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Marbles

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THIS IS HOW WE PLAY MARBLES, RERUN... FIRST, WE DRAW A BIG CIRCLE OR RING...

THEN WE EACH PUT SOME MARBLES IN THE RING.

NOW, BECAUSE YOU'RE A BEGINNER, WE WON'T PLAY FOR KEEPS... WELLS, JUST PLAY FOR FUN...

DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT THAT MEANS?

IF I WIN, IT'S FUN, IF I DON'T WIN, IT'S NO FUN...
Play with objects


“In side alleys too narrow for cars to negotiate, boys play “truck” by turning short sticks between their hands in front of them, a little to the left, a little to the right, as their steering wheels. They make “brrr” noises as they hurtle themselves downhill, four or five together, scaring all life in the small space just as cars and trucks do on the wider streets.” (p. 4)
Blowing off Steam


“Children love to play on the beach and in the water where they swim, dive, and splash water at each other. “(p. 102)


“…it starts mixing with other youngsters, it imitates them and is soon diving and swimming below the surface.” (Hogbin 1969: 32)
Constructing the Dominance Hierarchy


Discusses children's agency within the peer culture, including the flaunting of adult norms.

"...power is viewed as a central concern of children's peer cultures from early on." (p. 627)


Girls in this classroom articulated a series of moves to strengthen alliances, including praising and inviting each other home and conforming to another's attempts to elaborate a game, and two girls could indicate a relationship by excluding a third party (p. 77). Girls try to have the right things (e.g., dolls) and "secrets" to enhance the possibility for forming alliances. A girl's current alliance partner is praised, while all the other girls are criticized. " (p. 80).

“Those in the peer group who, during gossip events, displayed "proficiency in repeatedly (a) depicting the deviant character of others and (b) soliciting audience support for particular versions of events positioned them as leaders…(these boys) legitimate their power while subordinating the interests of others" (p. 219).


“….gatekeepers were expert at using the dominant gender ideology as a basis for marginalization…They manipulated others in the group to establish their central position and to dominate the definition of the group's boundaries" (p. 49). Weak boys, and girls who were lacking in the accoutrements of high socioeconomic status and attractiveness (e.g., overweight girls), were derided by the ringleaders and rendered the subjects of gossip, rumor, and en face derision (p. 50)

**Children heighten their peer group status by projecting views in opposition to parents, teachers and the dominant society.**

“… white working-class British adolescent boys displaying themselves as tough through telling stories about smoking, standing up to their fathers, throwing knives, etc. Participation frameworks of conversational stories as told in friendship groups could be manipulated in ways that help communicate gender identities (e.g., males interrupting, challenging, and insulting a teller to project masculinity…Preadolescent and adolescent teens resist dominant ideologies of the adult culture, including gender,
through mocking and animating others during collaborative stories with friends."(p. 639)

It is not clear that this preoccupation in the peer culture with opposition to the dominant culture reaches beyond contemporary, urbanized society. The authors do not acknowledge this limitation and do not, therefore wrestle with why this should be so. If we take Wills' classic *Learning to Labor* as a starting point, we might look at the highly competitive and ranked character of youth culture. Youth are drawn into competitive sports, beauty contests, music recitals and prizes, preoccupation with fashion trends, the ranking inherent in the disposable income available to the young, to say nothing of competitive entry to exclusive schools—including public schools. As many opportunities as there now are to be judged a "winner" there are vastly more chances to be declared a "non-winner."
Gamesmanship

Stone Play in Gbarngasuakwelle

Hide and Seek in Shibam
The Playgroup


“Maing Tuu children do not play alone. … most commonly they form play groups of from five to ten or more participants.” (Broch 1990:42) “Sometimes playgroups are formed of member of the same sex. Generally this division is more frequent among the older children….All children of the village are seldom together at the same time. The play groups split up and rearrange themselves, although some children tend to be best friends and stick together most of the day.” (Broch 1990:72)
Learning One’s Culture

Crèche of Toddlers Pretending to Use a Mortar and Pestle
The Moral Lessons in Folklore


Generally, traditional stories in Chuuk are told as allegory by older people…to younger people. The tales can be a means of opening a discussion of important social values, particularly those about relationships within the immediate family and local matrilineal segment. The tales also contain histories of Chuuk places and some of the relations among the politically powerful on the islands in the region. From a local point of view, these tales represent valuable knowledge, and adults do not always share them easily. Often, parents tell the stories when they feel their children are ready for them because they have shown love and obedience. (p. 153)

Like many successful stories that people tell and retell, a striking feature of the stories of Nemwes and Oon is how they share an emotional narrative structure. Each story tells of a loving and protective relationship between the good parent and the child, where the parent is sensitive to the child's desires or needs and acts to satisfy them. Then, either out of necessity (e.g., Oon) or the child's desire for exploration (Nemwes), the good parent and child are separated and the child encounters a threat to his or her life. (p. 155)
While most of the stories include a loving, sensitive parent (equally likely a father or a mother), some stories also include insensitive parents and even parents who are dangerous or cruel (p. 163)


“There are a number of folk tales centering on the evil stepmother theme, the most well known being the story of “Brambang Abang and Bwang Putih,” which are the names of two little girls (Humorous names, meaning “Red Onion” and “White Garlic”). Every child knows this story.” (p. 37)

“When Bawang Putih grew up, she became a very good person, whereas Brambang Abang grew up stupid, unable to do anything useful, because all she had done all her life was play.” (p. 43)
How Culture Shapes Children’s Play

Egyptian Raffia Doll

Amish Dolls

Roman Ceramic Gladiator

“There is very little child culture among the Baining. There are only a few games that seem indigenous to the area. In general children seem merely to run and chase each other out doors. This sort of general exuberance is not appreciated by adults in the society, as the quotes (p. 91) above indicate. Informants over forty years old describe how they were punished as children for playing. Their parents would take a piece of bone or thorn and pierce either the septum of the nose, the sides of the nose or the ear loves. Children were then supposed to keep a long pointed object in these apertures so that whey they engaged in some sort of active game or rambunctious activity, the bone, thorn, or whatever was in the hole would interfere with the play, and perhaps hurt.” (p. 92)

“The Baining do not consider that children learn from play. Parents do not make toys for their children. They do not give them miniatures of adult objects such as spears, baskets, tools, etc. They
rarely play with their children either in a verbal or active way (although they are generous, loving, and physically in touch with them frequently). Other children of age eight or nine were seen on several occasions playing with a 3 1/2-year-old. Their “game” consisted of calling the names of things and people for the younger child to repeat…Parents proceed from the principle that children learn from work. Consequently they teach children to work in the garden as soon as they show the interest and capability.” (p. 92)

“The Baining… regard children’s play as the antithesis of proper social activity. It stands outside the realm of social behavior.” …“The Baining suppress spontaneous play by children. (p. 168)

**Play in contemporary, bourgeoisie culture**


“Children like to run, they like to move around. For young children running, jumping and laughing are in many ways equivalent to talk (or conversation) among older children and adults.” (p. 233)

“In early infancy children through participation in everyday play routines with caretakers develop basic communicative skills and a sense of agency….Later in the infancy period children begin to initiate and take a more active role in interactive processes with
adults…Children come to see themselves as ‘children’ who are different from ‘adults.’” (p. 250)


“Children from middle-class homes in each city were more often observed in pretend play than were children from working-class backgrounds.” (p. 152)

“The Luo children in Kisumu were far less likely then children from the other cities to be observed playing with objects that have been designed for use by children…Luo children were observed playing with Vaseline containers, bottle tops, an old oil bottle, a tube of toothpaste, old cassette tapes.” (p. 153)
Suppression of Play


“Bernard de Gordon, a physician in fourteenth-century Montpellier, described early childhood (*pueritia*) as ‘the age of concussion’, on the grounds that ‘in that age they begin to run and jump and to hit each other’. Children were free to roam around the street and the countryside for much of the time. The American Lucy Larcom wrote that children in her neighbourhood during the 1830s enjoyed the privilege of ‘a little wholesome neglect’. At the same period Olivier Perrin reported that in Brittany once children
could walk they were left very much to themselves until the age of 7 or 8.” (p. 97)


“Sheruni, a stretch of wooded land along a stream to the south of Deh Koh, is taken to be inhabited by potentially dangerous djinn, and to be avoided (p. 5)…The map children construct for moving around in the village includes not just alleys, footbridges, staircases, and narrow channel-crossings, but any natural or manmade feature that can be climbed over, jumped across, squeezed by… (p. 7)…Any space at home is open to children unless or until men, boys, or, to a lesser degree, women, demand it for their purposes.” (p. 12)


“Parents proceed from the principle that children learn from work. Consequently they teach children to work in the garden as soon as they show the interest and capability.” (p. 92)

“The Baining…regard children’s play as the antithesis of proper social activity. It stands outside the realm of social behavior…The Baining suppress spontaneous play by children. In the Baining view, children are characterized by their initial asociality. This “naturalness” is expressed in their lack of control over bodily functions, their inability to hear (and therefore understand) what is told them, their inability to work (which result in playing instead),
and their stealing of food (which illustrates their fundamental ignorance of important social relations). The play of children is contrasted to the work of adults, especially the activities of gardening, cooking, and giving food to others. Play is not considered the work of children; eating and learning to work are.” (p. 168)


“Bonerate parents are not much concerned about how their children play. They rarely direct or stage play activities for their children and seldom make or find toys for them. Their notion of “bad play” would be what they regard as dangerous play, and they try to keep their youngest children from such activities as paddling dugouts or climbing tall coconut palms.” (Broch 1990:101)

“Children were never observed to complain of having nothing to do or to seek advice from their parents with regard to play activities.” (Broch 1990:101)
Parent-child Play


Parents of children aged 3 to 6 years (*n* = 24 children in each group) kept daily logs of their children’s activities and companions for a week. Results show that parents in both groups spent similar amounts of time in play activities with their children, although the Euro-American parents did more pretend play and the Asian parents did more constructive play. However, Asian parents spent far more time on preacademic activities with their children such as learning letters and numbers, playing math games, and working with the computer. The cultural differences among parents are mirrored to a lesser extent by patterns of participation of siblings, friends, and babysitters with the target children. (p. 163)

It is evident that these parents had already assigned themselves the role of teacher for their young children and were intent on helping their children to be successful in school and life through direct teaching activities. (p. 172)…Euro-American parents, but not the Asian parents, were also involving their young children in household chores - an early form of training for responsibility. (p. 173)

“Young children develop the habit of pretending by hearing and taking part, from their first year on, in pretend interactions with the significant people in their lives….Mothers’ participation is important to young children’s development of interest and skill in pretend. Research findings looking at children from the ages of 12 to 30 months suggest that children incorporate pretend elements from their joint play with their mothers into their own play.” (p. 58)

“When mothers play with their young children, they essentially “teach” role playing by modeling the behavior and talk that is typical of particular activities, such as when a mother tends a baby or when workers construct a building. Also, research suggests that children pretend more and that their play sequences are longer, more diverse, and more complex when they engage in pretend play with adult caregivers, usually their mothers, than when they pretend alone. Moreover, children as young as 19 months can continue pretend play, either gesturally or verbally, that their mothers have started.” (p. 59)

“This pattern of relationships establishes that skill with the extended discourse of pretend talk in the preschool years in related to the language and literacy skills that are important for children in kindergarten.” (p. 71)

**Survey shows that parent-child play is an extremely rare and recent phenomenon, found almost exclusively among elite bourgeoisie families.**

“The International Association for the Child’s Right to Play, would like to take the parent–child play movement around the entire globe. Founded in 1961, the organization has campaigned through the United Nations to define children’s opportunity to play as one of the fundamental human rights. At their 2005 annual meeting, attendees were welcomed by the President of the Federal Republic of Germany with these words: ‘Children at play not only require the understanding of adults but also their active support and participation. Parents must find the time to play with their children. …I am especially happy when adults regard the noise (p. 279) of playing children as the music of the future. [International Play Association 2005]’

This statement is tantamount to a condemnation of the child-rearing beliefs and behaviors of three-fourths of the world’s parents and is completely unjustified by either the experimental literature in child development or, especially, the ethnographic literature. There are plentiful examples throughout the ethnographic record in which mother–child play is not valued, and these should not be viewed as signs of deficiency or neglect. Parents in these societies can, when pressed, cite numerous reasons why playing with children might not be a good idea. As a final caution, we must be wary that efforts to promote parent–child play
are not driven by the desire to use play to (p. 280) ‘civilize the irrational natives’ (Sutton-Smith 1993:27).”


The Adult Management of Play

Wrestling Match
Prepping Rodeo Princess


**Parents teach siblings how to play together**

“The third phase begins when the younger child achieves active mastery of language between his-her 19th and 18th month. It can now talk to the elder sibling and thereby create new qualities of interaction. The behavior of the parents changes strikingly. They
seem no longer to consider it a major obligation to mediate between the children. Rather they leave it more and more to the children... The following are three short scenes from our material which demonstrate different interaction strategies of parents to establish contact between children.” (p. 136)


“As adults we frequently take for granted the ability to construct activities jointly with another person. Arriving at a mutual focus by soliciting a partner’s attention or by joining into an ongoing activity, seems rather straightforward. But to many young children, especially those who have interacted primarily with attentive caregivers who shape almost any response on the part of the child into a common frame, the actual process of how to negotiate joint activities is a major obstacle. The caregivers in our study are instrumental in the successful negotiation of the peers’ joint activities and the organization of peer play. The mothers are not directly involved in the play of (p. 88) the children. Instead they encourage their children to play with or next to each other. They closely monitor their children’s activities. The mothers assist their children by suggesting ways that the children could use their communicative resources for the purpose of negotiating shared activities. Initiation. One of the primary kinds of strategic assistance the mother give to the children concerns the initiation of
joint peer play. The mothers continually point out to the children various way in which a child could attempt to work out a common activity. Three major types of suggestions are made by mothers, namely that:

1. Child 1 SHOW Child 2 her activity
   “Show Jackie your new book”

2. Child 1 OFFER that Child 2 could participate
   “Tell Jackie she can play too”

3. Child 1 INSTRUCT Child 2 how to participate
   “Tell Jackie how that works” (p. 89)

“The children rarely attempt to join in each other’s activity without the mother’s prompting.” (p. 89)

“Our discussion has focused on some ways in which the mothers have contributed to the initial organization of a joint activity between the children. But the children are successful at finding a mutual focus, the mothers still play a significant role in making sure that such focus is maintained. It is not the case that the children merely need assistance in initiating joint activity. The children also require support to help insure that previously established joint focus is maintained.” (p. 90)

“In summary, the mothers exert much effort to make the children recognize each other’s point of view. The peers often lack awareness that they could use their existing communicative
resources in order to establish and sustain a shared activity. The mother-child dyad functions as a unit. Each mother tends to team up with her own child. (p. 91)…Why do the caregivers put so much effort into helping their children organize joint activities?...Caregivers feel it is important that children at this age begin to interact with age-mates. They may be preparing their children for school situations, where many of their interaction will involve peer play.” (p. 92)


“A Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) was established in 2003, whose principle aim is “to safeguard and promote the rights and best interests of children and young persons…The author was commissioned…to consult with children and young people to inform this Northern Ireland report. Consultation meetings were held with 132 children and young people, aged eight to twenty-five, from twelve groups across Northern Ireland.” (p. 419)

“Most children and young people felt that having safe places to play in their communities was a right they did not enjoy: “There are not enough places to play.” “…Some areas don’t have parks or youth clubs. No play area.” “There’s no after school activities and places to play.” “There’s fuck-all to do. That’s why kids are out on the streets.” (p. 430)...Children and young people wanted more parks and a range of community-based activities such as clubs,
trips to the cinema or bowling, outdoor activities and drop-ins.” (p. 431)

**Note the “moral” implications…**


“… suburban 8th graders’ involvement in different activities along with their perceptions of parental attitudes toward achievement. Results indicated negligible evidence for deleterious effects of high extracurricular involvement per se. Far more strongly implicated was perceived parent criticism for both girls and boys as well as the absence of after-school supervision. Low parent expectations connoted significant vulnerability especially for boys. (p. 583)

“ On average, girls and boys in this sample spent between 7 and 8 hr/week on structured extracurricular activities (range 0 to 20 hr/week). In terms of reasons for this involvement, enjoyment was mentioned for almost 5 hr/week on average, beliefs in benefits for the future for approximately 2.5 hr, and pressure from adults for 1.5 hr/week on average. In absolute terms, therefore, these early-adolescent children did not report pressure from parents as underlying inordinately high involvement in extracurriculars.” (p. 592)

“Supporting prior evidence with younger suburban children…the present results show that even among eighth graders the absence of adult after-school supervision does not necessarily foster self-
sufficiency…but instead can increase risk for delinquent behaviors. (p. 593)


“‘When I’m in the city, I miss my horses,” the boy, Munkherdene, 13, said. “When I’m in the countryside, I miss my friends and games. I really miss my PlayStation.’”

Such is the life of a city slicker turned child jockey in the wilds of Mongolia. Horse racing is becoming an industry across the same Central Asian steppes where Genghis Khan and his warrior hordes once galloped. Children as young as 5 ride in races that can be dangerous, with hundreds of horses thundering across the open plain at once, running at speeds approaching 50 miles per hour.

Horse racing is among what Mongolians call the “three manly sports” (alongside wrestling and archery), but female jockeys have started to appear. Munkherdene and his father Enkhbayar spend their summers traveling across the country from race to race, sleeping in the family’s richly appointed traditional tent, or ger, one that cost thousands of dollars and elicits approving looks from passers-by. The family owns more than 100 horses…the father [takes] Munkherdene…during the summers, teaching him to ride and care for the animals.

Enkhbayar said. “But I let my son start racing three years ago. It’s important to have him inherit the knowledge of horses from me. He’ll continue to train horses.” On Tuesday night, while munching on sheep organs, Enkhbayar was weighing whether to let his son
race this weekend. “If I place in the top five, I’ll be so happy,” Munkherdene said. “Maybe I’ll cry.” Prize money can be big by Mongolian standards—1,000,000 togrog, or $870. Prizes at smaller, more select competitions can be even larger—a sport utility vehicle, for instance—Enkhbayar had other hopes. Next year, he said, his 4-year-old son would start learning to ride.


Teenagers in Greenwich, CT, undertook a project to convert a vacant lot into a very professional looking (wiffle) ball field and hold regular games, complete with spectators. However, their initiative was met with a barrage of opposition from neighbors, and City Hall.

After three weeks of clearing brush and poison ivy, scrounging up plywood and green paint, digging holes and pouring concrete, Vincent, Justin and about a dozen friends did manage to build it—a tree-shaded Wiffle ball version of Fenway Park complete with a 12-foot-tall green monster in center field, American flag by the left-field foul pole and colorful signs for Taco Bell Frutista Freezes.

But, alas, they had no idea just who would come—youthful Wiffle ball players, yes, but also angry neighbors and their lawyer, the police, the town nuisance officer and tree warden and other officials in all shapes and sizes. It turns out that one kid’s field of
dreams is an adult’s dangerous nuisance, liability nightmare, inappropriate usurpation of green space, unpermitted special use or drag on property values, and their Wiffle-ball Fenway has become the talk of Greenwich and a suburban Rorschach test about youthful summers past and present.

Hilary Levey in press. Pageant princesses and Math whizzes:

Understanding children’s activities as a form of children’s work.

*Childhood.*

“…parents I met are very concerned about the adult lives of their children. The majority of the parents explain that they have their children involved in these activities to help ensure that they will be successful later in life. One pageant mom explains, “I just want to see my daughters go somewhere—go somewhere in life. I didn’t. I ended up having kids right away. I’m stuck at home now. I’m doing this for them.”

“…every single pageant mom talked about competitors winning prize money in child beauty pageants… CBP provides an opportunity to win cash prizes and possibly start a college savings fund…Children can also win cruises and Disney vacations.”
“The idea that pageants can teach children specific skills that will help them be successful was brought up literally hundreds of times in interviews with pageant mothers, as mentioned. There are eight major skills mentioned by moms (in decreasing order of frequency): learning confidence, learning to be comfortable on stage and in front of strangers, learning poise, learning how to present the self and dress appropriately, learning to practice,
learning good sportsmanship, learning how to be more outgoing, and learning to listen…”

“Even mothers who don’t envision a career in entertainment for their daughters still see CBP as teaching their daughters how to best use their beauty for financial gain. One mom, whose six-year-old daughter’s ambitions at a pageant were to become both a dentist and a doctor, said, ‘Obviously if the child looks like Barbie, and my daughter does, I mean there are some obvious attributes, I tell her to exploit it. I tell her you’re gorgeous, exploit it. Use it everywhere you can. Use it in your life.’”