

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, David Haight and Wendy Lancy discuss what they call culturally cultivated, culturally accepted, and culturally curtailed play in different societies; and Lancy, in her "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

adulthood as it is in childhood, ensuring that his analysis is as innovative as it is comprehensive. Particularly inclusive are the brief sections describing play in the lives of children with disabilities.

The third section concentrates on a less-popular subject: the value of play in development and therapeutic interventions. In contrast to the wide-ranging review of the first two parts, here L'Abate neglects to address how important play is in rehabilitation. Although the book is aimed at a variety of professionals, his analysis rests heavily on psychotherapy. For example, his focus lies more on the emotional and relational benefits of play than its sensory-motor and cognitive usefulness.

Finally, L'Abate devotes a section to contemporary controversies in the field, including the function of technological media. However, he neglects to explore fully the ramifications of this shift in lifestyle for expressions of play. For example, he fails to mention the ubiquity of mobile phones and social-networking Web sites, and he addresses the Internet only briefly.

In his conclusion, L'Abate offers the reader an organizing framework of play using concepts from relational-competence theory. He defines play as a relational activity that occurs with others or with the environment, and he approaches his conclusion from this perspective. A reader unfamiliar with this theoretical approach will labor through this section. L'Abate could have strengthened the presentation of this framework if he had incorporated examples from the literature he reviewed in the previous sections. In addition, the reader who wants to appreciate fully L'Abate's innovative contribution to the study of play presented in this con-

cluding chapter will need to have a basic understanding of relational-competence theory.

Despite some of the restrictions, this comprehensive handbook covers a wide range of topics related to the study of play. It is clearly written and can serve as a necessary textbook for graduate-level courses that focus on the study of play and leisure across the lifespan. *The Praeger Handbook of Play across the Life Cycle* is an engaging, extensive overview of play from different perspectives, emphasizing play as a valuable activity for individuals of all ages.

—Erna Imperatore Blanche, *University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA*

A History of Children's Play and Play Environments: Toward a Contemporary Child-Saving Movement

Joe L. Frost

New York, NY: Routledge, 2010. Illustrations, bibliographical references, index. xx, 295 pp. \$49.95 paper. ISBN: 9780415806206

Children's play, so goes the story told by historians, is a universal phenomenon, a force of nature considered by adults as too trivial to describe or disturb, a fact which secured its autonomy and transmission from one generation to the next. Aside from a few classical references (Plato and his Renaissance followers), play was first "discovered" by the Enlightenment and made into a fundamental philosophical entity supporting the modern ideal of the self as spontaneous and free. Since play does not require the use of compulsion,