

Chapter 3

Toddler and Older Peer Play: Agentic Imagination and Joyful Learning



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3.1 Introduction

Further research extending Monash University pilot project: CF14/2789 – 2014001543 *Studying babies and toddlers: Cultural worlds and transitory relationships*, Li Quinones and Ridgway (2014) reveals the complexity and speed of transitory relationships in toddlers' activity in long day care and home settings. We ask *How does agentic imagination in peer play enable joyful learning?* Ridgway et al. (2015) define agentic imagination as occurring when 'the child has actively connected their real life and imagined world' (p. 13). This happens in the moment of unification of toddler's motives and imagination. An example of researcher, cousins Em and toddler Luci, is videoed and analysed to illustrate the presence of agentic imagination in joyful learning.

Toddler relationships in play are characterised by fleeting exchanges that involve imaginative meanings of objects and roles (Elwick et al. 2014). Researchers of babies and toddlers however, are not necessarily writing about joyful imaginative relationships, or how they are expressed in outdoor settings, and for this reason, the presence of agentic imagination is brought to closer attention. The video taken by researcher captures older peer/educator Em simultaneously and imaginatively following and leading joyful play activity with toddler Luci. Video analysis provides evidence of agentic imagination and joyful learning between older peer and toddler. In shared relational moments, captured in screen shot images, shifts of attention, ideas, feelings and transformation of meanings of objects and roles, are evident. Video transcription reflects player's positions, exchanges, communications and shifts in play activity. A visual narrative methodology is developed by researchers,

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by juxtaposing transcription with screen shot moments. The resultant visual narrative builds awareness of transformation of objects and roles in play and the presence of agentic imagination.

3.1.1 Growing Awareness

The field of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Australia, aims to build awareness of cultural meaning and personal joy. The current curriculum framework (VEYLDF 2016) specifically acknowledges that ‘spirit refers to human exploration of being and knowing, a sense of awe and wonder, a search for purpose and meaning within a range of human experiences’ (2016, p. 7). Visual methods are used to raise awareness in support of the written word (Pink 2001; Fleer and Ridgway 2014). In this chapter visual methods enable capture of shared moments amongst older peer, toddler and researcher. These reflect qualities of wonder, joy and purpose; qualities that might otherwise go unnoticed because of their transitory nature in everyday social interaction.

3.1.2 Joyful Learning

In his pioneering work expressed so eloquently by Rinaldi (2000) and Barsotti (2004), Loris Malaguzzi’s (1993) words ‘Nothing Without Joy’, resonate worldwide. For those who use play-based curriculum with young children, there is continued encouragement to keep cultural meanings, joy and imagination alive (Rinaldi 2013). The notion of ‘nothing without joy’ in early childhood, is a powerful reminder that wellbeing and joyful learning occur within social interaction. Spiritual writer Neale Donald Walsch (2016), expressed this thought about interaction: ‘Release the joy that is inside of another, and you release the joy that is inside of you.’ Reciprocal interaction is endorsed in current play-based curriculum.

3.1.3 Looking Closely

This research looks closely at what, why, how, and where meaningful relationships and joyful learning occur for a toddler. Cultural historical concepts of social relations, situated context and imagination support theoretical discussion (Veresov 2015). When toddler’s imagination is co-constructed, it becomes ‘agentic’ imagination, and forms in the space where joy is expressed in shared play activity. Agentic imagination arises in toddler play activity where affective reciprocal relationships grow with support of older peer/adult. This implies educators (e.g. an older peer) create desirable imaginative pedagogical relationships with toddlers for mutual

wellbeing and joyful learning. Agentic imagination can arise in a toddler's relationship with a same age peer, however in this research, toddler and older age peer brought their own agency and imaginative thoughts into relational play.

3.2 Theoretical Considerations

A cultural-historical theoretical approach frames the initial research question *How does agentic imagination in peer play enable joyful learning?* and supports conceptualisation of the moments of joyful attunement in toddler and older peer play.

Concepts of social relations, situated context and shared feelings are at the heart of children's development of agentic imagination and joyful learning. Cultural-historical theory acknowledges social and contextual factors, in particular, home and family values and knowledge, and participants' relationships and intentions.

Toddler research in education excites debate, imagination and exploration of 'new pathways for conceptualisation of agency' (Duhn 2014, p. 1). Children's 'commitment to sharing their world with peers begins early in life' according to Johansson (2017, p. 13). In Finland, Hakkarainen and Hannikainen (1996), Hakkarainen et al. (2013) examine why play has a positive role in young children's development and point to the fact that a single child cannot determine flow of play, nor interpret a next action of others. Vygotsky (1966/2015, p. 5) argued that in play, 'affective incentives' exist. These can be realised and resolved when time, relationships and space, lead to dynamic involvement in imaginary situations. In play with others (e.g. older) peers, Kravtsova (2014) suggests that 'children encounter a model for further learning activity' (p. 24). In addition, joint action in play according to Elkonin and Vygotsky (2001, p. 4), involves a 'concerted action' that may or may not have been modelled. Concerted action involves internal reorientation. In peers' social exchange, this would mean an orientation of one's own activities to another's. Research into how transitory moments in toddler's play can re-orient infant toddler learning and development, are brought to attention by Ridgway et al. (2016). Transitory moments occur when 'the child's needs, inclinations, incentives and motives' come together to bring active change; a re-orientation of participants' imaginative thought (2016, p. 2). Transitory moments are theorised by Quinones et al. (2017, p. 175) as 'affective moments of action' in a case example where harmonious responsive and respectful play allows toddlers to share both real and imagined meanings. In other research, Singer and de Haan (2007a) and Singer (2013) found peers and adults who are emotionally available for playful activity, are highly significant for toddlers' wellbeing, belonging and learning. Such relationships are an important characteristic of quality pedagogical practice for toddlers (Singer and de Haan 2007b). Cultural-historical theory supports better understanding of how toddlers learn through social engagement.

Represented in Vygotsky's (1994) term 'perezhivanie' is a connection between the way environment is embodied through awareness and how an individual relates to socially situated experience. Perezhivanie is a widely interpreted Russian term

with no English equivalent. Often understood as lived experience it names the embedded relationships, that exist between an individual and their surrounding world as both phenomena and concept (Fleer 2016).

Lindqvist (2003) noted: ‘Vygotsky sees no opposition between reality and imagination, but regards play as a creative interpretation process where imagination is both a prerequisite for and a result of the play action’ (p. 55). Lindqvist claims the more experience a child has, the better their imagination is.

In earlier research, authors found shared play between a toddler and older peer connected real and imagined lives in active experience, where ‘agentic imagination’ develops (Ridgway et al. 2015, p. 95).

3.2.1 Initiating a Socially Situated Experience

From a cultural-historical perspective, agency has been thought of as an individual’s subjective awareness of their initiation or execution of actions (de Vignemont and Fourneret 2004). Stetsenko (2008) proposes nuanced and subtle social relations in play activity, is where individual agency is most fully expressed.

Social learning theory suggests play is a ‘creative reworking’ of a child/toddler’s impression of an experience (Vygotsky 2004, p. 16). If this is so, examining play from a toddler’s perspective has pedagogical implications. Social relations in joint play (peer play) involve bringing imagination and personal interpretation to interactions with others. For learning to occur, this requires caring reciprocal exchanges. Identifying such exchanges is given later in the case example.

3.2.2 Social Relations and Learning Process

Vygotskian scholar Veresov (2015) elaborates learning processes in social relations where he notes, Vygotsky considered ‘new complex wholes’ can emerge. These ‘new psychological systems are the result of development, a path along which the social becomes the individual’ (Vygotsky 1997, p. 198). Social interactions for participants in joint peer play are ‘a source of development of Higher Mental Functions’ (Vygotsky 1997, p. 203).

Veresov clarifies Vygotsky’s idea in relation to social learning:

First, higher mental functions do not appear IN social relations, but AS social relations; every higher mental function was external because it was social before it became an internal strictly mental function; it was formerly a social relation (Vygotsky 1997, p. 105).

The quote suggests feelings and thoughts expressed in social relations are a source of higher mental functions. Veresov (2015) points to the learning process

where an individual's feelings in playful activity can change a social situation into one of a social situation of development.

3.2.3 Agentic Imagination in Social Situation

The term agentic imagination refers to a unity that becomes evident when peer play is framed by shared intentions. This unity occurs when young children's real life and imagined worlds become actively connected. 'The concept of agentic imagination involves young children's ability to freely express and act in play through imagining different roles and rules while playing and creating imaginary spaces' (Ridgway et al. 2015, p. 181). Real and imagined play connections are motivated by shared feelings, intentions, mutual respect and understanding between players (Gonzalez-Rey 2014). Agentic imagination grows when affective relations, freedom of expression and rich reciprocal experiences are present in the social situation.

In various social situations, agency and intentionality are distributed amongst players (Barad 2007). Social situations may include availability of peers (or caregivers) interested in sharing players' intentions. The importance of peers' emotional availability and intention is emphasised by Emde et al. (1991, p. 251). They discuss 'dual origins of early self, present in biologically prepared motives and interactions with people who are emotionally available'. Sensitivities in a situated context form part of a new complex whole in peer play activity. A complex whole includes significant relationships between participants. Within joint play, personal influences, motives, feelings, space, and interest in materials, exist tacitly and explicitly (see Hakkaranien Chap. 2 this volume). We extend an understanding of a 'complex whole' as it exists in emotionally available peer presence.

3.2.4 Relationships, Feelings and Situated Context

Research by Taguchi (2010) offers thoughtful comment on what she thinks is taking place between a child and play materials (e.g. sand/water). Taguchi finds no clear borders between child and materials, as to her, each appears to be informing the other. Taguchi discusses momentary shifts exchanged between child and play material resonate in transformed relationships in a situated context. In the case example to come, the situated context of toddler and older peer involves engagement in water play. Momentary exchanges in their situated context create shifts in roles and object meanings. A closer look at these, builds awareness of the complexity of a situated context.

A cultural historical theoretical research approach supports analysis of small moments (see Li and Yu Chap. 12). It allows finely detailed investigation from many

perspectives that include social interactions between participants, materials and the whole situated context. Acknowledgement of feelings in peers' emotional availability and awareness of transitory relationships, bring together real and imagined fields of experience through children's agentic imagination.

3.3 Methodological Considerations

Outdoor water play activity is videoed in a home setting by researcher. Video screen shot capture technique is used for the case example. Subtle movements and nuanced perspectives of transitory relationships between toddler and older peer are stabilized through this technique of video screen shot capture. The affective nature of awareness and attuned support of a significant peer in the toddler's life, can be closely examined. The case example video and transcript show older peers' (in this case positioned as educators') capacity to enjoy transitory relationships that stimulate imagination, concentrate action, engage warm feelings and share agentic imagination (thoughts in action).

This methodological approach fits with cultural-historical theory, as by rethinking and reviewing the finer detail in social relations, greater awareness of learning in joint play becomes possible. Visual narrative methodology holds the capacity to narrate how older peer and toddler affectively transform play objects and shift roles in a cultural context of joint water play activity. The video made spontaneously by researcher illustrates the warm relationships at the core of a joyful exchange. Video provides screen shot capture images for a visual narrative presentation to readers. Visual narrative methodology uses juxtaposition of image with textual data to illustrate cultural attunement. This offers finer detail of the relationships in play activity of toddler, caring older peer and researcher.

3.3.1 Ethical Considerations

The data reported involves one focus child, 18 months old, Luci (pseudonyms used) in playful activity with her nine year old cousin, older peer Em, and researcher. Whilst the wider study focused on studying babies' and toddlers' cultural worlds and transitory relationships to find out how they develop and learn through their everyday cultural life, this chapter explores how educator/older peer can extend shared moments through entering imaginary play activity, to achieve joyful, affective learning. Informed consent was obtained from Luci's parents and those of older peer Em. Participants' names are kept anonymous. Ethical approval for the project was granted by Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC). Video data is stored safely at the University for up to 10 years. Data comprise a short video clip of one focus child (Luci) and older peer Em with researcher, in

home setting. The family participants willingly shared the playful time together and enjoyed reviewing video of their activity.

Next, transformations of materials and ideas are identified in the case example.

3.4 Visual Narrative Case Example: Toddler and Older Peer Water Play

Cousins Luci (18 months) and Em (9 years) play outdoors. Researcher video captures spontaneous playful moments of engagement, curious about how agentic imagination and joyful learning might be expressed.

3.4.1 *Situated Context*

Em (9 years) and Luci (18 months) have a laundry tub partly filled with fresh water and a set of submerged coloured nesting cups. A lemon, water pourer and blue drinking cup are beside the tub. Researcher videos water play activity.

3.4.2 *Visual Narrative*

Luci (L) selects small blue nesting cup (Fig. 3.1). Em, older cousin looks at researcher (R) quizzically (imagining tub water may not be healthy for Luci to drink). Luci drinks from the small blue nesting cup.

Researcher points to fresh water in big blue cup and reassures Em tub water is fresh.

Fig. 3.1 Luci scoops up water to drink



Fig. 3.2 Em hands big blue cup to Luci



R: *It's ordinary water in there (the big blue cup) though...*

Em: *Could be bit dirty*

Em expresses concern about tub water quality and chooses to hand Luci the big blue cup of clean water (Fig. 3.2).

Em: *Luci drink out of this cup. Should I pour this in there?*

She asks researcher who nods yes, acting as Em's social reference whilst filming.

Em: *More water, more water, What have you got there? It's a cup.*

Em directs conversation to Luci and researcher, asking if pouring big blue cup water into tub is okay. Em pours explaining in a teacherly manner to Luci ...*more water, more water*. Em asks Luci a question she already knows the answer to *what have you got there*, then names the object- *it's a cup*. When Luci is offered big blue cup by Em, she ignores it. Em responds by placing big blue cup, now empty, on adjacent seat.

Researcher, eager to see more, anticipates a playful idea of filling up big blue cup again. She says playfully and poetically to cousins Em and Luci:

R. *Little cup, scoop it up*

At this moment shared intention is achieved in the group. The playful game of scooping water together into big blue cup on the seat holds imagined promise for ongoing interaction. The smile on Em's face encourages Luci (Fig. 3.3). Through Em's concerted gestures and actions, and Luci's agentic imagination, Luci begins to fill the big blue cup with a little blue scoop. Em is joyfully watching and smiling, indicating sensitive appreciation of Luci's responses and shared understanding. Em uses verbal interaction and careful observation. Her imagination draws on movements, suggestions, and smiles, that fully engage her in experimental water play with cousin Luci.

Researcher provokes imaginative play by making a request to both girls '*cup of tea please?*'

Fig. 3.3 Em smiles as Luci scoops water into big blue cup



Fig. 3.4 Cup of 'tea' offered by Luci



R. *Cup of tea please?*

It is toddler Luci who immediately responds. She promptly offers an imaginary cup of tea in her little blue scoop to researcher (Fig. 3.4). Em's face shows surprise and delight in Luci's immediate capacity to respond imaginatively to something that Em may have interpreted literally. Luci's actions are accompanied by a joyful sound *mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm*.

Luci. *mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm*

Em. *Shall I put it back in?*

Em now pours water from big blue cup into tub.

Em. *What's happening?*

Luci puts empty blue cup on seat behind her. Em wants to know why, seeking to follow Luci's own imaginative narrative and enquires. Researcher provides Em with one possible explanation.

R. *You poured it out so she's putting it back.*

Luci. *mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm*

Fig. 3.5 Em demonstrates pouring



Em. *Good job Luci, Very clever girl Luci, Good job*

Luci scoops water from tub to pour into big blue cup now located on seat (Fig. 3.5).

Em takes the role of encourager commenting to Luci with words like *good job, very clever girl...*

Luci. *Hah*

Em. *Fill it up. You can fill it up- good job you are doing a very good job.*

It seems to researcher that Em sets a goal which toddler Luci has already imagined. Their shared intentions have grown through warm and caring interactive exchanges.

Em. *Do you want me to help? I'll put some more in. okay...I'll fill your little cup*

Luci and Em are immersed in active joint play. Em remains eager to participate and offer support. The awareness and response from both Em and Luci are in harmonic flow. These are conditions for deep level learning and agentic imagination.

Luci. *mmmm Mmmm, mmmm, mmmm,*

Each time Luci pours water into big blue cup she makes harmonious mmmm sounds.

Luci. *mmmm, that,*

Em. *There's a lot of water in there, a lot, how about I put this down, I'll put it down there. Make it easier?*

Em places an almost filled big blue cup on the ground. She imagines doing this will make it easier for Luci to pour into. Luci immediately responds to Em's move and squats down to continue pouring water into the big blue cup. Luci

Fig. 3.6 Em. introduces lemon to cup



however, finds it harder to pour from that position and promptly decides to move big blue cup back up on to seat.

R. *She likes it there* (said to Em.)

Luci. *mmmmmm*

Researcher shows support for toddler's choice and in the spirit of continued harmony Em personally responds with a new suggestion. It is very clear from this exchange that Luci is also 'reading' the conversations, the looks exchanged, and the caring support for her activity. Em socially references researcher, who reads her look as a question when she replies '*she likes it there*' and Luci appears to agree by vocalizing with an expressive '*mmmmmm*'. In this exchange the presence of agentic imagination is found.

Em. *How about if I do this, put that one in*

Em now uses a practical initiative. She shares her idea clearly with Luci however she is also now very aware that Luci has her own ideas and can express them. Em floats a lemon in big blue cup. Use of words '*how about*' suggests Em's understanding of the need to pre-empt a new challenge for Luci. Em is always interested in Luci's active imaginative responses. Their joint agreement is sustained as they continue to play.

Luci. *Ehhh*

Luci uses a new sound when she responds with *ehhhh*, rather than *mmmmmm*.

Em shows Luci how to float a lemon in the big blue cup (Fig. 3.6).

Luci responds quickly and follows Em's idea.

She takes one from tub and puts it into big blue cup too.

Luci. *mmmmmmmm*

Luci produces the harmonious sound again.

Imitating Em's action with lemon she independently produces her own action (Fig. 3.7).

Fig. 3.7 Luci imitates Em



Em. *Very good job Luci, very good*

Older peer Em takes dual roles of support and lead in the play. She also gives Luci direct encouragement and acknowledgement.

L. *mmmmmmmm*

Luci tries to fill the empty pourer as it has no water or lemon in it. As seen by response below, this was not at all in Em's mind. Researcher notes that whilst still in joint play, the children hold different ideas.

Em. *No, no, try that one, try this one here?*

Caring older peer Em anticipates it may be hard for toddler Luci to fill pourer so she places it on seat.

Em. *Shall I put it here?*

The subtle movement of Em shifting pourer comes from her earlier observation of Luci placing big blue cup onto seat. By doing this, Em demonstrates sensitive and respectful support for Luci. Em directs her question to Luci for permission and also for maintenance of joint play relations. Her actions reflect a keen sense of otherness in shared play activity and special affection for toddler Luci.

Luci. *mmmmmmmm*

Em. *Oh you want to put the water in the pourer?*

Luci teases and starts to fill the pourer held out by Em but quickly moves her blue scoop past pourer towards big blue cup (Fig. 3.8). With pourer and big blue cup both full she loses interest and play stops. Video ends at this point. Older peer Em and toddler Luci move off together into garden.



Fig. 3.8 A new challenge offered by Em

3.5 Discussion of Case Example Findings

It is through a detailed examination of social relations, situated context, and shared feelings in the case example, that we can illustrate how agentic imagination in peer play relations enables and, at least, encourages joyful learning.

The situated context and shared feelings come together as a complex whole in the social relations narrated. Small joyful moments visible in water play narrative indicate Em, Luci and researcher share feelings in a harmonious situated context. Analysis of play relations reveals imagination is an element of social cohesion amongst them. Em as older peer, shows her attunement with Luci and sustains responsive awareness to her in shared water play. Luci indicates her interest in Em's suggestions through joyful actions, vocalizations, gestures and movements. Researcher plays roles of social reference and provocateur. Affective reciprocity in social relations is exhibited (See Quiñones, Ridgway and Li, Chap. 6). Right at the outset Em shows concern for toddler Luci's well-being if she drinks dirty water. This motivates Em's swift action of offering Luci a big blue cup of fresh water. Fleeting unspoken moments of exchange show up in detail through use of visual narrative methodology within socio-cultural context.

Moments occur in the learning process where an individual's feelings in playful activity, change the social situation into a social situation of development (Veresov 2015). Values of wellbeing expressed strongly in play exchange amongst three participants reflect shared care, minding of one another, and interest (Parker-Rees 2017). Luci has space, freedom and conditions for imaginative ideas to flourish. Imagination is central to the way toddler Luci and older peer Em experience one another and the objects/materials they shape and transform (water, scoops, roles). Small details of how their learning is transformed through joyful interaction, indicate how agentic imagination is created when happiness and belonging is shared by all participants.

The role of researcher as a social reference and observer, brings another perspective to social relations and situated context of play activity. Curious to know more about agentic imagination, the authors as researchers, review video together to discuss the process of how and when Em and Luci jointly form shared intentions. We notice for example when Luci, highly attuned to colours, chooses a small blue cup for scooping up water. The colour matches Em's big blue cup exactly. This points to the tendency by Em and Luci for joint acknowledgement. They engage in harmonious rhythmic attunement to one another's ideas, preferences (colour blue) and moves and also in their verbal exchanges *mmmmmm eeehhhhh, good girl, clever girl.*

The oral discourse *mmmmmm, ehhhh* is used as a mechanism to share joyful movements and understandings with older peer. Toddler Luci chooses semiotic means to express herself (Trevarthen 2011; Wertsch 2007) and her capacity to do this, is significant for joyful learning experienced in the situated context. Older peer awareness of attuned relationships that create desirable imaginative pedagogical practices for wellbeing and happiness, are considered fundamental to infant/toddlers' learning and development (Taguchi 2010; VEYLD 2016).

Smiles and close positioning around seat and tub of water, frame and contain spaces for play. Secure relationships with trusted and affectionate others, build feelings of joy. A moment of teasing by Luci when pourer is placed on seat by Em and Luci playfully by-passes it, is met by Em's considered response: *No no try this one here*, but Luci moves straight to big blue cup and pours into that showing her agency and will. A big smile emanates from Em as she realises Luci's playful teasing reflects their different personal intentions. Em shares joy in Luci's playfulness. In small detailed moments of water play we find two important points about agentic imagination: it involves children in free expression of joy and having space to act on their own ideas. Em and Luci create a shared, magical imagined world in which they both feel happy, safe and valued. The ritualised interactions and patterns of movements motivate them to take initiatives and create variations, that further support their formation of agentic imagination (Singer 2013).

Pedagogical awareness by older peer Em nurtures agentic imagination and joyful learning. Affective peer play stimulates toddler's imaginative thinking (cup of tea please) resulting in shared moments of joyful learning. Older peer awareness of harmoniously coordinated interactive movements with toddler is highly significant for wellbeing. The particular qualities of more experienced social partner Em and researcher, include capacity to imagine possibilities of the play space and materials, and an ability to sensitively read toddler's interests through semiotic expressions: verbal, non-verbal, gestural (Veena and Bellur 2015), visual and auditory. By responsively entering and developing dynamic shared play activity with an intention and awareness of connecting the real and imagined world, agentic imagination builds opportunities for joyful learning exchanges.

3.6 Conclusion

Detailed visual narrative shows an older peer/educator relationship does hold strong pedagogical and playful opportunities to enhance toddlers' joyful learning experiences. Moments of joyful learning and use of agentic imagination revealed in data, form part of the toddler's cultural life. The implication is that momentary relationships are significant in a toddler's daily life. The cultural expressions (e.g. cup of tea), the confidence to try new things (lemons float) and make decisions (use only blue scoop) indicate significance of fleeting transitory exchanges. The appearance of pedagogical perspectives worthy of inclusion in repertoires of practice for those who share the lives of toddlers, include having capacity for mutual reciprocity and an affectionate attitude.

The reality of experiencing an imaginary situation with warm social relations provides the feeling of 'nothing without joy' (Malaguzzi 1993). This represents a simultaneous joyful recognition of the young child/toddler's learning and becomes a shared value. The warm and repetitive *mmm*'s of Luci's exchanges as she scoops up water and pours it into the big blue cup, were created in response to whole-hearted encouragement of those with her.

The most important finding in this research is that when participants in toddler play relationships are fully aware through attunement and interest in experimentation with materials from the toddler's perspective, meaningful exchanges of joyful learning can occur.

In relation to pedagogical implications for engaging with toddlers, questions are raised. Do we need to look more closely into those fleeting and transitory moments where exciting and joyful relational exchanges occur? How can one look more carefully at relationships amongst players? Where do praise, (good girl) compliments (clever girl Luci) and challenges (how about I put the cup here?) recorded in detail in this chapter, fit into educator/peer role in toddler play? How do peer/educators engage with toddlers to ensure their experience involves mutually joyful learning? Hakkarainen et al. (2013) emphasise that a flow of mutual experience is the highest level that play involvement can reach (Also see Chap. 2, this volume).

The original purpose of this chapter was to capture detail of joyful learning in a toddler's home context. Inhabited by family who care: an older peer, adult (researcher) and cultural objects, invites relevant questions in relation to current imperatives for more detailed research into wellbeing and joyful learning in toddlers' home settings.

Details in case example show the significant role of caring for one another's interests. In a mutually caring role, the older peer and adult supported the wellbeing and happiness of all play participants. The shared love, interest and safe relationships give freedom and full reign to joyful expression. The toddler makes choices and imagines what to do in the play situation. Agentic imagination is created through

affective, reciprocal relationships when time and space are given, and older peer and adult involvement occurs in toddler play activity. This implies the educators' role (e.g. an older peer) creates desirable imaginative pedagogical relationships with toddlers for mutual wellbeing and joyful learning.

Acknowledgement Thanks to the toddler and older peer's family for permissions.

Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (Project ID: CF14/2789–2014001543) and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Project ID 2014_002500) granted approval for the project, *Studying babies and toddlers: Cultural worlds and transitory relationships*. This project was funded by a Monash University Faculty of Education seeding grant.

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