

THESIS

DO AMERICAN ADULTS VALUE PLAY AND PLAYFULNESS
IN CHILDREN? AN EXPLORATION OF PARENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS
PLAYFULNESS IN THEIR CHILDREN

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

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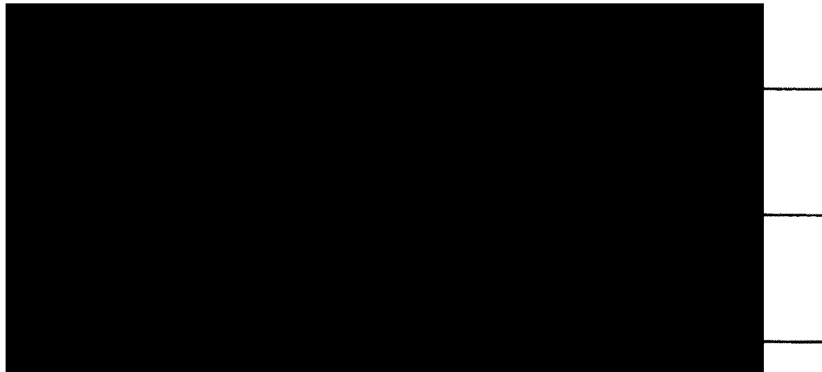
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WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY ZENNIFER PASCUAL ENTITLED DO AMERICAN ADULTS VALUE PLAY AND PLAYFULNESS IN CHILDREN? AN EXPLORATION OF PARENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS PLAYFULNESS IN THEIR CHILDREN BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE.

Committee on Graduate Work



Advisør



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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

DO AMERICAN ADULTS VALUE PLAY AND PLAYFULNESS IN THEIR CHILDREN? AN EXPLORATION OF PARENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS PLAYFULNESS IN CHILDREN

The recent trend in American culture grants play and a playful attitude vital places in adult life, and shies away from work as the governing activity of one's life. Previous research, however, found that adults did not value play in their children. This study explored whether American adults' attitudes now support the recent trend recognizing the importance of play and playfulness in children.

American parents of preschool children responded to a questionnaire investigating their attitudes towards play and playfulness. Their responses indicated that American adults recognize the value of play for its own sake and can identify the significant individual dimensions that comprise playfulness.

Noteworthy was the low valuation parents placed on the sense of humor dimension, for humor is synonymous with playfulness. Discussion on the significance of the results, recommendations for future research, and a review of the history of play, work, and child-rearing attitudes in America are provided.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
ABSTRACT	iii.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv.
CHAPTER	
ONE <u>Introduction</u>	1
TWO <u>Methods</u>	
Subjects	5
Instrumentation	5
Procedure	10
Data Analysis	10
THREE <u>Results</u>	
How much do parents value play and playfulness in their children?	12
The construct of playfulness	14
Details on the 22 playfulness items	15
Correlations between parents' overall value of the playfulness items and demographic data	15
FOUR <u>Discussion</u>	
American adults' value of play and playfulness in children	20
The construct of playfulness	21
Importance of items by dimension	22
Summary, conclusions, and implications for future study	28
REFERENCES	31
APPENDICES	41

TABLES

	<u>PAGE</u>
Table 1: Questionnaire	8-9
Table 2: Parents' Perceived Influence on Playfulness	12
Table 3: Items by Value Group and Playfulness Dimensions	17

FIGURES

Figure 1: Parents' reported educational levels	6
Figure 2: Parents' reported occupations by category	6
Figure 3: Parents' value of play and playfulness in preschool children .	13
Figure 4: Item value score ranges by high/low-value groups	16
Figure 5: Parental occupational categories by high/less-value playfulness groups	19

APPENDICES

Appendix A: First Letter to Parents	41
Appendix B: Second Letter to Parents	42
Appendix C: Item Statistics in Measure Order	43
Appendix D: Person Statistics in Measure Order	44
Appendix E: Literature Review	47

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In an occupational therapy framework, play is the major expression of purposeful activity and an arena for the development of competence for children (Schaff, 1990). The benefits of play to the social, emotional, cognitive, moral, and physical development of children are abundant in the literature (Bergen, 1988; Brown, 1994; Cherfas & Lewin, 1980; Pelligrini, 1980; Rubin, Fein, & Vandenberg, 1983; Salk, 1992; Trawick-Smith, 1994). When properly conceived and skillfully used, play can be the most powerful of therapeutic tools (Bundy, 1991).

While occupational therapists, educators, and theorists have promoted play (Bracegirdle, 1992; Bundy, 1993; Coletta, 1991; Elkind, 1994; Glickman, 1979; Kramer & Hinojosa, 1993; Missiuna & Pollock, 1991; Vandenberg & Kielhofner, 1982), others have indicated that the values of play for children have not been well-recognized in American culture (Garbarino, 1986; Hughes, 1991; Monihan-Nourot, Scales, Hoorn, Almy, 1987; Rothlein & Brett, 1987; Winn, 1983).

It is difficult to justify the use of play in early childhood programs (Spodek & Saracho, 1988), for play may be misunderstood or undervalued by parents and even by early childhood professionals who see play as a natural

part of childhood but secondary to educational and occupational achievement (Hartley, 1971; Monighan-Nourot et al., 1987). Play for its own sake is often not respected and is denigrated in favor of “work” and organized “learning” activities (Costello & LaFarge, 1987; Elkind, 1994).

In the most recent study of American adults’ values toward children’s play, many of the parents and teachers surveyed did not consider play to be important for young children, nor did they view play as a way that children learn (Rothlein & Brett, 1987). Only 20% of the teachers included play as an integral part of the school day. Most parents thought children should play in school between 30 and 50% of the time. More than half of children reported watching television when they were not playing. The authors expressed concern about the lack of interest in play, the amount of time children spend watching television when not playing, the emphasis on academics in the preschool setting, and the detrimental effects these results might have on the children's development.

Dutch parents, in comparison, estimated play as being of great importance for children’s development (Kooij & Hurk, 1991). They also valued play as having the greatest influence on children’s cognitive development over social development, creativity, personality development, and exploration.

Li, Bundy, & Beer (1995) studied Taiwanese adults' values toward play and manifestations of playfulness in their children. Seventy-seven parents and 4 teachers of kindergarten-aged children completed a questionnaire comprised of items reflective of 5 dimensions of playfulness (physical spontaneity, social spontaneity, cognitive spontaneity, manifest joy, and sense of humor) (Barnett, 1990; Lieberman, 1966), and general questions about the

value of play and playfulness to children. They found that all the Taiwanese adults surveyed valued play, and most acknowledged the existence of playful qualities that enabled children to play better. In concordance with traditional Chinese values of collectivism and interdependence, Taiwanese adults in the study viewed items from the social spontaneity dimension as being the most important. The sense of humor dimension, which has not been recognized as an important part of Chinese personality, and thus not considered an important element of playfulness for young children, was least valued by the respondents.

Parental beliefs and behaviors affect children's physical, social and emotional development (Bishop & Chace, 1971; Rubin, Mills, & Rose-Krasnor, 1989). While there has been a disappointing lack of relation between parental beliefs and their behaviors (Poel, de Bruyn, & Rost, 1991; Sigel, 1992), parental beliefs and child outcomes are correlated (Martin & Johnson, 1992; Palacios, Gonzalez, & Moreno, 1992). Thus, research that examines parental beliefs and ideas and clarifies the relation between parental belief structures, parenting behaviors, and child outcomes is critical (Rubin, Mills, & Rose-Krasnor, 1989).

In observing parental influence on their children's play, focus has been primarily on children's play as overt behavior or activity. Researchers and theorists (Barnett, 1990; Bundy, 1993; Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Lieberman, 1978; Schwartzman, 1978) have suggested viewing play as a person's disposition (playfulness) rather than as an activity. According to Froebel, often considered the father of kindergarten, "Play is the highest expression of what is in the child's soul . . . For one who has insight into human nature, the trend of the whole future life of the child is revealed in his freely chosen play" (Lowenfield, 1991, p. 19).

Play is the primary occupation of children, the vehicle by which children become competent interactors with their environment, and is the medium of intervention in the pediatric occupational therapy process (Hopkins & Smith, 1988). Children's playfulness helps to create an atmosphere through which play can occur (Bundy, 1991).

Since parents are the primary decision-makers in their children's lives, their attitudes toward play and playfulness are of prime importance in providing children with meaningful occupational therapy intervention. This study addressed the critical need for more research in this area. Specifically, the questions investigated were:

(1) How much do American parents value play in their children? If play is valued, (2) is it valued for its contribution to children's development and learning and/or for its own sake?

(3) Do parents acknowledge the existence of playfulness? If so, (4) how much do they value it in their children, and (5) do they believe playfulness is innate or that it can be learned?

(6) Do American parents view the items manifesting playfulness as a single unidimensional construct (i. e., do at least 95% of the 22 items conform to the Rasch model)?

(7) If so, how well do the parents agree with the construct of playfulness (i. e., do the responses of at least 95% of parents conform to the Rasch model)?

(8) What do parents say is the relative value of each of the 22 items manifesting playfulness?

Are American parents' values concerning playfulness as a whole related to (9) their age, (10) their educational level, (11) their child's age, or (12) their child's gender? (13) Is there a difference between parental value of playfulness as a whole and their occupation?

CHAPTER TWO

Methods

Subjects

The subjects were 67 parents (6 fathers and 61 mothers of 3-6 year-old children enrolled in two day-care centers. The parents' ages ranged from 24 to 63 years, with a mean of 36.8 years. Of the 67 children, 28 were male, 39 female. The children's ages ranged from 32 to 83 months, with a mean of 55.7 months. The parents' educational levels and occupations are summarized in Figures 1 and 2, respectively.

The day-care centers were chosen at random from the phonebook, and the directors contacted. Four day-care centers agreed initially to participate. By the time of the actual study, one center declined participation. Responses from another day-care center were not included in the sample because the response rate was significantly low (2/70, or 2.9%).

Instrumentation

A three-part questionnaire (Table 1) was used in the present study. The three parts were: (a) 22 items from the CPS (Barnett, 1990) modified to examine adults' values toward dimensions of playfulness. (Participants were asked to respond [on a 0-3 point scale] how important it was to them that their

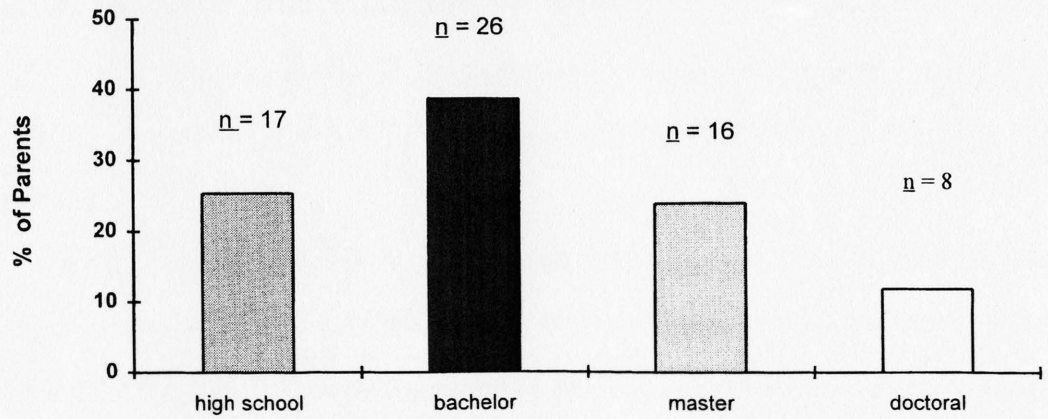


Figure 1. Parents' reported education levels

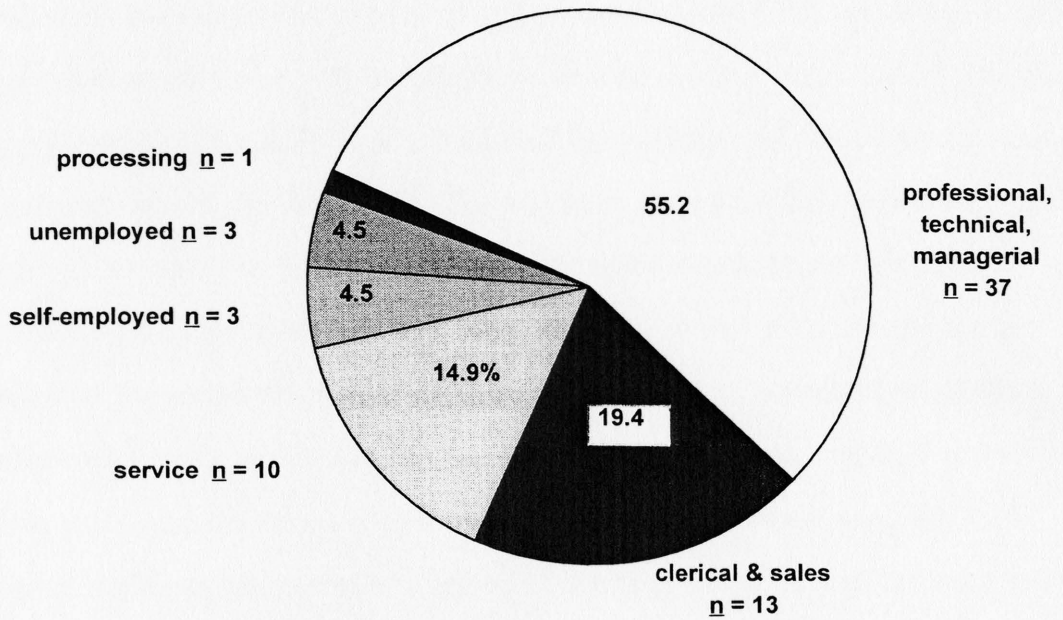


Figure 2. Parents' reported occupations by category (Dictionary of Occupational Titles, 1991)

child act like each of the items (behaviors) described. The higher the score, the more the item was valued); (b) demographic questions; and (c) 5 general questions designed to explore the adults' overall attitudes toward play and playfulness.

Items modified from the CPS comprise the principal section of the questionnaire. The CPS (Barnett, 1990) is a 23-item instrument designed to measure a "child's predisposition to approach his or her environment in a playful way" (p. 333). The 23 items are statements describing a child's behavior in five dimensions of playfulness: physical spontaneity, social spontaneity, cognitive spontaneity, manifest joy, sense of humor. In this study, one item (child shows enthusiasm) was combined with a similar item (child demonstrates exuberance during play), both from the CPS, resulting in Item 15 (child demonstrates enthusiasm/exuberance during play). (See Table 1)

Generally, the CPS is administered by parents and educators to assess the playfulness of children. The CPS has been tested for both reliability and validity. Correlations between teachers by sessions revealed interrater reliability coefficients of $r = .922, .958, .971$ for the test session, one-month retest and three-month retest sessions, respectively. Test-retest reliability coefficients were $r = .89, .92, .95$ for test to 1-month retest, test to 3-month retest, and 1-month retest to 3-month retest. Principal axes analysis with squared multiple correlations were used on the ratings of the 23 items to test the scale and item validity of the CPS. With regard to the individual playfulness items, the dimensions that emerged accounted for 87.4% and 96.1% of the common variance in two studies.

Li et al. (1995), modified the CPS (Barnett, 1990) to examine Taiwanese parental values toward the items manifesting playfulness. They found that

Table 1

Questionnaire

Parent : If you have more than one child between 3-6 years old, please fill out only one questionnaire. Thank you for your time and cooperation in getting this questionnaire back within 7 days.

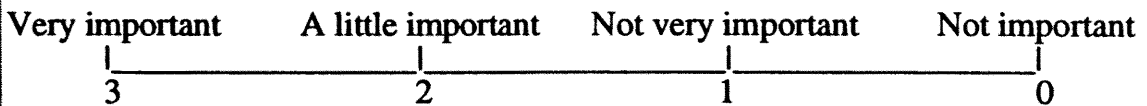
Today's date: _____

Part 1

- Your child's date of birth _____ gender _____
- Your age _____ gender _____
- Your highest education level _____
a) high school b) bachelors c) masters d) other (please specify)
- Your occupation _____

Part 2

Please indicate how important it is to you that your child act like each of the following. Place a 0, 1, 2, or 3 next to each sentence, using the scale below.



- (1) The child's movements are generally well-coordinated during play activities. _____
- (2) The child is physically active during play. _____
- (3) The child prefers to be active rather than quiet in play. _____
- (4) The child runs (skips, hops, jumps) a lot in play. _____

- (5) The child responds easily to others' approaches during play. _____
- (6) The child initiates play with others. _____
- (7) The child plays cooperatively with other children. _____
- (8) The child is willing to share playthings. _____

- (9) The child assumes a leadership role when playing with others. _____
- (10) The child invents his/her own games to play. _____
- (11) The child uses unconventional objects in play. _____
- (12) The child assumes different character roles in play. _____
- (13) The child is interested in many different kinds of activities. _____

- (14) The child expresses enjoyment during play. _____
- (15) The child demonstrates enthusiasm/exuberance during play. _____
- (16) The child freely expresses emotions during play. _____

- (17) The child sings and talks while playing. _____
- (18) The child enjoys joking with other children. _____
- (19) The child gently teases others while at play. _____
- (20) The child tells funny stories. _____
- (21) The child laughs at humorous stories. _____
- (22) The child likes to clown around in play. _____

Part 3

- (1) How important do you think play is to pre-school aged children? _____
- Very important.
 - A little important.
 - Not very important.
 - Not important at all. (Please go on to question (3).)
- (2) [Please answer (Y)es or (N)o] to:
Do you think play is important for:
- children's learning and development? _____
 - for its own sake? _____
- (3) Do you think there is a quality existing in some children that makes them more able than others to play? _____
- Yes. (Please go on to question (4).)
 - No. (Please stop here and return questionnaire.
Thank you for your help.)
- (4) How important is it to you that your child possess this quality that makes them able to play well? _____
- Very important.
 - A little important.
 - Not very important.
 - Not important at all.
- (5) Do you think that this quality that enables children to play well is inherent, learned, or some combination? _____
- Totally inherent.
 - Totally learned.
 - Mostly inherent, some learned.
 - Mostly learned, some inherent.
 - Half inherent, half learned.

Please return questionnaire. Thank you again for your responses and cooperation.

two of the 23 items from from the CPS (being reserved in emotion expression and gently teasing others) failed to conform to the Rasch model, suggesting that they were outside the construct of playfulness, and that 91.9% of the individuals fit the model, slightly less than the desired criteria of 95%.

Procedure

In order to protect the anonymity of the participants, the questionnaires (See Table 1) and letters (See Appendix A) were distributed through the directors of the day care centers. The letter described the purpose of the research and asked the participants to return the completed questionnaire in the enclosed envelope within 7 days. To maximize the return rate, a second questionnaire, a second letter (See Appendix B), and an enclosed return envelope were redistributed by the directors of the day care centers to all participants 2 weeks after the first distribution. Of 157 questionnaires distributed, 67 (43%) were returned.

Data analysis

Several procedures were used to analyze data. First, Rasch analysis was used to address the following questions: (1) Do American parents view the 22 items manifesting playfulness as a single unidimensional construct (i. e., do all 22 items conform to the Rasch model?); (2) If so, how well do the parents agree with the construct of playfulness (i. e., do the responses of at least 95% of parents conform to the Rasch model?); and (3) What do parents say is the relative value of each of the 22 items manifesting playfulness?

Second, Pearson product correlation procedures were used to determine (4) whether American parents' values concerning playfulness as a whole (overall value score) are related to parental age. Third, ANOVA was

used to determine (5) possible differences between parental values toward playfulness as a whole (based on overall value score) and parents' educational level.

Fourth, a ANOVA was used to investigate possible differences between parents' values toward playfulness as a whole (overall value score) and their (6) child's age, and (7) child's gender. Lastly, to answer (8) whether American parents' values towards playfulness as a whole are related to their occupation, the parents were divided into two non-overlapping groups (high value/low value) based on their overall value score of the 22 items manifesting playfulness. Their occupations were then examined and grouped by category (Dictionary of Occupational Titles, 1991).

Rasch analysis is a statistical procedure that involves logarithmic conversion of data into an interval scale. As it applies to this study, two assumptions underlie Rasch analysis: (1) some items (behaviors) will be more highly valued by the parents than other items; and (2) parents who value playfulness highly will value items (behaviors) that are less valued by the group. When both assumptions are met, an item or a subject is said to conform to the Rasch model. The higher the percentage of items and people that conform to the model, the greater the assurance that we are measuring the dimensions of playfulness as a single unidimensional construct.

CHAPTER THREE

Results

How much do parents value play and playfulness in their children?

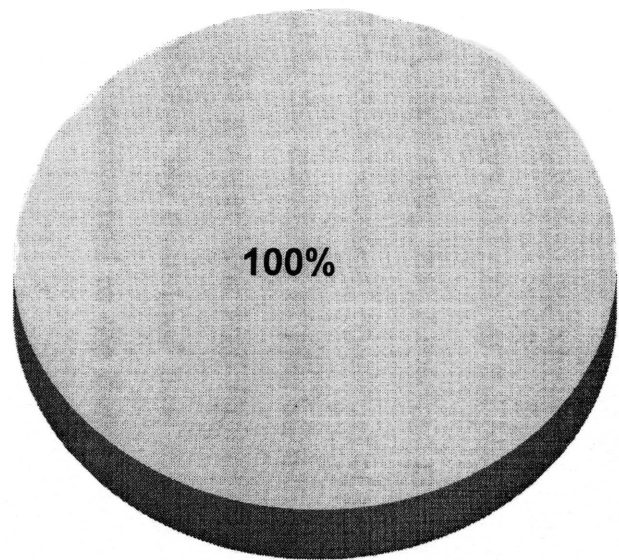
As can be seen in Figure 3, most parents considered play and playfulness to be “very important” to pre-school-aged children. Play was believed to be important for its own sake by 93.8% (61/65), and important for children’s learning and development by 98.5% (64/65) of the parents who responded.

Of the 66 parents who responded, 58 (87.9%) acknowledged a quality that exists in some children that makes them more able than others to play (playfulness). Almost half of the parents thought playfulness was a quality mostly learned and somewhat inherent (See Table 2).

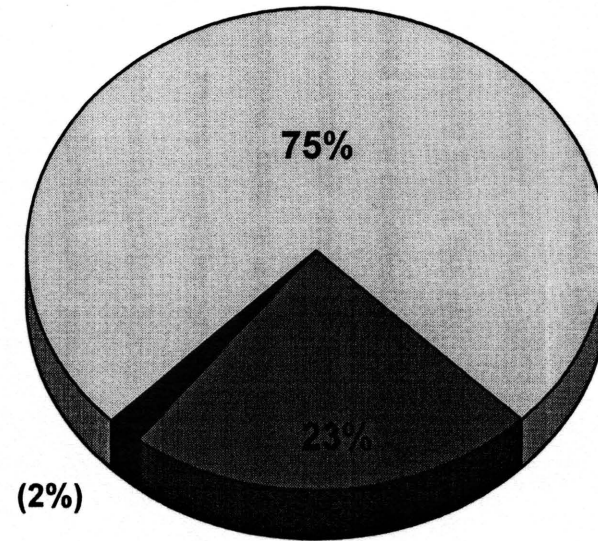
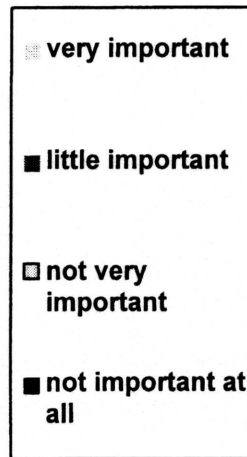
Table 2

Parents’ Perceived Influence on Playfulness

<u>Influence</u>	<u>n = 58</u>	<u>%</u>
Totally inherent	0	0
Totally learned	1	1.7
Mostly inherent, some learned	15	25.9
Mostly learned, some inherent	27	46.5
Half inherent, half learned	15	25.9



Play importance



Playfulness importance

Figure 3. Parents' value of play and playfulness in preschool children (for play importance, $n = 67$; for playfulness importance, $n = 56$). For parents who considered playfulness "very important", $n = 42$; "little important", $n = 13$; not important at all", $n = 1$.

The construct of playfulness

The BIGSTEPS program (Wright & Linacre, 1995) was used to analyze the parents' expressed values towards the 22 playfulness items modified from the CPS (Barnett, 1990a). BIGSTEPS is designed to construct Rasch measurement from the responses of a set of persons to a set of items. The measures were reported in Logits (log-odd probability units). The fit statistics were reported as mean-square residuals, which have approximate chi-square distributions. Infit is a standardized information-weighted mean square statistic, more sensitive to unexpected behavior affecting responses to items near the person's ability level. Outfit is a standardized outlier-sensitive mean square fit statistic, more sensitive to unexpected behavior by persons on items far from the person's ability level (Linacre & Wright, 1994).

First, we examined whether each of the 22 items conformed to the Rasch model to describe playfulness as a single unidimensional construct. An item is said to conform to the Rasch model if, for either infit or outfit statistic, the mean-square (MnSq) and standardized (t) statistics do not exceed 1.4 and 2.0, respectively and simultaneously. As can be seen in Appendix C, Item #3 (active rather than quiet) failed to conform to the Rasch model. For both infit and outfit statistics, the MnSq and t numbers were 1.44 and 2.3, respectively. Therefore, 95% (21/22) of the playfulness items conformed to the Rasch model, indicating that American parents view the 21 items as describing a single unidimensional construct of playfulness, and that Item #3 may fall outside the construct of playfulness.

To answer how well American parents agree with the construct of playfulness, we examined how many parent's overall measure score for the 22 items conformed to the Rasch model. As with the items, a parents' overall

measure score is said to conform to the Rasch model if, for either infit or outfit statistic, the MnSq and \hat{t} statistics do not exceed 1.4 and 2.0, respectively and simultaneously. Looking at Appendix D, the responses of 4 parents (Parents #8, 31, 50, and 58) did not conform to the Rasch model. The resulting 63/67, or 94%, of parents whose responses agree with the construct of playfulness is slightly less than the desired criteria of 95%.

Details on the 22 playfulness items

The expressed relative value (measure score) of each of the items manifesting playfulness can be seen in Appendix C. Parents valued the expression of enjoyment (Item #14) as most important (measure score = -2.67), and gently teasing others while at play (Item #19) as least important (measure score = 2.80).

By adding and subtracting 1 unit of model error, a range of the value scores for each of the 22 items was calculated, dividing the items into high and low-value groups (See Figure 4). As can be seen in Table 3, the items most valued by parents fell mainly into the manifest joy and social spontaneity dimensions, while all five humor items received low-value scores.

Correlations Between Parents' Overall Value of the Playfulness Items and Demographic Factors

Neither parental age nor child's age were significantly related to parental values concerning playfulness as a whole (as indicated by measure scores) ($p = .192$ and $.073$, respectively). Similarly, there were no statistically significant differences between the parents' measure scores based on a) parent education level ($F = .882$, $p = .46$); b) child's age ($F = 1.664$, $p = .202$); or c) child's gender ($F = .221$, $p = .64$). There was also no interaction between child's age and gender ($F = .103$, $p = .749$).

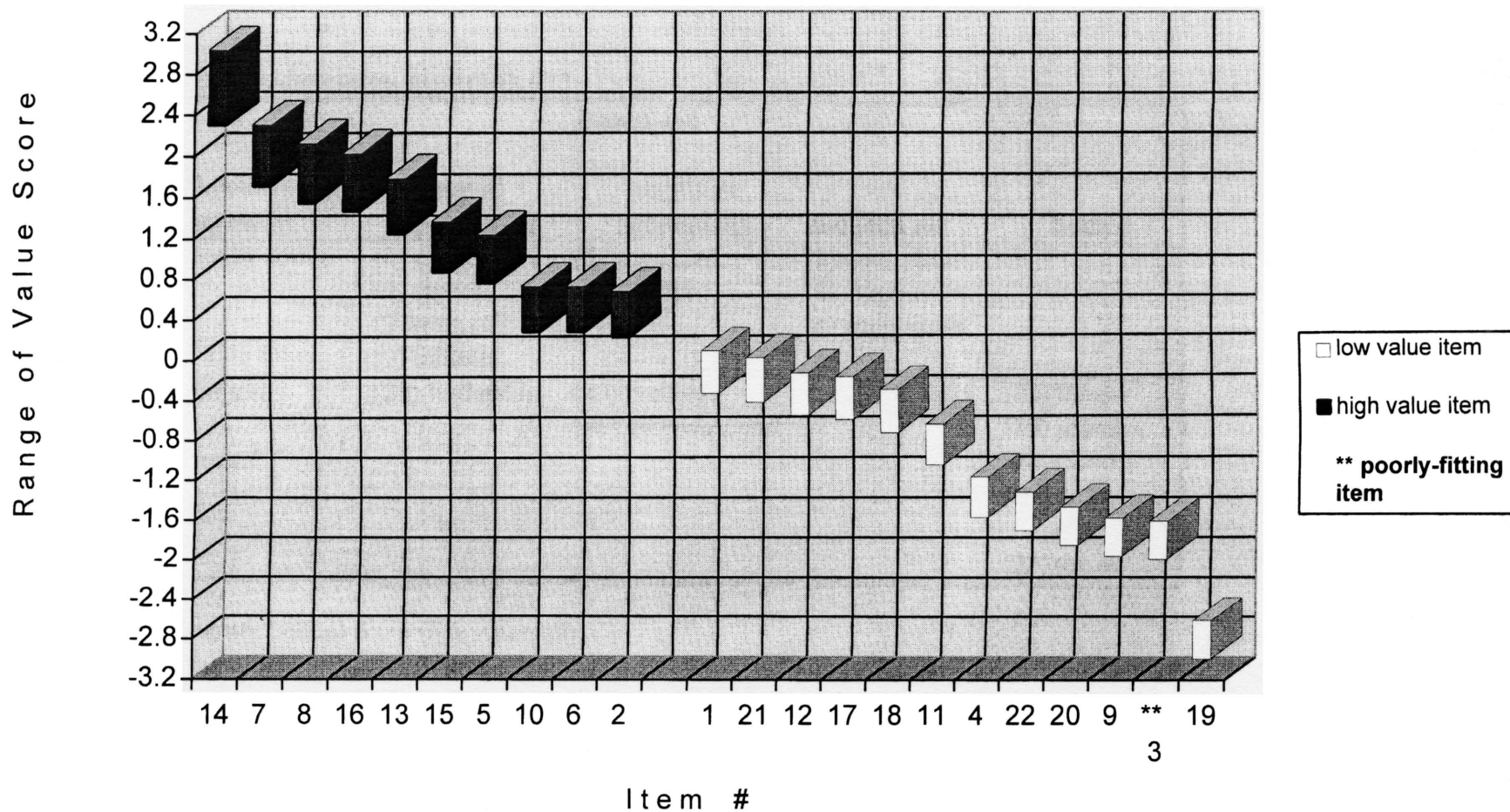


Figure 4. Item value score ranges by high/low-value groups. 1 unit of model error was added/subtracted to each item's measure (value) score (see Appendix C) to obtain the range. The value score ranges were then negated ($\times (-1)$) to make the relative values of the items clearer (higher-valued items originally had negative value ranges).

Table 3

Items by value, playfulness dimension, and (rank #) *

VALUE	<u>Dimension</u>				
	<u>physical spontaneity</u>	<u>social spontaneity</u>	<u>cognitive spontaneity</u>	<u>manifest joy</u>	<u>humor</u>
HIGH	(10) physically active	(2) cooperative (3) shares (7) responds (9) initiates	(5) interested (8) invents	(1) enjoyment (4) emotions (6) enthusiasm	
LOW	(11) coordinated (17) runs (21) not quiet **	(20) leadership	(13) pretends (16) unconventional	(14) sings/talks	(12) laughs (15) joking (18) clowns (19) funny stories (22) teases

* Items ranked by measure (value) score (See Appendix C).

**poorly-fitting item

To examine whether there was a difference between parental values of playfulness as a whole and their occupation, we added and subtracted 2 units of model error to each parent's measure (value) score. In this way we obtained a range in which each parent's true measure (value) score is likely to be found. The parents were thus divided into two non-overlapping groups. The High-Value group was composed of those parents who highly valued playfulness (n = 17) while the Less-Value group was composed of those who least valued playfulness (n = 14).

As Figure 5 indicates, there were few differences in occupation between parents in the Highly-Valued and Less-Valued groups. Most parents from both groups fell into 3 major occupational categories: (1) professional, technical, and managerial occupations; (2) clerical and sales occupations; and (3) service occupations (Dictionary of Occupational Titles, 1991).

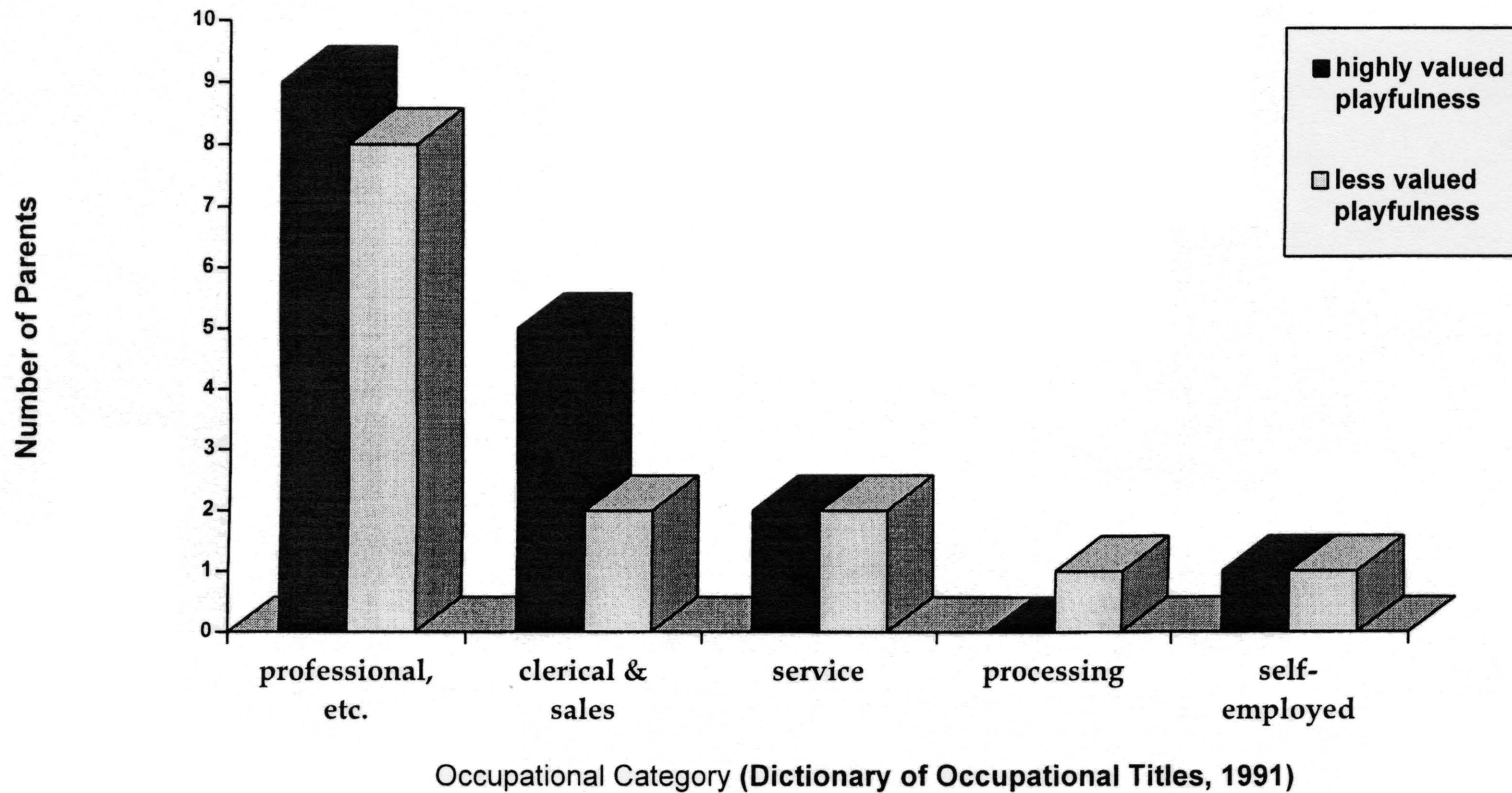


Figure 5. Parental occupational categories by highly/less-valued playfulness groups. Parents in the highly-valued playfulness group had higher measure (value) scores than parents in the less-valued group.

CHAPTER FOUR

Discussion

American adults' value of play and playfulness in children

Many of the parents and teachers in the most recent study of American adults' values toward children's play (Rothlein & Brett, 1987) did not consider play to be important for young children, nor did they view play as a way that children learn. In refreshing contrast, all the parents in this study valued play to be "very important" to their children, while the majority believed play was important for its own sake as well as for children's learning and development. For most parents who acknowledged the existence of playfulness, 75% valued playfulness as "very important", and almost half of them believed playfulness to have a strong learning component ("mostly learned, some inherent").

These findings support the recent trend emphasizing the importance of a playful attitude to Americans and the growing acceptance that a balanced, more fulfilling lifestyle includes a simpler schedule with plentiful amounts of physically and emotionally enriching play (Dolnic¹ 1994; Kanters & Montelpare, 1994; Rubin,1995; Wankel,1994). The parents'

responses indicated that this recent trend and these values of play and playfulness apply also to our children.

The implication of parents' high value of play in their children, along with the findings that parental beliefs have a significant impact on their children's behaviors (Martin & Johnson, 1992; Palacios, Gonzalez, & Moreno, 1992), is that children can and will be encouraged to play more, thereby exposing them to increased amounts of beneficial play. The fact that parents believed playfulness to have a strong learning component is also encouraging. As occupational therapists, we can teach parents and teachers how to encourage play in children, and by looking at each child's playful attributes, how to tailor play activities to best elicit healthy behavior.

The construct of playfulness

Item 3 (child prefers to be active rather than quiet in play) failed to conform to the Rasch model. The value scores this item received were so erratic that it is difficult to state confidently how much parents value it or whether it truly lies outside the construct of playfulness. One possible explanation for why Item 3 did not conform to the Rasch model is that the parents did not agree wholly on the meaning of this item. Some may have objected to the item's implicit devaluing of a quiet, internal play, while others may have perceived it as similar to the item above it (Item 2 - physically active during play), which was highly valued.

There were no similar characteristics (i.e., education, occupation, age) defining the four parents whose responses did not conform to the Rasch model. However, the high percentage of parents' agreeing with the construct of playfulness (94%) and high percentage of items (95%) conforming to the Rasch model gives us great assurance that the 21 items measure a unidimensional construct of playfulness.

Importance of Items by Dimension

Physical spontaneity

Since Americans value physical fitness and skill, and are participants in almost every conceivable sport (Ibrahim, 1991), it was somewhat surprising that only one item in the physical spontaneity dimension (Item 2 - physically active) was highly valued by parents. The three items rated low (Items 1 - well-coordinated; 3 - active rather than quiet; and 4 - runs alot) may reflect that parents are knowledgeable about the great variation in physical coordination and development in children, particularly in the early years (Margenau, 1990). Further, parents are informed about the potentially detrimental consequences of pushing children to participate in physical activities outside their ability level (Martens, & Seefeldt, 1979; Micheli, 1990). Parents may also be "tuned into" the fact that there are an almost infinite number of ways and styles to play, whether it be jumping and doing flips on a jungle gym, or playing quietly in a cardboard box castle.

social spontaneity

This dimension had the greatest number of items highly-valued by parents, including two of the top three items (Items 7 and 8 - plays cooperatively and willing to share playthings). Americans place a high value on skills of social competency and strategies for resolving conflicts smoothly. In America it is polite to be friendly whether or not you really mean it, whereas in England, it is impolite to be friendly if you do not really mean it (Terry, 1979). This social skill has otherwise been termed as "impersonal, but friendly" (Stearns, 1994), or "casual, yet impersonal civility" (Costello & LaFarge, 1987).

America is the land of opportunity, as well as a land of extreme individual diversity, where an individual cannot succeed without communicating effectively with or receiving help from others. Therefore, the individual who is more socially adept is more assured of prosperity (Stearns, 1994). Children are taught, mainly through schools, to acquire skills that will allow them to take advantage of America's opportunities, and a child who has difficulty absorbing the normative social values (i.e., taking turns) will to a greater or lesser degree, be rejected (Costello & LaFarge, 1987). This may explain why although American children tend to be more competitive as a group when compared to children in other cultures (Domino, 1992; Hughes, 1991), the importance of being a team player is also

stressed, and why parents in this study most valued the social spontaneity items.

As in the previous study which investigated Taiwanese parents' values towards play and playfulness in children (Li et al., 1995), the one social spontaneity item that was not highly valued by parents was the one of assuming a leadership role. But unlike that same previous study, where there was little wonder that respondents placed relatively less value on being leader (Li et al., 1995), this result was initially confusing.

The United States was shouldered on great leadership and Americans have been complimented as having experiences that nurture leadership qualities (Bass, 1990). Unlike Chinese society, where being a good member of the group is highly valued (Li. et al.) , the emphasis in American culture is on individualism and independence (Googins, 1991). However, many Americans reject taking on leadership roles for unfounded beliefs (i.e., "charisma is a necessary leadership quality", and "leaders always know the goal in advance") (McLean & Weitzel, 1991). Other authors have cited the negative reputation leaders have been gotten in recent times, along with the large and often contradictory demands placed on leaders (Campbell & Wysziniirski, 1991), as contributing to the low value Americans place on leadership.

Humor

Not one item from the humor dimension was on parents' highly-valued behavior list. All five items received low value scores from parents, with Item 19 (gently teases others) being the least-valued of all the items. This noted some discussion since playfulness is synonymous with "humorous, jesting, amusing; prankish; full of fun and high spirits" (Random House Thesaurus, 1984).

One reason may be that the humor items were descriptive of more linguistically-laden humor, beyond the cognitive capability of most preschoolers (Klein, 1987). Adults know that there are differences between child and adult humor, for children, like adults, will find amusing what they understand. Since humor increases and is influenced by cognitive ability (McGhee, 1979), what preschoolers generally find funny are imitations, physical incongruities, and more concrete, motor humor (i.e., peek-a-boo and chasing), where logic plays a small part (Klein, 1987; Koller, 1988). Older children and adults, on the other hand, find joking, riddles, and satirical material to be amusing (Dudden, 1987; Koller, 1988).

Another postulation for why the humor items were not highly valued is that they carry with them an element of being an on-display, "risque", the entertainer. "Risqué" is defined as "verging on impropriety or indecency" (Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary), where there is an increased

risk of insulting or not being understood by one's audience. Worse yet, an individual might make a fool of him or herself.

Americans hold in high esteem individuals with exceptional abilities and believe they should be identified as "superior" to others (Koller, 1988). Individuals who actually point out their shortcomings and non-exceptional abilities, are not so favorably looked upon. In describing the American emotional style, Stearns (1994) commented, "Embarrassment must be avoided. Even open communication must not lead to dramatic or upsetting scenes." (p. 191).

Comedians, or those individuals with better-developed senses of humor, represent conduct to be ridiculed and rejected, and our laughter drawn from them reflects our superiority and our relief that their weaknesses are greater than our own (Dudden, 1987). So in short, we appreciate those that make us laugh, but we do not necessarily aim to have ourselves or our children be like those individuals.

In support of this reasoning, Item 21 (laughs at humorous stories) was the highest-valued humor item. This item seems to imply a more receptive, audience and less-inclined-to-embarrass-oneself-type behavior.

Li et. al. (1995) also found that the items representing sense of humor were relatively less valued by the Taiwanese respondents than were items from other dimensions. They offered that humor was a relatively new term introduced by western culture to the Chinese, not recognized as an important

personality trait in adults, and thus not a very important playfulness element for young children.

Cognitive spontaneity

An offering of why Items 10 (invents his/her own games to play) and 13 (interested in many different kinds of activity) were more highly valued by parents than were Items 11 (assumes different character roles in play) and 12 (uses unconventional objects in play) requires several steps. First, creativity, ingenuity, and personal inventiveness are highly valued in our culture, for they foster wellness and influence one's ability to attain success and happiness (Goff & Torrance, 1991; Pepitone, 1980; Russ, 1993). In addition, researchers (Barnett & Kleiber, 1982; Lieberman, 1977; Pelligrini, 1980) have found a positive correlation between playfulness and cognitive, creative ability in children . Second, risque, entertaining-type behavior, which was discussed in the previous section on humor, is not strongly valued in American culture. Although creativity is required in assuming different roles and using unconventional objects in play, the possible resulting play behaviors and consequences may not be accepted by some parents (i.e, child using the family VCR as the hungry, peanut-butter-and-jelly-sandwich-eating machine; child acting like a monkey throughout dinner). Playfulness Items 10 and 13 may have suggested more creative and less risque, embarrassing behaviors than did Items 11 and 12, and thus, would be more highly valued by parents.

Manifest joy

Only one item (Item 17 - sings/talks) from this dimension was low-valued. Like the two low-valued cognitive spontaneity items, Item 17 was remindful of the humor items, with that element of risqué entertaining.

Parents indicated Item 14 (expresses enjoyment) to be the most-valued. Parents simply seem to want their children to have fun when they play. Item 16 (expresses emotion) ranked as the fourth most-valued item. Perhaps this is because the importance of allowing adults, as well as children, to freely express themselves is widely broadcasted in our culture (Russ, 1993; Taylor, 1978). In fact, talking out emotions became a central therapeutic mechanism in the growing use of formal therapy in our culture during the last half of this century (Stearns, 1994).

However, Americans have difficulty accepting a tragic interpretation of experience, and must pass on a "bright side" or "happy ending" mentality (Costello & LaFarge, 1987). Therefore, expressing negative emotions may not be as highly valued by parents as expressing positive ones such as enjoyment, perhaps explaining why Item 14 was more highly valued than Item 16. Personal experiences have found parents more accepting of their children's "happy" outbursts than of angry, tear-filled tantrums.

Summary, Conclusions, and Implications for Future Study

Due to the small sample size, it is difficult to generalize confidently the parents' generally concordant responses of this study. Most parents held at

least a bachelors degree and were professional, technical, and managerial professionals, thereby producing a homogeneous population perhaps more biasedly responsive to play. A more nationally representative study needs to be done to be assured that American adults do indeed understand and value the vital importance of play and playfulness not only for themselves, but for their children.

Better operational definitions of play should also be provided in future studies investigating adults' attitudes towards play and playfulness. Parents in this study indicated confusion with the unprovided, well-defined meanings of play and playfulness (i.e., "the word play here is too broad - covers goofing and learning"; to the question of the existence of playfulness as a quality that makes some children more able than others to play , one parent commented,"not a fair question").

Our society appears to recognize that play and a playful attitude are valuable. But do we know how to play and how to be playful? Responses from this study indicate that American adults can identify, with respect to their children, the merit of play for its own sake and some of the individual attributes that comprise playfulness.

However, it is not known whether adults know how to encourage play and playful behavior. Thus, another recommendation for future study is to explore this significantly consequential question, and contribute insight on how to nurture our incurable nature as players. It is also this researcher's

opinion that we need to foster those individual elements that give our children, ourselves, and everybody else the vital pleasure of laughing, for laughter can be the sunshine in one's soul.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

First Letter to Parents

Dear Parent,

Hello! My name is Zennifer Pascual, a student at Colorado State University pursuing a master's degree in occupational therapy. To meet the requirements of the program and because I feel that parents' opinions are important in shaping their children's lives, I am conducting a research project titled **"Do American Parents Value Play and Playfulness in Their Children? An Exploration of Adults' Attitudes Toward Dimensions of Playfulness"**. Anita Bundy, a professor in the Occupational Therapy department at CSU, is my advisor in this project.

What is the purpose of my project?

To find out the ways in which American parents value benefits of play and expressions of playfulness in their children

What do you need to do?

The 2-page questionnaire will take 5-10 minutes to complete. Please return the questionnaire within 7 days with your child to the day-care. Your participation is voluntary. If you cannot complete this questionnaire, your child's program will be in no way negatively affected. To ensure your anonymity, the director of your child's day-care has graciously agreed to distribute this letter and the attached questionnaire to you.

What are the risks?

It is not possible to identify all potential risks in an experimental procedure, but there are no known risks involved with completing this questionnaire.

What are the benefits?

Although neither you nor your child will benefit directly or immediately from this project, professionals and the children with whom they work will benefit from the knowledge generated in this study through improved intervention and the reduced effects of any existing disabilities.

Thank you very much for your time and interest in filling out the questionnaire and participating in this research project.

Appendix B

Second Letter to Parents

Dear Parent,

Your received a questionnaire and letter with your child last week. To increase the response rate for my research project, I am sending out a second distribution of questionnaires.

If you have already completed and returned a questionnaire, thank you for your responses and please disregard this letter. If you have not, please fill out this questionnaire and return it in the enclosed envelope within 7 days.

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Zennifer Pascual

Appendix C

Item Statistics by measure (value) score in highest to least valued order

<i>Item #</i>	<i>Raw Score</i>	<i>Measure score</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>IN FIT</i>		<i>OUT FIT</i>		<i>Item</i>
				<i>MnSq</i>	<i>Zstd</i>	<i>MnSq</i>	<i>Zstd</i>	
14	186	-2.67	.37	.91	-.3	.87	-.3	enjoyment
7	180	-2.01	.30	.84	-.8	.63	-1.3	cooperative
8	178	-1.84	.29	1.03	.1	1.20	.6	shares
16	177	-1.75	.28	1.35	1.6	1.18	.6	emotions
13	174	-1.52	.27	.82	-1.0	.85	-.6	interests
15	168	-1.12	.25	1.08	.5	.89	-.5	enthusiasm
5	166	-1.00	.24	.87	-.8	.87	-.6	responds
10	157	-.50	.23	.81	-1.2	.78	-1.3	invents
6	157	-.50	.23	1.04	.3	1.07	.4	initiates
2	156	-.45	.23	.90	-.6	.85	-.8	active
1	144	.13	.21	1.08	.4	1.07	.4	coordinated
21	142	.22	.21	1.02	.1	1.00	.0	laughs
12	139	.35	.21	.76	-1.5	.74	-1.6	pretends
17	138	.39	.21	.88	-.7	.88	-.7	sings/talks
18	135	.52	.21	.94	-.4	.93	-.4	jokes
11	127	.85	.20	.85	-.9	.87	-.8	unconventional
4	114	1.36	.19	1.21	1.2	1.23	1.3	runs
22	110	1.51	.19	.95	-.3	.96	-.3	clowns
20	106	1.66	.19	.95	-.3	.96	-.2	funny stories
9	101	1.77	.19	.94	-.4	.95	-.3	leadership
3	102	1.8	.19	1.44	2.3	1.44	2.3	not quiet
19	74	2.8	.19	1.30	1.7	1.32	1.8	teases
MEAN	142.	.00	.23	1.00	.0	.98	-.1	
S. D.	30.	1.44	.04	.18	1.0	.19	1.0	

APPENDIX D

Parent Statistics by measure (value) score from highly-valued to least-valued playfulness

ENTRY NUM	RAW SCORE	COUNT	MEASURE	ERROR	INFIT		OUTFIT		PTBIS	PARENT
					MNSQ	ZSTD	MNSQ	ZSTD		
21	66	22	6.99	1.45	MAXIMUM		ESTIMATED MEASURE			021 F 42 B EDITOR F 75
65	66	22	6.99	1.45	MAXIMUM		ESTIMATED MEASURE			065 F 33 A CLEANER F 43
29	62	22	4.52	.59	.95	-.1	.43	-.8	.66	029 F 42 A ARTIST M 63
23	61	22	4.20	.55	1.79	1.6	.83	-.2	.61	023 F 63 B NURSE F 79
34	60	22	3.92	.51	.90	-.3	.68	-.5	.49	034 F 38 B ARTIST M 57
43	60	22	3.67	.51	1.76	1.7	1.00	.0	.45	043 F 48 C WRITER M 56
25	59	22	3.22	.49	1.53	1.3	1.97	1.2	.29	025 F 40 C NURSE F 60
9	57	22	3.03	.45	1.53	1.3	1.36	.6	.44	009 F 31 C SELF F 63
26	56	22	3.03	.44	1.31	.8	1.04	.1	.52	026 F 30 B SCIENCE F 64
49	56	22	3.03	.44	.79	-.7	.70	-.7	.66	049 F 38 C COOMUN F49
55	56	22	3.03	.44	.84	-.5	.74	-.6	.51	055 M B ADVERTS M 61
59	56	22	3.03	.44	.69	-1.0	.53	-1.2	.752	059 F 29 A SECRET F 49
60	56	22	2.84	.44	.46	-2.0	.44	-1.5	.75	060 F 42 B ACCT M 61
57	53	21	2.66	.44	.72	-.9	.61	-1.0	.69	057 F 34 B PURCHS F 49
8	54	22	2.66	.41	2.09	2.6	1.55	1.2	.63	008 F 36 B ACCT M 54
15	54	22	2.66	.41	.72	-.9	.60	-1.2	.75	015 F 33 A SECRET F 40
63	54	22	2.50	.41	1.00	.0	1.12	.3	.59	063 F 36 B HSEWFE M 73
12	53	22	2.50	.41	1.11	.3	.86	-.4	.71	012 F 28 A SECRET M 70
19	53	22	2.50	.41	1.47	1.3	1.18	.5	.65	019 F 30 D VETER F 55
22	53	22	2.50	.41	1.38	1.1	1.12	.3	.60	022 F 40 A SECRET M 71
32	53	22	2.50	.41	.73	-.9	.61	-1.2	.80	032 M42 D PROFESS F 73
48	53	22	2.50	.41	.55	-1.7	.56	-1.4	.73	048 F 35 C UNEMPL F 72
58	53	22	2.50	.41	1.50	1.4	2.49	2.8	.30	058 F 24 A OFFICE F 65
20	52	22	2.34	.40	.85	-.5	.736	-.8	.72	020 F 39 B TVPROD F 43
31	51	22	2.18	.39	1.85	2.2	2.95	3.8	.05	031 F 42B DRAFTER F 40
38	51	22	2.18	.39	1.03	.1	1.07	.2	.68	038 F29 B HSEWFE M 77

APPENDIX D (cont'd)

<i>ENTRY NUM</i>	<i>RAW SCORE</i>	<i>COUNT</i>	<i>MEASURE</i>	<i>ERROR</i>	<i>INFIT</i>		<i>OUTFIT</i>		<i>PTBIS</i>	<i>PARENT</i>
					<i>MNSQ</i>	<i>ZSTD</i>	<i>MNSQ</i>	<i>ZSTD</i>		
45	51	22	2.18	.39	.59	-1.5	.64	-1.2	.81	045 F 29 C UNIVERS F 56
6	50	22	2.03	.38	.50	-2.0	.47	-2.0	.83	006 F 39 C ENGINEER F 66
17	50	22	2.03	.38	.40	-2.5	.50	-1.9	.75	017 F 37 B SECRET F 60
18	50	22	2.03	.38	.51	-1.9	.48	-2.0	.82	018 F 48 C UNE,PL F 78
50	50	22	2.03	.38	1.81	2.1	1.54	1.4	.70	050 M 37 C CONSLT M 44
66	50	22	2.03	.38	1.40	1.1	1.20	.6	.64	066 F 443 D LECTRE M 50
51	49	22	1.89	.38	.92	-.2	.84	-.5	.66	051 F 35 B ENGINEER F 58
13	48	22	1.75	.37	1.55	1.6	1.40	1.1	.57	013 M 37 D PROFES F 65
39	48	22	1.75	.37	.93	-.2	.87	-.4	.76	039 F 28 D UNEMPL F 47
42	48	22	1.75	.37	1.20	.6	1.39	1.1	.57	042 F 41 B NURSE F 49
44	48	22	1.75	.37	1.26	.8	1.17	.5	.62	044 F 46 C HSEWFE F 45
14	47	22	1.61	.37	.88	-.4	.85	-.5	.74	014 F 37 B HSEWFE M 62
1	46	22	1.48	.36	.85	-.5	.78	-.8	.58	001 F 25 A BOOKPR M 42
2	46	21	1.48	.36	.66	-1.3	.66	-1.3	.75	002 F 38 D HSEWFE M 44
24	46	22	1.48	.36	.81	-.7	.84	-.6	.53	024 F 33 B VETTECH M 65
30	46	22	1.48	.36	.41	-2.6	.42	-2.5	.82	030 F 36 B ARTIST M 63
36	46	22	1.48	.36	1.23	.7	1.15	.5	.68	036 F 41 D HSEWFE M 42
47	46	22	1.48	.36	1.68	1.9	1.57	1.6	.64	047 F 40 B COMPTER F 76
11	45	22	1.35	.36	.78	-.8	.74	-1.0	.71	011 F 29 B TEACHER F 33
27	45	22	1.35	.36	.98	-.1	.93	-.2	.62	027 F 36 D DENTIST F 59
41	45	22	1.35	.36	1.16	.5	1.24	.8	.39	041 F 34 D LAWYER M 44
67	45	22	1.35	.36	1.70	2.0	1.64	1.8	.38	067 F 37 D PHYSICN F 32
28	44	22	1.23	.35	1.05	.2	.98	-.1	.84	028 F 41 B SCIENCE M 61
35	44	22	1.23	.35	.78	-.8	.90	-.4	.00	035 F 41 B SALES M 63
52	43	22	1.10	.35	.84	-.6	.86	-.5	.67	052 M 40 A SELF M 51
54	43	22	1.10	.35	.52	-2.0	.52	-2.0	.82	054 F 38 B MARKET M 45

APPENDIX D (cont'd)

ENTRY NUM	RAW SCORE	COUNT	MEASURE	ERROR	INFIT		OUT FIT		PTBIS	PARENT
					MNSQ	ZSTD	MNSQ	ZSTD		
61	43	22	1.10	.35	.92	-.3	.98	-.1	.50	061 F 35 D HSEWFE F 56
5	42	22	.98	.35	.36	-3.0	.38	-2.9	.87	005 F 35 C CONSULT F 68
7	42	22	.98	.35	.81	-.7	.81	-.7	.35	007 F 35 A SALES M 36
37	42	22	.98	.35	1.14	.5	1.20	.7	.33	037 M36 C COMPTR M 53
53	42	22	.98	.35	.89	-.4	.95	-.2	.38	053 F 38 A PROCESS F 37
10	40	22	.74	.34	.98	-.1	.99	.0	.65	010 F 38 A SECRET M 41
56	40	22	.74	.34	.97	-.1	.92	-.3	.77	056 F 36 C HSEWFE F 44
62	40	22	.74	.34	.59	-1.7	.57	-1.8	.62	062 F 33 B SELF F 34
16	39	22	.63	.34	1.40	1.2	1.41	1.3	.55	016 F 45 C COMPTR F 71
40	39	22	.63	.34	.60	-1.7	.63	-1.5	.57	040 F 37 D FLIGHT M 53
3	38	22	.51	.34	1.54	1.6	1.44	1.4	.67	003 F 42 A ACCNT M 49
64	38	22	.51	.34	.73	-1.0	.78	-.9	.64	064 F 26 B BIOLOG F 35
4	37	22	.40	.34	1.10	.4	1.06	.2	.64	004 F 36 C RESEARC F 41
33	36	21	.28	.34	.63	-1.5	.64	-1.5	.82	033 F 31 B RESEARC F 60
46	28	22	-.61	.34	1.21	.7	1.19	.6	.83	046 F 38 C ACCT F 83
MEAN	48.	22.	1.88	.39	1.03	-.1	.98	-.2		
S. D.	7.	0.	1.02	.05	.41	1.3	.46	1.2		

Appendix E

Literature Review

Americans are learning to play more (Kanters & Montelpare, 1994; Wankel, 1994). The recent trend grants play and a playful attitude vital places in adult life, and shies away from work as the governing activity of one's life and away from the pervasive drive to be economically successful (Dolnick, 1994; Rubin, 1995). Does this recent trend emphasizing the importance of play and a playful attitude apply also to our children?

In today's society, which has seen an increase in child-care outside the home (Scales, Almy, Nicolopoulou, & Tripp, 1991), parents are still the primary decision-makers in their children's lives and have an important influence on the play activities and behaviors of their children (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Walum, 1977). Parents' values toward play and playfulness are therefore of prime importance in providing children with a valuable, playful context.

Considering the vital importance of play to children as well as to adults, and the role of parents in the development of children, the purpose of this literature review is to examine the history of work, play, and child-rearing attitudes in America from the age of the Puritans to today

The roles of work and play/leisure

Before we can talk about the roles of work and play/leisure in an individual's life, we need to first establish what work and play/leisure are. There is a staggering number of volumes written about the ever-shifting meanings of work and play/leisure.

Appendix E (cont'd)

Work will be defined in a classic sense - "labor; employment" (Stein & Flexner, 1984), and as "physical or mental exertion directed towards a definite end or purpose" (Soukanov, 1992). With work comes an element of seriousness, drudgery, and a sense of obligation.

Traditional notion puts work and play in opposition. Huizinga (1955) questioned this notion. He suggested that play was a condition rather than an activity, a state of mind where one can find joy and refreshment in challenging activities as well as relaxing ones, in work as well as in leisure. For the purpose of this study and for simplicity's sake, play will be viewed in this fashion.

According to de Grazia (1962), anybody can have free time, but not everybody can have leisure. Leisure is " a state of mind or being that allows people to choose contemplative, recreative, or amusive activities at a time when they are relatively free from work, civil, or familial obligations" (Mundy, Ibrahim, Robertson, Bedingfield, & Carpenter, 1992).

In an occupational therapy framework, work, play/leisure and daily activities are the prime occupations in a person's life (Kielhofner, 1992). A balance between these occupations is essential to health, and to a satisfying and happy life. Various health and emotional problems in adults, such as chronic boredom and depression, have been linked to a lack of play and leisure (Kielhofner, 1983).

Play is a child's major occupation (Pratt & Allen, 1985). The roles of play as a facilitator of development and as an important source of experience for a child are well-established. Play is thought to develop social and motor skills (Hopkins & Smith, 1988), promote competence (Schaaf, 1990), enhance

Appendix E (cont'd)

cognitive abilities (Pelligrini, 1980), stimulate imagination and problem-solving (Vandenberg & Kielhofner, 1982), influence moral and adult attitudes (Cherfas & Lewin, 1980), and promote healthy emotional development (Bergen, 1988).

Compared with research done on the benefits of play for children, few studies have investigated the implications of play deprivation on children. Winn (1983) claimed that what results from play deprivation is "what causes contemporary parents so much distress (p. 83)" (i. e. addictive television viewing, alcohol and drug use, premature sexual exploration, increase in depression).

Playfulness

When we talk about play as a flexible approach to life tasks, we use the term playfulness. Text definitions of playfulness include "spirited and full of fun; lively; humorous; joking; jocular" (Soukhanov, 1992).

When comparing animals at play, whether they be dolphins, monkeys, dogs, or humans, we can speak of the more or less playful animal. For example, we can generally say that dogs are more playful than cats. We also can say that certain breeds of dog are more playful than others. Links between playfulness and complexity of animal have been attempted (Ibrahim, 1991). Claims have been made that humans are the most playful of animals (Vandenberg & Kielhofner, 1982).

In *Homo Ludens*, Huizinga (1955) recognized and celebrated man's playful nature. He believed the play-spirit to be the civilizing factor in human development. Huizinga's major claim, however, was that culture emerges from playfulness, for, "Now in myth and ritual the great instinctive forces of

Appendix E (cont'd)

civilized life have their origin: law and order, commerce and profit, craft and art, poetry, wisdom and science. All are rooted in the primeval soil of play" (p. 5).

Culture and child-rearing attitudes

Culture is "the way of life of a group of people, the configuration of all of the more or less stereotyped patterns of learned behavior which are handed down from one generation to the next through the means of language and imitation" (Barnouw, 1973, p. 6).

Culture also can be viewed as an envelope that surrounds a social system and its mores, symbols, norms, and values (Ibrahim, 1991). Values are agreements among the members of the group about what is desirable or undesirable in social life. They are passed down not only from generation to generation, but from the levels of culture --> social system --> behavioral system. The social system is comprised of family, religion, government, economics, and technology. It is affected by and in turn, affects the behavioral system, which includes the character, personality and temperament of its individuals. Individuals construct and act in terms of their beliefs that reflect cultural values as well as their own personal experiences (Barnouw, 1973; Lightfoot & Valsiner, 1992).

Child-rearing attitudes are beliefs of how to prepare children to become responsible members of society and reflect cultural views about the inherent nature of children at birth and the desired outcomes of a child's development (Abramovitz, 1976). These beliefs then guide the caregivers (namely parents) in their behavior toward their children (McCollum & Yates, 1994).

Appendix E (cont'd)

If culture equates success with income and pleasure with cost, then child-rearing attitudes, more likely than not, would focus on preparing that child to be able to get a well-paying job, which would enable that individual to buy and collect whatever he/she desires (Spock, 1994). However, if members of the culture deem the benefits of play to be important for adults, then adults will internalize the importance of that value and encourage play in their children (Grover, 1992).

History of work, play, and child-rearing attitudes in America

Like the ebb and flow of ocean waves, the role of work or play as the dominant force shaping American culture has shifted throughout its history. Cultural forces have also consistently modified what work and play are. What will be highlighted are the periods considered landmark ones in American history.

Colonial Times and the Protestant Work Ethic (17th & 18th centuries)

The Puritans who first landed on seventeenth-century New England shores brought with them values that were fundamentally Calvinistic. Calvin believed that work increased the glory of God, and thus, was the purpose of life (Robertson, 1985). In contrast, leisure was for the most part a form of idleness (synonymous with mischief and the devil's work) (Furnham, 1990). Since the Puritans believed that one's salvation was dependent on one's productive activity, and since the colonial economy was based on self-sufficient agriculture, the first settlers found little time to play and little time for leisure (Ibrahim, 1991). In fact, the Virginia Assembly in 1619 declared that any person found idle would be bound over to work (Ibrahim). In 1750, a group of English actors was banned from putting on a

Appendix E (cont'd)

play by a court order obtained by the Puritans - "public stage plays, interludes and theatrical amusements, which not only occasioned great and necessary expenses, and discouraged industry and frugality, but likewise tend generally to increase immorality, impiety, and a contempt for religion" (Dulles, 1965, p. 49). In this moral and economically self-sufficient climate, work was given high value, and play was considered a sin (de Grazia, 1962). The Protestant Work Ethic, the cornerstone of American culture, was born.

Ministers, who were the source of child rearing advice during these times, emphasized "breaking the will" of the child (Abramovitz, 1976). John Calvin taught Colonial parents that the newborn was inherently sinful and depraved. The child's playful nature was viewed as a natural corruption that would lead him toward evil, frivolous play or willful disobedience. "This fruit of natural corruption and root of actual rebellion both against God and man must be destroyed and no manner of way nourished. . . ." (Robinson, 1973, p. 217).

In order to break the child's will, parents were told to use strict, vigorous disciplinary methods. Obedience and submission to parental authority was to be demanded. Only then would the child work, achieve piety and a chance for salvation (Cable, 1975). Parents were sought to prepare their children for the arduous future of unremitting hard work that was necessary for survival (Abramovitz, 1976). Children's play, like adult's play in the colonies, was considered extravagance, and there was little or no tolerance for it (Cable; Overman, 1983).

Appendix E (cont'd)

Industrialization (19th century)

With industrialization came the re-valuing of the work ethic and the emergence of a new play/leisure awareness (Applebaum, 1992). Mechanized production enabled Americans more time and opportunity to engage in more leisurely activities (Ibrahim, 1991). The International Brotherhood, according to Bosserman (1975), was the earliest labor organization to ask for reduced hours - "the reduction of hours of labor to eight hours a day, so that laborers may have more time for social enjoyment and intellectual improvement, and be enabled to reap the advantages conferred by labor saving machinery which brains have created" (p. 90).

Industrialization challenged the certainty that satisfaction and success would be brought about by work (Furnham, 1990). Unlike the colonials who worked to produce everything they ate and lived on, many Americans in the industrial age did not see the fruits of their labor. Only the very few could achieve enough success to escape manual toil and enjoy the leisured good life (Applebaum, 1992). According to Rodgers (1978), "it became troublingly clear that the semi-skilled laborer, caught in the anonymity of a late-nineteenth-century textile factory or steel mill, was trapped in his circumstances - that no amount of sheer hard work would open the way to self-employment or wealth" (p. 28).

Labor was becoming meaningless and unfulfilling (Overman, 1983), and the division of labor did not allow for the expansion of all the powers of the mind (Welton, 1979). In this mechanized work environment, where the individual performed his task over and over again, the lack of intellectual stimulation brought about boredom.

Appendix E (cont'd)

Child-rearing attitudes reflected the disillusionment many individuals felt working in their mechanically-depersonalized work environments. Since industrialization created a need for a more literate labor force, educators began to replace ministers as authorities in child-rearing (Abramovitz, 1976). Education was emphasized as the means of upward mobility and the way to find economic security and material success.

Child-rearing attitudes were also influenced by the ideas of Jean Rousseau, a French philosopher (Abramovitz, 1976). The child was viewed as basically good and pure and was to be educated in an atmosphere of affection and support. Parents were urged to step back and not interfere with the emergence of the child's natural abilities. Children were taught to value self-reliance, punctuality and to desire individual achievement through hard work.

1900 - The Great Depression (1929-1939)

The turn of the 20th century brought with it an "explosion in leisure awareness" (Mundy et al., 1992) and the "newly energized spirit of play" (Oriard, 1991). If the certainty that work would bring satisfaction to one's life was challenged by industrialization in the 19th century, then it was annihilated by the dawn of this period.

In this period, which included World War I, the Roaring 20's, and the Great Depression, many Americans had more free time. Since wages were more costly than machinery, a shift from blue-collar to white-collar workers occurred. This in turn caused increased unemployment among unskilled and semiskilled workers (Ibrahim, 1991). The Depression did not spare anyone on

Appendix E (cont'd)

the social and economic scale. Large numbers of the middle-class lost their jobs and savings, while doctors, lawyers, and architects saw their incomes shrink. College students had to abandon their educations due to lack of funding or, if they completed their courses, found themselves unemployable (Jones, 1983).

According to Ibrahim (1991), the reduction of American work hours, which first occurred in this period, was seen as a way to increasing consumption, and thus, was a partial solution to combating unemployment. He included a segment of the statement published by The Monthly Labor Review (Dec. 1926: 1162):

This country is ready for the 5-day week. It is bound to come through all industries. The short week is bound to come, because without it the country will not be able to absorb its production and stay prosperous. We think that, given the chance, people will become more and more expert in the effective use of leisure. And we are given the chance.

Despite hard times, leisure activities boomed. This was in part due to the American economy's ability (which prior to the 20th century concentrated on capital goods) to produce a greater proportion of consumer goods (Cole, 1968). Between 1929 and 1933 the number of library books in circulation rose 40 percent, and when Joe Louis fought Max Baer for the world heavyweight boxing championship in 1935, the gate receipts exceeded a million dollars (Jones, 1983). The first important radio broadcast was made on Nov. 2, 1920, and by 1924, a million families had radios, and by 1932, 32 million owned them (Cole). The first sound movie was produced in 1927, and the weekly

Appendix E (cont'd)

movie attendance rose from 40 million in 1922 to 100 million in 1930 (Cole). Most films, like much of the literature of this time, reflected escape from contemporary reality (Jones), and tied culture to the human play spirit (Oriard, 1991).

The 1930's brought with it the "leisure problem" and the passion for "teaching people to play" (Grover, 1992). It was not the lack of leisure but leisure itself that needed to be analyzed and treated. A bibliographer of leisure studies recorded only 72 books and articles in the first two decades of the twentieth century, then 199 in the 1920's, and 431 in the 1930's (Oriard, 1991). There was a conscious effort by play theorists such as Luther H. Gulick, and social reformers like Joseph Lee, to foster play as "letting loose of what is in him" and a more instinctual spirit (Grover).

Radio, movies, and later, television were powerful technological carriers of "leisure awareness". "Leisure awareness" includes the pursuit of leisure (Mundy et. al., 1992). Unlike Europe, which had areas designated for recreation, America had to develop areas where one could pursue leisure (Ibrahim, 1991). The role of government in public recreation provided not only open space and facilities (e.g., public and national parks), but also programs that fostered opportunities for the pursuit of happiness (Mundy et. al.). The number of visitors at National Parks soared from 6 million in 1934 to 16 million in 1938 (Jones, 1983).

The automobile was another consumer good and technological advance that aided the pursuit of leisure. Passenger car sales rose from about 4,000 in 1900 to 2 million in 1920 (Cole, 1968).

Appendix E (cont'd)

Cable (1975) posited that the automobile was perhaps the greatest single cause of the change in child-rearing standards during this period. Children could now be taken away from home to take special lessons, play with friends, or go to school.

The loosely-formed social sciences of the previous century formed into distinct disciplines such as psychology, social psychology, sociology, economics, and anthropology (Overman, 1983). The world of child-rearing experts expanded beyond educators to include "well-trained" individuals in child-training (e.g., social workers, pediatricians, child psychologists) (Cable, 1975). At the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station, the first child study center established in 1917, the laboratory study of child behavior by these child-rearing experts was initiated (Cable).

Psychologist G. Stanley Hall was the authoritative voice in the new field of child study (Grover, 1992). Hall urged the schools to permit free play rather than strictly monitored gymnastics and competitive sports, and self-expression in art, rather than merely copying (Cable, 1975). He also taught that infancy should be prolonged until a child was nine years old. Cable quoted Hall, "An ounce of health, growth, and heredity is worth a ton of education" (p. 173).

This period emphasized the need to regain the unrestrained joy of play in childhood if learning had to be done. At this time, when the nursery school was still a new idea, Susan Isaacs began systematically observing the nursery school she directed (Monighan-Nourot, Scales, Van Hoorn, & Almy, 1987). She expressed that adults need to recognize ". . . how large a value

Appendix E (cont'd)

children's play has for all sides of their growth. How great an ally the thoughtful parent can find it! And how fatal to go against this great stream of healthy and active impulse in our children!" (Smith, 1985, p. 116).

World War II (1941-1945) & the 1950's

Margaret Mead commented:

Americans. Committed to working fifteen hours a day in their efforts to keep up with the needs of three or four children for whom they have ambitious plans, they do not know the meaning of leisure time (Overman, 1983, p. 187).

The work ethic made a brief comeback. The war solved the longstanding unemployment problem (Jones, 1983). Overtime became necessary for the war effort (Ibrahim, 1991), and labor shortages provided expanded opportunities for minority populations, particularly women and blacks (Jones). On February 20, 1946, the Employment Act was passed, making it the government's responsibility to "promote maximum employment, production, and purchasing power" (Cole, 1968, p. 245).

The war was followed by a period of unparalleled prosperity, owing mainly to pent-up consumer demands and government support (Jones, 1983). According to Oriard (1991), this renewed prosperity and superficial complacency following the war raised American culture's anxiety about play. "There is no longer any particular virtue in working. Nor is there, in this affluent society, any particular sin in working..." (Overman, 1983, p. 188).

America in the 1950's was known as the consumer culture, the culture of abundance, the affluent society. Television became the primary focus of

Appendix E (cont'd)

American leisure, and became for most people the main source of information about what was happening in the world (Jones, 1983). It dominated American life as the number of television sets rose from 8,000 in 1946 to 46 million in 1960, and the percentage of advertising spent on television rose from 3 percent in 1950 to 17 percent in 1965 (Cole, 1968).

The "leisure problem", concerned about the absence of the genuine play spirit in American life, first encountered in the 1930's, was re-addressed. Many observers and critics foresaw the flood of television and mass-circulation magazines driving out more refined and enriching leisure activities (Jones, 1983). American writers, however, were credited with doing a superb job of identifying the problems of postwar America (Cole, 1968).

Oriard (1991), in his examination of the rhetoric of sport and play in America, referenced key literary writers of this period. He quoted Mills, from White Collar (1951), as describing contemporary leisure as "the amusement of hollow people that offers only diversion from the restless grind of their work by the absorbing grind of passive enjoyment of glamour and thrills" (p. 445). Bell (1960), in The End of Ideology, felt that the solution was in returning spontaneity and freedom in the workplace, not in creating more leisure. Riesman (1950), in The Lonely Crowd, judged Americans inept at play, having forgotten how to fantasize and be spontaneous. He also stated that, "[People on vacation] . . . are gainfully improving themselves in body and mind..and they are subject to the additional strain of having to feel and to claim that they are having a good time . . ." (Overman, 1983, p. 187).

However, the 1950's also produced works such as Jean Piaget's Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood (1951), the translation of Huizinga's

Appendix E (cont'd)

Homo Ludens into English (1955), and Jack Kerouac's On the Road (1957) - These works represented a time and people when play itself was discovered on an unprecedented scale (Oriard, 1991).

Social consequences of the war (e.g., earlier marriages, an acceleration of the divorce-rate, an increased mobility of an already footloose people) (Jones, 1983), and the drastic changes that occurred in American culture at head-spinning velocity molded the child-rearing attitudes of this time. It is an understatement to say that it is difficult to pinpoint dominant child-rearing strategies of this period.

Cable (1975) offered looking over book titles and examining the book lists of the Child Study Association as ways to make some sense of the staggering amounts of child-rearing theories "it amounts to a revolution" (p. 182). Between 1945 and 1955, titles included Democracy in the Home, Have Fun with Your Children, and Stop Annoying Your Children. In 1952, Hilde Bruch wrote Don't Be Afraid of Your Child, which pointed out the extreme permissiveness of that day and that children had become status and success symbols.

The most important child-care book of the century is arguably Baby and Child Care, by Benjamin Spock. First published in 1946, it has since been revised 7 times, translated into 39 languages, and has sold 40 million copies worldwide. Although the book appeared during the permissive trend, Dr. Spock believed more in firmness, where the parents, not the children, have unchallenged control, ". . . a strictness that comes from harsh feelings or a permissiveness that is timid or vacillating can each lead to poor results. The

Appendix E (cont'd)

real issue is what spirit the parent puts into managing the child and what attitude is engendered in the child as a result." (Cable, 1975, p. 186).

The 1960's and 1970's

The 1960's and 1970's have been labeled as the troubled years (Jones, 1983). The 60's was the time of radicalism and revolt, the 70's was the "me decade" (Rowe, 1989). The assassinations of John F. and Robert Kennedy, the Watergate scandal, the costly, frustrating, and unsuccessful Vietnam War, and the new militancy among blacks and other discontented groups producing violent confrontations on the streets and college campuses were among the many experiences that left Americans divided and unsure of themselves (Jones).

Through much of these two decades, work was widely regarded as a bothersome necessity that distracted one from one's real interests and fulfillments (Shames, 1989). Studs Terkel's introduction in his 1974 collection of interviews, *Working*, is given by Shames, "This book, being about work is, by its very nature, about violence - to the spirit as well as to the body . . . It is about ulcers . . . shouting matches . . . nervous breakdowns . . . It is, above all . . . about daily humiliations" (p. 222).

Play in the 60's was seen as a way to revolutionize politics and culture, and as a spiritual outgrowth of the search for fulfillment, where reality was substituted by the free play of imaginations (Oriard, 1991). Leisure was more introspective (Shames, 1989) and was a massive eruption of the anarchic play spirit, as was seen in communal or "tribal" living experiments and in "turning on" to drugs (Oriard). Tom Wolfe's Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test, a

Appendix E (cont'd)

novel superbly representative of the 60's, presents Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters in unrestrained playful abandon on their adventures across America. The Merry Pranksters were more than just a specific historical phenomenon - they were "the spirit of play questing for transcendence, at odds with the spirit of politics working for a more material revolution." (Oriard, p. 464).

Play in the 70's became the essence of American "mass culture", implicit in every beer, credit-card, and car commercial (Oriard, 1991). Play was now something one could buy. The introspective, communal and free play spirit of the 60's found itself in a fitness craze. Leisure excluded friends but included exercising on a stationary bike, equipped with a Walkman, and watching TV or a movie on a VCR in the privacy of one's home (Shames, 1989).

Mobility remained an American characteristic, people moving from countryside to city, from city to suburb, and from one city to another. Migration to these fastest-growing areas was a result of the attraction to the prosperity that followed the growth of industry (Jones, 1983).

As a result of mobility caused by work or the desire to improve their living situations, families did not have the support of community, relatives, and lifelong friendships. Abramovitz (1976) explained that the expansion and complexity of the economy made it necessary for both parents to work and was associated with new goals for the smaller family. These new goals included preparing children to be socially and personally well-adjusted and

Appendix E (cont'd)

developing their intellectual skills and curiosity so that they would be successful in the highly-competitive society.

Abramovitz (1976) also offered that sedentary mental work, which was the most desirable form for achieving economic success, kept children isolated and protected from everyday life. Rather than engaging in activities that stressed pure enjoyment, the development of motor skills, or imaginative pursuits, children engaged in activities that emphasized individual competition and achievement.

Cable (1975) quoted Dr. Urie Bronfenbrenner, "The pressures on parents make it increasingly difficult for parents to behave as parents." (p. 190). She also pointed out that although Americans claimed to be a child-oriented society, children's needs were considered very little.

Parents now looked to psychological experts for advice on how to meet their own, as well as their children's, goals (Abramovitz, 1976). Their advice stressed that play was a valuable learning experience and that reasoning, explanation and rewards were effective means of encouraging children to strive for achievement and behave well.

Early childhood educators also believed that free, spontaneous play was crucial to a child's total development. However, the media and the establishment of Head Start, which marked the beginning of curriculum models, confronted these educators with the need to justify the role of play in their programs and its importance to a child's development (Monighan-Nourot et. al., 1987).

Appendix E (cont'd)

The Present

Adult play

American society is presently undergoing a shift from outer-directed, materialistic, technological, self-denying values to inner-directed values, based on the idea that people have value in themselves and that activities have a value in their own right (Applebaum, 1992; Robertson, 1985).

Accompanying this shift in American values is a restructuring of the work ethic and the integration of work and leisure (Furnham, 1990). Work will continue to assume a position of extreme importance in the lives of most adults, but will no longer be the all-consuming activity, as Americans strive to experience a more "balanced" and fulfilling lifestyle (Dolnick, 1994; Googins, 1991).

A reduction in work hours and a return to a simpler, more wholesome lifestyle with plentiful leisure has been suggested as means of finding this "balanced" lifestyle (Rubin, 1995; Schor, 1991). In fact, there is acknowledgment that enjoyment and positive experiences from leisure time is paramount (Kanters & Montelpare, 1994; Wankel, 1994).

At the societal level leisure is becoming recognized as an "activity performed for its own sake - for love, pleasure or satisfaction, following personal passions, preferences and vocations" (Applebaum, 1992, p. 343), and should include play that is physically and emotionally enriching (Kraus, 1994). Society also realizes that a playful attitude is the way to approach all things in life (Mason, 1994), and that the simple ability to laugh, along with a

Appendix E (cont'd)

satisfying and meaningful work and recreation schedule, are tenets to a healthy life-style (Catanzaro, 1992).

At the individual level, however, Americans are still uneasy with pure play activity for its own sake, and fill their time almost compulsively, even if it means filling it with meaningless activity (Overman, 1983). Americans spend most of their free time on television viewing (Cohen, 1993; Ibrahim, 1991), a leisure activity that they do not enjoy or receive satisfaction from (Paulsen, 1994; Robinson, 1991). Although Americans admit feeling guilt, and feeling less relaxed, satisfied and productive after watching television (Carey, 1994), television viewing uses up more than four times as much of their total free time as any other single activity (Spring, 1993). Television viewing is representative of other leisure activities that Americans engage in, absent of true freedom and creativity (Oriard, 1991), not providing the balance necessary for an optimal, fulfilling experience (Paulsen), and lacking play that is spontaneous and unstructured (Mason, 1994).

Society and children's play

Like adult play, it is at the societal level that children's play is valued (Elkind, 1994; Hughes, 1991), and that the potentially deleterious effects of hurrying our children to leave childhood without having played is recognized (Garbarino, 1986; Googins, 1991; Winn, 1983; Zigler, 1987). Elkind (1986) pointed out the excessive demands of early learning placed on America's young children and the negative consequences that result from this push to achieve before the age of five. Glickman (1979) proposed that the decline in children's achievement scores in recent years is due to their lack of

Appendix E (cont'd)

play and suggested decreasing the amount of time children spend by the television and increasing their opportunities to play.

Dr. Lee Salk (1992) believed that a “confident, happy child is a child who plays”, and that “playing is one of the main ways she learns everything from mathematics to physics to aesthetics” (p. 42). He encouraged parents to provide their children with opportunities for discovery and self-initiation.

Like Dr. Salk, Dr. Spock (1994), in the newest publication of his famous *Baby and Child Care*, expressed the many benefits of play on a child’s social, emotional and intellectual well-being. He advocated self-discovering, untethered play through his advice (e.g., “Let children play at their own level”, “Let them get dirty sometimes”). In advising parents about choosing a preschool or daycare center, Dr. Spock emphasized the importance of trained teachers who provide opportunities for creative work and imaginative play, equipment for play, and spaces where children can play. He linked children’s deteriorating health to large doses of television watching and stated that children’s television viewing hours should be limited.

Parental beliefs and behaviors toward children’s play

Both parental beliefs and parental behaviors affect children’s social and emotional development (Rubin, Mills, & Rose-Krasnor, 1989). However, there has been a disappointing lack of relation between parental beliefs and their behaviors (Sigel, 1992). Poel et al. (1991) examined whether parental attitudes toward children’s play could be differentiated from parental reported behaviors. Parental attitudes and behaviors were found to be independent, and only parental attitudes were positively related to the children’s amount of play or quantitative playfulness. In their study investigating relations

Appendix E (cont'd)

between Dutch parental attitudes about child rearing and play, Kooij and Hurk (1991) found little relation between parental attitude toward children's play and parental behavior, and that attitude played a significant role in children's play behavior. Children's play was also found to be most significantly influenced by the cultural orientation of their parents and that culturally-oriented parents tended to show the highest interest in play.

It has been suggested that parental beliefs influence not only how a child develops, but how the parent behaves and how parent and child interact with each other (Farver & Howes, 1993; Sigel, McGillicuddy, & Goodnow, 1992). Since the association between parental beliefs and child development is an underresearched one and because of reported significant findings relating parent beliefs and child outcomes (Martin & Johnson, 1992; Palacios, Gonzalez, & Moreno, 1992), the importance of collecting more data on parental beliefs and ideas to clarify the relation between parental belief structures, parenting behaviors, and child outcomes has been emphasized (Rubin et al., 1989).

Parental beliefs are personally constructed from culture and from individual experiences (Lightfoot & Valsiner, 1992). In a culture still rooted in Puritanism, American adults may not be as tolerant of children's play as they believe (Hughes, 1991). It is difficult to justify the use of play in early childhood programs (Spodek & Saracho, 1988), for play is often misunderstood and undervalued by parents and even by early childhood professionals who see play as a natural part of childhood but secondary to educational and occupational achievement (Hartley, 1971; Monighan-Nourot

Appendix E (cont'd)

et al., 1987). Play for its own sake is often not respected and is denigrated in favor of “work” and organized “learning” activities (Costello & LaFarge, 1987; Elkind, 1994).

Rothlein and Brett (1987) investigated American preschool children's, parents' and teachers' perceptions of play. Many of the parents and teachers surveyed did not consider play to be important for young children, nor did they view play as a way that children learn. Only 20% of the teachers included play as an integral part of the school day. Most parents thought children should play in school 30-50% of the time. More than half of children reported watching television when they were not playing. The authors expressed concern about the amount of television watching children spend when not playing, the emphasis on academics in the preschool setting in their study, the lack of parental and teacher interest in play, and the detrimental effects these results might have on the children's development.

Playfulness and American values

In observing parental influence on their children's play, focus has been primarily on children's play as overt behavior or activity. Researchers and theorists have suggested viewing play as a person's disposition rather than as an activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Singer & Rummo, 1973; Schwartzman, 1978). Barnett (1990) claimed that “Rather than regarding play as what the child does, the better way is to focus on play as characteristic of the individual. Thus, empirical attention should be focused on the playful child.” (p. 30).

Lieberman (1965) was among the first to empirically study the playfulness trait in children. In her original study (1965), teachers rated 93

Appendix E (cont'd)

kindergarten children on playfulness traits. Lieberman identified and operationally defined five dimensions of playfulness: physical spontaneity, social spontaneity, cognitive spontaneity, manifest joy, and sense of humor.

The Children's Playfulness Scale (CPS) (Barnett, 1990) was developed to demonstrate how the playfulness quality could be identified and measured (as well as to focus attention on the player rather than the player's actions). The CPS utilized the five dimensions of playfulness and changed the response scale from Lieberman's work. An expert panel reviewed the CPS' twenty-five-item initial draft (5 items per dimension) for its face and content validity. The revised 23-item instrument was tested on 388 preschool children. The CPS was found to be a highly reliable and valid instrument in measuring the playfulness quality.

In a study of Taiwanese adults' values toward play and manifestations of playfulness in their children, seventy-seven parents and 4 teachers of kindergarten-aged children were asked to fill out a questionnaire comprised of items adapted from the CPS, demographic questions, and general questions about the value of play and playfulness to children (Li, Bundy, & Beer, 1995). Taiwanese adults valued play and most acknowledged the existence of playful qualities that enabled children to play better. In concordance with Chinese values of collectivism and interdependence, Taiwanese adults in the study viewed items from the social spontaneity dimension as being the most important. The sense of humor dimension, which has not been recognized as an important part of Chinese personality, and thus not considered an

Appendix E (cont'd)

important element of playfulness for young children, was least valued by the respondents.

In contrast to Chinese culture, humor is pervasive in American culture, and is considered to be a signature American trait (Inge, 1994). The study of American humor has been suggested to be a valuable tool for understanding American character (Clark & Turner, 1984). In fact, standup comedy is a popular art central to American entertainment, has contributed to all of the mass media in America, and is an important part of our nation's life (Dudden, 1987). Humor researchers have suggested that the acquisition of humor is an important portion of children's socialization and referred to it as an absolute necessity "to safeguard sanity" (Mintz, 1988).

Other values central to American culture are achievement, success, and effort, as well as social competency and the ability to resolve conflict smoothly (Nixon, 1984; Pepitone, 1980; Spock, 1994). Cooperation is valued, although it is through competitive efforts that individual accomplishments can be demonstrated and personal status enhanced (Hughes, 1991). Children are taught, mostly through schools, to acquire skills that would allow them to take advantage of America's opportunities. Children who could not, or would not, absorb the normative social values are, to a greater or lesser degree, rejected (Costello & LaFarge, 1987).

Competition, another important motif in American culture, is considered to be a healthy outlet for individuals (Margenau, 1990). American games and sports are highly competitive, and American people are generally dissatisfied with ties, draws, or stalemates (Leonard, 1988). American children

Appendix E (cont'd)

tend to be more competitive as a group when compared to children in other cultures (Domino, 1992; Hughes, 1991).

The emphasis in American culture is on individualism rather than collectivism. Throughout its history, American culture fostered the pioneer spirit, self-assertion, and individual inventiveness as the routes to fame and fortune (Pepitone, 1980). American culture encourages independence (Googins, 1991) and is permissive with respect to aggressiveness (Barnouw, 1973; Winn, 1983).

Americans are inspired with a zeal to chart their lives free from outside interference and pursue individual freedom and prosperity to his/her efforts and talents." (Costello & LaFarge, 1987, p. 60). Since its birth, America embraced the belief of individualism. It was the first government to constitutionally authorize the pursuit of individual interests (Ball, 1983). Throughout its history, American culture fostered the pioneer spirit, self-assertion, and individual inventiveness as the routes to fame and fortune (Pepitone, 1980).

Americans value physical fitness and skill (Leonard, 1988; Solomons, 1980), and are participants in almost every conceivable sport (Ibrahim, 1991). Baseball is an American sport and the game of a society that places enormous emphasis on "individualism and personal honor, and the dignity of man alone" yet at the same time insists that the individual associate himself with the team. Little League Baseball, the largest adult-controlled sports program for children, aims to provide opportunities to develop and demonstrate qualities of good character, teamwork, and fair play in a competitive setting

Appendix E (cont'd)

(Nixon, 1984). Through baseball, kids not only are having fun and testing, developing, and refining their physical skills, but are also taking in key elements of American culture.

Children and television

Today's children are TV kids (Salk, 1992). Children as young as 9 months watch approximately 90 minutes a day (Cohen, 1993). Preschoolers average 3 to 4 hours of television a day, while elementary-aged children watch 15 to 25 hours a week (Coletta, 1991). Almost from its birth television came under heavy fire (Jones, 1983), and is often regarded as a destructive force in children's lives (Hughes, 1991). Television "levels the nature of social discourse and entertainment to the lowest common denominator" (Costello & LaFarge, 1987). According to Cohen (1993), television does not teach children positive family values, prosocial behavior or cognitive and language skills. It does, however, provide the most excessive expressions of violence, making children more callous (Spock, 1994), and dulls the real issues that they must face within their families and communities (Dumas, 1992). Glickman (1979) admitted that although television is not the sole culprit, the "idiot box" does lure children away from their natural propensity to play.

Williams and her colleagues (1986) studied television's possible effects on children's sports participation and creativity in three Canadian towns: one with no TV, the second with one TV channel, and the third with four TV channels. Williams et al. found that children's participation in sports activities was greatest in the town with no TV and least in the town with four TV channels. Moreover, once television arrived in the town without TV,

Appendix E (cont'd)

children's participation in sports no longer differed from that of children in the other towns. Exposure to television had a negative effect on children's creativity, as indicated by results on several creativity tasks. Students in the town without TV obtained higher total and higher originality scores than students in the other two towns. After the arrival of television to the town initially without TV, the scores for students fell to the level of students in the other towns. They postulated that television might have a negative effect on information-processing skills necessary for creative thinking and that children who do not regularly watch television spend more time in activities that facilitate creativity.