

the author's suggestions for solving these problems are naive. She proposes a dramatic—and potentially dangerous—policy of parenting that does not account for the real dangers and pitfalls of life in today's world. In the "Bullying Bandwagon" chapter, she raises important issues including the overuse of the word *bully*, the expansion of its definition and the impact that immediate parental involvement may have on a child's ability to develop skills to manage conflict. However, life today is very different from the author's Norwegian childhood. Parents and teachers need to be aware of children's behaviors and contests and take action when appropriate. Dismissing a potentially damaging situation as a rite of passage is as irresponsible as is overreacting to every little flurry of playground unpleasantness.

Guldberg tries too hard and with too little subtlety to make her case. She offers a text that wanders and dilutes her arguments.

—Claire S. Green, *Parents' Choice Foundation, Timonium, MD*

The Oxford Handbook of the Development of Play

Anthony D. Pellegrini, ed.

New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. References, index, 377 pp. \$135.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780129539300

A first impression is that this is an elegantly organized and presented addition to the proliferating literature on children's play. Most of the authors of this edited volume have distinguished themselves as major contributors to the literature on children's

play. So, one might wonder, what's new? Do we need yet another beautiful book about play? If so, why this one?

For a rationale, the book's editor argues that play deserves more attention in the field of child development in particular. The interdisciplinary perspectives that deal with both human and animal play add to the luster of the subject. In addition to the editor's sections that open and conclude the book, there are five sections: "Definitions" (containing two chapters); "Theories" (seven chapters); "Methods" (two chapters); "Dimensions of Play" (twelve chapters); and "Education" (one chapter).

Each contributor provides a perspective about defining play in relation to his or her chapter's topic, highlighting the ongoing dilemma about the definitions of play. Gordon Burghardt's chapter, "Defining and Recognizing Play," uses powerful imagery to create a cogent, synoptic five-part definition that spans human and animal play. Along the way, he reviews articles in the first issue of the *American Journal of Play*. This is a powerful way to open the discourse because it clarifies a view of the complexity and interdisciplinary perspectives that both plague and enrich the nature of scholarship about play. Nevertheless, the book tilts toward the sociocognitive and psychological aspects of play with some attention to its locomotor aspects. Several authors sharpen the distinction between exploration as an attempt to find out about phenomena and play as an attempt to influence encounters with physical or social situations.

In a brief gem that closes the "Theories" section, Brian Sutton-Smith's "The Antipathies of Play" considers the role of the integrative nature of the brain during

play, citing Damasio's work. This reviewer wonders if attempts to define play in terms of structure might be missing its lymphatic nature that contributes to the dynamic functioning of play in children's development. Other chapters in this section also share representative as well as recent and ongoing studies of play in cultures around the world.

Both chapters in the "Methods" section, by Jonathan R. H. Tudge, Jill R. Brown, and Lia B.L. Freitas, "The Cultural Ecology of Play: Methodological Considerations for Studying Play in Its Every day Contexts" and by Peter K. Smith, "Observational Methods in Studying Play," underscore the powerful nature of context in the cultural ecology of play as well as the limitations of study where theoretical perspectives can provide both focus and limitations to the pursuit of research. These chapters serve as a treasure chest for graduate students and researchers who can retrieve valuable guidelines to support their particular research strands or to discover a vista of learning leading toward a fresh direction for study. Both the "Theories" section and the "Methods" section underscore the need for tentativeness in seeking universalist conclusions and simplistic definitions of play.

The "Dimensions of Play" section offers a representative survey of many current topics in the study of play, including a range of social issues. Robert J. Caplan looks at solitary play; David Schwartz and Daryaneh Badaly consider "Internalizing and Externalizing Disorders during Childhood: Implications for Social Play"; and Christopher Jerrold and Carmel Conn explore "The Development of Pretend Play in Autism." A number of pieces, includ-

ing "Rough-and-Tumble Play: Training and Using the Social Brain" by Sergio M. Pellis and Vivien C. Pellis, deal with outdoor play, games, and locomotor play. Any look at dimensions of play would need to consider the issue of pretense in children's play, as represented in chapters by Angelina S. Lillard's "Mother-Child Fantasy Play" and Robert D. Kavanaugh's "Origins and Consequences of Social Pretend Play." Both chapters provide solid content to illuminate this significant issue. Maintaining the currency of the book, Jeffrey Goldstein's chapter, "Technology and Play," closes this section of the book. Each chapter concludes with suggestions for relevant areas of future study about play that grow out of a sophisticated review of research within each dimension of play, as well as an occasional description of the authors' research.

In section 6, "Education," "Playing Around in School: Implications of Learning and Educational Policy" by Kelly Fisher, Kathy Hirsh-Pasek, Roberta M. Golinkoff, Dorothy G. Singer, and Laura Berk, builds a persuasive case for the use of "playful learning pedagogies" (p. 349). The authors cite supportive studies in the areas of learning language, mathematics, and self-regulation across models of transmission teaching, free play, and guided play formats.

Despite some jarring typographical errors, this reviewer can agree with Carolee Howes that "in a world that appears to be giving children less time to play, it is noteworthy to have this Handbook" (p. 241). By assembling chapters from the contributing scholars, Anthony Pellegrini provides the reader with a community of research studies that is more than the

sum of its parts because of the breadth and depth of references.

—Doris Pronin Fromberg, *Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY*

Playing: Christian Explorations of Daily Life

James H. Evans Jr.

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As part of a series called Christian Explorations of Daily Living written for a general readership, *Playing* aims to provide theological reflection on our play, asserting that everyday practices matter for Christian faith. Written by a systematic theologian and former president of Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School, the book reflects the author's broad theological wisdom. It also evidences a solid familiarity with the field, making use of classic works on play by Karl Goos, Johan Huizinga, Roger Caillois, Brian Sutton-Smith, Jean Piaget, Hugo Rahner, Clifford Geertz, John Dewey, David Miller, and Victor Turner, among others. But what sets this volume apart from these standard texts in the field is its focus on the practice of play within an African American cultural and theological context. It is Tony Morrison's *Playing in the Dark*, the work of Maya Angelou and of Tyler Perry, reflections on Brer Rabbit, Dwight Hopkins's work on enslaved Africans and their playful strategies, Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, and Evans's own upbringing at the Second Gethsemane Missionary Bap-

tist Church in Detroit, Michigan, that provide the context for the author's trinitarian theological reflections. In the process, our inquiry into the field is broadened.

Typical of other works on play, the author chooses more to describe than define this activity, noting play's distinctive ways while positing its theological character. After surveying classic descriptions, Evans concludes that play can be characterized as a set of practices "that occurs in the interstices between freedom and structure, between the subject [ive] and object [ive], between creation and imitation" (p.11). For Evans, play is serious business. It is not leisure, nor is it fooling around. Instead, writing from his African American experience, Evans argues that play allows people "to endure, manage, and even enjoy life." (p.85). Surely he is correct.

Evans could have been clearer, however, in maintaining play's nonutilitarian character, even as he rightly highlights its productivity and value. At times, Evans seems to turn play into a form of work, a task of subverting what is inhuman and destructive. Similarly, there is, at times, in this volume, a confusion between the practice of play (the book's ostensible focus) and an understanding of play as a metaphor for one's stance toward life. But the comingling both of work and play, and of play and that which is playful, while intending to make work more enjoyable and play more important, actually undercuts the ability of real play to give life a vitality amidst structures that might otherwise suffocate. To work at play is to abort one's play; to make everything play is to make nothing play.

In developing his argument, Evans gives his short book a provocative structure patterned on the Christian understanding