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Guest Editor's Note

I have been called to pinch hit for Ann Marie on the occasion of her husband Jim's recent death. On behalf of the Association I would like to pass on to her our sincere condolences, and at the same time thank her for her own outstanding contributions to the Society over many years.

Brian Sutton-Smith
Guest Editor's notes

I must begin with the apology that practically the whole of this issue has been dragged in a rush from my recent files. When Ann Marie asked me to take on this responsibility I was really not ready but could hardly decline. Given the deadlines I have not had the time to reach out elsewhere for information; a fact enswornised by Ann Marie's use of a speech of mine in the prior issue. If it seems that you have suddenly landed in Sutton-Smith's file drawer, you are not mistaken.

THE ANNUAL MEETING

Discussions with Bernard Mergen, TAASP President, and Gary Fine, President to be, indicate the following: The Annual Meeting will be held in the Washington D. C. Redlight district at the Washington Plaza hotel, so promises to be more than usually exciting, at least the view from the window. There is, however, a considerable shortage of papers to this point. The paper deadline is therefore extended for a day, a week or a month and you are urged to contact Gary Fine immediately and fill out the entry blanks at the back of this issue.

THE PROGRAM

While the program is not yet complete there can be visits to the Smithsonian (folktoys, etc.); and to the National Museum (art on childhood). Submitted papers to date indicate a predominant interest in childhood. We have at this point lost some of our sportsmen and some of our anthropologists. The predominant group centers on the children's play activities themselves and this is a most gratifying trend. For example:

1. Choosing up Children's Sides. The Social Process of Team Selection in Children's Spontaneous Games. (John Evans)

2. Affect in Play Boundary Interaction. (John Durkin)

3. Conversational Activities, Disputes and Social Organization Across Games Pretence and Constructive Play. (Mary Goodwin)

4. Ring play, line play and play with a dance style in a desegregated school. (J. Lynn Hanna)

5. School play and the organization of physical education. (A. Miracle, R. Reese, and F. Howell)

6. The effects of traditional playground equipment. (Chris Boyatzis)

7. A child's first games, the origins of literacy. (Sandra Hoffman)

8. Researching school play. (Nancy King)

9. Preschool teaching and children's play. (Robert Collier)

10. Play patterns and social intellectual competence. (James F. Christie and E. P. Johnsen)

11. Play theory applications for preschool teachers. (James E. Johnson)

12. Role of toys and stimulation for play. (Stevanne Auerbach)

So much for childhood. The rest of the age level are as follows:

13. Reviving adults' pleasures from the past -- the social treasure (scavenger) hunt. (Don Lytle)

15. I see everything twice, paradoxical communication in Joseph Heller; Catch 22.
(Jay Mechling)

(David Myers)

17. Video game rooms and pin ball parlors; Lessons learned and ignored in the creation of a new etiquette of setting.
(Stephen Conn)

18. A re-examination of the pursuit of vertigo in high risk physical activity.

NEWSBRIEFS

CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENTS QUARTERLY

This is an upgraded journal succeeding the earlier quarterly journal Childhood City. It doesn't quite jump into the academic journal class with glossy cover and paper, but is certainly a step ahead of their earlier format which was itself already several steps ahead of TASSP's own. "It is designed to improve the understanding of the relationship of children to the physical environment," they say, and as that often involves children at play, naturally their work is of interest to our readers. The editor is Roger Hart and he is a Professor at the Center for Human Environments; the Environmental Psychology Program, The Graduate Center of the City of New York, 33 W. 42nd Street, New York, NY 10036.

The first issue of Child Environments Quarterly, in fact, the first two issues, are on Toys, History, Theory and Ethnography. There are articles on antique toys (Beatrice Lewis); educational toys (Evelyn Weber); toy semiotics (BS-S); toys of the demiurge (Charles Zerner); and toys of the Baoule in Africa (Chantal Lombard) and a useful annotated bibliography. The annual subscription rate is $16. In the hope that our own members might perceive there are matters of some substance in toys, I am reproducing my own brief article on toy semiotics in this issue.

PLEASE TOUCH MUSEUM PLAY EXHIBIT

In recent years museums for children, or about children, which for the greater part have actually been museums for adult nostalgia, have been making ever greater efforts to reach out and turn their contents (childhood) into their customers (children). Granting agencies for their part have exercised a democratizing pressure on institutions which had often begun primarily as the private fictions of some wealthy nostalgic collectors. Without suggesting it is in this class I would call attention to the recent exhibition from the Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum in Rochester, New York, titled "A Century of Childhood" and its excellent catalogue with articles by Mary Lynn Stevens Heininger on the history of children between 1820 and 1920; by Karin Calvert on children's furniture; by Barbara Finkelstein and Kathy Vandell on Schooling; by Anne Scott Macleod on American Girlhood in the nineteenth century; and by Harvey Green on parallel scientific thought about children in this period. The N.Y. zip code is 14601.

The Please Touch Museum in Philadelphia is part of this new trend, though not to keep an older, nostalgic kind of museum in circulation, but rather to provide a direct and appealing museum experience for younger children, 1-7 years. It is amazingly successful as increasing number of urban parents attempt to seek out pleasant and "stimulating" places to take their children. There are animals, costumes, masks, play stores, play offices and a variety of changing exhibits of interest to children. Last year, amongst other things, and in co-operation with various
survey firms, they began the first exhibition of the ten best selling toys of the year with opportunities for children to play with them. This will continue year by year and be the first collection of this kind of "pop" phenomenon by an established institution over time. For next Spring (1985) they are planning an exhibition on Children's Play, and the catalogue presently in preparation has chapters by Bernard Mergen, Allen Davis, Emma Lapanasy, Morris Vogel and Michael Zuckerman, covering rural, urban, ethnic, suburban and future play. An attempt will be made to coordinate theories of play with the history and geography of the phenomenon itself. The Director is Portia Sperr, a long time TAASP member.

CITY PLAY: THE HISTORY AND CUSTOMS OF PLAY IN NEW YORK

In the meantime, the Queens Council on the Arts, under the direction of Steven Zeitlin is heading towards a 1986 project on a much larger scale in an endeavor to show the whole of New York as a playground. It promises to be the most comprehensive project of its kind and its interests range all the way from the massive street festivals to the vacant lot forts. It raises excitingly the question of how, indeed, one can conceptualize such an immensity of ongoing contemporary leisure events, both large and small scale, public and private, outside and inside, male and female, ethnic A. and ethnic B. etc.

And in case you have not noticed the permeation of play into conceptuality and praxis that we have been indicating, on Thursday, October 25, the American Folklife Center in the Library of Congress will present a bilingual demonstration of top playing and spinning by young people in the Mumford room of the Madison Building (LM - 649) between 12 noon and 1.30 pm. There will be story telling and rapping exchanges to go with this; the participants being from El Salvador.

FORMS OF PLAY IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

Undoubtedly the highlight of my own play year was a symposium held March 22-23, 1984 by the Center for Renaissance and Baroque Studies at the University of Maryland. Once again because I have access to my own manuscript I include my own contribution: "From Narcissism to Charisma: The Vicissitudes of Central Person Games" in the following pages. More importantly there were a number of papers at this Conference which started my thinking in new ways.

Michael Beaujour of N.Y.U. gave a paper entitled "Delayed Replay: The Renaissance as 'Mimicry' and Representation." He pointed out how difficult it is for a modern to think of play except in terms of childhood play and adult seriousness. Unfortunately the study of childhood play as a kind of fictitiousness is no help in reckoning with adult play. It leads to an ontological duality between play and everything else. Play is modelling, it is simulation, it is a rerun, it is an inversion. In this way play is made separate from life. (One should note here that Beaujour dedicates his lecture to Jacques Ehrmann who has made this point also). Both Huizinga and Caillois inherit this dualistic ontology. On the contrary Sartre, who sees that we can have a split self, being both an ordinary self and an actor or performer who mimics our own real actions doesn't imply any such ontological opposition. We can be a waiter playing at being a waiter without that changing our doings greatly. Being and mimicry are not so separate. Plato unfortunately made such mimicry a degraded form; at best a holdover from childhood. Huizinga similarly adopts Plato's either/or frame, instead of
In this way Huizinga's Waning of the Middle Ages and Dawn of the Renaissance can be faulted as an attempt to put these two into a category of not play and play; instead of seeing a constantly changing figure-ground gestalt of play and non play. (Beaujour favors this gestalt metaphor to the generational child-adult dichotomy). The Renaissance involves a revival of rhetoric; a sense of many selves. "The rhetorical self has no self to be true to." There is a Ciceronian vacuity at the center. One must play one's roles to live and is a self by dramatization.

This kind of view is familiar in Kenneth Burke for whom there is nothing outside of role playing. Seriousness is just one kind of mask to be played. A sacred task can become a parody. Thus "The Praise of Folly" by Erasmus postulates that imitations of the ancients can become an endless play of non authenticity. Don Quixote is so serious about being a knight he parodies his own mask. Although authentic persons devoutly pursue the loss of the self centered self, that pursuit itself is a kind of playful move. All imitation falls short, and if serious, becomes a parody and if not serious, is therefore playful. Dunces praise dunces and fools praise fools.

Without role distance there is folly and role distance is play. Beaujour adds the point that printing provided the age with endless models and in consequence with unendurable freedom. All of which is summed in Shakespeare's continual efforts to find who it was there when one was supposed "To thine own self be true; and you will be true to everyman." Perhaps Polonius got the knife for that kind of nonsense.

In sum, Beaujour contrasted the generational self versus the rhetorical self and made clear to me (more or less) how powerful is our persuasion in this century to the generational view. We have created childhood and clouded our vision of diversity.

Thomas M. Greene of Yale University carried on a similar theme in his paper on Ceremonial Play and Parody in Renaissance Literature. As the ceremonial order collapsed during and after the great plague, and dogma and traditions were found too rigid for circumstances, there was a quest for new innovations (of which Bocaccio's Decameron is an example); a quest for playful alternatives or a play of alternatives. It was an open and inter-textual period; a time of ambiguity with opportunities for novelty. There was a demand for practicality for a flexibility taking society beyond the older rigidities.

In the 1500's the very word "ceremony" acquires a negative connotation as a kind of evasion. The middle age feast of fools, which was an inversion and parody of ceremony, is now replaced by the very displacement of ceremony itself. Erasmus's Praise of Folly is a mock University Ceremony and expresses his hostility more openly than at any other time. Don Quixote is deeper and darker even than Rabelais and shows knighthood as a withered ceremony, a travesty of ceremonial faith. Shakespeare's plays in turn constantly fuss over the matter of the use and abuse of ceremony.

Arthur K. Wheelock, of the National Gallery of Art, spoke on "Games in Dutch Art: Innocent Pleasures or Moral Exemplars?" He writes of Dutch art in the 1600's, a period he sees as one of conservatism and religious rigor. And yet the art portrays a quite opposite life of games, dance, debauchery and music. He asks what is the relationship between the two? On the one hand there is a portrayal of vigorous life and on the other a continual moralizing about it. Some plays are accepted as good; chess makes for astuteness; skating makes for vigor; tops illustrate punishment. But
S. more often play and games are seen as negative. Backgammon, cards and dice often pictured in brothel scenes are symbols of vice and destruction. Hoops are pictured as a waste of energy; blowing bubbles as a sign of transitoriness; pinwheels as whirling over nothing; and hobby horses as self deception.

In general, the pictures seem to say that children's or adults' games are emblematic of folly, at the same time as their preoccupation with these activities suggests also a very real investment and ambivalence over their passionate fascination. Perhaps games then were the equivalent of drugs today.

Sybel Silverman spoke on "The Palio of Siena: Game, Ritual or Politics?" The palio is a horse race which has been figuring in the festival life of Siena for hundreds of years. It involves gambling; guilds prepare for the race all year, hire their rider from out of the city (he can be in great danger from the rivalry and from the probable bribery by opposing groups). The local view is that this is "serious" and not a sport; and the maxim about it is that "It is not the best man that wins, it is he who comes in first." The groups that run it seem to have been a survival from the age of Tuscan control when they were used to dismantle the City State's unified political power. They persist as a force contrary to the unity of the workers, and some argue are financed in this undertaking by the Banks in order to continue this divided state of affairs. The riders and the clubs are costumed in mediæval garments. There is great rivalry between them, including fights and attacks on the jockeys. This game seems to be the life of Siena rather than to reflect it. The game forms the character of Siena rather than modelling it. A nice example of the way in which life and play are not always distinct as they are in the modern scene when we carefully try to keep them separate in nursery schools, sports arenas, etc. The Palio is a horse race around the central square of the city.

Diane Owen Hughes talked about "Dance and Society in Renaissance Italy." She showed it to be a fulcrum for power struggles between the city and the countryside, between outsiders and insiders, those of high versus those of low status, and between men and women, manliness and feminization. Dances that were included were meant to illustrate the approved of virtues and those excluded the vices and praxis to be banned. But there was little constancy in this as power and attitudes were always changing.

In his summing up the moderator Werner Gundersheimer suggested that perhaps the most important history of play yet to be written would be that of the diversities of play seen as legal versus play seen as illegal and of the ambivalent relationships between the two. He interpreted the dance as a temporary time out from these social divisions, as the contrary groups move around each other in a pattern of existence constantly endangered by the stress of their differences.

It is expected the Proceedings will be published by the Center at the University of Maryland.

PLAY INTERACTIONS: THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF PLAY MATERIALS AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT TO CHILD DEVELOPMENT

This Johnson and Johnson Company Pediatric Round Table #11 took place on Key Biscayne, Florida, October 7-10 and included mainly psychologists: Elizabeth Bates, Leila Beckwith, Jay Belsky, Robert Bradley, Inge Bretherton, Betty Caldwell, Dante Cicchetti, Alison Clarke-Stewart, Judy Dunn, Adele Gottfried
Allen Gottfried, Greta Fein, Larry Fenson, Daniel Kee, Phyllis Levenstein, Lorraine McCune Nicolich, Vonnie McCloyd, Kenneth Rubin, Helen Schwartzman, Brian Sutton-Smith, Brian Vandenberg, Theodore Wachs, Jeffriann Wilson. These round tables are usually published subsequently. At the moment the most useful introduction to this group's preoccupation with play behavior in the first two or three years of life is probably SYMBOLIC PLAY, the development of Social Understanding, edited by Inge Bertherton and published by Academic Press, in 1984.

The topics of the conference included: ethology, cross cultural perspectives; play psychology; developmental progressions in play; play languages; play and gesture; computer play; play and social understanding; pretend play in the family; peer play; social class differences; play environments; parent-child interactions; interactions in medical settings; play ecology; play and intellectual development; mother's interactions and child's attainments.

GAMES RESEARCH IN YUGOSLAVIA

UNESCO has funded the psychology department of the University of Belgrade in Yugoslavia to establish a game research laboratory (one might have thought that Roland Renson and his Flemish Games Centre would have had a prior claim, after all Breugel got there first).

However what seems unique to the Yugoslavian approach and an important step forward is the primary emphasis on games as a semiotic activity par excellence, which employs iconic representation, simulacra and symbols. In this view games are a form of communication, a type of social praxis and a regulatory mechanism (quoting from Ivan Ivic of Belgrade). The latter involves both social integration and social differentiation.

1985 ANNUAL MEETINGS NOTE

Robert Coles, noted Harvard psychiatrist, has agreed to give the annual Johan Huizinga keynote address at next spring's TAASP meetings. His presentation is entitled "Learning from Children in their Homes." Barney Mergen suggests that the title may be deceptive but that "play is central to the planned address."

In addition to Coles, Mergen is enlisting several other speakers who should add extra elements of excitement to the 1985 meetings and make the trip to Washington well worth the effort.
Children's toys because of their typical character as miniatures and their association with childhood in this century, provide us with a signifying system of more than usual categorical clarity. The message for the majority of toys is that they signify some property in the real world (dolls for babies; cars for automobiles), and yet at the same time paradoxically signify that they do not signify what those real objects signify. Their schematic perceptual features, indicate quite clearly that they themselves are not simply signifiers (as the words doll and car might be) and are not to be taken as miniature replicas of the real thing (which is that other category of adult toy collections). Instead, in children's toys there is usually a perceptual heightening of some features in order to permit quick figure ground segregation (as in cartoons, or caricatures or Frantz's famous infant facial drawings, or as in clear black edge marked jig saw puzzles) and in consequence an equally quick reaction and comprehension. The child's toy world by heightening and caricaturing the dramatic features of its denizens, reduces the information load that is to be conveyed but at the same time permits a faster emotional response. All of this of course within the paradoxical and safe framing that this both is and is not a baby or a car which is the key condition for play to occur according to the communication theorists. (Bateson, 1972).

One can assume that this paradoxical framing has also been a key feature in heightening the "magical" or "awe" responses to small replicas throughout their most varied history as sacred objects, votary objects, fetish objects, etc.

In addition to these possible universal stimulus conditions of the objects themselves, however, when they are played with (and not, for example, treated in sacred or nostalgic terms), a further communicational development seems to take place. Play as a kind of assimilation has the potentiality to retreat increasingly from its original objects of reference. The toy itself which signals the first such departure, then makes possible a series of increasingly remote responses depending on the resident fantasies within the players' experience. Thus, several players together become increasingly minimal in the cues through which they signal their ludic progress. It is not that they are not capable of so doing, but rather that the further minimalization of signaling, appears to accompany an intensification of motivated action. This is why a concept once grasped can be signalled in an increasingly abstracted way, a stick for a gun, a cardboard box a house. It is the motivated action with these symbolic vehicles rather than the medium themselves that constitute the primary focus.

Collectors of toys on the contrary which at best are objects of art, proceed in an opposite direction and with an opposite intent. For the collectors the miniaturization is not meant as a schematic prompt to action but as embodiment of the external world. The miniaturist becomes lost in the medium of his signifying system and one suspects that the very intensity of involvement in this miniaturization leads not towards action but away from it. The Collector's point is not to inaugurate a world of barely concretized fantasy, but to both imply and deny (by exactness) some feelings about that world which are now buried in the toy itself. The signifying here is semiotic in the original Freudian sense of the term as symptomatic. One might say that Freudian signifiers apply to the collectors of toys, while Jungian signifiers which have a more creative function apply to the children who play with them. In the first, feeling is resident and concealed in the intensity of the relationship to the exacting medium, and in the second, feeling is permitted to emerge into action through the guidance of the toy as a schematic medium and therefore a motivating...
The number of books written about children's toys is a small fraction of the number written about toy collections (Mergen, 1982). And though this "fact" may be variously interpreted it is consistent with the tendency in most societies to place the ideologically conforming uses of play before the variant and profane uses. Thus in our own society, toys are identified largely with gift giving at family festivals. Some sixty percent of toys are sold at Christmas (Sutton-Smith, 1984). Family festivals (Christmas, Thanksgiving, Birthdays, Mother's Day, Valentine's Day) centre on the validation and consolidation of family ties and exchanges are made at that time to ensure that end. In our century in which the family has been threatened with dissolution, the pace of gift exchanges has increased, as has the tendency to turn all festivals into family festivals. Within this specific cultural frame then, toys are given to children as a part of a mutual fabric of obligations in which the children promise to be good for months before Christmas (clean their rooms, take out the garbage, clean teeth) and the parents promise to be loving. Both parties are then bonded together through these exchanges of duties and gifts. Unfortunately, modern families drift apart as much as they celebrate being together, so that having made the gift exchange, the children are then told to go and play by themselves. "I give you this toy to bond you to me, now go away and play with it by yourself." The child takes the toy back to the bedroom, the bonding function is soon forgotten and in its place, if it continues to be played with, a series of idiosyncratic assimilation proceeds, the toy prompting the child along those lines of internal fantasy mentioned above. Thus both ideological and idiosyncratic function of toy familial function and individual function are served. The two threaten to clash only when children hang onto their "soft" toys for unendurably long periods, show too great an attachment to playing with naked barbie dolls, threaten the peace of the household with war toys.

symbol.

pollute every other room with remnants of meccano, tinker toy and stacking sets.

The argument then is that the signifying function of the child's toy is to move the child along into idiosyncratic fantasy, but an important current cultural function of the toys is to bind the child into the family. Thus do the idiomatic and the sacred feed upon each other at the toy level, just as they do upon each other at the olympic level. Paradoxical signifiers (it is and it is not what it signifies) appear to lend themselves to pliable representation of larger cultural conflicts.

References


FROM NARCISSISM TO CHARISMA: THE VICISSITUDES OF CENTRAL PERSON GAMES

Brian Sutton-Smith
University of Pennsylvania

Forms of play in the early modern period. A symposium, March 22-23, 1984. Center for Renaissance and Baroque Studies
University of Maryland -- College Park

In the first part of this talk I will present my thesis about central person games, and in the second part will subject it to a skeptical scrutiny. I find myself in the difficult position of intuiting credibility in my thesis but of discerning many major problems in providing it with historical support. The problems lie not only in the paucity of useful historical data, but also in the interpretations that a modern brings to that data. One has to work through the relativity of the modern viewpoint on his way to the construction of the historical viewpoint. We have both historical and modern data problems and historical and modern interpretive problems. I trust I can weave my way through this morass and remain cogent.

The Central Person Thesis

A number of years ago I proposed the thesis that the numerically most frequent kind of games for young children in our culture up until the age of about ten years were central person games. These are games of a wide variety such as Farmer in the Dell, Hide and Seek, Statues, Dogeball, and King on the Mountain, where the action and coaction focuses about the role of a central person. What I discovered in my data was a developmental pattern whereby younger central person players (about five years of age) were given power by the game to carry out their actions, whereas older children could only retain that central position by superior skill. This is like the difference between Farmer in the Dell and King on the Mountain, but with a series of game gradations in between. In addition, there was yet another kind of central person game for the early adolescent years, in which the person in the middle became a scapegoat and had some trick played upon him or her; typically that they were led to imagine they were to be given a position of high status, but then were suddenly humiliated by falling into a bucket of water, or being covered with faeces or something equally execrable.

At that time my background in psychology led me to formulate this transition in terms of that between the family and the peer society. The game recapitulated the child's centrality in the family, but at the same time required a performance accommodation to the child's peers. From the years between five and fifteen the child could move by skillful accommodation from narcissism to charisma or by ineptitude from narcissism to nugatoriness. In its own ways the developmental series of games thus arranged provided their own story of the rise and fall of the hero or a transition from ritual to personal power or to personal pusillanimity. In more recent years I have taken in addition a more sociological perspective on these materials and see them, perhaps, as Erving Goffman might have, as a series of public rituals with their own demands for accommodation, and their own requirements upon those who are engaged. The games provide a series of required positions and required acts made sacred by their key importance in the development of peer society. They are the micro rituals of that public peer society through which its members learn the character of social
centrality and social peripherality at the same time as they discover their own performance competences within those alternatives. Some children learn they can take the center and hold it, while others learn the very opposite and thus their characters are socialized by this amongst many other such agencies. The family and the school and church, clubs, classes, close friends, siblings and other peer groups are also conveying their own lessons on centrality. My contribution to the notion of ritual in this conference is limited to this particular meaning.

I believe we are currently living at a time when the importance of this particular scheme of social transition is mediated less often by central person games. But the point of my paper today is to see if I can defend the proposition that in the 15th and 16th centuries the kinds of games were of even greater importance than my own descriptions derived largely from the pre World War II period (in New Zealand). My argument would be that with fewer other social resources and few literary mediations in the 15th and 16th centuries the life of games was a major kind of social schooling for the masses of youth. Here they learned to conduct themselves midst the lessons of aggression, sex and power that these games provided. Moreover, living in a period of largely preliterate imagination, their own behavior and thought was much more affected by collective constraints and collective expectations than is the case for a modern youth.

What follows then is a series of propositions about these central person rituals of the historical period, with an attempt to see what we can do to either support or negate their special importance.

(I) Proposition I. That there were more central person games in the 15th and 16th century period than at present.

Presumably if central person games had a greater ritual significance in the socialization of young persons at that time there would have been proportionately more of them.

At first sight it looks as if we might be able to support such a thesis. Of the 150 games cited in Iona and Peter Opie's British work Children's Games in Street and Playground, published in 1969 approximately 25 have pre 1600 sources. These sources are generally European including dictionaries, mediaeval manuscripts, novels (Rabelais), historical poems and biographies (Froissart). Fifteen of these 25 games are central person games (including Touch, Round Tag, Fox and Chickens, Blindman's Buff, Jingling, Frog in the Middle, Truth and Dare, Husky Bum, Finger and Thumb, How Far to London, Whackem, Buck Buck, Tip the Finger, Block and Hide and Seek. At first sight that seems an unusually high number, but when compared with the present day proportions in the Opie book as a whole it is not. Perhaps a defence that there is a difference, however, might lie in showing that the Opie book deals with the games of the modern unorganized children's playground, and because it does not include all those many other board and card games of modern children, nor any of their most diverse organized sports, the modern picture would show a much smaller proportion of central person games if the full count was provided. One could make the same argument for or against the sample in the modern
American collection of Knapp and Knapp which as it is also restricted mainly to playgrounds shows a spuriously higher percentage of central person games than is actually available in children's play.

This argument gains some strength from the 50 or so early modern games listed by Philip Ariès which does include a wider array of games such as tennis, bear baiting, prisoner's base, wrestling, chance and dice, etc., but in which some 20 of these are central person games (Hot Cockles, Blind Man's Buff, Paggot, forfeits, etc.). On the other hand it gains little support from the presumably representative sample of Breugel's 1560 painting of "Children's Games" in which approximately 80 activities are represented and over 240 players are to be distinguished. While many of the players are clearly adolescents, major adult sports of the era are not represented (such as dice, bear baiting, wrestling, tennis, fencing, riding, archery,) and yet by my account only 20 or so activities out of the 80 are of the central person variety.

We are not therefore left with any clear certainty that central person games were more important in the early modern period than they are today.

On the other hand, if we look at the full array of games and activities available in the modern period as compared with the older period, proposition I does not seem so completely inconclusive. This leads us to proposition II, which is:

(II) That cross-cultural data indicates a general historical shift in games from the simple to the more complex, from the physical to the symbolic and from the collective to the solitary. In short, if anthropological data across the several hundred tribal societies described in the Human Relations Area Files is arrayed in order from the technologically and politically simple to the complex, and if it is also assumed that the medieval to modern shift provides some parallel from simple to complex, then the norms of the first shift can be used to throw some light on the norms of the second. This is, of course, all very dubious methodologically though it might still be useful.

(a) Simple to Complex

Within physical skill games there is no comparison between the major sporting team game of the middle ages (Prisoner's Base) and any of the major team games of today, whether of the bootball, handball, racquetball or stickball varieties. Nor is there any evidence of the recruiting of the young into these pastimes in the earlier era, whereas today with Little League forms of sports, this is a normal activity of many youngsters from the age of seven or so years onwards. We may argue from this that with their time so preoccupied today's youngsters would have relatively less time for older forms of central person games. The argument is not as simple as it seems however, because team games have embedded within them the same central person formations, insofar as there are moments when everyone is attempting to get the man up at bat, the quarterback or the man with the ball. Still arguing in reverse, and assuming the same amount of leisure time (which is itself disputable), it seems probable that there might have been more preoccupation with the simpler central person games in the earlier era.

(b) Physical to Symbolic

We use the same kind of argument to suggest that with the present day symbolic games being such a massive
preoccupation, time left over for the earlier forms must be much less. Briefly we know that while there are strategy and chance games played during the early modern period they tended to be more frequent in upper status circles though the use of dice is widespread in the population. There is, however, only one mention of any of these in the sources already cited. Such games have been on the rise both in the general population as well as amongst childhood in this century. Board games between 1920 and the present have risen in their proportion of the toy market from 20% to 40%. And video games, as you undoubtedly know, involve as much spending as all the rest of the toy market put together. Board games and video games which now absorb so much of a child or youth's time, are essentially symbolic games.

This kind of argument is not coercive, but it does at least imply enormous differences between the play of yesterday and the play of today.

(c) Collective to Solitary

The final shift also modelled across the cross cultural files is from the collective to the solitary. The games of yesterday seem more often to have been played amongst large numbers and on festival occasions. More age levels were mixed heterogeneously in the same games and the games themselves appear to have been, in consequence, of simpler organization. At least these are the arguments presented by Ariès and I have not to date found any reason to quarrel with them. It would follow from this that we would be more likely to find in those large groups fewer of the more complex team and individual contest games and more of the simpler central person and choral singing and dancing games. But in addition it is also likely that we would find less solitary play in those days than today.

Unfortunately, few of the older writers ever mentioned such a thing as solitary play. In Breugel's picture there are sixteen out of the 72 activities which are carried on by solitary children. These are sun-bathing, tree climbing, sandplay, trailing streamers, toy windmills, riding a fence, using a blowpipe, balancing a stick, riding a hobby-horse, walking stilts, playing a drum, playing with a cow pat, urinating, looking in a barrel, playing with a stick and running up a wall.

Breugel has some 23 children involved in these solitary activities and some 210 children who are not. However, the children who are doing their own thing without companions are nevertheless in the midst of a sea of other children while doing it.

Solitary play, in our sense, where one plays alone in a house with one's own toys and more recently with video games seems to be a distinctly modern development. At least one notices even when plays and games are documented by Shakespeare, the Jesuits, by Comenius or in iconography as in Jacques Stella all plays mentioned or displayed are social ones. It is only with John Locke at the end of the 17th century that we get the first theoretical advocacy of solitary play with toys. A point again taken up a century later by his theoretical arch opponent Rousseau who is again an espouser of solitary activities. The history of toys particularly after 1750 is a history of the induction of solitary play in an increasingly affluent percentage of the population. The modern videogame is the apotheosis of solitariness in play.

Still, all we are arguing with these three points is that in a modern society where there is more game and play complexity, more game and play symbolic
activity and more game and play
solitariness, it makes sense that
there is less investment in cen-
tral person games than there was
in the earlier historical era.

So to this point we have little
but the weak possibility that
central person games were more
important in the early modern
period. It might buttress our
argument about the importance of
these games in the early modern
period if we could show that the
players then were more serious about
them. Portman and Berne in their
description of Breugel's games,
for example, declare that the
players have "a look of being
oppressed and driven" of "heavily
brooding", of "being already in
life's clutches" and "driven by
inherent forces". They say "they
are not gentle", "are rougher", "uncouth", are "coarsely primit-
ive", and possessed by "primitive
basic urges". Given the mul-
tiple interpretations of the
Breugel work, none of this may
mean much at all, except it is
surprisingly true that there is
very little smiling in this great
work. About the only laughter I
could see was on the faces of some
of the boys playing Run the Gaunt-
let and they were laughing while
they were in the act of kicking
those who were trying to run past
them. From all of this perhaps
we can create the proposition that
if the games were more violent
then they were ipso post facto
more crucial to the players.

(III) So our Proposition III is
that the violence of games in the
early modern period testifies to
their greater importance to the
players.

Once again, if we use the Opie's
it does seem that there was more
violence in the central person
games as described in their pre
1600 accounts.

In fact, when I first read over their
materials it seemed to me that one of
the functions of the central person
in many of these games at this time
was to be beaten and buffeted for the
amusement of colleagues. Two's and
Threes, Round Tag or "autiers" as
played in those times allowed one to
beat the pursued with a faggot.
Hoodman's Blind permitted the pursued
to beat the blind Hoodman over the
head with their own hoods, "Boys
swarmed about him for the sweet plea-
ure of giving him a buffet with their
own well knotted hoods," it is said.
In other games players were pursued
with punching or with whips and so
on. And of course on the side, for
your amusement and vicarious cruelty
if not yet satisfied there was bear
baiting, dog fights, cock fights, and
highly mortal versions of football
and prisoner's base.

And yet only about a third of these
early sources recorded by the Opie's
had within them such roughness. So
although those who have written about
these early times speak of the vio-
 lent tenor of life and the subsequent
decline of cruelty, it is not
easy to be sure that my first impres-
sion of violence is really sustained
by these numbers particularly as most
of the chroniclers are men and most
of their attention is given to male
play activities, which stereotypically
at least, are usually of rougher hue.

And now if one looks at some of the
available iconography an even contrary
opinion might be gleaned. Take, for
example Bruegel's classic Children's
Games of 1560, apparently the first
such painting devoted exclusively to
play and games, many interpreters
have seen the depiction of some of
the very same games as are men-
tioned in the Opie's sources as a portrayal
of innocence rather than of violence,
although many have viewed them as
representations of human folly rather
than games as such, a moral lesson
rather than a visual encyclopedia.
Unfortunately for all of us, the
sixteenth century was a font of controversy over childhood, so that it is possible to imagine that Bruegel did the painting to show children as immodest and uninhibited (in Rabelaisian fashion) or to show that they were innocent and susceptible to corruption (in Protestant fashion) or that they desperately needed supervision (in humanist fashion) or that in their quaint ceremonies they were pious and innocent (as in Roman Catholic fashion) or that they were painted in this full bodied way as a further celebration of the body and an awareness of its worth in terms of trends in 16th century art. Despite the great literature and arguments about this painting then nothing is really certain. This most famous of all paintings cannot speak clearly on the matter. But if we did decide that both early literature and early iconography coincide in illustrating rough play could we assume that play was, therefore, rougher in those 15th and 16th century times. When we look at the past 100 years we could not. I recently published an article entitled "The cruel play of the Nineteenth Century," in which I described the antics of New Zealand boys of that century in such a way as to suggest that they often were quite violent and undisciplined, highly aggressive and obscene. Looking also at the classic volumes on British games of the nineteenth century by Lady A. B. Gomme, one would also not find too much to disappoint the early moderns. Gomme even has a particular category for what she calls games of victimizing penalties and torture. She describes games in which one child held by hands and legs is swung as if it is a hummer against the butt of another boy who is a nail, and who if well propelled rams his head into the butt of the boy in front of him who is known as the block. There is the game of Carrying the Queen a Letter where the unsuspecting Queen sits between two others, who as she sits, rise, allowing her to tumble backwards into a tub of water hidden beneath the throne. There is the cute crowning ceremony in which the blindfolded and innocent King was expected to sweep the sword through his hands before knighting his followers. Unfortunately for him the sword had been dipped in the local latrines. In Cobbin Match, two players held by arms and legs by four players are bumped into a tree to see which one can stand it the longest. Or in Father's Fiddle one takes hold of the arm of a small child and in time with a spoken rhyme, gives it first two light taps and then a hard bash on the arm in the right metre.

My father was a Frenchman
He bought for me a fiddle;
He cut me here, he cut me here;
He cut me right in the middle.

And there are many, many more.

Well, you might say perhaps the violence continued from the fifteenth through the nineteenth century, but in the twentieth century we have been at relative peace. To that I would suggest that even that view might be an illusion. This is after all the century of the holocaust, of the world wars, of the increasing poverty of the third world. Two recent books which are not addressed to these larger issues but discuss children only as they are found in modern public school playgrounds still find a large amount of violence there, namely the Mary and Herbert Knapp's One Potato, Two Potato (1976) and even more so Andrew Slukin's up to date on the Opie's, his Oxford study called: Growing up in the Playground (1981).

All of this is not to say play was not more violent in the 15th and 16th centuries. It may well have been. But knowing whether it was not only involves ambiguities within and across
the kinds of historical sources (because play was seldom much recorded), but it also involves our own need to defend and idealize our own century's treatment of children, particularly as that category now excluded many of those who would be seen by us as adolescents and young adults. It is our own idealization of play, I believe, that ultimately makes us poor interpreters of past events.

(IV) And this leads us to our fourth proposition, that the idealization of play in the modern period renders it almost impossible for us to interpret its meaning in the early modern period.

Obviously this kind of proposition is of no help whatsoever to my general thesis that central person games were more important in the earlier period, and yet I can see no way in which we can advance the matter at hand without directly tackling this problem in our own interpretative set. The issue is about what we imagine play is and does. Do we stand at some neutral point where we can review the passage of play historically and say that the character and function of play is thus and so. Clearly we do not. On the contrary, the trend in the evaluation of play in this century has been strictly functional and strictly positive. From the evolutionary theories of Groos and Hall, through the psychoanalytic theories of Freud, Erikson and Winnicott, to the cognitive theories of Vygotsky and Piaget, to the information theories of Berlyne, Hutt and Ellis to the communication theory of Bateson, to the phenomenological theory of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, everyone has emphasized the functional virtues of play. In all of these theories play is lauded for its contribution to childhood socialization. Increasingly also play has come to be defined as a special area of human freedom, flexibility and fun. It has come to be idealized. This idealization has a number of practical sources. First, in the antithetical importance of leisure as such in an industrial world; secondly from the social status value that many modern sports acquired from their origins in the behavior of privileged classes; thirdly in the early demonstrated social control value that organized sports, child playgrounds, industrial recreation programs, and mass leisure consumption have had for controlling and martiaing the enthusiasm of masses of people world wide.

The theoretical sources of this idealization have been quite diverse. The cultural historian Huizinga contributed enormously by evoking play in a platonic essentialist fashion as a formal attribute of the very character of civilization. He then went on to define play in an elitist manner declaring it to be voluntary, disinterested, not serious, secluded in space and time, creating order, tension and secret play communities. These connotations are of course characteristics of some play and games in some places but are by no means universal either historically or anthropologically. Another major source of play theory has been the work of psychologists with children in laboratories, classrooms and nursery schools within which wilder kinds of play are not permitted, and where materials are often alid out on a smorgasbord principle, the scapegoating or forcing of others is not permitted, and everything is supervised by nearby adults. It is not surprising that in those contexts these psychologists came to define play as freedom (to choose), flexible (one could not be drafted into rigid and conformist peer group hierarchies) and fun (one could not be scapegoated or forced into unpleasant play for the sake of membership).
If one considers children in playgrounds or in the streets, however, a quite different definition of play as a more compulsive, intensive (or passionate) set of activities might result. One could certainly draw this conclusion from the work in folklore as well as from social science study of the playground.

What this all adds up to, is that moderns who are into play idealism are more likely to look at the Bruegel painting and not to see violence implicated even if it is there. Or alternatively they may exaggerate the violence of earlier times as against their own chosen current examples in order to promote the pacifity of modern play. I see a process in this century whereby adults have increasingly controlled the spaces and times of children's play, and have sought to bowdlerize it of its less pleasant elements just as they have already done with children's literature which had its own lineage of former cruelty and carnality. The urgency of this contemporary idealistic and romantic view of childhood play for parental and teacher social control purposes does, I believe, make interpretation of earlier historical examples hazardous at best.

Furthermore it imperils the thesis of this paper that early central person games may have been critical to the learning of centrality and peripherality in those times. This very thesis of mine is clearly the kind of socialization thesis that has been fostered by modern functional thinking about play. What of the fact that much play is dysfunctional. There are many examples in animal and festival play of the players being lost, injured, brutalized and misled. Next to motor injuries, forms of play are a major contributor to accident and death whether on bicycles or in football matches. What of the possibility that the major point of much play is that it is an antithesis to prevailing socialization norms. Perhaps we should read the central games of Bruegel as antithetical to the festival customs of the time in which young children were often given a very special role as when they held the candle of the King during the Mummer's begging, or said grace at meal times, or acted as Boy Bishops, The Master of the Kings Revels, The King of Christmas or the King of the Bean. Possibly then when we buffet the blindfolded player, or beat the hand of the guesser in hot cockles, we put down those of our peers who would have such umbrage to play a central role. Perhaps the main point of central person roles, is not the learning of centrality and peripherality but the discharge of anger against those would assume or be given such charismatic opportunity.

Following this line of thought then we can turn to the central person games of the 15th or 16th century as a folly's parody. We may seek not to see in them the way in which mankind is socialized or elevated, but rather the way in which it is put down. In these terms also we would not turn to modern play as everyone else does as socialization but see it also a folly's parody. We would notice that Olympic Games have become critical to national competitive self consciousness; that professional sports have become critical to university budgets; that gambling and lotteries have become critical to the vulnerable masses; that probabilistic thinking (derived from chance games) has become the way in which we divine markets and divine elections; and that game simulation (derived from strategy games) has become critical to the way in which we divine our world with the Russians. Games and play have completely penetrated the fabric of our work culture and in doing so have caricatured its worst excesses.

Finally as in the movie War Games, we notice that the world game is played out between us and the computer...
The computer, like the Homeric Gods, begins not just to play for us or against us but to play with us. We have a sense of a random universe, or rather of a universe in which the rules keep changing. And I could argue at this point that part of the fascination of video games for children is that they deal with this kind of paradigm of the universe. They subject the players to constant stress, deriving from information which remains uncertain, and when more or less comprehended, shifts into new rules systems, once again plunging the player into darkness. How can we know then whether the central person games of the 15th and the 16th centuries are rituals which teach the truths of centrality and peripherality, or whether they are rather a caricature and parody of being arbitrarily chosen as a Boy Bishop or as the King of Christmas, or being chosen as anything at all.

It would be my own preference to suggest that they are both—that in these games as in all play the very point is that the polarities of thesis and antithesis, of prayer and parody, become ambiguously available and are differentially construed according to time and context. I see play essentially as an archaic and paradoxical form of communication in which the forces of rule violation and rule induction are pitted against each other creating an exciting and uncertain group of communicants in the process.

What this means for the vicissitudes of the central person games in the 15th century, however, is largely that the ambiguous vicissitudes of the play itself and the ambiguous vicissitudes of our own play theory render interpretation practically impossible. This is an account which cannot end on a note of charisma.

My present thesis, "From narcissism to charisma"; derives from my earlier 1950 historical work on the games of children in the 19th century. It seemed to me at that time that the games reported to me by my oldest informants were of a different character than those of more recent years and I began this present inquiry in an effort to locate the source of this difference in the even earlier period we are discussing today.

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4. TAASP may not be able to provide free audiovisual equipment. Note audiovisual needs on Abstract Form and the Program Committee will facilitate arrangements for them.

5. Hotel arrangements will be handled separately.