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May, 2007

Gunilla Lindqvist's theory of play and contemporary play theory

"Children never refer to each other as children. They call themselves, rightly, people, and tell you what it is people like them -- their people -- believe and do."

-- Iona Opie, in an interview with Adam Gopnik (2006, p. 12)

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Introduction

Gunilla Lindqvist's "creative pedagogy of play" (1995)¹ fosters joint play between adults and young children. Frameworks for adult-child interaction both inside and outside of schools most often encourage adults to direct young children's play, or to leave children's play untouched to develop on its own, but rarely, if ever, encourage adults to join children in play. Lindqvist's approach to joint adult-child play is a significant contribution because the adult-child joint play of her pedagogy of creative play can potentially benefit children (Baumer, Ferholt & Lecusay, 2005), and may potentially benefit adults, both teachers and researchers, as well.

The theoretical justification for Lindqvist's approach to play (1995) is of interest because it supports Lindqvist's pedagogy. It is also of interest because the nature of play and its role in development is disputed, and, I argue, Lindqvist's emphasis on the creative quality of play is unique among contemporary theories of play.

Lindqvist's theory of play is derived from L. S. Vygotsky's theory of play (1978, 1987, 2004), and from a critique of D. B. Elkonin's interpretation (2005) of this theory. Here I first present Vygotsky's theory of play. Next I present Elkonin's interpretation of Vygotsky's theory of play. Then I discuss Lindqvist's theory of play. And, finally, I place Lindqvist's theory of play in the context of contemporary biological, psychoanalytic, cognitive-developmental, cross-cultural psychological and anthropological play theory.

Vygotsky's theory of play

Vygotsky's theory of play is most well known from his chapter, "The Role of Play in Development", in *Mind in Society* (1978). This chapter is based on a lecture at the Leningrad Pedagogical Institute in 1933, and was published in *Voprosi Psikologii* (*Problems of Psychology*) in 1966. In this work Lindqvist found support for her insistence on the importance of adult participation in children's play. However, support for Lindqvist's claim that children's play is a creative cultural manifestation in humans can be found in Vygotsky's "Imagination and Creativity in Childhood" (2004) and "Imagination and its Development in Childhood." (1987).

"The Role of Play in Development"

In "The Role of Play in Development" (1978) Vygotsky states: "Superficially, play bears little resemblance to the complex, mediated form of thought and volition it leads to." (104) Perhaps this is a reason for the extent of error which Vygotsky finds in most other theories of play. Vygotsky explains that play is not an activity defined by its ability to give pleasure to a child. Play is not always pleasurable and a child enjoys other pleasurable activities. Vygotsky also argues that to describe play only in terms of intellectual development is incorrect. Theories of play which focus only on intellectual development consider play to be a purely symbolic action, do not consider the

circumstances of play and do not help us to understand the role of play in later development.

Vygotsky states that a child's advancement from one developmental stage to the next is always connected with a change in motives, and that a change in motives comes with the satisfaction of needs. According to Vygotsky, fantasy play fulfills the need of the preschool child to ease the tension that occurs when desires cannot be immediately gratified or forgotten, and with this need fulfilled the child's motives change. Therefore, play is a leading factor of development in early childhood, not the predominant activity of childhood.

Defining play as a leading factor in child development, rather than the predominant activity of childhood, exposes the tendency to equate childhood with irrationality, and to dehumanize children, which underlies those theories of play that define play as the world of children. Vygotsky reminds us: "To behave in a real situation as in an illusory one is the first sign of delirium." (1978, 102) And he states, bluntly: "Only theories which maintain that a child does not have to satisfy the basic requirements of life but can live in search of pleasure could possibly suggest that a child's world is a play world." (1978, 102)

Furthermore, in Vygotsky's theory, play is not a prototype of everyday activity because in real life action dominates meaning, but in play action is subordinate to meaning. In real life a child's behavior is not always guided by meaning, but, instead, the child is often spontaneous. It is only in play that the child can be strictly subordinated to rules, because it is in play that subordination to rules leads to pleasure.

It is because of this difference between the child's play and everyday activity that play creates a zone of proximal development for the child. "In play a child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behavior; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself." (1978, 102) The child moves forward through play.

In Vygotsky's theory of play there is a change in the development of play itself from the predominance of the imaginary situation to the predominance of rules. First, play is more memory than it is a novel imaginary situation. For instance, children who are just beginning to play will feed their dolls almost exactly as they have been fed by their caretaker. Then there is the movement toward the conscious realization of the purpose of play, a realization of the need it can fulfill. At the end of the development of play rules emerge: those features of play which were secondary, rules, become primary, and those that were primary, imagination, become secondary. This evolution takes place on a continuum, as any imaginary situation has to contain rules, rules of behavior, and as all games with rules have imaginary situations, because rules rule out certain possibilities for action.

According to Vygotsky, at first, the behavior of very young children is dictated by the things around them, by their situational constraints. This is due to the union of motives and perception in very young children: perception stimulates activity. However, in play children act independently of what they see. Play allows children to develop a separation between perception and meaning. To explain this progression, Vygotsky uses

his famous example of the stick which, in play, becomes the horse. The stick is the “pivot” which allows thought, word meaning, to be separated from objects, and action to arise from ideas as opposed to arising from things. Although the stick is still needed to separate thought and object, the child’s relation to reality is now changed because the structure of his perceptions has changed. For the first time meaning predominates over object. Vygotsky writes: “This characterizes the transitional nature of play; it is a stage between the purely situational constraints of early childhood and adult thought, which can be totally free from real situations.” (1978, 98)

And in Vygotsky’s theory, play is not only transitional. It is also paradoxical:

The primary paradox of play is that the child operates with an alienated meaning in a real situation. The second paradox is that in play she adopts the line of least resistance – she does what she most feels like doing because play is connected with pleasure -- and at the same time she learns to follow the line of greatest resistance by subordinating herself to rules and thereby renouncing what she wants, since subjection to rules and renunciation of impulsive action constitute the path to maximum pleasure in play. (1978, 99)

Vygotsky’s concept of the zone of proximal development is defined as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving

under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (1978, 86). This claim of Vygotsky’s, that the “essential attribute of play is a rule that has become a desire” (1978, 99), helps us to understand how, in the zone of proximal development of play, a child is able to put forth the great effort, to make the stretch, to enter into dialogue with her future:

Play gives a child a new form of desires. It teaches her to desire by relating her desires to a fictitious “I,” to her role in the game and its rules. In this way a child’s greatest achievements are possible in play, achievements that tomorrow will become her basic level of real action and morality. (1978, 100)

In Vygotsky’s theory of play, the child is in dialogue with her future, not transported into her future, as these achievements are made possible, but they are not yet freestanding. In play meaning predominates over action as well as over object. However, action within the field of meaning occurs just as in reality. As there is still a pivot, the stick, when meaning predominates over object, so there is still a pivot, another action, when meaning predominates over action. Play leads to the development of will, the ability to make conscious choices, but conscious choices in play are still dependent upon a pivot.

“Imagination and Creativity in Childhood” and

“Imagination and its Development in Childhood”

In “Imagination and Creativity in Childhood” (2004) and “Imagination and its Development in Childhood” (1987), Vygotsky develops his theory of creativity. As Lindqvist (1995, 2003) argues, it is in these works that Vygotsky discusses the human process of creative consciousness, the link between emotion and thought, and the role of imagination. This discussion brings to the fore the issue not only of the link between reality and imagination, but also issues of reproduction and creativity (production).

In “Imagination and Creativity in Childhood” (2004) Vygotsky begins by defining the creative act as “(a)ny activity that gives rise to something new” (2004, 2). To hone this definition he makes a distinction between “reproductive” activity, in which “nothing new is created,” but, instead, there is “a repetition of something that already exists” (2004, 2), and a “combinatorial or creative activity” in which one is “not merely recovering the traces of stimulation that reached my brain in the past.” (2004, 3) In creative activity, Vygotsky writes, “I never actually saw this remote past, or this future; however, I still have my own idea, image, or picture of what they were or will be like.” (2004, 4)

This basic distinction is what allows anyone who is engaged in creative activity, including children, to produce something novel:

If human activity were limited to reproduction of the old, then the human being would be a creature oriented only to the past and would only be able

to adapt to the future to the extent that it reproduced the past. It is precisely human creative activity that makes the human being a creature oriented toward the future, creating the future and thus altering his own present. (2004, 3)

The creative activity that Vygotsky is discussing is imagination. He writes that imagination is an important component of all aspects of cultural life, essential to the artist and the scientist alike. “(A)bsolutely everything around us that was created by the hand of man, the entire world of human culture, as distinct from the world of nature, all this is the product of human imagination and of creation based on this imagination.” (2004, 4) Vygotsky quotes T. Ribot, writing that all human-made objects, every one, can be called “crystallized imagination” (2004, 5) Vygotsky is describing the role of imagination in the production of artifacts, as defined by cultural-historical activity theory: those aspect of the material world that have been modified over the history of their incorporation into goal directed human action (Ilyenkov, 1977, 1979).

Vygotsky is arguing that imagination is an essential aspect of all thought. As Michael Cole (unpublished) explains, human conscious experience is a process, a process which requires not just our phylogenetically constrained abilities and our culturally organized experience, but also our active reconciliation or “filling-in”, our imagining, as we try to make sense of our world. Cole notes that the Russian word normally translated as imagination, *voobrazhenie*, is made of three roots. The translation of the word according to these three roots is into-image-making. Therefore, in the language in which

Vygotsky was thinking and writing, within the word imagination were the concept that all representation is in part the result of an active processing by an individual, and also the concept that it is imagination that allows us to move into this process. When Vygotsky describes “the human being (as) a creature oriented toward the future, creating the future and thus altering his own present” (2004, 3), when he asserts that imagination is essential to both the artist and the scientist, he is moving towards an even broader claim, the claim that we can think because we can imagine.

Vygotsky explicitly argues that all humans, including children, are creative:

There is a widespread opinion that creativity is the province of a select few ... This is not true. If we understand creativity in its true psychological sense as the creation of something new, then this implies that creation is the province of everyone to one degree or another; that it is a normal and constant companion in childhood. (2004, 33)

Vygotsky includes a long quotation from a “Russian Scholar” restating the above. The claim that it is not only those at the height of their creative abilities who can produce something of worth to many others of all ages, meaning that even a child in play might inspire an adult, is at the heart of my argument. For this reason, and because of this “Russian Scholar’s eloquence, I have included most of this quotation below:

(J)ust as electricity is equally present in a storm with deafening thunder and blinding lightening and in the operation of a pocket flashlight, in the same way, creativity is present, in actuality, not only when great historical works are born but also whenever a person imagines, combines, alters, and creates something new, no matter how small a drop in the bucket this new thing appears compared to the works of geniuses. When we consider the phenomenon of collective creativity, which combines all these drops of individual creativity that frequently are insignificant in themselves, we readily understand what an enormous percentage of what has been created by humanity is a product of the anonymous collective creative work of unknown inventors. (2004, 5)

Vygotsky concludes: “If we understand creativity in this way, it is easy to see that the creative processes are already fully manifest in earliest childhood.” (2004, 6)

Furthermore, he writes: “We can identify creative processes in children at the very earliest ages, especially in their play...all these children at play represent examples of the most authentic, truest creativity.” (2004, 6)

Vygotsky continues by arguing that there is no strict line between fantasy and reality. A child at play is creatively reworking impressions he has acquired, combining them to construct a reality which meets his needs and desires. “It is this ability to combine elements to produce a structure, to combine the old in new ways that is the basis of creativity.” (2004, 7)

There are four ways that imagination is associated with reality. First, “everything the imagination creates is always based on elements taken from reality.” (2004, 8) Here is the Pushkin quote about Babayaga’s hut on chicken legs: “A hut on chicken legs exists, of course, only in fairy tales, but the elements from which this fairy tale image is constructed are taken from real human experience, and only their combination bears traces of the fantastic, that is, does not correspond to reality.” (2004, 8) This leads to the first and most important law governing imagination: “Every act of imagination starts with this accumulation of experience. All else being equal, the richer the experience, the richer the act of imagination.” (2004, 9-10) Therefore, we can make the child’s act of imagination richer by joining him and contributing from our greater accumulation of experience. This is why Lindqvist argues against those theories of play which leave the child alone with and in play.

Second, “It (imagination) becomes the means by which a person’s experience is broadened, because he can imagine what he has not seen, can conceptualize something from another person’s narration and description of what he himself has never directly experienced.” (2004,12) Imagination is based on experience. Experience is also based on imagination.

Third, emotions, which are a part of reality in that they are real and we experience them as real even if they don’t correspond to the rest of reality as expected, influence imagination, and imagination influences emotions. Impressions which produce similar

emotional effects have a tendency to cluster together in our imagination. Thus emotions have a part in shaping imagination. When one is daydreaming, for instance, imagination includes thinking which serves emotional interests. Imagination can satisfy emotional needs. Furthermore, Vygotsky (1987) explains that “the essential difference between the connections of imagination and realistic thinking with the emotions lies in the nature of the connection itself.” (1987, 347). There is a difference in the nature of this connection, but both imagination and realistic thinking are connected to emotions. Vygotsky writes that in realistic thinking emotion does not dominate logic. In creative imagination, however, there is a more complex relationship with emotion than exists in either daydreaming or realistic thinking.

Fourth, imagination can become reality. “(A) construct of fantasy may represent something substantially new, never encountered before in human experience and without correspondence to any object that actually exists in reality” (2004, 15). Nevertheless, “once it has been externally embodied, that is, has been given material form, this crystallized imagination that has become an object begins to actually exist in the real world, to effect other things.” (2004, 15)

Here Vygotsky is describing a circular path of development in imagination. The elements out of which a product of imagination is constructed are taken from reality, and once a product of the imagination is constructed it may be returned to reality, in turn altering the reality from which new products of the imagination will be constructed. Vygotsky concludes from this observation of the circular path of imagination that

intellect and emotion are both necessary if an act of creation is to occur: “Feeling as well as thought drives human creativity.” (2004, 16) And the internal logic of a work of art results from “the relationships the work (of art) establishes between its own world and the external world.” (2004, 19)

Vygotsky writes that every act of creation has a long history. The act of creation is the result, the “climactic moment of birth” (2004, 20), which occurs after a long internal process has taken place. First, one accumulates materials out of which one will construct fantasies. Second, one dissociates parts of this material from other parts. Third, one subjects the dissociated parts of the original material to change. For instance, elements of the original experience can be exaggerated or minimized. Vygotsky claims that this particular modification of elements “has enormous significance for imagination in general and for children’s imagination in particular.” (2004, 21) Finally, one combines the individual elements, now altered, into a new system. A complex picture is recreated, and this is the creative process come full cycle: “imagination is embodied or crystallized in external images.” (2004, 23)

Because all of these stages are essential in the operation of imagination, Vygotsky concludes that imagination depends on experience; on combinatorial abilities and practice exercising them, practice embodying constructs of imagination in material form; on one’s technical abilities and traditions, the creative models that influence one; and on the environment. The creative process does not happen in isolation. Instead, a person’s

“creations arise from needs that were created before him and rest on capacities that also exist outside of him.” (2004, 25)

In regards to the question of how a child’s imagination differs from an adult’s, Vygotsky argues against those who claim that fantasy is richer and more diverse in childhood than adulthood. He writes that the theory behind such claims mistake the undemanding and tolerant quality of child fantasy, the fact that children can indeed make anything out of anything, for richness of imagination. These theories also mistake the fact that the products of children’s fantasy are obviously very different from adult reality as support for the idea that children live more in the world of imagination than in the real world. And children’s interest in fantasy stories and in distortion, particularly exaggeration is another fact mistaken as support for this idea.

Vygotsky argues that children’s experience is poorer than adults’, that their interests are simpler, more elementary, and so also poorer than adults’, and that children’s relationship to the environment is not as complex, subtle or diverse as that of adults. Therefore, “(t)he child can imagine vastly less than the adult.” (2004, 29) Those who conclude otherwise are using the term imagination to refer to all that is unreal, that this how they come to their incorrect conclusions. The child “has greater faith in the products of his imagination and controls them less, and thus imagination, in the everyday, vulgar sense of this word, that is, what is unreal and made up, is of course greater in the child than in the adult.” (2004, 29) In truth the child’s imagination is only equal to the adult’s with regard to the elements used for the construction of imagination, reality, and the

emotional roots of imagination. Children and adults both engage in the process of imagination, but at different levels.

In “Imagination and its Development in Childhood” (1987) Vygotsky elaborates upon his arguments in “Imagination and Creativity in Childhood” (2004). He argues that there is an internal connection between imagination and realistic thinking, but that realistic thinking is not imagination. There is a complex relationship between realistic thinking and activity of advanced forms of imagination:

Each step in the child’s achievement of a more profound penetration of reality is linked with his continued liberation from earlier, more primitive forms of cognition. A more profound penetration of reality demands that consciousness attain a freer relationship to the elements of that reality, that consciousness depart from the external and apparent aspect of reality that is given directly in perception. The result is that the processes through which the cognition of reality is achieved become more complex and richer. (1987, 349)

Vygotsky concludes: “In sum, the apparent, metaphysical, and primal opposition that has been established between realistic and autistic² thinking is both fictive and false. The differences between realistic and autistic thinking are not absolute but relative.” (1987, 348) He writes that the verbal character of thought is inherent to realistic thinking and to imagination; that directedness, consciousness and the presence of motives and

goals is found in autistic and realistic forms of thinking (and that the individual frequently lacks full consciousness of true motives, goals and tasks in realistic thinking); that both activities are characterized by high levels of affect or emotion (and that not all forms of imagination are subordinate to the logic of emotions and feelings). Also, the key transition point in development of both imagination and thinking corresponds with appearance of speech and school age is the critical point in development of both imagination and thinking.

Vygotsky claims in this chapter that imagination is an integral aspect of realistic thinking. The two are interdependent. And in the observation of imagination linked with creativity, which is imagination directed towards reality, there is no boundary between realistic thinking and imagination. This is so because “no accurate cognition of reality is possible without a certain element of imagination, a certain flight from the immediate, concrete, solitary impressions in which this reality is presented in the elementary acts of consciousness.” (1987, 348). Invention and artistic creativity require realistic thinking and imagination. In these processes : “The two act as a unity.” (1987, 349)

The above is the central thrust of Vygotsky’s argument in “Imagination and its Development in Childhood” (1987). Lindqvist adds that Vygotsky stresses the fact that imagination faces forward, that those who imagine are capable of producing the new.

Vygotsky writes:

The essential feature that distinguishes imagination from other forms of mental activity is that it does not repeat combinations of accumulated impressions but builds a new series of impressions from them. The very foundation of the activity that we refer to as imagination is the introduction of something new into the flow of our impressions, the transformation of these impressions such that something new, an image that did not previously exist, emerges. (1987, 339)

Vygotsky explains that earlier theories of psychology were not able to understand imagination because they considered all forms of human mental activity to be associative combinations of accumulated impressions, and therefore had to attribute imagination to other functions. However, imagination does what other functions cannot do: it creates the new. According to Vygotsky associative psychology reduced imagination to memory. While idealist psychology tried to show that memory is just a special form of imagination, as perception is a form of imagination that constructs our perception of reality. The idealist psychologists argued that creative imagination is inherent in consciousness, that consciousness creates *a priori* forms, and that these forms produce all our impressions of external reality.

Furthermore, Vygotsky writes that earlier psychological theories failed to approach imagination as a complex mental activity that is the unification of the forms of many functions in unique relationships. He states that “it is only by approaching these forms of activity (thinking and imagination – he argues that controversy between

idealism and materialism concerning imagination parallels that concerning thinking) as systems that we can begin to describe the very important changes that occur in them, that we can begin to describe the dependencies and connections that are manifested in them.” (1987, 348)

Vygotsky concludes:

The mutual failure of atomistic and idealistic perspectives to resolve this issue had a common foundation. Both approached the problem metaphysically, representing the activity of consciousness as inherently reproductive. In this way, they precluded any explanation of the development of creative activity. (1987, 342)

Elkonin’s interpretation of Vygotsky’s theory of play

D. B. Elkonin was a student of Vygotsky’s whose work was summarized in his book, “Psychology of Play”, published in Russian in 1978. Elkonin’s (2005) main argument is that Soviet psychology crystallized an approach in which play is described as an activity performed by the child that embodies the child’s relationship to the external world and to social reality. Vygotsky’s (1987, 2004) claim is a rebuttal to those theories of play which position imagination and realistic thinking in opposition to one another.

Elkonin states that the play theory of Vygotsky and his students, through the realization that imagination and realistic thinking act as a unity in the processes of invention and creativity, overcomes the naturalistic and psychoanalytic theories of children's play (2005, 94).³

Elkonin criticizes those theories of play most directly descended from Groos (1901) for using the characteristics of animals as the basis for understanding human play. He criticizes other theories of play for using “the heightened development of imagination during childhood and its characteristics – liveliness, freedom from care, and susceptibility to illusion” to explain play (2005, 33). In both cases these theorists ignore the position of the child in society and the interaction of the child with adults. They perceive children as isolated from the society in which they live, and disregard the fact that children learn to manipulate objects only when the action of manipulation is included in a system of interpersonal relations. The alternative to these theories of play is a cultural-historical approach to defining the role of play in the development of the child.

Elkonin writes that philosophers and psychologists became interested in animal and human play when Groos published his work at the end of the nineteenth century. Groos's theory of play is based in the idea, first stated by H. Spencer (1855), that play anticipates future serious activity. For Groos the main objective of childhood is the development of adaptations for future survival tasks, and it is through play that this objective is accomplished.

Elkonin argues that because play in animals does not occur under the same conditions as an activity associated with the struggle for survival, no new forms of

species-specific adaptations for future survival tasks could arise during play. More importantly, Elkonin criticizes Groos's logic: Groos extrapolates the biological objective of play from animals to humans. "Groos ... does not see the fact, which the work of K. Marx made obvious, that when we move on to the discussion of humans, the process of individual development alters fundamentally." (2005, 6)

According to Elkonin, until the publication of F. Buytendijk's (1933) book on play, play theorists did not venture far from Groos's theory. Buytendijk writes that there is no proof that animals who play less have less-developed instincts, and that exercise, practice for a future activity, is not play. Instead play is not a physiological function, but a behavior, and play is not an exercise, but an aspect of development.

Elkonin next addresses theories of play developed by various Western schools of psychology. He writes that before Groos work was published Sully (1901) had identified the following two features of play: the child's "transformation of himself and objects around him and his journey into an imagined world" and the child's "deep engrossment in creating and living in his fantasy" (2005, 31). These two features of play became the focus of many scholars.

Elkonin writes that Stern (1924) was one of the first to consider these two aspects of play. Stern argued that play was an escape from the limited world of the child. Elkonin observes that here play is not the reproduction of adult activity to which the child feels attracted, but, instead, a reaction to the limitations of the world in which the child lives. He agrees that the description of play as a manifestation of fantasy that reaches its highest level of development in early childhood is common, but that it disregards the fact

that with this description one must argue that the complex ability of imagination develops earlier than more elementary abilities. Here Elkonin turns directly to Vygotsky, whose argument in response to this claim was discussed above.

Concerning S. Freud's theory of play, Elkonin states: "Freud's theory, while dynamic in form, in essence proves to be deeply metaphysical and devoid of any principle of development in psychological life." (2005, 44) First, Elkonin argues, this theory ignores the ontogenetic development of the individual, identifying the main human drives with those of animals. Second, this theory precludes the possibility of development in a child's psychological life, extending the mechanisms of the psychological life of the mentally ill adult to children. Third, this theory sees child and society as antagonistic, and the child as continually subjected to traumatic experiences by adults: play is the means of escaping from reality into a special symbolic world of fantasy. Fourth, this theory ignores the development of play in the history of society, or the history of a specific individual, and pays no attention to the significance of play for psychological development.

More specifically, Elkonin writes that in Freud's theory of play, all play is symbolic. In play a traumatic situation, unbearable emotion, or repressed desire or drive is symbolized. This is done unconsciously. However, argues Elkonin, symbolization requires generalization of situations, and young children do not generalize. Also, because for Freud all traumas are ultimately the trauma inflicted on childhood sexuality, adherents of Freudianism (Elkonin discusses the work of H. Hug-Helmuth, M. Klein, S. Isaacs and M. Lowenfeld) consider repressed sex drives to underlie children's psychological lives,

and hence their play. Elkonin writes that in this way the child is described as “a creature encapsulated in a world of his obsessive innate, biological drives” (2005, 42), without a life in interaction with his environment, and that “(t)he falsity of this position is so obvious that it is superfluous to criticize it”. (2005, 42)

Elkonin also discusses psychoanalytic play therapy, in which play either replaces word associations and the interpretation of dreams in classical psychoanalysis, or in which repressed desires are made visible to the analyst through play. In A. Freud’s work the therapist works to strengthen the child’s ego, and in M. Klein’s work the therapist brings the hidden anxieties and guilt of the child to the conscious attention of the child through explicit statements, and then works to relieve this anxiety and guilt. Elkonin writes that both are subject to the criticisms of Freud’s theories, above, and that it is impossible to determine if their effectiveness is simply the result of prolonged interaction with the psychotherapist.

Elkonin next criticizes Piaget’s theory of play. For Piaget, at first the single world of autism and desire exists for the child, and then, under the influence of pressure from the world of reality, the two worlds of play and reality develop. At first the world of play is what remains of the purely autistic world, and then, later, this world of play comes to be expressed only in dreams or fantasies. Elkonin writes that, unlike the theories of psychoanalysis, play is what remains of desires, what is not yet repressed. However, for both Piaget and Freud, these desires cannot be fulfilled in the actual world. Elkonin explains that for Piaget play is symbolic, and this symbolism is determined by a special, syncretic logic, an intermediate link between autistic and logical thinking. The play

world is more real to the child, but it contradicts the world of reality. In Piaget's theory of play, play's main function is to protect the child's ego from forced accommodation to reality. And so, argues Elkonin, for both Piaget and Freud the world of adults and the original world of the child are opposed to each other as antagonistic forces, are built on different foundations and are irreconcilable.

Evaluating this concept of two worlds (the basis of which Piaget found in Freud's work, and which is also found in the work of others), in which there is an objective, alien and hostile world of adults which represses and replaces a subjective child's world, Elkonin quotes Vygotsky: "It is difficult to imagine more violence to the facts than this sort of theory of children's play. After all, the very content of an imagined situation . . . (is) always taken from the world of adults. (1934, p. LIII)" (2005, 57) Elkonin adds:

(T)hese ideas are erroneous: first, the idea that the child's needs are born with him in the form of psychological structures, and in the form of desires or drives, and second, the idea that the child's needs are not satisfied. . . The satisfaction of primary needs (by adults) is the basic and essential condition of a child's life during childhood. . . (And,) the first psychological needs that the child develops are social... These involve the need for the presence of, and interaction with, an adult... The child enters the rest of the world only through the evolving system of 'adult-child' relationships. (2005, 58-59)

Elkonin also contests the idea that children could possibly find an imaginary world to be more real than the real world, as children have actual needs which demand

actual satisfaction, which only the real world can supply. Elkonin writes: “It is difficult to imagine that the illusory sucking of the breast is more real to the child than the actual satisfaction of his need by drinking juice or milk from a cup. (2005, 60) His conclusion is that “(T)he child’s world is always some part of the adult world, refracted in a unique way, but still a part of the objective world.” (2005, 60)

Elkonin concludes his summary of theoretical research on play with the claim that play should be studied “as a form of life and a special activity of children and as a means of orientation to the world of human actions, human relations, and the goals and motives of human activity.” “This route has not yet been tested. This is the route we have chosen.” (2005, 81)

Lindqvist’s theory of play

Lindqvist (1995, 2001, 2003) agrees with Elkonin concerning the importance of Vygotsky’s (1987, 2004) claim that imagination and realistic thinking act as a unity in the processes of invention and creativity. However Lindqvist (1995, 2001, 2003) argues that Elkonin did not sufficiently focus on Vygotsky’s assertion that children’s play is a creative cultural manifestation in humans.⁴ Lindqvist states that a significant result of this oversight was that Elkonin’s work promoted adult intervention in children’s play that stifles the creative potential of children’s play, rather than a creative approach to children’s play, which fosters this potential.

Lindqvist's response (1995, 2001, 2003) reinterprets Vygotsky's theory of play through his *Psychology of Art* (1971) and "Imagination and Creativity in Childhood" (2004). She uses this reinterpretation to design, implement and study a pedagogy in which adults assume a creative approach to children's play. B. Sutton-Smith writes in *The Ambiguity of Play* (1997) that "...extrinsic academic, social, moral, physical, and cognitive play functions, with a progress-oriented thrust, have been the major focus of most child play scientists ... " (1997, 50) Lindqvist's pedagogy of creative play (1995) permits the study of play and culture in preschools, the study of the aesthetics of children's play, and also the study of play as an activity in which children produce results that draw upon, but do not mimic adult achievements in any of the categories listed above. Lindqvist's pedagogy of creative play promotes the study of joint adult-child play in which children's ability to produce results in play that are novel to both adults and children is a central feature.

In Lindqvist's pedagogy of creative play interaction between adults and children is structured around a piece of literature. The adults and children work together to "bring the literature to life" (1995, p. 72) through drama. They assume roles, characters from the literary piece, and "make use of the intrinsic dynamism between world, action and character in drama and play." (1995, p. 72) Concretely, through joint scripted and improvisational acting, costume and set design, and multimodal rehearsal and reflection, the children and adults transform their classroom into a world inspired by a book (and, in the process, the book they are working from into a world inspired by their activity).

Lindqvist's pedagogy is designed to investigate how aesthetic activities can influence children's play, and the nature of the connections between play and the aesthetic forms of drama and literature. She is trying to find a "common denominator" of play and aesthetic forms, a denominator which she calls "the aesthetics of play" (Lindqvist, 1995). Lindqvist considers one of the most important conclusions of her investigation to be that the development of adult-child joint play is made possible through the creation of a *common fiction*, which she calls a "playword" (1995). The playworld is created through the activity of bringing the actions and characters in literary texts to life through drama. It is the interactive space in which both children and adults are creatively engaged.

Lindqvist (1995, 2001, 2003) argues that in "Imagination and Creativity in Childhood" (2004) Vygotsky links his ideas about art to his theory of play. Here he describes the imaginary process as creative interpretation and play as an early basis for children's creativity. Therefore Lindqvist also turns to Vygotsky's theory of art, as presented in *The Psychology of Art* (1971), as she reinterprets Vygotsky's work and develops her own theory of play.

Lindqvist (1995, 2001, 2003) argues that Vygotsky starts from the study of art and literature in his efforts to describe the cultural development of humans. He is interested in the dynamic links between human consciousness as it is reflected in children's play and the cultural, aesthetic forms of drama and literature. Like Elkonin (2005), and also A. N. Leontiev (1981), Lindqvist (1995) argues against the view that children's natural development is separate from the culture which surrounds them, or that

play expresses the child's natural development and is therefore free from adult influence. She, too, contrasts her approach with both a psychoanalytic and a cognitive approach to children's play, writing that in the psychoanalytic approach the child processes inner conflicts through play, in the cognitive approach the child builds knowledge through play, but that in both cases, unlike in her play pedagogy, the child is left alone with, and in, play.

For Lindqvist it is essential that we remember that Vygotsky's theory of play "is an all-embracing cultural theory, which combines emotion and thought, aesthetics and rationality." (1995, 16) She (1995, 2003) argues that for Vygotsky it is the exaggerations of imagination that give science the ability to recognize the new. Emotions and imagination are in a dialectic relationship, as the images of our imagination provide our emotions with an internal language, and emotions influence our imagination. Therefore, emotion and thought are related. Also, for Vygotsky, it is the exaggerations of imagination that give art the ability to recognize the new. And there is a dialectic relationship between imagination and reality, considered to be accessible by the rational. Imagination develops creativity because it is an emotional and intellectual process that takes fragments of reality and transforms them. These newly made fragments re-enter reality. Furthermore, emotions are always real.

In Lindqvist's view (2003) the way that Vygotsky links the emotions to thought gives aesthetics a new role in the process of consciousness. According to her (1995), Leontiev and Elkonin ignore the fact that in Vygotsky's theory of play, consciousness is

the key concept and the principle of individual development, that play is the activity through which children become conscious of the world. Also, Lindqvist writes: “Play does not keep emotion, thought and will separated from one another.” (1995, 40) By contrast, emotions are not emphasized in Leontiev and Elkonin’s interpretations of Vygotsky’s theory of play.

Lindqvist (1995) argues that Vygotsky’s emphasis on dialectics between the world of adults and children makes consideration of the dialogic process of central importance:

(D)ialogue with other human beings keeps man (the subject) in a dynamic relationship to his environment (the object), and he develops his conceptions of the world through a process which is both reproductive and productive. At the same time as he can remember and repeat patterns of behavior, he is able to shape and reshape his own conceptions of the world, i.e. he makes his own interpretations. This is a *dialectic theory* of influence in the pedagogic process. (1995, 40)

Of central importance to Lindqvist’s theory of play is her (1995) positioning of herself in opposition to Leontiev, whom she characterizes as believing that adult roles are what children play at, as believing that children’s “play faces the future” (1995, 50) because children in play are modeling themselves on adults. She explains that Leontiev thinks of play as reproduction of roles in an adult world, not as productive. Here Lindqvist is arguing that children are, often, modeling themselves on adults in play, but

that play faces a future that will be created, in part, by those who are now children, and that will be created within some constraints that those who are now adults cannot even imagine.

Lindqvist's contribution to play theory derives in part from her ability to interpret Vygotsky's work from outside the cultural, historical and political context in which it was created. Leontiev's belief that adult roles are what children play at also parallels what Lindqvist (1995) characterizes as a Soviet emphasis on a harmonious relationship between adults and children. According to Lindqvist, this emphasis has led to adults entering children's play to correct the play, instead of letting children act out their fears. Lindqvist (1995) argues that for Leontiev, play is interpreted as a realistic phenomenon, and therefore there is no conflict between reality and the children's interpretations in play. In contrast, according to Lindqvist, Vygotsky sees play "as a way for children of expressing their feelings and asserting themselves in relation to adults", but "at the same time, he senses a longing on the part of the children to move closer to the adult world." (1995, 50) For Lindqvist this vision of play is neither dualistic nor harmonious, but is dialectic, and allows adults to enter children's play without stifling children's expression of their fears.

Of adults' creative approach to children's play in her pedagogy of creative play Lindqvist writes the following (italics are mine):

During the course of the theme, I have seen the teachers become someone in the eyes of the children. They have turned into interesting and exciting people. I have often had the feeling that staff members at a day-care center

are perceived as rather anonymous grown-ups. Sometimes, the children will not even notice if a teacher is ill and has been replaced. In a way, *assuming roles has liberated the adults* – it has enabled them to step out of their “teacher roles” and leave behind the institutional language which is part of the teacher role in preschools and schools. By virtue of the fictitious role, the teachers have dared to try new attitudes and ways of acting. (1995, 210-211)

The children like playing with the adults. *When adults act out roles, the children know they are playing and do not have to worry about ‘adult conventions.’* The adults show the children that they know how to play – that is to say, that they are aware of the rules of play. (2001, p.12)

The children have often been longing to meet the different dramatized characters or personalities. The play settings which have been established have inspired them to play, but *the playworld would not have come alive if it had not been for the physical presence of the living, breathing characters* (played by the adults). (1995, 211)

Lindqvist’s theory of play in the context of Western European and American theories of play

I have situated Lindqvist's theory of play within contemporary Russian theories of play. I will now situate her theory of play in the context of Western European and American theories of play of the last century. I will not look, as did Elkonin (2005), for a chronological progression which Lindqvist then surpasses. Instead I will discuss those play theories according to disciplinary categories: biological, psychoanalytic, cognitive-developmental, cross-cultural psychological and anthropological. The thrust of my argument will be that Lindqvist's theory of play, which promotes adults' creative participation in children's play, does not share with contemporary Western European and American theories of play the inclination to describe adult knowledge, experience or developmental stage as a teleology for children's play. I will look to the work of psychologists K. Groos, S. Freud, A. Freud, M. Klein, E. H. Erikson, D. W. Winnicott, J. Piaget, G. Fein, S. Gaskins, A. Goncu, and also, briefly, anthropological theories of play. In the work of J. Huizinga, V. W. Turner, G. Bateson, C. Geertz and H. B. Schwartzman, my goal is to find not only mistakes of logic and fact that Lindqvist appears to have corrected, but also contributions that strengthen her approach.

Biological play theory

Groos

The fact that Groos (1901) argues that children's play is the practice of adult adaptive skills for survival is particularly significant because of his enormous influence. Piaget provides a starting point for this discussion which reminds us that each later scholar stands upon the shoulders of those theorists whom he criticizes:

In spite of the prophetic visions of the great educationists, play has always been considered, in traditional education, as a kind of mental waste-matter, or at least as a pseudo-activity, without functional significance, and even harmful to children, keeping them from their homework. For its part, common-sense, imbued with the adult-centrism which has been the great obstacle in genetic research, saw in play only a relaxation, or a drain for superfluous energy, without enquiring why children play in one way rather than another...K. Groos saw in play a phenomenon of growth, growth of thought and of activity, and he was the first to ask why the various forms of play exist. (Piaget, 1951, 151)

Groos presented a biogenetic theory of play in his book, *The Play of Man* (1901). In his account, play is the body's way of preparing itself for the tasks of adult life. In play children are practicing for adulthood by developing physical and intellectual skills necessary for functioning as adults. His stated goal, which he accomplishes, is to apply his prior investigation of animal play to humans. Groos writes that:

... opportunity is given to the animal, through the exercise of inborn dispositions, to strengthen and increase his inheritance in the acquisition of adaptations to his complex environment, an achievement which would be unattainable by mere mechanical instinct alone. The fact that youth is *par excellence* the period of play is in thorough harmony with this theory... An analogous position is tenable in the treatment of human play. (1901, 2)

However, despite the definitive quality of this statement, Gross seems thoroughly ambivalent and self-contradictory.

According to Groos (1901) childhood is defined as a time when one is still practicing for adulthood, and so one must play. Therefore, while play in children leads to development of adult skills, adult play has no such purpose. All play is performed only for pleasure, although one does not need to be conscious of engaging in a “sham occupation” (1901) when one is playing, but “(a)s soon as the individual has progressed far enough to realize the seriousness of life ... the liberty of play signifies to him relief from this pressure.” (1901, 83) For the adult, play is a refuge “from the bondage of his work and from all the anxieties of life” (1901, 83), not an activity in which development occurs.

However, Groos also writes (1901) that he was led to the topic of play through an interest in aesthetics, and that he relates his use of the term aesthetics (he primarily uses it to mean ‘of the senses’) to art. He believes that his interest in the aesthetics of play is conspicuous in his book, and he makes some important connections between artistic production and play. Although this claim does not appear to fit with the bulk of his argument, Groos writes that even “highly developed art ... is rooted in playful experimentation and imitation, and we can detect their later growth of joy in being a cause in the work of full-fledged artists of our own day.” (1901, 394)

Groos seeks to ‘fortify this position against misconstruction’, but his fortifications are weak; there are a number of inconsistencies in his writing. Groos writes that for an artist art is a life calling and that the artist devotes most of his time to art. For the player

these criteria do not apply. However, just a few of the examples that belie this point are the artists who work for a living and the artists who do not consider themselves to be artists. Groos writes that for the artist the acquisition of technical skill is not playful. However, for example, one may acquire the skill to serve a tennis ball in a way which is not playful. And Groos writes that the recognition a work of art receives or the extent to which the audience is brought to subscribe to the convictions of the artist are the aims of the artist. But here Groos himself points out that the experienced as artist is usually indifferent to these goals.

Furthermore, Groos offers some unexpected instructions concerning play and education. He writes that the educational value of play has been recognized since Plato, despite the opinions of those who agree with a certain Jean Paul who writes: "I tremble when any grown-up, hardened hand meddles with these tender buds from childhood's garden, rubbing off the bloom here and marring the delicacy of tint there." (1901, 402). Groos's own opinion is that "it would be unfortunate and in a sense unnatural for the teacher, and even more so for the parent, to leave the playing child entirely to his own devices." (1901, 402).

Groos argues that adults have three important tasks in relation to children and play: they must incite children to play, encourage what is "good and useful" (1901, 402) in play, and discourage "injurious and improper" (1901, 403) forms of play. This sounds like the very type of intervention in children's play for which Lindqvist holds Elkonin partly responsible. However, Groos claims that smuggling moral reflections into play destroys its spontaneity and ideality. He actually advocates a form of play in which

adults join children in play in such a way that they remain true to the spirit of the play, and that they accomplish this by taking on the role of children. He writes:

His parents are a child's natural playmates for the first years of his life...It is, of course, not necessary for a teacher to join in the games of merry urchins out of doors, yet in the lower grades especially it is a fortunate circumstance when he possesses the faculty of becoming a child again with the children in their play and walks. (1901, 403)⁵

Psychoanalytic play theory

The psychoanalytic play theorists whose work I will discuss are S. Freud, A. Freud, Klein, Erikson and Winnicott.

S. Freud

S. Freud asserted that imagination is a form of consciousness present from the outset in the child (S. Freud, 1950). As quoted above, Vygotsky says of the psychoanalytic concept of two worlds: "It is difficult to imagine more violence to the facts than this sort of theory of children's play." (1934, p. LIII) (Elkonin, 2005, 57) And Elkonin considers the falsity of the psychoanalytic description of the child's world of innate drives so obviously false "that it is superfluous to criticize it." (2005, 42) Lindqvist writes that psychoanalytic theory leads to a primary role for the adult in children's play as diagnostician, but as the psychoanalytic theory of play contradicts Lindqvist's project so obviously and totally, her few sentences stating this claim are the extent of her book's critique of this theory. For S. Freud, A. Freud, Klein, Erikson, and Winnicott children's

play is a path to adult mental health. However, as was shown in relation to Groos's work, above, texts presenting unified theories often reveal interesting internal contradictions that yield food for thought when they are granted a close examination.

For psychoanalytic theorists of play (Erikson, 1963; A. Freud, 1964; S. Freud, 1950; Klein, 1986; Winnicott, 1971) there is a conflict between the id and the ego in the child, and play serves two purposes in relation to this conflict. In play the child works through this conflict, providing the illusion of mastering the ego. Also, the adult therapist considers the child's play to be representation of this conflict which can be used in the process of diagnosis, and, in some cases, also in the process of arriving at a cure.

For the psychoanalytic theorist, play can reduce anxiety, fear of the external world which is produced when children realize that they are dependent upon adults, by allowing the child to feel illusory control of their world through control of the manageable world of blocks, dolls, etc. The child might work through a fear of dogs by pretending to be one, punish a stuffed animal to work through a punishment the child received from an adult or abandon a doll at the babysitter's to work through a separation from a parent. Also, play can increase social adjustment, giving the child a socially acceptable way to express impulses towards which adults have expressed disapproval. The child might play out anger, sexual curiosity or fear.

To think of play as an activity in which children displace instinct, to consider play to have the potential to provide a therapeutic environment in which internal conflicts can be worked through, may seem commonsensical to us today. However, this is the result of S. Freud's influence, and also, perhaps, of his rhetoric. S. Freud (1950) writes: "(I)t is

clear that in play children repeat everything that has made a great impression upon them and abreact the strength of the impression by making themselves master of the situation.” (1950, 11) And, he summarizes the teleology of child play, neatly, from this one observation: “(I)t is obvious that their (children’s) play is influenced by a wish that dominates them the whole time – the wish to be grown-up and to be able to do what grown-up people do.” (1950, 11)

A. Freud and Klein

A. Freud and Klein expanded upon S. Freud’s theory of play in their therapeutic work with children. For our purposes, what is interesting about their work (A. Freud, 1964; Klein, 1986) is that they show two types of adult intervention in children’s play which can be derived from the psychoanalytic theory of play. Each approach assumes that the adult therapist has access to a more accurate understanding than does the child of a message that the child’s play communicates, but A. Freud’s approach requires a little more humility of the adult therapist than does Klein’s approach.

A. Freud (1964) pays significant attention to the difficulties that she perceived in psychoanalyzing children. In successful psychoanalysis, patients must be highly motivated to change, or they will not be able to achieve transference or engage in free association. However, A. Freud asserts, children often lack the motivation to change: it is almost always their parents who decided to send them to therapy. Furthermore, transference is difficult for children to achieve because the significant person the therapist represents is often a parent, who, in the case of children, is still actively involved in the

patient's life. And, children usually lack the self-awareness and verbal skills to engage in free association.

Klein (1986) and A. Freud (1964) agree that difficulties with free association in psychoanalysis with children can be overcome through the use of play. They believed that in play children can communicate nonverbally about their innermost thoughts and feelings. However, here Klein and A. Freud diverged in their use of play.

For Klein (1986) play can be used as the equivalent of free association in psychoanalysis with children. She writes: "This anarchic mode of expression is also the language with which we are familiar in dreams, and it was by approaching the play of the child in a way similar to (S.) Freud's interpretation of dreams that I found I could get access to the child's unconscious." (1986, 51) The adult therapist can "gain access to the child's unconscious" by translating the symbolic messages in the child's play into words. Then the therapist can speak these translations to the child because, for Klein, children are able to recognize the meaning of their behaviors if the symbolism of their behavior is explained to them. According to Klein, as children come to understand their needs and feelings they will develop more effective ways of adapting to their worlds.

For A. Freud (1964) free play is not free association, but it can be used to diagnose problems. She writes that through observation of child's play one may be able to see the child's whole psychological world in the limited space and time of therapy. However, because free play is not free association, the therapist's interpretations may be incorrect much of the time. These observations must be combined with information

gathered from parents in interviews, and the therapist must remember that play often symbolizes nothing at all.

Interestingly, in response to the difficulty of motivation in child patients in psychoanalysis, A. Freud finds that therapists must make themselves useful to the child in play, as well as generally interesting to the child. The therapist need not join the child in play, but must show a commitment to and respect for the child's play. A. Freud writes: "In the case of a little girl who was undergoing her preparation (for analysis) ... I zealously crocheted (sic) and knitted during her appointments, and gradually clothed all her dolls and teddy bears." (1964, 12)⁶

Also interesting is A. Freud's interest in using adult interpretation of the play of children to discover, and then move to alleviate, injustices in the child's life. She describes a child patient thus: "Through fear of castration, threatening from the father, the boy had surrendered his love for the mother and allowed himself to be forced into the feminine attitude. From then on he had to try to sustain the father as object of his homosexual love." (1964, 68) She mentions, in an understated manner, the distress this condition is causing the child: "It would be tempting to go further, and describe the transition in the boy from this wish to kill (his father) to a fear of death which manifested itself each evening ... But that is in no part of my present purpose." (1964, 68) A. Freud then concludes:

(T)he task with the childish Super-ego is a double one. It is analytical in the historical dissolution of the Super-ego, so far as it is already an independent structure, from within, but it is also educational (in the widest

sense of that word) in exercising outward influence, by modifying the relations with those who are bringing up the child, creating new impressions, and revising the demands made on the child by the outside world. (1964, 73)⁷

Erikson

Erikson (1963) critiqued S. Freud's emphasis on play's role in reducing children's anxiety as too narrow. For Erikson, play enhances self-esteem, as children come to understand themselves as different from other people and to feel competent. He writes: "Paraphrasing Freud, we have called play the royal road to the understanding of the infantile ego's efforts at synthesis." (1963, 212)

Erikson describes (1963) play stages. First the child gains mastery over his own body through play, "autocosmic" play, then the child gains mastery over objects through play, "microsperic" play, and then, in the preschool years, the child masters social interactions through play, "macrosperic play". In this stage of play children come to feel they can be successful in the larger world and, also, to better understand their culture and the roles they are expected to fulfill.

With this understanding of play, Erikson describes play therapy as helping a child to communicate intimate experiences because it allows the child to express these experiences metaphorically. He returns to S. Freud's (1950) famous example of the child playing out his mother's departure and return by throwing away and drawing an object back on a string, and by observing his own disappearance and reappearance in a mirror.

Erikson writes: “He has, as Freud put it, *turned passivity into activity*; he plays at doing something that was in reality done to him.” (1963, 217) And Erikson adds that the child told his mother of his play, who was pleased to hear of it, and that “(h)e was then better off all around. He had adjusted to a difficult situation, he had learned to manipulate new objects, and he had received loving recognition for his method. All this is in “child’s play.” (1963, 218)

Erikson’s view of play therapy, derived from his view of play, does not require the adult to be a professional, with expert knowledge providing access to the child’s unconscious, but simply to be a sympathetic observer or listener. Erikson writes that the “protective sanction of an understanding adult to regain some play peace” is often what the troubled child needs. (1963, 222) “Grandmothers and favorite aunts may have played that role in the past; its professional elaboration of today is the play therapist.” (1963, 222)⁸

In this view of play therapy as “playing it out,” “the most natural self-healing measure childhood affords,” (1963, 222), play is not akin to adults talking about their dreams, but to adults “talking it out” to “resolve their tension” (1963, 224). The child player has, therefore, been granted more agency than he was by either A. Freud or Klein. One result of this change is that the child is given more room to correct adults through his play: “Often he (the child) feels that something is wrong with his parents, and mostly he is right.” (1963, 224) In fact, without granting children’s play the ability to create the new, Erikson has given it the power to contribute to adult development: “Thus at the end of any therapeutic encounter with a child the parent must sustain...a realignment with the

images and the forces governing the cultural development of his day, and from it an increased promise of a sense of identity. (1963, 224)

From this point Erikson moves to suggest that our view of children's play as existing in a separate, children's world, a world that is not real and that produces nothing of value to children and adults alike, may be an affront to children's identity. Erikson writes of an episode Dr. Ruth Underhill has described to him which took place among the Papago in Arizona. A three-year-old girl was with a group of Papago elders and was asked to close a heavy door. The task took her a long time but no one became impatient and no one offered help. "It was assumed that the task would not be asked of her unless she could perform it, and having been asked, the responsibility was hers alone just as if she were a grown woman." (1963, 236) Erikson concludes that "the theories of play which take as their foundation the assumption that in children, too, play is defined by the fact that it is not work, are really only one of the many prejudices by which we exclude our children from an early source of a sense of identity." (1963, 237)

This assertion, that children should be afforded a place in the adult world, and that their play is communicative and productive, is powerfully supported by Erikson despite the fact that his work depends on Freudian theories that would seem to make these conclusions untenable. His theory of play stages is clearly based in psychoanalytic theory, and yet it also provides an argument against any theory which argues that children live in a world in which adults are alien. Erikson speaks eloquently for children's right to be considered members of a child and adult world of people:

The playing child, then, poses a problem: whoever does not work shall not play. Therefore, to be tolerant of the child's play the adult must invent theories which show either that childhood play is really work – or that it does not count. The most popular theory and the easiest on the observer is that the child is *nobody yet*, and that the nonsense of play reflects it. (1963, 217)

No wonder, then, that some of our troubled children constantly break out of their play into some damaging activity in which they seem to us to “interfere” with our world; while analysis reveals that they only wish to demonstrate their right to find an identity in it. They refuse to become a specialty called “child,” who must play at being big because he is not given an opportunity to be a small partner in a big world. (1963, 238)

Winnicott

Winnicott (1971) also provides a psychoanalytic theory of play that in part contradicts the Freudian theory upon which it is built. This may be due to the fact that he works from the idea that the child is not primarily engaged in an Oedipal complex but is, instead, primarily developing in relation to a real, influential parent. This parent provides what he calls a holding environment, in which the child can develop.

Winnicott (1971) locates play not within the individual, where he locates an inner psychic reality, and not outside the individual, in an external reality, but between the two. He writes: “In the development of various individuals, it has to be recognized that the

third area of potential space between mother and baby is extremely valuable...” (1971, 53) He understands that he has moved away from Freud’s two world model, and far enough away that feels it necessary to add that these ideas shape: “...what I do as an analyst without, as I believe, altering my adherence to the important features of psychoanalysis ... that provide a common factor in the teaching of psychoanalysis as we believe it to be derived from the work of Freud.” (1971, 53)

Winnicott also declares that psychotherapy with children is an activity which includes adult and child play: “The general principle seems to me to be valid that *psychotherapy is done in the overlap of the two play areas, that of the patient and that of the therapist.*” (1971, 54) This inclusion of both child and adult in the play is essential for successful therapy: “If the therapist cannot play, then he is not suitable for the work. If the patient cannot play, then something needs to be done to enable the patient to become able to play, after which psychotherapy may begin.” (1971, 54)

And Winnicott writes: “The reason why playing is essential is that it is in playing that the patient is being creative.” (1971, 54) However, it is important to note that here Winnicott is not using the word ‘creative’ as are Vygotsky and Lindqvist. He is referring to the need in psychotherapy for the patient to make the key interpretations themselves. These interpretations lead to resolution of conflict between id and ego, not to a novel product for both child and adult.

It is also important to note that Winnicott is not advocating joint play between an adult and a child that closely resembles Lindqvist’s creation of a playworld. This is so because Winnicott asserts that what the therapist knows is irrelevant so long as he does

not show what he knows. Winnicott writes: “The patient’s creativity can be only too easily stolen by a therapist who knows too much. It does not really matter, of course, how much the therapist knows provided he can hide this knowledge, or refrain from advertising what he knows.” (1971, 57) The child in this therapy is, therefore, according to Lindqvist’s discussion, above, still left alone in play.

Despite these essential differences with Lindqvist, Winnicott is still insisting that “(p)sychotherapy has to do with two people playing together,” (1971, 38) and that these two people are a child and an adult. And Winnicott states flatly that in the psychoanalytic literature he finds “a lack of a useful statement on play.” (1971, 39) He critiques Klein for her concern with the use of play, instead of the play itself, and generalizes this critique to assert that “...the psychoanalyst has been too busy using play content to look at the playing child, and to write about playing as a thing in itself.” (1971, 40)

Furthermore, when Winnicott does write about play itself, he does not shy away from comparisons with art. Nor does he shy away from comparisons between child play and adult activities. As Winnicott defines play he makes us of the work of M. Milner, quoting references to a poet who resides in each of us and creates the external world for us by finding in the unfamiliar the familiar. And Winnicott writes: “I suggest that we must expect to find playing just as evident in the analyses of adults as it is in the case of our work with children. It manifests itself, for instance, in the choice of words, in the inflections of the voice, and indeed in the sense of humor.” (1971, 40)

At times Winnicott seems to be bordering on describing the paradox in play that interests Vygotsky, the paradox of “operat(ing) with an alienated meaning in a real situation,” of requiring a pivot. For instance, he writes: “The thing about playing is always the precariousness of the interplay of personal psychic reality and the experience of control of actual objects,” (1971, 47) and “In playing, the child manipulates external phenomena in the service of the dream and invests chosen external phenomena with dream meaning and feeling,” (1971, 51) and “The precariousness of play belongs to the fact that it is always on the theoretical line between the subjective and that which is objectively perceived.” (1971, 50).

At times Winnicott also seems to be bordering on describing the investment of the adult self in the play that Lindqvist’s pedagogy of creative play requires. He writes, following the sentence quoted directly above: “This is the precariousness of magic itself, magic that arises in intimacy, in a relationship that is being found to be reliable.” (1971, 47) The holding environment between adult and child that Winnicott believes is necessary for development requires trust.⁹

Ultimately what may keep Winnicott from arriving at even more similar conclusions to those Lindqvist draws from Vygotsky’s work is that Winnicott considers himself to be a therapist. He believes that, while the teacher works to enrich children’s lives, the therapist has the finite goal of removing impediments to the child’s development.¹⁰ He can write of play, sounding very much like Lindqvist: “The essential feature of my communication is this, that playing is an experience, always a creative experience, and it is an experience in the space-time continuum, a basic form of living.”

(1971, 50) Meanwhile, he insists that there is a developmental stage between the child's life in a subjective or conceptual world and the adult's life in an objective or perceivable world.

Cognitive-developmental play theory

Piaget

Freud's theory that the child moves from life in a fantasy world to life in a real world greatly influenced Piaget's (1951) own theory of two worlds. In critiquing Piaget's theory of play, Elkonin quotes Vygotsky, who writes, simply: "no one could have any doubt that we are here dealing with a purely biological theory, one that attempts to deduce the uniqueness of children's thought (thought divorced from reality) from children's biological nature." (1932, 99)" (2005, 53-54) Lindqvist writes that the divorce between the child's play world and the adult real world in Piaget's theory of play is so complete that the theory limits adults' participation in children's play to the modifying of the environment to make the environment conducive to the development of the child in play.

For Piaget a stage of realistic thinking, thinking in which the task is adaptation to and action on reality, comes after a transitional stage of egocentrism, which comes after a stage of imaginative "autistic" thought, which is not directed towards the real world. In order to argue that Piaget's definition of the child's imagination as separate from reality is false, Vygotsky (1987) lays out the three differences Piaget draws between these two

worlds. Vygotsky's summary and critique provide the most apt introduction to Piaget's theory for our purposes.

For Piaget (1951) the first world of the child is subconscious, it has no conscious awareness of goal, task or motive, while the second world is conscious, has conscious awareness of goal, task and motive. The first strives for the attainment of pleasure, the second for the cognition of reality. The first is nonverbal, is based in images and symbols and completely serves wishes with nothing in common with social reality. The second can be verbally reported and is social in that, to the extent that it reflects external reality that is similar for consciousnesses structured in similar ways, it can be communicated or transmitted. Because the basic means of social interaction is the word, realistic thought is both social and verbal thought.

However, Vygotsky (1987) argues that in the observation of animals we see little or no imaginative activity. Therefore, he writes: "(i)n phylogenesis...the mirage structure of the dream cannot be more primitive than thinking directed toward reality." Also, in the observation of children we see that the reception of pleasure is connected with the real, not with the imagined. And, while for Piaget (and Freud) child fantasy is nonverbal and therefore noncommunicatable, studies have shown that the mastery of speech represents an important step in the development of the child's imagination.¹¹

Working not only from his own research, Vygotsky writes:

Speech frees the child from the immediate impression of an object. It gives the child the power to represent and think about an object he has

not seen. Speech gives the child the power to free himself from the force of immediate impressions and go beyond their limits. The child can express in words something that does not coincide with the precise arrangement of objects or representations. This provides him with the power to move with extraordinary freedom in the sphere of impressions, designating them with words. (1987, 346)

Vygotsky adds that the onsets of major stages in development are also critical to the development of child's imagination. School is also important in the development of imagination, because at school age the first daydreaming appears, which Vygotsky describes as "the potential and capacity to consciously surrender oneself to a certain intellectual construction independent of its functions in realistic thinking." (1987, 346)

For Piaget (1951) imagination is subconscious activity, activity conditioned not by cognition of reality but by attainment of pleasure, nonsocial and non-communicable. For Vygotsky "The development of imagination is linked to the development of speech, to the development of the child's social interaction with those around him, to the basic forms of the collective social activity of the child's consciousness." (1987, 346)¹² For Piaget (1951) play is an activity of the first world of the child, the world of imagination.¹³

For Piaget (1951) growth of all living things takes place through assimilation, taking new materials from outside world and fitting them into one's already existing structures, and accommodation, adjusting one's structures in reaction to newly incorporated materials. Play is the dominance of assimilation over accommodation,

because in play the child forces reality to conform to their perspective without adjusting their way of thinking to fit reality. Play is a rehearsal of old learning.

For Piaget (1951) play includes the consolidation of activities already learned and facilitates learning by exposing the child to new experiences. However, it is not learning because it requires no accommodation of intellectual structures to reality. In Piaget's own words:

Unlike objective thought, which seeks to adapt itself to the requirements of external reality, imaginative play is a symbolic transposition which subjects things to the child's activity, without rules or limitations. It is therefore almost pure assimilation, i.e. thought polarised by preoccupation with individual satisfactions. (1951, 87)

For Piaget (1951) play proceeds through stages, but the nature of play depends on the nature of the child's thought, not the other way around. From infancy through the second year there is a sensorimotor stage, with play in which the child is acquiring control over movements and coordinating gestures and perceptions of the gestures' results. From the second through the sixth year there is symbolic or representational play, in which the child encodes their experience in symbols and begins to play with symbols and their combinations. In the school years rules enter play, and along with rules the concepts of cooperation and competition begin to develop. Piaget writes of this stage: "Finally, with the socialisation of the child, play acquires rules or gradually adapts symbolic imagination to reality in the form of constructions which are still spontaneous but which imitate reality." (1951, 87)

Sutton-Smith (1997) points out that part of the attraction of such developmental stages “to psychologists, as scientists, is the promise of predictable regularities of a reliable kind.” (1997, 36). He writes that “Developmental psychology has been focused on ... progressive development... (and t)he progress rhetoric of play is very much also a rhetoric of developmental stages.” (1997, 36) Therefore, for Piaget play “mirrors and consolidates the development of cognitive stages” (1997, 50), but does not drive them. In other words, for Piaget adult cognition is the teleology for child development in play, but this development is not contributed to by the play itself, but by the stage which determines the character of the play.

Sutton-Smith (1997) argues that both Groos and Freud tried to explain the causes of symbolic fiction in play, e.g. unconscious symbols, by their content. For Groos there is symbolic fiction because the contents of the play symbols are beyond the child’s reach. For Freud there is symbolism because the content of the symbols is repressed. However, for Piaget the formation of the symbol is due to the structure of the child’s thought: thought in elementary stages proceeds by egocentric assimilation and not by logical concepts.

Piaget’s (1951) theory of play has little in common with Vygotsky’s theory of play. However, the idea that children construct knowledge through actively mastering their environment, in which new stages of development are achieved through the interaction of the biological and environmental, is shared by Vygotsky. Moreover, Piaget’s ideas have had tremendous influence on many theories of human development, including theories of play.

Fein

Fein (1975, 1979, 1981, 1987) draws heavily upon Piaget's theory of play. She argues (1981) that the most productive theoretical positions concerning pretend play tend to deal with selected aspects of play behavior, not with play in its entirety, and her own studies are often empirical investigations of Piaget's theory of play. For instance, Fein (1975) argues that learning to engage in symbolic play with objects progresses from simple transformations to more complex ones as the child gains mastery over his environment, and Fein (1979) elaborates upon Piaget's claim that early pretense changes with respect to the decontextualization of behavior. However, Fein's (1987) work supports Vygotsky's theory of play, as Lindqvist interprets Vygotsky's theory, in many important respects.

Fein argues: "(p)erhaps the claim that pretense is a distinctive form of behavior rests largely on this unique confluence of emotional intensity and conceptual depth." (1987, 282) Sutton-Smith (1997) writes that Fein stated in a note to him: "I do not think play is about cognition and I don't think playing makes kids especially smarter. It most likely makes them happier...Little kids who do not play are usually very unhappy." (1997, 32) In Fein's theory of play emotion is a central motivation for play, and to assert this in the face of so many theories of play which do not emphasize emotion may require this apparent over-statement.

Furthermore, Fein (1987) describes play as a creative activity. She sees her work as calling for further study of play which looks at "the relationship between pretense and other spheres of creative endeavor." (1987, 302). And, for Fein, play is creative because

of the way that it interacts with the real world. Fein writes that the “embedding of the nonliteral in the literal with unexpected, unlikely elaborations ... gives pretend play the appearance of a creative endeavor.” (1987, 282)

Sutton-Smith writes of the work of Fein and a few others:

One has to concede that in the face of an adult world that wants to think children’s play is not important – or if important, it is so because it imitates the adult world, and if excusable, it is so because it does that politely – the very solid evidence established in these pretense studies contributes to our appreciation of the autonomy of the play life in childhood. (1997, 159).

This concept of autonomy is related to the autonomy of the child’s world in both Freud and then Piaget, but because, for Fein, fantasy is as connected to reality as it is separate, this autonomy cannot be subject to the same criticism which Vygotsky levels at Piaget. Fein writes, “On the one hand, pretend representations seem to float free of real-world conventions; on the other, these conventions seem to be embedded in these representations.” (1987, 282)

Lindqvist is discussing something very similar to this when she writes:

At Hybelejen it was interesting to see how children of different ages have interpreted and dramatized the theme together with the adults. Side by side, they have produced multi-dimensional play, each with their own text in an universal context. This was possible because the children have an

ability to move from internal to external levels in the fiction. They are part of the universal context at the same time as they are creating their own text. (1995, 215)

This paradox will be discussed a bit further in the section of the paper concerning anthropological play theories. For now, I will draw one more parallel between the work of Fein and Lindqvist. Sutton-Smith writes of the work of Fein, “Children’s fantasies are not meant only to replicate the world, nor to be only its therapy; they are meant to fabricate another world that lives along side the first one and carries on its own kind of life, a life much more emotionally vivid than mundane reality.” (1997, 158) This is the most accurate description of my experience of creating a playworld that I have found in the work of the play theorists I have read.

Cross-cultural psychological approaches

Goncu and Gaskins

Goncu and Gaskins (Gaskins, 1999, 2000; Gaskins & Goncu, 1992; Goncu, 1999; Goncu et al., 1999) criticize Vygotsky, Freud and Piaget for assuming that the origins, frequency and development of children’s play follow the same general patterns all over the world. They draw attention to, for instance, young children who are contributing to the economic welfare of their families in low-income urban communities and in small villages with subsistence economies who have little time to play. And they draw attention to these children’s parents, who may not value play.

Goncu et al. (1999) make an attempt to remedy this situation by theorizing children's play as a cultural activity using Leontiev's Activity Theory. They argue that Leontiev includes culture as an integral part of human development, bringing attention to the influence of community structure on activities of adults and children, and conceptualizing children's play as an activity. Furthermore, Leontiev extended Vygotsky's work on play, describing play as the unit of life in which in which children try to be like the adults in their community.

Goncu et al. (1999) provide five principles that guide their studies of cultural variation in children's play. The economic structure of a community determines the availability of children's play as one type of activity. Children's play cannot be understood if we don't understand the value the community attributes to play. One must understand how these values are conveyed to children, explicitly or implicitly. Children represent their worlds in play, so to study the development of creativity in children's play one must study adult roles, etc. And, to study children's play requires an interdisciplinary methodology involving multiple data-gathering and analysis techniques.

Gaskins (1999) presents a case study of young Yucatec Mayan children's engagement in their world to support her argument that play, and particularly symbolic play, is not prevalent in some cultures and does not serve the same functions in all cultures. She describes four kinds of activity: maintenance activities, social orientation, work and play, and explains that "Mayan children's moment-to-moment experiences are a constant interweaving of all four kinds of activities." (1999, 38) She provides a detailed description of an 18 month old child mixing all four activities while moving silently

among her mother and siblings, explaining that even if you were able to isolate symbolic play in a Mayan child's day, it is much less prevalent among Mayan children than among those children who have been the subjects of such studies in the past.

Interestingly, for Mayan children under age 5 play occurs in the house or compound with no support from adults or older children, or in large mixed-age groups at some distance from the house and without adult supervision. In this second play setting older children, sometimes 12-13 year olds, organize the play, assigning specific roles to the younger children, but in neither play setting is any adult structure or praise provided (Gaskins, 1999). Lindqvist argues that Elkonin's theory of play promoted adult intervention in children's play in which adults direct children's play from outside of play, rather than a creative approach to children's play in which adults participate in children's play as players. Among the Yucatec Maya we see that an adult understanding of play that does not assume that play is an activity of consequence in child development leading instead to a lack of any adult participation in children's play. These data suggest that there is a pre-modern condition of no adult participation in children's play, a modern condition of adult directive intervention in children's play, and now a post-modern condition of adults joining children in fantasy play through a creative approach such as Lindqvist promotes.

Also of interest is Gaskin's assessment that when Mayan children spend the majority of their time in maintenance activities, social orientation and work, not in play, they are spending their time in "in peripheral but legitimate engagement in the adult world, which is the primary world that the culture provides for the children." (1999, 57)

This is in contrast with what Gaskins describes (1999) as Western-style play, which promotes child engagement in a primary world which is child-dominated. While critiquing aspects of Vygotsky's theory of play, Goncu and Gaskins (Gaskins, 1999; Goncu et al., 1999) have provided evidence that challenges a concept that Vygotsky also opposes, the concept that children are primarily engaged in a fantasy world that is isolated from a real and alien adult world.

Furthermore, Goncu and Gaskins (Gaskins, 1999; Goncu, 1999; Goncu et al., 1999) come to some conclusions, through their criticisms of Vygotsky's theory of play, that are very similar to those which Lindqvist herself arrives at through her interpretation of Vygotsky's theory of play. Goncu and Gaskins (Gaskins, 1999; Goncu, 1999; Goncu et al., 1999) argue that throughout the 1980's and 90's Western researchers have followed developmental theorists, trying to understand play's developmental functions, rather than to understand play itself. (This is in part due to the assumption that play is universal, which made justification for study of the "serious" consequences of play more readily available than justifications for the "frivolous" activity of play itself. (Goncu et al., 1999)) This dominant approach has led to intervention programs for children whose play did not fit the common characterizations of play found in the most well-known play theories. These interventions stifled efforts to understand the play of non-Western or low-income children: play which may be different than that described in the dominant play literature, but which is not thereby deficient.

Goncu (1999) even describes Kecioren (an urban middle-class community in Turkey) mothers playing with their children in a way that resembles the creation of a

playworld in Lindqvist's pedagogy of creative play. He writes that the Kecioren mothers he observed not only supported children's pretend play by providing suggestions, as did their Western counterparts, but that they also "engaged in play as co-actors, adopting a host of roles, such as having a toast by lifting a glass of tea in the air as if it were a glass *raki* and saying "cheers" in response to the son's initiation." (1999, 162) Perhaps Vygotsky's theory of play is not 'overcoming' other theories of play, or 'coming closest' to identifying the psychological nature of play, and perhaps Lindqvist's pedagogy of creative play is nothing new, but instead a possible future that has already been realized in other places and at other times.

Anthropological play theory

Work outside the field of psychology has much of value to contribute to our understanding of Lindqvist's theory of play. The work of Huizinga (1970), Turner (1969, 1982), Bateson (1972), Geertz (1973) and Schwartzman (1978) offers new perspectives on play, as well as new methodologies for the study of play. Discussion of this work could fill another paper, so I only have space here for a brief overview.

Lindqvist writes that some anthropological theories of play have described play as being cultural, as being learned within a culture or subculture, in a way which complements Vygotsky's theory of play. Of the theorists I will discuss she mentions Huizinga, Bateson and Schwartzman. Lindqvist sees the overall contribution of this literature to be that it regards play as a phenomenon with its own characteristics while still stressing the fact that play is shaped by the surrounding culture.

Lindqvist is particularly impressed with Bateson's contribution, and writes that he avoids the twin pitfalls of considering play to be handed over from child to child, so that adult intervention is a hindrance, and considering play to be a way of learning social rules, so that adult intervention consists of teaching children to play. She criticizes Schwartzman for idealizing the critical dimension of play and in this way removing play from current culture. Lindqvist's overall criticism of this literature is that the role of adults in children's play is not elaborated upon, and that the artistic and fictitious qualities of play are not discussed.

I believe Lindqvist does not give this literature the attention it deserves. The second of the above criticisms does not apply to Geertz, Bateson, Turner or Schwartzman, and I think it is possible that much of Vygotsky's insight came from his ability to bridge disciplines in the humanities and the sciences. I agree with Callois that the division of the study of play among academic disciplines does study of play a disservice:

Psychology, sociology, anecdotage, pedagogy, and mathematics so divide its (the study of play's) domain that the unity of the subject is no longer perceptible...they don't even seem to be discussing the same subject... The player of leapfrog, dominoes, or kite-flying knows in all three cases equally that he is playing. However, only the child psychologists concern themselves with leapfrog (or the game of prisoner's base or marbles), only sociologists analyze kite-flying, and only mathematicians study dominoes (or roulette or poker). (1961, 161-162)

Huizinga

Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* (1970) was first published in 1944. In this book Huizinga argues that the major form of play is the contest and that contests have a civilizing influence. Contests produce social hierarchies around which society structures its values. Huizinga is arguing against a puritanical rhetoric that play is useless or dangerous, and he claims that play has always existed in all cultures. Sutton-Smith writes of Huizinga: "Nobody has claimed as much for play before or since, nor has anyone had as much effect on humanistic play scholars in the twentieth century." (1997, 202) It is Huizinga who described play as more than frivolous, despite the fact that, in the process, he idealized play.

Huizinga (1971) writes that poetry, and therefore play (he considers poetry to be the "purest" form of play), functions as a bridge between primitive and civilized man. He argues that civilization itself depends on play, as civilization, like play, requires mastery of the self through the imposition of freely accepted boundaries. Although idealized, this idealization is a step towards viewing play as a creative activity of central importance to the development of culture, as well as the individual. Callois (1961) describes the sum of Huizinga's work as an inquiry into the creative quality of play in the domain of culture.¹⁴

Turner

For Turner (1969) play is "liminal," meaning it occupies a threshold between reality and unreality. Turner (1969) writes that play's cultural function is to mediate social conflict. Societies are always suffering from conflict and must find ways of

mediating problems that arise from this conflict. In play these conflicts can be expressed but no one dies. Turner argues (1982) that in the ritual, myth, and the legal processes of certain cultures work and play are hardly distinguishable. For instance, ritual can be described as both earnest and playful.

Turner is describing an alternative to the two worlds view of Freud and Piaget. Furthermore, his rich descriptions (1969, 1982) tell us much about the “liminal” phenomenon that furthers Vygotsky’s and Lindqvist’s inquiry into particular areas of play. For instance, Turner (1969) explores the connection between play and dramatic expression at length. Turner also discusses the fact that “liminal” phenomenon present us with a “moment in and out of time” (1982, 96).

Bateson

For Bateson (1972) play is a paradox because it both is and is not what it appears to be. For instance, the play bite is a bite but in play it is not. “The playful nip denotes the bite, but it does not denote what would be denoted by the bite.” (1972, 185) And for Bateson play is also a paradox because it is metacommunicative. Play is not just play, but is also a message about itself. The message “This is play.” sets a frame for the play, creating a paradox by drawing a line between categories of different logical types. As Bateson explains, the picture frame (the equivalent of “This is play.”) is an instruction to the viewer to not extend the premises which obtain between the figures within the picture to the wallpaper behind the picture, and this is a paradox because the frame does delineate things that are not of same logical type (1972, 185).

This paradox of Bateson's is related to, although not exactly the same as, the one Vygotsky is describing when he writes, as quoted above: "The primary paradox of play is that the child operates with an alienated meaning in a real situation." The comparison becomes more clear with Bateson's discussion of the resemblance between the process of therapy and the phenomenon of play. I will quote this discussion of Bateson's at length:

Imagine first two (canasta) players who engage in a game of canasta according to a standard set of rules... We may imagine, however, that at a certain moment the two canasta players cease to play and start a discussion of the rules... Our imaginary players avoided paradox by separating their discussion of the rules from the play (separating discrepant logical types of discourse), and it is precisely this separation that is impossible in psychotherapy...

As we see it, the process of psychotherapy is a framed interaction between two persons, in which the rules are implicit but subject to change. Such change can only be proposed by experimental action, but every such experimental action, in which a proposal to change to rules is implicit, is itself a part of the ongoing game. It is this combination of logical types that gives to therapy the character not of a rigid game like canasta but, instead, that of an evolving system of interaction...

By the process of interpretation, the neurotic is driven to insert an "as if" clause into the productions of his primary process thinking, which productions he had previously depreciated or repressed. He must learn that fantasy contains truth...

For the schizophrenic the problem is somewhat different. His error is in treating the metaphors of primary process with the full intensity of literal truth. Through the discovery of what these metaphors stand for he must discover that they are only metaphors. (1972, 191-192)

Bateson is claiming that what we consider sanity requires the paradoxes of abstraction. He argues that without these paradoxes there could be no communication, change or humor. And for Vygotsky (1987) the paradox of play is equally essential to consciousness. We know from Vygotsky (1987) that play is a paradox, and Lindqvist explains:

There is a correspondence between man's consciousness (internal) and the external environment. Artistic, cultural and social structures are reflected in the structure of consciousness. Vygotsky's view of the dynamic structure of consciousness corresponds with the aesthetic form of art. In play, a meeting between the individual's internal and external environment takes place in a creative interpretation process, the imaginary process, in which children express their imagination in action. Play reflects the aesthetic form of consciousness. (1995, 40)

Geertz

For Geertz (1973) social play can be used as a text to "interpret" the power relationships within the culture. In this way he is following Freud, because he is treating communal play as diagnostic material for cultural interpretation. He is also following

Turner, because he writes of the Balinese cock fight that it “activate(s) village and kingroup rivalries and hostilities, but in “play” form” (1973, 261)

Geertz writes about “deep play,” play in which the stakes are so high that it is irrational to engage in it. In addition to interpreting this form of play as a text, Geertz describes it as an art form. Clearly thinking about the similarities between play and art in as much depth and with as much nuance as Lindqvist, though from a different starting point, Geertz writes:

Like any art form – for that, finally, is what we are dealing with – the cockfight renders ordinary, everyday experience comprehensible by presenting it in terms of acts and objects which have had their practical consequences removed and been reduced (or, if you prefer, raised) to the level of sheer appearances, where their meaning can be more powerfully articulated and more exactly perceived. (1973, 262)

and

What it (the cock fight) does is what, for other peoples with other temperaments and other conventions, *Lear* and *Crime and Punishment* do: it catches up these themes – death, masculinity, rage, pride, loss, beneficence, chance – and, ordering them into an encompassing structure, presents them in such a way as to throw into relief a particular view of their essential nature. It puts a construction on them, makes them, to those historically positioned to appreciate the construction, meaningful --

visible, tangible, graspable – “real,” in an ideational sense. An image, fiction, a model, a metaphor, the cockfight is a means of expression; its function is neither to assuage social passions nor to heighten them (though, in its playing-with-fire way it does a bit of both), but, in a medium of feathers, blood, crowds, and money, to display them. (1973, 263)

Schwartzman

Schwartzman’s (1978) theory of play has much in common with Lindqvist’s theory, so much so that I am surprised that Lindqvist does not mention this commonality. Both Schwartzman (1978) and Lindqvist (1995) find it necessary to examine play through the lens of another topic of study, and to simultaneously use play to examine this topic, in order to discuss a third, larger and more amorphous topic. Lindqvist looks at play and aesthetics to study creativity and Schwartzman looks at play and anthropological theories to study transformations. Schwartzman writes:

This book is about the anthropology of children’s play; however, it is also about the play of anthropologists, as both children and ethnographers are continually constructing and transforming the contexts in which they exist in their efforts to make sense, and sometimes nonsense, out of the worlds in which they find themselves...Transformations, then, are the subject of this book – children’s and anthropologists’. (1978, 1)

And, for both Schwartzman and Lindqvist, showing the reader their theory is integral to their process of describing their theory. Lindqvist's book (1995) could not stand alone, without the extensive descriptions of adults and children creating playworlds together. These descriptions make up the bulk of the book. And Schwartzman (1978) does not just turn to children's literature to illustrate her points, she frames her work with a twist which leaves her talking to an imaginary child. In her introduction she writes:

This is ironic (how quotations from the two Alice books show up in the work of philosophers, logicians, mathematicians, etc.) because Alice was not always fond of lessons and I can only hope she would approve of her appearance in a book about play and games, activities that she most definitely enjoyed. (1978, viii)

The content of Schwartzman and Lindqvist's theories of play also have much in common, even if their emphases differ. As we have shown, Lindqvist argument against the two world model of Freud and Piaget is central to her theory of play. And Schwartzman provides this summary of her book:

Writing a book about play leads to wondering. In writing this book, I wondered first if it would be taken seriously and then if it might be too serious. Eventually, I realized that these concerns were cast in terms of the major dichotomy that I wished to question, that is, the very pervasive and very inaccurate division that Western culture makes between play and seriousness (or play and work, fantasy and reality, and so forth). The study of play provides researchers with a special arena for re-thinking this

opposition, and in this book an attempt is made to do this by reviewing and evaluating studies of children's transformations (their play) in relation to the history of anthropologist's transformations (their theories). (1978, vii)

Furthermore, Schwartzman and Lindqvist both have agendas as agents of social change as they theorize play. Schwartzman strives to do no less than transform the study of children's play and the discipline of anthropology. She quotes a description of West African Yoruba children 'playing anthropologist' and writes that the quote is important "because it illustrates the dual perspective of this book, which has been written as if the study of anthropology could transform the study of children's play (and it has), and as if the study of play could transform the discipline of anthropology (and it could)." (1978, 7)

Meanwhile Lindqvist believes that children need a "cultural identity" (1995, 219) to be able to interpret the world, and that this identity can only be created starting at a very young age and in a democratic manner. This identity can be formed "(i)n the multi-dimensional world of art, (where) each and every one – both children and adults – are at liberty to choose to enter into a common fiction at the same time as they make their own interpretations." (1995, 219) In response to the spread of what she characterizes as the "scientific" (1995, 216) model of preschool pedagogy, in which aesthetic education is replaced by activities which are designed to promote the development of logical thinking, she advocates her pedagogy of creative play. Lindqvist writes that in pedagogy of creative play "Adults and children (can) "step into" the text and create() a fictitious world – a playworld." (1995, 219)¹⁵

Conclusion

As I have argued, Lindqvist's emphasis on the creative quality of play is unique among contemporary theories of play. Lindqvist's theory of play was developed from Russian theories of play, both the play theory of Vygotsky (1978, 1987, 2004), which forms the basis of Lindqvist's theory, and Elkonin's interpretation (2005) of this theory, which Lindqvist critiques. And Lindqvist's theory of play, which promotes adults' creative participation in children's play, does not share with contemporary Western European and American theories of play the inclination to describe adult knowledge, experience or developmental stage as a teleology for children's play.

In "The Role of Play in Development" (1978) Vygotsky argues, using his concept of the zone of proximal development, that in play children are in dialogue with a future, though not transported into this future. In this chapter he writes that, in play, formerly inaccessible achievements are made possible but are still dependent upon a "pivot". In "Imagination and Creativity in Childhood" (2004) and "Imagination and its Development in Childhood." (1987) Vygotsky argues that imagination is an integral aspect of realistic thinking, that the two are interdependent, and that imagination is essential in the process of creative consciousness. It is in these papers (1987, 2004) that Vygotsky makes a distinction between reproduction and creativity, arguing that imagination is a creative activity, and, therefore, that imagination is an important component of all aspects of

cultural life. Here he makes the claim that imagination is an essential aspect of all thought. And it is here (2004) that Vygotsky insists that all humans, including children, are creative, and that children are most creative in play.

Elkonin (2005) argues that Vygotsky's most significant contribution to play theory is his understanding of the child's relationship to the external world and to social reality in play. It is through this understanding, Elkonin claims, that Vygotsky's theory of play overcomes naturalistic and psychoanalytic theories of play, which position imagination and realistic thinking in opposition to one another. Much of Elkonin's critique of Western play theory was obligatory in the political climate in which Elkonin worked, but, whatever the reason, in his interpretation of Vygotsky's theory of play he did not emphasize Vygotsky's description of play as a *creative* cultural manifestation in humans.

Lindqvist (1995, 2001, 2003) agrees with Elkonin concerning the importance of Vygotsky's (1987, 2004) claim that imagination and realistic thinking act as a unity in the processes of invention and creativity. However, Lindqvist (1995, 2001, 2003) reminds us that Vygotsky also argues that play is creative. According to Lindqvist's interpretation of Vygotsky, because play is a creative activity, children in play do not only model themselves on adults, but are also facing a future that is beyond those who are now adults.

Lindqvist claims (1995) that Elkonin's neglect of Vygotsky's argument that children's play is creative led to the promotion of adult intervention in children's play that stifles the creative potential of children's play.¹⁶ She writes that her own pedagogy of creative play (1995) promotes the study of joint adult-child play in which children's ability to produce results in play that are novel to both adults and children is a central feature. I will conclude by mentioning those contributions from the contemporary Western European and American play theory discussed above, which I believe have the potential to strengthen Lindqvist's theory of play.

Some contemporary Western European and American scholars provide us with theories of play that bring a complex understanding of emotion into the study of children's play. Lindqvist's description of playworlds includes discussion of the emotions of child players. Central to Lindqvist's theory of play is her insistence that, despite Elkonin's lack of emphasis on the role of emotions in Vygotsky's theory of play, the way that Vygotsky's theory of play links the emotions to thought gives aesthetics a new role in the process of consciousness. However, Lindqvist's theory of play does not allow her to investigate emotions in play in depth. Once we have established our strong critique of the two worlds view of Freud and Piaget, and of those who base their theories of play upon the work of Freud and Piaget, we can begin to appreciate the significance of the nuanced social scientific discussion of emotion that psychoanalytic play theory, and also some of Fein's work, makes possible.

Psychoanalytic theorists of play argue that play can reduce fear of the external world by allowing the child to feel illusionary control of their world through control of a manageable world. Children meeting their fears in play is a topic of great interest to Lindqvist, although she does not make significant use of any theory to explain this aspect of children's play. However, psychoanalytic theory also brings despair, hope, pleasure and pain into our discussion of children's play, and these emotions are not prevalent in either Lindqvist or Vygotsky's theories of play.

Winnicott (1971), Erikson (1963) and Fein's (1987) may have further contributions to make to Lindqvist's theory of play. Winnicott (1971) locates play not within the individual, the space of inner psychic reality, and not outside the individual, the space of an external reality, but between the two, in a space that is already a focus of Lindqvist's theory of play. And Winnicott insists that it is in this space that children's emotions are expressed, developed and managed in many complex ways, and he studies these complex ways. Arguing that play enhances self-esteem, Erikson (1963) suggests that our view of children's play as existing in a separate, children's world may be an affront to children's identity. Lindqvist suggests that children can increase their self-esteem through her pedagogy of creative play, but does not explore this aspect of play. Furthermore, although Fein's work does not derive from Freud's, Fein's (1987) investigation of emotion as a central motivation for play, specifically her insistence that children play because play makes children happy, emphasizes the importance of understanding the pleasure which play provides.

As discussed above, Lindqvist makes use of Vygotsky's (1971) theory of art to interpret his theory of play. She is interested in Vygotsky's agreement with Freud in this context. Lindqvist acknowledges (2003) that Vygotsky (1971) welcomes the psychoanalytic understanding of art as the social liberation of emotions. Vygotsky (1971) writes of catharsis, which is liberation, through an explosion of emotions, which makes imagination flourish as it interprets these emotions.¹⁷ However, Caryl Emerson writes of the essential difference between Freud's therapeutic view and Vygotsky's pedagogical view: "For Bakhtin and Vygotsky, there is, in essence, no "inexpressible." In Freud's world, therefore, the Word is a tool of psychoanalysis. For Bakhtin and Vygotsky, it is a tool of pedagogy." (1983, 12) Because there is no inexpressible for Vygotsky, it would be very difficult to apply Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* directly to Lindqvist's theory of play.

Instead, I suggest, Freud's work will become essential to our analysis when we look specifically at the adult-child joint play that Lindqvist's pedagogy of creative play promotes. Lindqvist (1995) claims that the creative potential of children's play makes joint play between adults and young children desirable in part because this creative potential can allow for the development of adults as well as children in adult-child joint play. She does belittle the importance of this claim through her focus on the development of the children in the playworlds she studies. However, one could use Lindqvist's claim that children are not only modeling themselves on adults in play, but are also creating that

which is new for adults and children alike, to argue that adult and child development is made possible through adult-child joint play.¹⁸ Freud's theorizing of the connections between concrete human behavior and complex human emotions will have, I believe, much to contribute to our exploration of this adult and child development in the adult-child joint play of Lindqvist's pedagogy of creative play.

¹ "Creative pedagogy of play" is the translation from the Swedish used in the English edition of Lindqvist's book, *The Aesthetics of Play* (1995). However, I will use the phrase 'pedagogy of creative play' throughout the rest of this paper because it is less ambiguous in this context.

² Here Vygotsky is referring to Piaget's use of the term "autistic" in Piaget's earlier work. Piaget does not use the word to refer to what is now thought of as the disability of autism, but to refer to a stage of development during which children's thoughts are not directed towards the real world.

³ It is important to keep in mind that much of this critique was obligatory in the political climate in which Elkonin worked. Because of the constraints imposed on Soviets to dismiss Western authors, some of Elkonin's arguments may have been overstated, or even more significantly altered, in the interest of his professional and personal safety.

⁴ Elkonin ends his summary of theoretical research on play with a quote from S. L. Rubinshtein's 1946 response to Vygotsky's 1933 lecture:

In play there is indeed a flight from reality, but there is also a penetration of reality. For this reason there is no escape, no running away from reality to a putative special, make-believe, fictitious, unreal world. The lifeblood of play, everything that it embodies in action, it takes from reality. Play goes beyond the bounds of one situation and abstracts from particular aspects of reality in order to reveal others still more deeply. (1946, 592) (2005, 93-94)

In this quote Rubinshtein may be discussing the creative quality of play, but it is unclear whether or not this is the case from the context Elkonin provides. And Elkonin himself states that "(p)lay is directed at the future and not at the past." (2005 67) However, he is referring to his assertion that play is a central means by which higher forms of human needs evolve. This process is not necessarily creative.

⁵ The next sentence in Groos's book is: "He must be able, however, to resume the sceptre (sic) firmly when need arises." (1901, 403) As with his discussion of artistic production and play, Groos is 'fortifying his position against misconstruction'.

⁶ In response to the difficulty of transference in child patients in psychoanalysis A. Freud (1964) provides an extreme solution for those cases that are most difficult in this regard. The therapist can put the child in an institution, away from their family. For A. Freud institutionalization is an appropriate step in the process of intervening in the play of some children who resist this intervention.

⁷ The super-ego is the conscience, the moral judge or internalized parent. At almost all times it exists on the unconscious level and on the conscious level. Therefore, it opposes the id at the unconscious level, where the ego rarely descends.

⁸ Winnicott agrees with Erikson that play in therapy is merely a recontextualization of the play which occurs outside therapy but is still therapeutic. He writes: "The natural thing is playing, and the highly sophisticated twentieth-century phenomenon is psychoanalysis," (1971, 41) and "It is good to remember that playing is itself a therapy." (1971, 50)

⁹ This holding environment has much in common with the "third space" of K. Gutiérrez, B. Rymes and J. Larson (1995).

¹⁰ Caryl Emerson writes of the essential difference between Freud's therapeutic view and Vygotsky's (or Bakhtin's) pedagogical view in the context of a discussion of internalization of language, a subject I will approach in the next section of this paper:

In the Russian model inner speech is thus a benevolent quality, a "unique form of collaboration with oneself." In the Freudian model, language is perceived as neutral, objectified – a presumption Bakhtin would never make – and it can therefore be marshaled into service to express the inexpressible. For Bakhtin and Vygotsky, there is, in essence, no "inexpressible." In Freud's world, therefore, the Word is a tool of psychoanalysis. For Bakhtin and Vygotsky, it is a tool of pedagogy. (1983, 12)

¹¹ Here Vygotsky (1987) uses the example of aphasics who have lost the capacity to understand or produce speech and who manifest a sharp decline in fantasy and imagination. For instance, some of these patients cannot look out the window at sunshine and say, 'today it is raining'.

¹² As mentioned in a previous endnote, here I am approaching the topic of internalization of language. For Piaget (1951) egocentric thought is the stage between autistic play and reality-oriented thought. In this stage the child displays egocentric speech. Piaget argues that egocentric speech serves no cognitive or communicative function. Vygotsky and his

colleagues (1987) showed that egocentric speech has both cognitive and communicative functions. For Piaget egocentric speech simply disappears. For Vygotsky egocentric speech 'goes underground' and becomes inner speech. (Vygotsky, 1987; Wertsch, 1985)

¹³ Without contradicting this argument, it is useful to hear in Piaget's own words that while in his theory play and thought are on opposite ends of a continuum, they are not entirely separate:

Since all thought involves assimilation, and ludic assimilation is only distinctive in that it subordinates accommodation instead of being in equilibrium with it, play is to be conceived as being both related to adapted thought by a continuous sequence of intermediaries, and bound up with thought as a whole, of which it is only one pole, more or less differentiated. (1951, 150)

¹⁴ Callois (1961) criticizes Huizinga for ignoring the many forms of play and the many needs served by play in different cultural contexts. Callois is perhaps best known for arguing that chance is a basic factor in the motivation to play games. He argues that chance helps people to tolerate competition that is unfair, it gives hope that free competition is possible for all. Callois's book, *Man, Play, and Games* (1961) provides a typology of play which is designed to help classify the characteristic games of any culture.

¹⁵ The role for adults which Lindqvist advocates through her pedagogy of creative play is derived from Vygotsky's theory of the place of play in human psychological and social life. Vygotsky ends "Imagination and Creativity in Childhood" (2004) with these words:

In conclusion, we should emphasize the particular importance of cultivating creativity in school-age children. The entire future of humanity will be attained through creative imagination; orientation to the future, behavior based on the future and derived from this future, is the most important function of the imagination. To the extent that the main educational objective of teaching is guidance of school children's behavior so as to prepare them for the future, development and exercise of imagination should be one of the main forces enlisted for the attainment of this goal...

The development of a creative individual, one who strives for the future, is enabled by creative imagination embodied in the present. (2004, 83)

¹⁶ A recent article in the *New York Times* by J. Brody in support of "parent-child playtime" (2007, D9) includes the American Academy of Pediatrics' summary of the importance of free play to a children's development. According to Brody's citation, the summary does not mention the development of creativity as a possible positive outcome of free play, and Brody promotes parent-child play that appears to be designed to foster everything but creativity.

¹⁷ However, Vygotsky (1971) and Lindqvist (2003) agree, dreams and neuroses cannot be described as art (in part because they lack sociopsychological and historical interpretation of artistic symbolism).

¹⁸ This argument is supported by Huizinga's (1970) description of play as "civilizing," Turner's (1969) argument that play is "liminal," and as such presents us with a "moment in and out of time" (1982, 96), Bateson's (1972) claim that play embodies the paradoxes of abstraction, and that without these paradoxes there could be neither communication nor change, humor nor sanity, and Geertz's (1973) comparison of play with the masterpieces of Shakespeare and Dostoevsky, and his insistence that play can address themes such as death, rage, pride, loss and chance.

Furthermore, I speculate that Schwartzman (1978) employs and explicitly discusses just those aspects of Lindqvist's (1995) work that will allow us to explore adult and child development in adult-child joint play in greater depth. It is what Schwartzman and Lindqvist share that should allow us to develop playworlds in which adults and children participate more fully, and in which new creative heights are reached, and that should allow us to develop new ways of analyzing the types of data these playworlds generate. Again, both Schwartzman and Lindqvist: Examine play through the lens of another topic of study, while simultaneously using play to examine this topic, in order to discuss a third, larger and more amorphous topic; Consider showing, as well as telling, as integral to both analysis and presentation of play; Exploit the value the study of play holds for challenging the division that most of the social sciences make between fantasy and reality, or fiction and fact; Explicitly incorporate agendas of social change, change in the academy and change in the treatment of children, into play research and theory.

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