

also believe this book will help students develop their philosophies of teaching young children—going beyond the superficial phrase, “children learn through play,” to a more robust statement about the critical role of play in their teaching.

Although I have focused primarily on the benefits of *Playing to Learn* for college students, practicing teachers will also find much to learn. Smidt begins with infancy in describing how play underlies the development of identity. Experienced teachers will find themselves recognizing many play scenarios. Smidt, however, helps readers understand more—the inherent capabilities, goals, and developmental potential of the child at play. New teachers will find the book helpful beyond their academic and continuing education courses in recognizing theory and research about play as valuable tools for informing and defending their curriculum choices. I believe that readers will develop a deeper understanding of the developmental milestones that children master through play. Smidt helpfully concludes each section with implications and suggestions for teachers. Readers leave *Playing to Learn*, therefore, with a clear purpose: this is what I need to do in my classroom.

In sum, readers of *Playing to Learn* will gain breadth—in recognizing play across cultures. They will also gain in understanding the tremendous value of play for the children they teach. Smidt provides an interesting and exciting read, putting new life into the topic of play through new ideas, a strong cross-cultural component, and clear applications. I finished the book with two desires: to implement Smidt’s recommendations in an early-childhood classroom and to seek

more information through readings, discussions, and conducting research with my students. Play studies has needed a book like *Playing to Learn*; its content and the engaging style in which it is written remind us that we are talking about play—freely chosen, intrinsically motivated, beneficial, and quite simply, a lot of fun.

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Play as Engagement and Communication: Play & Culture Studies, Volume 10

Eva E. Nwokah, ed.

Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2010. Contents, tables, charts, references, bibliography, index. 223 pp. \$36.00 paper. ISBN: 9780761850830

In this, the tenth volume of the Play & Culture Studies series from TASP (The Association for the Study of Play), editor Eva Nwokah argues that the contributions of this volume all proclaim that play involves both engagement with another and communication through verbal or nonverbal means. This theme is very broad and covers almost any theoretical paper or research study on play. Most of the chapters in this volume are quite different from one another, are not well integrated, and do not build on one another. For example, there are no references to other chapters and seldom to the work of the other authors in any of the chapters. Some of the chapters are well written, innovative, and insightful, but the volume’s lack of coherence is a serious drawback.

The volume begins with a short introduction, and the chapters are organized into four sections: Child Play with Adults and with Animals; The Complexities of Child-Child Play in Different Contexts; Teacher Support for Play in Educational Settings; and Reflections on the Nature of Play.

The first section contains chapters by Michael Patte on the therapeutic benefits of play for hospitalized children, by Gail F. Melson on the play of children and domestic animals, and by Hui-Chin Hsu and Jihyun Sung on the social and didactic actions of mothers at play with infants. The chapters have little in common. Patte's chapter, a description of an applied program for training child-life specialists, focuses primarily on practice. I was surprised to see no reference to Cindy Dell Clark's *In Sickness and Play*, although Robyn Holmes refers to the book in a later chapter. Melson's chapter—primarily a review of her own and related work on children's play with animals—offers an important addition to the literature on children's play. Her discussion takes note of the types of animals children play with and discusses in general some play routines like fetch and catch, but the piece lacks a feeling for the true nature of child-animal play. Hsu and Sung's interesting, quasi-experimental study demonstrates the social regulatory effect of infant affect on maternal actions.

Section two contains three quantitative studies—Rachana Karnik and Jonathan Tudge on ethnic, socioeconomic, and gender variations in children's pretend play; Sandra Chang-Kredel and Nina Howe on children's pretend play with media-based toys; Hui-Chin Hsu and Patricia K. James on the contribution of

theory of mind to children's pretend play; and a qualitative study by Robyn Holmes on young children's emotional reactions to cheating in game play. The quantitative studies make important contributions to well-trodden ground on pretend play. Karnik and Tudge even take us in their study beyond the usual sample of middle-class, white, American children. Holmes' work is novel, and her findings are somewhat surprising. She reports that some young children embrace cheating with a winning-is-what-it-is-all-about philosophy. She fails, however, to cite the research by Marjorie Goodwin that reports the constraints on cheating. These occur, says Goodwin, in certain games like jump rope, where players are interdependent, or hopscotch, when children sometimes cheat precisely in order to get caught, adding drama to the game.

Section three contains two nicely related articles on teacher's support of children's play. The first, by Michelle Tannock, espouses the value of rough-and-tumble play for boys and girls and how it is often suppressed in preschools and elementary schools. She relates its suppression to the high proportion of female teachers who, she argues, are often biased against this form of play and fear injuries and possible lawsuits in American schools. Tannock provides a useful checklist to aid teachers in differentiating rough-and-tumble play from aggression. She also makes suggestions to help teachers and early-childhood textbook authors recognize the value of such play. The second article in this section, by Mira Tetkowski Berkley and Kate Mahoney, argues for enhancing sociodramatic play in early childhood classrooms. The authors found that such play was rare

in the two Head Start classrooms they studied. They suggest ways preschool teachers can initiate sociodramatic play or expand it when children spontaneously produce sociodramatic play themes. As someone who has observed frequent and rich spontaneous sociodramatic play in several longitudinal ethnographies of Head Start and other preschool classrooms, I am hesitant to endorse excessive teacher involvement. The Berkley and Mahoney study was of short duration, and perhaps the children did not have enough time together to engage in sociodramatic play on a regular basis. I agree that teachers can be very helpful in launching such play, especially in the early weeks of a school term, and in encouraging a variety of types of sociodramatic play. However, too much adult engineering can stifle children's creativity in this very important type of play.

The last section contains only one essay, an abstract, theoretical reflection on play in general by Thomas S. Henricks that builds on his previous work and is well written and interesting—and very different from all the other works in the volume. Henricks argues that a combination of two qualities distinguishes playful behavior: transformation and consummation. He develops his argument impressively, often displaying innovative and original ideas, and he relates his points to the works of a range of theorists from a variety of disciplines.

Overall, this book lacks the coherence to be useful as a course text in developmental psychology, the sociology or anthropology of childhood, or early-childhood education. Most chapters, with the exception of Henricks' insightful concluding theoretical essay, focus primarily

on play and children's psychological and social development. There is little recognition of or reference to studies dealing directly with play as part of childhood and the peer cultures of the young. However, scholars of children's play can still take much from various chapters depending on their interests.

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**Everyone Plays at the Library:
Creating Great Gaming
Experiences for All Ages**

Scott Nicholson

Medford, NJ: Information Today, Inc., 2010. Illustrations, endnotes, index. 232 pp. \$39.50 paper. ISBN: 9781573873987

Scott Nicholson, a librarian by training and assistant professor by trade, knows what he is talking about when it comes to libraries. In this book, he challenges librarians to ask themselves how gaming fits into their libraries and follows up with a practical guide for implementation.

The book is broken down into three sections. In the first section, "Introduction to Gaming in the Library," Nicholson gives a history and real-life examples of games in libraries. He also tackles demanding questions about literacy and gaming, as well as basic questions about noise, violence, and addiction.

In the second section, "The Five Gaming Experience Archetypes," the author discusses various types of games that can support different library goals. This section also includes his SNAKS model