The Sixth Annual meeting of The Association for the Anthropological Study of Play is scheduled to be held at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, April 9-12, 1980. TAASP will be meeting jointly with the Central States Anthropological Society (CSAS) and the American Ethnological Society (AES).

Persons interested in presenting papers are asked to submit a title and 250 word abstract by no later than January 3, 1980 to the program chairperson: Dr. John W. Loy, 210A Freer Gymnasium, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois 61801.

Any one wishing to organize a special symposium should contact the program chairperson by December 15, 1979.

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Editorial

We include in this issue a paper given in Germany this past spring to accompany the launching in that country of the New Games Movement. Whereas in the USA it is a voluntary concern; there it has been taken over by the Deutsche Sportbund, eager to see if they can spread the values of recreation more widely to include more people. They have been particularly successful in their advocacy of jogging.

Whatever the merits of the article (see page 12), it serves to complement and provide useful bibliography to go with the two areas of controversy with which this issue begins.
CURRENT CONTROVERSIES OVER PLAY

I. THAT PLAY DOES OR DOES NOT CAUSE LEARNING

In the 19th century there was no problem with this issue. In this century, since G. Stanley Hall and Karl Groos, Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson and Jean Piaget it has become a commonplace understanding that play is some kind of learning.

THE CASE AGAINST PLAY

Corinne Hutt has argued that children learn not through play but through EXPLORATION (see "Play and Learning" in B. Sutton-Smith, Ed. Exploration. N.Y.: Garden Press). She found that when children were exposed to various novel objects, if they began playing with them prior to exploring and discovering all the objects' characteristics, they often never did learn all about them. She says: "This playful behavior may actually preclude learning, in the sense of acquiring information from a novel or an unfamiliar source."

Ken Rubin also votes, at least playfully, for the negative when he suggests with others that perhaps learning takes place DUE TO CONFLICTS THAT OCCUR BETWEEN THE PLAYERS, rather than to what they actually do in play. He cites the following novel example from nursery school dyadic fantasy play between two boys, who have taken the roles of father and mother.

Father: "So long. I'll see ya later. It's time to go to work."
Mother: "Hey, wait for me. I gotta go to work too."
Father: "Hey, my mom don't work...you stay here."
Mother: "Well my mom works...lotta women work ya know. My Mom is a professor at the university."
Father: "OK then, just hurry so we won't be late. Are you sure that you wanna work?"

According to this point of view, play provides the dramatic context for these other important contextual matters. This is the kind of view which might be supported by Piaget who placed the source of development in the disequilibrating effects of social interaction, rather than in play itself which was a kind of consolidation of what has already occurred.

Another voice against play being a kind of learning would be that which would argue that it was never meant to be learning. Play is rather a kind of pleasure taking like sex. And like sex it might have certain incidental epistemic benefits, but like sex, that would not be its primary intent or primary outcome. The theory of PLAY AS PLEASURE TAKING, which is exactly what the Puritans were afraid of, would find significance elsewhere than in learning.

A fourth critique of the studies which purport to show that children learn through play says that in all the experimental studies in which a play training group has subsequently proved better than a non-play control group, the training activities were always ADULT-GUIDED. For a recent account of this criticism see Susan M. Burns and Charles J. Brainerd, "Effects of Constructive and Dramatic Play on Perspective Taking in Very Young Children," Developmental Psychology 1979:15:512-521.

In sum, these arguments say that the child learns not through play, but through the Explorations and Conflicts that take place before or during play or because there is Adult Guidance in the experimental play group situation. And then they add philosophically, that play's major function is for pleasure, not for learning in any case.

THE CASE FOR PLAY AS LEARNING

In earlier issues of this Newsletter we have cited various articles which have averred correlations between play and creativity, problem solving, and novelty, play and flexibility. Most of these were not of an experimental nature, and those that were usually involved some kind of tutorial relationships with the "play" group, which raises the possibility that it was that relationship and the modelling involved, rather than spontaneous play that was the cause of any change in creativity scores.

But the belief in play is persistent. Although the famous studies by Kathy Sylva, Jerome Bruner, and Paul Genova did not show that the children who learned about certain objects through playing with them were any more skillful at problem solving than those children who were taught directly about them, Bruner now argues that nevertheless, those who played with the objects did show certain benefits. In An International Year of the Child Symposium at Yale University in June, 1979, Bruner contended that they were more persistent, laughed more, were more autonomous, and were more flexible in generating solutions.

With respect to the role of social conflict in play, the work of Garvey could be used to argue that you simply can not separate the social communicational issues in play from play itself. Helen Garvey might argue that play is communication, playing is saying. It could also be argued that in normal play there
Current Controversies Over Play (cont'd)
is such an oscillation between exploration and play that Hutt's abstraction of the one from the other is also a false issue.

CONCLUSION

Clearly the issue is not closed. It is our current prejudice that play leads to learning. It was the prejudice of the last century that it did not. But then we are so incredibly achievement oriented that we find it difficult to consider that much that is worth while in life is not there because of its learning value. Perhaps there is a continuing kind of puritanism in our unwillingness to let children play for the hell of it. But, perhaps not.

Scholars involved in the above controversy can be contacted at the following addresses: Bruner, Jerome. Wolfson College, Oxford, England.
Feitelson, Dina. School of Education, Haifa, Israel.
Hutt, Corinne. Dept. of Psychology, University of Keele, Staffordshire, England.
Rubin, Kenneth. Psychology Dept., University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.

II. THAT SOME CHILDREN ARE DEFICIENT IN MAKE-BELIEVE AND SHOULD BE TRAINED TO OVERCOME THAT DEFICIENCY

This is the same controversy as was discussed in the last issue of this Newsletter with Helen Schwartzman. In her book Transformations (N.Y.: Plenum, 1978) and in the last Newsletter she argued against those who believe that such a lack of imagination should be remedied by training procedures.

The challenge was taken up at the Yale University Symposium for The International Year of the Child in June, 1979, by Dina Feitelson, who following Sara Smilansky, also did some of the pioneering work in Israel. At that symposium she said the following:

"It is at this point that I (Dina Feitelson) part company with Schwartzman for I fail to see why a value judgment is implied in the statement that conditions in some societies seem more conducive to the emergence of imaginative play in early childhood than conditions in others. It so happens that in the early fifties I was engaged in ethnographic fieldwork among Jews who had immigrated very recently, and less recently, from the Kurdish areas of Northeast Iraq. During intensive participant observation sessions over twelve months in seventy five families, not a single instance of toy ownership and only one of representational play was recorded, despite the fact that many of the families lived in semi-rural surroundings, and great portions of the time were spent out of doors...

Feitelson went on to point out that the amounts of imaginative play vary greatly in Non Western groups; its absence in some places does not preclude its presence in others. Among Arab groups in Israel where the children attend Christian nursery schools there is more evidence of imaginative play than when they do not so attend.

Again she argues that while each kind or lack of play may be appropriate to the tribal group; when such groups are eager to enter competitively into the modern world through the process of schooling, then they need to be helped, and here, she says, the evidence shows that play training can be of assistance.

So we sent Dina Feitelson's paper to Helen Schwartzman and we asked, "Have you revised your position?" Schwartzman replied, "In response to the paper itself, my main point would be that the position that she (Feitelson) has enumerated here has not caused me to revise my position on the subject of imaginative play and cultural content and on the appropriateness of imaginative play training programs. My argument, as stated in Transformations (1978:116-124) and in our TAASP Newsletter dialogue has been to suggest that there are a variety of factors that researchers and educators must take into account before they judge a particular group of children to be deficient in imaginative play abilities:

1) If the judgment is based on the ethnographic literature, then the purpose, interests and methods of the anthropologist must be carefully considered in order to evaluate the researcher's reports about the presence or absence (as well as frequency) of specific types of children's play (this is particularly true for all ethnographies in the Six Cultures Series).
2) If the judgment is based on experimental or quasi-experimental research then the effect of the testing context and the location of the research setting must be taken in account (e.g., are the results artifacts of the experimental situation? were the children tested in a strange context which might inhibit their play behavior? was the researcher familiar with the child's cultural context? were observations made in contexts familiar to the child? were the children affected/intimidated by the culture or class of the researchers? etc.); 3) The investigator's definition of imaginative play must also be evaluated because it may lead the researcher to make judgments about play deficiencies that are not
accurate or cross culturally applicable (e.g., is imaginative play considered to be best expressed in the use and 'ownership' of toys and in the practice of construction play? -- or is play with language or social roles and concepts also considered? is it assumed that play can only, or can best, take place in contexts and space that are separate from work? For example, Feitelson assumes this when she states that 'In some societies, the nature of chores expected of children, sometimes at a very tender age, preclude free time for play.' But there are many examples in the ethnographic literature of children integrating their play with their work, see Transformations pp. 156, 186, and photo on p. 186). If all of the above are taken into account and it is still decided that a group of children exhibits a play deficiency of some sort, then the researchers/educators must ask themselves what their purpose is in seeking to correct this deficiency; and also whether the risks of labeling this group of children play 'deficient' (and, therefore, also socially and cognitively deficient in some fashion) are worth the advantages of teaching the children a new form of play.

There may be many instances where researchers and educators will decide that certain groups of children are, in fact, deficient or discouraged in the display of imaginative play and would definitely benefit from some type of play training or play encouragement program. I can certainly conceive of many instances in which this might be the case. My main concern in this area, as stated in Transformations and in our Newsletter dialogue, has only been to caution researchers and educators to not make premature judgments about these matters without first examining the contexts in which these judgments are made, and the cultural and class values that may lead one to make such judgments. In regard to this latter point, Feitelson states that she fails 'to see why a value judgment is implied in the statement that conditions in some societies seem more conducive to the emergence of imaginative play in early childhood than conditions in others' (p. 2). I have tried to point out in the above comments how it is that a variety of judgments (value and otherwise) may be implied in this type of research. I am not, however, suggesting that it is wrong for this to occur because it is my belief that value judgments of various sorts are made by all researchers, at all levels, at all stages and with all types of research. I do not believe that there is such a thing as a value-free social science. I am only critical of research that pretends to be value-free (the spectre of objectivity) when it obviously is not (and cannot be). In this regard, I believe that the important thing for researchers to do is to spell out clearly what judgments they are making and why they are making them, as Feitelson does on page six of her paper when she states that her interest is in fostering those activities that may facilitate a child's learning of 'standard academic language'. I wish that more researchers and educators would follow her example of stating these interests.

III. THAT PLAY AND RITUAL ARE THE SAME, ARE DIFFERENT, ARE RELATED, ARE NOT RELATED, OR THAT WE ARE SICK OF THE VAGUENESS IN THIS AREA

We could use some help with this one. What are the contesting points of view? What are the dimension of contrast? Share your ideas with us.

QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS

I. TOY RESEARCH - We asked SUSAN McBRIE where she is going with her Toy Research and she replied to us from the Department of Educational Studies, 201A Willard Hall, University of Delaware, Newark, DE 19711, July 11, 1979.

To answer your question as to the direction my research has been taking, I shall pose one question in return which has guided my work: What is the benefit to cognitive development from play with toys? A whole raft of studies appears in the literature addressing this question and I've been reviewing these studies 'with a vengeance.' What I find is that toy play is used as an experimental vehicle toward understanding the child's various cognitive and social behaviors. However, few studies examine play with toys in the natural setting. The major consequence of this is the lack of an explicit toy ethnology. What I am questioning is the benefit to child development knowledge of a theoretical research with toys.

To illustrate my point, consider just one interesting toy study by Goetz and Baer (1973). They used contingent verbal feedback to reinforce diversity of structures in children's blockbuilding. Goetz and Baer go further than most investigators by making explicit their assumptions about the toy: 'that if blockbuilding were to yield a contribution...to the child's concepts of space, form, math (of Cuisenaire rods), balance, leverage and
Questions to Members (cont'd)

visual esthetics... the block play itself would need to be diverse rather than limited, repetitive, or stereotyped. The importance of the fact that the experimenters were able to shape up form diversity in blockbuilding depends upon our model of the child's thinking during blockbuilding. Does reinforcement of diversity lead to more complex mental schemes? Does it lead to more storage in memory? Does the child learn to generate plans?

The anthropological study of play - with toys - should be the jumping off point. A viable model of the child's thinking must be based on observations of toy play behavior in natural circumstances. Otherwise we risk disposing prematurely of important clues to the nature of the child's mental processes during play. Field study can contribute the 'thick description' needed for developing a theory of the toy. Once such a theory is developed, a number of benefits may accrue, not the least of which would be a more rational utilization of toys for cognitive and social research.

Sincerely yours,
Suzanne McBride

References:


II. ETHNOGRAPHY OF FANTASY - We asked GARY ALAN FINNE where he was at present in his work in the Ethnography of Fantasy. He replied from the Department of Sociology, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55400.

For the past eighteen months I have been investigating the process by which fantasy is constructed in social settings. Typically fantasy is seen as being a solitary pursuit to which only the fantasizer has access. While this may often be true, individual fantasy has parallels in collective situations, particularly in the development of a group history or group culture - elements of group life to which members can refer with the expectation that other members will have a shared understanding of the meaning of these references. Some groups incorporate fantasy into their shared culture more directly than others, and this research focuses on one such subculture.

My research examines the shared fantasy and group culture of fantasy role-play gamers. Fantasy role-play games developed from commercial board games, but eliminated the traditional hexagon-grid board, and replaced the rule-based structure of wargames with the control of another player, the referee, who constructs a game scenario using the rulebook as a guideline for action. One expert states, "a 'role-playing game' is any game which allows a number of players to assume the roles of imaginary characters and operate with some degree of freedom in an imaginary environment" (Lortz, 1979:39). These games were first marketed in 1974 and include role-playing based on Medieval European legendry (Chivalry and Sorcery; Dungeons and Dragons) and science fiction (Traveller; Empire of the Petal Throne). Players create the characters they will play through dice rolls, and these characters are directed through the scenario by a referee, typically one of the older and more experienced players, who determines the events with which players must deal.

These games are typically played during evenings or weekend afternoons in private homes or public meeting rooms. Typically a game lasts four to eight hours. In addition to the referee there will be from four to twelve players, ranging from twelve to fifty years of age. Players begin the game by rolling a character; among the attributes determined by dice roles in Chivalry and Sorcery (the most popular game in the groups I observed) are: race (human, elf, hobbit, and dwarf are the usual races), strength, voice (inarticulate to orghic), mental health, and social class. This is, it must be emphasized, only a partial list. After characters have been created, the referee explains the scenario, and players outfit themselves with the equipment needed for survival (armor, magical amulets, weapons, etc.), organize into a party, and begin adventuring. Often the scenario is rather simple, such as exploring uncharted lands, or searching for treasure in a dungeon. On other occasions the scenario may be more complex such as a quest by one character to discover his true lineage or an attempt to free a Duke imprisoned by evil forces. Unlike conventional games, the goal of fantasy role-playing games is not besting another player, but cooperatively staying alive and succeeding in the scenario the referee has created.

Ideally, though not always in fact, players speak as their characters might in the situa-
Questions to Members (cont'd)

tion presented or describe the action of their characters; this is an oral game and is not based upon dramatic simulation. The outcome of actions and events in the game is determined by dice rolls by the referee or the players; and thus, although the game challenges players' role-playing skill, outcomes are determined by chance.

The goal in this research is to examine the way in which the scenarios are jointly constructed by the players, as each player shapes the content of game events through the actions of the character being enacted. Thus, the creation of fantasy in these games is a social phenomenon rather than an idiosyncratic process. In this, conventions of 'appropriate' fantasy must be obeyed, and a complicated system of social control is practiced in which the referee shapes the behavior or players, players constrain the action of the referee, and, of course, players influence each other. These scenarios are ongoing cultural systems, frequently lasting from week to week, and even in extreme cases over several years. Thus, the fantasy content does not remain static, but it is malleable in meeting players' needs, both within the game situation (the needs of the characters), and their social needs (in that the fantasy which is created is responsive to the real-world social structure of the group).

Even after a game has been completed, the salient events of this fantasy may be subject of retrospective references, and the events in a particularly exciting game situation (such as fighting over a pegus or killing one hundred orcs) may come to characterize the interaction of this group of young urban Americans.

To date one paper dealing with this research has been completed, "Legendary Creatures and Small-Group Cultures: Medieval Lore in a Contemporary Role-Play Game". Copies are available upon request.

Sincerely yours,
Gary Fine

References:


III. PLAY/DANCE IN DESEGREGATED SCHOOLS - We asked JUDITH LYNNE HANNA about her current research in Desegregated School Play. She replied from the College of Human Ecology, University of Maryland, College Park, MD. 20034.

Questions to Members (cont'd)

Children from white, civil rights activist families speaking like conservative 'red necks' about blacks after attending desegregated schools catalyzed my study of an urban desegregated magnet school with a court-mandated 50 black-white ratio for each sex in each classroom. Under the "magnet" plan, only whites may volunteer to be bussed to the school which is located in a black community in a major metropolitan area in the southwest. The purpose of my year-long study was to try to understand children's social relations and communication from their point of view as well as from observations.

Low income and middle income children differed in their views of what is play and nonplay and when play becomes aggression. Rules of time, place, and appropriateness differ. Black and white children engaged in some different forms of play. Of special interest to me, having studied dance-plays in Nigeria and dance more generally, was black children's spontaneous individual and group dance movements in the classroom and halls and organized dance ring-plays, line-plays, and cheers on the playground. They appear to be palpable, adaptive communicative modes. Dance is a vehicle of we/they marking, defensive structuring, sympathetic magic, and playing with anti-structure or aspirations in a stratified society.

The situational context of dance activities, including the history of segregation and the development of the neighborhood community in which the school is located, helps explain the black children's behavior. Although most teachers dismiss spontaneous dance movements and organized dances as frivolous and a validation of their perception that blacks are more physical, it may be that dance/play is 'serious business' in dramatizing concepts and patterns of and for social life. Public schools are stages where many tensions and conflicts in America are acted out.

A preliminary report of the study described is "Public Social Policy and the Children's World: Implications of Ethnographic Research for Desegregated Schooling". In The Ethnography of Schooling: Educational Anthropology in Action. George D. Spindler (Ed.) I have received a National Endowment of the Humanities postdoctoral fellowship at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research to complete the study.

Questions to Members (cont'd)


Sincerely yours,
Judith Lynne Hanna

IV. ADULT-CHILD AND PLAY - We asked JAMES E. JOHNSON about his work since leaving the Center for Cognitive Studies with E. Saltz at Wayne State University, Detroit. He replied from Child and Family Studies, 1440 Linden Drive, Madison, WI 53706.

My current research is directed toward a further understanding of play in connection with early childhood education. My general goal is to help clarify the role of the adult in relation to children's play. Two aspects of this effort are to evaluate the effects of specific play materials on young children's ability or preference for imaginative play and to study the effects of the teacher's presence or involvement on the same. In addition, I am presently conducting some longitudinal research which is in its third year and which is investigating play within preschool centers as displayed by children from three to six years of age. Finally, we have completed collecting data on the play of 20 four-year olds who are exhibiting retarded intellectual development.

I believe that the area of play research is heading for a sounder empirical foundation upon which to erect a developmental theory of play, both in terms of stages and levels, and in terms of its nature and functions. I look to see studies addressed to individual differences in children's play. For example, what are the cognitive and social correlates of propensities for constructive play or make-believe play? Also, I hope to see more research on applied problems. For example, we need to do more molecular-level and process-oriented observations of adult-child and child-child interactions during play promoting teacher and parent interventions.

I justify my concern with questions dealing with adult intervention into children's play because of its widespread occurrence first of all, and also because of my conviction that it can be a 'social good.' The basis for my belief stems from my years of experience as a play interventionist and my seeing how much children play on their own any way, even when adults are involved, and often with greater enthusiasm and richness because of the adult contact.

References:

HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR TAASP MEMBERSHIP?
SEE LAST PAGE FOR RENEWAL FORM!

NOTICES

FROM SHLOMO ARIEL - HELP:
Israel is a distant spot, far away from the real drama of the scholarly study of play. Having spent a year in United States, I only started to realize how busy this field really is. Now I am going back to Israel. Please help me keep in touch. My address there will be: Shlomo Ariel, Ph.D., Department of Education, School of Education, The Hebrew University (Mount Scopus), Jerusalem, Israel. Please help me by keeping me posted about your recent work in the field of children's play. I shall return in kind.

Thank you!

Shlomo

FROM URI RAPP:
Dr. Rapp is a new TAASP member and brings with him a long interest as a sociologist and an aesthetician in analyzing theories of play. In a book currently being written, Play, Institutions and Art, he compares these theories with findings of empirical research (especially in ethology), examining the seeming paradox of
Notices (cont'd)

play to something which is non-play, following Bateson's analysis; inspecting the relation between a system and its environment as structured by channels and codes of the system; and using this as a basis for an analysis of imitation and reflection in the symbolic domains in general and as applied to Art in particular.

Dr. Rapp expects to visit U.S. during his six month sabbatical in 1980-81. He wonders "if there is any possibility of cooperating with members of TAASP in lecturing, conferences, etc." He can be reached at the following address: Dr. Uri Rapp, Tel-Aviv University, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Fine Arts, Department of Theatre Arts, Tel-Aviv, Israel.

CONFERENCE: Canadian Society for Psychomotor Learning and Sport Psychology meets November 2-5, 1979, at Park Plaza Hotel, Toronto. For details write School of Physical and Health Education, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1A1, Canada.

CALL FOR PAPERS: The R. Tait McKenzie Symposium on Sport will be held May 1-2, 1980, at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The purpose of the symposium is to foster interdisciplinary research and scholarship concerning sport from the perspective of the humanities (defined here broadly to include the following disciplines: anthropology, linguistics, religious studies, jurisprudence, history, philosophy, and the fine arts). At this time a general call for papers is being issued for the 1980 meeting. All papers will be considered that treat sport from one or more of the disciplines cited above. Although complete manuscripts are preferred, detailed abstracts will also be accepted for consideration. Previously published or presented material will not be considered. A jury system will be used to screen papers. Deadline date for submission will be February 1, 1980. Address all papers and abstracts to: Dr. William J. Morgan, Division of Physical Education, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN 37916.

ANNOUNCEMENT FROM BELGIUM:

At the occasion of the International Year of the Child, the Institute of Physical Education of the Catholic University, Leuven, Belgium, organized an exhibition and "animation" project on traditional folk games and children's games in Flanders. The project took place from June 1 to August 30, 1979 in the national open air Museum of Bokrijk in the province of Limburg, Belgium. Financial aid has been given by the Sports Department of the Flemish Ministry of Culture. The exhibition was structured according to the folk games typology developed from Flemish Folk Games File by R. Renson and H. Smulders (1978), covering the following sections: 1-Ball games; 2-Bowl games; 3-Animal games; 4-Shooting games; 5-Fencing and fighting; 6-Locomotion games; 7-Throwing games; 8-Companionship games; 9-Children's games and Festival Games.

Some aspects of the social and cultural change both in the text and context of the folk games were illustrated by artefacts, photographs, etchings, posters and diffusion maps. A slide presentation further illustrated the wide variety of actual folk games seen in Flanders.

In order to lift the project out of its paper surroundings, an 'animation' project was set up in order to make the different folk games come alive. Therefore, a so-called folk game route was created in the museum itself. In the different regional sectors of the museum, traditional folk games and children's games were demonstrated with the opportunity for active participation by the visitors. Physical education students of the Katholic University, Leuven, who were running the 'animation' program, selected the games and tested their applicability during several folk games workshops which had been previously held in several parts of the country.

(Reported by Roland Renson)

SOME EUROPEAN PUBLICATIONS ON SPORTS & GAMES


On violence in sports:


RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

Helanko, R. Preadolescent Cultures in the Light
Research Publication Received (cont'd)


Weybright, L. D. Young Children's Ideas About and the Practice of Their Own Rules in Imaginative Play. City College of New York.

Tips, C. The Sports of the Coming Age. 5876 Merriweed Drive, Oakland, CA 94611.


Robinson Finnan, C. The Ethnography of Children's Spontaneous Play. Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA. George Spindler.


Journals Received (With Contents) (cont'd)

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Sheedy, Arthur. Pour une Historiographie Propre aux Phenomenes de l'Education Physique et du Sport: Problemes Poses par l'Institutionnalisation ... 70

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Vertinsky, Patricia. Female Activism Through Sport from a Cross-National Perspective ... 3

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DeBord, Rhonda Roberts. Identity Crises: Humanizing our Sports Program ... 33

Greendorfer, Susan. Childhood Sport Socialization Influences of Male and Female Track Athletes ... 39

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BOOK REVIEW

Helen Schwartzman


This is an amusing and likable textbook that uses examples of language play to present information and concepts from linguistics. Language Play is an illuminating and entertaining way to learn about phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics and also English orthography, similes, proverbs, and metaphors, the language of advertising, discourse analysis, contradictions, paradoxes and tautologies and context and language. Each of the seventeen chapters concludes with suggested exercises for students (e.g., "find five advertisements employing one or the other of the following types of word play, axymoron, synesthesia, epithet, metonymy, etc."). This book is recommended for researchers, teachers, and students of language and play. TAASP readers will be particularly interested in the Nilsen's demonstration and analysis of American linguistic play.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SPECULATIVE ANTHROPOLOGY, CYBERNETIC MODEL, AND PLAY - COMMENTS FROM REED D. RINER, Dept. of Anthropology, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AR. 86011

"I have begun a thorough study of the TAASP Newsletters and will soon become a subscribing and participating member. I admit this is rather backwards, having published with TAASP before I really did my homework, but...

I am enclosing a paper I read this spring at the Los Angeles meetings of the Society for Speculative Anthropology. It is far from, but not inconsistent with, the cybernetic model paper which appeared in the newsletter. In reading your papers in the newsletter I have decided that you will probably enjoy the paper.

I've sent copies off to Human Nature.

I am also enclosing a recent issue of our journal Anthro-Tech. In trying to explain speculative anthropology I recently wrote:

'Speculative anthropology studies human experience from the present into the future as human paleontology, archeology, ethnography, and ethnology study human experience from the past into the present. A primary objective of speculative anthropology is the application of social science understanding in the anticipation and pre-solution of tomorrow's problems. We cannot apply anthropology's traditional method of participant-observation to our
futures. We can extrapolate from tested theories, an activity considerably different from extrapolating from trends, to construct scenarios or projective ethnographies of our probable futures. Such activities can be independently reproduced and the scenarios can be systematically compared and criticized in terms of their internal and external consistency; in other words, they constitute a legitimate, valuable and potentially productive social science activity.

It might have been more efficient just to have said that we are playing with anthropology...and our own futures. Parallel to this there is increasing interest on our campus, both in anthropology and in recreation, in TAASP's work. My newest advisee has me jury-rigging a double major for him in the two. And my Honors seminar in speculative anthropology has concluded that careers such as recreation management will be major employment areas for many years to come. Speculating on recreational possibilities in the L-5 Colonies has several heads spinning at the moment and promises a couple of very interesting term papers.

And somehow transecting this, since speculative anthropologists read a lot of science fiction, I highly recommend to you Nathaniel Foster's recent novel The Gameplayers of Zan - superb study in freedoms and constraints. (In paperback from Daw Publ.)

These diverse points of view on speculative anthropology will suggest to you, I believe, that our two constituencies have many interests in common. Perhaps TAASP could print a modest plug for Anthro-Tech, and Anthro-Tech regardless would like to print some discussion on the future of play, recreation and the like - do you know anyone in TAASP who's into that?

On another topic, the introduction to the newsletter version of my cybernetic model paper said 'what play might be like if it was part of the general system of predictable determinations'. My intent was not so much to entertain determinisms as to propose a (not electronically) modelable mechanism which would account for ludic behavior, one that would support many of the phenomena as you speak of them. I would never, for example, denigrate randomness. I've become increasingly curious, as I have read your papers, to know what criticisms you might present to my paper. Needless to say, I've enjoyed reading yours immensely.

Finally, a short paper of mine rests in Teachers College (Columbia) at the moment, a memo about the development and classroom use of a simulation of the Northwest Coast Potlatch. I have submitted this to Charles Harrington to consider for the Anthropology and Education Quarterly. Now, in retrospect, I see that it could also provide a control framework for the study of play behaviors in a classroom setting. I think this short item might interest you, and, as I have only just begun to think about this application of the simulation, I would appreciate any suggestions that may cross your mind.

Thank you for your attention to all this; newsletters seem to provoke just such sudden bursts of discussion."

Cordially,

Reed D. Riner
May 15, 1978

ANTICIPATORY SOCIALIZATION THROUGH SPORT RESEARCH PLANNED - NOTES FROM DONALD CHU, Dept. of Physical Education and Dance, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York 12866

"We are currently engaged in a research project assessing the possibilities of anticipatory socialization through sport, i.e. potential definition of values, attitudes, emotional and moral dispositions based on desired entry into youth sport groups (e.g. little league, pope-warner and JHS football teams). We hypothesize that such effects may precede and interact with latter effects due to actual participation in the sport setting.

In the course of our investigations your work has repeatedly arisen and demanded consideration. Jeff Segrave (co-investigator) and I thought perhaps that you might be willing and able to share your thoughts and references on this subject.

Whereas others have investigated the effects of sport on older populations, we intend to look at youngsters (ages 5-12). Though psychologists have employed their perspective, we feel that a sociological-anthropological look at sport as a symbolic agent may be more appropriate for uncovering effects.

Your comments on the above thoughts would be greatly appreciated. In addition any recent references to the theory of play literature would aid in the development of our funding proposal. Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to call if you require clarification."

Sincerely,

Dr. Donald Chu
October 3, 1978
Play as Flow and Innovation: etc. (cont'd)

players (musicians, dancers, basketball players) and workers (surgeons, factory hands, school children) Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, a University of Chicago Professor of Psychology, has declared that whatever the context, whether it be called sport or play or work, there is a special kind of peak experience which people seek out (1979). This is the flow experience, and whether in work or play this is the reason that they enjoy what they are doing and feel that their lives are worthwhile. For some this experience happens when they use their bodies, for others when they eat, for others when they talk, for others when they fantasize and for yet others it is to be found in their own creativity or even in listening and watching. In all cases, however, the individuals have control over what they are doing. Their competences are not outweighed by the uncertainties or challenges before them, but then nor are they bored and unstimulated. The peak "flow" experience comes in these situations when their total concentration is required for their own success, so that while fully aware of what they are doing, their attention is focused narrowly upon the field of interest, with no time for self-consciousness nor thoughts of other things. Sometimes this happens while performing surgery or while writing a book, though for many it still happens while playing a game or enjoying a banquet. In a world in which the sensation and experience of the individual person have become the measure of most things, it is not surprising that there has been generated a theory of play which says that its major function is to give more of this kind of peak experience than most other activities.

Still, we have to be careful to distinguish flow from play (Shultz, 1979). In play our competence does exceed the challenge. Because of that it is a harbour to which we can retreat and envisage our possibilities rather than our real accommodations. When we rise out of play or in play tackle external objects or other persons in such a way as to be challenged excitingly (rather than to be overwhelmed or underwhelmed) then flow occurs. Flow is a state of integration with reality, play is not.

There is another major modern contender for the description of the play experience. Unlike the Csikszentmihalyi theory, which is one of private satisfaction to be found at any moment of the day, the other is a theory of public good. It argues that the play experience which this world lacks is the experience of joyful sharing (Fluegelman, 1976). Sometimes
Play as Flow and Innovation: etc. (cont'd)
this new kind of desire for shared and cooperating experience is called group therapy, or it is called group dynamics or it is called the New Game Movement. But in all cases it is advocated as not only good for the individual but also as good for the society. It is said to increase mutual trust and a sense of community, as well as decreasing the modern sense of alienation. Games and festivals are contrived so that hundreds and even thousands of persons can become one community in experience of a peak kind. The aim is a kind of group flow. Even beyond this creation of a sense of community, however, there is also advocated a kind of hyper game consciousness. It is suggested that players should think through their games and festivals and should constantly change them for greater mutual enjoyment. Anyone should be able simply to drop out if it isn't satisfactory. Rules should be constantly changed in an innovative way to make the experience a peak one for all involved. Even if someone has to lose they should be done under circumstances and upon a ground of their own choosing. The intricacies of this new meta game philosophy are described in a new book called, The Well Played Game, by Bernard de Koven (1978). The subheading is that, "In a well played game everybody wins." Of course, all these kinds of new definitions of play have so far been pretty much made for the appetite of the wealthy or comfortable who have the time and leisure to consider such things. And yet we see that in the vast mass entertainments of movie and sport and television, there is also continued manipulation of the medium and the rules in order to heighten the involvement of the consumer and give him or her also the vicarious play experience. Whether the rules be manipulated for the engangement of others or for the development of one's own consciousness, what constitutes the mark of the modern play experience, therefore, is its requirement of a very considerable flexibility. It is no longer what is left over from the world of work. It is become sacral again as in many older societies (Turner, 1974).

Play as Innovation
Meantime the social scientists have been making discoveries within this general cultural shift, which contribute the justification that play, as valued in this new way, does indeed contribute enormously to the individual and the community. Earlier theories of function emphasized that play was a form of work alleviation or of social control and preparation for society. Beginning with Huizinga (1949), modern theories on the contrary stress the novelty which occurs in play and the way in which it makes a contribution of an innovative sort to modern society (Sutton-Smith, 1978).

In the 1950's, experimental work on animals and infant exploration permitted psychologists to formulate the roles of exploration and play in the neurological and cognitive economies of the developing organism, and advance the argument that it is through these autonomous competences that growth occurs (Aldis, 1975; Berlyne, 1960; Bruner, et al., 1976; Collard, 1979; Ellis, 1979; Fagan, 1976, 1977; Hutt, 1971, 1979; Loizos, 1967; Nunnally, et al., 1973; Piaget, 1962; Shultz, 1979; Stern, 1974; Suomi & Harlow, 1971; Walker, 1961). While this was in no way a novel argument (Groos, 1901), it was in marked contrast to the rather defensive views of play which were to be found in psychoanalytic theory and in play therapy, both of which had dominated the field for the prior forty years (Schaef er, 1976). Furthermore, this time (unlike 1901) there was a great deal of experimental research to back up the proposition and to indicate the kinds of novelties which children encountered and transformed in their growth. In the mid sixties also, research began to indicate relationships between play and creativity (Dansky & Silverman, 1973; Feitelson & Ross, 1973; Liberman, 1965, 1978; Sutton-Smith, 1967, 1968, 1975; Wallach & Kogan, 1965). But more importantly various workers began to train children in imaginative play and to show a host of positive consequences from this make-believe training. Not only was there heightened creativity, but in some cases there was an ability to read where it had not existed beforehand, and there were as well innumerable other positive developments in intelligence, vocabulary, empathy, persistence and non aggression (Glasberg, 1975; Lovinger, 1974; Marshall & Hahn, 1967; Rosen, 1974; Saltz, et al., 1977; Singer, 1973; Singer & Singer, 1979; Smilansky, 1968).

Furthermore, it was discovered that those children who are more imaginative and verbally ingenious usually have particular kinds of parents who both model these behaviors and encourage them in the young (Bishop & Chace, 1971; Bradley & Caldwell, 1976; Cohen, 1974; Gordon, 1970; Main, 1975). Various books of a practical kind were, therefore, written to encourage parents to play with their children. The books usually demonstrate age by age how to do it (Aldston, 1971; Singer & Singer, 1978; Sutton-Smith & Sutton-Smith, 1974).
Play as Flow and Innovation: etc. (cont'd)

In the 1970's the search for all the ways in which children innovate through play has, as it were, caught fire, with demonstrations that children who play with given materials learn more from them and solve problems more efficaciously than those who are only given guided practice in how to use them (Dansky & Silverman, 1975; Fagan, 1976; Smith, 1977; Smith & Sydall, 1977; Sylva, 1976, 1977; Zammarelli & Bolton, 1977); with demonstrations that children are linguistically more advanced in their play than in their ordinary discourse (Hutt, 1979; Nicolic, 1975; Weir, 1960); with demonstrations that even in social behavior extremely young children are capable of generating social exchanges and social arrangements with their infant and toddler peers (Garvey, 1977, 1979; Hays & Ross, 1979) and that their earliest symbolic behavior shows similar versatility (Elder & Pederson, in press; Fein, 1971, 1979; Gardner, 1979; Vygotsky, 1967).

But perhaps more fundamental even than these empirical demonstrations that those who play more are more innovative, and that children can be trained to be so, is the finding arising first out of logic and more recently out of anthropology, that in every society play is a kind of thinking. The message, "This is Play," is the way we talk about what we think should be flexible and what we think should be left alone (Bateson, 1956, 1972). In the classic "work ethic" period where most people had to be dragooned into factory work of a highly routine nature, there was little or no scope for flexibility, and therefore a general deprecation of play. Today where the need for original and innovative thinkers cannot be satisfied at any level of government and economics, we are relatively more open to this ludic domain seeking out new possibilities and new alternatives. Apparently throughout history recreative behavior is a cultural domain more likely to be open to change (Keesing, 1960). Anthropological studies show that a people's play is a commentary on their kind of society and their management of that society (Babcock, 1978; Geertz, 1976; Handelman, 1977; Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, 1976; Manning, 1974, 1977; Schwartzman, 1976, 1979; Turner, 1974). It tells us what we need to know about our own contradictions and compromises. At the same time it gives us imagined solutions. These solutions may hold us together as groups and even suggest the possibility of higher order integrations in ordinary life. Gathering people together into larger communities for festivals and games may generate the kind of community feeling, which is later institutionalized in a more enduring way. At the very least it is a commentary on our desire. When different groups celebrate together, when parents and children play together, they bring to their lives the kinds of vividness which we have earlier called play or flow. These have in them the seeds of a life which is more interesting and more connected in an age when many of the older forms of connection no longer seem so available or so meaningful.

Bibliography


Bateson, G. The message, 'This is play.' In B. Schaffner (Ed.), Group Processes: Transactions of the Second Conference. Josiah Macy Foundation, 1956, 1945-246.


Play as Flow and Innovation: etc. (cont'd)


Play as Flow and Innovation: etc. (cont'd)


Play as Flow and Innovation: etc. (cont'd)


TAASP PROCEEDINGS VOLUMES

All TAASP members should consider the value of using one or more of the (soon to be) four volumes of Proceedings as texts in the courses that they teach. The books are relevant for a number of different courses: history of play, history of sport, children's play, theory and method in the study of play, cross-cultural studies of childhood and play, cross-cultural studies of games and sports, etc. Leisure Press offers a 40% reduction in price for orders of ten or more copies of the books. All members should also be sure to encourage their libraries to order the volumes.

TAASP has been very fortunate to be able to publish (with the considerable help and investment of Leisure Press) four excellent Proceedings' volumes. If we wish to continue this practice in the future we must support Leisure Press now.

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