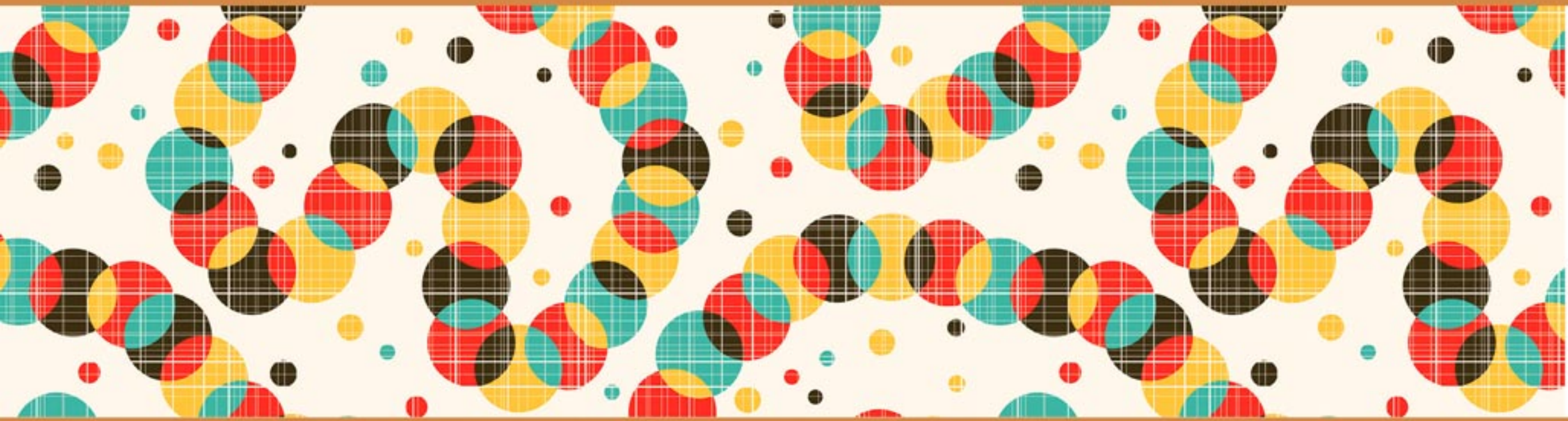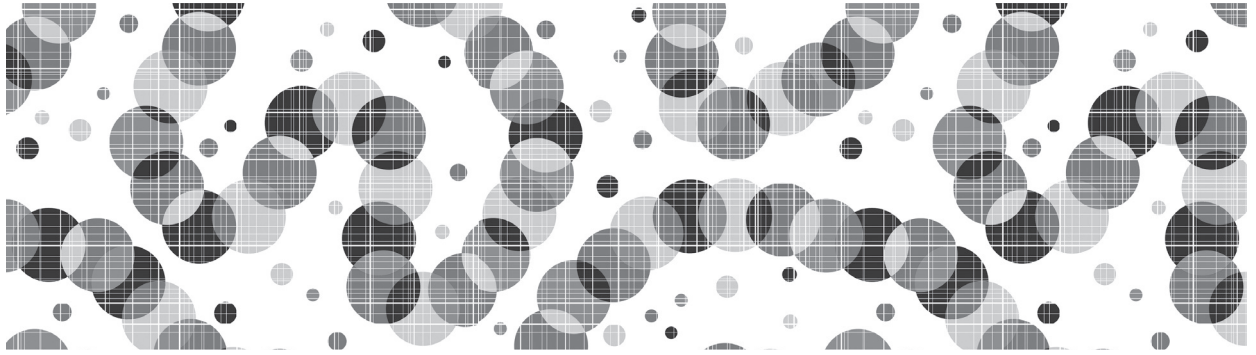The SAGE Handbook of
Play and Learning in
Early Childhood

Edited by
Liz Brooker
Mindy Blaise and
Susan Edwards

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International Advisory Editorial Board

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⑤SAGE reference

This book is dedicated to all our families, friends and colleagues, with thanks for the conversations that continue to inspire a fascination for all things to do with play.

Liz Brooker, Mindy Blaise and Susan Edwards

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About the Editors

Liz Brooker is a Reader in Early Childhood at the Institute of Education, University of London. Liz was an early years' teacher for many years, and her interest in the home experiences, and transitions to school, of ethnic minority children stemmed from her own work with children and families. Liz has continued to study early transitions, including those of infants and toddlers into their first group-care settings, with a focus on young children's agency as they engage with new environments. More recently her work has focused on play, using a socio-cultural perspective to describe how the social contexts of children's play shape their own development and that of the communities they construct with others.

Mindy Blaise is an Associate Professor and Co-director of the Centre for Childhood Research and Innovation at the Hong Kong Institute of Education, China, SAR. Mindy's scholarship relates to working with 'postdevelopmentalism' to reconfigure early childhood research, teaching and curriculum. A large part of this work involves 'grappling with' feminist practices that are useful for interrupting the notion of the developmental child. Mindy is currently involved in three interdisciplinary international research projects that are examining the situatedness of childhood in the Asia-Pacific region. She is a principal researcher, with Affrica Taylor and Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, in the Common Worlds Childhoods and Pedagogies Research Collective.

Susan Edwards is an Associate Professor of Curriculum and Pedagogy in the Faculty of Education at Australian Catholic University. She works as a Principal Research Fellow in the area of early childhood education and specializes in researching aspects of the early childhood curriculum, including play-based learning, teacher thinking, digital technologies and sustainability. Susan is the co-author of *Early Childhood Curriculum: Planning Assessment and Implementation*, published by Cambridge University Press (2010), and co-editor of *Engaging Play*, published by Open University Press (2010). She is currently serving as co-editor on the *Asia Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*.

Notes on Contributors

Jennifer Keys Adair is an Assistant Professor of Early Childhood Education at The University of Texas at Austin. As a cultural anthropologist, she has conducted ethnostudies in early childhood settings across multiple countries and communities. Her current work focuses on how to improve the educational experiences of young children of immigrants. Her work has been published in journals such as Teachers College Record, Harvard Educational Review, Race, Ethnicity and Education, Young Children and Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood. She recently coauthored Children Crossing Borders: Immigrant Parent and Teacher Perspectives on Preschool for Children of Immigrants with Joseph Tobin and Angela Arzubiaga. In 2011, Jennifer was awarded the Outstanding Article of the Year award from the *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education* for her article "Confirming Chanclas: What Early Childhood Teacher Educators Can Learn From Immigrant Preschool Teachers" and in 2012 the Emerging Scholar Award from the Critical Perspectives in Early Childhood Education SIG of AERA. Jennifer's current research looking at culturally-relevant types of agency in early childhood classrooms is currently supported by the Foundation for Child Development and the Spencer Foundation.

Doris Bergen is a Distinguished Professor of Educational Psychology Emerita at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. She received her PhD from Michigan State University East Lansing, Michigan. She has taught a range of courses related to learning, human development, assessment, early childhood, and educational psychology. A focus of her research interests has been play theory and humour development, including effects of technology-enhanced toys on play, adult memories of childhood play, and gifted children's humour. Her most recent research has been focused on investigating the event-related potentials (ERP) elicited when children engage in two types of video game play. She also is a Miami University Distinguished Scholar, having published 11 books and over 60 refereed articles and book chapters, and was co-director of Miami University's Center for Human Development, Learning, and Technology for many years. The Center was named in her honour after her retirement.

Laura E. Berk, PhD, is a Distinguished Professor of Psychology Emerita at Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois. Her empirical studies have focused on the effects of school environments on children's development, the social origins and functional significance of children's private speech, and the role of make-believe play in the development of self-regulation. Her books include *Private Speech: From Social Interaction to Self-Regulation* (Lawrence Erlbaum, 1992), *Scaffolding Children's Learning: Vygotsky and Early Childhood Education* (National Association for the Education Young Children, 2002), and *Awakening Children's Minds: How Parents and Teachers Can Make a Difference* (Open University Press, 2004). She is co-author of *A Mandate for Playful Learning in Preschool: Presenting the Evidence* (Oxford University Press, 2008)*.* She has also authored three university-level textbooks in human development: *Infants, Children, and Adolescents* (Pearson, 2012), and *Development Through the Lifespan* (Pearson, 2013). She is associate editor of the *Journal of Cognitive Education and Psychology* and a fellow of the American Psychological Association.

Milda Bredikyte has been a Senior Researcher and Lecturer at the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences, Vilnius, since 2012. She teaches courses on child development and

narrative learning in play and Vygotskian theory of cultural development in childhood. She is the senior researcher in the Research Laboratory of Play (LUES) and the coordinator of research activities in the research project 'Development of Self-regulation in Play'. She was responsible for the organization of university courses and research activities at the research laboratory on children's play (Play Lab 'Silmu') from 2002 to 2010 at Kajaani University Consortium, University of Oulu, Finland.

Margaret Carr is a Professor of Education in the Early Years Research Centre at the University of Waikato's Faculty of Education, Hamilton, New Zealand. She was a co-director of a New Zealand national curriculum development project that developed the early childhood curriculum, Te Whāriki, published in 1996, in which 'play' is included as a goal. Formerly a kindergarten teacher, she has developed a strong research interest in early childhood pedagogy. Her research with practitioners has often included the role and development of Learning Stories, a narrative assessment practice that is the subject of her 2013 book, *Learning Stories: Constructing Learner Identities in Early Education*, written with Wendy Lee (Sage, 2012). Before she became a kindergarten teacher she was a potter, and working with clay strengthened her enthusiasm for play and playfulness in all walks of life.

Daniel Thomas Cook is an Associate Professor of Childhood Studies and Sociology at Rutgers University, Camden, New Jersey. He examines the rise of children as consumers, presently and historically, exploring ways in which moral tensions between 'the child' and 'the market' play themselves out in various sites of children's consumer culture, such as advertising, food, rituals, clothing and media. Cook has written a number of articles and book chapters on consumer society, childhood, leisure and urban culture, including *The Commodification of Childhood* (Duke University Press, 2004). His edited books include: *Children and Armed Conflict* (2011, Palgrave Macmillan, co-edited with John Wall); *Symbolic Childhood* (2002); and *The Lived Experiences of Public Consumption* (2008). Cook continues to serve as a co-editor of *Childhood: A Journal of Global Child Research*. He is currently working on a book manuscript, *The Moral Project of the Child Consumer*, for New York University Press.

Fabienne Doucet is an Associate Professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning at the NYU Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development and an affiliated faculty member of the NYU Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, New York. Her research program addresses how immigrant and US-born children of colour and their families navigate education in the United States. A critical ethnographer, Doucet studies how taken-for-granted beliefs, practices, and values in the US educational system position children and families who are linguistically, culturally, and socioeconomically diverse at a disadvantage, and her work seeks active solutions for meeting their educational needs. Doucet has a PhD in human development and family studies from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and was a postdoctoral fellow at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Anne Haas Dyson is a former teacher of young children and, currently, a Professor of Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Among her previous appointments was a longtime professorship at the University of California, Berkeley, where she was a recipient of the campus Distinguished Teaching Award. A fellow of the American Educational Research Association, she has spent over 30 years studying the childhood cultures and literacy learning of young schoolchildren. Among her book publications are *Social Worlds of Children Learning to Write in an Urban Primary School* (Teachers College Press, 1993), *Writing Superheroes* (Teachers College Press, 1997), *The Brothers and Sisters Learn to Write* (Teachers College Press, 2003), and, with Celia Genishi, *Children, Language, and Literacy: Diverse*

Learners in Diverse Times (Teachers College Press, 2009); most recently, she has published *ReWRITING the Basics: Literacy Learning in Children's Cultures* (Teachers College Press, 2013).

Johanna Einarsdottir is a Professor of Early Childhood Education and Dean of the School of Education, University of Iceland. She has extensive experience in the field of early childhood education and early childhood teacher education. Her professional interests include continuity and transition in children's learning, children's well-being and learning in preschool, and research with children. She has been involved in several international research projects as a researcher and a consultant in her areas of expertise and published together with international colleagues. Recently she has been conducting research on children's views on their preschool education, and transition and continuity in early childhood education.

Maria Evangelou is a Associate Professor in the Department of Education, University of Oxford. Her research has focused predominantly on the evaluation of early childhood interventions. She has a strong interest in the areas of parenting education and support, in language and literacy development in the early years and in mixed methods longitudinal designs. She has led many large studies evaluating parenting programmes, including the Birth to School Study (BTSS) and the Evaluation of the Early Learning Partnership Project (ELPP), and she is currently leading the Parenting strand of the National Evaluation of Children's Centres in England**.** She also undertook a systematic review on 'hard-to-reach' families. During 2009 she led the literature review on children's cognitive and socio-emotional development that provided part of an evidence base which informed the review of the Early Years Foundation Stage in England.

Suzanne Gaskins is a Professor Emerita at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago, Illinois. (Department of Psychology, 1997–2012). She has done fieldwork in a traditional Yucatec Mayan village in Mexico since 1977, integrating psychological and ethnographic approaches to the study of children's everyday lives and their development. Her research is focused on cultural influences on development and learning in childhood, across a wide range of topics, including childhood learning in context, infant interactions with people and objects, the role of play and work in development across cultures, the developmental evidence for linguistic relativity beginning in middle childhood, and the influence of cultural change on socialization practices. She has co-authored two edited volumes (*Play and Development,* Psychology Press, 2007, and *The Anthropology of Learning in Childhood,* AltaMira Press) and written numerous articles and chapters on culture and development. She also studies cultural differences in families' informal learning activities in museums.

Celia Genishi is a Professor Emerita of Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, New York. She is a former secondary Spanish and preschool teacher and taught courses related to early childhood and qualitative research methods in the Department of Curriculum and Teaching at Teachers College. Her books include *Ways of Assessing Children and Curriculum* (Teachers College Press, 1992) *Diversities in Early Childhood Education* (with A. Lin Goodwin, Routledge, 2007); and *Children, Language, and Literacy: Diverse Learners in Diverse Times* (with Anne Haas Dyson, Teachers College Press, 2009)*.* The author of many articles for researchers and practitioners, her research interests include collaborative research and assessment with teachers, childhood bilingualism, and children's language use, play, and early literacy in classrooms. She is a recipient of an Advocate for Justice Award from the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education and the Distinguished Career Contribution Award from the American Educational Research Association Special Interest Group on Critical Perspectives on Early Childhood Education.

Susan Grieshaber is Chair Professor and Head of the Department of Early Childhood Education at the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd). The Department has over 60 full-time staff members who provide most of the early childhood teacher education in Hong Kong. Before joining HKIEd, Sue was Professor of Early Years Education in the School of Early Childhood at Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia. She co-edits the international journal *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* and is on the editorial board of several journals. Her current projects include a sociological study of how the compulsory Australian learning framework for children 0–5 years influences educators' practice, and an investigation of the professional networks of early childhood educators in Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and Korea.

Pentti Hakkarainen is a Professor of Psychology at the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences, Vilnius, from 2012 and Professor (emeritus) at the University of Oulu, Finland. He is head of the Research Laboratory of Play (LUES) and the scientific leader of the research project Development of Self-regulation in Play. He teaches courses on qualitative research methods and cultural historical psychology for MA students. He is the editor of the *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology* (M.E. Sharpe, New York) and has taught early education, developmental teaching and research methodology.

Linda J. Harrison is a Professor of Early Childhood Education at Charles Sturt University, Australia, and holds an Honorary Fellowship with the Murdoch Children's Research Institute. Her professional and research background is in developmental psychology and education. Her research focuses on infants', toddlers' and preschoolers' experiences of childcare/early education, quality in centre-based childcare, and children's socio-emotional, cognitive and speech-language development. Linda is particularly interested in the development of innovative methodologies for studying children's lives, experiences and perspectives as they move into and through early childhood settings and school. She has contributed to the development and design of the 16-year Longitudinal Study of Australian Children and the development and national trial of Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia. Her most recent book, *Lived Spaces of Infant-Toddler Education and* Care (co-edited with Jennifer Sumsion, Springer, 2014). She is an associate editor for the *International Journal of Early Childhood.*

Helen Hedges is an Associate Professor and the Deputy Head: Research in the School of Curriculum and Pedagogy at the Faculty of Education, University of Auckland, New Zealand. She teaches on graduate and postgraduate programmes, largely in early childhood education. Her research programme explores the interfaces of children's and teachers' interests, knowledge and learning and ways these connect in early childhood curriculum and pedagogy. She has published widely, including in the *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, *Cambridge Journal of Education*, *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice* and *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood.* She is the principal investigator of a Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (www.tlri.org.nz) that extends her research programme and investigates the notion of children's 'working theories' in collaboration with teacher-researchers.

Rachel Holmes has been a teacher for 19 years, working across the fields of Early Years, Key Stage 1, further and (more latterly) higher education. Her research interests lie across the interstices of applied educational research, social science research and arts-based research within cultures of childhood. Rachel is particularly interested in notions of 'childhood territories' such as ways childhood becomes imag(in)ed through fictional, documentary and ethnographic film; children's child(self)hood, identities and objects and ways to (left)field childhood via opening

up off-centre research methodologies. She works in the Educational and Social Research Institute at Manchester Metropolitan University, UK, as a Reader within the Centre for Cultural Studies of Children and Childhood.

James E. Johnson is a Professor of Education and Early Childhood Program Coordinator at the Pennsylvania State University. Before joining Penn State, he held positions in the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Child and Family Studies faculty and as a postdoctoral fellow at the Educational Testing Service in Princeton. A past president of the Association for the Study of Play and former Fulbright Senior Researcher in Taiwan, he now serves as Series Editor for *Play & Culture Studies* and is co-editing two new volumes in progress: (1) *International Perspectives on Children's Play* and (2) *Handbook of the Study of Play.* He is on the editorial board of the *International Journal of Play* and is USA representative on the Scientific Committee of the International Council for Children's Play.

Liz Jones is a Professor of Early Childhood Education at Manchester Metropolitan University, UK. She has over 20 years' experience of teaching in both mainstream and special education. Her research interests include poststructuralist theory; feminist theory; social constructions and deconstructions of 'the child' and 'childhood'. More recently she has become interested in post humanism. Liz leads the Centre for the Cultural Studies of Children and Childhood, which is affiliated to the Educational and Social Research Institute.

Margaret Kernan is a Senior Programme Manager in International Child Development Initiatives, in the Child Rights Home, Leiden, The Netherlands (www.icdi.nl). She has been working internationally in the field of early childhood care and education and primary education as a practitioner, researcher, trainer and consultant. Her specific interests include children's play indoors and outdoors, rights and diversity issues and policy and curriculum development in early childhood education and care. She is also interested in developing interdisciplinary approaches in researching issues affecting children's lives.

Elena Kravtsova is the Director of the L.S. Vygotsky Institute of Psychology, where she is Head of the Projective Psychology Department. She is one of the authors of the 'Golden Key', 'Master' and 'Opening' educational programmes for children of different psychological ages. Her work involves research into the problems of psychologists' and cultural-historical psychology specialists' training. Her research into the periodization of psychic and personal development, the zone of proximal development, and the developmental educational environment are a direct development of the traditions of the cultural-historical approach. She has published widely, in English as well as Russian, across these fields, and has given many international keynote presentations.

Hillevi Lenz Taguchi is a Professor of Education and Child and Youth Studies at the Department of Child and Youth Studies, Stockholm University, Sweden. Her present research interests concern methodologies and research practices in material feminist, new empiricisms and postconstructionist research. Her most recent articles are published in *Feminist Theory* and *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education.* Her most recently published book in English is *Going Beyond the Theory/Practice Divide in Early Childhood Education*: *Introducing an Intra-Active Pedagogy* (Routledge, 2010).

Stuart Lester spent many years working on adventure playgrounds and community play projects in the north-west of England and is now Senior Lecturer in postgraduate Professional

Studies in Children's Play and undergraduate Play and Playwork programmes at the University of Gloucestershire, Cheltenham. His current research interests centre on the nature and value of children's play, the everyday playful production of time/space and conditions under which playfulness thrives. Publications include *Play, Naturally* (with Martin Maudsley, National children's Bureau Enterprises, 2007), *Play for a Change: Play, Policy and Practice: A Review of Contemporary Perspectives* (National children's Bureau Enterprises, 2008) and *Children's Right to Play: An Examination of the Importance of Play in the Lives of Children Worldwide* (Bernard, van Leer Foundation 2010 both with Wendy Russell). He has also contributed numerous chapters and articles on children's play and playwork, the most recent of which are 'Playing in a Deleuzian playground', in *The Philosophy of Play*, C. Ryall, W. Russell and M. MacLean (eds, Routledge, 2013), and 'Rethinking children's participation in democratic processes: a right to play, in *Sociological Studies of children and Youth: Volume 16 Youth Engagement 2013*.

Annica Löfdahl is a Professor in Educational Work at Karlstad University (KAU), Sweden. She has a background as a preschool teacher and is engaged in the teacher education program at KAU, mainly focusing on education for the youngest children. Besides this, she is chair of the local ethical committee at KAU and has served as a member of the faculty board for several years. Her research interest is in children's play, peer cultures and social relations among preschool children. Currently she is interested in how the preschool teacher's profession is changing within increasing demands for documentation as well as how teachers working in afterschool settings handle the new demands for quality and assessments in Swedish schools.

Jackie Marsh is a Professor of Education at the University of Sheffield, where she conducts research on young children's digital literacy practices in homes, communities and Early Years settings. Her most recent publications include *Changing Play: Play, Media and Commercial Culture from the 1950s to the Present Day* (with Julia Bishop, Open University Press 2014) and *Handbook of Early Childhood Literacy* (edited with Nigel Hall Larson, and Joanne, Sage, 2013). Jackie is an editor of the *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*.

Felicity McArdle is an Associate Professor at Charles Stuart University and an Adjunct Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at Queensland University of Technology, Australia. She is particularly interested in the early years' curriculum, the arts, and teachers' work. She has conducted research enquiries into how teachers teach and the ironies within the discursive fields that shape their decisions and actions. She has an interest in the affordances of the arts as a way of knowing, and how diversity issues can be addressed through the arts as pedagogy, language, learning and research.

Adena B. Meyers, PhD, is a Professor of Psychology and member of the school psychology graduate program faculty at Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois. She received her doctorate in clinical community psychology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and is a licensed clinical psychologist. She is interested in contextual influences on child and adolescent development, with an emphasis on family-, school-, and community-based interventions designed to promote children's social and emotional functioning. She has served as a consultant to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), and as a supervisor of mental health consultants in Head Start preschool settings. Her publications have focused on school-based consultation and on adolescent pregnancy, parenthood, and sexual development. Her current work involves evaluation research related to school-based preventive interventions.

Kaitlin Northey-Berg is a doctoral student studying early childhood in the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey. She has been an art educator in K-12 settings and more recently an early childhood teacher working with children from birth to the age of five. Her research interests include examining the impact of public policy from the perspectives of teachers and children.

Bert van Oers is a Professor in Cultural-Historical Theory of Education in the Research and Theory of Education Department at the VU University Amsterdam, The Netherlands. In 2004 he was awarded an honorary doctoral degree at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland. His research approach is based on cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) and his main research interest is play as a context for learning (mathematics, literacy, music). He was one of the founders of the Dutch play-based curriculum Developmental Education for primary school. In addition to his publications in Dutch, he has published many articles and book chapters in English. The main book titles are: *Developmental Education for Young Children* (Springer, 2012)*, Narratives of Childhood* (VU University Press, 2003) and a co-edited book, *The Transformation of Learning: Advances in Cultural-Historical Activity Theory* (Cambridge University Press, 2008)*.* He is a member of a number of the editorial boards of English and Russian journals on early childhood education.

Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw is a Professor of Childhood Studies in the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria in Canada, where she is also the Coordinator of the Early Years Specialization. She has worked professionally in the field of early childhood education for over 20 years. Her work focuses on rethinking and reimagining early childhood education from theoretically and philosophically informed standpoints rooted in feminist, postcolonial, anti-racist and posthumanist perspectives. Her current writing project engages with posthumanist and Indigenous ontological perspectives grounded in relationalities to create possibilities for anti-colonial pedagogies. She is editor of *Flows, Rhythms and Intensities of Early Childhood Education Curriculum* (Peter Lang, 2010) and co-editor of *Re-situating Canadian Early Childhood Education* (Peter Lang, 2013) and the *Canadian Children Journal*. Her articles have been published in *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, *Gender and Education*, and *Child and Youth Services*, among other journals.

Rod Parker-Rees is an Associate Professor (Senior Lecturer) of early childhood studies at Plymouth University, UK. He was a nursery and reception class teacher before joining Plymouth University where he has helped to develop several early childhood studies programmes at undergraduate and masters level. He has particular interests in playfulness (in adulthood as well as in childhood), early (preverbal) communication, the history of childhood and informal learning at university. He has written numerous chapters and articles and has edited *Meeting the Child in Steiner Kindergartens: An Exploration of Beliefs, Values and Practices* (Routledge, 2011) and co-edited *Early Years Education: Major Themes in Education* (Routledge, 2005)*,* and *Early Childhood Studies: An Introduction to the Study of Children's Worlds and Children's Lives* (Learning Matter, 2010)*.* He is a co-editor of the journal *Early Years: An International Research Journal*.

Amy Noelle Parks is an Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education at the University of Georgia, USA. She is interested in equity issues in early childhood, particularly when they intersect with mathematics education. Her published work has drawn on long-term ethnographic studies as well as textual analysis. She recently completed a multi-year study following

a cohort of children as they moved from prekindergarten to Grade 1 in a rural school. She is currently writing a book for teachers about mathematics and play.

Lydia Plowman is the Chair in Education and Technology in the Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh. She has more than 20 years' experience of conducting research with children and technologies and is interested in the ways in which digital media are integrated into family life and used for leisure, work and educational purposes in the home. She has led or co-directed eight projects funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and conducted research or consultancy for the Scottish Government, the English Department for Education, the BBC and companies at the leading edge of technological innovation for children's media. A member of the National Toy Council, she is also Vice-Chair of the ESRC panel for Education, Linguistics and Psychology and a member of the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) Strategic Advisory Network, with an interest in social, cultural and ethical issues.

Niklas Pramling is a Professor of Education at the Department of Education, Communication and Learning, University of Gothenburg, Sweden. He works as a supervisor in several graduate schools for preschool teachers. His research interests include how preschool teachers and children communicate about various phenomena. In particular, he is interested in such communication in the context of aesthetic domains such as music and the literary arts. Another interest he is currently pursuing is how children, with and without adults such as preschool teachers, engage with new technologies for making music and stories.

Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson is a Professor of Early Childhood Education at the Department of Education, Communication and Learning at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. Her main research field is young children's learning and curriculum questions in early years education. Her many research studies of children's learning and play in the preschool context have led to the development of a didactic approach, labelled developmental pedagogy. One of her most popular books is *The Playing Learning Child* (originally in Swedish, but also translated into German), which is based on the idea that children are playing–learning individuals, so preschool didactics should integrate play and learning. Her latest research is about children's possibilities to learn depending on the number of children in the group. She holds a UNESCO Chair in ECE and Sustainable Development and is the World President of the Organisation Mondiale pour l´Èducation Présolaire (OMEP).

Stuart Reifel is a Professor Emeritus of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Texas at Austin, Texas where he served as adviser for graduate studies in early childhood education. His scholarly work addresses classroom play and teacher preparation, with research appearing in *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, *Journal of Research in Childhood Education, Young Children*, *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood,* and other journals and edited books. He served as series editor for *Advances in Early Education and Day Care* (Elsevier Science) and *Play and Culture Studies* (Ablex), and has served on editorial boards for a number of journals. A co-author of *Play and Child Development*, now in its fourth edition (Pearson, 2011), he has lectured internationally on classroom play. He was presented with the 2014 Distinguished Career Award by the American Educational Research Association Early Education/Child Development Special Interest Group.

Wendy Russell is a Senior Lecturer in play and playwork at the University of Gloucestershire, Cheltenham and a consultant on children's play and playwork. She has worked in the UK play

and playwork sector for over 35 years, first as a playworker on adventure playgrounds, then in development, research, and education and training. Her freelance work has included strategic development, evaluation and research projects for the public, private and voluntary sectors at local, national and international level. Recent publications include *The Philosophy of Play* (Routledge, 2013), co-edited with Emily Ryall and Malcolm MacLean, and *Children's Right to Play* (Bernard Van Leer Foundation, 2010) and *Play for a Change* (National Children Bureau Enterprise 2008), both co-authored with Stuart Lester. She is on the editorial board of the *International Journal of Play*.

Sharon Ryan is a Professor of Early Childhood Education at the Graduate School of Education and a Research Fellow at the National Institute of Early Education Research, at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey. Prior to moving to the United States, she worked in the early childhood field as a preschool teacher, curriculum adviser and special educator in Australia. Dr Ryan uses a range of mixed methods designs to research early childhood curriculum and policy, teacher education and the potential of critical theories for rethinking early childhood practices. She has written a number of articles and chapters on these topics.

Sue Saltmarsh is an Associate Professor of Educational Studies at the Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, Australia. Sue's research interests are broadly interdisciplinary, and her work is informed by poststructuralist theories of power, subjectivity and everyday life. She has undertaken a range of ethnographic, social semiotic and discourse analytic studies across early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary educational settings, focusing primarily on the connections between economic discourse, cultural practices and subjectivities. Sue serves on the National Executive Committee of the Australian Association of Research in Education, and is Executive Director of the Asia-Pacific Education Research Association, and International Advisor to the Centre for Childhood Research and Innovation at the Hong Kong Institute of Education. She is a founding editor of the journal *Global Studies of Childhood*, and reviews editor for *The Australian Educational Researcher*.

Christine Stephen is a Research Fellow in the School of Education, University of Stirling, Scotland. The focus of her research and writing is children's learning in the early years and the ways in which this is supported in preschool settings and at home. She has co-directed three Economic and Social Research Council-funded projects, which have examined young children's learning with technologies at home and in preschool, and led a number of studies examining the experiences of children as they move from preschool to Primary 1. Her interest in pedagogy includes studying the challenges of learning in Gaelic-immersion preschool settings and the learning opportunities offered to children younger than three years old.

Jennifer Sumsion is the Foundation Professor of Early Childhood Education at Charles Sturt University, Australia and Co-director of the Australian Government-funded Excellence in Research in Early Years Education Collaborative Research Network. In 2008–2009, she co-led a national consortium of academics, service providers and practitioners to develop Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, Australia's first national curriculum for children aged from birth to five years. She currently leads two Australian Research Council (ARC)-funded projects. One project is investigating early childhood educators' practices with respect to play-based learning. The second is exploring how a sense of belonging can be fostered in early childhood settings, especially for babies and their families in marginalised communities. Her recently completed ARC project with CSU colleagues focused on infants' lived experience of early childhood settings.

Michelle Tannock is a Lecturer of Early Childhood Education at Thompson Rivers University British Columbia, Canada. She has held posts as a Visiting Professor of Early Childhood Education at the University of Victoria, British Columbia, and as an Associate Professor at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. She has coordinated a series of studies examining the role of rough and tumble play in early childhood settings, the results of which have formed the basis for numerous publications and presentations. In addition to continued research on young children's rough and tumble play, her current projects include exploration of the form and use of kindness by young children and the effects of guided mentoring on educator practice.

Anita A. Wager is an Assistant Professor in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Wisconsin. Her research focus is on broadening notions of teaching mathematics for understanding by incorporating the cultural and socio-political contexts in which children live and learn. She is particularly interested in professional development that supports teachers as they draw on the rich mathematical resources from children's homes and communities to develop equitable mathematics pedagogy. Her current project is a study of a professional development for culturally relevant and developmentally responsive teaching and learning in preK mathematics.

Mary Wild is Head of the School of Education at Oxford Brookes University, Oxford. Her research interests include early childhood literacy, children's thinking and the use of ICT to support learning. During 2009 she was an author on the literature review on children's cognitive and socio-emotional development that provided part of the evidence-base which informed the review of the Early Years Foundation Stage in England. Mary is a member of the British Psychological Society and the British Educational Research Association (BERA). She is a Secretary to the Early Childhood Studies Degree Network in the UK and a member of its National Strategy Group.

Elizabeth Wood is a Professor of Education at the University of Sheffield, UK. She has worked on a number of collaborative research projects with teachers in early years, primary and secondary schools, based on participatory action research. Her research on play has been influential on national policy documents for early childhood education in several countries. She has authored books and articles based on her research interests in play, young children's learning, early childhood pedagogy and curriculum, equity and equality, and comparative policy analysis and critique.

Acknowledgements

Editors' Note on Terminology

In this handbook we acknowledge authors' preferred use of terminology and have not sought consistency of terms across all chapters. However, an author's choice of terms for certain categories can be construed as having political implications. We draw attention to the following categories here to clarify meanings.

1. In writing about young children and their caregivers and educators in a sex- and gender-neutral way, it is almost impossible to avoid the constant repetition of clumsy 'he/she', 'his or her', 's/he' constructions. Some authors, in reaction to psychology's traditional use of 'he', have preferred to adopt the convention of writing 'she' for 'the child'. Others, when writing about children's relationships with mothers and female educators, have preferred to use 'he' (the child) to avoid confusion with 'she' (the adult) where the caregiver is female. All authors have shown awareness of this difficulty and we have on the whole left their choices intact.
2. Some authors wished to make a specific statement about their use of 'race' as a socially constructed category to avoid the implication that it is a biological phenomenon. We have followed authors' preferences as to whether or not to 'quote' this term, but can confirm that in all cases (even when unquoted) it is understood by authors as a social and political construction.
3. Most authors have included some discussion of the different beliefs, practices and experiences found in different regions of the world. There are many ways to refer to these global divisions. Chosen terms include: Minority/Majority worlds; developing and developed worlds; Global North/Global South; Euro-American, Euro-Western, Western-heritage, industrialized, postindustrial and/or affluent. We have in almost every instance left these terms unchanged on the understanding that authors, whatever their preferred usage, are fully aware of global inequalities.
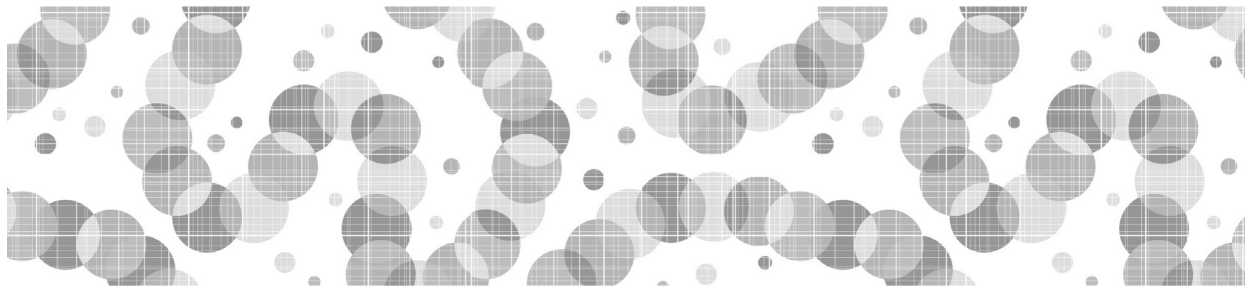
Introduction

Liz Brooker, Mindy Blaise and Susan Edwards

This is not the first handbook to be produced about play or about learning. Neither is this the first handbook to be written about young children. There are other handbooks that deal in considerable depth with topics including play (Pellegrini, 2011), young children's learning (Spodek & Saracho, 2006), and the sociological contexts of childhood (Qvortrup, Corsaro & Honig, 2009). What makes the present volume unique is that it is about play and learning in early childhood.

Play and learning are commonly described partners in the early years (Grindheim & Ødegaard, 2013), with the term 'early childhood' internationally defined as the ages between birth and eight (UNICEF, n.d). It is here that any ideas of simplicity regarding ease of definition about play and learning in early childhood might cease. This is because putting these concepts together opens for consideration a 'sprawling body' (Hännikainen, Singer & van Oers, 2013) of literature in which consensus about the definitions of 'play' and 'learning', and about conceptions of early childhood, is

never achieved. In all probability the field of early childhood will never reach any consensus on these points, because it continues to be engaged in dialogue with diverse disciplines, theoretical explanations and philosophical positions, all of which have different implications for both research and practice. This means that in considering 'play' or 'learning' (or play and learning) a reader of early childhood research might well encounter ideas and arguments from philosophy, psychology, history, evolutionary biology, anthropology and sociology. Each of these disciplines follows its own traditions and lines of arguments. They hold varying epistemological and ontological positions, which in turn means they understand and value play and learning in early childhood in sometimes complementary and at other times entirely contrary ways. To grasp an understanding of play and learning in early childhood is to recognise that the breadth and depth of ideas on which the field draws, and to which it contributes, sometimes enables convergence and at other times highlights degrees of difference.

What is interesting about understanding play and learning in early childhood in this way is that over time these points of convergence and difference have evolved into concepts and debates that are recognisable as being about the distinctive field of play and learning in early childhood rather than being simply about play, or learning, or early childhood. For example, many an introductory textbook on early childhood would talk about play as the basis for children's learning (see for example, Morrison, 2011), and provide a historical overview of theories of play as a justification for its claim. Here, the idea that 'play is a basis for learning' is recognisable as a construct associated with the field of play and learning in early childhood, while the ideas associated with it are drawn from philosophy and psychology. Again, the debate concerning the relative benefits of free play, or of adult interventions in children's play, is recognisable as a discussion occurring in play and learning in early childhood. However, the terms of this debate draw on philosophical ideas about the natural goodness of free play and psychological theory regarding the social construction of knowledge. In a further example, traditional assumptions that consider play as a neutral and value-free vehicle for children's learning are now challenged by the critique that play is vested in socially powerful relationships which can sometimes be unequal. This debate too is recognisably about play and learning in early childhood, while the critiques are located within poststructural arguments regarding the interconnections of power, knowledge, subjectivity and discourse.

This handbook is an attempt to map the range of concepts, debates and contemporary concerns associated with this field, while seeking to provide some sense of how they have evolved from, and contributed to, the range of associated disciplines. Given these combined aims, the task assigned to the contributing authors was by no means easy (Qvortrup, Corsaro & Honig, 2009). Authors were asked to provide a historical account of their specific focus in the field, to illustrate where possible the alignment or divergence of ideas informing their areas, and to point to future issues and directions of relevance for the next 10 to 15 years. Readers will note that each author approached this task differently. In some cases, authors adopted a largely chronological perspective, stepping the reader through an historical account of key ideas, signalling important points of departure in thinking about play and learning and suggesting future avenues for investigation. Other authors employed a more narrative framework, using specific examples and stories to highlight universal questions of concern and how these have adapted ideas from different disciplines. Other strategies involved comprehensively surveying empirical literature and showing how this literature relates to theories and philosophies of play and learning.

We intended that the handbook would be inclusive of a wide range of cultural, geographic and thematic positions. Culturally and geographically we were keen to represent as many international contexts as possible. Whilst we have contributions from Australasia, Europe and North America, we did not succeed in sourcing chapters from a broader region of Asia, or from Africa or South America. It remains the case that the world's most affluent countries are those best able to support research into young children's play. The initial list of topics we hoped would be canvassed in the book was also not entirely achieved: we regret that the themes of inclusion, sustainability and second language learning are not represented in separate chapters, although they do appear in chapters across the handbook. We therefore encouraged authors to be as international as possible in their account of the field and, where they were able, to refer to aspects of play and learning specifically associated with inclusion, sustainability and second language learning.

The next significant task was to determine the placing of the chapters in a way that provided a conceptual framing for the entire handbook. This presented its own problems

because we recognised that the structural possibilities were as endless as the discussions informing the field, and that no 'natural' thematic divisions were evident. In addition, it was apparent that each of our authors was differently situated in relation to their nation or region, disciplinary history, teaching and research experience and intellectual affiliations, and that we needed to take account of this 'situatedness' in grouping the chapters. These differences opened up many possibilities for juxtaposing and arranging chapters: we could for instance have placed all the more traditionally developmental chapters together and all the more experimental or postdevelopmental chapters in another group. Instead we sought to place the chapters in ways that recognise the value of their differently situated perspectives.

In drawing on ideas of 'situated knowledge' we are indebted to the thinking of Donna Haraway (1988) who argues that all knowledge, including those 'knowledges' associated with play and learning in early childhood, comes from *somewhere* (1988: 590). In the case of the knowledge contributed to this collection, that *somewhere* includes not only the temporal and spatial circumstances of the knowledge production but also the complex lifetime experiences of authors, including their affiliations to diverse theories, discourses and practices. And just as their approach to play and early learning, and even to children and to childhood itself, has been shaped by these circumstances, so we know that our readers' reception of the ideas and evidence presented here will be shaped by *their* own contexts and history.

Haraway's ideas are productive for considering knowledge production because they enable us to think about how knowledge practices are enacted across the broad field of early childhood, without hierarchising one approach over others. Instead of thinking about the 33 chapters as evidence of 33 different and even contradictory perspectives, we follow Haraway in viewing all such positions as 'partial views and halting voices' (1988: 590) which can help towards developing a

'collective subject position' (1988: 590) through dialogue. This makes it possible to consider the field of early childhood play and learning scholarship not as a collection of isolated individuals but, rather, as a community composed of rich and diverse voices. One of Haraway's most important contributions to debates about knowledge production lies in her interest in making room for 'the more' – in being inclusive of new as well as old ideas, even when these may appear to conflict, and in welcoming contradictions and differences. From this perspective, we have tried to see our own role as creating 'the more' through the presentation and placing of these knowledges, in all their diversity – to present a community of scholars in dialogue across the field.

In drawing upon Haraway's ideas we also hoped to move beyond the hierarchical and binary thinking which has previously characterised the field, where so much debate has centred on oppositions (of play and work, adult and child, formal and informal, child-initiated and adult-directed). In respecting and valuing the 'partial' perspectives that all the authors bring to their chapters we invite readers to work with these partial perspectives. Instead of thinking about different and even conflicting perspectives as problematic, we encourage readers to view them as positive and productive. We hope that the different perspectives presented here can be understood as in dialogue with one another, collectively generating points of reference that do not simply rely on the old binary stances, but acknowledge and gain from a recognition of difference.

In this perspective, it follows that how play and learning is understood, enacted, and researched across the field of early childhood cannot be disconnected from how it is situated within the micro and macro politics of teaching, learning, curriculum, and childhoods, both locally and globally. The chapters which follow are conceptually situated within various social and cultural contexts, including the authors' values and beliefs about play, research, childhood, teaching, and learning;

our own values and beliefs as co-editors; the values and beliefs of the publishing world; and, not least, our readers' expectations of the purpose and composition of a handbook.

Our aims for the handbook were, we determined, best served by a three-part framing of the field. Each part contains a self-standing introduction detailing the contributions of the chapters to the broad section themes in which they are located. The three sections of the handbook focus in turn on: 1) Theoretical perspectives on play and learning; 2) Play and learning in pedagogy, curriculum and assessment; and 3) Contexts for play and learning. While individual chapters are grouped under these three themes, it will be clear to many readers that the chapters in Parts II and III are as much 'about theory' as they are about curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and contexts for play. Similarly the chapters in the first part of the handbook, while located in the 'theoretical' section clearly draw on research and practice in their discussions of play and learning in early childhood. The distinction between them is a matter of emphasis. Thus chapters in Part I draw out a theoretical framework from experience; Part II shows how theories of play and learning are implicated in classroom pedagogies and curricula; and Part III encompasses a much wider range of contexts and relationships in young children's play and learning.

The emphasis of the handbook overall is, as suggested, on promoting an understanding of play and learning in early childhood. It will, we hope, enable readers to enter the debate characterising the field, and join in making its 'collective subject position'.

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Theoretical Perspectives on Play and Learning

Mindy Blaise, Susan Edwards and Liz Brooker
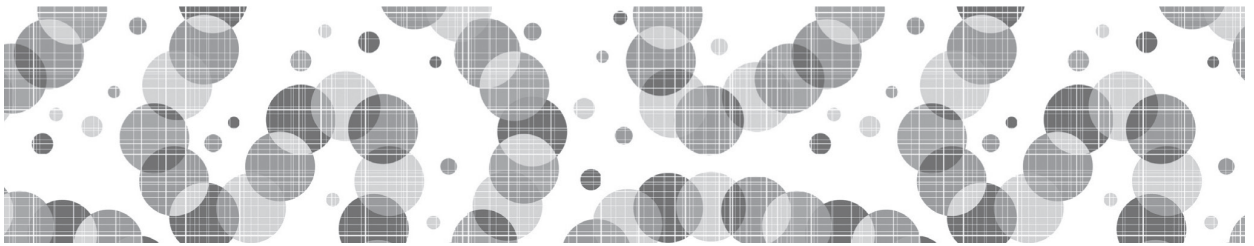
This section is focused on theoretical ideas about play and learning that are of both historical importance and contemporary interest to the field. Its chapters range from a broad account of foundational ideas to discussions of contemporary postdevelopmental theories, and include the consideration of socio-cultural, cultural–historical, psychological and anthropological perspectives.

The section commences with a chapter by Doris Bergen which introduces some of the foundations of play theory, including the work of psychologists such as Freud, Erikson, Piaget and Vygotsky and educators such as Hall and Dewey. The chapter explains how each of these theorists describes the relationship between play, development and learning in early childhood. Bergen introduces her historical survey with the declaration that play is 'a pervasive phenomenon seen in animal species, a common behaviour of human children, and an observable behaviour in the lives of human adults'. From this starting-point she refers to ancient, medieval and Renaissance writers to show how their ideas influenced understandings of play in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and identifies new directions for future research.

Chapter 4, by Adena Meyers and Laura Berk, demonstrates the strength and rigour of the experimental approach to research on pretend play, which is often viewed as the most characteristic, and the most significant, form of play in early childhood. Meyers and Berk take the reader through a series of key claims for the developmental impact of pretend play on young children, making a convincing case that – even if a causal relation cannot be established beyond doubt – evidence for the outcomes of pretend play, and especially of executive function, self-regulation and emotional control, has been described in numerous studies of children's development. The argument here draws on a number of important psychological constructs which have been the basis for extensive correlational studies.

The theoretical contribution of Vygotsky resonates through many chapters, but is the particular focus of Chapters 2 (Elena Kravtsova) and 5 (Bert van Oers). Both Kravtsova and van Oers argue the case for the relationship between play and learning from a cultural-historical perspective. Both engage closely not only with Vygotsky's own published works but also with those of his colleagues, collaborators and followers in the former Soviet Union. Drawing upon Vygotsky's non-classical psychological understanding of play, Kravtsova argues for the powerful enabling role of play in development and learning, framing play as a self-valuable activity which helps children to express what they know and see in their lives. Van Oers' work proposes a new cultural-historical activity theory that is capable of reformulating some of Vygotsky's original concepts, arguing that play is not a discrete activity but a mode of acting in the world which requires certain degrees of freedom for its existence.

Suzanne Gaskins, in Chapter 3, offers a very different description of the relationship between play and learning from an anthropological perspective. Gaskins also draws on foundational theorists such as Piaget and Vygotsky to trace the history of ideas, but situates her own argument within cross-cultural research, which demonstrates the role of social, economic and cultural circumstances in shaping how children acquire the knowledge and skills valued in their communities. Her typology of societies shows that young children's play may be cultivated, accepted or curtailed, and that their learning may, in many societies, be mediated through non-play routes.

Gaskins reminds researchers in the field that 'Data from one very specialized cultural ecology, where play is highly cultivated, is not sufficient to answer questions about play's unique contribution to children's development and learning in all environments' (p. 40). She cautions researchers about the pitfalls of relying on a single form of cultural knowledge in their efforts to understand play – a timely reminder of the limited usefulness of play research from White, Western and middle-class contexts. Play research located in widely varied geo-political locations and with different groups of children and families may therefore be seen as offering the valuable 'partial views' adumbrated by Haraway (1988: 590).

Chapter 9, by Susan Grieshaber and Felicity McArdle, reviews literature about the ethics of young children's play and learning, including in classroom contexts. In addition to reviewing traditional theories of ethics, in which children acquire ethical ideas from the modelling and instructive work of adults, the chapter argues that play may be an effective site for fostering young children's own ethical understanding and behaviour. The chapter includes an examination of curriculum documents from various countries (Sweden, Norway, Hong Kong, Australia, and England), which allows readers to consider how ideologies about play, childhood and teaching are enacted across the globe.

A strong theme of equity, social justice and transformation runs through Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. These chapters highlight strong links between social justice and play, where play is understood as a political space where inequities may be constituted and perpetuated. They draw on theories that are of increasing contemporary significance to the field to show how postcolonial, post-structural, feminist, queer, posthuman, girlhood and masculinity studies, and new materialisms, may be used to challenge taken-for-granted understandings of gender, (hetero) sexuality, 'race' and social class. What these chapters have in common is the articulation of theoretical concepts that view children as active and creative agents who contribute to cultural production and change. Play is not positioned as 'innocent', but is seen rather as a potential site of equitable and transformative social engagement.

The 'situated knowledge' (Haraway, 1988) produced by these scholars, and the research they review, derives from a cross-disciplinary and cross-national discourse. The authors, far from being co-located,

received their own education and training in their home countries: Australia, Canada, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. New ideas, as this demonstrates, travel around the globe as international communication becomes available at the touch of a screen.

For example, Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, in Chapter 6, discusses postdevelopmental critiques with a particular emphasis on post-colonial theory, which shows how powerfully individuals and groups can be subjugated through classroom activities, including play. Her chapter shows how the intersections of racism and colonialism have been identified in research in early childhood settings around the world. Hillevi Lenz Taguchi, in Chapter 7, describes the 'material turn' which has recently emerged in the social sciences, and shows how this idea has been taken up in research into young children's play and learning. Her chapter uses a single incident of a child's play with sand to offer an alternative, posthumanist and materialist interpretation, in which non-human elements are credited with agency in their intra-actions with humans. This emerging line of research is presented through a review of recent studies employing these theoretical concepts, showing that they have quite specific epistemological, ontological, methodological and ethical consequences for understanding play and learning in early childhood. Readers will note too the requirement for a new 'language' which tries to express the meanings which are being 'thought' and 'said' for the first time.

Sue Saltmarsh, in Chapter 8, offers a cross-disciplinary theoretical approach to the study of play from a childhood studies/sociology of childhood perspective. Her representation of young children's play is grounded in historical accounts of childhood, as well as in contemporary understandings of the status of the child in society and the political nature of adult–child and child–child relationships. The many disciplinary perspectives employed in this chapter offer a range of insights into the ambiguities and complexities of children's socially constructed position in society and

the material facts of their everyday lives and play experiences. Grieshaber and McArdle's discussion of the ethics of play in Chapter 9 reiterates many of the postdevelopmental themes raised in these chapters.

An array of different postdevelopmental theoretical perspectives is surveyed by Mindy Blaise in Chapter 10. Her chapter provides an account of the ways in which discourses of gender, sex and sexuality can be differently construed from the various theoretical standpoints to have emerged from feminist scholarship, including that of post-Confucianism. Each of the six theoretical positions discussed here makes visible, in different ways, how ideas about gender, sex and sexuality are constructed and enacted in early childhood classrooms. Discussion of recent play research employing these approaches prompts a rethinking of the roles of educators as well as researchers in challenging the inequalities which are produced when young children play together.

The final chapter in this section, written by Liz Jones and Rachel Holmes, clearly exemplifies Haraway's (1988) concept of situated knowledge, which is highlighted above. It considers the consequences of research and knowledge production where various theoretical paradigms are used as starting points to define and position play. This chapter, like Chapter 7, uses a single observation of classroom play to explore the meanings and interpretations which emerge when different theoretical and methodological lenses – modernism, postmodernism and posthumanism – are applied to the play. It concludes that non-traditional concepts, such as embodiment and affect, offer opportunities for new understandings of play's meaning for children. Readers, regardless of their own theoretical orientation, are likely to find this chapter challenging. Jones and Holmes argue that 'methodological multiplicity and complexity, taken in order to move ourselves as researchers towards conceptual, analytical and interpretive spaces that can meet the needs of ever-changing educational practices' (p. 134).

Part I of the handbook canvasses an array of theoretical and methodological insights and possibilities, encouraging an appreciation of the historical evolution of key ideas and a recognition of the force of postdevelopmental theories.

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Foundations of Play Theory

Doris Bergen

INTRODUCTION

Although play has existed as a part of human experience since early times, theories regarding its definition and cause, purpose, value, meaning, nature, effects and influence have been diverse and often controversial. Some theorists have focused on only one of the manifestations of play while others have focused on many different aspects. Playfulness, in its varied forms, is a pervasive phenomenon seen in animal species, a common behaviour of human children and an observable behaviour in the lives of human adults. According to Gordon (2009), the nature of play has been described differently by theorists in various disciplines, and they have 'come to different conclusions about the nature of play' (3). Göncü and Gaskins (2007) assert that because play is such a complex phenomenon, it has often been difficult to 'integrate its multiple perspectives' (4).

Play theory, therefore, is a wide-ranging topic, with some theorists giving definitions of the term 'play' and describing its purposes narrowly, others focusing on describing one manifestation of play, such as animal physical play or children's fantasy play, and others trying to probe the underlying meanings of all types of play with broad definitional theories. Four major strands of play theory have influenced present views of the theoretical meaning of play: 1) defining the characteristics of the behaviour called play; 2) examining aspects of animal play and its meaning; 3) examining the role of play as a sociocultural phenomenon and adaptive life quality throughout the lifespan; and 4) focusing on the role of various types of play in fostering children's development and education. This chapter provides an overview of the foundations of play theory, giving attention to all of these theoretical perspectives.

EARLY THEORIES OF PLAY

Plato, in his book of *Laws* (643 BCE), was one of the first to make the phenomenon of play a subject of theoretical interest. He suggested that children's play (*paidia*) had theoretical

significance as a venue for learning and for developing basic habits of character (*paideia*). According to Morris (1998), Plato believed that 'play is a medium of activity in which the player's natural underlying dispositions are revealed… and… (is)… the ideal medium of a child's *paideia*; that is, learning is most effective when play is its medium' (1998:114). Plato suggested that the correct way to educate children (both boys and girls) was to allow them to engage in play that promoted growth of their abilities, and that this would result in adults who were able to use their abilities effectively. Thus, the theoretical idea of play as an educational venue can be traced back to these early times.

RENAISSANCE/ENLIGHTENMENT THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON PLAY

Specifically stated theoretical positions regarding the role of play and its value as a means for assisting children's development and learning began to be more evident during the Renaissance. For example, Comenius (1632, 1657) emphasized the view that children's playful activity had educational meaning. He wrote two books advising that children's learning would be fostered by interesting and playful activities. His books were so popular at that time that they were translated into 40 languages.

In the period of the Enlightenment, the influence of Rousseau's book *Emile* (published in 1762) emphasized the role of playful activity in children's lives. Rousseau believed that children were born innately good and thus, instead of having adults rigidly controlling their behaviour, should have the freedom to develop in their own natural ways. Since playing is a natural activity of children when they are allowed to control their own activities, Rousseau asserted that their development would be positive in this condition. Thus, his perspective is one that promoted an appreciation of the play of children at that time. Even

Locke (1693), who saw children as *tabulae rasae* (blank slates) at birth, suggested that children should be taught through positive playful experiences to promote rational and individual needs, rather than by methods that made them fearful. He recommended indoor block play, however, rather than rowdy outdoor play. While play began to be viewed by these theorists as having a positive role in children's development and education, they did not really make explicit what might be the specific qualities of play that made it an important influence on children's development. However, their influence was a factor in later theoretical views of play as a facilitator of children's development and education.

LATE NINETEENTH-AND EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY THEORIES OF PLAY

Although these earlier theories continued to have influence during later centuries, theoretical ideas concerning play as a particularly meaningful factor that promoted children's development and education began to be made more explicit during this time period.

Theories Defining Characteristics and Purposes of Play

Theorists such as Spencer (1873), Schiller (1875), Lazarus (1883) and Seashore (1913) were interested in the meaning of play, and they provided some of the definitions of play that have continued to be influential. These theorists addressed play's origin and hypothesized about its purpose. For example, Seashore stated that play was free self-expression and its purpose was the pleasure gained by self-expression; Schiller theorized that children had excess energy and play was a means to expend this exuberant energy; Spencer viewed play as activity performed for immediate gratification without thought of long-term benefit; and Lazarus defined play as a free, aimless and diverting activity

without purpose. (See Mitchell and Mason, 1948, for more details on these early definitions of play.) The idea of defining play – that is, identifying its essential characteristics – has continued to be of theoretical interest.

Theories Derived from Observing Animal Play

Theorists during this period also speculated about the meanings of animal play and the implications for human play theory. For example, Groos (1898, 1901) discussed both animal and human play and thought that play was instinctive practice behaviour that assisted in preparing individuals for later use of the skills that were needed in adulthood (for both animals and humans), but also that for adult humans, play provided relief from the stresses of life. He proposed a 'recreation theory' of play that explained why adults often took refuge in play when they had lives that were consumed by work and anxieties. Mitchell (1912) and Kohler (1931) studied the play of animals and concluded that play served a purpose of socialization as well as assisting young animals to develop behaviours needed by adults of the species. Theoretical insights about the socialization meanings of animal play, gained from focused study of animal play, have enriched hypotheses about the meaning of play for humans (see Pellis and Iwaniuk, 2004).

Theories Focused on Play in Education and Child Development

European theorists Froebel (1887), Pestalozzi (1894) and Montessori (1914) all stressed the importance of playful activity as a means of educating children. Pestalozzi designed an educative system that drew on Rousseau's theoretical ideas. He suggested that children be free to explore aspects of their environment through their play and that the teacher's role was to observe and reflect on how to help them learn in that way. Froebel and Montessori both designed educational environments that

built upon children's natural play abilities. Froebel, the designer of the kindergarten ('children's garden'), provided a set of toys (gifts) for children that were supposed to extend their learning as the children played through a set of activities that these toys promoted, and Montessori set up Children's Houses, which provided activities that were initially close to children's existing play behaviours but then provided ordered/sequenced materials (work!) to enhance those behaviours. Their views of structured play environments as ideal starting points for children's education continue to be supported by many present-day play theorists (see Elkind, 1983; Bryant and Clifford, 1992).

The American psychological theorists who influenced how play was viewed during this time period were Hall and Dewey, leaders in the child development movement. Hall (1920, 1924) is viewed as the founder of the field of child development. His theoretical perspective on play was influenced by Darwin and thus he believed children went through stages in their play that demonstrated the stages of human evolution. At an early age in play they manipulate objects; later they replicate simple adult activities in pretence, and their games reflect skills needed in more advanced civilization. Thus, to have a well-developed adult, there must first be a well-played child. While this theory is not accepted as accurate today, it did contribute to the idea that children's play was an essential part of their early development and that play experiences enabled them to be more effective in adulthood.

Although Dewey (1910, 1916) was influenced by Darwin and Hall, his theoretical orientation focused on applying theory to practice, and thus he drew on Rousseau, Froebel and other theorists who saw play as a venue for childhood education. He believed that the educative environment for children required their active involvement in self-chosen, playful experiences, because these would lead to child learning, and he demonstrated his ideas at the University of Chicago laboratory school. In play, children find

problems to solve, and since Dewey (1938) believed finding problems was the essential first step in problem-solving, he supported children's play as a means of helping them discover and solve problems. Research on children's play activities was common at university laboratory preschools during this time period. One early researcher was Parten (1932), who derived a schema of social play stages, including solitary, parallel, associative and cooperative, from her observational research. Adaptations of the schema have been used in many play studies conducted in more recent times (see Coplan, Rubin, and Findlay, 2006).

MID- TO LATE TWENTIETH-CENTURY THEORIES OF PLAY

During the mid-twentieth century, play became a greater focus both of empirical and theoretical study by biologists, sociologists, ethologists and anthropologists, as well as educators and psychologists.

Theories Defining Characteristics and Purposes of Play

An influential piece of work by Huizinga (1950) emphasized the idea of play as a pervasive cultural experience that is tied to human survival. Huizinga believed that play was such an integral behaviour in the human species that he called humans *Homo Ludens* ('man, the player'). He outlined a number of the characteristics of play: it is voluntary; separated from real life; occurs within a frame or boundary; is ordered (has rules); and involves private spaces. Henricks (2002) states that although there have been many critiques and revisions of Huizinga's view, 'modern scholars stand on the shoulders of Johan Huizinga' (23). Huizinga's view of the evolutionary importance of play has been supported by Ellis (1998). For instance, Ellis (1998) believes that play has been a means for humans to survive the many uncertainties they have faced since ancient times, because

the most playful humans were the ones who had the greatest range of adaptive behaviours that they could use when environmental or social conditions changed. Ellis stated that play was 'necessary for our evolution' (1998: 29) because it is 'a biological system for promoting rapid adaptation to threats to survival that cannot be predicted' (30).

Another influential definition of play was that of Bateson (1956), who explored the paradoxical nature of play, suggesting that it is a form of metacommunication. He stated that in play, animals and humans operate within a 'play frame', in which behavioural and verbal signals do not convey the same message as they would if used outside that play frame. Instead, players send the message 'this is play' and thus the message conveyed by their play behaviour is different from the meaning of that behaviour when displayed outside the play frame. He described the signals and understandings that occur among players so that they can communicate meaningfully within the play frame. Hutt (1971) theorized about the difference between ludic activity (play) and epistemic activity (exploration), which have some similar qualities. She stated that in exploration children find out objects' characteristics but in play they find out what they can do with objects. That is, in play the object may be used in elaborated ways.

Neumann (1971) theorized that since play is a voluntary activity, certain dimensions within the individual and external to the individual could be evaluated in determining if an activity could be called play. The dimensions she identified involved how much internal control the person had over the activity, what level of internal reality was present and if there was internal motivation to engage in the activity. She stated that most playful actions have children in control, making up their own reality and doing the activity because they want to do it. Rubin, Fein, and Vandenberg (1983) theorized that the definition of play must include active engagement, non-instrumental actions, focus on means not ends, internal motivation, internal rules and

internal locus of control. Bergen (1988) defined play as a 'medium' in which learning and development are fostered, and Barnett (1998) outlined the characteristics of 'playfulness'. There have been many expansions and critiques of these definitions in recent times (see Gordon, 2009).

There is evidence that children also have theories about play's characteristics. For example, King (1979, 1982) found that kindergarten children used criteria such as if an activity was imposed by the teacher and if it was enjoyable to define whether or not it was play, and at later ages, they had an 'in-between' category that identified some required activity as having playful characteristics but not really being play. Fein and Wiltz (1998) reported that when children talk about their pretence, they mention activities done at home or in the neighbourhood but not at school, because school activities are 'not the play children describe with relish and delight many years later' (47).

Theories Derived from Observing Animal Play

In studies of animals, biologists, ethologists and psychologists have noted that certain conditions elicited playful behaviour in animals that they were studying, both in laboratories and at field sites, and have speculated on the meanings of such behaviours. For example, Suomi and Harlow (1972) found that rhesus monkeys raised in social isolation in a laboratory appeared to have deficits in play behaviours, but if they were then allowed to play with younger monkeys, they recovered social behaviours. Harlow and colleagues (1950) also observed that when monkeys were given puzzles to manipulate, they did not need food reinforcements, and concluded that there was a 'manipulation drive' that is as primary as are more basic homeostatic drives. They did not identify this behaviour as play, however. Suomi and Harlow (1976) did speculate that play served two purposes in monkeys: enabling them to practise adult social functioning

routines and to learn how to master aggressive impulses by using those behaviours in controlled, playful ways.

In studies of chimpanzees in the wild, Van Lawick-Goodall (1968) found all mother chimpanzees engaged in some play with their infants, although there were different levels of such play, and hypothesized that its purpose was social bonding. Lorenz (1971) indicated that, for many animal species, the curiosity exhibited in young animal play is an essential characteristic, enabling expression of new behaviours in varied settings. He commented that the curiosity evident in childhood play is exhibited in humans throughout life, and compared the play of children to the research of adult scientists. Recent research has studied how the 'playful brain' evolved in animal and human species (Iwaniuk et al, 2001; Pellis and Iwaniuk, 2004).

Theories of Play as a Socio-cultural Phenomenon

Sociologists and anthropologists have also theorized about the meanings of the play behaviours they observed in varied socio-cultural settings. For example, Leacock (1976) described the play of African village children and theorized that it was 'a rehearsal for adult roles' (467). Whiting and Pope Edwards (1988), after conducting a cross-cultural study of children's social activity and play, concluded that, while children played in all cultures, the types of play were malleable under social pressure, accounting for differences among boys' and girls' play and the types of play in various cultures. That is, play reflects the cultural meanings of the society in which it occurs (Gaskins, this volume). Documentation of the social–cultural meanings of play has continued to be of theoretical interest (see Roopnarine and Krishnakumar, 2006).

Opie and Opie (1969) gave an exhaustive account of English children's play in the streets and schoolyards and concluded that there was a culture of childhood that perpetuated

these games. They theorized that the function of the game was primarily a social one because it was not that important to win and in some ways these were 'ceremonial' activities, in that following the rituals of the game were important. Smith (1978, 1982) extensively examined the evolutionary and functional qualities of children's play as well as the longitudinal aspects of social play development, and Sutton-Smith and Rosenberg (1961) documented the changing nature of informal games over a 60-year period. Both Smith and Sutton-Smith have continued to elaborate on their theoretical perspectives in recent years.

Blurton-Jones (1972) charted categories of children's play in various world areas and compared rough-and-tumble play of preschool children to that of other young animals. He theorized that this behaviour served a social function and might occur in a critical period. Recent work on this play phenomenon by Pellegrini (2002, 2009) suggests that the purpose of this play in childhood differs from its purpose in adolescence. The rich database drawn from such studies has provided theoretical insights into the role of play as an enculturation medium.

Theories Focused on Play in Education and Child Development

Ideas of play as a phenomenon fostering development and education were furthered by the theoretical giants of the era, who focused on play's role in promoting socioemotional or cognitive benefits.

Freudian theory

Freud (1917/1956, 1938, 1960), within his theory of psychosexual development, discussed aspects of children's play and adult playful thought. He saw the early childhood period as one in which the child at play creates a world in which he can feel in control, stating that the child 'behaves like an imaginative writer, in that he creates a world of his own or, more

truly, he rearranges the things of his world and orders it in a new way' (1917/1956: 123). Freud believed that the child's playful activity was later transformed into adult playful thought. He suggested that adults create fantasy (much of it internal) rather than continuing to play as children do. Freud discussed how the joking behaviour of adults emerges from children's play by describing how children's playful activity is often the earliest form of humour expression, marked by exuberance and nonsensical qualities. He saw joking as a form of playful thought in later childhood and adulthood, and he asserted that 'the pleasure in a joke is derived from play with words or from the liberation of nonsense' (1960: 287).

Freud's youngest daughter, Anna, expanded understandings of the role of play in helping children face reality. In her work with children who had experienced the trauma of war and parental separation, she developed a 'therapeutic' play environment in which children could play out their emotions caused by traumatic stress. She stated that play therapy helps the child develop a secret world, using imagination and fantasy, and it is free from external demands (Freud, 1989). Other contemporary and later theorists expanded on these views regarding the emotional purposes that play serves (e.g. Klein, 1932; Isaacs, 1933; Lowenfeld, 1935).

This theoretical view has led to further work in the field of play therapy. Winnicott (1953) extended the psychoanalytic play therapy tradition and Axline (1969) and Moustakas (1974) laid foundations for 'non-directive' play therapy, which envisions play as being powerful enough to heal emotional trauma without active therapist intervention. Although methodologies and treatment models have continued to advance, the use of play in the treatment of childhood trauma is still based on the foundation provided by early theorists (see Wilson and Ryan, 2005).

Eriksonian theory

Erikson (1963, 1977) expanded on the theoretical meaning of play and its enormous

power in children's lives. He described how children use both pretence and construction play to gain control over their emotional lives and asserted that the feelings of power over their life events that children gain from pretence allows both expression of emotions and practice in controlling emotions responsibly. He theorized that this occurs during the 'Play Age' (three–six), which sets the direction of adult life. Erikson described children's creation of block construction 'worlds', which allowed them to deal with emotional and behavioural 'real-world' dilemmas. He asserted that, by taking on the role of a super-character (e.g. Spiderman) or an adult who is powerful in their lives (e.g. the doctor), children experience the leadership and power position of those individuals. He suggested that if they gain this ability to take initiative during this period of life, they will be able to assume roles of power and leadership and to imagine possibilities. Thus, they develop the strength of 'Purpose' and can allow 'the dreams of early childhood to be attached to the goals of an active adult life' (1963: 20).

Erikson believed that the play rituals of childhood continue to be expressed throughout life because these experiences provide 'the training ground for the experience of a leeway of imaginative choices within an existence governed and guided by roles and visions' (1977: 78). He stated (1966) that children's play is transformed into ritualizations (e.g. weddings, parades), which have a paradoxical quality because they are both playful and formal, familiar and surprising, and affirming and ambivalent.

Piagetian theory

Piaget's contribution to play theory (1945, 1965) was of great interest in the mid to late twentieth century. From his observations of his own children's play in infancy (1945) and his study of older boys' marble game play (1965), he both proposed stages of play development and theorized about their meaning as developmental constructs. Piaget differentiated play from imitation, indicating that play is primarily an assimilation process while imitation is primarily an accommodation process. He believed that children used play to construct their knowledge of the world by trying to relate their new experiences to their existing cognitive schema. Piaget stated that adults could gain great insight into children's thinking by watching children's play, and he explained how various stages of play corresponded with levels of the child's developing thought processes.

In the infant–toddler age period, the most prominent type of play is practice play, which involves repeating similar play actions on toys or other objects to master their use, with gradual elaboration of these actions. Piaget noted that one crucial aspect of practice play is that, rather than being a routine repetition of the same actions, as actions are mastered the child changes the play activity by making it more difficult or adding new elements. Practice play is seen in later childhood and adulthood when new routines of behaviour need to be mastered in the service of a larger goal.

Piaget noted that pretence becomes a major play mode during the age period of four–seven. Early pretence is often facilitated by adults but extends into elaborate social pretence activities with peers, such as socio-dramatic or fantasy play, during preschool and early years. Piaget's view that pretence is a means of furthering knowledge construction has led to much research on cognitive processes. Because, in pretence, children create worlds that make sense to them, Piaget believed that observers of play could learn much about children's understandings and misunderstandings. Pretence continues to be a major type of play during early and later years, although it may then involve small-scale replica figures or computer video sites (Bergen and Davis, 2011).

Piaget identified games with rules as the common play type for young children, although one-rule games such as peek-a-boo occur at earlier ages (Bruner and Sherwood, 1976). Piaget believed that in

games, children create rules that change as they negotiate to make the game enjoyable for a range of players with varied skill levels. Time is spent in discussion of rules, making them 'fair' and adapting them to make the game more 'fun'. Piaget asserted that peer play in games fosters children's moral development as children resolve cognitive disequilibrium related to issues of fairness and equity in peer play.

Piaget's theoretical ideas about children's play continue to be a catalyst for generating play theory. Numerous contemporary theorists have speculated about its influence on role and perspective-taking, social comparisons, language narration, social script knowledge and academic learning. For example, Bruner (1961) suggested that 'discovery learning' should be the mode for learning mathematics, Elkind (1976) adapted Piagetian perspectives to early childhood education, Fein (1981) and Bretherton (1984) discussed the role of pretence in cognitive development and the Singers (1990) examined its role in creativity and imaginative thinking.

Vygotskian theory

The influence of Vygotsky's theoretical ideas (1967, 1978) became prominent more recently. Vygotsky and his colleagues saw children's play as important but the adult's role also as important in helping children use objects symbolically (El'konin, 1966). Vygotsky described the age period from 2 to 8 as the time in which children learned the language of their culture and stated that this learning was evident in their play. At preschool age, children begin to use running monologues (i.e. 'private' speech) that accompany their play activities and this fosters the development of 'spontaneous' concepts. Vygotsky observed that in block play children's initial categorizations were unorganized but by late preschool age, their concept development is evident in their problem-solving with blocks.

However, he thought that pretence, especially pretend role-taking, in which the child must follow cultural scripts, was an especially important aspect of play because it enabled children to learn self-regulation and to develop a range of spontaneous concepts (1967). Vygotsky stated: 'there is no such thing as play without rules. The imaginary situation of any form of play already contains rules of behavior' (1978: 74). He asserted that play enabled thought to be separated from objects and actions, thus promoting ideas to control the play. As children grow older and their language becomes internalized private speech, these abilities continue to develop until individuals achieve mastery of their own behaviour by using symbolic means (Vygotsky and Luria, 1994). Although much of this imaginative play occurs in the company of other people, Vygotsky also discussed 'director's play' that occurs when a child is alone (Kravstova, in this volume). Then the child develops the scripts, builds the settings, and gives all characters voice. Older children often do this with small-scale objects and create their own 'worlds', which also have cultural meaning (Bodrova and Leong, 2011).

Vygotsky stressed the role of pretend play as a means of organizing thought through verbal mediation, enabling self-regulation to develop. This latter strand of his theory has continued to be fruitful regarding the role of fantasy and the relationship of play to cognitive skills such as literacy. His former student El'konin (2005) has continued to make his theoretical views on play explicit. Other theorists have promoted the use of playful techniques to support the growth of self-regulation (see Bodrova and Leong, 2011; Meyers and Berk, this volume) and to advance literacy development (see Christie and Roskos, 2000).

INFLUENCE OF FOUNDATIONAL THEORIES ON PRESENT-DAY PLAY THEORY

In contemporary scholarship the four strands of play theory discussed above are still in

evidence, although they have been refined and challenged as researchers have continued to test their premises.

A number of recent books have focused on defining socio-cultural aspects of play (Sutton-Smith, 2001), explaining animal play (Bekoff and Byers, 1998) and examining developmental, educational and therapeutic aspects of play (O'Connor and Braveman, 2009; Pelligrini, 2009). These works all build on the theoretical foundation provided by earlier theorists, which continues to influence research and theoretical ideas. One newer theoretical approach, however, has arisen from dynamic systems theory, and this may provide a new foundational component that will guide research and practice.

Play as a Dynamic System

The most recent theoretical perspective on play draws on dynamic systems theory and posits the view that one reason why theories of play have been so diverse is that play is a complex dynamic system that has characteristics of all such systems (see Thelen and Smith, 1994; Van Geert, 2000). For example, play is a self-organizing system that may appear chaotic but in which complex patterns of behaviour move towards order. The play state also shows disequilibrium, because it is always capable of change; its attractor states may be long or short, and it involves sensitive dependence on initial conditions because small inputs into play situations may cause disparate results. There are control parameters, which include differences in play patterns due to the age and skill of players; limitations on experience and types of settings available for play; interdependence, because all levels of play are interrelated; and soft assembly, with both stable and dynamic alternating periods. Vanderven has described play from this theoretical perspective (Vanderven, 1998), which will probably influence both play theory and research in the future.

CONCLUSION

Many theories of play have served as foundations for present play theory. They have added to the richness of definitions of play, its evidence in many species, its role in expressing cultural meanings and its importance as a venue for children's development and learning. Theorists will continue to build on these foundations to expand both the meanings and the mysteries of play.

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Play in the Non-classical Psychology of L.S. Vygotsky

Elena Kravtsova (translation by Anton Maximov)

INTRODUCTION

L.S. Vygotsky did not write a great deal about play. However, we believe that his approach to the activity of play allows us not only to understand the essential characteristics of the cultural–historical approach but also to single out specific traits and features of non-classical psychology.

The approach to understanding play from the perspective of classical science has helped us to identify important data about the developmental patterns of play and its role in the development of preschool-aged children. At the same time, the classical approach has left four global questions about play that require further attention. First of all, a clear differentiation in classical science between the adult experimenter and the child respondent has led us to note that one of the most difficult problems in classical science is the problem of teaching how to play. Not only do children play less and with potentially lower quality now than in the past (Smirnova, 2006; Tullis, 2011; Tandon, Zhou and Cristakis, 2012) but

also, many adults also do not have a grasp of the activity of play (Maximov, 2009).

Another question that was not covered by classical science is the question of using play as an auxiliary tool, in other words as a means to an end. This question is most important in education. There is even a special play type that relates to education, known as didactic play. Didactic play is an educational game. However, when researching the features of didactic play, V.V. Davydov (1986) has shown that play can lose its essential play characteristics, and in yet another case, can also lose the auxiliary function of working as a means to an end.

The third problem, which has not attracted much attention in classical science, is that play replaces object-manipulative activity in children's development, and later play itself is also replaced in turn by learning activity. In other words, classical psychology has not been able to explain the mechanisms and patterns of transition from one age period to another, including the transition from play as a leading activity to learning activity as a

leading activity. This question is not entirely theoretical. However, without even a hypothetical answer, it is impossible either to create a system for teaching children how to play, or to use play to create psychological readiness for school education.

The last and most important question not covered by the classical psychology of play is a question of the criteria of play. That is, the basis of play or the difference between play and non-play. By the basis of play we mean a certain unit of play activity that, according to L.S. Vygotsky, should have all the characteristics and features of a whole. In understanding the basis of play it is important, firstly, to settle the problem of the interconnection between play and the imagination. This is because many authors, such as Elkonin (1978), Davydov (1986), Kudriavtsev (1997), denote the close interconnection between play and imagination, but it is still unclear if imagination is formed by play or if it acts as a basis for play activity. It is also important to identify criteria which can be found not only in all types of children's play but also in the variety of adult games, as a way to understand the connection between imagination and play.

If we define the features of play in non-classical psychology we can see that play must be described from the perspective that types of communication are realized in play. For example, modern psychology has twice attempted to define play from the point of view of communication between players. A.P. Usova (1981) spoke of two types of relationships between players: play relationships and real relationships. In addition, according to L.S. Vygotsky's ideas, a child who is playing at being ill and in hospital 'is crying as a patient and at the same time is rejoicing as a player' (1978: 290). A child has two types of communication in play, that concerning the play and that as a player.

Play relationships and real relationships, despite their outward similarity, actually differ greatly from each other. The main difference is related to the fact that in Usova's (1981) definition, play is considered in terms of classical psychology and as an activity

approach. Without denying the presence of real relations and play relations in play, we need also to notice that this feature is not exactly specific to play. These two types of relationships also take place in terms, for example, of education or in the process of professional activity. While studying play according to the idea that in play a child is at the same time inside it (i.e. crying like a patient) and outside it (i.e. rejoicing as a player) allows us to speak of the features of play and its difference from other types of activity, it also helps us to mark out its criteria and signs.

THE IMAGINARY SITUATION: A CRITERION OF PLAY

According to L.S. Vygotsky (1993), the basic criterion of play is the imaginary situation. The imaginary situation is the space between two 'fields', known as the real (or optical) field and the sense (or imaginary) field. To create the imaginary situation (i.e. the space between the optical and sense fields), a player must be at the same time inside and outside of the play. This explains why understanding and researching play is possible only through the simultaneous realization of these two positions. At the same time this also makes the study of play difficult for classical psychology, because the researcher may study play from the position of 'patient' or from the position of 'player'.

In non-classical psychology a person is at the same time 'in the situation' and 'above the situation'. Being in-situation and above-situation allows a person to realize the imaginary situation (i.e. the space determined by the real and sense fields). Accordingly, play includes play relations that are related to the logic of the play plot *and* real relations that are formed in the process of the player's real-life activity. In some cases, 'logic plot' relations and real relations do not coincide. For example, a small child might be playing the role of an adult who is helping and taking care of a youngster. The 'youngster' in