

twentieth century—and as early as the 1940s, Edward U. Condon displayed at the world's fair a computer with gaming capabilities. The authors do an excellent job, however, of creating a dialogue of the social, political, and psychological implications of designer works for children.

This book serves as a general resource, and the online interactive exhibit found at www.moma.org proves an essential companion.

—Michelle Parnett, *The Strong, Rochester, NY*

Play in the Early Years

Marilyn Fler

New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013. References, vignettes, photographs, glossary, indices. 261 pp. \$94.00 paper. ISBN: 9781107640221

In *Play in the Early Years*, Marilyn Fler communicates the importance of play in young children's early education and development. Focusing primarily on the role of play in the Australian government's Early Years Learning Framework (a curriculum for children from birth to age five), she uses a variety of theoretical perspectives to develop a schema to help the reader understand children's play. Her schema considers the setting (such as school, home, playground) in which play takes place and the nature of play. She encourages readers to reflect on their own personal memories, perspectives, and expectations of play to become aware of the value of children's play. Fler also describes a systematic analysis of teaching

based on children's play in early-childhood education. She demonstrates the ways in which others have understood play in different eras, cultures, and early-childhood education settings (such as child care, family child care, schools, and community groups). The book discusses a wide range of topics, including perspectives on play from different individuals such as infants, children, teachers, families, communities, classrooms, and various early-childhood settings; different theories of play including classical, developmental, and post-developmental; integrating play into the early-childhood education curriculum; promoting children's play development; using cultural technologies in children's play; using play for assessment purposes; and advocating for play.

In her first chapter, she introduces the different perspectives on play from personal memories, early-childhood education teachers, and theorists. Fler provides an important discussion on the teachers' beliefs about children's play, which determines how they implement play in their classroom. At the end of each chapter, Fler includes glossaries to assist students to relate their understanding of important concepts to ideas. She also presents vignettes and real-life examples to assist students with making the transition from theory to practice. Throughout the book, she underscores children's play experiences in various ways. Every chapter highlights numerous instances of play based on young children's interviews and observations. These interviews and observations focus on important concerns and on children's resourcefulness and interests during their play.

Play in the Early Years appears to be

a valuable resource primarily for practitioners and undergraduate students of early-childhood education at Australian universities. It presents numerous perspectives on the conceptualization of play and a comprehensive review of how many individuals—such as teachers, family members, and theorists—conceptualize play. Yet the content in the book has a narrow focus, and it appears to be based on the Early Years Learning Framework, which is a basic element in the Australian government's National Quality Framework for early-childhood education and care. Fleer discusses important theories from classical and contemporary perspectives, but it seems that she selected these theories based on either the National Quality Framework or the particular theories she considered to be the most important. However, she does present and analyze the most prevalent theories (e.g., of Lev Vygotsky and Jean Piaget) and current theories (e.g., theories of mind) about early-childhood pedagogy and play. She uses the theory of Vygotsky and other cultural-historical approaches to describe current developments in play research and the role of play in early-childhood development and education. She defines play based on contemporary definitions by early-childhood professionals—Jaipaul Roopnarine, Peter Gray, and Doris Bergen. Since play has been difficult to define, many play researchers and experts prefer to use different criteria to identify their use of play. Fleer might have strengthened her definition by including such criteria for play as spontaneity, flexibility, and interest for children.

The book's most noteworthy contributions are its chapter on families at play

and its presentation of a variety of cultural perspectives on children's play. For example, Fleer provides an illuminating play vignette about children from Singapore. In addition, the book uses several theories of play, real-life examples, and glossaries that help students understand children's play. The book also includes the perspectives of teachers on children's play, which help students understand the complexities of play as presented in different classrooms. Fleer's discussion of the use of technology in children's play should also be noted, because—according to the National Association for the Education of Young children—young children are currently experiencing an unexpectedly shifting digital terrain. Enjoyable and engaging, shared experiences in technology can promote children's learning and development in the classroom and at home.

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The Ball: The Object of the Game

John Fox

New York: Harper Perennial, 2012.

Notes, bibliography, index. 400 pp.

\$14.99 paper. ISBN: 9780061881794

Why do we play ball? *The Ball: The Object of the Game* begins with the conceit that John Fox—prompted by an offhand question tossed out by his seven-year-old son—embarked on a quest to articulate why humans play ball. Although the underlying motivation for the work clearly comes from the years he spent researching an ancient Mayan ball game, this father-