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IT'S ALL RIGHT TO BE A CHILD:
CULTURE AND PSYCHOSOCIAL COMPETENCE IN TWO DISTINCT
MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is about processes of psychosocial competence and middle childhood (between six and twelve years of age) in two distinct cultural communities that share relative poverty: a Chicago public housing community identified as “Concrete Park,” and a community of four refugee camps in the Republic of Angola identified as “Pena.” The research involved participant-observation to investigate the nature of self-esteem and teamwork as psychosocial concepts commonly promoted and associated with play activities. Qualitative and quantitative data collected in Concrete Park and Pena suggests that self-esteem and teamwork, associated with a folk model of childhood mental health, depend upon particularly cultural mentalities. Play, games, and sports activities both demonstrate and socialize these mentalities. Thus, while self-evaluation in Concrete Park involves competitive social comparison oriented by a priority on high individualized self-esteem, self-evaluation in Pena involves taking advantage of opportunities to behave appropriately within a hierarchical social world. Likewise, while teamwork in Concrete Park involves an emphasis on loyalty, teamwork in Pena involves an emphasis on social order. One possibility raised by this work is that cultural processes of psychosocial competence vary according to a set of particular concerns relevant in any community such as: the salience of individualized self-esteem and self-development; conceptions of an ideal self (particularly in relation to one’s understanding of his/her place in the life-course); norms of social comparison; norms of functional cooperation; and conceptions of one’s social identity. Specific processes related to these concerns differ between cultural communities and motivate individual patterns of thought and behavior towards distinct, cultural derived versions of psychosocial competence. Ultimately, this research supports conceptualizing children in impoverished communities as neither dysfunctional nor resilient; instead they should be recognized as profoundly social beings deeply embedded in distinct cultural communities.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES.....	iii
LIST OF TABLES.....	iv
Chapter	
ONE	INTRODUCTION..... 6
TWO	METHODS..... 44
THREE	SETTINGS..... 59
FOUR	CHILD’S PLAY..... 86
FIVE	SELF-ESTEEM..... 125
SIX	TEAMWORK..... 150
SEVEN	CONCLUSION..... 177
Appendix	
A.	FIGURES..... 194
B.	TABLES..... 203
C.	OLYMPIC AID STATEMENT ON CHILDREN AND SPORT..... 213
D.	VERBAL INSULTS COLLECTED IN CONCRETE PARK AND PENA..... 216
E.	DEMOGRAPHIC AND SELF-ESTEEM SURVEY FORMS..... 232
F.	DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS SURVEY FORM..... 234
G.	SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDES..... 235
H.	VIDEO FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE..... 237
REFERENCES.....	238

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1:	Rasch measure scores for developmental tasks ranked by three samples.....	195
Figure 2:	Percentage of children who participate in sports and physically active games at least once each week.....	197
Figure 3:	Percentage of children who participate in sports and physically active games every day.....	198
Figure 4:	Percentage of children who have participated in organized sports.....	199
Figure 5:	Mean peer comparison factor scores by age.....	200
Figure 6:	Global self-esteem scores by age.....	201
Figure 7:	Percentage of children who would "change many things about myself".....	202

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1:	General sample profile.....	204
Table 2:	Developmental task priorities rated by adults for children from 6 to 12 years old.....	205
Table 3:	Children's insults categorized by target and by characteristic being insulted.....	206
Table 4:	Mean scores on the CFSEI-3 and on self-evaluation items.....	207
Table 5:	Factor Analysis of CFSEI-3 Data.....	208
Table 6:	What would you change about yourself if you could?.....	209
Table 7:	Correlations among feelings about self, perceptions of inclusion, and perceptions of competitive success.....	212

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Children, no matter what their socio-economic circumstances, grow up in vibrant cultural communities that shape mentalities essential to psychosocial development. This dissertation is about the way such mentalities relate to processes of psychosocial competence and middle childhood in two distinct cultural communities: a Chicago public housing community I call Concrete Park, and a community of four refugee camps in the Republic of Angola I call Pena. These two impoverished communities are easy to stereotype as abysmal places for children. Chicago public housing has a popular reputation in the United States as being among the most dysfunctional and dangerous places an American can live. The United Nations has described Angola as “the worst place in the world to be a child” (Renner, 2003). These perceptions make communities such as Concrete Park and Pena regular targets for external aid programs, including an increasing number of programs focused on “psychosocial concepts” related to competence and mental health (Loughry & Eyber, 2003). The children of Concrete Park and Pena, however, regularly demonstrate locally appropriate versions of psychosocial competence despite poverty that deeply and negatively influences their opportunities for social mobility and socio-economic achievement. The children readily engage with the activities of daily life, feel adequate, and effectively interact with others. Such

competence comes through distinct psychosocial processes related to self-evaluation and functional cooperation.

The specific focus of this research is on self-esteem and teamwork as psychosocial concepts broadly promoted and associated with play, games, and sports activities. Evidence from Concrete Park and Pena suggests that self-esteem and teamwork represent particular cultural versions of self-evaluation and functional cooperation. In a sense, self-esteem and teamwork are part of a Western folk model of psychosocial competence. This folk model is influential in both Concrete Park and Pena, but it is not deterministic. Thus, while self-evaluation in Concrete Park involves a priority on high individualized self-esteem oriented by competitive social comparison and an ideal self modeled on adult success, self-evaluation in Pena involves taking advantage of opportunities to behave appropriately as a child within a hierarchical social world. Likewise, while functional cooperation in Concrete Park involves an emphasis on loyalty, functional cooperation in Pena involves an emphasis on social order. Psychosocial competence is more of a cultural model than a universal ideal, and the different models contrast and influence children in meaningful ways.

General practices familiar to any cultural community, such as child's play, simultaneously develop and represent distinct models of psychosocial competence. In analyzing these processes I regularly reference five related psychosocial concepts that are prominent in social science literature: norms of social comparison, conceptions of an ideal self, orientations of self-evaluation, norms of functional cooperation, and conceptions of social identity. I suggest these processes are influenced by culture and essentially related to self-esteem and teamwork

As with most research addressing psychosocial development, the focus of this project derives from a choice among several major influences on childhood including personal traits, universal psychological capacities, or mentalities developed through experiences that are deeply cultural. While children in Concrete Park and Pena are products of all three influences, I explicitly focus on mentalities that are deeply cultural. This influence on psychological character is often the least appreciated in psychological literature, while potentially most important for service agencies attempting to “help” children in impoverished communities. This project is thus situated within the tradition of cultural psychology, several versions of which have been usefully applied to comparative research on human development (e.g., Harkness & Super, 1996; LeVine et. al., 1994; Shweder, Goodnow, Hatano, LeVine, Markus, & Miller, 1998; Shweder, 1999; Weisner, 2000; Whiting & Edwards, 1988).

This introductory chapter begins by drawing from cultural psychology and related literature to establish key concepts, revolving around a cultural perspective on psychosocial competence, that underlie this research. Thereafter, I discuss the settings for the research as distinct cultural communities, drawing from case studies of four children in Concrete Park and Pena. I then separately consider child’s play as an object of study, self-esteem, and teamwork in relation to existing literature, and use each of those sections to introduce the ideas in the chapters that comprise the body of this dissertation. Examples from the four case studies illustrate most of these ideas, appropriately putting the regular lives of children at the core of the larger project.

Key concepts underlying this research

While traditional developmental psychology, such as that made famous by Jean Piaget, studies children's internal mentalities through their external behavior in the social world, cultural psychology studies ways that the external social world shapes children's internal mentalities (Shweder, 1999). Within cultural psychology, however, there is wide variation in understandings of the elements of the social world that are meaningful.

While social psychologists often analyze national or hemispheric "cultures" as most salient for psychology (see, for example, Nisbett, 2003), psychological anthropologists often focus on individual "subjectivity" as the most viable marker of meanings.

Shweder's version of cultural psychology provides something of a middle ground by focusing on culture as "community-specific ideas about what is true, good, beautiful, and efficient that are socially inherited and customary and mark some kind of distinction between different ways of life"(Shweder, 1999). While not every member of a cultural community, nor every member of Concrete Park and Pena, agree on what is "true, good, beautiful, and efficient," broad cultural mentalities are consistently evident in the standards towards which children, parents, and communities orient learning and socialization experiences. In this dissertation I focus on cultural mentalities of the "true, good, beautiful, and efficient" as related to psychosocial competence.

For children, being motivated towards psychosocial competence may be an evolutionary universal (Masten & Coatsworth, 1995; White, 1959). In other words, at some level most children want to feel that they can function proficiently in the social world. Because, however, that functioning occurs within very different social worlds children are motivated towards distinct cultural versions of psychosocial competence.

Most definitions of competence related to child development acknowledge this cultural variation. Masten and Coatsworth, for example, in tracing definitions of competence related to child development propose that it is “a pattern of effective performance in the environment, evaluated from the perspective of development in ecological and cultural context” (p. 724). Similarly, the World Health Organization (1997) suggests:

“Psychosocial competence is a person’s ability to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. It is a person’s ability to maintain a state of mental well-being and to demonstrate this in adaptive and positive behaviour while interacting with others, his/her culture and environment.” Thus, the meaning of psychosocial competence derives from interactions within a cultural community.

Ogbu’s (1981) definition of competence as a “set of functional or instrumental skills” in cognitive, linguistic, practical, and social-emotional domains allows for both a cultural and a multi-dimensional understanding of the concept. He argues for a “cultural-ecological” perspective on competence, suggesting that it develops according to the “cultural imperatives in a given population” such that inner-city African-American models of competence are a viable alternative to what Ogbu calls “mainstream” models. Though Ogbu offers a model of competence largely dependent on economic factors and opportunity structures, he identifies functional social-emotional characteristics such as “self-reliance, resourcefulness, ability to manipulate people and situations, mistrust of people in authority, ability to “fight back” or to ward off attacks” (p. 424) that fit well with aspects of psychosocial competence discussed here. Miller (2004) also suggests dimensions of psychosocial competence that might vary by cultural community, using as

examples models of attachment, social motivation, parenting style, and interpersonal morality.

Overall, existing literature related to psychosocial competence makes clear that the concept is culturally relative and multi-dimensional. As such, for present purposes I understand psychosocial competence to be a constellation of characteristic thought and behavior patterns that are appropriate for functioning within a cultural community. Thus, for example, psychosocial competence for children in Concrete Park depends upon combative competitiveness, enduring traits related to adult ideals, feeling good about an individuated self, personal loyalty (particularly within family contexts), and the significance of a social identity as “project kids.” In contrast, children in Pena tend to base feelings of psychosocial competence on opportunistic inclusion, appropriate behavior as a child without the pressure of adult standards, accomplishment before self-esteem, cooperation leading to social order, and the influence of a social identity as “*refugiados*.”

Each of these components plays a role in the “psychosocial concepts” that are targeted by organizations using play, games, and sport to facilitate child development. These programs, domestically and internationally, consistently define the benefits of play activities using a uniform rhetoric of personal qualities such as self-esteem, confidence, leadership, discipline, morality, and teamwork. Citing these characteristics as global benefits of play and sports participation depends upon an idea that certain personal characteristics, such as high self-esteem and teamwork, make up psychosocial competence in any society. There is also an implicit idea that these characteristics have nearly identical meanings for people in distinct local communities. While scholars often

criticize these ideas theoretically for their universalizing nature and implicit modernist discourse (often in relation to colonialism and globalization), little existing empirical research considers these ideas in relation to local cultural communities. Thus, while the rhetoric of development-through-sports programs represents a globalizing cultural model of psychosocial competence, in this dissertation I outline components of alternative cultural models that are particular to Concrete Park and Pena. I argue that local play, games, and sports activities both represent and develop these cultural models. Further, I use analyses of such activities in Concrete Park and Pena to transition into considerations of self-esteem and teamwork as oft-cited characteristics of globalizing psychosocial competence.

Introduction to the settings of this research

Throughout a year of field work I used a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods to evaluate the psychosocial character of middle childhood in Concrete Park and Pena. I discuss the bulk of that research and analysis in the body of this dissertation. One of the most basic methods, however, involved simply asking children and adults from Concrete Park and Pena, during both formal interviews and informal conversations, whether they thought their community was a good place to grow up. The vast majority of those asked said that it was. Of course they were not happy with the structural conditions of their lives, they rued their lack of opportunity for conventional success, and they felt the deep injustices and inequality of contemporary society. But they simultaneously considered childhood in their community to be decent and agreeable. That felt discordant. How could people living in Chicago public housing and Angolan refugee camps, communities frequently stereotyped as being among the most deficient and

destitute in the world, feel their communities are decent places to grow up? The answer is that people living in Concrete Park and Pena appear to separate the structural conditions of their community from its psychosocial character.

The lives of children in Concrete Park and Pena best demonstrate the characteristics of these communities. Sissi, Demarcus, Brianna, and Abel are the types of ordinary children that define middle childhood in Concrete Park and Pena. Each has his or her own distinct individual characteristics, but they are unexceptional in their communities and thus exemplify local mentalities and experiences of childhood. DeMarcus and Abel are two eleven year old boys who enjoy sports, school, friends, action movies, family, and, somewhat hesitantly, flirting with girls. Brianna, age nine, and Sissi, age twelve, are two bright and popular girls in middle childhood who enjoy school, family, friends, and games. All four children have a captivating tendency to erupt in large, coy smiles when they meet acquaintances. Aside from their familiar interests and shared characteristics, however, Sissi, DeMarcus, Brianna, and Abel are children of very different cultural communities. DeMarcus and Brianna live in the Concrete Park public housing project on the near south side of Chicago. Sissi and Abel live in the Pena refugee camp on the outskirts of Luanda, the capital of the Republic of Angola. Their young lives, in both their similarities and differences, prefigure some of the themes of this dissertation by demonstrating the characteristics of their cultural communities and the related mentalities they encounter during middle childhood.

Demarcus, Brianna, and Concrete Park

DeMarcus and Brianna's lives in Concrete Park take place amidst large extended families and a tight network of cousins and peers. DeMarcus's grandmother originally

moved the family to Concrete Park several decades ago after someone was shot and killed in her previous housing development building in a different part of the south side. She perceived Concrete Park, being a smallish low-rise housing project spatially isolated from more dangerous neighborhoods, as a safer place for her family, and they have become an integral part of the community. Brianna's family is also deeply enmeshed in the social fiber of Concrete Park, though some have recently moved to row houses outside the immediate community to escape the stigma of living in "the projects." Her mother works in the maintenance department of the housing development, her grandmother is a member of the community leadership council, two aunts live in the community, and Brianna identifies three same age cousins living in Concrete Park as her best friends. Both DeMarcus and Brianna live with their biological mothers, along with several half-siblings and their mothers' respective boyfriends. While most of the adults in their lives meet the criteria to be considered members of the working poor, the community in Concrete Park is settled and exceedingly socially integrated. .

The spatial lay-out of Concrete Park promotes sociality in being comprised of low-rise buildings surrounding a series of courtyards. Within their homes, DeMarcus has his own large room in his family's simple apartment in a two-story rectangular red-brick building, while Brianna shares a room with her 17 year old sister, with whom she has a close, respectful, and energetic relationship. Both DeMarcus and Brianna spend many days with friends in and around the community and many evenings with uncles, aunts, and grandmothers. During the summer these children are rarely alone, regularly wandering around Concrete Park to find friends and nearly constant activity.

During the school year DeMarcus and Brianna attend different Chicago public schools outside of Concrete Park; both attended the local Concrete Park public school until their respective parents decided the school was too dysfunctional. This is a common attitude in Concrete Park, and parents regularly consider moving their children to other schools in neighboring communities. Notably, however, official district test statistics suggest that the Concrete Park school is not that different from DeMarcus and Brianna's alternatives; all these schools are classified as over 90% low income, nearly 100% African-American, and poor performing by state standards. Nevertheless, Brianna's mother tells me that when she visited the new school she was impressed because "every morning, one thing that I like about them, they have a song that they sing every morning. They have to stand out in the hall, and they have a pledge that they have to say every morning to keep them motivated and everything." For residents of Concrete Park an organized school offers a chance for change and self-development.

Most children in Concrete Park like school and express high conventional ambitions. Brianna enjoys school, does well in most subjects besides reading, tells me she wants to be a teacher when she grows up, and has a family that provides her much encouragement. Her poor reading skills are a source of great frustration to her, such that when I asked Brianna what she would change about herself if she could change anything at all she told me she would change her ability to read. DeMarcus identifies himself as smart and takes great pride in doing relatively well in school (he told me with beaming pride "I get straight B's"). While the odds are strongly against him attaining his stated future goals of being either a professional football player, an ATF agent, or a lawyer,

because of his family support, his comparatively serious demeanor, and his pride in school DeMarcus has a relatively bright future.

When I talked to DeMarcus alone he seemed most proud of having played the trumpet in his school band and having built a rocket that earned second place in the school science fair. Around his peers, however, those achievements rarely garner any mention. Instead, during within community interactions DeMarcus and his peers spend most of their focus on video games, popular culture, and sports.

DeMarcus and Brianna also enjoy walking and biking around Concrete Park, though they are generally unable to stray far when with peers. Across the train tracks from Concrete Park is a working class white neighborhood which has a historic tension with the near-by public housing communities. The one time DeMarcus went there on foot he was chased away by stone-throwing white youth, and DeMarcus now only enters the neighboring community on a bicycle that ensures him the possibility of a quick escape. Children in Concrete Park learn to identify closely with their community, though that identification alternates between pride within the neighborhood and a social identity as “project kids” in broader society.

Children such as DeMarcus and Brianna experience Concrete Park as a distinct community with its own rituals, norms, values, and mentalities. They feel valued and integrated within their community, but identify as poor and deficient in society as a whole. They engage in daily activities associated with normal childhood, but also confront regular harsh realities of drugs, violence, and desperation amongst neighbors and relatives. They put an intense value on contemporary American ideals like competition and self-improvement, but also feel angry about being socially marginalized.

Concrete Park is a vibrant cultural community that orients children such as DeMarcus and Brianna towards particular mentalities related to psychosocial competence.

Abel, Sissi, and Pena

Abel and Sissi's families came to Pena searching for relative safety and opportunity after living in areas of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Angola affected by long civil wars. Abel's family fled war and civil unrest in the Democratic Republic of Congo's Shaba province in 1969. They have been in United Nations administered refugee camps in different parts of Angola for several decades, moving from camp to camp in accordance with the dangers of Angola's own 27 year civil war. Sissi had lived in a large, decaying green canvas tent provided by the United Nations as "temporary" housing since 1999, when her family was displaced from a rural Angolan province enveloped by heavy combat in Angola's civil war. Although their lives have moved at the whims of war in both Congo and Angola, neither Abel nor Sissi has had direct experience with war or combat; their primary developmental experiences relate to living in Pena.

Abel and Sissi's respective homes fit into a patchwork of tents and mud-brick huts laid out along grids of hard red dirt. Sissi's family tent was approximately 15 feet square and 7 feet tall, a space which Sissi's family had divided into sleeping and eating areas by hanging an old sheet. There was one mattress in the sleeping area, upon which Sissi, her brother, her mother, and her grandmother all slept when in the house. Abel, who is under the custody of a 29 year old sister (one of his many full and half siblings both in Pena and elsewhere), lived in a small one room hut with the 13 year old son of that sister named Nuno. Nuno is technically Abel's nephew, but they function primarily

as best friends and co-heads of their small household. Abel's biological father was dead and his biological mother was a drunk renown in Pena for her relatively harmless but embarrassing behavior. His older sister was more responsible than his mother, and she provided him food and basic necessities as distributed by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). Her hut, however, is in a separate block of Pena and thus Abel only sees her sporadically and rarely has extended interactions. For many of the children in Pena home is more a place where their family lives than the solitary site for social interaction.

Abel's hut, made of red-tinged mud, wood, and corrugated tin with a childishly painted skull and crossbones marking the door, seems like a self-made boys' clubhouse. In the small interior space they have one thin mattress on the floor, two green plastic chairs, two water buckets, and newspaper pictures of soccer players and movie stars pasted haphazardly on the whitewashed mud walls. While Abel has at least 15 blood relatives in the camp (no one is very sure of the exact number), he only seems to have close familial relations with Nuno. His closest non-family relations are with his peers, schoolmates, and playmates. His sister is married, but her husband works outside the camp and only visits occasionally. On the day I interviewed his sister her husband was in attendance, focused primarily on finishing two beers while I held a 45 minute interview with Abel at 11:00 in the morning.

One Tuesday when I met with Sissi her mother had been away since Saturday and Sissi had no idea when she would return. This was not an issue of neglect. Sissi was only 12, but was very capable of running the household and felt no need for any explanations from her mother. Sissi had a good relationship with her mother because

Sissi focused her days on fulfilling routine responsibilities of household chores and school. It seemed to never cross Sissi's mind that her mother should explain where she was going or what she was doing. As long as the household maintained a sense of order the family was reasonably content.

Abel and Sissi both hoped that education might eventually take them out of Pena, and they attended a small camp school that operates several three hour shifts each day for grades equivalent to first through fourth. Unless a family has the resources to send their child to relatively costly and selective schools in the nearest town, an opportunity which probably only one of one hundred children in Pena would get, children cannot hope for education beyond fourth grade.

Despite limited educational opportunities, Sissi tells me that she wants to be both "a lawyer and a housewife with four children in Brazil." While it is extraordinarily unlikely that either of these ambitions will come to fruition, the fact that Sissi holds both as ideals is significant. She gets exposure to enough media, education, and international organizational influence to associate a high status profession such as law with life success. At the same time, she values the more "traditional" roles assigned to women in Angola as homemakers and caregivers integrated into dynamic families. When I asked Sissi what she likes to do during the day she specifically cited her chores and "taking care of the home." When I clarify whether she thinks those things are actually enjoyable, or just necessary, she tells me "no, it is fun." Sissi enjoys the feeling of participating in the understood social order. But, she also associates being Angolan with a negative social identity and idealizes the opportunity to leave. Because of strong Lusophone ties, Brazil and Portugal were the most commonly cited "lands of opportunity" for people in Pena.

Aside from chores and school, in a normal day Abel and Sissi spend most of their time playing games, wandering around Pena, or walking to the nearby community market. When wandering around the camp groups of friends chat and talk about what is happening in their lives. They tell each other stories about recent experiences, talk about peers, play a verbal game called *estiga-se* which involves trading amusing insults (Abel's friend tells him "your father walks with a crutch [is a cripple] but you still ask him to carry you around"), and watch one of the TV's scattered in a few homes of more wealthy community members (usually tuned to news, sports, or Brazilian soap operas known as *novellas*). On a typical trip to the market, a 15 minute walk through dusty streets bordered by whitewashed mud brick houses in various states of disrepair, the children might check the movies playing at the "video hut" (the day I accompanied Abel the options were all "kung-fu" type fighting movies: "The Master" with Jet Li, "The Order" and "Kickboxer" with Jean-Claude Van Damme, "Undefeatable" with an Asian woman kung fu star, and "Double Dragon"), play games on outdoor tables, check the various wares on sale, or buy a snack of bread and tea from elderly women wearing brightly wrapped fabric stirring scarred tin pots over tiny smoke-filled fires.

During these activities children such as Abel and Sissi in Pena experience their community through the freedom of childhood and, simultaneously, through an expectation of strict social order. They seem to enjoy their friendships and their daily rituals, but they also resent being identified with poverty and destitution. Ultimately, although they have exposure to global media and recognize a national identity, children such as Abel and Sissi are firmly situated in Pena as a cultural community.

Children and interactions with their cultural communities

There is a common discourse amongst both residents and development workers which suggests that children in impoverished communities, children such as DeMarcus, Brianna, Abel, and Sissi, spend most of their time just “doing nothing.” Likewise, there is a common refrain within poor communities that social problems come from children and youth who “just have nothing to do.” While I was documenting the daily lives of children in Concrete Park and Pena children were rarely literally “doing nothing.” The closest I saw during a day with Abel was at a point in the late afternoon when a conversation amongst friends taking place in one of Pena’s community huts broke up leading Abel and three friends to re-locate to a small adobe porch near his family’s hut. For a few brief minutes the boys just sat, almost literally doing nothing. Then a few other children, some smaller and shirtless, some larger and well-dressed, wandered by and joined Abel’s group. Within another minute little games started to evolve. Some of the children picked up sticks and pretended that they were writing down things on the ground. The others had to try and read or guess what is written. One boy started playing a small hand held video game. Another started playing with a junked bicycle tire rim, propping it up with a stick to turn it into a sort of play animal trap. In another couple of minutes there were energetic calls of “what did I write here?” competing with daring attempts to slip under the bicycle rim. Other children started to throw stones to the air, soon trying to head the stones out of the air into small dirt circles. Within five minutes they went from literally doing nothing to a sort of frenzy of random, unexceptional activity and fun.

While children in Concrete Park and Pena may not always be engaged in activities deemed productive or socially redeeming, they are always relating to the people, activities, institutions, and ideas that comprise the experiences of daily life. Thus, even when the perception is that they are “doing nothing,” children such as DeMarcus, Brianna, Abel, and Sissi are interacting with their cultural community in ways that cultivate particular local mentalities.

Themes related to play, games, and sports

While play, games, and sports activities are not a traditional site for the study of culture and local mentalities, there is a popular understanding of these activities as viable tools for improving children’s lives. As examples, in 2002 DaimlerChrysler and Rlichemont committed five million dollars to establish the international “Laureus Sport for Good Foundation” and the Dutch government pledged five million Euros to expand efforts by the non-governmental organization with which I worked in Angola, Olympic Aid, to use play, games, and sports to “facilitate child development” in the developing world. These efforts seem particularly popular in Africa, garnering explicit endorsements from African Nobel laureates including Kofi Annan, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and Nelson Mandela. Mandela, speaking at the 2000 Laureus World Sport Awards, explained that “Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to unite people in a way little else does. Sport can create hope, where once there was only despair.”

Olympic Aid (which since changed its name to “The Right to Play”) translates this ideal into a mission stating that it uses “sport and play to enhance child development.” I have appended Olympic Aid’s statement on children and sport which lays out what the organization saw itself to be doing (included as Appendix C). In this

statement a Western child development discourse seems to frame the benefits of sports programs in Africa and Asia. The benefits of sport for youth are divided primarily into physiological and psychosocial, with a strong emphasis on individualistic psychosocial traits such as self-esteem, confidence, teamwork (though teamwork may not seem individualistic upon initial consideration, I will argue that there are important differences between communal qualities and teamwork as a more instrumental form of cooperation), and leadership.

This mentality, framing play and sports as a forum for intentional socialization towards particular desired outcomes, fits well with understandings of child's play in Concrete Park. In a local pre-school program, for example, a teacher had written "PLAYING IS LEARNING" on her smock to remind everyone that child's play in the community was not just frivolous. Child's play needed to be associated with desired adult outcomes in order to be considered worthwhile. In contrast, in Pena child's play was an appropriate domain for the child. Through these types of distinct understandings, child's play became a site where mentalities towards psychosocial competence were instantiated. Play, games, and sports activities provided an entry point to understanding tensions between differing models of psychosocial competence.

Play, games, and sport were unquestionably part of the local reality for children such as DeMarcus and Abel. In fact, aside from school and sleep, no other category of activity took up more of their time. Likewise, broad categories of play types in Concrete Park and Pena were relatively similar. In both communities children engaged regularly in organized sports, physically active games, non-physically active games, verbal games, and role playing games. Though there were differences in terms of frequency and

content, all five categories were evident in both communities. The cultural mentalities towards these activities, however, varied significantly between Concrete Park and Pena.

In Chapter Four I highlight two specific differences in mentalities toward play, games, and sports: the relationship between play and norms of social comparison, and the relationship between play and conceptions of the ideal self (as represented by conceptions of the life-course). Children in Concrete Park thought of play, games, and sports as an explicitly pedagogical experience that was most valuable when organized as a site for the transmission of values and personal qualities (like self-esteem and teamwork). Simultaneously, however, children in Concrete Park learned that beyond the transmission of relevant values play, games, and sports were not important for adult life. Thus, they were not a priority. Children in Pena also knew that play, games, and sports were not important for adult life. For children in Pena, however, that fact meant those activities were the proper realm of the child. Childhood was a time to play, interact with peers, and enjoy the freedom to explore the world. Play, games, and sports did not teach children in Pena anything, they did not transmit values, but they did provide them an appropriate chance to engage the social world. Further, children in Pena understood that engagement as best when occurring in a strict social order where participation, rather than competition, was the priority. Children in Pena emphasized properly situating oneself in the social order as a way of establishing a type of psychosocial competence measured by appropriate behavior. In contrast, children in Concrete Park developed an intense focus on competitive outcomes, and developed mentalities prioritizing combative competitiveness as a way of establishing a type of psychosocial competence measured by enduring traits. These characteristics are considered normal within their communities;

residents of Pena value striving for opportunities in the social order and residents of Concrete Park value standing up for oneself. Ultimately, however, some of these mentalities contrast with prominent globalizing models of psychosocial competence and may create a sense of inappropriate interactions outside of the immediate cultural community. DeMarcus, Brianna, Abel, and Sissi's experiences with child's play further illuminate these mentalities.

Child's play in Concrete Park

DeMarcus and Brianna focused their recreational energy on the normal activities of childhood in Concrete Park. Of these activities, play, games, and sports are among the most prominent. At times, it actually seemed that the attention DeMarcus and Brianna devoted to sports derived more from normative expectations than genuine passion. While documenting one full day of DeMarcus's 11 year old life, for example, I observed him doing household chores, playing video games, cooking himself lunch, playing with his dog, going to the store with his uncle, and spending several hours at a well organized basketball practice. In relation to all these activities, DeMarcus seemed only moderately engaged during the basketball practice. Yet, with the encouragement of his uncles and friends, DeMarcus has participated extensively in organized sports including basketball, football, soccer, and baseball.

Play activities did provide an important forum in Concrete Park for social interaction between both peers and adults. During the summer DeMarcus participated on a Concrete Park baseball team in an inner-city little league, that was a summer highlight for the community. The boys felt important enough during the season that they showed up at the small community center gym in their full uniforms early in the morning on

Tuesdays and Thursdays to get ready for their afternoon games. Their coach was an African-American firefighter with a strong personality who had married a woman that grew up in Concrete Park. The coach was a successful role model for the boys in the community, who always looked forward to the possibility of riding in one of his large shiny late-model trucks. The team, and related activities, clearly provided a major setting through which community children and adults were able to feel comfortable in positive relationships and social interactions.

Relationships and social interactions also seemed to drive the recreational activities in Brianna's weekly routine. Brianna attended church and soccer with a popular employee of the Chicago Housing Authority, Clive, that ran many engaging programs for children in different housing projects. Clive had grown up in one of the more dangerous public housing developments, but had achieved more than many other people from his community because, in his mind, he was heavily involved in both sports and church. Such activities serve both as opportunities for meaningful engagement and as structured settings for constructing positive, pro-social identities. For some children those two functions were somewhat exclusive of each other. Brianna, for example, rarely actually seemed to have any particular affinity for soccer as a game or for the content of church services. At various point she told me frankly that she did not really like sitting through sermons or sweating through soccer practices. But she also told others with great pride about being a soccer player and about going to church. Brianna tells me they are just things to do, but they also clearly provide her with significant and positive social identities that help craft a self-image as a "good" child.

Particularly during the summer, Brianna did spend a great deal of her free time playing sports, shooting baskets, and jumping rope. As with DeMarcus, however, that seemed more a function of available activities than any intrinsic passion. Brianna appears to enjoy the socializing involved in sports and games more than she enjoys the actual games. As she looks forward, Brianna only sports related ambition is to be a high school cheerleader. Her mother told me with a laugh that Brianna “has the mouth for it, that’s for sure.”

It is worth noting that DeMarcus’s uncle Oliver, despite great success in sports, had ambivalent feelings about the role of sports for children in Concrete Park. He told me “It’s a good thing and it’s a bad thing...sometimes sports keeps kids in school, and then sometimes it messes up their life if they’re too much into sports.” Oliver expressed a belief that sports can create false hopes and dreams for children, seeing school as the primary route to social mobility. At the same time, Oliver endorses certain values available in sports settings, noting “it teaches them teamwork, discipline. It’s a discipline thing. It really helps, like I say, being able to talk to other people who helped, you know, that’s the way you find out if you’re a leader, you can tell kids who lead, who follow, you know what I’m saying, or kids who just understand.” There is an underlying idea in this perspective of children sorting themselves into groups based on competitive traits. Similarly, Oliver told me: “As long as they compete against each other, you know, they’re trying to beat each other out. That’s where they get their self-esteem from. As long as they keep trying to do each other better. I mean they do it on their report cards, they do it when they’re playing sports.” When I pointed out that in competition only some people can win, Oliver told me “it don’t really be like that...they be like your grade

is better than mine this time, we gonna try this again...they keep going at it. I see a lot of them do that.”

In this discussion Oliver describes a common mentality in Concrete Park which conceptualizes play and sports activities as sites for the transmission of psychosocial characteristics such as teamwork and self-esteem. The underlying idea is that play activities are sites for self development; residents of Concrete Park understood play as an opportunity for learning and developing one’s self towards an adult ideal. A respect for particular enduring traits demonstrated through combative competitiveness, such as cunning and loyalty, permeated that ideal. These mentalities contrast with conceptions of play and sports in Pena.

Child’s play in Pena

While Abel and Sissi did not have extensive experience on organized sports teams in formal leagues with a coach or uniforms, both spent considerable time engaged in play activities. Abel’s primary play endeavors involved soccer and basketball; whether he played one or the other on any particular day depended upon the availability of the improvised red dirt soccer field in front of the rectangular tin-roofed school or the basic cement basketball court between the school and awkwardly placed rows of small huts. Though Abel prefers basketball, he also notes that playing basketball requires an inflated ball- which is not always available- while soccer can be played with any kind of improvised sphere. In the daily soccer games played by the boys of Pena I can never tell who is on which team, there being no distinction of obvious markers like shirt color, but somehow boys like Abel always know. From a distance these games look like a dusty

chaotic scrum of happy children; only up close does it become clear that the children create their own order amidst the laughter and banter.

Sissi, when not working around the home, engaged in a variety of physically active games and role playing activities with her similar age girl friends. At night Sissi often participates in a regular game of *bica bidon* (which is very similar to the American game “kick the can”) that children in her block of the camp organize. When spending time with her brother she will also sometimes play popular verbal games including *estiga-se*- a local game which translates to “abuse you.” She told me, for example, that she might tell her brother “Your father was the tallest guy in the world, but he was still able to play basketball under the bed.” I noted to Sissi that by making fun of her brother’s father she was also making fun of her own father, but Sissi just shrugged and offered a bemused laugh. She explained to me that for them the game is just about having fun and being creative- there is no combative intention to explicitly demean another. In documenting a day in Sissi’s 12 year old life I watched her spend hours with three girl friends setting up an elaborate small table-top model of a kitchen, using scraps of paper, balls of mud, and crumbs of the morning’s breakfast to create an detailed miniature tableau of a grand meal. At one point Sissi became frustrated with the pace at which her friend was cutting a mat for their fantasy kitchen, proclaiming “you are doing that like you are from Huambo” (Huambo being a rural Angolan province stereotyped as more backwards than Luanda). Throughout setting up the imaginary kitchen, and during the other games of the day, Sissi and her friends seem in constant competition for authority rather than outcome. Whenever one has a bit of knowledge that seems applicable, they assert themselves with loud chirping voices telling the others where to

stand, how to move, or when to act. To me the tone of the interactions seems tense, but the children demonstrated no feelings of hostility. Instead, they seemed to appreciate the need for order.

In Pena children such as Abel and Sissi experienced play as a practice in which they could enjoy the freedom and peer interaction associated with being young. A reverence for finding one's place in the social order and appropriate behavior embedded itself in that practice. These general mentalities, related to norms of social comparison and conceptions of the ideal self, also filter into local meanings for self-esteem and teamwork as characteristics regularly associated with a globalizing model of psychosocial competence.

Themes related to self-esteem

Self-esteem, though often used synonymously with related constructs like self-concept, self-worth, self-confidence, and self-efficacy which focus on cognitive appraisal, generally refers to the affective outcome of an individualistic self-evaluation. In practice, self-esteem has been most commonly measured through rating the accuracy of statements such as "I feel that I am a person of worth" and "I feel that I have a number of good qualities" (both drawn from the 1965 Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale). The primary emphasis in the huge body of academic literature addressing self-esteem and other self-related constructs is on quantity rather than quality. That is, research tends to focus on the antecedents and consequences of having high or low self-esteem without attending to the way children learn to evaluate or esteem particular conceptions of self. The focus on quantity is obvious in the substantial debate about differences in self-esteem between demographic groups, including an academic discussion surrounding the

“culture-free self-esteem scale” (CFSEI-3) commercially produced by Battle (1992; 2002) which I used in my field research. Holaday et. al. (1996) compared the scale in seven relatively distinct cultural groups, finding that means between the groups were significantly different. The authors make the perfectly reasonable conclusion that the scale is “not culture-free.” But they ignore the equally valid possibility that self-esteem as a Western construct may not be culture free. Thus, while questioning a scale’s claim to be “culture-free,” they implicitly accept that individualized self-esteem is vital in distinct cultural setting. Contrasting the experiences of children in Concrete Park and Pena challenges that notion.

Individualized self-esteem is not a universal characteristic directly related to psychosocial competence. Instead it is part of a Western folk model offering a particular way of talking about cultural processes of self-evaluation. Concrete Park as a cultural community inundates children with that folk model and the implicit notion that individualized self-esteem is an ideal component of psychosocial competence. Further, that ideal filters through processes such as competitive social comparison and conceptualizing an ideal self that is modeled on adulthood, prioritizes individuality, and emphasizes constant attention to self improvement. In contrast, in Pena individualized self-esteem is neither a familiar construct nor a salient concept. Children in Pena evaluate their selves based on an ideal self that is modeled on being a good child by engaging with peers, taking opportunities in school and around the home, and behaving properly in the social order. Further, children in Pena focus on social comparisons that help them evaluate how well they fit in the social order with others, rather than whether they are better or worse than others in zero-sum competition.

Middle childhood is ideal for analyzing these self-evaluation related processes because it is the period when norms for self-representation and evaluation are instantiated (Harter, 1998). In the period between starting school, which takes children out of the immediate home environment for extended periods, and the onset of puberty, which necessarily shifts children towards adult concerns, children learn to reason and think about their selves according to cultural criteria. Further, comparing middle childhood in two impoverished black communities provides a natural control for any direct influence of SES and race. Through this comparison I argue that an individualized conception of self-esteem is a major component in the assessment of psychosocial competence in a cultural community such as Concrete Park, but has a very limited role in a cultural community such as Pena. Simultaneously, however, in both communities it was clear that living in stigmatized neighborhoods crafted an important social identity. Children in Concrete Park identified as “project kids” to a degree that caused them to accept stereotypes contrasting with their own personal experience. Likewise, adults and children in Pena regularly explained bad behavior and poor performance through the derogatory expression “*refugiados*.” Thus, in considering the lives of children in Concrete Park and Pena I attempt to disentangle some of the ways self-esteem represents both individual and group processes.

Self-esteem and Concrete Park

Most children in Concrete Park, including DeMarcus and Brianna, are constantly exposed to an intense emphasis on self-esteem oriented to an admiration for adult-like traits. When, for example, I asked DeMarcus’s grandmother to describe DeMarcus she told me “That’s my baby and I love him. But...DeMarcus thinks too much of himself

sometimes. He's got very high self-esteem...sometimes it can overwhelm. But that's from people telling him it's all right to be who he is, it's all right to be smart, it's all right to be a child." The notion that children need to be told that it is "all right to be a child" derives from DeMarcus's grandmother's interpretation of a peer norm common to children in the community: "I think all of them tries to show how tough they are. It's like I gotta be bigger than you type of atmosphere than just being a kid because they don't know how to be just ten, they want to be ten going on fifteen." While children in Concrete Park aspire to seem tough and adult-like, they simultaneously learn to emphasize positive self-regard.

As such, children in Concrete Park evaluate themselves quite positively by the criteria of self-esteem inventories such as the CFSEI-3. Brianna, for example, scored 18 out of 19 possible, indicating extraordinarily high self-esteem. The point she did not score came from saying that "yes" she would "change many things about myself if I could." Interestingly, however, over 80% of children in Concrete Park told me they would change many things about themselves, in comparison to only 56% of children in Pena and 51% in the test publisher's norming sample. Brianna, and other children in Concrete Park, had been socialized to value striving for personal change and improvement. Likewise, children such as Brianna had learned to value representing one's individual self in as positive a light as possible. My sense in administering the self-esteem scale several times with Brianna was that she did recognize socially desirable responses, but also genuinely esteemed her individual self. She had a large and happy family, she liked school, she spent most of her days playing and laughing, and she perceived herself as being involved in worthwhile activities such as organized soccer and

church programs. Further, when I asked Brianna's mother about self-esteem she told me "I think I started that out early, you know, because I'm always talking with them. I always tell them do better than what I've done...Not to take away from nobody else, but know what you want and go get it. And to know that as long as you're happy that's all that matters. Keep a peace of mind within yourself and that's all that matters. Don't let nobody tell you what you can't do. If you make a mistake that's okay because that's all a part of life."

Like most children in Concrete Park, Brianna and DeMarcus regularly attended to a version of a powerful Western discourse prioritizing individual happiness and esteem for one's self through competitive social comparison. While quantitative measures evidence the emphasis on high self-esteem in Concrete Park, qualitative observations indicate that emphasis on self-esteem is partially a result of negative social identities associated with living in a socially marginalized community. Brianna and DeMarcus, despite their high individualized self-esteem, both identified as "project kids" and often attributed behaviors to a marginalized social identity familiar to other impoverished communities. Ultimately, however, mentalities related to self-evaluation in Concrete Park, including the emphasis placed on high self-esteem, the norms of social comparison, and conceptions of an ideal self, were distinct from mentalities in Pena.

Self-esteem and Pena

Most children and adults in Pena were unfamiliar with the construct of self-esteem. Neither Abel, Sissi, nor their adult guardians put a priority on individualized self-esteem as a foundation for achievement. When I explicitly asked adults in Pena about self-esteem, they explained that you have to have the other things first- it is only

when you are clean, can read and write, can play well, have good relationships, etc. that you can think about and feel good about yourself. One Pena adult male rhetorically questioned self-esteem: “what is the fruit, what is the future?” The idea of prioritizing an intangible idea like self-esteem over tangible achievement did not make sense; there is no fruit or future in an intangible idea. The mentality in Pena suggesting that achieving leads to self-esteem is only strange in contrast to the Western folk model of self-esteem suggesting achievement derives from feeling good about one’s self.

Thus, for children such as Abel and Sissi self-evaluation involved assessing opportunities, achievements, and behaviors rather than esteeming the abstract traits of their selves. Sissi, for example, had done well in school, was competent around the house, and had stayed out of trouble to this point. These successes, in addition to her reputation as a smart and attractive girl (both partially due to having lighter skin pigmentation than most Angolans- which was generally associated with intelligence and beauty in Pena), provided Sissi a foundation for responding affirmatively to most of the achievement related items on the CFSEI-3. Sissi told me that “most boys and girls” were neither more intelligent than her nor did they “do things better” than her, that she had “many friends about my own age,” that her teacher thinks she is “good enough,” and that her family thinks she is important. Particularly when making social comparisons, however, Sissi seemed to focus on the ways she was similar to other children rather than ways she was better or worse. Likewise, when considering “most boys and girls” she seemed to think primarily about younger children. Sissi, at age twelve, was at a point in the life-course where she was among the eldest of a group that had limited larger social responsibilities. Though it had not happened yet, Sissi was starting to think about

adulthood in a way younger children in Pena, who were more firmly embedded in middle childhood, did not. The fact that she was approaching the end of her formal schooling and that she was nearing puberty, marking the end of middle childhood, signaled a shift away from playful freedom and marked a new set of opportunities to approach. For these reasons, when I asked Sissi to tell me which among four smiley faces looked most like her when she thought about herself, she pointed to the one categorized as “somewhat sad.” That response was in the minority among children in Pena, and almost non-existent for children in Concrete Park.

For children in Pena such as Sissi and Abel, perceptions of inclusion were more important than competitive success when making social comparisons. When, for example, Sissi felt that others gave her the opportunity to participate in or lead group activities she was more likely to feel happy when thinking about her self than children who focused only on winning and losing. Likewise, Abel oriented his behavior according to an ideal self appropriate to childhood. Abel was expected to be respectful, fulfill household responsibilities, take opportunities for education, and enjoy playing with peers. When pressed, as when responding to items on a self-esteem scale, children such as Abel and Sissi could make individualized assessments of their traits. Assessments of individualized self-esteem, however, were less important than larger social identities offered by society as socially marginalized *refugiados*. Thus, associating psychosocial competence with a primarily individual trait such as self-esteem is not sufficient for understanding children deeply enmeshed in cultural communities.

Themes related to teamwork

Beyond self-evaluation, children in all societies, no matter whether the societies are characterized as individualistic or collectivist, must interact with others and thus negotiate between their individuality and the collective. In this dissertation I analyze teamwork as a particular social process that represents this negotiation. I define teamwork as a particular cultural mentality toward functional cooperation, and consider processes of cooperation an underlying dimension of psychosocial competence.

Despite its popularity as a rhetorical ideal, attempts to define teamwork are relatively rare in academic literature. While cooperation has been the subject of much research in developmental psychology, the literature tends to minimize variations in processes of cooperation in favor of dichotomously comparing cooperative preferences with competitive intentions (for a recent review, see Richard, Fonzi, Tani, Tassi, Tomada, & Schneider, 2002). Thus, existing cultural research tends to evaluate the frequency with which children make cooperative or competitive choices in their behavior.

In contrast, in Chapter Six of this dissertation I suggest that ideals of functional cooperation depend on considerations of what is functional within particular cultural communities. I present three models of functional cooperation related to teamwork in Concrete Park and Pena. These three models, discussed below, include a productivity oriented model prominently offered by the media and by programs working with children, a loyalty model based on values prioritized in Concrete Park, and a social order model based on values prioritized in Pena.

Although teamwork is frequently valorized as an important general personal trait, the only academic studies of teamwork as a construct originate from business scholars

focused on improving efficient productivity in work groups and from scholars interested in military unit functioning. In looking at this literature teamwork seems most commonly understood as a particular version of cooperation guided by the acceptance of an explicit and externally defined version of productivity. The productivity model is particularly popular in contemporary American culture writ large. For example, speaking directly of teamwork in a prominent sport sociology textbook, Coakley (1998) notes that the “teamwork theme clearly fits with ideology underlying the American market economy and most American business organizations: teamwork means loyalty and productivity under the direction of a leader-coach.” (p. 390) In related common usage teamwork is employed to refer to individuals engaging in productive behavior oriented towards immediate external goals in group settings. Nevertheless, while teamwork is often spoken of as if it were a tangible personal trait (he/she is “good at teamwork”), it is understood by children in ways that relate to the mentalities and practices of their cultural communities.

Teamwork and Concrete Park

In Concrete Park children such as DeMarcus and Brianna focus their cooperative efforts on maintaining loyalty to family, friends, and teammates. The ultimate ideal is not necessarily short-term outcomes, like winning games or producing large quantities of work (though those are recognized as important), but on building trust and support within meaningful social networks. Some residents of Concrete Park compared this model of functional cooperation with a “gang mentality,” but it also relates to a more general priority on being loyal to family and group bonds that are essential to long-term well-

being. Residents of Concrete Park relied on the loyalty of family and of members of their social group to insure support and resources over the long term and in times of need.

Messages about teamwork are pervasive in the life of children such as DeMarcus and Brianna. When DeMarcus attends football practice he regularly encounters coaches and teammates emphasizing teamwork. When Brianna and her nine-year old brother undertake their household chores their mother encourages them to use teamwork to get the jobs done. A billboard in front of a nearby public schools announces to children such as DeMarcus and Brianna pedaling by on bicycles that “Teamwork makes the dream work.”

The consistent emphasis on teamwork is, however, filtered through particular local mentalities. Thus, for example, part of the pleasure Brianna seems to derive from teamwork in sports settings is the socializing and sense of loyalty available. Loyalty is a primary value in Concrete Park, often starting with loyalty to one’s family. In discussing her child rearing philosophy regarding her four children, Brianna’s mother tells me “I tell them to look out for each other because they’ve been around each other more than anybody. They know each other’s ways and everything, you know...this one here (Brianna) she’ll try them all the time, but I just try to teach them you have to depend on each other.” Likewise, when I asked Brianna’s mother about Brianna and teamwork, she told me “I think she works well with others...she’s always working, like the other day she cleaned her sister’s room without asking...I’m teaching them to try and get along with others because you never know who you might meet in the long run. You don’t just disrespect anybody, and especially at home, you know, try to get along with each other because you’re all you have.”

Brianna and DeMarcus both learned to prioritize working with others in ways that would allow for loyalty and interdependence, particularly in family settings. They both also recognized a productivity oriented model of teamwork as rhetorically valued in larger society. Neither the loyalty model nor the productivity oriented model of teamwork was prominent in Pena.

Teamwork and Pena

When I asked Abel and Sissi about teamwork they were not familiar with the term. Sissi does have familiarity with the concept of “group work” based on her experiences in school. She gives me the example of a group of children going to school and working together under the direction of a teacher to plant a tree. In general, children such as Sissi and Abel are socialized to understand functional cooperation as working together in an orderly way, most often in a disciplined hierarchy. During middle childhood, however, they do not associate psychosocial competence with productivity oriented models of functional cooperation.

When, for example, Abel plays games with his friends they compete for control, who gets to play what role and how the rules will be enforced, rather than competing for particular outcomes. This is sharply evident in the daily soccer games that are part of Abel’s regular routine. The most tense moment of the game is the very beginning, when the children are organizing the teams. Various children, usually older and more established, compete to determine who plays on which team and what rules might govern the days match. After some initial negotiations, other children eagerly fit into assigned roles and prioritize the order and opportunity in addition to the competition. The times when Abel quits the game do not usually seem to come from any frustration with losing,

so much as they come from a feeling that the game is disorganized and he does not have an appropriate role. When I ask children like Abel to describe good teamwork to me, they regularly describe settings where children pay attention to a coach or authority figure and fulfill an assigned role.

I argue that this mentality towards teamwork in Pena relates to a general priority on maintaining social order as a way of feeling functional within one's community. In making that prioritization children such as Abel and Sissi employ particular cultural mentalities; they demonstrate a process of psychosocial competence by being able to cooperate with an emphasis on social order that is recognizable as appropriate in the cultural community. Such processes of psychosocial competence underlie these children's thought and behavior and these processes underlie the body of this dissertation, the progression of which is described below.

The remainder of this dissertation

The foundation of this work is a general research question of how cultural communities influence mentalities toward psychosocial competence and middle childhood, which is broken down into questions about three specific topics of study: play, games, and sports; self-esteem; and teamwork. Before addressing those topics individually, Chapter Two describes the data collection process and methods. The general methodology involved a variety of field research methods including observations, surveys, individual interviews, and video interpretations to provide a broad quantitative and qualitative picture of psychosocial competence and middle childhood in Concrete Park and Pena. Chapter Three provides an extensive analysis and discussion of these communities as research settings. While convention holds that settings are included in

the description of methodology, in this research the communities themselves are primary objects of study. As such, Chapter Three is devoted to providing qualitative and quantitative context for psychosocial competence and middle childhood in a Chicago Public Housing development and an Angolan refugee camp. Chapter Four presents an analysis of play, games, and sports as activities which both socialize and demonstrate cultural processes. Play, games, and sports were common and popular activities for children in both Concrete Park and Pena, though they often engendered different meanings. Some of those meanings include socialization messages about what is required to feel adequate when evaluating one's self, which provides a transition to analyses of self-esteem in Chapter Five. Chapter Six extends these analyses by considering teamwork as a process of functional cooperation that depends upon meanings and practices in one's cultural community. In Chapter Seven, I address the implications for research and practice of understanding psychosocial competence as a deeply cultural process. I also reconsider the processes of psychosocial competence identified as being related to experiences in a cultural community: norms of social comparison, conceptions of an ideal self, orientations of self-evaluation, norms of functional cooperation, and conceptions of social identity.

Ultimately, children such as DeMarcus, Abel, Brianna, and Sissi are embedded in cultural communities providing them a decent local experience of psychosocial development. These children have opportunities for routines, interaction, social support, play, and normalcy that belie their socio-economic circumstances. Yet, while DeMarcus, Abel, Brianna, and Sissi can achieve local versions of psychosocial competence, statistical odds suggest they will struggle to achieve conventional material success.

Finally, then, while this research project begins with a question about the cultural nature of psychosocial competence, it concludes by raising larger questions about the life-course for children in poor communities. I argue that facilitating child development in poor communities depends heavily upon being aware of and reflective about various cultural processes related to psychosocial competence.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODS

The methods utilized during comparative field work provide a qualitative and quantitative sense of mentalities related to middle childhood and psychosocial competence in Concrete Park and Pena. This chapter presents those methods in two steps. The first step explains the process of establishing field sites and developing methodological tools, which involved opportunistic participant-observation combined with designing valid comparative methods through experiences in the field. The second step describes the primary types of data gathering undertaken: field notes, surveys with children including a self-esteem inventory, a developmental tasks survey with adults, semi-structured interviews with both adults and children, focus group video interpretations with both adults and children, and the case studies discussed in Chapter One.

In both Concrete Park and Pena multiple research assistants helped collect data and refine methodological tools. In Concrete Park several research assistants, most of whom were students involved with the Sloan Center at the National Opinion Research Center, administered surveys to children. In addition, two Concrete Park residents assisted in gathering case study material and vetting survey and interview content. In Pena Angolan research assistants provided extensive translation services. Though I ultimately spoke enough Portuguese to have basic conversations, my primary Angolan

research assistant was present throughout most of the experiences, observations, and methods discussed in this dissertation. This man did not live in Pena, but had worked in the community for several years on various United Nations and NGO projects and had built extensive trust and personal networks of positive relationships with community members. He provided access and legitimacy I would not have otherwise attained, and provided extensive assistance in revising methodological tools. He also helped recruit three other temporary Angolan research assistants, who received training in order to administer surveys to children.

Establishing field sites and developing methodological tools

All data gathering for this project derived from participant-observation. I spent six months in Concrete Park over the course of two summers volunteering with a summer camp program and a soccer program. I spent six months in Pena volunteering with Olympic Aid, a Canadian non-governmental organization (NGO), that uses sport and play to “facilitate child development” in developing countries. These programs are “development-through-sport programs” in that they represent grass-root programs using sport primarily to improve well-being. Such programs are distinct from elite sport development programs that focus on enhancing sport performance for its own sake.

The underlying methodological foundation of this research project was comparing two field sites; two poor communities targeted by development-through-sports programs. I identified the Concrete Park site through a development-through-sports program affiliated with the Illinois Youth Soccer Association (IYSA) that worked with children in Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) developments. I had been working for several years with IYSA as a coach and coaching educator, but had not had previous affiliation with

the “inner-city soccer program.” Volunteering in a daily summer camp program run in Concrete Park, which was one of several CHA communities involved in the inner-city soccer program, became the most viable option for collecting meaningful data. Once I agreed with the summer camp program and inner-city soccer program to assume a role combining volunteer work and research, I informed community leaders, parents, and children of my research intentions through formal letters and informal discussion.

I identified the Pena site through a development-through-sports program run by a Canadian Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) called Olympic Aid. Again, volunteering with one of their programs provided the best opportunity to ensure data collection opportunities. By virtue of taking on a volunteer role the organization also provided me air transportation and housing during my field work. Though Olympic Aid has programs throughout the developing world, I focused on potential sites in sub-Saharan Africa because of previous experience in the region and area studies knowledge.

Of the Olympic Aid sites in sub-Saharan Africa, Pena was most appropriate for two reasons. First, the organization had only been operating program sites for two years and Pena was one of its first sites. In other settings there would not have been significant existing connections with the communities, which was essential for this research. Second, the schedule for sending a new set of volunteers to Pena worked best with the field work timetable. When I began my field work in Pena I again informed community leaders, parents, and children of my research intentions through formal letters and informal conversation.

In each community, after receiving general approval, the first two to three months of field work involved becoming familiar with the settings, building relationships, and

taking field notes to record daily observations and experiences. In addition to providing a general record, the field notes specifically chronicled events surrounding play, games, and sports activities and documented instances where community residents either implicitly or explicitly referenced self-esteem and teamwork.

I also organized basic play and sport activities with children in both settings on semi-regular bases (usually several times a week), and helped to lead a six week coach training program in Pena offered by Olympic Aid for resident adult volunteers. While these activities made me a part of each setting that I was attempting to study, and thus raise the possibility of biasing the data, leading activities also helped me to build trust and understanding with community members which would not have been otherwise available. Thus, recognizing the potential distortions of my role in the community, making my role in the community explicit allowed me opportunities that would not have been available otherwise. Because residents in each site knew of my involvement with community programs they were more likely to be honest with me and participate in my surveys or interviews.

After several months of acclimating to each community, the second phase of field work involved the piloting of survey and interview protocols. An initial set of semi-structured interview questions addressing perceptions of the cultural community, the role of play and sports, self-esteem, and teamwork provided a foundation for the protocol. Progressive modifications of the initial questions through piloting opportunities made the questions more specific and meaningful in communities where survey and interview research is not familiar. When, for example, children struggled to generally explain the things that made them feel good about themselves, a modified question asked them to

imagine what they would say to a sad friend in order to make that friend feel better about his or her self. Further, for the sake of comparison, vetting of the surveys and interviews focused on questions which seemed to elicit worthwhile responses in both communities. Thus, for example, a developmental task of “forming good relationships with parents and adults” replaced a task of “learning proper gender roles” that struck participants in Concrete Park as outdated. Overall, while regularly adjusting the content of items, the broad categories of remained relatively stable and focused on the central themes of this project.

Primary types of data gathering

Surveys with children. My largest quantitative data sample came from surveys with children between six and twelve years of age in each community. An example survey form is included as Appendix A. A Portuguese version of this survey originated from translation of the English survey to Portuguese and back to English by Angolan research assistants. Approximately 140 children in Concrete Park and 240 Children in Pena completed some portion of these surveys.

By the end of the field work these surveys included three components. One component covered basic demographic information including family size, parents’ employment status, and types of activity participation. A second component covered opinion and attitude questions that became relevant during field work. Examples include questions about what children considered the ideal age, what they hoped to be when they grow up, how often they perceived themselves to win in games and sports activities, and what types of statements they considered most personally insulting. A third component

involved questions on the Culture Free Self-Esteem Inventory for Children (CFSEI-3; Battle, 2002).

There were several reasons for choosing to use the CFSEI-3 rather than other self-esteem inventories: by claiming to be “culture-free” it represents a presumed universal ideal of what self-esteem looks like, it provides enough items (29) to allow for productive item comparison, it is easy to administer because each item requires a simple yes or no response, it has been translated into several languages, and it has demonstrated reliability and validity with a normative sample of children six years and older. The test publisher reports a coefficient alpha of .81 for normative sample on the primary form of the CFSEI-3, and a test-retest reliability of .72 for global self-esteem.

The Concrete Park and Pena samples taking the CFSEI-3 had reasonably similar test-retest reliability when compared to the normative sample (in Concrete Park $r = .760$, $N = 11$; in Pena $r = .686$, $N = 20$) but worse internal reliability based on low coefficient alphas (in Concrete Park $\text{Alpha} = .6720$, $N = 134$; in Pena $\text{Alpha} = .5330$, $N = 237$). This finding is predictable based on an understanding of self-esteem as a cultural process. Having relatively comparable test-retest reliability suggests that the children in all three samples had a reasonable idea of what they were saying when they answered the questions; they were all fairly consistent across time in responses to the individual items. But, based on lower coefficient alphas representing internal consistency within samples between questions, it does not seem that children in Concrete Park and Pena understood the questions, in relation to each other, as having the same meaning as they had for the normative sample. Thus, for example, where children in the normative sample might have responded to all the school related items with a consistency suggesting some

conceptual relationship centered around school as a domain, children in the Concrete Park and Pena samples might have responded to all the items phrased as peer comparisons as conceptually related above and beyond any domain specificity. Overall, therefore, these statistics suggests children in Concrete Park and Pena understood each question individually but used different underlying conceptual categories, derived from cultural meaning systems, in responding to all items on the inventory.

Practical circumstances, in addition to cultural meanings, dictated the mechanics of survey administration. The CFSEI-3 protocol allows for administration to take place either individually or in groups. During this research all surveying occurred with two children responding orally to questions asked by one adult. The administrator recorded the responses in order to control for widely varying levels of literacy.

There were two primary reasons for administering the surveys to two children together. First, the children in these communities are not used to being alone with adults from outside the community and seemed more at ease answering questions when with a familiar peer. This was particularly true in Pena, where community norms for age graded sociability make instances of individual children being alone with an adult exceedingly rare. Harkness and Super (1977) note that this situation is common in many parts of Africa, making African children difficult to test for social science research. Harkness and Super argue the necessity of modifying testing protocols to ensure culturally valid responses.

Second, partially because these communities identify as marginalized, there was concern about public perceptions of an “outsider” being alone with a child. In fact, at one point during the research in Concrete Park several teen-age boys tried to convince several

younger girls who had participated in an interview with me to lie and claim that I had made sexual advances towards them. The boys were trying to cause problems for me largely for their own entertainment, commonly referred to in Concrete Park as “getting up on” someone. Fortunately, the girls instead told members of the summer camp staff about the boys’ scheme. Nevertheless, there was enough uncertainty in the field sites that, at least for the sake of public appearances, it was important that outsiders not spend time alone with any of the children.

Developmental tasks survey with adults. Another general methodological issue derived from the fact that neither children nor adults in Concrete Park and Pena were familiar with an abstract discourse surrounding child development. Thus, for example, when adults responded to semi-structured interview questions about the characteristic qualities they hoped children would develop in middle childhood, people in Concrete Park and Pena often gave answers that did not fit with the types familiar to research done in communities where higher education is the norm. For example, when asked what she thought was “important for children to learn as they are growing up” a mother in Concrete Park responded “Peace. They need to learn peace, all of them maybe where they get along with each other. Job oriented. I can’t think of the word I’m really searching for. Ask me the question again.” In response to a rephrased version of the question, she stated “Say no to drugs. Learn school and learn the streets....” Thus, although the intention of the question was to learn about priorities toward psychosocial and cognitive characteristics such as diligence, cooperation, or problem-solving, adults in Concrete Park and Pena oriented their responses using general messages for children. These types of answers represented interesting appropriations of messages available in

the community, but they did not provide access to the way community members prioritized aspects of psychological development.

Researching abstract concerns related to children's competence instead required "forcing" people to explain what developmental tasks were priorities by offering them a list and having them put them in rank order. Thus, rather than engaging in extensive formal surveys with adults, a sample of approximately 50 adults in each community participated in a survey about developmental priorities for children between six and twelve years of age (in addition to approximately 30 adults who participated in trial versions of the survey). This survey involved ranking ten developmental tasks culled from those set out by Havighurst (1972) as priorities for children during middle childhood, and is included as Appendix B. Trials of this survey in Concrete Park during the summer of 2002 provided useful information. Trials of the survey in Pena, however, encountered a new difficulty. High proportions of adults in Pena are illiterate and could not understand the written form of the survey. As an alternative, collaboration with my Angolan research assistants and a local artist produced small cartoon renditions of each developmental task. Thus, a picture of a child washing himself using a plastic basin represented the developmental task of "Developing basic hygiene and self-care," a child looking in the mirror and seeing a large smile with a cartoon heart emanating from her mind represented the developmental task of "Developing self-esteem (self-love)," and corresponding cartoon pictures represented the rest of the developmental tasks.

During administration of the developmental tasks survey in Pena participants received a card with a drawing of each developmental task while a research assistant read a direct Portuguese translation of the written tasks offered to adults in Concrete Park.

Adults in Pena then placed the illustrations in order of importance on a large cardboard rectangle segmented into ten spaces. After adults had placed the ten cards we would ask them to confirm that whatever they had put in first position was in fact their top priority, and that their tenth position was their last priority.

In both Concrete Park and Pena, I would often ask for follow-up explanations to adult developmental task ranking priorities in order to better uncover mentalities toward middle childhood. Responses to these follow-up questions also indicated that participants in both Concrete Park and Pena understood the nature of the survey, despite modifications in the mode of administration. Thus, while it is important to note that this method primarily allows for comparison between these particular samples, results from this method inform the analyses of mentalities towards middle childhood within these cultural communities throughout this dissertation.

Semi-structured interviews with both adults and children. In addition to the structured surveys, eight adults in Concrete Park, 12 children in Concrete Park, eight adults in Pena, 14 children in Pena participated in semi-structured interviews. The questions I used to guide these interviews are included as Appendix C.

Transcriptions of these interviews provide some context for the findings of this research, but the method proved unreliable. This was particularly true with interviewing children in Pena. Partially because of mentalities toward the life course that identify children as people adults will talk to, but not with (something related to the mentalities toward childhood discussed throughout this dissertation), asking children in Pena open-ended questions proved difficult. They would rarely elaborate. As mentioned above in reference to the Harkness and Super (1977) article entitled “Why African children are so

hard to test,” this phenomenon is familiar to those interested in African culture and childhood.

As a working solution to this challenge, open-ended interview questions became structured and the field work came to rely less on the interviews than initially intended. Thus, for example, where at the start of my research I asked children what it meant to be a child in their community, at the end I asked them to tell me specifically what age they would like to be if they had the choice of any age between zero and one hundred. The latter type of question was ultimately included with the aforementioned structured surveys of children, and recruiting participants focused on those surveys rather than semi-structured interviews.

Focus group video interpretations with both adults and children. While most data gathering involved trying to find questions and ideas that were sensible in both Concrete Park and Pena, focus group video interpretations allowed community members to provide their own local categories when describing middle childhood. The general procedure for these focus groups involved asking three to five people to watch simple documentary videos of a day in soccer program activities filmed in each site. I supervised the filming in each setting, done with a standard video camera, to focus on similar general categories of activity surrounding a soccer tournament involving approximately 100 pre-adolescent boys and girls from each community. Thus, in each setting footage included children arriving at the fields, playing freely with their friends while getting ready for the formal games, doing a physical warm-up with a team and coach, playing small formal games, receiving instructions from the coach, taking breaks for water and snacks, leaving the field after the games ended, and taking part in various

tangential activities taking place around the soccer games. This footage provided the basis for two edited videos between 15 and 20 minutes in length that documented the sequence of events during the soccer tournaments in each site.

After creating the videos I organized five focus groups, targeting at least one group of men, women, boys, and girls, in each site to view and comment upon both videos. In Concrete Park there was one focus group of boys, one focus group of girls, one focus group of adult community members, one focus group of parents, and one focus group of coaches from the soccer program. In Pena there was one focus group of boys and girls, two focus groups of parents and coaches, one focus group of fathers, and one focus group of mothers. At the start of each viewing I explained to the focus groups that my general interest was in their impressions of the events in the video and the behavior of children. I asked them to comment on anything that caught their attention, and told them after viewing both videos I would ask them some specific questions. The intention was to see if comments about play, games, sports, self-esteem, or teamwork would come up without prompting, but if they did not come up without prompting I specifically asked about whether people saw examples in the videos. The general interview questions used to guide the focus groups are included as Appendix D. Several analyses in this dissertation draw on comments made regarding the videos, with particular attention in the Chapter Six discussion of teamwork.

The object of this method, borrowed from Tobin, Wu, and Davidson's (1989) study of pre-school in three cultures, was to have local community members interpret the meaning of sport and children's behavior without imposed categories. This method has a rich potential for facilitating valid cultural psychology in that it allows local meanings to

emerge without making assumptions based on a universalizing discourse (Greenfield, 2000). Unfortunately, while the videos did provoke some interesting discussions and comments, this method did not end up providing the expected rich data. Firstly, it was difficult to get the focus groups to make any unsolicited comments. As noted above, participants were not comfortable making abstract comments or critiques about the events of their daily life. Thus, comments often depended upon extensive prompting. Secondly, it was difficult to identify meaningful patterns in the focus group interpretations because people would attend to different aspects of the videos. Sometimes the difficulty of keeping people's attention was simply a matter of being unable to control the viewing environment. Because these focus groups took place in the field sites themselves it was difficult to find settings without distractions. The challenge of simply accessing a television in a refugee camp (often a television borrowed from a relatively wealthy community member run off either electricity pirated from overhead cables or off an old car battery charged in the local open air market) contravened attempts to watch the videos in controlled conditions.

The experience of trying the focus group video interpretations methodology was, nevertheless, a significant learning experience. I would like to try similar methods in the future with modifications to provide more focus on viewing specific delineated behaviors such as children playing in dyads, or coaches providing instructions to children. Such a focus would help ensure that interviewees provide interpretations relevant to the primary research questions.

Case studies. The final formal methodology employed in this research was undertaking the case studies used in Chapter One. In addition to the four case studies

already discussed, one other case study in Pena documented the daily life of a 7 year old boy who did not have functioning legs. This boy was of interest because while he was quite active and engaged in his social world he superficially appeared quite different (scooting around camp using his fists as feet to drag thin useless legs through the hard red dirt). Thus, his case allowed for thinking through ways that someone who has obvious abnormalities can seem to experience childhood as “normal” and psychosocially competent. This case supports the argument in Chapter Four that play and sports are normative activities in Concrete Park and Pena.

The other case study participants became involved with this research based on their being both available and unexceptional (thus representing “normal” childhood in the field sites). The original intention was to do an intensive study of one boy and one girl in each community. In Concrete Park DeMarcus was the nephew of and Brianna a sister of two adults I had built a relationships with through volunteering at the summer camp, while in Pena Abel and Sissi were both children of adult friends of my primary Angolan research assistant. The case study data gathering comprised of interviews and surveys with each child and at least one adult family member (if available) and one full day following their activities with a video camera. The videos of their day provided fodder for further interviews and provided a basic sense of their “normal” routine.

Summary

The methods for this project derive from an interest in analyzing the role of cultural communities as influences on psychosocial competence during middle childhood through comparative study of two impoverished communities targeted by development agencies. The specific data gathering techniques developed while working in the field

sites through participant observation, pilot administration, and collaboration with research assistants. The six primary methods, focusing on field notes, surveys, and interviews, evolved for use in Concrete Park and Pena with their particular local constraints. The intention was to use qualitative and quantitative perspectives to provide a rich multidimensional understanding of psychosocial competence and middle childhood in Concrete Park and Pena as distinct cultural communities. The circumstances and administration of the research methods were enough alike to make this comparative understanding emerge.

CHAPTER THREE

SETTINGS

Concrete Park and Pena provided the opportunity for comparative analyses by virtue of their common standing as stigmatized and impoverished communities that have particular local cultures. This chapter offers data-driven descriptions of Concrete Park and Pena to demonstrate characteristics the two communities share and characteristics that are distinct. These descriptions, dealing first with Concrete Park and then with Pena, suggest that the psychosocial character of these two field sites belie their low and debilitating socio-economic statuses: children feel important, have high levels of social interaction, and share common behavioral norms. There are, however, significant structural constraints and negative social identities held by residents of each community. After describing each community, I present data about children's ambitions suggesting that the difference in absolute severity of structural or socio-economic constraints in the US and Angola does not impact children in Concrete Park and Angola in dissimilar ways. I then report data about developmental task priorities during middle childhood as held by adults in each community. This data suggests that residents of Concrete Park and Pena share a concern with developing children's practical abilities, such as academic skills and hygienic self-care. At the same time, the developmental task priorities suggest that the two communities have differing underlying conceptions of childhood, with residents of Concrete Park focused on childhood as a stage in a linear progression towards adulthood

and residents of Pena understanding childhood as distinct segment of the life-course offering a time apart. This chapter concludes with a brief discussion of my role as a participant-observer in each setting in order to highlight community differences in concepts of the person (as enduring traits or characteristic behaviors), differences in attitudes toward competition, and the similar availability of globalizing capitalist mentalities relevant to teamwork.

The underlying theme of this chapter is that the best conceptualization of Concrete Park and Pena is as distinct cultural communities that share relative poverty. Concrete Park and Pena are both stigmatized impoverished communities, despite being located in very different larger societies. The US is the wealthiest country in the world. Angola is a nation devastated by several decades of civil war, as indicated by its ranking 164th out of 175 nations in the 2003 United Nations Human Development Index. It is, therefore, easy to focus on the structural socio-economic differences between the US and Angola that have powerful practical implications for the future of children in Concrete Park and Pena. For purposes of understanding psychosocial aspects of development, however, local mentalities and lived experiences have more influence on middle childhood. Children in Concrete Park and Pena, such as those introduced in Chapter One, recognize that they are Americans and Angolans, but their primary socialization experiences occur through social interactions with local community members, participation in activities oriented by community institutions, and roles given meaning by the opportunities and values of their communities. Thus, describing the communities calls for a focus on characteristics observed as most significant for the experience of

childhood, with a particular focus on things such as available community institutions, common activities, norms for social interaction, and markers of community identity.

Concrete Park

Concrete Park is a small poor urban community of African-American working families where the experience of middle childhood involves high levels of social interaction, a sense of social marginalization, and adaptation to challenging urban realities. This description of Concrete Park sets the demographic context of low socioeconomic status as restrictive, but not deterministic. Instead, the demographic context supplements a psychological context where children generally feel valued and involved, allowing for distinctive patterns of psychosocial adjustment and a shared social identity.

Field work in Concrete Park involved two summers of daily participant-observation with recreation programs, sports programs, and a day camp. While these programs included children from several low income neighborhoods on the south side of Chicago, most of the children observed during field work had an affiliation with the Concrete Park housing project. According to official housing management population statistics, Concrete Park had 1000 residents (all of whom listed as African-American) including 260 children between the ages of six and twelve. There were, however, a significant number of transient residents and accurate population statistics were difficult to obtain. About half of the children in Concrete Park between six and twelve years of age were directly included in this research through surveys or interviews. Table 1 provides some quantitative descriptors of the Concrete Park population based on these surveys.

Qualifying for public housing requires families to be poor, though there are gradations in rent according to resident economic status. In Concrete Park a majority of households included at least one employed adult, with most employed residents holding blue collar jobs in service industries. It was common for adults from Concrete Park to work as unskilled labor in local hospitals, at fast-food restaurants, for city programs operating within the community (such as free meal programs), and for the Chicago transportation authority. Concrete Park residents valued education highly, and a significant number of children from Concrete Park had gone on to undertake some form of post-secondary education, but most people who stayed in the housing development did not have any education beyond the high school level.

The physical housing development is a complex of low-rise apartment buildings that takes up approximately six square city blocks. Major roads, train tracks, and large parking lots for a near-by sports stadium serve to spatially isolate the community. There is a public primary school across the street from the housing development where most, but not all, Concrete Park children attend pre-school (in a Head Start program) through eighth grade. During the year of field work, official Chicago Public School demographics listed the 268 students at the Concrete Park school as 100% low income and 100% Black. The school is low performing in relation to suburban schools, but average performing in relation to many other urban public schools in Chicago.

Within the building complex Concrete Park has a large central courtyard and smaller courtyards between outer buildings, providing a decent amount of open space and allowing for frequent social interaction. Particularly during the summer, a youth population often fills these spaces while engaging in activities ranging from sports and

socializing to drinking and gambling. There is a regular police presence in the community, which creates a mixed sense of practical security and psychological unease.

Police cars would regularly charge into the main courtyard of Concrete Park and forcibly search young adults the police considered to look suspicious. The first time that I saw this event I was shocked at the bluntness. It felt unnerving to see armed and armored policemen driving into the Concrete Park central courtyard, grabbing sleepy youths in the midst of conversation, and throwing them against a patrol car for a physical search. It seemed like an unrealistic scene from a television show. During that first incident I happened to be standing near the community gym and was amidst a group of younger children. As the police drove off, having found nothing in their search, none of the children seemed at all unsettled. When I inquired they told me in a very matter of fact tone that the police were searching for drugs. And, chimed in one of the young boys, that guy (who the police had searched) is my brother. I then asked one of the near-by adults how often this happened. He told me “once or twice.” I tried to clarify- “once or twice a month, or what?” He told me “once or twice a day.” The point to note here is that the internal perception of these events, which an outsider could easily construe as traumatic, was actually quite mundane. Children did not experience such seemingly extreme events with significant psychological impact. At the same time, a significant number of residents in Concrete Park had spent time in jail at some point, and the marshal authority of the police was an expected part of daily life which contributed to a sense of social marginalization.

Nevertheless, compared to other housing developments Concrete Park had relatively low levels of violence and, despite some gang activity, no territorial contests

between gangs as in some larger and more violent developments. Residents considered Concrete Park to be a safe place for children, and while there was concern that gangs will recruit adolescent community residents, younger children were not much affected. Further, several adult male community members claimed that the gangs are relatively selective about which children they recruit. If they know a child has particular talents, with school and sports being the most commonly mentioned, they often leave that child to fulfill his or her potential. One community resident who staffed the summer camp, for example, had his home life disrupted during early adolescence because of problems with his father and, around that time, had tried to join a gang. But several gang members talked him out of it because they knew he was a talented football player and they wanted him to represent the community in that capacity.

Overall, while most residents agreed that Concrete Park is not bad for Chicago public housing, a significant negative stereotype associated with living in “the projects” still exists. This is evident by virtue of the many families in Concrete Park that were taking advantage of Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) policy changes encouraging residents to take federal “section eight” housing subsidies to go towards rent in residential neighborhoods. The CHA was also making plans to undertake significant structural refurbishing of Concrete Park buildings and thus, during the second summer of field research, a large proportion of the community was looking to move to other parts of the city. Most residents were excited about the opportunity to move and escape the stigmas of living in public housing.

In some ways, however, these stigmas and related commiserating about the hardships of life in the projects also served to cement a shared social identity. People in

Concrete Park regularly compared and contrasted themselves as a group with other neighboring communities, and viewed membership in the community as part of their self-concept. This is most evident at a large yearly community day when many present and former residents come together to celebrate being from Concrete Park. Throughout the year people were referred to in casual speech in regard to their neighborhood affiliation; one is either of Concrete Park, affiliated with Concrete Park, or an outsider. Further, there were several youth sports leagues, including a popular summer baseball league, that provided competition for teams representing each of the different housing projects in the area and helped to reinforce community social identity. On game days the ten to twelve year old boys on the Concrete Park baseball team, for example, would be up early, in uniform, and pacing around the neighborhood for several hours before a school bus arrived to take them to their early afternoon game. The boys and the community simply had fun anticipating and conceptualizing the team as a representation of collective pride.

High levels of within group social interaction, for both children and adults, furthers the feeling of collective identity in Concrete Park. Outside of school hours children are always milling about in groups- often drifting towards “the Center” (a city parks department facility that contains a very small gym, weight room, crafts room, and kitchen). Many children have several sets of siblings and cousins within Concrete Park, further facilitating high levels of interaction across age groups. The community is small enough that everyone knows whose child is whose, and there seems to be a tacit agreement that children are valuable parts of the community landscape. The frequency with which children freely roam between different apartment units and “the Center” suggests that children feel relatively comfortable and safe in their community.

In relation to psychosocial competence and middle childhood the children of Concrete Park adapt to challenging urban realities. They do not perceive the immediate issues confronting their lives as extreme, though they recognize their lack of resources and opportunities. They value education, social interaction, and self-improvement, but also seem to internalize a negative social identity. The distinction highlighted in this section between structural socio-economic conditions and the phenomenological experience of the community provides an important space in which children can engage in processes of psychosocial competence.

Pena

Pena is a community of refugees and displaced persons where the experience of middle childhood involves intensive peer relations, participation in evolving community institutions such as schools, and structured social roles. This description of Pena sets the demographic context of refugee status as similar to that of other low-income quasi-urban populations in the developing world. The demographic context, however, is less salient to children than a psychological context where children develop according to communal norms and interpretations of broader societal influences.

Field work in Pena involved six months of daily participant-observation with sport and play programs administered by a Canadian non-governmental organization in cooperation with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. Children in four “camps” participated in the research. Two of these camps were home to refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) who had fled from ongoing conflicts in the DRC. The other two were home to Internally Displaced Persons (IDP’s), a largely political designation for people taking refuge from Angola’s 27 year civil war without

crossing any nation-state boundaries. Each camp was composed primarily of long-term refugees who had been moving from location to location for up to two decades.

Though each of the four camps had somewhat distinct identities, three were in immediate proximity to each other and the fourth had regular resident interaction with the rest. Thus, for present purposes I am amalgamating the camps, which had been in the same area for several years, into the community of Pena. These camps officially included about 8000 total residents, although most people feel that figure seems quite high. Getting accurate population statistics was difficult because much of the community was transient, and because families gained extra benefits and rations for reporting larger family sizes. Regardless of the exact community population, official statistics reasonably estimate that approximately one fourth of residents are children between six and twelve. Of these, about 300 children were directly involved in this research through interviews or surveys, while I observed and interacted with many more. Again, Table 1 provides some quantitative information based on surveys for this research project about the population of these communities.

The geography of Pena included clusters of small densely packed huts and houses on an arid plane of hard red dirt bordered by one paved road. People and small animals (including chickens, pigs, dogs, and a few goats) moved through the camp on dirt paths that segmented “blocks” of huts and houses. Each of the three camps in Pena had a central gathering area with a meeting hut, health clinic, and a primary school.

The camps had no gates and many residents pursued work in the nearby town and in the capital city of Luanda. While there were few formal work opportunities, seasonal agriculture provided some employment to both men and women from Pena. Likewise, a

small number of males found formal employment through service positions within the community or through unskilled positions that involved construction and security. A good number of women earned income through working in near-by outdoor markets or through selling small snacks and cooking supplies in the camp. Ultimately, most families had some limited employment and income that supplemented aid provided by the United Nations and affiliated organizations.

While earning money was a daily pre-occupation in the camps, most families in Pena came from rural agricultural communities and had very little in the way of material wealth. The poorest families lived in houses of mud, sticks, and plastic tarps while a few families had graduated to small brick houses with tin roofs. The best off families had managed to pirate electricity and some houses had acquired televisions and freezers (placed on bare dirt floors).

Education was highly valued in Pena as a route to social mobility, but children did not have many chances for formal schooling. Each camp had opened primary schools within the prior three years to educate children up to the fourth grade level. These schools were very popular and ran several shifts to accommodate demand, but the school day for each child only comprised three hours. Prior to the opening of these schools a few children had attended school in the near-by town. The most educated residents of Pena, often teachers at the camp primary schools, were formally educated up to a sixth grade level. Most children did attend school at some point or another, but there were frequent interruptions. Thus, by age 10 the average child was still at either the first or second grade level. All formal education took place in Portuguese, which is the national language in Angola and served as the dominant language in Pena (though many older

residents spoke Bantu dialects, French, or Swahili, children almost exclusively spoke Portuguese).

Children also had difficulty pursuing education because of having to move according to the influence of the war. Interestingly, however, while war had displaced Pena's residents, only a small minority of people living in Pena had direct experience with armed conflict. Most families in Pena had simply lived in areas that became dangerous and had to move. Residents did experience thieves and occasional violent crime, but the threat was no greater than that in any suburban slum outside of a major African city. Having not usually experienced acute trauma, a more practical implication of being a refugee was separation from extended families that remained in home villages or fled in different directions. Yet, residents within each of the camps had come to know each other well over the years and often assumed roles near to those of kinship. Further, while most families had not known each other prior to seeking refuge, each camp represented particular regions of Angola and DRC and thus most families shared some heritage (the most frequent self-classifications were Kimbundu, Ombundu, Bakongo, and Chokwe).

But these ethnic and national identities were often less prominent in the experiences of Pena residents than the frequently spoken designation within the society at large as *Refugiados* and *Dislocados*. The pervasive war in both Angola and the DRC has created a large class of people living at the margins of society in a manner administered by the United Nations and government ministries. The designation had become a commonly understood negative social identity. Misbehavior, failure, and waywardness

within Pena regularly met with a shake of the head and the muttered explanation “*Refugiado*.”

The social identity of being a *refugiado* was also frequently associated with a complicated discourse of “trauma” in Pena. External agencies often work on the assumption that Pena residents had acute traumatic experiences in war. Pena residents have themselves picked up this discourse, habitually invoking the war and related “trauma,” when talking to me about children’s behavior. Adults and parents would regularly tell me that children in Pena had many problems because of war related “trauma.” Having to move homes because of long-standing civil war is unquestionably an unpleasant experience. But, interestingly, when I would press people in discussions to give me examples of children whose behavior was directly influenced by “trauma” no one was able to give me any specifics. In all my many conversations and interviews with both adults and children, I met very few who concretely identified traumatic events which seemed to have lasting psychological impact; I heard no stories of witnessing violent combat, gory death, or war atrocity. Many people in Angola had such experiences, but for the most part children in Pena had not.

It was a discourse of trauma and deficiency, rather than tangible experience, that seemed to guide how Pena residents thought of themselves. This self-perception is important in relation to social identity, but the evident discourse of trauma in absence of traumatic events also illustrates the way that Pena is a particularly local cultural community. While the long wars in Angola and the DRC Pena directly affected residents, as did membership in larger Angolan society, their salient social world primarily involved the discourses and experiences surrounding them in daily life.

Residents of Pena also had a self-perception that they were members of a distinct community separate from the rest of the area around Luanda. This self-perception related to the structures of community life, such as the fact that the camps have their own governance structures, the fact that they are a target of “development” agency work, and the existence of within community social life in the form of celebrations and sports teams. Finally, as in Concrete Park, a familiar commiseration about the hardships of life served to craft a shared social identity.

Also like Concrete Park, the shared social identity, the density of the community, and the availability of open space allowed for high degrees of within group social interaction. A difference between the social interaction norms in Pena and Concrete Park, however, was the amount of interaction between children and adults. In Pena children spent a large portion of their days together without adult supervision or attention. Other than ensuring that children do their chores and go to school, adults in Pena gave children time from a very young age to explore and experience the world on their own. It was common to see groups of children as young as five or six wandering around the camps, occasionally stopping for naps or games or observations, without any attention from adults. This was not a matter of neglect. Although prior to taking refuge a larger percentage of children’s time was likely spent working on family farms, there was also a time-honored understanding that childhood is a time for the tangible learning of roles and the abstract freedom to be without adult obligations. In many ways, the children of Pena existed in a social world consisting of chores, school, and peers that was separate from the social world of community adults.

One representative incident, when I was meeting with a small group of teachers in Pena, evidences both the freedom of childhood and the negative social identity of being *refugiados*. The teachers and I met in the community *jango*, which was an open hut with a thatched roof designed to stay cool during very hot weather. As I met and talked with three teachers a group of three young girls, five or six years of age, wandered in to the *jango* to escape the heat. They lay down on the cool poured concrete floor, cuddled up in a ball of three small bodies, and went to sleep. My discussion with the teachers went on for another thirty minutes, seemingly oblivious to the girls sleeping on the floor, until one of the children awoke with a crying start as if she had been having a bad dream. The girls generally did not appear distressed- in fact they looked quite content and cozy. Nevertheless, suddenly, since the teachers had given no indication that they recognized the little girls were in the small hut, one of the teachers turned on the children and derided them: “Where is your mother? What are you doing?” The girls roused themselves without responding and wandered off, rubbing the sleep from their eyes and looking refreshed. The derisive teacher shook his head and exclaimed with spent exasperation: *refugiados*. In doing so he immediately invoked a negative stereotype to explain the children’s inability to stay quiet. Prior to their crying, however, he had no problem with their freedom to wander the camp alone. Then, changing his tone, he went on to rue the poor treatment people in Pena received because they were refugees. Thus, in this brief conversation he conveyed an implicit message that children’s behavior was poor, but that was predictable due to the treatment refugees receive.

This anecdote speaks to a mentality in Pena allowing children large amounts of autonomy, often facilitating a sense of contentment amongst children that one might not

expect in abject poverty. At the same time, however, residents possessed a powerful and negative social identity associated with being a refugee that people often invoked as an attribution for behavior. Thus, in relation to psychosocial competence and middle childhood, the residents of Pena value the opportunities and structured roles associated with childhood, they allow children a freedom to play and experience the social world, but they also highlight the community's privation as stressful to children.

Ambitions

Adults and children in both Concrete Park and Pena have high ambitions for the future and generally believe that formal education will lead to social mobility. While it is possible to debate whether these ambitions for social mobility are realistic in either setting, they provide evidence that local mentalities toward childhood are not direct results of structural conditions. Poverty does not determine the way people think. Further, while Concrete Park is significantly wealthier than Pena by absolute global standards, children tend not to think in these relative standards. Children think about their lives, and their ambitions, in relation to ideals in their cultural community.

During formal interviews and informal conversations in Concrete Park and Pena a number of children between the ages of six and twelve responded to the question of "what do you want to be when you grow up?" In each community the answers were surprising only for their familiarity. Of children formally surveyed (50 in Concrete Park and 14 in Pena) over one quarter in both settings wanted to be either a doctor or a nurse. 35% of children in Pena and 16% of children in Concrete Park wanted to be teachers, and each community had children wanting to be lawyers or business people. With the exception of one girl in Concrete Park who wanted to be the tooth fairy and one girl who

wanted to be a “thug,” all the ambitions fit with very conventional contemporary notions of success promoted in the media and modeled by experience. In Concrete Park, for example, a number of children wanted to be professional athletes, musicians, or bureau of alcohol, tobacco, and firearms agents- all of which the popular media regularly presents as ideals of achievement for African-Americans. Likewise, several children in Pena wanted to be MIG pilots and petroleum engineers- professions that are prominent in a nation driven by civil war and massive oil revenue.

Overall, these ambitions indicate that residents of Concrete Park and Pena were alike in hoping for opportunities that would allow them to escape from poverty and stigma. While the children had slightly different imaginings of the content of that escape, the fundamental ideal of social mobility was the same. Thus, focusing on differing cultural mentalities, rather than analyzing differing opportunity structures, is most appropriate to my interest in psychosocial factors related to development.

Priorities towards developmental tasks

The results of the developmental tasks survey, a method described in Chapter Two, demonstrate several points worth highlighting as salient aspects of Concrete Park and Pena as cultural communities. Table 2 presents the mean rank orderings among the 10 developmental tasks prioritized by Pena adults, Concrete Park adults, and American college undergraduates. Figure 1, based on the same data reported in Table 2, presents measure scores based on Rasch analyses of the three samples for each of the developmental tasks. Combining these analyses of the developmental tasks surveys with my participant-observation suggests two levels of the relationship between cultural communities and developmental task priorities. First, there is an abstract level

exemplified by priorities relating to broad mentalities toward childhood as a part of the life-course and priorities relating to the emphasis put on explicitly feeling good about the self. This level seems to revolve around different cultural mentalities in each setting. Second, there is a practical level exemplified by priorities related to the emphasis on basic abilities such as academic skills and hygiene. This level seems to revolve around socio-economic conditions and whether adults can take the development of basic abilities for granted.

The most relevant example of ways different cultural mentalities influence developmental priorities is a subtle suggestion in Table 2 that different understandings of what it means to be a child underlie mentalities in Concrete Park (and, based on the results from the college students, in America more broadly) and Pena. In Concrete Park “learning physical skills for play, games, and sports” was the bottom ranked priority for adults thinking about children. When asked to explain, most adults told me that those skills have little relevance to adult life and are thus unimportant. Adults in Pena used very similar logic to draw a completely different conclusion. In explaining why parents (who had high hopes and ambitions for the future of their children) prioritized “learning physical skills for play, games, and sports” above all but one other developmental task, adults in Pena explained that the ages of 6 to 12 are a time for play and games. People in Pena agreed that playing was not important for adults, but they felt playing is important for children because that is what children do.

This contrast indicates a way that these communities seemed to have meaningfully different mentalities toward childhood as a part of the life-course. People in Pena considered childhood a distinct segment of the life-course. Children had specific

tasks and responsibilities, but they also had the space and freedom to be young. In Angolan Portuguese children in middle childhood were termed “*Crianças de pão é leite*” [children of bread and milk], meaning that children of this age were to be provided for practically but otherwise left to their own devices. This idea contrasts sharply with popular conceptualizations of childhood in inner-city America. The well known book title *There are No Children Here* (Kotlowitz, 1991) typifies the idea that children in the inner-city have to grow up fast; they do not have the luxury of childhood. In many ways, however, children of all cultural communities in America are encouraged to grow up fast. Society increasingly presents childhood and adolescence as an early life-course stage that is merely apprenticeship adulthood, requiring a focus on skills and characteristics understood as essential for future success.

The influence of these mentalities is evident in responses to a semi-structured interview question asking a sub-sample of children in Concrete Park and Pena what they considered “the best age to be?” On average, 55 children in Concrete Park identified 26 years old as the ideal age, while on average 21 children in Pena identified 17 years old as ideal. Further, four children in Concrete responded by saying that the best age to be was the highest possible age- 100, or whatever was allowable. No child in Pena gave such a response. While people in Concrete Park understood the life course as a series of progressive stages and childhood as an early period of directly preparing for future success, people in Pena understood the life course as a series of segments, each of which has its own characteristics qualities and tasks. Thus, while children in Concrete Park used adulthood as the primary conceptual model for psychosocial competence in

childhood, children in Pena often based understandings of psychosocial competence on a slightly different version of being a child.

Another important example of ways that cultural mentalities are evident in developmental priorities involves the task of “developing self-esteem.” This task was the top priority for Concrete Park adults (and for American college students), ranked ahead of more practical tasks such as developing academic abilities, learning to care of the body, and developing physical skills for games. In contrast, among Pena community adults “developing self-esteem” was towards the bottom of the priority list. The communities took opposite positions on a prominent question in contemporary debates about self-esteem: Is “feeling good” a cause or an effect of “doing well” (Seligman, 1995)?

Adults in Concrete Park explained to me that children who feel good about themselves will do well. As such, children learned to put a premium on self-affirmation and self-development. This was often quite explicit, as when a mother trying to get the attention of some unruly children from Concrete Park during a sports practice loudly pointed out “you all are out here to develop your selves.” The children may have just as well thought they were out there to simply play sports. But with a mentality that intentionally developing the self is a foundation for future success, children learn to conceptualize the self as a set of malleable abstract traits like self-esteem.

Adults in Pena explained to me that children who do well will feel good about themselves. This understanding is so deeply ingrained that people rarely think about self-esteem, or any potential outcome of self-evaluation, as a trait. In fact, the first time I tried to ask people in Pena about self-esteem, self-love, self-confidence, and related ideas

only one out of a group of approximately 20 teachers and coaches thought he recognized these traits. When asked to explain, he defined self-esteem as people spending a lot of time thinking about their selves. While this is not a textbook definition, it is not far from my argument that self-esteem is a cultural process. In prioritizing tangible conduct over abstract self-development the social environment in Pena lends itself to self-evaluations based on behaviors and possessions rather than personal traits.

Importantly, on the development tasks survey only the college student sample prioritized the other abstract personal qualities beyond self-esteem, such as “the ability to think and be creative” and “building values and morals,” over practical abilities (such as academic skills and hygiene). My interpretation of this finding is that, largely due to socio-economic status, only the college students are able to take for granted that children will develop abilities such as learning to read and write effectively and basic hygiene and self-care. Further, in discussions with adults in both Concrete Park and Pena it was clear that children’s basic hygiene varied significantly and, as such, marked whether a child was from a “good” family. In fact, residents of Concrete Park knew that the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) used children’s hygiene as a criterion in evaluating parents’ competence, thus codifying the importance of the developmental task.

Adults in Concrete Park and Pena did, however, take other practical developmental tasks for granted. For example, while the college students seemed to presuppose basic abilities, they prioritize “building relationships with other children” significantly higher than adults in Pena or Concrete Park. Because of high levels of social interaction amongst children in both Concrete Park and Pena, such communities seem to presume that children naturally build relationships.

Overall, the developmental task priorities represent the different levels at which Concrete Park and Pena as cultural communities influence development during middle childhood. In both Concrete Park and Pena amalgamated cultural characteristics such as routine daily activities, abstract cultural-historical values, identifications as marginalized, and low relative socio-economic status craft mentalities toward middle childhood and psychosocial competence for children. One minor additional characteristic of these cultural communities, not yet discussed, that has the potential to craft relevant mentalities is the presence of non-community members (such as me).

Participation in the settings

Though my role was minor in regard to the already described characteristics of Concrete Park and Pena as cultural communities, the presence of service workers and researchers was a regular part of the landscape in these settings. Thus, my presence deserves brief mention, and allows me to auger a few final themes. Specifically, my participation experiences in each setting demonstrate something about concepts of the person, general mentalities toward competition, and the relative influence of globalizing capitalist ideals.

At the start of my participant observation in Pena I unwittingly learned about concepts of the person within the community when interviewing local residents to select participants in an Olympic Aid coaching course. One of the basic questions that I asked interested Pena residents was to “describe the qualities of a good coach.” Despite my cultural psychological orientation, I anticipated this question would elicit responses similar to those I had heard when leading coaching courses in Illinois or like I might have expected in Concrete Park: a good coach is charismatic, intelligent, caring, inspiring, etc..

In almost thirty interviews in Pena no framing of the question elicited such a response. When first asked people often had no response at all, but when pushed to “describe a good coach” they would explain: “a good coach breaks up fights,” “a good coach helps his players when they are not doing well,” “a good coach is treated with respect by players,” etc.. Despite many re-phrasings and re-framings, where I expected descriptions of a good coach to focus on enduring personal traits, as had been my experience in the US, in Pena descriptions of a good coach focused on characteristic behaviors.

This anecdote is significant for two reasons. For one, it illustrates the idea that residents of Concrete Park and Pena had meaningfully different conceptions of the person and the ideal self (whether it is comprised of a set of idealized and enduring personal traits or of a set of idealized and meaningful behaviors), which is an important underlying characteristic of mentalities in these cultural communities. For another, it suggests the limited potential influence of outsiders in each setting. While I spent a great deal of time and effort trying to have residents of Pena describe a good coach using an understanding of the ideal self with which I was familiar, I had no success. In situations where I was not intentionally trying to elicit particular types of responses, I was likely even less influential. Although my presence as a participant in each setting unquestionably influenced interpersonal interactions, underlying mentalities in both Concrete Park and Pena were too deeply ingrained to succumb to the influence of outsiders during a relatively short time frame.

My role working for organizations trying to promote play, games, and sports as part of child development did seem to cause some difficulty in getting a sense of the types of activities in which children would usually participate. My work positioned me

as an authority in those areas, and residents often assumed that I knew “better” play activities, games, and sports in which children might participate. Ultimately, however, through both time and multiple methods of gathering information, I did get an accurate sense of how children spent their time. And simultaneously, the process of organizing numerous activities provided a sense of what best engaged children and a sense of the mentalities behind that engagement.

In Concrete Park, for example, when organizing activities for children I was initially frustrated by the extreme emphasis young children put on zero-sum competition. When leading activities, and thus being concerned with engaging all the children, any activity that clearly delineates half the participants as more successful (the winners) than another half (the losers) is problematic. Thus, during summer camp sessions with six to eight year old children I would often conclude games of soccer, or tee ball, or floor hockey, or obstacle courses with a brief lecture on how everyone needed to focus on having fun and learning rather winning and losing. I would then ask if the children had any questions. Almost inevitably, a cherubic and agitated child would thrust his or her hand in the air and ask: “What was the score? Because Joe says his team won, and I say they didn’t.” It became frustratingly obvious that children in Concrete Park, even when not understanding how to keep score, learned to value combative competitiveness from a very young age.

In Pena, in contrast, the most difficult challenge in organizing play, games, and sports, was ensuring all the children had a feeling of being a full participant in each activity. In Concrete Park children not selected for one team or another in a game of basketball would often simply disengage in a sort of silent protest suggesting they did not

need to take part. In Pena children not selected for one team or another in a game of soccer would often engage in frantic protests, desperately trying to participate. In one representative example my Australian co-worker with Olympic Aid organized a field hockey-like game using rolled up newspapers as hockey sticks. Because we had not had enough newspaper, there were not enough hockey “sticks” for everyone to play at the same time. As the leaders of the activity, we unthinkingly told some of the children they would be substitutes that would rotate in to play throughout the duration of the game. This solution, perfectly logical to us, was disturbingly unacceptable to the children. Those designated as substitutes were distraught by seeing their peers participate while they sat idle. While all the children were visibly shaken, one eight year old girl went into a raging fit, rolling around on the dirt ground sprinkled with pebbles and splitting open a cut on her head that began bleeding profusely. It was a frightening moment, and our game was in tatters. A simple manipulation, however, changed everything. Instead of having two teams with substitutes we created three teams to rotate through the game. The children were happy with this because they were always explicitly part of a team and were able to have a consistent sense of participation. Though this may be a better strategy anywhere, including in Concrete Park, the intensity of wanting to feel like a participant was greater in Pena than anywhere else I have had experiences leading activities with children.

These experiences, working with children in many different community types, also allowed me to observe elements of Concrete Park and Pena as cultural communities that are consistent with other settings subject to the influence of global capitalism. These elements are relevant to this dissertation in demonstrating the exposure of children to

globalizing cultural ideals, such as productivity oriented teamwork. For example, children in Concrete Park and Pena experienced a world of brand name reverence. The most prominent example of this was Nike. The Nike trademark “swoosh” was almost ubiquitous in both settings. Though it was not particularly surprising to see children in Concrete Park wearing and admiring the latest Nike products, it was occasionally startling to see the “swoosh” adapted throughout an African refugee camp setting. Aside from being a desirable status marker for second hand clothing, people in Pena had painted the “swoosh” on their crumbling mud walls and listing plank doors. A local open-air market had even begun selling ceramic wash basins with the Nike “swoosh” indented on the washboard surface. While the appropriations of this symbol are interesting in and of themselves, the important point here, particularly in relation to teamwork as a component of psychosocial competence, is that elements of global business culture were available in both settings.

Similarly, children in both settings often engaged in business-like activities, hawking small goods for profit. In Pena, and Luanda more generally, a booming market for street hawkers had taken off with the influx of dislocated people (creating many more people than jobs) and the increasing availability of cheap foreign goods. Though most of the hawkers were adolescents or young adults, younger children would often serve in apprentice roles or work with older partners in several of the nearby bustling open air markets. While street hawking was not as prominent in Concrete Park, through much of the summer it was regular practice for children to stake out corners of busy streets near the housing development with bottles of water, packets of socks, or other assorted trinkets that might catch the eye of drivers stopped at a corner. Often the salesmanship

involved a sort of scam- with young adults recruiting children to tell people they were raising money for a team or a club, trying to get sympathy for shopping. Many of the children, most often boys, were quite convincing and seemed to look at salesmanship as more of a competitive game than a business scam. In fact, on one afternoon during my second summer of field work in Concrete Park I was leaving for the day on my bicycle when I ran into a group of resident boys (between 10 and 12 years of age) selling bottles of water. They told me they were “raising money for little league baseball” and asked me to buy some water. Having spent several months studying play, games, and sports activities I was fairly sure these children were not actually on the community baseball team. When I said that to them they argued vehemently and convincingly, telling me there was another team that played out of a nearby Boys and Girls Club so I didn’t know about it. They seemed so sincere that I bought a few bottles of water. Then, the next day, when I asked some adults in Concrete Park about this other baseball team they just laughed at me. There was no other baseball team- the boys were just “gettin’ up” on me.

Though embarrassed at my naiveté, the competitive savvy of young children in Concrete Park was an impressive and salient part of local cultural mentalities. Throughout this research, gaining access to such mentalities depended on my participation in each community. Ultimately, however, my role in each community merely allowed me to document, rather than significantly influence, the cultural essence of Concrete Park and Pena.

Summary

Concrete Park and Pena are particular cultural communities deriving their character from local mentalities that filter the influence of daily experiences and the

influence of structural socio-economic circumstances on children's thought and behavior.

In this chapter I have highlighted several characteristics of these two cultural communities that relate to mentalities toward middle childhood and psychosocial competence. Most salient are high rates of social interaction, shared local mentalities regarding things such as competition, societal marginalization crafting negative social identities, high ambitions for children despite structural poverty, distinct mentalities toward the life-course, and robust enduring patterns of behavior and thought. The following analyses of child's play, self-esteem, and teamwork depend on these characteristics to elucidate psychosocial competence and middle childhood as cultural processes.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHILD'S PLAY

Play, according to an entry in the International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences, comprises behaviors that do not seem to serve any apparent immediate purpose for the participant (Pellegrini and Smith, 2002). Yet, ironically, studying child's play is useful precisely because play serves several significant purposes within cultural communities such as Concrete Park and Pena. Play, whether informal, symbolic, pretend, rule-guided, competitive, or organized, is a prominent means through which children have developmental experiences with their social world. From a cultural psychology perspective, play is the type of "socio-cultural participation" (Shweder et. al. 1998) that crafts particular cultural mentalities. Thus, in this chapter I suggest that child's play in Concrete Park and Pena served to simultaneously socialize and represent particular local mentalities including norms of social comparison and conceptions of an ideal self, both of which are fundamental dimensions within the cultural process of psychosocial competence.

The notion that play represents particular conceptions of an ideal self relates to the role of play in the life-course. Across cultures play is most commonly associated with the relatively carefree period of childhood. Yet, people in Concrete Park tended to conceptualize play as an unsuitable activity for children unless endowed with specific learning intentions. This mentality inserted itself in the playful verbal and physical

banter that was common in Concrete Park. Adolescents would jokingly insult each other on the basketball court; children would use each other as targets for the latest wrestling move seen on cable TV; adults would tease each other about an embarrassing experience. Yet, when such interactions went too far and a child felt the need to end the banter the most common dictate was to forcefully state “you play too much.” To play “too much” in Concrete Park indicated impertinent frivolity. This attitude relates to more general conceptions of childhood as a stage in the life-course, which for Concrete Park residents comprised apprenticeship adulthood based on the progressive acquisition of adult-like characteristics. In contrast, while people in Pena considered play essentially purposeless, I never heard children insulted for playing “too much.” Frequent play and playfulness were positively associated with childhood in Pena despite clear expectations that children should prioritize household chores and school work. Play in Pena was not a matter of degree; it was something children did until they became adults. Mentalities towards child’s play in Pena represented a broader conceptualization of childhood as a segment in the life-course removed from adult behaviors and responsibilities.

Existing literature provides a foundation for an analysis of child’s play in Concrete Park and Pena, suggesting that child’s play is a common cultural practice, often associated with psychosocial competence, which connects to conceptions of the life-course and attitudes toward competition. After reviewing this literature, I present data demonstrating that play was a normative form of cultural participation during middle childhood in Concrete Park and Pena. I also present data suggesting that local cultural mentalities permeated normative participation, drawing from perspectives on child’s play elicited through focus group interpretations of sports program videos. This data indicates

that the mentalities of children in Concrete Park emphasized combative competition oriented to self-development towards an adult ideal, while mentalities of children in Pena emphasized participation oriented to social order within a relatively playful and free conception of childhood. In the second half of this chapter I analyze five categories of play activities that were evident in the two communities (sports, physically active games, non-physically active games, role playing, and verbal games) to provide examples of types of play that are embedded with these distinct cultural mentalities. I then undertake an extensive analysis of verbal insulting games in each community, substantiating the notion that children in Concrete Park and Pena sustain different norms of social comparison and idealize different conceptions of the self.

The theme of this chapter is that play activities are “ideal sites for telling stories that people might use to formulate their ideas about what is important in life” (Coakely, 1998, p. 109). I suggest that the story regarding psychosocial competence revolves around particular plot lines including norms of social comparison and conceptions of an ideal self. Those plot lines are among the essential cultural dimensions of psychosocial competence discussed throughout this dissertation.

Perspectives on play and development in context

I take a broad view of play to include unstructured play, rule bound games, and organized competitive sports. Middle childhood is the period when most such play occurs. Prior to middle childhood many children have neither the motor skills nor the independence to engage in intensive play. After middle childhood play becomes a specialized activity for a few, generally more athletically talented, youth as they segment into niches and identities. Yet, while there has been a great deal of research on the

emergence of symbolic play in early childhood (motivated partially by the attention both Piaget and Vygotsky put on play as a setting where children developed cognitive understandings of fantasy and reality; see Rubin 1983 for a review) and on recreational activities as informal education for adolescents and youth (see, for example, Eccles, Barber, Stone & Hunt, 2003; Larson, 1994), little research has considered play and games in middle childhood (Pellegrini, Kato, Blatchford, & Bains, 2002). Significantly less research still has analyzed play and games as socio-cultural participation in middle childhood.

Nevertheless, from Freudian ideas about wish fulfillment to Piagetian theories of cognitive exploration to cross-cultural research showing high rates of play across cultures (eg, Tudge et al, 1999; Whiting and Edwards, 1988), there is agreement in academic literature that children's play has meaning in the process of human development. Research on this meaning takes two forms. Developmental psychologists tend to evaluate the cognitive and social implications of play for individual children by asking how various forms of play impact developmental outcomes. A relevant example is research by Pellegrini et al (2002) finding that abilities in games during recess upon entry to primary school predict children's classroom adjustment. In contrast, sociologists and anthropologists tend to evaluate the way play reflects and develops cultural norms within social groups and communities. A relevant example is Fine's (1987) ethnography of little league baseball demonstrating ways that sport settings facilitate ideologies about masculinity among American boys. These existing lines of research are relevant to this analysis of child's play in Concrete Park and Pena in revealing that play is a normal and

expected part of development, but its developmental implications filter through cultural mentalities.

Previous literature thus demonstrates that play contributes to child development, but that play alone does not produce particular psychosocial outcomes. Nevertheless, the idea that play, games, and sports build strong psychological character has been popular in Western culture at least since the Duke of Wellington famously claimed that victory over Napoleon at Waterloo “was won on the playing fields of Eton.” A version of this idea is still readily available in popular culture and in social science. Kail and Cavanaugh (2004), for example, state uncritically in their text on human development that “participating in sports has many benefits for youth. In addition to improved physical fitness, sports can enhance participants’ self-esteem and can help them learn initiative” (p. 313). In contrast, in a 1998 review of literature on sport socialization Coakly suggests that play, games, and sport are better conceptualized as “sites for socialization experiences, not causes of socialization outcomes.” (p. 102)

Though there is little cultural research analyzing play and sport during middle childhood as “sites for socialization experiences,” some literature exists for early childhood. Gaskins (1999) and Goncu, Tuermer, Jain, and Johnson (1999), for example, critique “dominant developmental theories that are based on the play of middle-class children in the Western world” (Goncu et. al., p. 149) and they critique thinking about play as an activity universally necessary for “optimal development.” Contrasting play in Western and non-Western cultures, such as among the Maya in Mexico, these authors suggest play in non-Western cultures holds a different, rather than deficient, place in the social worlds of children. Gaskins and Goncu et. al. suggest that much of the difference

derives from impoverished communities that deemphasize play because of economic realities.

Lancy's 1996 ethnography of children's play among Kpelle-speaking people in West Africa offers the possibility that play can be valued in impoverished communities, but for distinct reasons. Lancy suggests that some African cultures value play as an activity keeping children occupied and happy during childhood, without the Western assumption that there are immediate benefits and learning accruing during play. Lancy argues that partially because Kpelle parents do not think of play as a setting for instruction adults do not intentionally pass play, games, and sports activities on to children through generations. Thus, such activities are open to significant change over time. "Traditional" games are not necessarily enduring, though cultural attitudes toward play as an independent component of childhood in Africa do endure.

In contrast, American cultural attitudes toward play resonate with larger American cultural mentalities toward child rearing. This mentality relates to Levine et al.'s (1994) idea that the dominant American cultural model of childhood is "pedagogical." In this model all activities and behaviors, including play, are only worthwhile if directed towards change, improvement, and progress. The result of rationalizing play as a learning opportunity, observed by Farver (1999) in a cross-cultural analysis of pre-school play norms, is that "when adults are highly involved in structuring children's settings preschoolers' activities resemble 'work' more than 'play.'"

The relationship between work and play is a consistent and interesting theme in the literature on culture and childhood. Whiting and Edwards (1988) discuss research based on the Whiting's six cultures study suggesting that African children, and children

in other non-Western cultures, often spend more time engaged in work rather than play activities. Yet, as Farver (1999) observes, in America people may not conceptualize work and play as distinct activities; both are behavior and activity geared toward a specific productive outcome. American children often work at play. In contrast, Gaskins notes that children in many non-Western cultures are less likely to engage in pure symbolic play than middle class Euro-American children, and more likely to engage in role playing adult activities common to their daily experience; non-Western children often play at work. This distinction proved robust in Concrete Park and Pena, and derives from other cultural mentalities expressed in child's play.

Sport sociologists have long observed, for example, that positive attitudes in America toward competitive sports relate subtly, yet pervasively, to the emphasis on competition within larger capitalist society (see, for example, Coakly, 1998). Americans tend to see sports as a setting to socialize generally competitive mentalities. The actual expression of this mentality, however, lacks evidential support in existing research. Further, existing research often fails to demonstrate possible alternative cultural mentalities. Thus, it is important to consider data from Concrete Park and Pena suggesting that competitive individuation was a primary aspect of children's socialization experiences in Concrete Park, while children in Pena experienced and demonstrated mentalities prioritizing properly situating oneself within appropriate social roles. Likewise, my general research builds off conceptual literature on child's play and sport by demonstrating that play, games, and sports during middle childhood in Concrete Park and Pena were settings for particular developmental experiences situated within those cultural communities.

Play as normal and expected

In the process of giving brief surveys addressing demographics, activities, and self-esteem to almost 400 children in Concrete Park and Pena there was only one occasion where I felt any reluctance to ask a child about the frequency of his or her sports participation. That occasion involved a seven year old boy in Pena who was born without functioning legs. The boy, Dunga, had no access to high technology hospital care, prosthetics, or wheelchairs. So Dunga had learned to move around the camp by walking on his arms, dragging his stick thin legs along the ground and using the thickly scabbed skin on his knees as points on which to rest. In asking my research questions I didn't want to embarrass Dunga- I didn't want to make him feel badly about not having functioning legs and thus being unable to participate in the ubiquitous pick-up soccer games.

When I asked the question timidly, "how many days a week do you usually play sports and physical games," Dunga looked at me with some confusion and pity. He broke the uncomfortable silence by telling me in Portuguese "*Todos os dias.*" Dunga told me that he played soccer every day. Every day? Well, he qualified himself, there were a few days when he had a cold and couldn't play. So almost every day.

Just like all boys in the refugee camp, Dunga played sports and physically active games almost every day of his young life. Dunga just used his hands to "kick" the ball when others would use their feet. There were no adults to set the games up, no special equipment, and no major modifications to the rules. The only minor debate among the children was what should happen when the ball hit Dunga's non-functioning legs: should

that be like a handball for the kids with functioning legs? Different children had different opinions, but none worried much. Mostly they just played.

Although Dunga's circumstances were particular, his experience represents the near ubiquity of play during childhood in both Concrete Park and Pena. Though formal surveys only asked children about participation in sports and physically active games, 98.6% of children in Concrete Park and 83.8% of children in Pena reported some such participation at least once each week. Further, 47.5 % of children in Concrete Park and 23.6% of children in Pena reported participating in sports and physically active games every day. Based on field observations, the survey participation rates would be nearly 100% if pretend role playing, verbal games and non-physically active games (such as cards, video games, and board games) were included. In general, despite some differences by community, age, and gender in participation rates, child's play was a regular part of middle childhood in these communities.

While the opportunity structure related to participation was not an explicit focus of this research, there are some trends in participation that relate to gender and age in meaningful ways. Figures 2 and 3 present participation rates for sports and physically active games broken down by age and gender. The most notable difference in Figure 2 is that unlike the other groups (boys in Concrete Park, girls in Concrete Park, and boys in Pena) girls in Pena do not all regularly participate in sports and physically active games. This likely relates to gender norms in Angola which primarily identify sports and physically active games as male domains, whereas contemporary American norms promote sports and physical activity for both genders. Nevertheless, a majority of girls

during middle childhood in Pena still participate in sports and physically active games at least on a weekly basis.

The intensive participation rates represented in Figure 3 (compared by age and gender) demonstrate slightly different trends in Concrete Park and Pena. Where both boys and girls in Concrete Park are increasingly likely through middle childhood to engage in daily sports and physical games, boys in Pena are decreasingly likely to engage in daily participation and only around 15% of girls in Pena at any age during middle childhood are likely to participate in sports and physically active games daily. It is possible that these trends relate to the differing conceptions of the life course in Concrete Park and Pena. Children in Concrete Park have increasing autonomy from their family during what the community conceptualizes as a stage in the linear progression towards adulthood, thus allowing increasing opportunities for regular play with peers and participation in programs outside the home. In contrast, children in Pena stay consistently embedded in the roles of childhood during what the community conceptualizes as a distinct segment of the life-course. The possibility that cultural mentalities relate to children's participation in play is further evident in the next section through qualitative interpretations residents of Concrete Park and Pena offered of videos documenting sports program activities.

Local mentalities toward psychosocial competence in relation to play activities

Focus groups watching videos of sports programs in both Concrete Park and Pena endorsed the above notion that play is central to the lives of community children. A member of the Concrete Park community observed in relation to the videos: “the kids in the residential neighborhoods got to go through [organized] programs. In the ‘hood you

get up, eat cereal, and go out to play. You always got people ready to play.” Likewise, during one scene documented in the Pena video where the kids take a break from the soccer games to climb trees, several Pena adults participating in focus groups observed “kids are like that, they are always playing. They never want to stop- for kids the most important thing is to play...everybody is playing in their own way.” Beyond recognizing play as normative, however, residents of Concrete Park and Pena employed differing mentalities when offering interpretations of sports program activities.

Mentalities in Pena were evident in the way Pena adults reacted when watching the video from the Concrete Park program. At one point in the video a Concrete Park coach tries to inject some enthusiasm into a warm-up exercise by doing an exuberant jig before serving a ball to a line of children. Though from one perspective it seemed to be engaging coaching, the adults in Pena thought it was inappropriate. One group of men shook their heads and said “come on, don’t teach them about boxing.” Several other groups of adults in Pena disliked his playful enthusiasm. Yet, minutes later, a child in the Concrete Park video does a very similar jig during a different warm-up exercise. Though the child is clearly not following the order of the activity, the adults in Pena thought the child’s enthusiasm was quite amusing. They laughed and noted with pleasure the boy dancing and “playing” during the warm-up.

In Pena people accepted that children are very different from adults. Pena adults commenting on the videos never criticized children for misbehavior, instead focusing on the competence of the adults. When one group of adult males in Pena noted with apparent disapproval that several children were not paying attention to their coaches, it seemed that they were going to be the first Pena focus group to blame the bad behavior

on the kids. Instead they used the incident as an example of the coach's incompetence. One of the men explained that it is normal for kids to play around, but it is still possible to control them and this is important because "they have to learn to be attentive." In Pena children were expected to play, while adults were expected to provide order. If they learned anything it was not self-esteem, teamwork, or character; it was about how to be attentive and thus fulfil their social roles as children.

A similar mentality is evident in the interpretations of a play fight captured in the Pena video. The incident documented in the video occurred as the Pena children were arriving at the field getting ready to play. Several boys started play wrestling, laughing and chasing each other while a group of other children watched with amusement. None of the focus groups in Pena watching the videos had any objections to this incident. One Pena focus group called it just "playing normal" and an adult male in Pena explained to me that "with kids you are not always going to get 100% good behavior. It is difficult to work with kids. They will get better."

In the Concrete Park focus groups several people recognized the playfulness of the fight in Pena but contrasted it with their own children, noting for example "One thing I can see, they're [the children in Pena] very playful- the fighting is much more playful over there than here. When they fight over here [in Chicago] it's for real." When commenting on the videos people in Concrete Park frequently suggested that children in Concrete Park have to balance the frivolity of childhood with an adult-like toughness. Thus, for example, a Concrete Park focus group tried to explain unruly behavior in the Concrete Park video by noting that the kids in Chicago have so much more besides soccer they like to play: "The kids here go home and play basketball, video games,

whatever other things” but another man quickly interjected “No, these kids get bused back and dodge bullets.” A different Concrete Park focus group commented on the videos by noting that “in the city when you wake up in the morning you have to be tough or you’re going to get walked on.” For people in Concrete Park children had to be serious and tough beyond their years.

Aspiring to seriousness and toughness related to mentalities in Concrete Park about competition. When, for example, a child in the Concrete Park video walked off the field clearly dejected by a loss a man in a Concrete Park focus group explained: “it’s an ego thing; lots of egos in the city...the city puts pressure on them- you got so much to live up to; you want to come home and have a highlight.” Another Concrete Park adult watching the video noted that “you don’t really see that pressure in Virginia [seemingly randomly cited as a rural environment]. In the city you have to get your name noticed.” These perspectives demonstrate how people in Concrete Park recognized, and often valorized, combative competitiveness as a natural result of life in the inner-city. The ideal of sports as an appropriate site for intense and tough competition was also clear in the attitude of Concrete Park children. Watching the video inspired one boy in Concrete Park, who was no longer involved in the soccer program, to share his only memory of soccer by saying with clear pride “I broke somebody’s leg playin soccer; I killed the guy.”

In contrast, in Pena the consistent emphasis for people explaining the importance of sports was on participation rather than competition. For example, when I asked a group of adult men in Pena after watching both videos whether they saw anything that suggested sport was important for children, they noted that in both situations the kids had

to go a “long ways from their fathers’ houses” in order to participate. The Pena men felt that this showed the importance of sports- they left their homes and parents to go play, and they thus made significant efforts to participate.

The ways that people in Concrete Park and Pena interpreted these examples of children’s play help illustrate underlying mentalities toward psychosocial competence. In Concrete Park children are expected to be tough and competitive in adult-like ways. In Pena they are expected to be playful but attentive in ways befitting children focused on opportunistic participation in a hierarchical social order. Partially due to these differing mentalities, the two communities had different conceptions of the essence of play and its place in the life-course.

Play and the life-course

Postures toward child’s play in Concrete Park and Pena reinforce mentalities relating to the life-course discussed in Chapter Three based on the results of developmental task surveys. In Concrete Park “learning physical skills for play, games, and sports” was the bottom ranked of ten developmental task priorities for adults thinking about children. When asked to explain, most adults told me that those skills have little relevance to adult life and are thus unimportant. Adults in Pena, in contrast, explained why parents (who had high hopes and ambitions for the future of their children) prioritized “learning physical skills for play, games, and sports” above all but one other developmental task by noting that the ages of 6 to 12 are a time for play and games. People in Pena agreed that playing is not important for adults, but they felt playing is important for children because that is what children do. While people in Concrete Park understood the life-course as a series of progressive stages and childhood as an early

period of directly preparing for future success, people in Pena understood the life course as a series of segments, each of which has its own characteristic qualities and tasks.

Children in Concrete Park and Pena seem to internalize these different conceptions of childhood partially by way of the standards that they use evaluate their abilities. Several questions on the self-esteem inventory administered to children during field work asked them about their competence in relation to “most boys and girls.” These items asked children to respond yes or no to the following statements: Most boys and girls are better at doing things than I am; Most boys and girls play games better than I do; Most boys and girls are smarter than I am; Most boys and girls are better than I am. In factor analysis of the self-esteem inventory these four items grouped together as one factor for each of the two communities. When compared by age within the two communities, however, mean scores on these “peer comparison” factors went in opposite directions (see Figure 4). Thus, in Concrete Park as children get older they tend to rate themselves more negatively in relation to “most boys and girls” while in Pena as children get older they tend to rate themselves more positively in relation to “most boys and girls.” In contrast, in the CFSEI-3 norming sample responses to these items remain relatively similar between the ages of 6 and 12. This same pattern exists, based on individual item analysis, for responses to the item most relevant to this chapter: “Most boys and girls play games better than I do.” Children in Concrete Park become more likely to consider other boys and girls better at playing games during middle childhood, while children in Pena become more likely to consider themselves better than other boys and girls at playing games during middle childhood.

It thus seems that children in Concrete Park and Pena associate “most boys and girls” with a different age cohort. In relation to the above noted cultural conceptions of the life course it makes sense that during middle childhood boys and girls in Concrete Park learn to compare themselves upward with older children and adults. Therefore, contrary to actual abilities, 11 and 12 year olds tend to make more negative peer comparisons than 6 to 8 year olds. In contrast, during these same ages in Pena, where middle childhood feels like a distinct segment of the life course, boys and girls appear to compare themselves with other young children. In the minds of the children, 11 and 12 year olds in Pena are the best of any age cohort at being children, while the 11 and 12 year olds in Concrete Park are the least of any age cohort at being young adults.

The notion that mentalities toward child’s play demonstrate and socialize understandings of the life-course influences conceptions of the ideal self. Child’s play, while normative in both Concrete Park and Pena, involved a heavy emphasis on self-development, adult postures, and combative competitiveness in Concrete Park. In Pena child’s play provided a forum for children to be lively while also engaging opportunities to participate in the social order. In the remainder of this chapter I analyze examples of common play activities in each community to further explicate these mentalities..

Categories of play activities and cultural mentalities

Although cultural mentalities related to play were relatively distinct, the categories of play activities in Concrete Park and Pena were reasonably similar and recognizable. This is likely a result of Pena’s exposure to and adoption of Western play forms. Lancy’s (1996) suggests that generational transmission of “traditional” play forms is rare in cultural communities, such as Pena, that do not consider play a pedagogical

opportunity. Thus, categories and types of play may be particularly amenable to globalization.

In Pena, the general concept of playing was more important to the community than the specific content of the play. This gave the many outside organizations targeting children in refugee camps significant power in guiding play patterns. When I began my field work in Pena, for example, it was surprising to regularly observe boys and girls playing together, or at least playing the same games. Based on other experiences in Africa I had expected to see more strongly gendered participation patterns. It turned out that this expectation was not completely incorrect. The main play areas in Pena were near to schools, and there was always a great deal of play in the periods before and after school. But after a few months of field work the school year ended and so, for the most part, did gender integrated play. When asked about the change, several adult members of the community explained that it was simply the influence of the many NGO's and international agencies that administered programs in the refugee camps. When working with children these groups put a strong emphasis on gender equality and integration. Thus, in formally organized settings (such as school) most play activities integrated boys and girls. Outside of these formal settings, however, the children reverted to their more familiar gender segregated play interactions. Overall, it seemed that global forces were most influential in regard to broad types of activities rather than in regard to the mentalities underlying participation.

Differences within five superficially similar categories of play undertaken in Concrete Park and Pena further elucidate local mentalities. Based on unstructured observations, the main categories of activities comprising the majority of play in both

communities were sports, physically active games, non-physically active games, role playing games, and verbal games. Though all five broad categories were evident in both communities, there were significant differences in the meanings of participation and in the specific types of activities undertaken within each cultural community.

Sports

Sports, by definition, are organized and competitive play activities within a set of agreed upon rules. As such, sports activities are a rich site to observe mentalities related to both social organization and competition. Norms of sports participation in Concrete Park and Pena demonstrate provocative patterns suggesting that children in Concrete Park learn to prioritize individualized competition, while children in Pena learn to prioritize organized participation.

Sports, both formally organized and informally organized, were a particularly prominent play form for boys in both Concrete Park and Pena. Boys in Concrete Park mostly played basketball, while also regularly participating in baseball and football. Girls in Concrete Park also played basketball, though with less frequency, and were somewhat engaged with an organized soccer program (through one of the programs with which I did my field work). In Pena soccer was the major sport for boys. Basketball was also popular, though more difficult to organize because of the need for a basket, an inflatable ball, and a hard court. Girls in Pena did play some organized sports, though the majority of girls' physically active play in Pena occurred in less formal games.

Though the frequency with which boys in Concrete Park played basketball was relatively similar to the frequency with which boys in Pena played soccer, the manner of organizing play was significantly different. As can be seen in Figure 4, it was more

common for boys in Concrete Park than boys in Pena to play formally organized sports in adult organized leagues (the park district, YMCA, or Boys and Girls Clubs often organized these leagues). As a result, children in Concrete Park rarely organized group activities on their own; if no adults were involved the children would often just play individualized versions of basketball (such as games where scores were kept for each individual on the court) or would put together temporary teams based on who was at the court.

Though some formal adult organized opportunities existed in Pena, primarily administered by the schools or external developmental agencies, most sports were self-organized by children and devoted a great deal of attention to the social order. Most boys in Pena considered themselves to be on a “team” comprised of a group of friends who played together regularly and took on the identity and adapted structure of an organized soccer team. Often, it was important to the boys to create a hierarchy by designating one player to be the coach or manager (usually a boy of the same age, though the “coach” or manager might also be one or two years older) and the boys would take a team name borrowed from either an Angolan or European professional team. These types of teams were common in Luanda, the Angolan capital city that was near Pena; it was common in Luanda to see groups of boys on back streets in the city that had pooled together all their money to buy replica uniforms from Manchester United, AS Roma, or the German national team. In Pena the children did not have money for uniforms, but they improvised as much as possible to create the feeling of being on a team and keeping a sensible social order. These teams seemed neither encouraged nor discouraged by adults. But for many young boys in Pena they were a primary form of engaging and thinking

about the organization of the social world. In contrast, adults organized and administered any equivalent in Concrete Park, thus relieving children of any attention towards social organization.

For girls in Pena the play activity that residents themselves equated with soccer was a physically active game called *garrafina* (for which the literal translation from Portuguese is “small bottle”). *Garrafina* involved a group of girls setting up empty soda or beer bottles in the middle of a sandy dirt area. Some of the girls would try to fill the bottles with sand, while the other girls tried to hit them with a small ball (often made of rags and twine). If the ball hit the girls trying to fill the bottles they were out of the game. The girls filling the bottles won if they were able to fill the bottles with sand, while the girls throwing the balls won if they were able to stop them. Although *garrafina* is not a sport in the sense of being formally codified and competitive, within Pena (and other parts of Angola) people treated it as the sport for girls. It was rare, though not unheard of, for boys to play *garrafina*. Overall, it is important to note that the game was oriented around participation, with the primary punishment for poor performance being elimination from the game.

In both communities fighting was another activity that bordered between sports and physically active games. In Pena action fighting movies and videos of kung-fu type competitions that were exhibited in “video huts” (improvised movie theaters) were immensely popular among young boys. It was quite common for the boys to imitate the fights during play, though these imitations never felt combative. The focus of the boys was more on imitating the prowess of action and fighting stars than on establishing raw physical dominance.

In contrast, children in Concrete Park occasionally used boxing matches to establish competitive physical dominance and to resolve conflicts. I first saw boxing organized during a Concrete Park summer camp when a 10 year old boy and 10 year old girl could not seem to resolve an escalating argument. The camp counselors (young adult residents of Concrete Park) took the children to the park director's office. When the director's attempts to reason with the children proved futile, the summer camp counselors suggested that the best way to resolve the issue was to lace up boxing gloves and have them fight. The camp director reluctantly agreed on the condition that there be no audience. So the counselors cleared out the gym and cheered on the two pugilists. When the girl gave a clear and thorough beating to the boy, the counselors laughed with abandon. Then, when the camp director left the building, the counselors thought the boxing such fun that they brought in all the children in the camp and organized several hours of matches. Pairs of children from 5 years old up to 12 (both boys and girls) volunteered to go for 1 or 2 minute rounds against similarly sized opposition with the winners decided by the cheers of the crowd. And the crowd of campers loved it- they were cheering, yelling, jumping in the "ring" (a square of blue mats on the floor) to celebrate a good punch.

After I got over my initial disbelief at the endorsed aggression, watching one of the more responsible counselors congratulating himself for organizing a good match because "the kids need to get out all that energy," I observed pure joy and exuberance. Further, even though I was sitting away from the main crowd in the gym, several of the children came up to me after their round of boxing and asked me how I thought they did. It was clear that fighting ability was a major point of pride and it was important to the

children to be tough in the heat of competition. Although some of the punches certainly must have hurt (especially without headgear) no child showed it. To show being hurt would be worse than just losing. And, at the end of the day, no one seemed to think the fights were a bad idea; several adults and at least two mothers walked by and took a few minutes to watch.

Eventually, boxing matches became a staple of the Concrete Park summer camp, and seemed to embody the value put on combative competitiveness in its most literal form. In contrast, children in Pena engaged in competitive sports with a focus on participation and social order. In both sites winning and losing mattered, and sports intrinsically require some social order. But the intensity and salience of mentalities toward competition and social order varied dramatically.

Physically active games

Physically active games in Concrete Park and Pena consisted of distinct content particular to those cultural communities. Girls in Pena, as noted above and discussed in relation to *garrafina*, were more apt to participate in physically active games involving routines and easily available materials (including versions of “hop-scotch,” jumping rope, and dancing related games). In Concrete Park “flippin” was the most common play activity classified as a physically active game, involving dramatic individual exhibitions of gymnastic-like tumbling and flipping. These types of games were distinctively local and offer further examples of diverse emphases on repetition and individualistic exhibition.

Girls in each community had a relatively elaborate set of physically active games in which to participate. In Pena, one common, but unfamiliar, game popular with girls

was “*zero*” (though the game had various names for people from different areas). The game began with a line or circle of between five and ten children. One designated child then moved along the line, coming to face each participant in turn, and initiated a patterned set of clapping and dancing movements. At the conclusion of the brief clapping and dancing pattern the designated child would launch one leg or the other toward the participant opposite them in the line, who simultaneously launched one of his or her legs. If the leg launched by each child matched (right to right or left to left) the designated child lost and the participant from line took his or her place continuing down the line to face each participant in turn. The object for the designated child was largely to get through the entire line or circle by challenging each participant in turn to imitate their leg movement. In practice, however, the game mostly just involved a flurry of continuous movement, clapping, and imitation. The game, fitting well with the Pena emphasis on social order and participation, was about being good at patterning behavior within specific understood parameters.

Other forms of dance were popular with girls in both Pena and Concrete Park, and further demonstrate differing cultural mentalities. In Pena girls most often danced in ritualized ways during public celebrations, or during social events, focusing on the ability to perfect existing cultural forms. Girls in Concrete Park also danced during public celebrations and during social events, though they spent more time creating their own dance routines and focused on being creative and distinctive. Most community residents did not, however, frame dance as play because it was mostly associated with celebrations and artistic expression.

Several other physically active games were popular with both boys and girls in Pena, and often served as a collective after dinner activity involving collections of children from the community. The two most common of these games were called *bica bidon* and *banana*, which closely resembled familiar American games like “kick the bottle” and “capture the flag.” Children in Pena used such games as a base for social interactions, often drifting in and out of direct participation while socializing and observing peers without interference from adults.

Aside from two exceptions, children in Concrete Park were much less likely to self-organize physically active games than children in Pena. Although occasional games of tag and chase would occur, most play in Concrete Park either related to sports or had adult organizers. The major exception for girls in Concrete Park was the popularity of jumping rope games. The other major exception was the very popular tumbling and gymnastics related activity known exclusively as “flippin.”

While flippin was largely an activity for boys, it was popular amongst both genders and was the most prominent non-sport physical activity in Concrete Park. As the name suggests, the main object was to see who could do the most elaborate, creative, and numerous jumping flips. Ideally, though not necessarily, on a soft surface such as gym mats or a grass lawn, children would take turns running, cart wheeling, twisting, and flipping in something most closely resembling a floor routine in Olympic gymnastics competition. Alternatively, children would do flips off raised surfaces such as playground equipment or staircase railings. Though there was nerve-inducing danger involved in a seven year old doing a double back flip off an eight foot high set of monkey bars, I never saw any of the children get seriously hurt. And they often impressed and

astonished with their skill. Being accomplished at flippin offered significant status amongst peers, and some adults, within the community. While flippin children regularly engaged in challenging and playful banter about who could do what kind of flip, creating a sort of implicit competition focused on individuality and self-promotion that was familiar to play in Concrete Park.

In analyzing play as a socialization experience that both demonstrates and socializes local mentalities, it is important to note that flippin is not part of America's national play, games, and sports repertoire. While there is much popular discussion of how images of professional sports such as basketball, baseball, and football influence inner-city youth, there seems to be little recognition that inner-city youth do not merely passively receive the priorities of mainstream American culture. Flippin is something valued within Concrete Park (and, I suspect, parts of the larger African-American community) that provides enjoyment and status based almost entirely on particular norms within the cultural community. Children do not watch flippin on cable television, but they respect flippin ability to a similar degree as they value the basketball skills on prominent media display. In both Concrete Park and Pena play activities represented the multiple levels of culture, including national and local, interacting within each community.

Non-physically active games

Two aforementioned types of non-physically active games were particularly prominent in both Concrete Park and Pena: video games and card games. Residents primarily conceptualized these activities primarily as absent-minded pastimes. At the

same time, in their own ways, participation in non-physically active games facilitated the instantiation of status.

Basic Asian-made handheld video games were cheap and available in Angolan open-air markets and were thus fairly common in Pena. Most were quite simple, and did not seem to hold excessive interest for children. They were, however, a type of status symbol as a frivolous toy amidst poverty. Most of the times I saw video games in Pena they were simply being carried around, with the possessor seemingly just waiting for someone to ask if it might be possible to play. In contrast, in Concrete Park video games were popular and elaborate, particularly amongst boys. Children would often verbally compare their abilities on various popular games, though the games were most often played at home amongst siblings and close friends. As in Pena, status was accorded to the children in Concrete Park who had the newest and most interesting video games, but unlike Pena in Concrete Park status was also measured by performance on those games.

Potentially the most popular non-physically active games in both communities were various card games. In Concrete Park and Pena card games were popular for both participation and observation, though for slightly different reasons. In Concrete Park gambling with cards (and dice) was a common activity for teenagers and young adults. Because of the money at stake, these games were often animated, tense, and entertaining. Thus, children enjoyed both watching and practicing their skills. While gambling did occur in Pena, it was more common for children to play cards simply as a form of leisure. The sense was that card games were forums for social interactions, and abilities in cards seemed to guide the establishment of status hierarchies. At the same time, younger children would watch these games for the satisfaction of being involved with a social

group and to observe how the players dealt with their success or failure. This was particularly obvious in a game I observed while undertaking a case study of Dunga, the disabled child mentioned earlier in this chapter. During a day spent with Dunga a large part of his afternoon was consumed by joining a group of 10 to 15 peers watching a group of six older boys (probably 12 or 13) play a simple card game; though I didn't understand the rules of the game, whoever won each round was rewarded by the opportunity of using a plastic foam sandal to sharply hit the prostrated hand of the losing player. This process provided great entertainment for all the spectators, and carried a clear message about dominance, submission, and the social order. Competition in Pena seemed primarily oriented to sorting social order and status hierarchies. In contrast, competition in Concrete Park seemed primarily oriented to demonstrating the quality of an individual's enduring traits.

Pretend role playing

The only category of play that I observed with disproportionate frequency in Pena when compared to Concrete Park was pretend role playing. Pretend role play fit well with the emphasis in Pena on taking advantage of opportunities within the social order. Children felt satisfaction from successfully adopting roles that provided validation in the daily life of the cultural community. In contrast, the conformity intrinsic to role playing seemed uncomfortable to children in Concrete Park.

In Pena I regularly saw boys playing at building houses out of mud, girls playing at vending in the market using different colors of dirt to represent different spices, boys borrowing their parents' hoes to dig pretend garden plots, girls setting up miniature kitchens with scraps of plastic trash, boys building elaborate miniature cars and trucks out

of tin cans and discarded wire, girls tying improvised dolls to their back in imitation of motherly duties, and more. In Concrete Park I almost never saw anything similar. While it is possible that children in Concrete Park played doctor or house within the privacy of their home, the only role playing I observed during my field work in Concrete Park involved girls pretending to be mothers for younger children.

Although it would seem easy to think of the elaborate role playing in Pena as a sort of training for adult roles, community members did not conceptualize the activities in that way. Whenever I would ask people about the role playing activities they would simply shrug and say it was just kids playing. The following exchange during an interview with a male Pena community leader demonstrates local attitudes towards such games:

Drew: What about the role playing game? Are those good for kids to play?

Fefe: No they don't learn anything.

Drew: So the game is just to pass time?

Fefe: Yes, just to pass time. They do it when they don't have anything to do at home.

Drew: But they like it?

Fefe: They like it, but it's just because they don't have anything to do.

Drew: So they like to do work?

Fefe: Then that's sort of entertainment, we understand it; we were kids too and we did it some time in the past, but we now notice that's not a job to do and you don't learn anything out of it...When they are at home with their mother, their mother tells them to wash the dishes, set them somewhere, that's learning. But when they go outside pretending that they are joining things together, the stones and things like that, they are not learning.

Though several people in Pena expressed this perspective in conversation, it was always hard to fathom. Children's role plays, in an Western cultural model, are paradigmatic examples of playing as learning. Nevertheless, residents of Pena, where role playing was quite common, maintained no such conception. This mentality related

to an understanding of childhood as a relatively detached segment of the life-course. For residents of Pena children's play was valuable largely as emblematic of a happy childhood, rather than as an opportunity for self-development and cultivating abstract traits explicitly seen as valuable to adult life. In contrast, despite believing in playing as learning, children in Concrete Park simply did not engage in role play. Because of play's orientation within Concrete Park to the development of abstract traits seen as essential to adult life, the practical satisfaction of fulfilling recognized roles seemed less valued in Concrete Park. Role playing provided children in Pena the opportunity to feel competent within circumscribed social roles, which was not a salient criterion for psychosocial competence in Concrete Park.

Verbal games

Verbal games played by children in Concrete Park and Pena relayed messages about psychosocial competence more directly than other categories of play. Though verbal games included rhyming songs, often exchanged by girls in accompaniment to hand slapping, the games most relevant to understanding psychosocial competence were surprisingly similar versions of a verbal insulting game. Concrete Park residents alternately called the game "heatin up," "roastin," or "snappin," while Pena residents called the game *estiga-se*, which in Angolan slang translates to something like "abuse you." Both games involved somewhat formal and quite creative exchanges of abusive one-line verbal barbs, providing a rich source of information about what matters to children.

The basics of the games usually involved two children (boys or girls) trading creative and humorous verbal barbs to see who could come up with the best insult. The

criteria for what was the “best” varied, but most often depended on being funny, creative, and cutting. People told me that the best “roast” or *estiga* was something hard to describe, but you knew it when you heard it. Particularly in Pena, the game could become a formal contest, involving judges, on which people wagered money. But most often it was just an exchange between groups of playful children, with some serving as insulters and some serving as judges.

Both games relate to a verbal game, documented by sociologists as popular in Black American communities during the mid-part of the twentieth century, called “playing the dozens.” When I asked about “the dozens” in Concrete Park all the adults and some of the children knew that it was a popular game in the past. But they also felt that contemporary verbal insults were no longer just a matter of fun and games. One 20 year old male in Concrete Park, for example, told me that he had heard of “playing the dozens,” and knew that it had been a popular activity in the community decades ago. But he had never seen it in person. When asked why he thought the game disappeared in its previous form he said that in his perception the insults had become much more antagonistic- in the past people “did it just for fun. Now kids think if you talking bout their mamma you lookin to fight.” All the adults asked about the difference between “the dozens” and the contemporary roasts suggested in one way or another that the dynamic had shifted from being engaging fun to being a matter of combative competitiveness.

In contrast, any conversations in Pena related to *estiga-se* involved a great deal of laughter and amusement. An example comes from the following interview with a young adult involved in a coach training program:

Drew: Have you ever heard of the estiga game.

Chippy: Yes, that was one of my main hobbies when I was a kid and I used to get some money out of it.

Drew: How would you get money out of it?

Chippy: I would be very good at that. We had some friends that when they saw us they would call us and tell us to start abusing each other, and they said they would contribute some money for the winner. They did it and after the one that they consider the winner they would give him some money. But that was a combination- we would go somewhere else and just share the money.

Drew: Do you remember some of the best ones you've heard?

Chippy: Yes....Don't take it the wrong way...I remember once when I told my cousin, your mother is the best harlot in the world, but she doesn't have sex.

Drew: Okay, so was the winner decided by who had the most creative one? Were people always thinking of new ones?

Chippy: Yeah, sometimes you had to be creative because there was a point where it was like a profession. I would go home, start thinking, being a bit creative and yeah, sometimes I would go and find some people gathered together, and I would sit down as someone who doesn't want anything- just for listening what they are saying and the estigas, so when I went back home I would write that down and sometimes I would create some new ones too.

Drew: So do you think this is a good game for kids to play?

Chippy: Yeah, I think it's good entertainment. And if people made an evaluation of this and gave you positions, I would be president of this.

Drew: But it seems like the whole idea is to hurt people's feelings, so you could say it's not a good thing to do.

Chippy: As a kid we didn't consider like that.

Ultimately, Chippy earned such a local reputation for his ability in *estiga-se* that an aid organization running a drama program in Pena had temporarily employed him as a facilitator. Likewise, towards the end of my field work I temporarily hired Chippy to document *estigas* from children in Pena. Being the “president” of *estiga-se* seems to have been a valuable position in Pena.

Beyond any practical opportunities provided by verbal insulting games, the historical roots of these games suggest they are particularly relevant to understanding the cultural origins of children's conceptions of psychosocial competence. For example, many contemporary African-American forms of verbal play, including “snaps” and “your

momma” jokes (both of which have entire popular books devoted their dissemination, including a comic book titled “The Amazing Adventures of the Dark Snapper”) are traceable to the dozens (Smitherman, 1995). In addition, several folklorists trace the origin of “the dozens” to west and central Africa. Chimezie (1976) notes that nearly identical games to “the dozens” exist in both Nigeria and Ghana, and argues that the presence of “the dozens” in Black American culture is due to African heritage. While there was much speculation amongst researchers in the middle part of the 20th century as to the psychosocial function of “the dozens” (see, for example, Abrahams, 1962; Bruhn & Murray, 1985; Dollard, 1939) the only agreed upon point is that “the dozens” could serve as a socialization agent for children. This function is most relevant to understanding local mentalities toward psychosocial competence and middle childhood.

Insult games as a window to psychosocial competence

I recorded 46 “roasts” from children in Concrete Park and 81 *estigas* from children in Pena (documenting regularly employed “roasts” in Concrete Park was more difficult than collecting *estigas* in Pena because “roastin” was less formalized). I categorized each *estiga* and “roast” using a lay version of what Ryan and Bernard (2000) define as classical content analysis, where a “content dictionary” of themes is created and the content (in this case the *estiga* or “roast”) is classified as best fitting with one category. The content categories were based on an intuitive sorting of the *estigas* and “roasts.” Appendix D presents the verbal insults collected in both communities and the content dictionary employed to categorize the content. Table 3 presents the numerical results of this categorization by target and by characteristic being insulted.

Analyzing the targets in these verbal games supports the notion that *estigas* and “roasts” demonstrate and instantiate mentalities toward psychosocial competence. There were significant differences in who *estigas* and “roasts” were directed towards. In Concrete Park 52% of “roasts” commented on one’s mother, 41% focused immediately on the other, while 7% commented on other family members (fathers, grandmothers, and the parents together). In contrast, in Pena 53% of *estigas* commented on one’s father, 21% commented directly on the other, 17% focused on one’s mother, and 9% commented on one’s family or “house.” Though there seems to be a cultural difference in whether the mother or the father is most representative of one’s person, the important difference is in how often *estigas* and “roasts” commented directly on the other. In fact, one response to “roasts” in Concrete Park was to make clearly evident that they could not be personal, as when one boy responded to an attack on his “mamma” by saying “you don’t know my momma’s name; you don’t know my sister’s name.” In contrast, several children in Pena told me that they only played “estiga-se” with their siblings. When I noted that would mean they were insulting their own family (since the father or mother would be the same) the children would just laugh. It was clear that the intention in Pena was not personal. Thus, the greater proportion of direct “roasts” in Concrete Park than in Pena represents the focus on combative competitiveness in Concrete Park. In contrast, the greater proportion of indirect *estigas* in Pena represents a priority on properly situating oneself in the social world.

The most obvious difference when reviewing the *estigas* and “roasts” from Pena and Concrete Park is whether they are directed at enduring traits (such as one’s physical appearance), personal conditions (such as poverty), or particular behaviors. In Concrete

Park 77% of the 44 “roasts” collected are directed at enduring traits and 23% are directed at personal conditions. No “roasts” in Concrete Park primarily targeted behavior. In contrast, in Pena 22% of the 81 *estigas* I collected are directed at traits, 16% at conditions, and 62% at behaviors. Looking at this content suggests that children in Concrete Park focused on comparing the desirability of stable personal characteristics while children in Pena focused on evaluating the appropriateness of particular social behaviors. This difference relates to differences in concepts of the person, as documented in academic literature discussing cultural notions of personality characteristics and attributions (see, for example, Shweder & Bourne, 1991; Traindis & Suh, 2002). Looking at examples of *estigas* and “roasts” from each category illustrates these differences.

Insults directed at personal traits and conditions

Trait estigas and “roasts.” The *estigas* and “roasts” directed at traits were the most similar between Concrete Park and Pena. The majority targeted physical appearance, commenting on how “ugly” a person or their relative is, or at intelligence, commenting on how “dumb” a person or their relative is. When a girl in Pena said that “your mother is the fattest person in the world, and because she is so big she has to wear tire earrings” she sounded quite similar to the boy in Concrete Park who said “your momma so fat she on both sides of the family.” Many *estigas* and “roasts” directed at traits, however, called upon particular local categories. In Pena, for example, a girl commented on physical attractiveness by saying “the face of your father is like a doormat in Portugal,” referencing the old colonial master with an implicit sense of inferiority. Another girl referenced the mysterious circumstances surrounding the death of Angola’s

first president in commenting on bad breath by saying “the smell of your father’s mouth is what killed the first president Augustino Neto.” In Concrete Park the “roasts” were more combative and tended to do more playing with language than with cultural references. Examples include a boy saying that “your momma’s ass cocked like a pistol” and another boy saying “your head so big you fittin’ to flip over.” Thus, being identified with undesirable personal traits was an obviously negative characteristic in both communities. Nevertheless, while these traits were described more elaborately in Pena than in Concrete Park they comprised a lesser proportion of Pena children’s attention.

Condition estigas and “roasts.” The contrast between creative cultural referencing in Pena and combative directness in Concrete park is also evident in *estigas* and “roasts” directed at personal conditions. For example, in both Concrete Park and Pena hygiene was a primary concern (as is evident in the results of the developmental tasks surveys of adult priorities for children) and thus children’s *estigas* and “roasts” regularly insulted being “dirty.” However, while a boy in Concrete Park said “don’t your momma tell you to take a bath” and a girl simply stated “you stink,” a girl in Pena said “your father is the dirtiest person in the world; he went to the beach to have a bath and all the water ran away” and a boy said “everybody in your house was having a bath with just a can of soft drink and there was still water left over.” The other *estigas* and “roasts” directed at conditions tended toward a similar pattern with children in Concrete Park combatively mentioning drug use, poverty, and simple deprecation while children in Pena creatively mention physical strength, poverty, and corruption.

Insults directed at behaviors

While the majority of *estigas* in Pena focused on specific behaviors, any reference to behaviors in Concrete Park only served to explicitly link with some negative trait or condition. Thus, the closest “roasts” in Concrete Park came to focusing on behavior were statements such as “you take pictures of naked boys; that’s why you gay” and “you so dumb when they said it was chilly outside you went to get a bowl and spoon.” In these situations behavior was used as insulting only as illustrative of more stable personal qualities.

Unseemly behavior estigas. In Pena behaviors alone were the most common target of children’s *estigas*, with unseemly or disgraceful behavior being the most frequently referenced in my sample. These types of *estigas* focused on behaviors such as those understood to be inappropriate for a particular age, disrespectful, promiscuous, lacking dignity, or miserly. Examples include a boy saying “your father was born in 1202, and he only stopped making cars of tin cans by demand of the court after United States independence” suggesting the father took too long to become an adult, a girl saying “your father stayed overnight in mourning just with one touch of the drum” suggesting the father didn’t mourn a death properly, a boy saying “your father made a doll pregnant and he ran away in the bush” suggesting bizarre promiscuity, a boy saying “in the time of war you traded your mother for two tins of sardines” suggesting pathetic desperation, and a girl saying “in your house when you are eating if a person drops a grain of rice then you are going to have the police come” suggesting miserly attitudes. All of these *estigas* represent ways that children understood what behaviors are

unseemly, and thus help instantiate notions of psychosocial competence as involving behavior that is age appropriate, respectful, chaste, dignified, and unstinting.

Peculiar behavior estigas. Another category of *estigas* I collected in Pena focus on behaviors that are simply peculiar or unintelligent and thus represent a negative attitude toward being different and slow. Examples of *estigas* focused on peculiar behaviors include a girl saying “you went to register a fish as your youngest brother” and a boy saying “your mom is the best at trying to dodge the rain.” This focus implies that a good person acts conventionally and intelligently within their social world. To try and dodge the rain is just to deny the inevitable. Yet, to be the best at something was highly desirable, as long as that something was worthwhile. Being the best at dodging the rain was a negative behavior not only because it is impossible; children in Pena also understood there to be deep shame in having failing in a distinguished position. Thus, a final category of *estigas* followed a pattern that is difficult to describe in a single word such as unseemly or peculiar.

Distinguished failure estigas. Because these *estigas* insult others for distinguishing themselves and then failing, they are categorized as insults directed at “distinguished failure.” Examples include a girl saying “your father went to the United States to be trained as a driver for cars made out of cans” and a girl saying “your mother went to Brazil for studying a course of mending buckets.” In both these cases the insult lies in having the idealized opportunity of training in a “superior” country, but then not learning a skill of any particular use or status. Other examples include a girl saying “you have a freezer in your house that works with wood but only freezes dried fish” and a different girl saying “your father wanted to be like American “nigas,” and he started

wearing a blanket cloth on his forehead.” Having a freezer in one’s house and having American style were both important status symbols in Pena, but to have those things in foolish ways (dried fish does not need to be frozen and blankets do not work as substitutes for bandannas and skull caps) was pretentious and shameful. A final set of examples include a girl saying “your father was given the witchcraft so as to manipulate bread from children” and a different girl saying “your father is the best witchcrafter in the world that was able to stop farting with a hammer.” In both these cases the insult is the idiocy of using powerful witchcraft for acts that don’t require witchcraft. These *estigas* represent a mentality focused on appropriate behavior within given roles: the competent person uses opportunities well, deserves status, and wields power wisely.

Summary

The themes implicit in the above analysis of insult games in Concrete Park and Pena provide an appropriate summary for this consideration of Child’s play in relation to cultural processes of psychosocial competence and middle childhood. When children in Concrete Park combatively engage their peers through insults about personal traits and conditions they are simultaneously demonstrating and reinforcing a mentality suggesting psychosocial competence revolves around competitive social comparison and an ideal self comprised enduring traits oriented by an adult ideal. When children in Pena playfully engage their peers through insults about appropriate behavior they are focusing on a mentality defining psychosocial competence by actively participating in creating social order and by an ideal self comprised of respectful behavior that is age-appropriate. These mentalities, which are both represented in and socialized through child’s play, relate to dimensions of psychosocial competence discussed in the following two chapters,

as I explore ways that cultural mentalities filter into local meanings for self-esteem and teamwork as specific characteristics regularly associated with a globalizing model of psychosocial competence.

CHAPTER FIVE

CULTURAL PROCESSES OF SELF-ESTEEM

As noted in Chapter Three American adults, both in Concrete Park and elsewhere, consistently prioritize the task of “developing self-esteem” in a way residents of Pena find quite strange. While Pena residents assume that feeling good about one’s self is a consequence of tangible achievement, the conventional Western notion of self-esteem assumes feeling good about one’s self produces success. As such, self-esteem is an extraordinarily popular focus for Western practitioners and researchers interested in the psychosocial development of children in impoverished communities. Remarkably, however, the idea that raising levels of self-esteem effectively facilitates development while combating personal and social ills has great intuitive appeal and little substantive proof (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003; Damon, 1995; Hewitt, 1998, 2002; Seligman, 1995). The persistence of popular belief in the value of self-esteem in the absence of evidence creates a compelling cultural phenomenon, akin to what Hewitt (1998) calls *The Myth of Self-Esteem*.

The myth of self-esteem is essentially a Western folk model of mental health prioritizing self-esteem as a central component of psychosocial competence. The idea is that for a child to be successful and well-adjusted that child must reflectively evaluate his or her individual self positively. This chapter investigates the myth of self-esteem by setting aside traditional questions about levels of self-esteem to address how the quality

of self-esteem in Concrete Park and Pena demonstrates cultural mentalities related to psychosocial competence in middle childhood. Ultimately, I argue that self-esteem is a particular cultural manifestation of self-evaluation, which is a dimension of psychosocial competence across cultural communities.

Understanding self-esteem as a cultural process makes sense in relation to its character. Self-esteem is a theoretical construct intended to represent the outcome of self-evaluation. Self-evaluation is an inherently cultural process involving two steps. The first step entails conceptualizing a self to evaluate. A great deal of recent research has documented the cultural construction of one's concept of self (for a recent review, see Cross & Gore, 2003). The second step entails evaluating one's concept of self through processes such as comparisons to an ideal self, social comparison, and achievement related attribution. These processes, as writers from William James (1890/1963) and G.H. Mead (1934) to the present suggest, also depend on the social world. In this chapter, after reviewing relevant literature on group differences in self-esteem, I address each of these three processes in turn as they relate to psychosocial competence in Concrete Park and Pena. I argue that differences in the emphasis placed on individualized self-esteem in Concrete Park and Pena associate with different conceptions of an ideal self, and that the competitive version of social comparison assumed when evaluating Western versions of self-esteem gives way to an inclusion oriented version of social comparison in Pena. Ultimately, however, negative social identities influence processes of self-evaluation in both Concrete Park and Pena in ways that relate to attribution styles and perceptions of psychosocial competence.

Self-esteem and self-evaluation as a group processes

The extensive literature on group differences in self-esteem depends on an underlying assumption that group membership influences self-evaluation. There is, however, a question as to the nature of that influence. Existing academic literature on three types of group differences in self-esteem are relevant to children in Concrete Park and Pena: socio-economic status (SES) group differences, racial group differences, and cultural group differences. While differences in SES, race, and culture demonstrate significant associations with quantitative levels of self-esteem, existing research tends to consider these differences as separate demographic forces. An alternative conceptualization suggests that each of these three types of group differences represents parts of the general influence that cultural communities have on processes of self-evaluation.

For example, the emphasis in contemporary society on SES as a marker of self-worth may explain meta-analysis that suggests a slight but consistent association between higher SES and higher self-esteem scores (Twenge & Campbell, 2001; Twenge & Campbell, 2002). This makes sense in that wealth and social class provide a quantitative standard by which people can evaluate self-worth. At the same time, wealth is relative to one's point of comparison. Having high relative SES within a poor community could logically contribute to a positive self-evaluation regardless of low relative SES within broader society.

The social process of evaluating oneself in relation to a particular community rather than in relation to broader society is also relevant to studies of racial group differences in self-esteem. Meta-analyses suggest a consistent "self-esteem advantage"

for African-American respondents to self-esteem scales over other racial groups (Gray-Little & Hafdahl, 2000; Twenge & Crocker, 2002). This has long been a vexing finding for researchers who had assumed African-Americans would internalize societal stigmas and evaluate themselves negatively. Morris Rosenberg, a major figure in self-esteem measurement, speculated that an African-American self-esteem advantage was due to different standards of social comparison (Rosenberg & Simmons, 1971). Gray-Little and Hafdahl note that this would not explain higher (rather than equal) scores, and instead posit that African-Americans place cultural emphases on having a positive social identity. Alternatively, Twenge and Crocker suggest that the cultural factor most relevant to higher African-American scores on self-esteem scales is the levels of individualism and collectivism within racial groups. While many possible explanations exist for racial group differences in self-esteem, most depend on an assumption that racial groups are cultural entities guiding processes of self-evaluation. In other words, being African-American influences self-esteem by virtue of influencing social identity and providing particular criteria for thinking about one's ideal self.

It thus makes sense to look at the relationship between self-esteem and cultural communities directly, an endeavor undertaken in an increasing number of cross-cultural studies. Self-esteem has a significant association with life-satisfaction in "individualistic" cultures, but not in "collectivistic" cultures (Diener & Diener, 1995). Similarly, while a need for positive self-regard often motivates individuals raised in North America, self-criticism more often motivates individuals raised in Asia (Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999). Some of these differences may have to do with an

American emphasis on self-esteem as a part of child rearing, which is less common in other cultures (Miller, Wang, Sandel, & Cho, 2002; Miller, Wiley, Fung, & Liang, 1997).

Overall, most cross-cultural research related to self-esteem has focused on the question of whether a self-enhancement bias is universal (see, for example, the September, 2003 issue of *The Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*). Though mediated by factors such as competitiveness (Takata, 2003) and modesty (Kobayashi & Greenwald, 2003) the consensus seems to be that there is some universal tendency toward self-enhancement expressed in culturally distinct ways (Brown, 2003; Sedikides, Gaertner, & Toguchi, 2003). This suggests the possibility that an emphasis on individualized self-esteem is a particularly cultural version of self-enhancement. Analyses of self-esteem in Concrete Park and Pena further suggest that the self-enhancement bias itself may reflect a universal motivation towards psychosocial competence. The self-enhancement bias, processing information in a way that provides validation by the criteria of one's social world, is about orienting psychosocial interactions towards feeling competent in a cultural community. As such, emphasizing individualized self-esteem is only one possible mode of self-enhancement and is unlikely to have the same resonance in distinct cultural communities such as Concrete Park and Pena.

Emphases on and understandings of self-esteem in Concrete Park and Pena

The differences between Concrete Park and Pena in the emphases placed upon raising self-esteem were tangible in many every day experiences. Adults, both in and outside of the community, design many experiences for children of Concrete Park to produce high self-esteem. When, for example, the summer camp went on a field trip to

learn fishing at a Chicago park district pond, the pond was so stocked with hungry fish that every line in the water came up with a bite. The retired men who were running the program laughed with pleasure, saying just loud enough for the kids to hear: “You think this is the best group yet? Yeah, real good fisherman.” When, during soccer practices, coaches assigned skill challenges to children, most children would try only as long as the coach was watching and telling the children how well they were doing. As soon as the children felt they would not get praise the majority stopped. When, at the end of the summer league season, every child individually received a shiny gold medal they beamed with a sense that the experience had been worth it after all. Likewise, when children brought back work from summer school, which they were attending because of failing to achieve minimum standards on year-end tests, they would proudly show off gold stars and smiley face stickers.

Ironically, few residents of Concrete Park thought children had self-esteem problems. In fact, a man who had grown up in the Concrete Park area and now helped organize sports programs for the CHA told me “I don’t see a lot of kids having not a lot of self-esteem. I don’t see the kids have a self-esteem problem. Maybe 3% have self-esteem (problems).” The programs and interactions intentionally designed to provide high self-esteem in Concrete Park related more to a pervasive cultural mentality than to a particular need observed in children.

While children in Pena appreciated receiving awards and praise, there was not the same sense of intentional design. During competitive activities at a Pena pre-school, where many games involved the gradual elimination of participants to determine one winner, none of the teachers made any effort to comfort the losers. The children simply

went to wait for their next turn. When primary school children engaged in writing exercises in classrooms, the teacher walked around with a small cut piece of plastic hose banging on the dusty desks of students not doing well. The teacher expected diligence, but rarely endorsed it with explicit compliments. When girls working in the household completed their morning runs for water from the communal pump, they ran off to play without waiting to hear that they had done particularly well as feedback to boost their esteem based on taken-for-granted chores.

These experiences of childhood, with varying emphases on individualized positive self-regard, depend upon cultural mentalities and the salience of self-esteem. Self-esteem was simply not a prominent concept for the residents of Pena. Thus, the first time I asked about self-esteem, as part of a coach training course mandated by Olympic Aid, only one of approximately thirty adults thought he knew the term. He told me “self-esteem” was when a person is “very conscious of their self.” Though that is not a textbook definition, it offers a valid perspective on the concept: prioritizing self-esteem both requires and promotes a reflective and individualized self-evaluation.

When working with the Pena coach training program I persevered with my interest in self-esteem, asking the group of Pena adults to think about three reasons why some children might feel good about themselves while others do not. As small groups were working on the exercise my research assistant, a middle-class Angolan who had spent most of his life in the urban capital, told me his three reasons: the amount of attention the child gets from parents, whether others teach the child to do things well, and if the child gets along well with other children. These three reasons would likely resonate with the mentalities of American adults. In contrast, after the time in group discussions,

the Pena residents told me their three reasons why some children might feel good about themselves: “social conditions” (they gave the example of whether food was available), “academic level” (they gave the example of whether the child’s parents had a formal education), and “environment” (they gave the example of living in the city, instead of rural areas, where “opportunities” were greater). Because these responses did not jibe with the organizations goals for these coach training sessions, I asked my research assistant to tell the group his three reasons and asked the group to respond. Most strikingly, the group disagreed that attention from parents was a factor in how children feel about themselves. Of course parents must give instructions and discipline to create social order, but there was no sense in Pena that parents, even good parents, have a particular obligation to make a child feel special.

Instead of focusing on feeling good about an abstract self, residents in Pena focus on feeling good as marked by having food, shelter, education, and opportunity, involving a sense of achievement, success, and competence in the conventional social order. This mentality did not derive from a hierarchy of needs. While it is easy to assume that people at risk of being without food and shelter would not be concerned with having high self-esteem, participants in my research agreed with me that children could, and regularly did, feel happy even at times when mired in the trappings of poverty. Nevertheless, reflecting on or evaluating the enduring traits of an individualized self was not a primary part of childhood.

The few people in Pena that had specific exposure to “self-esteem” had encountered the construct in church settings. As such, self-esteem was associated with a modernizing religious value of loving and accepting oneself. Thus, a more familiar term

than *auto-esteema* or *esteema-propria* (the most common and direct Portuguese translations of “self-esteem) was *amor-propria*, or “self-love.”

In this research, trying to get an underlying sense of criteria for self-evaluation, I employed whatever terms made the most sense to Pena residents. Thus, the developmental tasks survey references both *auto-esteema* and *amor-propria*, and in interviews or discussions I would often also talk about having confidence in one’s self and “feeling good when thinking about who they are.” I assumed that the construct of “self-esteem” did not have the same meaning or familiarity in Concrete Park and Pena, but that people in both communities do engage in some process of self-evaluation. I did, however, use quantitative evaluation of the construct of “self-esteem” to supplement qualitative impressions and gain insight into the cultural nature of self-evaluation processes.

Quantitative assessments of self-esteem in Concrete Park and Pena

The CFSEI-3, by identifying as “culture-free” (or, the publisher qualifies in the test manual, “culture-fair”), represents a rhetorically universal model of self-esteem. Ironically, however, the presupposition of universality depends upon a particular cultural mentality positing that standardizing scores across demographic groups eliminates the influence of “culture.” In the case of the CFSEI-3, standardizing scores on the inventory involved norming CFSEI-3 items on multiple samples of North American children from Canada and the United States. The racial demographics of these samples approximate demographic diversity within North America. Nevertheless, analyzing the responses of this norming sample in comparison to the responses of children in Concrete Park and

Pena makes clear that particular mentalities toward self-esteem permeate self-esteem inventory responses.

Table 4 presents quantitative results related to self-esteem in Concrete Park, Pena, and the CFSEI-3 norming sample. In a basic quantitative sense, the normative mean for self-esteem as measured by the CFSEI-3 requires an extraordinarily high rate of positive responses to individual items. Of the 19 items assessing self-esteem, the reported score for the 50th percentile of the normative sample is 14. Thus, on average children in the normative sample respond to almost 75% of questions in a manner that affirms self-esteem. While the Concrete Park and Pena samples responded, on average, lower than this percentage the mean scores were still approximately 12 out of 19. Thus, on average children in the Concrete Park and Pena samples responded to almost two thirds of questions in a manner that affirms self-esteem. This is significantly above chance, and suggests that children in Concrete Park and Pena may score lower than children in the normative sample on the self-esteem scale without actually scoring low; the children in Concrete Park and Pena do not seem to have low self-esteem scores in an absolute sense so much as they have slightly lower scores than the extraordinarily high scores of the normative sample.

Alternative measures demonstrate the tendency for children in Concrete Park and Pena to make positive self-evaluations. Attempting to avoid assumptions about what elements of self-evaluation constitute self-esteem, I presented 84 children with four simple hand drawn faces progressing from a deep frown to a slight frown to a slight smile to a large smile. The children pointed at one of these faces in response to the question: “Which face is most like you when you think about yourself and the person you are?” I

told the children that the first face was very sad, the second was a little sad, the third was a little happy, and the fourth was very happy. In Concrete Park over 90% of children indicated feeling at least a little happy when thinking about their selves (39 of 55 pointed at the very happy face; 11 of 55 pointed at the somewhat happy face). In Pena over 75% of children indicated feeling at least a little happy when thinking about their selves (15 of 29 pointed at the very happy face, 7 of 29 pointed at the somewhat happy face).

Item by item analysis of the CFSEI-3 helps to make sense of the generally positive self-evaluations in Concrete Park and Pena. For one thing, the vast majority of children in Concrete Park and Pena feel valued by their families and integrated with their peers. At least four of every five children surveyed in each community said that “my family thinks I am important,” that “boys and girls like to play with me,” and that “I have many friends about my own age.” In all cases but one these percentages are equal to or higher than the percentages reported for children in the normative sample. The finding that children in Concrete Park and Pena felt good about personal relationships is important in relation to recent theory and research suggesting that “the distal causes of both trait self-esteem and the outcomes with which it correlates involve the degree to which people believe they are valued and accepted by other people” (Leary & MacDonald, 2003, p. 414). Fundamentally, children feel good about themselves not only because they positively evaluate their abilities in specific domains such as school and sports, but because they are recognized as competent according to local understandings. The daily personal environment that children in Concrete Park and Pena experience provides an essential foundation of positive self-evaluation through making children feel important to their families and accepted by their peers.

The idea that children in Concrete Park and Pena have a solid foundation of personal relationships helps to explain the pattern of self-esteem scores by age in the two communities. If the environment in each community had a negative influence on self-esteem, self-esteem scores should go down with age. In other words, if one believes that impoverished structural circumstances diminish self-esteem, extended exposure to those circumstances during a life-course stage of increasing self-consciousness should be detrimental to self-esteem. Contrary to this prediction, in both communities global self-esteem scores go up between the ages of six and twelve (the Pearson correlation coefficients for 133 children in Concrete Park are $r = .243$, $p = .005$; for 234 children in Pena they are $r = .139$, $p = .033$). This increase in global self-esteem scores during middle childhood is also evident in linear regression analysis using household employment status as a control for socio-economic differences within the community. In these regressions age is a strong predictor of global self-esteem scores in Concrete Park ($p = .010$), and a moderate predictor of global self-esteem scores in Pena ($p = .065$).

These trends, in addition to a line representing means for self-esteem scores by age for the CFSEI-3 normative sample, are evident graphically in Figure 6. It is noteworthy that in the normative sample global self-esteem scores stay relatively consistent for children between age six and twelve. Thus, while overall mean global self-esteem scores significantly differ between the normative sample and the samples from my research, children in Concrete Park and Pena seem to “catch-up” to children in the normative sample through middle childhood.

This “catch-up” may relate to changing social identities. Younger children in both communities seemed less able to cognitively separate stigmas associated with the

structural environment of their community from the personal environment of their daily experience. As noted in Chapter One and Chapter Three, children of all ages in Concrete Park recognized derogatory stereotypes about “project kids” and the problems associated with growing up in the “ghetto.” This recognition was exemplified when an eleven year old girl from Concrete Park, when asked why some children are “good” and some “bad,” forcefully explained that “good kids come from the suburbs and bad kids come from the projects.” The internalization of these negative stereotypes, however, was more pervasive for younger children. In discussions with six and seven year olds in Concrete Park there were indications that they accepted many of the negative stereotypes of the “projects” in the face of the evidence provided by their own experience. Several young children told me that they could not go outside after dark because of nightly shooting and gang warfare. I would always clarify to make sure they were saying there were nightly gun battles in Concrete Park, and they said there were. That was not true. Adults in the community, police reports, and my own experience confirm that Concrete Park itself only experienced gun fights once or twice a year (though the rates were higher in neighboring areas, they were not every night). By the age of 10, most children in Concrete Park realized that the stereotype of project life as a series of gun battles was not true to their daily experience.

Overall, while such social identity issues may partially explain why the same general quantitative pattern seemed to hold true for self-esteem in both Concrete Park and Pena, the particular characteristics of these cultural communities qualitatively influenced the local process of thinking about one’s self. Dissecting self-esteem scale scores within Concrete Park and Pena illustrates these local processes.

Factor analysis

One way in which cultural mentalities might influence self-esteem scale scores is by altering the underlying meaning of scale items. Members of different cultural communities likely interpret questions in relation to their own experiences and mentalities. To investigate this possibility I undertook a basic factor analysis analyzing differences in the way children from Concrete Park and Pena responded to the individual items on the CFSEI-3. In both samples the 19 individual items grouped into five factors. That is, five factors in the sample from each community had Eigen values well over one, indicating that these groups of items have greater explanatory power in each sample than the items individually (the loading of the extraction sum of squares for the factor of multiple items provides more explanatory value than the items individually). Table 5 presents the five factors with their composite items and an assigned label. In and of themselves these factor groupings are not indicative of much, but the meaningful associations of different individual items together as factors in Concrete Park and Pena prefigure three relevant findings: feeling approved by others is particularly salient for children in Concrete Park, feeling integrated with others is particularly salient for children in Pena, and children in both communities tend to engage in general social comparisons that have meaning separate from their feelings about domain-specific abilities.

In the factor analysis the most highly correlated items in the Concrete Park sample, the factor grouping with the most explanatory power, address whether the children feel treated well by others (“children often pick on me,” “other children are mean to me,” “I usually feel like I don’t fit in,” “I often feel left out of things at home,”

and “my parents make me feel like I am not good enough.”). This suggests that feeling generally approved by others is particularly salient for children in Concrete Park. In other words, children in Concrete Park tend to think about disapproval, and approval, by peers and family as a coherent category in a way unfamiliar to children in Pena. This fits with the general idea that the emphasis on approval as it relates to positive self-regard and self-esteem is part of childhood in Concrete Park.

In contrast, in Pena children seem to focus on feeling integrated with other children and with their family. Thus, for children in Pena, the factor grouping other than social comparison which had the most coherence was about feeling integrated in positive ways (factor two for the Pena sample included four items: “My parents are interested in me and the things that I do,” “Boys and girls like to play with me,” “My family thinks I am important,” and “I would change many things about myself if I could.”). This factor suggests a priority on thinking about whether one is valued with others as a single category. It is interesting to note that “I would change many things about myself” fits with this factor grouping in the Pena sample, suggesting that children in Pena link a desire to change things about their “self” with feelings of social integration.

In the Concrete Park sample, “I would change many things about myself” is the only item that did not fit well with one of the five factors. The meaning of this question, how children thought about changing their “self,” is central to their self-evaluation and, as such, I discuss this question more extensively below. The important point here, however, is that for children in Concrete Park changing things about the self seems to be a concern separate from one’s abilities, the impressions of others, and the like. Children in Concrete Park demonstrated an independent focus on changing the self,

conceptualizing a progressive and linear life-course, and they learned to constantly reflect on how such change could take place. In contrast, children in Pena primarily thought about changing the self in regard to feeling valued by others. Changing the self was not a primary task of childhood in Pena; changing the self was only necessary if one did not seem to fit in the social order.

The only identical factor (in terms of grouping the exact same items) for both Concrete Park and Pena relates to peer comparison. The items making up this factor grouping, about whether “most boys and girls are smarter than I am,” “most boys and girls are better than I am,” “most boys and girls are better at doing things than I am,” and “most boys and girls play games better than I do,” are intended in the design of the CFSEI-3 to get at domains of self-esteem (regarding intelligence, self-worth, competence, and games), but in Concrete Park and Pena these four items most correlated with each other. This suggests that social comparison is a more salient general category of self-evaluation than domain-specific evaluations. In other words, children in Concrete Park and Pena have a general conception of their self in relation to their peers that supercedes their independent conception of their intelligence or their ability in games. This seems particularly true in Pena, where the factor of items involving peer comparison had the highest Eigen value (the greatest inter-item correlation). If peer comparison is significant in both settings, and if the focus of that comparison differs between the settings in regard to whether approval or integration is more salient, a question arises as to whether the children engage in self-evaluation based on meaningfully different conceptions of an ideal self.

Conceptions of an ideal self

Responses to the “I would change many things about myself if I could” item demonstrate potential differences in conceptualizations of an ideal self for children in Concrete Park and Pena. Over 80% of children in Concrete Park, contrasted with 52% of children in the normative sample, would change many things about themselves if they could. When analyzed for changes by age, this tendency appears to be consistent between the ages of 6 to 12 for children in Concrete Park. In contrast, the desire to change things about the self develops with age in Pena (in linear regression analyses controlling for household employment, the Beta value for age was not significant in Concrete Park but was significant at the $p = .003$ level in Pena). Only 33% of six year olds in Pena, in contrast to 72% of twelve year olds, would change many things about themselves. Figure 6 represents graphically the trends by age for responses to the question of whether children would change many things about themselves. These trends suggest that from a very young age children in Concrete Park learn to understand their self as exceptionally malleable and subject to improvement, while children in Pena only gradually come to think of the self as an entity that can or should be changed. For children in Concrete Park the ideal self is itself focused on change towards an adult ideal, while children in Pena only come to idealize change as they approach adolescence.

Differences in conceptions of an ideal self are also evident in the characteristics of the self that children understand as desirable to change. Table 6 presents responses to a follow-up question of “what” children would change about themselves if they could. In both communities children identified characteristics of the self related to appearance, behavior, and school, but they framed those characteristics in meaningfully different

ways. The majority of responses in Concrete Park had to do with personal traits, while the majority of responses in Pena had to do with social actions and material possessions. Thus, in regard to appearance, while children in Concrete Park wanted to change their face or hair children in Pena wanted to change their clothes. In regard to behavior, while children in Concrete Park wanted to change their “attitude” children in Pena wanted to change the amount of respect they offered to elders. In regard to school, while children in Concrete Park wanted to change their scores and grades children in Pena wanted to change the amount of time they spent studying. As with the content of the verbal insult games discussed in Chapter Four, these findings suggest that children in Concrete Park learn to conceptualize the ideal self as a malleable bundle of enduring personal traits, while children in Pena learn to think about the ideal self as a set of appropriate behaviors and possessions.

The different conceptions of an ideal self evident in Concrete Park and Pena relate to different priorities for children. As noted in earlier when describing the settings for this research, the top developmental task priority for Concrete Park adults was “developing self-esteem”, which people ranked ahead of more concrete tasks such as developing academic abilities, learning to care of the body, and developing physical skills for games. In contrast, among Pena community adults “developing self-esteem” was towards the bottom of the priority list. The communities had different understandings regarding the direction of causality between self-esteem and achievement: does “feeling good” cause or result from “doing well” (Seligman, 1995)? In Concrete Park the understanding that feeling good causes doing well (considering reflective and positive valuations of the self as a foundation for future success) logically associates with

conceptualizing an ideal self as a set of malleable but enduring abstract traits like self-esteem. This association also fits with the notion, from Chapter Four, that children in Concrete Park are socialized to idealize a particular set of traits associated with adult success. In Pena the understanding that doing well causes feeling good (prioritizing tangible conduct over abstract self-reflection) the social environment lends itself to a conception of an ideal self based on behaviors and possessions rather than abstract personal traits. This conception fits with the notion, also from Chapter Four, that children in Pena learn to idealize appropriate behaviors according to normative expectations for children. These conceptions of the ideal self provide meaningfully different foundations for the processes of social comparison.

Social comparison

Most self-esteem inventories include questions asking people to make competitive social comparisons. Above, in discussing the factor analysis results, I termed such items on the CFSEI-3 as “peer comparison.” It is important to note, however, that all these comparison items are explicitly competitive, requiring children to evaluate themselves as better or worse than others. As noted in the discussion of child’s play in Chapter Four, combative competitiveness was a valued characteristic in Concrete Park but not in Pena. As such, while the explicitly competitive items from the CFSEI-3 were easy for children in Concrete Park to conceptualize, children in Pena often had to take pause. In administering the inventory I initially assumed this was a communication problem and made several attempts to clarify responses. If, for example, a child in Pena said “no” to one of these statements I would clarify by asking, “so you are better at doing things (or play games better, or are smarter, or are better) than other boys and girls.” The child

usually responded “no” to these follow-up questions as well. After many trials, modifications, and discussions, the persistence of this pattern made it clear that the problem was not explicit communication, but implicit understandings of what makes for successful social comparison. When the children in Pena told me they were neither better nor worse than others, I assumed they didn’t understand the question. In fact, they understood the question perfectly well in relation to their own mentality toward social comparison: the ideal for many children in Pena was not to be better or worse than other children- the ideal was to fit in with one’s peers as part of the social order.

Traditional research assumes that the salient information garnered from social comparison in relation to self-evaluation is whether a person is better or worse than others (for a recent review of this literature, see Wood & Wilson, 2003). This competitive understanding of social comparison was abundantly evident in Concrete Park. Parents, siblings, and peers focused on competitive success in both words and actions. Even in casual games played by children under eight years of age, where children attended to rules and scores with very limited precision, designating a winner and loser was always a priority. As a result, the majority of tears shed by children in Concrete Park flowed from losing and negative competitive outcomes. In contrast, the majority of tears shed by children in Pena flowed from exclusion. The most emotional moment of a children’s game in Pena was not the end, determining a winner or loser, but the start, determining who gets the opportunity to play.

Likewise, residents of Pena viewed participation and integration as markers of self-esteem and self-love. For example, during a focus group interview regarding my two soccer videos, when I asked adults to tell me a situation where they saw a child likely to

gain self-esteem, people in Pena commented on the number of children that showed up at the field on the day of the event. They felt like the fact that kids wanted to participate somehow showed that the children felt good about themselves. They also noted that you could see kids feeling good about their selves when a goal was scored and people were “happy to celebrate together.” It is important to note that success was combined with the happiness of celebrating “together.”

I only recognized the contrasting models of social comparison proposed above through experiences in the field, and thus had not planned any empirical tests. Late in the field work, however, a sub-sample of children were asked to rate on a four point Likert scale how often they won when playing sports and games and how often they were included when others played sports and games (the four responses were never, sometimes, usually, and always). I then correlated these responses with global self-esteem scores and ratings of happiness when thinking about one’s self (see Table 7). Though preliminary, the results support the suggestion that competitive success and inclusion as types of social comparison are influential socio-cultural influences on self-evaluation. For children in Concrete Park, perceptions of competitive success had a significant correlation with global self-esteem scores. Children in Concrete Park who felt like they often won in competitive games were more likely to evaluate themselves positively than children who felt that they often lost. This was not true in Pena, where perceptions of competitive success did not associate with self-esteem at all. Instead, for children in Pena, perceptions of inclusion had a significant correlation with feeling happy when thinking about the self. Children who felt included in the social order associated with group activities were more likely to feel happy when thinking about their selves than

children who felt excluded. Thus, overall, children in Concrete Park and Pena seemed to use different criteria towards similar underlying processes of self-evaluation.

Attributions for success and failure in relation to self-evaluation

While children in Concrete Park and Pena learned different ways of defining success and failure, both in terms of what constitutes an ideal self and what makes for positive social comparison, attributions for success and failure seemed largely similar. Throughout field work in both communities it was clear that living in stigmatized neighborhoods crafted a salient social identity. As noted in discussing the character of self-esteem, children in Concrete Park identified as “project kids” to a degree that caused them to accept stereotypes contrasting with their own personal experience.

Likewise, adults and children in Pena regularly explained bad behavior and poor performance through an exasperated shake of the head and the expression “*refugiados*” or “*dislocados*.” In one of many simple examples, community members in a coach training program tried to teach children the new track and field skill of passing a relay baton. The children, having never seen a formal track competition with relay races, struggled to grasp the concept. The children stopped paying attention, and the instructional session lost any sense of order. After a few minutes of trying, the coaches were left frustrated and while shaking their heads several simply stated “*refugiados*.” It was both a deprecating tag and an attribution for the children’s performance.

Community members in both Concrete Park and Pena consistently invoked their respective stigmatized identity as an attribution for a variety of failures, from failing in school to losing a job. Though the overall effect was almost certainly to reduce feelings of self-efficacy, the short-term effect was protective for self-esteem. In one

representative instance, I discussed with focus group of adults in Concrete Park watching the two soccer program videos the effects on children's self-esteem of losing in sports competition. The group started by saying "Yes, when they are playing, they get so competitive. When they lose a game they lose self-esteem. But they come back and want to win the next game. I don't know if they don't know how to lose..." I pressed the discussion on this point and we ended up making a distinction; losing causes the kids to lose some motivation, but not self-esteem. The explanation, as relayed by one of the men in the focus group, was that when kids lose they don't take responsibility; "they always want to be blamin somebody else." This process worked at both micro and macro levels, with children attributing specific negative behaviors to others and attributing generally negative outcomes to broad social identities.

Thus, when children failed they were quick to attribute that failure to the social marginalization associated with being a "project kid" or a "*refugiado*." When children succeeded they were able to attribute that success to personal qualities that allow them to overcome negative group identities. While testing this hypothesis empirically requires more data, the suggestion here is that salient negative group identities have properties that allow for high individualized self-esteem through influencing patterns of attribution for success and failure. Simultaneously, however, such attributions may perpetuate the popular, potentially damaging, notion that disadvantage is due to individual deficiencies rather than to an interaction of the person with social worlds and cultural processes.

Summary

Qualitative group differences between children's self-esteem in Concrete Park provide an indication of processes through which cultural communities shape children's

mentalities toward psychosocial competence. Children in Concrete Park learn to prioritize high individualized self-esteem as an outcome of self-evaluation, implicitly marking psychosocial competence. This process involves conceptualizing the ideal self as bundles of abstract traits that are malleable and essential to the progressive nature of becoming an adult. A child evaluates and tests the self in Concrete Park through intensely competitive social comparison, but also protects the self by identifying with a socially marginalized cultural community and attributing failure to larger society.

For children in Pena, identifying with a socially marginalized cultural community serves a similar function, but that process involves a different mentality toward psychosocial competence. Children in Pena learn to conceptualize the ideal self as sets of behaviors and possessions, paying attention to things such as the amount of respect given to others, the availability of clothing and housing, and the effort one expends on education. Further, children evaluate this self in regard to the ideal of being good children, rather than apprentice adults, and tend to emphasize inclusion rather than competition when making social comparisons. Individualized self-esteem is not a priority in Pena because it is conceptualized as an outcome, rather than cause, of success.

These qualitative group differences in self-esteem are as important as the quantitative level of group differences when trying to understand culture and processes of psychosocial competence. At this point, however, most existing research on self-related constructs considers the quantitative level of cultural group differences, often as measured by inventories such as the CFSEI-3, at the exclusion of the quality (Tangney & Leary, 2003). Likewise, well-intentioned programming efforts to facilitate psychosocial development often focus on a universal and quantitative conception of self-esteem. In a

community like Pena, however, attempting to emphasize a universal construct of self-esteem may actually conflict with locally appropriate notions of psychosocial competence. While critics already note that emphasizing a Western cultural version of self-esteem can be counter-productive in any community (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003; Damon, 1995; Hewitt, 1998, 2002; Seligman, 1995), it is wise to be particularly cautious in considering self-esteem as a potential export.

So does self-esteem matter? Whether or not levels of self-esteem enhance psychosocial development, the process of self-esteem does represent development as a cultural experience. Thus, as these accounts of middle childhood in Concrete Park and Pena demonstrate, investigating the quality of self-esteem reveals something about children's processes of self-evaluation. These processes, including the degree of emphasis placed on positive self-regard, conceptions of an ideal self, norms of social comparison, and meaningful social identities, relate to the implicit models of psychosocial competence that motivate daily behavior. Ultimately, then, investigating the quality of self-esteem reveals something about how children learn what it means to be good. Few things matter more when thinking about the social development of children.

CHAPTER SIX

TEAMWORK

Promoting the virtues of good teamwork, and thus implicitly associating teamwork with psychosocial competence, is a popular contemporary endeavour taken on by both of the organizations with which I did my field work. While teamwork generally connotes effectively working with others, the exact meaning of good teamwork is rarely articulated. As such, appropriated understandings of teamwork offer insight into local models of effective cooperation and interpersonal interaction.

The potential complexity of teamwork was evident in “child development evaluations” from Olympic Aid programs across Africa. In one example, a question on the evaluation form asks volunteer Canadian coaches working in a Tanzanian refugee camp to rate “children’s ability to work as a team.” The Canadians rate the Tanzanian children as “low” on their teamwork, explaining that “It appears that the children tend to fight a lot with each other in order to have the most time with attention and/or the object that they may be playing with.” Yet, several questions later when asked to rate “the quality of the relationships children display towards their peers,” the Canadians rate the quality of relationships as “high” explaining “although fighting still occurs, we believe that that is a natural part of growing up, and feel it is more important to focus on the constant support that children give each other, sharing food and holding hands.” In these two evaluations, external observers see Tanzanian children as both not very good at

teamwork and as very good at relating with each other. In this chapter I suggest that resolving this seeming contradiction requires understanding teamwork as a culturally particular social process rather than as a universally ideal method of practice.

My analysis in this chapter begins by considering the conception of teamwork as productivity oriented functional cooperation that is offered in both popular and academic literature. I then consider how that popular conception functioned in Concrete Park and Pena, relying on interview responses and focus group interpretations of videos documenting sports programs in each community. While children in Concrete Park and Pena had exposure, to varying degrees, to the popular ideal, local cultural mentalities powerfully influenced their understanding of functional cooperation. In this chapter I suggest these cultural mentalities in Concrete Park emphasized a type of functional cooperation and teamwork prioritizing loyalty to a social group. In contrast, cultural mentalities in Pena emphasized a type of functional cooperation and teamwork prioritizing hierarchical social order. Ultimately, the objective of this chapter is to analyze local appropriations of teamwork in order to understand how cultural communities shape the way children conceptualize negotiations between their individual selves and the collective; a negotiation that is fundamental to psychosocial competence.

In this research project I focused primarily on trying to understand the potential meanings for teamwork that are available to children in Concrete Park and Pena, and thus form a basis for relating to others. Without a significant body of existing research specifically focused on teamwork, I was unable to test or survey the specific teamwork characteristics of children. This chapter, therefore, provides a general analysis of the

culturally guided meanings of teamwork in Concrete Park and Pena that help socialize local children in processes of relating to others.

Definitions of teamwork in academic literature and in popular rhetoric

Despite the prominence of teamwork as a rhetorical ideal, there have been very few attempts to systematically define and understand teamwork as a psychosocial concept. As such, analyzing teamwork in relation to cultural processes requires first considering meanings underlying the conventional uses of teamwork as a concept. In reviewing these meanings I suggest that popular usage of teamwork takes for granted an orientation towards productivity, but that in its core teamwork is really a social process involving negotiating between one's individual self and the collective.

The concept underlying the common usage of teamwork is a way of relating to others involving functional cooperation. Yet, when relating well to others and teamwork are separated out, as in the developmental tasks survey administered in Concrete Park and Pena, adults tend to prioritize relating well over learning teamwork. In Concrete Park, Pena, and a sample of American college students "learning teamwork (working in groups)" was never ranked higher than eighth out of ten developmental task priorities for children during middle childhood. In contrast, "learning to get along with other children" and "forming a good relationship with parents and adults" were never lower than sixth in the priorities. If, then, teamwork is not a high priority for adults and parents, why is it such a common discourse in popular culture and service programs?

The answer is that people often use teamwork to connote a particular type of functional cooperation that fits with globalizing cultural values. In contemporary Western society business ideals are the primary guide for the meaning of teamwork and

functional cooperation. In fact, teamwork has appealed to business leaders at least since Andrew Carnegie provided fodder for managers, consultants, and motivational speakers by stating that: “Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.” This business type of teamwork, involving efficient cooperation directed towards achieving externally defined goals (“organizational objectives”), is at the core of the teamwork as a popular ideal.

The internet abounds with sports and business related web-sites offering motivational quotations that exemplify the popular usage of teamwork. A brief scan of these quotations demonstrates the above noted productivity oriented type of teamwork based on efficiency in achieving an externally defined goal, an ideal promoted in the rhetoric of the organizations with which I did my field work,. This type of teamwork idealizes an individual giving up personal prominence for group gain. On one business related web-site, in a quote attributed to Marvin Weisbord, we learn that “teamwork is the quintessential contradiction of a society grounded in individual achievement.” (heartquotes.net, n.d.). Upon closer consideration, however, it becomes clear that teamwork is not a contradiction so much as a resolution.

There is a basic tension in any society between individual interests and group ethics. Brad Shore (1996) discusses this in America by using baseball as a metaphor, explaining that “in its complex representations of time, space, and action...[baseball] models important tensions in mainstream American culture between communitarian and individualistic values.” (p.76) John and Jean Comeroff discuss a similar tension as perplexing Westerners in Africa since the time of 19th century missionaries: “On the one

hand, 'the natives' were described as 'primitive communists', savages with no individuality or sense of self; yet they were constantly accused of brute 'selfishness' and 'greed', even a lack of 'natural affection' for others." (2001, p. 277) Teamwork, as a process where the individual profits from accepting group norms and objectives, provides some resolution to this tension by simultaneously valorizing individualism and collectivism. The particular popularity of teamwork in Western culture is partially based on creating a type of functional cooperation based on productivity, evident in the above quote from Weisbord, that makes individualism appear communitarian.

As noted in Chapter One of this dissertation, while this type of functional cooperation invokes a sports metaphor it is particularly useful in other settings that require efficient interaction geared toward productivity related goals. Appropriately then, although teamwork is frequently valorized as an important general personal trait, most academic studies of teamwork as a construct usually originate from business scholars focused on improving work group efficiency and from scholars interested in military unit functioning. Thus, for example, one of the few available theoretical treatments of teamwork, in a book titled *The Social Psychology of Organizing* (Hosking and Morley, 1991), suggests that "A theory of teamwork should show, in general terms, how to organize the collective process to produce high quality products with a minimum of 'process loss.'" (pp. 175-176) Such a theory of teamwork may produce an effective business organization, but the emphasis on depersonalized productivity may not be an appropriate model for children negotiating their individual role in relation to a community of others.

On the rare occasions when psychological literature discusses teamwork it most often appears in social psychology studies of functional cooperation geared towards achieving an artificial external goal. For example, Plaks and Higgins (2000) evaluate the “use of stereotyping in teamwork” (quoted from the title of the article) to evaluate how social loafing relates to perceptions of one’s partner in a task. The measure of teamwork in this study is performance on and effort put towards GRE questions and a word scramble task. The title implies that engaging in these artificial tasks with a partner to whom a person has no personal affiliation is an ideal form of teamwork. Thus, again, the meaning of teamwork depends on a particular type of depersonalized functional cooperation geared towards productivity in externally defined tasks.

Cooperation, of course, has been the subject of much research in developmental psychology. Yet, as noted in Chapter One, this literature rarely allows the possibility that cooperation processes might vary across individuals or communities, instead prioritizing a persistent contrast between the development of cooperative and competitive strategies (for a recent review, see Richard, Fonzi, Tani, Tassi, Tomada, and Schneider, 2002). This priority also holds true in culturally oriented literature. Carlo, Roesch, Knight, and Koller (2001), for example, used resource allocation tasks with children between the ages of 3 and 11 to study how culture moderates preferences for cooperative, competitive, and individualistic behavior. In a sample of Brazilian children they identified a clear trend for “cooperative” preferences to increase with age. In contrast, a European-American sample demonstrated a developmental trend for “competitive” preferences to increase with age. They suggest that these differences are due to a combination of changes in cognitive functioning and socialization experience. When discussing socialization,

however, they rely entirely on the broad notion that Brazil is a collectivistic culture and America is individualistic. Further, Carlo et. al. conclude that “cooperative behaviors among Brazilian children might be functionally adaptive for children in this culture [Brazil]. Cooperative behaviors among peers in this culture group might facilitate peer group inclusion that, in turn, promotes well being by fostering social support” (p. 575). There is, however, no discussion of why social support would be functionally adaptive in promoting well-being for Brazilian children and not for American children. One could infer the argument here to be that functional adaptations are culturally specific, but such an inference would be in some tension with huge bodies of research on evolutionary social psychology and rational choice theory. This tension may, however, help to clarify why teamwork seems to be a culturally particular social process. Because social interaction is part of any society, some level of cooperation is adaptive regardless of culture. Priorities for what is “functional,” however, vary across cultural and social settings depending on the primacy of particular goals. Thus, in line with Richard et. al. in their review of the developmental literature on cooperation and competition, “global and diametrical distinctions between competitive and cooperative behaviors” are important, but the more important questions currently are about the varying “processes by which children compete or cooperate” (p. 529).

Questions about the processes of teamwork and functional cooperation may thus fit better with classic, rather than contemporary, social psychology. George Herbert Mead, for example, offered teamwork as one of several ways individuals fuse “I” and “me” aspects of the self (in addition to things like “neighborliness”). Mead explains:

The attitude of the engineer, the organizer...illustrates in extreme form the attitude of teamwork. The engineer has the attitudes of all the other individuals in the group, and it is because he has that participation that he is able to direct. When the engineer comes out of the machine shop with the bare blue print, the machine does not yet exist; but he must know what the people are to do, how long it should take them, how to measure the processes involved, and how to eliminate waste. That sort of taking the attitudes of everyone else as fully and completely as possible, entering upon one's own action from the standpoint of such a complete taking of the role of the others, we may perhaps refer to as the "attitude of the engineer." It is a highly intelligent attitude; and if it can be formed with a profound interest in social team work, it belongs to the high social processes and to the significant experiences. Here the full concreteness of the "me" depends upon man's capacity to take the attitude of everybody else in the process which he directs. Here is gained the concrete content not found in the bare emotional identification of one's self with everyone else in the group. (1934; p. 277)

In this explanation Mead, while acknowledging that something about the concrete outcome involved in teamwork separates it from mere sociality or identification with a group, suggests that teamwork is a "social process" that depends upon an ability to take the perspectives of others. Teamwork involves the ability to take, as part of one's self, the attitude of other members of one's social group. Mead thus suggests two things contemporary discussions of teamwork regularly ignore: there is a relationship between teamwork and self-related processes, and teamwork depends on shared social understandings. Throughout this dissertation I have argued that Concrete Park and Pena as cultural communities shape self-related processes and shape shared social understandings. It thus follows that the productivity oriented type of teamwork exists in some tension with cultural processes of teamwork for children in Concrete Park and Pena who are socialized into particular local types of functional cooperation. Local mentalities are evident in residents of Concrete Park and Pena interpretations of teamwork as a concept.

Local interpretations of teamwork as observed in child's play

While one 11 year old boy in Concrete Park was watching a video of the local soccer program he interpreted the play by telling me “they tryin to score on their own; they should be usin teamwork...we was serious about it- we know there ain’t no ‘I’ in team.” The notion that there is “no ‘I’ in team” is a common American sports aphorism regularly available in the media, on T-shirts promoting youth teams, and in popular coaching discourse. From George Herbert Mead’s perspective, however, having no “I” in team could lead to one of the aphorism’s amusing variations: “there is no ‘I’ in team, but there is a ‘me’.” Mead could not agree more- the self as an object of social understanding (Mead’s “me” self) is inherent in what it means to be good at teamwork. Interpretations by residents of Concrete Park and Pena of the edited videos from soccer programs in each setting present local social understandings employed in appropriating the popular ideal of teamwork.

Residents of Concrete Park were more familiar with the productivity oriented type of teamwork than residents of Pena. For example, when asked where they saw teamwork in the videos four of the five focus groups in Concrete Park talked about passing during the course of game play. In contrast, only one of the five focus groups in Pena talked about passing as a marker of teamwork. For many American coaches passing is the most frequently employed marker of teamwork in competitive sports. In the popular sports wisdom passing suggests that a player is willing to forgo individual glory and share opportunities for the sake of the team. Following this wisdom, both groups of Concrete Park children who watched the videos talked about teamwork in relation to passing, with a group of girls reflecting on the videos that “they were takin turns kickin the ball” and a

group of boys noting “They [in Pena] got good teamwork, they don’t try to do it on their own, they pass the ball.” Significantly, however, no one actually cited specific incidents of passing in the videos (and, in fact, the quality of the passing in the videos was quite low). Instead, people in Concrete Park adopted a popular rhetoric by generally suggesting that passing is integral to good teamwork. The iconic image of teamwork as efficient passing and instrumental activity was familiar to Concrete Park residents, but it was not a primary template applied to perceptions of specific social interactions.

The one focus group in Pena that mentioned passing in regard to teamwork was a group of children who struggled throughout watching the video with a clearly unrealized expectation that the Concrete Park children, being from a “superior” nation like the United States, would be better than Angolan children at soccer. Facing the reality that the children playing soccer in the Concrete Park video were much worse at the game than the children playing in the Pena video, they seemed to resolve their confusion by telling me that the children in Concrete Park were “better individually, but the Angolan kids were better together.” They then responded to a question about teamwork in the two settings by noting that the Pena children were better at passing. The children in Pena could not fathom the possibility that the children in Concrete Park did not have the skills to successfully pass, so they assumed the children made a choice as better individual players to not pass. As such, there is an idea embedded in this single incidence of people in Pena citing passing as related to teamwork that teamwork is a choice of style rather than an efficiency related ideal.

While Concrete Park residents were more likely than Pena residents to relate questions about teamwork in the videos to the popular productivity oriented type of

teamwork, residents of both communities saw teamwork as going beyond efficiency, productivity, and immediate outcomes. For example, when I asked the focus groups where they saw bad teamwork people in both settings cited several playful fights captured in the video. There was a clear sense in both communities that good teamwork, and functional cooperation, involved children liking each other and getting along personally. Thus, a group of adult male coaches in Concrete Park referenced teamwork to a group of children that participated in the soccer program from Chinatown by noting “the oriental kids were able to play more teamwork because they played more soccer and because they like each other.” Likewise, a group of men in Pena observed that “sports requires friendships because you can’t fight...if you are tied up to each other you will play better, you are united.” Thus, people in both settings saw aspects of personal affiliation as central to teamwork. Though this is not particularly exotic, it does deviate slightly from the popular productivity oriented type of teamwork. In the popular vision teammates do not have to like each other as long as they produce efficiently. Thus, another teamwork quote from the internet, attributed to Tom Peters, claims: “Stellar teams are invariably made up of quirky individuals who typically rub each other raw, but they figure out – with the spiritual help of a gifted leader – how to be their peculiar selves and how to win championships as a team...at the same time.” In contrast, residents of Pena and Concrete Park saw teamwork as dependent on socially unified rather than “peculiar” selves. There were, however, differences in how residents of Pena and Concrete Park conceptualized the process of unification. These differences are evident in patterns of regular interactions and daily experiences related to middle childhood in Concrete Park and Pena.

Instantiating local mentalities toward teamwork and functional cooperation

The popular ideal of teamwork delineated above, as productivity oriented cooperation, filters into the mentality of children through interactions in their own cultural community. Taking teamwork as a mode of negotiating between the individual and the collective suggests that the concept is inherently based on interactions. A paradigmatic example of such an interaction is sharing. Mentalities related to sharing provide one example of how teamwork and functional cooperation adapt to local models of psychosocial competence.

The videos of soccer programs in Concrete Park and Pena documented several incidents where children made explicit efforts to share drinks, snacks, and sports equipment. Although I did not ask about sharing explicitly, three of five focus groups in Concrete Park commented on examples of sharing as demonstrations of teamwork. For example, when asked about teamwork one Concrete Park focus group told me “they looked like they [children in the programs] were sharing...when they get their chokes [sandwiches] they pass it around. They look out for each other.” In contrast, no focus groups in Pena referenced examples of sharing as related to teamwork. Yet, there are several situations documented in the Pena video, and many more in my personal observations, of children in Pena going to extraordinary lengths to share food, toys, clothes, or whatever things were of interest. Thus, the explicit emphasis on sharing in Concrete Park and lack of emphasis on sharing in Pena was not about whether sharing was actually undertaken. Instead it was about whether sharing was a type of functional cooperation, something like teamwork, that required explicit endorsement.

For residents of Pena sharing was an assumed and automatic form of cooperation, while sharing for children in Concrete Park required intentional endorsement and validation. While this was partially about differing mentalities towards children, with adults in Concrete Park conceptualizing childhood as a stage in a linear progression towards adulthood where children needed constant guidance and instruction, it also demonstrates one way that explicitly endorsing teamwork may influence local cultural mentalities. The popularity of teamwork as a rhetorical concept in Concrete Park meant that children received constant praise for productive cooperation and regular sanction for inefficient cooperation. In contrast, children in Pena engaged in sharing as a type of cooperation that was assumed in their social world. People shared with each other without regard for external feedback. These processes are perhaps most evident in specific interactions between children and adults.

In the Concrete Park soccer program it was a common occurrence for kids to stop during games to tie their shoes. One time I observed a girl struggle to get her shoe tied, ultimately saved by a friend who came by to help. Upon seeing this the coach, who had throughout the practice constantly reminded his players they were a “team,” chastised the struggling girl, asking derisively “can’t you tie your own shoes?” So much for teamwork. Soon thereafter, a boy inadvertently knocked over one of his own teammates. He immediately stopped, helped his victim up and brushed off his back. The situation could have been over, except that the coach felt compelled to go over and endorse the event telling the boy “Oh, that was nice.” The message of these micro-anecdotes was two fold: teamwork is not just cooperating, and allowable types of cooperating must be endorsed by an outsider as relevant to the imposed task.

In contrast, regular generous acts of cooperation among children often went completely without comment in Pena. This was frequently evident in children's games in Pena, which regularly included astonishing acts of cooperation that diverted from the fundamental nature of games as competitive. In a game played with young children at a Pena school called "Giant and Dwarf," for example, children lined up in a circle around a teacher. If the teacher said "Giant" the children had to explode up and make themselves as big as possible. If the teacher said "dwarf" the children had to compact themselves down to become small and dwarflike. The teacher would try to trick the children with her commands, and the children would have to step out of the circle if they gave an incorrect response- shaping themselves as a giant at the call of "dwarf," or shaping themselves as a dwarf at the call of "giant." Every time I saw this game played the children in the circle gradually closed in until they were able to put their hands on each other's shoulders. They would then become a synergistic circle where each hand pushed or pulled so as to make sure no one went into the wrong shape. This was completely contradictory to the competitive nature of the game- the effort to see which child was the last left in the circle. But it demonstrated a clear priority on cooperation and inclusion over individuated competition. Further, the teachers present felt no need to comment on these actions, while it stood out to me exactly because I felt like I was seeing something out of the ordinary. Thus, in some senses, it seemed that the absence of explicit endorsements helped create an environment where mentalities of very social cooperation as the norm exist without challenge or reflection.

Differing expectations related to cooperative interactions ultimately helped to shape differing mentalities toward teamwork. When the Concrete Park focus group

endorsed sharing by noting that “they lookin’ out for each other” they also imply a notion of teamwork that prioritizes loyalty. When Pena residents emphasize the importance of paying attention to authority as primary to functional cooperation they also imply a notion of teamwork that prioritizes social order. These distinctive models of teamwork, which co-exist with the popular productivity oriented type of teamwork, are presented below as “ideal types” evident in Concrete Park and Pena.

Teamwork and loyalty in Concrete Park

The behavior of Concrete Park children in group settings often seemed like an extreme replication of the children from the “robbers cave” experiment famous in social psychology (Sherif, Harvey, Hoyt, Hood, & Sherif, 1961). The idea that simply putting children together in competitive groups, however artificial those groups might be (in the case of the “robbers cave” experiment, randomly assigned teams during a summer camp), could inspire great loyalty to the group and great animosity to the opposition was a regular part of children’s activities in Concrete Park. During Concrete Park summer camp activities young children were often artificially divided into teams, sometimes through counting off by numbers or sometimes just by location in the gym or on the field. Though children were often reluctant initially to separate from their friends, siblings, or cousins, when children invested themselves in group competition they suddenly became incredibly loyal to the members of their group. In one exemplary incident, children in a soccer match who had regularly argued and debated positions and playing time suddenly unified upon scoring a goal: a 9 year old boy on the sideline, who had been complaining about not getting to play, unexpectedly yelled- “Yeah! That’s that teamwork!” Group

designations served two functions for children in Concrete Park: it initiated strong feelings of loyalty and it activated a contested discourse of teamwork.

The contested discourse of teamwork involved the two most prominent, and somewhat opposing, types of teamwork in Concrete Park: the popular productivity oriented type and the loyalty type familiar from the emphases people in Concrete Park put on family and social groups. The popular business type was prominent in sports settings from a very young age. When, for example, coaches in the Concrete Park soccer program talked to groups of kids they offered regular reminders that they must work together to win because they are “a team.” I was interested to watch one coach call together a team of four 4-5 year olds to play a short game, have them put their hands together and, on the count of three, shout “team.” The kids were quite good at the cheer. They were not, however, good at actually understanding soccer to be a team sport. Like 4-5 year-old kids everywhere, as soon as the ball went into play they not only had no idea that any of the other children on the field shared a collective objective, they did not have any idea that they were supposed to go in only one direction. For these young children their experience in sports served more to instantiate the idea that teamwork marked a particular type of functional cooperation than it served to make them work together towards productive efficiency.

Further, passing, the paradigmatic marker of teamwork as a productivity oriented type of functional cooperation, was markedly absent in my observations of youth sports in Concrete Park. This was particularly evident in basketball. In a youth basketball program involving children from Concrete Park there was a dramatic contrast between coaches’ rhetorical emphasis on teamwork and the emphasis in actual play on individual

achievement. During one set of formal games I observed only two instances where a team passed more than twice before taking a shot. And, during one of the rare instances when a player forsook a shot for a pass, the coach chastised that player for not trying to take the ball directly to the basket. His coach told him he could not “be scared of going strong to the hole.” It seemed contradictory for the coach to imply that the player was actually letting down the team by not being more selfish during game play.

Being selfish during game play does not, however, contradict being a loyal teammate. Thus, resolving the seeming contradiction between selfish play and a strong teamwork ethic requires an alternative model of teamwork. Several residents of Concrete Park described such an alternative when asked about teamwork. Oliver, for example, told me: “Teamwork is basically knowing you have back up. Teamwork to me is no fear. I mean if you know there’s somebody there to help you, you don’t have to be scared to do anything. That’s how you know, it’s more of a pressure thing. That’s what teamwork is...As long as you know your friend got your back you’re not afraid to try anything or do anything else extra. That’s what teamwork is.” In this explanation, teamwork is not a way of playing a sport or a method of practice. Instead it is a social process through which people gain a feeling of loyal social support. Similarly, when asked about children’s style of play in relation to a teamwork ideal, a former Concrete Park resident who helped organize the basketball program tied it to growing up with a “gang mentality” where “who has your back” receives the utmost priority. Thus, even if gangs are considered bad (which most of these kids seemed to feel), the loyalty inherent in a “gang mentality” influences their notions of a good group and functional cooperation- of teamwork.

When asked to talk about teamwork in Concrete Park residents regularly discussed two settings, other than gangs, associated with loyalty: the family and football. In interviews I regularly asked people to give me an example of when they would see teamwork. Though I expected people to talk about sports related examples, the most common example was chores around the house. In fact, during one interview two seven year old boys immediately referenced family when asked them if they had heard of teamwork:

Drew: Have you guys ever heard of teamwork?

1st 7 year old: Yeah.

2nd 7 year old: I help all my family

Drew: Is that what teamwork is, helping people in your family and stuff? Is it just your family or is it other people?

2nd 7 year old: It's my family and my cousins....

Drew: Okay, is teamwork important for kids?

1st 7 year old: Yeah.

Drew: Why?

1st 7 year old: so they help people clean up their room for them.

Similarly, one mother, when asked for an example of her 9 year old daughter using teamwork, told me “the other day she cleaned her sister’s room without asking. [Her sister] was gone so she, her and [her brother] worked together and cleaned the room up. I just tell them it’s your stuff in there too, you know, so don’t just leave it all on [your sister] to do.” While these mentalities toward teamwork involve some objective or desired outcome (such as a clean house), the regular references to family and household responsibilities suggest an understanding of teamwork as requiring a personal loyalty that goes beyond having a shared goal. Loyalty to one’s family had extraordinarily high value in Concrete Park, and that value seems to have translated to mentalities regarding teamwork.

When Concrete Park residents discussed the activities through which children might learn teamwork several adults specifically endorsed football as a special site for learning teamwork. One Concrete Park recreation leader, who also lived in the community, explained that “the main sport that you really will learn teamwork is in football. Because if you don’t play as a team in football you will get knocked on your butt. I mean that’s the sport where you really have to have trust in everybody else, especially as a quarterback, running back, receiver. You have to trust somebody else to protect you.” Likewise, a father who had also grown up in Concrete Park, when asked where children could learn teamwork, told me that “I think football is really the ultimate to me...once you play football you will see it’s a totally different thing. There’s just a lot of love. I’ve played football and I got to the point where I looked at basketball as far as basketball or football. Football is more guys, there’s so much love in football. You get into it with one or the other, and after that you make up because football definitely takes everybody.” These two explanations of why football might have a special role in imbuing teamwork demonstrate the sense in the Concrete Park interviews that teamwork comes through a social process of feeling protected, loved, and part of a loyal group.

Teamwork and social order in Pena

The popular discourse of productivity oriented teamwork, as promoted by sports media and business motivators, was largely absent in Pena. Some people had exposure to teamwork as an ideal through the popular media and through the presence of Western aid workers and organizations, but Pena residents often appropriated teamwork according to local mentalities. Thus, even when people in Pena had some familiarity with teamwork they usually emphasized its functions in relation to social order. Nevertheless, both the

existing understandings and the appropriations demonstrate local mentalities in Pena that guide children as they negotiate between their individual self and the collective.

While the organization I worked with included teamwork among its goals for the refugees, and while most community members could infer a definition from knowing meanings for both “team” and “work,” there was no regular teamwork construct invoked locally in Pena as there was in Concrete Park. When asked, most adults in Pena defined teamwork as “working together” and related it to the concept of “group work” which was part of the Angolan school curriculum. It is worth noting that “group work” was also a familiar concept in Concrete Park, but people were more apt to use teamwork to describe quality functional cooperation across domains. Thus, people in Concrete Park might talk about doing a task as “group work” but they would talk about individuals in regard to how well they engaged in “teamwork.” In Pena, neither “group work” nor teamwork were regularly used as processes, characteristics, or constructs related to one’s person.

In sport settings, when others would criticize children for playing selfishly, I never heard children told to use teamwork- which was a regular comment in Concrete Park. Instead, the usual comment towards a selfish player in Pena was *não jogo individual*- don’t play individually. Likewise, one Pena mother who had ranked relating with other children above teamwork in the developmental tasks survey explained simply that relating with other children was “more than just games and sports.” Relating well to others was a central facet of Pena as a cultural community, where high levels of social interaction and interdependence were a taken for granted part of daily life. But a productivity oriented model of teamwork did not have broad resonance in Pena.

The Pena residents that had heard of teamwork often appropriated its meaning according to local mentalities. One mother and teacher in Pena had primarily learned about the construct of teamwork when she had been involved in a coach training program run by previous volunteers for Olympic Aid. When asked about teamwork she told me “Well, we learned about this a long time ago, but I forgot” demonstrating honesty in recognizing that teamwork was a foreign construct. When pressed to explain what she thought teamwork might look like she reasoned: “a child has to pay attention for him to be good in teamwork. For example, if a kid stops paying attention because of a chicken that is passing, then this kid is going to lose the game. And there are games, like giant and dwarf, where if a child stops paying attention he loses the game.” The interesting aspect of this response is that the woman, while not recognizing teamwork as a local construct, appropriated its meaning to be related to paying attention. She does tie teamwork to an outcome, but not to instrumental cooperation. Instead she idealizes teamwork as the ability to pay attention and thus perform in an orderly manner.

One group of Pena adults that talked about teamwork, beyond saying it was “working together,” gave the example of “when people have different ideas and the group agrees together on one.” This statement orients teamwork by an appropriate social process of agreeing on an idea, rather than orienting teamwork by a task outcome. Another group of adults in Pena told me that teamwork comes from a child’s “way of being” in the world, which the child learns from parents. These Pena adults explained that if parents were “too rigid” and did not allow children to play games with others they would never learn teamwork. Again, the emphasis in this discussion was on the teamwork as a relational process rather than a means to an end or outcome. Likewise,

one of the few men who rated teamwork highly on the developmental tasks survey explained “children need friends to play with; if they play alone they will feel isolated.” In this understanding teamwork is not about individual achievement or competitive outcomes, instead it is a social process prioritizing inclusion.

Mentalities related to functional cooperation are also evident in the ways Pena residents who were not familiar with teamwork interpreted its meaning. When, for example, asked to identify teamwork in the soccer program videos a man in Pena was unwilling to cite a specific situation, but instead gave a general example: “if one player is good, but doesn’t get along with others that is bad. If a player uses his abilities to show others they are bad- sometimes after the game a player will say he is better than the others- that is bad teamwork.” Teamwork, in this interpretation, is about getting along with others, something which people in Concrete Park would endorse. But there was also a sense in Pena that one gets along with others by keeping a reasonable place within a social order.

This sense was evident when four of five focus groups in Pena related teamwork in the videos to the role of coaches and put a heavy emphasis on order through adhering to hierarchies. Focus groups in Pena, for example, perceived teamwork demonstrated in the videos to be better in Concrete Park than Pena because they thought the activities in Chicago were better organized- “there was no *confusão*.” One Pena focus group explained that to have good teamwork “each team must have enough space for itself, no distractions, and the coach must be able to coach.” Another Pena focus group told me that they thought teamwork in both of the soccer program videos seemed good because “there were no shy kids and they had good coaches.” In contrast, none of the focus

groups in Concrete Park mentioned the role of coaches when talking about teamwork.

There was an overall sense in Pena of teamwork as involving a hierarchical social order that is not usually associated with the concept.

The association made in Pena between teamwork and social order was particularly evident when four of five Pena focus groups identified teamwork in events documented in the edited videos that occurred around, rather than within, the soccer games. The most commonly cited event demonstrating teamwork for the Pena focus groups was the distribution of food and drink snacks to sports program participants. Both videos documented children lining up to receive snacks and drinks after their soccer games, and the video followed the children briefly as they took their snacks to shady spots near the fields. Several focus groups watching the videos in Pena commented approvingly on the “teamwork” they saw when the children in the Concrete Park video make an orderly line to wait for their snacks, and then sit down “quietly” to eat. Though on one level this orderly snacking simply contrasted sharply with Pena residents’ own experiences of food distribution in refugee camps as something of a scramble, that alone does not necessarily explain associating social order with “teamwork.” In fact, several focus groups in Pena also cited the way children in both the videos seemed to arrive at the field in an orderly manner to represent teamwork. These conceptualizations of teamwork make most sense in relation to the general mentality of Pena residents prioritizing roles and achievements that make sense in their familiar social world. For residents of Pena to see cooperation as functional required cooperation leading to social order.

The mentalities in Pena disconnected teamwork from competitive outcomes.

When I asked Pena residents to define and give examples of teamwork, they consistently talked about discipline and orderly functioning within larger hierarchies. One father, community leader, and coach, for example, described the child who is good at teamwork as: “always interacting with others, is calm, and doesn’t cause any problems (*confusão*), and is good at organizing the group; but the one who is not good is always causing problems, doesn’t play with others, the main problem is he wants to fight with others—that’s not good.” In discussing differences between children within Pena as to their teamwork, this description also raises a question as to the experiences of children in relation to these general teamwork ideals prioritizing processes creating social order.

In relation to children’s experiences, one father in Pena made a developmental distinction regarding teamwork by noting that “six year olds don’t understand teamwork, but twelve year olds do.” When asked to explain he told me that six year olds “are not good because they play in whatever manner they want, they don’t have control.” Importantly, this man does not reference the lack of a team concept or the lack of cooperative abilities; instead he focuses on the inability of young children to be in control. The implication is that socializing children to appropriately negotiate between their individual selves and the collective necessarily involves control geared towards social order. Likewise, another male father and coach who defined teamwork as “a community” told me that a child who is bad in teamwork “sometimes I tell him to jump and he can’t jump, so it means he didn’t succeed.” I responded by clarifying that this child was not good at teamwork, and the man told me “he’s not good in teamwork, maybe because his attention is outside the group.” In this explanation a child engages in

teamwork when committed to the group and obedient to the leader. Significantly, there is no reference to ability, efficiency, or productivity- just to failing to follow instructions. Another young adult male told me that he could see a difference in children as to how good they were at teamwork. When I asked him to explain he told me: “by talking you can figure who is good [at teamwork] and who is not...the person who understands the rules involved and knows the job he is supposed to do [is good at teamwork].” Another adult male father and coach in Pena told me that teamwork was a good thing because “it helps people to share their knowledge.” When pressed for an example he told me “for example, there might be a mis-understanding and two kids maybe start fighting; but if there is one that plays a mediator saying don’t fight, I would say that kid is good in teamwork.” In this example children who are good at teamwork actively participate in maintaining social order and sharing knowledge. Discussing the concept of teamwork in relation to Pena children demonstrates a mentality towards children suggesting that functional cooperation requires efforts toward social order.

Though children in Pena, in contrast to adults, rarely had heard of teamwork themselves, I asked some children to explain what it looked like for some children to get along well with others. A 10 year old boy told me: “It’s when they share things together, they play together, and when they are having problems they are playing together they go to one of this friend’s house and they wash the dishes, they eat together, and when they finish washing the dishes they go to her house.” Again, while there is some reference here to accomplishing tasks and achieving outcomes, the main emphasis is on processes of social support. Other groups of kids emphasized that this social support should occur within the established order of social hierarchy. Two twelve year old girls, for example,

explained that a child who is bad at teamwork is one who does not follow the instructions of “a person responsible for a team.” In contrast, the child who is good at teamwork, “if the person responsible for the team tells them to do something they do it, and if when they don’t know how to do something they go there and ask this person so they can be taught.” In these responses it is clear that children, when able, appropriate teamwork as the ability to properly fit into the social order.

In practice, whether playing soccer or lining up for food, children in Pena often seemed to be clambering and inefficient. Often, however, their behavior was geared at taking advantage of opportunities to establish a place in the social order. Thus, although few children in Pena had exposure to the popular rhetoric of teamwork, they had particular cultural mentalities that guided functional cooperation. Children in Pena took social interactions and sharing for granted; but they explicitly attended to opportunities for functional cooperation in social interactions that allowed them to fit into a hierarchical social order.

Conclusion

The concept of teamwork refers to an abstract ideal of functional cooperation which people appropriate and understand in culturally specific ways. When organizations and the popular media promote teamwork there is an implicit message that functional cooperation should be about efficiently working together towards an externally defined outcome so as to maximize productivity. I have argued in this chapter that while children in Concrete Park and Pena recognize this meaning to varying degrees, the children’s mentality towards functional cooperation mixes the popular discourse with local cultural values. Thus, children in Concrete Park value loyalty within social groups

as functional cooperation serving to ensure they are supported and protected by those in their group. In contrast, children in Pena value social order as functional cooperation which serves to maintain discipline and provide opportunities for adults, coaches, and superiors to ensure proper behavior.

Thus, while some form of cooperation is functional in any cultural setting, socio-cultural communities guide mentalities toward teamwork as a social process. During middle childhood, when children develop the cognitive capacity to focus on other people's perspectives, exposure to these mentalities creates culturally distinct ways of negotiating individuality and community. In this chapter and this research project I have been able to document that the way children in Concrete Park and Pena cooperated looked meaningfully different, and that the way people explained teamwork sounded meaningfully different. In the future it would thus be worth exploring the specific developmental pattern of functional cooperation to emphasize that intentional efforts to promote and/or improve "teamwork" should recognize its nature as a culturally particular social process rather than a universally ideal method of practice.

There was a public primary school near Concrete Park, which I passed every day on my way to the community, proclaiming on a large sign-board towering above the school: "Teamwork makes the dream work!" The slogan has a nice ring to it. In this chapter, however, I have suggested that such a slogan may need to be qualified.

Teamwork is best understood as a social process that children are encouraged to value in culturally specific ways. Teamwork, when understood as a negotiation between the individual and the collective, is not so much a method for operating "the dream" as a process of realizing cultural mentalities toward psychosocial competence.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

This project depends on three premises: One, at some level, all children are motivated towards psychosocial competence; Two, that motivation relates to processes of self-evaluation and functional cooperation; Three, those processes depend on mentalities that are deeply cultural. Building on those premises, the research involved comparing a popular folk model of psychosocial competence with cultural models in Concrete Park and Pena. The components of the folk model derive from implicit and explicit messages about psychosocial competence available through service organizations and the popular media. Self-esteem and teamwork serve as paradigmatic examples of components in the folk model, with self-esteem relating to the primarily psychological process of self-evaluation and teamwork relating to the primarily social process of functional cooperation. In other words, while all children engage in processes of self-evaluation and functional cooperation as part of being motivated towards psychosocial competence, only children socialized with particular cultural mentalities prioritize individualized self-esteem and productivity-oriented teamwork. Thus, placing a high priority on individualized self-esteem matches cultural mentalities evident in Concrete Park, but seems senseless to residents of Pena; emphasizing productivity-oriented teamwork occurs in both field sites, but is distinct from local ideals for cooperation.

Beyond assuming that psychosocial competence is comprised of universal constructs such as self-esteem and teamwork, the folk model makes two additional assumptions. One involves an implicit association between childhood in impoverished circumstances and dysfunctional psychosocial development. The second involves an implicitly causal relationship between individual deficiency and social inequality. In this conclusion I explain how this research project has attempted to confront all three of these assumptions. First, I address universality by framing findings in relation to potentially cross-cultural processes of psychosocial competence. Second, I evaluate the association of poverty and psychosocial dysfunction by discussing research implications and future directions for work addressing child development in impoverished communities. Third, I challenge the line of thought suggesting that social inequality derives from individual deficiency by considering the general implications for understanding social inequality.

Processes of psychosocial competence

By contrasting different models of psychosocial competence and middle childhood in distinct cultural communities, the comparative nature of this project uncovers both differences and similarities in developmental processes. The body of this dissertation focused on breaking down differences in order to defamiliarize the folk model of psychosocial competence. To consider potential implications, it is useful to put the pieces back together and evaluate similarities in developmental processes at the core of psychosocial competence. I have identified five general processes that underlie psychosocial competence in its different cultural representations: norms of social comparison, conceptions of an ideal self, orientations of self-evaluation, norms of functional cooperation, and conceptions of social identity. Though these processes are

not completely distinct, each relates to prominent bodies of social science literature and I will discuss each of these processes in turn. The underlying suggestion is that these processes represent universal components of psychosocial competence that manifest as concepts such as self-esteem and teamwork primarily when shaped by a child's cultural community.

Norms of social comparison. Children in both Concrete Park and Pena engage in social comparison to assess their psychosocial competence and orient their endeavors. As noted earlier, most research assumes that the important information gathered through such social comparison is whether a person is better or worse than others (for a recent review, see Wood & Wilson, 2003). While an intense value on combative competition in Concrete Park influenced children to engage regularly in this competitive social comparison, children in Pena seemed to use social comparison to evaluate inclusion and integration. Thus, in child's play and self-evaluation alike, children in Pena focused on comparisons evaluating whether they had reasonable opportunities and were similar to others. The notion that the specific relationship between social comparison and psychosocial competence depends on cultural mentalities related to competition and integration begs further research. Social comparison is an implicit component of other concerns related to psychosocial competence and thus deserves careful attention.

Conceptions of an ideal self. The large and growing body of literature on cultural differences in conceptions of the self (for a recent review, see Cross & Gore, 2003) is important because self-related processes influence most human thought and behavior. Likewise, characteristics such as self-esteem and teamwork depend upon whether an ideal self is conceptualized as comprised of particular traits, characteristic behaviors,

independent achievement, interdependent success, among other possible dimensions. As such, in being motivated towards psychosocial competence children employ an implicit conception of their ideal self. While conceptions of an ideal self encompass a variety of the processes discussed in this dissertation, a primary example related to different notions of childhood. Children in Concrete Park idealize the qualities of a productive adult, while children in Pena idealize an appropriate childhood full of both serious opportunity and playful activity. Conceptions of an ideal self also relate to the way children learn to engage in self-evaluation.

Orientations of self-evaluation. Children in Concrete Park and Pena orient their self-evaluations towards psychosocial competence in relation to local norms of self-enhancement. In fact, understanding individualized self-esteem as part of a folk model of psychosocial competence depends upon a notion that individualized self-esteem is only one of many potential orientations of self-evaluation. There is considerable debate in contemporary academic literature as to whether self-enhancement is universal or pancultural (see, for example, Brown, 2003; Sedikides, Gaertner, & Toguchi 2003). My research suggests that it is, but only at a high level of abstraction. Children in Concrete Park oriented their self-evaluation by prioritizing high individualized self-esteem. Children in Pena oriented their self-evaluation by virtue of opportunities to participate in a sensible social order. Thus, while individualized positive self-regard and self-esteem was extraordinarily important in Concrete Park, it was of little explicit concern in Pena. This finding raises an important question, relevant to all of these processes, as to whether specific cultural manifestations of universal processes, such as self-esteem as a cultural manifestation of self-evaluation, are neither intrinsically valuable nor harmful (the axis

upon which much of the contemporary debate on self-esteem revolves) but instead are only significant within particular cultural communities.

Norms of functional cooperation. Children in Concrete Park and Pena rely on norms of functional cooperation to negotiate between their individual selves and the collective, as is necessary for psychosocial competence in any community. While existing literature acknowledges significant cultural variation in the emphasis placed on cooperation, there is little research considering cultural variation in cooperative processes (as noted by Richard et al., 2002). Through contrasts with productivity oriented teamwork, which is a concept used to represent one specific cultural variation in cooperative processes, I presented evidence suggesting that other general cultural variations in cooperative processes might prioritize types of teamwork oriented by loyalty or social order. Children in Concrete Park thought of teamwork primarily as functional cooperation based on loyalty, where commitments to a social unit were more important than absolute efficiency. Children in Pena lived in an environment where functional cooperation meant maintaining a sensible social order, where attention to participation opportunities and status hierarchies outweighed concentrating on raw productivity. Thus, while most of the processes discussed focus on patterns of thought and behavior within an individual (associated with psychological development), processes of functional cooperation provide an important reminder that much of development occurs through interactions that can be associated with social development. In evaluating the cultural manifestation of universal processes it is important to consider manifestations related to both the individual psyche and social interactions.

Conceptions of social identity. In addition to psychosocial processes within the child (regarding conceptions of an ideal self and orientations of self-evaluation) and between children (regarding norms of social comparison and functional cooperation), the interaction between children and society provides a final important cultural dimension. This was evident here in the finding that children in both Concrete Park and Pena associate themselves with particular social identities that frame their conceptions of psychosocial competence. A huge body of scholarship documents the importance of social identity, and the notion that varying the salience of a social identity significantly influences patterns of thought and behavior (see, for a recent review, Hogg, 2003). In Concrete Park children associated with a negative social identity as “project kids” and in Pena children associated with a negative social identity as “*refugiados*.” Though the label for these social identities varied, the negative valence and psychological connection with dysfunction and deficiency was uniform. Associations with particular social identities relate to psychosocial competence in both Concrete Park and Pena and, while easy to confuse with self-esteem and the orientations of self-evaluation discussed above, I suggest social identities are the most direct influence on the experience of middle childhood in an impoverished community.

Research implications and future directions

The most general next step related to the analyses in this dissertation is to study the consequences of different cultural mentalities towards these processes of psychosocial competence for developmental outcomes at different stages of the life-course. I have focused on middle childhood, and I argue that children during those years are able to attain a reasonable degree of psychosocial competence despite living in impoverished

circumstances because competence depends on local, rather than global, models. Thus, the child at age ten in Concrete Park is motivated to feel competent based primarily on characteristics such as self-esteem and self-respect, combative competitiveness, identifying enduring traits of social value, and loyalty. Simultaneously, the child at age ten in Pena is motivated to feel competent based primarily on characteristics such as interpersonal integration, socially appropriate behavior, opportune achievement, and maintenance of a sensible social order.

There is, however, an interesting question as to whether those same primary characteristics will serve children well through the life-course as they begin to engage the social world outside of their cultural community. During the life-course segments of adolescence, emerging adulthood, and beyond it seems possible that the same children who attained psychosocial competence in cultural communities such as Concrete Park and Pena will be increasingly likely to confront schools, job markets, government bureaucracies, service programs, interpersonal expectations, and more that neither prioritize nor significantly reward characteristics such as combative competitiveness and profuse self-esteem, or deferentially integrative behavior and tacit acceptance of existing social roles. Thus, in Concrete Park it is possible that characteristics such as extreme competitiveness, which may lead to an outcome orientation that limits persistence and process, would cause some adolescents problems in their professional development. Likewise, in Pena it is possible that characteristics such as focusing on existing opportunities may cause young adults problems in creatively adapting professional ambitions to changing society. These speculations, however, depend upon several

assumptions, such as that characteristic mentalities persist across domains in the social world and across stages in the life-course, that need to be tested empirically.

These empirical questions are best answered through longitudinal and cross-cultural data collection. It will, for example, be important to evaluate cultural models of psychosocial competence in relation to characteristics necessary for conventional success for children in distinct cultural communities during both middle childhood and adolescence. Likewise, it will be important to evaluate whether characteristics related to psychosocial competence persist through the life-course; does the child with adaptive psychosocial character at ten years of age maintain similar mentalities at eighteen years of age? Further, there is an important question of whether mentalities toward psychosocial competence within a cultural community stay within the community; do children prioritize particular norms of social comparison when they are outside of their familiar peer group settings?

There are several other empirical questions embedded in the findings of this dissertation. For one, I have argued that psychosocial competence is best conceptualized as a cultural process, rather than a universal construct. Implicit in that argument is a notion that psychosocial competence and its components are best studied as both quantitative and qualitative phenomena. That is, the characteristics of psychosocial competence must not only be measured and objectified, but must also be understood as qualitative phenomena that relate to “beliefs, desires, feelings, concepts, attitudes symbolically expressed” (Shweder, 1996, p. 180). Thus, in addition to analyzing the quantitative antecedents and consequences of particular psychosocial characteristics, it is important to analyze the qualitative processes through which children understand, and are

motivated towards, competence. Rather than simply focusing on why children have high or low self-esteem, or whether having high self-esteem leads to particular behavioral outcomes, it seems worthwhile to investigate the significance of individualized self-esteem in relation to children's motivation, behavior, and thought. For example, do certain norms, values, and conceptions of self differently craft the influence of self-esteem on children's achievement orientations or anti-social behavior? Likewise, rather than simply analyzing the situations when children make cooperative or competitive choices during group or team interactions, or evaluating whether those choices prove more or less productive, it seems important to investigate how children understand functional cooperation in group settings and whether those understandings influence behavior and thought. For example, do children in distinct cultural communities learn particular sets of cooperative strategies that they employ to greater or less effect in different domains? These types of questions are based on the fundamental argument that the characteristics of psychosocial competence are local cultural processes rather than universal constructs.

Emphasizing local cultural processes also raises an important research-related question about the level of "culture" as a salient meaning system. While acknowledging an inevitable interaction of many levels of meaning, in this dissertation the "culture" in cultural psychology is located in the proximal social ecology of children living within distinct neighborhoods. This is an intentional contrast to the trend in much cultural psychological research to locate salient meaning systems at hemispheric (ie, West and East; see, for example, Nisbett, 2003) or nation-state (eg, America and Japan; see, for example, Markus & Kitayama, 1991) levels. Such research regularly neglects to account

for culture as internalized in individual thought and behavior; by locating culture at the level of the nation-state, for example, research assumes uniform and shared national experiences that are not always true at an individual level.

While this dissertation does not explicitly address the mechanisms through which culture becomes internalized, there is an implicit recognition that culture and the social world are internalized through the interactions, practices, roles, and experiences of daily life. Thus, while the children share some socialization experiences with larger cultural-historical norms, they also experience distinct roles within particular communities. Children in Concrete Park do experience larger cultural-historical norms prioritizing individualized conceptions of self focused on enduring traits, but they also maintain particular identities within American society as members of a low-income African-American community. Children in Pena do grow up in the midst of larger African mentalities prioritizing social order and status based respect, but they also experience social identities as displaced persons interacting with international aid organizations in a dynamic modern society. Future research endeavors should explicitly address the potential mechanisms through which these psychosocial influences in the social world do, or do not, become internalized in the lives of children.

General implications

The abstract cultural processes addressed in this dissertation and the above suggestions for future research relate to a tangible concern for helping children in impoverished communities. While I cannot claim “insider” status in either Concrete Park or Pena, I am an “insider” in the community of well-meaning individuals interested in finding ways to work for social justice by paying attention to disadvantaged children.

“Insiders” in the community of the well-meaning, who bear particular globalizing mentalities toward psychosocial competence, provide points of contrast to the communities of Concrete Park and Pena. Though not directly addressed, these contrasts raise an interesting question as to how distinct cultural models of psychosocial competence, the local and the global, amalgamate in people’s thought and behavior. All cultural communities are dynamic entities that constantly negotiate between the old and new, continually crafting the daily experiences of children in relation to mentalities toward processes such as self-evaluation.

During just six months in Pena I witnessed some of this negotiation. Having introduced and discussed the concept of self-esteem with some adult leaders in one part of Pena, I later heard them appropriate the idea to explain children’s misbehavior. A man who had not heard of “self-esteem” several months prior told me that the reason a child was acting up and getting in fights was because he did not have enough *amor-propria* (self-love). I am quite confident that several months before this adult would have made a completely different attribution for the child’s behavior. Though this dissertation does not specifically address the cultural hybridization of psychosocial concepts, I raise the issue as an important and open question in relation to children and international development. While efforts to facilitate psychosocial development have a valuable place in any work with children, assumptions based on a single model of psychosocial competence have the potential to be both counterproductive and detrimental. Promoting particular mentalities toward self-esteem, for example, has as much potential to muddle conceptions of self as it has to improve the outcomes of self-evaluation. There is no one

ideal set of psychosocial characteristics for children any more than there is one perfect personality to which all people should aspire.

Recognizing distinct cultural models of psychosocial competence allows for the possibility, in contrast to prominent social identities, that children in distinct cultural communities are not necessarily deficient or dysfunctional. This is important because during this research children in Concrete Park and Pena regularly identified with the conglomeration of negative characteristics associated with being “project kids” and “*refugiados*.” Those social identities involved a sense of deficiency and alienation from larger society. At times these identities provided a convenient attribution for failure, but my overall impression is that most negative psychosocial consequences of middle childhood in impoverished community result from these negative social identities rather than from self-esteem problems.

The idea that specific characteristics such as individualized self-esteem should not be a major or primary emphasis for children in impoverished communities, however, is often very difficult for well-meaning outsiders to accept. During a brief training for Olympic Aid volunteers in Toronto before going to Angola, I met and discussed this issue with a variety of American, Canadian, and European young adults who were off to various corners of the developing world to work for the sake of children in impoverished communities. In instances where I discussed my research about self-esteem, and mentioned my suggestion that for the children I was working with in Concrete Park self-esteem was not a primary problem, the Olympic Aid volunteers often refused to accept my suggestion. Instead, my colleagues told me several times, the children merely had “false” self-esteem that was part of their presentation of self. This is a common

interpretation of seeming confidence amidst dire circumstances, but it is ultimately problematic because it insists that the root of the predicament for children in poverty is an internalization of their impoverished environment. It implicitly locates the root of social inequality at the individual, rather than societal, level. In contrast, this research indicates that children do not directly internalize their structural socio-economic environment.

The importance of these negative identities was evident throughout field research undertaken for this dissertation. A remarkable example occurred during my attempts to use documentary videos of soccer programs in each setting as a stimulus for talking about play and games, self-esteem, and teamwork. While I did get some data about these topics, the most powerful response in every one of the Pena focus groups was an insistent perceived inferiority that overwhelmed objective viewing of the video. In each of the five formal showings of the videos in Pena residents expected before viewing that the soccer program in Concrete Park would be superior to their program in every way. The sense of deficiency, the assumption that Angolan refugees were lesser able than any American, was so deeply internalized that Pena residents seemed almost unable to acknowledge the obvious fact that the quality of soccer in Chicago was dramatically lower than the quality of play in Pena. Thus, when I showed the video to focus groups in Pena they spent at least five or ten minutes of the 15 minute Concrete Park video insisting that the children in Concrete Park were better soccer players than the children in Pena. With some cajoling from me and my research assistant, most of the participants would ultimately concede that the children in Pena were better soccer players than the children in Concrete Park. Most often, however, the Pena residents would quickly qualify this concession by noting that “the Chicago children were so much better behaved” or “the

Chicago children played better as a team.” These types of responses were clear compensatory explanations to resolve cognitive dissonance- a way to reconcile a deeply negative social identity with evidence of their competence. The important point here is that in all of these situations the individuals did not seem to regularly feel badly about their selves or incompetent; instead they identified with a negative social identity (as a member of a relatively deficient social group) separate from their individual self.

A similar process went on in Concrete Park, though not specifically in relation to Angola (when watching the videos most of the Concrete Park focus groups commented upon the Pena soccer program by talking about how “blessed” they were living in America to have decent housing, food, and clothing). At the end of my field work in Concrete Park the local park director suspended the community summer camp (through which I had done much of my participant observation) because of repeated mis-behavior by children and a perceived lack of support from parents. The camp director framed his decision to prematurely cancel the camp, a summer ritual in Concrete Park, as an opportunity to teach people a lesson: “maybe when its gone people will learn to appreciate what they had.” Instead, however, most Concrete Park residents reacted to the cancellation of the summer camp programming with a sense of inevitability. They were used to well-intended programming in the community running into obstacles such that the programs dismissed the possibility of actually providing help. Thus, decisions such as that to end the summer camp program serve to reinforce negative identities within the community as being members of a dysfunctional and deficient group. Yet, individually people generally felt competent and good about their selves. In some ways, the combination of high individual self-esteem and a negative social identity seemed to cycle

on itself such that residents would write off efforts to help as both unnecessary and doomed.

External assumptions that children in poor communities must feel badly about themselves, and that such low self-esteem is a root cause of problem behavior and negative outcomes, derive largely from what Hewitt (1998) calls *The Myth of Self-Esteem*- a cultural tendency related to the intense valuing of individualism and happiness that ascribes well-being to personal agency. Though not intentional, this tendency ultimately serves to obviate any collective social responsibility for the negative outcomes associated with childhood in marginalized communities by focusing intervention and explanation on individuals. In contrast, the underlying message of this dissertation is that children develop at the nexus of many-layered socio-cultural meaning systems, and thus facilitating child development only occurs through processes working at all levels of those systems. This perspective essentially melds versions of contemporary cultural psychology (ie, Shweder, et al., 1998) with efforts to address the practical role of society in developmental psychology (eg, Bronfenbrenner, 1979). As applied to this research, for example, negative developmental outcomes related to childhood in Concrete Park and Pena do not necessarily derive from a lack of psychosocial competence, nor do they associate with self-esteem problems. Instead, negative developmental outcomes derive from the experience of being enveloped by communities identified as deficient, from resource networks detached from broader global society, and from behavioral norms which serve to reproduce inequality by virtue of their cultural distinctiveness from globalizing ideals. Facilitating child development depends more upon being aware of

and reflective about various cultural models for psychosocial competence than upon offering one model implicitly assumed to be universally “correct.”

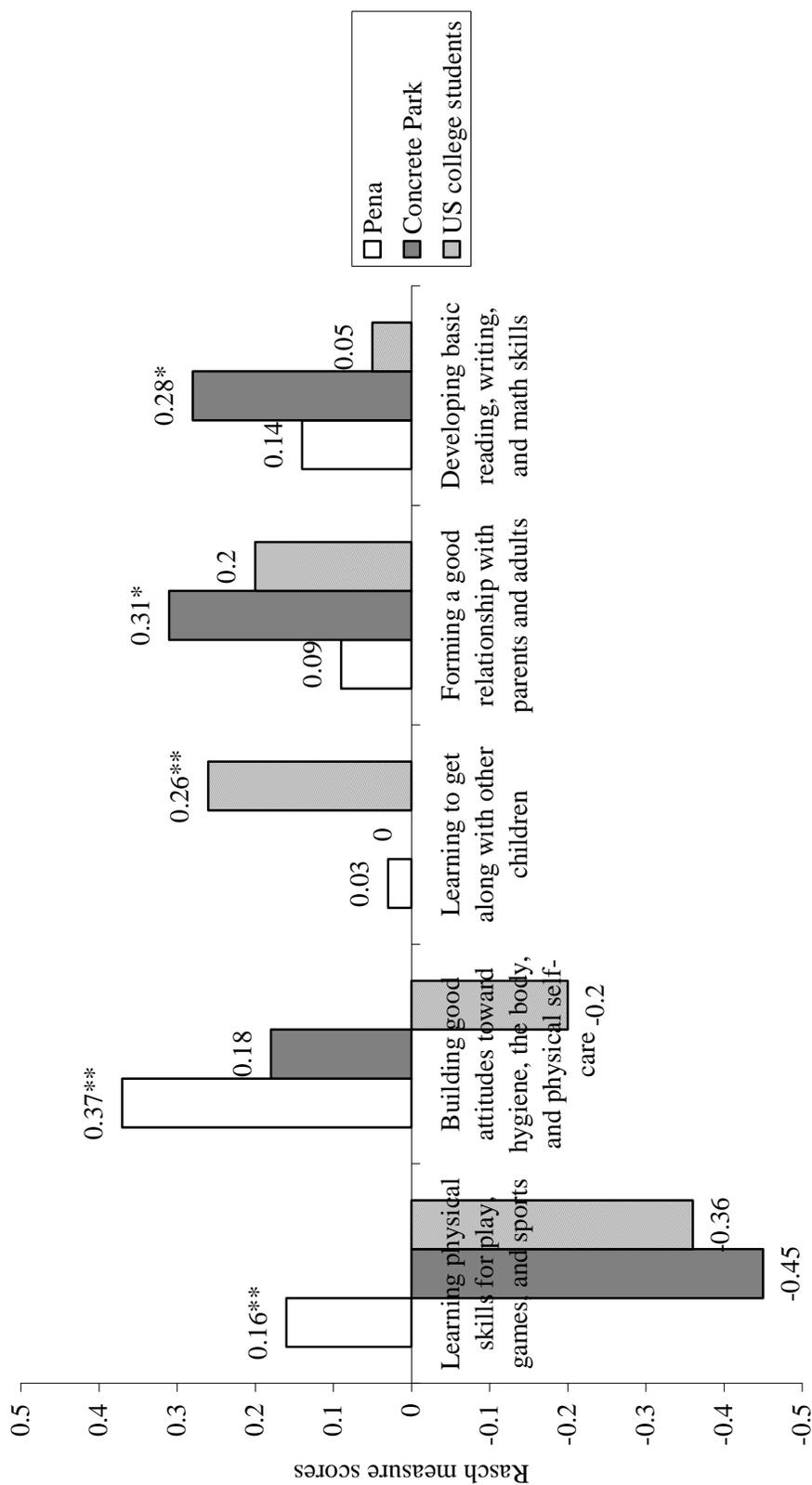
Thus, well-intentioned efforts to promote characteristics such as self-esteem and teamwork as universal components of psychosocial competence may actually be counter-productive. Ultimately, I agree with Masten and Coatsworth (1995) that feeling functional, or feeling competent, within one’s cultural community is a primary developmental task of childhood. When, however, children aspire to psychosocial competence they are aspiring towards a positive social identity. When confronted with different models of psychosocial competence presented as superior, children learn that their local ways of being are inappropriate. Thus, children in Concrete Park and Pena are simultaneously happy daughters and “ghetto kids,” or they are star soccer players while also identifying as “refugiados.”

Ironically, by telling people in impoverished circumstances that they should feel good about themselves and can overcome the hardships of their lives there is an implicit message that the problems in your life are part of your self. In a peculiar way, promoting resilience necessitates the internalization of a social identity containing an array of problems to be resilient against. Thus, while most scholarship addressing psychosocial competence in impoverished communities focuses on the concept of resilience, I have intentionally avoided that term. Thinking of psychosocial competence as a product of resilience implies that children have to overcome their environment in order to attain competence. Instead, as suggested by the tenant of cultural psychology positing that culture and the psyche make each other up (Shweder & Sullivan, 1993), the experience of middle childhood in Concrete Park and Pena involves competence as made up by the

environment. The cultural environment is not something to overcome; rather it becomes internalized as part of daily psychosocial functioning. Children, no matter what their socio-economic circumstances, develop within vibrant cultural communities that socialize local models of psychosocial competence which are adaptive for their experience of daily life.

APPENDIX A
FIGURES

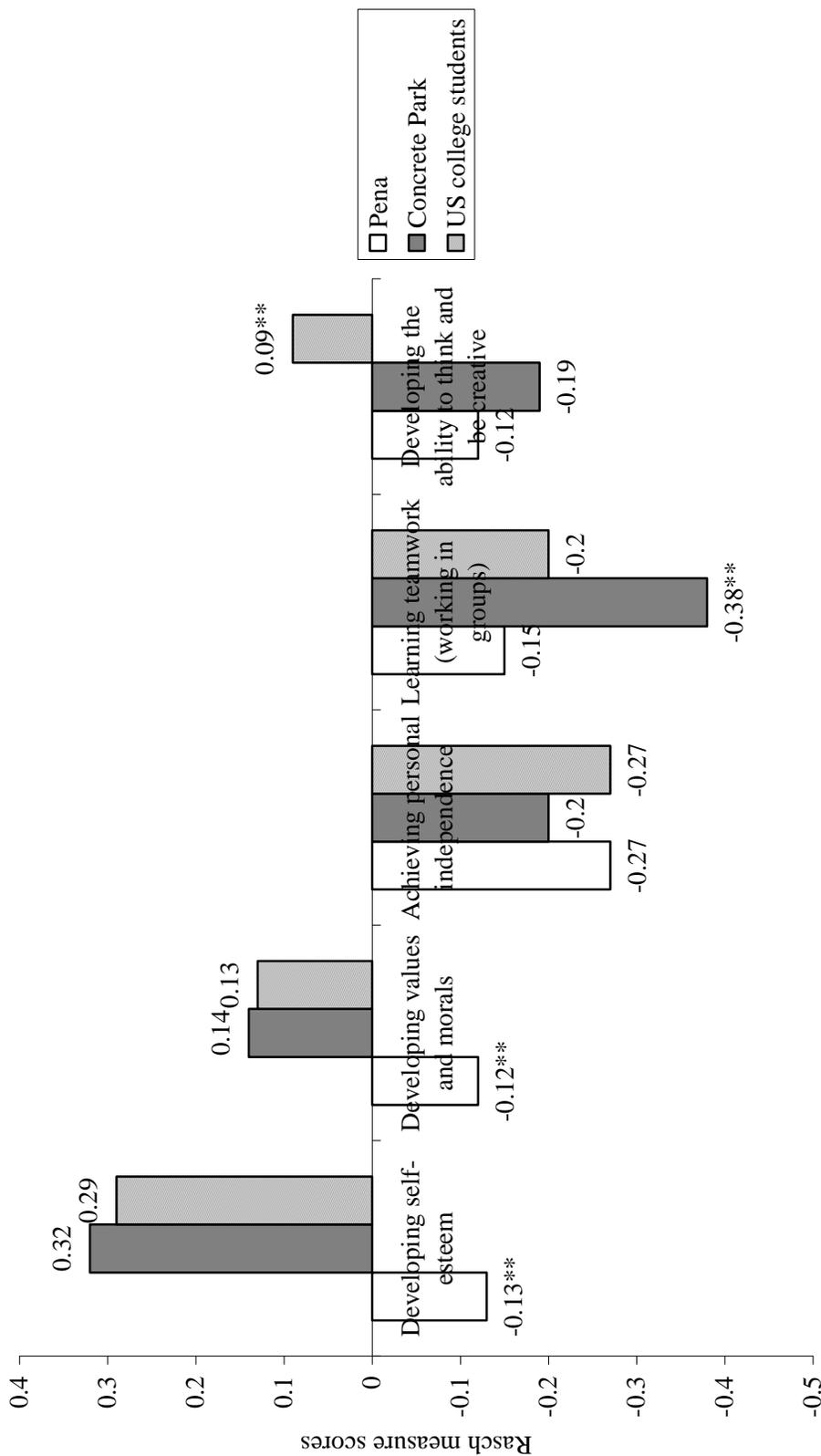
Figure 1: Rasch measure scores for developmental tasks ranked by three samples



**Value is significantly different from the other two values (p < .05)

*Value is significantly different only from the lesser of the other two values (p < .05)

Figure 1, continued



**V alue is significantly different from the other two values (p < .05)

Figure 2: Percentage of children who participate in sports and physically active games at least once each week

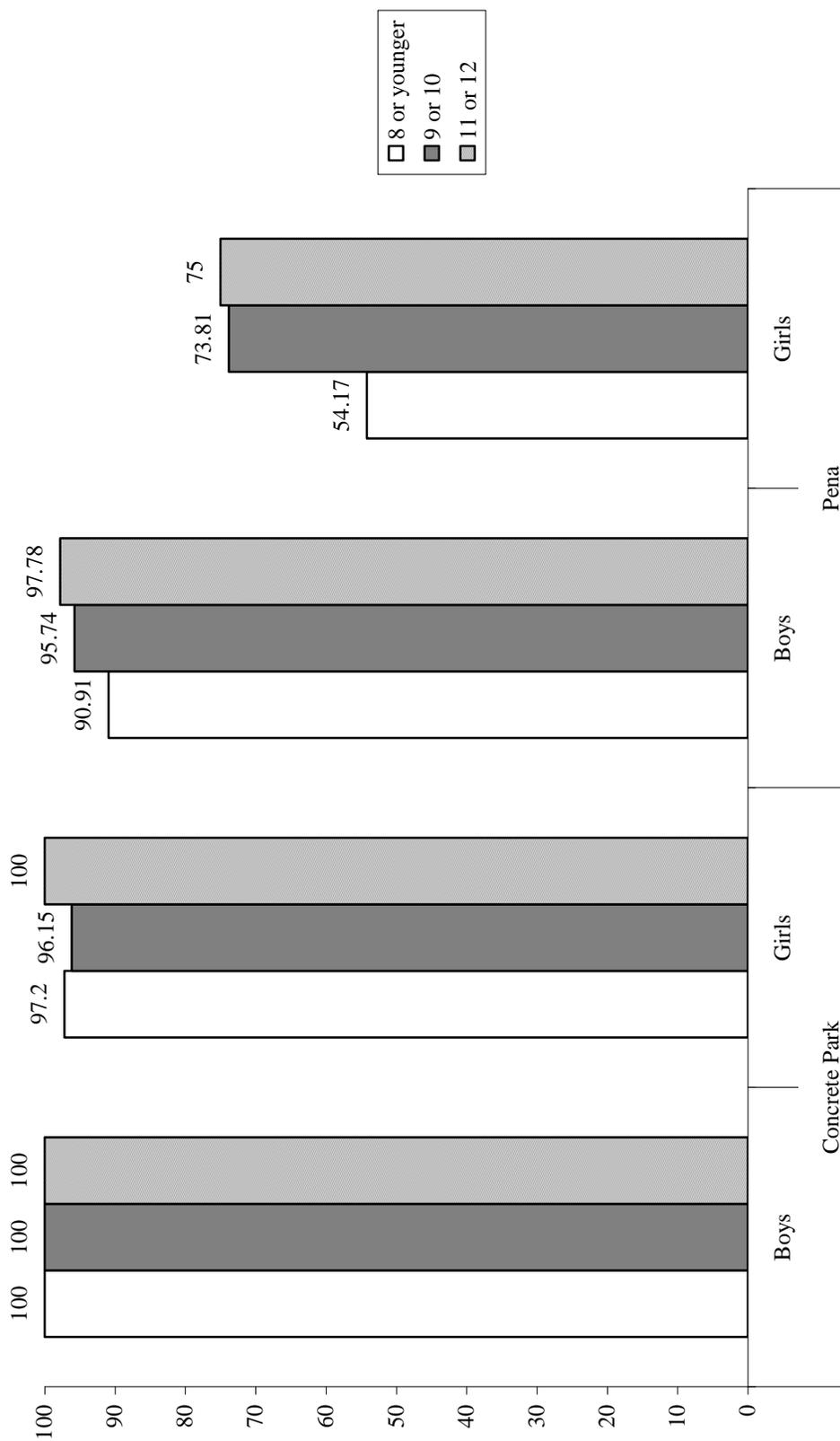


Figure 3: Percentage of children who participate in sports and physically active games every day

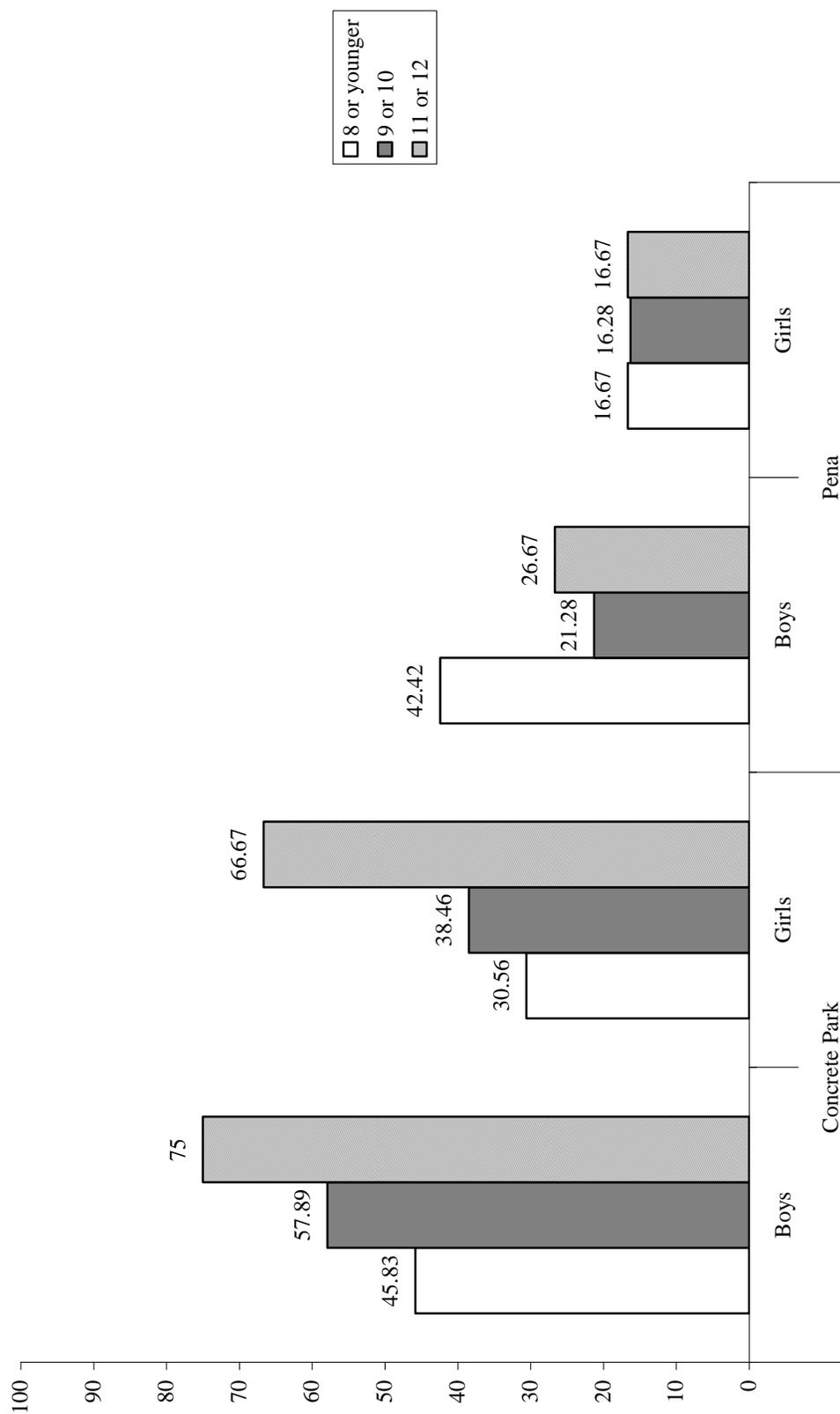


Figure 4: Percentage of children who have participated in organized sports

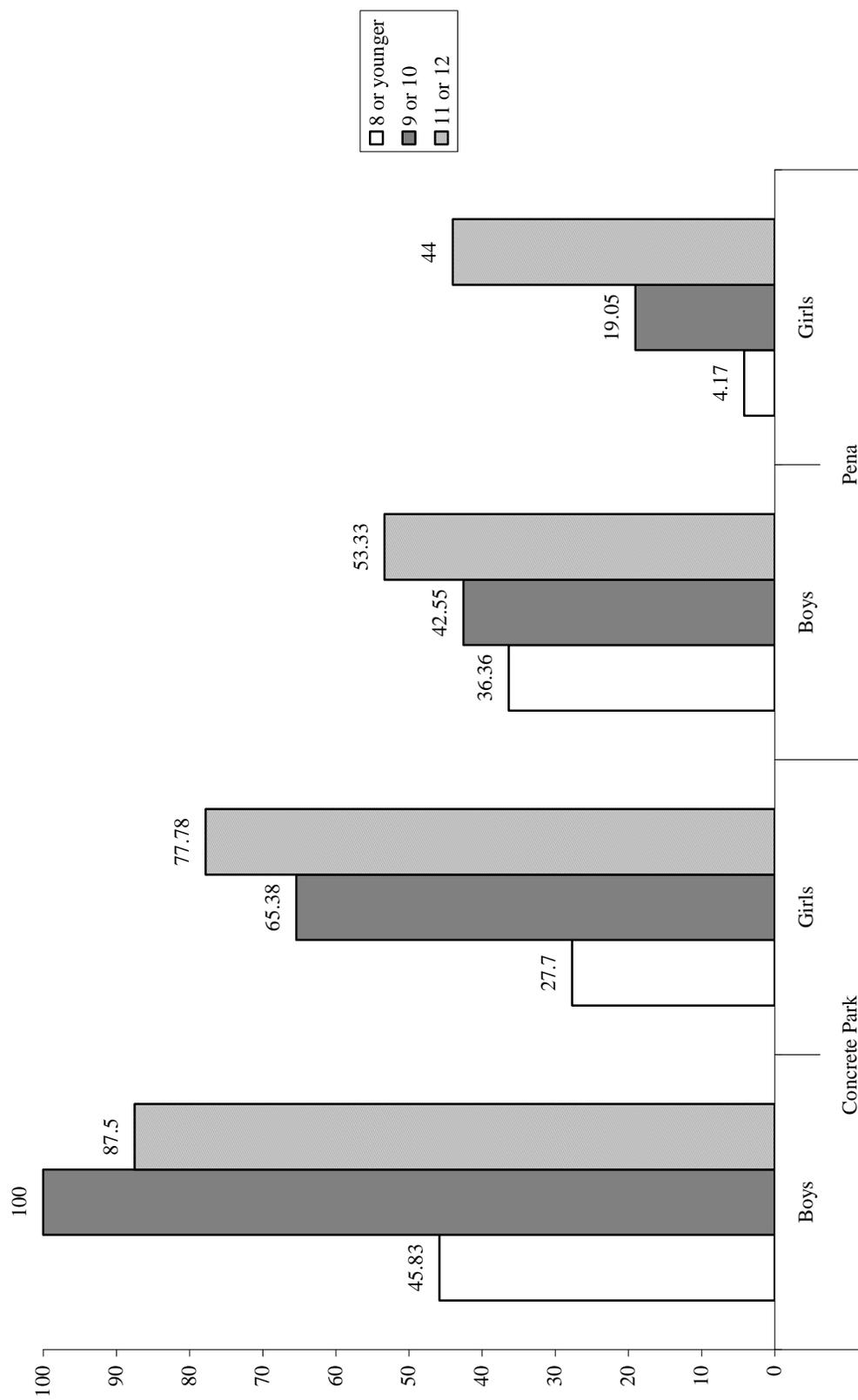
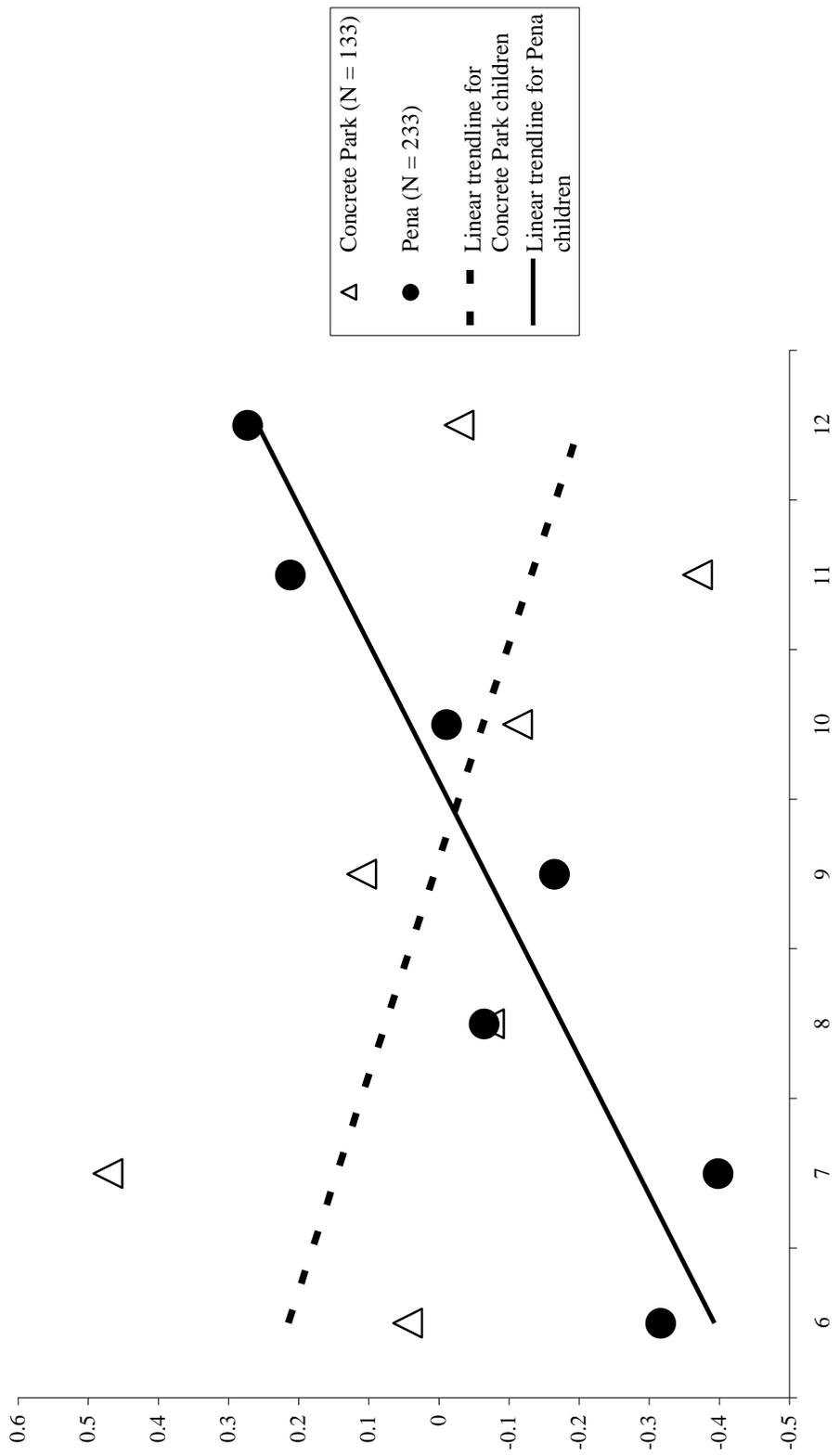
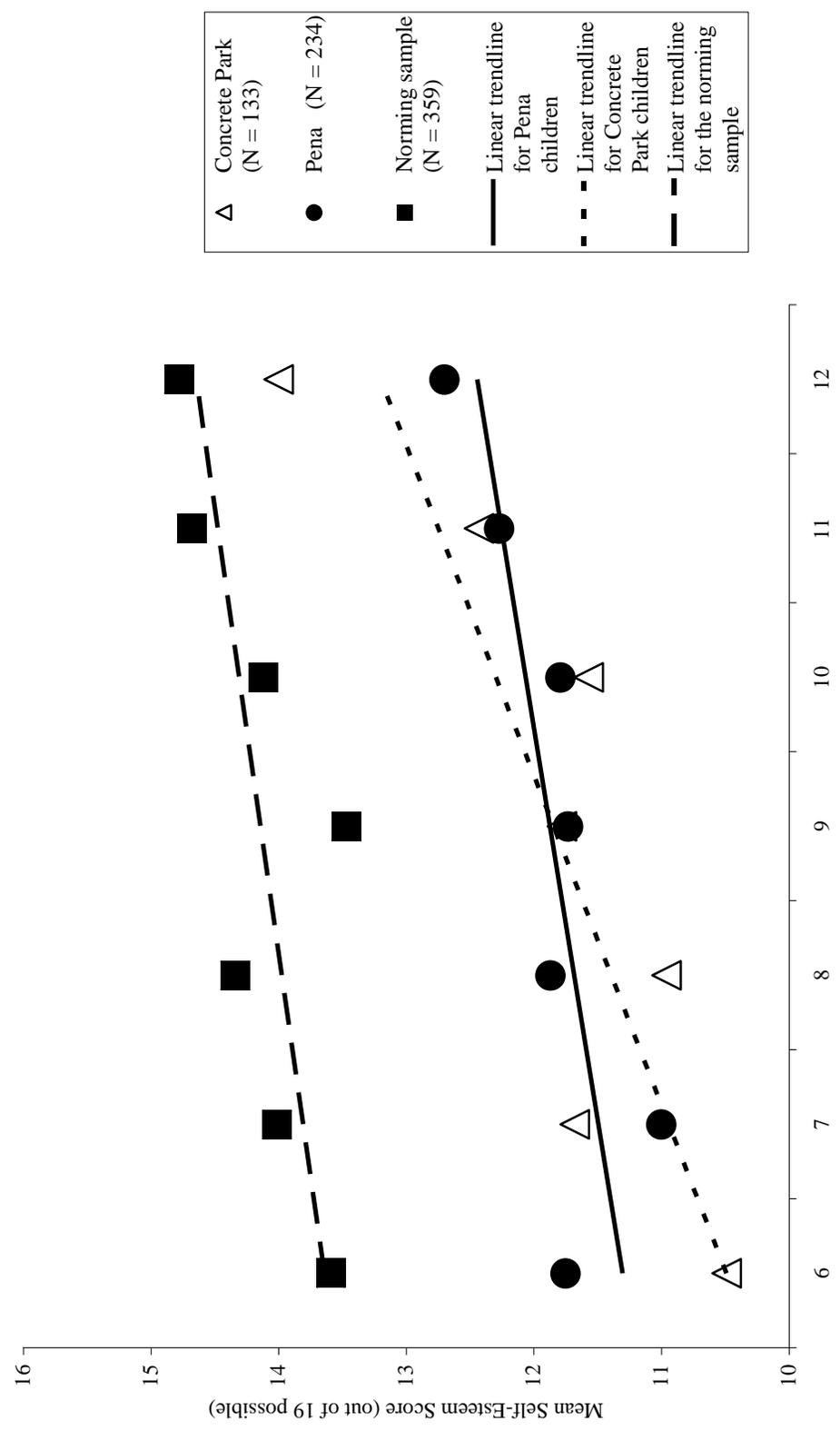


Figure 5: Mean peer comparison factor scores by age



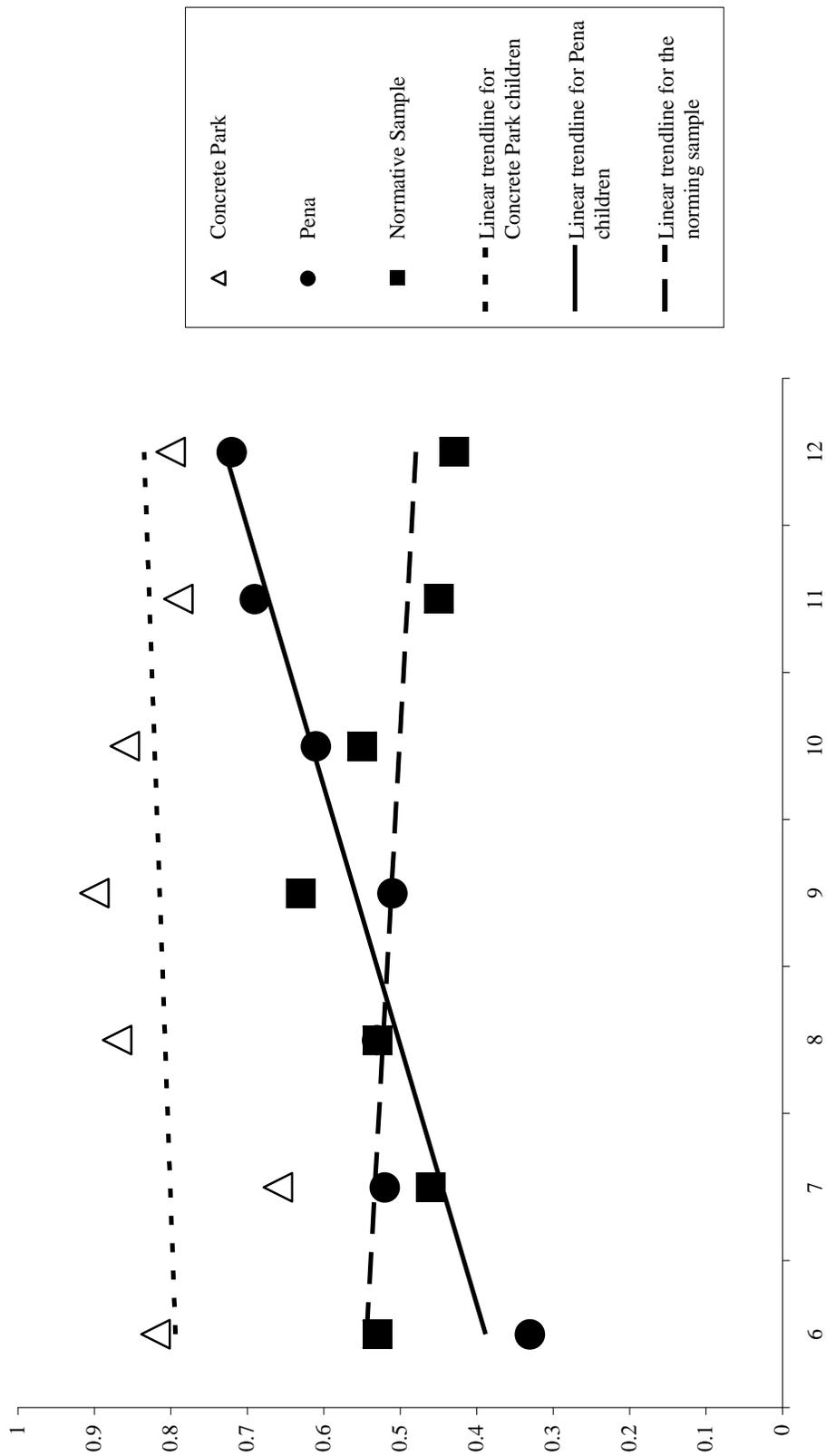
*Note: The Beta value representing the slope of the linear regression line predicting peer comparison factor scores by age for Concrete Park is -0.79 (p = .09); for Pena it is .114 (p = .002).

Figure 6: Global self-esteem scores by age



*Note: The Beta value representing the slope of the linear regression line predicting global self-esteem scores by age for Concrete park is .425 (p = .005); for Pena it is .224 (p = .033).

Figure 7: Percentage of children who would "change many things about myself"



*Note: The Beta value representing the slope of the linear regression line predicting scores on this change item by age for Concrete park is .003 (p = .886); for Pena it is .052 (p = .004).

APPENDIX B

TABLES

Table 1: General sample profile

	<i>Concrete Park</i>	<i>Pena</i>
Total included in surveys	141	239
Male	61	134
6-8 years old	25	34
9-10 years old	19	50
11-12 years old	17	47
Female	80	105
6-8 years old	35	30
9-10 years old	27	47
11-12 years old	18	28
Households with at least one employed adult	81.90%	87.80%
In blue collar or agricultural employment	60.00%	59.70%
In white collar or contractual employment	21.10%	28.10%
Average number of residents in a household	6.05	7.39
Average number of years children have been in the same community	6.2	4.6
Percentage of children who play sports at least once a week	98.60%	85.40%
Percentage of children who have played organized sports	60.90%	35.80%

Table 2: Developmental task priorities rated by adults for children from 6 to 12 years old

<i>Concrete Park (N = 45)</i>
1. Developing self-esteem (self-love) [3.61]
2. Forming a good relationship with parents and adults [3.64]
3. Developing basic reading, writing, and math skills [3.82]
4. Building good attitudes toward hygiene, the body, and physical self-care [4.41]
5. Developing values and morals [4.64]
6. Learning to get along with other children [5.53]
7. Developing the ability to think and be creative [6.77]
8. Achieving personal independence [6.82]
9. Learning teamwork (working in groups) [7.73]
10. Learning physical skills for play, games, and sports [8.01]
<i>Pena (N = 47)</i>
1. Building good attitudes toward hygiene, the body, and physical self-care [3.19]
2. Learning physical skills for play, games, and sports [4.36]
3. Developing basic reading, writing, and math skills [4.51]
4. Forming a good relationship with parents and adults [4.85]
5. Learning to get along with other children [5.28]
6. Developing values and morals [6.36]
7. Developing the ability to think and be creative [6.40]
8. Developing self-esteem (self-love) [6.44]
9. Learning teamwork (working in groups) [6.57]
10. Achieving personal independence [7.31]
<i>American University Students (N = 206)</i>
1. Developing self-esteem (self-love) [3.66]
2. Learning to get along with other children [3.82]
3. Forming a good relationship with parents and adults [4.16]
4. Developing values and morals [4.62]
5. Developing the ability to think and be creative [4.88]
6. Developing basic reading, writing, and math skills [5.19]
7. Building good attitudes toward hygiene, the body, and physical self-care [6.86]
8. Learning teamwork (working in groups) [6.85]
9. Achieving personal independence [7.30]
10. Learning physical skills for play, games, and sports [7.70]

Table 3: Children's insults categorized by target and by characteristic being insulted

	Concrete Park (roasts)	Pena (<i>estigas</i>)
Total collected	44	81
Target of the insult		
Other's mother	52%	17%
Other's father	2%	53%
Other directly	41%	21%
Other's family or "house"	5%	9%
Characteristic being insulted		
Trait	77%	22%
Condition	23%	16%
Unseemly behavior	0%	25%
Peculiar behavior	0%	17%
Distinguished failure	0%	20%

Table 4: Mean scores on the CFSEI-3 and on self-evaluation items

	Concrete Park	Pena	CFSEI-3 norming sample
Mean global self-esteem ¹	11.83 (n = 133; SD = 3.28)	11.97 (n = 237; SD = 2.81)	14 (n = 359; SD = 4.0)
Percentage of children indicating happy feelings when thinking about their self	90.90% (n = 55)	75.86% (n = 29)	N/A
Percentage of children reporting "my family thinks I am important" ²	.88 (n = 134; SD = .33)	.81 (n = 237; SD = .39)	.92 (n = 838; SD = .28)
Percentage of children reporting "boys and girls like to play with me"	.86 (n = 137; SD = .33)	.85 (n = 238; SD = .36)	0.87 (n = 840; SD = 0.33)
Percentage of children reporting "I have many friends about my own age" ³	.82 (n = 137; SD = .38)	.91 (n = 237; SD = .29)	0.84 (n = 840; SD = .36)

¹ The mean for the norming sample is an approximation provided in the test manual for the CFSEI-3; it only includes children between 6 and 8.

Evaluations of the same items among children between 9 and 12 in the norming sample suggests an approximately equal mean.

² For this item, the mean for pena is significantly less than that of the normative sample. The other means are not significantly different.

³ For this item, the mean for pena is significantly greater than those of the other samples. The means for Concrete Park and the normative sample are not significantly different.

Table 5: Factor Analysis of CFSEI-3 Data

 Concrete Park

Factor 1: Social Integration

(Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings: 2.931, explaining 15.4% of variance)

- Children often pick on me
- Other children are mean to me
- I usually feel like I don't fit in
- I often feel left out of things at home
- My parents make me feel like I am not good enough

Factor 2: Peer Comparison

(Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings: 1.771, explaining 9.3% of variance)

- Most boys and girls are smarter than I am
- Most boys and girls are better than I am
- Most boys and girls are better at doing things than I am
- Most boys and girls play games better than I do

Factor 3: Popularity

(Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings: 1.468, explaining 7.7% of variance)

- I have many friends about my own age
- My parents are interested in me and the things that I do
- Boys and girls like to play with me
- I spend a lot of time daydreaming

Factor 4: Aptitude

(Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings: 1.315, explaining 6.9% of variance)

- My teacher feels that I am not good enough
- I am clumsy
- I usually take a long time to do my schoolwork

Factor 5: Valued at Home

(Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings: 1.259, explaining 6.6% of variance)

- My family thinks I am important
- I have often thought about running away from home

* "I would change many things about myself if I could" does not fit with any factor
(it is closest to Factor 5 with a component loading of .369)

Table 5, continued.

Pena

Factor 1: Peer Comparison

(Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings: 2.407, explaining 12.7% of variance)

Most boys and girls are smarter than I am

Most boys and girls are better than I am

Most boys and girls are better at doing things than I am

Most boys and girls play games better than I do

Factor 2: Feeling Valued

(Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings: 1.871, explaining 9.8% of variance)

My parents are interested in me and the things that I do

Boys and girls like to play with me

My family thinks I am important

I would change many things about myself if I could

Factor 3: Social Integration

(Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings: 1.493, explaining 7.9% of variance)

I have many friends about my own age

I spend a lot of time daydreaming

Children often pick on me

I usually take a long time to do my schoolwork

Factor 4: Home Life

(Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings: 1.319, explaining 6.9% of variance)

I have often thought about running away from home

I often feel left out of things at home

My parents make me feel like I am not good enough

Factor 5: Out of Home Life

(Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings: 1.206, explaining 6.3% of variance)

My teacher feels that I am not good enough

I usually feel like I don't fit in.

* "Other children are mean to me" does not fit with any factor (it is closest to Factor 4 with a component loading of .394), nor does "I am clumsy" (it is closest to Factor 1 with a component loading of .301).

Table 6: What would you change about yourself if you could?

 Concrete Park (N = 50)

32% Would change their "attitude" or "act"

12% Would change their appearance (weight, face, hair, skin, nails, teeth)

12% Would change how they are "bad" or "act up"

10% Would change their test scores and grades in school

8% Would change themselves have money and / or a job

8% Would change their "life"

6% Would change their physical strength

6% Would change how often they get mad

6% Would change their house or room

6% Would be nicer to people

Other changes mentioned in Concrete Park:

Mentioned by two children: Everything I do; Bicycle; Stop fighting; Mouth; Do chores;
Writing / Reading; Mom's weight / health; Stop whining / crying.

Mentioned by one child: Not have sisters; Self; The park; More time with Dad; Sisters;
How people are mean; Play the lottery; Stop cursing; Stop talking back; Be happy;
Read more; Way of treating people; More thankful; Manners; Move out of the projects;
Stop yelling; More sleep; Not get old; The city.

Table 6, continued

Pena (N= 105)
32% Would change their clothing and/or shoes
17% Would change the time they devote to studying and schoolwork
10% Would change the amount of respect they give to elders
8.6% Would change the amount of time they spend playing
6.7% Would change their family house
5.7% Would stop gossiping and / or talking nonsense
5.7% Would bring peace and harmony and / or end pain and death
4.8% Would live better and / or have a good life
4.8% Would not offend others and / or fight
4.8% Would help others more

Other changes mentioned in Pena:

Mentioned by two children: Intelligence; Live happily; Behave with other children; Work harder; Food; New school.

Mentioned by one child: Time talking with friends; School material; Vocabulary; Preparation; Honesty; Humbleness; Singing; Hair / skin (mentioned by an albino girl); Listening to parents; Church attendance; Hygiene; Learn to write.

Table 7: Correlations among feelings about self, perceptions of inclusion, and perceptions of competitive success

Concrete Park (N = 51)				
Variable	Variable			
	1	2	3	
1. Global self-esteem				
2. Happiness when thinking about one's self	.135 (p = .345)			
3. Perceptions of inclusion	.257 (p = .068)	.197 (p = .150)		
4. Perceptions of competitive success	.404 (p = .003)	-.052 (p = .705)	.192 (p = .161)	
Pena (N = 29)				
Variable	Variable			
	1	2	3	
1. Global self-esteem				
2. Happiness when thinking about one's self	.294 (p = .121)			
3. Perceptions of inclusion	.135 (p = .484)	.658 (p = .000)		
4. Perceptions of competitive success	-.067 (p = .730)	-.171 (p = .374)	.019 (p = .921)	

*Note: Analyzing these same relationships through regression equations also demonstrates that only perceptions of competitive success are significantly associated with global self-esteem in Concrete Park ($p < .01$) and that only perceptions of inclusion are significantly associated with happiness with thinking about one's self in Pena ($p < .001$). Correlation values are presented here for easier interpretation.

Appendix C: Olympic Aid statement on children and sport

From: <http://www.olympicaid.org/childrenandsport.asp>, retrieved May 10, 2002.

What is play?

Play, which is any physical activity that is fun and participatory, provides many benefits to children and is essential to their healthy physical and socio-emotional development. The United Nations (UN) and its member-states affirmed their commitment to the right to play in the 1989 UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child.

Access to play is particularly fragile for children affected by conflict, disease or poverty, and for those who have been marginalized for a variety of reasons, including gender, ability, ethnicity, religion or social background. Play occupies children's minds and bodies, giving them an opportunity to leave the difficulties of the past and present behind. Children must be allowed to have fun and build skills for the future. Play allows children to be children.

Helping Children Through Sport

Sport programs are vital in helping children meet individual developmental needs. Sport provides clear physiological benefits, improving disease resistance and muscular, and bone development. The psychosocial benefits of sport include:

- Development of self-esteem and confidence;
- Building of trust, both among the peer group and of adults;
- Teaching of interpersonal communication skills and conflict resolution;
- Encouragement of participation and understanding through teamwork;
- Imparting of leadership skills;
- Outlet for frustration;
- Alleviation of boredom; and
- Engagement of children in education and peace-building activities.

Through our experiences in the field, we have come to understand the importance of play in a child's social life. Games and the roles children play within them can help children understand such important concepts as decision making through due process, tolerance, compromise and resolution.

Understanding Democracy

Sport is also a powerful tool that enables children to understand democracy. Children learn the importance of building teams and relying on others to work together towards a common goal. They learn how to make decisions through accepted processes, including team building and sharing, consideration of the views of others, and the balancing of

interests. While these may be simple lessons on a playground, children learn to take the rules of sport and play to the more complex field of adulthood.

Understanding Fair Play

Sport provides new opportunities to learn about the rules of life and to understand the concept of fair play. It also allows for a better understanding and acceptance of differences among people. This is especially evident when different ethnic groups participate in together. Silken Laumann, an Olympic Aid Athlete Ambassador, traveled to the refugee camps of the Sudan and Eritrea in August of 2000. While playing a game of soccer with the young girls in the camp, she learned that many had never spoken to each other before the game, even though some had been born in the camp. Understanding rules and developing respect for one's opponent are lessons learned through sport that may be applied to life.

Encouraging Female Participation and Leadership

Olympic Aid promotes female participation in our programs, as athletes and as coaches. This female leadership encourages acceptance of the participation of women in all parts of society. Using sport as a means to build local leadership among young adults and children alike is another key factor in our policy. Children who are leaders in their youth communities will hopefully use the skills they learn to assume leadership roles in their adult lives.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution is another lesson learned from engaging in sport. Teamwork as well as competition teaches children the value of understanding their opponents and working together to arrive at a shared goal. Children learn about compromise and collaboration to reach positive outcomes.

Sport a Global Scale

Sport's transcultural nature gives it the power to unite people and foster dialogue. We need only look to the Olympic Games to understand the importance of sport in the engagement of national and individual pride, not to mention human solidarity and the promotion of peace, participation, and fair play. Olympic Aid is dedicated to furthering the use of sport globally as a tool of development.

We intend to enable governments and organizations throughout the world to use sport in terms of building their domestic capacities. Sustainability can be achieved by encouraging local communities to take ownership of Olympic Aid programs and to be involved in their management and development. Management training and continuing education are integral to the development of sustainable programs. Children who take

part in our programs are encouraged to stay involved and continue the program as part of peer leadership initiatives.

Olympic Aid and our ambassadors will also continue to encourage states to become accountable to the ratified United Nations Convention on Children's Rights. Sport is also a way to engage a community in awareness and education programs that affect their health and well-being. Awareness campaigns that address issues like vaccinations, health care and HIV/AIDS have proved more effective when linked to physical activity through sports festivals and peer group initiatives. For more information on how we are working with the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations (GAVI) and The Vaccine Fund to implement such programs, please see children's health.

Appendix D: VERBAL INSULTS COLLECTED IN CONCRETE PARK AND PENA

Content categories:

Trait insult: Directed at a quality of a person that is enduring and relatively permanent such as being ugly, fat, skinny, deformed, crazy, or stupid.

Condition insult: Directed at a condition of a person that is temporary and somewhat easy to change such as being poor, dirty, hungry, corrupt, or weak.

Behavior insult: Directed at an action, or set of actions, taken by a person and considered disgraceful, improper, stupid, strange, or a wasted opportunity. For analytic purposes this category includes three sub-categories:

- *Unseemly:* Directed at behavior which is inappropriate or disgraceful for someone in a particular role or of a particular age, status, or position in society.
- *Peculiar:* Directed at behavior considered unintelligent or strange, thus indirectly representing a sort of character flaw.
- *Distinguished failure:* Behavior involving a wasted opportunity where someone has an idealized opportunity or position of power in which they perform poorly or disappointingly.

Pena

Trait insult: Directed at a quality of a person that is enduring and relatively permanent such as being ugly, fat, skinny, deformed, crazy, or stupid.

Your father is the ugliest person in the world, when he went out of your house one day he was fined. (12 year old boy)

Your father was fired from his job because he wasn't circumcised. (It is embarrassing for a grown man to not be circumcised; 14 year old girl).

Your mother is blind, but she can choose good bread. (This is making fun of the mother for being blind, yet still being focused on shopping and spending money).

Your father is the tallest person in the world, and because he is that tall he was able to pinch the sky. (The insult is that your father is a physical freak; 22 year old female).

The face of your father is like a doormat in Portugal. (Basically saying your father's face is ugly- it is only good enough to be a doormat in a wonderful place like Portugal; 12 year old girl).

Your mother is the fattest person in the world, and because she is so big she has to wear tire earnings. (14 year old female)

Your mother doesn't have teeth, but she wanted to bite a thief. (The mother is deformed and crazy; 13 year old male)

Your father's left shoe has a lazy eye (The insult is a little strange, but essentially says that even the father's shoe is deformed; 12 year old girl).

In 1992 you were considered to be the ugliest person in the world- when you were passing next to the bakery all the bread burned; in 2002 you received the Nobel prize

in the United States (You got a huge prize because of how ugly you are; 14 year old female)

The smell of your father's mouth is what killed the first president (of Angola) Agustino Neto. (This is mostly insulting the father's odor, but plays on the well-known fact that the circumstances of Neto's death were suspicious; 14 year old girl)

Where your father shits, the grass dies/fades. (10 year old girl)

Your father left Congo because it doesn't produce salt. (The insult is about being from a poor country like Congo which can't even make it's own salt; 11 year old boy)

Your belly is like a tomato. (10 year old boy)

Your chest is like a biscuit, when you try to concentrate it breaks (12 year old boy).

The bump on your head is ambidextrous- can use both hands. (This is just a strange way of making fun of someone's appearance; 12 year old boy).

Your father is so dumb that he tried to stop a limo with his slipper. (12 year old boy)

You're ugly and your face is like a train (11 year old boy)

When you go to have someone take your picture the camera and film break (11 year old boy)

Pena

Condition insult: Directed at a condition of a person that is temporary and somewhat easy to change such as being poor, dirty, hungry, corrupt, or weak.

- 1) Your father's face stops fitting when the watch marks twelve o'clock. (Because your face expands when you don't eat, this suggests the father is hungry and poor; 9 year old girl)
- 2) Your father hit himself with paper and he lost a toe nail (He is weak; 19 year old male).
- 3) Your father is the dirtiest person in the world, when he is passing near the building people spit at him. (Your father has bad hygiene; 8 year old girl).
- 4) Your father went to make analysis at the hospital and the result was that he is a stealer. (The basic insult is that the father is a thief; 14 year old female)
- 5) Your father is the dirtiest person in the world. He went to the beach to have a bath and the water ran away from him. (12 year old girl)
- 6) Your father is the best [most] doubtful person in the world that came out from reading the journal shaking his head (saying I don't believe). (The insult is that it is bad to always be doubting; 12 year old male).
- 7) Your mother gave a bad look at the water point and the water stopped. (This is insulting because even the water is scared of her; 12 year old girl)
- 8) In the time of starving/war everybody in your house gathered on the back of a matchbox. (The insult here is that the family was so skinny because they had no food; 10 year old boy)

- 9) You had a mosquito leg for Christmas (25th of December). (The insult here is that the family is so poor they cannot celebrate Christmas properly; 10 year old boy)
- 10) In the time of war you used diarrhea to bake a cake on the 25th of December. (The insult is that your family had nothing with which to properly celebrate Christmas; 10 year old boy)
- 11) Everybody in your house was having a bath with just a can of soft drink, and there was still water left over. (This is insulting the hygiene of the family; 7 year old boy)
- 12) Your father bumped himself on paper and he broke his toe nail. (The father is weak; 12 year old boy)
- 13) Your breakfast was roast ice and bread. (The insult here is that your family is poor; 9 year old boy)

Pena

Unseemly: Directed at behavior which is inappropriate or disgraceful for someone in a particular role or of a particular age, status, or position in society.

Your father lost five Kwanzas and went to complain at “Have Courage, Nation.” (“Have Courage, Nation” was a program on Angolan TV which tried to reunite family members lost during the war; It would be considered pathetic to treat an insignificant amount of money like a lost family member; 13 year old boy)

For your father to have a bath, he needs someone to run after him as if he was a kid.

(Only children run away from baths, so this is saying that the father is both dirty and like a crazy child; 14 year old girl).

Your father was born in 1202, and he only stopped making cars of tin cans by demand of the court after United States independence. (Even though the father is very old, he still makes tin can cars like a little kid; the insult is that the father never really became an adult)

Your father wasn't weaned off his mother's breast until he was 38 years old. (This is an insult because the father was like a baby for so long)

Your mother in the time of war was running away and she took the dog instead of taking the baby on the bed. (It would be unthinkable to care more about a dog than about a baby; 15 year old male)

Your father stayed overnight in mourning just with one dance move (one touch of the drum). (The insult is that the father went to a funeral and barely mourned; 12 year old female).

Your father made a doll pregnant and he ran away in the bush. (The father is both sleeping around, and doing it in a bizarre way; 13 year old male).

Your father is only able to walk with crutches, but you asked him for a ride. (The insult is primarily that the child demands too much from a crippled father; 15 year old male)

Your traded your mother for an unripe mango. (The insult is to the child for not valuing the mother; 10 year old male).

In the time of war you traded your mother for two tins of sardines. (The main insult here is not valuing the mother; 14 year old boy)

When 'Drew' was travelling he shit on the airport runway. (Drew was scared and pathetic when leaving on an airplane; 13 year old boy)

In your house you have a pan with potato leaves on top and cooked maize on the bottom. (This is insulting because it would be a pathetically inappropriate way to cook; 12 year old girl).

Your mother is the biggest harlot in the world, but she doesn't have sex. (The mother is considered a harlot, but does not even do that correctly; adult male)

In the time of war, because of hunger, your mother pretended she was a hen in order not to be caught by UNITA. (This is insulting because the mother was both skinny from hunger and acted in a desperate way; 10 year old boy)

Your father, in the time of war, he tried to make rice like you make *funge*. (*Funge* is the corn-meal staple food in Angola- to try and cook rice like *funge* is pathetic and desperate; 10 year old boy).

Someone hid your father in his pocket during the time of war. (The insult is that your father could not fend for himself; 10 year old boy)

In your house when you are eating, if a person drops a grain of rice then you are going to have the police come. (The family is so miserly that they worry about a grain of rice; 12 year old girl)

During the time of war someone had your father in their pocket. (The insult is that your father could not fend for himself; 10 year old boy)

Your Dad used to hang from Savimbi's beard. (Savimbi was the hated rebel leader in Angola's civil war- it would be dishonorable to have been beholden to him during the war; 9 year old boy)

You went to register (for school) and said you were your younger brother. (The insult is that the person tried to cheat their way into school; 12 year old boy).

Pena

Peculiar: Directed at behavior considered unintelligent or strange, thus indirectly representing a sort of character flaw.

- 1) Your father was invited for a party to play a game called “soeca” (card game), he was wearing soccer shoes and he also wore a bra and he had a whistle to referee the game. (Because the game doesn’t require any of the things he brought, nor does it require a referee; this suggests the father is acting strangely; 14 year old boy).
- 2) When your mother cooks, she puts bars up on the top of the pan so that nobody smells the odor. (Because it is impossible to try and stop smells using bars, and because it doesn’t matter if people smell the odor, this suggests the mother is being dumb; 13 year old girl).
- 3) Chipuco has a pair of Isuzu sport shoes with license plates LDA-22-44 (Chipuco thinks shoes are cars and thus is being dumb; 10 year old boy).
- 4) Your father and your mother were playing basketball under their bed and they were scoring in the bed pan. (This is saying that your parents are crazy because it is impossible to play basketball under the bed, and it is stupid to try and score in the bed pan).
- 5) In your house you have underwear that is 15 cm and the person that gets up first is the one that wears it. (The insult here is partly that this is just strange, and partly that people getting up early are often being greedy trying to get the available food; 9 year old girl)

- 6) Your mother has underwear made out of leather and when its dirty she polishes it.
(Polishing underwear is strange and funny because it is not realistic; 13 year old girl).
- 7) Your mother slept with a porter, and gave birth to a wheel-barrow. (This is considered improper, strange, and funny because its not realistic; 19 year old male).
- 8) Your mother slept with a toy doll and your father was jealous of that (Basically saying both your parents act crazy and strange; 17 year old female).
- 9) Your mother sells water in the evening, when she sees the police she hides the water in her pubic hair. (This is saying that is a stupid thing to do, and it is also supposed to be funny because it is just gross; 19 year old female)
- 10) Your father was invited to go to the church and he brought the book from first class (first grade) with him. (This insult combines two ways of behaving stupidly- both being an adult at first grade level, and thinking you should bring school books to church; 17 year old male)
- 11) You ate the telephone and shit hello. (12 year old boy)
- 12) You went to register a fish as your youngest brother. (This is insulting because it is both stupid and strange to think a fish is your brother; 9 year old girl).
- 13) Your mom is the best at trying to dodge the rain. (Because dodging the rain is impossible, this is a dumb thing to be good at; 7 year old boy)
- 14) You were walking around the bed pan and you said “Angola is big.” (You are so dumb you think the bed pan is the nation; 12 year old girl)

Pena

Distinguished Failure: Behavior involving a wasted opportunity where someone has an idealized opportunity in which they perform poorly or disappointingly.

- 1) Your father wanted to be like American “nigas”, and he started wearing a blanket cloth on his forehead. (This suggests the father is trying and failing to be cool: you should use a bandana or hat, but not a blanket; 10 year old girl).
- 2) Your father went to the United States to be trained as a driver for cars made out of cans. (It is a dream to go to the US, but it would be a wasted opportunity if done for something silly and childish like driving toy cars; 14 year old girl).
- 3) Your father fought for 15 years, hair grew on the sole of his foot, and he didn’t win anything. (The hair growing on the feet just emphasizes the long time he fought. The insult is that it was for naught- he still didn’t win any honors or distinguish himself; 8 year old boy)
- 4) Your father in the war killed 120 enemies, and the president of the country gave him as a reward a cartridge of bullets. (The insult is that he should have received something better than a cartridge of bullets- his good soldiering was for naught; 20 year old male).
- 5) Your father was issued a passport just to travel behind your house. (Getting a passport is very difficult and desirable because it means one can travel abroad, thus it would be a waste to actually get one and then just travel behind the house; 14 year old boy)

- 6) Your father was given the witchcraft so as to manipulate bread from children. (This is an insult because he witchcraft should be used for bigger things than stealing bread from children; 12 year old girl).
- 7) Your father is the best carjacker in the world that manage to steal cars made of cans. (This is insulting both because the father is a thief, and because he is supposed to be good at it yet wastes his time on worthless toys; 14 year old boy)
- 8) Your mother went to Brazil for studying a course of mending buckets. (It is a dream to go away to Brazil, but it is a waste to do it for nothing meaningful; 13 year old female)
- 9) Your father is the best witchcrafter of the world that was able to stop farting with a hammer. (He wastes his powerful witchcraft on something dumb; 16 year old female)
- 10) You have a freezer in your house that works with wood, but only freezes dried fish. (Having a freezer is idealized, yet it is pointless if it uses wood and only freezes something that does not need to be frozen; 13 year old female)
- 11) Your father is the best fancy dresser of the world that tried to be stylish by wearing a clock. (The insult here is that he tried to be stylish and instead of wearing a nice watch he tried to wear a whole clock; 14 year old girl)
- 12) Your father has a limousine but for him to steer the steering wheel he had to put his foot on the road. (The insult is that the father has what seems to be a nice car, but he has to drive it in a lowly way; 14 year old girl)

- 13) Your father enrolled himself to be a deputy, but his name came out in the grinding.
(The father thought he was going to get a good job, but instead ended up assigned to menial mill work; 14 year old girl)
- 14) You learned how to swim inside a soup spoon. (You tried to learn how to swim- which would be good- in a silly way; 10 year old boy)
- 15) Your father was the tallest guy in the world, but he was still able to play basketball under the bed. (Your father is really tall and could be good at basketball, but instead he wastes his height on a game that is strange and would not require any height; 12 year old girl)
- 16) Your Dad was in jail for 70 years for stealing 5 kwanza. (The insult is that he got a serious punishment for a trivial offense; 9 year old boy)

Concrete Park

Trait insult: Directed at a quality of a person that is enduring and relatively permanent such as being ugly, fat, skinny, deformed, crazy, or stupid.

- 1) Your mama fat like a big old moose. (9 year old boy)
- 2) Your mama so fat when she sat on the toilet seat it said “get off me.” (9 year old girl)
- 3) Your mama so fat in 1993 the toilet broke down and said get your fat butt off me. (9 year old girl)
- 4) Your mama so fat, she went upstairs in my bathroom and broke down my whole floor. (7 year old girl)
- 5) When you go to sleep you don’t have dreams, you have movies [because your head is so big]. (11 year old girl)
- 6) Your mama so skinny she hula hoop with a Cheerio. (10 year old girl)
- 7) You so dumb you got hit by a parked car. (11 year old girl)
- 8) You so dumb, when they said it was chilly outside you went to get a bowl and spoon. (11 year old girl)
- 9) Your momma sat on the toilet, it said be getting your fat butt off me. (8 year old girl)
- 10) You momma’s ass cocked like a pistol. (10 year old boy)
- 11) You take pictures of naked boys; that’s why you gay. (10 year old boy)
- 12) You’re a fat pig. (7 year old girl)
- 13) You’re momma’s ugly. (7 year old girl)
- 14) Your momma’s pretty and your daddy’s fat. (7 year old girl)

- 15) Your momma is so fat when she got off the toilet it broke through the floor. (11 year old girl)
- 16) Your momma's so ugly, when she look in the mirror it broke. (11 year old girl)
- 17) You ugly. (6 year old girl)
- 18) You're an ugly dog. (9 year old boy)
- 19) You're momma ugly. (9 year old boy)
- 20) You're momma look like a man. (9 year old boy)
- 21) You got a peanut head. (8 year old boy)
- 22) You better get your big air head out. (8 year old boy).
- 23) You so stupid you don't even know your momma. (10 year old boy)
- 24) Your momma retarded. (10 year old boy)
- 25) Your momma so fat she break the toilet. (9 year old girl)
- 26) Your momma a bee. (10 year old boy)
- 27) Your momma so fat she on both sides of the family. (9 year old boy)
- 28) Your head's so big you fitten to flip over. (9 year old boy)
- 29) Your momma so dumb she can't keep a phone on. (11 year old boy).
- 30) Your mother so fat she sat on the toilet and it fell through the roof. (10 year old boy)
- 31) You're a shotgun head. (11 year old girl)
- 32) You're a crocodile Dundee head. (12 year old girl)
- 33) You momma so fat she got hit by a bus and said- who threw a rock?
- 34) Your so ugly your girlfriend dumped you for the ugliest boy in the world?

Concrete Park

Condition insult: Directed at a condition of a person that is temporary and somewhat easy to change such as being poor, dirty, hungry, corrupt, or weak.

- 1) Your mama's a crack head and slut; what you think her kids are going to be when they grow up? (10 year old girl)
- 2) Your mama sucks. (8 year old girl)
- 3) Your mama don't wear no drawers, she put them on the track, when the train saw went 50 miles back. (9 year old girl)
- 4) Your dad livin in a garbage can cause your Mom kicked him out. (8 year old boy)
- 5) Your grandma so old she thought the elevator was a mobile home. (10 year old boy)
- 6) Don't your momma tell you to take a bath? (10 year old boy)
- 7) When your momma on dope and the refrigerator broke [you] go to chokes. (11 year old girl)
- 8) You're dirty. (10 year old boy)
- 9) You stink (9 year old girl)
- 10) Your breath smells bad (9 year old girl)

Appendix E: Example Survey Forms for Children

Name:

Age: 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Grade: K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Do they live in the Wentworth Gardens development? (if not, where and who do they know in WG)

For how long (how many years)?

How many people do they live with?

Who is their guardian? (Mom, Dad, Sister, Grandparent?)

Do the adults in the home have jobs? Do they know what the jobs are?

How often do they play sports? Never Once a week 3-4 times a week Every day

Have they ever played organized sports on a team with a coach?

If so, for how many years:

Self-presentation: Good Normal Poor

Administered by:

Administered with:

Any other comments:

Protocol before administering survey:

Explain that the answers they give won't be shared with anyone- they are just for general information.

Ask the kids to try to be honest- they won't get in trouble for any response.

Ask them to try not to talk to the other kids during the questions.

Tell them that if they are confused by anything, please feel free to ask you during the questions.

1.	I spend a lot of time daydreaming.	YES	NO
2.	Boys and girls like to play with me.	YES	NO
3.	My parents never get angry with me.	YES	NO
4.	Most boys and girls are better at doing things than I am.	YES	NO
5.	I am never shy.	YES	NO
6.	Most boys and girls play games better than I do.	YES	NO
7.	I have never taken anything that did not belong to me.	YES	NO
8.	My parents make me feel like I am not good enough.	YES	NO
9.	I never get angry.	YES	NO
10.	I have many friends about my own age.	YES	NO
11.	Most boys and girls are smarter than I am.	YES	NO
12.	Children often pick on me.	YES	NO
13.	I like everyone I know.	YES	NO
14.	I would change many things about myself if I could.	YES	NO
15.	I have often thought about running away from home.	YES	NO
16.	I never worry about anything.	YES	NO
17.	Other children are mean to me.	YES	NO
18.	I always tell the truth.	YES	NO
19.	My parents are interested in me and the things that I do.	YES	NO
20.	Most boys and girls are better than I am.	YES	NO
21.	I always know what to say to people.	YES	NO
22.	My teacher feels that I am not good enough.	YES	NO
23.	My family thinks I am important.	YES	NO
24.	I never do anything wrong.	YES	NO
25.	I am clumsy.	YES	NO
26.	I usually feel like I don't fit in.	YES	NO
27.	I am never unhappy.	YES	NO
28.	I usually take a long time to do my schoolwork.	YES	NO
29.	I often feel left out of things at home	YES	NO

What would you change about yourself if you could?

Appendix F: Developmental Tasks Survey for Adults

This is a list of developmental tasks that experts think are important for children between the ages of about 6 to about 12. Based on your opinion, try to rank these 10 tasks in order of how important you think they are for children at these ages. 1 would be the most important and 10 would be the least important (1=first, 2=second, 3=third, 4=fourth, 5=fifth, 6=sixth, 7=seventh, 8=eighth, 9=ninth, 10=tenth).

_____ Learning physical skills for play, games, and sports.

_____ Building good attitudes toward hygiene, the body, and physical self-care.

_____ Learning to get along with other children.

_____ Forming good relationships with parents and adults.

_____ Developing basic reading, writing, and math skills.

_____ Developing self-esteem (self-love).

_____ Developing values and morals.

_____ Achieving personal independence.

_____ Learning teamwork (group work).

_____ Developing the ability to think and be creative.

Appendix G: Interview Guide
(for adults)

Childhood in the local community:

- What do you think about this camp as a place for kids?
- Is there anything distinctive about this camp as a place for kids?
- Who had a better childhood- you or your child/children here? Why?
- Did the war influence kids here? How?
- From an outsiders perspective, many people think these camps are bad places for children- what would you tell these people?
- What is the best age to be? If you could be any age, what age would you pick? Why?
- What is the worst age to be? If you could avoid any age, which age? Why?
- Are there differences in a child's "way of being" compared to an adult?
- How can you tell if a child here is good or bad? If they've been raised well? (Try to elicit at least two specific behavioral indicators; and reasons why kids turn out good or bad).

Self-esteem: (note to self- is there any way to distinguish between feeling badly, and feeling badly about the SELF?)

- What does self-esteem (amor-propria) mean to you?
- Is self-esteem important for children? Why or why not?
- What provides children in your community self-esteem/to feel good about themselves (to have amor-propria, and/or self-confidence)?
- What causes children to lose self-esteem/feel badly about themselves (to not have amor-propria, and/or self-confidence)? What hurts their feelings?
- Can a child ever have too much amor-proprio or self-confidence?
- What are, in your opinion, three specific differences between children in your community that have high self-esteem, and children that have low self-esteem.
- Is it possible for a child to have bad environment and still feel good about themselves- still think they are a good person? Explain.

Sports in the local community:

- When children have free time, what are some of the best activities for them?
- What are the best sports and games?
- Do children learn anything from these activities?
- Did you have a favorite activity as a child?
- If someone played sports when they were young, can that help them in their adult life even if they stop playing sports? How?

Teamwork:

- What does teamwork mean to you?
- If you see children playing together, can you tell if one is good at teamwork and one is not? How?

Would it be better for a child to be the best player on a bad team, or the worst player on a good team?

Appendix G, Continued
(for children)

A comparative study of sport and its benefits in local communities:

1) When you think about yourself and the person that you are, which of these faces is most like you? This one is very sad, this one is a little bit sad, this one is happy, this one is very happy.

2) When there are activities to do in the camp, people include me (put me in there): never, sometimes, almost always, always.

3) When there are games to play, I win: never, sometimes, almost always, always.

4) In school, when there are exams, the teacher gives points from one to 100 (??). If you were grading how you are as a person, how many points would you give.

- What is the best age to be? Why?
- What is the worst age to be? Why?
- What do you want to be when you grow up?
- How can you hurt someone's feelings?
- How can you make someone feel good about themselves?
- What are some of your favorite games to play? Your favorite sports?
- Do you learn anything when you play these games?
- Do you ever play the game of "abusing each other"- trade verbal insults? What are some of the best insults you have heard or said? How do you decide what is best? Is it just the funniest- or do you actually want to hurt the other person's feelings?
- How can you tell if a child here is good or bad? If they've been raised well? (Try to elicit at least two specific behavioral indicators; and reasons why kids turn out good or bad).
- What is your favorite time/part of the day?
- What is your least favorite time/part of the day?
- Would you rather be an average player on a winning team, or be the best player on a bad team. Explain.

Appendix H: Video Interview Guide

In general- I want you to help me understand what is going on in these videos. I am particularly interested in children, the way they feel about themselves, the way they get along with each other, and the significance of sports. I need to know what you think is interesting, surprising, strange, and also what is normal or expected. I also want you to help me understand what you think seems different and what seems the same about children in the two videos.

Please, while watching the videos, speak any comments or questions that come to your mind:

After each video: Did you notice anything that surprised you- that was different than what you expected?

Any general observations on the way kids seemed to feel about themselves?

Can you cite one situation you saw where a child would have been likely to gain self-esteem?

Can you cite one situation you saw where a child would have been likely to lose self-esteem?

Any general observations on the way kids seemed to get along with each other?

Can you cite one situation where you saw children using good teamwork?

Can you cite one situation where you saw children not using good teamwork?

Any general observations on the importance of sports in these two places?

Can you cite one situation that made you think sports is important for kids?

Can you cite one situation that made you think sports is not important for kids?

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