and come back only for meals or as it gets darker to join their family by the fire.

Figure 3.14. Children play on the beach.

Children have access to everyday objects and natural materials, like dirt, wood, branches, fruits, and household utensils and tools, for play and some have toys that have been gifted to them by outsiders or perhaps purchased by their parents in Santa Marta. I have seen children use toy cars, tops, coloring books, and storybooks that some children use in their free time in and outside of school (see Figure 3.15).

Figure 3.15. Boys playing with toy trucks.

One day when I walk into the classroom, I watch as Erik plays with a red fire truck. He pulls off pieces off the fire truck and then says it needs to get fixed, “I’m going to take it to the mechanic.” “I have a mechanic for when my car breaks down. Right now, the handle is broken, and he can also fix the tire,” says Erik. Another time, Jaime finds a large twisted branch and stands over it, pretending it’s a motorcycle. He makes motorcycle sounds and says, “I’m leaving. I’m a policeman.” Inside a rundown shed, a few children build a structure with wooden sticks by placing one carefully on top of the other. The structure gets pretty tall, but the children tear it down and begin building again.

Figure 3.16. Children building.

As with other sites, girls initially seem to be mostly observers of life around them. I wonder if the roles for boys and girls in the community establish different expectations for how they should behave and ultimately, dictate whether and how they engage in play.

I hear from children, teachers, and parents that there are specific roles for boys and girls. Girls weave and boys help with carrying wood and other physical work. It may be that boys appear to engage in more active play because their expected duties and activities tend to be physical and resemble more outwardly playful behaviors. While boys are running around, hitting and chasing each other, girls tend to hang out watching others, listening to adult conversation, or talking with each other. After school, girls might also be engaged in chores, such as bathing, washing clothes, taking care of younger siblings, and sweeping the classrooms. I also observe them reading books and coloring.

During a morning break, I ask Margarita, a ten-year-old girl in first grade, what she likes to do after school, and she tells me that she spends her time on household chores ["haciendo oficio"], like weaving bags ["tejiendo mochila"] and washing her clothes. When I ask Manuel, a seven-year-old preschooler, he tells me that he likes to play "lion," a made-up game in which someone pretends to be a lion and chases everyone else. Later, I talk to a mixed-age group of boys and girls. At one point I ask, "Do you play with marbles?" A boy says that he does. I turn to a girl and ask, "And do you also play with marbles?" She tells me that she doesn't. The boy tries to explain, "women don't play." "Why not?" I ask. "They have to weave the bags," he answers. The girl quickly retorts, "And the men have to bring the firewood." The girl seems defiant as if she did not like the boy's comment. The boy simply repeats, "women don't play."

However, I witness plenty of evidence that girls in this community play just as much as boys and tend to play in mixed-age and mixed-gender groups. One afternoon, I watch as a group of children hang out in a large hut in the center of the community. The older boys talk and make jokes and arm wrestle. The girls run around, sit, and watch

others. There's lots of noise, laughter, and conversation. Girls and boys are interacting in different ways, but they are all engaging in fun, spontaneous, intrinsically motivated interactions that appear playful.

One rich example of the times that boys and girls play together are their crab-hunt adventures. Once it gets dark, small greyish, white crabs start appearing on the shore, and the children gather at the school to head out onto the beach. The group can be as small as a couple of boys but most often, the group ranges in size, age, and gender. One of the times I'm invited to join, 13 children, five boys and eight girls ages 3-15, go out on the excursion. It's the same ritual every time. With flashlights in hand and incredible night vision from a lifetime of having to do things in low light or in the dark, the children go out on the hunt.

Both girls and boys chase after the white creatures skittering across the sand. Once they locate one, the children run after it and either slap, step, jump on it, or dig into the sand to find it. This happens so quickly that I have trouble keeping track of the group as it dashes off in pursuit of a crab. Once the crab is captured, it is jammed into a plastic bottle with the rest oand the group continues walking along the sand on the lookout for the next target. Sometimes the crabs prick them with their claws, but the children seem used to the pain, and the thrill of the hunt definitely seems worth it. Girls are just as excited as the boys, and they are also quite adept at catching the small creatures. The youngest children are not as effective at catching them, but they appear to enjoy the hunt, running after them and digging just as the older children do. The ocean roars as we walk in a group; some children run toward the ocean and back before the waves catch up to them. When we return to the settlement, the children get their reward. They clean the

crabs and fry them in simmering oil in an open fire. The children divvy up and enjoy the salty, fried spoils.

Group activities with both girls and boys entail different kinds of play. One evening, instead of going out crab hunting, girls suggest we play Little Red Riding Hood, which is a story they have read in their storybooks. They assign roles. I'm the grandmother. Three boys are the wolf, three girls are Little Red Riding Hood, and one girl is the mother. The children direct and play out the scenes, from the moment Little Red Riding Hood leaves her home to chasing the wolf and cutting him open to rescue the grandmother. After role playing, the children request a singing game, in which a "wolf" chases after everyone else. We run around in the dark either chasing or running away; and then this soon turns into a hide and seek game. We hide and look for each other around the entire compound.

Children start getting ready to sleep at around 7:30pm. Some hang their hammocks in wooden structures or inside their huts; most put down blankets on the floor. Children who are boarding and whose parents don't live in the community all set up their sleeping area inside a storage building that doubles as a dormitory for the time being. As I fall asleep in my own hammock in one of the classrooms, I hear children talking and laughing as they fall asleep. Voices die down at around 8pm but it's not completely quiet until around 9pm.

What I realize from my continued observations is that, although cultural beliefs and community customs in some respects limit children's opportunities and access to play, children's autonomy and freedom allow for play to occur. In one sense, children have limitless resources to play, they have freedom to wander without adult supervision

and they live in the open natural environment that provides many materials to play with. There is an interesting contrast between what parents say, what teachers have been asked to do, and what children actually do with their time. Children still retain a lot of agency over what they do during the day, and they find plenty an opportunity to engage in play.

Outsiders

As an accessible indigenous community, non-indigenous individuals and organizations often visit for research, media, service, and business purposes. In fact, when I first start visiting Katanzama, I hear of a group of Japanese business people who recently visited because they wanted to export the community's cacao, which is believed to be some of the best in the world. University students from Santa Marta will often also visit to conduct their thesis projects.

One morning, a man arrives at the school unannounced wanting to introduce children to a puppetry program he has developed. He talks to the teachers before school starts and although they are a bit taken aback by his arrival, they appear to have some prior connection to his program and accommodate his visit. The teachers rearrange their day's schedule so that children can participate in the program in groups. The puppeteer engages the children in warm-up pretend exercises, singing games, and ice breakers. He has them do different gestures with their hands—little spiders, rain, playing basketball, and swimming. Some children stand and watch, while others participate and follow his instructions, but most smile or laugh.

After some time, the puppeteer starts a hand puppet show behind a makeshift curtain. Children sit and watch him perform. The children chuckle as he does his routine. He then invites children to join him behind the curtain to perform with him, using their

hands. Some children are hesitant and shy; others follow his lead with hand gestures. The children in the audience laugh. Finally, class by class, the puppeteer guides the children in creating their own puppets with foam balls, wooden dowels, and cloth. They paste on googly eyes, draw on mouths and noses, and dress the puppets in fabrics in their favorite colors (see Figure 3.17). Their works in progress are left out to dry at the end of the day, with the promise that the next day, they will get to use them in their very own puppetry show. The children seem to have enjoyed the activities and look forward to finishing and using their puppets; unfortunately, the next day the man running the program receives a call from a school administrator telling him that he is not allowed to return to the school because he has not gone through the proper channels to arrange his visit.

Figure 3.17. Children making puppets.

By coincidence, the same day that the man with this puppetry program shows up, students from the Normal high school also visit (with proper permissions) to conduct an observation and interview project of children's and teachers' educational experiences. The Normal students go around taking notes and interviewing children and afterward

hand out meals and sodas to the children. They also organize singing and hide and seek games. Children follow along and play, and sometimes they watch to learn a new game.

On one of my final visits, I return to the community for a special event. A local foundation has organized a special celebration for Children's Day and the governor along with other local officials like the police chief also happen to visit the community on that same day and have organized activities and refreshments for the children. There is music, speeches, games, and face painting. The children receive balloon figures. One boy walks around with his balloon sword, looking happy and showing it to other children. He pokes other children with it and makes sword sounds "ding!" The is a hand puppet show and children sing, clap, and respond to story told by the hand puppets. There is also a clown, leading games and dancing with children; the governor joins them in the games and dancing at some point. Before leaving, the governor's team hands out soccer balls and other sports equipment, bags with school materials, and snacks

When I observe these visitors, I think back to my first meeting with the *mamo* and community leaders. I remember their reservations about my proposed research and their inquiries about my intentions. Although we may all believe we're well-intentioned, it is also easy to see that those of us who enter the community are often looking to gain from the experience—either information, an assignment, or a photo op—without much concern for whether our activities or service bring any benefit to the community.

Once the excitement of the Children's Day celebration dies down, and the governor's team and nonprofit organization have all left, I talk to parents who tell me that they would much rather receive food than toys or balloons for their children. Catalina tells me that toys don't last and soon will become trash. Ms. Rosa complains that the

school was gifted several soccer balls that they would be unable to use because it's prohibited by the community. It seems that these objects symbolize a view of childhood that outsiders impose upon the community. Although I don't doubt that parents' conceptions of their children's development are changing as a result of daily interactions with non-indigenous influences and their own shifting cultural priorities, it feels like they reject the idea that these will be dictated by others. Rather, they are committed to figuring out how to guide their children in a way of life that honors their traditions yet benefits from other sources of knowledge, including perhaps even play. They are guarding the gate into their community and households, so to speak.

On Access and Defining the Role of Play

As I leave Katanzama on one of my visits, a group of university students have just arrived to film the community for a school project. I leave a little disappointed, thinking that I might be missing something out of the ordinary, some unique experience in the community that I will not be able to document. However, over time, I realize that visitors from outside are not unique for this community, they happen often and the children and families who live there see these as normal occurrences. Because of its location and easy access, Katanzama is a settlement that is visited constantly, and this perhaps makes children and families more comfortable with outsiders, and also makes it more likely that they are introduced to Western ("occidental") ideas about play, including types of games and play activities and objects. At the same time, it may also make families feel more protective of their traditions.

On my last visit, Ms. Rosa offers me a plastic bag full of marbles that were gifted to the school. She complains that students will not be able to use them as they have been

banned by the community leaders and parents. I still keep these marbles in my office. They are a reminder of the tensions that exist in Katanzama. Children play, sometimes even with toys and games that have been introduced by outsiders, and some parents believe play can be beneficial for them. That said, the community is also determining how much of this is allowed into their children's lives and education. Together—children, parents, leaders, and teachers—are constantly negotiating what play looks like in this community.

CHAPTER 4

An Open Door: Generational Changes and the Growing Role of Play in a Kogi Community

The Journey

"Left, right. Left, right." I repeat this to myself under the little breath I still have to push myself to put one foot in front of the other. The hike up to Ableizhi, the Kogi community, is strenuous. This is the most remote indigenous community I visit, although there are many others further up in the Sierra. The heat, combined with the humidity and rough terrain make the hike intense. Long, uphill stretches take my breath away and I tangibly feel the energy leaving my body. At some points, the only thing I can do from collapsing is to focus on moving one foot and then the other. In front of me is the comisario's wife who is leading the way up to the settlement on my first visit. She walks barefoot on the dirt floor and keeps herself occupied by weaving a mochila as she walks along. Her steps are steady and effortless on the twisting path and up steep mounds. She has made similar treks for most of her life. What takes every ounce of my physical and mental energy to achieve, is her daily toil and she does it with no apparent strain or discomfort.

The journey that morning begins at 3am when we start on La Troncal, the main thoroughfare around the Sierra Nevada on the Caribbean Coast. On this trip, the only people riding in the car are the driver, Waldir, and my husband, Antonio, who sometimes accompanies me to this distant site. We drive for an hour on the road before entering the dusty path for another hour or two toward Quebrada del Sol, a small farming community where a Kogi settlement and a school named Mulkwuakungui were established around

the year 2013. The only way to get to our final destination (Ableizhi) from this point is by foot or on a horse or mule. At Quebrada del Sol, I wait at a small store for guides sent from Ableizhi who will show us the way on the two to three-hour hike, depending on one's physical stamina.

On this day, the *comisario*, a secular village headman, arrives with his wife and a mule. He expertly loads and ties my large, hunter green camping bag and food onto the mule and we head out. It is almost 10 am as we begin the ascent and, quickly, I discover that my training has not prepared me for this type of physical exertion. We have missed the cooler air of the early morning hours and now are hit by the mid-morning heat wave. I am not carrying anything on my back, but I still struggle just as much as the sorry mule that is carrying several pounds-worth of my supplies. As I follow along, I look down at my aubergine-colored hiking boots as if willing them to shuffle forward on the muddy ground. As we reach the halfway point of our hike, the earth under my feet turns a bright, rusty red. It is a spectacle that makes my heart swell with gratitude for the opportunity to witness such amazing views of the Sierra Nevada, despite the obvious physical burden. As we near Ableizhi, we cross a hanging bridge and seeing the massive Molino River several feet below inspires an awe of the beauty of our surroundings (see Figure 4.1).

Given its remote location, Ableizhi feels both physically and culturally disconnected from mainstream Colombian society in ways that I do not experience in the other two communities I visit. The arduous trek here makes it almost impenetrable, and a strict stance against tourism imposed by the Kogi communities along this part of the Sierra Nevada make it nearly impossible for outsiders to visit, except for a few who through close relationships with community members or special permission from leaders

are allowed passage. Although my visits never go unnoticed by members of the community (who often ask my local companions who I am and what I'm doing here), I like to think that over time, the special permission that once gained me entrance to Ableizhi has evolved into close relationships with children, their families, and teachers. It is through these close interactions that I come to realize that rather than being isolated from outside influences, Ableizhi is daily being confronted by the direct and indirect influences of the world beyond the Sierra Nevada. Teachers are considering what it means to educate children who value their traditions but can also navigate the world outside those traditions; parents are reconciling the generational changes they witness as their children develop and experience things that seem far away from their own experiences as children; and boys and girls are engaging in behaviors and experiences, including play, that deviate from those of their parents.

Figure 4.1. Molino River.

The Context

The community of Ableizhi consists of approximately 63 families amounting to 270 people living in small compounds and "fincas," or plots of agricultural land, all along the Don Diego "cuenca," or river basin. As one walks along paths to get from one place to another along the *cuenca*, one can hear birds, insects, trickling water, and the quiet rumbling of nature. Although the vegetation in this part of the Sierra is a thick, luscious green, especially during rainy months, a persistent drought in the region during the months I visit, combined with the clearing of land for cattle grazing, also reveals patches of open, dry earth.

Ableizhi's main gathering place sits on a hill just above the school and is used when community members come down from their *fincas* and participate in special events and celebrations (see Figure 4.2). Every time I visit, I cross this gathering place on my way to the school. On most of these occasions it feels deserted, desolate really. There are over 20 round huts, each belonging to a family or specifically dedicated for community meetings, but they are all closed with chains and padlocks on the doors. It feels a bit eerie to walk through the quiet, mysterious atmosphere of a seemingly deserted settlement. During my time here, I only see it come alive twice—once for a cultural celebration and then at the closure of the school year—when families come together to share food, news, and camaraderie as well as participate in rituals.

Figure 4.2. Huts in Ableizhi's main gathering place.

Just a few feet downhill from this gathering place, I come to the two-room, concrete school building with tin roof (see Figure 4.3). Just beyond the school, there is a soccer field that ends in a precipice overlooking the Molino River. The school building, which is partially painted white, has exactly two doors and four windows as the only forms of ventilation. Above one of the doors is a sign crafted of natural fibers announcing, "Bienvenido," welcome in Spanish. The only other structure near the school building is a wooden kitchen shed with a fire pit and two long wood tables, where food is prepared and consumed. This will all change during the time I spend here, with the construction of a concrete kitchen, the addition of a bathroom building a few feet away from the schoolyard, and the planting of a school garden. On a return visit after the completion of the study, a group of non-profit organizations has funded and coordinated the construction of two new classrooms, with a third under construction (see Figures 4.4 and 4.5).

Figure 4.3. Old school building.

Figure 4.4. New classroom.

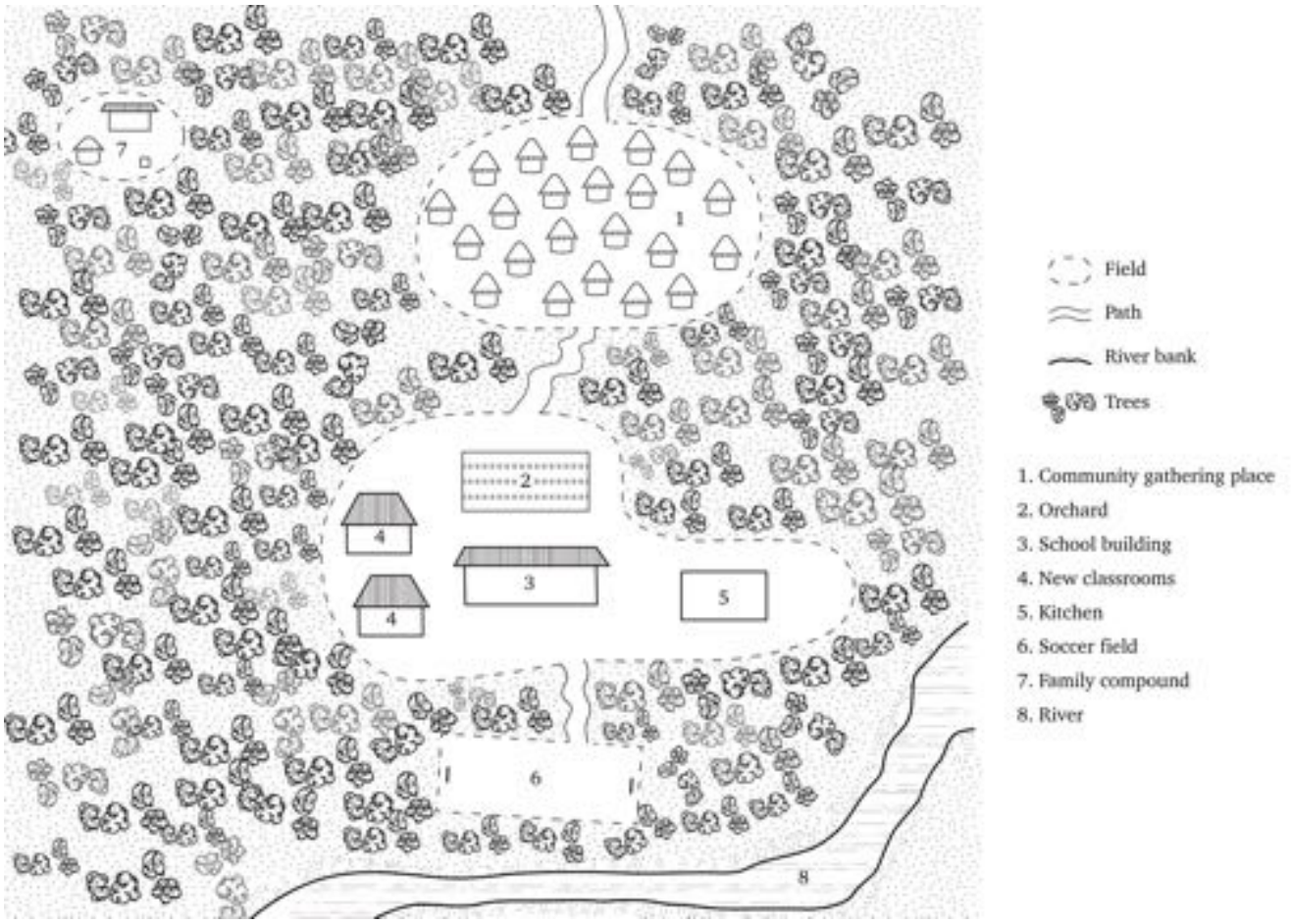


Figure 4.4. Representation of Ableizhi community layout (not drawn to scale).

On my first visit, I meet with Mr. Joaquín and Mr. Gabriel, who are both Kogi and are the school's only teachers and staff. Mr. Joaquín teaches preschool through first grade (roughly ages 6-11) and Mr. Gabriel teaches 2nd through 4th grade. They are also responsible for any administrative work and communicating with the state education department and other officials of the indigenous school network. The teachers tell me the hope is for the school to expand and grow as the children move to higher grades, but this is still a plan in progress. For example, during my time here, I am able to observe the transition to a new school year, and by that time both teachers have taken on a new grade level. Mr. Joaquín is assigned preschool through 2nd grade and Mr. Gabriel is teaching 3rd

through 5th grade, to accommodate the few students who have now advanced beyond the previous offerings.

Mr. Joaquín and Mr. Gabriel completed primary schooling in the Sierra Nevada but then had the opportunity to complete secondary education in the Colombian capital city, Bogota. An American Christian linguist who had lived with the Kogi to learn Koguian invited several boys over a period of years to live with her in Bogota to attend further schooling. Mr. Joaquín and Mr. Gabriel had been two of those boys.[3] After their education in Bogota, both Mr. Joaquín and Mr. Gabriel sought further pedagogical training. Mr. Gabriel holds two bachelor's degrees in Education with an emphasis in Social Sciences and Theology. He also completed a master's degree in Education with an emphasis in multicultural contexts. Mr. Joaquín completed high school and is currently attempting to complete an online bachelor's degree in ethnoeducation, which has proven challenging given that he can only access Internet when he travels to Santa Marta.

The school at Ableizhi was originally founded in 1999, closed, and then reopened by Mr. Gabriel in 2004. The school was closed a few years later because of differences of opinion on the role of the school in the community. Mr. Joaquín tells me, and I later confirm by reading news articles of that time that covered the disagreements over religion in the region, that some community members believed there was Christian evangelization taking place at the school. Although some Kogi who have spent more time in mainstream Colombian culture quietly practice Christianity, religion is largely opposed in their communities. Mr. Gabriel left his post at the school, but in 2012 Mr. Joaquín returned to

[3] The practice of sending children away to live with outsiders who become family friends, called "padrinos" or godparents, is something I hear about and observe among the members of the communities I visit.

his community and rallied the community to once again to reopen the school. By the time of my research, the school had been open for three years. Mr. Gabriel was called back to teach, and since then, both Mr. Joaquín and Mr. Gabriel have worked tirelessly to gain the trust and good will of parents and community leaders.

The School Day

Ableizhi is a small school, with only about 40 students, roughly 20 students in each classroom, and only 7 girls who attend, when I first visit. By the time I leave the field, the school enrollment has grown to close to 60 students, and one more girl has joined the preschool grade level. All the children travel to school by foot, walking anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour or two each way. I am able to observe large groups of children as they move about the classroom and the contained area of the school grounds but given the long distances between one family compound and the next, it is harder (compared to both, the school and the other two research sites) to follow most of them once they return home at the end of the day. I typically ask a family if I can stay with them overnight, which allows me to follow children with their extended family at home for the remainder of the afternoon and evening. Therefore, throughout my observations, school is clearly a separate space from home, and the flow of activities is not as fluid between school and home as it is for children in the other communities.

Children attend school from 7am to noon and then head home at the end of the school day, unless lunch is provided in the kitchen (Figure 4.5). If there is food for lunch, children can hang around at school for a while longer, playing soccer and gathering in small groups, while the food is being prepared by community mothers. They also have a short recess break in the morning, when they can have a snack that they either bring from

home or they pick from the trees surrounding the school grounds. The Ministry of Education typically sends food provisions for meals but according to Mr. Joaquín, the state has recently required that the school day have both morning and afternoon periods, in order to provide these resources. Given that the teachers and parents at Ableizhi have not yet decided to add the afternoon session, it has been harder to obtain supplies, and therefore rare for meals to be served at school. Although there is a kitchen at Ableizhi that is renovated during my time here, I only observe children eating at school a handful of times. Therefore, on most days, children will head home around noon.

Figure 4.5. Lunch preparation in the old kitchen.

Because Mr. Joaquín teaches the lower grades, I do most of my observations in his classroom. I observe his interactions with all children, but focus on the youngest, preschoolers, who are mostly between 5 and 7 years old. As is true in the other schools I observe, Mr. Joaquín designs lessons to address the learning needs of children in different grade levels. Classes are taught in the Koguian; the teachers believe that in order for children to excel in Spanish, they need a strong foundation in their home language.

On my first visit, Mr. Joaquín begins class by reading a book in the local language to the whole class. When he finishes the story, he asks 1st grade students, who can write, to pull out their notebooks to copy and answer the questions on the reading that he has written on the board. Mr. Joaquín then walks over to the younger children and checks the numbers they have written in their notebooks, reading them out loud as a review for students. He then calls preschoolers over to his desk at the front of the classroom in order to write an assignment in their notebooks. He draws large letters, pours glue on them, and then makes children trace the letters by spreading the glue with their finger. The school has little in terms of available materials and supplies. However, the teachers see the surrounding natural resources as potential materials. For example, on this day, Mr. Joaquín sends a boy outside to collect sand so that the preschoolers can paste it onto the letters they have just traced with the glue. Once the children are done with this activity, they take their notebooks outside to dry.

Most days inside the hot classroom, with only a meager breeze coming through the open windows, follow similar routines. Mr. Joaquín will give students an assignment and then they will spend extended periods of time working in their notebooks. Classroom activities are focused on completing assignments and the teacher either imparting or checking knowledge. However, as is the theme across the communities I visit, the luxury of extended time at Ableizhi allows me to see that the school is in a transition toward an educational approach that is open to a diversity of instructional practices, including playful instructional approaches.

Integrating Play into the Instructional Approach

From talking to teachers and parents, and observing classroom activities over time, I begin to gather that the school at Ableizhi is trying to develop an educational approach that deviates from things-as-usual in the Sierra Nevada indigenous education context to foster "creativity and innovation" in students, as Mr. Joaquín puts it. Although much of their teaching still entails typical educational approaches, like teacher-focused lecturing and *planas*—the two most common approaches I observed across indigenous communities—Mr. Joaquín and Mr. Gabriel also employ diverse instructional practices—working in groups, building replicas and models, and dramatizing learning—that they believe provide children with experiences that can foster motivation, creativity, and teamwork. It is not necessarily that there is a coordinated set of approaches they implement or a clearly defined curriculum, but rather a commitment to incorporate different ways of teaching and learning as they (the teachers) receive further training. In my observatins and conversations with them, I aim to understand how play features into this view of teaching and learning.

Mr. Joaquín and Mr. Gabriel both tell me they consider play and playful forms of learning as culturally relevant and as an opportunity for children to expand their community knowledge. They plan for activities in the classroom with an educational goal in mind but allow children to participate in flexible, enjoyable, active learning ways. Much of the playful forms of learning I observe reflect the skills and activities that are typical of this community and this region, such as cooking on the fire, using weaving tools, and utilizing natural materials to build, with the purpose of tapping into students' existing knowledge but also encourage children to think beyond their current experience.

Mr. Gabriel tells me that "play is important because children learn and form ideas about things they need to know in this world." He says that he includes dramatizations in his instructional practice "to help children envision what they are preparing in life for." Mr. Joaquín is concerned about students' participation in class. Prior to attending school, children have learned to be still and silent during social gatherings and interactions with adults; therefore, once they attend school, it is hard to get them to participate in classroom activities. He sees play as a way of drawing students out to share their thinking during instruction and encouraging them to think creatively for their sake and their community's sake. He explains, "What I see is that [students] need to be more dynamic, creative people. People who know how to do many things. For what? So that each of them can also participate and be more creative in their community."

I observe Mr. Joaquín closely as he incorporates play opportunities in his instruction. Sometimes they are subtle instructional moves; other times they are full blown, planned activities. For example, he has children collect natural specimens to illustrate concepts and use as manipulatives, he brings in objects that children can play with during class to learn a given concept and incorporates dramatization and games into his lessons. Mr. Joaquín will ask children to go out to the forest surrounding the school to collect leaves, dirt, stones, or fruits to incorporate into the day's lesson. One morning, he sends children outside to look for examples of small and large rocks to help illustrate the mathematical concept of larger/smaller. He sends out groups of 4-5 girls and boys at a time, and they gleefully go out exploring their surroundings for rock samples. One child comes upon a large pile of rocks that have been amassed for the kitchen renovation project, and soon a group of children gathers around him, squatting and picking rocks to

take back to the classroom (see Figure 4.6). Once all the children have returned to the classroom with their collections, Mr. Joaquín places all the rocks into a black plastic bowl and invites students to hold, touch, examine, and organize them from smallest to largest, asking questions about students' understanding of the concept. Finding rocks on the ground is perhaps not new for children, but by having them scavenge for them, examine them closely, and utilize them as manipulatives, he has transformed a mundane experience into an enjoyable, active, participatory math lesson.

Figure 4.6. Children gathering rocks for math lesson.

Early one day, Mr. Joaquín sends the preschool children to the yard to build models of huts of different shapes (round, square, rectangular) with the natural materials around them. Mr. Joaquín explains to me that he thinks of this project as introducing children to mathematical and engineering concepts involved in building but also social studies topics of diversity and plurality. The different ethnic groups of the Sierra Nevada can largely be identified by the shapes of the homes they build, and Mr. Joaquín wants children to consider the cultural diversity that determines people's choices and practices, including how they build their homes. Mr. Joaquín has to attend to other students' needs

and join a parent meeting while the younger children are outside building; therefore, the children are free to organize themselves and their strategy for building their models, choose their building materials, and enjoy the time outdoors. The groups of 3-4 boys and girls gather leaves and cut wooden sticks with machetes to build their structures. They sit on the ground around their structures, tying sticks together with organic fibers and making roofs of large, green leaves. Midmorning, the children break for a snack and afterward return to the classroom with their models in hand to present to the entire class. As children share the structures they have built, Mr. Joaquín explains the different types of homes and how they represent cultural differences (see Figure 4.7).

Figure 4.7. Children building models.

Sometimes, Mr. Joaquín is the one who introduces new materials. In the classroom, there are two *mochilas,* hand-woven bags*,* with objects Mr. Joaquín has collected for children to use. One bag has marbles that Mr. Joaquín gives students to help them count or solve math problems. The other bag contains a collection of contraptions that the children have built with wood and large, round, smooth seeds to resemble the tool that adults use to "hilar," or spin, the yarn that they use to make mochilas. Mr. Joaquín tells me that the purpose of these creations is to help children learn about their

traditional crafts but also learn to innovate on the traditional tools and activities of their community. This is the first step in a multi-step creation process in which the children will eventually make real tools. He says he wants children to make their own tools to learn the craft and then invent new ways of doing this task that has been part of the community's daily life for generations.

One morning, I walk into the classroom and find two groups of the preschool children sitting in circles on the floor around colorful objects. Mr. Joaquín purchased the manipulatives for his five-year-old son Andres who is not yet enrolled in school but brought them to school for the math lessons with the preschoolers. One group of three boys and three girls is building with large plastic building blocks (Figure 4.8a). They build towers by connecting one with another and then use pieces with wheels on them to make their structures mobile. Mr. Joaquín tells me he wants children to invent something with the blocks and, in the process, learn mathematical concepts, like categorization, size (smaller/bigger), and shapes. The other group of four boys and two girls use colorful tokens and categorize them by color and then stack them on a plastic platform (Figure 4.8b). Mr. Joaquín allows children to manipulate the blocks and tokens by themselves for a few minutes and then he comes over to check whether they have been exploring the mathematical concepts he intended by asking them questions to check their understanding. He provides an explanation and then leaves them to continue manipulating the objects independently, for about an hour.

a)

b)

Figure 8. Preschoolers using blocks (a) and tokens (b).

In addition to incorporating the use of objects, manipulatives, and models, the teachers task children with planning and executing skits that represent their learning, drawing out their ability to dramatize and engage in the non-literal, that is, pretend. When I visit the school at the end of the term, I find the children dressed up in feathers, some with bows and arrows made of branches and twine, and others climbing trees. Mr. Joaquín explains that the children are representing lessons about the respect for life, nature, and others that the children learned in ethics class. Over several days, children practice different dramas in groups, dressing up as animals common in this region, building huts with branches and leaves, and acting out farming, hunting, teaching, and

ritual scenes, scenes that they are familiar with in their cultural context (see Figure 4.9). They make their own costumes, create their own props, and practice their dialogues and acting, guided by the teachers. The dramas are then performed at a gathering of the community where children present what they have learned throughout the year. In this way, students and teachers, families and leaders, share in this playful, imaginative way of learning (see Figure 4.10).

Figure 4.9. Girls and boys building a hut for a dramatization.

Figure 4.10. Dramatizations presented to parents and community members.

Teachers at Ableizhi see education as an important experience that will benefit children and the community as a whole, especially as they interact more and more with mainstream Colombian society. As Mr. Joaquín explains, their goal is to prepare children to innovate and improve upon existing traditional practices. Mr. Joaquín and Mr. Gabriel embrace the challenge of educating children to know their own cultural values and practices and also know and understand the diverse values of other people outside their community.

Both Mr. Joaquín and Mr. Gabriel refer to this as "saber propio y saber universal," meaning "own knowledge and universal knowledge," to indicate that their goal is to create an educational experience that will help children become proficient in the knowledge that is important to their community (own knowledge) and the non-indigenous knowledge that is important to interact productively outside their community (universal knowledge). Play is one way they try to achieve this. Mr Gabriel tells me,

Creo que lo que se debe tener en cuentas más, hoy en día, del juego, es conocer lo que es la parte intercultural. No solamente que los niños indígenas de las escuelas conozcan su deporte, su juego, sino también que conozcan los deportes o juegos de otras culturas. Por eso para mí es muy importante que en cada institución [indígena] conozcan también el juego extranjero, y que también conozcan sus propios juegos. Eso es lo que nosotros buscamos, no desconocer los juegos extranjeros, no decir que los juegos extranjeros no hay que conocerlos. No. Para mí, los juegos que son de afuera también son muy importantes, hay que conocer de la misma manera nuestros juegos, tenemos que conocer. Para hablar de la interculturalidad tenemos que hablar esto.

[I think that what we should take into account, nowadays, about play, is to understand what is interculturality. Not only should the indigenous children of the schools know their sports, their games, but they should also know the sports or games of other cultures. For that reason, it is very important for me that in each [indigenous] institution they also know about foreign games, and that they also know their own games. That is what we are looking for, not to ignore foreign games, not to say that foreign games should not be known. No. For me, games that are from outside are also very important, we must know our games in the same way, we have to know. To talk about interculturality we have to talk about this.]

The difficulty they acknowledge is that lessons from formal schooling sometimes overshadow traditional teachings from home. Their responsibility, as they identify it, is to teach students to honor the hard work required to survive in a physical setting like the Sierra Nevada and respect their spiritual traditions of honoring the Earth, while gaining new skills and knowledge that may change the economic and cultural structure of their community.

When I observe and speak to parents at Ableizhi, they all seem satisfied with the work that Mr. Joaquín and Mr. Gabriel are doing and are supportive of their approaches to teaching. I suspect this is for at least two reasons: first, Joaquín and Gabriel are both Kogi and are able to communicate to community members and leaders as respected insiders; second, they both invest a lot of time and energy in communicating with parents, informing them about educational methods, and including them in the decisions that affect the school and the students.

When I first enter the community, Mr. Joaquín and Mr. Gabriel tell me that they welcome my research but that it will be the parents' ultimate decision whether I am allowed access or not. This is the only place where I meet parents at the start of my investigation, as opposed to meeting them as I spend time in the community. One morning early in the project, they arrange one of their usual parent meetings and invite me to share my research and purposes with parents. About 20 mothers, fathers, and community leaders gather in one of the classrooms—sitting in the same desks that their children sit in—and ask me about my intentions, whether I will return to their community (as opposed to leaving after one visit, as they have experienced before), and whether I will contribute to the school in some capacity. Mr. Joaquín and Mr. Gabriel facilitate my

conversation with parents, interpreting and explaining as I talk about "investigación," or investigation, play, learning, and child development.

Several times during my visits, I watch the teachers as they lead similar parent gatherings to discuss issues related to the activities that take place in the classroom, school construction projects, and the future of education in the community. It is this attention to the communication with parents that I surmise allows Mr. Joaquín and Mr. Gabriel, at least in part, to employ playful pedagogical approaches in their teaching, without resistance from families; and even encourage their indirect participation as they witness children distill their learning in playful ways. It is not necessarily that parents are differentiating between playful instruction and other kinds of instructional activities, but rather that parents trust what is happening in the classroom and let the teachers make decisions about what children should be doing there. I suspect that it's their quiet, intelligent, and wise leadership and their vision of what is possible for the school and their community—a commitment to "saber propio" yet an informed understanding of "saber universal" that can lead to a thriving future—that open the door to play.

On Community and Children's Responsibilities

In alignment with their community's priorities, much of children's time outside of the instructional context is spent participating in communal activities, like meals, conversations, work, and chores with their families and peers. During recess, groups of children gather around the schoolyard, sitting, talking, and eating a snack they have brought from home or have picked from a nearby tree. Cacao is grown in this region and is a favorite snack during recess. Children pick the cacao fruit from the tree, open it by beating its large, dimply, yellow shell on the ground or a rock, and eat the white, sticky

pulp covering the seeds. One morning, I watch a group of girls walking down to a nearby stream behind the school to drink water and wash their face. They converse as they freshen up and after a few minutes, walk back to the schoolyard and stand around in a group (Figure 4.11). Other children walk individually across the school yard, aimlessly looking around or observing as classmates move about.

Figure 4.11. Girls at a nearby stream.

I observe similar behaviors once children have returned home. After walking along strenuous forest trails for up to an hour for some, children join the regular business of the household. There is a relaxed atmosphere in which children go about their activities freely. Some wash up and change to a dirty and tattered tunic in order to wash their school tunic for the next day. Others work on school assignments. Families share meals, often gathered together around the kitchen area; children listen in on adults' conversations or help out with meal preparation. When parents are out on the fields or tending to cacao seeds that has been left out in the sun to dry, young children help to gather, collect crops, pick, or carry whatever their small hands and bodies can handle (see Figure 4.12).

Figure 4.12. Children helping mother with cacao seeds.

One afternoon when I am visiting Mr. Joaquín's family, I watch as a group of five or six girls and boys—all relatives—of various ages, sit on the ground peeling "guandul," pigeon peas, for that evening's dinner (see Figure 4.13). The children pull apart the long, thin shell and pick out the peas to place into a bowl with a dexterity that demonstrates they have done this many times before. I join the group, cross-legged on the ground, watching and trying to perfect my peeling skills. I feel outperformed by the children for whom this task has obviously become automated. As this is a task that requires minimal exertion, this gathering becomes an opportunity for social interaction; the children are talking and smiling. As I look around, I can see and feel this is a relaxing, even fun, pastime for the children; it is for me, too. I wonder to myself if this fun, flexible task is also a form of play for these children.

Figure 4.13. Children peeling guandul.

As the night settles that day, I watch from my hammock hanging in a wooden structure just a few feet away as the children sweep the dirt floor in the kitchen, preparing the ground where they will be sleeping. They put down a fabric tarp and blankets to lie down to sleep. Mr. Joaquín, his wife, and eight children find their sleeping spot around the fire. Although they are getting ready to fall asleep, chatter continues. A solar-powered radio begins to play; dim light from the kitchen fire and a solar-powered lamp light up the kitchen as we all fall asleep.

The following morning, we wake up from a frigid night. It is February and although the daytime weather is just as hot and humid as the first time I visited, evenings have become quite chilly. It is hardly 5am and I stumble out of my hammock, seeking the warmth of the fire burning in the kitchen. Older children are preparing a breakfast of meat and cooked plantains. The younger girls bathe with the hose that brings water from the river by the power of gravity. They shiver violently as the water falls on them and as

they put their wet tunics on. They continue to shake as they walk back to the kitchen and squat next to the fire. The children serve themselves meat and plantains and eat breakfast around the fire, two to a bowl.

As I observe children gather with each other and adults, participating in self-maintenance activities, conversations, and chores, I see that work and responsibility are considered important within the context of community. Parents want children to engage in work and other communal practices because they want children to participate in the rhythms of the community. At times, play appears to disrupt these rhythms and children's participation in what seems to be acceptable behavior of obedience and contemplation in the community, and parents seem to be responding to this when they speak negatively about play. However, by parents' own accounts, children play. They play after classes around the school building and yard and they play at home. Play emerges as children hang out, as they work, and as they take care of their personal needs.

Parental Views of Generational Changes and Children's Autonomy

Although parents seem perfectly comfortable with, and even open to, the kinds of play that occur at school, when I ask them more generally about their beliefs about play, one type of response illustrates the continued generational and cultural tensions that permeate parents' attitudes about play: Parents bemoan the fact that childhood today seems different from what it was when they were growing up. They see their children representing a different generation that is drawn to play and responds differently to the commands of authority.

Several parents I interview share that even though they discourage play, they also acknowledge Kogi children today want to play, and there is little that parents can do to prevent it. Milena, one of the mothers I interview, explains,

Nuestras madres nos enseñaron [that children should not play], pero en el día de hoy los niños ya son diferentes. Ya juegan. Yo le digo a mi niña no haga pero ya no escucha, no entiende.

[Our mothers taught us that [children should not play] but today, children are different. They play. I tell my daughter, don't do that, but she doesn't listen, she doesn't understand.]

Parents recount the negatives they see in play, they believe it is a waste of time, or fear that children will be physically harmed, or believe that it disrupts the spiritual order in the world. Milena continues discussing the concerns about play disrupting spiritual order,

Nuestros ancestros nos dicen no tenemos que jugar, no tenemos que danzar, no tenemos que saltar, no tenemos que hacer las cosas. Es mejor no jugar sino que estar quieto, para que no haya un cambio en el mundo. Tenemos que estar quietos para que el mundo quede quieto. O sea, el equilibrio.

[Our ancestors tell us that we shouldn't play, we shouldn't dance, we shouldn't jump, do these things. It is better not to play and instead be quiet so there is not a change in the world. We need to be still so the world is still. That is, the equilibrium.]

Verónica, another community mother, explains her concerns about safety,

No todos [los juegos] son malos, sino que tengo que corregir, solo tengo que direccionar a ellos qué juego es bueno y qué juego es malo. Porque hay algunos juegos que, por ejemplo, columpiarse dentro de un río, o saltar en un río, porque qué tal que jugando en el río, que se resbala en una piedra y el golpe puede ser fuerte, y se cae.

[Not all games are bad, but I have to correct, I only have to guide them to what game is good and what game is bad. Because there are games, like swinging on the side of the river, or jumping in the river, because what if they are playing in the river and they slip on a rock and the blow can be hard.]

Despite their concerns, parents also say that even when they instruct their children not to play, they do it anyway. Verónica explains,

Lo que veo ahora es uno lo prohíbe mucho [el juego], pero los niños no escuchan. Hacen, actúan. Yo lo que veo que hay un cambio en el desarrollo de los niños. Aunque antes decían mucho [que no jugar], pero ahora ya los niños no entienden porque alrededor de los niños miran muchas cosas. Siendo por eso pongo una disciplina, pero casi no lo escuchan. Porque mis dos niños ya casi no me escuchan. Porque hacen, hacen y tengo que tener la paciencia con ellos.

[What I see now is that we forbid [play] a lot, but children don't listen. They do, act. I see there is a change in the development of children. Although before they told us a lot [not to play], but now children don't understand because around them children see many things. That is why I impose a discipline, but they don't really listen. My two sons don't really listen to me. Because they do, do, and I have to have patience with them.]

This I believe points also to strains between the priorities that parents have for their children and the independence and autonomy children are afforded. While parents are concerned with children's alignment with expectations and traditions of the community, when they tell their children not to play, they also seem to believe that children can make decisions on their own about how they will behave. This is likely due, at least in part, to the lack of constant adult supervision as children go about their business. As Milena explains, "As a mother, I do not force my child to choose, I have always thought that the child is the one who decides."

From an early age, children are encouraged and expected to take care of themselves, help out in the household, and navigate their natural environment independently. Older siblings and extended family and neighbors can keep an eye on younger children, but there is an understanding that children are capable of determining their activities with little oversight. In parents' responses to my question about whether their children play or not, and whether they agree with children's playful activities, I can sense a resignation of children's play despite parents' admonitions. It is not my sense that parents believe that they, as children did not have the desire to play, but there is a certain belief that while they followed adults' orders, today's children do not. There is no anger

or worry in parents' reflections; they describe the state of children's participation in play matter-of-factly. And although Ableizhi is the community where I observe the least amount of time spent on play, as I follow groups and individual children throughout the day and across months, I amass a collection of examples of children's playful activities that speaks to the diversity of play forms children engage in, the makeup of children's play group, and how gender differences arise in playful activities.

Children's Play, Playmates, and Gender

As I observe children during free periods, I see them go from standing or walking around calmly to shifting into different forms of play. Any open space is ripe with opportunities for play—including the schoolyard, soccer field, river, dirt paths, areas around their family compound, and surrounding vegetation children navigate on a daily basis. At school, children have different areas where they might spend their free time, in the river, on the soccer field, around the schoolyard and community meeting place. At home, family compounds tend to have several structures that constitute the living quarters, including sleeping and bathing areas, the kitchen, and perhaps a family gathering place. Children move about these different buildings, playing inside but also between and behind buildings. Children show a great comfort with the natural environment around them. When in school and at home, they walk into the nearby brush to scavenge for fruit or flowers, find a stream, or climb a tree. Children possess few resources dedicated exclusively for play but there are rich natural resources, household tools, and everyday objects that can quickly change from utilitarian to play objects when children include them in their play activities.

Boys seem more prone to start engaging in physical play, rough and tumble play, or sports. Whether it's pushing and pulling each other, or climbing a tree, or organizing a soccer game (even with a lime), boys find physical opportunities to play. Soccer matches are arranged by teachers as part of physical education or after school recreation but children, mostly upper elementary boys, also spontaneously organize their own games around the schoolyard and the soccer field during school periods. Younger children and girls will typically watch these soccer games, but young boys also organize makeshift games in the surrounding area. One day, a few preschool and first grade boys go under the trees near the soccer field, they use a machete to cut a few branches to serve as goalposts and then form teams to play. They have an old tattered ball that they kick from one side to the other.

Meanwhile, girls tend to talk to each other or sit in groups observing the activities around them; this, however, does not preclude them from joining a group of children on an adventure in the river or running around in the forest. On one of my visits, I follow Carolina, a six-year-old, throughout the day and record spot observations every five minutes. When I follow her home, I see that most of her time is spent in small groups with her sisters, talking, doing homework, and feeding the pigs. However, for most of this time, she and the others are smiling or laughing, enjoying each other's company. What I realize by observing Carolina for the day is that this time is deeply social, enjoyable, and recreational. She might engage in brief moments of obvious play, like climbing a tree or playing with an animal, but mostly, they are enjoying each other's company. During this time, the girls exhibit flexibility, positive affect, and autonomy, all of which are indicators of play.

The following day, Carolina and her three older sisters, are responsible for guiding me on the path to school, given that I'm the inexperienced commuter in the group. We walk in a line with Carolina and one of her sisters in front of me and her other two sisters behind me. Impulsively, Liliana and her sister at the front start running, so I follow running, and the girls behind me do the same. We all run through the dirt path surrounded by the forest. It's wet and still a little cold from the previous night but we're all running and laughing and panting. When we get to the community gathering place, which we must cross to get to school, our running turns into a walk, to match the quiet, still atmosphere. Families have started to gather here for a festivity and from the dark insides of the houses, young children and their mothers watch as we walk past them. When we reach the edge of the settlement, our walk turns into a run again, making our way through the rocky downhill path toward the school. Running is perhaps an efficient way to get to school, but the laughter that ensues as we run in the group, also shows me that the girls enjoy this activity. That they may not do it as often or as obviously as boys do but this does not negate how much the girls enjoy this physical play.

Children tend to play with same gender and same age peers. That is, girls tend to gather around with girls and boys tend to gather around with boys, and usually this happens among the younger children and the older children, separately. Of course, because they play in the same spaces, girls and boys and younger and older children interact, talk with each other, and join each other in games. The groups tend to remain similar in and out of school. Interestingly, given the large families and the fact that extended families tend to live in the same household, when playing in groups, children are drawn to siblings and cousins as play partners. At school, children can have an even

wider network of play partners but at home, when isolated from other children by the distance between family compounds, children play with the companions afforded to them by their immediate and extended family.

One afternoon, while staying with one of the school families, Mr. Jacinto's (a school parent) family, I watch as nine children—brothers, sisters, cousins, nephews, and nieces—of ages three to about twelve, move about the compound as an extended playgroup. Under a wooden roof, two more boys climb a ladder resting against a wall and another boy twirls a plastic bottle with a string; two girls sit on a tree stump watching the boys climb, and the youngest boy and girl skip in a circle holding hands. The action moves outside, and soon the children—boys and girls—begin to drink or make each other drink from plastic bottles filled with water. After drinking, some fall to the floor, and others pick them up from all four extremities and carry them away. The scene unfolds as a loud and jovial commotion. They push, punch, and pull each other, screaming and yelling, and roll around on the dirt, laughing. It takes me a moment to realize that they are acting out scenes from drunken adult festivities they have witnessed—which I have heard described but have not directly observed.

This make-believe continues for fifteen, twenty minutes until someone announces, "estoy cansado," "I'm tired," and the group disbands for a few minutes of leisurely sitting or walking around. The group reassembles spontaneously when the Julio decides he wants to go to a nearby tree to cut down guama, a fruit that grows in long, green pods that contain large black-brown seeds covered with a white juicy, fuzzy pulp; in English, it's called ice cream bean and it tastes as sweet as it sounds. The children run along a narrow path toward the tree, a few yards from their compound. When they arrive,

the two oldest boys take their machete, climb the tree, and begin the task of cutting down the guama from the top branches. The youngest children direct them to the spots where the guama pods hang and collect them as they fall. Once they have gathered several pods, the group returns home, running along the path in single file (see Figure 4.14).

Figure 4.14. Siblings, cousins, and other family members play together.

During my time with them, I also become a play partner. One afternoon after school, I sit with a group of children on a fallen tree trunk in the schoolyard (Figure 4.14). Miguel, who I hazard to guess is about seven-years-old, starts jumping on one foot. Two other boys follow and then I join them and organize a race where we all jump on one foot until we reach a specific tree and back. The boys excitedly jump, focusing all their effort on beating me. Being physically active, jumping, with the children feels so intuitive to me, but as I hop, I recognize that it is a rare experience for the children, and they find it quite amusing. Although Mr. Joaquín and Mr. Gabriel join the boys in soccer matches, it is otherwise uncommon for adults to participate actively in children's games, especially a strange adult woman like me. After a few rounds of our jumping contest, I'm

exhausted and tap out, going back to the tree trunk to catch my breath. The boys transition into running around the school building, and at some point, I have recuperated enough of my energy that I join them, again, running after them. We run around in one direction, and then one of us switches and goes the opposite way. Angela, the only girl in the upper elementary classroom, observes us, sitting on the tree truck with the youngest boys and one preschool girl, Roberta.

Figure 4.14. Sitting down on a tree trunk with children.

At one point, one of the boys running has an idea, "vamos a bañar" ("let's go bathe"), which is code for "let's jump in the river," including the children who had been sitting down. The children jump into the river still wearing their clothing, swim, and make waves. I initially watch from the riverbank but soon the children gesture to me to join them. When I jump in, in my pants and t-shirt, they call my name (Angela calls my name several times) giving me directions with gestures and their burgeoning Spanish to swim toward one of them, swim on my back, or swim under the water. Moises and another boy put rocks on their backs and say they are crocodiles and swim under the water, seeing how long they can go without coming to the surface for air. The boys throw rocks to skip on the water and they give me rocks to do the same. When one of the older

kids says it is time to go, everyone gets out just as quickly as they jumped in and begin wringing their tunic to dry. We walk back to the school and as we walk away, the boys hide under and behind trees and plants to startle me as I walk past them.

The flexible flow of that afternoon, with children moving from one activity to the next, and with younger and older, female and male, children playing together illustrates what I consistently observe among the children. Yes, boys appear to engage in more active play than girls; but girls jump around too. Yes, girls enjoy sitting together with other children socializing; but often boys gather around too. Yes, children will seek out peers of similar ages, but mixed-age, mixed-gender groups are a whole lot of fun, too. There is no doubt that my presence in the play interactions changes the social makeup; suddenly, there is an adult in the mix. And at least in this instance, I instigate a competition with the boys, which I tend not to do to refrain from overly influencing children's behavior. That said, by joining in their spontaneous exchanges as a playmate—not a caregiver, teacher, or an older sibling—I hope to gain some insider understanding of what it is that children do when they go off running into the forest brush together.

Physical Play and the Historical View of Play

The most common form of play I observe at Ableizhi is physical play. As discussed, boys appear to be more physically active than girls but, in general, all children run and jump, climb trees, swim in the river, push and pull each other, or carry each other on their backs. Children's engagement in physical play appears rooted in both their physical environment and the historical priorities of their community. Although in the form of a soccer game, it may appear to be foreign to the activities germane in this

context, physical exertion and vigor have been instrumental for the survival of the indigenous communities of the Sierra Nevada.

Mr. Gabriel tells me that, historically, physical exercises have been critical for Kogi subsistence. The elders of the community have told him about the times when walking long distances or using a machete were important activities for children, because it helped them practice their daily life skills; physical activity was considered to be directly linked to children's ability to do well in their natural environment. Mr. Jacinto, the school parent, shares something similar. He explains that in the past, parents wanted their children to run or fish or swim to prepare them for the real tasks of surviving and living in this setting. Mr. Gabriel and Mr. Jacinto also explain that even though currently some community members say play is not part of their cultural tradition, elders have told them that play (at least physical play) has always been very important for life in the Sierra Nevada.

The way Mr. Gabriel and Mr. Jacinto describe this historical understanding of play, shows that physical activity in this context is seen as training for the real-life responsibilities that children (as well as adults) face in living in their environment. As explained by Mr. Gabriel and Mr. Jacinto, the priority of surviving in the wilderness of the Sierra Nevada necessitated that children from generations past exercise to be strong enough to work the land and fight against the elements. Physical exercise—swimming, jumping, running—were of utmost importance for their preparation. As the availability of tools and materials has made their work less strenuous, there seems to be time and space for children to engage in recreation as part of this physical activity. Being physically strong is still a point of pride for children and adults. If anything, older folks in the

community lament that today's youth are less physically capable—they walk slower, shorter distances, can carry less weight, or are less adept at swimming against strong currents—than previous generations.

The Next Generation

The generational changes seemingly shaping children's play are best illustrated by Ester, a young girl I meet at Ableizhi. Ester, who is four, is Mr. Gabriel's daughter. She does not yet attend school but spends a lot of time accompanying her father to class, observing as he teaches and interacting with the other children in and out of the classroom, engaging with them during classroom activities as well as pastimes. In this way, although she does not participate in formal schooling, she is already surrounded daily by the experience of school.

From early in my observations, I notice that Ester is curious and active, organizing games and play for herself. One day in the school kitchen, I watch Ester imitate what her mother is doing with the lentils she is preparing. Ester helps her mother wash and peel lentils in a bucket of water and then stirs the water with her finger as if stirring a stew. She talks to herself in a high-pitched voice, seemingly pretending she is cooking. I observe as Ester continues to play that day. She collects green plastic cups, stacks them, unstacks them and stacks them again. She brings out a bunch of spoons and bangs them against each other and the table. I follow her as she walks away from the kitchen and find her with other children banging two large, brown seeds together as cymbals and then climbing a tree.

Back at home after school, I watch Ester pull things in and out of sacks, from under the bed, and from the vegetation that surrounds the family's complex. As she does,

she mumbles as if narrating something to herself. She gathers leaves and sticks from around her house and puts them into a container, speaking to herself the whole time. She plays with the animals around her house, hugging, carrying, pulling, kicking, and chasing cats, pigs, and puppies. She then becomes very interested in a small, handheld rectangular mirror. She looks at herself and then peeks through it, adjusting the angle repeatedly until she meets the eye of another family member or me. When she settles down in the main room where her family sleeps, she opens up a notebook she uses to draw different shapes; after a few moments, she pushes the notebook toward me, hands me a pencil, and gestures to me to draw with her. I start drawing and coloring in her notebook and she brings me leaves, flowers, peppers, branches, and green onions as objects to draw. Over my visits this becomes a ritual whenever I follow her home from school as she involves me in her goings-on. She realizes I respond to her invitations to muck around the house, among the trees and bushes, and draw.

Throughout my observations, Ester demonstrates a variety of play forms, playing with objects or being physically active, exploring the features of her environments and at times seemingly pretending, sometimes on her own and sometimes with others. One evening, for example, Ester and Gonzalo, her cousin, run around showing me vegetation and naming it in Koguian. I follow them, trying my best to repeat the names of things and collecting everything they give me. Ester finds a measuring tape and together, Gonzalo, she, and I measure things around the house. On another occasion, Ester and I collect seeds from a coca plant– bright red, pebble-like seeds–in a travel size bottle. She collects them and I put them into the lotion bottle. The next day, Ester brings out the coca seeds

she collected in the lotion bottle the day before, makes several holes in the ground, and drops a seed in each hole, pretending to plant them.

One afternoon as I doze in my hammock, I hear Ester in the other room whispering to herself. She talks and sings as she walks inside and out of the structure and around the compound. At one point, I hear her say, "vamos a jugar," "let's go play," as an invitation to herself or perhaps an imagined companion (maybe me, given that she spoke the words in Spanish and not Koguian) to engage in activities that she has identified as play.

I see Ester's playful behaviors as embedded in experiences that deviate from the norm in the indigenous context of Ableizhi. When I visit Ableizhi, I often stay with Ester's family. Almost immediately, I notice that this family functions a little differently than I have observed in other Kogi families. To begin, Mr. Gabriel is highly educated. In fact, it was only after Mr. Gabriel returned from completing his higher education that he married his wife, Mariana. While it is not uncommon for couples to be married at 16 or 17, if not younger, Mr. Gabriel was 27 and Mariana was 19 when they married. Mr. Gabriel explains to me that getting married at a mature age was important to him. He believes that individuals need to develop the skills and the knowledge required to head a household before getting married. He believes that too many in his community get married while still being youth themselves and he worries that this can lead to the demise of the family structure that is foundational to the communities of the Sierra Nevada. This way of thinking has informed other decisions he and Mariana have made for their family. For example, in six years together, Mr. Gabriel and Mariana have had only two children

and do not have immediate plans to have a third child, which is uncommon in other families that tend to have children in close succession.

Besides the choices structuring their family, Mr. Gabriel's family spends time together in continuous, active interaction with one another. In addition to their daughters, one of Mariana's younger brothers and two of Gabriel's nephews also live with them. After school, and after completing various chores and farming tasks, they all gather in the kitchen to cook, eat, talk, and sometimes listen to music on a solar-powered radio. Gabriel and his wife are constantly discussing household and community business as they prepare meals and as they go to bed. I can often hear the family in conversation and laughing until 9pm or 10pm, hours after I have retired to my hammock and again as early as 2am, hours before I will stumble out of my hammock. I sense a closeness and affection that I have not typically observed among other couples and families.

Gabriel and Mariana also focus a lot of attention on their daughters, Ester and Flor, their five-month-old. They speak directly with them and encourage them to explore their environment. I can often hear Gabriel or Mariana talking to little Flor in a high-pitched, exaggerated language celebrating her natural baby cuteness, appeasing her if she is upset or crying, and cooing at her to entertain her. Similarly, when Ester does something amusing, her parents are often watching and react to her by smiling or laughing at the things she comes up with. Although I rarely see them actively engaging with Ester in her childhood pastimes, I can see, and she is aware, that they are paying attention to her actions and responding to her in positive, encouraging ways.

It is within this context of familial warmth and attention that I observe Ester's play. Although I witness other children playing, she seems like a noteworthy case to me:

she is a young girl—members of the community that can be overlooked—yet intuitively demands attention with her consistently inquisitive and active disposition. She involves others in her play and engages in what looks to me like pretend play, speaking to herself as she imitates adult life or walks around collecting flowers, vegetables, and branches. She plays with animals as pets and climbs trees. She explores affordances of natural materials and everyday objects.

Ester's inclination to play in such ways is likely influenced by a number of factors, including the fact that she is young and not yet expected to engage in family responsibilities or school, a girl and perhaps afforded more leniency than boys, and Mr. Gabriel's daughter, who is educated and has internalized a multicultural perspective of child development and play. In fact, when I interview Mr. Gabriel, he shares that he believes that play

Para mí [el juego] es muy importante para su desarrollo, porque creo que a través de ella, de los juegos que está realizando, más adelante va a comprender más, lo que ahora comprende con su [temprana] edad.

[For me [play] is very important for her development, because I believe through her, the games she plays, she will understand things better, what she understands with her [young] age now.]

In an email exchange with Mr. Gabriel after I had left the field, he told me that Ester missed me and asked about me often. Everything about that electronic mail seemed quite telling of Ester's experience, in which her father, in addition to teaching in the local school, also travels to Santa Marta every weekend to teach a college course on multiculturism at the local university and can send an email to someone in the United States expressing the memorable, although likely fading, impact of an extended friendship his daughter had with an American researcher. Ester is part of a unique family,

in that her parents appear committed to her development in ways that reflect non-indigenous preoccupations that I have not observed in other Kogi families. The activities, objects, and stories of her family context are imbued with interactions with communities and people beyond her immediate community, and this all appears to be related to the way she navigates her environment and the possibilities she explores through play.

However, to me, Ester may also represent something larger: the new generation of children that adults refer to when I talk to them about play and their vision for the future. A generation that is being raised by parents who have more constant interactions outside their community, through economic transactions, friendships, and educational experiences; a generation in which girls are educated and education incorporates playful forms of instruction; and a generation that spends time playing in more obvious, extended ways than their parents did (or remember). It is unclear how widespread an experience like Ester's will really become in the Kogi context. However, as I think about the play experiences I have observed in and out of school at Ableizhi, Ester's case does pose a hypothesis for how future generations of children will continue to participate in play here.

CHAPTER 5

Children's Daily Activities and Playful Behaviors Across Research Sites

As detailed in the previous chapters, I found that children's experiences with play in Wiwa, Kogi, and Arhuaco communities were shaped by their interactions with the physical environment, available resources and partners for play, schooling experiences, and the autonomy they were afforded, all of which were influenced by the expectations, practices, and beliefs of their communities. A way to gain a better understanding of how culture shapes play is to investigate how children spend their time and how play features in their time budgets. As Larson and Verma (1999) explain, "playing is a universal activity among younger children; nonetheless, cultural variations occur in the amount of time spent in play" (p. 719). And drawing from a synthesis of the literature, Whitebread and Basilio (2013) conclude that,

> play is a multi-faceted phenomenon, with a variety of types that appear in all societies, but that there are variations in the prevalence and forms that the various types of play take in different societies. These variations appear to arise from differing attitudes concerning the nature of childhood and the value of play within particular cultures. (p. 78)

In order to further explore and characterize children's play within the indigenous settings in this investigation, I systematically documented individual children's play activities throughout the day, and how they varied depending on the community, schooling, and gender and present the findings in this chapter (Gaskins, 2000).

I conducted focal child spot observations to document the frequency and variability of play activities children engaged in throughout the day to address two research questions:

1) What is the range and frequency of play experiences of Wiwa, Kogi, and Arhuaco indigenous children of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta?
2) What similarities and differences exist in children's play experiences across the communities based on community factors, home and schooling contexts, and gender?

Answering these two questions required documenting the nature of children's daily activities during an extended period of time. Detailed records of individual children's activities provided the data to calculate time budgets that estimated the amount of time children spent engaging in different activities, including play. The results showed that children's daily activities were diverse, most often involved play and social interaction, and were shaped by the community and school context.

Methods

Participants

Eighteen children (N = 18) participated in the focal child observations, with six children in each of the three communities. Table 1 summarizes individual children's age and gender according to community and school status. Given the focus on investigating differences in children's play experiences as related to schooling, the sample included preschool children (n = 12) and children who had not yet enrolled in school (n = 6). Four preschool children and two children who had not yet been enrolled in school participated in each community. School attendance was not compulsory or constrained by age of entry in any of the communities; therefore, preschool ages (4-7 yrs.) in the sample ranged considerably and overlapped with the ages of children who had not yet enrolled in school

(3-5 yrs.).[4] On average, preschool children (*M* = 5 yrs. 8 mo.) were older than children not enrolled in school (*M* = 3 yrs. 2 mo.). An equal number of boys and girls (n = 9) participated.

Table 5.1

Participant Gender and Age Details by Research Site and Schooling Status (N = 18)

Community	Child	Gender	Age
Ableizhi	Preschool		
	Roberta	Female	5
	Carolina	Female	6
	Andrés	Male	5
	Gonzalo	Male	6
	Not Enrolled		
	Ester	Female	4
	Jacinto	Male	3
Katanzama	Preschool		
	Sandra	Female	6
	Paulina	Female	8
	Elias	Male	6
	Sergio	Male	7
	Not Enrolled		
	Fernanda	Female	3
	Yordy	Male	3
Gotsezhi	Preschool		
	Elmira	Female	4
	Luisa	Female	5
	Juan Gabriel	Male	4
	Narciso	Male	6
	Not Enrolled		
	Arleny	Female	3
	Carlos	Male	3

[4] Because birth records and information about age are not systematically kept, many parents and teachers could only estimate children's age.

Procedures

I began conducting individual child observations after the first three visits to the communities. By this point in the study, I had familiarized myself with the physical, social, and cultural context of the research sites and had created a rapport with children and families in the community. The children I selected to participate in this portion of the larger study were those who had demonstrated comfort with my presence through informal interactions around the community and/or had previously invited me to join their daily activities, whose families had consented to their participation, and had themselves assented to participate. This convenience sampling approach provided the most unrestricted access to children's activities and spaces. All children and families who I asked to participate agreed to have me follow and observe them during an extended period of time, collect written records of the observations, and capture video and photo recordings of the children.

Over multiple visits to the research sites, I observed different children for 12 hours each, conducting spot observations of their behaviors every 5 minutes. Spot observations are "repeated momentary observations [made] at a predetermined time (e.g., every 5 minutes) and recorded" (Gaskins, 2000, p. 377). This method permits estimation of the range of variation and proportion of time that individuals spend in different activities and has been found to be of high quality, accurate, and have strong inter-observer reliability (Gaskins, 2000; Larson & Verma, 1999). Gaskins (2000) argued that, "When culturally situated, [spot observations] can provide valid and useful descriptions of how children spend their time and provide the basis for more focused microlevel analyses of daily activities." (p. 378).

I conducted observations over multiple days to ensure that children were observed during a morning, afternoon, and evening period. Children who were enrolled in school attended classes for 5-6 hours a day; following them for 12 hours allowed me to observe them for approximately the same amount of time in and out of school. Once I identified the child I would observe during a particular period, I followed them everywhere they went. My distance from the child and their activity varied depending on the context as long as I had direct visual access to their behaviors. For example, during observation in the classroom, I sat on a chair next to the perimeter wall closest to where the child was seated. When observing at home, I sat on a bench or chair where I could observe activity throughout the household. When children moved beyond the school or home (e.g., into the forest or river), I followed more closely in order to maintain visual contact. Observations focused on children's behaviors but whenever their dialogue was accessible to me, I documented what children said for context. My personal interactions with children were limited during observations but followed a natural flow as dictated by the children. If they addressed me directly or called out to me, I would respond and if they invited me to participate in their play activities, I would join them being careful to follow their lead; otherwise, I would refrain from addressing them or initiating contact.

I began observations on the hour and at the 5-minute mark, I observed children for 1 minute and spent the remaining 4 minutes recording the details of the observation. My observation notes included a brief description of the child's behavior, social context (i.e., whether the child was interacting with other children or adults), and setting (e.g., classroom, home, river). I documented observations by hand in the field and then transcribed them into an electronic spreadsheet for coding and analysis. A total of 145, 1-

minute observations were recorded per child, and 2610 observations were recorded in total across children.

As is true of other participant observation research, my presence undoubtedly affected the children and changed their context. Children were aware that I was interested in their behaviors and if they inquired about the notes I was taking or the images and videos I was gathering, I shared these with them. This may have heightened their awareness of me and my focus on their play behaviors—something that was not typical of other adults in their community; however, over the course of my initial visits children became less curious about my observations, and therefore, less preoccupied with my presence or the intentions of my research. In addition, by observing children in a variety of situations over the course of several hours, following them closely and from afar, and triangulating my spot observations with fieldnotes of a larger number of children in the community and interviews with parents and teachers, I was able to check the validity of my data.

Data Analysis

Given the paucity of play research in the Colombian indigenous context, it was critical that I employ an analytical approach that allowed me to look for children's participation in activities identified in the literature but also allowed for activities unique to this cultural context but not identified prior to emerge from the data. I coded spot observation using a rubric developed following Berry's (1999) three-pronged approach. This process entailed 1) selecting etic categories based on existing research prior to data collection, 2) identifying additional emic categories that emerged throughout data collection and were grounded in the data, and 3) compiling both sets of categories into a

derived emic coding rubric that was applied to the entire dataset. I followed this process to analyze children's daily child activities (see Table 5.2 for summary of daily activity categories) and once play instances were identified, analyze play categories, as discussed next.

Children's daily activities. Etic, predetermined categories consisted of activities that had been documented in previous research on indigenous children's daily time expenditures and were of interest given the study's research questions. Etic categories, included: play, instruction, maintenance, work, and observation (e.g., Gaskins, 1999, 2000; Larson & Verma, 1999).

Play instances were characterized by behaviors that reflected criteria used to define play in prior literature: flexibility, positive affect, intrinsic motivation, non-literality (pretending), and means/ends distinction (more concerned with process than the outcome) (Rubin, Fein, & Vandenberg, 1983). Although play behaviors need not reflect all criteria, they did need to exhibit a minimum of two criteria (e.g., positive affect and non-literality) in order to help differentiate play from other childhood activities. For example, a child laughing (i.e., positive affect) and repeatedly jumping into the river for no other apparent purpose but the activity itself (means/ends distinction) was coded as play. Play instances could be within a solitary play context or a social interaction, as discussed below.

Time spent in instruction has been rarely documented in previous research investigating indigenous children's play but was of interest in the present study. Instruction specifically referred to on-task, instructional activities and behaviors during or after school hours, such as listening to a lesson or completing an assignment in their

notebook, as opposed to simply spending time in the classroom. This distinction was necessary to disambiguate between the setting where children spent their time (i.e., school or classroom) and their actual engagement in instructional activities. This was the only category that was not recorded among children not enrolled in school. That said, it is also essential to underline that the instruction category specifically referred to formal schooling activities and behaviors. Informal cultural learning often happens among children of all ages and their families; in fact, parents expressed that the home was the first educational environment for children. Even though these informal forms of learning were subtle and not explicitly recorded as a separate category, it is likely that many of these instances were captured by the Observation category, described below.

Maintenance and work are often documented when studying traditional, small-scale societies (e.g., Gaskins, 1999; Lancy, 2016b). Maintenance referred to instances in which children were involved in taking care of their basic needs, such as eating, sleeping, bathing and grooming, dressing, and urinating and defecating. In the literature, work is sometimes discussed in contrast to time spent in play; thus, this was a category of great interest in this investigation, especially because adults in the community discussed children's work responsibilities as superseding the importance of play. During work activities, children were involved in completing chores and pitching in at home and at school; these activities included, sweeping, tending to livestock, helping with preparations for meals, fetching firewood, or putting things away.

Observation referred to instances in which children silently watched, paid attention to, or followed the people and activities around them. Observation is a primary mode of social and cultural learning, as children watch the activities of their communities

and behaviors of individuals in their environment. This is a behavior that has been documented in prior ethnographic research on indigenous children's time budgets and cultural acquisition (Gaskins, 1999; Lancy, 2016a, 2016b).

Table 5.2

Summary of Daily Activity Code Descriptions

Category	Description
Etic Categories	
Play	Child engages in an enjoyable, flexible, and spontaneous activity, characterized by a playful demeanor as indicated by the following criteria: Flexibility, Positive Affect, Intrinsic Motivation, Non-literality, Means/Ends Distinction.
Instruction	Child engages in a school activity or assignment in the classroom or outside of the classroom.
Maintenance	Child is taking care of his/her basic needs (e.g., sleeping, personal care, eating).
Work	Child completes a household or classroom/school chore or responsibility.
Observation	Child is watching, paying attention to, and/or following the people and activities around him/her.
Emic Categories	
Social Interaction	Child engages with other children or adults in conversation or activity.
Unoccupied	Child is sitting, standing, or walking around without engaging in any particular activity or with no apparent purpose or direction.
Technology	Child uses, engages with, or is entertained by technology.
Books	Child flips through or looks at book.

Travel	Getting from one destination to another
Other	Child engages in behavior not clearly categorized under the previous codes.

I identified emergent categories through memos I wrote after each site visit, during preliminary analyses of behaviors, and conversations with colleagues familiar with the context and/or play research. Emic categories included: unoccupied, social interaction, technology, books, and travel. Unoccupied was one of the first categories that emerged during observations and subsequent data analysis. I applied this category when children were observed sitting, standing, or walking around without engaging in any particular activity or with no apparent purpose or direction. The child might have been surrounded by other children or adults but appeared to be passing time without an intent for a particular action or interaction.

When children were observed engaging with other children or adults in conversation or activity, these instances were coded as Social Interaction. I first identified this activity when I noticed that children sat in groups conversing and spending time together, often with no other apparent purpose other than the social exchange. Although I set out to document the presence of other children and adults during children's daily activities, social interaction was an emergent category that surfaced as both a standalone behavior and a context for other behaviors given its distinctiveness and prevalence.

During observations, children's engagement with technology and books was salient given that this has also been rarely documented in time budgets when studying children's activities and pastimes in indigenous settings (Auld, 2007; Heredia & Icaza, 2012; Johnson, 2016; Rice, Haynes, Royce, & Thompson, 2016). Technology referred to

instances in which children were introduced to, used, or were entertained by technology, such as watching a Youtube video, looking through photos on a cellular phone, or manipulating a tablet. Similarly, when children flipped through, read, or looked at books, their behaviors were coded with the Book category.

As I spent time following children, I realized the importance of their movement from one space or area of the community to another. Travel was used to indicate instances in which children were getting from one destination to another; for example, walking from home to school. Finally, behaviors that did not fit into the previous categories were coded as Other.

The finalized rubric that included emic and etic categories, as well as illustrative examples and decision rules, was used to code the data. Although much of the previous work on children's time use categorizes activities using one label (i.e., coding a behavior as just play or just work), I applied multiple codes to a single instance when appropriate. Children's activities are multifaceted and flexible, oftentimes demonstrating different purposes and behaviors. For example, sometimes children played as they participated in instructional activities (e.g., playing with tokens for a math exercise) and interacted with others when attending to their self-maintenance needs (e.g., snacking and talking in groups). By using multiple codes to categorize observations, I was able to represent the complexity of children's activities and calculate frequencies that did not unnecessarily draw distinctions between behaviors that co-occurred. Therefore, categories and frequencies reported in the Results section are not mutually exclusive.

A second independent coder scored data for one randomly selected child per research site (435 observations total) to assess the reliability of the coding rubric.

Reliability was assessed at 93% ($\kappa = 0.915$). Disagreements were resolved, and I applied insights from the conversation on disagreements to the entire dataset to be reflected in the final coding.

Children's play activities. Once play instances were identified, they were further categorized by play type. As with daily activities, categories were developed using both etic and emic approaches. Play categories determined at the outset of the study included: object play, physical play, pretend play, games, and rough and tumble (e.g., Garvey, 1990; Trawick-Smith, 2010). Again, these categories of play included both solitary and social play.

Object play involved activities in which children used objects and manipulated their properties, including constructing with them. This might include building a structure with tree bark or filling a plastic bottle with seeds. Physical play involved non-rough, large-motor movement, such as running, swimming, or climbing a tree. Pretend play referred to instances in which children engaged in make-believe scenarios that involved imaginary activities, persons, animals, or objects, such as pretending to cook or ride a horse. Games were play activities that involved structure or explicit rules that could be communicated, taught, and learned, like playing soccer, tic-tac-toe, or hide-and-seek (Amlor, 2016). Rough and Tumble (R&T) referred to a specific type of physical activity that involved intentional rough contact with peers yet within a convivial context, such as arm wrestling or punching. I categorized R&T distinctly from physical play given that it is considered qualitatively different than other large motor activity (Lindsey, 2014) and entails intentional rough contact among peers.

Based on emergent themes from the data, further categories were developed, including: teasing and humor, foraging, animals, crafts, and music. Teasing and Humor involved behaviors intended to make others laugh, such as tricks, silly behaviors, or teasing. Foraging involved children's recreational, self-initiated, and exciting excursions to search for and collect plants, food, or animals, such as collecting mangoes from a tree or hunting for crabs. The Animal Play category indicated instances in which children interacted with pets, livestock, or wild animals in their play. Crafts referred to activities in which children spontaneously used media and materials to create visual representations, such as coloring, drawing, or cutting paper. Music Play referred to instances in which children engaged in musical expression with their voices, body movements, and/or instruments.

As with coding for daily activities, I applied multiple categories to the same instance of play when relevant. For example, singing games were coded as both music play and games and climbing a tree to collect pears was coded as both physical play and foraging. Therefore, frequencies of play categories reported in the Results section do not add up to 100% of instances coded.

Results

The results described next demonstrate that children engaged in a range of activities during the day and these reflected the affordances and pressures of children's cultural, social, and physical environment. Similarly, children's play behaviors were shaped by their social interactions, the independence they are afforded by adults, and the materials resources available to them. Below, I provide descriptions of the frequency and range of children's daily activities followed by the frequency and range of play

behaviors. Frequencies and descriptions of activities were calculated based on overall totals of instances documented as well as parsed based on variables of interest, including schooling status, research site, and gender.

As I describe in the following sections, I found was that social interaction and play were the most common categories and often co-occurred. Therefore, compared to other daily activities, children—both those enrolled in school and those not enrolled in school—spent more time interacting with peers and engaged in playful activities. Children participated in other daily activities but to a lesser extent, including instruction, observation, maintanence, work, travel, technology, and books.

Children's Daily Activities

In order to situate children's play behaviors within the larger rhythm of their daily lives, I investigated the different ways in which they spent their time and the frequency with which they engaged in different activities throughout the day. As I show in Figure 5.1, children participated in a variety of activities throughout the day.

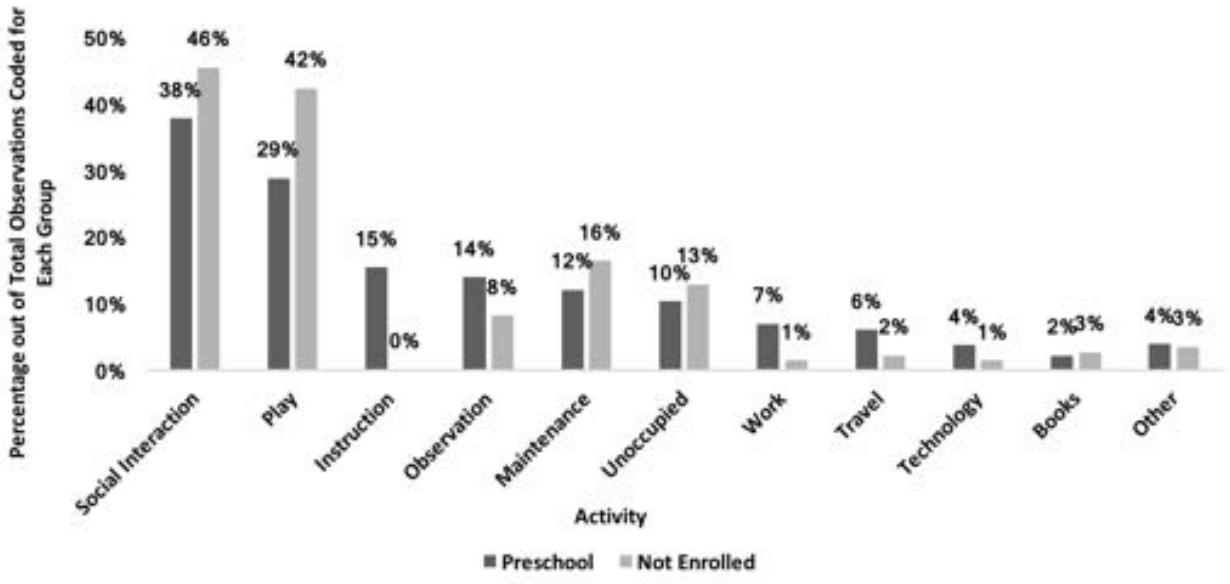


Figure 5.1. Frequency (%) of children's daily activities by schooling status across research sites.

Social interaction and play were the most common activities, respectively, for both preschoolers and children not yet enrolled in school, and they often co-occurred. The prevalence of social interaction and play was surprising given the primacy of work and spiritual stillness in the community and the ambivalent or negative attitudes toward play shared by adults. Perhaps most surprising was that for both groups of children, social interaction and play were more than twice as prevalent as any of the other categories of activities. As expected, children across research sites spent time in instruction, observing the activities and people around them, attending to their needs, contributing to household work or school chores, and observing. However, these activities constituted approximately 15% or less of instances coded. Play is discussed in further detail below but first, I describe the range of other activities children engaged in throughout the 12-hour period they were observed.

Social Interaction. Children often interacted with others across activities; therefore, social interaction coincided with many of the other codes and was the most common behavior. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of preschool children's behaviors and 46% of the behaviors of children who had not yet attended school involved social interaction. During these instances, children showed signs of enjoying their time together, such as smiling or excitedly commenting on past experiences or the occurrences around them. At other times, this social interaction involved other daily tasks, such as completing chores or self-maintenance activities. For example, in Ableizhi, I followed Roberta as part of a group of mixed-aged girls to a creek during a school break where they washed their faces, drank from the refreshing stream, and sat among the rocks "hanging out." In Gotsezhi, I observed Ester in a group of boys and girls who sat together eating mangoes and talking.

Social interactions occurred all around the community, school, and surrounding forest areas. What seemed especially relevant about this category was that it reflected the kind of collective activity that occurred among adults. Social interaction seemed to fit within the cultural repertoire that children observed in their communities and practiced often, both when it occurred on its own or when it served as a context for other activities.

In Figure 5.2, I present the percentage of social interaction instances that only involved social interaction and the percentage that involved other types of activities. When social interaction was broken down, I found that a quarter of instances involved only social interaction (e.g., children talking), over half of instances involved play, and 10% or less involved other activities, such as instruction, maintenance, and work.

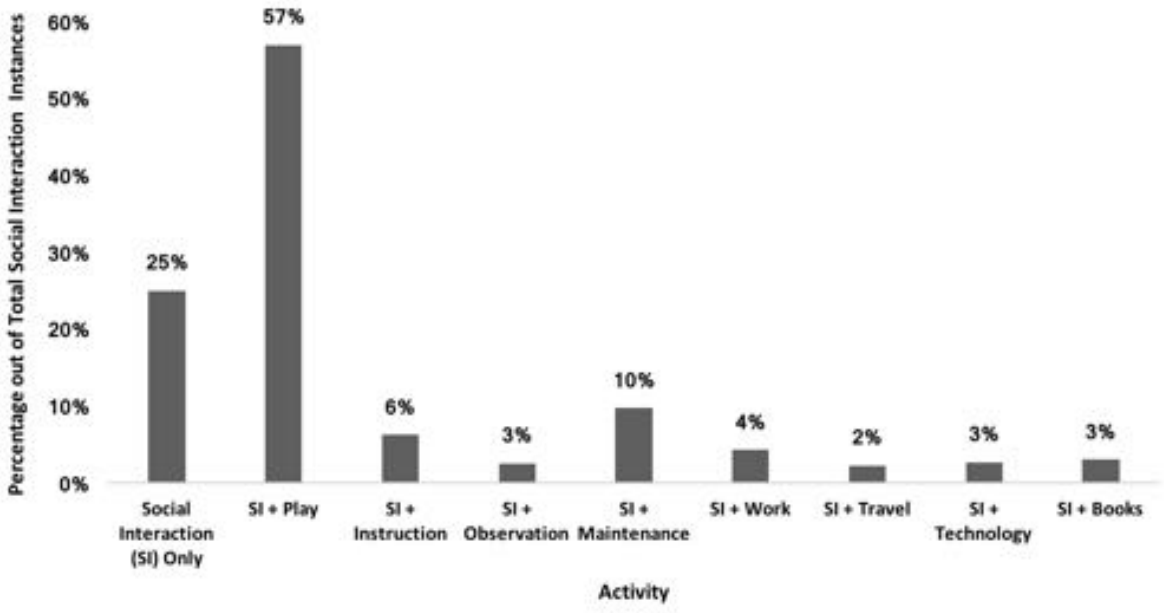


Figure 5.2. Frequency (%) of instances of social interaction only and instances in which social interaction coincided with other categories across participants in the different research sites.

In Figure 5.3, I break down daily children's activities by the percentage of instances that involved social interaction and the percentage that did not involve social interactions. This is further discussed in the following sections.

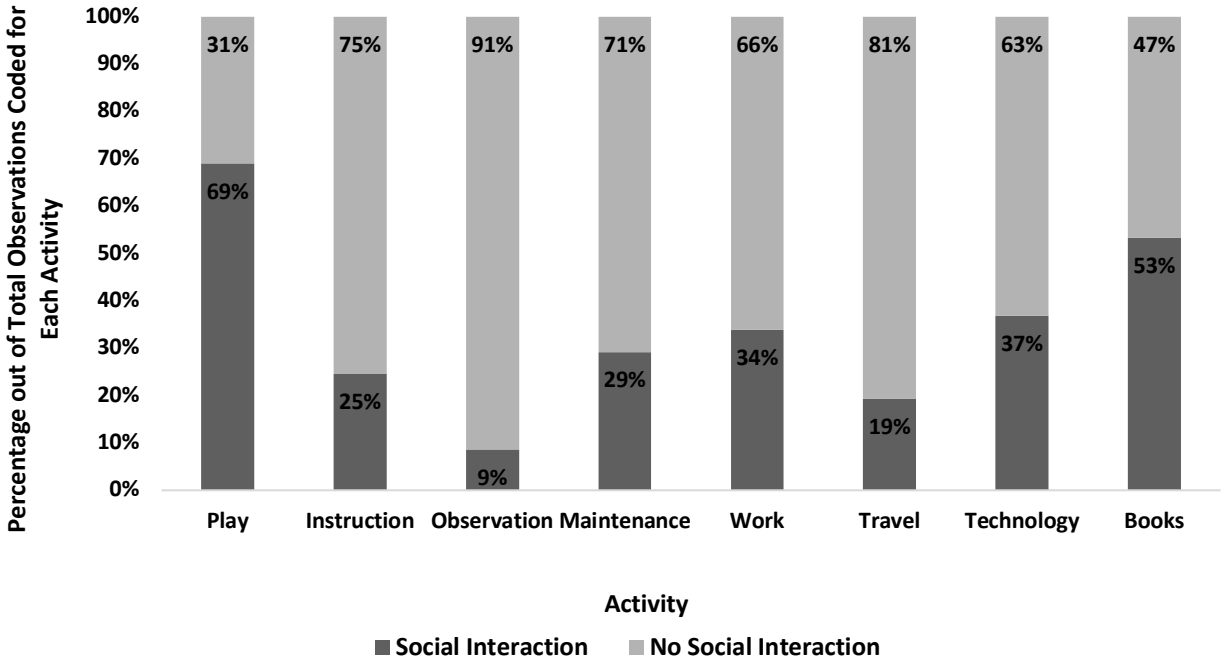


Figure 5.3. Frequency (%) of instances coded for each activity type that involved social interaction vs. no social interaction across participants in the different research sites.

Instruction. After social interaction and play, instruction was the third most common activity for preschool children. Children enrolled in school attended classes for 5-6 hours a day and school was a primary context within which preschool children spent their time. Interestingly, although preschool children spent a great proportion of their day in school (approximately half of the time children were observed), only 15% of preschoolers' observations were coded as being actively involved in instructional and learning activities, such as listening to a lesson or completing an assignment in their notebook. The rest of observations recorded in class involved informal play behaviors not related to instruction, observing classmates or other non-instructional activities, or being

unoccupied. Furthermore, most instructional activities were individual and few involved interactions with classmates; only 25% of instruction instances involved social interaction.

Observation. Preschool children were documented engaged in observation during 14% of instances and children not yet enrolled in school were recorded observing during 8% of instances. Observation seemed to serve the purpose of helping children keep track of the goings-on and rhythms of the community as a whole as well as the immediate activity surrounding them. Children were recorded observing their mothers as they cooked, their fathers as they tended to the livestock, older siblings as they helped around the house or played games, and community members as they engaged in special ceremonies and dances. The slight difference between preschool children and those not enrolled in school is explained, in part by, preschoolers' participation in instruction; during school hours, children had plenty of uninterrupted opportunities to observe their teacher during lessons or attending to classmates, and also to watch as other children completed their assignments. Given that observation most often involved sitting or standing quietly and tracking activity and actions attentively, children rarely interacted with others while observing; only 9% of observation involved social interaction.

Maintenance. Twelve percent (12%) of instances recorded for preschool children and 16% of children not enrolled in school involved attending to their personal needs. Children in the communities I studied were expected to be increasingly self-sufficient from the moment they could walk. By three and four years of age, children were expected to attend to their personal care (e.g., eating, bathing, sleeping) with little to no help from adults. As recounted in a previous chapter, in Katanzama, the Arhuaco community, I

observed Elias, a five-year-old, peeling and cutting up a plantain and frying the pieces in hot oil in an open fire. Adults and older children were around him but did not aid him with any of the preparations. Children's independence in maintenance activities served not only to free adults to engage in household and subsistence responsibilities but it introduced and maintained the sense of personal responsibility and productivity in children.

Given preschool children's time spent in school, their maintenance activities were mostly relegated to before and after school times and school breaks. By contrast, children not enrolled in school had all day to snack, bathe, and sleep as they pleased, which may account for the slightly higher percent of instances involved in self-maintenance for this group. While there was little oversight from parents and other adults, children accompanied each other during maintenance activities, going to the river together to bathe, picking and sitting together to eat a snack, or cooking meals for themselves. Twenty-nice percent (29%) of children's maintenance activities involved interaction with others.

Work. Even though children were observed engaged in a variety of chores in school, at home, and around the community, including washing clothes, fetching water or firewood, sweeping classrooms, taking care of younger siblings, helping to cook, and tending to livestock and crops, work was one of the least frequent activities recorded for children. Only 7% of preschool children's observations and 1% of observations for children not enrolled in school involved work. Although the percentage of instances spent in work was minimal in both cases, this pattern points to the typical trajectory in this

cultural context of assigning more work responsibility to children as they get older, matching the tasks to children's believed abilities.

Although both boys and girls engaged in overlapping types of work activities, there were certain tasks that were believed to be more appropriate for one gender than the other in their communities. For example, when helping around school in Gotsezhi, boys were called to fetch firewood while girls were asked to sweep the floors. When parents talked about children's expected activities, they tended to talk about tasks for boys (e.g., fetching wood) separately than those for girls (e.g., weaving bags). Thirty-four percent (34%) of children's work activities involved social interaction.

Unoccupied. Ten percent (10%) of preschool children's observations and 13% of observations for children not in school were coded as unoccupied. The unoccupied category was an emergent finding that referred to instances in which I observed children passing the time without apparent purpose or goal. Observing children as young as three spending extended times in an outwardly passive manner was initially surprising to me yet not unusual within the cultural context that valued stillness. When children found themselves without immediate goal or activity, they appeared content sitting and standing without having to seek further stimulus or engage in any further interaction. Older children's increased responsibilities in school and at home may account for the slight differences between the groups.

This category was intentionally differentiated from observation and social interaction in that children did not have any discernable object or focus of attention and never interacted with others while unoccupied. That said, the term used for this category does not imply that children were not engaged in thought or contemplation. When

unoccupied, children appeared to be present yet not outwardly focused in their attention. It is plausible to surmise that at least some of children's time spent unoccupied may have been related to similar practices observed in adults and practiced by children during spiritual rituals. Although I did not have the opportunity to observe children engaging in spiritual practices guided by *mamos*, explanations from children themselves and adults indicated that children were expected to engage in inward spiritual exploration for purposes of confession or divination. At the very least, children's time spent unoccupied seemed a prerequisite for extended periods of stillness and quiet both physical and spiritual that children were expected to engage in during community activities and rituals.

Travel. Children's getting from one place to another was not a predetermined category but quickly emerged as noteworthy during observations. Although this category was developed through emic analysis, it has also been documented in other research on children's play in indigenous contexts (e.g., Boyette, 2016). Six percent (6%) of preschoolers' activities and 2% of activities recorded for children not enrolled in school involved travel. Children were free to move about the community and beyond independently and those who attended school were trusted to walk there by themselves or in small groups. For some children, like those in Ableizhi, where household compounds and the school were dispersed along great distances, children walked up to two hours to get from one place to another. In Gotsezhi, where most of the students lived within close proximity to the school, children walked as little as a minute. Children who did not attend school mostly walked around their household compound.

However, children were not just limited to walking to and from school or around their household; the surrounding forest presented opportunities for journeys to swimming

spots, specific fruit trees, and other destinations that entailed travel by foot. Children traveled places by themselves but also in groups with peers and adults; although children traveled in groups, only nineteen-percent (19%) of children's travel involved active social interaction (i.e., talking or engaging with others in ways other than walking in the same direction). Aside from being the most common way of getting from one place to another in the communities (a few people traveled by horse or mule), walking long distances was referenced as a point of pride and an essential ability for children. Whenever they led the way and I was following, children indeed demonstrated great stamina and nimbleness even when they walked barefoot.

Technology and books. Children's use of technology and books were emergent categories that seemed important to document given the scarcity of accounts on children's use of different media in indigenous settings. As informal activities that also introduced non-indigenous childhood pastimes and materials, they seemed critical to record as childhood experiences in the changing communities. Preschool children were observed engaging with technology during 4% of instances recorded and children not enrolled were observed during 1% of their recorded instances. Preschool children most often interacted with technology during classroom activities as teachers showed them videos and movies for instructional purposes. That said, families also had access to cell phones, tablets, and radios and children—those in school and not in school—were able to interact with these new technologies at home as well. For example, in Ableizhi, Teacher Gabriel had a tablet that he allowed students to use outside of class, and Gonzalo, a five-year-old, played educational games on it with other children after school. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of children's technology use occurred within social interactions.

Preschoolers and children not enrolled in school were observed using books 2% and 3% of instances observed, respectively. Contrary to what might be expected, children interacted with books mostly outside of school time. Given the limited availability of textbooks and other books, most classroom activities were based on teacher-led instruction and assignments. Thus, children had access to the few books available at school or at home during extracurricular blocks of time. During these periods children and their peers—both older and younger—congregated around a book and flipped through the pages, mostly looking at the pictures and reading as much as they could. Fifty-three (53%) of children's book use was in the context of social interactions. At Gotsezhi, Elmira and Arleny, four and three respectively, gathered with other children in the small unattended school library (which consisted of two metal shelves located in the first-grade classroom) and pulled books from the shelves after school; one favorite type of book were search and find books, in which children had to look for a certain quantity of an object or character (e.g., three yellow ducks) on a busy page full of other distracting images (e.g., a picture of a busy animal farm). At home, parents might acquire a dictionary, picture book, or even a Bible that several children would then share.

Not only were technology and books novel introductions to this context but the informal nature of children's interactions with these materials stood out. As I described in Katanzama, once Teacher Josefina started a Youtube video, children themselves navigated the next videos and reacted to the content without much prompting. As with most other activities observed, children seemed to be scaffolding each other through social interaction around the technology or book.

As described thus far, children engaged in a range of activities throughout the day that reflected the structures and priorities of their communities. That said, after social interaction, play behaviors were the most commonly documented activities. This was in contrast to what I heard from parents and teachers about how children were expected to spend their time. Play not only surfaced as an activity in itself but it also occurred within other contexts and activities, such as instruction, work, maintenance, and travel. I discuss children's play activities and the different types that children engaged in further in the next sections, including differences in play according to community, schooling status, and gender.

Children's Play Activities

Play was the second most common behavior documented. Preschool children played during 29% of all recorded observations and children who were not enrolled in preschool played during 42% of observations. A likely explanation for the difference in the frequency of play between preschool children and those not in school is, in part, the amount of time that those enrolled spent in instruction and school-related activities. In addition, those not enrolled in school tended to be younger and not expected to engage in as many work activities or chores. With fewer constraints on their time, younger children had more freedom to engage in play. Nevertheless, both groups of children played during a substantial percentage of the time their behaviors were recorded.

As discussed above, much of play activity occurred within social interactions. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of all play activities involved social interaction, most often with other children. In fact, only six play interactions, total, involved a teacher during play in school and only one instance observed involved a play interaction with a parent.

Play behaviors across children reflected a range of play types (see Figure 5.4), ones that were predetermined based on the existing literature, such as object, physical, pretend play, and games and others that emerged during observations, such as teasing and humor, foraging, and play with animals. In many cases, several play types were identified in one play instance recorded. For example, when Elias was running, jumping, and digging with other children on the beach hunting for crabs, this was coded as both physical play and foraging.

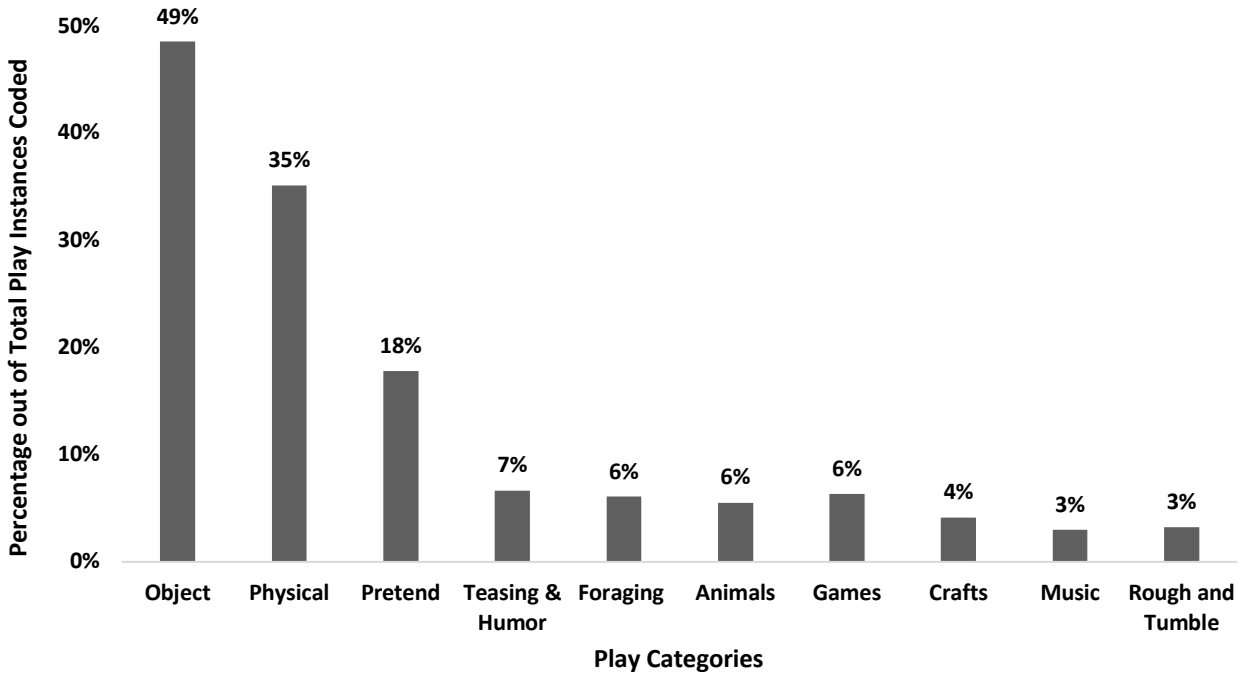


Figure 5.4. Frequency (%) of play types across participants in the different research sites.

Object play. The most common type of play was object play (49%). Children played and constructed with natural materials, toys or manipulatives in the classroom, and sometimes even small toy cars or dolls they owned at home. For example, one morning I observed Yordy and Fernanda, both three years old, playing in a puddle, powering water into cups and mixing it with dirt to make mud shapes and structures.

Children in school, encountered objects as part of classroom activities as well as out-of-school times. In Gotsezhi, I observed Elmira and Ester playing with Lego bricks in their classroom, building towers and cars. After school, Elmira joined a group of children, some younger and others older, and dug holes in the sand on the riverbank and constructed tunnels and bridges. Although some children did own toys, play objects more widely consisted of any materials, vegetation, tools, and household items that children incorporated into their playful behaviors. Few objects were prohibited from children's use, including machetes and other sharp objects, which meant that wherever children went around the community and beyond, they could find objects and materials for play. For example, in Ableizhi, a group of preschoolers, including Carolina went into a brushy area to cut leaves and built a replica of a hut that they could play in.

Physical play. Physical play (35%) was the second most common play category. Children climbed trees, ran around their household compound, or swam in the river. With wide open spaces and few limitations on where they could spend time, children had the liberty to move about and exert their physical energy as they also managed the demands of the terrain. In Ableizhi, I followed a group of siblings and cousins ranging in ages, including Andrés and Jacinto, who ran along a path to climb a tree and collect juicy pears.

Pretend play. The third most common type of play was pretend play, with 18% of play instances coded as engaging in make-believe or engaging with objects and individuals in non-literal or symbolic ways. Consistent with prior research in indigenous settings (e.g., Lancy, 2016; Larson & Verma, 1999), much of children's pretend play emulated adult activities. Children pretended to ride horses, cook meals, or drive

motorcycles. Children engaged in pretend play all around the community, it most often involved other children, and it occurred alongside other forms of play, such as object play. In Gotsezhi, Ester walked to the river with a group of girls and they spontaneously started collecting leaves, seeds, and plants from the surrounding vegetation. They created several mounds of mud and leaves and filled them with water. They then told me they were making soup and oatmeal. Ester ran back and forth from the brush looking for and adding "ingredients" to the meals. This went on for close to half an hour before the group moved on to building a "farm" out of leaves and branches. In Katanzama, Elias put a thick tree branch between his legs and ran around saying he was riding a motorcycle. Although not as frequent as physical or object play, pretend play was a key category in children's play activities.

Games. Games with rules constituted 6% of play instances and ranged from playing tic-tac-toe to hide-and-seek and singing games children learned in school. These games occurred in a social context in which other children were engaged and where the children themselves managed and implemented the rules of the game. In some instances, the games children played were ones they adapted. For example, one afternoon I watched as Narciso played tag with other boys in the river, but this game involved floating on driftwood, carrying sticks, and hiding underwater and behind rocks. As with other categories of play, games involved other forms of play such as object, physical, and pretend play.

Rough and tumble. Although physical play was one of the most common activities, rough and tumble (R&T) which is a form of playful physical activity occurred only 3% of recorded instances. During R&T play, children pushed, punched, and

wrestled each other, and although this occurred among a diverse range of peers in terms of age and gender, it tended to occur most often among similarly-sized (a proxy for age) and same-sex peers (but not as much with girls, as will be discussed below). Although physical contact during R&T was quite forceful and rough, it was always reciprocal and children to smiled, laughed, and otherwise demonstrated delight throughout the exchange. Part of the appeal appeared to prove strength among the children. For example, in Gotsezhi, I observed Narciso challenging other boys to arm wrestling matches as they waited to be dismissed from their classroom. When I observed instances of R&T, I did not see teachers or parents discouraging or managing the exchanges yet never once saw children engaging in disputes, crying, or getting upset. They seemed to have a mutual understanding that the rough physical contact was playful and remained within this positive attitude throughout the interaction.

Physical, object, and pretend play, rough and tumble, and games are commonly studied play categories and were of interest at the outset of the investigation. Emergent categories of play that are less commonly documented in play literature but that were nonetheless surfaced in this indigenous context, included teasing and humor, foraging, play with animals, crafts, and music. Although these types of play did not occur as frequently as physical, object, or pretend play, they seemed to point to meaningful ways in which children participated in playful activities.

Humor play. Teasing and humor emerged within social settings in which children interacted with each other and made each other laugh. This kind of friendly teasing occurred 7% of play instances recorded, and involved children poking fun at each other and being silly in physical and verbal ways. As described by Trawick-Smith (2010),

humor and teasing were accompanied by smiling, laughter, exaggerated tone, and funny noises. For example, one morning in class, I observed Carolina and Gonzalo making funny faces at each other by pulling the sides of their mouths. They laughed and smiled and entertained each other as they waited for their next assignment. When gathered in groups, children told stories and laughed as they recounted experiences.

Foraging play. Foraging (6%) also emerged as a play activity that reflected the cultural context of children's communities. As I have described, children collected plants, flowers, and fruits and searched for small animals. The primary focus of these activities was not subsistence, although children certainly ate the fruits they collected and some of the edible animals they captured; rather, the focus appeared to be on the social, playful adventure that surrounded the foraging activity. Foraging referred to instances when children went in search of specific items or creatures but often entailed other forms of play such as object, physical, and pretend play. One afternoon, I observed as Ester collected flowers, pebbles, and bottle caps from around her household compound. As she lined things up along a small dirt mound, she explained to me that this was her farm. Although this instance involved object play (i.e., the items Ester collected) and pretend play (i.e., imagining this was her farm), which were also coded for, the primary activity seemed to be going around her home and its surrounding vegetation foraging for interesting objects to add to her collection.

As described in a previous chapter, I followed Elias as he and other children ran along the beach at night with a couple of flashlights hunting small crabs. There was lots of excitement and physical play as the group ran, jumped, and captured the fleeing creatures, but again, the main motivator was the search for crabs. Foraging instances were

reminiscent of skills and activities children likely observed and would probably employ as adults. However, instances of foraging play appeared intrinsically engaging, flexible, and enjoyable—that is, playful—for children.

Animal play. Although children's play with pets is common around the globe, play with animals in this context seemed unique. First, many of the animals that children had access to were not necessarily household pets that belonged to children but rather strays or wild animals. Dogs and cats roamed around the settlements without one particular owner, yet different children and families fed and took care of them. Other animals, like spiders and lizards, were creatures that children encountered as they walked along paths or explored their natural surroundings. Furthermore, animals like chickens and pigs were livestock that belonged to the household but mostly fulfilled subsistence purposes for families. Nevertheless, children were drawn by animals and they interacted in playful ways. I observed Ester carrying a cat around and chasing after it when it tried to escape. I watched Fernanda as she poured water on a chick and said that she was bathing it. Some children were rough with animals, others were tender, but in all instances, children seemed to be entertained and enjoyed animals' reactions to their petting, prodding, and handling.

Crafts. The term "arts and crafts" tends to conjure up images of colorful paper, scissors, markers, and paint that teachers or parents provide children for pedagogical and ludic purposes. This was not the necessarily the nature of the children's crafts (4%) I observed; children had limited access to craft materials outside of school, but they were still entertained by leftover pieces of construction paper, pencils, pens, their school notebooks, and sometimes coloring or activity books. Instances in which children

participated in crafts were organized by children themselves. During downtimes either in their classrooms or at home, children would open up their notebook to a blank page and draw shapes and figures freely. If they had access to colors, they colored in their drawings. In very rare occasions, children had materials specifically intended for arts and crafts. For example, one day after school, I watched as Sandra shared colored pencils with her older brother and they both colored in their coloring books. Given the limited formal spaces and opportunities for child-centered activity in these communities, other than school, the few opportunities that children found to scavenge for materials and engage in crafts seemed particularly striking.

Music play. Children engaged in music play in 3% of play instances. Not only did children participate in signing games they learned in school, but they also engaged in spontaneous singing as they went about their day, walking home or fetching water. Importantly, communal dancing and singing were essential cultural practices and children joyfully participated in these activities. Children and adults gathered, and as drums and reed flutes played, children held hands interpreting different traditional songs and dances, laughing, and enjoying the social interaction. That said, because much of the cultural singing and dancing occurred after dark, my observations of individual children, which occurred during daylight, did not capture the moments. Thus, it is likely that the frequency of music play I documented actually underestimates how much children actually engaged in musical activities.

Play categories according to schooling status. Preschoolers and children not yet enrolled in school engaged in all of the categories of play reported; however, there were some differences between the groups that are worth noting (see Figure 5.5). Twenty-eight

percent (28%) of preschool children's play involved object play compared to 46% of the play instances recorded for their peers not in school. Given that children not enrolled in school had more time to move about their household and the vicinity, they had more opportunities to encounter objects to incorporate into their play. By contrast, preschoolers engaged in physical play during 32% of play instances recorded compared to only 17% for children not enrolled in school. This is difference was likely due to a number of reasons, including the fact that children who attended school had a greater number of peers that could engage with them in physical activities like chasing, swimming, and climbing trees and the fact that, the older children were, the further away from the household they went which provided them more opportunities for large motor movement.

Preschool children engaged in somewhat more teasing, foraging, and humor and R&T; children not in school were recorded engaging in slightly more (16%) than preschool children (11%). These differences between the groups were likely due both to developmental differences and differences in the specific settings of children's play. For example, R&T required more physical strength and dexterity, which preschool children would likely possess to a greater extent than younger children who were not yet enrolled in school. Children not involved in school played more with objects which also provided opportunities for symbolic, pretend play. Differences in play based on school and community are discussed in the next section.

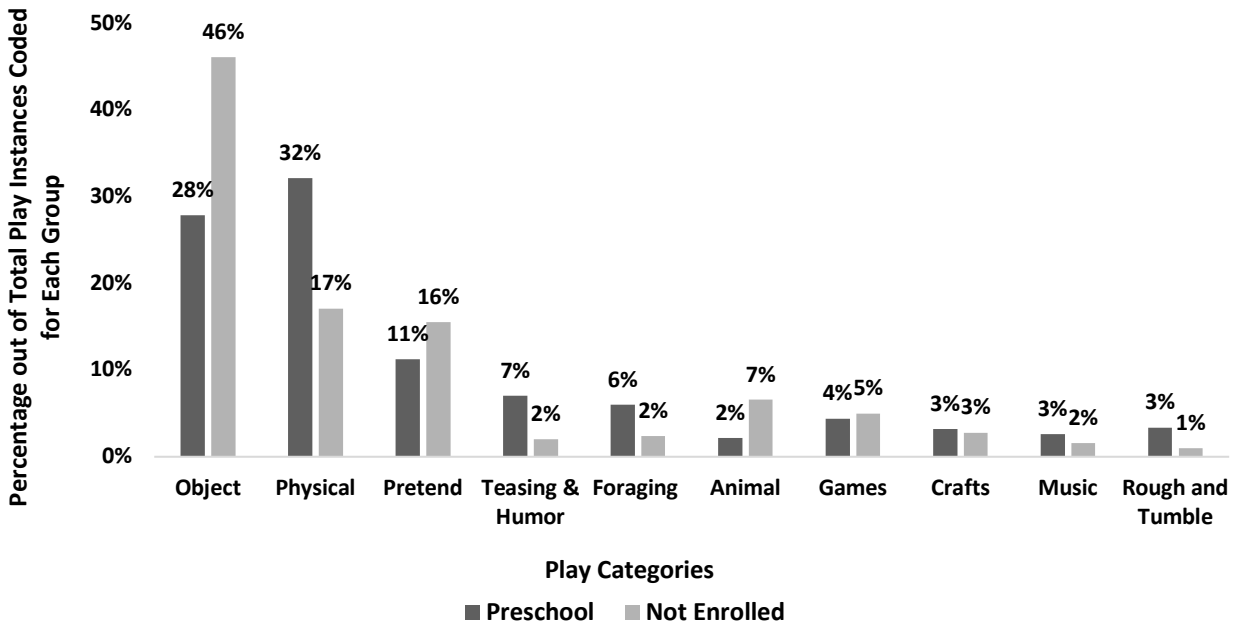


Figure 5.5. Frequency (%) of play types by schooling status across the different research sites.

Play differences by research site and school. When looking at play more closely across the three research sites, we see that there were differences in the frequency of play documented in each site (see Figure 5.6). Play occurred least often in Ableizhi (19%) compared to Katanzama (39%) and Gotsezhi (41%). A potential way to explain these differences is by considering the interactions that these communities have had with non-indigenous, Western culture. As the most remote site, children and families in Ableizhi have had limited interactions with the majority Colombian culture, which may mean that fewer play and child-focused activities have been introduced into this context. Although teachers do employ playful forms of learning into instruction, families tend to live far from the school setting, and children's behaviors during out of school time are constrained by the opportunities and space (or lack thereof) for play available in family compounds. By contrast, children in both Katanzama and Gotsezhi have had extensive and substantial encounters with mainstream Colombian culture—including other non-

indigenous children—and formal education and are both established in settings where non-indigenous and indigenous activities are constantly interacting, which likely increases the opportunities for play. In terms of the physical setting, both Katanzama and Gotsezhi are established in big open spaces where children can easily go from home to school and beyond.

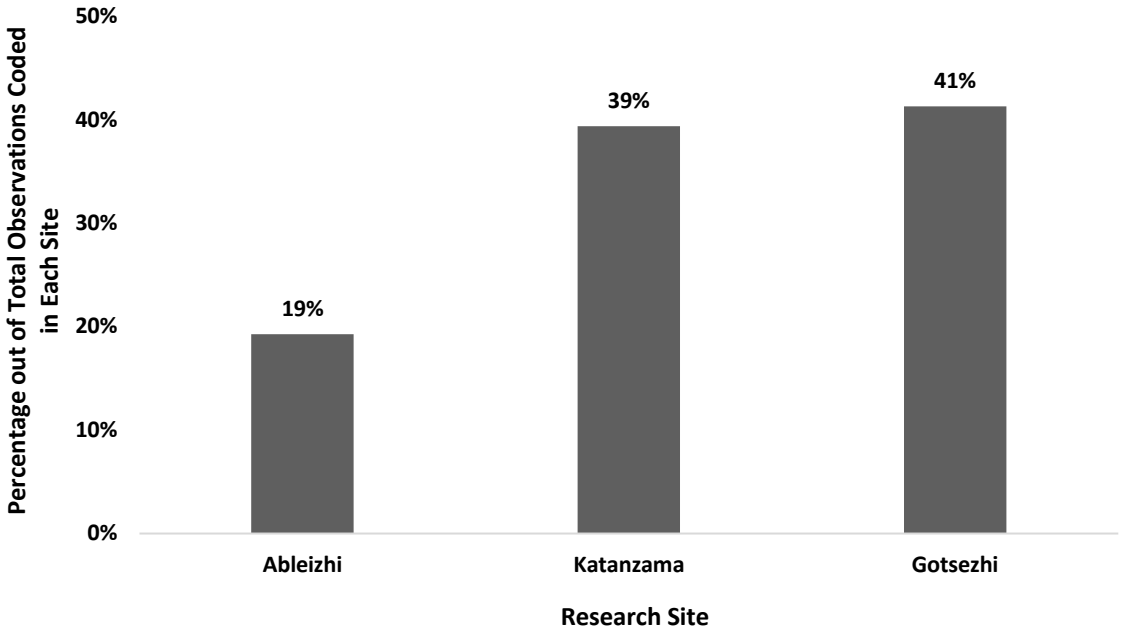


Figure 5.6 Frequency (%) of play in each of the research sites.

These differences are further elucidated when looking at the frequency of play for children who attend school versus those who are not yet enrolled in school (see Figure 5.7). Children not in school played almost twice as often as preschool children in Ableizhi and Katanzama, but they played about the same in Gotsezhi. As has been discussed, children not enrolled in school had somewhat less constrained time available for play; therefore, it is not surprising that they played more than school children in Ableizhi and Katanzama. However, the difference may also reflect a more rigid separation between younger children who do not attend school and older ones who have

more school and home responsibilities. In Katanzama in particular, the community had also more explicitly prohibited play for school children. By contrast, in Gotsezhi, there may be less of a distinction in what is expected of children enrolled in school and those not enrolled in school, and therefore, less of a difference in how much time each group is able to spend playing.

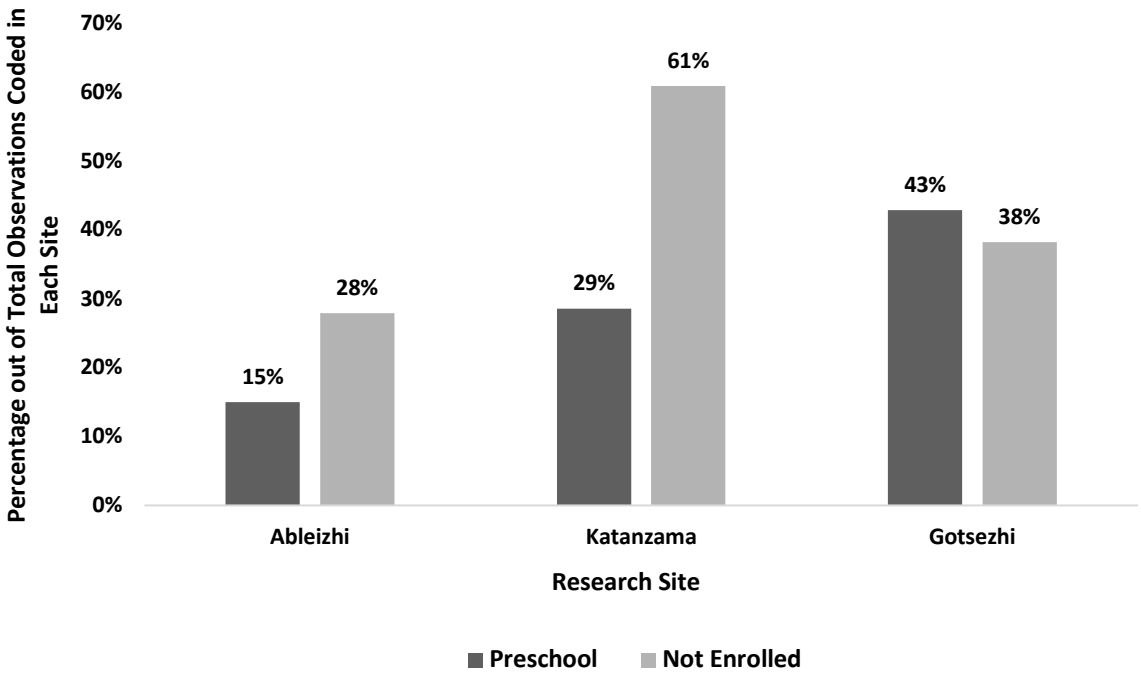
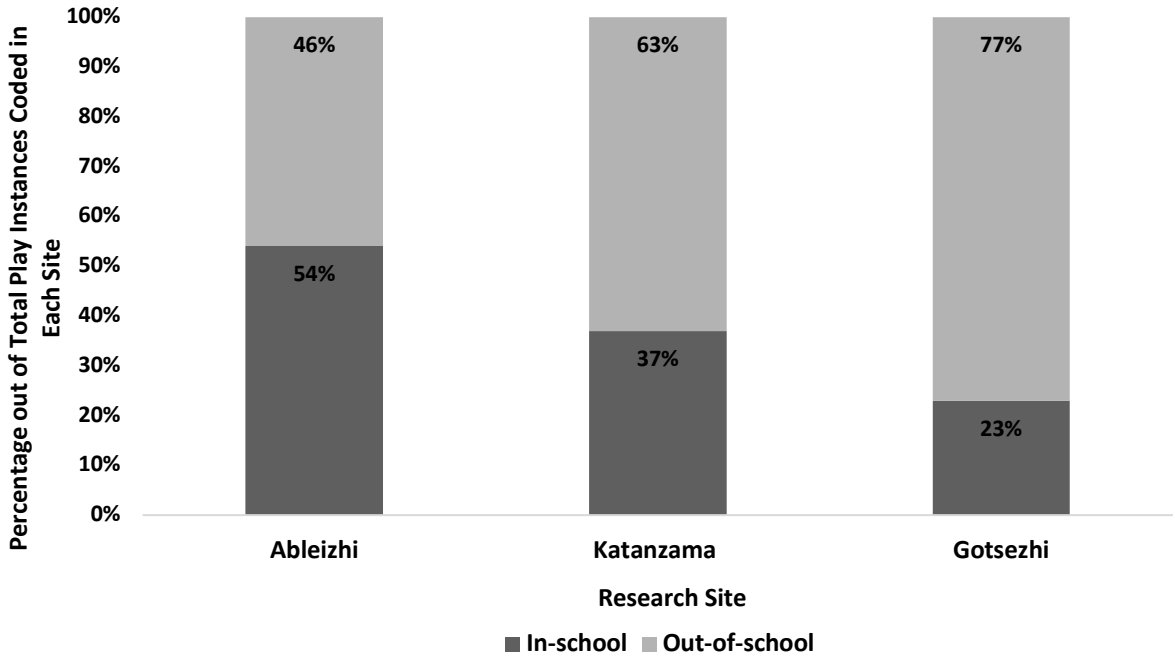


Figure 5.7 Frequency (%) of play by schooling status in each of the research sites.

A different image of the differences by research site emerges when we look at play within the school environment, and specifically during instructional activities (see Figures 5.8 and 5.9). For preschoolers, more than half of play instances (54%) in Ableizhi occurred during school hours and 55% of those were during formal instructional activities. Teachers in Ableizhi intentionally incorporated play into their instruction, and this seemed to be reflected in the opportunities that students had to engage in play in school. Although this was the community that had the lowest frequency of play, school

seemed to be a place where the frequency of play was increasing. Thirty-seven (37%) percent of play behaviors in Katanzama occurred during school hours but only 8% of those occurred during formal instructional activities, and this seemed consistent with the limits on play in school that the community expressed. About a quarter (23%) of play instances in Gotsezhi occurred in school and 41% of those involved formal instruction. In Gotsezhi, play is accepted in school and although teachers incorporate it into teaching, it is often constrained by more formal forms of instruction, limited classroom space and resources, and high preschool enrollment (close to 40 children).



5.8 Frequency (%) of play observed in-school vs. out-of-school time in each research site.

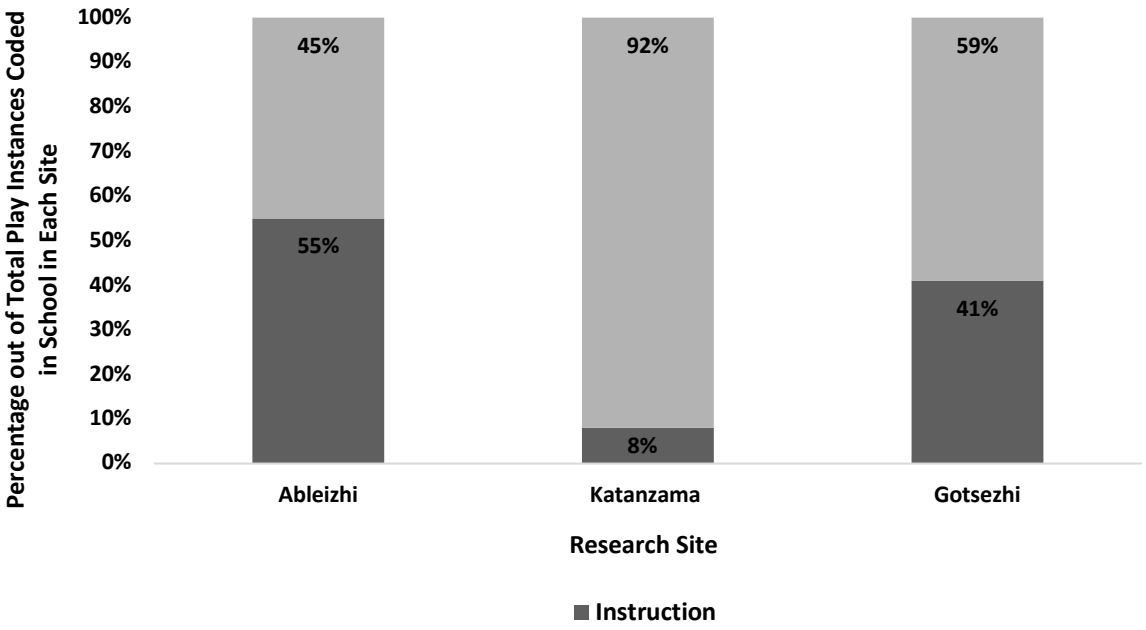


Figure 5.9 Frequency (%) of play observed during instructional time vs. other school time in each research site.

The results of the frequency of play by community and school illustrated how play was affected by broader community factors and by the negotiations between teachers and community members about play in school. Furthermore, the findings demonstrated that not only did the school context matter for informal opportunities for play (i.e., children playing during breaks) but that teachers' incorporation of formal play opportunities within instruction, such as allowing free play time with building blocks, using music and singing for engagement, and providing toys and manipulatives during lessons mattered for children's participation in play.

Gender. Another relevant factor to consider when exploring children's play was gender. Given community beliefs about expected behaviors for girls and boys, it was reasonable to expect some differences among the two groups. However, when looking at the overall frequency of play, girls and boys played about the same across research sites (see Figure 5.10).

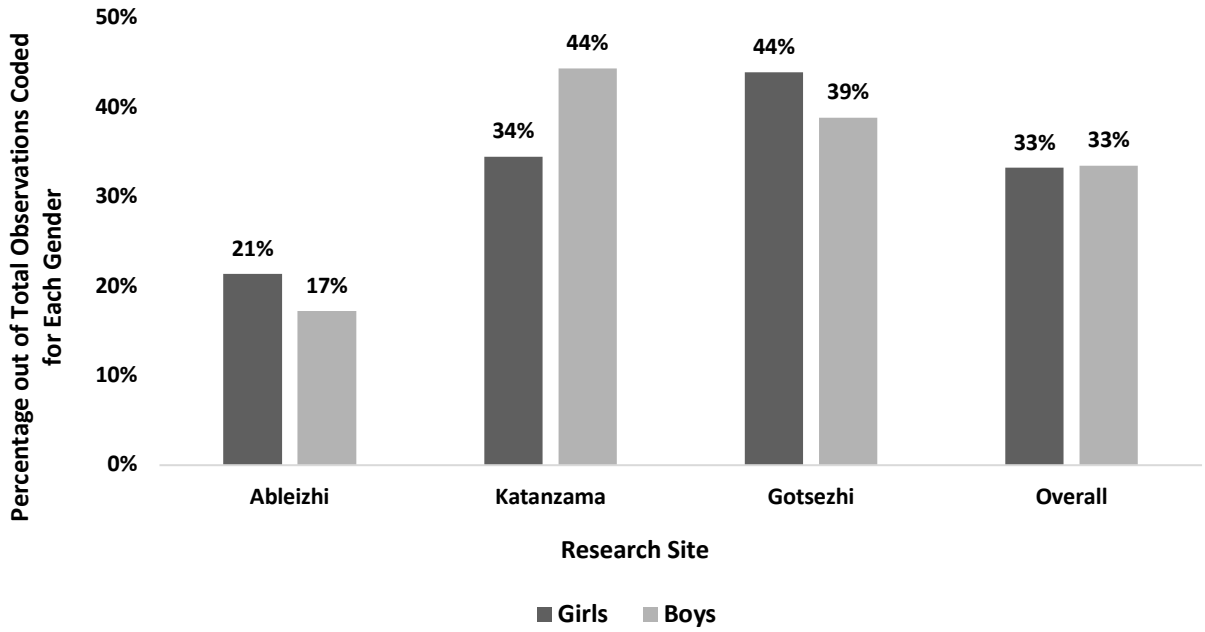


Figure 5.10. Frequency (%) of play by gender in each of the research sites and overall.

Similarly, girls and boys only differed slightly in the types of play they tended to engage in (see Figure 5.11). Boys participated in physical, foraging, and R&T more than girls; girls participated in pretend, teasing and joking, games, crafts, and singing more than boys. These are not pronounced differences in play types between girls and boys, but they do seem to coincide with prior research that finds boys engaging in more physical play while girls engaging in more social types of play.

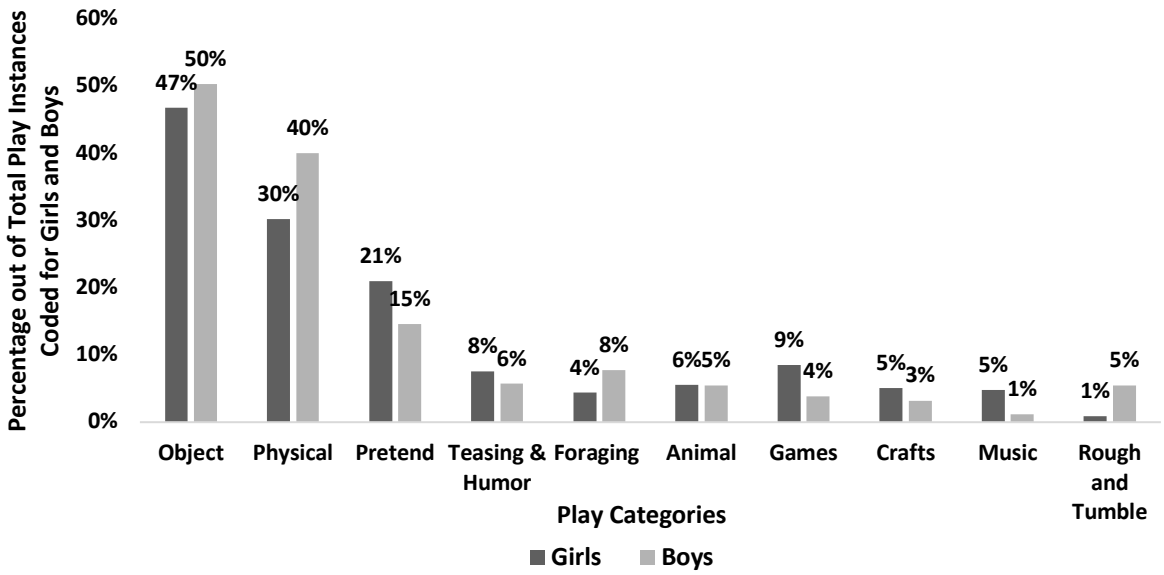


Figure 5.11 Frequency (%) of play types by gender across the different research sites.

Discussion

I set out to document children's play activities within the flow of their daily routines. Determining how children spend their time and how play fits within the freedoms and constrains of their daily lives, helps us better understand the nature of their play behaviors and the factors that shape it. The findings demonstrated that children participated in a variety of daily activities. Social interaction and play were the most common childhood activities, which tended to co-occur. Results also showed that children's play was diverse and more common than other activities documented, including instruction, work, and maintenance. The frequency of play in girls and boys was similar, and more meaningful differences were apparent in the types of play girls and boys engaged in most often. Finally, there were some notable differences across research sites in the frequency of play of preschoolers compared to children not enrolled in school, in the amount of time preschoolers played during school compared to out-of-school hours, and in the frequency of play during formal instructional activities. These

differences can be explained in part by the children's cultural context and community expectations.

Daily Activities as Shaped by the Cultural Context

Analyses of children's daily time budgets demonstrated that, children participated in a number of activity types that were expected given prior research (i.e., play, instruction, work, self-maintenance, and observations) and also engaged in behaviors that were not expected at the outset of the study but nevertheless, surfaced in spot observations (i.e., social interactions, unoccupied time, travel, technology and book use).

Overall, children tended to engage in flexible, play behaviors and social interactions with greater frequency than any other activity, which seemed to contrast with the beliefs and attitudes expressed by parents and teachers about what their priorities were for children. However, the variety and frequency of children's daily activities during discretionary time appeared to be largely shaped by the independence and autonomy children are afforded in their communities (Fouts et al., 2016; Larson & Verma, 1999; Veitch et al., 2006). Although there are cultural expectations about their daily activities (e.g., attend to school responsibilities, take care of their personal needs, and contribute to the household), how and when this happens seems largely determined by children's personal motivation. This is a theme that is well-documented in prior research on the cultural influences on children's use of time in small-scale, indigenous communities. For example, given the primacy of adult activities, the expectations that children will be self-sufficient early in development, and the limited adult oversight, Gaskins (1999) found that "many of a young child's activities [in a Mayan village] are determined by the child's own interests and motivations, as well as by her own understandings of cultural expectations and restraints" (p. 35). Larson and Verma (1999)

also found that in nonindustrial, rural settings, children spend large portions of their time in discretionary, leisure activities.

The idea that children's autonomy shaped the nature of their activities was further illustrated by the distinct experiences of preschoolers and younger children not enrolled in school. While preschoolers had 5-6 hours of their day that were constrained to the school context and the responsibilities and limitations that correspond to this setting, children not enrolled in school had much more freedom to participate in play and social interactions. That said, even within the school context, the limited amount of time dedicated exclusively to instruction meant that school children engaged in other informal activities, including play, in their classrooms.

Children's participation in work obligations also seemed to be determined by the interaction between community and family priorities and children's independence. Although work activities entailed a minor percentage of how children actually spent their time, as has been recorded in prior research (e.g., Gaskins, 1999), it held a central place in the community, in children's own sense of what was expected of them, and parents' view of how children should spend their time. As I learned in parent interviews, discussed in the next chapter, it was not so much about how much time children spent in work but rather that they completed the tasks that were assigned to them prior to engaging in play and other self-directed activities.

In addition to children's independence, the emergent categories of social interactions and unoccupied time reflected the cultural context of their communities and the behavioral patterns of adults. When not involved in daily work tasks, adults in the communities spend much of their time in social gatherings (e.g., as women weave bags in

groups or as the community makes decisions together) and in quiet contemplation, and as children learn the rhythms of their communities, they seem to emulate these behaviors. First, the social nature of children's activities seems to reflect both the availability of social partners (e.g., siblings and extended family, neighbors, and classmates) and the inclination to seek out these peers to share in their daily activities. Second, children's comfort with apparent idleness and passing time perhaps reveals that children have internalize the value their community places on stillness and contemplation.

Finally, the emergent categories of technology and book use, although not as frequent, seems to demonstrate changes to the traditional activities typically recorded among indigenous populations. A small but growing body of literature on indigenous children's technology use shows that access to technological innovations is limited in aboriginal contexts but has the potential to increase access to knowledge and resources. Likewise, children's access to and use of books—depicting both local indigenous and non-indigenous life—promises to be significant for preserving local language and knowledge as well as developing academic literacy. To my knowledge, no study on young indigenous children's time budgets has specifically documented their use of books and technology. However, it may be critical to document these types of child-centered activities as we try to understand the lived experiences of children who are growing up in a changing world that is ever more connected by information and technology.

Play Activities as Cultural Learning

Within the context of children's daily activities, play emerged as a frequent activity. Play can be a form of sociocultural learning and a way children can prepare to be adults in their communities (Garvey, 1990; Lancy, 2016a); and although not actively

promoted or valued by adults, children nevertheless engaged in various forms of play. Analyses demonstrated that children's play was diverse, with the most common play types being object, physical, and pretend play, common play activities that have also been observed in previous research (e.g., Gaskins, 2000; Lancy, 2016a).

Object play facilitates children's exploration of their physical, cultural, and social world, and as was observed in this study, is one of the most regularly documented activities in play research. Children in the study had limited play-specific objects but had access to a plethora of natural materials, tools, and household objects that they incorporated into their play. Human artifacts are the "stuff" of culture and when studying play through a sociocultural perspective, children's curiosity and energy in exploring and utilizing objects in play also serves as form of "decoding information [about their culture] embedded in objects" (Lancy, 2016a, p. 177).

Physicality was central to the way children navigated their environment—as they walked long distances, crossed rivers, and engaged in labor—and physical play was motivated by the demands and thrills of their surroundings. Physical play in this sense seemed to point to a deeper motivation than simple physical exertion or seeking of risk or excitement. Children had the opportunity to explore the affordances of their environment, test their "bodily possibilities and limitations through interactions with their physical, social and cultural surroundings," and "embody experiences about themselves and their surroundings" (Gurholt & Sanderud, 2016, p. 8-9).

Children's participation in pretend play also seemed to be tied to their exploration of the roles and activities they are likely to fulfill as adults. As observed in other small-scale societies, much of children's pretend involved work-themed play (Boyette, 2016;

Fouts et al., 2016; Gaskins, 2000; Lancy, 2016a). Although work-themed play in indigenous contexts does not necessarily involve the fantasy elements observed in children's pretense in other cultural contexts (Whitebread & Basilio, 2013), it still appears to involve the imagination and children's adaptation of real life into flexible and intrinsically enjoyable playful activities. Lancy (2016) explains,

> Children's make-believe may closely replicate the scenes of village life but does not do so slavishly. There is invention in the roles assigned, in the props used, in the script followed, and, importantly, children may 'twist' the tale…Fortes notes "the Tale child's play mimesis is never simple and mechanical reproduction; it is always imaginative construction based on the themes of adult life (1970:475)." (p. 179)

As with children's daily activities, emergent themes in play pointed to unique aspects of the cultural context. For example, foraging play reflected activities that children might observe and engage in with adults; although in other contexts it might entail work, when done for amusement and enjoyment, foraging becomes another way in which children employ themes of adult life in their play. Children's animal play occurred not with domesticated pets but with wild animals and livestock—that is, with animals encountered in the natural flow of community life.

Throughout observations children rarely interacted with adults in play, which is a pattern that has been observed in similar small-scale societies (e.g., Fouts et al., 2016; Kazemeini & Pajoheshgar, 2013; Lancy, 2016b). When children played near their home or school, adults were present but did not engage with children in their play. When children went beyond the immediate community—to a river or a particular fruit tree—they did so without adult oversight. Rather, children served as companions for each other. Older children might be tasked with looking after younger siblings and mixed-aged

groups allowed for younger children to join older peers in adventures that took them away from the household. Lancy (2016a) described similar observations,

> children are far more likely to be in the company of peers than parents. Weisner argues that 'children care for other children [under a mother's or other adults' management] within indirect chains of support' (1996b:308, emphasis added; see also Rogoff 1981:31). Toddlers are managed by slightly older siblings who are, in turn, guided by adolescents. Adults, meanwhile, serve as rather distant 'foremen' for activities. (p. 182)

Few differences between boys and girls were observed, but overall, girls and boys played similar amounts of time. This was in contrast with beliefs expressed by some adults that boys played more than girls. One potential explanation for this is that boys tended to engage in more physical play or outwardly identifiable forms of play while girls tended to engage in social types of play that may not have been as readily identified by adults. Furthermore, given that these socities tend to be male-centered and there are gender differences in community discourse, girls can go unnoticed or unseen by adults.

Differences in play patterns did emerge between the communities, based on cultural differences, experiences with non-indigenous society, and schooling. For example, although Ableizhi was the most remote with lowest overall play frequency, it was also the site where a greater proportion of play occurred in school and during instructional time. By comparison, Katanzama, the most accessible and the site with more frequent (although recent) interactions with non-indigenous individuals and organizations, had the least frequent instances of play, likely due to the community's desire to limit play in school.

Limitations

Although meaningful, the results are also constrained by the limitations of the study design, including sample size, sample selection, and participant observation

methods. Having a small convenience sample certainty limits the generalizability of the findings. The children and families who participated in observations had a level of comfort with me—an outside researcher—and the research process that may point to differences between them and others in their communities. In addition, the small sample of children also means that the data available to analyze were limited and perhaps not representative of the larger population of children. However, conducting spot observations is intense and time-consuming; having a small sample size, that nevertheless was variable in terms of age, schooling, and gender, allowed me to produce high-quality, detailed records of children's behaviors within the scope and timeframe of the study.

A related limitation is that I conducted my observations during daylight hours, which means I did not gather data on time use after dark. In addition to nighttime sleep and household chores children completed before and after dark, I did not capture children's participation in rituals, dances, and community gatherings that tended to take place at night. Likewise, there were certain rituals that took place in private and I was not permitted to observe. This means that the results do not include children's participation in rites and celebrations, and underestimate playful behaviors that may occur during these activities (e.g., play during traditional dances). With continued research in the communities, nocturnal observations would complement the findings of the present study.

When I followed children, their conversations were not always accessible to me, either because I could not hear them or because they were speaking in the local language and I was unable to follow up with them to ask what their discussions entailed. This restricted my understanding of some play contexts, especially when children were

pretending or joking. A lot can be gathered from children observations and with multiple observations of similar behaviors where I was able to talk to children about their daily activities and play, I am confident that the interpretations are robust. However, future research could also address this by using photo or video elicitation interview methods with children to follow up regarding particular behaviors and contexts. This could also include auto-driven media elicitation approaches, in which children themselves capture photos or videos of behaviors and activities during their day that they deem of interest. These methods can support child-researcher communication and provide children power over data collection and interpretation (Ford et al., 2017; Pyle, 2013).

As an outsider to the communities, an adult, and a researcher, my presence in the community and among the children surely changed children's environment and may have influenced their behaviors, those of families, and teachers. Children were aware of my presence and saw me taking notes, photos, and videos of them; when they asked, I told them that I was documenting their behaviors because I wanted to learn more about their activities, play, and learning. Over time, children were less concerned with my presence, and by the time I conducted individual child observations, it was not apparent that children were changing their behaviors for my sake. They focused more on their interactions with peers and whenever I was engaged in their activities, it was within the flow of actions that were already taking place. In case of families and teachers, given the demands of their daily tasks and responsibilities, adults rarely paid attention to me. When I joined in conversations or invited them to participate in interviews and shared more about myself or my research interests and procedures, they seemed interested in sharing

insights from their experiences but not terribly preoccupied with changing their already occupied routines.

There are myriad ways in which I could have influenced the research context and failed to capture the entire breadth and depth of children's cultures, lives, and activities. It is not my claim that the present findings are generalizable to all children in a community or ethnic group, but I do believe that the results provide insights into some patterns of behavior that surface in each community. Spot observations have been shown to be an accurate and reliable method for documenting the range and frequency of children's behaviors (Larson & Verma, 1999). I further corroborated these observations using other sources of evidence, such as fieldnotes of sustained observations and interviews at each research site.

Conclusion

Observations of individual children showed that, as Larson and Verma (1999) described, communities "shape children's and adolescents' use of time through the inculcation of values and goals, through positive or negative sanctions they attach to different activities and companions, and through the structure they give to the day, the week, and the year. Often, these cultural norms may apply differently according to a children's gender, age, or other social markers" (p. 704). Children's play was influenced by the ecological, cultural systems within which they are enveloped. As I observed, children engaged in play throughout the day as they attended to their responsibilities and explored their environment; therefore, participating in their traditional roles and expectations while also finding the time and opportunity to play. Within this context, adults have an important role in directly and indirectly managing the spaces, materials,

and opportunities children have to play. In the next chapter, I explore how parents' theories about their culture, childhood, and child development inform their beliefs and attitudes about play and their reactions to children's involvement in play activities.

CHAPTER 6

Parents' Beliefs and Attitudes about Play Across Research Sites

Children's involvement in play is shaped by the activities and behaviors that are fostered or prohibited by their cultures and parents are often the "gatekeepers" facilitating, encouraging, or prohibiting children's participation in play (Veitch, Bagley, Ball, & Salmon, 2006, p. 384). Gaskins, Haight, and Lancy (2007) have argued that play is either culturally curtailed, accepted, or cultivated by adults in a society. According to Gaskins et al. (2007), in some pre-industrial societies, play is curtailed, that is, tolerated but believed to be of little value and certain types even culturally discouraged. In other pre-industrial societies, play is accepted as a way of keeping children busy and out of the way, but it is not encouraged by adults. Finally, in industrialized societies play is mostly cultivated; adults encourage play and engage with children around play activities (Gaskins et al., 2007; Whitebread et al., 2012). Although these classifications might oversimplify tensions within societies about the value of and response to children's play, they do point to differences in the way that adults might view play depending on larger social and cultural factors.

What is evident from the literature, whether looking within or between cultures, is that whether parents cultivate, accept, or discourage play is largely based on their cultural belief systems about childhood and child development, which are influenced by the values, traditions, and priorities of their communities—authors have called these belief systems, ethnotheories (Gaskins, 1996; Gaskins et al., 2007). These theories influence parents' beliefs and attitudes about play, the opportunities that they provide (or don't) for children to engage in play, and whether or not and how they engage with children in play

(Gaskins, 1996; Gaskins et al., 2007; Kazemeini & Pajoheshgar, 2013; Lancy, 2016b). Even within communities, however, parents' beliefs can vary depending on their own experiences, goals, and educational experiences.

In this study, I conducted interviews with parents in order to understand the cultural and individual influences that informed their attitudes about play. I was particularly interested in exploring if and how parents' own educational experiences might have informed their views on play and their engagement with children around play. Through these interviews, I addressed the following questions:

1) What are parents' beliefs and attitudes about play in indigenous communities of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta?
2) What is the relationship between parent education, beliefs about play, and the opportunities that children have to play in these communities?

Some of the themes in parents' attitudes about play that are highlighted in this chapter have been discussed or alluded to in previous chapters. However, here I focus on representing parents' thoughts about play across the different research sites and exploring the cultural factors that inform their thinking about play. What I found was that there is no one monolithic account to represent parental views on play. Parents talked about the concerns of their communities and of their own about play, yet also described appropriate times for children to play and even potential benefits of children's play. The variability between and within parents' responses demonstrated that play is sometimes curtailed, and other times accepted. And although parents hardly encourage or engage with children in play, there are indications that there may be generational changes in this respect.

Methods

Participants

Thirty parents (N = 30, 10 from each research site) participated in semi-structured interviews. With the help of an interpreter, parents of children who attended the local school were invited verbally to participate in the interview. With those parents who agreed to participate, a time to conduct the interview was scheduled. Both mothers (n = 20) and fathers (n = 10) were recruited and participated. In two cases in Ableizhi and one case in Katanzama, I interviewed both father and mother from the same family. In cases in which both father and mother were interviewed, their interviews were conducted separately. Most parents who participated had children enrolled in preschool; however, parents with children in other primary grades were also included. Because birth records and information about age are not systematically kept, many parents could only estimate their age and that of their children. Parents who participated ranged in age from early 20's to late 40's and all had multiple children of various ages.

Procedures

Interviews were conducted in a location that was convenient for parents and was logistically feasible to arrange. In Katanzama and Gotsezhi, where families lived short distances from the school, parents were interviewed in their home or another comfortable place around the community (e.g., under a shady tree); in Ableizhi, where families were spread out at longer distances from the school along difficult trails, parents were interviewed at the school in the open-air kitchen.

During interviews, parents were asked about children's participation in play activities (e.g., Have you observed your children playing? What do your children do

when they play?), their community's beliefs about play (e.g., What are the traditional [ethnic group name] views about play in children's lives?), and their own attitudes about play (e.g., What do you think about your children participating in play) as well as more general beliefs and attitudes about child development (e.g., What do you think your children need to grow up healthy and successful?) and formal schooling (What value does school have for your children?). In order to understand how formal education may have shaped parents' beliefs about play, I also asked parents about their level of education and educational experiences. When appropriate, I asked clarifying and follow-up questions about their responses and the terms being used in the interview (e.g., "Can you say more about that?" "What do you mean by…?") to ensure that my understanding of their responses was complete.

Interviews were conducted in Spanish with the help of interpreters from each of the communities who translated from the local language to Spanish. Parents who felt comfortable communicating in Spanish responded directly in Spanish, but most parents preferred to communicate through an interpreter. Given that the term "play" could be understood differently given the diverse cultural and language contexts, I worked with interpreters to ensure that terms employed in translation were understood locally (e.g., in Kogi the term "jokldekshi" was used which translated to the verb "to play"). Interview responses indicated that parents interpreted the terms used in the interview questions as referring to behaviors characterized by spontaneity, positive affect, flexibility, and engagement. The length of interviews varied from 30-60 minutes. With parents' consent, interviews were recorded and were transcribed in Spanish using an online transcription service.

Data Analysis

Interviews were analyzed using MAXQDA Standard 12 qualitative data analysis software. I conducted emic, thematic coding of interviews, allowing the patterns in parents' beliefs and attitudes about play to emerge from the data rather than imposing preexisting categories or coding protocols. As I read through each transcript, I applied a descriptive label (Charmaz, 2006; Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003) in English to responses that described children's play behaviors (e.g., "they swim in the river" received the label "children engage in physical play) or reflected a belief or attitude about play (e.g., "play can open the mind" received the label "intellectual benefits of play"). Parents' responses often reflected several ideas about play; in these cases, responses received multiple labels to help capture the complexity of responses (e.g., "children should play where I can watch them" received the labels "designated place to play" and "adult oversight of play").

Once all interviews for each community were coded, I wrote an analytic memo in English synthesizing the descriptive labels into categories that reflected themes from the data, illustrated by excerpts from the interviews. Themes were also compared against the observation fieldnotes and individual child observations I conducted. Once all thirty interviews were analyzed, I wrote a final memo that summarized the themes across the three communities and highlighted ones that emerged across all three research sites; those that were perhaps not as pervasive but indicated a unique set of parental beliefs in the communities; and/or provided counterevidence for other themes. Not many differences between communities surfaced consistently in parents' responses but those that did are described.

I draw from the final memo to report on key themes in the Results section. As I describe the findings below, I signal the pervasiveness of different themes but focus on characterizing parents' responses as opposed to quantifying them. It is important to note that the data presented here have undergone several layers of interpretation: the translation from the original local language in which most parents communicated to Spanish by the local interpreter; the analytical process of translating responses from Spanish to English labels and themes; the meaning that I made of the patterns I observed, recognizing that I hold my own cultural and academic frames but informed by extended observations in communities; and the meaning that the reader of this chapter makes given her own context. Therefore, the aim here is to provide insights into parents' responses while recognizing that community and parent beliefs are more complex than can be captured by this synthesis of the findings and the limitations of language and cultural frames. Nevertheless, supported by the evidence presented, insights drawn from parents' interviews contribute to our understanding of their beliefs about play.

Results

Data analyses of interviews revealed multifaceted parental ideas about play. As discussed in further detail below, results showed a generalized belief that play and playful behaviors were not typically encouraged in their communities, and most parents discussed some concerns about children's participation in play. However, parents also expressed that they allowed their children to play within limits and some named potential benefits. In the following sections, I describe the complex themes that emerged in parents' responses and illustrate them using excerpts from interviews. The excerpts are presented in English and Spanish. I begin by describing the types of play activities that

parents referred to when they discussed play. I then present community and individual parents' concerns about play; followed by parents' beliefs about when play is appropriate, and finally, parents' beliefs about the benefits of play. I end by exploring the relationship between parent schooling and their beliefs about play.

Children's Play Activities

In an effort to establish how parents understood the concept of play and what they thought about when discussing their children's engagement in play, I asked parents to describe their children's play activities. Most parents shared that they had observed their children play and were able to describe a variety of play activities, as I also found in my observations. As illustrated by the excerpts below, parents described their children participating in physical activities like running and swimming as well as playing games and sports, constructing and pretending.

J: Mi niña hace muchas cosas. Tiene muchos juegos diferentes. Hacer un conjunto, trae todo los materiales y objetos de toda clase, [una colección] de pepitas, otra de piedras, o algunas cosas, pero hacer unos conjuntos. Y después moverse. En un segundo está acá, y otro segundo allá, o sea, moverse, en todo eso, en un espacio, moverse todo.[5]

[J: My daughter does a lot of things. She has many different kinds of games. She makes collections, brings all the materials and objects of all kinds, [a collection] of seeds, another of rocks, and some things, but making collections. And then she moves. One second she is here and another second she is over there, that is, moving, everywhere, in a space. She moves everywhere.]

C: Van al río, que están todo el tiempo nadando. Les gusta mucho el río. Y si no es el río entonces les gusta cantar las canciones que le enseñen el colegio, las ronda infantiles, bailar, las danzas tradicionales, practican entre ellos. Y esos son el tipo de juegos que hacen.

[C: "They go to the river, they are swimming the whole time. They like the river a lot. And if it's not the river, then they like to sing the songs that they teach them at school,

[5] Italicized text indicates direct quotations from parents' interviews. Translations in English are presented in brackets. These excerpts illustrate the themes that emerged in interviews and are representative of parents across the three research sites unless otherwise indicated.

the singing games, dancing, the traditional dances, they practice among themselves. And those are the kinds of games they do.]

D: Juegan con carros [de juguete], pero a veces les gusta jugar con tierra.
[D: They play with [toy] cars, but sometimes they like to play with dirt.]

M: Mi hijo coge un palo y lo ensilla, como que está ensillada la mula. Y luego dice, "Esa es mía, mi mula". Y lo amarra y corre con ese palito.

[M: My son takes a stick and mounts it, like he is mounting a mule. And then says, "That is mine, my mule." And he ties it and runs with the stick.]

Parents' descriptions of children's play activities were important for a number of reasons. First, they demonstrated that even though parents rarely engage with children during play and children often play away from adults, parents are still aware of children's behaviors. As parents go about their daily life in the community, they are also mindful of their children's activities and identify behaviors that are playful. Their diverse descriptions also indicate that although many parents referred to physical play activities like swimming, running, and playing soccer, their conceptions of play were broader than only physical play. Their focus on physical play is to be expected given that physical play was one of the more common play activities, as described in the previous chapter; however, parents' responses also reflected the diversity of play types children engaged in. Parents discussed children playing with objects, singing, and imitating adult life. It was within the context of children's diverse engagement in play that parents shared their community's reservations and their own concerns about the consequences of play.

Community Beliefs and Parents' Concerns about Play

Although parents were responding to my inquiries about play, it did not appear that this was the first time that they had thought or reflected on the concepts I was asking about. As communities that constantly meet and discuss daily affairs, including children's

behaviors, schooling, and discipline, when I asked parents about their community's beliefs about play, parents responded with what they thought to be the consensus from their knowledge of the community and prior discussions. Over half of parents shared that play was either not accepted or encouraged in their community and described it as an outsider or foreign conception of how children should be spending their time. For example, Benjamín, of Katanzama and father of a ten-year-old girl,[6] explained that his community did not accept play and that although play as an aspect of "civilization" (as he referred to life beyond the community) had found its way in through school, it was not embraced in other parts of what he referred to as "indigenous" life.

B: Muchas veces la parte indígena lo que es juego no lo acepta. Bueno aunque--porque hay muchas partes que el juego, la parte de civilización sí tiene que entrar en el colegio también, pero en la parte indígena no. Porque muchas veces eso [los juegos] son de ustedes, o sea, de los civilizados, no los Arhuacos.

[B: Many times the indigenous part does not accept what is play. Well although--because there are many parts that play, the part of civilization does have to enter the school too, but not in the indigenous part. Because many times those [games] are yours, that is, of the civilized, not the Arhuacos.]

In his response, Benjamín made a clear distinction between what he perceived as the way of life of his community and life outside of it. According to him, play and games belong outside of indigenous life, even if it exists side by side with other contexts in which play may enter the community, like school. Importantly, Benjamín was one of the parents who chose to conduct the interview in Spanish, and his use of the word "civilized" in this context is unlikely to refer to the more Western connotation meaning

[6] To contextualize parents' responses throughout the results, the first I introduce a parent, I provide information about their community and their child's age. Families had multiple children of varying ages; therefore, I provide the age of younger children who were the focus of this study.

"more advanced"; it is rather an adoption of a Spanish term that serves as a proxy to refer to an outsider or foreigner, like me.

Juan Manuel, of Gotsezhi and father of a six-year-old boy, explained that play—children being actively engaged in entertaining activities, as he described it—was not an idea that existed in indigenous culture and that parents would rather see their children participating in activities that contributed to the household.

JM: En la cultura indígena, en sí al juego, como lo vea como juego, no existe. Los niños cuando están en tiempo libre, siempre uno de los mayores, o uno, los enseña a buscar leña, a ayudar al papá, a la mamá en la casa si son niñas, a traer agua, a acompañarlo el padre cuando ellos salen a alguna parte.

[JM: "In the indigenous culture, play, what one might see as play, does not exist. When children have free time, one of the elders, or we, will teach them to look for wood, to help the father, or the mother at home if they are girls, to fetch water, or accompany the father when they go out somewhere.]

As illustrated by Juan Manuel's response, the belief that play was not accepted in the community was often accompanied by parents' explanations of cultural values, priorities, and the expectations for children's behaviors. Most parents discussed concerns or reservations about children's involvement in play. In particular, parents discussed the importance of being productive and not wasting time, concerns for children's safety and cleanliness, the belief that children's actions could have negative spiritual consequences in the future, and the generational changes they observed in children's engagement in play. I elaborate on parents' concerns in the following sections.

Importance of productivity. The concern for children's productivity was a widespread one, a value that parents desired to instill in their children as a way of life. The majority of parents shared their desire for children to be productive, contribute to the household, and to their community. Play was seen as getting in the way of children's

productivity. As Silvia, of Katanzama and mother of a six-year-old girl, explained, parents and leaders had gathered in a community meeting to discuss the issue of play and they agreed that they would rather see children (and in her example, girls) involved in what they saw as productive activities instead of play.

S: Esa misma conversación [acerca del juego] la tuvimos en Katanzama y el consenso fue que era mejor que las niñas estuviesen hilando, haciendo sus mochilas y cosiendo sus ropas. Que era mucho más productivo.

[S: That is the same conversation [about play] we had in Katanzama and the consensus was that it was better for the girls to be spinning (yarn), making their bags, and sewing clothes. That it was more productive.]

Silvia discussed girls in her response and the activities that her community typically deems appropriate female responsibilities (i.e., weaving and sewing). It was common for parents to discuss children's tasks according to what was expected for different genders, although more generally their focus was on children's productivity. Milena, of Ableizhi and mother of a six-year-old girl, described the various responsibilities that children needed to attend to rather than engaging in play.

M: No es todo el día jugar, sino que hacer algo. Al menos mirar a los marranos en su corral, o un buey, o animal que está amarrado. Al menos mirar allá, "Está bien. Ahí está". ...Eso es lo que ella hace, su responsabilidad que ella tiene. Al menos barrer, en lo que pueda hacer. Traer agua de aquella distancia a la casa. Eso es lo que tiene que hacer, las cosas sencillas.

[M: It's not play all day, rather do something. At least checking on the pigs in their pen, or the ox, or the animal that is tied up. At least checking, "It's okay. There it is."…That is what she does, her responsibility that she has. At least sweep, whatever she can do. Bring water from that distance to the house. That is what she has to do, simple things.]

From a young age, children were introduced to simple tasks that they could complete to help with the daily household chores and develop a sense of responsibility. Play, in contrast, was described as a waste of time or as distracting children from their

responsibilities. For example, when I asked about her community's beliefs about play, Ana, from Katanzama and mother of a six-year-old boy, responded,

A: Los niños no se les permite jugar; deben estar ocupados. No deben perder tiempo o meterse en problemas.

[A: Children are not allowed to play; they are supposed to be occupied. They should not be wasting time or getting in trouble.]

And not only were play activities seen as idle but also as getting in the way of children following directions when they were asked to complete a chore. When I asked Catalina, of Katanzama and mother of a ten-year-old girl, what she thought of children engaging in play, she said that children ignored commands when they were engrossed in play.

C: Porque los pelaos se dedican nada más es al juego y pendientes del juego y uno les va a mandar a hacer, "Vaya a hacer esto" y no quiere hacerlo sino pendiente del juego.

[C: Because kids are just dedicated to playing and paying attention to play and we tell them to do something, "Go do that," and they don't want to do it because they are paying attention to play.]

Concerns about safety and cleanliness. In addition to the focus on productivity, parents also discussed their worries about children getting hurt or dirty. Silvia described it as follows,

S: Jugar mucho puede ser perjudicial para los niños porque son inoficiosos. Es mejor tenerlos activos en otras cosas, porque incluso cuando están jugando se pueden lastimar, pueden salir heridos, no es bueno.

[S: Playing too much can be detrimental for children because they are unproductive. It is better to have them be active in other things, because when they are playing they can get hurt, they can come out injured, it is not good.]

Given their remote location and minimal access to medical care, physical injury was high on parents' list of concerns for their children. Thinking about children running around, climbing trees, or swimming in the river, raised parents' concerns for their safety. Antonia, mother of a five-year-old girl, and Martín, father of a five-year-old son, both

from Ableizhi, each described play scenarios in which they feared children could get hurt.

An: ¿Por qué no me gusta que las niñas jueguen, corran? Porque ellas corren, se caen y se fracturan. Por la salud.

[An: Why do I not like for the girls to play, run? Because they run, they fall and they get fractured. For the health.]

Ma: Si uno los deja en la libertad de hacer juegos, si hay, ¿qué tal si hay niños que se ahogan en los río? Por eso es que algunos de los padres dicen eso. Cuando en un futuro, ¿qué tal si se suben a un árbol, se cae, se parten la pierna? Entonce por eso, por evitar el problema. Por eso hay muchos que tienen esa la teoría, porque la cultura [creen] en una consecuencia, obvio. Porque si se parte una pierna, al final va a tener una consecuencia.

[Ma: If we give them the liberty of making games [play], what if there are children who drown in the river? That is why some of the parents say that. When in the future, what if they climb a tree, fall, and break a leg? Then that is why, to avoid a problem. That is why, there are many who have that theory, because the culture [believes] in a consequence, it's obvious. Because if they break a leg, in the end they will have a consequence.]

In addition, parents were concerned about children getting dirty during play. Children had limited changes of clothes that often had to be washed nightly for the next day, and parents worried that if children engaged in unsupervised play they would get hurt or dirty. Benjamín and Cecilia, of Gotsezhi and mother of a seven-year-old boy, explained their worries as follows:

B: Hemos hablado con los profesores, "mucho cuidado con esos jueguitos [marbles]," porque empiezan a jugar y se revuelcan por ahí, se ensucian y entonces la madre preocupada lavándole esa ropa. Entonces ya ve como más preocupación por esa parte.

[B: We have spoken to teachers and told them, 'be careful with those little games [marbles]," because they [children] begin playing and roll around somewhere, they get dirty and then the mother is worried washing the clothes. Then there is more worry on that part.]

Ce: No me gustaría que jugaran, ¿qué tal que se parten un brazo o se caen de un árbol? Hay que gastar plata para bajar [a la ciudad]. Mejor no. Con el profesor sí pueden jugar. Hay que estar bien pendiente si juegan algo pero aquí, pero arriba de un palo, tirarse de arriba, no.

[Ce: I would not like them to play. What if they break an arm or fall from a tree? We have to spend money to go down [to the city]. I rather not. With a teacher [watching], yes, they can play. We have to be very watchful if they are playing something, but up in a tree, or jumping from up there, no.]

As Cecilia explained, this concern about cleanliness reflected the hard work that it took to wash clothes by hand in the river and the limited availability of supplies, like soap, that were acquired in the city, a long, costly trek away from home. Of course, other childhood chores and tasks involved a level of danger (e.g., using machetes) or messiness (e.g., helping with the animals) but these were permissible given their utility as opposed to play that was typically not considered productive. That said, both Benjamín and Cecilia did concede that with proper oversight of a teacher, children could play, and this is a theme that I return to later in the results.

Spiritual consequences. Closely tied to the spiritual worldview of these communities, parents shared concerns about the long-term consequences that play could have for children. The belief that play could bring physical, social, and spiritual problems in the future was one that parents shared across communities and was tied to their beliefs that childhood experiences have long-term consequences for individuals as adults. Julian, of Ableizhi and father of a five-year-old son, explained that the belief of his community, as he understood it, was that play was not accepted because it brought negative consequences for children in the future.

J: La concepción del Kogui es que no hacemos juego porque es un problema en el futuro.

[J: The conception of the Kogui is that we don't play because that is a problem for the future.]

The indigenous groups of the Sierra Nevada placed great importance on individuals maintaining a physical and spiritual stillness and balance with other-than-human entities,

and parents feared that children's actions during play would affect their future health and personal relationships. Milena described the spiritual equilibrium that humans are expected to maintain and that engaging in play could make children forget this important lesson.

M: [Los niños] no deben jugar sino que estar quietos, para que no haya un cambio en el mundo. O sea, que tenemos que estar quietos para que el mundo quede quieto. O sea, el equilibrio…Jugar mucho es olvidar cosas, se olvidan las cosas. Lo que se olvida, las cosas que le enseñó mamá, lo que dijo el día, en la noche, en la mañana.

[M: [Children] should not play but be still, so there is no change in the world. We have to be very still, so the world can be still. That is, the equilibrium…Playing too much is to forget things, things are forgotten. What is forgotten, the things that the mother taught them, what she said in the day, in the night, in the morning.]

As illustrated by Milena's explanations, the stillness that individuals, including children were, expected to practice involved both physical (not moving) as well as cognitive (being mindful, not forgetting) components. Playful behaviors appeared to get in the way of both of these components and, as parents expressed, could lead to long-term consequences.

Parents referred to *mamos* as both warning against the possible negative consequences of play—from illness to marital problems—and leading rituals where children "confessed" to their actions during play to help prevent future misfortune. Diana, of Katanzama and mother of a three-year-old boy, for example, said that playing with dirt could lead to a stomachache and Juan Manuel explained that swinging on a rope could have consequences in adulthood.

D: Eso no lo permite el mamo, jugar con tierra. Dice que es malo, que les da dolor de estómago.

[D: The Mamo does not permit that, playing with dirt. He says that it is bad, that they will get a stomachache.]

JM: Porque el juego, si el niño juega, o sea el niño en su tiempo libre o en etapa de niñez, si ellos juegan, cuando ellos ya están grandes ya, ellos tienen que decir todo eso lo que hicieron cuando fueron niños. Eso se llama un trabajo interno tradicional con el mamo. Por ejemplo, yo pateo un balón o si yo pateo cualquier cosa, si yo colgué un lazo y comienzo como a columpiarme, después que ya yo soy adulto, a mí me trae una consecuencia.

[JM: Because play, if the child plays, that is, in their free time or in the childhood stage, if they play, when they are older, they have to say everything they did when they were children. That is called an internal traditional work with the mamo. For example, if I kick a ball or I kick anything, if I hang a rope and I begin to swing, after when I'm an adult, it will bring me a consequence.]

In their explanations, Diana and Juan Manuel were referring to more than the immediate consequences of children's actions. The connection between playing with dirt and a stomachache, is not a biological one per se but a spiritual one. Children's actions are interpreted as bothersome to any number of other-than-human entities that may cause these illnesses. Furthermore, parents explained a belief system that was largely communicated by *mamos*; as spiritual leaders, the *mamos* have great influence over parents' attitudes about play, but as discussed later, parents combine these spiritual beliefs with their own interpretations and priorities for their children.

Generational changes. A few parents reflected that things had changed from previous generations, and that even when children were discouraged from playing, they did so anyway. Verónica, of Ableizhi and mother of a seven-year-old boy, drew a distinction between the past and the present, implying that children in previous generations followed their parents' directions and did not play as much as children do today, and described that their own children did not listen when they were instructed not to play.

V: Lo que veo ahora es uno lo prohíbe mucho [el juego], pero los niños no escuchan. Hacen, actúan. Yo lo que veo que hay un cambio en el desarrollo de los niños. Aunque antes decían mucho [que no jugar], pero ahora ya los niños no entienden porque

alrededor de los niños miran muchas cosas. Siendo por eso pongo una disciplina, pero casi no lo escuchan. Porque mis dos niños ya casi no me escuchan. Porque hacen, hacen y tengo que tener la paciencia con ellos.

[V: What I see now is that we forbid [play] a lot, but children don't listen. They do, act. I see there is a change in the development of children. Although before they told us a lot [not to play], but now children don't understand because around them children see many things. That is why I impose a discipline, but they don't really listen. My two sons don't really listen to me. Because they do, do, and I have to have patience with them.]

Verónica's explanation raises a number of points. First, it highlights an interaction between parental commands and children's autonomy. The way that parents described their children's actions was matter-of-fact, as in, "this is the way things are now," pointing to a level of independence that parents provide their children. Parents see their responsibility to guide children but there is not necessarily a belief that they will control their actions. In this sense, children's disobedience is noted and believed to bring consequences for children (as described in the above section on spiritual beliefs) but there is also an implied notion that parents may not be able to prevent children's actions. Furthermore, parents' explanations seemed to point to a belief that childhood in communities is changing and that children's engagement in play is a demonstration of these changes. As Verónica explained, "children see many things," and this points to children's, parents', and communities' access to alternative childhood experiences introduced by school, interactions with those outside of their indigenous culture, and even technology. For example, Juan Manuel described that,

JM: Entonces al ver los niños a veces en la televisión, muchas cosas ellos ven, que la gente que está jugando. Entonces ellos también se entusiasman de jugar. Preguntan, "Profe, ¿yo por qué no puedo ser así?, ¿por qué no puedo jugar", "Ah, porque nosotros somos indígenas", "¿Pero qué diferencia hay?". Por eso la educación física 100% no es aceptada en la cultura indígena de la institución. Esas son unas cosas, porque ahora aquí estamos con los estudiantes campesinos, entonces nos toca adaptarse. Y además aquí estamos todos con los profesores que no son indígenas.

[JM: Then as children watch on television sometimes, they see many things, that people are playing. Then they also get excited to play. They ask, “Teacher, why can’t I be like that? why can’t I play.” “Ah, because we are indigenous.” “But what difference is there?” That is why physical education is not accepted 100% in indigenous culture of the institution. Those are some things, because now here we are with peasant students, therefore we have to adapt. And here we are all with the teachers who are not indigenous.]

Childhood experiences and parents’ beliefs indeed seemed to be shifting as a result of changes in the ecology of their communities. Parents had a number of concerns about the short- and long-term consequences of play, from wasting time and the threat of physical injury to illness and problems in adulthood. This affected their desires and directions for children about how they should spend their time. However, parents were also aware that children engage in play (with or without permission), and in the next section, I discuss their attitudes about when play might be appropriate.

An Appropriate Time and Place to Play

Despite parents’ reservations about children’s involvement in play, the majority, including some of those who expressed concerns, felt that the more important issue was finding the appropriate or safest form of play. These parents seemed to be finding a way of balancing the strict guidelines of their community beliefs regarding play and their management of children’s desire and tendency to play. They discussed that children could have positive play experiences for a designated amount of time or in a designated place and with appropriate oversight. As discussed above, this was also under the condition that they had attended to their responsibilities and household chores first.

Designated time. Parents shared their ideas about when it was appropriate for children to play, in terms of the point their development (i.e., their age) as well as the amount of time they spent playing during the day. They made a distinction between the

responsibilities of younger and older children and explained that young children had fewer responsibilities in the household and in their community, and therefore, had more freedom to play. Patricia, of Katanzama and mother of a six-year-old girl, explained,

P: Es más provechoso que estén haciendo algo, ocupados en algo que traiga beneficio para todos que viven en la casa. Los niños chiquitos, sí los dejo [jugar] porque están chiquitos, que no pueden hacer labores de grandes, entonces a ellos los dejo jugar un rato. Pero en cuanto a los grandes que vayan a jugar, no, está prohibido porque en lugar de estar haciendo eso pueden estar ayudando a los demás.

[P: It's more productive to be doing something, occupied in something that will bring a benefit to everyone who lives in the house. The young children, I do allow them [to play] because they are young, they cannot do the labors that the older ones can do, so I do allow them to play for some time. But for the older ones to go play, no, it's prohibited because instead of doing that they can be helping others.]

Each parent had their own way of defining "younger children"—whether they pointed to a three- or four-year-old child nearby or differentiated between those who attended school and those who did not—but the distinction seemed to come down to their notion of when children were physically capable and socially expected by the family and community to work. Before that point, children had more opportunities to play. Iris, of Katanzama and mother of a five-year-old boy, for example, saw ten years old as the moment when children went from being "little" and "allowed to play" to older and having "more work."

I: Cuando los niños están pequeños se les permiten jugar más, pero a medida que están de diez años, más es el trabajo.

[I: When children are little they are allowed to play more, but as they get to ten years old, they have more work.]

Parents also explained that children could play but within a reasonable amount of time. That is, they allowed their children to play and thought it was a positive activity but only for a limited time.

F: Me piden permiso, "¿Puedo ir a jugar?" "Sí pero si hacen primero todas las tareas que tienen, pero no me van a jugar toda la tarde porque tienen que ir a clases mañana y tienen que estudiar…Para mí es bueno que los niños jueguen, pero con un tiempo limitado. No darles tanto permiso que ellos puedan correr porque uno no sabe en qué problema se puedan meter ellos o los meten a uno en un problema.

[F: "They ask me for permission, "Can I go play?" "Yes, but if you do all the homework and chores you have, but you are not going to play all afternoon because you have to go to school in the morning and you have to study"…For me it is good that children play but for a limited time. Not give them so much permission for them to run because we don't know what problem they might run into or what problem they might bring us into.]

As Felipe, of Katanzama and father of an eight-year-old girl, explained in the above quotation, the idea of limiting the time for play was meant to ensure that children attended to other responsibilities and to minimize the threat that children might run into trouble during play. According to parents, there was an appropriate time to engage in play and an appropriate time to do chores, complete homework, and participate in community traditions and other responsibilities. As Rafael, of Ableizhi and father of a five-year-old boy, saw it, there is an appropriate "time to play" and there is also a "time to be still."

R: O sea, dar tiempo [para jugar], no todo es estar quieto. Hay tiempo de jugar, de divertirse y algún tiempo de estar quieto.

[R: I mean, give time [to play], not everything is being still. There is a time to play, have fun, and some time to be still.]

Designated place. In addition to a limited time to play, parents discussed appropriate places to play. This was related to the idea that if left to engage in play freely just anywhere—in rivers and trees—children could get hurt or into trouble. Further, parents believe that certain other-than-human entities manifest themselves in river pools, meanders, and certain trees and that play will upset these entities. Instead, parents had places that they deemed safe. Felipe, for example, not only limited the time his children could play but had a specific area near their home that he designated for them to play.

F: Porque nada más tienen un solo sitio, no salen por allá a correr sino tienen un solo sitio. Entre la casa de mi rancho y la casa del vecino, ellos juegan en ese trecho.

[F: They only have one area [to play], they don't go running everywhere but have only one area. Between the house in my ranch and the neighbor's house, they play in that stretch.]

Luis Alfredo, of Katanzama and father of a nine-year-old boy, explained that although the *mamos* did not approve of play, he believed that certain games within an appropriate space—like a park—could be a positive, fun experience for children, both physically and mentally.

LA: Los mamos dicen que no están de acuerdo con el juego. Pero hay juegos sanos, de pronto qué diríamos en forma de un parquecito donde tengan de pronto un columpio o cositas así que son donde se pueden entretener.

[LA: Mamos say they do not approve of play. But there are games that are good, like a little park where they have a swing or things like that where they can be entertained.]

There were no parks or playgrounds in the communities I visited; therefore, it appears that Luis Alfredo was referring to sites he had seen outside of his community, perhaps in nearby cities, that felt conducive to positive play experiences. Luis Alfredo also talked about "good" forms of play and implied that there were "bad" forms of play. From parents' descriptions, it appeared that bad forms of play involved a risky physical component that could be disturbing to supernatural entities, while good forms of play entailed less risky behaviors that had a positive cognitive or affective component. In addition, parents discussed the importance of adults' role in overseeing play to ensure that children knew the difference.

Appropriate Oversight. Constraining the amount of time and space of play both seemed to indicate parents' belief that play should happen under the oversight of adults.

Juan Manuel shared that he regulated his children's time to play but also made sure to watch them playing.

JM: Con orden yo les permito [jugar]. Con orden, porque hay un orden. "De tal hora a tal hora pueden jugar". Pero yo también estoy pendiente.

[JM: With order, I allow them [to play]. With order, because there is an order. "From this time to this time you can play." But I'm also watchful.]

Watching over the children gave Juan Manuel an opportunity to ensure their safety but also explain to them the spiritual implications of their behaviors. He said,

JM: Yo les explico, "Ustedes han jugado así o así, pero eso cuando ustedes van a ser grandes el mamo les va a preguntar, y ustedes le van a decir, no se les debe olvidar dónde jugaron, con quién jugaron, qué hicieron. Deben acordarse el día cuando el mamo les pregunte."

[JM: I explain to them, "You are playing like this or like this, but when you are older the mamo is going to ask, and you are going to tell, don't forget where you played, with whom you played, what you did. You must remember the day when the mamo asks you.]

By overseeing children's play parents could teach their children about the consequences of their actions, correct them, and guide them as to the play behaviors and games that were deemed "good" or "bad," as Verónica explained:

V: ...tengo que corregir, solo tengo que direccionar a ellos a qué juego es bueno y qué juego es malo.

[V: …I have to correct, I only have to guide them to what game is good and what game is bad.]

Parents' guidance for children during play happened mostly through directions and commands rather than direct engagement with them during play. In my observations, I rarely saw parents interacting with children around play and most of children's play activities happened away from parental oversight. Iris explained that parents playing with children was not a common sight.

I: No sé si [los padres] jugarán [con los niños] en un momento que uno no los vea, pero eso es como muy raro entre el indígena.

[I: I don't know if [parents] might play [with children] in a moment when we don't see them, but that is like very rare among the indigenous.]

However, there were a few parents that shared that they facilitated their children's play, either by playing with them or providing them with materials to encourage their play. For example, Julian believed he had to teach his child appropriate behavior, but this included finding objects that could support his play behaviors.

J: Tengo que impartir el comportamiento, la actitud de un niño. Por eso tengo que valorar lo que él hace. Tengo solamente que buscar algunos materiales o objetos que de pronto le hacen juegar y le hacen bien. Tengo que enseñarle.

[J: I have to impart the behavior, the attitude of a child. That is why I have to value what he does. I only have to look for some materials or objects that maybe make him play and do well. I have to teach him.]

Diana described that she engaged with her children through play, in private, and employed toys to interact with them.

D: A veces cuando estoy sola sí me pongo a jugar con ellos dos, a jugar en la cama, a hacerme cosquillas, decirme cosas y me pongo a decirles cosas. Me pongo a jugar así, o con carritos, así juego.

[D: Sometimes when I'm alone, I play with the two of them. We play on the bed, to tickle me, tell me things and I tell them things. I play like that, or with toy cars, that is how I play.]

Julian's and Diana's direct engagement was perhaps not common but parents' belief that children needed oversight during play was an important priority. In addition to feeling like they, as parents, were responsible for making sure children participated in the appropriate kind of play, in the right place, and at the right time, parents also shared that they saw teachers as responsible for watching children and ensuring their well-being, as both María Isabel, of Gotsezhi and mother of a six-year-old boy, and Silvia explained:

MI: Con los profesores sí está bien que jueguen. Pero a veces juegan sin profesores, y eso no me gusta.

[MI: With teachers it is okay for them to play. But sometimes they play without teachers, and I don't like that.]

S: En Katanzama lo que he observado es que si los niños van a jugar, los profesores hagan un acompañamiento. Porque si los niños están solos, entonces van a venir a la casa con la ropa sucia, con quejas de "que me pegó, me golpeó." Entonces que en la reunión que hubo en Katanzama anteriormente eso fue lo que hablaron, y estubimos de acuerdo de que [los niños] hicieran juegos, pero que después de que los profesores sean quienes estén haciendo el acompañamiento a los niños y vean que no pase nada fuera de lo común.

[S: In Katanzama what I have observed is that if children are going to play, teachers accompany them. Because if children are by themselves, then they are going to come home with dirty clothes, with complaints of "they hit me, they hit me." In a meeting that we had previously in Katanzama that is what we discussed, and we agreed that they [children] could play, but as long as the teacher are the ones accompanying children and making sure that nothing out of the ordinary happens.]

I heard conflicting accounts of the meeting Silvia described; some parents and the teachers remembered that at that meeting it was decided that play was not allowed at school. I also found that most of the parents who discussed teachers' responsibilities to oversee play were from Gotsezhi. This was the research site with the longest history of schooling; it is possible that parents have accepted that children will play and that playful behaviors will be encouraged by teachers, yet they see this as teachers' domain of responsibility. That said, what both María Isabel's and Silvia's responses illustrate is parents' allowance for play as long as there was some kind of supervision. It seems that although parents expressed communal and personal reservations about play, they were also pragmatic about how they managed children's participation in play. Children played but within certain constraints set up by adults.

Gender Beliefs about Play. Also reflecting parents' cultural and social values about children's activities, about a third of parents shared gendered beliefs about the

kinds of play children engaged in or what play was appropriate or beneficial for them to engage in. These responses reflected the social order of the community, where men and women have specific responsibilities that they need to fulfill.[7]

An: Hay diferencia. Al varoncito le gusta hacer como el papá hace, cortar palos y construir casitas. Y siempre le gusta más el campo. Mientras que la niña en la casa, siempre está pendiente. Coge cualquier cosa y le pone nombre, su marranito o sus ganaditos. Y después los lleva, los deja, y un en segundo lo visita, otro segundo los lleva a otra parte. Y después, hace como tejer la mochila. Cuando dejo por ahí en la silla la mochila, enseguida lo coge y hace como que teje.

[An: There is a difference. The boy likes to do like his father does, cut down sticks and build houses. He always likes the field better. On the other hand, the girl at home is always watching. She takes anything and gives it a name, her little pig or her little cattle. Then she takes them, leaves them, and in a second she visits them, another second, she takes them somewhere else. Then she does as if she is weaving the bag. When I leave my weaving on the chair, right away she will take it and do as if she is weaving.]

According to these parents, given the roles that children are expected to fill, boys have more opportunities to participate in play than girls.

E: Los niños tienen herramientas para poder jugar, como carritos, con los palos crean muchas cosas. A diferencia de las niñas, que muy poco tienen herramientas para poder jugar. Su diversión es limpiar la lana, hilarla, tejer mochilas es la diversión. Y en eso enfocan su tiempo las niñas.

[E: Boys have tools to be able to play, like toy cars, with sticks they create many things. In contrast to girls, who have very few tools to be able to play. Their diversion is cleaning the wool, spinning, weaving bags is their diversion. That is what girls focus their time on.]

The distinction between boys and girls included girls' role in bearing children. Verónica described that she did not believe girls should engage in play for the fear that it would

[7] It is important to note that historically, the spiritual traditions of indigenous groups of the Sierra Nevada have reflected a belief in the role played by human beings in maintaining a balance between the female and male forces in the universe. In this worldview, females and males have different but equally important roles to fulfill in nature and in life. As exemplified by the Great Mother, *Gran Madre*, the creator force, females are believed to be strong and the ideal complement to males. Today, social and economic changes seem to reflect more patriarchal, male-dominated social expectations and practices. The influences that shaped the present social order are beyond the scope of this study but seemed to be reflected in some parents' beliefs about how children should and do engage in play.

"damage" their ability to have children, again reflecting the concern for safety, and in this case, for girls in particular.

V: Las niñas no deben jugar porque pueden dañar muchas cosas…ellas van a tener hijos y entonces no pueden estar jugando. Los niños si pueden [jugar], pero las niñas son más sagradas.

[V: Girls should not play because they can damage things…they are going to have children so girls cannot be playing. Boys can [play], but girls are more sacred.]

Parents' beliefs about gender differences in play were informed by social expectations. By holding specific ideas of what girls and boys should be doing, they also seemed to be ascribing and fostering differences in their engagement in play. As was described in the previous chapter, children did not appear to differ in the amount of time they spent playing as some parents believed but they did seem to differ slightly in the kinds of play they engaged in. Boys tended to engage in physical types of play, which are more obvious, while girls engaged in social types of play that may be more difficult to discern. These differences may have informed parents' accounts. Again, parents' responses to the appropriate situations for children to play reflected the way they made sense of their community's way of life alongside their observations of children's play. At the same time, parents also reflected on the potential benefits of play and shared their ideas in our interviews.

Potential Benefits of Play

When asked whether they believed play had any benefits for children, many parents discussed positive consequences of play in terms of children's affect, intellectual development, practice for adult roles, and physical strength.

Positive Affect. Some parents discussed the importance of the recreation and entertainment that play provided for children. These parents, some of whom had also

shared that their community did not accept it or had concerns about children's involvement in play, explained that they wanted to provide children the opportunity for joy through play. Parents described the recreational value of play and the happiness that they wanted to allow their children to enjoy.

Ma: El juego es bueno…es algo recreativo, es algo en lo que participan porque no va a estar un niño quieto hasta que sean más grandes, no van a estar quietos como algunos nos dicen.

[Ma: Play is good…it is something recreational, it is something they participate in because a child will not be still until they are older, they are not going to be still like some people tell us.]

L: Mi punto de vista es que es mejor que un niño haga las cosas, se divierta en el juego, lo que realiza a cada momento.

[L: My point of view is that it is better for a child to do things, be entertained in play, what s/he is doing in each moment.]

Ca: Los niños son muy felices jugando y no quisiera tener hijos infelices.

[Ca: "Children are very happy playing and I would not want to have unhappy children.]

T: Cuando los niños pequeños inventan un juego, yo los dejo que sigan jugando para que disfruten y se entretegan un rato.

[T: When the younger children are inventing a game, I allow them to continue playing, so they can enjoy and be entertained for a while.]

All parents discussed their ideas about play in terms of their own experiences of play when they were children. And about half of the parents talked pointed to their childhood experiences—either of enjoying or being prohibited from play—that prompted a positive attitude toward play. Juana, Felipe, and Ignacio all believed that play could be positive for children, and they referred to their own memories to explain this.

Ju: Cuando era niña hacía lo que está haciendo mi hija. Jugaba, me divertía.

[Ju: When I was a girl, I did what my daughter does. I played, I had fun.]

F: Pues refiriéndome un poco más a lo que yo sufrí, porque yo veía jugar a los hijos de los demás, mas yo no tenía esa libertad. Me sentia como triste y despreciado de mis padres, porque aquellos juegan, se divierten y yo no podia jugar. No tener esa libertad se siente bastante deprimente.

[F: Referring a bit to what I suffered, because I saw other people's children playing, but I did not have that liberty. I felt sad and despised by my parents because others play and have fun, and I could not play. Not having that liberty was quite depressing.]

Ig: Como en mi niñez me gustaba jugar, también me gustaría que los niños, los nietos, que jueguen.

[Ig: Like in my childhood I liked to play, I would also like children, the grandchildren, to play.]

In reflecting on their own childhood, parents found motivation to permit and foster experiences that brought joy to children, enjoyment that appeared like a conception of what children could or should experience that differed from what parents' own families believed.

Intellectual Development. Parents also shared the potential for play to promote intellectual abilities and learning. As communities that value reason and awareness, parents spoke about how play could free children to enjoy and at the same time develop their mind and reason.

D: Porque los niños se divierten, desarrollan más la mente, jugar así.

[D: Because children have fun, develop their mind more, playing like that.]

L: Por eso cuando juega, cuando hace otra cosa, eso le hace desarrollar sus conocimientos en o la razón.

[L: That is why when he plays, when he does something else, that makes him develop his knowledge, or reason.]

N: El juego elevan o despierta la razón de pensar las cosas. Eso es lo que yo he visto.

[N: Play elevates or awakens reason to think about things. That is what I have seen.]

These viewpoints contrasted with the beliefs that play could distract children and get in the way of their physical and spiritual stillness. From their descriptions, parents appeared to be referring to children's awareness of their own local knowledge but also other sources of knowledge. The intellectual benefits that parents described included its potential contributions to children's learning and formal education.

F: Porque en los juegos de los niños, ellos se refrescan la mente, se desestresan… Entonces sí es bueno el juego para los niños, para que se distraigan. Como le dije, les abre más la mente, conocen. Entre juegos hay unas cositas que le sirven a los niños para lo que es la matemática, contar y todo eso.

[F: Because in children's games, they refresh their mind, they destress…So play is good for children, so they can have some distraction. Like I said, it opens their mind, they learn. In games, there are things that serve children in mathematics, counting and all that.]

Ca: Hay varios tipos de juegos que son inservibles, que no enseñan nada, cómo los carritos, las muñequitas. No les veo utilidad. Pero en cambio hay juegos como los rompecabezas, como juegos que les ayudan a contar, los que tengan números que en manera estén relacionados con lo que están aprendiendo en el colegio. Entonces esos les ayudan mucho a reforzar lo que ven el colegio.

[Ca: There are various kinds of play that are useless, that don't teach anything, like play cars, dolls. I don't see their utility. But there are games like puzzles, games that help them to count, ones that have numbers that in some way are related to what they are learning in school. Those help them to reinforce what they are learning in school.]

As Juan Manuel explained, the knowledge children developed needed to be multi-purposed given children's multicultural experiences.

JM: Entonces el estudiante también necesita saber esto [conocimiento del colegio y conocimiento local], utilizar dos saberes, y así ellos podrán vivir tranquilamente o podrán desenvolverse en diferentes partes del mundo.

[JM: Then the student also needs to know this [school knowledge and local knowledge], utilize two forms of knowledge, and this way they will be able to live calmly or interact in different parts of the world.]

A few parents viewed play as allowing for these two ways of knowing to develop. However, they discussed the benefits of play within certain constraints of the kind, time,

or place of the playful experience. This demonstrated the multifaceted beliefs and attitudes parents held about play. Their belief that play could be intellectually beneficial seemed to stem both from their traditional beliefs about the importance of children's awareness and mindfulness but also their need to navigate the knowledge systems of societies outside their community.

Imitating Adult Life. Parents' descriptions of children imitating adult activities illustrated that children's play was enjoyable and spontaneous and also reflected the lessons of productivity that their parents and community wanted to instill in them. Just under a third of parents responded that their children pretended to engage in adult activities during play, and this was often shared with a tone of approval. Ana shared that she liked it when her children were pretending to ride a horse or cook.

A: Me gusta cuando inventan cosas ellos mismos y juegan cuando hacen las cosas de todos los días, como montar a caballo o están en el campo. O cuando juegan pero están cocinando comida. Los observe; están jugando pero haciendo cosas también.

[A: I like it when they invent things themselves and play as they are going about their everyday activities, like riding a horse or when they are out in the field. Or when they are playing but they are actually cooking their food. I am watching them; they are playing but they are actually doing things as well.]

Parents saw their daily life reflected in children's play—riding a mule or tending to their farm—but also saw children imitating other role models, like teachers.

Ju: [La niña] hace como hacen las mamas. Sale y busca un espacio y siembra algo ahí. Dicen, "Mamá, me voy a la finca para sacar una yuca y la llevo en la mochila." Y la saca, "Ah bueno, ya la saqué." Le echa algo, y dice, "Ya llegué a la finca". O sea, ella hace lo que hacen las mamás.

[Ju: [The girl] do like their mothers do. She goes out and finds a space and plants something there. She says, "Mom, I'm going to the farm to get a yucca and I'll bring it in my bag." And then she takes it out, "Ok, I took it out." She puts something on it and says, "I got back from the farm." That is, she does what mothers do.]

F: Se hace la profesora y la que le da clase a los más pequeñitos y así comparten. A veces ellos también hacen como si estuvieran cocinando, reparten la comida.

[F: She makes like she is the teacher and is teaching the youngest ones and they share like that. Sometimes they make like they are cooking, they share the food.]

Parents seemed to believe that these forms of play were particularly appropriate because they reflected values that were in accordance with their community and the roles they were expected to fulfill within it.

Physical Strength. A smaller number of parents also believed that physical play could help prepare children for the physical demands of their daily life and environment. Verónica described,

V: Una es de correr, otra es alzar piedra. Ese tipo de juego no es tan peligroso, porque es un ejercicio, es una práctica. Digamos una práctica como deporte. Cuando sean grandes van a tener la fuerza para correr, pero con fuerza, las dos cosas tienen que manejar.

[V: One is running, another is lifting rocks. That kind of play is not as dangerous, because it is an exercise, it's practice. Let's say a practice like a sport. When they are older they will have the strength to run, but with strength, they need both.]

The potential physical benefits of play were in contrast to the safety, cleanliness, and stillness concerns that parents also held. Interestingly, most of the parents who pointed to physical benefits of play were from Ableizhi, the most remote community where families were more exposed to the pressures of the environment. Given that children's and families' daily survival depended on their physical prowess and ability to take measured risks—crossing rivers, hiking near dangerous cliffs, walking long distances—some parents seemed to see play as an opportunity for children to practice the skills they would depend on when they were older.

As described throughout, parents' beliefs and attitudes about play demonstrated their negotiation of their community's values, their individual priorities for children, and

children's autonomy to engage in playful behaviors. Their responses were marked by references to scenarios and instances when play was more or less appropriate. They discussed both the material and spiritual dangers of play but also enumerated its benefits. Their ideas were informed by their history, traditions, and more recent developments in their communities, such as schooling. To explore whether parents' own schooling informed their ideas about play, I looked for patterns in their level of education and responses. As described next, themes in parents' responses seemed more informed by broader outside influences than specifically their own schooling.

Parents' Education and their Beliefs about Play

Parents reported varying levels of education. The breakdown by educational attainment and research site is reported in Table 6.1. Half of the parents had no formal education, 9 (30%) completed primary education or some primary education, and 3 (10%) completed secondary education or some secondary education. Two fathers had completed postsecondary education. There were some notable differences in parental education among the samples from the three research sites. Ableizhi had the lowest overall levels of education; all parents in the sample had either no formal school or only some primary education. The sample from Katanzama had a wider distribution, from two parents with no schooling to one who completed secondary education. Finally, the majority of parents in Gotsezhi had no schooling or some primary education but the sample also contained two fathers who completed postsecondary degrees in education and nursing. In addition, five parents from Katanzama and Gotsezhi who had completed primary education or less were enrolled in adult continuation classes offered by the schools.

Table 6.1

Parent Educational Attainment by Research Site and Across Research Sites (N = 30)

Level of Education	Ableizhi (n = 10)	Katanzama (n = 10)	Gotsezhi (n = 10)	Total (N = 30)
No schooling	8	2	6	16 (53%)
Some primary[1]	2	3	2	7 (23%)
Completed primary	0	2	0	2 (7%)
Some secondary[2]	0	2	0	2 (7%)
Completed secondary	0	1	0	1 (3%)
Completed postsecondary	0	0	2	2 (7%)
Continuing adult education	0	3	2	5 (17%)

1. Primary education refers to preschool to 5th grade
2. Secondary education refers to 6th to 11th grade

Despite the distribution in educational attainment, it did not appear that higher levels of education were related to more positive or negative attitudes about play in this sample of parents. Most parents discussed concerns about play but they also discussed instances when it was appropriate for children to play, regardless of level of education. For example, both fathers who had postsecondary degrees discussed reservations about children's involvement in play and their desire to educate them about their indigenous heritage instead of allowing them to play. By contrast, parents with no education expressed positive attitudes about play and shared that play could benefit the children and the community. In the end, there was not sufficient variability in responses associated with different levels of education to identify a clear relationship.

Discussion

This investigation explored Wiwa, Kogi, and Arhuaco parents' beliefs and attitudes about play and how these were informed by the cultural context of their communities as well as their personal experiences and goals for their children. The findings demonstrate that while parents expressed community and individual concerns about play, they also believed there were appropriate times and situations for children to participate in play. They discussed a variety of childhood play activities and the risks as well as benefits that they associated with these activities. It did not appear that it was formal education but rather parents' own experiences of play as children and their acceptance of alternative conceptions of childhood and childhood activities that influenced parental beliefs and attitudes about play.

A majority of parents discussed that playful behaviors were not generally accepted in their communities. They believed play distracted children from their responsibilities and chores and they feared they could get hurt or dirty. These beliefs are consistent with what has been documented in other small-scale communities that value and encourage work and productivity in children (e.g., Fouts, Bader, & Neitzel, 2016; Lancy, 2016) and who place limits on play for safety concerns (e.g., Gaskins, 1996). Parents also shared concerns about the spiritual consequences that play actions might have for children's long-term wellbeing. Parents attempt to manage their children's play activities while teaching them to be still to maintain the balance among supernatural entities. Although the manifestations of these spiritual concerns are unique to this cultural context, there are similar restrictions on play based on spiritual beliefs in other indigenous communities (e.g., Gaskins, 1996).

Some of the concerns about play described by parents (e.g., issues of cleanliness and safety) are perhaps similar to those that parents might share globally (e.g., Singer, Singer, D'Agnostino, & DeLong, 2009; Veitch et al., 2006). However, the worries expressed in parents' interviews seemed to be motivated by particular cultural and material realities, like the importance of physical labor for their subsistence, the imminent dangers and limited resources they face on a daily basis, and the spiritual belief system that is central to their worldview. Similarly, we often hear older generations the world over lamenting perceived changes in younger generations. In this study, parents' reflections on a changing generation seemed motivated by the knowledge and activities that enter their communities as they interact with schools, teachers, outside institutions and individuals.

Parents' beliefs about the potential benefits of play reflected ideas about how play can contribute to learning and development but seemed informed by different priorities unique to the priorities of the communities. Parents valued play that reflected adult life and provided physical strength and dexterity that prepared children for to fill the roles and responsibilities in their communities as they get older, which coincides with prior research on the role of play in other indigenous communities (e.g., Amlor, 2016; Lancy, 2016). As Gaskins (2000) also observed in a Mayan village, parents' desire to prepare children to contribute to work and chores was not only based on the need for labor in the household but also on the belief that working hard would make them capable, contributing community members as adults.

The intellectual benefits parents described seemed to indicate children's need to hold knowledge about the multiple social and cultural environments and interactions they

navigate. Researchers have found that indigenous parents value educational experiences that promote their culture while providing academic knowledge and skills (Windisch et al., 2003), and it seemed that, at least for some parents, play constituted an experience that could help children learn to interact in the complex cultural fabric of their communities. Finally, parents' focus on children's positive affect elucidated a desire for children to enjoy experiences in ways that were not prioritized in the past and that they, parents themselves, had not experienced in their childhood.

What is clear from the themes in the beliefs and attitudes about play that parents raised in this study is that the communities and community beliefs represented are not monolithic. Communities are made up of individuals who make decisions informed by many, sometime competing, goals and priorities. Although parents expressed and ascribed to ideas about play they believed were widely accepted in their community, they also demonstrated that there were differences between parents in their beliefs and attitudes and even within parents' own belief systems. As Camila shared,

Ca: En las reuniones hemos escuchado diferentes puntos de vista [acerca del jueog], porque a pesar de ser una comunidad cada quien tiene un punto diferente de educar [a sus hijos]. Unos son mucho más estrictos, otros son mucho más flexibles.

[Ca: In the [community] meetings we have heard different points of view [about play], because even though we are a community each one has different ways of educating [their children]. Some are much stricter, others are much more flexible.]

Parents' responses reflected their negotiation of community cultural commitments and their individual beliefs informed by personal priorities, interactions beyond their community, and even their own childhood memories. They expressed tensions and compromises between allowing and limiting play, as they manage children's autonomy, generational changes, and shifting conceptions of childhood. Based on memories of their

own childhood, parents suggested that it is not that children did not play or did not have the desire to play in the past, but that now they appear more willing to disregard parental directions not to play; and at the same time, parents' reactions to play, at least in this sample of 30 parents, appear to provide more flexibility and opportunities for playful activities within a set of parameters. Changing notions of what is appropriate childhood behaviors, including play, seem informed by alternate ways of viewing childhood that have been introduced by schools and teachers, interactions with mainstream Colombian society, and even technology.

For this group of parents, parental education did not seem to be the primary catalyst of changing beliefs about play. A more likely explanation of differences between parents is their acceptance of outside (non-indigenous) values and conceptions of childhood. For example, in Ableizhi, where most parents have little to no formal education, teachers have devoted a lot of time and effort in introducing parents to how new ideas about children's learning and development can be incorporated into local ways of living and knowing. It is possible that school parents in Ableizhi seem generally open to children's play because they have embraced the ideas introduced by the teachers and the school. By contrast, in Katanzama, community leaders, parents, and teachers have had contentious conversations about whether play in accepted or not; but at the same time, as the community that is closest to mainstream Colombian culture, parents have many other sources of information and experiences (e.g., through interactions with neighbors, business transactions, and visitors) that may inform their beliefs about play.

That being said, the effects of formal education on parents' attitudes about play are left open to further exploration. Formal education is still relatively new in the Sierra

Nevada and the number of parents who have attended school for a substantial amount of time is limited. As higher numbers of children, both male and female, attend and complete primary and secondary schooling and become parents themselves, it may be fruitful to investigate how schooling shapes parental beliefs and attitudes about childhood, development, learning, and play.

As with any investigation, the findings here should be interpreted within the scope of the methodology employed and its limitations. The themes described are those that emerged from conversations with a group of 30 parents who have decided and make the effort to send their children to school, are engaged in the school activities and culture, and agreed to participate in the study. These characteristics make this a very specific group of parents who may not represent other parents in their communities. In addition, reporting on key patterns of responses necessarily requires that not all ideas shared in the interviews be included in the results. The focus of my analyses was to present ideas that reoccurred across interviews and highlighted commonalities in parents' thinking, but there are complex differences within and between parents that were not all captured.

Furthermore, as discussed in the methods, the multiple layers of interpretation of the data (from translation from the local language to Spanish to analyzing data in Spanish and then translating ideas to English) may mean that some beliefs or attitudes about play were lost in translation or filtered through the multiple cultural frames of interpretation. This recognition that we all hold cultural frames, some that we are aware of and others that are tacit to us, encourages humility in interpreting findings from any studies that invoke cross-cultural considerations. In addition, as Giraldo (under review) argues, it is important to note that the interpretations that indigenous individuals of the Sierra Nevada

offer about their cultural and spiritual beliefs are themselves, "socially and historically situated claims" that are contingent on the "perceptions, propositions, intellectual and critical discourses and discussions" of their communities (n.p.). As such, the themes of parent responses I present here are, as Geertz (1973) put it, my "own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to" (p. 9). Nevertheless, by highlighting ideas that seemed pervasive and informative and triangulating these with ongoing data collection, these findings do provide important insights into some of the issues that are salient in parents' minds.

The indigenous communities of the Sierra Nevada are microcosms of long-held histories and traditions but also present realities, politics, and experiences that make each unique. This is true even of families within communities, which was reflected in the beliefs and attitudes that parents shared about play. Taking into account their ways of life and spiritual beliefs, parents expressed tensions between concerns about play but also the compromises that they make to allow their children to engage in playful activities. As their communities change with ongoing schooling and interactions with outside cultural influences, it is likely that they will also continue to negotiate priorities that affect the rules and opportunities that shape children's play.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

A la hora de hacer cambios, los pueblos, consciente o inconscientemente, siempre hacen memoria. Hay un pasado que se quiere olvidar y por eso se ratifica el cambio; pero también hay un pasado que se debe respetar. Los pueblos indígenas miramos hacia el pasado y hacia el future

[At the moment of making changes, communities, consciously or unconsciously, always remember. There is a past that we want to forget and change is ratified; but there is also a past that has to be respected. The indigenous peoples, we look to toward the past and toward the future.]

Lorenzo Muelas Hurtado, Guambiano Indigenous Leader

In this investigation, I aimed to portray Wiwa, Kogi, and Arhuaco children's day-to-day activities and play interactions and surface the sociocultural influences, including their participation in formal schooling, that foster or constrain children's opportunities for play. I also wanted to explore how parents' belief systems and education shape parents' attitudes and practices regarding play. As Larson and Verma (1999) explained,

> Cultures shape children's and adolescents' use of time through the inculcation of values and goals, through positive or negative sanctions they attach to different activities and companions, and through the structure they give to the day, the week, and the year. Often, these cultural norms may apply differently according to a children's gender, age, or other social markers. (p. 704)

I found a complex system of competing priorities and visions of childhood that all shape when and how children engage in play.

In Chapters 2-4, I described and illustrated how children's lives in each of the communities are characterized by a variety of expected behaviors and responsibilities, changing cultural contexts and new technologies, and material and social resources that provide the space and opportunity for play. Given their integration into community life,

children in these communities are afforded a great deal of autonomy, are expected to be self-sufficient and contribute to the household early on in development and have limited dedicated spaces for child-focused activities; nevertheless, as they go about their day, they play individually and with their peers. In Chapter 5, I detailed the range and frequency of play in children's daily routines, which demonstrated that social interactions and play are the most common activities across research sites, and that formal schooling is an important setting shaping play experiences. Finally, in Chapter 6, I reported that parents shared cultural and spiritual reservations about children's participation in play but also named potential affective, intellectual, practical, and physical benefits, and this was true regardless of parent education level.

In her own culturally grounded description of children's daily activities in a Mayan village, Gaskins (2000) concluded by suggesting that an important question for future studies to address was, "how play (as a low-valued activity) finds and retains a place in the child's activities" in a society (p. 388). The answer to this question in the present ethnographic study appears to be that it is precisely the dynamic, evolving nature of societies, the changing notions of childhood, the constant tension between history and custom and generational change in communities, and children's own motivations, that give way to play. There is certainly a phylogenetic argument to be made here regarding the evolutionary benefits of play. However, as is the focus of this investigation, a sociocultural analysis also seems to reveal that play is constantly being negotiated by children, their parents—and with the introduction of formal schooling—their teachers.

What emerged through my observations and conversations with community members was perhaps not surprising. After all, limited yet richly and systematically

conducted cross-cultural work in small-scale, indigenous societies has documented similar findings in terms of the cultural guiding principles, parental theories, economic practices, and childhood activities, work, and autonomy, that all influence the manifestations of play (Boyette, 2016; Fouts et al., 2016; Gaskins, 1999, 2000; Göncü & Gaskins, 2006; Göncü et al., 2000, 1999; Lancy, 2016a, 2016b; Larson & Verma, 1999; Veitch et al., 2006). Nevertheless, research is in desperate need of more nuanced accounts and understandings of children's lives and caregiver practices that can reveal both particular and universal themes of human development (Legare & Harris, 2016). The themes that are elucidated here both corroborate past research but also point to considerations that are unique to the present affordances and challenges in the indigenous communities of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

Importantly, the findings of this study challenge the notion that societies have one way of thinking about play. Rather, there are multifaceted ways in which individual parents and families make choices about when and where children engage in play. Furthermore, this work shows that there is no one reference population when it comes to understanding a developmental and behavioral phenomenon; in the case of play, diversifying the populations we represent in literature can actually teach us to understand this human experience within the dynamic ecologies at the macro- and micro-levels that are constantly shaping and re-shaping children's opportunities to play. Future research, can continue to elucidate not only the diversity in children's experiences and caregivers' beliefs when it comes to play but also the associated developmental outcomes. This is not something that was directly investigated in the present study but can continue to expand our understanding of the relationship between play, learning, and development. For

example, how might children's autonomy in play influence their physical, social-emotional, and cognitive development? How might indigenous children's mindfulness and care for the Earth inform their worldview? What is the rate and path of change in communities' beliefs about educational and developmental experiences like play as a result of schooling? What is lost and what is gained when (or if) these changes occur? These are questions that are suggested by the findings of this study and should be addressed with utmost respect and humility for the communities we study, knowing that what we know from current developmental literature is limited.

Of particular importance in the present study is the implication that play can have for the continued efforts to improve the quality and relevance of ethnoeducation in Colombia. As an institution that is important both to the local indigenous communities and to the wider Colombian society, schooling is the setting where much multicultural exchange takes place. As parents and leaders shared, and as has been elucidated by the literature, indigenous communities value education that promotes their own knowledge ("saber propio") while providing children with the academic knowledge and skills that prepares them to interact beyond their community ("saber universal") (Windisch et al., 2003). As a form of cultural learning, play can promote children's knowledge of the different facets of their community life (Lancy, 2016a). Incorporated into formal instruction and with thoughtfully introduced new technologies, it can also help develop academic skills (Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, Berk, & Singer, 2009). Understanding where and why children play, thus, can inform both formal and informal opportunities to promote play (Veitch et al., 2006). However, as Moland (2017) argues, "Any approach that is brought into a new context needs to be adjusted to reflect local conceptualizations

of knowledge production, childhood, and pedagogy." Therefore, knowing where, how, and why children in Wiwa, Kogi, and Arhuaco communities play, can also help inform how playful forms of learning can be implemented within the context of indigenous education.

What I present in the pages of this dissertation, is the story of communities that are ever-changing and defining and redefining their identities—not unlike societies and individuals around the world. It is the story of childhood that looks toward the past and toward the future and of how play fits within the natural tensions and opportunities that result. It is the story of children, parents, and teachers and how their goals and motivations give rise to play. It is my hope that the portraits I have drawn of these children, parents, and teachers honor them and contribute to the future of education in the Sierra Nevada de Santa, Colombia.

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Appendix A: Sampling Procedures

Below is a description of sampling methods I employed during observations. The purposeful sampling methods described are drawn from Altmann (1974) and were used by Smith and Connolly (1980) to observe children's activities in a study on the ecology of preschool behavior (including play). Similar to Smith and Connolly's procedures, these sampling methods were used in the present to observe and portray a variety of individuals, play activities, and settings.

Method	Description	Example	In this Study
Ad libitum sampling	Consists of informal, non-systematic observations.	Smith and Connolly kept informal observations of children's behaviors and activities in a daily diary.	Observe activities and behaviors of interest as I move fluidly through the community and note them in a small journal; expand these notes into descriptions and possible insights/questions for future observations.
Incident sampling	Consists of watching a whole group and recording any occurrence of particular defined behaviors.	Smith and Connolly scanned the preschool classroom looking for and recording any incident of fantasy play or rough-and-tumble play.	Observe groups of children and record specific play activities that meet the criteria described by Rubin et al. 1983.
Focal-person sampling	Consists of recording full details of all specified behaviors for one particular individual.	Smith and Connolly focused on one child and recorded his/her companions, activities, and behaviors for a period of 40 seconds.	Follow one child throughout the day and document the activities (play activities, other informal activities, and academic activities) he/she is engaging in every 5 minutes.