

Sheila Eyberg, provides the format for this behavioral approach to making changes in parenting. The evidence-based treatment they describe deals with the problematic interaction patterns in the parent-child relationship often revealed by a child's acting out. Eric Green and Kristi Gibbs discuss sand play—the use of sand-filled trays with a collection of miniature toys—as an intervention with acting-out children. They give a detailed case study from a Jungian perspective of sand-play therapy as a modality of play therapy, one which includes the coordination of multidisciplinary services such as filial therapy with the child and mother. They indicate the need for research into sand play and sand-tray therapy. Lastly, Carolyn Webster-Stratton and M. Jamila Reid's description of the use of child-directed play therapy (not to be confused with child-centered play therapy) concludes this section of the book. Their research-based intervention has three components: parent training, teacher training, and child training. They offer an interesting collection of coaching skills, such as descriptive commenting and persistence coaching, which are insightful ways of interacting with children and can be applied elsewhere as well. The authors indicate that their protocol has produced promising research results.

The final section of the book comprises two chapters on developmental issues. In the first, David Neufeld and Pamela Wolfberg discuss the use of the integrated play group. These are adult-facilitated groups of children with autistic spectrum disorders (ASP) and normally developing children. Bringing them together allows children with ASP to learn from both the adult leader and the other children. In the final chapter of the book, Johnny Matson

and Jill Fodstad present a review of the use of play with developmentally delayed children, especially those with intellectual delays and with autism. They also call for the inclusion of siblings in the play sessions, where they prove to be important assets.

*Play Therapy for Preschool Children* is both valuable to the novice play therapist and informative for the experienced professional. The volume will broaden the scope of understanding play interventions with preschoolers.

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**Play for a Change: Play, Policy and Practice: A Review of Contemporary Perspectives**

*Stuart Lester and Wendy Russell*  
London, United Kingdom: National Children's Bureau, 2008. References, photographs, tables, 270 pp. \$49.95 cloth. ISBN: 9781905818396

This book is written by two lecturers in playwork from the United Kingdom who have both academic and practitioner experience. These authors have reviewed “the research and literature on children's play, with a focus on evidence-based research that can inform policy” (p. 11). The book has a number of positive features.

First, the book is quite wide ranging in its coverage and referencing. Although I had myself written *Children at Play* (2009), I nevertheless found a considerable number of references I had not previously come across. These included a good number from sociological and educational sources.

The authors also cover perspectives from psychology, neuroscience, and the practical playwork field. They venture into new technologies and play and have a fine section on inclusion issues. In some respects, they have done an impressive job covering what is now quite a vast literature.

Second, the book is very nicely produced. There are some attractive illustrations, including a color page at the beginning of each chapter, clear text with important quotes in bold face, and a glossary.

But there are limitations too. One limitation for readers outside of Britain may be that the references to government policy and playwork practice are U.K. based. This particularly affects chapter 2 (“National and Local Socio-Political Context”) and, to a lesser extent, chapter 5 (“From Policy and Theory into Practice: Provision for Play”). It does not much affect chapter 3 (“The Importance of Play in Children’s Lives”) or chapter 4 (“Children’s Play Patterns”), which review the research largely irrespective of national origin. The emphasis on Britain is natural enough given the provenance of the information, but it may prove a distraction for readers outside the United Kingdom.

Although the authors are wide ranging in aspects of their review, they state at the start: “While not entirely forgetting the foundation that developmental psychology has given to theories about children and play, this review has largely focussed on alternative approaches” (p. 11). They do in fact cover quite a lot of psychological and also ethological research (citing for example Anthony Pellegrini, David Bjorklund, Gordon Burghardt, and my own work). There is no citation of clas-

sics in developmental psychology such as works by Jean Piaget, Lev S. Vygotsky, or Sara Smilansky, but these, one could argue, are not contemporary perspectives as suggested in the book’s subtitle. However, there are omissions of contemporary developmental-psychology theorists, such as Paul L. Harris, and of philosophers, such as Peter Carruthers. The possible relevance of pretend play for theory of mind, a major issue in developmental psychology recently, is not touched upon.

Early on, the authors reference the more sceptical view of the benefits of play, from authors such as Burghardt, Brian Sutton-Smith, and my own work on the “play ethos”; and they state: “Such a widespread questioning of existing understandings of play demands more than a passing consideration” (p. 13). Unfortunately, that is all it really gets. Lester and Russell cite all the same authors again, but only for other aspects of their work (and in ways which to me seemed to exemplify the play ethos at work). Indeed, Lester and Russell cite a lot of evidence for the value of play, but they do not really grapple with the issues around the play ethos idea—whether such evidence is really strong and whether it has really been critically assessed.

In fact, large sections of the central chapters, although quite readable and accurate as far as they go, do basically read as a string of quotes, citations, and summaries from selected articles. This sometimes becomes a series of “X notes that . . .” and “Y highlights that . . .” with quite extensive quotations. Again, in a review, this is fair enough in its way, but it does not develop a strongly coherent line of argument, nor does it take on board much in the way of alternative views and debates.

As an example, although Lester and Russell make brief mention of anthropological perspectives on play, they offer no serious coverage of how and why play and attitudes about play vary so much in different societies and no discussion of the implications of these differences. For instance, in an essay written for *Play and Development* (2007), Suzanne Gaskins, Wendy Haight and David Lancy discuss what they call culturally cultivated, culturally accepted, and culturally curtailed play in different societies; and Lancy, in his "Accounting for Variability in Mother-Child Play" for *American Anthropologist* (2007), has explicitly espoused a sceptical view of play partly based on such variations; if pretend play does not happen much in some cultures, but the children grow up okay, then how essential is such play? But this debate is not entered into here, and these authors are not referenced.

Finally, although the book is attractive and readable, I did find some textual references missing from the reference list. Also, the lack of an index is frustrating.

Altogether, *Play for a Change* is a useful sourcebook for much of the recent research on children's play and on policy issues concerning children's play, especially in Britain. However, it is far from being a complete review of contemporary perspectives in the field, and some important issues and research areas are not covered. The book is worth having as a resource, but potential readers and purchasers should bear its limitations in mind.

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### **The Praeger Handbook of Play across the Life Cycle: From Infancy to Old Age**

*Luciano L'Abate*

Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2009. References, appendix, index, 335 pp. \$59.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780313359293

Luciano L'Abate, a world-renowned expert on family therapy, has produced a comprehensive review of the literature on play, ranging from an examination of play across dozens of cultures to an analysis of the implications of technology on leisure time. The inclusion of the topic of adult play solidifies its must-read status for scholars interested in understanding diverse expressions and functions of play.

This well-organized handbook offers a solid structure with which to analyze the different aspects of play: its sections include "Definitions and a Bird's Eye View of Play," "Chronological Stages of Play," "The Usefulness of Play," and "Controversies about Play." L'Abate first focuses on providing a foundation on the topic, including a fascinating exploration of the role of gender and culture, based upon an exhaustive review of existing literature. He also provides a historical review of the inclusion of play in society, as well as a summary of the most prominent scholars in the field.

Next, L'Abate analyzes the types of play in different life-cycle stages, from infancy through adulthood. In regard to play studies, he acknowledges the "decreasing amount of information with increasing age," resulting in a scarcity of research on the expression and meaning of play from puberty to old age. L'Abate considers play as necessary an activity in