TASP NewsLetter
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TASP Annual Meeting in Berkeley in April

TASP will hold its annual meeting in conjunction
with the California Folklore Society from April 21 to
24, 1988. Convention headquarters will be the
Berkeley Marina Marriott in Berkeley, California. The
convention site offers numerous in-house
amenities, shuttle service to Oakland airport and
BART stations, and a superb view. Mary Catherine
Bateson will be the TASP keynote speaker. A wide
range of TASP/CFS joint programs have been
planned. Preliminary programs and hotel
reservation cards will be mailed to all TASP
members during the first week of March. The
conference room rate is $75 per night regardless of
number of occupants.
(See program chair Ann Marie Guilmette's own
comments on the program elsewhere in this issue.)

Playfully Yours
By Brian Sutton-Smith

In June of 1987 I gave my Hertz keynote
speech in Stockholm to the International
Playground Association, a world wide
group with practical relationships to
playground builders and recreationists in
general and with a liberal political activist
attitude in children's rights.
(See Newsletter, Fall, 87). In October
of 1987 I gave my Avis keynote speech
to the ICCP (International Committee on
Children's Play) in Suhl, East Germany, a
smaller and a slightly more scholarly
oriented group with a practical
relationship to toy manufacturers and a
bridge to Eastern Europe which the IPA
does not have. While Stockholm is a
clean jewel of a city set on islands, lakes
and sea, Suhl is a polluted (unleaded
gasoline and low grade brown coal)
Bavarian like rural village in the heart of
the Thuringen mountain forests. Its
distinctiveness is its association with the
ancient East German toy manufacture;
and its propinquity to the remarkable
Sonnenberg Toy Museum, certainly the
best I have ever seen.

The first morning began with a
sequence of introductions from the
dignitaries lined up in a row behind the
horizontal communist style grand
podium at the front of the Hall. These
were in order Herrn Kunze, the mayor of
Suhl. Then Herrn Stolze the director of
the museum at Sonnenberg who
informed us that East Germany now
spent 1.4 billion marks on toys and
produced 30,000 items. Next came the
ever smiling Dr. Michelet from France,
President of the ICCP. He gave a quick
resume of the themes of the successive
ICCP meetings since its inauguration in
1959. 'They were in successive order: to defend the rights of children to play, toys and games; outdoor play and playgrounds, play for the handicapped, toys and play equipment, play and toys in education, play and creativity in technical worlds, in cultural development, as mediators between children and civilization, and finally as related to movement. The group had met in: Brighton, Groningen, Zurich, Paris, Turino, Oslo, Nijmegen, Reisenberg, Thessalonika, Morschach, and Seivres. The present conference subsidized by the local toy industry was on the theme of Toys and Personality. What this meant was explicated by Dr. Schwarze the Minister of Culture who followed next. (That's right, nobody seemed to have a first name or a first initial). He began by lauding the initiation of this conference at a time of promised world peace coming about as a result of socialist initiatives. He pointed out that by age three years in East Germany 95% (1 million) children are in all day schooling. This is budgeted by the central government to provide for their all round development and the provision of toys for the children is part and parcel of this education. Play is part and parcel (the translator favored this metaphor) of the socialist concept of the child. But it is also a "guided" activity to create the socialist personality. Play is responsible for making children creative. Children set up the ends that they wish and then fantasize the means to achieve these ends. Toys for their part stimulate children to imitate the life around them, a life which is determined by the social environment. The influence of toys can be quite remarkable both positively and negatively. All good play requires the following: (a) that the social contents of life are expressed and provide a place for friendships and peer relationships (b) that the play contributes to the children discovering laws and knowledge in a playful way (c) that play helps children to learn how to construct materials in a co-operative way (d) that children through play discover micro electronic laws (e) that there are sufficient toys and playground apparatuses so children develop play for sportive ends (f) and that toys and play should have an aesthetic feeling. In the papers that followed throughout the week and in our visits to the toy museum and the three toy factories (one wood, one plastic, one doll) and Froebel's birthplace; a great stress was placed on the virtues of wooden toys for which this area has a 500 year historical tradition of manufacture. Distinctions were constantly made between the wooden toys of Germany and the plastic toys of the West. However, in local stores I could find only plastic toys but I learned that their wooden toys are all exported to the West chiefly France and England who share their prejudice if not their shortage of Western currency.

More importantly I realized that preschool education everywhere in the world is moving rapidly to that near universal full time status that occurred with elementary education in the last century and High School education early in this century. Also that preschool education for so long associated with Froebelian notions of organic growth and free play is under peril in East Germany of socialist guidance, and in the West of accelerational "guidance". (See, for example, the intimidating recent book edited by James Block and Nancy King entitled "School Play" Garland, 1987). This was the first time after all that I had ever heard a leading Political figure give a ringing endorsement of play. I have spent my life playing with the scholarship on play behind the Triviality Barrier with my equally playful and equally trivializing Taspians. (No relationship to the Tasmanian devil which has a large head and weak hindquarters and preys on animals larger than itself). It begins to look as if I will have to come out of that closet and deal with people who believe that there is no important distinction between play and guided play and between a physical education lesson and recess. Frankly I'm in a state of shock. I thought I was doing good work defending Rabelais from Huizinga, Piaget, Bateson and the rest. Having to travel the country on behalf of recess and playground accidents will be tough.
Conundri in California
By Ann Marie Guilmette

Editor's Note: Ann Marie Guilmette, TASP President Elect and 1988 Program Chair presently exists (in some state or another) somewhere in North America.

Life is funny, by which I mean peculiar (rather than hysterical), ironic, and yes TASP members, paradoxical! That very paradoxical theme will again be the focus (I suspect and suggest) of the 1988 TASP/CFS Conference (April 20-24), in Berkeley, California, when Mary Catherine Bateson (of Batesonian metacommunication fame) will be the TASP Keynote speaker. Of course, as TASP President-Elect I have the honour/horror of planning the program for this delightful debacle. On this basis, and given that you accept this invitation by attending the conference, you can expect to encounter as many California contradictions, paradoxical puzzles, ironic inversions, transformational transfigurations, and reversible revelries as I can incorporate during that time at Berkeley!!!

I started my first ever sabbatical in July of 1987. I had chosen (first delusion) to spend my sabbatical writing (second delusion) in La Mirada, California. So, I spent July and August with family, travelling between Canada and California. Now, you may ask, why California? From previous visits, I had been most impressed by the serenity, quiet, tranquility, and peacefulness of La Mirada, and so thought that I would spend September settling into my serene, quiet, tranquil, and peaceful community for some playfully serious and seriously playful sabbatical writing. By now, you should all have guessed, what occurred (struck)! In Whittier, a community very near to La Mirada and the epicenter of the Earthquake, the devastation shattered my naive image of tranquility, to say nothing of the Whitwood Mall, where I had frequented the cinemas. Fortunately, the earthquake did not entirely destroy my plans, but I was unaware of other disasters yet to befall me.

Shortly after the earthquake in California, I found that October and November were to serve me other equally unpleasant, yet playfully dramatic endeavours. Large families are so enchanting, comforting, and supportive, except of course when there are crises to handle. Now perhaps here, I am being overly cynical, or just overreacting. Nevertheless, my next challenge occurred as illness struck. Later in September, I learned that my father-in-law was losing his fight against cancer, and that his condition was worse than anticipated. At the same time, my own father was also battling cancer, and losing. Their funerals, in October and November, respectively and respectfully, were remarkably well timed. I had to spend only two months commuting between California and Canada. I crossed the Canadian/U.S. border so many times that I had the customs/immigration officers convinced that I must be a part of the free trade agreement!

Anyway, my father-in-law and father had been important men in my life. I missed them, and I wasn't certain that I could (or wanted to) pick up the pieces. Nevertheless, with winter fast approaching in Canada, I hastily returned to the land of sunshine, and the warm embrace of California (third delusion), to which I had on so many previous occasions been attracted. Oh yes, my clever readers, by now you are saying, "You forgot to bring your snow shovel to California"! Due to the great quantities of snow in California, a frosty wind chill which forced the closing of Disneyland (one of my very favourite retreats), remarkable de-icing airplane equipment, as well as the December Christmas holidays, I returned again to Canada, leaving the snow and cold behind in California. Lest I should be thought to be a jinx, the temperature in Canada, over Christmas, ironically and paradoxically was 58 degrees and sunshine.

Originally, I had been tempted to write this commentary with the title, "A Warm Invitation to the Welcome Warmth of California", in order to encourage you to come to the Berkeley meetings. Now, in my writing you can understand how inappropriate that title would have been. And Sutton-Smith has proposed to speak to us in April on "Radical Childhoods". Has he never considered the nightmares of adults?! or the torturing of innocent adult President-Elects?!!

Speaking of radicalization, I spent the month of January, in Canada, on a diet!! I
had vowed that dieting would never be a part of my lifestyle, and I probably would have kept my word, except for this particular diet, which I include for those of you who may have taken a similar vow:

**Breakfast**
1/2 Grapefruit; 1 piece whole wheat toast; 8 oz. skim milk

**Lunch**
4 oz. lean broiled chicken breast; 1 cup steamed zucchini; 1 oreo cookie; herb tea

**Dinner**
2 loaves garlic bread; large mushroom and pepperoni pizza; large pitcher beer; 3 milky ways; entire frozen cheesecake--eaten directly from the freezer.

Naturally, I often skip breakfast and lunch, and go directly to dinner!!! Especially, now that I have the Berkeley program to organize!!!

Lest you all think that I have developed, by now, a ravaging/raging paranoia/catatonia, I wrote this commentary to dispel such notions. Further, I am writing to suggest the great potential possibilities which exist for you if you attend the 1988 TASP/CFS meetings (April 20-24) at Berkeley, California. So enough of my entertaining calamities, and as they say in California (to where I have again returned), ON WITH THE SHOW!!!

I thought that I should prepare a conference at which delegates, who attend, could possibly experience "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975)--a sufficiently challenging task which is matched by appropriate skill development, rather than anxiety (insufficient skill development) or boredom (insufficiently challenging task). In 1987, Csikszentmihalyi suggested an additional non-flow state, which he labelled "Apathy" (a lack of both skill development and task difficulty). I would suggest that these three non-flow states represent the attitudes of some TASP members who will probably not attend the Berkeley meetings, offering Conundrum (Anxiety), Ho Hum (Boredom), or Doldrum (Apathy) excuses.

I have heard Conundrum excuses already from Mike Salter (due to more skill demanding meetings in Cypress and Yugoslavia), and Barney Mergen (who already 'purged' his play for the year at the Strong Museum's American Play Symposium, in November of 1987). Those offering Ho Hum excuses are James Duthie (for whom retirement is sufficiently challenging), and Helen Schwartzman (whose "transformations" solved all of the TASP issues way back in 1980). Finally, John Loy (a Doldrum if ever I met one) suggested (at an AAHPERD meeting of all places--where he was caught/seen/chastised and reprimanded) that , at Berkeley, he might 'come', although I wasn't sure that he was talking about the TASP conference!!!

Nevertheless, the myriad of other participants, who are planning to attend, will experience "flow"; by arriving in California prepared to deal with play (challenging task) and delivering some renowned/outstanding verbage as dynamic personae (remarkable skill development)--the kind of inspired cognitions upon which the TASP reputation thrives!!! So, if you have talent, and find the task sufficiently challenging, come to Berkeley where you won't be disappointed (disgraced, disgruntled, and discredited perhaps, but not disappointed!!!).

Lest you fear that I am having difficulties in preparing the Conference program, I offer the following 'editorialized' manuscript, entitled "An Underground Guide to Successful Conference Planning--Confessions of a Program Director". Please note that most of this manuscript was inspired/conspired by a conversation/conversion with Professor Roger Rees, Deparment of Physical Education, Recreation, and Human Performance Science, Adelphi University, Garden City, New York, 11530 U.S.A. He (Professor Rees) bears no responsibility for any incoherences within contained, and for 1988, I also 'bare nothing' (Schechter take note)!!!:

**Introduction**

During the closing session of a recent international conference a delegate wondered why a group of experts in the field of education would themselves choose such an inefficient method of disseminating knowledge. The process she was referring to is the standard format for most scholarly meetings, with research
presentations of 15-20 minutes grouped thematically (though sometimes the theme is not always apparent), interspersed with longer presentations by "big name" scholars who get more time (these are sometimes rather grandly referred to as "keynote presentations"). Her comment sparked a lively debate about more effective and "innovative" conference formats which ended in a vague suggestion that the program director for next year's conference "look into it". You can bet your bottom dollar that nothing will change. Although scholarly exchanges aimed at developing the knowledge base of the field is the "official" reason for having conferences, below the surface lurk a number of different and much more potent forces (TASP members beware!!!). Scholarly conferences are about gaining, maintaining, saving, and losing professional status through interaction with one's peers, and the traditional organizational format fits into this process very well. The public forum of conference presentation is the battleground on which professional reputations are won and lost as scholars cut, thrust, and parry before an audience of their peers (actually, upon reading this section, I am not so convinced that this author has ever attended a TASP conference). Some will win, some will lose, and some will retire hurt, nursing their wounds until they find an opportunity for revenge next year (Remember Roger Rees himself pouting after the Great Debate in Texas, and vowing to get even with one Ann Marie Guilmette; perhaps his contributing this article is his form of revenge!)

While this perception of conference reality is very helpful to individual delegates in organizing their strategy, it is essential for the survival of the conference planners. The following insights are based on the author's experiences and are offered to those foolish, naive or ambitious enough to become program directors. This is a potentially dangerous position because, if things do not go well, you are the ultimate fall guy (In the case of the 1988 TASP/CFS meeting in Berkeley, what better place than California to be a fall guy, and especially for one with my sky-diving experiences!).

The key to conference success is very simple: you have to structure the situation so that, no matter what was said and done, the delegates have no choice but to congratulate you on an "outstanding performance". The way to get the delegates to say nice things about the conference, whether they mean it or not, is to get all the "big names" in the field to attend (In the case of the Berkeley meetings, I made the mistake of being too literal, and so invited Kelly-Bryne, Csikszentmihalyi, and Huizingacalloisnorbeckellis, now those are big names!!). Then even if it is a complete flop, nobody can say so for fear of embarrassing the "big names". This is not a very politic thing to do because these people control the field via writing references for jobs, editing journals, etc., and consequently it pays to be in their good graces if you are interested in your own professional advancement (Once again, this author probably has never attended a TASP meeting!!).

The best strategy for getting all the "big names" to a conference is to appeal to them, that is, appeal to their pocketbooks and to their egos. Yes, you are going to have to pay them, none of this philanthropic stuff. However, because of the ego bit, you don't have to pay all of them, usually two or three will do, and then the rest will have to come. Don't be worried that the ones you pay will brag it to the ones you didn't, who will then rush up to you demanding their "fair share". "Big names" usually like to maintain the pretense that they are primarily motivated by a desire to advance the field (very much like Gershon Legman?). Even if they do tell their colleagues, who do mention it to you, you can always get off the hook by saying that "well, we had to pay Professor X, otherwise he would not have come, but we realized that you are much more committed to the field" (This strategy has always worked before with Brian Sutton-Smith, but please don't tell him!!!).

It cannot be overstressed that the points mentioned above are the absolute key to conference success. If you get the "big names", everything else falls into place. You can develop a dynamic in which people are falling over themselves to present (which probably explains why I am swamped with proposals [over 100] for the Berkeley meetings, and will have to reject, at least 60 of them).
Deadlines and Abstracts

It is by no means clear why deadlines are developed for the submission of abstracts or papers to a conference, since they are circumvented in a number of innovative ways by would-be participants, and totally disregarded by "big names", and where necessary, the program organizers themselves. The most common ploy is to blame the mail service if the abstract is late or does not arrive (although it does not seem fair to expect the mail service to deliver something a day or a week before it was written [just ask Dan Hilliard about this manuscript?], or something that was never written at all). Postal service ploys are particularly useful for international conferences in countries where the mail service is indeed unreliable (oh, why did I leave Canada?). Requiring deadlines in such instances can put the program director at a decided disadvantage because abstracts may really be delayed or lost (which probably explains why I really only have 3 proposals for the Berkeley meetings). If this possibility exists then you have a problem, because you do not know whether the irrate colleague is complaining because their name does not appear on the preliminary program or is merely skilled in conference gamesmanship. In either case, you have lost the psychological advantage necessary to preserve your control (What I shall have to do for TASP is to construct a bogus preliminary program, filled with "big names" and intriguing titles, which I shall create; then those attending the conference will only see the revised program, and everyone will be impressed and happy--fooled, but happy. I am beginning to truly understand the word con-text). With all this psychological doublethink, you can see that the setting of deadlines is a very tricky business. Abstracts can be equally tricky, as writing it and a paper may be two totally different things. The only similarity usually is the title, but sometimes even that changes. This is not surprising, as the function of the abstract is to get you on the program; and be sure that you say something controversial in your abstract. Controversy is the lifeblood of a conference organizer, because it can really liven up a boring program (just ask Klaus Meier), and give the delegates something to talk about in the bar afterwards (the very key to past successful TASP Conferences). A really good controversy can greatly enhance the success of the conference, and make it into an historical event (much like the Henniker meetings). That the paper you eventually present is not in the least controversial does not matter at all. Half the time the program director is too harried with pre-conference details to publish the abstracts before the conference starts (Not so, in the case of TASP). If they do get published, you can always say that a more in-depth analysis, after the abstract was written, has led to a change in your results and discussion. At least you will have achieved the objective of getting on the program.

Conference Hotel

The conference hotel is an integral part of the way you manage the impressions of the delegates. The richer and more sumptuous the better (Jay Mechling's strategy for Berkeley), provided that you get a reasonable room rate. Also, there should be no other hotels in walking distance, so that all the delegates will have to stay in your hotel. Another advantage of a very expensive hotel is that the bar and coffee shop prices will be way out of reach of the average delegate. Now, providing that no other cheap bars are within easy walking distance, the attendance at the sessions will be to capacity (since there is no where else for delegates to go). This is good for the program director since it creates the illusion that you have really put together a program in which everyone is interested. It also protects the egos of the presenters, who can maintain the idea that their presentations are worth listening to, when perhaps they really know better. But there is a catch, if you are paying for the "big names". Be sure to give them a per diem rate, otherwise you will be saddled with their bar bills after the conference (Where was this article when Gershon Legman took Tempe by storm, and just took TASP???), which could send the sponsoring organization into debt for years.

The Program

If handled correctly, the program is a major weapon that the organizers can use against the presenters, since it is in the arena in which they are on public display.
Wielded with cunning and strategy, it can be formidable. A few simple assumptions will help you anticipate problems and prepare your strategy. You will receive complaints from presenters whose papers are scheduled for the first and last days of the conference, and from those who are in the first and last session each day, and from presenters who feel that their papers are better than average, but are given only an average amount of time. However, with judicious planning, you can turn these complaints to your advantage. The offer of more time is an easy strategy to manage. You can employ a "more time" trick, by scheduling some cancelable papers (like accepting papers from foreign presenters, and then neglecting to write letters to them, making attendance possible—oh, thank you for the Canadian proposals).

Another argument to use against the people who complain about first and last days is to explain that you need strong papers to get the people to the conference early (or keep them late), and theirs was chosen (This strategy always worked before with Alyce Cheska, but please don't tell her). Since the veneer of status has to be maintained, few presenters can counter this argument, even though it is obvious to both of you that their paper is a load of trash (I am still waiting for some TASP member to explore "trashy play"—although I did put an article on "trashy sport" in the Newsletter). I know that, in the case of the TASP/CFS Berkeley meetings, none of these problems will arise; after all, we only meet once a year to discuss play—rendering every speaker and presentation so important that we could never be limited by time or date!!!

In Conclusion

So after all this, why would anyone want to be a program director for the conference? The answer (though a rationalization) is that it can really be a lot of fun, if it is not taken too seriously (As most of you know, I am incapable of taking anything seriously, so we should all survive Berkeley, and have some fun!!!). A good strategy is to treat the whole affair as a form of academic "deep play" (thank you Geertz), by which you "play with fire and not get burned" (enough for now of my mystical powers).

Of course, the chances are that you might get burned, but this (relatively safe) risk is what makes irony, paradox, and transformations, fun. If you have a positive attitude, a sense of humour, and a thick skin (sounds like Ann Marie Guilmette), and follow some of the strategies outlined above, you may pull it off (I worry about the it!). Imagine the boost to your ego when a few years later, a colleague (if you have any left) turns to you and says, "This is as good as the one you (translated Ann Marie) organized". Well, at least, it might be worth a couple of beers, and you all know what I would do for a couple of beers (When I have one beer, I can feel it, but when I have more than one beer, anyone can feel it!!!).

Finally, I am looking forward to the 1988 TASP/CFS Conference (April 20-24) at the Marina-Marriott Hotel, in Berkeley, California. See you all there???

The Anthropology of Play Equipment
By D. Alan Aycock

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Although there is a large and growing literature concerning the anthropological study of play, little or no attention has been directed to the social and symbolic implications of the equipment associated with play. This is all the more surprising, since anthropologists have historically been keenly aware of the ways in which material culture constrains, directs, and reinforces social relations.

In the light of this research vacuum, I shall not attempt to establish a theoretical overview of play equipment here. Instead, I shall take a single example of the equipment used in play and suggest an analytical approach which, if not comprehensive, might evoke further much-needed efforts in this area.
The example that I intend to use is chess and its equipment. I have chosen it because I have played competitively for more than twenty-five years, and have undertaken substantial participant observation. I shall refer in this essay only to tournament chess played "over the board," since this form of chess confronts players and spectators alike with an encounter strictly limited in space and time, one in which all symbols and strategies are brought into play at once. "Skittles," i.e., chess played casually for fun, and correspondence chess present different aspects of the use of equipment, and so will not be considered here.

What is meant here by chess equipment? First, I exclude for purposes of this essay what may be termed "facilities," e.g., lighting, tables and chairs. I also will not deal with the personal apparel of the players themselves. The subject matter of this essay is the equipment peculiar to tournament chess: chess set, board, and clock. I shall analyze this chess equipment along three dimensions: time, space, and aesthetics.

**Time**

A salient characteristic of any cultural event is the manner in which time is imposed as a "social fact" upon participants. In a chess tournament, limitations upon time set the parameters of the competitive encounter, placing the opponents in a rhythmic and mutually focused involvement.

A chess clock consists of two clocks set side by side in a single case, with separate buttons to start one clock while the other is stopped. The buttons are pressed alternately as each player moves. Players are required to complete a specified number of moves, e.g., forty moves in two hours, or lose the game. This emphasizes careful planning, since a decision taken after an hour of agonized thought may later be compensated by a series of moves made in relatively few minutes, or even seconds. Often the first ten or more moves are made very quickly so that the next moves can be considered at leisure. This places a premium on "book" knowledge, influencing players to regard themselves as "serious" if they spend the requisite months or years to learn standardized opening sequences.

The presence of chess clocks causes time to appear as an objective reality to the players, amenable to tactical manipulation. For instance, a player known for his "addiction" to time trouble may be induced to slow down his play by a crafty opponent who seeks to complicate the position. Alternatively, those inexperienced in tournament play can sometimes be persuaded to move too quickly by an opponent who himself moves rapidly. The decisive banging of clock buttons when both players are short of time imparts an aura of excitement and unpredictability to the encounter, attracting spectators to witness and validate the denouement.

In a broader context, chess clocks define a special "time out of time" which sets apart tournament play from the cadences of everyday life, and situates play in a specially constructed reality. For the non-playing public, the apparently glacial pace of a chess game has become proverbial, and has thereby generated the (quite erroneous) belief that most serious players are bearded ancients. Players may indeed come to perceive time spent in tournament play to be more real, and more compelling, than time allotted to family or work. The "chess widow" is a well-known anecdotal figure, and even divorces are occasioned by enthusiastic commitment to tournament play.

**Space**

A tournament chess game is played on a board of 64 squares, colored green and beige to reduce eyestrain during the 4-8 hours normally required for a single tournament game. The familiar red and black checkerboard is, for this reason, never used for tournament play. The standard size of a square is 2"-2 1/4", making the entire board (including a narrow border) 17"-19" square.

I have emphasized the dimensions of a chess board because it is the spatial focus of a confrontation that absorbs the entire attention of two players (plus an indefinite number of spectators) for many hours. It therefore constitutes a territory which circumscribes their social interaction. The chess set and clock also occupy space, as do the players, but these are not the focus of activity.
As a territory, the chess board belongs to the players for the duration of their game. No spectator may encroach upon this territory, for example, by touching or moving a piece, without certain reprisal. A tournament director or referee is permitted to intrude only under special circumstances designated by a rule book, and even he is unlikely to do more than instruct the players themselves to make appropriate adjustments. The chess board, it appears, delineates a "sacred" space that complements the effect of the chess clock upon time: both set apart the chess encounter as a cultural event not to be confused with everyday routine. The nearly ritual status of the tournament director or referee further emphasizes the existence of a taboo zone to which none but the participants has authorized access. The presence of rules which carefully prescribe use of the board and table (Kazic 1979) direct and legitimate the players' attention to their role.

Within the narrow limits of the rules of tournament play, a player may yet manipulate territory to his advantage. For example, a player may lean far forward over the board when it is not his move to obstruct his opponent's view and disrupt his concentration by this act of symbolic aggression. A player may alternately, as a display of confidence, get up from the board and stroll around the tournament hall with apparent indifference to the territory he has temporarily abandoned to his opponent. Captured pieces, which must be removed from the board, may nevertheless be placed so near its edge that a player includes them, unconsciously, in his calculations, or else feels sufficiently annoyed by their proximity to move them farther away (to the unexpressed satisfaction of his opponent).

More generally, the presence of a chess board confers a culturally recognized identity upon those seated on opposite sides of it. Where there are many such boards, as in a tournament, onlookers correctly ascribe to the players the status of members of a coherent group. That players seek to defeat their opponents does not divide them; to the contrary, the fact that victory is attainable only within the confines of a mutually agreed set of rules unites the players as possessors of a common culture. The chess board is a visible manifestation of that shared culture.

Aesthetics

It is far more difficult to appreciate the sociocultural relevance of the aesthetics of chess equipment than it is to study its temporal and spatial dimensions. The analyst must work from an intuition of beauty to an elaboration of the anthropological regularities which underlie it. Nevertheless, a cultural event is not completely comprehended if one ignores the sensual, as contrasted with the moral, satisfaction of those who participate in it. The analysis that follows applies in some degree to all chess equipment, but most conspicuously to chess sets. I shall therefore concentrate primarily on the aesthetics of chess pieces.

Chess equipment is not solely utilitarian, even in a tournament where rules limit the nature of that equipment. Setting aside the possible psychoanalytic significance of chess pieces, we come to the observation that players identify their roles in terms of the equipment they use. For example, it is common practice, especially in major tournaments, for the director to supply clocks, boards, and sets, usually made of plastic to minimize the costs of damage or theft. For the same reasons, many players will use the equipment supplied rather than risk their own. However, a player who regards and represents himself to be seriously committed to the game will frequently bring his own equipment. Wooden clocks and sets (wooden boards are too bulky) then replace the plastic ones to the evident pride of their owners. Conflict sometimes arises when each player wants to use his own equipment, particularly since there is a generally accepted view that familiarity with a given set enhances the strength of one's play and disadvantages one's opponent. Rules universally give the player of the black men the choice to use his opponent's equipment or his own, to offset the reputed advantage of the first move which accrues to the player of the white pieces. More usually, players negotiate a resolution, such as using one player's men and the other player's clock, which satisfies them both.

Although non-players or casual players generally recognize the prestige and beauty of chess sets, non-players or casual players generally recognize the prestige and beauty of chess sets, consider the frequency with which they are used as props in movies or advertisements, the aesthetic preferences of tournament players are based on much more specific
criteria. These criteria are often enshrined in tournament rules, but even without that formal reinforcement they govern the tournament player's choice of equipment.

I have already mentioned that many players prefer wood to plastic as a construction material. Wood is also chosen over metal, ivory or stone, which are often used to manufacture the chess sets displayed in homes or museums. Of course the cost, awkwardness, or fragility of such sets prohibits their widespread use in tournaments, but the texture of wood sets is in any event thought superior by tournament players. Wood possesses a tactile "warmth" that plastic, ivory, metal, and stone do not. It is possible to surmise that this warmth imparts a certain personality to what might otherwise be experienced as impersonal endeavor, thus strengthening the image of tournament play as a social and sociable encounter. Furthermore, wood is "softer" to the touch than the other materials used to manufacture chess equipment, and for this reason may be deemed more appropriate for play, if the consequences of chess be thought correspondingly "softer" than those of war, its real-life analogue. Admittedly, the rationale underlying cultural symbols remains, on the whole, obscure to participant and observer alike. Whatever the explanation, a player who openly expressed a preference for ivory, plastic, metal, or stone equipment would be thought odd, and treated as such by the players.

The color of chess equipment naturally varies in part with the material used to construct it. White and black are the standard for plastic sets, while wood sets may be brown, black, or russet, and blond, white, or beige. The symbolic significance of the use of contrasting light and dark colors in the game of chess, so thoroughly elaborated by Victor Turner for other cultural forms, lies beyond the scope of this essay. Suffice it to say that in a tournament, where each competitor plays games over the space of several rounds, the director allotts a balanced proportion of light and dark colors to each player. No individual assumes an exclusive role as player of the pieces of a single color, although many players do prefer one to the other for technical reasons which are consistent with their personal style.

The design of chess pieces is a critical element of their appeal to tournament players. Commercial sets mass-produced for consumption by the general public, as well as those created by artists, exhibit a remarkable variety of forms. Dieties, animals, historical personages, and surreal or baroque abstractions are some of the themes embodied in famous or popular sets. The only design acceptable for tournament play, however, is that originally promoted by Howard Staunton, an influential English master of the 19th century. A player will routinely refuse to employ a set of any other design in a tournament game, unless he is playing a child or a novice unfamiliar with the conventional design who has brought an inappropriate set (and even then the more experienced player may not acquiesce). In this inflexibility he is supported by international rules, and by a consensus among the players themselves. Every player who considers himself "strong" owns at least one, and often several, sets of Staunton design. National chess federations, which sell chess equipment of every description, stock none but Staunton sets.

The basis for this invariant preference lies in the prominence during the latter half of the 19th century of England as a site for strong international tournaments and as a training ground for masters of world repute (Golombek 1978: 43). Howard Staunton's views on chess style, including the design of chess sets, in turn dominated the English school of chess (Hooper & Whyld 1984: 327). Although English chess had declined markedly in all respects by the turn of the century, the prestige of Staunton sets had already diffused throughout Europe and the United States. The developing concept of a world championship, together with players' high regard for the champions themselves, set a firm imprimatur upon the tournament competitor's choice of set. The role model inspired by successful masters thus led ordinary players to imitate their preferences. Ultimately, these preferences were uniformly institutionalized in the rule books of national and international chess organizations (Kazic 1979, Morrison 1978). The culture of chess, and the aesthetic judgement which this culture fosters, today remains quite homogeneous throughout the world.
The ideal proportions and weighting of Staunton pieces equally occupy a chapter in the rule books. Most players prefer, within those limits, larger and heavier pieces to smaller and lighter ones. Open satisfaction is derived from handling and moving hefty pieces. The substantial solidarity of a chess set, and by implication of those who use it, establishes the game as a social fact and confirms competitors' perception of their own roles as serious players.

To summarize my argument in this section, there are obvious social sanctions, formal and informal, which tend to standardize players' preferences for chess equipment of a particular material and design. These preferences are internalized and publicly expressed by those who assume the role of a serious tournament competitor. Ownership and use of appropriate equipment is a highly visible metaphor for adherence to the values of the culture of chess, national and international. There are of course social mechanisms, not directly relevant to this essay, which acculturate and socialize players into the accepted attitudes of the culture. What appears at first glance to be merely an idiosyncratic aesthetic preference is therefore much more subtly a requisite of the validation of personal and group identity.

Conclusion

I will conclude this essay by referring briefly to an interesting and relatively recent innovation in tournament chess, the introduction of chess-playing computers as opponents for human players and for one another. Some of these computers are commercially available, while others are programmed in university-based computers too expensive for an individual to own. Although all chess-playing computers share limitations generated by programmers' inability to duplicate the intuitive and abstract aspects of human thought, the sheer speed of their calculations makes the more elaborate computers formidable opponents. Since a human player is not permitted to use the advice of a chess computer to augment his own strength during a tournament game, a computer can only enter tournament play as a competitor in its own right. Thus chess equipment and chess player, in this instance, become indistinguishable.

The consequences of this development neatly counterpoint my argument in this essay. On the one hand the chess computer embodies pure impersonal cognition, since it can never (unlike a human player) get angry, excited, depressed, or exultant whatever the course or outcome of its game. On the other hand, the manufacturers of chess computers have gone to considerable trouble and expense to make them conform recognizably to the role of a "serious" player, building into them (male) voices, standard Staunton design and (in more expensive models) wooden pieces and boards, clocks, and even in some cases mechanical arms to move their own pieces. The resultant tension between anthropomorphic design and the usual inanimacy of chess equipment fuels furious controversy among chess players respecting the legitimacy of computers' participation in the role structure of tournament chess. I shall not recapitulate these arguments here. I believe it to be significant, however, that at the bottom of these arguments lies a fundamental uncertainty about the distinction between pretense and reality: to dispute whether a computer is mechanical contrivance or a "real" player begs the question of human conformity to cultural norms. If a person who plays chess with the proper equipment thereby adopts a role which transmutes his experience of play into a discernibly greater and more satisfying reality, does a computer which assumes that same role become less like a piece of equipment by undertaking an experience which is ostensibly human? Ultimately, all cultural artifacts, human or non-human in form, are equally value-laden and comparably real.

Note

1. I wrote this essay prior to the publication of Sutton-Smith's excellent *Toys as Culture*; however, his insights do not significantly alter my view of the particular case that I am here analyzing.

References


Dr. Play's Quiz #3

TASP members and physical educators Alyce Cheska and Janet Harris
Have something else in common that need not embarrass.
All their good work is something to tout
One lives in the north and one in the south.
Pause awhile to ponder a trait they both share
The clues are embodied in this poem everywhere.

Finding their commonality may be paradoxical and problematic
For instance how could it be that they are both morganatic?
They are as pious as a righteous minister
No one would believe they could be so sinister.
Spending time investigating in federal libraries
Are they really covert reactionaries?
They both move and write as gracefully as a bird
To be clumsy or awkward would be absurd.
Everyone knows them as kind, clear and dear
Are they really by nature ambiguous and insincere?

They like the north and have common bonds in the west.
Its up to you now to handle the rest.

Editor’s note: Dr. Play’s identity has been revealed, and as some of you may have guessed, he is none other than that prodigious word wizard Don Lytle. He offers the following solution to Quiz #1, which seems appropriate as we look toward the Berkeley meetings: “By reading the correctly answered letters downward, they spelled the word FULSOMENESS. Since this means ‘nauseous’ or ‘disgusting’ it could have referred to the quiz but was actually a reference to Frank Manning’s Presidential Address in Montreal.” Answers to quizzes number 2 and 3 will appear in the next issue of the Newsletter. This editor offers a bottle of Anchor Steam Beer to the first TASP member who gives him a correct solution to this quiz at the Berkeley meetings. (Don, Alyce and Janet are not eligible, but I will be happy to buy them a beer anyway.)

PLAY PRINT: Books and Materials for Play Scholars

This data based analysis by a well-known recreation specialist at the University of Illinois examines past trends and probable future developments in eighteen specific recreational activities. The book is intended for both academicians and recreational planners and professionals and is available from Management Learning Laboratories, Ltd., Box M, Station A, Champaign, IL 61820 USA.

Australian Children’s Folklore Publications
The Australian Children’s Folklore Archive at the Institute of Early Childhood Development, 4 Madden Grove, Kew, Victoria 3101 is Australia’s largest collection of children’s folklore. Its faculty offer the following publications: June Factor and Gwenda Davey (eds.), Australian Children’s Folklore Newsletter; Heather Russell, Play and Friendships in a Multicultural Playground; and June Factor, Children’s Folklore in Australia: An Annotated Bibliography.
Brock University Seeks Tenure-Track Faculty

The Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies invites applications for two tenure-track positions at the Assistant or Associate Professor level. Candidates must have expertise in either a) recreation of special populations, or b) commercial recreation services. The completion of the doctorate degree is preferred. The successful candidate is expected to contribute to the research, and to teach, in the field of recreation for special populations or commercial recreation services. This appointment will begin July 1, 1988. Deadline for applications is March 15, 1988. In accordance with Canadian immigration requirements, this advertisement is directed towards Canadian citizens and permanent residents. Brock University is an equal opportunity employer. Please send curriculum vitae and names of three referees to: Dr. J. Larsen, Chairman, Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario L2S 3A1.

Upcoming International Conferences

A number of exciting conferences touching on play and expressive behavior will be held in various parts of the Western world in the next few months. WHIM (World Humor and Imitation Membership) holds its 1988 annual conference on international humor April 1-4 at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. The program chair is Victor Raskin, Department of English; his telephone is (317) 743-3094. The 1989 WHIM conference is being planned for Hawaii; contact Margaret Baker or Jesse Crisler in the Communication Division at BYU-Hawaii at (808) 293-3600 or (808) 293-1552.

The World Congress on Free Time, Culture and Society will be held May 16-22 at Chateau Lake Louise in Alberta, Canada. Separate programs will be provided by the Education Commission, Information Commission, Management Commission and Research Commission. The respective program chairs are: Education Commission, David Ng, School of Physical Education and Recreation, Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada L2S 3A1; Information Commission, Gerald Kenyon, Department of Sociology, University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada T1K 3M4; Management Commission, Louis F. Twardzik, 131 Natural Resources Building, Michigan State University, Department of Park and Recreation Resources, East Lansing, MI 48824 USA; Research Commission, John Kelly, University of Illinois, 51 E. Gerty Dr., Champaign, IL 61820 USA.

The Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language at the University of Sheffield will present two programs this summer. An international seminar Perspectives on Contemporary Legend will run July 25-29. A conference on Traditional Humor will follow July 31- August 6. Information on either program may be obtained from the University of Sheffield, Sheffield, England S10 2TJ, telephone 0742-768555, ext. 6296.

Journals Focus on Play

In addition to TASP's new journal Play & Culture, a number of new developments are taking place in the area of academic journals which will be of interest to play scholars.

Children's Environments Quarterly seeks papers for its Fall 1988 special issue on street children and children of homeless families. Theoretical, empirical, historical or applied articles are sought. Four copies of the manuscript of not more than 30 pages, following APA guidelines, should be submitted by May 1 to The Editors, Children's Environments Quarterly, Children's Environments Research Group, CUNY Graduate School and University Center, 33 West 42nd Street, New York, NY 10036. Guest editors of the volume are Leanne Rivlin and Jason Schwartzman.

Humor: The International Journal of Humor Research will be published by Mouton de Gruyter beginning in April 1988. Submissions may be sent to the Editor-in-Chief, Victor Raskin, Department of English, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907 USA. Subscriptions may be ordered through Mouton de Gruyter, Inc., 200 Saw Mill River Road, Hawthorne, NY 10532 USA.

The National Center for American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research has recently been established at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center. It will soon be publishing its own journal and is currently soliciting manuscripts on Native American mental health from all social science disciplines. Three copies of the manuscript following APA guidelines should be sent to: Journal Editor, NCAIANHR, UCHSC, Department of Psychiatry, Box C 249, 4200 E. 9th Ave., Denver, CO 80262 USA.

The Journal of Leisure Research is seeking an editor for a three year term beginning October 1, 1989. Nominations will be accepted until May 1. For information about the position contact Donald Henkel, Director of Professional Services, National Recreation and Park Association, 3101 Park Center Drive, 12th Floor, Alexandria, VA 22302 USA. His phone is (703) 820-4940.