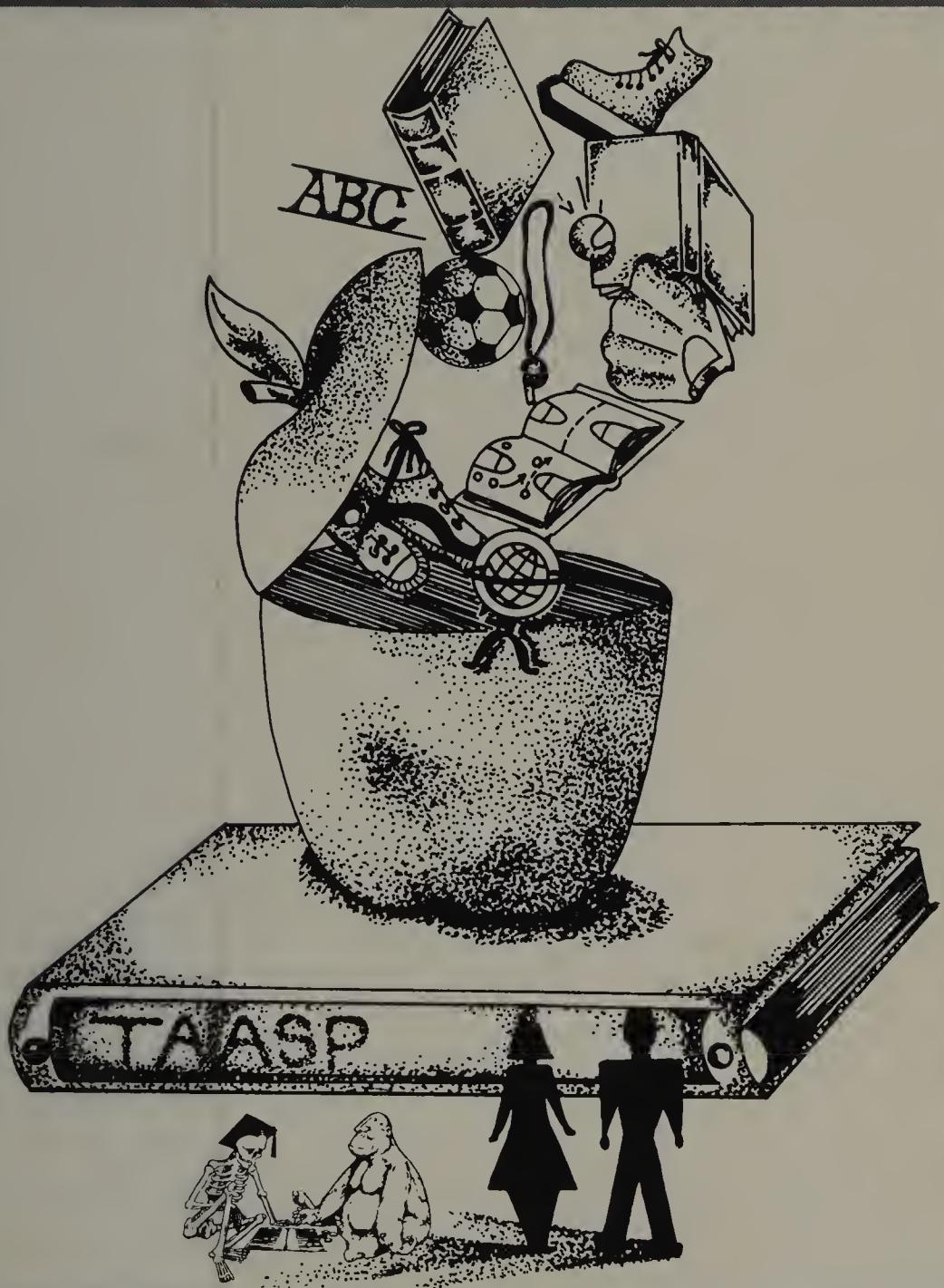


the World Of Play



edited by

Frank E. Manning



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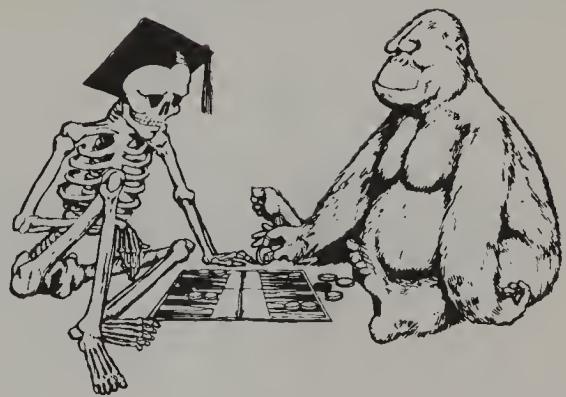
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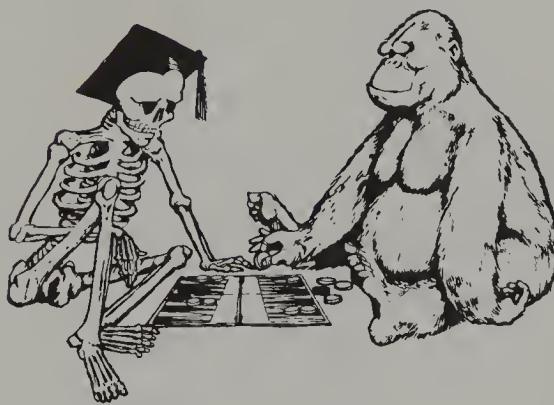
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The World of Play

THE WORLD OF PLAY



**Proceedings of the 7th Annual Meeting of
The Association of the Anthropological Study of Play**

Edited
by

**Frank E. Manning
University of Western Ontario**

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PREFACE

Play is a meaningful world unto itself. It overlaps and intersects other human (and non-human) endeavors, but its special qualities invariably set it apart. Play creates its own imaginative universe, and then sustains and depends on it.

This volume is an excursion into the immense and intriguing world of play. The *dramatis personae* are children and adults, contemporary, historic and prehistoric peoples, students, workers, literary characters, gamblers, athletes, sports fans, and many more. We view the rich variety of their ludic expressions from an equally rich variety of disciplinary perspectives, aiming both to appreciate diversity and to reflect upon the underlying unities and coherencies that emerge when human beings are moved to play.

This volume's papers were selected from those presented at the Seventh Annual Meeting of The Association for the Anthropological Study of Play (TAASP), in Fort Worth, Texas. For assistance in reviewing papers I am grateful to Jeanne Cannizzo, Zelda Cohen, Susan Hornshaw, Klaus Meier, Michael Salter, Helen Schwartzman, Annette Weiner, and Earle

Zeigler. I also thank Leisure Press for their dedicated effort in bringing this and previous volumes to fruition.

Frank E. Manning

London, Ontario
Spring, 1982

PART I

INTRODUCTION

1

THE SCHOLAR AS CLOWN: AN APPROACH TO PLAY

BY
FRANK E. MANNING

Abstract

Clowns are playful figures who hold important roles in many religious performances. The clown thus symbolizes the relationship between ritual and play, a relationship that enriches and illuminates ludic phenomena. The clown also enjoys a unique perspective on his action context. He observes it wisely, participates in it insightfully, and entertains himself and his audience in the process. This stance is appropriate for scholars of play.

Credo quia absurdum. “I believe because it is absurd.” Although Tertullian was perhaps the most significant figure in Christian Latin literature, his apologia on the nature of faith has had little impact within the Church. The classical Protestant tradition has harnessed religion to the service of utilitarian objectives, while the dominant Thomistic orientation of Catholicism (fittingly known as Scholasticism) has held that religious belief is based on, even proven by, rational thought. Contrastingly, religious belief in Tertullian’s sense shares an essential quality of play; it confounds both interest and reason. If we grant this notion, we join Huizinga in seeing *homo religiosus* as a primal, essential manifestation of *homo ludens*:

In the form and function of play, itself an independent entity which is senseless and irrational, man’s consciousness that he is embedded in a sacred order of things finds its first, highest, and holiest expression. (1955, p. 17).

This introductory essay evokes the religion-play association partly because of its potential for insight. As Peacock (1975) has proposed, a great deal of twentieth century social science has trafficked between theoretical positions introduced by Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, scholars whose deepest understandings of human society were shaped by their examinations of religion. More recently, Clifford Geertz, Victor Turner, Don Handelman and others whose work is cited extensively in this volume and in the growing corpus of play literature, have moved from the study of religion to the study of ludic phenomena, and have provocatively explored the symbolic relationship between these complementary modes of understanding and action. I follow their lead in these next several pages, turning to social and humanistic studies of religion for perspectives that will integrate the papers and situate them in a broader context.

Play’s affinity to religion raises another consideration pertinent to scholarly style. What is our appropriate stance toward the subject? At least two role models come to mind. One is that of the priest: guardian, interpreter, and evangelist of official doctrine. The academic experience inclines one in this direction, but it is the sort of position that, like conventional religion, tends to reduce and restrain the subject. An alternative role is that of the clown, a figure prominent in religious as well as secular performance. A good clown is like a good anthropologist. He or she observes the social world as a participant, but is clumsily integrated with the surroundings and thus ironically detached. Religious clowns do not presume to explain, govern, or sanction the ritual performance in which they act. Rather, they move it along, comment on it, and enliven it with light relief. These clowns exemplify liminality, license, creativity and potentiality, essential attributes of play (Handelman, 1981; Hieb, 1979; King, 1979).

The clown’s style is exhibited in many of this volume’s papers, and it has been one of the exhilarating threads in the brief history of The Association for the Anthropological Study of Play. This style may involve

piling meanings atop meanings in bewildering, convention-shattering fashion, an approach illustrated in Phyllis Gorfain's paper on Hamlet. Alternately, it may involve a willingness to entertain, playing on the ideas and personalities that link us together as a rather peculiar community and laughing at ourselves as we do it—the stance taken by Victor Turner in his comical but cogent conclusion. More modestly, it may involve the simple realization that since play is “pointless but significant” (Huizinga, 1955, p. 19), we ought to seek out and appreciate its myriad meanings, rather than try to “explain” them or, worse yet, translate them into the sterile pedantry that often passes for intellectual discourse. Let us therefore proceed, as clowns, to enjoy and reflect upon the spectacle as it parades before us.

Leisure and Culture

It is beyond question that the growth of leisure time has been one of the most striking social phenomena of the past three or four decades, as has the “average” person’s access to commodities, services, and indulgences associated with leisure pastimes. How does the adult population of North America spend its leisure? What do leisure pursuits tell us about contemporary life? Some answers to these broad questions are given in papers on college athletics, professional baseball and football, casino and race track gambling, and pinball playing.

Exploring the promotion of college football, Janet Harris finds that advertising material tends increasingly to highlight the atmosphere of the game—its pageantry, excitement, and high-spirited fun—rather than the game itself. This emphasis is shaped by the interests and tastes of the primary target audience: people who are not avid sports fans, but who are attracted by the promise of entertainment and festive sociability. Beyond its immediate purpose, however, advertising subtly influences sport culture, contributing to the overall process whereby sports spectacles are becoming less sport and more spectacle. Harris draws from Geertz (1965) on this point, concluding that advertisement is a “model for” the social reality to which it is related, not simply a “model of” it.

The next step, I would suggest, is towards an ethnography of the fans as they “celebrate” these sporting occasions. Anthropologists should be concerned with what happens at tailgate parties and post-game festivities, not simply with what takes place on the field or in the locker room. I have attempted this sort of holistic ethnography in a recent paper on Bermudian cricket festivals (Manning, 1981), and a more general argument for it has been made in a discussion of how communities form around sports attractions (Anderson and Stone, 1981). The latter study further suggests that “collective representations”—the social beliefs that Durkheim (1915) saw as the products of religious ritual in primitive societies—may in contemporary societies derive from the symbolic construction of popular sports.

Dan Hilliard's paper takes us from college to professional sport, focusing on how baseball and football articulate one of the central dilemmas in white American culture: the belief in human equality and the counterbelief in black inferiority. This contradiction is 'played out,' as it were, in the practice known as "stacking." In both sports whites predominate in "central" positions, which involve decision making and game control, while blacks are generally put in "peripheral" positions, where strength, speed, and other physical attributes are demanded. Blacks who excel gain fame and fortune, indicating that the outstanding individual is duly rewarded. Yet the positional difference between the races also shows that whites are especially qualified for leadership and managerial responsibilities. Whites have the brain, and blacks the brawn.

Hilliard, like Harris, reveals the long arm of Geertz' influence. He suggests that baseball and football are cultural "texts" which interpret American racial ideology in much the same way that the Balinese cock-fight interprets the ideology of caste (Geertz 1972). But I would underscore an important difference that can be drawn within the context of the literary metaphor. The cockfight is a parody of the caste system, and in that sense an ironical counterpoint to it. Baseball and football, however, are allegories. They replicate and caricature the social position that blacks hold in white American thought.

Extending the literary metaphor but switching from Geertz (1972) to Levi-Strauss (1955), one might see baseball and football as myths—logical models which parallel and thereby sustain contrasting beliefs. The contradictory black role is a symbolic form in which racism is reconciled with its antithesis, the principle of liberal democracy. If this speculation is granted, it suggests a powerful reason for the cultural significance and enduring popularity of America's major team sports.

The relationship between play symbolism and social thought is extended in the paper on gambling by Vicki Abt and James Smith. For gamblers, "the play's the thing." The authors cite a remark attributed to Nick "the Greek" Dandalos: "The best thing in the world is to gamble and win. The second best thing is to gamble and lose." The growing acceptance of gambling indicates not an erosion of traditional American values, but a reorientation of those values from production to consumption. Gambling is the ultimate form of consumption, as it represents money buying experience. A kind of Protestant leisure ethic has replaced the conventional Protestant work ethic, and the gambler is its version of Horatio Alger. Casinos and race tracks have a shrine-like aura, as they embody what the American dream is now about: the use of money in the search for pleasure.

Abt and Smith stress the importance of the setting, as does Harris. Casinos and race tracks are "special places," symbolic enclosures with an ambience all their own. Huizinga's (1955) classic notion of play as a "stepping out" experience, symbolized by the movement from an ordinary to a special environment, is well illustrated. Grimes (1982, p. 66-67),

speaking of ritual, has recently referred to such environments as "founded places"—areas sequestered and transformed into symbolic forcefields through boundary or action. In studying rite or play, then, we do well to pay close attention to the venue.

Stephen Conn and Judith Marquez exemplify this emphasis in their analysis of pinball parlors. To an even greater extent than most gambling settings, these arcades have been socially stigmatized. Part of the reason lies in the "subliminal interaction" that players, overwhelmingly male, have with their machines. The machines seem to be construed as responsive but powerless females who simply "turn on" to the male touch. Straddling the machine, players thrust their pelvises as they penetrate the machine with shots in order to achieve a score. The final objective is to control the machine, an objective frequently pursued through flagrant cheating. It is no wonder that women find the imagery offensive, and are often embarrassed when brought into arcades by male friends. For pinball devotees, however, the surroundings are an integral part of the game's appeal. The authors predict that current attempts to make pinball parlors socially respectable will result in a loss, not a gain, of popularity.

In all of these papers, then, there is a close and significant relationship between leisure pursuits and their cultural context. The varied dimensions of that relationship yield a valuable perspective on contemporary society.

Risk, Rite, and Power

In his plenary address to TAASP a few years ago, Csikszentmihalyi (1981) underscored one of the central paradoxes of play. On the one hand it is autotelic, done for its own sake and purpose. On the other, it has important implications and consequences. Sometimes the effects of play are relatively remote and "functional" in nature, as in the general case where children enjoy themselves in play but are also socialized into adult roles and values. At other times, however, the effects of play are quite direct and tangible. The gamblers discussed in the Abt-Smith paper may be primarily attracted by the "action," but the gain or loss of money, often in substantial amounts, is immediate and inescapable.

The stakes of gambling pale beside those of some other games. Among the classic examples of high risk play are the Mesoamerican rubber ball games, a kind of pre-Columbian version of soccer. Distinguishing between the Lowland Mayan and Toltec-Aztec versions of the game, Michael Salter shows that the latter example was apparently constructed as a life-or-death combat in which the defeated side, or at least its leader, suffered the fate of ritual decapitation at the hands of the victors. The ball games were thus a "ludic" version of the Aztec religious rites in which military foes were taken to the top of the pyramids, and there sacrificed by having their hearts gouged out and offered to the gods. There is no evidence of sacrificial death in the Lowland Mayan ball

games, but the play was ferocious and dangerous. The ball was astonishingly heavy and hard, and the playing area filled with sharp projections and other perilous objects. Injury to ball players is among the motifs of Mayan art objects uncovered by archeologists.

While extreme cases, the Mesoamerican ball games warn us that play has aggressive, even brutal and destructive, possibilities. The theme of aggression is developed by Marilyn Jorgensen, who studied parodies of popular songs in which children ridicule and attack adult authority figures. The children often claim that they render these parodies purely for enjoyment, but Jorgensen suggests that there is also a symbolic attempt to invert and undermine the power hierarchy. Like Gluckman's (1963) classic rites of rebellion, these lyrical parodies are stylized expressions of hostility by people who chafe under a system but ultimately recognize that its strength is greater than theirs.

Reporting on New Zealand children's play in the 19th and early 20th centuries, Brian Sutton-Smith goes a step beyond Marilyn Jorgensen by showing that child hostility toward an adult world can take physical as well as figurative form in play. Violence and cruelty, moreover, are directed within the peer group as well as outside it, as play is a major context in which children negotiate hierarchies and sustain dominant conformity. Children learn that they *have* to play, and in so doing to submit to the collective will. Sutton-Smith sees the peer group in much the same way that Durkheim (1915) saw the primitive church; it ritualistically asserts and enforces corporate jurisdiction over individual choice.

Extrapolating from the New Zealand example, Sutton-Smith challenges the common tendency to associate play with a cluster of positive valences: freedom, fun, creativity, voluntariness, and so on. This idealization of play, he proposes, is a middle-class, adult-oriented bias. It may be appropriate here to consider the argument of Aries (1962), who contends that modern Western society has developed a distinctive concept of children. We see children not as small, immature versions of their elders, but as categorically separate human types. Accordingly, we have produced the conventional notion that children's lives are full of fun and free from care. But this notion obscures both the children's sense of being repressed by an adult establishment and their struggles among themselves for status and influence. These two concerns are often "played out" within play, since play is the most diffuse and encompassing mode of action in children's lives. Children's play, then, may be seen as a "two-dimensional" enterprise, to use Cohen's (1974) phrase. It carries its own meaning and motivation, but it is also a symbolic arena in which power relations are cast in dramatic form. Readers of William Golding's popular novel, *Lord of the Flies* (1959), will agree; indeed, his account of boy's inhumanity to boy converges strikingly with Sutton-Smith's ethnography.

While power struggles are waged on children's playgrounds and Mesoamerican ballcourts, they are also immortalized in literature. In the English language, perhaps the greatest "power play" is Shakespeare's

Hamlet. But beyond the blood feuding, fratricide, and contention for the throne, there is a moral and metaphysical drama, a deeply philosophical excursion into the nature of truth and reality. As in most great works of art, there is subtlety and ambiguity in the treatment of these issues. Hamlet's most memorable scene, the play within a play ("The play's the thing, wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King"), symbolizes the multiple levels of meaning and possibility that are implicit in the drama.

In a scintillating paper that she describes as "dense," Phyllis Gorfain takes a ludic step beyond Shakespeare, although one suspects he would approve it. She suggests that the play is a tragedy only from an onstage perspective. For us as audience, not having to make choices or face their consequences, there are comic implications. Distanced from the action, we see the drama's ambiguity as the delightful paradox of play, and recognize our fascination with it as a metacommentary on ourselves as players.

This intriguing argument invites comparison. Were the Toltec-Aztec fans at play, for example, while the athletes engaged in a life-or-death ritual combat? (This is a familiar interpretation of the Roman gladiatorial combats, and vestiges of it are discernible in the way that modern Spanish bullfights are sometimes described.) On a more commonplace level, is children's play a positive experience for adults, but a painful one for the children themselves? There are no final answers, of course, but these questions remind us of what Loy (1982) has stressed: that play, at base, is paradox.

The Ludic Construction of Reality

In a paper on the Brazilian carnival, Turner (Note 1) suggests that the event's celebratory symbols have a strongly "infantine" quality. His argument is that children exemplify liminality to a greater degree than adults, as they are further distanced from ordinary reality and the social structures that support it. If adult players "step out", as Huizinga (1955, p. 8) puts it, from conventional reality into a realm of pretense, their status as adults tends to impose restrictions and to pull them back. But children enjoy a greater semantic freedom, as they are still in the process of discovering their meaningful worlds.

How do children create and communicate meaning in their play? Michael Bamberg considers the rudiments of play as a sense-making system by examining the conceptual activity of "seeing as" among preschoolers. In one example, his subjects negotiate an imaginative universe in which the floor is an ocean, their legs are a drawbridge over it, and other nearby objects are boats, islands, shorelines, and so on. Developing Schwartzman's (1978) argument that play is a discourse in metaphorical transformations, Bamberg proposes that the shared knowledge produced in play is the basis of cultural creativity and social intimacy.

Bamberg deals here with the double-edged, dialectical question that underlines anthropological myth-making: How does human understanding become a social construction, and how does it derive its power to socialize individuals? He renders Durkheim (1915) in a pediatric and ludic vocabulary. The primitives are children, the clan is the peer group, play rather than ritual is the dynamic, and shared knowledge replaces collective representations. Moreover, Bamberg's view of children parallels the "noble savage" concepts of primitives that grounded Durkheimian social epistemology. Bamberg sees children's play as generative of joy, happiness, freedom, community, sharing, and similar symbols that are highly valued within our culture. Thus while this study is clinical, it reveals the profound philosophical implications of children's play and exemplifies the cultural framework in which current Western middle class notions of childhood are situated.

Nancy Budwig, who collaborated with Bamberg, focuses on the transition from adult to peer-directed play. Steeped in their conviction regarding the pleasures and benefits of play, parents encourage the transition by introducing and initially sustaining their children's play frames, but then urging them to redirect attention to their peers. When the transition is complete, the children achieve what Budwig calls the "product" of play—a sense of intimacy with peers that makes possible social relations. The refrain, "Mommy, let me play with my friend," proclaims a degree of socialization that both parent and child welcome.

Diana Kelly-Byrne also focuses on the relationship of play and intimacy, but modifies the work of Bamberg by arguing that children maintain and cherish intimate play relations with adults even when they have reached school age. Dealing with a white, middle-class, seven-year-old girl whom she babysat for a year as her dissertation research, Kelly-Byrne gives rich ethnographic detail about the inter-personal dynamics of their play encounters. She argues that play epitomizes Turner's (1969) sense of liminality, with its guises, plots, tests, and social reversals. Like other forms of liminality, it thrives in seclusion. Staged in the privacy of the home, child-adult play is often more intimate and metaphorically elaborate than peer play, which usually takes place in the school yard, playground, or other public setting.

The play-intimacy correspondence is discussed further by Kathleen Alford. Reporting on survey research among American university students, she finds that these respondents have experienced a considerable degree of intimacy and informality with their parents. She proposes that this experience is highly correlated with joking relationships, and thus challenges Radcliffe-Brown's (1940) classic formulation that joking corresponds with hostility. Nonetheless, her survey tends to corroborate one of Radcliffe-Brown's more general observations: that joking thrives in situations of ambivalence. In the American example this ambivalence derives not from structural oppositions in extended kinship systems, but from the inequality (in status and power) between parents and children,

as against the prevailing American ethos of egalitarianism. Joking veils this conflict while articulating it. In this sense joking is analogous to sport, as interpreted by Hilliard.

Contributions from Linda Hughes and Helen Schwartzman raise again the issue of how children construct their social and conceptual universe in play. Hughes, using the schoolyard game Foursquare as her illustration, posits a basic distinction between "ideal" and "real" rules. Ideal rules are the formal, official regulations of a game, while real rules are the codes and conventions implicitly understood by a community of players. Real rules may involve infractions against ideal rules, but are popular because they reflect a consensus of how the game ought to be played. Real rules embody the players' ludic values and social relations while ideal rules have a legal, but not a social, validity.

Hughes contends that her argument is generalizable to other games played by adults as well as children. In professional sports, for example, referees often turn a blind eye to misdemeanors that they and the players have informally agreed to allow in order to provide more excitement and spectator interest. The model might also be extended to the workplace. When industrial jobs are done with competence and efficiency, it is often because bosses and workers have implicitly conspired to suspend contractual formalities. The opposite of such conspiracy is the work-to-rule strategy, which virtually paralyses production.

Helen Schwartzman adds two important dimensions to the discussion of how children shape their world through play: she focuses on activities that have been structured by the children themselves, and she examines the subject cross-culturally. Children "on their own," she finds, tend to be more creative than when they are involved in adult-structured play situations. They design their own toys, postulate sophisticated modes of pretense, and exhibit a high degree of ingenuity, resourcefulness, and self-reliance. Child-structured play also tends to be cooperative and egalitarian, while adult-structured play is more competitive and hierarchical. These observations are generally collaborated in studies of non-Western, non-middle class children, although there are many cultural variations. Schwartzman urges us not to confine our studies of children's play to the laboratory or little league baseball field, since a great deal of what is interesting and ingenious is happening "in the streets, alleys, backlots, and backyards of children's lives."

One pattern brought to light by the cross-cultural survey is that industrialized societies have emphasized adult-structured play, while non-industrial societies seem content to let children play on their own. The industrial bias is clearly reflected in scholarly research, which has put a disproportionate emphasis on adult-structured play. Perhaps it is time for all of us—parents, teachers, play investigators—to stop leading our children so much and start responding more astutely and sensitively to what they are discovering for themselves. Let us find our children where they are and, like the clown, learn to observe, relish, and reflect upon the

dramatic processes whereby they are shaping and understanding their lives.

Conclusion

Victor Turner's splendid keynote address has an onomatopoeiac quality to it. It "sounds like" what it signifies. It is a playful statement about play, an attempt, in his words, to "play with ideas, at keynote addressing, and down legitimate doubts."

Turner begins with an examination of some "heavy, serious stuff" about the brain's left and right hemispheres and their relationship to modes of consciousness and action. The left hemisphere is the side of rational, analytic thought, and the right of synthetic, artistic thought. Turner's prose is replete with polysyllabic scholastic terms, most of them drawn from sources which he pedantically and slavishly quotes. He then proceeds to a discussion of play, which is fittingly light and irreverent. This sojourn into play contrasts piquantly with the cerebral material at the beginning of the address, just as the left and right hemispheres are seen as structural and semantic contrasts, and just as play derives its peculiar significance from its capacity to pose—and juxtapose—contrasting meanings.

But play does more than represent contrasts. It also transcends them, escapes from them. In Turner's felicitous phrase, play "runs rings" around the brain's opposite hemispheres and the dilemma they constitute. Play is the archetypal example of liminal and liminoid phenomena, those domains of human experience that Turner has immortalized. Alternately, but still in keeping with his outlook, play is the quintessential metalanguage. It lies beyond and between other modes of communication and reality.

There is a great deal of the clown in Turner. He is playing with us in this address and, as he puts it, "erasing the trace" under a cloak of academic conventions. The paper is thus a beguiling interpretation of the "interplay" between itself, its author, and its audience. But what is the meta-meaning of the performance? Simply, I think, that play is a primal, wondrous, resonant, but still ineffable expression of the human spirit. In striving to learn *about* play, and *from* it, our own stance should ultimately be playful.

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1. Turner, V. Carnival in Rio: Dionysian drama in an industrializing society. In F. Manning (ed.), *Bread and circuses: Cultural performance in complex societies*. (forthcoming)

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PART II

LEISURE AND CULTURE

PRIDE AND FEVER: TWO UNIVERSITY SPORT PROMOTION THEMES

BY
JANET C. HARRIS

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to gain a broader understanding of the attractions emphasized in advertisements and promoters' related conceptions of the importance or attractiveness to potential spectators of major home athletic contests (primarily football games) played during the 1980-81 academic year at two universities in North Carolina. Research methods included examination and interpretation of (a) advertising materials which were designed to promote sports at the two institutions, and (b) interview data concerning reflections of athletic department sports promoters as they created their advertising materials. The evidence from these two institutions suggests that promoters aimed their advertisements at marginal fans and that the festive activities which accompanied the football games were emphasized more than were the games themselves. If advertising images contribute to the continuous shaping or redefining of culture, then sport advertising such as that which was examined here may contribute to a strengthening of the sport emphasized and to a weakening of others not as frequently brought to public attention.

The prominence of spectator sports events in the United States suggests that these activities are important or attractive to many Americans. Scholarly speculations regarding the reasons why sports seem to fascinate such large numbers of Americans include the following:

- sports are a partial substitute for religion (Milton, 1972; Novak, 1976);
- sports are a source of compensatory excitement in an otherwise somewhat drab, largely technological society (Elias and Dunning, 1970);
- sports communicate idealized values and social relationships within American society (Cheska, 1978; Guttman, 1978; Lipsky, 1978; Lipsyte, 1975/1977; Montague and Morais, 1976; Real, 1975; Stein, 1977);
- sports offer spectators a wide variety of experiences from which to choose their own level of involvement (Michener, 1976);
- sports offer spectators opportunities to identify with winners (Cialdini, Borden, Thorne, Walker, Freeman, and Sloan, 1976; Sloan, 1979);
- sports contain visible actions which are at times risky and/or effective, and spectators enjoy these (Zillman, Bryant, and Sapolosky, 1979); and
- sports offer a sense of community to people within large, technological societies (Anderson and Stone, 1981). A few of these suggestions are supported with research evidence, but most of them are speculative and lack direct systematic empirical support.

Within a hermeneutic framework in which culture is considered to be partially constituted through social interaction processes, and in which the social interaction processes themselves are influenced by the larger culture (Agar, 1980; Rabinow, 1977; Rabinow and Sullivan, 1979), mass communication in general and advertising in particular can be considered to be part of the social interaction processes which partially define and are defined by culture. From this perspective advertising can be considered to consist of symbols which serve, in Geertz' (1966) terms, both as "models of" and as "models for" culture. Through face-to-face interaction as well as through more distanced interaction processes involving mass communication, shared interpretations or meanings are developed which people use to "make sense of" situations and events in their lives.

From the perspective of hermeneutics each person in a culture or society is involved in defining and redefining shared meanings or understandings through social interaction. However, as Millum (1975) suggests, "the group of advertisers has much greater power (in terms of thought, money, time, skill . . .), and although it is *part* of the culture, it is one of the groups which help to give particular meanings a specific emphasis or concretism . . ., the effect of which is to reinforce certain clusters of meanings and to ignore others" (p. 41). As Goffman (1979) suggests, advertisements are frequently stylized, exaggerated, simplified characterizations of an ideal "with all the occasions and senses in which the ideal is not exhibited having been . . . edited out of what is made available" (p. 84). Inglis (1972, p. 4) adds that mass communication

is perhaps the major means by which some members of large, technological societies maintain contact and engage in social interaction with one another (albeit in a distanced fashion).

Utilizing a hermeneutic conceptualization of culture, and considering the literature which suggests that advertisements are important in large societies for developing the shared meanings which constitute culture, it can be suggested that advertising designed to attract spectators to sports events may serve both to *reflect* and to *define* characteristics of the advertised sports which potential audience members find to be important or attractive. If such a suggestion has merit, then it is valuable to examine sport advertisements with regard to the attractions of sports which are emphasized in them, and it is also valuable to examine the conceptions held by promoters who create the advertisements regarding (a) the characteristics of the advertised sports which they believe are attractive to potential spectators and (b) the characteristics of the potential spectators whom they hope to attract to the games.

The purpose of the present study was to gain a broader understanding of the attractions emphasized in advertisements and promoters' related conceptions of the importance or attractiveness to potential spectators of major home athletic contests (primarily football games) played during the 1980-81 academic year at two universities in North Carolina—The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Wake Forest University.

Social Context and Research Methods

Wake Forest University, located in Winston-Salem, is a small, private university with about 5,000 students, a strong emphasis upon excellence in the liberal arts, and lingering religious ties (Wake Forest University, 1980), while the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is a large, multifaceted state university with over 20,000 students (University of North Carolina, 1980). These are two of the four North Carolina institutions which belong to the Atlantic Coast Conference for purposes of intercollegiate athletic competition. As such their men's football and basketball games are recognized as components of the highest level of competition in these two sports in the state. According to the sport promoters at each of these schools, basketball traditionally has received more media and community attention than has football (Gainey, Note 1; Savod, Note 2). Athletic department officials at the two institutions decided several years ago that more extensive advertising efforts might help to attract more spectators to the football games. Promotional efforts—primarily oriented toward football—were increased at both institutions beginning in 1976 (Gainey, Note 3; Savod, Note 4). Although the extent to which the teams were successful each season as well as more subtle town/gown interrelationships may have contributed to game attendance figures, there is evidence which suggests the promotional campaigns may have contributed to increases in attendance at football games at both institutions.¹

The sport promoters at both universities emphasized the importance of creating a theme or slogan to be used as a central focus in their advertising campaigns (Savod, 1980; Gainey, Note 3, Note 11; Savod, Note 2, Note 4). Because these themes were viewed by the promoters who created them to be of key importance in their sport advertising efforts, it was decided to focus the present investigation upon the meanings which the promoters intended to associate with their respective themes. Research methods included examination and interpretation of the following data:

- advertising materials (e.g., radio, television, and newspaper advertisements; billboard advertisements; bumper stickers, game souvenir give-aways) which were designed to promote sports at the two institutions;
- interview data concerning the reflections of athletic department sport promoters with regard to the factors which they considered as they created their advertising materials, particularly for the promotion of football.

Central Themes—Uses and Meanings

The sport promoters at the two institutions each believed the central advertising theme or slogan should not be tied to the success of specific coaches or teams but should have an emotional tone. At Wake Forest, where athletic teams are nicknamed the Deamon Deacons, the theme was "Proud to be a Deacon," and at Carolina the theme was "Carolina Fever." These slogans were used extensively in a 3-4 week multimedia² advertising campaign conducted by the promoters at each institution in mid-summer prior to the beginning of the football season (Savod, 1980; Gainey, Note 1, Note 11; Savod, Note 4). The Carolina promoter supported the timing of the advertising campaign with his belief that football is entertainment, and as such it is usually bought on impulse. Furthermore, the advertisements were designed to attract marginal fans who had not attended these intercollegiate football games regularly in the recent past. The best time to attract such fans to buy football tickets on impulse, he suggested, is at a time when their thoughts may have turned to fall activities (Savod, 1980; Savod, Note 4).

Although the promoters at each institution used their central advertising themes in similar ways, the meanings they intended to associate with their respective themes differed somewhat, and there was also a difference with regard to the breadth of activities within athletics with which the promoters intended their themes to be associated.

Proud to be a Deacon

A key to understanding the meanings which the Wake Forest promoter intended to associate with "Proud to be a Deacon" is the notion of

inclusion or involvement. Pride is usually felt toward something with which one is associated, not something that belongs to others. The most important meanings which he wished to connect with the theme were the following:

- a person can feel good by identifying with Wake Forest athletics because the program entails optimistic, positive activities;
- anyone can identify with Wake Forest athletics, become a Deacon by that means, and thus take on a sense of pride;
- Wake Forest football games are entertaining because they are exciting, emotional, fun pageants, and part of the entertainment is generated by inclusion and involvement of the spectators in the totality of the pageants' sights and sounds;
- Wake Forest football games are good family entertainment— inclusion and involvement of entire families at football games is encouraged (Gainey, Note 3, Note 11).

Radio and television advertisements portrayed the excitement and emotional drama of Wake Forest football games and also associated these feelings with pride in being a Deacon. They were a subtle blending of visual and sound images—music, narratives, shots of cheerleaders and team mascots, shots of the players, crowd noise, and an occasional excited radio announcer describing a successful play from a previous season. They were designed to give potential spectators a feeling of the involvement that awaited them at football games.

The heightening of a sense of inclusion and involvement on the part of spectators and potential spectators was further encouraged by the promoter through the distribution of bumper stickers which proclaimed "Proud to be a Deacon," additions to the entertainment opportunities at games, and distribution of free souvenirs at games. The Wake Forest promoter contended that people who put bumper stickers on their cars want to identify with a cause, and thus the availability of "Proud to be a Deacon" bumper stickers makes it possible for people to make a public statement of identification with Wake Forest athletics (Gainey, Note 3). Additional entertainment provided at the football games by the promoter included sky divers on one Saturday (Gainey, Note 6) and a natural science dinosaur display on another (Wake Forest vs. Virginia, Note 12, p. 38). Souvenirs which were given away included iron-on decals proclaiming "Proud to be a Deacon" and other items such as toy footballs, roses, and key chains which displayed references to Wake Forest University or to the Deacons.

The iron-on decals which were given away were intended to encourage later family attendance to football games because children wearing shirts with the iron-on decals could be admitted free with a paying adult. Radio advertisements aimed specifically at women and at children were designed to encourage attendance by all family members. Containing frequently-voiced, stereotypical views of women in American society, the advertisement directed toward women emphasized such things as the

wearing of new fall fashions to games, seeing others and being seen, socializing before and after the games, and an admission in a half-embarassed tone by the woman in the advertisement that the grace, talent and physical appearance of the players is exciting. The children's advertisement stressed family tailgate picnics before the games and children's delight in watching warm-up drills, the cheerleaders, and the Deacon mascot.

The promoter encouraged the use of "Proud to be a Deacon" in connection with all aspects of the Wake Forest athletic program rather than just football. For example, the 1980/81 basketball team picture was taken in front of a "Proud to be a Deacon" sign; a special bumper sticker which said "Proud to be Big-4 Champs" was created by the athletic department after the basketball team won an important holiday tournament; an iron-on decal was created using the theme in connection with a logo associated with women's intercollegiate athletics on the campus; and a large sign above the main entrance to the gymnasium proclaimed "Proud to be a Deacon" to all who entered or passed by the building. Billboard advertisements throughout Winston-Salem provided a source of further elaboration of the meaning of pride which the promoter intended to suggest. Using school colors, "Proud to be a Deacon" was expressed on these signs in classy, tasteful, dignified (Alspaugh, Note 13), three-dimensional-appearing gold letters on a solid black background. These signs seemed to project a feeling similar to the classy and dignified atmosphere one often experiences on the Wake Forest campus.

Carolina Fever

The Carolina promoter suggested a somewhat different configuration of meanings which he intended to associate with "Carolina Fever." The key to understanding this is the notion of *scarcity of tickets*. The primary meanings which the Carolina promoter wished to connect with the theme were: tickets are scarce and home games will be sell-outs again because the pageants are emotionally electrifying; Carolina football games are entertaining because they are emotional, exciting, fun pageants, and spectators can be involved in this totality of sights and sounds (Savod, Note 4).

"Carolina Fever" was almost always paired with the follow-up slogan, "There's No Cure Once The Last Seat Is Sold." This was intended to mean that interest in Carolina football was spreading rapidly, people were acting fast to buy tickets, and some people might end up with the fever—a desire to buy tickets—but be unable to cure it because the tickets would be sold out. "Carolina Fever" usually appeared in disjointed blue and white (school colors) letters, as if electricity or an earthquake had shaken them up. This reinforced the hot, sizzling, earth-shattering aspects of the Carolina football games, and the phenomenon of feverish interest in procuring tickets. Announcements during the football season

proclaimed the Carolina stadium was sold out, that there were capacity crowds at each game, and unlucky people without tickets could contact the athletic office to be put on a waiting list for the following year. An image of wide-spread community interest in Carolina football was strengthened by encouraging advertisers from other companies to incorporate “Carolina Fever” into their own radio and newspaper advertisements in exchange for season football tickets. This reinforced the impression, the Carolina promoter suggested, of a wide-spread community desire to identify with the theme and its meanings—of enough interest in the theme and in Carolina football on the part of representatives of local companies to incorporate it into their own advertising (Savod, Note 4).

Similar to Wake Forest, the Carolina radio and television advertisements emphasized the color, drama, sociability, and excitement of football games through the utilization of crowd noise, shots of the cheerleaders, enticing music, poetic narratives, and excited radio announcers describing long runs and passes which had culminated in touchdowns in previous years. The Carolina promoter summed up his desires to produce exciting advertisements by saying, “If the [radio and television] spots do not send a shiver down our spines, we simply reject them and go back to the drawing board” (Savod, 1980, p. 24).

In contrast to Wake Forest, the Carolina promoter did not place strong emphasis upon the idea of encouraging families to attend the games, although that was vaguely suggested. For example, tailgate picnics are usually family affairs, and a radio advertisement included mention of these. Because the stadium was expected to be filled to capacity at all games, there was little need to encourage more adults to bring their children.

Finally, in contrast to the intended breadth of association of “Proud to be a Deacon” with the entire Wake Forest intercollegiate athletic program, the Carolina promoter intended to associate “Carolina Fever” as exclusively as possible with football (Savod, Note 4). There is evidence of only very limited use of the theme in association with the promotion of basketball in the first year the theme was used (Carolina vs. South Carolina, Note 14, p. 68). Considering this desire to associate “Carolina Fever” with football only, it is understandable that the Carolina promoter also had no interest in encouraging the development of broader meanings for the theme associated with the campus in general.

Summary and Conclusions

The promotional campaigns to advertise major home athletic contests (primarily football games) at Wake Forest University and at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill were both directed toward marginal fans—individuals who had not attended football games frequently at these institutions in the recent past. An assumption was made by the

promoters that these potential spectators would not be interested in the fine points of the game of football. The evidence concerning promoters' conceptions of the attractiveness of football which guided their creation of advertising materials must be tempered with this understanding of the presumed nature of the people toward whom their materials were directed.

The differences between the promotional appeals of the sport promoters at these two institutions seem to be related to differences in their philosophies concerning the nature of effective promotional messages, and the extent to which they expected their stadiums to be filled for home football games. The Carolina promoter believed that an image of scarcity makes a product more valuable, and he emphasized this in his promotion of Carolina football. Furthermore, when he knew that all tickets to Carolina games for the 1980 season were sold, he could capitalize on this situation by announcing publicly that the games were sold out, and this plus the full stadium on Saturday afternoons further supported his image of scarcity. On the other hand, the Wake Forest promoter said he would be "resentful" (Gainey, Note 3) if people associated "Proud to be a Deacon" primarily with the selling of tickets. His intention was to encourage the formation of an identity with Wake Forest athletics in general. This intended image was perhaps of value at Wake Forest because the stadium was rarely filled to capacity and scarcity of football tickets would have been a difficult approach to use.

The combined evidence from the promoters and their advertising materials at these two institutions suggests the promoters believed their home football games held the following primary attractions for marginal fans:

- the games were a source of colorful, emotionally exciting entertainment,
- the games offered spectators a sense of community or inclusion,
- the games offered these opportunities for involvement to a wide variety of people with many different interests and capabilities. In Goffman's (1974) terms, the "frames" or pageants within which the football games occurred were emphasized more in the advertisements than were the games themselves. The games were characterized primarily by a few excited recollections of previous years in which long runs and passes resulted in touchdowns—those rare, brief, but intensely visible and captivating moments when the home team broke away from the opposition, scoring in dramatic or risky fashion.

Returning to the scholarly speculations summarized earlier concerning reasons for the importance of sports to American spectators, the attractions which these promoters believed their home football games had for potential audience members lend support to some of these hypotheses and fail to support others. Strongest support exists for the suggestions that: sports offer spectators a wide variety of experiences from which to choose their own level of involvement (Michener, 1976);

sports offer a sense of community to people within large technological societies (Anderson and Stone, 1981); and sports contain visible actions which are at times risky and/or effective, and spectators enjoy these (Zillman et al., 1979). It should be remembered, of course, that the attractions of football the sport promoters intended to project through their advertisements provide only indirect support for these hypotheses. More direct evidence from the spectators themselves and from a wider variety of sport settings is needed. The results of this investigation may be helpful, however, for those researchers who examine the importance of sports for spectators more directly.

If advertising consists of images or symbols which in Geertz' (1966) sense serve both as "models of" and "models for" culture, then the attractions of athletic contests such as those discussed above which have been displayed to hundreds of thousands of people in North Carolina must be carefully considered. Recalling once again the suggestion that advertising images may contribute to the continuous shaping or redefining of culture (Goffman, 1979; Inglis, 1972; Millum, 1975) in much the same way in which Geertz (1966) suggests that symbols serve as "models for" culture, the notion can be expressed that college football advertising (such as was examined here) may contribute to a strengthening of particular attractions of college football which it emphasizes and to a weakening of other attractions which, by their omission from the advertisements, may not be as frequently brought to public attention. An example of one way in which the Carolina and Wake Forest advertisements may have served as "models for" the attractions of collegiate football will be presented within the context of MacAloon's (in press) theoretical insights concerning performance genres of the Olympic Games.

MacAloon has presented a theoretical framework for understanding the nature of spectacles in modern societies using as his major illustration the Olympic Games. His theory suggests that the Games can best be understood as "laminated" or "ramified" cultural performances because they are constituted by the simultaneous occurrence of several framed performative genres—spectacle, festival, ritual, and play/game. MacAloon suggests that the coalescence of the spectacle genre of the Games in the last fifty years has provided a context within which the other performance genres have taken place. The penetration of politics, economics and ideology from "ordinary life" into the Games by way of the spectacle genre has served to render the "truth" or "reality" of the other performance genres of the Games questionable by permitting spectators to watch the Games in a disinterested and even a skeptical mood. Such a mood is characterized by awe at the grandeur of the performance, but it does not lead to any obligation to take seriously the communal joyousness and light-heartedness of the festival genre, the communal transcendence of the ritual genre, or the revelations of the play/game genre.

Assuming that major collegiate football games in the United States can also be considered to be laminated cultural performances in MacAloon's sense, his theoretical framework can be used to speculate about one way in which the football advertisements from Wake Forest and Carolina may have served as "models for" the attractiveness of collegiate football. As has already been pointed out above, the football advertisements from both institutions tended to highlight the fun, excitement, pageantry and communal involvement awaiting spectators at the games. Except for brief references to particularly exciting plays in previous games, the advertisements did not focus on the games themselves. Furthermore, there were no references to external concerns of "ordinary life" and only minor references to transcendental powers. In MacAloon's terms, primarily the festival performance genre was emphasized, and because of this emphasis it can be hypothesized that the Carolina and Wake Forest football advertisements may have served partially to focus spectator attention and action more solidly within the festival genre of the games. This suggestion is only speculative because direct evidence from the spectators themselves is lacking.

An example of spectator attentiveness to the festival genre has been provided, however, in a recent anecdotal account of University of Wisconsin home football games, although it is not clear whether or not sport advertising was involved in producing this attentiveness (Milverstedt, 1980). Wisconsin fields a perennially weak football team which loses frequently, but the weakness of the team has not deterred large numbers of enthusiastic fans from coming to the home games. They attend primarily to take part in the dancing, drinking and general partying at the stadium before, during and after the games; most people pay little attention to the progress of the games themselves. This anecdotal account suggests that increased attentiveness to the football festival genre might be more widespread, in a somewhat compensatory fashion, among spectators who support relatively weak teams.

The meanings which the Wake Forest and Carolina sport promoters intended to associate with their respective themes differed somewhat, primarily as a result of differences in their own philosophies regarding the nature of effective promotional messages and differences in their expectations regarding the likelihood of filling their stadiums with spectators. However, both sets of advertising materials stressed the communal fun and excitement of collegiate football pageants, and thus it can be hypothesized that both sets of advertising materials may have served partially to focus spectator attention and action more solidly within the "festival genre" (MacAloon, *in press*) of these collegiate events.

Footnotes

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¹Advertising campaigns were initiated at both institutions in 1976. Wake Forest averaged 19,857 spectators per home football game during the years 1970-75; this figure increased to 25,259 during the years 1976-1980 (Atlantic Coast Conference, Note 5; Gainey, Note 6; Wake Forest Football Media Guides, Note 7; Wake Forest Football Press Releases, Note 8). Carolina averaged 40,511 spectators at each home game during the 1970-1975 period; this rose to 48,190 during the 1976-1980 years (Carolina Final Football Statistics, Note 9; Carolina Football Media Guides, Note 10). In addition, at Carolina the stadium (seating about 50,000) was sold out at each home game during the 1978-1980 period (Savod, Note 4). The stadium at Wake Forest (seating about 38,000) was sold out only infrequently. The Carolina win/loss records in the pre- and post-1976 periods are very similar, while a very successful season in 1979 at Wake Forest tends to cloud the relationship between attendance and the promotional efforts at that institution.

²At both institutions these campaigns included radio and television advertising spots in the geographic areas from which spectators were typically drawn, newspaper advertising, and distribution of bumper stickers proclaiming the theme. At Carolina, the campaigns also included the incorporation of the theme into radio advertising of other companies, and colorful advertising sheets which were mailed with monthly statements to bank customers.

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3

HEROES IN BLACK AND WHITE: THE MEANINGS OF RACISM IN AMERICAN SPORT

BY
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Abstract

Numerous studies have indicated that, despite the growing presence of black athletes in big-time sport in America, several forms of racial discrimination exist in intercollegiate and professional sport. The conventional argument has been that racial discrimination in sport is a reflection of racism in the larger society. It is argued here that racial discrimination in sport is not merely a reflection of racism in the larger society but a powerful symbol of the complex nature of discrimination in contemporary America—discrimination which allows for the success of exceptional individuals but still places obstacles in the path of the typical black citizen. The argument draws heavily upon Geertz' (1973) interpretation of culture as a symbol system and upon Ross' (1973) interpretation of the symbolic meanings of football and baseball in America.

One of the most significant trends in organized sport in modern America is the ever increasing role of the black athlete. At all levels of participation, from high school to the colleges and the pros, black participation has skyrocketed in the post-World War II era. Intercollegiate conferences which were lily-white only fifteen years ago, such as the Southeastern and Southwestern Conferences, now field predominantly black basketball teams and football teams on which blacks are over-represented in comparison to their proportion in the general population. But nowhere has the rise of the black athlete been more dramatic than at the professional level. The racial integration of professional sport is relatively recent: the National Football League was integrated in 1945, major league baseball in 1949, and the National Basketball Association in 1950 (Eitzen and Sage, 1978, p. 236). However, in each of the major professional team sports, black participation increased rapidly, so that black players were soon represented in proportions equal to their representation in the population as a whole: in baseball by 1957, in basketball by 1958, and in football by 1960 (Eitzen and Sage, 1978, p. 239). Black participation has continued to rise so that they constituted over 60% of the players in the NBA, 42% of the players in the NFL, and 21% of the players in major league baseball by 1975 (Eitzen and Sage, 1978, p. 239). The black dominance of professional sport in America has been interpreted in terms of a racial stereotype which links physical superiority with mental inferiority and has led black spokesman and sport sociologist Harry Edwards (1974, p. 346-352) to attempt to debunk the "myth of the racially superior athlete." One well-known sports journalist has predicted that the black dominance of the major team sports will eventually lead to a decline in the interest of affluent white fans and, therefore, to economic instability in these sports (Deford, 1979, p. 451-457).

The modern American sports fan probably sees professional sport as a major avenue of social mobility for blacks. Indeed, there is concern among some black public figures, such as sport sociologist Harry Edwards and tennis star Arthur Ashe, that the emphasis on sport as a means of social mobility among blacks deflects the interest of talented black youth away from other avenues of achievement. Since the chances of rising to the professional level in sport are minute for a given individual, over-emphasis on sport may actually serve to reduce social mobility among black Americans (Michener, 1976, chap. 6). But, regardless of the concerns of black leaders, Americans in general probably view sport as a color-blind institution. The American sports fan is hard-pressed to accept the notion that there is racial discrimination in sport when he sees the astronomical salaries of the Reggie Jacksons, Dave Winfields, David Thompsons, Kareem Abdul-Jabbars, and Earl Campbells. Yet racial discrimination does exist in professional sport, as has been documented by any number of studies.

Though not the only form of racial discrimination which exists within the institution of sport, the form which is most evident and which has

been most widely discussed is “stacking.” Stacking refers to the tendency to assign players to positions on the basis of race, such that certain positions are seen as predominantly black and other positions are seen as predominantly white. Loy and McElvogue (1970, p. 5–24), who first documented the existence of stacking in professional football and baseball, drew upon Grusky’s (1963, p. 345–353) concept of the centrality of a position within a formal organization. Grusky argued that a spatially central position in an organization results in more frequent interaction between the incumbent and others and in the more frequent participation of the incumbent in coordinative tasks. Loy and McElvogue identified the central positions in football as quarterback, center, offensive guard, and linebacker, with the non-central positions being defensive linemen and backs, offensive tackle and end, running back and wide receiver. In baseball, the central positions were identified as pitcher, catcher, and infield, with the outfield positions being considered non-central. Recent data indicate that the stacking of black players in so-called non-central positions is still a fact of life in professional football and baseball. In 1975, the proportion of blacks among various baseball positions in the major leagues was as follows: pitchers, 4%; catchers, 5%; infielders, 24%; and outfielders, 49% (Eitzen and Sage, 1978, p. 245–246). Similarly, the proportions of blacks among the various positions in professional football in 1975 were: quarterback, 3.5%; center, 4.9%; linebacker, 26%; offensive guard, 26.9%; offensive tackle, 31.8%; defensive linemen, 47.6%; receiver, 55.3%; running back, 65.2% and defensive back, 67.3%. Edwards (1973, chap. 7) suggests that it is not spatial centrality but leadership responsibility and opportunity to control the outcome of the game that is the basis for stacking. Brower (1972, Note1) has shown that the “central positions” in football are ones which require leadership, mental ability, refined skills, and have a greater effect on the outcome of the game. Eitzen and Sage (1978, p. 247) support Brower and Edwards by pointing out that punters, placekickers, and kick holders are overwhelmingly white; these are non-central positions, but they require highly refined technical skills and have a great impact on the outcome of the game. Thus, in both professional football and baseball, there is evidence that blacks are segregated into playing positions which are both spatially non-central, and thus removed from extensive interaction, but also require more “pure” athletic ability and less refined technique than the so-called “central positions.”

Sociological Explanations of Stacking

A number of explanations have been advanced for the existence of racial stacking. Brower (1972, Note 1) suggests stacking results from the fact that coaches hold stereotypes not unlike those held by the public at large and that their stereotypes influence the assignment of players to

positions. Specifically, blacks are seen as appropriate candidates for non-central positions because they have more raw athletic talent and less mental ability than whites. Another explanation is provided by McPherson (1980, p. 339–346), who argues that black youngsters select non-central positions early in their careers as they emulate black professional stars. Eitzen and Sanford (1975, p. 948–959) questioned McPherson's explanation, noting the tendency for black players to switch from central to non-central positions as they move from high school to college and from college to the pros. Probably a combination of mechanisms is involved. Coaches either consciously or unconsciously place black players in non-central positions, and black players, seeing the phenomenon, prepare for the move out of economic necessity.

At another level, a functional explanation for stacking can be advanced. Stacking performs at least two functions which contribute to the stability of the team as a formal organization over the long run. First, stacking reduces the potential for racial conflict among players by reducing direct inter-racial competition for positions. Thus, ironically, one of the functions of racial discrimination is to aid the coaches in avoiding the charges of racial discrimination which would inevitably arise if there were widespread inter-racial competition for positions. A second function of stacking is that it maintains a relative balance of black and white players on the field at any given time. Given the bi-racial nature of the major cities where professional sports franchises are found, this is probably crucial to maintaining positive relations between the team and its fans.

A third "function" of racial stacking may be suggested, though it is by no means so obvious as the first two. Stacking may serve to reduce the amount of inter-racial conflict within the game itself. This argument cannot be consistently supported; for instance, there is a great deal of contact between white offensive linemen and black defensive linemen and between black running backs and white linebackers. However, the most brutal and openly observable contact in professional football is between defensive backs and wide receivers, both positions which are predominantly black. And it is worth noting that in the area of inter-racial contact which has the greatest potential outcome on the game—the sacking of the white quarterback by black defensive linemen—the rules of the game have recently been modified to protect the quarterback. This line of analysis would not seem to hold for baseball, where the most exciting confrontation is between the pitcher (white) and the power hitter (black). But perhaps the fact that baseball is not a collision sport reduces the need for inter-racial confrontation to be controlled.

Sport and Its Relation to Other Social Institutions

Though the social process explanations and functional analyses of racial segregation in American sport are instructive, there is another

interpretation of this phenomenon, one which, to my knowledge, has not yet been discussed. In order to develop this interpretation, I must digress briefly into a discussion on the relationship between sport and the larger society.

Sport journalist Robert Boyle (1963) argued that American sport is a “mirror of American life.” Eitzen and Sage (1978, chap. 1) elaborate on this point by suggesting that the institution of sport is a microcosm of the larger society of which it is a part. They suggest the characteristics of the society as a whole are observable within the institution of sport; they have in mind such characteristics as competition, emphasis on materialism, racism, domination of individuals by bureaucracies, unequal distribution of power among organizations, and the use of conflict to change power relations (Eitzen and Sage, 1978, p. 14–15). Eitzen and Sage point to sport as a microcosm of the larger society in order to make a case for the study of sport; they argue that by focusing on sport, one can observe social patterns which exist in the larger society. However, Eitzen and Sage do not deal with the question of *why* the institution of sport reflects the characteristics of the larger society. Perhaps sport mirrors other social institutions because it is dominated by them. If sport is dominated by the economic, political, religious or educational institutions, it will, of course, take on many of their characteristics. On the other hand, perhaps the institution of sport represents a case of “cultural lead” (Zurcher, 1972, p. 357–376); that is, because sport is not a mainstream institution, perhaps it is more free to change than the major social institutions. In this case, sport would not be simply a mirror of the larger society but a barometer by which changes in the larger society may be predicted. In any case, sport is not merely a microcosm of the larger society; it is related to other social institutions in some systematic way.

A related question has to do with the relationship between the content of particular games and the cultures of which they are a part. Roberts, *et al.* (1974, p. 138–148) described the content of games found in fifty societies and found the following: games of strategy were most likely to be found in societies with more elaborate status systems; games of chance were most common in societies which emphasized the sacred; and games of physical skill were most frequent among societies from temperate as opposed to tropical environments. The authors speculate that games reflect characteristics of the larger society because they are a means of socialization:

Thus, we can speculate that further inquiry will show that games of strategy are linked with the learning of social roles, games of chance with responsibility and achievement, and games of physical skill with self-reliance. Alternatively stated, games of strategy may be related to mastery of the social environment; games of chance may be linked with mastery of the supernatural; and games of physical skill are possibly associated with mastery both of self and of environment. (Roberts, *et al.*, 1974, p. 147)

It has been widely suggested that sport performs a socialization function within American society. Edwards, (1973, chap. 5 and 10) notes that most coaches and physical educators adhere to an “American sports creed” which asserts that sport builds physical and mental strength, teaches competition and discipline, and supports the cultural values of religiosity and patriotism. However, Edwards also points out that empirical evidence in support of the sports creed is slim; while it is widely asserted that “sport builds character,” the assertion has not yet been empirically verified. Still, if one accepts the socialization argument, the dominance of competitive team games (football, baseball, basketball) in American society may be seen as a means of preparing American youth for life in a highly competitive, bureaucratically structured society which emphasizes personal achievement and mastery over both the social and physical environments. This line of reasoning places sport in a subordinate position to other social institutions, such as the economy and the polity; that is, it suggests that sport exists so that individuals may learn to act in ways which will support the stability of the major social institutions.

Sport as Text: The Meanings of Football and Baseball in America

There is still another way to view the relationship between sport and the larger society. This view has best been expressed by Clifford Geertz, and I think that it is significant that while Geertz is ultimately concerned with status systems, political hierarchies, and trade relationships rather than sport, his classical statement is a description of sport, namely, the cockfight of Balinese society (Geertz, 1973, p. 412-453). Geertz argues that cultural traits can be interpreted as can a text—that they may legitimately be viewed, not just as reflections of the larger society, but as symbols of it. Geertz regards the Balinese cockfight, and particularly the elaborate system of betting which accompanies it, as a symbol of the intricate system of status relationships which permeates Balinese society. Geertz states that the cockfight:

... is—or more exactly, deliberately is made to be—a simulation of the social matrix, the involved system of cross-cutting, overlapping, highly corporate groups—villages, kingroups, irrigation societies, temple congregations, “castes”—in which its devotees live. (1973, p. 436)

... the cockfight is a means of expression; its *function* is neither to assuage social passions nor to heighten them (though, in its playing-with-fire-way it does a bit of both), but, in a medium of feathers, blood, crowds, and money, to *display* them. (1973, p. 444; *italics added*)

What sets the cockfight apart from the ordinary course of life, lifts it from the realm of everyday practical affairs, and surrounds it with

an aura of enlarged importance is not, as functionalist sociology would have it, that it reinforces status discriminations (such reinforcement is hardly necessary in a society where every act proclaims them), but that it provides a metasocial commentary upon the whole matter of assorting human beings into fixed hierarchical ranks and then organizing the major part of collective existence around that assortment. Its function, if you want to call it that, is interpretive: it is a Balinese reading of Balinese experience, a story they tell about themselves. (1973, p. 448)

Geertz' analysis suggests an explanation for the importance of sport in American culture which the "sport as microcosm" perspective does not. Perhaps we are "mad about sport" (Beisser, 1967) because sport is one of our primary means of expressing our understanding of our group life to one another. This line of analysis suggests sport is neither dominated by other social institutions nor merely a reflection of them; it is in a sense more significant than other social institutions—not because it dominates them; it certainly does not—but because it plays on our consciousness in a more powerful way.

Using a similar approach, Murray Ross (1973, p. 102–112) has provided us with some insight into the meaning of America's national games, football and baseball. He suggests baseball expresses a "pastoral myth" associated with the past while football expresses the "heroic myth" associated with the industrial, bureaucratic present. Drawing heavily upon Ross' analysis, I would like to compare baseball and football in terms of four dimensions in order to suggest that each game is a symbol of our conception of our national experience—baseball, a symbol of the idyllic rural past "which may never have been ours, but which we believe was," (Ross, 1973, p. 105) and football, a symbol of the modern, industrial, rapidly changing present which we fear but seek to understand and control.

The first major difference which confronts the viewer of football and baseball is the physical space in which the games are played. Although multi-use, synthetic-turfed stadia have reduced somewhat the differences in recent years, the basic differences noted by Ross remain. The "ball park" in which baseball is played represents life in a rural age. As Ross (1973, p. 103) describes it:

Most of the game is played between the pitcher and the hitter in the extreme corner of the playing area. This is the busiest, most sophisticated part of the ball park, where something is always happening, and from which all subsequent action originates. From this urban corner we move to a supporting infield, active but a little less crowded, and from there we come to the vast stretches of the outfield. As is traditional in American lore, danger increases with distance, and the outfield action is often the most spectacular in the game. The long throw, the double off the wall, and leaping catch—these plays take place in remote territory, and they belong, like most legendary feats, to the frontier.

The “frontier” nature of the outfield region is further suggested by the fact that there are no uniform dimensions for baseball parks and that each park has its idiosyncracies which threaten the visiting team—the cavernous expanse of the Astrodome, the “green monster” left field wall at Fenway Park. Football, on the other hand, is a game played on a fixed and highly segmented space. The “gridiron” of yard stripes and hash marks recalls the grid which spatially demarcates urban life. Action is not confined to one corner of the field but moves in a systematic way up and down the entire expanse, as with the inevitable invasion and succession of land use patterns on the cityscape.

Once the game begins, the spectator will note the use of time is different in the two games. Baseball is casual, even slow. Innings, like the seasons of the year, begin and end in their own good time. Football, on the other hand, is frantic; minutes, even seconds, matter. According to Ross (1973, p. 107):

Time in football is wound up inexorably until it reaches the breaking point in the last minutes of a close game. More often than not it is the clock which emerges as the real enemy, and it is the sense of time running out that regularly produces a pitch of tension uncommon in baseball.

What could better symbolize the modern executive’s scramble for success than Roger Staubach leading the Dallas Cowboys in the “two minute drill” and what could better symbolize the frustration and boredom of the industrial worker than the New England Patriots pounding the New Orleans Saints 35 to 7, while the TV announcer implores us to stay tuned because “there’s plenty of football left to be played.”

Not only is the use of time different, the games themselves differ in a number of important ways. Baseball is a simple game, though it certainly requires complex athletic skills. The rules of the game are relatively simple, and the action is easy to follow. Baseball is a game which provides a stage for the individual player to showcase his skills. Baseball games are won and lost not by complex team strategy—the teamwork required in baseball is routinized and taken for granted—but by exceptional performances by key individuals—the clutch hit, the strikeout by the relief pitcher, the diving catch by the centerfielder. Baseball, too, is relatively static. Although the use of artificial turf has resulted in a new emphasis on speed rather than power, the basic strategies of baseball—“playing the percentages”—have changed very little in recent years. Football, on the other hand, is highly complex, difficult to follow, requires carefully orchestrated interaction among teammates, and shows rapid changes in rules, strategy, etc. Success in football is based on the coordination of players within the offensive and defensive teams. Football coaches continuously speak of “execution”; the continuous success of the Dallas Cowboys is attributed to “The System.” The action in football is so complex that no single fan, player, or coach can comprehend it. Fans are aided by instant replay; coaches on the field rely on game films and assistants in the press box; the individual player is given

a set of “keys” by which he may infer something about how the play in which he is taking part will unfold. In recent years, new offensive strategies—multiple sets, the wishbone, the veer, etc.—and new defensive strategies—the bump-and-run, the three-four front, the “nickel” defense—have been implemented. As each has been brought into widespread use, it has altered the balance between offense and defense, requiring modification of the rules. The most recent NFL season saw record scoring primarily because of rule changes which gave the offense advantages over defense. These rule changes were made out of concern that the game was being dominated by the defense and was, therefore, becoming dull. Thus baseball represents simplicity, while football represents complexity and technological change.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly for our purposes, football and baseball differ in the degree to which they allow for self-expression and individuality on the part of the athlete. Baseball, because it showcases individual skills, is a fine vehicle for self-expression. Indeed, baseball is known to and remembered by many fans for its characters and their idiosyncracies—Pete Rose’s head-first slide, Reggie Jackson’s classic home run swing, Luis Tiant’s contorted delivery, Willie Mays’ basket catch, Jimmy Pearsall’s antics on the basepaths. Football, however, seems to repress the individual player’s opportunities for self-expression; “free spirits” like Duane Thomas and Thomas “Hollywood” Henderson are labeled troublemakers. Ross (1973, p. 105) describes Jim Brown as “an expressionless mask under the helmet. In action he seemed invincible, the embodiment of speed and power in an inflated human shape.” Important fictional (Gent, 1973) and non-fictional (Blount, 1974) works about football stress the dilemma of the football player, who sees athletic prowess as a means of self-expression and self-gratification but who also finds his individuality constantly constrained by the coaches and their system. Baseball, then, represents the earlier age of the entrepreneur, of individual accomplishment, while football represents the age of the corporation.

The Meaning of Racism in Baseball and Football

If we accept the notion that our national games represent two pictures we have of ourselves, one of the nostalgic past and the other of the frantic present, it becomes more plausible to interpret the racial segregation within those sports in symbolic terms as well. After all, the skin color of the players is something the fan observes—along with the stadium, the scoreboard, and the game itself—though he may give it little conscious thought. Whether on the baseball field or in the football stadium, the American sports fan sees the black player taking on an increasingly important role in American sport. Ironically, due to another form of discrimination (Eitzen and Sage, 1978, p. 250–255), black players are overrepresented among the sports’ superstars. When Reggie Jackson hits a

home run in the ninth, Willie Wilson steals a base, Lynn Swann makes a spectacular touchdown catch or Lester Hayes a crucial interception, we have a dramatic instance of the impact of blacks on American sport. When the dust clears and the drama ends, however, the American sports fan is also aware that there has never been a really successful black quarterback in the NFL and that successful black major league pitchers have been few and far between. They may also become aware of the paucity of blacks in coaching and administrative jobs in professional sport. What does it mean, this dual position of blacks within American sport—dominating superstar on the one hand, excluded on the other? What is indicated by the fact that football and baseball, so different in many respects, are similar in their treatment of blacks? To me the following interpretation seems plausible.

Both equality of opportunity and racism have been important values in American culture (Williams, 1970, chap. 11). Both have existed in our agrarian past, and both exist today, though the relative mix of the two may have changed. When the black superstar is voted most valuable player of his team or league, he becomes a bigger-than-life representation of the fact that an individual in American society can achieve success on his own merits. At the same time, however, the segregation which exists within the institution of sport is a bigger-than-life reminder that racism continues to exist in our society—bigger-than-life because sport is ostensibly the institution in which one can least afford to discriminate, in which, to quote Vince Lombardi, “winning is the only thing.” It may seem implausible to view Dave Winfield and Reggie Jackson, with their multi-million dollar contracts, as sharecroppers, occupying the rural expanse of the outfield. It may likewise seem implausible to view Earl Campbell or Tony Dorsett as symbols of black participation in the marginal sectors of our industrial economy. But consider one final factor. The typical professional sports career is extremely brief. Even professional sports stardom is only an opportunity to set oneself up. The key to a successful sport career is wise investment and planning for the future. Because of discrimination with respect to playing position, blacks are less well prepared than whites to embark on a carry-over career in sport; being a quarterback, offensive guard, or infielder prepares one to become a head coach or general manager; being a wide receiver or outfielder does not (Eitzen and Sage, 1978, p. 251-253). Endorsement contracts, too, seem to be more available to white stars (Eitzen and Sage, 1978, p. 251). The black athletes who have capitalized on their athletic success are those, like O.J. Simpson and Jim Brown, who shifted to the entertainment industry, another marginal economic area.

In short, the existence of black superstars in the world of big-time sport has important meaning to both blacks and whites in American society. In 1944, Swedish economist-sociologist Gunnar Myrdal explained the development of virulent racism in American society as an attempt to resolve “an American dilemma”; that is, the discrepancy

between the American value on equality of opportunity and the fact of black subordination was explained away by defining black people as qualitatively inferior (Myrdal, 1944). The American dilemma still exists: white Americans believe in equality of opportunity but want to transmit their advantaged social positions to their sons and daughters. The success of the Earl Campbells and "Magic" Johnsons allows white Americans to assert that equality of opportunity *does* exist. It is "proof" that talented blacks who are dedicated workers *can* rise to the top. These successes, however, also allow white Americans to blame those blacks who do not succeed for their own failure; thus, existing inequalities are explained in terms of differences in aptitude and motivation. Black Americans, too, see the significance of the black superstar. Sports have long held an important place in black culture, and it is undoubtedly meaningful to many black Americans that black athletes, by their sheer athletic ability, determine the outcomes of major sporting events. However, as mentioned previously, a number of blacks are now viewing upward mobility through athletic achievement as an elusive dream that can be accomplished only by the most talented few.

Thus, black and white superstars together act out a representation of both the positive and negative aspects of race relations in America today. Categorical subordination has been replaced by great achievements by the extraordinarily talented; caste barriers have given way to limited avenues for mobility. At first glance, the American dream is now possible to blacks from even the most disadvantaged backgrounds. On closer examination, however, racism still exists.

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4

PLAYING THE GAME IN MAINSTREAM AMERICA: RACE TRACK AND CASINO GAMBLING

BY

VICKI ABT AND JAMES F. SMITH

Abstract

This article explores two popular forms of social gambling, showing how they reflect contemporary American culture while they provide recreation for players. Rather than traditional psychological approaches to gaming, this study offers a socio-cultural view of gambling as leisure activity. The "worlds" of the race track and the casino are examined, with special emphasis on the formal and informal rules and social structures established within gaming environments. We find a well-developed subculture among recreational gamblers that places their form of play directly in the mainstream of American cultural values, even though the traditional view places gambling at odds with the work ethic. Money, the measure of worth in democratic civilization, becomes less important than the action or play itself, marking a shift in priorities from production to consumption. Yet in the context of gambling-play, an individual has the opportunity to act out compatible social roles and to earn status similar to the roles and status of the larger society.

Though gambling is by no means unique to American culture, it occupies a unique position in our civilization. Many consider the pastime a vice, particularly when it is practiced illegally or compulsively. For others, especially those involved in running a legal gambling enterprise such as state lottery, parimutuel wagering, OTB, or casino, the "vice" becomes "just business" with all the frustration, routine, politics, and boredom of any other occupation. Still others such as the local police chief who plays in a weekly poker game with his cronies, wink indulgently at players and become outraged only if there is evidence of underworld connections or dishonesty in the game. Jerome Skolnick (1978) discusses the play-pathology ambivalence of gambling, offering comparisons to other risk-taking forms of leisure activity. But unlike the examples Skolnick chooses (skiing, auto racing, snowmobiling, hang gliding), gambling forces its enthusiasts to risk only money—not life and limb. While it can be argued that the gambling environment is a world where people are manipulated by their greed in the act of exchanging their money for the chance to obtain more money (pitting their stake against the odds for a prize), this motivation is subordinate to the need for *play* among the vast majority of gamblers. Most players prefer to extend their gaming experience over a period of time at a casino or at a race track, even though such extended play *decreases* their chance of success (for example, doubling their stake) and *increases* their chance of being beaten slowly by the house advantage or vigorish. Greedy professional or compulsive gamblers are far more likely to wager large amounts on limited action, a style of play that increases the odds for success at the price of a similar increase in the probability of ruin.

To the consternation of some citizens, gambling, an apparent contradiction to the Protestant work ethic and a mother lode for psychoanalytic investigation, has been legalized in various forms throughout the United States. The popularity of legalized gambling at race tracks, in casinos, and in state lotteries is growing as more Americans spend more of their income on leisure activities and as more states look upon taxing gambling revenue as a painless method of solving their fiscal problems. But nowhere in the many studies of gambling undertaken is a discussion of its most compelling relationship to our culture. For in its counterproductive naughtiness, its magnetic appeal of "the action," its routine and conventional structure, and its need to perpetuate its own enterprise, gambling is both a reflection and caricature of our most deep-seated cultural values—the American Dream itself.

Gambling is a universal cultural phenomenon. Almost every ancient and modern civilization displays evidence of gambling behavior as part of its culture. In some societies, gambling is part of religious celebrations, while in others it is a routine form of entertainment. Estimates of the amount of money wagered legally and illegally in the United States run well into the hundreds of billions of dollars per year, but even so, our culture is not as addicted to gambling as, say, the Roman Empire. With

its checkered history and still somewhat shady reputation, gambling has moved from smokey back rooms and candy store bookie joints to plush casinos, computerized parimutuel betting, and state lotteries, replete with legitimacy, bureaucracy, and slick media advertising campaigns; thus it has become a full scale popular phenomenon in late 20th century American culture. Although it still may not be a universally condoned form of recreation, legalized gambling is rapidly becoming one of the most potent economic and cultural forces of our time.

This study is concerned with two of the most popular forms of legalized gambling—parimutuel wagering at race tracks and gaming in licensed casinos. These two forms have the most legitimacy (or the least stigma); they are the most regulated; and, most significantly, they encourage particular social groupings that constitute subcultures. These are the most accessible forms of social gambling, and, at least in theory, are the most democratic, offering the same odds of success to all bettors. Furthermore, we do not intend to deal with the pathological aspects of gambling behavior, the compulsive or degenerate gamblers, not because the problems surrounding this idiosyncratic behavior are not significant (they are) but because they are aberrations or exaggerations of the gambling phenomenon. We intend to study gambling as adult recreation, a social context, a leisure activity, and a consumer behavior, no more pathological or sinful than any other activity in which people invest time, money, and energy.

Playing the Game: Risk and Recreation

Traditional explanations of why people gamble have centered on psychological analyses of gambling and gamblers; however, we propose a different approach—a socio-cultural analysis, treating gambling as adult recreation, an extension of childhood play, for those who can afford it. There are at least three interrelated problems associated with most psychological explanations of gambling. First, attempts to deal with the general concept of *gambling* at the psychological level fail because the term, generally defined, can include everything from stock market speculation to sky diving. Second, psychological perspectives find it necessary but difficult to distinguish pathological or compulsive gambling from “normal” or controlled gambling. This distinction forces judgments about either the morality of gambling or the pragmatic “rational” criteria involving weighing losses of time, money, and personal esteem against the possibility of a payoff. This last approach includes a great deal of research on decision making processes and the question of a “risky shift” or the reduction of riskiness in group betting situations. Studies such as those of Knox (1976) and Sanders (1978) focus on the question of gambling and riskiness. Snyder (1978) documents the conclusion that horse bettors, for example, tend to underbet favorites just a little but appear rational in the short run by generally ignoring long shots while

pragmatically maximizing their chances of success by weighing the variables of the stake, the odds of the payoff, and the amount of the prize.

This consideration of risk taking, and the knowledge that in the long run most gamblers will lose, give rise to many psychological examinations of the *loser*. Asking what motivates gamblers, Kusyszyn (1978) includes a model incorporating variables of money, time, negative effects on others, and the feelings of the gamblers, themselves to distinguish among various types of players ranging from the classic compulsive gambler (much money lost, negative effects on self and others) to the professional gambler (frequent winner, positive self-image). Livingston (1974) administered questionnaires to gamblers at G. A. meetings and found them to be generally impatient people needing personal recognition and striving to present an image of success. However, more interesting is his suggestion that the *culture* (social system) of gambling situations helps the gambler hide his losses, save face, and act out his anxiety—usually through joking about his bad luck. Group norms develop which preclude discussion about the outside world. There is also a folkway against bragging about a big win because boasting could upset the other gamblers who are not winning at the time. The loser is able to maintain his equilibrium, not questioning (or having others question) what he is doing. As he continues to lose, it is only during the game that he can go unjudged, and so we find one of the self-sustaining aspects of race track and casino environments. A kind of entrapment is in operation: the more a gambler loses, the more he is attracted to the track or casino as solace. Livingston also touches on the process of *becoming* a gambler through being socialized into a system of roles, but he fails to emphasize that there is little point in reducing explanations to any extraordinary or pathological characteristics of the novice. Over time, the situation should change the actor.

The apparent contradiction between situational rationalizing and long-term irrationality coupled with a rather undifferentiated approach to gamblers and gambling (i.e., no one gambles *all* the time) has us focus on the reasons a person begins gambling as an explanation of current gambling, even though the current activity may be far removed from the original motivation. This approach to the appeal of gambling centers on *personality* as the independent causal variable, leading to the assumption that “man makes the role” rather than the sociological concept that “the role makes the man.” Any focus on the gambler should be in terms of a social career and of the process of learning the social roles of a gambler. If this perspective is used, much gambling behavior can be seen as conventional (within the norms of other gamers) if not “normal.” In the social career of a gambler, many things will affect his view of himself, his choice of game and gambling peers, his learning tools. If for no other reason than the fact that no one can be in two places at the same time, by choosing gambling settings, a player has, by definition, limited associations and friendships and opportunities for socialization and develop-

ment of alternative interests. It is not important at the track or casino to be able to name three operatic composers, while it *is* important to know the times of three horses in the race or the three best bets at a crap table. Areas of competency become encapsulated and self enclosing. People tend not to try behaviors with which they are unfamiliar or uncomfortable. Thus we must not remove the gambler from the gambling situation; rather we must begin to analyze the dynamics and structure of the various gambling situations. It will become apparent that by creating their own worlds while in many ways reflecting the outside world, a race track and a casino provide their own explanations of gambling behavior. In this argument, the PLAY (game) really *is* the thing.

Gamblers seek temporary escape from the outside world in the controlled environment of a game where there are an organized structure, rules of play, suspense, catharsis, and a resolution or decision. Few situations in life are resolved as quickly and as finally as a gambling decision. However, gambling-as-play carries the important qualification that the players must be able to afford the game. For our purposes, this implies that the player does not jeopardize his livelihood, financial position, or his long-term goals to pursue his recreation any more than a skier would in the pursuit of his sport. If the play becomes an obsession, he could be considered a "professional" (if he is successful) or a "compulsive" (if he is unsuccessful). Either case falls outside the scope of our study, for just as most skiers enjoy the sport in moderation, so, too, the vast majority of gamblers set well defined limits on the amount of time and money they invest in their chosen diversion. If they do not, their activity ceases to be play.

Gaming is actually less risky than many other comparable pastimes. It need not be the reckless expenditure of scarce resources on events of great risk in the naive hope of making a killing. If a gambler is ensnared in such a trap, he can be considered a degenerate or compulsive gambler; his behavior is irrational, if not pathological, and must be discussed at the psychological level. The fact is that the gaming industry could not survive if it had to depend on such players for its profits. On the contrary, vast numbers of players taking only moderate or controlled risks constitute the market for gambling entrepreneurs. Moderation is a key concept. Regular recreational gamblers will not be taken seriously if they bet totally inconsequential sums of money; however, if they bet too recklessly, they will also lose face. In practical terms, a recreational gambler must sustain his entertainment while making it interesting at the same time. This type of player will participate in the game for a variety of reasons. He may amuse himself with moderate risk to escape from the predictable routine of his daily life, or he may use gambling as a safety valve instead of turning directly against the real sources of his frustration and unfulfilled aspirations (and thus not be forced to confront the system directly). He may actually hope for social betterment, even the temporary status available among the gambling fraternity, or he may be consciously

trying to “beat the system” at its own game. In any event, studies such as Robert Herman’s (1976) analysis of track bettors indicate that players handle their money conservatively, betting on favorites, retaining at least a portion of their winnings (perhaps for more action later), and keeping bet sizes modest.

Money itself plays an almost incidental role for recreational gamblers: it is used primarily to facilitate the decision-making process. Money establishes the fact of a decisive act, but at the track it is converted into a ticket marked with the decision and the amount wagered, and in the casino it disappears into the drop box and is replaced with gaming tokens (checks) to be placed in designated spots on a playing field. In each case, the cash vanishes, and the player is left with only a symbol of his decision. This transaction may be seen as one of the ways in which the casino or track manipulates players into forgetting the “value” of their money. On the other hand, the tokens or slips are the playing pieces, material artifacts, of the game. In a sense, gamblers can be said to adopt traditional roles, making decisions after weighing alternatives and signalling these decisions by attaching symbolic value to them.

Ironically, gaming should become even more popular in industrial societies. Self-reliance, independence, decision making, and other conventional values are part of the gaming experience and will continue to be available at the track and in casinos as they become increasingly difficult to embrace in industrial bureaucracies where individual initiative and decision making are often smothered by the demands of the system. As Herman (1976) asks, “What other cultural devices are available to middle class and working class men that can be effective in bolstering a sense of belonging, of independence, of self-determination, and the exercise of mental skills and rational powers?” (p.102). So the conspicuous consumption of gambling actually strikes at the heart of traditional values, not overturning them but reinforcing them. The fact that there is invariably a group setting for track and casino gaming adds to the parallel with the larger society’s roles and values.

Play is a voluntary activity, frequently intense, and it is usually an end in itself. In an apocryphal remark often quoted in gambling stories, Nick “The Greek” Dandalos once claimed, “The best thing in the world is to gamble and win. The second best thing is to gamble and lose.” Casino games are structured so that there is a house “advantage”—a negative expectation for the players—though it is true that a limited number of blackjack players possess enough skill in counting cards to win regularly, providing they have enough courage and cash to ride out inevitable losing patterns. Otherwise, in the long run, the casino can count on winning a predictable percentage of every dollar wagered on the various games. Gamblers at a race track face an even more formidable disadvantage, with a fixed percentage taken out of every betting pool before payoffs are awarded to winners. Yet in spite of this knowledge, players continue to participate in the games—so important is the act of *playing*.

that it overshadows all other considerations. Betting, then, becomes an end in itself, and the final result—the win or loss—becomes *almost* unimportant. And while psychologists may argue that such irrational behavior can only be symptomatic of masochistic or other pathological tendencies in the individual, it is possible to hold the view that gambling-as-play is simply an activity to be enjoyed, regardless of the ultimate consequences. Gamblers are fond of saying that they love the *action*, or that they are only excited or fulfilled when they are in action. Simply defined, the action is the intensity of the game, whether tossing the dice, turning a card, or handicapping and watching a race. Action embodies the suspense of waiting for the decision, the catharsis of the decision, and the resolution of the expectation or prediction compared to the decision. Action, much more than winning, is the chief attraction of gaming and it is the surest signal that we are studying play, not pathology. Gamblers do not play because they subconsciously want to lose; they play because they want to *play*.

In addition to being a voluntary activity, play creates a world of its own (Goffman, 1961)—a world that may have a special place, its own society, its own system of order, and its own group pressures and expectations. As any other game, such as baseball or football, gambling at the track or in a casino fulfills these characteristics of play. With a sense of place greater than mere geographical considerations, a race track and a casino possess a particular ambiance, an atmosphere conducive to the particular kind(s) of activity encouraged there.

The Race Track as Special Place

Within its surroundings, and to some extent determined by them, the race track embodies a formal and an informal system of rules defining the play of the game and distinguishing the serious or successful players from those less serious or successful. While the individual players may change from day to day, the roles they play may be seen on any race day. In other words, the track generates a social structure complete with ways to socialize new players and with communication networks. Also evident is a status hierarchy which is simultaneously *unlike* the larger society in that determinants such as race, sex, and religion are ignored, but *similar* in that excellence in role performance is rewarded. Money is frequently seen as the formal reward, but the personal prestige and reputation of a consistently good player who knows and follows the rules may exist independently of monetary rewards. Just as any social system must have methods for handling or “cooling out” tension and conflict, track etiquette settles disputes over order of finish through the final word of the judges. Informally players learn to stay “cool,” to keep going as players, by not getting too upset over losses or too demonstrative over winning. Since everyone knows that at various times a person can win or lose just

by chance, the play becomes routinized—it goes on. No matter how wild the cheers or how discouraging the moans at the conclusion of a race, the sequence of pre-race events begins almost immediately, and the cycle of play starts again, orchestrated by the track announcer and regulated by post times, helping the bettors maintain short memories of past success or failure. They have another chance! Further, most players consider it bad form to boast or complain too loudly or too often. Equally out of place is one player asking another about the amount of money bet, won, or lost. Yet, disgusted players are not condemned for occasional profanity or for talking to no one in particular about the bad ride their horse got. But such players are expected to get over their disappointment. No one really wants to keep “track” of results.

For a horse player, setting assumes a primary importance in the game. Playing at the track is different from betting in an OTB parlor or through a bookie. Players become socialized to specific networks and rules at the track, and except for minor variations among specific locations, the knowledge may be easily transferred from one track to another. While it is true occasional players need not learn the informal rules of the track, one of the most significant aspects of track betting is that such systems exist and they make winning or losing less important than the game or play itself. Everything and everyone at the track contribute to the sense of morality or “OK-ness” in this form of entertainment. Little cognitive dissonance is permitted. The rituals of betting, the regularity of races, the lack of communication with the outside, the self-enclosed physical space (keeping patrons “confined” for approximately four hours at a time), the control of the bettors, the anonymity afforded players, the plentiful refreshment and rest facilities, the toleration of player behavior within a loose etiquette structure—all these factors contribute to a relaxed atmosphere that does not pressure the individual into unwanted behavior or make him think negatively about his behavior. The track, a veritable retreat from responsibility, is a paradise for players as long as they do not notice everyone must lose in the long run and there are more “productive” ways to spend those four hours. They may be almost child-like in their innocence. If pressed, most players will admit the odds against long-term winning, but will counter by saying they love the action anyway!

Group pressures exist in this world. For example, one would never take another person’s seat or butt in line at a betting window. One would not distribute anti-gambling literature, nor would a player become too curious about anyone’s private (i.e. non-track) life. Regular players are often seen greeting one another, and while intense friendships are seldom formed, they usually express concern for, say, long absences from the track. The few restrictions pale in the face of the tolerance shown toward styles of dress, grooming, ethnic background, race, religion, or sex. Such factors are irrelevant to gambler-identity. The new grouping of gamblers (in their play identities) exists for the pleasure of the action, and anyone

willing to play by the rules will be accepted. A player does not always have to win. Losses are inevitable, given the vagaries of chance and the high track percentage, so being *relatively* successful and following the rules of good handicapping (hunch betting is *out*) is all that can be expected of a player.

Status hierarchies exist within the structure, but always in terms of the game. For example, trainers, owners, and jockeys are at the top of the hierarchy because they are assumed to have "inside information." Every gambler would like to know one of these people personally, and if a player associates with one of the elite fraternity, he will be sought out by others and assumed to be doing well at the track. Sometimes personnel at the betting windows will grant status by giving tips to regular customers. "Regulars," then, share in higher status by virtue of their inside information. Even a phenomenal streak of beginner's luck in an occasional player does not compare to the status held by regular clubhouse patrons or heavy bettors. Serious *intent* is the discriminating factor, not the variables important to society at large. Handicapping and betting are fun, but *serious* fun. At the same time, however, the bettor would lose respect if he were discovered to be taking the game *too* seriously—if he were gambling with his last dollar or with his rent money.

The track, then, encourages its own form of recreation; but, as in any form of play, certain rules govern the conduct of the game and the behavior of the players. There is, in fact, form and decorum governed by the setting and instituted spontaneously by the participants. On one hand, a retreat to a place promoting "irresponsible" behavior may be considered infantile or selfish. Nevertheless, the temporary escape from everyday problems and pressures coupled with the feeling a player has some control over his recreational destiny is part of all forms of entertainment.

The Casino as Special Place

Like the race track, a gambling casino has its own particular sense of place and its own social structure that, in many ways, may be even more seductive to a player. Since casinos are indoors, almost uniformly windowless, artificially lighted, and air conditioned, patrons easily lose their sense of time. Indeed, casino "season" is any time of year, 365 days, and—at least in Nevada—24 hours per day! When patrons arrive at a casino, they are immediately thrust into the midst of the action. In fact, for many casino-hotels, the gambling room has replaced the traditional hotel lobby. Interior geography is carefully planned to orchestrate floor traffic to the various games of chance. The casino attempts to fascinate, entertain, and captivate its audience for as long as their inclination and bankroll hold out. There is no built-in time frame as in a racing schedule. But while virtually all major casinos share common elements, each is characterized by a particular variation of the "eat, drink, and be merry"

theme which helps to cultivate a particular player-clientele. Modern casino marketing techniques include a careful analysis of what type of visitor is likely to play at a given casino. Once this hypothetical player is defined, everything from the color scheme and architectural motifs, the outfits worn by house personnel, the types of restaurants and entertainment, to the ratio and distribution of games create the image that will best appeal to the market. Thus a player may choose from a variety of gambling surroundings while playing essentially identical games of chance.

Within each casino there are distinctions of place in the gaming areas. The slot pits usually surround the table games. These areas are the least formal with players milling about or stationed at their chosen machine. Since slot areas are subject to the most traffic, they often become littered with coin wrappers, change cups, cocktail glasses, and other debris, keeping the cadre of clean-up personnel working non-stop during gambling hours. Wheel games, roulette and big six, offer a more sedate atmosphere for players as well as action methodical and colorful enough to attract many onlookers. The twenty-one pits are even more subdued, with players studying their cards and hoping to make the correct decisions that will beat the dealer's hand. Baccarat, a game most casino visitors find intimidating, is set off in an exclusive area, offering the most relaxed and dignified surroundings. Finally, the heart and pulse of the casino can be found at the crap tables, where crowds of closely jammed players make their bets, shout encouragement to the shooter, or mutter silent prayers the dice will roll in their favor. Communal shouts or groans are characteristic of dice games, where money can be won or lost more quickly than anywhere else in the casino. Players can roam around the perimeter of the various playing areas, choosing their game or table-hopping to keep or to change their luck. Inside the pits, floor personnel supervise the games, keep security, replenish checks, check player credit, and issue markers to customers. Cocktail waitresses satisfy the needs of thirsty players, and gamblers can become lost in their own private worlds.

The pace of action in the various games is controlled by two factors. One is the set of house rules governing each game. These are posted in the gaming locations and are sometimes outlined in guides or brochures available to players. Rules are usually consistent from casino to casino, often mandated by legislation. In spite of minor variations, a player accustomed to playing a particular game in one location will almost immediately find himself comfortable with the same game in new surroundings. Players tend to gravitate to the games with which they feel most compatible. They may know the percentages involved in a particular game, they may have a system they wish to use, or they may simply choose to play in an environment consistent with their recreational personality. Dice games can become frantic and boisterous, while twenty-one is suspenseful in concentration. Baccarat can be relaxing

and hypnotic, and roulette moves at a deliberate pace. Each game is conducted in a sequence of mechanical, predictable actions by players and dealers. Since the rules of the games favor the house, dealers are encouraged to keep the action going smoothly and as quickly as the players will tolerate. Player toleration and etiquette constitute the second controlling factor governing the pace of the action. Dealers must not confuse players, or the game will lose customers. On the other hand, games that move too slowly because of betting disputes or inexperienced dealers may become boring or distracting to players and less profitable for the house. Action must be swift, sure, and regular to keep players involved. American casinos tend to deal all games much more quickly than their counterparts in Europe and around the world, possibly because American players thrive on intense play as opposed to more leisurely gambling. With less time to rationalize, the players tend to become more totally absorbed in the gaming experience.

Further, each game—and sometimes each *table*—tends to cultivate its own sense of decorum and behavior, constituting an informal but nonetheless rigidly enforced social structure. The enthusiastic shouting and cheering at a hot dice table is out of place in a baccarat pit, while the studied restraint of an expert blackjack counter may arouse suspicion, if not ill will, at a dice table. Player etiquette, something found even in slot pits, develops independently of the casino management, although alert dealers and supervisors will “enforce” the informal systems if they feel they are beneficial to the action. Thus such etiquette plays an important role in determining how an individual player behaves in the context of his particular gaming subgroup. The player, in a sense, defines his self-image in his choice of game, and the etiquette he follows helps to alleviate his own alienation and the apparent chaos of a gambling emporium. There is actually form and system where there appears to be none, for nothing is more conspicuous and unwanted at a blackjack table than a novice player at “third base” (the last player position to act before the dealer completes his hand), especially when the other players believe that they are playing skillfully. A hesitant shooter can cool off a hot pair of dice, and a baccarat player who misdeals from the shoe is virtually ostracized.

The players themselves form a social system within the casino, a hierarchy that can be distinguished on several different levels. The house may consciously participate in the stratification, or the divisions may be entirely spontaneous among players.

First, and most obviously, players are distinguished by the level of play or action they choose. Even slot machines are available in denominations ranging from 5¢ to \$5, and though one may find nickle, dime, and quarter machines mingled at random, the dollar (and higher) machines are usually grouped in specific areas. Table games are divided by established and posted minimum and maximum wagers. Minimum wagers at table games may be as little as \$1 or \$2 or as high as \$100 or \$500;

maximum limits may range from \$150 to \$4000 per wager. The various denominations of checks are color-coded—\$25 checks are predominantly green, \$100's are characteristically black—and a gambler can be immediately distinguished by the color of checks with which he plays. High rolling players using green or black checks are singled out by alert casino staff for special treatment. In addition to the usual free drinks and smokes, these gamblers are frequently offered gourmet dinners, shows, and even free rooms and refund of transportation expenses if they play long enough and at high enough stakes. These players are the premium customers most houses wish to court, and if they play at the tables reserved for high-limit players, they can actually isolate themselves from novices and low-rollers in the casino. This may be an advantage to the professional blackjack player who wishes to play head-to-head with a dealer, but it is not at all unusual to see a "green check" player sitting among dollars bettors in a game. Perhaps he derives satisfaction from the instant status and recognition he receives at that table.

Further, the *cognescentsi* at any game may be discerned, no matter what the stakes level of the table or the color of their checks. Much like the avid handicapper, these players study their choice of game and play skillfully (in blackjack, for example), or at least make only those wagers which give them the greatest chance for success. They know the house percentages, say, at dice, and they always go with the best odds. House personnel recognize these players as well, and even the short bankrolled "tough players" may receive recognition and respect from dealers and supervisors. Such gamblers handle their checks deliberately and play a "tight" game, as opposed to the fumbling uncertainty of novice players. To be sure, they enjoy themselves, but it is with the confidence that they are playing as well as they can—win, lose, or draw. This gives them their own brand of status, one based on knowledge, not the amount of money played.

Finally, there is another circle of players, like the "insiders" at the track, who always seem to know the right people in the right places. They possess what is affectionately known as "juice." Perhaps they are high rollers who have been singled out by management for special treatment. Other times, they may be regular customers or people in the travel business or media whose good graces the casino wishes to cultivate. Or they may be friends with key personnel who offer them "comps" usually reserved for the affluent. In any event, these customers, too, find satisfaction in "game playing" beyond the actual gambling experience.

There is no question that playing casino games is more intense than gambling at a race track. For many players, the casino experience may end after only a few minutes in action, whereas a \$20 stake could conceivably last a track fan through ten races. Bettors at the track concentrate as a group on the same event; players at a casino choose their diversions and form sub-groups. Deliberation and analysis are part of any good handicapper's talent; casino gamblers must make many

instantaneous decisions in the course of play. Hypnotized by the careening dice, the whirling reels of a slot, or the mechanical turning of cards, casino players experience an almost ecstatic immersion in the game—a play-by-play account would be as difficult to recall as, say, a play-by-play description of a pinball game. But the track and casino share two common elements. First, players at each place play similar, informal latent games of adopting roles in the social structure of the track or casino. These roles may be radically different from “real life” roles, and adopting such recreational personalities (whether consciously or unconsciously) constitutes another level of “play.” Finally, the easiest measure to calculate, the amount of money won or lost, is less important to the player than the excitement, suspense, immersion, and role-playing of the gambling experience. Were this not the case, the majority of casino and track clientele, the *losers*, would exercise their capacity to reason, stop playing, and be forever lost to the market. Instead, they return time and time again to lose themselves, not their money, in play.

Gaming in Mainstream America

Fundamentally, the play of the gambler is congruent with all forms of popular entertainment in America. Like the mythologies, legends, and religions of earlier cultures, formulas of contemporary entertainment help reaffirm, articulate, and synthesize the cultural values of modern America; and gambling as a social and cultural ritual reflects the particular preoccupations of the culture, time, and group which spawn it. As Kaplan (1960) observes, leisure activities are the ways in which we are freest to be ourselves, and so the culture’s fundamental views of life, purpose, and goals are reflected in leisure behavior unconstrained by the organizational demands of work. But Kaplan adds a crucial question: “Has the age of leisure modified the values that have been identified with those of a business and industrial society? Is the ‘acquisitive’ society subverted or converted by leisure activity?” (p. 4). A tentative answer, at least so far as gaming is concerned, is no. In fact, the values of industrial society have helped shape most contemporary leisure. Although leisure (a consuming activity) may be the antithesis of work (the productive activity) as an economic function, we have seen significant parallels between gaming and traditional values of the culture; it is even possible to interpret this type of leisure activity as a mechanism for adjustment to societal norms and expectations as well as an escape from societal pressures. As society becomes more *Gesellschaft*, leisure becomes characterized by the same attributes as work: more of it is *indoors*, much play is *commercialized*, many *specialized* forms are popular, games are *formally* organized, many activities are *individual-centered*. Thus it is difficult to regard leisure activity, gambling in particular, as culturally bad unless it conflicts with cultural values or negatively affects other parts of one’s life (livelihood); in short, if it ceases to be only a leisure activity.

We have seen that gaming in casinos and at race tracks is commercialized and exhibits a formal organization. Further, though there is a clearly identifiable social structure in each case, the actual play itself is performed by individuals. Just as in the larger social setting, success implies both status and monetary reward for wise decision making. Contrary to the prevalent belief, recreational gamblers cannot afford to trust to blind chance (recall the disdain for hunch betting) or to behave totally on impulse. Rather, most "serious" handicappers and casino patrons work at their choice of game—at least they believe they know enough to make their wagers wisely. When players immerse themselves in their game, when they join the gambling fraternity in their own special place, they leave the outside world behind; but at the same time, their play reflects and caricatures mainstream America.

Until recent times, the Protestant work ethic stood as the most important value in American culture. According to the myth of capitalist enterprise, thrift and industry held the keys to material success and spiritual fulfillment. The self-made man, the archetypal embodiment of the American Dream, owed his success to habits of industry, sobriety, moderation, self-discipline, and avoidance of debt. These qualities may still be seen in the successful gambler (with the possible exception of avoiding debt), but they are caricatured in that he "invests" in the present—a chance for *immediate* reward in an atmosphere characterized by self-indulgence. The traditional Alger-hero and his descendants lived for the future, shunning self-indulgence in favor of slow investment, self improvement, and a painstaking climb up the ladder of success. The gambler hopes to compress and intensify this experience.

Lasch (1979) points out that in an age of diminishing expectations, the work ethic is critically eroded. No longer is there a stigma attached to the pursuit of wealth as an end in itself. We tend to live for the moment in our unpredictable world, and as a result, unlike our forebears, we are not unwilling to consume our wealth. Gamblers can bet on a quicker tomorrow rather than wait until later to test their ultimate fate. The pseudo-event of gaming (a man-made, sociable, and safe risk) yields an instant measure of success in the context of a sense of control over destiny—it is not as ambiguous as most of life has become. The new criterion for success is making one's fortune without necessarily doing anything intrinsically good or useful in the process. Earlier conceptions of success presupposed a certain stability, a future that bore some resemblance to the present and past. Uncertainty about the future, the growth of bureaucracy, and the cult of consumption with its immediate gratifications have transformed the Protestant ethic: self-interest, formerly a rational pursuit of gain and the accumulation of wealth, has become a search for pleasure and psychic survival. Workers are consumers—even in their leisure—and their consumption fuels the social and industrial complex. Big business encourages consumption through advertising that increases our expectations. Contemporary man is perpetually bored, dis-

satisfied, always looking for safe risks. Accumulation of wealth is not as important to mainstream America as the search for pleasure, which today involves the *use* of money. Traditionally in a democracy the only status comes from money as a source of power and authority. Modern America would only add that money is the means to pleasure, and as we have seen, gamblers are more interested in the action, the pleasure of consumption and "risk" than in accumulating winnings. The means, the gamble, has become an end in itself.

Recreational gambling fits easily with the values, virtues, and life-styles of mainstream American culture. This play is intense and carefully patterned into rising excitement, suspense, and release through a definite decision where there are obvious winners and losers. In a curious way, track and casino gaming may be examples of pure democracy in action. As institutions, they consume money—the standard of worth in American life. The posted odds are egalitarian; they are unflinchingly stable whether the wager is large or small. The games are accessible to anyone holding the money required for a minimum bet. Knowledge, skill, and perseverance may earn appropriate rewards; and just as in Alger's mythology of success, *pluck* must be blessed with *luck*—Ben Franklin's "Providence"—for the player to win. Individually and in groups, gamblers enjoy ego-enhancement in their immediate gratification, or at least in the temporary but clear-cut resolution of the inescapable frustrations and ambiguities of modern life. Players at tracks and in casinos seek entertainment and release through escape from the limits of real life, while at the same time they act out their roles in a context that clearly parallels the structure of their world. The search for El Dorado, the Grail Quest, and the traditional concept of the American Dream may simply be nobler versions of the search for a winning system or a sure-fire bet. On the other hand, the contemporary American Dream might find its only tangible reality in the momentary flush of being a *winner*.

Note:

Between 1978 and the present time, the authors have engaged in participant-observation of gambling at race tracks and in casinos. During the course of our research, we have conducted numerous interviews with track personnel in Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey and with casino executives in Las Vegas, Reno, and Atlantic City, exploring the "business" and marketing sides of the gambling enterprise. Further, we have interviewed many players at tracks and casinos, compiling much anecdotal information in support of our thesis. Finally, at the present time, we are engaged in a survey of recreation, gaming, and leisure interests among people who include gambling at race tracks or in casinos as part of their leisure activity because our impressionistic sample and interviews with gamblers did not indicate the typical pathological view of the gambler applied to the majority of regular players. Therefore

we are testing several hypotheses to see if the gambler can really be distinguished from the non-gambler in ways other than his choice of game.

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5

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF PINBALL: THE MAKING OF A SETTING AND ITS ETIQUETTE

BY

STEPHEN CONN AND JUDITH B. MARQUEZ

Abstract

Pinball and the settings in which it is played are perceived by the public as having an aura of deviance. The perception derives in part from behavior observed in pinball parlors, but goes beyond the reality of the pinball setting. Public labeling of pinball, with its taint of illegitimacy, molds the etiquette of pinball and acts to repel or attract potential players. Recent efforts by industry to improve the image of pinball aim to dispel negative attitudes toward pinball, thereby widening the social acceptance and use of pinball in public settings.

Pinball, a unique American amusement device, is a coin-operated electric game developed and refined for public playing in the 1930's and 1940's. It pits player against machine. In exchange for coin, skill and chance, it rewards the player with a direct response in the form of lights, noise, motion and, if predetermined high scores are reached, additional games. The playing of pinball in its typical public setting appears to be no more of an expressive social act than other transactions with vending machines. Yet the activity of public pinball has been colored by strong negative and positive connotations by participants and by non-participants. These connotations are far out of proportion to the apparent cost, rewards and dangers of this game. An aura of deviance surrounds pinball and the settings in which it is played. The aura is derived only in part from what can be observed there. Pinball has been labeled as gambling and not play. Its participants have been cast as loiterers "up to no good." Its attractions for youth have been viewed as unsavory. The aura of deviance and the consequent labeling effect upon those who frequent pinball settings provide a special appeal for some players (especially young, single males) and a special disincentive for participation for others (especially females). The taint of illegitimacy surrounding pinball also molds the etiquette of pinball. This is especially evident in the players' tolerance for the flaunting of rules which in other circumstances might be necessarily obeyed to preserve the separate reality of the game and a "spirit of play."

One experiment suggests there is little or no peer pressure against cheating. In fact, within the context of the game and its setting, "cheating" does not seem possible for regular players. Conversely, pinball has been intellectualized in ways not necessary for games which society accepts as legitimate sports or, at least, "mirthful" play. The interplay of the public conduct associated with pinball and its aura, formed largely by the perception of non-participants, preserves the setting as an exclusive arena for regular players and watchers—and allows for its etiquette. There is currently a concerted corporate effort to improve pinball's public image. The authors suggest that players may be driven from art deco pinball emporiums only to find havens in traditional pinball settings. These traditional pinball parlors will be arranged by operators who view pinball as a very palatable profit-making venture. They harbor no illusions about the conduct that players desire to perpetuate as they address the machines and one another.

To assess pinball play as a publicly-played game, one must consider "play" in a more general social context. Huizinga (1955) defined play as voluntary, superfluous activity. It involves stepping into a sphere of activity that has a disposition all its own (Huizinga, 1955, p.8). As structured play, games are world-building activities (Goffman, 1961, p. 27). As a second world, involving a second self, the logic and rewards of games can be found in the context of a second system of rules which have little or no relationship to the player's present and legitimized role in society.

This separation of recreational games from "real life" and from the "real self" is accomplished because nonplayers and players honor special interpretive obligations, obligations which are separate and distinct for each group. Nonplayers are obliged to disassociate the player from the down-to-business person with whom they deal in other spheres of public activity. Players, in turn are obliged to play the game in places and times appropriate and, most importantly, to treat the rules of the game seriously. To cheat would be to destroy the reality or generating power of the game (Goffman, 1961, p. 67). Cheating would also taint the distinction between the rewards and purposes of play and the rewards and purposes of the "real world," which is a portion of the world shared by players and nonplayers. An observation of pinball play in urban settings and an analysis of public commentary on pinball suggest neither players nor nonplayers are prepared to live up to these obligations.

Both critics and advocates of pinball tend to interpret pinball in the context of its aura of deviance and not in its more parochial context, as a commercialized game. What are these themes which comprise the aura of deviance that isolates the pinball setting from other recreational activities discussed in public journals?

First, pinball is seen as gambling, with social ties to gangsterism. Pinball machines were classed as gambling devices from their inception in public places. They came into vogue after crackdowns on "one-armed bandits." Early machines paid off in cash and then in tickets for cash paid to the player by the operator of the setting. Before World War II, machines had meters which proprietors could read to pay off the player in nickels. In order to avoid anti-gambling laws, manufacturers removed these devices and began to give free games only (Tilt, 1973, p. 31).

The dispute over whether chance or skill predominated was fought in many states. Even after flippers were introduced, many cities, including Chicago, New York, Los Angeles and Detroit, continued to view the machines as outlawed games of chance.

Pinball has always been big business. In 1941, there were 200,000 machines, earning more than \$400 million for their owners (Shalett, 1941, p. 12). Three companies, all located in Chicago, came to dominate the postwar market: Bally (known then, as now, for slot machines), Gottlieb, and Williams (inventor of noise in machines). Their coin operated machines, like other vending machines, were usually placed on location by distributors who split the take with operators in each location.

The potential for skimming off the top, laundering dirty money and small-scale corruption was present in pinball as in other vending machine businesses. But, while pinball received special attention from police and social crusaders, other machines (commercial laundromat washers and dryers) did not.

Second, it is believed the pinball setting is conducive to loitering by purposeless and vaguely mindless loners who should be usefully engaged and who are probably doing nothing good (playing hooky or

waiting for drugs). In short, the setting is peopled by that element of the population which cannot be trusted when unemployed and can barely be trusted when they bide their time in "those" public places.

Third, the pinball parlor is viewed as a setting that corrupts youth. Its Lorelei-like lights, bells and rock music tempt young people to waste their parents' money and rub shoulders with the trash of the community. An early critic wrote, "Children who hang out in places where pinball is played form bad associations, are often led into juvenile delinquency and eventually serious crimes" (Githers, 1942, p. 20). This rather improbable assertion found its way into New York law (Benjamin, 1961, p. 76).

Machines were located where young people would play. Few other opportunities to test skill and luck against machines existed for youngsters who lacked access to autos. Pinball parlors provided legitimate sites for public gatherings away from the street (and police) and at lower cost than drive-ins. Machines allowed for a youthful display of aggression and skill. Youngsters could compare their skill against teenagers and adults. These reasons for pinball play among the young are as legitimate today as in earlier decades. Pinball operators located machines where school kids could break out of structured routines and enjoy them.

There is a mix of fact and fantasy that sustains each of these three themes of the deviant image in the pinball setting and beyond. The linkage among pinball play, the player and the machine, and the perception of the core activity by the larger society seems to be the most significant influence on the setting. Edgerton (1977) suggests the illusion of how-it-is or how-it will-be influences one's conduct in, or impression of, a setting. It seems equally true that a predisposition to believe that a setting harbors deviance or low-life fun may screen out some participants and attract others. Further, the conduct of players may be colored in part by the illusion of how-it-is. Some may react defensively and dispute this image. Others may luxuriate in what they view as an image that liberates them from weighty social restraints. Here is the machine that can be the target of anger against machines which could lead to arrest if vented on telephones, soft drink machines or computers. Not only legal restraints, but social restraints shared by the customers of these other machines, inhibit aggression against them, even when they "steal" one's money.

Pinball players have selected themselves out of the general population to enjoy a different relationship with machines. As players pass from the general population into the arcade, they take up special and nearly solitary relationships with machines. Human relationships are secondary. But they do this with some continuing remembrance of general society's label for their activity. They are not members of a subculture. Their participation in the community of pinball players is short-term; their participation in the larger society is a continuing event.

Research Setting and Methods

We observed two public settings where pinball is regularly played. One is located in the corner of recreation facilities in a large university student union in Santa Monica, California. Bowling alleys fill the rest of the room. The other setting was situated along one wall of an amusement arcade on a pier in a nearby beach community. Along with 20 observation periods from one to four hours, over a six-month period, we interviewed players, as well as both interested and disinterested observers.

As might be expected, most participants in the student union appeared to be undergraduates. Occasionally groups of high school students were observed. Female players were in the distinct minority, comprising no more than one or two percent of every hundred players. A more general mixture of male and female students used the other facilities in the same as well as other parts of the floor.

Japanese-Americans and foreign students appeared to be disproportionately overly represented, especially among serious players. Engineering students and science majors were predominant within this segment of the players.

On the pier the same under-representation of females was observed. Here, however, white males, from subteenagers totting skate boards to men in their mid-forties, far outnumbered Chicanos, blacks and other ethnic minorities who frequented other nearby attractions.

Interaction between strangers in both places was limited to commenting briefly upon the machines, praising play—but never criticizing play—and negotiating access to more popular machines.

The physical arrangement of each setting was similar. The management of the student union and the arcade operators had each set aside one stretch of wall for a series of 12 to 16 different machines, each set side-by-side, with no standing room in between. Players faced their machines. Watchers or waiters stood behind players or to their left or right shoulders in order to observe play without touching the player or the machine in play. Both sites were noisy. Along with the bells and clatter of the machines, loud rock music and bowling activity added to the din of the student union. In the arcade, carnival music and noises from shooting and driving games in the room filled the air with competing sounds. The floor space allocations in both places allowed for little other than pinball playing or watching (both on one's feet), or for moving along the bank of machines and players to look for a machine that was vacant. Although tobacco smoking was observed, there was little or no eating or drinking or use of intoxicants.

A sign high on the wall above machines in the pier arcade attempted to establish the etiquette² of the setting. It read:

Please do not stand between machines. If game doesn't work look for coins in return cup. If you have a problem ask for help. Do not block or put clothes on machine. Do not sit or beat on our machines.

This is a family arcade.

No profanity.

Press button to start.

Come let us have fun all year on....Pier. (Black, 1976, p. 36)

This sign recounted norms of the setting which, if followed, would prevent damage to machines, negative encounters between players and watchers if play was disturbed, and annoyances to non-pinball players, especially children and women who might use other amusements in the vicinity.

The arcade management had two employees who roamed the area, mostly making change. They called police when major damage occurred or fights broke out, but they did not otherwise interfere with players. In the student union, student assistants were less visible. Two incidents of intervention were noted, one against a person who pounded the glass and another against an overt cheater.³

Findings

The interaction between the pinball player and his machine is a relationship of greater depth and openness than one finds in other gaming encounters (Goffman, 1961, p.36). The player interacts with the machine until he masters it, or until it masters him. Physical and mental energy are expended; the intensity of this effort shows.

Pinball systems offer closed systems with rules, rewards and penalties. The rules are printed on each machine, but most players "learn" a machine by playing it or by watching others play. Each machine has one or more built-in circuit breakers that penalize the player who jars the machine with his body. To be caught by the machine is to "tilt" it. Both the manufacturer and location operator can adjust the machine to make it difficult or easy to beat. Players expect an operator will allow enough "give" in a machine for some body-work—along with flipper play. They are angry when a machine is arranged in place (intentionally or out of ignorance) so it allows for little or no torque. Such machines are said to tilt too easily.

The goal of pinball is to win games through skill and luck. Beyond pure luck, however, the key to winning is to dominate the machine, to "turn it on," which means to turn the machine back upon itself so that it gives away free games not only for high scores but also for hitting various targets which glow when the machine is hot. Lights which glow only after especially skilled and accumulative foreplay provide game after game. Those which provide no soft spots and make victory improbable are ignored by regular players.

Some players speak of achieving a kind of subliminal interaction with the machine, a kind of interaction that is so perfect they are an extension of the machine and it of them. But even in this coupling of machine to player, it is the domination of the machine that is critical. To control a

machine, the player positions himself to “call the shots,” to drive the ball into a frenzy of rotations which keeps it afloat inside the machine, so the thwak, thwak of mechanical orgasms provides a pleasurable result. He does not read the score during the game except between balls. His body and mind are riveted on the playboard. His wrists and forearms govern the flippers. His eyes never leave the ball. His body throws motion into the machine in total disregard of the appearance of gyrating buttocks to the people around him. This last overtly sexual image of a player standing before a machine, his pelvis rotating as he shoots steel balls into the innards of a machine, probably serves a “gatekeeping” function that legitimizes it among players who know it does not necessarily mean games will be won.

Many women would find such a public self-image repugnant. Even though they may not have been socialized to the point of viewing pinball as deviant behavior, the public aggression of the players, transmitted through words and body language, may keep them out of this setting. Female pinball players observed in both settings used noticeably less body language than their male counterparts. Several told the authors they had been initiated into pinball play by boyfriends who owned machines in their homes.

That a game rewards its player does not, *per se*, make it a gambler’s game of chance. In the two settings, no payoffs occurred and no bets were made on play. Yet many players explained their play of pinball in terms of its game winning potential. Players stressed they could parlay a few purchased games into an evening of entertainment on a machine they could beat. Other players said they did not play video games because they could not win games on those machines.⁴

While some statements seem to reaffirm the general public’s association of pinball with gambling, they must be examined with some suspicion. Purposeful pinball play seems to require an explanation that other games do not. Gambling and its aura have, after all, attractive as well as unattractive connotations for pinball players and for non-participants. It is easier to explain play in terms of games won to an outsider than to launch into an exposition on “energy flow” or on pop art. In short, the player tells the outsider what he wants to hear. The questioners must be outsiders if they have to ask.

Pinball does connote, to some, mindless woolgathering: a solitary, public activity to provide a momentary respite from interaction with strangers in public places. It allows players, especially males, to “kill time” (Goffman, 1967, p. 162). A 16-year-old female pinball player on the pier explained that in her Northern California home she never played because her friends would associate her with “hangars around” or, worse yet, with motorcycle gangs. She was careful to explain her presence on the pier: she worked there and was waiting for her boyfriend. Other female players said they would not tell anyone how long they played pinball.

For females this secondary association with others has in it the

potential for undesired encounters. Female players are not always viewed as serious players. The single-minded attention to the machine that provides privacy for male players may not serve as a barrier against strangers for females. As public activity, pinball is not sufficiently purposeful to screen out less desirable strangers who are attracted to the setting. Necessarily, one's back is turned at close quarters to strangers in a social arena where the restraints of etiquette have been loosened.

Some kinds of aggression practiced on pinball machines have nothing to do with winning free games. In both settings, the author observed players pounding the glass when they lost or when the machine tilted. Sometimes the glass was broken. Other players did not report these acts nor did they intervene, although some commented privately to one another on the danger that a raucous player might take a "good" machine out of play.⁵ Aggrieved players have been observed on many occasions giving a machine a final yank to "tilt it out," or they have even lifted the entire front end and dropped it before they departed. Only the possible intervention of nonplayers prevents greater displays of anger by players who lose.

What appears to be a critical difference between pinball play and other games is the little or no onus placed upon cheaters. In fact, among regular players there are no cheaters. Cheating *is* part of playing. It is frequent and continuous. Virtually any technique that can be developed by a player to use against a machine is considered legitimate. Cheating does not destroy "the integrity of the game" (Contra: Goffman, 1961, p. 67). The institutional surroundings do not create a "spirit of play" which assists external control agents (management and the tilt mechanism) in curbing cheating (Contra: Goffman, 1969, p. 123). For example, some players are adept at hitting the front end of some machines to force a ball back onto the playing field. Other machines (with faulty tilt mechanisms) can be lifted slightly to keep the ball in play. When observed by other players, these acts are condoned and admired. Players and watchers repeat them to other pinball players in praise-filled anecdotes. They are never reported to management.

A Field Experiment

In order to test the proposition that a breach of rules integral to pinball machines was not a breach of the integrity of the game, the authors obtained a large magnet and took it to each pinball setting. While the magnet was not very strong, the appearance of this square, black metal box on the glass of a playboard could not be overlooked. The authors played many machines in each location for over two hours. They employed the magnet to trap the ball in "death" alleys and slow or change the trajectory of the ball.

In the student union, approximately 10 persons noticed the magnet and its influence on the game. Seven practiced civil inattention (Goffman,

1961, p. 83) similar to that which often accompanied watching skilled play or waiting for a machine to become vacant. However, when questioned, several indicated they were watching to learn if the benefits of the magnet outweighed the loss of vision caused by the magnet's presence on the glass. One suggested that play with a magnet would be improved if a second player was employed to move the magnet about.

A player on one side warned the authors when an employee of the student union appeared in the area. When the authors asked why they should worry about this employee, the player replied the employee was not himself a pinball player and was not "in touch with the pinball philosophy."

In the pier arcade, when the experiment was repeated, civil inattention again dominated the response of players and watchers. However, one female was overheard commenting loudly to her date playing the machine next to the authors, "He has a magnet; he's cheating." Her date did nothing. The employees of the arcade observed the magnet, but did not intervene. They pretended they did not see it. In neither location did any person report the use of the magnet to the management.

Discussion and Conclusions

We have seen that the cloud of deviance formed by labeling overreaches the reality of pinball, but to some extent is confirmed by what players find there. To what extent has the aura of pinball liberated the activity from ordinary rules of public behavior? To what extent does the aura make the decision to play a license to act in the pinball setting in a way that would be foreclosed in other settings?

Causation is hard to establish. But the relationships among the style of play, the rules of the setting, and the interpretation of pinball by non-participants appear to be clear enough to conclude that change in any one element will influence the others.

Throughout the 1950's and the 1960's, there had been an attempt by the pinball industry and by a cadre of Eastern writer-intellectuals to cleanse the public image of pinball. The industry has suggested in its public relations ventures that the game had its roots in ancient history. Players of early versions of pinball were to be found in such diverse locations as ancient Greece, the court of Louis XIV and Abe Lincoln's White House (Benjamin, 1961, p. 10; Jones, n. d., p. 20).

The intellectuals criticized New York for its ban on the game (Tilt, 1973). As in other "liberation movements," prominent New York writers identified themselves and their peers as heretofore "closet pinball freaks" (Lukas and McPhee, 1975, p. 81; Buckley, 1977, p. 30). Their criticisms of the social and legal prohibitions surrounding the game were coupled with intellectual analyses of pinball which transformed it into a unique mental and physical experience. Their profound insights to be drawn from the

pinball experience were explained to non-playing readers of *better* magazines (Buckley, 1966; Segal, 1957).

Although this image-building by the industry and by New York intellectuals may have softened the aura of deviance in some circles, the real push for legitimacy and for new markets occurred coincidentally with the merger of pinball companies with larger entertainment conglomerates. Columbia Pictures purchased D. Gottlieb and Co., for \$50 million. Williams was purchased by Gulf and Western (Buckley, 1977, p. 30).⁶ The merger of pinball companies with more powerful actors in the leisure industry had other indirect results. Pinball was finally legalized in New York City in July, 1976, and in Chicago in December, 1976.

Magazine articles on rock stars and other celebrities mentioned they had pinball machines in their mansions. A major company produced a full-sized machine for home purchase for the first time. Even the *Reader's Guide* was impressed. In 1975, its editors separated pinball from the general category for gambling devices for the first time since it had begun to list articles on the subject in 1932. Commenting on the new pinball settings, a *Newsweek* article stated:

Once upon a time, pinball was a tacky game played by punks who hung out in speedy luncheonettes. Now it's a respectable diversion for the leisure class. Suburban crowds man the flashing machines in plushly carpeted arcades; singles play the game in neighborhood bars; parents have even begun buying pinball machines for their children" (*Pinball*, 1977, p. 54).

This new public face has not yet affected pinball's etiquette in its familiar public settings. While it may have attracted some new players, especially females, these new players have had to adapt to the game as it is found in pinball parlors and not as it is richly purported to be in magazine articles. Management in such settings has been convinced that plusher surroundings should be employed to mask a style of pinball proven to be profitable to them. The lower end of the pinball delivery system has not received the message issued from the top. Players are still expected to assault machines. Other participants are still expected to approve or, at least, to say and do nothing about it.

Pinball in the Future

It remains to be seen whether the continuing manipulation of pinball's public image will affect the community of pinball players in their setting. The problem that the conglomerate image-builders and their advertising agencies will confront is the setting in which pinball is now played. If pinball operators are coerced into much improvement of their machines' environment (in much the way filling station operators were coerced to clean their restrooms), will regular players change their ways or simply depart? Will more congenial, casino-style surroundings that attract a mix

of males and females inhibit the average player who seeks to dominate the machine in ways that might prove embarrassing in another setting?

Escape from more responsible settings is a key motivating force for players who seek their "time out" in traditional pinball parlors where deviant reactions to private property are tolerated and passively approved. If the unsophisticated setting that repels nonplayers with its noise, limited space, profanity, violence and gyrating buttocks is transformed with Tiffany glass chandeliers, Boston ferns, and space for casual lounging, there will be a departure of regular players. For them, "something" will be missing. For every pinball wizard who might relish a display of his finesse to a female audience (as in the movie "Tommy"), there are dozens of average players who unleash their frustrations on this machine: their haven *is* the pinball parlor. Even if art deco pinball flourishes in posh bars, hotels and private mansions, pinball freaks will find new havens in bus stations, truck stops and arcades where *their* kind of pinball is played.

Pinball parlors in urban settings are, finally, a stage for public "acting out" that cannot occur elsewhere. As face-to-machine relationships, these are revealing if not profound. Pinball proves again that one person's revulsion may be another person's pastime.

Notes

- 1 The authors conducted the research over a six month period in 1976-77 in two pinball arcades in Santa Monica, California. One was located in town on the pier and the other in a university student center.
- 2 Black defines etiquette as the "social control of face-to-face interaction." Etiquette includes "what is proper and what is not, what is mannerly and rude, graceful and vulgar, kind, considerate, interested, detached, tactless, oblivious or cold" (Black, 1976, p.33).
- 3 The first intervention was reported to the authors by a fellow player who stated the student assistant who had intervened had never played pinball and did not understand the pinball philosophy. Many other incidents of glass pounding were observed in the student union where intervention did not take place. The second example of intervention to stem cheating was induced by the authors in an experiment to be described.
- 4 Later models of video games attract players with free games for high scores (Rickey, 1981, p. 66).
- 5 Pinball machines are constructed to take a phenomenal amount of physical pounding. That is the manufacturers' response to what they know to be a style of play by regular consumers. It is likely the change from the loss of a game to the loss of a ball when a machine is "tilted" was incorporated into more recent machines in order to assuage the player's anger and its results on the equipment.
- 6 Buckley reports "at least three books now in preparation will describe

it [pinball] as a great American art form and as a test of judgment and skill, seasoned with luck"(Buckley, 1977, p.30).

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PART III

RISK, RITE, AND POWER

6

CLASSIC GAME, CLASSIC PEOPLE: BALL GAMES OF THE LOWLAND MAYA

BY
MICHAEL A. SALTER

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the rubber ball court games of the Classic Lowland Maya, c. 300-900 A.D. With this end in view, the author recently spent a year travelling throughout Europe, North and Middle America examining manuscripts and artifacts *in situ* and in public and private collections. The data gathered lend support to the hypothesis that traditional views of the Classic Lowland game are erroneous and have been based on descriptions of the Historic Aztec, Toltec and Veracruz contests. The Lowland Maya game, unlike those of Central Mexico, did not include ritual decapitation. Further, certain court structures, game paraphernalia, and scoring methods were unique to the Lowland area. As such this contest should not be indiscriminately labeled as simply the "Mesoamerican rubber ball game."

Few mysteries are as tantalizing to the play ethnologist and sport historian as those that surround the rubber ball court games of the Pre-Columbian Mesoamericans. The mysteries are amplified, not so much by the data scholars possess, but by the information they lack. What has been written of these contests, and a comprehensive body of literature does exist (Blom, 1932; de Borhegyi, 1969; Clune, Note 1; Cox, Note 2; Hellmuth, 1975; Kember, 1968; Ritman, 1968; Stern, 1949), leaves the neophyte with the impression of a highly institutionalized athletic activity in which victory was paramount. Although tacit recognition is usually paid to the fact that a number of different groups enjoyed the game, readers are nevertheless frequently left with the feeling that the structure and function of the game was remarkable similar throughout the breadth and history of Mesoamerica. Unfortunately, such all-embracing conclusions result as authors attempt to "complete" the picture by clumping together data from a variety of ethnic groups and a range of eras. Writers vividly portray the entry into the stadia of gaily attired young warriors from the nobility, each sporting elaborate headdresses and cumbersome stone game apparel. They attune the reader to the phrenetic behaviour of the spectators as the game progresses, and leave them to shudder as the blood spurts from the severed neck of the ritually decapitated vanquished (victorious?) captain at the contest's conclusion. This scenario has been propogated over the years by those who have tended to study the ball game on a Pan-American basis rather than within the context of a specific society. Of course, not all scholars can be accused of contributing to this skewed mosaic; however, the sad fact remains that whenever the Central American rubber ball game is mentioned, the image most commonly conjured up is of the Aztec-Toltec version.

With the preceding in mind the thrust of this essay is to view the ball game as it was played by the Maya, specifically during their Classic Period from approximately 300 to 900 A.D. At this time, as the Roman Empire began to disintegrate and the Dark Ages engulfed Europe, the Maya entered their golden era. They constructed a network of imposing cities that ranged from the parched plains of Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula through the steaming jungles of Honduras and Belize to the volcanic mountains of Guatemala and El Salvador. Their culture was epitomized by their brilliant art, sophisticated mathematics and astronomy, intricate calendric and glyph systems, and a striking architectural style that featured the corbel arch, soaring temple-pyramids, and palace complexes.

Although the entire story of these remarkable people may never be told, it has been established that they had existed for at least fifteen centuries prior to the arrival of the Spaniards in the New World. For much of this time, theirs was a world dominated by powerful city-states, whose leaders warred and traded with relish. Throughout their history, through either conflict or commerce, the Maya were in constant contact with their various neighbours. It is logical to assume they were well aware of adjacent cultures and it would be naive to pretend they were not influ-

enced to some extent by them. This was particularly true during the Early Post-Classic Period (900 to 1200 A.D.) when Toltec peoples from Central Mexico migrated into the Yucatán and subjugated the indigenous population. While there were marked cultural differences throughout Central America, there were also notable variations among the specific groups of Maya, particularly between those societies who occupied the Highlands and those of the Lowlands. The Lowland civilization crystallized, flourished, and declined between the third and tenth centuries A.D. on a stage that ranged from the Yucatán to the foothills of the mountains of Guatemala and eastern Chiapas. Despite some regional deviation, the Lowland Maya were distinctly different from their Highland brethren. During the Early Classic Period, the latter were heavily influenced by the peoples of Central Mexico and remained, throughout the Classic Period, more Mexican than Maya in character. It is thus in the light of this ebb and flow of peoples and ideas throughout Pre-Columbian Middle America that the Classic Maya game must be viewed.

It is the contention of this essay that, by and large, existing descriptions of the rubber ball game have been biased by the Toltec and Aztec contests and may not accurately reflect the true Classic Maya version. To test this proposition, the author visited numerous museums, archives, and archaeological sites in Middle America, Europe, and North America between June, 1979 and May, 1980 (Appendix A).

The Game

To date, knowledge of the ancient game has primarily come from three sources. The first of these is a magnificent cosmogonic saga which must rank as one of the major literary achievements of native America. This work, the *Popul Vuh* (de Bourbourg, 1861), or Sacred Book of the Quiché Maya, was translated into Spanish at the beginning of the eighteenth century by a Dominican friar, Francisco Ximenez. This mythological and historical epic provides the reader with limited descriptions of the game as it was played by the Quiché Maya of the Guatemalan Highlands. The second major source of information has been from the accounts of the Conquistadores and those who followed in their footsteps. Lamentably, their observations were made some six hundred years after the Classic Maya had vanished. Nevertheless, they have permitted a partial reconstruction of the Aztec and Toltec games, and to a lesser extent, of the Highland Maya and Yucatán Maya games. Unfortunately, these sources do not provide even a brief glimpse of the Lowland game during the Classic Period. For this, scholars have been forced to rely almost exclusively on the third and final avenue of information, the artifact.

What, then, is known of the game? To summarize, it has been determined that:

- ball games were played throughout Mesoamerica, the Greater Antilles, and Arizona (Cox, Note 2);

- the games were conducted on courts specifically constructed for the purpose and rubber balls were used;
- regional versions existed;
- natives were playing one or more variations of the game when Christ was born, and are still doing so today (Humphrey, 1981);
- athletes wore specific equipment in association with the activities;
- many games possessed metaphysical elements (Simri, Note 3); and
- in several regions pre- and post-game rituals, including human sacrifices, accompanied the contests (Knauth, 1961).

There does appear to be a marked similarity between the way in which the game was played in certain major Mexican communities, such as El Tajin and Teotihuacán, and those Maya centers that came under the influence of the Central Mexicans; for example, Santa Lucia Cotzumalhuapa and Pueblo Nuevo Tiquisate in the Highlands, and Uxmal and Chichén Itzá in the Yucatán. It is against this Highland Guatemalan-Mexican contest that the Classic Lowland Maya game must be juxtaposed.

Central Mexican Influences

The most accessible, and probably the Pre-Columbian ball court most commonly visited today, lies some 120 kilometers to the east of the Yucatán city of Mérida. This magnificent structure, one of the seven courts to be found in the great Maya-Toltec centre of Chichén Itzá, was erected during the late Classic and early Post-Classic periods. Basically Toltec in character, the huge stadium is the largest to be excavated and reconstructed thus far in the Americas. This particular arena has probably received more attention than any other similar structure, and it would be time wasting to dwell on the specifics of its size and grandeur here. Scholars interested in the details of this edifice may wish to consult either Stephens (1841, or Maudsley (1900). What is of interest to this study lies in the splendid bas reliefs carved into the lower side walls at centre court. These extensive friezes depict two groups of ball players clad in their game paraphernalia supervising the decapitation of one of their members. As illustrated in Tozzer (1957, Fig. 474), an athlete is shown clasping an unhafted sacrificial flint knife in one hand and the severed head of his recent adversary in the other. The victim remains kneeling in front of his executioner with streams of blood (portrayed as serpents) spraying from his gaping neck.

This scene is replicated some thousand kilometers to the west across the Gulf of Mexico in the Classic Veracruz center of El Tajin. Here on the walls of one of the seven ball courts in this city is another detailed scene of players ritually executing one of their number. A similar picture emerges far to the southeast along the Pacific coast region of Escuintla in Highland Guatemala. Here on a ceramic vase from Pueblo Nuevo Tiquisate sits a headless ball player from whose

neck gushes blood—again, as in Chichén Itzá, writhing snakes symbolize the blood flow. The dead athlete's dripping head is proudly displayed by his former opponent (Hellmuth, 1975). Stone stelae from nearby Santa Lucia Cotzumalhuapa illustrate similar post-game sacrificial scenes. Common also to the Veracruz-Yucatán-Escuintla areas is the skull motif, placed on the game ball whenever it was artistically illustrated. It would be simple, but unnecessary in the terms of this essay, to document similar ritualistic practices throughout other Highland Maya, Aztec and Toltec centers; however, our interest here does not lie in the practice of beheading athletes *per se*, but rather in the fact that it apparently existed in a horseshoe shaped pattern around the Classic Lowland Maya centers. There is to date absolutely no evidence to suggest that ritual decapitation was associated with the games of the latter.

To return to Chichén Itzá, a more detailed observation of sculptured panels in the great ball court reveals the players are all wearing stone hip-yokes and stone hachas and, with the exception of the executioner, are all carrying hand-stones. Controversy still boils around the ceremonial/secular, decorative/utilitarian aspects of this apparent ball game equipment. While leaving this important debate for the moment to such scholars as de Borhegyi (1961), Clune (Note 1), Lothrop (1923), Thompson (1940-41) and Coe (1962), it must nevertheless be noted that these game-associated artifacts have been found throughout Central Mexico, the Yucatán Peninsula, and the Pacific coast region of Guatemala and neighbouring El Salvador. Again, the Classic Lowland Maya centres have yet to reveal artifacts of this type. These communities appear to have been virtually surrounded by a form of game that featured stone yokes, stone hachas and handstones, along with ceremonial beheading.

The other prominent feature of the Chichén Itzá court that had its origin in Central Mexico is the stone ring through which the rubber ball was presumably deflected. These rings, positioned vertically and high on the side walls, are a feature of those courts built or modified by the Toltec, and of the later Aztec structures. The Classic Lowland Maya courts did not have such rings set into their walls. The *Popul Vuh* (de Bourbourg, 1861) does mention a "stone ring" as being an integral part of the ball player's equipment. Some, such as Goellner (1953) have chosen to interpret this as a scoring ring and have argued that because these have not been found in conjunction with the Lowland courts they must have been constructed of a perishable material or have been portable. (I would suggest that the *Popul Vuh* reference is to the hip-yokes known to be associated with the Highland Maya games.) Goellner's (1953) arguments are of course based on the premise that the same game was played throughout Mesoamerica - a fallacious assumption when we consider the monument at El Baúl (near Santa Lucia Cotzumalhuapa) which shows players holding balls in well-protected

hands (Greene *et al.*, 1972, Plate 186), or the Teotihuacán murals (outside Mexico City) which illustrate athletes carrying bats and balls.

The Classic Lowland Maya Game

We may thus surmise that the Classic Lowland Maya peoples, in all likelihood, played a rubber ball game unique in Central America. If, as suggested, the Lowland game did not feature bulky stone playing equipment, scoring rings, the skull motif on ball game art, or human sacrifices, what then were its characteristics? Some answers begin to emerge through an examination of the Classic courts of Yaxhá, Tikal (Guatemala) and Copán (Honduras), together with game-related artifacts and art works from the Belize-Petén-Chiapas-Campeché-Honduras areas.

What they reveal lends support to the contention that the southern Lowland Maya game differed significantly from its surrounding Central Mexican counterpart. The most obvious difference lay in the athletes' playing apparel. As mentioned, archaeologists have yet to unearth in the Lowland region any stone yokes, hachas or palmas. These typically Mexican items rested on the player's hip and were used to strike the ball. The Lowland Maya did employ a yoke-like device to direct the ball; however, it was positioned high on the chest beneath the player's armpits. Ostensibly made of wood, it either completely or partially encircled the athlete's upper body. This chest-encompassing ball-striker is most commonly depicted with a series of three to five vertical striations or transverse ribs. Numerous artifacts illustrate players in crouching positions endeavouring to redirect balls with their ribbed-strikers.

As added protection from the blow of the ball and contact with the court surface, athletes wore a leather or cloth undergarment. (Greene *et al.*, 1972, Plate 98; Tozzer, 1957, Figure 486; Hellmuth, 1975, cover plates). This was attached to the ball-striker and somewhat resembled a long, calf-length skirt with the front panels removed from just above the knees. It afforded some protection to the hips and upper body, the back of the legs and the thighs. Several artifacts seem to indicate that additional padding may have been wrapped around the waist below the striker, and that it may have been this padding that stabilized the striker on the chest. The absence of the front panels in the protective over-skirt obviously allowed the player greater mobility, particularly when he had to bend or drop quickly to his knee in order to retrieve a ball.

As further protection, one knee and the lower portion of the arm on the same side of the body were heavily padded. The knee protector featured tassels which may have helped to shield the lower leg from court abrasions while the wrist and adjoining forearm were wrapped or bound in a spiral fashion (de Borhegyi, 1969). The latter suggests that

the arm may have assisted the chest-striker by directing the ball. The knee and wrist on the other side of the body were left unprotected, although they were occasionally adorned with jewellery. (Such forearm and knee protectors were not isolated to the Lowland region, but were also an integral part of the Central Mexican players' equipment.) Another item of protective equipment, however, may have been unique to the Lowland Maya. This was the protective headgear, the helmets and face masks, uncovered at Lubaantun in Belize (Joyce, 1933). However, as similar headgear has not been detected at any of the other Classic sites, they cannot be considered at this point as anything more than a regional anomaly.

Why all this protective equipment? To begin with, certain court surfaces were paved with flagstones and these were relatively rough. Further, players probably had to negotiate sharp protrusions in the playing arena. A quick glance at the beautifully reconstructed Copán Court, shows a vertical rise of about a metre from the playing floor to the gently sloping side walls, both of which presumably constituted part of the inbound playing area. Further, one end of this court terminates in a broad flight of nine steps. Whether or not these were part of the playing surface is a moot point, but similar stepped boundaries are clearly illustrated behind ball players on a number of polychrome vases and sculptured stone panels from other Classic Maya centres. Players may well have had to contend with such potentially dangerous projections.

This leads to another unusual feature of the Classic Lowland game. While protection from the court was undoubtedly important, it would appear that similar protection from the ball was also necessary. Until recently it has been assumed that the Maya ball was quite small, like the Central Mexican ball which had to pass through a stone ring. However, evidence now points to a Maya ball of considerably larger dimensions. Undoubtedly a large solid rubber object of this nature could be exceedingly heavy. The power of such a moving ball is clearly illustrated on a frieze from the Usumacinta River region of Mexico-Guatemala (Greene, 1972, Plate 78). Here, the force of the ball has toppled the athlete from his striking position and driven him backwards, completely off balance, onto his unprotected knee. Obviously, the protective equipment served to ease the force of such teeth-jarring blows.

This raises the question of scoring. If the Classic Maya used such a large ball and did not employ stone scoring rings, how then did they determine winners and losers? Unfortunately, at this point scholars can only speculate but it is possible that one way of scoring points may have been by striking designated portions of the playing area with the ball. Various courts have revealed marker stones that were once embedded into their playing surfaces. These ball-court markers are frequently carved and quite distinct from regular paving stones. They

are clearly visible at Copán where two types can be noted. The first, a set of three, had been placed on the centre axis of the court's floor, one in the middle and another toward each end. On each side of the court, projecting from the upper edges of its sloping walls and level with the floor markers, are six more stones (three on each wall), beautifully carved in the shape of Macaw heads.

While it is possible that these nine stones, or at least some of them, may have served as targets, it is as sad fact that at this stage the method of scoring is just not known. Perhaps more information on this aspect of the game will become available when the glyphs and their accompanying bar-and-dot numbers that appear on the balls of so many Classic Maya artforms are thoroughly analyzed. Information is also lacking on the composition of teams (although artifacts frequently only illustrate four players), the rules of the game, and most importantly, which segments of society played the game and for what purposes. These will remain as questions until additional artifacts become available and the rows and columns of glyphs on existing artifacts have been deciphered. While it is somewhat embarrassing to admit that few definitive statements can be made about the Classic Lowland Maya game, the information now available strongly suggests that this game differed significantly from the stereotyped Central Mexican version and as such should not be indiscriminantly lumped under the same rubric.

NOTE

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Appendix A: Institutions and Sites Visited in 1979 & 1980

		Museums and Archives
<i>North America</i>		
Cambridge:		Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology
Chicago:		Art Institute of Chicago
New York:		Museum of the American Indian; New York Public Library; American Museum of Natural History; Museum of Primitive Art.
Toronto:		Royal Ontario Museum
Washington:		National Museum of Natural History; Library of Congress
<i>Europe</i>		
London:		Museum of Mankind—British Museum
Madrid:		Museo de América
<i>Central America</i>		
Copán, Honduras:		Museo Regional de Arqueología Maya
Campeché, Mexico:		Museo Regional de Campechá
Guatemala City:		Instituto de Antropología e Historia; Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología; Foundation for Latin American Anthropological Research
Mérida:		Museo de Arqueología
Mexico City:		Instituto Nacional de Antropología e History; Museo Nacional de Antropología
<i>Maya Archaeological Sites—Classic Period</i>		
<i>Highland Sites</i>		
Guatemala:		Santa Lucía Cotzumalhuapa (El Bilbao), Es- cuinctla Kaminaljuyú, Guatemala Amatitlán, Guatemala Mixco Viejo, Chimaltenango Quiriguá, Izabal San Agustín Acasaguastlán, El Progreso
<i>Lowland Sites</i>		
Guatemala:		Uaxactún, Petén Tikal, Petén Ceibal, Petén Yaxjá, Petén Sayaxché, Petén
Honduras:		Copán Archaeological Park La Union
Mexico:		Coba, Quintana Roo Nohoch Mul, Quintana Roo Uxmal, Yucatán
<i>Maya Archaeological Sites—Other Periods</i>		
Guatemala:		Iximché, Chimaltenango (Highland, Historic Period) Zaculeu, Huehuetenango (Highland, Late Postclassic) Asunción Mita, Jutiapa (Highland, Early Postclassic)
Mexico:		Chichén Itzá, Yucatán (Lowland, Early Postclassic)

ANTI-SCHOOL PARODIES AS SPEECH PLAY AND SOCIAL PROTEST

**BY
MARILYN JORGENSEN**

Abstract

Children's anti-school parodies are examined from the perspective of language manipulation as a form of play activity. Two questions concerning the nature of speech play form the basis of this paper. The first question involves an inquiry into the ways in which children manipulate language in order to form these parodies. The second question deals with the emotional effect produced by the performance of these songs and the ultimate purposes fulfilled by this form of speech play for the children involved in the activity. The changes which children have made in re-wording the original songs is the focus of the first question, especially as it relates to such formal features of the lyric as meter and rhyme. The influence of these formal considerations on the transformational process involving the verse's variable elements is the basis of analysis. These new creations are then examined from the viewpoint of the second question: What is the value and purpose of this form of speech play with relation to the social setting in which it occurs?

Definitions of play by scholars such as Caillois (1961) have stressed the make-believe element, or the idea that a "second" or "free" reality is being created in the play situation. It is as if in the play experience a child is temporarily able to step out of the immediate, real-life situation in which he finds himself, and is able to enter a new world in which he is in a "safe" environment. Similarly, the phenomenon of play has been described by Turner (1974) in terms of freedom of the individual to transcend social and structural limitations and to play with ideas, with fantasies, and with words. From these various theoretical perspectives of play as it relates to the creation of a "second reality", or a make-believe world, it may be seen that one view of play reveals it as a valuable cognitive, emotional, and social experience in which reality may be transformed into something else by an individual's inherent powers of imagination and creativity. In addition, sometimes in the play experience a positive contribution to the individual's emotional and social life is made, especially in situations where ideas or actions relating to experiences of an overwhelming emotional nature are reenacted under controlled conditions associated with the imaginative and make-believe aspects of play.

It is from this perspective of play that I wish to proceed to a demonstration of the use which children have made of a specific kind of imaginative play—speech play, especially in two popular children's parodies of adult songs: "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "On Top of Old Smoky." In these parodies there are at least two different kinds of "separate realities" being established. The first transformation involves the child's manipulation of language as observed in the formal features of the song's construction—such as rhyme, meter, and grammar. The second way in which the reality of the young child's daily life is being transformed is in the manipulation of ideas—especially as they relate to the institutionalized norms and values of the culture in which he lives and into which he is being socialized.

The educational system and the images which symbolize the power structure and its authority (such as teachers, principals and school rules) are the main idea elements which are manipulated. In the anti-authority parodies discussed in this paper, humor serves as the vehicle for the children's fantasies of rebellion and retribution relating to the elementary school setting. A specific kind of humor, satire, is employed in a manner which inverts the social norms and hierarchical relationships of power. In the parodies, rules are broken and authority figures are belittled or killed. The child obviously knows that the images of rebellion against school rules and authority figures which are created in the parodies are not part of his everyday reality, but are, instead, constructions of a "second reality" within a play frame. Here we have a specific illustration of Caillois's (1961) ideas concerning the roles of make-believe and creativity in the play experience.

The recitation of these parodies can, in certain cases, offer a great deal

of emotional release for the child singing the songs, and a great amount of personal satisfaction may sometimes be derived from this kind of play experience. It is quite possible that the singing of songs such as these may help the child to cope with the conflicts engendered by the socialization process and the accompanying pressures toward conformity which he is experiencing at this particular time in his life. The singing of these parodies can allow the expression of important feelings and emotions related to school life (especially when performed with other members of the peer group) in a relatively "safe" environment due to the context of freedom usually afforded to a play setting. This creative process constructs a temporary make-believe world in which the parodies depict the peer group rebelling against school authority and taking control of the school; the child may vicariously transcend the inherent social and structural limitations of childhood and his everyday school experience in a manner similar to that described generally by Turner (1974).

Ideas, fantasies, and words are all being manipulated through speech play in these parodies. These same arguments are presented with reference to the play situation by Brian Sutton-Smith in a paper presented to the American Psychological Association in 1974, entitled "Current Research in Children's Play." He describes play as a form of inversion which makes the existing social system more tolerable and also promotes flexibility in its members, making them better able to deal with the present social order as well as with change.

Before proceeding to an analysis of schoolchildren's versions of "The Battle Hymn" and "On Top of Old Smoky," I will describe the context in which these parodies are performed. First of all, I have received the impression from discussions with children and adults that quite often these songs are sung strictly for fun and the enjoyment of the humor conveyed by the imagery involved, with no negative feelings for the teachers or the school experience in general being apparent. However, from my own observations as a classroom teacher, I tend to believe that children will not usually sing these songs in the presence of teachers, parents, or other adults who might be considered to be unsympathetic authority figures, which of course makes these songs somewhat difficult for adults to collect, unless they are liked and trusted by the children singing them. Indeed, I suspect that it is altogether possible that many elementary teachers are completely unaware of the existence of such songs.

My research into material collected in folklore archives on the subject of anti-school parodies has indicated that some adults recalled singing these songs in the classroom when they thought that the teacher was not listening, but if they were caught singing them openly, they were usually punished. One college student who contributed his ideas on the subject to the archives recalled performing "Battle Hymn" parody during his early school years at sharing time and being sent directly to the Principal's office as a consequence! Thus, it appears that although children might

not take this form of verbal play very seriously, some teachers do! My own interviews with young children, as well as my recent experiences in various roles as a participant-observer in contemporary urban schools, have led me to believe that probably as a result of negative experiences similar to those reported, or possibly due to some primitive instinct for survival, children tend to sing these songs in small groups of two or three, at the times of the day when it is safest to do so: on the way to school, at the bus stop, on the playground at recess, in the cafeteria at lunch time, or while walking home from school. And, of course, the favorite (and also the safest) time to sing the songs in a loud, fervent and boisterous manner is on the last day of school, just as one leaves the school grounds for three long months of freedom.

The following is a summary of my findings with regard to the general context in which anti-school parodies are sung. The parodies are known and sung by both boys and girls, with many informants acknowledging that they learned the parodies as early as the second grade, even before learning the "correct" words to the original song in church as a religious hymn or in school as a patriotic song to accompany the pledge of allegiance. These songs are most popular with elementary school children between the ages of six to twelve years, with their popularity at specific grade levels varying from school to school. Apparently, most parodies are used only infrequently after the junior high school years due to a feeling on the part of most students that they have outgrown this form of verbal play.

These parodies are popular in a wide variety of settings not limited to the public schools. They are commonly learned in such diverse school situations as religious elementary schools (in which case the nuns become the main authority figures in the narrative), private alternative schools (which may be politically and socially liberal), and in overseas American military schools. Different versions of anti-school songs are also learned in "Brownies" or "Scouts" and in summer camps sponsored by youth organizations. When parodies of the Battle Hymn Song are sung in summer camps the teacher and principal are often replaced by camp counselors as the authority figures.

With this contextual background in mind, then, the remainder of this paper will be devoted to exploring the following research question suggested by Hymes: "To what extent, in what ways, and for what purposes is speech manipulated for its own sake or for kinds of effect recognized as play and art?" (1964, p.293). The following analysis of the technical means (such as meter, rhyme, grammar, etc.) used to form these parodies is intended to be an attempt to answer the part of Hymes's question which inquires about the ways in which speech is manipulated. The analysis is also meant to be a specific demonstration of how children manipulate words in order to create the "second" or "free" reality (see Caillois, 1961) of an atmosphere of rebellion against the school hierarchy and authority, with the parodies serving as vehicles for the expression of

this fantasy world.

The first anti-school parody to be discussed is derived from Julia Ward Howe's "Battle Hymn of the Republic", which was a popular religious and patriotic song for the Union states during and after the Civil War. It has traditionally been sung at assemblies of people in connection with both institutions of the church and state—being both a religious and patriotic song. The words of the song convey images of fighting in the name of a just cause in which the Lord is on the side of truth and freedom. The first verse of the hymn, which will be used as the model of comparison for the children's parodies of it, is usually sung as follows:

- (1) Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.
- (2) He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored.
- (3) He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword.
- (4) His truth is marching on.
- (5) Glory, glory hallelujah! Glory, glory hallelujah!
- (6) Glory, glory hallelujah! His truth is marching on.

Analysis of some of the formal features of the song reveals that the basic metric pattern is trochaic—a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed or unaccented one. For purposes of convenience of comparison, I have divided the song into six lines. The first three lines of the original song have 14, 15, and 15 syllables respectively. Each of the first three lines also contain end rhymes: in this instance *Lord*, *stored*, and *sword*. The fourth line as well as the last half of the sixth line ("His truth is marching on") each contain six stressed syllables. The lines between the two uses of "His truth is marching on" consist of a threefold repetition of the phrase, "Glory, glory hallelujah!" which is composed of four trochaic feet.

In order to examine how the original hymn has been changed in the anti-school parodies, a fairly typical version will first be presented for analysis. The following text is part of a recording of anti-school songs which I made during a classroom discussion involving several fifth and sixth grade students at a private elementary school where I was a teacher. The recording was made in the Fall of 1979, in Sacramento, California:

- (1) Mine eyes have seen the glory of the burning of our school.
- (2) We have tortured all the teachers and *have broke* the Golden Rule.
- (3) We are *going* to the office and we *crippled* the principal.
- (4) Our troops go marching on!
- (5) Glory, glory hallelujah! Glory, glory hallelujah!
- (6) Glory, glory hallelujah! Our troops go marching on!¹

As compared with the original hymn, the first three lines of this parody contain 14, 15, and 16 syllables with the only change being an additional syllable in the third line. It appears that the parody follows the original fairly closely in terms of number of syllables and line length. The remaining lines of the parody (4, 5, and 6) duplicate the original hymn in terms of syllable length exactly, making the entire song a close copy of the original

with regard to number of syllables.

In the first line, the changes in wording occur after "mine eyes have seen the glory of the ...". The phrase "coming of the Lord" has been replaced by another prepositional phrase with its object being the gerund *burning* instead of *coming*. The children have here retained the gerund form which is reminiscent of the original song. "Of the Lord" has been changed to "of our school" in which the prepositional phrase beginning with "of" has been retained, but the article *the* modifying *Lord* has been changed to the plural possessive pronoun *our* in keeping with the new group spirit emphasis of the parody. From this point on, the action is described in terms of the peer group's actions with respect to the school: "*Our* troops go marching on!", for example.

In lines two and three verb tenses are used incorrectly. "Have broke" instead of "have broken" is an example of what may be intentional incorrect usage. In line three, tenses are confused (note the use of *are going* and *crippled* with reference to the principal in this respect). This example of lack of parallel verb construction could be supplemented with numerous other instances of incorrect grammar in other versions, one of the most notable being the use of *ain't* and *no more* when referring to the resignation or the death of the teacher at the end of many versions. If even some of this incorrect grammatical usage is intentional, as I suspect it is, it may represent a form of grammatical rebellion which is certainly in keeping with the general air of rebelliousness of the rest of the parody.

Generally speaking, the trochaic pattern is followed, with the exception of Line 3 ("We crippled the principal") in which the rhythmic beat is disrupted by the use of word *crippled* which adds an extra syllable, but is nevertheless "squeezed into" the text by the children. Very possibly the image of a "crippled principal", along with the pleasing quality of the similar sounds and stresses in the two words, was so overwhelmingly satisfying to the students who sang this version that it overcame their concern for correctness of fit in terms of the basic rhythm of the song's structure.

Also, there has been a definite attempt to make the first three lines rhyme as they did in the original, but not with the same "ord" sound. Instead, the end rhymes employed are "school," "rule," and the near-rhyme "principal" which probably satisfied the esthetic requirements of the children closely enough to warrant its retention—especially considering the emotional importance of the school principal as the major power figure in the school experience of most children and, therefore, the appropriateness of his inclusion in anti-authoritarian parodies such as this.

Finally, I would like to include a brief summary of the major findings which emerged as a result of a comparison of the numerous versions of the Battle Hymn of the Republic parodies I have collected during the last two years. *Line 1:* As in the original hymn, the opening lines of the

parodies usually serve the purpose of setting the scene of action for the rest of the song. *Line 2:* In almost all of the second lines of the parodies, the action involves an attack on the teachers and the breaking of school rules. *Line 3:* The battle imagery of the original hymn is kept in most of the student parodies, with the student uprising continuing its movement in the direction of the office of the principal. Example: "With our *terrible* sharp knives we have stabbed the principal." (Note the retention of "terrible" from the original hymn's usage of "terrible swift sword" and the switching of weaponry which occurs here!) The *fourth lines* are usually transformations of the original "His truth is marching on" with different designations for the peer group (such as "our troops" or "the kids" being substituted for the phrase "His truth". The *sixth line* of all the versions I have collected is "Glory, glory hallelujah! Teacher hit me with a ruler." This line has remained remarkably stable in the oral tradition, possibly due to the eight-syllable construction in which the metric stress pattern is remarkably close to the original. Also, the internal rhyme of the word "ruler" which is a near-rhyme to "hallelujah" probably further enhances the appeal of this particular line, which some informants consider to be the central action of importance in the song because of the actions of retribution on the part of the students which traditionally follow from this "ruler" incident. The *last lines* of the parodies contain a wide variety of objects which are used as weapons of retribution against the teacher and her initial attack with the ruler. Whatever is handy, in general, seems to be "fair game" for use as a weapon—a rusty coke machine, a Nazi cannon-ball, a U.S. army tank, a coconut, a rotten tangerine, or even a rainbow trout which is thrown at the teacher's *snout*. In the last lines of the songs, specifically, there is much variation in meter and line length and there is little attempt made to approximate the original in this respect. However, the use of rhyme is retained and there are many interesting and extremely imaginative uses of internal rhyme within a single line which are not found in the original hymn.

The second song to be analyzed is "On Top of Old Smoky"—a traditional song well-known in the Appalachians as one of the many "take warning, young maidens" songs which deals with the dangers of romantic involvement. This sad love song (cited here from *A Treasury of Folk Songs* by Sylvia and John Kolb, p. 150-151) goes as follows:

- (1) On top of old Smoky, all covered with snow.
- (2) I lost my true lover by a-courting too slow.
- (3) Now courting is pleasure, parting is grief.
- (4) But a false-hearted lover, is worse than a thief.

There are at least three groups of "On Top of Old Smoky" anti-school parodies.² The first group involves a rubber band being used as a weapon to attack the teacher. It is generally a comic version, with the humor element being more predominant than the idea of violence. The second type of parody features a gun as the weapon and is much more bloody and violently aggressive than the first type. The third type of parody

carries an impersonal element—the student is witness to the after-math of the teacher's murder. The killer is anonymous, but the student witness continues the violence against the teacher's lifeless body.

A typical example of the first type is taken from the folklore archives of the University of Texas at Austin and was collected in 1971 from a seven year-old boy. It goes like this:

- (1) On top of old Smoky, all covered with *sand*
- (2) I popped my dear teacher with a red rubber *band*.
- (3) I done it with pleasure, I done it with *pride*.
- (4) Oh how could I miss her. She was 20 feet *wide*.

This parody retains the a-a, b-b end rhyme scheme of the original in which all the ending words are accentuated. The first line in the parody contains eleven syllables as does the original version, the only change in the first line being the changing of the noun *snow* to another noun, *sand*. The second line contains twelve syllables, with the fifth syllable being stressed as it was in the original song. The stressed syllable here places emphasis on the word *teacher* as opposed to *lover*, as in the original version indicating in this case that the subject of the song has changed from the person of the lover to that of the teacher. The third line of the parody retains the use of the word *p/leasure* (again, the fifth syllable is here extended for extra counts and emphasis), but instead of being used in connection with the act of courting, it is used with reference to the aggressive act of shooting the teacher. The last line in the original song describes the lover as being false-hearted, and in the parody the last line also gives an unflattering description of the subject not as "false-hearted" but as physically unattractive due to extreme fatness, (in some versions the teacher is forty feet wide instead of just twenty as quoted here).

The second major type of "On Top of Old Smoky" parody, in which a gun is used as a weapon, is here represented by a version which is also at the folklore archives of the University of Texas at Austin. It was collected from three eleven year-old boys in Austin in 1969:

- (1) On top of old Smokey, all covered with *blood*.
- (2) I shot my poor teacher with a .45 *slug*.
- (3) I went to her funeral, I went to her *grave*.
- (4) Instead of throwing flowers, I threw hand *grenades*.

This version follows a syllable-per-line pattern of 11-12-11-12 instead of the 11-12-10-12 pattern of the original. This is still a fairly close representation of the original, with only one line (the third) having one additional syllable in the parody. This parody attempts to follow the a-a, b-b end rhyme scheme of the original with the word pairs of blood/slug and grave/grenades each having a vowel sound in common. As in most of the other parodies, the first line follows the original very closely. Only one word, at the end of the line, has been changed: *snow* has been changed to another noun, *blood*, an important change which sets the stage for the violence which follows in the rest of the song.

I obtained an example of a third type (which is more gruesome than the first two) in January of 1981 during an interview with Louise Cordova, a student at U. C. Berkeley who recalled using it in Southern California about 1965:

- (1) On top of Old Smokey all covered with *blood*.
- (2) I saw my old teacher, her face in the *mud*.
- (3) An axe through her belly, a knife through her *head*.
- (4) I think my old teacher is certainly *dead*.
- (5) I plucked out her eyeballs, I cut off her *toes*.
- (6) I took daddy's hammer, and bashed in her *nose*.

Here, the usual, a-a, b-b end-rhyme scheme has been enlarged to include a third rhymed pair (toes, nose) not usually found in examples of this variant. The specific identity of the killer is left open to speculation in this version, with the student's desecration of the teacher's body being accomplished with his own hands, instead of being mediated by a distance-producing weapon of a more impersonal variety, such as a gun or hand grenade. The variants of this third type are all extremely gruesome and lack the sense of humor found in the more playful rubber band variants.

For both of the parodies analyzed in this paper, it seems that the first lines are almost always word-for-word reproductions of the original with one or two key words at the most being changed, usually at the end of the line. After the first line, the words do not seem to have much of a relationship to the original song, except for a few instances in which a word or two ("pleasure" or "terrible") may be carried over. The children seem to try to maintain a rhyme scheme similar to the original, but do not attempt to use the same rhyming sounds that are used in the adult version.

The last section of this paper will deal with the part of Hymes's question which asks, "What kinds of purposes are fulfilled by this form of speech manipulation?" (1964, p. 293).

In examining the many different versions of these two parodies it seemed that the words of the songs often represent the adults as victims of the children's wrath. In different versions the school buildings are burned, the personnel are attacked or killed, and the rules are broken (especially the *Golden Rule* which says, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"). There is a circular pattern of substitution of power involved in which students replace school authority figures as the powerful masters of the school world. In the majority of the variants of both the Battle Hymn and Old Smoky parodies, the children's rebellion represents a reversal in the pattern of domination, wherein the adult authority figures are the new victims and the repressive system is perpetuated by the students. However, in some versions of the Battle Hymn satires, the uprising is not successful and the students are punished. Whatever the outcome of the specific parodies discussed, however, they are all forms of social commentary in which resentment toward the

institution of the school is being expressed. Also, in the case of the Battle Hymn parody, the mere act of singing it at school may be interpreted as an act of defiance against the institutions of church, state, and school, which are all associated with the use of the original song as a vehicle for the expression of religious and patriotic sentiments.

Most children would never consider actually doing the ghastly things that are mentioned in the songs, but there are probably some young students who at times of extreme anger have harbored such thoughts, at least temporarily. The parody is then used as a form of resistance against the power structure of the school and as a psychological escape from the pressures of school life. For such students, it is altogether possible that singing of the violent episodes might serve as a means of wish-fulfillment—something that they might like to see happen some day. In such cases this form of speech play serves the purpose of diffusion of anger through the creative process of satire which utilizes artistic devices such as imagination and humor. In his discussion of satire, Bailey (1976, p. 102) focuses on the process of artistic and intellectual creation involved in its production. He notes the element of enjoyment which occurs in this process of making fun of a subject, as well as the accompanying diffusion of anger which occurs. Perhaps the inherent sense of satisfaction and pleasure which accompanies the making of satire helps to explain the immense creativity employed by generations of school children in the making of a seemingly endless number of humorous versions of the anti-school parodies discussed in this paper.

The last function which the parodies might be considered to fulfill is that of peer group cohesiveness. The singing of anti-school songs is a means of affirming sentiment for one another, especially during times of emotional stress. One informant recalled his friends singing a parody of the Battle Hymn to one of the group who had just returned from being sent to the principal's office. Seen from this perspective, the song serves the purpose of reaffirming one's identity within the peer group, and it gives the group a place within the social order and structure of the school. It is as if the group's boundaries are being defined and partially maintained by establishing the teachers, principal, and secretary as the outsiders who are to be feared and sometimes hated because of the roles which they play. The emotional aspects of a child's life which relate to his structural position within the hierarchy of the school are thus dealt with by the creative power of fantasy and satire within the play experience, as described in general terms by Turner (1974). Perhaps some children manage to temporarily transcend their position of inferiority within the school's hierarchy by being able to laugh at the unhappiness in their subordinate position. Within the temporary bounds of the "second," "free" reality emphasized by Caillois (1961) as part of the play setting, the children singing these songs can experience the satisfaction of pretending that for a moment they, and *not* the adult authority figures of real life, are all-powerful and in control of the school experience. A make-believe

world has been created through the imaginative use of humor and speech play.

Notes

The field research upon which this paper is based was conducted in 1978-80, beginning with observations of and informal interviews with children in various elementary schools (both private and public) in Sacramento, California, where I was conducting fieldwork for a master's degree in folklore and early childhood education and also serving as part-time teacher in an elementary school. I am indebted to Dorothy Torres for her assistance in the interviewing of children of Afro-American and Mexican-American descent in Sacramento in 1979. This initial research yielded approximately ten variants of the two anti-school parodies discussed in this paper, as well as others not mentioned here. In an effort to supplement my knowledge of the extent to which variants might exist, I did additional research in the folklore archives at the University of California at Berkeley and the University of Texas at Austin in 1980-81. More than 75 additional versions of these two parodies were found to exist in these two archives alone. The last stage of research involved a search of the literature for written documentation of these parodies.

¹Other published versions of parodies of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" may be found in: Cansler, p. 8-9; Knapp and Knapp, p. 172-174; Krueger, p. 67-68; Moneteiro, p.49; Opie and Opie, p.374.

²Other references to the "On Top of Old Smoky" parodies may be found in Knapp and Knapp, p. 174-175 and in Paredes, p. 213.

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8

PLAY THEORY AND CRUEL PLAY OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

BY
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Abstract

Using examples from nineteenth century New Zealand, the present paper argues that much of what is called play is in fact furtive, brutal and cruel. Citing the works of other playground collectors of play (Opie, Knapp, Slukin) as well as a variety of anthropologists (Turner, Babcock, Murphy), it is argued that a great deal of play is inversive to the cultural order and preoccupied with negotiations and power struggles (Bateson, Schwartzman, Garvey). On these grounds it is suggested that the current tendency to define play as free, voluntary and intrinsically motivated is a cultural state of mind derived from upper status practices and the idealization of play in the modern nursery school.

My first book on the play of New Zealand children dealt only with their formal games (1959). At that time *texts* were what appealed to publishers of folklore. Very few other scholars were interested in the subject. In my current study of the same subject-matter, in the University of Pennsylvania Folklore Series, I have been able to publish all the *contextual* material as well as the material on informal play, neither of which were, at an earlier period, particularly acceptable (1981). It has taken some 30 years for this turn-around to occur. In both of these works I have addressed the historical changes occurring in childhood as children have become more domesticated, more sophisticated, more solitary, more informal and less sex-differentiated.

In the present paper I wish to look back at that historical material from the perspective of some current play theorizing. It is, for example, often maintained that children's play is: particularly flexible, characterized by positive affect, intrinsically motivated (Krasnor & Pepler, 1980), for its own sake, voluntary, spontaneous, not serious, informal and egalitarian (Loizos, 1980), to mention the summations of two current monographs on play. I would suggest, however, that these concepts are a part of only one bundle of connotations that we apply to childhood. This is the positive and idealized bundle which is also associated historically with the nobility of savages, the delicacy of women, the innocence of children, and the fair play of nonprofessional sportsmen. The bundle of connotations that is the negative of this romanticized group includes the view that savages should be colonized, women are irrational, children are pre-operational and play is trivial. It also includes the view, not surprisingly, that play, games and sports should be organized, and toys and television should be educational. The former positive views of play appear to persist mainly amongst psychologists and those who work with children in middle class nursery schools where such idealization can flourish. The second negative views are more often to be found amongst those who work with immigrants, members of lower social orders or adolescents.

It is the positive group which I intend to assess (though it is the negative group I will vindicate). My question is whether it is essential to the definition of play that it be thought of as a voluntary activity. I will argue that much of the play of nineteenth century New Zealand children can only be thought of as *freedom from* adult oppression. It is not particularly a freedom to *choose from* life's smorgasbord. On the contrary, one gives up one set of masters for another; one gives up teachers and parents for one's peers who are equally ruthless and domineering.

Play as Freedom from Oppression

When schools became compulsory in 1877, for the first time, the children in every district had a definite locale for games. Before that there was seldom a general community centre where all could, and did, play regularly. However, compulsory school attendance forced children to

appear five times a week upon a common pitch. It is in these circumstances that games proliferated. The period between 1870 and 1905 was the heyday of unorganized games in New Zealand. It was a period when all children were brought by the accident of universal education to a free, secular and compulsory village green. Herded daily into this situation and with little direct adult guidance, they carried on the games acquired at an occasional picnic, or sports meeting, from older children and from the homeland memories of their parents and grandparents.

After a journey, sometimes through mud and mire, and sometimes with stilts, hoops or whip tops and perhaps even against the opposition of rival factions, the children finally arrived at the school. Unfortunately, when they arrived they sometimes found that the roadway was the lesser of the two evils: that the conditions *within* the school were even harsher than they had been on *the way to school*.

Often enough...there existed a state of open warfare between teachers and pupils, with rebellion from below breaking out at periodic intervals and being put down from above by merciless flogging. (Campbell, 1941)

There are reports of school boy strikes. An informant spoke of a teacher who was a former military man:

Boys who broke his law would be put into "coventry" and any other children who spoke to them would be tanned. One morning, by conspiracy, sick of long endured suffering, the boys "went for him." The teacher rushed for the door and they after him. At the door he stopped, locked it, turned round and rolled up his sleeves and beat up those kids till twelve o'clock.

Influenced by press reports of the Maritime Strike ...between twenty or thirty of us declared a "strike"...and one morning, instead of marching into school, we marched off to seaward bush and stayed there until hunger drove us home. (From Invercargill, 1890)

I was an observer of a riot about 1906. It began with the morning whacking for spelling. The headmaster was pelted with inkwells and slates and then rushed and "downed." About six advanced adolescents were expelled. (From Christchurch)

The struggle between teacher and children usually went on in other less overtly rebellious terms than those mentioned. Some examples of typical classroom "play" expressions of this rebellious motif are as follows. The following account refers to Waitara, 1899/1905:

Once a flounder was nailed to the under-side of the master's table. He could not see it, but after a day or so he could smell it, and very plainly at that. He kept pulling the drawer out and hunting around the table, but not examining it from underneath.

Another trick was to chew paper into soft wads and place it at the end of a flat ruler, through springiness of which the paper was shot through the air with great speed. When it hit the ceiling, it remained stuck. The school ceiling consequently was well spotted over most

of its surface with these, to us, delightful splodges. But the master was not amused, as, owing to the height of the ceiling, their removal was difficult.

Other playful inversions were: hiding the log book in the ventilator; cutting the master's strap to pieces; drawing faces on the back of the boy in the front's celluloid collar; poking a ruler through a hole in the floor; sliding down the bannisters both inside and outside school buildings; eating green apples in school; sticking darts into the roof; putting pins into other children; sticking penholders to your tongue and your nose; overloading the coal cart which the master was to push; chewing kauri gum and passing it round from mouth to mouth; chewing whole wheat in winter months; chewing coffee buns; passing conversation lollies; overflowing newly filled inkwells with lumps of carbide; stealing teacher's bicycle tyres; stealing the school bell tongue; wearing out the desk footrail by rubbing at it continually with feet—competition to see who could get through first; exploding gunpowder in the classroom—for example, Guy Fawkes Day occurred a day too soon in Manakau School, for Willie Hiwi exploded a detonator during lessons! Old pupils still recount how the marks of poor Willie's fingers lingered on the ceiling for years.

Play as Freedom for Oppression

In addition to the roughness to be found in many of the boys' traditional games, there were many other ways in which they could show a bellicose spirit. In most schools, for example, there seems to have been a regular fighting pit either in the school or in the paddock next door.

There are many records of schools having had a special fighting arena to which the boys retired, out of sight, when the pressure became too great for the civil order of childhood. "We had an arena surrounded by black logs and blackberry bushes" (from Nelson, 1895). "There were hawthorn hedges round a gravel pit" (from Palmerston, 1900). "Two boys were punished for fighting in the school ground. They were encouraged by about thirty others who shared in the dividend at a somewhat lower rate of payment." Often the fights were arranged for the entertainment of the older boys. "They were arranged by the school bullies" (Nelson, 1895). "You even had to fight your boy friends if it was arranged for you" (Waikouaiti, 1895). "Small boys were induced to fight for sport" (Waipu, 1880). "There was nothing organized for us, so we organized fighting" (Dunedin, 1875). "Fighting was arranged in a paddock. If one flunked it, he was crowned. The victor patted him three times on the back and spat over his head—usually aiming too low. I never remember seeing any boy consent to crowning, even when threatened. Sometimes he was held. Otherwise, it was the ultimate humiliation which no one could stand and

retain his self respect" (Petone, 1900). "She learned further during the course of an incredulous investigation that every boy had to fight twice a week to retain respectability. Opponents were selected by a committee and the fights took place on Wednesdays and Fridays. It was 'too, too much' but perhaps not surprising when one looked at the fathers" (Kaikohe, 1890). "Yes, now as I come to think of it, the part of the school that I remember best were the fights—not dog fights in the playshed or such like crudities, but the formal, full dress ceremonial affairs carried out as only schoolboys could. There was always in the background a 'promoter'; he was the only one who seemed always to escape the punishment which fell on fighters and onlookers alike. The ring was a clearing in the bush, densely surrounded by rangioras and laurels, and there was always a strong smell of moist earth and rotting leaves. The two contestants removed their coats and reluctantly and carefully rolled up their sleeves—they really didn't want to fight at all—but honour and the 'promoter' were adamant. The seconds fussed around; the onlookers selected comfortable seats on rotting logs and lighted up their collection of 'Old Judge' butts and dock leaf cigarettes. The referee stepped back on to a bunch of stinging nettle and the fight commenced. One or two swinging airshots, then a contact, a bleeding nose, and then calamity arrived. Calamity in the shape of the head teacher with a long 'supplejack' (Pongaroa). But the fights were not always arranged. Sometimes they arose casually, often in connection with football. "They arose out of arguments amongst the barrackers" (Charleston, 1890). Girls are not often mentioned in this connection, but there were some exceptions. "I saw many fights in the gravel pit amongst the boys and on one occasion my sister scratched the face of one boy who was apparently winning in a fight with my brother. Sometimes girls fought in their own way—hair pulling, etc" (Moeraki, 1890).

It was natural enough that group differences would also become a basis for group quarrels. Some took place at school. "The personal and the arranged individual fighting were dwarfed by the mass fighting of the Reds and Blues. Can you imagine twenty Reds pitted against twenty Blues, making use of straps with buckles on them, of waddies, of six-foot manuka sticks, confronting one another in real battle array and at a signal, and with the use of rallying calls, entering the fray determined to overcome and rout the enemy? Blood flowed, heads and bodies suffered, until one or other side was overcome through sheer exhaustion and casualties! This section fighting assumed such ugly proportions that authority, in the shape of the Headmaster, stepped in and prohibited it" (Queenstown, 1880).

In towns the same sort of group fighting was usually known as gang-fighting. "Different gangs took different sides in the paper chase" (Riwaka, 1900). "Each gang had a corner of the playground. Captured prisoners were held by force and by force alone. There were torn shirts and fingers bent back. When enough prisoners were caught, they would

break out by force" (Forbury, 1915). "When there was a gang quarrel, we lined up in two lines in the gravel pit for an all-in fight" (Nelson, 1900).

The individual and gang fighting of the day was often very harsh, and the younger and less virile members of the playground must often have been terrorized by those stronger than themselves. But the harshness did not stop there. In many places there were, as well, initiation ceremonies. Ducking under the tap was the most widespread of these customs. But there were others with a more unique flavour. Of these, "king of the golden sword" was probably the most interesting. "The new boy was made to face the fence with his hands behind his back. There was a long ceremony about his crowning and entry into the school and then finally the golden sword (which had been dipped into the latrine) was pulled through his fingers" (M. Cook, 1890; Taita, 1900; Clyde Quay, 1900). "Another initiation rite was 'Pee wee some more yet.' The initiate was blind-folded and ordered to pee-wee some more yet into another boy's cap. The cap turned out to be his own" (M. Cook, 1890). One cannot help but be struck by the number of times the forbidden parts of the body were involved in these ceremonies. For example: "We would take the boys' and sometimes the girls' trousers down and then spit on their privates" (Hutt, 1900). "One very interesting initiation ceremony was to take the new boys down to the stables and wait till a horse was urinating and then spin him under the stream" (Petone, 1900). "He had to eat half a tin of pipis" (Rangitoto, 1900). "We peed in his cap" (Thomas, 1900). "He was invited to a tug of war with his cap. The cap was held in the teeth of the initiate and the teeth of one of the big boys. Hands were supposed to be behind backs. While the struggle was in progress, the big boy urinated over the initiate who could not see the operation because of the hat, but learned about it only gradually and with surprise" (Takaka, 1870).

The Generality of Cruel Play

I am assuming that in these various examples I am talking about childrens' play. Obviously I have chosen some of the more brutal, the more furtive and the more invasive of the play of those days. I suggest that there is little more freedom in most of this than there is in most of the games played in tribal cultures where all are expected to be involved. My point is that voluntariness, intrinsic motivation and freedom of choice are not concepts which are essential to any universal definition of play.

If my material appears quite selective and rare and perhaps not a fair instrument to bring to this issue, then I would call attention to the comprehensive modern work of Iona and Peter Opie, *The Lore and Language of Children* (1968), the more recent work on English children by Andy Sluckin, *Growing up on the Playground* 1981), or the recent work on the American playground by Mary and Herbert Knapp, *One Potato, Two Potato* (1976). By my count approximately two thirds of the contents of

each of these books are occupied by struggles for power, by the play of attack and defense or chase and escape. There is approximately the same proportion of playtime devoted to these matters during animal play in natural habitats according to Robert Fagen in *Animal Play Behavior* 1981. Furthermore, the leading modern anthropological theory of play, that of Gregory Bateson (1972), which is re-echoed in the work of Helen Schwarzman (1978) and of Catherine Garvey (1977), is also devoted to the demonstration that play is a form of communication, a matter of negotiations and arguments. "Playing is saying," as Catherine Garvey has it.

Why is it then that these other notions are so persistent? Why must the scholars of this age insist that freedom and voluntarism are the mark of play? Elsewhere I have attempted to trace the historical picture by which this *idealization of play* has occurred in the twentieth century (1981) and I will not repeat myself here, except to briefly note that the idealization has its basis in contemporary romanticism about children, in the conflation of upper-class notions of leisure with theories of play, and with the need economically to define leisure time as an antithesis to obligatory work. I would further add that most of the psychological theories of play are derived from observing the activities of nursery schools. It can be argued that much of this is not play at all, but is idling, exploring, constructive imagination or daydreaming. Unfortunately, there is a tendency to put all of these activities within the same diffuse category of play; there is a tendency also for children in nursery schools to fulfill the romanticism and work orientations of those members of the culture who plan these schools and believe that that is their very function. Nursery schools are themselves a form of cultural communication, not a neutral ground within which we can diagnose any universal characteristics of play.

Elsewhere I have outlined my notions of the fundamentally inversive and dialectical character of that part of childrens' activity which I would wish to call play (Sutton-Smith, 1981b). My point of view in this is consistent with a number of major cultural theorists including Babcock (1978); Murphy (1971); Turner (1974); and Simmel (in Wolff, 1950).

Conclusion

These protest plays I have documented are brutal, express peer dominance orders, invert the status quo and create a community of players impelled by a harsh adult order to generate their own harsh worlds. You join the side or you get crushed, rejected, or scapegoated. If we wish to reach for universalist definitions of play we do better to discuss excitement or passion (which can be negative and cruel), as well as inversions of the normative social order. These form a better basis for such definitions than notions of freedom of choice, nonseriousness, positive affect, egalitarianism and flexibility.

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**HAMLET
AND THE
TRAGEDY OF
LUDIC REVENGE**

BY
PHYLLIS GORFAIN

Abstract

The paper centers on the problem of considering a fiction as a ludic event. Such a consideration reveals that the process of interpreting play is a playful one; interpreting fiction frees us to make choices that tolerate ambiguity and can accept mistakes, for no responsible actions need follow our interpretive choices in play. This approach to *Hamlet* as a ludic event also examines it as a metacommunication and explores it as a master text about play. The drama embeds theories of play within itself as it shows the central characters engaged in forms of fatal error and in forms of playing with mistakes through games and play. Perennial questions about *Hamlet* are also explored using anthropological notions of play as metacommunication; among these problems are questions about the authenticity of Hamlet's "antic disposition" as true madness and about the use of a false game as a plot resolution. We come to

understand how we, as audiences to an uncertain fiction about fiction-making, occupy a position like the one Hamlet occupies. He faces a parallel epistemological dilemma about how to see into “what passes shows”, what therefore cannot be seen in a world of sheer appearances. But we can distinguish ourselves from Hamlet, for we, unlike him, do not have to act responsibly on our playful interpretive choices; our mistakes, unlike his, are mediated by the fictiveness of play. The drama then likens processes of forgiveness, in life and in this tragedy, to the playful process of interpreting fiction; revenge belongs to the realm of manipulation, deceit, and false fiction-making. Seen in ludic terms, the drama shows students of play the tragedy of mistaking, in acting absolutely through revenge, and the comedy of uncertainty, in learning paradoxically through play.

When we pick up the text of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, or when the curtain rises on a stage in Elsinore, we have no doubt that we are reading or witnessing a fiction, a work of pretense.¹ To claim that *Hamlet* is a ludic event, then, identifies the ways we take fictions and the ways we interpret ludic events.² This drama offers a particularly useful basis for such a combined study of play and fictions, for *Hamlet* is both about itself as play and about play in general. The central characters of *Hamlet* engage in a series of deceptions, put-ons, open fictions, and playful interludes; they use games for purely expressive and for fatally instrumental ends. Moreover, their activities bear a remarkable set of parallels with our own, as we read or witness the drama as a fiction about an uncertain past. In the process of showing us Hamlet's quest for truth and for a way to act, using fictions and play, the drama allows us to play with our attempts to understand or escape the consequences of action. As a tragedy, it shows us something about the paradoxes in our impulses to play and our histories of death, requital and revenge. Drama enables us to play with difficult issues of interpretation and judgment, and *Hamlet* does the same as it offers us a ludic process which freely examines and evaluates ways of playing. The paper aims to show how *Hamlet* may be opened up from an anthropological perspective on play, and how doing so may demonstrate to students of play how this fiction teaches us paradoxes of knowing through play.

The first section of the paper briefly pursues this problem of looking at a fiction as a ludic event and of examining it in this particular way. The central portion of the paper then offers a plot analysis of the drama and investigates how several interpretive puzzles about the drama can be explained by anthropological studies of play. A conclusion returns to how the drama permits and even requires us to play with such interpretive and evaluative questions.

The Problem: Interpreting a Drama as a Playful Activity

To say that a drama such as *Hamlet* is a ludic event is to say that we take this playful activity as an event which is interpreted as an imitation of an action. Talking about a drama as a play event helps us recognize two assumptions we make as theatre audiences. As we watch a drama, we first recognize that events on stage are not the action they represent; in this case, they represent “the doings of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark.” Secondly, we realize that the events represented may never have occurred, that they may be as imaginative as the fictionalized presentation. That is, the original Hamlet may be no more real than the Hamlet created on the stage; or, if there were a Hamlet in history, the stage Hamlet may not represent *his* actions. When we take a representation as a fiction, then, we take it as an act unmoored from a historical context. Unlike history, and unlike present speech, fictive speech is not *taken* as if it were an actual historically situated utterance. We do not *interpret* a fictive act of speech to uncover the speaker’s immediate intentions or to formulate choices for consequential actions. When the fictional Hamlet speaks on stage we can play with our sense of what he means and intends; we do not have to act on our choices, nor suffer any consequences for mistakes. A play event creates a process of interpretation which is itself playful (Ellis, 1974, p. 42–46; Smith, 1978, p. 24–40, 116–23). Since we do not need to recover, when we interpret play, the truth of the historical past, or to choose responsible actions in the present, the process of interpreting play centers on the *play* of interpreting meaning.

Play always makes a metacommunication, a communication about communication, for a play event always “says” it does not signify what it denotes would normally signify. For example, when a puppy plays at fighting, his “nip”, which denotes a bite, does not signify what a bite normally signifies (Bateson, 1972, p. 179–80). So when we take a discourse, such as a drama, as a form of play, we take it as if it were framing itself with a statement about how it is to be interpreted (i.e., we take it as a statement and a metastatement at once). That double discourse in play creates a paradox about its own meanings, for it indicates it is at the same time both an action and a message about its meaning which “denies the meaning” of the action. Such paradoxes of self-referentiality in play call the very process of meaning into question as they foreground the process of making meaning.

In using anthropological perspectives to examine *Hamlet* as a play event, we see the text as a metatext, one which makes its own process of meaning into its subject. Such anthropological approaches to play then clarify lasting problems in the interpretation of *Hamlet*. Several critical puzzles in *Hamlet* can be penetrated by anthropological studies of play, and in this paper I will center on two: 1) Hamlet’s ambiguous behavior,

which is indeterminately madness or feigned madness—it confounds the audience as well as the court about how it is to be taken; and 2) the peculiar ending of the play, which employs the guise of a game—a fake fencing match—to press the instabilities of the plot to their resolutions. Both of these questions call attention to how play itself questions processes of knowing and interpreting; pointing up such questions demonstrates how *Hamlet* paradoxically frees us to play with the epistemological problems it poses for the hero and for us as critics.

To make these issues clearer, and this approach to them more evident, a plot summary follows for those not familiar with the play's action. At the same time an analysis of the ways the drama uses games and ludic modes will show how *Hamlet* raises fundamental questions about knowing and responsibility. Throughout, the essay relies on theories of play as metacommunication as developed by Bateson (1969; 1971; 1972; 1978; 1979), and by other play theorists such as Schwartzman (1978) and Handelman (1977; 1979; 1980).

Seeing What Happens in Hamlet

The plot of *Hamlet* follows a course of events in the medieval Danish court following the sudden death of its warrior king, Hamlet. Prince Hamlet has returned home from his studies at Wittenburg to witness, within two months of his father's funeral, a wedding between his mother, Queen Gertrude, and his father's younger brother, Claudius. Hamlet watches his uncle assume kingship and declare legitimate his marriage to the woman he openly calls his "sometime sister" (I.ii.8).³ In Shakespeare's England, a younger brother's marriage to an elder brother's widow was considered incestuous if the elder brother left a surviving son (Rosenblatt, 1978). To claim the legitimacy of this marriage is tantamount to declaring Hamlet dead, since his existence should outlaw the marriage. Hamlet's presence, then, betrays the arbitrary quality of the king's rules. He uses such institutions to serve his own will. But Claudius' statements, State acts when pronounced by him as king, transform what should be absolute rules into manipulative legitimations of his own will. He undermines all rules as just rulings when he makes them the means to alter the readings which others make of social situations. So Claudius declares his marriage legitimate and instructs others how to react; he thanks in advance those with "better wisdoms, which have freely gone/ With this affair along" (I.ii.15–16). Like the rules for play, his feats do not change brute facts, but they do transform social roles and guide the interpretation of reality. If Claudius cannot bring back the dead, he can direct the living in how to become his audience.

Such a world of courtly fabrication leads Hamlet to view all appearances as shows, and to be further troubled when appearances he wishes

to disbelieve prove true. So Hamlet's mourning for his lost father and his horror at his mother's substitution of Claudius as a husband lead Hamlet to generalize his grief. He mourns the loss of meaning in all social acts, which he views as merely "actions that a man might play" (I.ii.84). His melancholy sharpens when a ghost appears claiming to be his father and relating a ghastly tale of murder by Claudius. Stricken by the discrepancies between acting and actions, Hamlet is heavily burdened with a morally difficult charge. The ghost enjoins Hamlet to kill the king as revenge for his father's assassination. The ghost's disclosure reveals the falseness of Claudius' reports about King Hamlet's death, and yet the ghost's report may be no more valid. A ghost's ontology was problematic in an age which questioned the reality of the forms evil might assume. A ghost itself may be a misleading appearance, no more reliable than a stage illusion. So this ghost's authority may not be that of Hamlet's father, but may be as counterfeit as the usurped authority of Claudius. Moreover, with each investigation of the ghost's tale, Hamlet discovers only another account of reality, not the original event.

Hamlet cannot be certain about the truth of appearances, and such problems leave him confused about what he must do. Uncertainty stymies Hamlet not only in choosing interpretations, but also in choosing actions. Both ambiguity and contradiction perplex Hamlet beyond not knowing *what* to trust; he also faces more profound epistemological questions about *how* to know. Hamlet's problems in knowing match his problems in responsibility, for there he is caught in another structural contradiction. The ghost has extracted from Hamlet a pledge to enact a revenge which, in Renaissance cosmology, sacred law reserves for God alone. As a result, Hamlet encounters a double bind. On the one hand, he feels an obligation to his father's ghost to exact revenge. On the other hand, he knows the superordinate rule which forbids that revenge by claiming vengeance belongs to the Lord alone. At the same time, Hamlet is immobilized by his disillusionments; he had been stunned by his awareness that all acts are just acting and rules are just constructions. The prince's solutions to the double bind is not, however, to become schizophrenic, at least not clearly so. Rather, Hamlet engages in an elaborate act, and puts on what he warns his friends is an "antic disposition" (I.v.173).

The "Antic Disposition" and Metacommunication

From the point of view of Bateson's theories, this role uses the paradoxical structure of play as metacommunication. That is, play is a communication which operates on two logical levels, each of which negates the other. Like the Liar paradox, the antic disposition creates endless puzzles about how to assess the truth of what is said, for it is framed

within a metameessage which denies itself as it also denies the truth of what it frames. If Hamlet is mad, then his statements are not sane; but if his statements are not sane, then they are not Hamlet's true statements. Furthermore, how can we be sure he is mad, ask the courtiers, when there is such "method in't" (II.ii.208)? Yet, at the same time, if Hamlet is not "beside himself", if he is really a sane Hamlet, then he is surely mad to utter what he does! Like play, and like the dilemma he faces, Hamlet's indeterminate madness—madness which is neither clearly insanity nor clearly a deliberate act—creates a double discourse: it refers to itself as well as the targets it addresses. Like play, this "antic disposition" places the problem of meaning in the foreground by implicitly referring to its own meaning and by calling meaning into question.

Although Hamlet's antic disposition has already been analyzed using Bateson's theories of play (Nardo, Note 1), this approach emphasizes how Hamlet uses a ludic stance to mirror back to the court that it faces the same epistemological questions he does. In this case, ludic behavior operates as "saying play", to use the terms of Schwartzman (1978) and Handelman (1979; 1980). The uncertainty about whether Hamlet is mad creates problems for the court in deciding what is real. When Hamlet both stresses the truth of, and disclaims responsibility for, what his antic disposition says, he suggests he is at one with a court which only pretends to be what it appears.

Hamlet's illusive identity questions and allows him to test how identity and social reality are constructed and are changed. Handelman (1979) discusses such ludic behavior as a transparent mask which admits a view of that which it also seems to hide. Donning the ludic mask suggests a similar masked, or illusory, quality in the behavior of the person(s) the "player" engages with, socially (1979; 1980). It is as if I am saying, "since I am obviously playing with you, you—who were trying to be serious—are really just playing with me too." Schwartzman (1978, p. 232-47) thus considers playing roles as a way of saying something about the roles and powers of players, and about the persons in dialogue with the roles they play. Playing does not remove the player to an alternate world, but creates a tensive relationship with this one. Moreover, when I make my behavior into a performance, yours is also transformed. Schwartzman points up how formal play, in fact, requires a process of negotiations in which players both deny and express their ordinary social identities. When Linda (a young informant) organizes her playmates to play house, and she makes herself "the mommy", Schwartzman suggests that Linda expresses her powers as a leader and her playmates' acquiescence as her collaborators. In Linda's role as "mommy", she can become the "not-Linda" who lies within her as well as the kind of person who *plays* "mommy" and gets others to play their parts.

Hamlet's antic disposition on the one hand denies his identity and qualifies the meaning of all he says. On the other hand, his role as "fool" amplifies his identity and discloses the equally ludic quality of the entire

court. Hamlet's antics use ambiguity and paradox to occupy a ludic position from which he can assert, in "saying play", the illusory nature of court behavior as the counterpart to his own masked mode.

Metacommunication, Play, and Metadrama

The performances of a group of professional players who arrive at the court inspire Hamlet to another set of reflections on role playing and offer him a new means by which to test—as well as reflect—court appearances. Hamlet begins to use play even more forcefully as prophecy, to warn the court. Hamlet revises an old plot called "The Murder of Gonzago", an Italianate court intrigue of royal murder and queenly remarriage. The performance of this piece creates a mirror for the Danish court. For us, this performance of a drama functions as a play-in-a-play with a complex set of metadramatic and metaludic statements. The play depicts events precisely like the ones in the ghost's tale, and so the inner play matches the court world, the ghost's story, and Shakespeare's play, which we are now made aware we watch as a play.

At the same time, Hamlet shows the court its own masks. Characters may not be whom they seem. During the play, Hamlet comments on the characters. At one point, he identifies the murderer of the Player King as "one Lucianus, nephew to the King" (III.ii.250). We may have taken the poisoner as Claudius, brother to the king he poisoned. Seeing the regicide as nephew to the king suggests he may (also) be taken as the replica of Hamlet, present nephew to the present king. Hamlet now uses the mirror play not only to investigate the truth of the past, by observing the guilty reactions of his audience, but also to shape a view of the future, by warning his audience about a possible world in which Hamlet may kill Claudius. Hamlet seems to be recalling a past event and threatening the court with a future act. He both accuses and warns. Because the image contains such ambiguities in its multiple referentiality, it serves both for retelling and foretelling. The play reinterprets the past and shapes expectations about the future. Thus play becomes more than a mirror and more than a rehearsal. It becomes an active means for creating the future through a process of expectation.

Mistakes, Play, and Tragedy

Dubious about the meaning of this mimetic event, the King initiates a new series of deceptions. He has Hamlet summoned to his mother's dressing room for a seemingly private interview. But this intimate conversation turns into a secret performance, for it is watched by an audience, the spy whom the King has placed in the room. Throughout the play, the meaning of events takes on new perspectives as we see them watched, overheard and directed. Events become scenes and actions performances as nearly everyone "by indirections find directions out" (II.i.66). But

can such knowledge penetrate to the truth on the other side of the curtain? At one point during his interview, Hamlet angrily threatens his mother, and the old courtier, Polonius, stationed behind a curtain, calls out, "What ho! Help!" (III.iv.23). Taking the ambiguous appearance for the King, Hamlet impulsively stabs the shape behind the screen. This mistake is played on in Hamlet's ironic compliment to his unintended victim: "I took you for your better" (III.iv.33). All the problems in taking as transparent that which remains cloaked behind the interventions of signs are here revealed. Hamlet's pun emphasizes the tragedy of mistakes. His previous puns created a comedy of taking and mistaking, just as puns assert mastery over accidental mistaking by making confusion deliberate (Phillips, 1975). Hamlet's puns could be playful acts which "speak daggers . . . , but use none" (III.iii.404). But this act of murder cannot be made ludic, for Hamlet has used a dagger, not speech, and no verbal play can undo that fact. The redirection he attempts in his pun only displays the distance between the finalities of death and the ways we try to reinterpret death. Here lies the tragic problem the play confronts.

The irrevocability of death, despite the reversibilities play represents, makes Hamlet the object of a new revenge plot. Laertes, the son of Polonius, now becomes Hamlet's "foil" (V.ii.256) as Laertes becomes another revenger of a father's murder. The mirrors multiply and the actions nest within one another still further. In a side plot, Prince Fortinbras of Poland, another prince whose uncle reigns over the lands his father ruled, has threatened to attack Denmark to avenge his father's death. Before the play begins, King Fortinbras was fatally defeated by King Hamlet in single combat. In an enclosed plot, Hamlet recalls à speech from a play in which Aeneas, another son who has delayed avenging his father's slaying, recalls the story of the assassination. King Priam, Aeneas' father, was slaughtered by Pyrrhus, who himself takes Priam's life in exchange for his father's life, which was dispatched by Priam's other son, Paris. Murder generates murder as revenge fails to recover death. Sons try to replace their fathers by murdering the fathers of other sons. This fatal cycle is structurally matched, but reversed, in the ways play can be replayed, and in the ways it repeats images of a recurrent reality. But the irrevocability of death points out how both revenge and play create only fictions of reversibility. We can imagine redress, and it can be played out; but the construction of revenge substitutes real deeds for the fictions of play. As a result, revenge cannot rectify death, but achieves only new exchanges of retaliation. The action of revenge produces not so much the fiction, but the illusion of revocability. Revenge entails the law of talion, a series of substitutions which never recover the original crime. Retribution and closure belong to a sacred realm. Such equilibrium is won only in a transcendent exchange: the institution of forgiveness, of which play is the ludic model.

By murdering Polonius, Hamlet pushes the King into a lethal exchange. Claudius can no longer simply spy on Hamlet; now reconnaiss-

sance is insufficient to unwrap the meaning of Hamlet's paradoxical behavior. Hamlet's rash act, then, initiates the tragic course of active plots on his life. Hamlet has passed himself from playing into an engagement with life through death.

Revenge and the Manipulation of Games

Meanwhile, Laertes pursues his own revenge by rushing directly into the king's chambers. There, the armed youth threatens to assassinate the king as the presumed murderer of his father. The slippery monarch quickly deflects Laertes' anger into an alternate course of action, a game. This game is not an actual substitute for action, but a disguise for it. In place of a bated foil in a fencing match, the King and Laertes conspire to substitute a bare blade. For double assurance, Laertes proposes he "anoint" (IV.vii.140) his sword with poison. In a condensed mode, the strategies for a false game become strategies for action. The King uses pretense for deception as he uses social institutions to escape consequences. The structure of his wrongdoing perverts the structure of not-doing in play, and his plot does that which cannot be undone—he makes the impunity of play into the permanence of death.

The fencing match, like the play we watch, should play with death, but it becomes a hidden duel which literally acts out the figurative fencing throughout the play's action. The game thus encapsulates the agonistic acts of a court which are masked as playful interrogations, and it, as a counterfeit game which only seems to be a representation, summarizes all the other counterfeits at court. The con game mocks the double language of play in the duplicity of lies. The paradoxes of play are reversed in the paradoxes of action masquerading as a game.

To assure even more certainly that the fraudulent game will do its work, the conspirators plan that if the formal game moves do not occasion death, then the scoring procedures will. Scoring marks the rounds of play as well as the hits. Scoring thus also makes the difference between the uncounted blows of a duel, which count in bloody ways, and the tallied hits of a fencing match, which "don't really count." The King arranges that social interludes will be added to the scoring; they will toast the first two hits made by Hamlet. Into Hamlet's goblet the King will drop a disguised poison. A salute to Hamlet's hit will then strike him. If not by sport, then by its celebration, the player prince will be de-luded, killed by an illusion of playing.

As the event proceeds, Hamlet nullifies the script implicit in the King's plot, for he defers drinking his wine, and goes right on to make another hit. Now Hamlet's mother, warm with pleasure in her son's skill, toasts him with his glass. Claudius quickly tries to prevent her from drinking the lethal cordial, but Gertrude insists she will honor Hamlet, and she drinks from his goblet. Helpless, the King watches the show, a process now beyond his direction. The game the King has tried to fix remains

unfixable—a game with its own momentum and an unpredictable outcome. Trapped by the safety he has fashioned for himself as an ostensible spectator, the hidden director of death is confined ironically by his role as audience. Claudius cannot control his substitute without revealing his hidden role and betraying his own treachery. The open-ended process of even this false game displays the open-ended character of games and the analogous recalcitrance of life; neither can be plotted, although both are open to subterfuge.

Cheating itself may also be subverted by mistakes. At this juncture Gertrude's mistake may propel Laertes into one of his own, for he rushes his opponent. In the scuffle, the weapons are exchanged, and the orderly game comes to resemble a duel. The resemblance between a game and duel gives way to an unequivocal identity between the forms when Hamlet discovers he has wounded Laertes. The fact that a duel occurs is exposed when the spectators call out, "They bleed on both sides" (V.ii.305). The audience of a sport becomes a witness to murder as the democracy of death overtakes all opponents. Hamlet now realizes Laertes has wielded a real, not a tipped sword, and he learns that his mother expires, poisoned with a drink intended for him. Calling the doors to be closed, Hamlet announces, "Treachery! Seek it out" (V.ii.312). Once again the search for origins and truth begins. But even if the openings are now closed, the initial fact and crime may be no clearer. Laertes delivers his *version* of the ironic truth: Hamlet bears the treachery in his own hands; the sword he handles is unbated and envenomed; he bears no more than half an hour's life and Laertes will die as soon. "The King's to blame," (V.ii.321), his pawn concludes. At last Hamlet stabs the author of crime with the poisoned blade and forces Claudius' own medicine down his throat.

Forgiveness, Playfulness, and the Freedom of Reflexivity in Art

The single act of revenge cannot achieve full equilibrium. "Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet," Laertes requests with his last breath. The two revengers seek release from the law of talion in the freedom of forgiveness. Will their exchange, however, hold the future in check? A similar contract between Kings Hamlet and Fortinbras dissolved in time, and failed to bind posterity. Despite their agreement, Fortinbras, the prince, has sought his restitution. But the achievement of forgiveness may here seem to close the cycle of death, for as forgiveness is "exchanged," the play reflexively turns back to its own beginning in a new cycle of discovery.

The play now folds over on itself and opens out to become not just a fiction, but a fiction and an actual event. As the play admits its own telling, it becomes a meta-meta statement—a kind of statement which

exists in the theatre, not just on the stage. Following the death of Laertes, the dying Prince turns to “You that look pale and tremble at this chance,/ That are but mutes and audience to this act” (V.ii.335–36). He wishes to give them his account, but death, “a fell sergeant” (V.ii.337), allows him no time. So Hamlet turns to his friend Horatio, whose name indicates his function as orator, and Hamlet notes the crucial difference between life and death—life has the ability to rectify the past:

Horatio, I am dead;
Thou livest; report me and my cause aright
To the unsatisfied.

(V.ii.340–41)

Horatio seeks his own satisfaction in death, and he reaches for the poisoned cup. But Hamlet beseeches him:

O God Horatio, what a wounded name,
Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me!
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
To tell my story.

(V.ii.345–49)

Although those present have seen the very event, Hamlet cannot trust them to know it “aright” for they do not know its history. His name and his cause are as stricken as he is without the recovery of truth in a report. To amend knowledge, not to reverse death, Hamlet calls not for another round of revenge, but for a new process—that of making events knowable. A series of transformations unfolds. Witnesses to death are transfigured as they turn into an audience; conversely, we are changed into witnesses, as the play we watch seems to take on the dimensions of a real event in the real world by seeming to say that a fiction has been fashioned out of actual events. For the story that Horatio is to tell has just been dramatized in the play we watch, now clearly just the latest version of that tale, a story which becomes as fictive as the fiction we see. The epistemic problem is at once evident. We realize that even as such ludic texts only represent events. Events themselves may be knowable, yet irretrievable, only in such acts. We become one with the court characters, united with them in the role of an audience to both play worlds and the world as performed. But the regress is not entirely infinite, for we are also placed beyond the play audience in our double awareness of them as our counterparts, but not ourselves. In our differences from them, we recognize that we are their witnesses, as well as their audience. Our separation from the play audience permits us to contemplate as an event the telling of a story. We may consider the hidden narrative of Horatio as another version of the plot we have seen enacted. The past, imagined, telling of the story and the present, real enactment of the drama we have watched

both become evident as fictive events, as play texts, and as removed actions from us. The cycle of repetition in re-presentation seems as inevitable as the killings of kings and the avenging of their deaths. But this cycle, the cycle of art, admits its substitutions and makes its recoveries in the art of forgiveness and in the pardons of play.

Conclusion

The drama shows us our desires to revoke the finalities of death, to domesticate the wilderness of desire, to captivate the flight of time, and to manage the fate of our social selves. Those cravings are shown to be both noble and tragic for they can be realized only in the confinements of play, games, dramas, and in the limits of social expression which may do no more than interpret and manipulate views of reality. These means are powerful, and they can determine the course of life and death, but they cannot cancel death. The order fictions make is the order of discourse. Hamlet recognizes the universe of discourse that play offers, and he finally submits to it, rather than trying to plot it. In his submission, we find a paradoxical release of freedom, one which traces an arc of our aspirations for both reflection and action. Against that spirit stands the equally compelling truth of Claudius, who can seize the channels of social power to serve his individual will. Yet in the last act, "he is justly served" (V.ii.328). His assertions of control are no more lasting than the systems he destroys. Both these figures compose our recurring human history, our dreams and our lives, and both must be comprehended in the texts we tell about ourselves (Geertz, 1972, 26). We know both Hamlet and Claudius, or at least we must know both to know ourselves. To us, these two characters come to represent major versions in the ways play and games are used. The drama shows us how to cherish the submission to play by Hamlet and how to recognize the manipulations of games by Claudius. For the play finally places us in the position of neither Hamlet nor Claudius, but as their audience, playing our roles by judging their uses of play as versions of human possibility. The play holds them and their modes of play up for evaluation, not just examination. By giving us these modes of using play in the theatre, where we are freed from the responsibilities of making choices and from their attendant consequences, the drama allows us a playful exercise in the use of both interpretation and judgment. We fulfill our responsibilities as an audience and witness in the Hamlet spirit by recognizing that our safety is guaranteed by the confinements of art and play. But the qualified freedom of play becomes ours to control when seen for the construction it is: a text about ourselves as players.

Notes

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²The term “ludic” is a Latinate neologism derived from *ludere*, to play, and is used by many students of play whose work is indebted to the seminal study of Johann Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Human Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950). First published, 1938.

³This and all subsequent quotations from the play cite the Signet edition, (ed.) E. Hubler (New York: New American Library, 1963).

Reference Note

1. Nardo, A.K. *Hamlet*, “a man to double business bound.” Unpublished manuscript, 1979. (Available from Department of English, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803).

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PART IV

THE LUDIC

CONSTRUCTION

OF REALITY

10

METAPHOR AND PLAY INTERACTION IN YOUNG CHILDREN

BY
MICHAEL BAMBERG

Abstract

The main goal of the article is a characterization of the spontaneous and creative aspects of play in terms of metaphor. For this purpose metaphor is defined as the conceptual activity of *seeing as*. This notion of metaphor is subsequently used to interpret the play interactions of two 2-3 year old girls and two 4 year old boys. The discussion focuses on how children use processes of metaphorization in order to reach a shared understanding that is necessary for negotiating a joint play frame. Concluding comments highlight the relationship between play, effect and the development of social identity.

At first sight the proposal to view play in terms of metaphor seems to complicate our endeavours of coming to terms with the notion of play. However, the idea is by no means a new one. On the one hand, according to our folk beliefs, a person who expresses a novel perspective towards common objects, events, or social roles is characterized as "playful." On the other, there are also attempts to link metaphor and play (and the work in which the anthropologist is engaged) in a more general fashion. Helen Schwartzman's work was at the forefront of such endeavours (Schwartzman, 1978, 1979). This work stressed the constructive elements metaphor, play, and the anthropologist have in common. This constructivist viewpoint expressed by Schwartzman is paralleled in the recent views of a particular branch of metaphor experts; a branch that has (at least) three different labels, namely Contextualism (Hoffman and Nead, 1981), Realism (Gibson, 1967; Verbrugge, 1977, 1980), and/or Experientialism (Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1980; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). This branch has evolved from the debates within the reawakened interest in metaphor research as documented in symposia in 1977, 1978, 1979, and 1980 by the Experimental Psychology Division of the American Psychological Association, and two major conferences on metaphor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (Ortony, 1979), and the University of Chicago Extension (Critical Inquiry, Vol. 5, No. 1), respectively.

Without reiterating these debates here, it is my contention that certain aspects of metaphor may contribute to a better understanding of what is involved in the play activities of young children. To show this efficiently, I will highlight those aspects of metaphor I regard as important for the conceptual and communicative activity that goes into play. Then I will lay out these aspects using two case studies: one of two 4 year old boys, and the other of two 2-3 year old girls. Finally, I will return to a discussion of the commonalities of metaphor and play, suggesting that the capacity to think and communicate metaphorically is the basis for metaphoric verbalizations as well as for play.

Metaphor

The aspects of metaphor considered important for the present purpose are:

- Metaphor is a conceptual activity of *seeing as*.
- Novel ways of *seeing as* and conventional ways of *seeing as* are two ends of a continuum.
- The conceptual activity of *seeing as* is an ordering activity that gives coherence to new or uncommon experiences.
- The conceptual activity of *seeing as* is embedded in cultural and communal ways of *seeing as* (in shared conventions by certain communities that have experienced or ordered the world in which they live).

- If experiences are structured metaphorically, the means to analyze experiences underlying sentences, interactions, texts, life stories, and even whole cultures is offered.

Let us see how these five points can be exemplified: Wittgenstein has described the conceptual activity of *seeing as* as the “flashing of an aspect on us which seems half visual experience, half thought...an amalgam of the two,” and further, “what I perceive in the drawing of an aspect is not a property of the object, but an internal relation between it and other objects” (Wittgenstein, 1953, p. 197). Thus, seeing ‘man’ as ‘wolf’ requires imagination, that of the gestalt-like configuration that unifies our ideas of ‘man’ with those of ‘wolf.’ However, the notion of “perspective seeing” does not seem to be sufficient for a full grasp of metaphor. We would like to know what distinguishes between a subcategorization (“This ship is a freighter”) from “metaphor” (“Man is a wolf”). This question is answered best by viewing conventional ways of seeing at one end of the continuum and novel ways at the other. A conventional way of *seeing as* is the one just mentioned, “This ship is a freighter,” while a novel perspective is given by the expression “Love is a collaborative piece of art.” However, what are we to do with books that are *sitting* on a shelf, or the *leg* of a table, or fog that is *rolling in*? We could deal with them under the heading of ‘dead’ or ‘frozen’ metaphors or ‘fixed expressions.’ Nevertheless, to view somebody as a *warm* person, or talking about a *hot date* is not quite so frozen or fixed as the previous expressions. There seems to be a whole conceptualization of ‘temperature stands for an emotion or feeling’ behind those expressions from which one could also draw quite novel expressions as, “His entering the room brought the temperature down to the freezing point” or “It took them almost two years after their divorce to get their relationship somewhat defrosted.”

This example of metaphoric conceptualization of emotions by temperature is just one of many that particular cultures have imposed onto reality. In this sense these conceptualizations are used by the speaker and language learner to recreate meaningful relations. Such metaphors are by no means “dead” but kept alive by constant use.

How deeply such metaphors are entrenched into our everyday way of *seeing as* might become clearer with the following example: Seeing fog in front of a mountain presupposes a chain of rather complex operations. First, ‘the mountain’ as well as ‘the fog’ have to be seen as clearly delineated from their surroundings. In this sense ‘mountains’ as well as ‘fog’ are given entity and substance. This imposition seems to be deeply rooted in our everyday practices. Nevertheless when questions are asked such as where does the mountain or fog begin, where do they end, what exactly is the substance of fog, or why is the sentence “the car hit the wall” different from “the ship hit the fog,” it becomes clear that seeing ‘fog’ and ‘mountain’ in terms of an entity structure is an imposition. There are grounds to assume such an imposition is not just culturally given and

as such arbitrary, but rather experiential. Even clearer is the imposition of an orientational structure given to the 'mountain'. A mountain does not have an inherent front-back orientation such as a person. Imposing this structure onto a 'mountain entity' might have been due to an experientially more basic gestalt of the prototypical interaction situation—which is usually face to face. So in this case of seeing fog in front of a mountain, one clearly interacts with the mountain entity—at least with the side that is "facing" us.

As these examples show, the imposition of meaningful relations in the ways we see and interpret the world is by no means random and arbitrary. Seeing time as space, emotions as temperatures, life as a container, marriage as a challenge are just a few of the countless attempts to cope with experiences of a new or more complex kind in terms of relatively well-established categories that have been tested through more or less successful functioning in intersubjective practices with other members of our culture.¹ In this sense it can be argued that our capacity to organize experiences metaphorically by way of *seeing as* is at the same time our capacity to impose coherency onto reality (the process of making sense of the world and ourselves in terms of previous experiences). Consequently, seeing the wind in a field of grain as waves, experiencing marriage as a prison, or simply saying "Sally is a block of ice," are only surface phenomena which are grounded in our capacity to think metaphorically.²

If there is one lesson to learn from the most recent debates on the topic of metaphor, it is that metaphor is not simply a comparison of words or an interaction of two conceptual categories. Even the sentence level as the basis of analysis is not sufficient. Metaphorical thinking is much more deeply rooted and part of our everyday practices; the processes of *seeing as* are the processes we must analyze if we want to learn how people interpret their lives, their interactions (what meaningful relations they impose onto reality). Studying metaphoric coherences in people's life stories, searching the metaphoric conceptualizations that structure written texts, and using metaphorical thought as the structuring principle of conversational interactions—these are the orientations that have emerged in recent writings. One aspect of this orientation is the question of how children structure their views of *seeing as* in their spontaneous interactions with the world.

My research started with this aspect. By using the concept of metaphor, I wanted to discover how children learn to combine new and sometimes uncommon experiences with previously established meaning relations.

Play Interaction and Metaphor in Four Year Olds

Two 4 year old boys were videotaped three times at two month intervals. The boys had known each other in nursery school, and had visited

each other's homes on a weekly basis for about 10 months. The children came from similar family backgrounds. The parents were white, middle class, college educated residents of a university community in Northern California. At the time the taping started, the sessions usually began with the mother suggesting an activity "Why don't you show Lucas your new legos?"), and then taking own work elsewhere. From the seven one-half hour videotapes and one hour additional audiotape, 12 different interactional episodes were chosen because they clearly characterize *seeing* as.

The following example might serve as an illustration of a typical interaction structured by *seeing* as characteristics. The episode starts with Noah questioning the investigator, who is working the camera.

*Example 1:*³

N₁ why are you doing that [rising intonation]

M₂ why am I doing what

N₃ why are you putting

N₄ why . . why are you in the ocean

M₅ I'm not in the ocean

N₆ yes you are . . you are

M₇ is this the ocean [rising intonation]

or is this the ocean

or all of it [falling intonation] [pointing with head from the wooden floor to the area that is covered by a rug]

N₈ the . . . the

M₉ huh [rising intonation]

N₁₀ the

.

.

.

.

N₁₇ the wood's the ocean

.

.

.

.

N₃₂ you're in the ocean now [to L]

.

.

.

L₃₆ it's no water in the ocean

N₃₇ this is the ocean . . this is the ocean [stomping on the wooden floor]

L₃₈ you're in the ocean

N₃₉ hehehe [laughing]

.

.

N₄₇ a drawbridge [pointing at investigator who is sitting on the sofa,
 : lifting both legs "drawbridgelike" over the wooden
 : floor]
 :
 :
 :
 :
 :

L₆₆ I'm up here . . hehe . . on the island
 M₆₇ on the island [rising intonation]
 L₆₈ yeah
 N₆₉ you're on the hill Lucas
 :
 :
 :
 :

L₇₃ I stay on top of the hill . . . look . . . I don't get in the water
 N₇₄ I'm in the water
 :
 :
 :
 :

N₈₈ hehe . . . my boat broke [pushing a cardboard against the wall]
 :
 :
 :
 L₉₅ my town broke . . my town broke . . hehehe [laughing]
 N₉₆ poppappappappa [starting singing and looking around]

Noah's suggestion to see the wooden floor between the couch and the carpet as the ocean is itself a conceptual act of *seeing as*. Furthermore, the fact that it was proposed in the form of a question (N₄₇) suggests it was meant to be a conversational opener. At this point not much is established between the interactants. However, as the episode unfolds, the two boys work the earlier suggestion of *seeing as* into a coherent frame with 'a drawbridge' (utterance N₄₇), 'islands' and 'hills' (utterances L₆₆ - N₆₉), and 'a boat' (utterance N₈₈). This joint working out of the coherent frame shows clearly how the communicative partners seek a mutual understanding by continuously negotiating the coherency conditions (by metaphor).

What this example documents is the ability of four-year old children to qualify objects or events along a continuum of *seeing as*. In addition, both children are *jointly* working on sharing and elaborating the perspective taken (here towards a landscape kind of gestalt with parts of an ocean, a drawbridge, islands, hills, and boats). Sharing a perspective and elaborating on it leads to the establishment of a coherent frame that emerges during the cooperative interaction of the peers. However, this notion of a coherent frame is gained *a posteriori*; that is, we see it emerging after the fact, usually at a point where the frame is falling apart and a new one emerges. And in this respect, it would be wrong to argue

that the children start their play interactions with a mentally represented plan of the frame in mind.

By viewing the children as negotiating where to fit objects or events of their surrounding context into the *seeing as* continuum (with novel ways of *seeing as* on the one side, and conventional ones on the other) without having a clear plan or goal of the direction the negotiation can take, we have a clearer notion of what it means to say the child "imagines" a play context or creates his/her own play world. It is often argued that the child "switches realities" when involved in play activities, switches from the real world to an imagined or play world). If this is done in a particular communicative setting, the playmate has to be informed of the switch by "marking" the speech event linguistically or non-linguistically as 'play'. However, in eight of the twelve episodes of our taped play activities, no marking of any possible transition between real and imagined world could be found.

This finding led us to revise the concept of imagination and that of communicative markers of play events in the following fashion. First, it should now be clear that metaphoric processes of *seeing as* are involved in the discovery and imposition of meaningful structures within the processes of categorization of the so-called "real world," as well as in processes of categorization of any possible or imagined world. In this sense it is not a possible world that has to be "imagined" in contrast to the real world, but rather to what degree the metaphoric process is shared by the communicative partner. In other words, it is not the distinction of a 'real world' vs. a 'non-real world' that is a basic characteristic of play or metaphor. Rather, it is the knowledge of the communicative partner that has to be *imagined*. As long as the speaker imagines the listener operates on the basis of the same background assumptions, he/she will not have to clarify the topic or the comment to be understood. When the speaker feels the communicative partner is "lost," he/she may clarify by linguistic or extra-linguistic cues.

Secondly, if we recognize that the play event itself does not get communicatively marked by the child, but rather the clash of sharedness in background assumptions (which occasionally may coincide with the beginning of a new topic or the beginning of play event), we might be able to drop the distinction 'real world' vs. 'imagined' or 'possible world' altogether—at least for the characterization of play. The distinction between 'real world' and 'non-real world' is paralleled in the metaphor research by that between 'literal language' and 'non-literal language,' whereby the term 'non-literalness' is used as a synonym for metaphor or 'metaphoricity.' To summarize, the view expressed here does not conceive of play or metaphor as second-hand concepts based (ontogenetically as well as ontologically) on knowledge of the 'real world' and the 'literalness' of language use. Rather, we view the process of metaphorization as the core of the intersubjectively mediated knowledge of the real world, as well as our language use.

Play Interaction and Metaphor in Two Year Olds

Thus far, the argument has been led from different but related directions. First, it was argued that metaphoric thought plays an important role in all kinds of categorization processes—those that are more conventional as well as those more novel in the *seeing as* continuum. This implies that the child does not have to learn any literal meaning of words, sentences or whatever, before extending this to an imagined or metaphoric meaning, which in order to be understood by the communicative partner has to be “marked” communicatively. Second, play activities take place within the *real world*: a perspective is taken toward an object, an event, a person, or a role that is truly metaphoric. Third, play and metaphor in their communicative context do not necessarily exist as mental plans in the minds of each participant, but rather are spontaneous, whereby the particular metaphoric perspective chosen by the participants lends coherence to the orientation and framing of the activity.

Based on the developing view concerning the relationship between metaphor and play interactions gained from observations of 4-year-old children, a second study was conducted in which we followed two 2-year-old girls in their interactive development over twelve months. One of the goals of this study was to learn more about the earlier developmental routes of metaphor and play, which might enable us to shed more light onto the metaphor-play relationship displayed by 4-year-old children.

Two 2-year-old girls and their mothers were videotaped for two hours once a month, in alternate homes. Six months prior to our taping the mothers and children started to visit each other one afternoon a week. The investigators joined them occasionally in order for the children to become familiar with them and their audiotape equipment. For purposes of comparison, the two girls were chosen from comparable family backgrounds just as the two boys were in the former study. At the point the videotaping began, the girls were 2;2 and 2;5, respectively, and had just started talking to one another.

It became very clear to us that children by the age of 2½ are already well equipped with the ability of *seeing as* as a conceptual activity. The following examples give an impression of the variety of dimensions along the *seeing as* continuum to which the children could appeal. For convenience only, the examples are all taken from the same girl; the other girl, however, showed similar patterns in her development of metaphoric thought.

Example 2:⁴

- J (2;5) [playing with a toy goose; trying to make it swim in an upright position in a bucket of water] he's a funny goosey . . . he doesn't stand up . . . I don't know why he falls over to take a nap in the bath tub

Example 3:

- J (2;7) my blanky is hiding under the table

Example 4:

J (2;10) *hi Michael [coming out of the toy room with a new doll 30 seconds after she had left Michael]*

Example 5:

J (3;1) I'm brooming this book [going with a feather over a book]
 [and a minute later:]
 I'm brooming Mommy's hair [going with a feather over her
 mommy's hair]

Example 6:

M [Jennifer and the investigator, putting a duck-puzzle together:]
 these are the two legs
 J (3;3) no these are not the legs
 ducks don't walk . . . they swim
 M ducks don't walk . . . they swim . . . in the water
 J and then they come out
 and then . . . they . . . then they have feet
 [stress on the second *then*]

Example 5 offers possibly the clearest case for instances of *seeing as*: Jennifer uses and verbally refers to a feather as a broom. Having seen her mother "brooming" might have served as the experiential basis for this metaphor. A similar case is seeing the "goosey's" fall as taking a nap (example 2). Again, we can assume certain experiences of going to bed and lying down that might have led to this particular perspective. Not quite so clear is the instance presented in examples 3 and 6: "My blanky is hiding under the table" could just be a mistaken "is hidden". However, contextual aspects suggest that she simply meant, "From my standpoint I can't see my blanky". Since it was visible from all areas, in the room, it does not matter whether she meant that the blanket was hidden (for her eyes) or hiding; both views require a perspective *seeing as*, and in this respect are based on metaphoric thought.

Example 6 shows the difficulty in deciding whether metaphoric processes involved are only a question of degree. The question of whether ducks really have legs or feet is not solvable. It depends entirely on the perspective taken; or better, yet, they have some kind of legs, but only when they walk. When they swim, we possibly shouldn't see their web-feet as legs. This conflict, caused by seeing certain objects or events from an experiential perspective in order to see them meaningfully, is reflected in the conversational piece given in example 6.

Example 4 makes a similar point. At first sight there seems nothing metaphorical involved in greeting another person particularly when entering the room. However, normally one does not go through the conventional greeting procedures after having left the room for only a few seconds. Thus, the child is forced to make a decision in terms of how to see the situation. And take the appropriate action. In example 4 the greeting was definitely "playful," as conversation shows:

J	hi Michael	
M	hi Jennifer . . . how are you	[rising intonation]
J	fine	["]
M	you are fine	["]
J	mhmm [rising intonation] [= agreeing] and you	["]

As the above examples (2-6) show, 2-year-old children are clearly able to cover almost the whole continuum of *seeing as*: conventional ways of *seeing as*, as in the abundancy of adjective-noun modifications, but also sometimes in conversational arguments as documented in example 6. There are less conventional and more novel instances of *seeing as* as example 3 documents. Example 4 ranges somewhere more towards the middle of the continuum. However, we also find quite a number of instances of novel ways of *seeing as* (cf. examples 2 and 5). All these instances of categorizing the world meaningfully are experientially grounded. That is, children at the age of 2½ make use of the same cognitive operations as adults by taking experiences of a rather well-established domain of knowledge structures in order to better understand what is going on in the here and now. However, such cognitive operations are only half the story. They would not lead anywhere (in particular developmentally) without the communicative context in which they are defined and refined.

Thus far, we have mainly dealt with the ability of perspective *seeing as* as a cognitive operation; we have dealt with it as if such cognitive operations take place in the monadic mind, apart from social conventions and the necessity to communicate and interact with others. In this sense, the relationship between metaphoric thought (as purely cognitive operation) and play interaction is not a direct, immediate one, in spite of the fact that according to our folk belief the use of novel metaphors as well as metaphors derived from conventional forms of *seeing as* is often given the attribute "playful." Nevertheless, the relationship between play and metaphor can only be grasped if the analysis of metaphoric thought is complemented by the analysis of its communicative function. It was argued in the section on 'Metaphor' that the seeing of an object, event, role, etc. in perspective can be used effectively in particular communicative contexts to remind the listener of a shared experience in order to aid his/her understanding of the objects, event, etc. Consequently, we now have to check this claim in more detail against the data from 2½ year old children. Before doing this, it may be recalled that metaphor as a communicative device, to take the same perspective, works only if two conditions are met: the experiential basis has to be shared, and furthermore, the speaker has to know that it is shared.

A first analysis of the interactions of the 2-year-old children showed the suggestions of *seeing as* were directed only rarely toward the peer. Furthermore, if directed towards the peer, such suggestions were rarely

taken and elaborated upon as they were by the 4-year-old children. Examples 7 and 8 show the typical lack of any negotiation and elaboration of such suggestions:

Example 7:

- J (2;5) [playing with playdough]
 I'm gonna make you a pie right here [to Sarah]
 pie . . . one . . . uh huh
 I'm gonna put it in this oven . . . right here it's done . . . it's done
 in the oven

Example 8:

- J (2;5) [playing with playdough]
 are you gingerbreading [asking Sarah whether she was working on a 'ginger-bread-man']
 you shake it down . . . shake it down [the clay]

In both cases, like in many others, we find almost no elaboration on the children's part, although the activities with playdough and in the sandbox are very rich in instances of *seeing as* and their respective namings. In the course of the children's development, we find both girls involved in challenging each other by focusing on their respective *seeing as* suggestion, without any further negotiation or elaboration process (cf. example 9).

Example 9:

- J (3;2) [playing with playdough]
 I'm ready . . . to get the snake in [a piece of clay into the can]
 S (2;11) that isn't a snake [rising intonation]
 J yes it is
 S let me see . . . no it's a pony [falling intonation]
 but I will make one [intonation on I]

In spite of such *seeing as* incidents and their respective namings, one has to note that the frame in which this kind of play takes place is usually suggested by the mothers, and basically maintained by the objects used (the clay and the sand). There seem to be almost no further negotiations necessary in this kind of play. In this respect the activity as well as the naming of objects and any suggestions concerning what to do with them paralleled activities with art projects that we introduced during each session (such as dressing up potatoes, seeing them as people). What all these activities had in common was that the children focused primarily on their activity and used the other's activity (and in particular the playmate's comments on that activity, such as, "I'm ready.... to get the snake in") as a stimulus to continue with one's own activity.

This capacity of *seeing as* and the ability to focus on it verbally seems to be an indispensable prerequisite to the play activities we discussed in the previous section on the 4 year olds. While the 2 year olds were

practicing this capacity using playdough or in the sandbox, they worked at the same time to elaborate upon their shared background knowledge and to establish some kind of intimacy. Since this process is dealt with in more detail in another contribution in this volume (Budwig, Strage and Bamberg), I will only briefly sketch the implications of this important learning process.

Over our twelve month observation period, on a number of occasions one of the girls would begin to sing or make funny noises (example 10). The other girl often joined in, waiting for a minor pause in the singing or noise, and then repeated or slightly changed that noise or melody. Such established joint activities were sometimes interrupted by laughter.

Example 10:

- | | |
|---------|---|
| S (2;5) | [starting to jump up and down on the couch] |
| | ja ja ja [laughing] |
| J (2;8) | ja ja ja [laughter] [tumbles over] |
| | mommy . . . I keep falling down . . . backwards |
| | mommy . . . I keep falling down . . . backwards |
| S | ja ja ja ja ja [laughter] |
| J | ja ja ja ja ja [falling over again] |
| S | ja ja . . . ja ja ja |

In contrast to the difficulties the children show in negotiating a mutual frame verbally or even in understanding each other in the early phase of their relationship, the taking of turns in sound play seemed to present an easier means of establishing and maintaining a mutual frame. The observation that such means are almost never used by the girls in child-adult conversations can be viewed as support of this hypothesis, since the child can rely upon some well-established interactional frames that can easily be recalled, in addition to the strategic assistance provided by an attentive caregiver. However, within the course of such early play interactions centering around sound play, the children develop a sense of shared understanding that will aid the establishment of later play activities that are so common to 4-year-old children. The development of shared understanding is one important component leading to intimacy which in turn can be used by the peers in their attempts to coordinate new experiences in ways interpretable to both.

Metaphor and Play

While dealing with the play interactions of young children, two important aspects have emerged that a theory of play has to account for: the *creativity* and the *spontaneity* of such interactions. Both the creativity as well as the spontaneity of play can better be understood if we look at

them in light of the metaphoric activity basic to human activities and interactions.⁵

Let us start with a consideration of creativity. Play has an underlying conceptual basis identical to that of metaphor, namely the ability of perspective *seeing as*. This conceptual activity ranges between completely novel ways of seeing an object, person or event to socially well-established, conventional ways. Both ends of this continuum, however, characterize ways of categorizing and interpreting which are experientially grounded. In other words, even a completely novel way of seeing a familiar object or person must have an experiential basis so that the interpretation of that object or person is meaningful or "makes sense." The implication is this kind of creativity still has to rely on "old parts" in order to create novel ways of *seeing as*. It would also seem that for practical purposes we as a rule use well established, conventional ways of categorizing the world when trying to express the sudden appearance of novel aspects⁶.

The second important aspect shared by metaphor and play is that they both are spontaneous. It was suggested that play interactions be viewed as a joint construction of a metaphoric frame holding the interaction together. The commonality of metaphor and play, therefore, is the structuring effect a particular way of *seeing as* lends to the situation. In this sense, the situation itself is not taken for granted but rather is a construct of the negotiation between the playmates. Thus, if the situation is a product that has to be negotiated within a fresh, metaphoric perspective, there is no such thing as a clear plan or goal which can be followed in the course of the play interactions, at least not in the minds of the interactants. Frame and situation are spontaneously negotiated.

This observation also helps us to differentiate between *games* and *play*. Games follow highly routine and/or stereotyped rules which can be assumed to form some kind of mentally represented schema. If one of the playmates has good reason to assume the rules of a particular game are represented in the playmate's mind, he/she can call upon such representations with the intention of executing the plans and goals necessary for the joint activity. No further negotiation is required. Thus, it might be appropriate to view games as ritualized play that follow particular mental plans and goals. However, it should be noted that the learning of games requires the ability to 'play' (the cognitive ability of *seeing as* and the capacity to negotiate this particular metaphoric perspective). Therefore, it is also possible to *play games* (to exhibit such playful attitudes as in the play activities described above). Of course it is also possible to participate in games in a non-playful manner (execute the cognitive plan necessary to finish a particular game).

The function of the spontaneous, negotiative aspect of metaphor and play becomes clearer if we consider the intimacy that metaphor as well as play presuppose, and at the same time seem to establish and further. In the analysis of the play interactions of the 2-year-olds, we learned that

when there was not enough shared understanding, the children had difficulty negotiating any coherent play frame. However, with more intimacy they were able to use metaphoric conceptualizations which furthered their intimacy. Many shared experiences are necessary for children to arrive at such elaborate play activities as the 4-year-olds demonstrated.

Starting with the assumption that children have different experiences (highlighting the individual conceptual differences between children rather than their commonalities), the process of metaphorizing successfully forms the basis on which a shared understanding can evolve. It was argued in this article that metaphorization in the play activities of young children can be viewed as relating different perspectives (in terms of *seeing as*) and weaving them into a common frame. Of importance is the fact that once the perspective towards an object, event, a particular interactive frame or a social role is agreed upon, it constitutes a shared experience which contributes to intimacy between the children. Play frames toward the novel end of the metaphorization continuum (provided they are successfully negotiated) contribute to the kind of shared understanding and intimacy which is necessary before new and even more creative play activities are attempted.

In summary, the metaphorization process is viewed as a conceptual activity. However, by framing it in terms of *shared understanding* and *intimacy*, the conceptual activity of *seeing as* is interwoven in the social activity of establishing and elaborating interpersonal relationships (*intimacy*) as well as affective processes of appraisal—two aspects that play an important role for any theory of play. Thus, the proposal presented here is the commonly shared conviction that play is linked with a particular emotional quality best described in terms of *joy* and *happiness*.⁷ This link between play and joy was clearly expressed in our study in the frequent laughter that accompanied spontaneous play activities—particularly within the process of negotiating a novel play frame.

To interpret these expressions of joy and happiness in terms of appraisal processes would have to take the following direction:⁸ the child, when facing a new perspective towards an object, event, or social role, is confronted with an ambiguous and uncertain situation. He/she can appraise this novel encounter in either of two ways, as a threat or as a challenge. Elsewhere (Bamberg, 1981) I have tried to show that the more shared understanding between young children, the more likely novel ways of *seeing as* will be interpreted by the partner as a cooperative bid. In turn, it is more likely that novel encounters in a more intimate relationship will be appraised in terms of a challenge. Thus, children who have practised their processes of metaphorizing in negotiations with another, are more likely to succeed in constructing joint play frames. More simply they are more likely to be 'good play-mates.' On this basis, the function of the affective expressions of smiling and laughter becomes clearer. They symbolize the appraisal strategy of the particular event in terms of a

challenge, to impose meaning relations onto new experiences and to negotiate them successfully). Thus, smiling and laughter can be interpreted as signalling the message "This is play." However, it is not an intentional (cognitive) marker of the activity, but rather an automatic prerequisite and product of the activity.

Finally, the appraisal process as challenge, and subsequent success in negotiation, can be appraised as having a socially supportive function, since these factors contribute to more intersubjectivity and intimacy with other social beings. How to describe particular social support systems (the family, smaller communities, street gangs) in terms of the sharing or overlap of particular metaphors is an interesting question that is open to further analysis. It is already well demonstrated that the skillful use of metaphors and play in culture-specific practices, such as swapping insults among young blacks (cf. Labov, 1972; Taylor and Ortony, 1980), gives the culture-specific approbation that is necessary for the development of social identity.

Notes

Although many people contributed to the ideas in this article, I would like to thank in particular: George Lakoff for fruitful discussions concerning the problems of metaphor; Helen Schwartzman, who helped clarify my understanding of the connection between metaphor and play; and Dick Lazarus, who helped me see the relationship between play and affect more clearly. In addition, this study could not have been possible without the help of the children and their parents, to whom I am especially thankful.

¹For further details concerning the relationship between metaphor, language and inter-subjective practices see Bamberg (1982).

²See Lakoff and Johnson (1980) for a detailed discussion with an abundance of examples demonstrating the points under discussion.

³In the abbreviated transcription of this interactive frame (example 1), N is Noah, L is Lucas, and M is Michael (the investigator). The sequence of the utterances is marked by consecutive numbers; horizontal periods (...) indicate short pauses, while vertical periods indicate speech that has been left out for purposes of transcription. Contextual explanations are added in square brackets.

⁴In the following abbreviated examples (2 through 10) J is Jennifer, S is Sarah, and M is Michael (the investigator); the age of the children is listed in round brackets, contextual notes in square brackets.

⁵This thesis is elaborated upon in Vico's *The New Science* (Vico, 1948).

⁶Schon (1979) gives two examples which demonstrate how a change in perspective of *seeing as* towards a particular object can lead to a new awareness regarding one's interactive practices with this object.

⁷The close semantic link between the two expressions *joyful* and *playful* might be based on the folk notion, which might be grounded on

the culturally (and as such historically developed) shared perspective on labour. It is my conviction that further analysis of this metaphorical perspective of seeing labour as opposed to joy and play could bring more light onto the cultural grounding of particular emotional experiences.

⁸In this rather brief perspective on the inner link between metaphor, play and emotions, I am relying on the 'stress and coping paradigm' as presented in the work by Richard Lazarus and his collaborators. See Folkman, Schaefer and Lazarus, 1979, and Lazarus, Coyne and Folkman, in press, as two of the many publications of the Lazarus group.

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“MOMMY, LET ME PLAY WITH MY FRIEND:” THE MECHANICS AND PRODUCTS OF PEER PLAY

BY
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Abstract

This paper is based on an eight month study of two 2-year-old girls playing together. We have used the study of their play to focus on two sets of issues. The first concerns the *mechanics* of organizing and sustaining play, which we discuss in terms of scaffolds. The mothers “scaffold” when they monitor their children’s interactions, and intervene whenever necessary; the children use the scaffold to solicit assistance in managing play with a peer. The second set of issues pertains to the *products* of peer play. Here, we suggest that the successful negotiation of an interaction consists of interactants establishing and appealing to a sense of shared understanding. A detailed analysis of several play frames illustrates the relationship between the mechanics and products of peer play. We conclude that preschool play is not just an occasion to explore a world of pretense, but also an early lesson in establishing social relationships.

It is commonly agreed that play and the development of communication are very closely related. Studies of play have emphasized the collaborative work of participants in negotiating a shared play frame. Our work takes up exactly this issue, examining the dynamics of the play experience of young peers. To date, two separate research traditions have focused on the negotiative aspects of play: there are those researchers who have investigated the play interactions of the caregiver-child dyad, and there are those who have studied the play of young peers. We shall begin this paper with a brief consideration of each of these research traditions since our research relates to assumptions central to both.

Much existing research has suggested that the earliest interactions occurring between caregiver and child can be characterized as essentially mutual and reciprocal in nature (Brazleton, Koslowski, and Main, 1974; Ryan, 1974; Stern, 1974; Sutton-Smith, 1980). These researchers and others have described the adult-child relationship as one which actively involves the caregiver and the child. Both participants are said to be engaged in a system of mutual regulation. Within this relaxed setting where social interaction occurs, the dyad works together towards more and more sharing of their individual worlds. Researchers (Trevarthen, 1980) have suggested that such relationships are motivated by a mutual notion of trust and cooperation and in addition, by the desire of both caregiver and child to communicate with one another.

While caregiver and child are said to be working together as a dyad, it is apparent they play very different roles in their interactions, and more specifically in their play. Clearly, the caregiver—more experienced, knowledgeable, and flexible about the specific demands of various communicative situations—assumes much of the responsibility for sustaining play (Kaye, 1979). This sort of assistance on the part of the caregiver has been called *scaffolding* by Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976). The scaffolding metaphor refers to the specific structuring the adult provides in his/her work to hold up a dialogue or play routine with the child. The caregiver acts as a sort of finely tuned support system that at first performs much of the work so a shared frame can be initiated and maintained. Over time, the infant takes on more and more responsibility for the interaction so the process of negotiation becomes more equally shared by the dyad. It is important to note that, even within the specially structured context of caregiver-child interaction, pre-verbal children have been credited with some communicative skills as, for example, the ability to take turns (Kaye, 1979; Kaye and Charney, 1980; Murphy and Messner, 1977; Schaffer, 1977).

The research concerning the caregiver-child relationship suggests that very young children are actively involved in sharing certain kinds of play interactions with their caregivers. Nevertheless, the roles of caregiver and child have been considered asymmetrical to the extent that the play is dependent on the strategic assistance offered by the caregiver.

In recent years, more research has been conducted concerning the nature of interactions taking place between young peers. For a while such research was neglected for a variety of reasons including the fact that emphasis was placed on studying the mother-child dyad due to assumptions fostered by psychoanalytic theory (Rubin, 1980, p. 2-4) and the dominant view of the child as egocentric. During the 1970's though, as researchers began to view the child as playing a more active role in his/her development, studies were designed to investigate a wide variety of issues concerning peer relations (Bronson, in press and Lewis and Rosenblum, 1975). Research on the play interactions of young peers can be divided into two groups:

- Play occurring between pre-verbal toddlers.
- Play interactions of pre-school age children.

A major debate centers on the question of whether toddler peers can work out joint play frames. Those researchers who claim that indeed reciprocity exists between toddler playmates (Becker, 1977; Doyle, Connolly and Rivest, 1980; Mueller and Brenner, 1977; Rubenstein and Howe, 1976) have focused primarily on the attempts of peers to coordinate shared frames rather than emphasizing the mutually organized play frames. It seems likely that in fact there may have been relatively few instances of elaborated play sequences observed in the interactions of toddler peers. As Bronson (in press) suggests, while the toddler may be interested in his/her peer, s/he is still very much dependent on a more experienced communicative partner to help structure joint play activities.

In contrast to the toddler peer research, those focusing on the play interactions of preschool age peers are in agreement that children by the time they enter nursery school can negotiate mutual play frames with an agemate. There is much evidence suggesting that peers' talk is not egocentric (Keenan, 1974; Keenan and Klein, 1975; McTear, Note 4), and preschoolers have been credited with a variety of communicative skills necessary for initiating and maintaining play frames with a peer (Corsaro, 1979; Garvey, 1975, 1977b). Recently a small number of investigators have studied the process by which preschool age peers negotiate joint play (Cook-Gumperz, 1975, Note 2; Cook-Gumperz and Gumperz, 1976; Gelphman, Note 3; Schwartzman, 1976, 1978). The ways joint play activities unfold through the ongoing interpretation of both verbal and nonverbal cues has been examined. The establishment and elaboration of the play frames of preschool age peers are said to rely heavily on the use of highly repetitive sequences and routines (Garvey, 1977a; Iwamura, 1980).

In summary, this research indicates that preschool age peers already are quite able to collaborate in joint play. No longer are they so dependent on more experienced communicative partners, such as their caregivers, to help structure their play.

Attempting to build the two different research traditions into one coherent developmental frame, it becomes clear that we still know very little about the *transition* between the somewhat asymmetrical negotia-

tions taking place between caregiver and infant and those occurring between preschool peers. Our work narrows on this gap. We investigate the question of how young peers first come to construct shared play activities. Our discussion centers around two ways children achieve mutual agreement. First, we will examine what we have labelled the *mechanics* of peer play. In addition, we will discuss what we have called the *products* of peer play. We will highlight also some of the ways the mechanics and products of peer play evolve and interact.

In the following discussion we draw from examples of the play interactions taking place between two 2-year-old girls. These data stem from a year long longitudinal study examining the children's interactive development. Both children came from similar family backgrounds. The girls' parents were white, middle class, college educated residents of a university community in Northern California. The children's fathers were employed full-time, while their mothers held part-time jobs and took on the role of primary caregiver.

Six months prior to our study, the children and their mothers started meeting one afternoon each week. The mothers became acquainted at a local recreation center where their children were enrolled in a swimming class. At the completion of the course, the mothers decided the formation of an informal playgroup would be a good experience for their daughters. Though the foursome met once each week, we joined in only once a month. We video-taped whatever activities took place from the time the visiting mother-child dyad arrived until the time they left. The play sessions, which alternated between the two homes, lasted an average of two hours. Our video-tapes begin when the peers first started talking to one another. It should be noted that our role in the play group was one of participant observer. While we spent time attending to the video equipment, we also interacted with the children and their mothers. We believe this contributed to the relaxed atmosphere that existed throughout the video sessions.

The Mechanics of Peer Play

In referring to the mechanics of the peers' play, we are interested in the processes by which joint activities are established and elaborated upon. At first, the children had difficulty working out joint play activities by themselves. They lacked sufficient knowledge about how such negotiations should be carried out, as well as what such collaborations should be about. This is not to say they did not become involved in shared play frames. In these early sessions, the mothers mediated such organizational aspects of the play.

In describing the mothers' strategic assistance to the mechanics of peer play, we have borrowed the notion of *scaffolding* from Wood et al. (1976) to show more clearly the processes by which the mothers help ensure the peers' participation in shared experiences.¹ The mothers did

not establish the play for the children. Rather, their mediation helped regulate the peers' negotiations. The mothers scaffolded the play by stepping in at necessary junctures and faded away when no longer needed. We will discuss three ways in which the scaffolding process contributed to the peers' construction of shared play frames.

One use of the scaffold concerns the initiation of a joint play frame. The mothers directed the children towards one another by suggesting a possible new play activity or a way to turn one child's play into a joint activity. The following sequence, taken from the first video session, illustrates this first kind of scaffold.²

- Example 1: Session I, C1 = 2.6; C2 = 2.3
 C1 by tub of water playing with toy goose. C2 sitting on M2's lap.
- (1) M1: Maybe the goose should go on the swing.
 - (2) C1: I'll give him a swinger-binger (taking goose to the swing area).
 - (3) M2: Wanna help C1 give him a swing? (to C2)
 - (4) C2: (approaches swing and helps C1 push)
 - (5) C1: I need to do that! (glances to M1)
 - (6) M1: You share with C2, she wants to help.
 - (7) C1: She can help.
 - (8) C2: (removes goose from swing, takes it to a tub of water and runs to M2)
 - (9) C1: She is getting him out. She is throwing him out.
 - (10) C2: I throwed him back in.
 - (11) M2: You want to put a boat on the swing? (to C2)

In line (1) of this example M1 suggests a possible play activity. C1 complies with this suggestion and takes her toy goose to the swing. In line (3) M2 encourages C2 to share this activity with C1. Thus by the end of line (4) the two children are at the swing together. In the first part of this example, both mothers attempted to get the peers to recognize a joint focus.

A second use of the scaffolding process relates to the mothers' strategic assistance once the peers are already engaged in joint activity. The mothers suggested ways to elaborate on an agreed-upon frame and thereby helped *sustain mutual focus*. This second kind of scaffold is illustrated in lines (5)-(11) of Example 1. Despite the peers' mutual focus by the end of line (4), they encounter problems when elaborating the frame: In line (5) C1 wants to be the 'pusher' of the swing; her mother reminds her to share her toys and expresses what C2 might intend. Though consensus seems to be reached in line (7) (when C1 acknowledges that her peer can help), problems surface in lines (8)-(10). However, in line (11) we see that the elaboration of this frame is dependent upon a suggestion from one of the mothers.

The third use of the scaffold concerns how *mothers redirect the children's attention to their peer* when the their help has been solicited by the children. At first, the mothers were quite responsive to these requests. Around the fourth month of our study though, such requests were responded to as follows: "Maybe C2 can help you," "Can you help C1? I don't want to get down on the floor," and "Show C2—she is the one who does not know." In the later months of this longitudinal study, the adults played a less central role in the organization of the play by redirecting the children's attention towards one another.

The foregoing examples illustrate three different ways the mothers in our study helped regulate the children's interactions so that peer play could evolve. At different stages of development and with regard to different situational demands, the scaffold aided in the organization and maintenance of play in various ways. We shall not further examine the specifics of the scaffolding process (Strage, Bamberg, and Budwig, 1981); the point to be made here is more general, namely that the mothers, through the process of scaffolding, help foster the initiation and elaboration of joint play activities among young peers.

The Products of Peer Play

Thus far we have discussed the role of the caregivers in helping young peers negotiate joint play frames. In highlighting the role of the caregivers, one can too easily lose sight of another very important factor contributing to the development of peer play—a factor that possibly is best understood under the heading of *shared understanding*.

In order to coordinate joint frames (regardless of whether they center around play or other forms of communication), interactants need some degree of *shared understanding*. By use of the term shared understanding, we mean the individuals' competence to fit singular experiences into a scenic understanding, thereby constructing meaningful wholes—wholes that are not only meaningful to that individual, but also to other members of a community or culture. In this sense, the meaning of particular scenes and/or experiences must be shared intersubjectively in order to be interpreted as meaningful (Bamberg, 1980).

In terms of the information processing metaphor, this complex process is usually presupposed. Researchers within this particular branch of Cognitive Psychology take for granted that members of a particular culture share a knowledge base or common storage which they can employ in order to communicate with each other. However, in contrast to this rather static view of a pre-existing knowledge storage, it is our aim to show how individuals, and in particular children, reach a common knowledge base via processes of understanding. We start from the assumption that children have rather different experiences. Thus, what children must learn in the socialization process is to take into account the co-

participant's experiences, learning to relate these to their own perspective. By communicating across their differences, children build up shared understanding. Another paper in this volume discusses exactly this point in showing how the stage of shared understanding is reached via processes of metaphorization (Bamberg, this volume). Here we want to follow up on this proposal and elaborate upon it by showing how the construction of shared understanding leads to a 'better understanding' between communicative partners—a notion that could be called at a different level of analysis *establishing intimacy* (Cohen, 1978).

With regard to our study, the task in negotiating joint play frames becomes one of the play-mates constructing ways to express their views of the play situation that are meaningful to one another. The peers must recognize that their playmate might not share the same perspective in a play situation. Therefore, the children have to learn to coordinate play across their different perspectives. It is our contention that without a minimal amount of shared understanding between the peers, no joint play could take place.

The question remains: How is it that two peers arrive at some level of shared understanding? In the previous section of this paper we stressed the role of the mothers in fostering joint play between the peers. Indeed, the mothers' role could be interpreted as helping the children arrive at a sense of shared understanding. Clearly the mothers aided with the mechanics of negotiating joint frames. In mediating the peers' play, the mothers called upon experiences that were similar to both peers, as for example when the mothers suggested activities with which both children were familiar. In addition, the mothers called attention to differences in the children's perspectives and at times reminded the children to consider the point of view of their peer.³ While there is little doubt that the mothers contributed to the coordination of the peers' play activities, as well as to the development of shared understanding between the peers, the children's achievement of shared understanding cannot be viewed as the mere result of the mothers' input. This view would imply an underestimation of the children's part in the achievement of shared understanding believed to be critical to the negotiation of more elaborate play frames.

We will focus now on the ways the children themselves construct joint play activities through the use of their growing sense of shared understanding. This point becomes clearer if we illustrate how the children in the earliest video sessions make use of the restricted means they have available for coordinating play interactions.

In the first video sessions, joint peer play almost exclusively involved repetition. The peers relied heavily on sound play, such as repeating and varying the contours of a peer's previous utterance, or taking turns performing a similar action, as for example throwing small wooden blocks one at a time into a tub of water. In one such play sequence, the children took turns jumping across the couch, rhythmically repeating the sounds "Ja, ja, ja." They continued this activity with roars of laughter for

more than 10 minutes, until they were too dizzy to continue. The following excerpt from this interactive sequence is typical of the sorts of early play frames the peers negotiated on their own.

Example 2: Session III, C1 = 2.8; C2 = 2.5

C1 and C2 have been jumping across the couch saying the following:

- (1) C2: Ja, ja, ja (laughter)
- (2) C1: Ja, ja, ja (laughter)
- (3) C1: Ja, ja, ja (laughter) (tumbles over)
Mommy I keep falling down—backwards
Mommy I keep falling down—backwards
- (4) C2: Ja, ja, ja, ja, ja (laughter)
- (5) C1: Ja, ja, ja, ja, ja (falls over)
- (6) C2: Ja, ja, (slight pause) ja, ja, ja

In the above example, the peers have successfully organized a mutual play frame centering around the limited means they each bring to the play interaction. Not only do the peers collaborate in deciding on a focus, but they agree on ways to elaborate the frame. This relatively simple play sequence takes on new light when it is interpreted as an early form of cooperation between the peers. The coordination of such frames seems to be an experience the peers find mutually satisfying and enjoyable. Within the context of these early play interactions, the peers are developing a sense of intimacy which enhances their shared understanding of one another. This sense of intimacy stems not only from the joy of play, but also from the joy of successfully working out a joint play activity. In the first utterance found in Example 2 (line 1), C2 offered her peer one of many possible perspectives that could be taken in that setting. By joining in and repeating C2's comment (line 2), C1 is not only acknowledging her acceptance of C2's invitation, but in copying C2's actions, C1 suggests that she views her peer's utterance (line 1) as an initiation bid—a bid that could be both understood and responded to. It is the opening invitation, the response, as well as the joy found in the experience, regardless of the play frame's relative simplicity, that fosters the peers' sense of intimacy. Within this context, the peers are developing the shared understanding said to play an important role in the negotiation of the more complex play frames found in the later video sessions.

In the short span of this study, the peers seem to be developing a greater sense of shared understanding. Not only do the children's negotiations reflect an increasing ability to work out the mechanics of joint play, but also they base their interactions on a growing background of shared experience. Furthermore, the sense of intimacy developing between the peers is reflected in the increasingly cooperative nature expressed in many of the peers' joint play frames. The following example captures the more elaborate nature of the peers' negotiations. In this example C1 has

been reading a storybook with one of the researchers. C1 notices that C2 is playing on the floor nearby and approaches her. The following example is an excerpt from the play interaction that evolved.

- Example 3: Session VII, C1 = 2.12; C2 = 2.9
 C1 has approached C2 who is on the floor examining a stamp pad and 'stampers'.
 C1 requests water and paper from M1.
 C1 is returning with the supplies.
- (1) C1: Mesty-mesty bing bing (singing).
 Look C2.
 - (2) C2: A-ABCDEFG, HI (singing)
 - (3) C1: (joins in) HIJKLOmenOG, Jill,R (stamping)
 Make a 'C'! How about this? You do this one. Look.
 Put it in here. You don't put 'em both in there.
 - (4) C2: (inaudible)
 - (5) C1: And you put the thing in there.
 Where's the lid? (slight pause)
 Where's the lid, Mommy? Where's the lid?
 - (6) C2: Right there (softly).
 - (7) C1: Mommy, where's the lid?
 - (8) C2: Here (hands C1 the lid to stamp pad).
 - (9) C1: Thank you. Thank you for giving me the lid.

In the above example, the two peers have constructed a play frame centering around a stamp pad and stampers that belong to C1. While C2 is examining these objects, C1 recognizes that her peer has neither the water nor paper necessary for making the stamps "work." C1 requests these supplies from her mother and returns from the kitchen with paper, singing a song that is seemingly created on the spot. Her peer, not familiar with this particular song, joins the singing activity by chanting a version of the 'ABCs.' C1, familiar with this song, acknowledges the appeal to shared background by switching from her version to that of her peer. In line (3) C1 begins explaining the mechanics of "stamping." While in the earlier video sessions repetition was the "stuff" of the peers' play, now they converse as they take turns using the stamp pad and stamps. C1's explanation of how to use the stamps indicates her growing awareness that her peer may not have the same background knowledge of how to use the toys as she herself does. Furthermore, C1's explanation suggests her ability to communicate across such experiential differences. Throughout this example, one senses the cooperative spirit underlying the peers' play. Based on shared understanding, the peers have turned what could have been solitary play into a joint play activity.

We contend that as a result of the gradual development of shared understanding, and the children's growing ability to rely on verbal resources, the peers' play in the later sessions more closely approximates

the sophisticated play of preschool peers described by other researchers which we discussed in the first section of this paper. We do not want to suggest, however, that by the end of our last video session the peers' negotiations were without problems. As the next example illustrates, despite a growing amount of shared understanding, the construction of a joint play frame was not always smooth.

- Example 4: Session VII, C1 = 2.12; C2 = 2.9
C1 and C2 are playing with clay.
C1 is explaining she has a 'boulder' (a marble) stuck in her clay. M1 and M2 talk together on the couch nearby.
- (1) C2: (responding to C1's explanation) A boulder?
 - (2) C1: (doesn't seem to hear C2) Look. (pause)
Look (holds up clay). (2 second pause)
Look (6 second pause). Look, look C2, look (holds clay closer to C2) look, look.
 - (3) C2: I'm making a pancake!
 - (4) C1: Look, (puts clay even closer) look.
 - (5) C2: That's silly (refers to marble that has fallen out of clay) Uh-oh, fell off.
 - (6) C1: N-No this is not—it didn't fall off—didn't fell off—it just—look at it. Look at. This is not—don't say it fell off, it just bouldered!

In the fourth example the peers have difficulty arriving at a shared perspective on how to view the clay they are manipulating. C1 explains that the marble stuck in her clay is to be viewed as a boulder. C2, not understanding, questions her, but speaks (line 1) in a rather soft tone which goes unanswered by C1. Instead, C1 attempts to solicit her peers' attention with no success (line 2). When C2 does respond in line (3), C1 seems dissatisfied; she only wants her peer to notice her own wad of clay. It is not until line (5) that C2 does acknowledge C1's clay, but still no mutual perspective on how to view the clay is reached. Despite the growing foundation of shared understanding developed over time, the peers still have difficulty negotiating shared activities. In Example 4 they finally opt to work independently on their own clay constructions rather than attempting to further negotiate a joint frame. Nevertheless, even this episode reveals the extensive efforts the peers invest in their attempts to construct shared play frames.

In this section we have suggested that the notion of shared understanding is a necessary factor contributing to the successful negotiation of peer play. It has been our contention that through play itself peers attain more and more shared understanding, not only in terms of an increased amount of shared experience, but also in terms of a sense of intimacy allowing them to communicate despite their different perspec-

tives. In this sense, our discussion of the mothers' role in the peers' play is only one aspect contributing to the peers' play. The mothers act not so much as socializing agents, teaching their children to play with one another, but rather as scaffolds that allow play to occur. Through the *process of play* the children develop a greater sense of shared understanding and to this extent, the products of peer play—shared understanding—are a second important contribution to the nature and development of peer play.

Interaction of Mechanics and Products

Thus far we have described two factors contributing to the development of peer play. We have stressed the role of the mothers who, through a scaffolding process, act as a support system which facilitates the peers' play. We have considered also the ways in which the peers themselves make use of their growing sense of shared understanding in establishing joint play frames. In discussing these two aspects which contribute to the negotiation of joint peer play separately, we have consequently de-emphasized the inter-relationship that exists between the scaffolding process and the peers' development of shared understanding. In the following section we will discuss the interdependence of these two factors.

The interaction between scaffolding and shared understanding can be found both *microdevelopmentally*, within particular play episodes, and *macrodevelopmentally*, across the various play sessions. In several of the play episodes, the peers rely on shared understanding as well as on their mothers' scaffolding in their attempts at coordinating play. The mothers step in and assist the children when they need such help, but even in such situations a certain amount of shared understanding between them exists. Consider the following example taken from the fifth video session:

- Example 5: Session V, C1 = 2.10; C2 = 2.7
 C1 and C2 are working on a craft task that C1 has brought to C2's home. After M1 explains the task of decorating 'little people' with markers and stickers, she joins M2 on the couch.
- (1) C1: (referring to stickers) I got a lot. Stick 'em on the table.
 - (2) C2: (reaches for stickers in C1's hand)
 - (3) M1: C2 needs one (8 second pause, C1 lets go)
 - (4) C1: She has one (looking at M1).
 - (5) C1: I'm sticking 'em on the table and then I'm gonna put 'em on the man.
 - (6) C2: I'm gonna put some buttons on 'em (tries to get the roll of stickers from C1).
 - (7) C1: I'll give you one. Here.

In this episode, C1 and C2 have jointly built a play frame around decorating small containers with colored stickers and marking pens. C1's mother provides strategic assistance throughout this play frame of the sort offered in line (3). Note how the scaffold quickly recedes; M1 returns to her conversation with M2 after she has "patched up" the play situation. In line (6) a similar incident arises. Again, C2 wants to use the roll of stickers that C1 is holding. This time the peers work out the problem for themselves. It is not that the mothers only scaffold the earliest play interactions and later leave the peers with sole responsibility for negotiating play frames. The mothers, quite sensitive to the needs of their children, lend assistance within particular frames when necessary, allowing the children to rely on their growing sense of shared understanding. Thus, the mothers and the children work together, making joint peer play possible.

With regard to the macrodevelopmental level (across the various play sessions), an interaction also exists between the scaffolding process and the peers' reliance on shared understanding. Early in this study the mothers intervened more frequently in the peers' play than in the later sessions. In the first sessions the peers knew very little about the mechanics of negotiating frames and in addition, not much intimacy had yet developed between them. Consequently, the mothers assisted when necessary to assure that joint play could be established. As the peers began to share knowledge about ways to negotiate joint play frames, and as their relationship gained a sense of intimacy, the children relied less on the strategic help provided by their mothers. During this study, the peers themselves gradually shared more and more the responsibility for negotiating joint play frames.⁴

In summary, we believe that it is neither the sole contributions of the scaffolding process nor the children's reliance on shared understanding that leads successfully to coordinated peer play. We have suggested that it is the relationship between these two factors that seems critical to an understanding of how young peers learn to play together.

Concluding Comments

In this paper, play has been viewed as an activity in which play partners work towards a shared understanding of the play context. We have purposely stressed the negotiative aspects of play and consequently, the created nature any play frame assumes. Our discussion has focused on two inter-related components in the development of children's ability to negotiate play frames with a peer. We have discussed the *mechanics* of negotiating the frame in terms of the scaffold process, whereby the mothers intervened when the peers were unable to carry out the negotiation alone. We also have discussed the *products* of peer play in terms of the establishment of shared understanding, which the children depend upon while negotiating play frames. Finally, we have suggested some

ways in which the mechanics and products are *inter-related*: as the sense of shared understanding increases, the children require less assistance with the basic organization of play, and the mothers intervene less frequently, letting the children coordinate joint play on their own. Through the process of play, the peers, with the help of their mothers, construct more and more elaborate play activities. The products of earlier play are said to contribute to the peers' growing sense of shared understanding.

It should go without saying that our findings may be limited to the sort of population that we have studied. Clearly, the sorts of conclusions we have drawn from this study must be weighed in terms of a broader cultural perspective. We would suggest that shared understanding is a necessary component of the successful negotiation of all peer play. Furthermore, we would expect that in all societies peer play is facilitated by the assistance of some support system. But what the nature of this support system is and how it functions seem to be culture specific questions. In our study we have suggested that the mothers scaffolded their children's play, aiding the development of a sense of shared understanding between the peers. Nevertheless, in all cultural groups mothers do not formulate small play groups, nor are they present to act as support systems. Often children spend a great deal of time with older peers and siblings and perhaps they too act as support systems. It seems, then, that our detailed analysis in part has isolated some cultural specific aspects that contribute to the development of peer play. We also believe, though, that our study has raised questions concerning peer play that go beyond the population we studied.

We began our study hoping to arrive at a better understanding of the transitions between play interactions of caregiver and child and those occurring between preschool age peers. In the course of our analysis we hope to have shown that peer play at this age acts as an entry into the cultural system of shared understanding. In focusing on the interplay between the mechanics and products of the peers' play, we have tried to show that play is more than the chance to try out social roles in a world of make believe. It is our belief that peer play functions as an early lesson in establishing and embellishing social relationships.

Notes

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'Our notion of the mothers' role in the peers' interaction also borrows the notion of strategic assistance from Wertsch (1979, 1980).

²To clarify the relationship between the two mother-child dyads, we will refrain from using names and instead refer to the slightly older child and her mother as C1 and M1, and the other dyad as C2 and M2. While somewhat impersonal, we hope this will contribute to the flow of this paper.

³Hoffman (in press) makes reference to a similar scaffolding process which assists the child in learning to take into account a peer's well-being. It is argued that parents express a play-mate's feelings ("Don't yell at him. He was only trying to help.") and to this extent the parents are said to contribute to the child's moral development.

⁴For a more detailed analysis of the interaction between the scaffolding process and the peers' reliance on shared understanding, see Budwig (1981).

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12

A NARRATIVE OF PLAY AND INTIMACY



**BY
DIANA KELLY-BYRNE**

Abstract

Using information gathered from an investigation of a seven year old female's play relationship with an adult, this paper argues that there is a close relationship between social play and intimacy. It suggests that in a private setting (the child's bedroom) not only are the play transformations produced of a higher and more elaborate order than those found in public settings (nursery schools and clinical settings) but play is used to effect interpersonal communication of an intimate order.

The discovery that play is a form of communication has constituted a quantum leap forward in the progress of play research. Older work dealt mainly with play as representative of other psychological processes. Play was looked upon as solitary, parallel or social (Parten, 1932, 1933; Rubin, 1980). Fantasy was regarded as a kind of ability making one non-aggressive, more persistent, etc. (Singer, 1973). However, none of these categorizations yielded much information about the phenomenon itself. Other studies that regarded play as a kind of structure occupied a sphere of platonic abstraction where the particular players and the particular occasions were disregarded. Consequently, once again, our understanding of the phenomenon was limited (Fein and Apfel, 1979b).

More recent studies, despite their excellence, may also have their drawbacks. I refer to the work of Garvey (1977, 1979) and Schwartzman (1976, 1978). By insisting that playing is saying, by showing that text is always to be found in context, and that context can also be found in text, these researchers have largely confined themselves to children playing in laboratory or nursery school settings. It can be argued that such public settings militate against our observing very significant developments in play. The transformations we observe are those momentary accommodations that must be undergone to "get things going." Often, little else develops as players are hindered by continuous interruptions from teachers, time schedules, and other children. Additionally, in such situations relationships tend to be relatively public. Frequently the lack of close friendship among the players effectively focuses behavior to a much greater extent on negotiation to start a relationship than would otherwise be the case. As a result, from studies made in public settings, not only do we get little sense of what occurs after these negotiations have been accomplished, but there is little sense of any real development and innovation in a majority of these cases. Furthermore, in both Schwartzman's and Garvey's work, because the participants' relationships are relatively "public" and the time continuum not exhaustively studied, what comes from their research is once again a variety of categorized behaviors such as "communications," "plans," "roles," "statements," and "genres" which show the intertwining of setting and scene, of saying and playing, but still do not give us a sense of what it is all about.

The Study

The present study was undertaken to see if a better sense of the character and function of play might evolve from an intensive play relationship carried out between an adult and a child over an extensive period of time. Despite the obvious "scientific" limitations, it seemed worthwhile to have the adult adopt both the role of player and observer, thus gaining all the advantages that accrue from involved participation (Agar, 1980; Vygotsky, 1978). Moreover, by continuing the relationship for an

extended time (one year) it was believed that the developmental character of play might begin to be apparent. Perhaps, it was argued, by witnessing the transformations of play over time, its function becomes more apparent.

The following account will consider some material from the first encounter with the child, a session lasting 3-4 hours. Each of the encounters that followed during the year were of similar duration. The material from our initial encounter will be presented embedded in the verbal interpretations of a Goffman-like account of how human interactions are managed and flow forward. His concepts of encounters, self-presentations, rituals, rules, strategies, brackets, front and back-stage behavior, and disattention will be used as they seem to be most sensitive to the intricacies of text and context in the present case (Goffman, 1959, 1974). At the same time, our first play session will be presented as a narrative-like occasion with its own orientations, interdictions, disequilibria, testings, liminal zones, and resolutions. What follows is such a description, commentary, and analysis of the events which occurred when I first met Helen.

A Play Encounter: A Narrative Description and Analysis

I was to be a new baby-sitter. It was an opportunity to establish a relationship with a prospective research subject in whose play and story behavior I was interested. A great deal was at stake for me as a potential investigator. This was probably true for the child too, although that was not known to me until much later on. How then did we structure our encounter in such circumstances? It was five o'clock on a summer's evening when I first met Helen. As she opened the front door to her home, I initiated the encounter by saying, "Hi! I'm Diana." It is customary for adults in our society, at least nervous ones, to initiate encounters with children by inviting them to respond to greetings, questions, or requests. However, the child's response was uncharacteristic. Her comment, "Um! Another Wonder Woman," is an evaluation of the adult which is usually part of an inner response to a situation, rarely voiced so candidly during introductions in face-to-face encounters. In addition, it was a comment that linked the child and her world by allusion to a stranger, the new baby-sitter. It functioned as an early orientation to the child's world of reference. Orientations supply information necessary to understand a situation. They may also serve to link different orders of experience in a situation. The child's early cue becomes a preface, if you will, for what is to come. However, at the time, this early cue for orientation to the child's world was not received by me.

This direct encounter between us was then displaced briefly by the child's parents who greeted me and discussed plans for the remainder of

the evening. They suggested the child be taken to "Gino's" for dinner, adding they planned to be back about eight o'clock. The exchanges so far have taken place in the foyer and adjoining living room.

The child initiated the next question. She asked me whether I had read the Bible. When I replied I had read a great deal of it, Helen said she had read the entire Old Testament. Offering to read me some of it, she duly turned to a passage from the Psalms and read it somewhat stiltedly, but accurately, although with not much sense to it. She arbitrarily stopped at a certain point and looked at me. I complimented her efforts and enquired whether she knew many of the stories in the Bible. Helen said she did.

The child's question about the Bible and subsequent behavior demonstrating her reading prowess suggests a particular presentation of self. Although the presentation is implied and therefore indirect, in Goffman's terms it is front-stage behavior (1959). It is behavior by which the child wishes to regulate and shape the encounter by presenting herself in a particular and favourable light. The self presented was that of a competent, well read, literate, and superior figure.

Helen then laid the Bible on the settee. Once again, Helen initiated the conversation, by asking me what we should do. I asked her whether she would like me to read her a story. Her response to this was she could read them herself. Having thus had the reading activity excluded, relegated to a position of inattention, and the child's own competence in the area underlined, I then sought to discover another focus for joint attention. I asked the child what she would prefer to do. The child's response to this was to say rather haughtily, "Don't you think we'd better get to know each other first?" This marked a crucial point in the encounter. In it lies the implication that there was a certain order of events or ritual to be negotiated before all else. The utterance sought permission to direct attention at sharing information about the self with the other. It was also an attempt to mobilize the activity between us, the interactants, so what she wished to convey would have been expressed through it. As Goffman points out, such moves are crucial if a participant's activity, in this case Helen's, is to become significant to the other (Goffman, 1959).

The child's suggestion about us getting to know one another becomes even more striking when we consider her next response. When I agreed with the suggestion, she set up a further condition. "Okay. But then you have to come to my room." This was another element in Helen's bid to negotiate the encounter successfully. Her bid to ritualize and control what was going on is further focused by her designation of a separate location, a physical frame, for the ritualistic process of getting to know one another. Frames are metacommunications about events which not only help to codify them, but reveal the nature of the relationship between communicators. Gregory Bateson defined them as metacommunications, or exchanged cues and propositions about codification at one level, and about the relationship between communicators on another (Ruesch and Bateson, 1968).

Helen's emphasis on relocation for the new activity becomes interesting when considering that often, though not always, certain special orders of events are marked multiply and that part of this marking is of a physical nature such as by location. Therefore, in addition to marking linguistically the onset of a different realm of behavior, the child used the location to differentiate between that which is outside, and that which is inside. Her behavior indicated a distinction between what had transpired so far and what was to come.

The child has successfully controlled the encounter thus far and oriented the adult to her concerns which are shortly to be more fully revealed. She has also suggested her desire for a particular kind of relatedness between them. The nature of this relatedness became clearer as the evening progressed.

To return to the narrative, because my motive was to allow the child's concerns to shape the occasion, I agreed to move to the bedroom. As we walked up the stairs and stood on the threshold to Helen's bedroom, she stopped short. Turning to me, she announced an interdiction: "I tell no one my dreams, secrets, secret language, or about my superheroes, so don't ask me about them." As she said this, I could not help noticing that the surface of the door to Helen's room and part of a bedroom wall were filled with posters of Wonder Woman as well as other allusions to the world of superheroes.

Helen's threshold behavior, although striking, seemed at first blush anomalous, given her earlier wish to share more of herself with me. However, this act of negation may be shown to be entirely consistent with the child's own plot for the occasion. It is almost as if Helen were staging her own sacred drama. When considering this threshold behavior, it becomes clear that having already oriented me, her co-participant, to another frame for activity and marked it by its location, Helen further underlined the import of her behavior to come by a series of staged tests. Van Gennep shows how thresholds symbolize beginnings of new statuses (in Douglas, 1961). Douglas claims that the homely experience of going through a door expresses many kinds of entrance. She adds that no experience is too lowly to be taken up in ritual and given a lofty meaning. For Helen what was at stake was initiating me, an adult, into her inner world. This to her was worthy of ritual. In fact, Douglas suggests that the more personal and intimate the source of ritual symbolism, the more telling its message. The child was signalling the new domain to be entered by her use of frame, both locationally and conceptually.

Let me return to Helen's interdiction tabooing certain areas of her experience from our conversation. This functions two ways. First, it becomes part of a series of tests the child gives the adult. These are tests of the adult's suitability as a partner in her world, and in terms of the child's own ritualistic plot, they become rites of initiation. Secondly, the interdiction functions metacommunicatively. It defines the activity to be engaged in within the room by negation or taboo. By drawing attention to

what is *not* to transpire in the new frame, Helen delineates and focuses on that to which she will soon attend. The child is in fact communicating the paradoxical nature of the behavior shortly to be engaged in. What she will reveal, she suggests, will not really be her dreams, secrets and so on but rather a play on these phenomena. The play will be of the order of the ‘nip’ rather than the ‘bite’ in Bateson’s terms (1956). The paradoxical nature of her interdiction was evidenced in her later behavior in her bedroom.

Supporting the child’s right to make certain themes taboo, I said that was fine and enquired what we would do instead. She assured me we would find something to do. Once we were in the room, Helen “breaks through into performance” (Hymes, 1975a). She asked me whether I could fly and demonstrated this behavior. I accepted the challenge, and said that I thought I could. As Helen urged me to fly, I followed the child in a flying movement while she showed signs of enjoying herself. She continued flying to the accompaniment of whizzing noises and then, once more interrogated me. She asked if I knew who she was. As I shook my head in puzzlement, she said that she was “Beauty the Butterfly” and then “Golden Bird the Raven Helper.” When I commented that they were all good at flying, she rather emphatically and smugly commented that of course they were since they were superheroes. I did feel rather silly from time to time and nervously wondered what task she would set me to next. However, I felt it was crucial for me to participate in her world since this was part of my contract for getting to know her.

With this spate of flying activity, we had entered a very different realm from that of the everyday. We were now in the realm of fantasy and play, a world governed by conventions of a different order. The child’s use of the logic of pretend itself is the realization of what she wished to do by her prior interdiction about telling her dreams. It places restrictions on reality and recontextualizes it, thus creating a “psychological frame” (Haley, 1973; Milner, 1952) which itself was freeing. The avoidance of reality contact enabled the suspension of disbelief so that fantasy play could freely develop. It allowed a leeway or an “intermediate zone” (Winnicott, 1971) for mutual risk in regression which is reassuring and generates trust, acceptance, and intimacy. The child’s physical activity and testing of the adult’s prowess at this activity are also examples of an earlier order of initiation which occurs in young children’s play where they imitate each other, and in so doing both test and validate their suitability for acceptance by the group (Sullivan, 1953).

My behavior now would be crucial. I accepted the child’s tacit invitation to engage in an act of suspension of disbelief and participate in the activities of her world. My willing acceptance of this realm of behavior suggested a consensus and harmony were operating. I had effectively contributed to the child’s definition of the situation by virtue of my response to the child and the situation. As Goffman says, together we had contributed to a single overall definition of the situation. He explains

that

when we allow that the individual projects a definition of the situation when he appears before others, we must also see that the others, however passive their role may seem to be, will themselves effectively project a definition of the situation by virtue of their response to the individual and by virtue of any lines of action they initiate to him (1959, p. 9).

He further suggests that what this overall definition implies is a working consensus. This definition involves not so much a real agreement as to what exists, but a real agreement as to whose claims concerning what issues will be temporarily honored. In this case, it was the child's claims that were to be honored.

To resume, the child had both introduced me to the flying superheroes as well as challenged me to imitate them. After this spate of mirroring behavior (which in itself was significant as it acted to validate consensually the fantasy realm), Helen introduced me to yet another feature of her fantasy world. She asked me somewhat challengingly whether I had been to a secret place where they spoke secret languages. Both the land and language she used were a play of nonsense syllables. When I said I did not know the land she alluded to but instead knew another secret language, Helen displayed great interest and wished to hear it as well as be taught it. After I had taught her this language I had used as a child, we used it to talk with each other for a while.

A little later, Helen again mentioned her secret land. She emphasized that she knew this place very well. My enquiry about how she knew this place so well resulted in a rather elaborate answer which took the form of a narrative:

"I know this land, Balalulaland, where they speak secret languages very well. I was there as a baby. I grew into a very powerful princess with magical powers. I was invulnerable, the most beautiful girl. I could conquer everything. My father, the king, was dead. Killed by enemies . . . the Swabs. It was always war there and we had to make it peace. Be nice to everyone, care about people, like I did. Not like Michael who doesn't."

When I asked her who Michael was, she said that he was a boy in her school whom she hated. She added that he was a tease and hated her. In contrast, she said rather quietly, "I like teenagers like you."

A consideration of this narrative reveals it to be a fantasy autobiography. It is a story that is distinct from, as well as implicated in, the situation in which it is presented. As the latter, it is a fiction and as the former, it is an event in our everyday conversation which refers to the child's symbolic world, and which the present relationship promises to bring into play. The fiction is a representation of the private self; the self as princess, as a super and wondrous being. The tale marks a deeper sharing of the self with the adult.

The self presented in this story is another of the faces of the presenting

self (the competent, controlling Bible reader of the everyday world). The various selves which accompany Helen's behavior both in the everyday and play worlds may be considered as laminations of a composite, everyday self. Although a story symbolizing the more private dream self, it is clearly marked as being of another place and time; it is of the realm of faraway, magic, mystery, princesses and Swabs.

The narrative also provided a means by which the child was able to share an important piece of information with me. Her sentence "Not like Michael who doesn't" introduced a new element at this juncture, creating another point of transition and re-orientation that the child required to communicate her meaning. Through my query about Michael, Helen was able to bring the listener, and herself, back to the everyday world. Her final declaration of her liking and approval of me, ended her narrative as well as that part of the encounter. Finally satisfied that I had allowed her to reveal herself as multiply constituted, the child was able to take stock of what had transpired so far and announce that she liked me. This was a gesture of sharing, of trust, and also an intimation of wishing to continue the relationship. At this point, both participants were entitled to feel that the groundwork had been laid for the development of a "we rationale" between them. The series or ritual sharing had constituted the beginnings of a "culture of two" or perhaps in Huizinga's sense, a benign "folie a deux" (1949).

Once a context of safety had been provided by the other, the child was able to relax into desultory, formless functioning. For example, she played with nonsense words which trailed off into tunes, asked that I tap dance with her, lassoed imagery figures in the air, and requested that I follow her into the bathroom while she incorporated her toilet activity into the general talk she was engaging in with me. What had been achieved was a "spielraum" (Erikson, 1963), or an interpersonal field, in which an individual has sufficient ego relatedness. What followed seemed to rest on a set of shared assumptions, mutual motivation, joint attention and co-construction of meaning about play, fantasy and relatedness.

Conclusion

While this is only part of the analysis of the early sections of the first of 14 such meetings, it serves to illustrate a stepwise progression whereby the child moved through a period of negotiation, into play and out of it again, into a close relatedness, and then back again into play for a deepening of the intimacy. On the basis of this episode and my knowledge of what happened throughout the rest of the year, I would like to take the position that play of this kind is a liminal area (Turner, 1974), within which the players engage each other in a more loving relationship. Play is the labile medium (a kind of moving transitional object and area) they use for testing each other. However, it is also their reward because of its personal indulgences. In the present encounter at least, the evening had

the character of a narrative plot with its early character elaborations (as Bible reader and dominant person), its complications and interdictions (bedrooms, negated dreams and superheroes), its many tests (secret languages, and lands as well as flying actions), its internal plot (of kings, princesses and Swabs), and its final resolution in love and celebration or primary process playing.

One sees, following Schwartzman (1976), that children do look sideways to their root selves. Indeed it seems (if this encounter be our guide) they do by quite systematically putting their partners through a legendary plot-like sequence, to see if indeed they can emerge at the other end as closer companions. But when that is fulfilled, they immediately plunge back into fantasy realms in pursuit of further personal treasures for deepening their relationship. One suspects when play is more public, as in school ground games, much less is reached for, and compromises are centered on shallower secrets. What develops in those circumstances is sufficient play sharing to establish community, but not sufficient to promote an ever deepening intimacy. In the kind of close play dealt with here, there is a continuing cycle of development in which the players' needs may be psychogenic, the medium may be play and fantasy, but the outcome is sociogenic.

Note

Observations on which this paper is based formed part of the research done for my dissertation, *A Narrative of Play and Intimacy: A Seven Year Old's Play and Story Relationship with an Adult*, University of Pennsylvania, 1981. The research was conducted from September 1978 through August 1979. Using the research procedure of participant observation, data was gathered from a white, mainstream, middle-class, seven-year-old, female subject. The study was located in the child's home which is in a racially integrated, middle-class neighborhood in Philadelphia. At the time of the study, the girl was an only child. She lives with her parents who are both college educated individuals, each of whom pursues an academic career.

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13

PRIVELEGED PLAY: JOKING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN

BY
KATHLEEN F. ALFORD

Abstract

This study investigates the structure and meaning of joking relationships between parents and children in American society. The anthropological literature defines a "joking relationship" as a style of interaction in which two people tease and make fun of each other without taking offense. The widespread existence of joking between parents and children in American society calls into question the widely accepted theory of joking relationships offered by Radcliffe-Brown (1952). According to Radcliffe-Brown, joking relationships serve to maintain harmony in relationships by providing a mechanism for the indirect expression of hostility. Questionnaire data from 206 American subjects as well as interview data from a subsample of 25 subjects support the following conclusions:

- Joking relationships are typical of American parents and children.
- Joking relationships rarely serve as mechanisms for the indirect expression of hostility.

- Joking relationships are typically a playful and intrinsically rewarding form of interaction.
- Joking relationships are most often found in relationships characterized by high intimacy and frequent contact.
- The rules which govern joking interaction are culturally patterned to a substantial degree.

A secondary analysis of data on joking relationships cross-culturally suggests that:

- The American norm of joking between parents and children is extremely rare cross-culturally.
- Parent-child joking in America is institutionalized to a lesser degree than are most joking relationships in pre-industrial societies.
- American parent-child joking represents the gradual de-institutionalization of the traditional formal styles of parent-child interaction which once were the norm.

Styles of interacting between parents and children vary from society to society. In some societies respectful relations are the norm throughout the lifetime of the parents and offspring (Murdock, 1949; Stephens, 1963). These respectful relations involve behavioral restraint and deference. In other societies, such as our own, more relaxed styles of interacting have been documented (Schneider, 1968; Adams, 1971; Firth, Hubert and Forge, 1970). In fact, in the United States children and their parents can actually tease one another and play together (Alford, Note 1). How can this cultural variability be explained? The goals of this study are:

- To determine the primary significance of culturally patterned joking relationships between parents and children.
- To determine the social context in which teasing, joking, and play between parents and children occur. I have focused on joking relationships, as defined by Radcliffe-Brown (1952), as one type of playful interaction found in the American parent-child relationship.

Joking relationships have been identified by anthropologists in traditional and folk societies at least since the end of the nineteenth century (Dale, 1896). Radcliffe-Brown, the acknowledged authority on this subject, defined a “joking relationship” as a style of interaction existing between two people or two groups of people “in which one is by custom *permitted*, and in some instances required, to tease or make fun of the other, who in return is required to take no offense.” (1952, p. 90) (italics mine). In most ethnographic examples of joking relationships, the initiation of the joking relationship is voluntary. In other words, seldom is joking required with particular partners at specific times and places. All that is consistently required is no offense be taken by either participant.

Joking relationships involve situationally allocated “privileged disrespect” and the freedom to abuse verbally another person (Radcliffe-Brown, 1958, p. 92). Horesplay, mock physical aggression (play fighting),

and obscenity may all occur in a joking relationship. Joking relationships involve behavior which, in any other context, would be considered inappropriate. In inappropriate contexts, such behavior may well arouse hostility or discomfort.

Similarly, there are appropriate and inappropriate topics for joking. Boundaries of acceptable joking clearly exist, and these boundaries are culturally defined. If a person exceeds the boundaries of the joking relationship, this is treated as a breach of etiquette.

Further, a joking relationship is not limited to joking interaction. Joking partners are usually involved in regular, even day-to-day interaction (see Kennedy, 1970, 1978; Stevens, Note 2.; Bradney, 1957; Christensen, 1963; Mayer, 1951). The relationship typically involves several rights, duties, and obligations with respect to one's partners. Cross culturally, joking relationships tend to occur among kin, and those people in the category of potential spouses (Murdock, 1949; Brant, 1972).

Joking relationships are not always defined or structured in the same way throughout societies in which they occur. This may at first seem rather obvious, but recognizing this fact is central to understanding the meaning of joking relationships. Joking relationships vary from society to society in:

- the cultural definitions of appropriate joking dyads;
- the times and places this joking is allowed;
- the availability of subjects or topics for joking. Individual differences parallel this cultural variability.

While there have been numerous studies of joking relationships in pre-literate, non-Western cultures, there have been few such studies in Western, industrialized societies. In fact, some joking relationship theorists claim there are no joking relationships in complex, industrialized societies (Kennedy, 1970; Murdock, 1949). Still other theorists dispute this claim (Bradney, 1957; Traylor, 1973; Howell, 1973; Alford, Note 1). Furthermore, in spite of the many studies conducted on this subject, there is not yet agreement on the motivation for joking relationships. The question remains: what is the primary significance of this patterned joking behavior?

Most of the joking relationship literature has followed Radcliffe-Brown in his suggestion that the primary significance of the joking relationship is its capacity to function as a mechanism for the indirect, and hence safe, expression of hostility (1952). However, as Kennedy so insightfully remarks: "The most obvious fact to notice here is how closely this behavior [joking relationships] fits all the criteria for games and 'play'" (1970, p. 53). In this study I will follow Kennedy's assertion that joking relationships are a form of play, and, as such, occur in social contexts of intimacy and/or equality. As a form of play, joking relationships produce primarily intrinsic rewards. In other words, the primary significance of joking relationships lies in the fun and hilarity which they create, rather than, as Radcliffe-Brown suggests, in the hostility they express. I suggest

that joking relationships everywhere have the same basic meaning: they constitute a play form predominantly engaged in by intimates and/or equals. Specifically, I hypothesize the higher the intimacy, the greater the equality, the more frequent the contact between parents and children, the more frequently joking relationships occur. Thus, the focus of this study is the meaning and structure of joking relations between parents and children.

Design of the Study

This study focuses on subjects' perceptions of their own joking behavior. To achieve my research goals, a research strategy was devised combining three specific methods of data collection: questionnaire, interview, and a secondary analysis of cross-cultural data. First, a questionnaire was administered. Uniform instructions for answering the questionnaire were given to the subjects. This questionnaire sought information from each subject on his/her parents and children, as well as 32 other categories of kin (maternal and paternal grandparents, older and younger siblings of the same and opposite sex, maternal and paternal cousins of the same and opposite sex, spouses, parents-in-law, and siblings-in-law), and twelve categories of non-kin (best friend, roommate, neighbor, co-worker, teacher, and work superior of both the same and opposite sex).

For each of these kin and non-kinsmen, each subject was asked to indicate

- the style of each relationship;
- the intimacy felt with each person (on a scale of 1—low to 5—high);
- the frequency of contact with the person, including face-to-face interaction, telephoning, and writing (on a scale of 1—daily to 7—less than yearly);
- the authority/relative equality of the other person with respect to the subject (on a scale of -3 to +3, with -3 representing highest authority of subject over that person, 0 representing equality, and +3 representing highest authority of that person over the subject);
- content of joking which occurs (aggression, sexual, and/or silliness/nonsense).

While each subject was asked to report only one style of relationship for each category, one level of intimacy, one rating of frequency of contact, and authority rating, each subject could report more than one category of joking content (if appropriate). Subjects were instructed to report the level which indicated the typical style of each relationship.

In defining the "style of relationship" I have used Murdock's (1949) continuum of styles of relationships (see Figure 1). Briefly, this continuum is: avoidance, respect, informality, joking, and license. *Avoidance* means to avoid looking at, speaking to, touching, or being in the same room with the other person. A style of *respect* means to treat another person with deference, special regard or esteem, using formal language, and re-

Figure 1. Styles of relationship

Avoidance	Respect	Informality	Mild Joking	Moderate Joking	License
Respectful Behavior					Mock Disrespect
Formal Address					Informal Address
Formal Behavior					Informal Behavior
Uncomfortable Interaction					Uncomfortable Interaction
No Joking					Joking at the Other
Physical Avoidance					Physical Contact
					Joking Relationships

strained behavior. A respectful style refers to displayed behavior, and does not necessarily imply actual feelings of respect for the other person. A style of *informality* means casual, friendly interaction without ceremony. I have modified Murdock's continuum to include mild and moderate styles of joking. *Mild joking* involves light verbal teasing and kidding. *Moderate joking* involves less restrained teasing and kidding. *License* involves the most explicit and extreme verbal teasing, wrestling, play fighting, tickling and practical joking. Mild joking, moderate joking, and license comprise the joking relationship (Murdock, 1949; Alford, Note 1).

"Intimacy" was defined as the degree of socio-emotional closeness to another person, the willingness to engage in activities together, the degree to which one feels free to express one's innermost thoughts and feelings to the other, and the degree of concern for the welfare of the other. The equality/authority measure used is actually a combination of authority (legitimate power), power (the ability to affect other peoples' behavior without their consent), and influence (the ability to affect other peoples' behavior without coercion). Basic demographic data were also obtained for each subject. This included age, sex, marital status, ethnic identification, occupation, and income.

The sample population selected was comprised of seven social science classes at an Eastern urban university, with a total of 206 student subjects. Both day and evening classes were chosen to increase the ranges of age, marital status occupations, and incomes of the sample group. Participation was voluntary. Classes were chosen for the administration of the questionnaire based upon professors' cooperation in making their classes available to the researcher.

Secondly, both to test the validity of the questionnaire data and to generate a body of qualitative data, extensive interviews were conducted with a sub-sample of twenty-five volunteers from the original questionnaire sample. Interviews, conducted in university offices, averaged over three hours per subject. The questions were directed towards determining the intimacy (and its modes of expression) with selected kin and non-kin persons, the frequency of face-to-face interaction, and detailed descriptions of joking and other playful interaction with these persons. Thirdly, a secondary analysis of data collected by Murdock (1949) on the contrast to Murdock's coding of relationships between parents and children in American society as informal (on the continuum of styles of relationship), subjects in this study most often report joking relationships with both parents and children. These joking relationships are associated with high intimacy, frequent contact, and high authority for both parents. The cultural patterning of this relationship is very clear. Parents and children are most often partners in joking relationships. Over seventy per cent of subjects report joking relationships with mothers. Similarly, over sixty-five per cent report joking relationships with fathers (see Tables 1 and 2). For both parents, then, high intimacy, frequent contact, and higher authority for parents are associated with the presence of joking relationships.

Results: Joking Relationships in the Nuclear Family

As predicted by the hypothesis, the higher the intimacy with both parents and the more frequent the contact, the more often were joking relationships between parents and children found. However, contrary to predictions, equality is not found in association with joking relationships with parents. Instead, higher authority for both mothers and fathers is associated with both joking relationships and high intimacy. In marked cross-cultural distribution of styles of relationships for nine cross-sex kin dyads was conducted.

Frequencies for all styles of relationships, intimacy ratings, frequency of contact ratings, authority ratings, and contents of joking were computed. Frequencies were also computed for these variables partitioning the sample by sex, age, income, occupation, and ethnic identification. Cross-tabulations were calculated to determine the associations of styles of relationship with intimacy, frequency of contact, authority, age, sex, and income. Analysis of variance procedures was also undertaken to determine the relative effects of intimacy, frequency of contact, relative equality/authority, and sex of subjects on styles of relationships. The statistics of association used in this paper are Pearson's r and bi-serial correlations. These statistics were chosen as most appropriate for interval and ordinal data.

The greatest limitation of this study is the lack of control over the sample population. In other words, how well does this sample represent the larger American society? While the sample is not entirely representative, the demographic characteristics of the sample population are known, and the standard sources of bias can be controlled. While generalizing from this sample to American society as a whole is somewhat problematic, this study constitutes basic, preliminary research necessary to extend the study of joking relationships to American family, in particular, and American society, generally.

While relatively few subjects had children of their own, over eighty per cent of mothers and fathers surveyed indicated they engaged in joking relationships with their sons and daughters (see Tables 1 and 2). Interestingly, most of this joking was asymmetrical. In other words, most parents reported teasing their children more, and teasing in a more licentious manner than they thought their children teased them. Thus, differences in authority between parents and children lend an asymmetry to their joking relationships; yet joking is, nevertheless, a typical form of parent-child interaction. As stated earlier, the acceptability of partners for joking relationships is culturally patterned. In American society, parents and children are acceptable joking partners.

Table 1
Parents' and Children's Relationships

Styles of Relationship

Adjusted Frequencies — % (number of cases)	Avoidance	Respect	Informality	Mild Joking	Moderate Joking	Overall Joking	License
Mother (189)	1.6 (3)	5.8 (11)	21.7 (41)	28.0 (53)	30.2 (57)	12.7 (24)	70.9 (134)
Father (172)	2.9 (5)	6.4 (11)	23.8 (41)	30.8 (53)	25.6 (44)	10.5 (18)	66.9 (115)
Son (23)	0.0 (0)	4.3 (1)	8.6 (2)	17.4 (4)	26.1 (6)	43.5 (10)	87.0 (20)
Daughter (27)	0.0 (0)	7.4 (2)	11.1 (3)	14.8 (4)	25.9 (7)	40.7 (11)	81.4 (22)

Intimacy

Adjusted Frequencies — % (number of cases)	(1) Lowest	(2) Low	(3) Moderate	(4) High	(5) Highest	(4 + 5) Overall High Intimacy
Mother (187)	2.7 (5)	3.2 (6)	15.5 (29)	33.7 (63)	44.9 (84)	78.6 (147)
Father (169)	9.5 (16)	10.7 (18)	22.5 (38)	27.8 (47)	29.6 (50)	57.4 (97)
Son (23)	0.0 (0)	4.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	21.7 (5)	73.9 (17)	95.6 (22)
Daughter (27)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	3.7 (1)	18.5 (5)	77.8 (21)	96.3 (26)

Table 1 (continued)**Parents' and Children's Relationships****Frequency of Contact**

Adjusted Frequencies — % (number of cases)	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly	Several Times Yearly	Less Than Yearly	
Mother (187)	50.3 (94)	36.9 (69)	9.1 (17)	3.2 (6)	0.0 (0)	0.5 (1)	
Father (168)	48.2 (81)	36.9 (62)	8.9 (15)	4.8 (8)	0.0 (0)	1.2 (2)	
Son (23)	87.0 (20)	8.7 (2)	0.0 (0)	4.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	
Daughter (27)	88.9 (24)	3.7 (1)	0.0 (0)	7.4 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	

Authority

Adjusted Frequencies — % (number of cases)	(-3) Lowest	(-2)	(-1)	(0) Equality	(+1)	(+2)	(+3) Highest	
Mother (184)	1.6 (3)	1.1 (2)	3.8 (7)	15.2 (28)	19.0 (35)	31.0 (57)	28.3 (52)	
Father (168)	0.6 (1)	1.2 (2)	1.2 (2)	12.5 (21)	12.5 (21)	29.2 (49)	42.9 (72)	
Son (23)	34.8 (8)	30.4 (7)	13.0 (3)	13.0 (3)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	8.7 (2)	
Daughter (27)	33.3 (9)	11.1 (3)	18.5 (5)	25.9 (7)	0.0 (0)	3.7 (1)	7.4 (2)	

Table 2
Correlations for Mother and Father

	Mother Pearson's Significance	Father Pearson's Significance
Style of Relationship by:		
Intimacy	.386	.001
Frequency of Contact	.178	.01
Authority	.196	.01
Intimacy by:		
Frequency of Contact	ns	ns
Authority	.406	.001
Frequency of Contact by:		
Authority	.206	.01
Sex by:		
Style of Relationship	.224*	.001
Intimacy	.119*	.1
Frequency of Contact	ns	ns
Authority	ns	ns
Age by:		
Style of Relationship	ns	ns
Intimacy	ns	ns
Frequency of Contact	ns	ns
Authority	ns	.113
Marital Status by:		
Style of Relationship	-.113	.1
Intimacy	-.159*	.05
Frequency of Contact	-.257*	.001
Authority	-.236*	.001
Income by:		
Style of Relationship	ns	ns
Intimacy	-.142	.05
Frequency of Contact	ns	ns
Authority	-.123	.1

*biserial correlation

Overall, it appears the sex, age, and marital status of the subjects can be distancing variables. This restraint may take the form of reduced frequency of joking and more mild joking, lower intimacy ratings, and less frequent contact. Both sons and daughters expressed higher intimacy overall with mothers than with fathers. Generally, daughters were somewhat more restrained in joking with their fathers than were sons. Older subjects, too, as well as married persons, report this greater restraint with members of their family of orientation than younger and single subjects. With parents specifically, the growing independence which comes with increasing age and a family of one's own apparently results in lessened involvement in one's family of orientation in American society. Income had no significant effects on the presence of joking relationships. Data on occupation and ethnic identification were too limited to permit analysis.

Interestingly, many subjects repeatedly mentioned the same kinds of audience constraints on their joking behavior. Nearly all subjects said they did not tease their parents (or children) in front of strangers, casual acquaintances, or certain high status individuals (clergy and employers, specifically). In every case the reason given was to avoid embarrassment for the recipient of the joke. Subjects explained that, by revealing such intimacies in front of these unfamiliar audiences, the recipient of the joke might be embarrassed or hurt: "other people don't know when you're kidding..."(Alford, Note 1, p.117). Most joking, then, occurs privately between participants and significant others (close family and friends), out of respect for the feelings of the participants. Thus, acceptable audiences for joking relationship behavior are culturally prescribed.

In addition, the timing of joking is culturally dictated. Joking was usually avoided in formal or high status settings. For example, participants said joking with their partners was inappropriate at church, at funerals, or when either the parents or children were engaged in professional or business interaction with their workmates. Finally, appropriate topics for joking are culturally prescribed. Topics which informants most frequently mentioned as inappropriate were sexual behavior, the use of drugs (other than alcohol), and religious beliefs. Thus, the participants, audiences, timing, and topics for joking are culturally patterned.

Within these culturally prescribed rules for joking relationship behavior, there is room for individual variability. If parents perceive joking and less restrained behavior to be inappropriate, they will not initiate joking and will not sanction joking initiated by their offspring. This inhibition of joking was found to be associated with lower than average intimacy between parents and children. Interview data make it clear the parents have the right to initiate, to allow to be initiated, or to negatively sanction joking with children. Thus, while joking relationships are typical between parents and children, parents have the option to prohibit such interaction.

Further, it appears participants, in some way, evaluate each others'

moods, determining the acceptability of a particular instance of joking. When one partner feels angry, depressed, upset, or worried, he typically does not engage in joking interaction. If joking does occur at these times, it occasionally upsets one of the participants or otherwise incurs bad feelings. Nevertheless, some subjects explained how they, or their partners, gracefully accepted joking during inappropriate times. Finally, individual variability is found in topics for joking. Topics which arouse hostility or serious discomfort in everyday conversation were not acceptable topics for joking.

I can tell when I said the wrong thing and upset her because when she gets pissed, like that time I hurt her feelings telling her she was boring, she just stares at you, and don't say nothin'...In the last few years she's become more relaxed about a bunch of things, and pretty much anything is okay to joke about. We don't tease about personal beliefs—well, like religion. She's a strict Catholic (Alford, Note 1, p.115).

I can say something at the wrong time though and hurt his feelings. The he gets up and walks away. This happens especially if I tease him about his memory. I don't tease him in front of anyone else, but my mother. I don't tease him in front of my sister, because she is so hostile to him. She never forgave him for his past drinking problem. (Alford, Note 1, p.118)

[Speaking of her father] He has part of a finger cut off and just recently we are able to kid about that too. He even makes jokes about it, so I guess it's okay (Alford, Note 1, p.123).

Discussion: The Meaning and Structure of Joking Relationships

In this study I have demonstrated that joking relationships are the predominant style of relationship between parents and children. Further, in accord with the hypotheses, joking relationships were found to be associated with high intimacy and frequent contact. Equality, however, was not found in association with joking relationships. Instead, parental authority correlated with the presence of joking relationships.

As stated earlier, joking relationships are a form of play, with all of the principal characteristics of play. Huizinga (1950, p.8) describes the entry into play as “stepping out of ‘real’ life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all its own.” According to Huizinga (1950), the principal characteristics of play are the following:

- The primary goal is to achieve pleasure—the act itself is rewarding apart from any instrumental goals.
- Part of the play transformation involves the equality of play partners—either through the selection of equals, or the situational discounting of status inequalities;

- Play is a type of sanctioned competition.
- Normal, everyday rules are relaxed or suspended.
- Frequently some psychological regression or desocialization is involved (the use of alcohol, or fantasy, for example).
- Partners have the freedom to choose whether or not they will participate in the play.

Joking relationships provide pleasure and entertainment for intimate equals—play partners. Joking partners engage in an exclusive relationship in which privileged disrespect, mock aggression, and licentious behavior may occur. These otherwise forbidden behaviors are permitted within joking relationships because the joking partners recognize the behavior as play. The same qualities which are the basis of harmonious play partnerships (intimacy and equality) are also the basis of harmonious joking relationships. When partners are structural equals (siblings, agemates, or co-workers) joking is especially easy. When partners are not equal, status inequalities may be situationally discounted, as between parents and children. Frequently the joking is a “socially sanctioned rivalry” (Duncan, 1962, p. 343), each person trying to match and outdo the other in cleverness and wit. Everyday rules of behavior are suspended, and otherwise prohibited aggressive and sexual behaviors are commonly made topics of joking. The use of alcohol and other drugs, as well as the use of fantasy, are often associated with joking styles of interaction.

Finally, joking partners can usually choose whether or not to participate in this style of interaction and with whom to joke. An example of this volunteerism is cited by Radcliffe-Brown (1952, p.93). Among the Ojibwa, cross cousins have a joking relationship and “cross cousins who do not joke in this way are considered boorish, as not playing the social game,” (Landes in Mead, 1937, p. 103). Furthermore, neither the ethnographic literature nor the data from this study indicates that partners must joke during every interaction, nor must they joke continuously during any interaction. In only a few non-Western societies are partners sometimes required to joke with each other in certain situations despite their personal preferences (Stephens, 1963).

Joking partners are “exchanging the rights of play” and otherwise “relieving the seriousness of everyday life,” (Kennedy, 1970, p. 56, 60). In fact, joking partners turn formality upside down and play with it. In joking relationships, the conventions of proprietous interaction become, themselves, the objects of play. Joking relationships symbolically mark intimacy and/or relative equality between partners. Joking relationships vary, however, from society to society in the cultural specifications of appropriate partners, appropriate times and places for joking, and in appropriate topics for joking. This variability reflects the manner in which the patterning of intimacy, in particular, differs across relationships from society to society. I suggest there is a basic sociopsychological relationship between intimacy (as defined earlier) and the formality/informality of dyadic relationships: the more intimate a relationship is, the more infor-

mal the typical style of behavior will tend to be. This tendency may be overridden, however, in certain personality types (beyond the scope of this study), and by socially imposed norms of restraint (and/or the social inhibition of intimacy itself, as in prescribed brother-sister avoidance).

Thus, joking relationship behavior signals intimate relationships, communicating the licensed status of the relationship. The presence of joking relationship behavior indicates to both participant and audience (if present) the intimacy and/or relative equality of the members of the joking dyad. But joking relationship behavior can also increase the intimacy between members of the joking dyad, as well as increasing the perceived relative equality of the dyad. The give and take of playful abuse can provide opportunities for increasing the closeness, trust, confidence, and self-disclosure typical of intimate relationships. By generating and tolerating mutual playful abuse, feelings of relative equality and intimacy between members of a dyad may be heightened.

The results of this study indicate joking relationships typically do not mask hostile and ambivalent feelings which are otherwise difficult to express. Instead, such joking is typically a playful form of communication and expressive behavior. Nevertheless, joking relationship humor is not always playful. Occasionally, the form of joking can be used to communicate serious criticisms. Joking relations can be used for extrinsic, instrumental purposes. For example, to avoid responsibility for a serious critical comment, individuals may couch these serious comments in the form of a joke. In this way, hostile or critical comments may be made while avoiding a direct confrontation. If the joke is perceived by the recipient to be a "real" attack concerning a "real" issue rather than a "playful" attack, the joking will typically break down. Whether or not the joking was meant seriously (deliberately or accidentally broaching a sensitive topic, for example), joking breaks down when the recipient of the joke suspects or knows that the joke has a serious intent. Such a breakdown will lead to avoidance of the joker, avoidance of the sensitive topics, and/or fighting the serious exchange of verbal and/or physical hostilities.

Joking frequently draws upon real behaviors, situations, and appearances. These "real" topics, however, are usually not topics about which the recipients are sensitive or likely to take offense. Interview data, data from participant observation, and cross-cultural data, all support this view. The expression of genuine hostility in joking form is inherently fragile. If the underlying hostility is communicated and recognized, the interaction will probably break down. Only one subject continued to tease a parent when the parent took offense, and failed to return his son's joking:

No, I don't tease my father...Well, I do, but it pisses him off... It's not his fault though...but I don't tease him very much because he gets pissed...My father gets aggravated too easy...He wants to argue then. He thinks whatever I say is a slur on him personally, and he'll

stay mad at me for days. He doesn't kid me either. I'm totally different than my father...If I try to tease him it usually stops right away. He don't say anything. I keep on teasing him, because I know I don't mean it, and what's the big deal then. (Alford, Note 1, p.115-116).

In this study, relationships with parents have been demonstrated to be typically intimate and marked by frequent contact and joking styles of interaction. This is not the case in all societies. In other words, not all societies structure intimacy and temporary equality in play into parent/child relationships. Lewis, for example, describes the Tepotzlan father/son relationship:

The husband avoids intimacy with members of his family to be respected by them. He expects them to demonstrate their respect by maintaining a proper social distance....The relationship between father and child is one of respect and avoidance of intimacy....They [the children] are always obedient, subdued, controlled, and inhibited in his presence and remain so well into adulthood. (Lewis, 1951, p. 322-338)

This deferential behavior involves more than power inequality. It also involves some degree of restrained behavior, a lack of spontaneity, or, in other words, the inhibition of playful behavior. Even though father and son share geneological closeness, they do not become intimate. Instead, there is even some avoidance of each other.

Many misunderstandings about joking relationships in complex societies center on the institutionalization of this style of relationship. Most of the joking relationship literature describes behavior which is highly institutionalized. But joking relationships vary from a high degree to a low degree of institutionalization. This variability is evident in the comparison of complex and relatively simple societies (Alford, Note 1). Those few societies reported to require partners to joke, despite their personal preferences, represent a high degree of institutionalization. On the other hand, more complex societies generally allow greater variability. The range of permitted joking partners is generally greater in complex societies than in simpler societies. In other words, individuals are allowed more choice in the selection of joking partners, and more individual latitude in the activation of these relationships.

Another index of institutionalization is the seriousness with which a violation of joking relationship etiquette is treated. The presence or absence of specific names for the joking relations and partners is a further index of institutionalization. Finally, the institutionalization of joking relationships varies in the explicitness of the rules for joking. Generally, complex societies allow greater variability, permit more volunteerism, provide less explicit rules for joking, and fail to name joking relationships. The violation of joking rules is typically regarded as less serious in more complex societies as well. Those who suggest that contemporary American society lacks joking relationships really mean

that highly institutionalized and precisely and formally patterned joking relationships are absent. Institutionalization, though, is a matter of degree.

In this study we find American parents and children treat each other more informally than in any of the pre-industrial societies in the cross-cultural sample. This less formal behavior in these relationships reflects a gradual de-institutionalization of formal styles of behavior prescribed in these relationships. Sources of social distance (like authority differences, age differences, and incest taboos) which tend to make parent-child relationships relatively formal in pre-industrial societies are not necessarily inhibitors of intimacy (and hence, informality and joking) in contemporary America society. Intimacy can develop in relationships which involve age or authority differences and incest taboos, and this, of course, includes the parent/child relationship.

Conclusions

This study has provided answers to my major research questions. First, joking relationships unquestionably exist in American society between parents and children. Informants had no trouble understanding and applying Radcliffe-Brown's (1952) definition of joking relationships to their own relationships. They readily reported joking styles of interaction, and interview participants described the nature of this joking in detail. Second, as predicted, the greater the intimacy and the more frequent the contact between the members of a dyad, the greater the frequency of joking and more extreme the joking. Intimacy is the key variable in determining appropriate styles of interaction. If high intimacy exists between members of a dyad, they need not be relatively equal to joke. In fact, equality is negatively associated with joking relationships between parents and children. Joking relationships occurred in spite of the reported inequality of the participants. A high degree of intimacy appears to override authority and status considerations.

Informants clearly expressed the feeling that hostile and ambivalent feelings are not typically expressed in joking. On the contrary, such feelings tend to result in avoidance and respectful styles of interaction. There was typically no joking between persons who had a history of hostile relations. Joking relationships occur when people have, at least, friendly relations. Both the questionnaire and the interview data are inconsistent with Radcliffe-Brown's (1952) notion that joking relationships maintain stability in relationships by providing for the indirect expression of hostility. On the contrary, joking relationships express intimacy and /or equality and seldom mask hostile feelings.

While we must guard against sweeping generalizations from the data collected in this study, it is clear that Radcliffe-Brown's conflict theory of joking relationships is untenable. Further, this study unambiguously establishes the presence of joking relationships in a complex Western

society, a fact doubted by many prior joking relationship theorists. In American society, however, styles of relating to some kin group members are more voluntary and less uniform than is typically the case in less complex societies. Nevertheless, some relationships in American society do exhibit considerable uniformity (siblings, spouses, parents, and children).

In contemporary American society, we are witnessing the emergence of a truly novel norm in parent-child interaction. The vast majority of subjects in this population reported they did joke and tease with their parents and children. The more intimate subjects were with their parents, the more they joked with them, and the more authority they attributed to them. Quite at variance with the required formality typical of most traditional societies, American parents and children are becoming play partners. In this way the parent-child relationship is typical of the greater volunteerism, and the more relaxed attitudes toward authority which describe interpersonal interaction generally in the United States today.

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14

BEYOND THE RULES OF THE GAME: WHY ARE ROOIE RULES NICE?

**BY
LINDA A. HUGHES**

Abstract

Game rules and the rules of contexted gaming are contrasted. Observations of children's play are cited to illustrate the difficulties that arise when the boundaries between the two types of rules break down. It is proposed that an important source of "play" and "fun" in games derives from the apparent contradiction between "ideal" game rules and the "real" rules of gaming.

King: "I call Rooie Rules. Duckfeet."

Player: "Why Rooie Rules?"

King (after a brief pause): "Because Rooie Rules are nice."

Most studies of games focus on games themselves, on common threads of structure, procedure and rules across what may be very different gaming experiences for players. We have tended to work from the assumption that game rules define the activity we are studying and, further, that these same rules quite explicitly and prescriptively define the same activity for players (Avedon and Sutton-Smith, 1971).

Recent analyses have suggested this overemphasis on game rules can lead to some rather paradoxical conclusions. Helen Schwartzman (1978), for example, has argued for abandoning game models in studies of play. While such a proposal may be well justified, given the limitations of traditional game models as they have been applied to play, Schwartzman goes on to propose we also take the play out of games. She justifies her position, in part, on the perception that "an understanding of game rules provides one with an understanding of the event" which rules out "the ambiguity, spontaneity and flexibility of play" (p. 327).

It is true that there is very little room in descriptions of game rules for much ambiguity or spontaneity, but it does not necessarily follow that games are not "playful." Being playful is an activity of people, not of rules. Understanding the rules, at least as we normally describe them, cannot be equated with understanding the event. We are reminded of Kenneth Goldstein's (1971) observation that

the rules which are verbalized by informants and which are then presented by collectors in their papers and books for our analysis and study are an idealized set of rules—they are the rules by which people should play rather than the ones by which they do play. (p. 90)

Goldstein's suggestion that the "real" rules of the game differ markedly from those commonly reported by players (and by researchers) takes us beyond the rules of the game. It opens to question whether something is wrong with our commonsense notions about the nature and functioning of rules in games. Games themselves may be in some very real sense constituted by the sets of rules we have used to describe them, but the activity of gamers in constituting an instance of that game may require a very different descriptive and analytic framework. Gary Fine (1980) has used the term "gaming" to distinguish between the game itself and what real players do in constructing a particular instance of that game. In this paper we will explore, at least in a preliminary way, something of the differences between game rules and the rules of gaming. In the process we hope to put some "play" back into games.

Games and Gaming

For some time it has been the vogue to adopt games as metaphors for social interaction (Bateson, 1972; Goffman, 1961; Harré, 1974), but only

rarely have we approached games from a social communicational interactional perspective. Goldstein (1971) provides a notable exception, as does Gary Fine's (in press) recent analysis of fantasy role-play gaming. In both we find a good deal of "ambiguity, spontaneity and flexibility." Fine, for example, observes that

In fantasy role-play gaming, rules and outcomes do not have the inevitability that they possess in most formal games, rather both features are negotiated and rules are adjusted by the referee and his group. Thus, ironically, fantasy games are in some ways more like "life" than like "games," despite their position as games. (p. 4)

It is not the particular game Fine studied that sets it off from "most formal games," but the type of analysis he has chosen. His game looks more like "life" than like "games" because he is not describing the game for us here, but the social and interactional activity of gaming. Looked at from a similar perspective, even professional sports, which we tend to regard as the most formal of "formal games," also display much more flexibility than might be suggested by their rules.

To the NHL's thirteen referees, life is a constant struggle to maintain the game's flow, keep the coaches off their backs and the players off each other's. Most important, referees must have an instinct for which violations to call and which to ignore. They themselves talk of "good" penalties (flagrant violations such as tripping the player with the puck) and "bad" ones (minor offenses such as hooking a player who doesn't have the puck late in a tight game). "You could call a penalty a minute," says referee Ron Fournier. "But that's not what we're supposed to do. You call a guy for a minor infraction, and even though you cite the rule number, he just looks at you and says, 'What's that?' It doesn't earn you respect. (*Newsweek*, January 5, 1981)

This referee is well aware he is supposed to be providing something more than a literal reading of the rule book. Maintaining the game's "flow" and earning the respect of other participants depends upon knowledge of both game rules and gaming rules. One must not only know how the rule book defines and penalizes "hooking." One must also know that this "hook" is not the same as that "hook."

If we adopt, for the moment, Goldstein's distinction, we might distinguish between an "ideal" game rule, which refers to an action (a "hook") and to a game-prescribed outcome (a penalty), and a "real" rule, which refers to a "hook" as something other than a contextless action and to shared, socially-prescribed, negotiated outcomes (interruptions in game flow, loss of respect and such). The term "respect" makes reference to social relationships, to something of a very different order than game rules. It derives from the status of games as a social process, not from the status of the activity as a game.

When we encounter words like "respect," we move from an analysis of games into the realm of gaming. The quotation at the beginning of this

chapter (from the author's observations of a group of young Foursquare players) similarly moves us out of the game and into gaming: "Why Rooie Rules?" "Because Rooie Rules are nice." We will be exploring Rooie Rules as game rules and as "nice" rules. In the process, we will be asking whether it is possible to understand these rules without also understanding why they are "nice."

The World of Foursquare

For almost three years, children were observed playing the game of Foursquare on the lower school playground of a private Friends school in the suburbs of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. More recently extensive interviews were conducted with many of the players. The following is drawn from a larger research effort focused on the negotiative aspects of gaming, and especially on identifying some of the largely tacit understandings that allow these children to construct this kind of complex communal activity.

The groups of children observed come generally from white, middle to upper socio-economic groups. Less than a third come from Quaker families. The game of Foursquare tends to be dominated by girls, especially those in third to fifth grades, but boys have also been observed in the game, with and without girls. Older and younger children regularly join in. At the time of the observations cited below, the "regulars" consisted largely of third and fourth grade girls.

Children in this school have played Foursquare during recess for more than twenty years. The game is played on a square court painted on a portion of paved playground. The court is further divided into four equal squares, each of which constitutes the play space for one of the four active players. The player occupying one of the squares is called the "king." Before each round of play, the "king" calls a set of rules for that round (in our opening example, "I call Rooie Rules. Duckfeet."). This player then serves a large rubber ball to one of the other players. The ball is bounced among the players until it bounces more than once in a player's square, or until a player fails to hit it into the square of one of the other players. That player is out. He or she leaves the court and goes to the end of a line of players waiting to enter the game. The remaining players rotate toward the "king" square, filling in the vacated square, and the first player in line enters the game through the square farthest from the "king."

Foursquare is a simple ball-bouncing game. One of the ways it is made before each round of play. Such calls can be used for a wide variety of purposes, including increasing game excitement, adjusting the level of difficulty, and assisting or scapegoating other players. At one level the "king's" rules prescribe or prohibit certain actions and specify their consequences. In this sense they function as game rules. At another level, they may display or set the general tone for a particular round of play or for the overall gaming occasion.

It is this latter quality that allows the call of “Rooie Rules” in this game. A girl named Rooie was one of the regular players when the current observations were made. The King’s call makes reference to her preferred set of rules, which include the following: “no holding” (the ball must be hit, not caught and thrown); “no slams” (bounces high over a player’s head); “duckfeet” (being hit on the legs) is out (rather than a “takeover”); “spins” are allowed; and so on. Each of these individual game “rules” can be called by a “king.” The call of “Rooie Rules” is a kind of shorthand, covering a long list of individual calls.

Despite the fact that play regularly proceeds after a call of “Rooie Rules,” no player, including Rooie and the “king” who calls them, can supply a complete list of rules encompassed by this call. In fact, this call is very regularly used by very inexperienced players to avoid having to specify a particular list of rules before they have learned what calls are possible. What allows the game to proceed within such apparent ambiguity concerning the precise rules of the game is the tacit understanding that Rooie Rules are “nice,” and “nice” is perhaps the paramount concern among these players. It is far more important to understand “nice” play than to understand the rules.

What Makes Rooie Rules “Nice”?

How are Rooie Rules “nice”? First, even though they are not explicitly mentioned and most of the players could not list all of them, Rooie Rules are understood to prohibit all kinds of what the kids call “rough stuff.” This includes all moves like “slams” or “wings” (hard, low shots to the corner of a player’s square) which are difficult for the receiving player to return. “Nice” players are supposed to give others a fair chance of returning the ball and, even more basic, they are not supposed to try to get other players out of the game deliberately.

Second, Rooie Rules are “nice” because they prohibit “rough stuff” in a “nice” way. Even when prohibited by a call such as Rooie Rules, players may still “slam” and “wing” and “hold” without being called out for doing so. When observations of this game began, this seeming lack of direct relationship between the rules as called and being “out” was particularly puzzling. Why bother to call the rules if no one was ever out for violating them?

Things became clearer one day when one of the players explained to another the rule really was “please don’t hold the ball unless you really have to.” This interpretation allows more experienced players to be “nice” to “little kids,” who can do little more than catch and throw the ball. It also reflects a shared sense that it is unfair to penalize players, who, in the heat of play, lack sufficient control to avoid holding the ball briefly before returning it. Fairness, it seems, is an important component of “nice.”

Later conversations with players confirmed that actions such as

"wings," "slams" and "holds" were not really prohibited by Rooie Rules though one should *try* not to do them. What was prohibited is what the kids call "purpose stuff." A common cited example of the latter is "holding" the ball while deciding which player to get out of the game. Perceived intentionality joins fairness as another component of "nice."

Third, Rooie Rules are "nice" because they avoid direct confrontations over player actions. Even the most blatant "purpose stuff" is rarely directly challenged. Certainly, no player would ever be called out for such violations. They may be simply ignored, especially when directed toward a player scapegoated by a dominant group of players. If not ignored, they will be handled in a less direct—and "nicer"—way. It is very common to observe rather elaborate performances—exaggerated leaning, grunts, cries of "whew!" and dramatic mopping of brows—around rather easy shots that just happen to land as a "slam" in the offending player's square. This latter observation underscores *perceived* intentionality as a major component of "nice" among these gamers. One is reminded of Goffman's (1959) concept of "demeanor." It is apparently less important here that one be "nice" than one make an appropriate display of being "nice."

Highly ritualized "yes you are"/"no I'm not" exchanges are very common. Again, from fieldnotes:

Angie: "Sally! You're playing rough!"

Sally: "So are you!"

Angie: "No I'm not! I'm being nice!"

Smiles, sideways glances, and the glints in players' eyes when they engage in such exchanges belie their seriousness. There is a quality of collusive "play" around ways of making deliberate actions look accidental, a shared delight in a virtuoso performance or a comment on a performance that just misses the mark.

It is only when "purpose stuff" does not have this playful, among-friends quality that one is likely to see sanctions applied for violations of the "rules." Players who consistently "slam" or "wing" without this playful collusion quite often find themselves on the receiving end of a wild shot they cannot return. Such occasions are always followed, of course, by profuse apologies from the hitter, who "just couldn't help it," and who puts on quite a performance to support a claim of innocence in the whole matter.

This use of indirect sanctions, or at least "accidental" sanctions, bypassing a simple appeal to the game rules, is also part of being "nice". If the "real" rules of this game tend to revolve around perceived intentions of the player (as in "purpose stuff"), then it becomes rather awkward to invoke those rules and still be "nice." Invoking a "rule" is not merely a statement of fact about a player's actions, but an accusation of having violated something of the social order, a much more serious charge. Among these gamers, invocation of such rules would involve not only explicit recognition that all players are not equal under the rules, but also

an implicit accusation of being purposefully vindictive or nasty—of not being “nice.” It is not “nice” to violate “nice” rules, but it is also not “nice” to accuse someone directly of doing so. Instead, sanctions are imposed in a way which allows everyone to act as though they were accidental, accompanied by an appropriate “I couldn’t help it” performance.

At least among the gamers observed here, the call of “Rooie Rules” invokes less a list of individual rules’ calls than a general framework for player interaction. The latter rests upon shared standards for fairness, perceived intentionality and appropriate demeanor within the group. The term “nice,” and its contrast “rough,” are employed among this particular set of gamers to refer to a rather complex matrix of social rights and obligations. It appears that understanding and accepting these standards is even more critical to sustaining the game activity than understanding the set of rules currently in force. This became particularly clear one day when a group of boys joined the regular female players. The boys clearly understood the “real” rules of the game, as the “regulars” played it, but they actively challenged the implicit demand that they play “nice.” In the process, what was usually implicit became more and more explicit. Their behavior triggered a rather active discourse concerning the “real” and “ideal” rules of this game. Some very interesting things began to happen.

When Players Won’t Be “Nice”

As might be predicted among boys and girls of this age, the boys almost immediately drove the girls crazy by very overtly using “rough stuff” (“slams” and “wings”) to get the girls out of the game. This does not mean the girls were not also using such moves. What enraged them was the boys’ failure to disguise “purpose stuff” in the kinds of “I couldn’t help it” performances demanded by “nice” play. The boys would, for example, call, “Rough square. Getting out on serves,” and then slam the ball high over one of the girls’ heads on the serve.

Totally outraged, the girls would counter, when one of their number was “king,” with a call of “Rooie Rules.” But, as we might expect, calling “nice” rules had little effect. The boys blatantly continued to “slam” and “wing” the ball past them. Since the girls were still bound by their “nice” rules, which prohibited direct confrontation over such actions, there was little they could do. As play proceeded, however, the girls gradually abandoned some of the trappings of “nice” play. They began handling violations quite differently. The following are excerpts from fieldnotes. We begin with three girls and one boy on the court.

Angie (the “king”): “Rooie Rules. Rooie Rules.”

Angie pauses, looks around, and then walks over to the players waiting in line to get into the game.

Angie (to Rooie, who is waiting in line): “Rooie, tell them your rules.”

As Angie returns to her square, she glares rather pointedly at Hoover, the boy who has just entered the game, while Rooie lists her rules.

(It should be noted that another understanding among these gamers is that players are only responsible for violating a rule they know about. Only if they know, and then violate, a rule can they be denied a takeover of the last round. This attempt to list very explicitly the rules in effect is highly unusual. It functions as a kind of warning to the offending players.)

A little later, Cindy (who is now the "king") calls: "Rooie Rules."

But Andy continues to "wing" and "slam" the ball consistently. After several such hits, Rooie, who is waiting in line, walks over to Andy's square.

Rooie (to Andy): "You're out! Wings are out!"

Cindy steps forward to back Rooie up.

Cindy (to Andy): "I called Rooie Rules and there's no wings! You're out!"

As Andy leaves the court he mumbles something about being a "fish."

The term "fish" refers to a scapegoated player. In over six months of observing this game, this was the first time the author had observed anyone being called out for "wings." The exchange above is a very significant departure from the usual patterns of play. Andy is well aware of this. He knows he's been had.

The girls' revenge was shortlived, however. In reacting to the boys' refusal to play "nice" by becoming more explicit in their calls of the rules, and by applying direct sanctions for violations, the girls began digging themselves into a rather deep hole. They expanded a call of "Rooie Rules," for example, to "Rooie rules. No slams. No wings. No rough stuff." They tried explicitly to prohibit each of the boys' offending actions. Naturally, the boys could always find actions the girls had not specifically prohibited. One particularly exasperated "king" recognized the problem when she tagged her call of the rules with, "And nothing you guys do!"

Of course, on the other side, the girls could not completely avoid violating their own rules, now differently defined. The boys were only too happy to point this out. Again, from fieldnotes, we start with four girls as active players on the court.

Angie ("the king"): "Fair square. Rooie Rules. Fair square."

(The call of "fair square" means no one should get anyone else out. It is a reference here to a desire to keep the girls in, and the boys out of the game.)

The boys waiting in line can be heard mumbling something about "holding."

In an unusual move, Angie stops the ball and turns to Sandy, a young and inexperienced player.

Angie: "No holding, Sandy."

She immediately puts the ball back into play.

More grumblings can be heard from the boys in line.

A little later in this round of play Andrea does a "double tap" before hitting the ball to the next player.

("Double taps" is a very common move, especially during a low pressure round like that framed by "fair square." It is a type of "fancy" move, in which the ball is tapped twice in the air before being hit to the next player.)

One of the boys in line immediately steps forward and shouts: "Holding!"

The other boys chime in, accusing Andrea and the other players of holding the ball, a move prohibited by Rooie Rules.

The girls on the court try to ignore the ruckus. They continue to play, as Angie (the "king") protests: "They can't help it!"

(The appeal here, of course, is to the "real" rule which makes reference to "purpose stuff," not to the act of "holding.")

The boys continue to complain. Angie finally turns to them and says: "Okay, then. I call 'holding'."

A little later Angie again calls: "Rooie Rules." But now she appends: "And there's holding."

Mike, one of the boys who at this time was playing regularly with the girls, shouts sarcastically: "Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Andy (rather pointedly): "Did you call holds?"

Angie directs a withering glance at the boys, and starts the next round of play without comment.

The girls are trapped, and both they and the boys know it. The cornerstone of "Rooie Rules" is "no holding." The call of "Rooie Rules—and there's holding" is totally contradictory and unthinkable within the normal course of play. We have reached a point where the "ideal" logic of the game has been invoked, where rules have become rigidly pegged to player actions and game outcomes. In the process, the logic of the "real" rules has become paradoxical. The players have lost the leeway which allows the usual understanding that this "hold" is not the same as that "hold." The flow of the game, as these particular players constitute it, cannot survive such a rigid linking of rule and action.

Rules and Paradox

The kind of pickle the girls find themselves in looks suspiciously like the stuff of classical logical paradox (Bateson, 1972). They are left holding a bag very neatly labelled “no holding,” and simultaneously tagged “this is holding” and “this is not holding.” This is not normally paradoxical at all within the everyday logic of the game as these players constitute it, but it has become so in the confusion of action and rule. The philosophers might have helped them out by demonstrating that the problem is really one of propositions differing in order of abstraction, a simple error in logical typing. “Holding” and “nice” are not of the same logical order.

It’s unlikely, of course, the players would find such an argument very persuasive or very relevant to their predicament, because they don’t confuse the two in the normal course of events. All conversations with these children indicate a clear recognition of the difference between the way it’s supposed to be in an ideal sense, and the way it is. The two are intricately and elaborately interwoven into a consistent and coherent framework which sustains the complex communal activity of Four-square.

Some recognition that game rules and player actions, and the interpretive gaming scheme which binds them together, are of different orders may be more useful to us, as researchers, than to these players. In our thinking about games, we create our own paradox when we take the “play” out of games, the “fun” out of gaming, by treating a description of the game rules as descriptive of the activity or experience. Something of the same phenomenon seems to be at work, too, when we speak of games as frames, as though games frame activity, rather than gamers.

Games aren’t much “fun” when rules, rather than relationships, dominate the activity, when there is no attention to “flow,” “fairness,” “respect” and “nice.” We need the leeway to be playful in these relationships, to share and enjoy the performance that sneaks nastiness by as nice, that displays knowledge of the “ideal” rule and plays with the boundaries of the “real” rule. Taking the leeway out by treating all rules as rigidly prescriptive and tied to actions subordinates “fun,” “flow,” “spontaneous involvement” (Goffman, 1961) to the activity. In actual gaming, as Goldstein (1971) and Fine (in press) remind us, quite the opposite may be true.

Studies of this type suggest a number of assumptions about game rules that require active reconsideration. First, our thinking about rules in the games literature has been rather simplistic and monolithic. In other social science and philosophical traditions, the whole notion of a “rule” is considered to be highly problematic. Rules are assumed to be of many different types, multi-layered and hierarchical, referencing very different antecedents and outcomes. They are assumed to be subject to constant negotiation and reinterpretation in the course of everyday life. The current study, for example, suggests all rules are not equal and all players are not equal under the rules.

Second, because the activity is a game, we have tended to assume game rules are at all times explicit and foregrounded. We have taken for granted all debates and disputes concern the game, not the relationships among players. Observations of players, however, suggest the degree of rule explicitness may constantly shift, and such phenomena are highly contexted and indicative of social relationships among gamers (Erikson and Shultz, 1976; Shultz, 1976).

Finally, we might propose that the apparent paradoxes and transformations of "play" derive less from the logic of players than from the logic of our descriptions. Contradiction seems almost inevitable when we confuse the logic of the game and the logic of contexted gaming.

Epilogue

Just to close the story begun above, this particular gaming occasion broke down into one of the few complete stalemates observed over a period of several years. Whether a prohibited move had occurred or not simply could not be resolved by appeal. The girls refused to be "nice" and give an offending player, a boy, the benefit of the doubt, as they usually do, by allowing him a "takeover." Just before the bell ending the recess period, we find Angie turning to one of the boys and suggesting the only acceptable mode of resolution: "Okay, we'll give you guys another chance. But only if you promise to be nice."

Note

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CHILD-STRUCTURED PLAY

BY
HELEN B. SCHWARTZMAN

Abstract

In this paper, material is presented that describes what children (Western and non-Western) play when they are literally "on their own," what children think and say about this play, and what types of toys and environments they create and use in these situations. The type of play referred to here is *child-structured play* and it is contrasted with *adult-structured play*.

What do children do when they are *not* under the watchful eyes of parents, teachers, or other adults? What do they play? What do they say? And what do researchers tell us about this type of play?

The discipline of anthropology is particularly useful for answering these questions because of its focus on participant observation and a desire to understand events from the informant's point of view. In order to discuss these issues, I will present material that first describes what children (Western and non-Western) play when they are literally "on their own," what children think and say about this play, and what types of toys and environments they create and use in these situations. This type of play is referred to here as *child-structured play*, and will be contrasted with *adult-structured play*.

Child-Structured Play: Past and Present Studies

Certainly the most extensive study of the self-structured games of Western children is Iona and Peter Opie's collection of English children's street games, reported in *Children's Games in Street and Playground* (1969). (Interesting and relevant material is also available in the Opies' earlier study, *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren*, 1959.) In the 1969 study the Opies state that their concern is,

solely with the games that children aged 6-12, play of their own accord when out of doors, and usually out of sight. We do not include, except incidentally, party games, scout games, team games, or any sport that requires supervision; and we concentrate for the most part on the rough-and-tumble games which, though they may require energy and sometimes fortitude, do not need even the elementary equipment of bat and ball. We are interested in the simple games for which, as one child put it, 'nothing is needed but the players themselves' (p.v.).

Given this criteria the Opies collected and catalogued over 150 games; these include chasing games, catching games, seeking games, hunting games, racing games, dueling games, exerting games, daring games, guessing games, acting games, pretending games. All of these games demonstrate what children can do using themselves as the major "implements" in a game, or using very simple materials (cans, sticks, stones, etc.) or structures (walls, streets, fields) in creating the game.

The Opies also performed an analysis of games diminishing or growing in popularity over the last 50 years in Britain. This analysis revealed that the games whose decline was most pronounced were those that were the best known to adults and the most likely to be promoted by them. The games that were flourishing or increasing in popularity were those adults did not wish to encourage (knife throwing, chasing in the

dark), or those in which adults were least proficient (ball bouncing, long-rope skipping) (Opie and Opie, 1969, p. 10).

In discussing play environments, the Opies suggest that when children play in a "restricted" space (such as a playground), their behavior is more aggressive and hierarchical than when they play in the streets and "wastelands" where they are said to act in a more cooperative, egalitarian, and thoughtful manner. But the authors note their "street" play always seems to get children in trouble with adults because of the places they choose for play and the fact that they seem to want,

deliberately to attract attention to themselves, screaming, scribbling on the pavements, smashing milk bottles, banging on doors, and getting in people's way. A single group of children were able to name twenty games they played which involved running across the road (p. 11).

Perhaps children are more likely to explore their individual relationships with *each other* when interacting in restricted environments whereas in an open environment, group relationships (we-other, adult vs. child) assume prominence.

The Opies are particularly critical of the view that contemporary children can no longer entertain themselves and that traditional games have been extinguished or are in the process of dying out. They argue (and their collection substantiates this) that this is not happening but it may become a reality because,

nothing extinguishes self-organized play more effectively than does action to promote it. It is not only natural but beneficial that there should be a gulf between the generations in their choice of recreation. . . . If children's games are tamed and made part of school curricula, if wastelands are turned into playing fields for the benefit of those who conform and ape their elders, if children are given the idea that they cannot enjoy themselves without being provided with the "proper" equipment, we need blame only ourselves when we produce a generation who have lost their dignity, who are ever dissatisfied, and who descend for their sport to the easy excitement of rioting, or pilfering, or vandalism (p. 16).

In most non-Western cultures, the opportunities for children to engage in self-organized play are greater because they are frequently considered to be competent at an earlier age than Western children and therefore there are fewer watchful eyes on their behavior. Along with this, play is often defined as a behavior that does not need to be watched and strictly supervised, organized or promoted by adults. Play is seen as "just natural" and while it may be actively discouraged in some societies (Feitelson, 1954, 1977) it is more generally tolerated or ignored (which may be the best thing to do if we accept the Opies' argument as stated above). I am raising these points in order to contrast them with the arguments of some researchers and educators who suggest that children do not play actively or imaginatively if adults do not create a "play conducive atmo-

sphere" (as well as provide appropriate models) for the practice of play (see Feitelson 1977). The lack of a "play-conducive atmosphere" and the disinterest of adults in children's play, however, does not necessarily mean children do not (or cannot) play. The reports of extensive play activities (and particularly children's self-structured play) among a variety of groups document this point. I shall mention only a few of these studies.

In Oceania, for example, Best's (1925) studies of Maori children's play and games; Roth's (1902) of North Queensland aborigine children and descriptions of Okinawan children's play in T. and H. Maretzki (1963) provide vivid accounts of a variety of self-organized activities. Scheffler (1976) has provided a collection of Mexican (Tlaxcala) children's play and games, and briefer discussions of South American Indian children's self-made toys, are also available by Jackson (1964) and Shoemaker (1964). Dorsey's (1891) early account of Teton Dakota children's play and Dennis' (1940) study of Hopi children provide detailed information for North American Indian children. For Africa there are several useful reports, including Fortes' (1938) analysis of Tallensi children's play, Beart's (1955) compilation of the play activities (including children's play) of several West African groups, and Lancy's (1974) specific consideration of the play and games of Kpelle children in Liberia. The most detailed report for all of Africa is Centner's (1962) exhaustive survey of Luba, Sanga and Yeke children's play (these groups are located in what is now called Zaire, in Shaba province). This survey includes detailed information on the self-structured play and games and child and adult-designed toys of these children. Other interesting reports for African groups are available in Raum (1940) for the Chaga children of East Africa; Leacock (1971) for children in Lusaka, Zambia; and Marshall (1976) for !Kung Bushmen children in what is now called Namibia.

Along with the Opies' study mentioned above there are other interesting reports of Western children's self-organized play. These occur mostly as collections based on analyses of children's stated play preferences, adult recollections, or observations (frequently the observations have been made on playgrounds but the focus has been on what children play "of their own free will"). Sutton-Smith's (1959) collection of New Zealand *Pakeha* (European) children's games presents one of the most extensive records of this sort. Examples of collections of American children's games are Newell (1883), Babcock (1888), Culin (1891), Chase (1905), Brewster (1952, 1953), and Howard (1944). Howard's collection of Australian European children's games published in a series of articles (1958a, b; 1959; 1960a, b) and Brewster's collection of play in several European societies (see 1957, 1959) are also important to mention.

Child-Designed Toys

Children probably create toys for themselves (or use materials in the

environment as toys) in all societies. It is assumed that Western children (especially middle-class children) will be creative and ingenious in their designs, but are they, in fact, and what about non-middle class and non-Western children? Finally, what types of contexts and what types of materials facilitate or inhibit a creative, imaginative, and self-organized use of materials and space?

Unfortunately, there is not much systematic research in this area to use in answering these questions, again because of the tendency for investigators to study play in adult-designed contexts using ready-made toys. There are, however, a few interesting reports in the ethnographic and folklore literature. The majority of descriptions of child-designed play are brief reports included in anthropologists' monographs. For example, Cora DuBois (1944) reports the following in her study of Alorese children:

Children play a great deal. Girls emphasize food-gathering activities and cooking; boys emphasize hunting. It is noteworthy that the children have many games and toys, some of which are very ingenious—for example, a pressure squirt gun that is fashioned of bamboo (p. 59).

It is interesting to compare these descriptions of Alorese children's creativity and ingenuity in play with suggestions made by Trude Schmidl-Waechner (a psychoanalyst who examined the children's drawings collected by DuBois) that there was evidence of poverty-stricken relationships and a noticeable lack of creativity exhibited in the drawings. Drawing was not a natural activity for the children but play was.

The Maretzkis report that the children of Taira in Okinawa meet the "minimum of equipment" with a "maximum of inventiveness and enthusiasm" in their play (1963: p. 356). Stones, peas, or seeds may be used as marbles; empty cartons as trucks and boats; cabbage leaves become helmets; and bamboo pieces are daggers. It is interesting to note that in the Fischer's (1963) ethnography of the New England community of Orchard Town (also in the Six Cultures series) mention is made of numerous organized group games and group activities in which the children take part (Little League, Boy Scouts, church choir). There is also a description of the numerous toys all children have in their possession, including blocks, stuffed animals, miniature trucks and cars, tricycles, dolls and accessories, toy guns, soldiers, board games, etc. However, no mention is made of any ingenuity or inventiveness displayed by these children in their play.

More detailed studies of non-Western children's self-organized and self-designed toys are available in Lorna Marshall's ethnography of the !Kung Bushmen. The book includes one chapter on the topic of play and games. Marshall describes the children's ingenuity in manufacturing a variety of objects for play (a toy gun made out of a reed, a camera carved out of a tuber, "autos" made from tubers and bulbs modeled after the Marshall's jeeps and accompanied by motor sounds imitated by the boys

who specialize "in the roar of low gear pulling out of heavy sand" (p. 342). Photos of some of these toy inventions are included in the ethnography.

The indigenous play and toy objects of Chama (Tacanan) Indian children in northern Bolivia are described in detail by Shoemaker (1964). These children are said to spend many hours creatively shaping toys from the raw materials of the jungle, but the ethnographer reports they do not play group games (only one, a free-for-all tag played with one leg tied up, was observed). The children's ability to use a variety of materials for playful purposes is demonstrated in this unusual report. Papaya and banana leaves are used for umbrellas and for play-house roofs. Large soft leaves are used as toy cups; these may also be pressed against the teeth and popped like bubble gum, or cupped in one hand and popped with the other like a paper bag. Juice from the *kwasosa* tree is blown into durable soap bubbles. Small reeds are cut in differing lengths and slit on one side to make variously toned whistles. Younger children string bracelets of colored seeds, alligator teeth and tiny shells, and they mold simple objects from clay. They also stick feathers in light-weight peeled lemons that resemble shuttlecocks and make balloons from elastic fungus pods (p. 1152).

The older boys make models of canoes, airplanes and launches which they whittle from balsa wood. Whistling tops which spin on hard wood pegs are made from little gourds. Intricate clocks, animals, and other objects are carved from hard lumps of clay. The boys "hunt" with one and a half foot palm strip bows and arrows made of long thorns fitted into grass stem shafts, and with sling shots made of crude rubber. They also make a toy gun from two reeds of differing diameters fitted together which has a range of 30-45 feet, a gun which has enough force to kill lizards. The boys were also inspired by the anthropologist's two-way radio to make one of their own using a thread line and two match-box receiver-transmitters (p. 1152-53).

Jackson (1964) also presents a description of the native toys of the Guarayu Indians of central eastern Bolivia. These toys consisted of items used in their original form as taken from the jungle or fashioned out of materials at hand. Artificial lips are made by pressing on bright-orange-red blossoms from the *tuinani* tree which are double and crescent shaped. Small canoes are simulated by using large pods of the *pinomini* palm and children pull each other around in them on the ground. Sticks are used for play houses. Play houses are built with short sticks and several miniature items are used in "house" play, including small-sized baskets and hats woven from palm fronds; small water pots are made from pottery clay, small dolls and animals may be modeled from clay or whittled from mahogany wood. Dolls are also fashioned from corn husks and cast-off rags. Bows and arrows are made from palm, a small gun is a pea-shooter toy made from a hollow piece of cane with a stiff trigger of dry palm to shoot off the ammunition, which may be dry corn kernels or small stones (p. 1154). Seeds are used as balls or marbles, and marbles

are also shaped from clay. Bouncing balls are made by winding long strings of crude rubber into a round shape (p. 1154-55).

What happens to the play of non-Western children when they grow up in an urban as opposed to a rural environment? Leacock (1971) presents an interesting report on the play and self-designed toys of African children living in Lusaka, the capital of Zambia. Leacock suggests here that children naturally and un-selfconsciously demonstrate their knowledge and use of a variety of social and cognitive skills in play. For example, the organization of roles and role relationships and the ability to count scores is demonstrated in games; the ability to understand and use volume, area and linear measurement is displayed in water play and the construction of numerous toy objects; and language and dramatic skills are demonstrated in the construction and performance of stories and songs. The most interesting material in this report describes the children's (generally boys) creation and demonstration of numerous toy objects:

Boys are ingenious at finding and making do with available materials. Seesaws are improvised; poles found for stilts and pole vaulting. To make a wagon, one boy says he gets planks from a brewery, finds floor-polish tins, cuts poles from trees, and makes wooden wheels (p. 64-65).

The toy inventions described so far appear to indicate a high degree of resourcefulness, creativity and ingenuity on the part of children who do not grow up in environments with vast numbers of manufactured toys and carefully-designed playgrounds at their disposal. The children described here create many of their own toys and then proceed to use them in a variety of play and game activities. Unfortunately, there are few systematic studies of child-designed toys of Western middle-class children, again because of the tendency for researchers to study these children in artificial environments and using adult-designed toys as stimuli for the investigation of particular types of behaviors (see especially the doll play and toy preference studies conducted by psychologists, e.g., Levin and Wardwell, 1971). The fact that Western children use natural materials as well as their own toys in creative and imaginative ways is documented to some extent in fiction and biographies as well as in psychologists' "naturalistic" reports of their own children's activities (see Piaget, 1951). But there is no systematic research tradition here.

A recent study by Saegart and Hart (1978) presents interesting information on the self-organized construction play of New England middle-class children. In this study specific attention was paid to the impact of sex differences on children's use of the environment in their play and, according to the authors, it was found boys modified the landscape more frequently and more effectively than girls. Boys built physical structures more frequently than girls and while girls might build houses, forts, etc., they would manipulate the environment less in doing so. The authors suggest girls are more likely to modify the space in their imagination, so

bushes become walls, branches of trees may be shelves, and rocks are used as seats. Boys (after the age of seven) are said to build forts, tree houses, and other structures with walls, windows, seats and even roofs. When girls build such structures, they do not create walls and instead put considerable effort into the elaboration of the interior with drapes, bottles, pots, pans, etc. The researchers also suggest boys "made many more models in the dirt, manipulated streams with dams and channels, made and managed gardens, built sled runs and jumps, and in general made their mark on the landscape more than girls" (p. 163). Indeed it is possible to see in this behavior (and in films Hart has also recently made depicting some of these activities; see Schwartzman, 1978, p. 336-7) a striking demonstration of the Western and American view of *man versus nature*. In this play we see both the creative and potentially destructive results of this world view, for here we see the beginnings of skyscrapers as well as strip-mining.

From Child-Structured to Adult Structured Play: A New Zealand Example

What do children say about what they play, and do these preferences change over time, or upon contact with children from other cultures? Brian Sutton-Smith's studies have provided some of the most interesting answers to these questions. His collection of New Zealand children's games, *The Games of New Zealand Children* (1959), is specifically concerned with the games children "play of their own free will without the assistance or leadership of adults." This study focuses on the games children play on playgrounds and the changes over time (1870-1950) in such games. Information was collected from observations of children, interviews with teachers and children and adult recollections. The period of 1870-1900 is said to have been the heyday of traditional games structured and organized by the children themselves. These games were characterized by the use of minimal play apparatus (and all equipment was made by the children) and the games are said to have been rough and boisterous. Older children played games that in the more recent time period (1950) are only played by younger children (games such as horses, marbles, tops, singing games, hoops, kites). Boys and girls played separately (secluded from each other by a concrete wall, and girls played more sedate and stationary games, such as singing games, knuckle bones, and cat's cradle. Organized sports competitions between schools had not yet been instituted.

The period 1900-1920 marked the appearance of adults as playground supervisors and teacher-coaches of organized sports. This produced a decrease in the rough boys' games (such as Tip Cat, Buck Buck, Duck-stones) and, interestingly, an increase in the activity of girls' games. The organized games of Rugby and Cricket began to take over the function of

many of the "boisterous running games" (such as Bull in the Ring, Hare and Hound, Paper Chase) in the playground, although Sutton-Smith (1959) reports these were still played out of school and beyond the supervision of adults. This period also saw the introduction of quieter and more informal games such as swapping games, scrapbooks, post cards, etc. which contributed to the "taming" of the playground and represented "the first step in the transference of children's play interests from the world of their own play objects to a world of play objects contrived by adults" (p. 13).

This trend continued after 1920 until the present (here 1950) and this period is marked especially by the influence of toys, and organized sports and recreations on children's play. All of this led, according to Sutton-Smith, to the "speedy demise of the great majority of the older traditional games" (p. 13). It should be noted here this finding is in contrast to the Opies' finding for British children, although perhaps Sutton-Smith's observations were limited because they were confined to the playground.

The playground of 1950 is characterized by:

- rapid, but less turbulent movement on the part of children;
- the fact that "games have slipped down the age scale" (marbles, houses, etc. played by 12 year olds in the 1890's are now played only by younger children, and likewise singing games played by older girls are now played only by younger ones);
- the presence of artificial, commercial toys (especially manufactured balls) as opposed to homemade play objects such as bows and arrows, pea shooters, kites, cat's cradle, etc.;
- the demise of older conventional rhymes and sayings to be replaced by more impromptu slanging, smart answers, teasing expressions, and teasing rhymes.

The changes described here are also paralleled to some degree in Sutton-Smith and Rosenberg's (1961) study of 60 years of historical change in American children's play preferences. Here the authors compared the results of four large-scale studies of American children's play: Crosswell (1898); McGhee (1900); Terman (1926); and Sutton-Smith and Rosenberg (1960). Each of these studies involved the use of questionnaires or checklists given to large numbers of school-aged children asking them about their game likes and dislikes. On the basis of this study, the authors reported a number of changes in game preferences found to be less important to present-day children are singing games, dialogue games, team guessing and acting games; cooperative parlor games, couple and kissing games (all of which are generally girls' games), and team games without role differentiation (which are generally boys' games). Games popular in the 1890's and still popular today are imitative games, chasing games, central-person games of low power. The authors also found that during the period from 1896-1959 girls' responses had become more like boys' responses. However, the findings indicated boys' play roles were becoming increasingly circumscribed

over the same time period so that "it is much more deviant behavior for a modern boy to play at . . . dolls, hopscotch, jacks, cooking, jump rope . . . than it was for a boy to play these things in the earlier historical periods" (1961, p. 280). Sutton-Smith continues this historical analysis in a recent book that specifically focuses on the informal play and games of New Zealand children from 1840 to 1950 (in press).

Sutton-Smith also presents one of the few systematic studies of change in children's play as produced by culture contact. In his first published study, Sutton-Smith (1951) examined the effect of European games on Maori children's unorganized games. This study indicated a number of traditional Maori children's games were still being played. Examples of these games were hand games, knucklebones, stilts, whip toys and string games. A number of more informal games had also persisted, such as vine swinging, hunting and fishing, sliding and sledging, throwing and skipping stones, juggling, skipping, and sailing flax canoes. Sutton-Smith suggested these game forms persisted because "the existence of the parallel games in European culture acted as a permissive factor on the same games in Maori culture" (p. 319). In conjunction with this idea, he also suggested missionaries and other agents of culture change looked more leniently on "pastimes" that were seen as games of "civilized" as well as "heathen" children.

A number of games introduced by Europeans were also played quite frequently by Maori children. These games were marbles, ball bouncing, stag knife, bow and arrows, popguns, windmills and propellers, and ball hopscotch. Sutton-Smith also stated the impact of European games on Maori games was not completely one-sided, for there were also reports of *Pakeha* children playing traditional Maori children's games (humming tops, team whip tops, building *raupo* huts, and sledging on cabbage tree leaves). In conclusion, Sutton-Smith suggests that:

in the meeting of these two cultures, there has been a tendency for the unique pastimes of the submerged culture to be cancelled out, and for the pastimes which both cultures shared to be strengthened (p. 330).

However, he also found "a stronger tendency" which is the influence of organized sport "has tended to cancel out all the minor games of both cultures irrespective of their nature" (p. 330).

Summary

Children's play has been classified and categorized in a number of different ways. One division that has been neglected, for the most part, is a contrast between child-structured and adult structured play: Self-structured play is defined here as the play (and toys) of children which they create "on their own" and often "out of sight" of adults. Team games, sports, board games, and other highly structured games which adults

have introduced to children, which may or may not require adult supervision, are referred to as adult-structured play. One of the most important differences between these two play forms is that one type has been greatly studied (adult-structured play) in laboratories, schools, playgrounds, etc. while the other (child-structured play) has been investigated only infrequently. This makes it somewhat difficult to contrast these two activities, but it is possible to suggest what appear to be some important differences between them.

Child-structured play is characterized by child-child interaction (in peer or multi-aged groups), frequently, without the presence of an adult. Adult-structured play is characterized by child-child (generally in peer groups), adult interaction with adults operating in a variety of roles (supervisor, coach, teacher, parent, etc.). There are other points of contrast as well. Child-structured play may occur as more boisterous, rough, seemingly chaotic, turbulent, and sometimes dangerous activity. Adult-structured play appears, on the whole, as quieter, more orderly, and less dangerous behavior. It is true, however, that some adult-structured children's play activities can be quite dangerous. In fact, the most elaborately organized of these events—organized sports competitions, such as Little League or football matches—are the most potentially dangerous of all children's play activities.

Child-structured play is more likely to be egalitarian and cooperative in contrast to adult-structured play, which tends to be more hierarchical and competitive (although these qualities will be greatly affected by the cultural context). Child-structured play is characterized by the minimal use of equipment. If objects are used, they will be designed by children, or the children will use themselves as the major "implements" of the game. By contrast, adult-structured play almost always involves the use of some sort of equipment. These objects may be adult-designed toys, sports equipment, uniforms, etc. Child-structured play can occur anywhere and at any time as it is not dependent on a special space or designated time. Adult-structured play is more dependent on a place and a time for it to occur. Child-structured play encourages resourceful, self-sufficient, and self-managed behavior, and it also provides a context for the generation and expression of individual and group creativity and ingenuity. Adult-structured play encourages sensitivity to group and hierarchical relationships, reliance on adult or leader authority, specifically designed props, and space for the organization of behavior. There would appear to be a need in all cultures for children to have the experiences provided by each form of play. Adult-structured play appears to occur more frequently in industrialized rather than non-industrialized cultures.

There remains some questions as to whether adult-structured play contributes to a demise of child-structured play. A common belief of Western parents (and researchers) is that children's traditional games are disappearing, that children have lost the ability to entertain themselves,

and that passive diversions are replacing active ones. This is the "it's not like it was in the good old days" argument and has been with us at least since the 1880's when William Wells Newell, the American folklorist, set out "to pick and preserve" children's traditional games in collections such as *Games and Songs of American Children* (1883, expanded 1903). Newell believed English children's games had already been lost or "tainted" in England and were actually in a "purer" state of preservation in America. However, with the publication of Lady A.B. Gomme's two volume work on *The Traditional Games of England, Scotland and Wales* (1894, 1898) Newell's worries were laid to rest, at least temporarily, because this collection revealed children's traditional games had survived and were even flourishing in England. The Opies' more recent collections (1959, 1969) affirm the continuing presence and elaboration of child-structured play in a society also characterized by a strong tradition of adult-structured games. In this case the one has not cancelled out the other. Often when children are followed out of their houses or schools and into the streets, backlots, and alleys of their lives, their behavior is observed to be highly creative, self-sufficient, active and resourceful. This contrast is especially apparent for "disadvantaged" children whose play lives have recently been depicted by researchers as impoverished (see Feitelson and Ross, 1973). However, when they are observed outside the school or laboratory setting, it is found they are able to create a variety of imaginative and ingenious play events (see Cooper Note 1; Schwartzman 1978).

Sutton-Smith's research in New Zealand suggests, however, that adult-structured play can transform the character and frequency of child-structured play. In this study he describes how the influence of commercial toys and adult-structured games, sports, and other recreations led to the "speedy demise" of New Zealand children's traditional games. His research on the influence of European games on Maori children's traditional games also supports this view, as he suggests the influence of organized sport cancelled out the "minor games" of both Maori and European children. Sutton-Smith's (1959) research on changes in American children's game preferences is less conclusive, although there is evidence of increasing preference for more informal as opposed to formal games which could be seen to promote child-structured play. It is important to note here that most of these studies focused on historical accounts and contemporary children's stated game preferences or observations at playgrounds. Hence, the existence of an entire "underground" of child-structured play which the children did not talk about and which the researchers did not see must be suggested.

The field of play research has been expanding rapidly since the late 1960s. It is to be hoped this trend will continue, and, as it does, researchers will continue to expand the contexts in which play is studied. I believe it is time for a new generation of child-structured play studies—in the tradition of Dorothy Howard, Iona and Peter Opie, and Brian Sutton-

Smith—to be conducted. Researchers cannot remain in the school, playground, or laboratory when so much that is interesting and ingenious about play is happening in the streets, alleys, backlots and backyards of children's lives.

Reference Note

1. Cooper, M. *Street play in New York*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of The Association for the Anthropological Study of Play, March, Henniker, New Hampshire, 1979.

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PART V

CONCLUSION

16

PLAY AND DRAMA: THE HORNS OF A DILEMMA

**BY
VICTOR TURNER**

Abstract

Current ideas about differences between the left and right hemispheres of the brain provide a basis for speculating about the nature of play. Play encompasses both the rationality and order of the left hemispheric orientation, and the improvisation and creativity of the right. But play also transcends these oppositions, running rings around them as it encircles the brain's consciousness.

Brevity is the soul of conferences but the assassin of data and the mother of dogma. What can I do but play *with* ideas, at keynote addressing, and *down* legitimate doubts? We now know it takes two hemispheres to make a brain, more than a brain to make a central nervous system, and that human neurobiology must be taken into serious account if we are to understand myth and ritual. It should probably be taken into, at any rate, playful account in dealing with play. In a recent proceeding of the American Ethnological Society, Marlene Dobkin de Rios and Robert Schroeder (1979) speculate interestingly about the relationships among "American Occupations, Leisure Time Use and Left Brain/Right Brain Dialectics." They hypothesize that "left hemisphere occupations," calling for "rational, analytical thinking, attention to detail and explicit rules of procedure, as well as the manipulation of cognitive categories, such as accountants, air traffic controllers, bank tellers, computer operators, mechanical engineers, filing clerks," choose leisure activities, "play modalities," in a "complementary mode," such as "reading printed material, playing cards, social conversation, playing scrabble, doing crossword puzzles and comparative shopping" (p. 12). On the other hand, "right hemisphere occupations," calling for "syncretic thinking," a grasp of "complex real world situations," physical skills and experience, "on-the-job training" (as against the "formal learning" of the left hemispheric occupations), such as factory assemblers, construction workers, jewelers, loggers, truck drivers, professional athletes, would choose such right hemisphere play modalities as "dancing, listening to music, watching spectator sports, craft activity (weaving), fishing, sky diving, hang gliding" (p 12).

I haven't heard whether our authors confirmed their hypothesis or not. One might even argue to the contrary, that right-hemispherical work would go with left-hemispherical play and, indeed, vice versa! In the absence of statistical verification, I can quite easily imagine a "right hemispherical" disco crammed with prancing "left hemispherical" accountants, air traffic controllers, filing clerks, *et al*, holistically overcompensating for their parametrically logical working lives.

But I would like to pursue this matter of the neurobiology of play a little further and add some speculations of my own. Many of you will have read *The Spectrum of Ritual* (1979), edited and largely written by d'Aquili, Laughlin, and McManus and containing an excellent overview of the literature on ritual trance from the neurophysiological perspective by Barbara Lex. D'Aquili and Laughlin make an important summation of their and Lex's views on the duality of cerebral functioning in concert with Hess's (1925) model of the dual functioning of the ergotropic and trophotropic systems within the central nervous system, as a way of explaining phenomena reported in the study of meditative states and ritual behavior. Their hypothesis is that both cerebral hemispheres operate in solving problems, "via a mechanism of reciprocal inhibition controlled at the

brain stem level . . . The world,

is approached by a rapid functional alternation of each hemisphere. One is, as it were, flashed on, then turned off; the second flashed on, then turned off . . . The rhythm of this process, and the predominance of one side or the other, may account for the various cognitive styles, from the extremely analytic and scientific to the extremely artistic and synthetic (d'Aquili and Laughlin, 1979, p. 174).

Now this "flashing on and off" of hemispheric functions is very like what we know of play-play, in Helen Schwartzman's sense of "a mode, as opposed to a category, of activity" (1978, p. 328). But let's return to the d'Aquili-Laughlin hypothesis before pursuing this matter. The ergotropic system, they contend,

consists not only of the sympathetic nervous system, which governs arousal states and fight or flight responses, but also of any energy-expending process within the nervous system. Conversely, the trophotropic system includes not only the parasympathetic nervous system, which governs basic vegetative and homeostatic functions, but also any CNS process that maintains the baseline stability of the organism (1979, p. 174-175).

Now the authors propose an extended model

according to which the minor or non-dominant hemisphere is identified with the trophotropic or baseline energy state system, and the dominant or major hemisphere that governs analytical verbal and causal thinking is identified with the ergotropic or energy-expending system (p. 175).

They present evidence which suggests that, when either the ergotropic or trophotropic system is hyperstimulated, there is a "spillover" into the opposite system. They postulate, in particular, that the rhythmic activity of ritual, aided by sonic and other kinds of "driving," may lead to simultaneous maximal stimulation of both systems, causing ritual participants to experience what they call "positive, ineffable affect" (p. 175). They also use Freud's term "oceanic experience," as well as "yogic ecstasy," or *unio mystica* (p. 176), an experience of the union of those opposites typical of binary, digital, left-hemisphere ratiocination. Clearly they are as much "turned on" by the effects of these supersaturated systems as physicists have been by those hypothetical subatomic particles of apparently paradoxical character which they have "playfully" called "quark," "ace," "charm," and "love." Quark, incidentally, derives from a line in that arch-word-player James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*, "three quarks for Mr. Marks" for it was once thought there were only three of these so-called "fundamental particles."

D'Aquili and Laughlin believe that while the end point of simultaneous strong discharge of both the ergotropic and trophotropic systems is the same in meditation and ritual, the former begins by intensely stimulating the trophotropic system through techniques for reducing thought and desire in order to maintain "an almost total baseline homeostasis" (p.

176). This results in "spillover" to the ergotropic side, and eventually to strong excitation of both systems. Ritual, on the other hand, involves initial ergotropic excitation. The authors argue that causal thinking arises from the reciprocal interconnections of the inferior parietal lobule and the anterior convexity of the frontal lobes, particularly on the dominant, usually left side, and is an inescapable human propensity. They call this brain nexus "the causal operator" and claim that it "grinds out the initial terminus or first cause of any strip of reality" (p. 170). They argue that "gods, powers, spirits, personified forces, or any other causative ingredients are automatically generated by the causal operator" (p. 170). Hence "human beings have no choice but to construct myths to explain their world," to orient themselves "in what often appears to be a capricious universe." This is "inherent in the obligatory functioning of the neural structures" (p. 171). We are, indeed, back to Aristotle's "Uncaused Cause" or Prime Mover unmoved!

Myths present problems to the verbal analytic consciousness. Levi-Strauss (1963) has made us familiar with some of these: life and death, good and evil, mutability and an unchangeable "ground of being," freedom and necessity, and a few other perennial "posers." Myths attempt to explain away such logical contradictions, but puzzlement remains at the cognitive level. D'Aquili and Laughlin argue that ritual is often performed to resolve problems posed by myth to the analytic verbalizing consciousness. This is because, like all other animals, man attempts to master the environmental situation by means of motor behavior, in this case ritual, a mode going back into his phylogenetic past and involving repetitive motor, visual, and auditory driving stimuli, kinetic rhythms, repeated prayers, mantras and chanting, which strongly activate the ergotropic system. Ergotropic excitation is appropriate because the problem is presented in the "mythical" analytical mode, which involves binary thinking, mediations, and casual chains arranging both concepts and precepts in terms of antinomies or polar dyads. These are mainly left hemispheric properties and connect up, in the authors' view, with augmented sympathetic discharges, such as increased heart rate, blood pressure, sweat secretion, pupillary dilation, increased secretion of catabolic hormones, etc. If excitation continues long enough, the trophotropic system is triggered too, with mixed discharges from both sides, resulting in ritual trance in some cases. Lex writes that "driving techniques (also) facilitate right-hemisphere dominance, resulting in gestalt, timeless, nonverbal experiences, differentiated and unique when compared with left-hemisphere functioning or hemisphere alternation" (1979, p. 146). One solution, if it can so be termed, of the Sphinxian riddles posed by myth, according to d'Aquili and Laughlin, is that during certain ritual and meditation states, logical paradoxes or the awareness of polar opposites as presented in myth appear simultaneously, both as antinomies and as unified wholes. There is an ecstatic state and a sense of union, brief in ritual, prolonged in meditation, where culturally transmit-

ted techniques and intense personal discipline sustain the peak experience.

The problem is therefore resolved not at the cognitive, left hemispheric level but by an experience which is described by the authors as "ineffable," that is, beyond verbal expression. Presumably the embodiment of the myth in the ritual scenario, either verbally in prayer or song or nonverbally in dramatic action or visual symbolism, continues to arouse the "cognitive ergotropic functions of the dominant hemisphere" (p. 177). If the experiences of participants have been rewarding—and ritual devices and symbolic actions may well "tune" a wide range of variant somatic, mental and emotional propensities in a wide range of individuals (amounting to the well-known "redundancy" of ritual with its many sensory codes and multivocal symbols)—faith in the cosmic and moral orders contained in the myth-cycle will obviously be reinforced.

It will be clear to you that all this is "heavy," serious stuff. I am not too happy about the authors' tendency to localize mental functions somewhat specifically in cortical regions, but there does seem "to be something" in the division of labor between the hemispheres, in the different "work" they do, broadly speaking. The term "ergotropic" is itself derived from the Greek *ergon*, work, and *tropos*, a turn, way, manner. It represents the autonomic nervous system in the mode of work, as a sympathetic system, whereas the trophotropic system (from the Greek *trophe*, food, nourishment) represents the autonomic nervous system in the mode of sustentation, as a parasympathetic subsystem responsible for producing a balance of functions and of chemical composition within an organism. This too is a kind of diffused "work," less focused and mobilized than the ergotropic functions. But where does "play" play a part in this model? Our authors hardly mention it. The hemispheres clearly have their "work" to do, the autonomic nervous system has its "work" to do. Whether normally functioning or intensely stimulated the components of the central nervous system seem to have clearly assigned, responsible, interdependent roles to perform.

As I see it, play does not "fit in" anywhere; it is a transient, recalcitrant to localization, to placement, to fixation. Huizinga (1955) dubbed it "a free activity," but he and Caillois (1961), and many afterwards, have commented on the framing and enclosure of playing within frames of arbitrary and deliberately monotonous conventions. Play is a volatile, sometimes dangerously explosive essence, which cultural institutions seek to bottle, or contain, in the vials of games of competition, chance, simulation, and controlled disorientation. Play is dangerous because it may subvert the left-hemispheric social order. Most definitions of "play" involve notions of disengagement, of freewheeling, of being out of mesh with the serious, "bread-and-butter," let alone "life-and-death" processes of production, social control, getting and spending, and raising the next generation. Play, as it were, lightly skims over the cerebral cortices, sampling rather than partaking of the capacities and functions of the

various areas of the brain. That is why play can provide a meta-language (since to be “meta-” is to be both beyond and between) and emit meta-messages about so many and varied human propensities, and provide, as Handelman has said, “a very wide range of commentary on the social order” (1977, p. 189). Play is *transcendent*, though only just so, brushing the surfaces of more specialized neural organizations rather than existing apart from them. Play is the supreme bricoleur of frail transient constructions. Like a caddis worm’s case or a magpie’s nest, its meta-messages are composed of a potpourri of apparently incongruous elements: products of both hemispheres are juxtaposed and intermingled. Passages of seemingly wholly rational thought jostle in a Joycean manner with passages filleted of all syntactical connectedness.

Some of you may have guessed that play is, for me, a liminal or liminoid mode, essentially interstitial, betwixt-and-between all taxonomic nodes, essentially “elusive”—a term derived from the Latin *ex-*, away + *ludere*, to play, hence the Latin verb *eludere* acquired the sense of “to take away from someone at play,” thus “to cheat” or “to deceive.” As such play cannot be pinned down by formulations of left-hemisphere thinking—such as we all must use on occasions like this in keeping with the rhetorical conventions of academic lecturing. Play is neither ritual action nor meditation, nor is it merely vegetative, nor is it just “having fun”—it has a good deal of ergotropic aggressivity in its odd-jobbing bricolage style, too. It makes fun of people, things, ideas, ideologies, institutions, structures. It is partly a mocker as well as a mimic, a tease, arousing hope, desire, or curiosity without giving satisfaction. It is as much a reflexive interrupter as an inciter of “flow” states. Like many Trickster figures in myths (or should these be anti-myths, if myths are dominantly left-hemisphere speculations about causality?) play can deceive, betray, beguile, delude (another derivate of *ludere* “to play”), dupe, hoodwink, bamboozle, gull—as that category of players known as “card-sharps” well know! Actually, the English verb “play” itself is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *plegian*, “to strike or clap”—the A-S noun *plega* means not only “a game, sport,” but also, commonly, “a fight, battle.” But play, as I said, draws its materials from all aspects of experience, both from the interior milieu and the external environment. Yet, as Handelman (1977) concludes, it has no instrumental potency. For this very reason, its range of meta-communication is great; nothing human escapes it. Still, it has a dangerous harmlessness, for it has no fear. Its lightness and fleetingness protect it. It has the powers of the weak, an infantine audacity in the face of the strong.

Finally, play, like other liminal phenomena, is in the subjunctive mood. What does this mean? The subjunctive designates a verb form or set of forms used in English to express a contingent or hypothetical action. A contingent action is one that may occur but is not likely or intended. Subjunctivity is possibility. It refers to what may or might be. It is also concerned with supposition, conjecture, assumption, with the domain of

"as-if," rather than "as-is." "As-is" refers to the world of what culture recognizes as factuality, the world of cause and effect, in short the indicative mood—which indicates the denoted act or condition is an objective fact. This is *par excellence* the world of the left cerebral hemisphere. The world of the right hemisphere is, nevertheless, not the world of play, for its gestalt grasp of things holds for it the sense of a higher "reality," beyond speculation or supposition. Play is a light-winged, light-fingered sceptic, putting into question the cherished assumptions of both hemispheres. There is no sanctity in play; it is irreverent, and protected in the world of power struggles by its apparent irrelevance and clown's garb. But since play deals with the whole gamut of experience both contemporary and stored in culture, it can be said perhaps to play a similar role in the social construction of reality as mutation and variation in organic evolution. Its flickering knowledge of all experience possible to the nervous system and its detachment from its localizations enables it to perform the liminal function of ludic recombination of familiar elements in unfamiliar patterns. Often quite arbitrary ones. Yet it may happen that a "light," play-begotten pattern for living or social structuring, once thought whimsical, under conditions of extreme social change may prove an adaptive, "indicative" design for living. Here early theories that play arises from excess energy have renewed relevance. Part of that surplus fabricates ludic critiques of presentness, of the *status quo*, undermining it by parody, satire, irony, slapstick; part of it is mortgaged to the future in the form of a store of possible cultural and social structures, ranging from the bizarre and ludicrous to the utopian, one of which may become rooted in a future reality, allowing the serious dialectic of left and right hemispherical functions to propel individuals and groups of individuals from earth to heaven and heaven to earth on a new "indicative mood" foundation. But it was the slippery Trickster who enabled them to do it, and he/she modestly, in Derrida's ludic words, "erases the trace."

What has all this to do with the title of my paper? Very little, except that drama seems to relate to the central functions of the left and right hemispheres, those horns of a dilemma, strange beast, while play runs rings around it.

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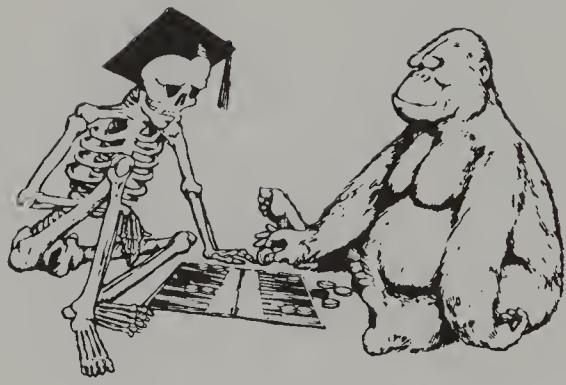
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