

# INTERACTION, INITIATIVE AND CREATIVITY IN THE PLAY SITUATION: THIRD YEAR DEVELOPMENTS

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## Summary

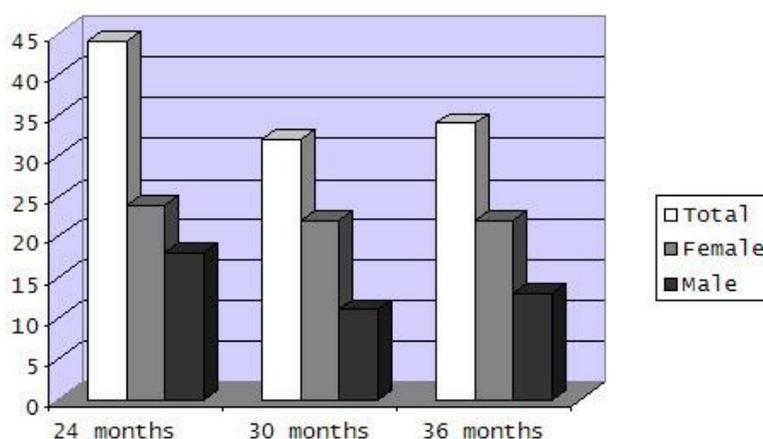
### Aims

1. In the interactive dimension: to correlate creative play developments with maternal attitudes.
2. In the child's play dimension: to correlate play developments with initiatives expressed through his proposals.
3. To compare how the two items mentioned in the main objective evolve during the third year of life.
4. To determine whether boys and girls share similar developments of creativity in their play.
5. To determine whether boys and girls share preferences for the same type of play: construction games pretend play, skill play.
6. To determine whether these preferences are accompanied by greater creativity in the same type of play.

### Methods

We recruited the sample population in ten daycare centers, located in the North Zone of the Gran Buenos Aires. We selected through a survey a middle class population that would have no reason for consultation. We recruited 40 dyads, and videotaped them at the day care center, for 25 minutes. The children were 24, 30 and 36 months old (see graph 1).

GRAPH 1



We invited the mother and the child to “play what they liked best”. We did not let them know how much time they had available; we only told them that, a few minutes before finishing, we would let them know so that they would be able to end their game. The assistant turned on the video camera and left the play room.

Chronometred work copies of all the original videos were made.

We used the videos of a previous Pilot Project in order to train the assistants in the use of the manual for the identification of the different categories.

Each of the sequences was written down in the encoding chart, location, and corresponding category. In addition, in the Play with Transformation category, the amount of transformations was registered.

75% of the samples were encoded by two encoding groups (Double blind technique). For the analysis of reliability among observers the technique derived from ANOVA, Variance Analysis (Steiner & Norman) was used. To determine the concordance grade between the different variables, the coefficient of Kendall (Tau- t) was used. In both cases the significant value was = 0.05, for the two extremes.

The statistical analysis was done with the Statistical Software, 51/97 version Start Soft, Tulsa, Ok; Windows 95.

### **Child categories:**

**Play with transformations – Creative Play:** The child is the protagonist. The predominant affect is concentration during its development and a quiet satisfaction in its consummation. It might integrate two types of Play -e.g. game of construction + Pretend Play, or an expressive resourceful engagement in any type of Play – singing, dancing etc.

**Play without transformation – Play:** Relatively simple and predictable organized action of play. It is characterized by a high degree of expressiveness. ([See component 1 for further information on the difference between play with and without transformation](#))

**To propose:** This is the moment of “shall we play?” This proposal can be made verbally or not. It is usually made after an exploratory activity with a toy or argument of Play.

**Passive perturbation:** the playing suffers some modifications: inhibition, avoidance, stereotyping or disorganization.

**Active perturbation:** episodes of excitement, violence.

### **Maternal categories:**

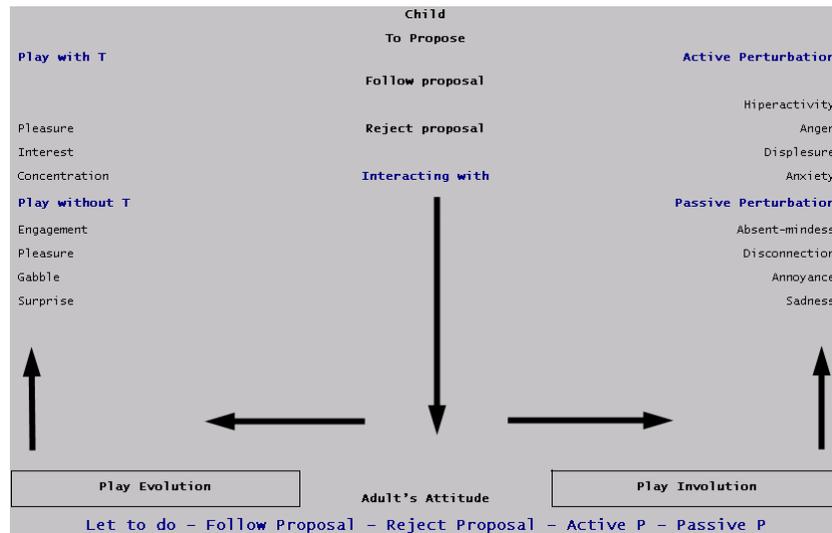
**Let the child do:** The mother follows attentively what is happening, without taking any action; she lets the child be the protagonist. ([See - Example of let to do](#))

**To facilitate:** the caretaker helps the child actively in the execution and continuity of play. He/she executes manipulations that the child can not accomplish on his own. He/she makes discreet educational attempts and assumes the regulation of undesirable stimuli.

**Active perturbation:** the adult may impose, over stimulate, hurry, prohibit, suppress, invade, discourage, disdain.

**Passive perturbation:** disconnection, distraction, avoidance.

# INTERACTION BETWEEN MATERNAL CATEGORIES AND CHILD CATEGORIES



## Results

We found the following statistically significant correlations between maternal attitudes and child attitudes in the 24, 30 and 36 month old sample.

Let the child do: correlates positively with Creative Play and to propose and, negatively, with Child's Passive Perturbation.

Adult Perturbs Actively: correlates negatively with Creative Play and, positively, with follows proposal and rejects adult's proposals.

Adult Perturbs Passively: correlates in a positive manner with Child's passive Perturbation.

Play with transformation: correlates in a positive manner with child's proposals of play in 98% of the cases.

Boys and girls share similar numbers of creative play in the 30 and 36 month old sample but boys get lower results at the age of 24 months.

Girls prefer pretend play with toys in 70% of cases to constructive games (20 %) and skill games (10%). Boys prefer skill games in 70 % of cases to constructive games (20 %) and pretend play (10 %). These preferences are accompanied by greater creativity in the same type of play.

[see table: Kendall coefficients - PV Steigel & Siegel](#)

[see graphs: Results for the child categories.](#)

[see graphs: Results for the adult categories.](#)

## Implications for psychoanalysis

We understand that playing is a pleasant and complex activity that explores and represents hedonic, affective, cognitive and social phenomena. Not only dreaming but also free association enables the linking of emotional schemes, derived from bodily experiences, to non-verbal symbolic representations apt for a later articulation with language – according to W. Bucci, reflective function. We hypothesise that to play is also a reflective function that allows the child to show his own subjectivity. Winnicott thinks that the play space is part of a transitional space; we consider that this theoretical space can be described and evaluated in the interactive space of the dyad. It is in this space

where the child tests his limits and possibilities and where the mother agrees or not to his proposals, realizations, and creative potentialities. If the environment is favourable to those developments, the child will develop feelings of approval and confidence in his ability to do, imagine and create.

We believe that we have developed a versatile instrument which is not only useful for research work on play and interaction, but can also be used in other areas of work with children such as prevention, clinical work, and teaching. In the field of prevention it is a useful diagnostic instrument to alert us to the interactive phenomena that discourage the development of creativity and good interactions of the family web. These derailments may be found in different type of dyads: child-mother, child-father, child-teacher, child-therapist, etc. The same material recorded as a diagnosis base can also be used as support for a minimum therapeutic intervention, of the type of interactive guides for parents and teachers.

If the degree of interactive conflict observed should be very high, another type of intervention, specific to each case, could be indicated. It is interesting to highlight that this instrument allows us to discriminate whether the starting point of the problem is centered on the child, on the adult or, as it might seem to be in the majority of cases, on the reciprocal impact of the attitudes of both.

We believe that it would be interesting to use this methodology to develop and sharpen the observation skills of those that are in contact with children: child psychotherapists, caretakers, teachers, social assistants, etc. with the objective of closing the gap between the child of theory and the child of perception. Another possible application is to complement with this methodology the supervision of child therapists, to show up in evidence the non verbal aspects of the interactive dialogue.

In the cases which we supervised using this methodology we were able to detect, very precisely at an early stage, the therapist's inadequate ways of participation that might have disturbed the course of the psychoanalytical process and interfered with the patient's contribution to insight and elaboration if they had not been modified. That is to say: words like timing, analytical disposition, good enough mother, etc, would be described more precisely and would probably acquire a more profound meaning.

## Keywords

Child and adult interactions, creativity, early development, initiative, play, reflective function

## Bibliography

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**Benito Silva, G., & Galamarini, S.** (1997). Un niño con trastornos del lenguaje: estrategias terapéuticas derivadas de un diseño de investigación. Paper presented at the Congreso Internacional de Saúde Mental. Bebe, Crianza e Família, Canela Brasil.

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# COMPONENT 1: PLAY WITH AND WITHOUT TRANSFORMATION

Let's give two examples corresponding to play situations of two children belonging to the 30 month old sample:

a) A child builds a tower with cubes, he then knocks it down and with great gabble repeats the game over and over again.

b) A girl places the cubes in a line; she gives life to this creation by transforming it into a train; she builds a bridge so that the train can pass underneath it; she makes it go to the edge of the table exploring limits (to see whether the cube-wagons fall or not) and she places a toy figure as a passenger and another one as conductor.

The first game contains very little information or, it is so condensed that it gives clues of the inner world of the patient, but without the details that would allow us to reveal his fantasy. Does the little boy feel that he is the God of construction and destruction, or the magician that transforms small things into big ones or vice versa? In the second game the girl explores and narrates her unconscious fantasy chapter by chapter. There might be slight differences, depending on the theoretical framework from which it is interpreted, but we might agree that it is about a fantasy related to the passage from the anal expulsive phase to the anal retentive one and a later equivalence between faces-babies-penis etc.

In this second example there are more symbolic mediations and interpretative resource than in the first one. The affective environment is pleasant because excitement and concentration prevails over gabble and suspense. According to the categories proposed in the investigation, we say that the tower game is a play without transformation and the passenger train is a play with four transformations.

In order to correlate play with interaction and with affects, it could be useful to build a model in which two prototypes are used according to the following parameters: 1) capacity for reverie in the adult (reflective function, mentalization and empathy according to certain authors) 2) tolerance to frustration of the boy. On the positive side we see an adult with reverie capacity and a boy with high tolerance to frustration; on the negative side we see an adult with low reverie capacity and a boy with low tolerance to frustration. In between we can see crossed prototypes: low capacity of reverie with high tolerance to frustration and high capacity of reverie with low tolerance to frustration. The first prototype will provoke thoughts and dreams, and this narration is easily transformable into language. The second will have a limited capacity for symbolization and mentalization and will engage in projective identification. The first prototype occurs in a positive affect spectrum: joy, curiosity, confidence, and comfort. The second occurs in a zone of negative affects: anger, distrust, boredom, despair, indifference, etc.

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## EXAMPLE OF LET TO DO

The mother watches, without taking part in the game, how her daughter begins to build with blocks.

The mother says: "it's all right, it's all right, let's continue playing".

The girl asks her to look at the tower. The mother exclaims in admiration.

Lucía tries to get a car to pass between the blocks and says: "it can't pass, it can't pass".

Her mother asks her: "Are you sure that it can't pass?". And she lets Lucía solve the problem by herself.

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# KENDALL COEFFICIENTS - PV STEIGEL & SIEGEL

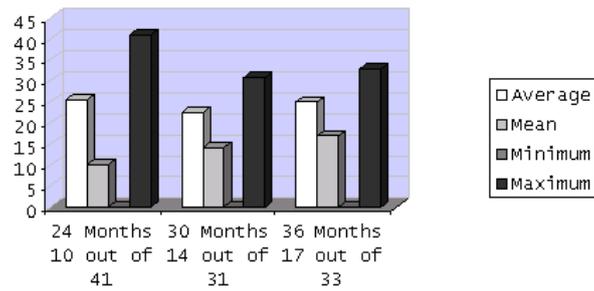
p value  $\geq .05$  are significant

Adult	Child	CT	PV	CT	PV	CT	PV
Let the child do	Play with T	0.366	$\geq 0.0008$	0.355	$\geq 0.005$	0.267	$\geq 0.030$
	To Propose	0.231	$\geq 0.033$	0.293	$\geq 0.020$	0.290	$\geq 0.008$
	Passive P	-0.212	$\geq 0.050$	0.232	0.067	-0.249	$\geq 0.045$
Active P	Play with T	-0.353	$\geq 0.0011$	-0.292	$\geq 0.021$	-0.229	0.066
	Follow propose	0.401	$\geq 0.0002$	0.303	$\geq 0.017$	0.392	$\geq 0.0016$
	Reject propose	0.285	$\geq 0.008$	0.316	$\geq 0.012$	0.453	$\geq 0.00027$
Passive P	Passive P	0.260	$\geq 0.017$	0.268	$\geq 0.035$	0.264	$\geq 0.034$
	Active P	0.105	0.333	0.311	$\geq 0.0095$	0.389	$\geq 0.0017$
	Passive P	0.147	0.076	0.418	$\geq 0.00095$	0.363	$\geq 0.0035$

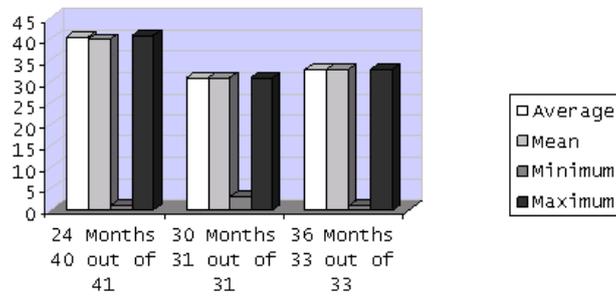
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# RESULTS FOR CHILD CATEGORIES

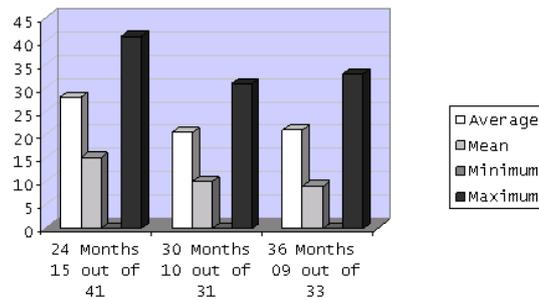
## Play with transformation



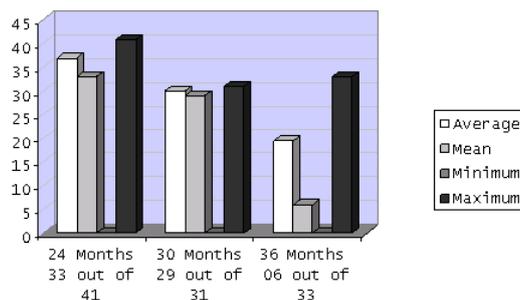
## Play without transformation



## Child perturbs actively



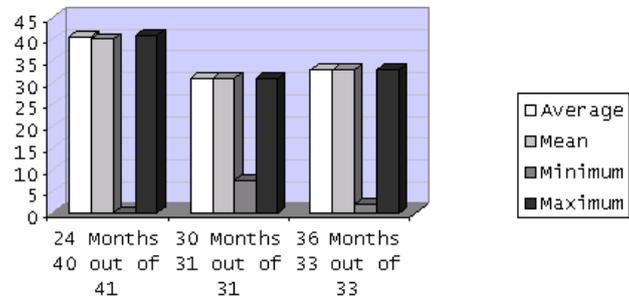
## Child perturbs passively



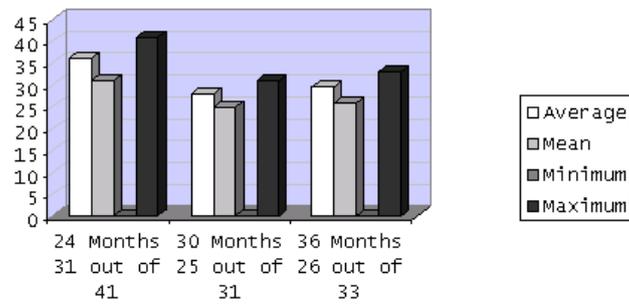
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# RESULTS FOR ADULT CATEGORIES

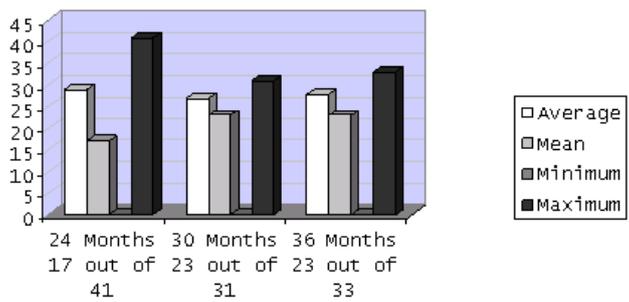
## Let the child do



## Active perturbation



## Passive perturbation



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