

of analysis, readers will be challenged to consider play themes through contextual lenses that respect the unique personhood of the child.

This combined review of two new child-centered play-therapy texts barely scratches the surface of the inherent value that each work offers to novice and experienced play therapists alike. As a passionate child-centered play therapist, I found those Ah-ha moments rise up in me as both texts challenged me to think about my own approach or reminded me of an idea that I need to reconnect to. We are fortunate to have two books that complement each other and provide unique perspectives on the same topic. Much like the work of Axline and Landreth, these books will become an integral part of the child-centered play therapy canon.

—Stephen Demanchick, *Nazareth College, Rochester, NY*

Transactions at Play: Play & Cultural Studies, Volume 9

Cindy Dell Clark, ed.

Lanham, MD: University of America Press, 2009. Notes, charts, references, index. 190 pp. \$29.99 paper.
ISBN: 978076184485

An outstanding collection of original research and new insights on play, this is the ninth volume of a series of annual publications by The Association for the Study of Play (TASP), a scholarly organization of play researchers. The variety of articles—organized into three sections, each of which includes three articles and

an introductory commentary by an eminent play researcher—testifies to the broad spectrum of TASP membership, which includes psychologists, folklorists, sociologists, educators, anthropologists, historians, animal researchers, and therapists, all of them with their own ideas about play. The forward, by series editor James E. Johnson, refers to the book as “a box of jewels,” and I agree.

Helen Schwarzman introduces the first section, “Play and Culture,” with a thoughtful critique of the articles, sometimes agreeing with and sometimes challenging their interpretations. Suzanne Gaskins and Peggy Miller’s “The Cultural Roles of Emotions in Pretend Play” compares the pretend play of middle-class, European-American children and Yucatec Maya children and describes the cultural differences that promote more emotion and fantasy among the Americans. Avigail Morris’s “Nine a Side Basketball in the Kingdom of Tonga: A Case Study in Negotiating Gender Roles” describes the concept of femininity in Tonga culture and how an imported basketball game, adapted by Tongalese girls, provides a more feminine alternative to Western sports. The third piece views culture quite differently. In “Is Hazing Play?” Jay Mechling traces the history of hazing, painting disturbing images of physical and mental abuse during hazing in institutions from fraternities to the military. Mechling opposes dangerous practices but argues that “stylized aggression” resulting in humiliation exists “in the play frame.” Whether one agrees or disagrees, Mechling’s article is a thought-provoking challenge to the view that play is necessarily fun for all the players.

Keith Sawyer introduces the rewarding second section, "Transacting Play," with a commentary on the richness of play research. Julie Dunn's article, "Keeping it Real: An Examination of the Metacommunication Processes Used within the Play of One Group of Preadolescent Girls," describes the role-playing scenarios of white, middle-income girls in Australia. From play scripts and interviews, the author concludes that implicit rather than explicit metacommunication helps support the realness of play; the scripts themselves make fascinating reading. In contrast, Robyn Holmes and Jill Procassino's article, "Autistic Children's Play with Objects, Peers, and Adults in a Classroom Setting," illustrates the play of children who have limited abilities to fantasize. The authors found that, during free play, these children spent most of their time playing alone but their play lengthened if they were near other children. Teachers found play to be an effective scaffolding tool for these students. This article is an important addition to the special-education literature. The final article on transacting play takes up panda play and compares the quality of play fighting when cubs play with their mother instead of a peer. "Effects of Partner on Play Fighting Behavior in Giant Panda Cubs" by Megan Wilson, Rebecca Snyder, Zhi Zang, Luo Lan, C. L. Li, and Terry Maple is important research on the healthy development of pandas. Because, in the wild, panda cubs do not have litter mates, housing cubs with peers in panda-breeding stations creates an artificial situation that raises concerns for healthy panda development. Using ethograms to track play-fighting behaviors on videotape, the researchers found

minor differences between peer play and mother play but suggest that the play may be similar enough to mitigate concerns.

Artin Goncu and Anthony Perone's introduction to the last section, "Adults in Children's Play," notes that children's motivation for play is not just personal but also relational. Children play with other children and adults, and children's opportunities to play depends on adults giving them the freedom to do so. Importantly, Goncu and Perone note that more data are needed to support the play needs of children. All three authors in this section agree that adults should support children's play. June Factor explores children's folklore in "It's Only Play if You Get to Choose': Children's Perceptions of Play and Adult Interventions." Factor gives many examples from children's play and folklore, whether considered vulgar or not, to explore the role of play in how children learn, adapt roles, and gain feelings of power. Both Factor and the following author, Michael Patte, note with concern the growing restrictions on play in school. Patte's research in "The State of Recess in Pennsylvania Elementary Schools: A Continuing Tradition or a Distant Memory?" describes surveys of Pennsylvania teachers and administrators concerning the value and availability of recess. The findings expose a disconnect between teachers' positive attitudes about recess and schools' decrease in recess time. The author suggests the need for more documentation on the value of recess paired with more public discourse on its importance for development. The final paper, "The Toy Bag: An Examination of Its History and Use in Early Intervention for Infants and Toddlers with

Special Needs” by Eva Nwokah, traces the history of toy-bag use by therapists of young children. Therapists originally used toy bags as props to promote interaction with children and aid assessment, but the current trend is to use materials in the child’s environment as playthings while doing the assessment. Are the new approaches better? Nwokah finds both pros and cons and challenges researchers to study new approaches.

The editor of this volume, Dr. Cindy Dell Clark, should be commended for assembling such a significant collection. The nine articles in this volume are well written and interesting—indeed a “box of jewels.” The variety of topics and diversity of methodologies make this an important read for theorists, researchers, and play practitioners alike.

—Olga S. Jarrett, *Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA*