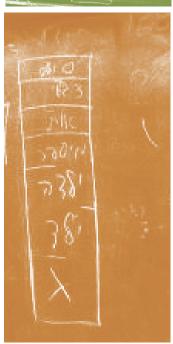


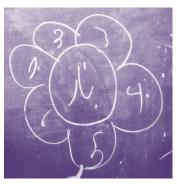
Uses of Hopscotch in Multicultural, Intergenerational Co-existence Education



by Simon Lichman



When I grew up in London in the 1950s, Hopscotch was considered a "girls game." Boys might have joined in for a bit of fun if invited, or to create a moment or two of havoc, but in general children needed to be guarded about crossing game-gender boundaries since playing "girls" or "boys" games could have consequences on their status in the group. Nevertheless, out of school, I spent hours drawing the courts, choosing pieces of slate with the "right feel" from flowerbeds, and playing the game either alone, with friends (boys and girls), or with my older sister and her friends. I loved the throwing, the hopping, the challenge of picking up, and, especially, the two-skip twist-turn that could be achieved with panache.



But what is special about Hopscotch? Why is it such a well-loved game? What might children learn from studying it? And what does it offer the process of inter-cultural exchange, the bringing together of neighboring communities between whom there may be ongoing tensions or years of conflict? This article discusses how Hopscotch exemplifies the use of traditional games in a co-existence education program that brings together Jewish and Arab, Israeli and Palestinian, school communities.

Jews and Arabs, even those living side by side in Israel, often find that there is little opportunity of knowing one another in personal contexts. Adults may meet in the workplace, but children hardly meet at all, since, for the most part, there are different school systems.² Negative stereotyped images of each other, frequently exacerbated by the media, are reinforced by successive waves of violence and counter violence, leading to an atmosphere of deep mistrust and fear on both sides. In addition, both Jews and Arabs feel pressure to adapt to a mainstream identity and are often alienated from their own cultural backgrounds while they struggle to balance modernity with tradition, ethnicity with integration, religious observance with fundamentalism.

In 1991 I established the Centre for Creativity in Education and Cultural Heritage (CCECH) (a registered Israeli NGO) to implement programs that address these issues. Participants' folklore is used as a key for understanding each other and establishing positive partnerships between diverse cultural, religious, and national groups. Arab and Jewish elementary school communities are paired with classes of nine- to twelve-year-olds meeting regularly for Joint Activities over a period of two years. The themes for the program include Traditional Play, Song, and Dance in the first year, and Foodways, Traditions in Religion and Family Stories in the second year. The children also work on the responsibilities of being guests and hosts. However, the programs are flexible to cater for the specific interests and needs of each class-community. The CCECH team, together with participating schoolteachers, plans the implementation of these units of study and how long they will last.

The program is allotted one teaching hour per week in the curriculum of each participating Arab and Jewish class. Background lessons on folklore topics are taught by CCECH staff and teachers in each school separately. The pupils then interview their parents and grandparents, sharing information about their different traditions with their own classes. Every six to eight weeks, each pair of Arab and Jewish classes comes together for a Joint Activity designed around parents and grandparents who lead mixed groups of Jewish and Arab children in playing games and making dolls, toys, pickles, and bread, according to their different traditions and the practices of their own childhoods. When possible, participants visit synagogues, mosques, churches, craft workshops, museums, and parks together. These activities last for a full school morning and are hosted in each school alternately.³

Folklorists working in schools might expect to find cultural diversity, but many children, while being proud of their cultural backgrounds, religious and ethnic origins, also fear the stigma of their family traditions being seen as "old-fashioned" or even "primitive." There is an overwhelming need to fit in, to belong, not to stand out. When asked how many backgrounds we might find in any classroom, the children invariably answer, "We're all the same," despite the many different cultures and mother-tongues to be found in most Jewish classes, and the range of traditions in the more homogeneous Arab schools.⁴

We encourage children to collect their family folklore in the "source" language with as much contextual information as possible. We ask that names and texts be written in transliteration so that the whole class can read it and get a sense of the original language, with a translation of the meaning. This sensitivity and respect for other languages is also an important step toward the meetings between the Jewish and Arab children when all the activities are conducted bilingually in Hebrew and Arabic as a matter of course.

At the beginning of the program the children are asked, "What is folklore—can you give examples?" We introduce key words and concepts such as Tradition, Culture, Custom, Transmission, and explain that our first subject is Traditional Play. Gradually the children understand these key words and concepts as they become aware of how they apply to their own repertoires of play. They study paintings and photographs of different generations of people at play, and then they interview their families about the games they played in their childhoods, sharing the information they bring from home with their own classmates. They are intrigued by the differences as well as the similarities between the cultural groups that make up their own class communities. Games commonly found in both Arab and Jewish communities are Skipping, Five Stones, Marbles, Football, Apricot Stones, Duck Duck Goose, Elastics, and Hopscotch. We examine some of these games in depth, both in the classroom and the playground.⁶



Figure 1. Photo by Simon Lichman.

With Hopscotch we ask the children what we consider straightforward, fact-finding, opening questions: "Do any of you play Hopscotch? How do you play it? How many types of Hopscotch do you know?" usually receiving a misleading answer, "We all play it the same way." We then ask, "Who wants to draw Hopscotch on the board?" Everybody puts their hands up and as the chosen one begins to draw, the rest of the class, arms waving wildly unable to contain themselves, burst out, "No, that's not right," moving us into an animated discussion of concepts of "right," "wrong," "different." The idea of multiple versions of the "same game," of "variation" as opposed to "right" and "wrong," opens a new way of thinking for the children, and often for their teachers too. They begin to pay attention to how versions might be time-, place-, gender-, and religion-bound.

In Figure 1 we see Palestinian children in a small village school southeast of Jerusalem.⁷ The children's impatience with each other's "wrong" shapes of Hopscotch courts and their mounting frustrations have led the teacher to permit them to leave their desks and draw their own versions on the board. Apart from the ensuing collections of Hopscotch that it turns out "everyone knows," the children understand that this lesson is about versions and variation through living examples from their own traditions, and that all these courts are, in fact, part of their repertoire. They also revel in the seeming chaos of the moment when their teacher abandons class discipline.

As they learn how each community and generation has its own Hopscotch traditions, the children invariably comment, "They are the same as us," in that Hopscotch is almost always clearly Hopscotch no matter the version, and, "Wow, they play so differently," since there will be versions that each class community will not have seen before.

Many Hopscotch courts described by the Arab children have names that correspond to their patterns. In Figure 2 we see a court known as "Flower," described by girls from two Arab villages close to Jerusalem, which has the word "flower" or "fire" (as in this court) written in the middle. Players hop from one numbered petal to the other, finally landing in the center where they can put both feet down.⁸



Figure 2. Photo by Simon Lichman.

To the left of the blackboard is a line drawing of the court "Snake." It can also be a full serpentine shape with numbers written into the body of each section going up toward the "head," or a series of circles as seen on the right-hand side of the blackboard in Figure 1. Continuing with the animal theme, another court is called "Tortoise" (second right in Figure 1), which is round with a short ladder (tail) and a divided circle (body). In contrast, very few of the Hopscotch courts we have received from the Jewish communities have names.

Figure 3 shows part of a collection of Hopscotch courts that children in a Jewish school in the mixed Arab-Jewish town of Ramle brought from their parents and grandparents. The central court is one these children often used, consisting of straight up and down squares in which players fill in categories of information according to the sequence: "boy"/"girl"/"number"/"letter"/"color"/end."

The court on the right-hand side, described by a grandfather, was something these children had not seen before. The semicircular section at the top of the ladder is split into thirds, with the names Abraham written in the middle, Isaac to the left, and Jacob to the right. Why should the patriarchs turn up on a Hopscotch court? Does it reflect an over-zealous attitude toward religion, an inability to detach religion from the world of play, an obvious inclusion of Bible stories that are so much a part of the Jewish cultural environment? Or is it an example of children appropriating religious imagery to add the spice of heaven and hell to the game?

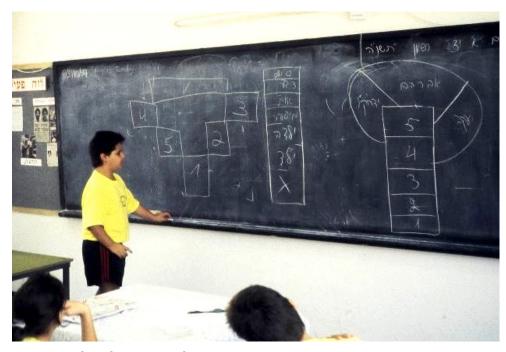


Figure 3. Photo by Simon Lichman.

Folklorists and anthropologists have written about Hopscotch as providing a symbolic move from "the earth" (here) to "heaven" (the imagined perfect elsewhere), with the risk of throwing the stone too far and ending up in hell. There are numerous British and European versions in which "earth," "sky," "heaven," and "hell" are written into the beginning or end of the Hopscotch court.⁹ In a version played by a Jewish mother who grew up in Morocco and France, "Paradise" is written into the semicircle, with "Hell" written into the furthest edge of this section. Lady Gomme writes that Hopscotch "at one time represented the progress of the soul from earth to heaven through various intermediate states, the name given to the last court being most frequently paradise or an equivalent, such as crown of glory." And in their concluding section on Hopscotch, Iona and Peter Opie remark that "on the Continent the Church seems to have converted the game into a religious exercise, the diagram having assumed the character of a journey through life to death and beyond." ¹⁰



Figure 4. Photo by Rivanna Miller.

Perhaps this Ramle Hopscotch court is a Jewish version of an "earth to heaven" tradition, with heaven represented by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, residing together in the Garden of Eden. When the children are told about such Earth/Heaven/Hell courts they usually laugh and are disinclined to ascribe this journey to their game. Nevertheless, they enjoy thinking about how the meaning of their games is open to academic interpretation and that variations of Hopscotch, for example, could be the subject of research projects.

Apart from the different versions of Hopscotch and the opportunities of playing on each other's courts, children learn about the interaction with, or intersection between, their "game-worlds" and "everyday life." We see how the court creates a world of its own as players chalk, scratch, or etch their presence onto the surface of their environment, be it concrete, asphalt, gravel, or earth. The drawn frames in their myriad shapes enclose an internal order that is usually numbered, a carefully contrived and inviting game-world to be jumped into, carved out of mundane surroundings.¹¹

This game-world is superimposed on public spaces, some of which are designated for ad-hoc play such as playgrounds and parks, which may have the paraphernalia of specific games like swings, climbing frames, goal posts, basketball hoops, or permanently painted Hopscotch courts, as opposed to space designated only for specialized play such as tennis courts, basketball courts, and soccer pitches (although, of course, different games will be played there when these spaces are "free"). Other places where children play Hopscotch are designated for civic purposes such as courtyards, pavements, and roads. And since it is not customary for Hopscotch players to "clean up" after play, the courts become signs of child-habitation, sometimes to be used again, maybe by a child nonchalantly hopping through the deserted court en route to somewhere else, a fading splendor of color, shape, number.¹²

With regard to game-worlds generally, grandparents often describe how they had access to more outside spaces because both rural and city environments were less built up and there were few formal play areas. Their game-spaces included fields, forests, empty lots, building sites, the remains of derelict structures, and abandoned building projects. These "dangerous" settings were used when adults were not around. Catch, Hide and Seek, and Dare, for example, were adapted to suit the space and "new games" were invented especially for these physical environments.¹³

Our classwork enables the children to present their individual family's games and to build a picture of their own class community's traditional repertoires of play. Although an objective in itself, it is also part of the preparation for the second phase of the program, the Joint Activities, in which the paired Jewish and Arab class communities meet. Parents and grandparents are invited to teach aspects of the home cultures the children have been researching. In the Traditional Play Joint Activities, small mixed groups of Arab and Jewish children move from one play station to the next, learning from parents and grandparents whose expertise as tradition artists is clearly visible and acknowledged in the schools through our programs.¹⁴

In planning sessions with our staff and the teachers, we consider combinations of games and play stations that reflect a range of intercultural and intergenerational variation and will create an overall atmosphere of learning and fun. Our ongoing formative evaluation has highlighted the importance of balancing game situations such as standing, sitting, running, simple and complex rules, complicated and easy moves, constant action versus turns, levels of language skills, and playing in teams, pairs, or as individuals.¹⁵

In role-playing exercises prior to these meetings, the children imagine the type of challenges they might face when learning and teaching new games or versions of games. They concentrate on potential frustrations, potential miscommunication, the behavioral differences they may encounter both in and out of play, and the need for patience and perseverance.

Hopscotch is an especially good way for participants to observe and interpret behavior, while involved in the process of learning about each other, because players are required to watch how the game as a whole progresses as opposed to awaiting their turns more or less passively. The physical game-world is clearly defined and the rules simple enough, despite the range of difference between versions, for players to become proficient quite quickly. The game space (court) is immediately accessible and the rules can be demonstrated rather than explained, without needing a common "verbal" language. It even offers unthreatening opportunities for cross-gender play. 16

The children can learn, for example:

- how each culture decides on the order of the players, or selection of teams;
- what they do while waiting for their turn;
- how they watch other children take turns, whether they ignore, encourage, or discourage the person playing;
- how easily laughter and talking in "the other" language can be misinterpreted as laughing *at* you, and therefore potentially hurtful, regardless of actual intent; and
- whether children are kind, sympathetic, tease, or dismiss players who lose or miss.

At the same time as making these observations, the children also need to learn how to take responsibility for their own behavior and keep the game atmosphere positive.

While we could build the Joint Activities around games that are completely "new" for the children, a mixture of games that include some with which they are familiar contributes toward a sense of security and evolving confidence within play-spaces, which for half the children (those from the "guest school") will be unknown territory and possibly perceived of as potentially threatening.¹⁷

The children respond well to being immersed in each other's game spaces. They usually come with positive attitudes, having been enchanted by the concepts of variation and version, the idea of "difference" within "the same thing," and their feelings of pride in the selection of games they will be playing, which have come from their own families' traditions. They are moved by the patience of the other children, parents, and grandparents who need to teach the moves appropriate to each new version of the games, and they enjoy the moments of sharing the results of their research and the thrill of learning together.

The transmission of home culture inevitably includes family stories that will reflect the history of the people of this region, as well as issues that are central to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In our programs, game-worlds from one country or area are mapped onto the terrain of another, regardless of the delicate question of borders, or the animosity of peoples separated by conflict yet living in the same or parallel space.

Within conflict situations items of folklore can appear to allude to, or raise, delicate topics that may be painful to both "sides," so that a Hopscotch court or a recipe from a particular area, for example, can evoke negative stereotyped perceptions of the "other," or the "other's" ideology, as if a political statement is being made. However, the material, in this instance Hopscotch courts and other games, has been generated as a natural consequence of children exploring their home cultures within a growing and often unexpected "wonder of discovery" and the anticipation of sharing with their counterparts.

From the children's point of view, as frequently expressed in feedback sessions, once they have overcome the strangeness of being together in each other's "spaces," they are just "kids having a good time," which mitigates the subtle workings of stereotyping, political bias, and social prejudice. Parents and grandparents talk about witnessing a freedom of movement between cultural histories in their children's play, a crisscrossing over tangible manifestations of each other's life stories. Where the political issues surrounding specific items of each others' culture are articulated, the ensuing discussion offers a way for participants to acknowledge that there may be multiple perspectives. 19

Children are shown the benefit of being open to their own group's or family's traditions, becoming comfortable with "difference" ("we are *not* all the same") and the celebration of diversity. They learn how difference is to be expected and respected rather than shunned, ridiculed, or feared; that difference need not be divisive or undermining. They inhabit all points of a game-world's compass, suggesting a journey beyond conflicting perceptions of who did what to whom, learning the value of an "open mind." In this context, Hopscotch helps to facilitate the placing of people in each other's shoes so that they can metaphorically walk around seeing the world from a more compassionate point of view.²⁰



Simon Lichman, PhD, was born in London and has lived in Jerusalem since 1971. He is Director of the Centre for Creativity in Education and Cultural Heritage, which brings together Jewish and Arab communities through education programs based on folklore. He has taught at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv University, and Ben Gurion University of the Negev (Beersheva). He currently teaches Multicultural Education at Kaye Academic College (Beersheva). He has published numerous articles on ritual drama and the application of folklore to multicultural and co-existence education, including his Presidential Address to the 2014 Meeting of the American Folklore Society (forthcoming in the Journal of American Folklore). He is a published poet and has also served as Chairman of the Israel Association of Writers in English editing a number of issues of its journal, arc.

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I would like to thank generations of children at play (whether school pupils, parents, grandparents, other family members, teachers, or school principals) who have shared traditional games with each other in our programs and agreed to allow us to use their descriptions of Hopscotch as well as the photographs included in this article.

I would also like to thank all past and present members of the CCECH teaching team, especially our Program Coordinator, Mahadiyah Barhum, and our research assistant and archivist, Tsahi Tubol.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the great debt I owe Rivanna Miller, the CCECH Internal Evaluator, with whom I have ongoing discussions about every facet of the work described and who has edited this article.

Notes

- 1. For a discussion of gender and children's games see "The Interaction of Gender and Play Style in the Development of Gender Segregation," Julie Tietz and Stephanie Shine, pp. 131-147, and "Boys Who Play Hopscotch: The Historical Divide of a Gendered Space," Derek Van Rheenen, pp. 111-131, in *Theory In and Context Out*, Vol. 3 of *Play and Culture Studies*, ed. Stuart Reifel (Westport, CT: Ablex Publishing, 2001).

 2. When the State of Israel was established in 1948, the Arab communities chose to maintain separate school systems in which Arabic was the language of instruction.
- 3. While the individual children "graduate" at the end of 5th or 6th grade (11- to 12-year-olds), the paired Jewish and Arab schools continue in partnership so that each new pair of 4th- or 5th-grade classes automatically enters the program at the beginning of each new school year. For a more detailed description of the program structure and content see "Harnessing Folklore and Traditional Creativity to Promote Better Understanding between Jewish and Arab Children in Israel," Simon Lichman and Keith Sullivan, Vol. VI, *Education, Culture and Values*, eds. M. Leicester, S. and C. Modgil, *Politics, Education and Citizenship* (London: Falmer Press, 2000), pp-66-77. For more information about CCECH see http://www.ccech.org.
- 4. The Jewish population of Israel reflects the wide spread of countries throughout the world where there have been Jewish communities. The Arab population of Israel includes Christians, Muslims, Bedouin, and Druze from rural and urban settings.
- 5. In particular we use *Children's Games*, by the Flemish artist Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1560) (http://www.khm.at/en/visit/collections/picture-gallery/selected-masterpieces); Rothschild Dwelling, Spitalfields (London, 1930s), by the British artist John Allin (http://spitalfieldslife.com/2012/04/09/john-allin-artist) in Say Goodbye: You May Never See Them Again, John Allin and Arnold Wesker, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974); and a photograph of a complicated draughts-type game called Siji, taken by an Armenian photographer, Elia Kahvedjian, in the 1930s. For a description of how these lessons work, see "Meeting in the Middle East: Iona and Peter Opie's Contribution to Co-existence Education," Simon Lichman and Rivanna Miller, International Journal of Play (Vol. 3, no. 3, December 2014), pp.280-292.
- 6. The local names for some of these games are as follows: Apricot Stones *Gogoim/Adgoim* (Hebrew), *Adjum* (Arabic); Duck Duck Goose *Golem Bma'agal* (Hebrew), *Tak Tak Takia* (Arabic); Elastics *Gummi* (Hebrew).

Hopscotch is called *Class* in Hebrew. Polish and Russian immigrants to Palestine-Israel brought the name with them. In Russia and Poland *Class* means "class" both in the sense of "a class" and "grade." It was a game associated with school playgrounds although it was not exclusively played in school, and has the further connotation of "going up a class" (i.e., grade) as a player progresses up the numbers on the Hopscotch court. In Arabic it is called *Hajla* (literally: hop) or *zakhkah* (which might be derived from the word *zakhlak* – to slide).

- 7. All photographs by Simon Lichman and Rivanna Miller.
- 8. The Flower court resembles "spiral Hopscotch" as described, for example, by Iona and Peter Opie, *Children's Games with Things* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 105-7. See Simon Lichman, "From Hopscotch to *Siji*: Generations at Play in a Cross-cultural Setting" in *Play Today in the Primary School Playground: Life, Learning and Creativity*, eds. Julia Bishop and Mavis Curtis (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2001), pp. 152-166, where some of this material was first presented.
- 9. I would like to thank members of the Childlore List for generously sharing knowledge on this point and helping locate diagrams of, and literature about, Hopscotch courts; in particular, Anna Beresin, Julia Bishop, June Factor, Mavis Marsh, Steve Roud, and Gareth Whitaker. For examples and accounts of Hopscotch see Anna R. Beresin, *The Art of Play: Recess and the Practice of Invention* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014); Simon J. Bronner, *American Children's Folklore* (Little Rock: August House, 1988); J.W. Crombie, "History of the Game of Hop-Scotch," *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 15, 1886, pp.403-408; June Factor, *Captain Cook Chased a Chook: Children's Folklore in Australia*, (Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin, 1988); Frederic V. Grunfeld, *Games of the World: How to Make Them, How to Play Them, How They Came to Be* (New York: Plenary Publications International Incorporated, 1975) for UNICEF; Mary and Herbert Knapp, *One Potato, Two Potato: The Folklore of American Children* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976); Steve Roud, *The Lore of the Playground: One Hundred Years of Children's Games, Rhymes and Traditions* (London: Random House Books, 2010).
- 10. Alice B. Gomme, *The Traditional Games of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, 2 volumes (London: David Nutt, 1894 and 1898), pp. 224-227; and Iona and Peter Opie, *op.cit.* p. 109.
- 11. In contrast to this there are games where the parameters of play are determined by a tension between the number of participants and the "shape" of the game such as Duck Duck Goose, and games where the boundaries of play or the game-area itself will be determined by the general agreement of the players, such as Football, Catch, Hide and Seek, or What's the Time Mr. Woolf (Hebrew: *Hayai Sarah* "Sarah's life"). For wonderful examples of the way public space is used in play see Amanda Dargan and Steve Zeitlin, *City Play* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990).
- 12. Iona and Peter Opie also talk about Hopscotch courts as leaving "traces behind them," op.cit. p. 95.
- 13. Gertrude Sheffield (my colleague Barbara Rosenstein's mother) describes how, when playing Hopscotch (called "Potsy") in Brooklyn around 1910, they would flatten the sardine tins they used for throwing onto the squares by placing their tins on tram tracks. Arline Miller (my mother-in-law) talks with a gleam in her eye about how, in the Bronx of the 1930s, she would play a tag-like game in "the Foundies," which entailed climbing unfinished structures and being chased across the open spaces of glassless window frames (Private Communications).
- 14. A more detailed description of the Joint Activities appears in Lichman (2001) op.cit.
- 15. Rivanna Miller, Evaluation Archives. Formative evaluation is used throughout CCECH programs to improve the quality of each activity and for program development.
- 16. Despite being a "girl's game" in both Israeli and Palestinian communities, the boys are more than happy to play Hopscotch during the Joint Activities and talk about enjoying the opportunity to play rather than feeling embarrassed.
- 17. Participants refer to "Jewish space" or "Arab space." See Simon Lichman, "Invisibility–Dissolving the Boundaries of *Local* in Conflict Situations Where *Local* Could Be *Hostile* or *Exclusive*," Annual Meeting of the American Folklore Society, New Orleans, 2012 (unpublished).
- 18. Rivanna Miller, Evaluation Archives.
- 19. Rivanna Miller and Barbara Rosenstein are undertaking an Evaluation and Tracer Study to examine the long-term impact on participants and their communities. See the conclusion of Lichman (2001) *op.cit*. for a brief discussion of program impact.
- 20. See *To Kill A Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee, in which Atticus Finch uses the image of standing in someone else's shoes to explain the importance of seeing the world from other people's perspectives to his daughter, Scout.

Classroom Application: Student Games and Play Worksheet	
Name: Date	
1. Games Write down all the games and kinds of play that you remember now or when younger. Don't forget pretend play, travel games, cards, video games, and board games use the back of this sheet.	•
2. Folk Groups Write down the different groups of people you've played with, such as school friends. These are what folklorists call folk groups.	neighbors or
3. Landscapes and Boundaries List places where you have played games. Write or draw descriptions of a place where Include boundaries. You may use the back of this sheet.	you played.
4. Young People at Play in Your Community On a separate sheet, draw a picture or write a story about a memory of childhood pwritten story or the story of your picture with a partner. The partner should listen car at least two questions. Write down the questions but don't answer them yet! Switch both shared, return to the questions. Do the answers deepen the story? Do you anything about being from your community? Pairs should share their stories with the	refully and ask n. After you've ur stories say
Adapted with permission from <u>www.louisianavoices.org</u> .	

Classroom Application: Adult Games and Play Worksheet Name: ______ Date:_____ Now that you and classmates have collected games that you play, interview some adults about what they played when they were young. When interviewing others, remember to be polite and thank them for their time. A suggested interview form to copy for each interview follows. Add other questions you'd like to ask. If you run across an unfamiliar game, ask about it and report back to the class. Choose at least one game to ask about in detail. Name of Person Interviewed _____ Interviewee agrees this interview may be shared in educational settings. Yes Birth Year _____Female____Male____ Childhood Home (if different) 1. Games Played as a Child (list games, use a separate sheet if necessary). 2. Write a detailed description of at least one game you collect. Include rules, number of players, boundaries, who played it, special memories (use the back of this sheet or a separate sheet). Adapted with permission from www.louisianavoices.org.