

THESIS

SOCIALIZING PLAYGROUNDS

AND CREATING INVISIBLE BORDERS

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ABSTRACT

SOCIALIZING PLAYGROUNDS AND CREATING INVISIBLE BORDERS

Equal rights have been the outcry for many protesters and environmentalists fighting against injustices done to communities. Visual arts have the power to start and steer conversations, therefore juxtaposing objects, images, and the use of color to indicate concepts of invisible borders that are created by people, maps, and the built environment. An understanding of the early adaptation of children's stratification of others through the readings of Pierre Bourdieu's community doxa, and the three capitals that differentiate one's upbringing into a society. The ontology of the adult-made toy can tell us a bit more about how these objects introduce a child to a Marxist society, while other toys can teach them how to socialize and obtain skills that only belong to the community. Low social classes and high social classes are clear distinctions of the social economic state of families across the nation, yet Charles Tilly's *Durable Inequality*, helps us understand that we care to dissolve injustices, much more than fighting for equality.

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Introduction

Items are being designed, manufactured, wanted, needed, purchased, gifted, traded, abandoned, disregarded, thrown away, illegally dumped, forgotten, weathered, decomposed, striped, crushed, recycled, resold, rediscovered, auctioned, loaned, donated, put on a pedestal for museum visitors to admire, the material vs immaterial, the modern ruin vs the ancient.

All these many lives that items can partake in by transitioning through spaces with their human owners. Things aren't created equally; they are made for all public use or certain groups. When items or concepts are privatized, there are intermediate tools that introduce new members to the local socialized culture. Stratification of people is easily achieved by viewing how we interact with things. A kid's toy can eventually turn into an invisible border that can teach a child to segregate, like lines on a map. These invisible borders can be highlighted through visual arts, collaging symbols like maps, toys, religious figures, and dividing lines, with the help of photography, printmaking, and painting media to demonstrate the injustices to impoverished neighborhoods, and how items can become liminal entities to our current behaviors.

Intergenerational Harm

The initial background for a couple of paintings, and the starting grid to my juxtaposing concepts started with the burden that the United States caused to its own citizens' communities by federally supporting the creation of "redlining" maps created by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) in the 1930s; the effects are still felt today (Krieger et al 2020, 1046-1047).¹ In the midst of the Great Depression and right before World War II started, a nation fearing its debts and its homeowners unable to pay their mortgages, the HOLC was commissioned and introduced as a New Deal by the Franklin Roosevelt Administration (Jacoby et al 2021, chap. 1),² creating appraisal maps for more than 200 cities (Nardone et al, 2021, pg.1).³ These appraisal maps had information on all streets, avenues, developed and undeveloped shopping districts, farm fields, and schools. The HOLC maps had distinguishable geometric shapes, that are color coated over certain areas in a city. Green was considered "best," blue was "still desirable," yellow was "definitely declining" and red was "hazardous"

¹Nancy Krieger, Gretchen Van Wye, Mary Huynh, Pamela D Waterman, Gil Maduro, Wenhui Li, R Charon Gwynn, Oxiris Barbot, and Mary T Bassett. "Structural Racism, Historical Redlining, and Risk of Preterm Birth in New York City, 2013-2017." *American journal of public health* (1971) 110, no. 7 (2020): e1-1053.

² Sara F Jacoby., Beidi Dong, Jessica H. Beard, Douglas J. Wiebe, and Christopher N. Morrison. "The Enduring Impact of Historical and Structural Racism on Urban Violence in Philadelphia." *Social science & medicine* (1982) 199 (2018): 87-95.

³ Anthony Nardone, Kara E Rudolph, Rachel Morello-Frosch, and Joan A Casey. "Redlines and Greenspace: The Relationship Between Historical Redlining and 2010 Greenspace Across the United States." *Environmental health perspectives* 129, no. 1 (2021): 17006-17006.

(Nardone et al, 2021, pg. 1-2), ⁴ hence their most popular and modern name, “redlining.” These color maps helped the lender make a better decision about certain loans and their likeliness of being paid, by knowing the location, the poverty level, and the racial groups found at said locations.

These maps designed to segregate communities helped construct a racial environment and aggrandized income inequality, making this the foundation of my art investigation. Several studies have been conducted to view the aftermath of the HOLC maps in the present day. Sociologists and scientists analyze the HOLC maps, and 1940s census data, along with current census data, we can correlate existing medical issues and the negligence of government officials to help these communities (Nardone, 2021 et al, pg. 2-3).⁵

The American Journal of Public Health (AJPH) searched the significance of the 1930s HOLC maps in correlation to preterm births in New York City (Krieger, 2020 et al, 2,4).⁶ Ethnic inequities can be seen in the number of infant deaths and intergenerational harm. Viewing these parents’ addresses and comparing them to the HOLC maps, AJPH figures that more than 60% of women lived in a yellow, “definitely declining” or a red, “hazardous” zone, while only approximately 15% lived in the blue, “still desirable” or green, “best” zones. The remaining lived outside of the 1930s HOLC maps. This shows the negligence of government officials in building a proper healthcare program to help its citizens, especially those who live in low-income neighborhoods.

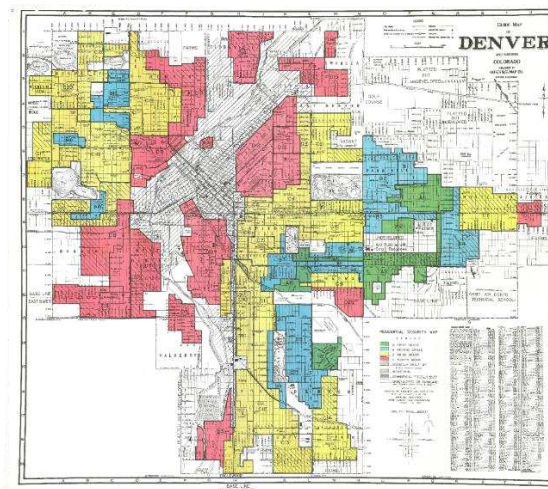


Fig. 1 Denver, Colorado 1940's Home Owner's Loans Corporation map.⁷

Globeville, a small community found north of Denver, Colorado, is an example of a community experiencing environmental injustices, due to its location and is highlighted in red

⁴ Nardone, “Relationship Between Historical Redlining,” 1-2.

⁵ Nardone, “Relationship Between Historical Redlining,” 2-3.

⁶ Krieger, “Structural Racism,” 2,4.

⁷ Robert K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, Richard Marciano, Nathan Connolly, et al., “Mapping Inequality,” American Panorama, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, accessed March 30, 2023, <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining>.

in the HOLC maps of 1930, as shown in figure 1, highlighted in red, and labeled D14. This community has the lowest life expectancy rates in the entire state of Colorado, as mentioned by Jakob Rodgers, a writer for Denver's Gazette paper (Rodgers, 2021).⁸ This area has been heavily polluted by commuters that travel through the intersections of Interstate 70 and Interstate 25, and the stench from a couple of manufacturing plants in the area. Several analyses have been conducted in Globeville and its neighboring community Elyria-Swansea, due to the number of odor complaints submitted throughout the years (Eltarkawe and Miller, 2018, pg. 3).⁹



Fig. 2 "Globeville," laser engraved woodcut, serigraph CMYK, and photolithography print, 20" x 22" inches.

In the print, "Globeville," the photograph was taken on a trip to this neighborhood, of the landscape found in Globeville. The image is the landscape of typical homes found in Denver, Colorado, with a sidewalk being the bottom center object displayed as one of the main concentration areas. The concrete sidewalk is getting narrow along its axis, reaching the viewpoint, where the horizontal line is covered by the transit structure known as Interstate-25.

⁸ Jakob Rodgers.2021. "In Two Colorado Neighborhoods, even life expectancy is much diminished." Last modified February 14, 2022 for the Gazette. https://gazette.com/denver-gazette/in-two-colorado-neighborhoods-even-life-expectancy-is-much-diminished/article_42a64518-5045-11eb-8138-0372a52794a8.html

⁹ Mohamed A. Eltarkawe, and Shelly L. Miller. 2018. "The impact of industrial odors on the subjective well-being of communities in Colorado." International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health 15, (6) (06): 1091, <https://ezproxy2.library.colostate.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/impact-industrial-odors-on-subjective-well-being/docview/2108411172/se-2> (accessed February 22, 2023).

The extension of Interstate 70 and 25 has been a project that has given the communities neighboring this construction greater headaches than the commuters using these highways on the daily basis (Rodgers, 2021).¹⁰ The entire picture is black and white except for the hopscotch game drawn along the sidewalk, and the only tree found in the picture is printed with halftone dots, a printmaking method popularized by print media to reproduce imagery using the least amount of ink. The tree and the hopscotch are bringing joy, health, and a sense of positivity to this built environment, this print captures a child's perspective of finding a way to play in this community like Globeville, along with the innocence of breathing these toxins, while their own classmates might have a different sense of what home is.

The Environmental Health Perspectives EHP, "conducted a nationwide geospatial analysis, using the Moderate-resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) on the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Terra satellite," (Nardone, 2021 et al, pg. 2)¹¹ to explore communities' heat patterns created by infrastructures, traffic, and the absence of greenery. Satellites captured the amount of light absorbed by plants and trees planted in different zones and correlated with the HOLC maps. The result of the EHP analysis found that there is less tree canopy and an increase of impervious surfaces in redlining zones than in other HOLC color-coded categories. Making redlining zones 2.6C (36.68F) warmer than their better-grade neighbors, due to a 21% decrease in the tree canopy, grass area, and shrubs than a HOLC-graded "green" zone (Nardone, 2021 et al, pg. 4).¹² In addition, building materials used for inexpensive homes, and the highway systems crossing through "red" zones have been contributing causes to the warmer temperature (Nardone, 2021 et al, pg. 4).¹³

Businesses tend to get great tax breaks by buying land in impoverished neighborhoods and might be able to afford labor by hiring members of certain communities by giving them manageable wages that will profit the company.

Retail in Redline Zones

The HOLC maps have helped multiple studies identify the structural racism in the United States, and it has helped franchise stores find thriving locations for their continuous affordable sales tactics. For example, the rage it caused over Washington D.C.'s mayor, Muriel Bowser in 2016 when learned that Walmart hid in the contract additional locations in underserved communities (Reich, 2016, pg. 74).¹⁴ Walmart's known goal is bringing inexpensive prices to communities, with the expense of its workers having low wages, poor benefits, and irregular

¹⁰ Jakob Rodgers .2021. "In Two Colorado Neighborhoods, even life expectancy is much diminished." Last modified February 14, 2022 for the Gazette. https://gazette.com/denver-gazette/in-two-colorado-neighborhoods-even-life-expectancy-is-much-diminished/article_42a64518-5045-11eb-8138-0372a52794a8.html

¹¹ Nardone, "Relationship Between Historical Redlining," 2.

¹² Nardone, "Relationship Between Historical Redlining," 4.

¹³ Nardone, "Relationship Between Historical Redlining," 4.

¹⁴ Adam Reich. "Walmart's Consumer Redlining." Contexts (Berkeley, Calif.) 15, no. 4 (2016): 74.

shifts having made this franchise become a bad customer service retailer (Reich, 2016, pg. 74-75).¹⁵

Franchise stores like these are harming communities' self-reflection on their members. With constant budget cuts, low benefits, hours cut, and zero investment in training their employees, just to profit each year is creating a cycle of bad reviews that are aimed towards the employees, the same members of their community. Reich Adam wrote about Walmart's consumer redlining, for the American Sociology Association, and compared Walmart's online customer ratings and comments in different area codes. Reich learned that ratings for a Walmart were lower in areas where the majority of the city's demographic was communities of color, making the distinction that the scores were bad no matter if the zip code was in a wealthy area or poor, but the comments towards the workers were degrading for one demographic (Reich, 2016, pg. 75).¹⁶ Reich explains the comments found in different ethnic communities, *"in stores in predominantly African American zip codes, reviewers are likely to use words like "worst," "unorganized," and "nasty" to describe their experiences. In contrast in stores located in white communities, reviewers were likely to use words like "typical," "friendly," and smaller."* (Reich, 2016, pg. 75-76).¹⁷ Customer reviews are a self-reflection of the community to which they pertain, along with the color coordination on which the company decided to purchase its land on and hire its members.

Environmental Inequality

To understand the continuous problems of inequality, we must understand how communities work, and the way people obtain their own identities. Pierre Bourdieu, French Sociologist, uses the word habitus, as the "feel for the game" (Reed-Danahay, 2022, pg. 23),¹⁸ the intuition of self-belonging within their built environment, in which we feel we have little control, yet it determines the culture one belongs and easily disqualifies those who don't follow similar habitus, or as Bourdieu called this commonsense understanding as the doxa (Reed-Danahay, 2022, pg. 23).¹⁹ Bourdieu views all people as social agents positioned in a social space, and our relationships with others can change as they acquire new capital; economic, social, or cultural. *"The lack of capital intensifies the experience of finitude; it chains one to a place"* (Reed-Danahay, 2022, pg. 25.).²⁰

For an individual not to feel *"out of place,"* as Bourdieu puts it, the person can make spatial changes. Bourdieu notes that when a person has gained a higher status or has fully understood their social identity within their social space, may bend the doxa, or the society's commonsense. People who lack capital or have inherited less, need sufficient skills to notice any advantage to make them extra capital, as opposed to those who have inherited all three capitals, making it easier to continue growing.

¹⁵ Reich, "Walmart's Consumer Redlining," 74,75.

¹⁶ Reich, "Walmart's Consumer Redlining," 75.

¹⁷ Reich, "Walmart's Consumer Redlining," 75-76.

¹⁸ Deborah Reed-Danahay. "Bourdieu's World-Making." In Bourdieu and Social Space, 6: 23. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2022.

¹⁹ Reed-Danahay, "Bourdieu's World-Making," 23.

²⁰ Reed-Danahay, "Bourdieu's World-Making," 25.



Fig. 3 "Community Development," vinyl toy monoprint, cyanotype, and oil on canvas, 35" x 132" inches.

"Community Development," is a deflated vinyl toy relief, and cyanotype print with oil paint on canvas, measuring 35" by 132" inches. This was a collaboration with Colorado State University's Alliance program. A program that helps high school students, from low transfer rate schools in Colorado, and inspires them to continue higher education by meeting university professors, instructors, and graduate students.

The students had the opportunity to learn about a couple of printmaking techniques and were instructed to grab an inflatable toy from a previous project, "Stratify Today!," where more than 300 inflatable toys were placed on a 4" x 4" piece of wood, that was being transported by a grocery shopping cart. The second step was deflating their toy and rolling any of the four colors I had mixed for them, red, blue, green, and yellow. One by one, they laid their inked deflated toy on top of the raw canvas, slowly getting to set their mark on the canvas as one giant community of toys. All the students were handed markers to write their names on the canvas, next to their monoprint, deflated toy.

The canvas was later treated to a cyanotype mixture, potassium ferricyanide and ferric ammonium citrate, which is a light-sensitive mixture that captures any shadows from objects laid over them. This is the traditional way architects developed blueprints. On top of the cyanotype, there are white contour outlines of different economic status homes found in a city like; a mobile home on the bottom left, a two-story house right above the mobile home, a modern yet traditional Homeowner Association (HOA) house on the top right, and other traditional homes found in the Colorado area. All these homes can be found in different communities in a city, and the only way these communities come together is through the children's school system.

Social Capital of Sports

Mirjam Stuij thought Bourdieu's theory focused on the macro level of social identity when he deems it crucial to investigate the micro level of the social capital, obtained by playing sports and exercising. Stuij's thesis highlighted a better understanding of physical health

practiced by young children within different social classes (Stuij, 2015, pg. 783).²¹ They conducted interviews with 92 students in 2 different schools in Amsterdam, Netherlands, and of the 92 students 42 of them attended school in a lower social economic status area. In the Netherlands, parents tend to register their students in a similar social class they pertain to. The kids were in 6th grade, ages from 9 to 11 years old.

They asked both age groups a few more questions on the current exercises they perform, and their favorite sport to play. Children from higher social classes referenced their extracurricular activities, or their memberships in sports clubs or camps, due to the skills that are shown by a parent, teacher, instructor, or coach. Usually, these kids did not want to participate in sports but were influenced by their parents, siblings, or family members who either used to play or currently play in an adult team. High-social-class children have less free time to play, while low-social-class children had more time to ride their bikes, play with neighbors, or participate in any spontaneous activity.

The parents of children in the lower social economic class, tend to be “*more concerned with everyday life and less on the development of special talents.*”²² (Stuij, pg. 793) These children would agree that play is another form of exercise, constantly referencing sports they played at school or during physical education, and making their physical education teacher the center of all these activities. However, while a child from a high social economic class is gaining a sense of belonging, a child from a low social economic class is practicing improvisational skills by playing outside with neighborhood kids and dealing with challenges like a shortage of players. Even though both groups had similar ideas of sport and exercise, the social value of sporting capital was higher for children in the higher social economic class.

Bourdieu determines that people’s lives are limited to their social space along with their acquisition of cultural and social capital (Reed-Danahay, 2022, pg. 34).²³ Social pockets can feel “exposed” for their capitals when newcomers arrive, calling it migrant incorporation (Reed-Danahay, 2022, pg. 34).²⁴

²¹ Mirjam Stuij. 2013. “Habitus and Social Class: a Case Study on Socialization Into Sports and Exercise, Sport Education and Society, 20:6, 783, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2013.827568>

²² Stuij, “Habitus and Social Class,” 793.

²³ Reed-Danahay, “Bourdieu’s World-Making,” 34.

²⁴ Reed-Danahay, “Bourdieu’s World-Making,” 34.



Fig.4 "American Tradition," photolithography, 23" x 15" inch.

"American Tradition," exemplifies the exposure felt by social pockets clinging to the symbols of their built community. This print is a 23" by 15" inch, five-layer, photolithography print. From the Tykes toy car, and alphabet wooden blocks, to the View Masters three-dimensional viewer, and more. These are traditional toys that are part of popular American culture, being reproduced and redesigned each year, however, the iteration of toys that are captured here are nostalgic to a number of generations. These symbols seem to be floating in thin air, resembling pages from a tattoo shop. On the bottom of the toys, there are three traditional-style roses, then a dark outline of the US-Mexico border working as a reminder that these symbols pertain to the U.S. community. The wall sits behind all the foliage found in the Chihuahuan desert, like the century plant, ocotillo plant, and prickly pear.

Agency of Toys

Toys are interesting since they are adult inventions with the idea of children gaining something from an item. The toys highlighted in the print, "American Tradition," are the 'traditional affordances,' term by Patrick Maynard. The items that are made for us (the community) to which the child belongs, and the items that categorize children into a class (Maynard, 2020 pg. 96).²⁵ These toys are the tools of 'play' and along with these tools, there is a proper way for using them to achieve their true goal. On the contrary, there is 'Physical affordance,' as defined by Maynard, "the use of natural objects, without regard for their rule-governed intentional ones" (Maynard, 2020 pg. 97).²⁶ For example, a kid building a house fort

²⁵ Patrick Maynard. "Rules: A Toy Box." Phenomenology and mind, no. 17 (2020). 96, 97.

²⁶ Maynard, "Rules," 97.

out of pillows, bed sheets, and chairs, or the kids at the water levy rolling and playing on a shopping cart.

In Alan Levinovitz's theoretical/philosophical paper called, "Towards a Theory of Toys and Toy-Play" Levinovitz gathered all definitions of 'play,' mainly from Johan Huizinga's book, *Homo Ludens* (1938,) in which he concluded the value of the word, "play is essential to humanity, and that culture itself can only be explained by taking the importance of play into account" (Levinovitz, 2022 pg. 267-268).²⁷

Levinovitz's definition of play is a "subject's freedom from constraints," (Levinovitz, 2022 pg. 267)²⁸ therefore it is the reason why an artist is expected to 'play' in their studio, or a writer 'plays' with his subjects, or in the workplace, those who seem to enjoy their job tend to be playful. Michael Apter defined the meaning of "being playful" as a state of the "structural phenomenology of play." "Being playful... when we are in our play world, we feel that we are ultimately in charge of things." (Levinovitz, 2022 pg. 268)²⁹ However, we are not free from constraints when playing a sporting game. If a person is being playful in a game of basketball, baseball, or even tennis, the "purpose of the game is not really solving the task, but ordering and shaping the movement of the game itself," Bateson Gadamer from the division of Psychotherapy (Levinovitz, 2022 pg. 267-268).³⁰ However, to go against the rules of the game is to not play the game at all, "Yes, play is free, but it is also limiting; interpretation entails the exertion of agency, but also radical passivity" (Levinovitz, 2022 pg. 269).³¹ Furthermore, Levinovitz adds "Toy-play" is different from gameplay. Toy-play carries more agency for its users (Levinovitz, 2022 pg. 270).³²

²⁷ Alan Levinovits, *Towards a Theory of Toys and Toy-Play*, (April 2022), 267-268.

²⁸ Levinovitz, "Towards a Theory of Toys," 268.

²⁹ Levinovitz, "Towards a Theory of Toys," 268.

³⁰ Levinovitz, "Towards a Theory of Toys," 268.

³¹ Levinovitz, "Towards a Theory of Toys," 269.

³² Levinovitz, "Towards a Theory of Toys," 270.



Fig. 5 Jane Hammond, "Irregular Plural #2," 1995, Oil and mixed media on canvas, 73" x 87.5" inches.³³

Jane Hammond, "Irregular Plural II" 1995, was part of the series of titles requested by Hammond, and created by poet John Ashbery, as an inspiration for the printmaker (Madison, 2022).³⁴ Ashbery delivered titles to inspire Hammond and over-delivered with 44 titles (Madison, 2022).³⁵ The title *Irregular Plural* made Hammond think of juxtaposing different things, like the different knots created on sewing needles, the several symbols of hospital patients bandaged while resting, a cage with a hole on one of its walls, a bird tied with thread, a caged-up beetle, and many more. The play on words can be examined by and correlated with the items on its opposite page, by color, or by objects and their similarities. Jane Hammond's fascinating approach to using symbols, and the way they interact with other objects can set a narration of the work, no matter the experience of the viewer.

Maynard grinds the meaning of roles to become more important than rules. One must follow their roles to achieve the greatest satisfaction in the game. Similarly, with a toy doll, there is a role children must follow to achieve full enjoyment of the game called 'make-believe.' Bill Brown discusses the belief of 'play' as important in the developmental years of children, quoting Canadian anthropologists Alexander F. Chamberlain, "*no play he were perpetually savage*" (Brown 2022, pg. 459).³⁶ Meaning the importance of children playing can remove their instinctive nature of savagery. Like the example of kids playing with a grocery cart in a drained

³³ Hammond, Jane. "Irregular Plural #2 at Madison Museum of Contemporary Art." Accessed March 29, 2023. <http://janehammondartist.com/irregular-plural-2-at-madison-museum-of-contemporary-art/>

³⁴ Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, 2022. "Jane Hammond." Published February 11, 2022. <https://www.mmoca.org/learn/teaching-pages/jane-hammond/>

³⁵ Madison Museum, "Jane Hammond."

³⁶ Brown, "American Childhood," 459.

water levy, their decision in true nature was to use inappropriate tools for play, while possibly damaging property. Therefore we solve the savagery early instead of working on the incarceration of unlawful acts (Brown 2022, pg. 459).³⁷ Brown, *“If the play of the playground was meant to Americanize the immigrant, the play described by child psychologists was meant to Americanize the American...with a market economy restaged in the realm of recreation”* (Brown 2022, pg. 459-460).³⁸ Since communal playgrounds are free for all and help lower criminal misconduct, then the toy is to elevate the child to a new world economy.



Fig. 6 “Structure 24; Play Environments,” mixed media, oil, acrylic painting, 27”x 52” inches.

The collaged work of “Structure 24: Play Environments,” figure 6. An unstretched canvas with a Sohio gas station highway map collaged on the top. On the map, there are about five different city’s HOLC maps, from areas near the locations on the map, they are not to scale, but enlarged to be able to show the segregation of the red zones with the help of yellow and blue zones, to work as borders for the green areas.

On top of the maps and their color-coordinated HOLC zones, there’s an oil-painted public playground, typically found in a neighborhood. The bright primary colors used on this children’s socializing play tool can set the era in which this construction was made. Two cobalt-blue plastic slides, that transport in opposite directions from one another, but they are moldings of a, once nostalgic metal slide, that was unsafe, and too hot during certain times of the day. Intricate patterns with bright yellow metal bars, working as steps, become the safest resemblance of a ‘monkey bar,’ that assists children to move from one space to another. Under the two slides, there’s another famous American traditional toy, that implies roles set in children’s day-to-day play experience, the child size, kitchen/house set. This toy insists for the

³⁷ Brown, “American Childhood,” 459.

³⁸ Brown, “American Childhood,” 459,460.

child to use roles, for example the role of mocking certain family members traits, and chores, they observe in their daily routines.

A giant, dark, lampblack oil paint, has been applied where typically one would find safety mulch, soft gravel, or sponge that protects children in the play zone and serves as a welcoming and a reminder of the play areas. A concrete barrier works as a border of the public park, to the play zone. Depending on the state, or city in which the playground is set, there are different rules when creating this transitional zone. A liminal space for the community to know where the public park has ended, and the play area has started. With the metal bars running through the black hole, the space in which the child desires to step in is hollowed out, and the environment is not fully built, to be safe anymore, and is simply just there as an icon for the nonsubscriber.

Within the economy of play, one can view the vending tactics obtained through time which only benefit the merchant. There are details in toys that manufacturers care about to increase their attention, knowing the child's nature of "showing off" and the child's "instinct to have," will obtain their profitability. Kopytoff was talking about snobbery in the art world, however, in the world of infants, toys are "the high value of the high singular in complex societies becomes so easily embroiled in snobbery" (Kopytoff 2022, pg. 82).³⁹ The instinct of ownership transformed to the "notion of acquiring," as Brown puts it, "prompts the individual to attain the status" (Brown 2022, pg. 460).⁴⁰ Yet the status is not obtained by the less privileged that has the same instincts, and later obtain the item, either by the depreciation of the item, or criminal mischief. "The toy does not distance human conflict; it provokes conflict, and the tragedy of mimetic desire... the object may very well exist for the child as little more than a commodity" (Brown 2022, pg. 443).⁴¹ Kopytoff defines commodity in Arjun Appadurai's, "The Social life of things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective." "A commodity is a thing that has use value and that can be exchanged in a discrete transaction for a counterpart, the very fact of exchange indicating that the counterpart has, in the immediate context, an equivalent value" (Kopytoff 2022, pg. 68).⁴²

³⁹ Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural biography of things: commoditization as process," *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. (April 2022): 82.

⁴⁰ Brown, "American Childhood," 460.

⁴¹ Brown, "American Childhood," 443.

⁴² Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural biography of things: commoditization as process," *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. (April 2022): 68.



Fig. 7 Rael San Fratello, "Teeter-Totter Wall." ⁴³

In "Transforming the Border Wall into a Teeter-Totter," created by Sara Bodinson, Kelly Cannon, and team, a short film for The Museum of Modern Art. An interview with Ronald Rael and Virginia San Fratello (Real San Fratello) while creating this memorable peace at the US-Mexico border. Their initial maquettes were simple snow globes of daily life experienced with the obstruction of the border wall. Some of them were horse racing, a game of volleyball with the wall being the net, and the finalized Teeter-Totter play sets (Bodinson, et al. 2020).⁴⁴ The color of the teeter-totters is hot pink, which commemorates the religious crosses that were a symbol for each woman that was found in the Chihuahuan Deserts, or reported missing, due to the high crime rate and the violence shown to women of Ciudad Juárez (Bodinson, et al. 2020).⁴⁵ Real San Fratello installed the teeter totters, on the border wall, and kids were lined up, and ready to play before any border patrol agents discover the playful event. Fratello notes that the children were excited to play, but like any playground, they will eventually get tired and ready to move on to the next play set (Bodinson, et al. 2020).⁴⁶

A child's playground, even though it belongs to the city, it is a commodity, that parents or future parents deem it necessary to be near and socialize their kid in the community, or the symbol of a playground can mean safety, which brings a tranquil state when moving through the built environment.

⁴³ Rael San Fratello, "Teeter-Totter Wall." Accessed March 28, 2023.

<https://www.rael-sanfratello.com/made/teetertotter-wall>

⁴⁴ Bodinson, Sara, Cannon, Kelly, et al. "Transforming the Border Wall into a Teeter-Totter." Published April 24, 2020 at MoMa Artist Stories. Video, 5:15.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1bbeBo3te5E>

⁴⁵ Bodinson, "Transforming the Border Wall."

⁴⁶ Bodinson, "Transforming the Border Wall."

Donald Ball explains in his academic journal titled *“Toward a Sociology of Toys,”* *“toys are socializing devices; that is to say, toys are part of the paraphernalia which facilitate the process by which children prepare and are prepared for the performance of various social roles”* (Ball 2022, pg. 450).⁴⁷ Recreational realism, the reproduction of adult tools, hammers, drills, kitchen sets, etc., then turned into toys, is bad for children when all they have for their own pleasures are reminders of the social world norms that they have to accustom to once the time comes. There is no creativity when playing with these toys, kids will reenact scenarios they’ve seen adults do, creating a set of unsaid rules to play by, to get full enjoyment of these tools of play. Ball mentions that *“merchandisers are followers, not innovators, and their wares are those already known to be marketable and popular”* (ball 2022, pg. 450).⁴⁸

A great example of profiting from marketable popularity among communities was made by Bill Brown. He investigated the glorification of ‘coming-of-age’ genre, found in novels that spread throughout the United States, from the end of the eighteen hundreds to the mid-20th century, like “boy adventure” novels or as he calls them, “boy books,” for example, “The Story of a Bad Boy” (1865), “The Adventures of Tom Sawyer” (1876), and “The Story of The Sandpile” (1888) (Brown 2022, pg. 452).⁴⁹ Following the film industry with films like “Stand by Me” (1986), “The Goonies” (1985), “The Sandlot” (1993), and many others alike, by accounts of Bill Brown, this glorified the normalization of boy surveillance, thanks to the narrator-observer, which helped foster the “mode of information” (Brown 2022, pg. 450).⁵⁰ Bill Brown quoted a lot of boy-to-men stories and movies, but the same treatment was given to girl-to-women characters, like “My Girl” (1991), “The Babysitter’s Club” (1986), and “Now and Then” (1995). As Winfield S. Hall concluded the reasoning for the romanticized story of adolescence correlates to the notion of the country’s resolution of social and literary problems after the Great Depression, World War I, and the Dust Bowl era (Brown 2022, pg. 451).⁵¹ By concentrating on the development of a boy into adolescence, the United States was able to communicate those transitions (Brown 2022, pg. 452).⁵² This glorified the life of the teenager to all Americans, modernizing children which made them want this simulation of teenage years, making the Barbie doll, sports cars, and the young adult lifestyle, popularized and hiding any resemblance to child life.

The commercialization of teaching young kids, along with the proper toys came from a collaboration between a printmaker and an educator. Milton Bradley, in his beginnings, had an unsuccessful lithography shop. Due to the Civil War, Bradley started printing board games for children (Froebel 1876, pg. 213).⁵³ When Elizabeth Peabody introduced Bradley to Friedrich Froebel, German educator, and founder of the kindergarten educational system (Froebel 1876,

⁴⁷ Donald W. Ball, “Toward a Sociology of Toys: Inanimate Objects, Socialization, and the Demography of the Doll World,” (April 2022): 450.

⁴⁸ Ball, “Toward a Sociology of Toys,” 452.

⁴⁹ Brown, “American Childhood,” 450.

⁵⁰ Brown, “American Childhood,” 450.

⁵¹ Brown, “American Childhood,” 451.

⁵² Brown, “American Childhood,” 452.

⁵³ Karl Froebel, “Friedrick Froebel’s Developing System of Education,” New-England Journal of Education, April 29, 1876, 213.

pg. 213).⁵⁴ he was interested in enhancing “the faculties of observation and understanding” (Warner 2009, pg. 7),⁵⁵ which he later deemed important in the infantile years to learn these techniques. Froebel’s believed, “children would blossom if they were attended to like plants, with the right amount of nourishing and water,” coming to the word to characterize this mode of teaching as, “kindergarten or garden for children” (Warner 2009, pg. 7).⁵⁶

Milton Bradley supported the movement, and printed the first kindergarten manual, “The Paradise of Childhood” (1869), along with the creation of the toys prescribed in the manual. Froebel mixed folklore tales with songs, along with finger movements, for children to follow along while dancing and playing (Warner 2009, pg. 8).⁵⁷ Bradley and Froebel created nonrecognizable characters or stories that came along with colored patterns, and two-dimensional shapes, along with other items like sticks, strings, and shells (Warner 2009, pg.8).⁵⁸ Froebel mentioned, “I wish to find the right forms for awakening the higher sense of the child . . . What symbol does my ball offer to him? That of unity . . . the Ball connects the child with nature” (Warner 2009, pg. 8).⁵⁹ Many believed this notion, from Baudeliar, Levinovitz, and even Walter Benjamin mentioned the superiority of toy-play over the imitative play that comes from replicated toys (Levinovitz 2022, pg. 273).⁶⁰ Benjamin adds, “The more appealing toys are, in the ordinary sense of the term, the further they are from genuine playthings; the more they are based on imitation, the further they lead us from real, living play” (Levinovitz 2022, pg. 273).⁶¹ Brown denotes as this was the first time the economy of play and American literary become fellow economic partners (Brown 2022, pg. 454).⁶² In modern times, films impact the toy industry within retail stores, fast food restaurants, and other merchandise to push their brand.

Contemporary Segregation

Recreational parks, children’s play zones, to large amusement parks, all these are simulations that help stimulate a child’s creativity, imagination, knowledge, and joy.

“Los Angeles is encircled by these “imaginary stations” which feed reality, reality energy, to a town whose mystery is precisely that it is nothing more than a network of endless, unreal circulation- a town of fabulous proportions, but without space or dimensions” (Baudrillard 2022, pg. 26).⁶³ – Jean Baudrillard

The placement of playgrounds or the creation of toys is a panoptic system (Baudrillard 2022, pg. 26).⁶⁴ A way in which a concept is viewed and stretched into a possible truth.

⁵⁴ Froebel, “Friedrick Froebel’s,” 213.

⁵⁵ Marina Warner, “Out of an Old Toy Chest,” Journal of Aesthetic Education, Vol. 43, No. 2, (Summer 2009), 7.

⁵⁶ Warner, “Out of an Old Toy Chest,” 7.

⁵⁷ Warner, “Out of an Old Toy Chest,” 8.

⁵⁸ Warner, “Out of an Old Toy Chest,” 8.

⁵⁹ Warner, “Out of an Old Toy Chest,” 8.

⁶⁰ Levinovitz, “Towards a Theory of Toys,” 273.

⁶¹ Levinovitz, “Towards a Theory of Toys,” 273.

⁶² Brown, “American Childhood,” 454.

⁶³ Jean Baudrillard, “Simulations,” Translated by Paul Foss, Paul Patton and Philip Beitchman. (April 2022): 26.

⁶⁴ Baudrillard, “Simulations,” 26.



Fig. 8 “Pacification,” Intaglio, lithography, oil, and acrylic on canvas, is 24” x 48” inches.

The painting, and print assemblage in “Pacification,” is a play on symbols illustrating the gatekeeping done by other parties, and the illustrations of toys, are reminders of the ultimate goal of a migrant. On the top of the background, multiple aquatint prints, on mulberry paper are collaged of Saint Christopher; the patron saint of safe travels is seen holding his symbolic staff and carrying baby Jesus across a river. The bottom underlay collaged print, is a reproduction of multiple street vendors, with its iconic movable carts, printed with stone lithography on, newsprint paper, a paper that isn’t convenient for the life of the painting, yet practical, as the materials any vendor would use to get his small business started. The vendor’s cart is full of inflatable toys looking to capitalize on those incoming families.

Overlapping the patron saint, the only greenery in the scene, are several prickly pears and Yuma plants, painted in oil based paint, which are symbols for the Chihuahuan desert. The desert plants are placed behind the U.S.-Mexico border. While on the other side of the wall, overlapping all past symbols, there is a baby, with an adult head, wearing a Mexican ‘luchador’ mask. Not having a warm welcome, the Border Patrol is engaging the baby fighter. A patrol car with a dented front, after crashing on the baby’s left leg, while a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) helicopter is flying towards him, a pick-up truck on the far right with face recognition cameras pointing at him, and an unmanned aird vehicle (UAV) is gliding in the air taking aerial data. All of the taxing power found on the border of the United States, welcomes families incoming into the United States, a place where panoptic systems are sold, to the young and the old, with its concrete walls, and pathways acting as the transitional zone into a U.S. social identity and class.



Fig. 9 Enrique Chagoya, "What Appropriation Has Given Me, From Beyond/ Lo Qué Apropiación Me ha Dado, del Mas Allá," 1992, serigraph, 30" x 22" inches.⁶⁵

Enrique Chagoya's, 1992 screen print, is an illustration of the things appropriated into the American culture. The print is depicting an outdoor scene, with baby blue skies. There are 4 arms, two normal-sized arms, one smaller than the rest, a darker tone to the smaller one, and a cartoon character arm, with large white gloves. All four characters are reaching toward a green table that contains snacks, mainly chips, salsa, half of a watermelon, and a slice overlapping it. The chips have been renamed, instead of a Fritos chip bag, there is a 'Fritas' bag, with a depiction of Frida Kahlo on the front of the bag, and instead of a Doritos bag, the two top characters are sharing 'Diequitos Tortilla Chips.' The small, brown hand is dipping his Diequitos chip into the salsa, which the salsa is dripping off the table on the left-hand side. On the bottom edge of the table, a small ribbon with red cursive letters has the title of the print written in Spanish, with the date of the Spanish colonization in Mexico, to the year of the creation of the print "1492-Lo que apropiación me ha dado- 1992." The entire picture has its own wooden frame with blood marks all over the border.

⁶⁵ Smithsonian American Art Museum, n.d. "What Appropriation Has Given Me, From Beyond/Lo Qué Apropiación Me ha Dado, del Mas Allá." Accessed March 29, 2023.

<https://americanart.si.edu/artwork/what-appropriation-has-given-me-beyond-lo-que-apropriacion-me-ha-dado-del-mas-alla-116556>

Durable Inequality

To feel a sense of belonging, means the shared experience and capitals are in equal parts to those in the same community. Those who lack any of these three forms of capital, or obtained an unknown capital from another community, tend to be alienated and identified to belong to a separate group. Charles Tilly explains durable inequality, the reasons why inequality will never go away, and the reason stratification exists. The Annual Review of Sociology, Culture and Durable Inequality” by Lauren Valentino and Stephen Vaisey breaks down Charles Tilly’s four mechanisms of Durable Inequality: exploitation, opportunity hoarding, emulation, and adaptation (Valentino and Stephen 2022, pg. 110).⁶⁶

Adaptation is the final mechanism for Tilly’s Durable Inequality and adapting to the socioeconomic group is detrimental to inequality. *“Children who grow up in poor neighborhoods are exposed to heterogeneous models of attainment. As a result, they tend to have lower educational aspirations, which lead to lower educational attainment”* (Valentino and Stephen 2022, pg. 120-121).⁶⁷ These are influences that children grow up with and come to accept the life quality everyone around them seems to portray.

“Individuals come to value particular forms of identities, preferences, relationships, and skills, often in ways that unintentionally reinforce categorical group membership and resource levels” (Valentino and Stephen pg. 122).⁶⁸



Fig. 10 “Stratify Today!” mixed media, 87” h x 89” w x 89” d.

⁶⁶ Valentino, Lauren, and Stephen Vaisey. “Culture and Durable Inequality.” Annual review of sociology 48, no. 1 (2022): 110.

⁶⁷ Valentino, “Culture and Durable Inequality,” 120-121.

⁶⁸ Valentino, “Culture and Durable Inequality,” 122.

“Stratify Today!” is a shopping cart filled with more than two hundred inflatable vinyl toys, making the cart and toys measure 87” inches in height, 89” wide, by 89” depth. This became a symbol in several other artworks to demonstrate the mobilization of capitalism to fit everyone and anyone’s income. The inflatable toy, being the least expensive toy, becomes a rapid satisfaction for a child who is learning about wants and needs. Carts like these can be found in parades, carnivals, or community events that involve children. Toys, clothes, and school supplies are items that can help children identify other classmates that share the same lived experiences or might influence others into the friends they wish to preserve.

Exploitation and opportunity hoarding come from individuals with higher capital, excluding the full value of a service or product from groups with lower capital, or creating a complex network of imports and exports and monopolizing an industry (Valentino and Stephen 2022, pg. 119).⁶⁹

In the modern day, we have issues like zoning laws, which aren’t helping low-income families pick the proper education for their children. The public school system uses zoning law as a “quasi-monopoly” hold on children living in the school’s zip code. Public Schools are funded by local property tax which is beneficial to certain areas, and a disadvantage to low-income families (Pigeon 2022).⁷⁰

Zoning laws in public schools are segregating children, with their friendships being in the same economic status as theirs, compared to charter schools where different families from all walks of life exist (Pigeon 2022).⁷¹

Conclusion

“To dissimulate is to feign not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign to have what one hasn’t. One implies a presence, the other an absence” (Baudrillard 2022, pg. 5).⁷² Jean Baudrillard’s simulation theory, considers all toys being a simulation for children, simply filling in that void they didn’t know they had while teaching them with simulations, the person they ought to be. “Simulation threatens the difference between “true” and “false,” between “real and “imaginary” (Baudrillard 2022, pg. 5).⁷³ It can segregate communities creating dividing lines and separating humanity.

Crossing the U.S.-Mexico border every week as a child, was an eventful ride in my dad’s 1988 Chevy Blazer. Having to visit my grandparents, or watch my dad and uncles play baseball in the dusty, city of Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua. The ride back to the states, usually a 10 to 20-minute drive could turn into an hour to three-hour traffic jam, due to the border patrol agents

⁶⁹ Valentino, “Culture and Durable Inequality,” 119.

⁷⁰ Sean Michael Pigeon. “School zoning laws don’t make much sense anymore”. Newstex Blogs redefinED. November 3, 2022. <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:66SG-5RY1-JCMN-Y3H7-00000-00&context=1516831>.

⁷¹ Pigeon, “School Zoning.”

⁷² Baudrillard, “Simulations,” 5.

⁷³ Baudrillard, “Simulations,” 5.

evaluating people's passports and responses. Long lines usually brought street vendors along the medians of the bridge lanes, trying to sell any last-minute snacks, toys, and Mexican tourist art. The brake lights of the traffic trying to reach Texas would illuminate all the Mexican children vendors and the drivers, bright red. Carbon monoxide would be a constant odor until reaching the U.S. border checkpoint.

I would simply smile the best I can while trying to say "American!" and trying not to show any type of accent. Once the agent decides to let you pass, one must proceed slowly through the transitional zone, that is the United States. This has several large speed bumps, along with zig-zagged concrete barricades, which makes any driver follow the 5 miles per hour rule.

Liminal spaces, and transitional zones, in the simulation, are all invisible borders that are experienced since young, that teach us about the norms expected from our community.

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