

Play, Policy, & Practice CONNECTIONS

Published by the Play, Policy, & Practice Interest Forum
of the
National Association for the Education of Young Children

Online *Connections* at <http://pppconnections.wordpress.com/>

Volume, XV, Issue 1

Fall 2014

A Note from the Editors:

Welcome to the latest edition of *Connections*. As we assume our new roles as editors, the theme: *Past, Present and Future* came to mind. Really, to be honest, it came to the previous editor's mind, Sandi Waite-Stupiansky.



Sandi is the founding editor and has served as the editor of *Connections* for over 20 years. As she retires this year, she provided us with not only years of back issues to house in our 'artifacts' section but

an overview of our publication's history for this issue. Thank you, Sandi, for your years of service to *Connections*!

To round out our 'past' section, Dr. Jim Johnson and Changkee Lee interview Edgar Klugman. We are honored to have this treasured history in our pages.

We take a look at the *present* state of play and practice, with a short reminder from Diane Levin and some important new updates to the TRUCE website. And Kristen Kemple and a group of colleagues from the University of Florida share a tale of collaboration while creating an interdisciplinary study group around play.

Lastly, our *future* pieces include topics such as spiritual development and technology. Deborah Schien looks at the possible work between the spiritual interest forum and the PPP interest forum and shares her connections of play, nature and spiritual development. While Lynn has included a resource on technology and play and takes the position that play and technology is not an either or.

As we look to the future of *Connections* and the PPP IF, we need all of us here and now to work together to preserve the great work of the past. Please consider attending our meeting in Dallas, writing for our next edition of *Connections* and joining our work to further the 'connections' between Play, Policy and Practice.



Co-Managing Editors:

Lynn-Hartle, The Pennsylvania State University at Brandywine

Karen Lindeman, Edinboro University

Come and join the **Play, Policy and Practice Interest Forum** Annual Leadership and Advocacy business meeting. Lend a hand in strengthening play as the heart of early childhood education, discuss this year's workshops, plan next year's sessions, brainstorm PPIIF *Connections*, and get involved in one of our action committees.

The Patricia Monaghan Nurot and Professor Edgar Klugman Awards will be presented. Everyone is welcome.

Friday, November 7th from 6:00–8:00 p.m.
Omni Dallas Hotel, Fair Park 1



Why Play? From Sandbox and Discrimination to International Sharing and

Caring: Creating a Play Life. Learning from Edgar Klugman

By Jim Johnson, Ph.D. and Changkee Lee, Doctoral Student

Department of Curriculum and Instruction
The Pennsylvania State University

Edgar Klugman is Professor Emeritus of Wheelock College, Charter Member and Facilitator of PPPIF for many years and Co-Founder (with John Lee of The Learning Curve Company) of *Playing for Keeps*; which is now A Leadership Initiative of the Association for Children's Museums. What follows is a summary of the 135 minute phone conversation with Edgar, which took place on Friday October 3, 2014. This interview was conducted and written up by Jim Johnson who is ECE Program Coordinator and by Changkee Lee who is an advanced ECE doctoral student. Both are affiliated with the Department of Curriculum and Instruction in the College of Education at The Pennsylvania State University.

Edgar Klugman spent his childhood years in the City of Toys, Nuremburg, Germany, where the annual International Toy Fair is held to this day. Edgar attended a Froebelian kindergarten, learning through playing with blocks, making books by cutting and pasting and other such collaborative activities. He loved playing inside and outside, and remembers how German tradition at that time, included trying to control youngsters' behavior through 'fooling them'. He remembers being told stories like that of the stork bringing a boy baby when cubed sugar is left on the window sill, or a girl baby is brought when refined sugar is put out. There are also many stories meant to scare or trick children into listening to their parents' rules. For

example, *Struwwelpeter* (1845) was meant to scare kids away from sucking their thumbs. This illustrated book by Heinrich Hoffmann Doners (1809~1894), graphically and frighteningly relates a story about a boy who disobeys his mother by sucking his thumb when she leaves to go shopping. He is punished when a tailor arrives with larger-than-life scissors, cuts off his thumb, shedding blood all over the page! This is very frightening to a young child who sucks his thumb! (Continued on next page)

In this Issue:

Past:

Why Play? From Sandbox and Discrimination to International Sharing and Caring: Creating a Play Life. Learning from Edgar Klugman by Jim Johnson and Changkee Lee, The Pennsylvania State University

The History of the PPP IF Publication: Connections, 1985- Present by Sandra Waite-Stupiansky, Edinboro University

Present:

News from TRUCE, by Diane Levin, Wheelock College

Finding Nemo in an Interdisciplinary Study Group by Kristen Kemple, Sondra Smith-Adcock, Tina Smith-Bonahue and Jacqueline Swank, University of Florida

Future:

Play, Nature, and Spiritual Development: Ingredients for Quality Learning, Happy Children, and a Better Society by Deborah Schein, Champlain College

Beyond the "Godzilla" of Technology & Interactive Media verses Young Children's Play by Lynn Hartle, The State University of Pennsylvania, Brandywine.

The social policies in Germany at the time of Edgar's childhood were scary. Events in the 1930s had a huge impact on Edgar's childhood and play, the effects of which profoundly affected the course of his life and career. The Nazi regime ruled Germany in a brain washing campaign against the Jewish people and other minorities, leading to restrictions that discriminated against him as a young person. He was barred from the public playground sandbox where he loved to play. He could not learn to swim until later in life because the community swimming pool was closed to Jews. The children in his neighborhood would come after him because he was Jewish.

When Edgar was 8 years old, he lost his best friend Hansi whose father became a 'brown shirt', a member of Hitler's Nazi Party, and forbade them



ever to see each other-- even though they had already established a close relationship, and were next door neighbors. At the age of 9 or 10 years old, Edgar was not allowed to travel with a group on his bike or hiking. The Germans feared that Jewish people would resist the oppression if they were allowed to congregate in groups. Consequently traveling long distances, like to his grandparents (60 km

away) became a solo activity on a bike. He had to travel through villages and was always greeted by the sign "JEWS NOT WANTED HERE." The fear of being 'caught' was always present. It was a time when a young Jewish boy feared for his safety on a daily basis.

However, the discrimination also led Edgar to find other ways of playing, becoming more innovative and resilient; it caused him to rebel, to hate discrimination and the loss of basic freedoms. All his life he has been seeking to improve human and cultural relations, and peaceful play. The seeds

for this were planted many years ago in Nuremberg, Germany. His motivation to participate actively in the creation and shaping of a just and equitable world for all has grown and strengthened whenever facing experiences with discrimination throughout his life. He lived in many places, including 3 years in Afghanistan, 1956-1959, as a member of a team of educators from Columbia University. Where ever he lived, if somehow discrimination occurred or injustice was seen, his early memories were stirred. "Seeing discrimination and injustice still present today in many ways," He said, "Can spur one to revisit all those memories, and it can rekindle the drive to do something about it."

When Edgar was 13 years old (8/24/1939), his parents put him on the Kinder-transport train. He travelled 48 hours to England. The Kinder transport program assisted in temporary relocation of Jewish refugee children, between 10 and 16 years of age, who were affected by Hitler. The Kinder transport helped 10,000 children to move to England from Nazi invaded, European countries (primarily Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Germany). Children were evacuated to small rural towns. Edgar went to northern England, away from London in order to avoid the frequent bombing the city saw. Children lived in foster homes in small groups with surrogate or house parents. Edgar arrived ten days before WW2 officially began. He saw a black curtain covering the windows; he thought he may have arrived at a movie theater only to find out that war was imminent and this was the blackout curtain. This was a time he truly grew up and was forced to become independent.

Another story Edgar tells, concerns his Oxford English, learned in Germany. He used it but was not understood by the English he encountered while in transit, as it was considered "strange" English. The boys Edgar met at the group home, predominantly from Austria, spoke German, though a different dialect. The fact that he came from Germany, and the other kids came from Austria was an initial shock for both of them. The Austrian children had preconceived ideas about all Germans and thought

he was responsible for the war because he was German. He was faced with discrimination in Germany because he was a Jew and then in England because he was a German. The boys eventually became aware that they were all Jewish and that they should support each other.

The boys played together but they were all having a very different and restricted life in another culture. Their house parents, who came from Austria, were prejudiced and discriminated against the German boy, Edgar. The interpersonal discrimination he felt in England was due to nationality rather than religion, but it was the same feeling none-the-less, which interferes with the children's growth and development. The prejudiced house parents were fired finally and new house parents were hired who were much better. The new house parents sent the boys to the local community Church of England school. Edgar offered that dialect differences stand in the way in any country especially affecting foreigners. Upon arrival at the Church of England school, Edgar was corrected by the headmaster for his Oxford English since the language pattern in Northern England was different from that of London or anywhere else.

On April 1st, 1940, when he was 14 years old, Edgar arrived by boat in New York City. His quota number was called while in England. He had a visa and was allowed to enter by the American government, according to the immigration laws of the United States. When he phoned his brother, Werner, from the boat, who had a job in NYC, he reached a Hungarian lady where Werner lived. She answered, "Woina's at Woik" in her best "New York-ese" accent.

Edgar learned much from the various settings in which he lived. He learned from an early age to adapt to new situations, to invent ways to use the indigenous resources, knowledge base and to learn what you can or cannot do in a particular setting for religious, class or cast reasons. This concept is important for immigrants who have to accommodate to the new patterns they find. Even in play, Edgar is able to accept the different forms that children bring into the classroom and elsewhere, and adapt them to

make them his own. He learns with the children and people he meets.

Edgar also learned from Caroline Pratt's model of education at the City and Country School. Each grade contributed to the whole school; One class ran a store. Another class learned how to use the printing press and made all the printed materials for the school. The school setting helped him understand that when children's interests and needs become the focal point for the school curriculum a teacher can learn from the children how to best create a child centered classroom.

Edgar shared many informative topics relating to play that he has found important and influential in his continuing career. For example, "Spiel Gut" translates as "good toy" a seal awarded by an interdisciplinary team of 40, representing different disciplines (e.g. medicine, engineering, environment and other occupations). The expert panels meet regularly selecting and recommending good toys. Spiel Gut's headquarters are located in Ulm Germany, birthplace of the International Council for Children's Play in 1959. He told us about BRIO Toys and their pro-social, pro-humanity mission and the Lennart Ivarson Scholarship Awards with the 2012 recipient Dr. David Whitebread. Plan Toys in Thailand, make toys from rubber trees no longer producing latex. Their toy designs are creative and produced to last. They employ local people who are paid a living wage. Plan Toys from the beginning conducts the industry in an environmentally conscious way. They also publish materials for parents, educating them about play and learning in contextually appropriate ways.

Edgar discussed connections between his earlier experiences with Spiel Gut, BRIO and other companies and founding *Playing For Keeps*. He also discussed his current work on intergenerational play in the City of Cambridge. He is part of a task force dedicated to having healthy playgrounds and recreation. He was approached by the City Manager to serve on this task force. One initiative that came out of the Task Force was an interactive art gallery presentation titled – Let The People Play. An exhibit consisted of a wall covered in "blackboard paint" (purchased from a Japanese company) that

can be ‘painted’ with water. After the water dries the surface can be painted with water again. This reusable surface reminded Edgar of the school walls in Afghanistan where he saw a similar phenomenon – daily murals were painted and then each evening it could be white washed over and ready for the next mural. It is marvelous how one’s past resurfaces in the present impacting the future.

From his involvement with the Transition Movement and the New Economy Coalition to his most recent creation of the intergenerational program “Project Read” on Cape Cod, to having served as a delegate at the Massachusetts State Democratic Convention, Ed continues to push courageously forward, policies and practices that serve to create “the better world our hearts know is possible” (also the title of a favorite book of his by Charles Eisenstein) for all beings on this planet and beyond.

Listening and thinking over all that Edgar told us made us realize how fortunate we are to be in dialogue with him and have access to his storehouse of memories and knowledge, insight and wisdom. He shared lessons culled from distant places on the planet and from over the decades. The importance of history and culture became very real to us. Goosebumps were felt as we listened to his words describing events in rich detail from the 1930s and early 1940s.

Perhaps the most important lesson, implicit as it is within everything else he was telling us, is that life is a gift to share. To care is to keep in touch with each other and to be fully present, not to hide from the flow of time but to enter into solidarity from different points along the life cycle. Play helps us all, and as we age it is especially welcome to help us maintain our mental openness and networks across the generations. It is a joy to reap the benefits of Edgar’s amazing life experiences and his creative thought connections. Our conversation and this article is testimony to this. Thank you Edgar Klugman!

The History of the Play, Policy, and Practice (PPP) Interest Forum Connections: 1985- Present

By Sandi Waite-Stupiansky, Ph.D.
Professor, Early Childhood, Edinboro University

As I pack up my office at Edinboro University and prepare to retire after 30+ years of university teaching, there are so many memories that swirl around my imagination. Last week, I boxed up the back issues of *PPP Connections* and passed them along to Karen Lindeman, one of the new co-editors of this little gem of a publication. In that box were the words and thoughts of the people who have contributed to and guest edited *Connections*. These folks have become some of my favorite people as we worked and played together to promote play. Knowing that we probably wouldn’t have crossed paths if we didn’t have our shared passion for the value of play in the lives of children and adults leaves me in a state of awe and thankfulness. It occurred to me that it’s not the pages of the publication, the number of workshops we presented, the dozens of business meetings and conference calls we participated in that make us strong. It’s the relationships we have forged at the individual most personal level. The web of a structure that has tied us together is what matters the most. No wonder we called our publication “Connections”! That was Ed Klugman’s foresight twenty years ago.

Where have we been over the last thirty years? We started as a caucus of NAEYC—just a few key folks who were crazy about play. The original group of three--Ed Klugman, Pat Monighan Nourot, and I--gave a presentation at the NAEYC annual conference resulting from a summer workshop on play at Wheelock College. During the presentation, we invited others to join our little caucus. Lynn Cohen and Walter Drew willingly heeded our invitation. Now a group of five, we declared ourselves the “Play, Policy, and Practice Caucus,” became recognized by NAEYC, and started our presence at the NAEYC annual

conferences and Professional Development Institutes, sponsoring at least one workshop and one business meeting every year. Around 10 years into the process, we started the Research Roundtables under the skillful guidance of Dorothy Sluss, to showcase and dialogue about the research studies—large and small—being conducted by folks all over the country and world. In 2012, NAEYC selected our Research Roundtable for a “featured session” at the annual conference. How far we have come from the few passionate play folks to having national recognition for our play research by NAEYC!

Back to the 1990’s, we applied for and received a NAEYC Member Action Grant (MAG) to finance our publication, *Play, Policy, and Practice Connections*. The first issue came out in the summer of 1995. For 12 years we published *Connections* in hard copy and mailed them to subscribers, which was quite expensive. But in 2007, we went digital and started distributing *Connections* electronically. Issues were available free of charge on the NAEYC Community of Practice website and through our email distribution list. Circulation grew from several hundred to several thousand. Paging back through the nearly 40 issues of *PPP Connections*, I marvel at the expertise, wisdom, and hard work that went into the hundreds of articles therein. It gives me shivers to think about the collective wisdom encapsulated in this small but mighty publication. I am so honored to have been a part of it all of these years and will watch with anticipation where the new editors will take it.

In 2001, PPP became one of the first “Interest Forums” of NAEYC. In an effort to make the caucuses a more formal part of the infrastructure of NAEYC, this new Interest Forum structure was put into place. The vision was for the interest forums to have their own website under the NAEYC umbrella, maintain visibility in the conferences and publications of NAEYC, and provide a venue for members to connect with others with similar passions and positions. After 13 years, the vision is still becoming a reality as the interest forums, which are made up of volunteers with few operating funds and an aging population, hammer out their identities

in relation to NAEYC. PPP remains one of the most active and visible interest forums due to the boundless energy of the cadre of folks who are passionate about play. The future is bright for interest forums that make the most of their relationship to NAEYC at the national, state and local levels, which PPP has worked hard to do under the guidance of Walter Drew.

The history of the Play, Policy, and Practice Interest Forum is one of energy and resilience. As we pass the leadership on to a new generation, we do so with a sense of confidence that the work is going to continue to prosper, relationships will strengthen, and play will go on. It has to for the sake of our children!



***Finding Nemo* in an Interdisciplinary Study Group**

By Kristen Kemple, Sondra Smith-Adcock, Tina Smith-Bonahue and Jacqueline Swank
University of Florida

In the popular Disney Pixar production, *Finding Nemo*, it is the first day of school and a nervous and overprotective clownfish named Marlin cautions his exuberant son, “I would feel better if you go play over there on the sponge beds.

That’s where I would play”. Marlin is later advised by a laid-back surfer turtle to “see what the young one can do for himself”, which results in Nemo becoming separated from his father. As Marlin searches for his son, he ultimately learns to allow

him the freedom to both test himself and take care of himself.

There are elements of freedom, risk, and testing inherent in the act of play. Play is a natural place and process for trying things on, trying things out, and experimenting with the world. Valuing play for these functions is one of the core commonalities we have discovered in the interest that pulls us together.

A little over a year ago, several university colleagues began meeting as a local group of scholars interested in the study of young children's play. We have grown to a cluster of 10 (professors and graduate students) who meet for one hour weekly, to enjoy conversation, company, and occasional play. Our group is interdisciplinary, and represents early childhood education, school psychology, counseling, and child development. Our individual interests in play are wide-ranging, and include playground design, play therapy, play in nature, and play-based assessment, among many others.

We view our "play group" as an opportunity to cross-fertilize and incubate ideas. In keeping with the spirit of play, we try things on, try things out, and experiment in a fairly casual context. We cross boundaries, encourage academic risk-taking, and present differing perspectives. More than a few times, as our Monday meeting draws to a close at 10 AM, group members have commented to the effect that, "This is the best meeting I'll have this week". We cannot always all be in attendance, but something good must be happening to keep us regularly showing up at 9 AM on Monday mornings.

Our group has grown tentacles. As ideas have been spawned, smaller groups and individuals have developed spin-off opportunities and projects that take on their own life. During a recent spin-off meeting, four of us (the authors) shared our personal views about the primary ways in which children's play is important in our respective disciplines. While a variety of benefits were identified, we noted that a strong unifying theme involved empowerment. Comments included:

"In play, children get a kind of confidence"

"When we impose too many structures on children, we take away their power to create their world in a way that makes sense to them...opportunity to play restores this power"

"For a child, play is "my way to be who I am""

"Play is a child's natural medium – it is a vital context for all aspects of development"

"Play is the native language of children – through play children are able to feel seen and heard"

"Play is a place for putting ideas together"

"Play is a natural teacher of limits – children discover for themselves how far they can go"

"Play is an opportunity not only for seeing what a child can do, but for letting her experience what she can do"

As we shared these comments, we were reminded of Nemo. Marlin is reluctant to let Nemo experience life outside their anemone-home for fear he will get hurt. Over the course of their adventures, Marlin meets other fathers, and Nemo meets other father-figures, who teach them the importance of trying new things, testing your own limits, exploring your world. In essence, father and son negotiate a space where Nemo can stand a head taller than himself (ala Vygotsky) as he builds his competence and confidence.



We came to the realization that mainstream American culture has adopted Marlin's child-rearing philosophies. Adults control children's worlds through overly structured "play dates," obsessive concerns about safety, and an over-abundance of adult-directed extracurricular activities. In our post-No-Child-Left-Behind schools, risk-taking is frowned upon, and creativity is definitely "not on

the test.” Our interest in exploring and understanding play is fueled by a desire to change children’s worlds so they can explore and learn on their own terms, through their natural medium, and in their native tongue - play.

The study of play is by nature an interdisciplinary endeavor. By coming together as a study group, we have found support and created momentum for projects that might not have emerged had we stayed within the bounds of our own disciplines and departments. We are sure our little study group is not unique, but we offer this description to encourage others to swim into interdisciplinary waters and engage in similar collaborations.

News from TRUCE

Submitted by Diane Levin, Ph.D.
Wheelock College,
Professor of Early Childhood Education



Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment (TRUCE) is a national group of educators deeply concerned about how children's entertainment and toys are affecting the play and behavior of children in our classrooms. Busy families often find it hard to set aside time for play, especially with the distraction of screens and technology. TRUCE offers resources to help families choose appropriate toys and media and promote quality play. It's most recent project is designed to encourage play with the whole family using natural and found objects as well as outdoor play for each season of the year.

Go to www.Truceteachers.org to print a two-page guide for each seasonal play theme with easy-to-follow ideas. These are great resources to share with pre-service teachers and families. Browse the action guides or download them in color or black & white PDF format. Feel free to copy and distribute

the materials to help spread the word in your community about the value of family play.

Find them at: www.TruceTeachers.org



Play, Nature, and Spiritual Development: Ingredients for Quality Learning, Happy Children, and a Better Society

By Deborah Schein, Ph.D.
Consultant for the Agency of Jewish Learning,
Pittsburgh, PA
Adjunct Professor for Early Childhood Graduate
Department of Champlain College in Vermont

Many early childhood educators agree with researchers and philosophers who say that play is important for healthy human development. I have recently completed a Ph.D. in spiritual development. The findings of my research hold new understandings for creating quality instruction, higher standards, better assessment scores, more joy in learning, and ultimately a better society.

First: A Look at Play

My fondest memories of play include roller skating downhill with the wind upon my face; climbing trees where I could nestle among the leaves while glancing upon the world of my neighborhood; and taking walks with my grandfather as we collected beautiful pieces of nature complete with names, colors, textures, and smells. Each of these activities were enhanced when done with a friend.

Young children in the classrooms in which I have taught have also appreciated exploration with

block building, using art materials, reading, dress-up, etc in clean, beautiful, uncluttered environments. I would set up my classrooms so that children played and through the play they learned . . . while they learned, I observed so that I might provide the next needed stimulus for their learning to continue. My role was that of facilitator rather than teacher.

Spiritual Development

For me, important play takes place within spiritual moments. In 2005, when I went to the internet to see what was said about spiritual development for young children, I found very little relevant material. This led to my doctoral research titled: *Early Childhood Educator's Perceptions of Spiritual Development in Young Children*. It was my goal to begin analyzing the meaning of spiritual development while also questioning how early childhood educators might nurture this often forgotten area of development. I hoped to increase awareness of spiritual development in all early childhood programs in the United States by defining it as separate from God and religion. Therefore, I focused on finding other important elements of spiritual development that might be found in everyday experiences.

Data sorting of interviews with 12 experienced and very accomplished early childhood educators from across the United States led to a description of spiritual development as a system of children's deep connections (with others, self, nature, and big questions). Deep connections seem to lead to greater self-awareness. The findings also spoke to the importance of nurturing basic and complex dispositions¹ ignited by moments of wonderment, awe, joy, and inner peace (basic dispositions) that develop into the pro-social personality traits of caring, kindness, empathy, and reverence (complex dispositions). Nature played an important role for providing wonder, big questions, and a sense of responsibility. This system of spiritual development also requires love and attachment, spiritual modeling, and time spent by children within spiritual moments. Participants

described specific attributes for spiritual moments in time, space, nature, within relationships and with big questions capable of taking children beyond themselves.²

More importantly, these spiritual moments are made available to children through play. Reflecting back on my memories of play, I see that I was given a gift of time to be outdoors, to pursue the activities of my own choosing; to spend time with those I chose to be with, in places I wanted to be. I was loved. I was seen. I was respected. Because of this, my play was capable of touching me deeply in a way that helped me to better know myself. This person I call "me" houses my spiritualness or my spiritual embryo³, a force that is nurtured through love, experiences, language, being present in the world of nature, feeling and hearing one's own breath, and respecting others.

Mindfulness and Being Present

More recently I have been reading about the concept of mindfulness. Friends and colleagues are telling me that mindfulness is equivalence to spiritual development. I am not convinced. They tell me to use this word instead of spiritual development. Spirituality, they say, comes with too much baggage. Instead I see mindfulness as the part of spiritual development where one is present during a spiritual moment. It is possible that being present during play makes play itself a spiritual moment. But spiritual development is much more than being present in the moment.

Martin Buber speaks about presence being a required element for any I-Thou relationship.⁴ Young children experience such moments quite

² Rifkin, M., with Schein, D. (2014). "The Great outdoors: Providing Natural Spaces for Young Children." Washington DC: NAEYC.

³ *Spiritual embryo*: The term used to describe innate disposition that guides, directs, and propels each child toward growth, independence, knowledge, learning, and knowing (Montessori, 1967). Inherent in this force is a process by which the human psyche develops in much the same way as the germ cell—both appear to be "the miracle of creation from nothing" (Montessori, 1963, p. 15). This "new creature born into the world" . . . is not merely a material body" but houses the home (Montessori, 1963, p. 15), a "vital force", a term borrowed from Sir Percy Nunn.

⁴ An I/Thou relationship is a relationship that is extremely significant and meaningful. Such relationships begin present then on-going experiences. I/Thou relationships have the potential to become part of an individual (Buber, 1923/1996, p. 57). To use Montessori's language, the experiences and emotions spurred by these relationships become absorbed into one's being.

¹ A disposition refers to a child's nature, character, and temperament (Katz, 2009).

frequently, but only if they are first loved and then when they are invited to play within beautiful spaces where they are given time to explore, and trusted to do so following their own agenda.

I recently returned from a visit to Israel. There, children as young as one-year-olds are free to climb and roam the small playgrounds that dot the landscape while the parent or care-givers sit in the shade supervising from afar. I did not see any helicopter parents hover with fear thus preventing children from experiencing presence in their own moments of play. I also saw many children simply being present in the park, sitting head to head upon a rock or in the grass. Pure contentment in the moment shone on their faces.

Conclusion

Based upon my own experiences as an educator and as a researcher, play; spirituality defined as a system of deep connections and the nurturing of children's dispositions through wonder and joy, caring and empathy; and presence reflected in I and Thou relationships all provide impetus for the development of self-awareness. A developing sense of self or positive self-awareness helps to propel us human beings toward wanting to know, knowing, and remembering. Being in nature also helps to support these qualities of life. These qualities of being provide a tapestry in which children can hold language and understandings that connect to context and content of their experiences. Real learning thus takes place when the whole child is engaged in spiritual moments where the self, the spirit, and the mind are equally engaged.

Jan Huzinga, the Dutch theologian, once provocatively suggested that rather than being known as Homo sapiens, the wise creature, human beings might be called homo ludens, the playful being. Whatever wisdom his observations may contain for human beings as a species, it serves to underscore the importance of our thinking about the relationship between play, spiritual development, and quality learning for young children as our education systems move into a new phase of thinking about early childhood education. Play and spiritual development should not be forgotten!

References

- Buber, M. 1923/1996. *I and Thou* (W. Kaufmann, Trans.). New York, NY: Touchstone.
- Katz, L. (2009). *Intellectual emergencies: Some reflections on mothering and teaching*. Louisville, NC: Kaplan Press.
- Montessori, M. (1967). *The absorbent mind* (C. A. Claremont, Trans.). New York, NY: Dell.
- Montessori, M. (1963). *The secret of childhood* (B. B. Carter, Trans.). Bombay, India: Orient Longmans.
- Rivkin, M. & Schein, D. (2014). *The great outdoors: Providing natural spaces for young children*. Washington DC: NAEYC.
- Schein, D. L. (winter, 2014). Practices that nurture young Jewish children's spiritual development. *The Reform Jewish Quarterly published by the Central Conference of American Rabbis*. Special edition, 116-133.
- Schein, D. L. (2012). Early childhood educators' perceptions of spiritual development in young children: A social constructivist grounded theory study. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Walden University.
- Wilson, R.A., & Schein, D. (In press) Supporting the spiritual development of young children. *Essays in Jewish scholarship and education in honor of Lifsa Schachter*.

Beyond the “Godzilla” of Technology and Interactive Media Verses Young Children’s Play

By Lynn Hartle, Ph.D.
Professor of Education, The State University of Pennsylvania, Brandywine

The world is rapidly changing as technologies and interactive media tools permeate our daily lives to make communication and the access of information easier, faster, better, and more fun, but many play advocates, (including this

author) question – “At what price?”. Are these technologies “Godzillas” that mindlessly ravage children of important play opportunities? Young children in the 21st century are no strangers to uses of these technologies and interactive media; just search the internet for “toddler with iPad”; “five year old playing the Wii; Or “six year old on Skype”. *Zero to eight: Children’s media use in America (2013)*, a nationwide survey of parents by Common Sense Media reported that 38 percent of children *under 2* have used a mobile device for media (compared to 10% in 2011). Seventy-two percent of children age 8 and under have used a mobile device for some type of media activity such as playing games, watching videos, or using apps, up from 38% in 2011.

So what does the research say?

So, the question remains and the research is limited and can be conflicting and confusing - What does this mean for young children? Is there a shift to play with technologies rather than with natural materials, a cultural phenomenon that will forever change childhood? What is the role of schools and families to provide access or not to these technologies? ... And will this be “high quality” play? Will young children get so absorbed in the mechanical aspects of technology that they forget how to engage with each other in a critical medium of development – play? Can certain technologies actually support and or enhance play?

There is evidence that the use of technology and the glamour and hype of screen time (with computers, mobile devices, & TV) is potentially harmful and without proper adult guidance, may replace young children’s authentic play of manipulating objects, interacting other children, and time outdoors in active play. Excessive use of electronic media also has been credited with increase in the following, for example- obesity, attention deficit disorder, and violence. Those of us who are play advocates, parents, researchers, and teachers support efforts to “take back” childhood from a media saturated, fast paced world and for children to engage in good old-fashioned make-believe play time which extensive research supports

as critical for the development of language, social skills, and self-regulation (Berk, Mann, & Ogan, 2006; Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2003; Singer & Singer, 2005).

PPP Connections Volume XV, Issue 2 Winter/Spring 2015

Call for Articles & Guest Editor(s)!

Themed Issue: Play and Pre K!

With federal and state funding increasing for mandated Prekindergarten in almost every state, we are asking where is the play?

We are looking for **guest editors** and **articles** for our next edition of *Connections*.

Please contact either:

Lynn Hartle at lch1@psu.edu or

Karen Lindeman at klindeman@edinboro.edu

But where can families and teachers of young children go to find more research-based information within a world flooded with marketing on the latest tech tools? Lisa Guernsey (2012) a concerned mother, but also a scholar, includes in her book: *Screen time: How electronic media—from baby videos to educational software—affects your young child*, a summary of the research on how electronic media impacts our children. She provides some clarifications regarding ages when children are most vulnerable and what families can do to play a more active part in children’s uses and time balanced with active play and effective technology uses. (see more of Lisa’s papers at <http://www.lisaguernsey.com/>). (Continued on next page)

Other major national organizations and individuals consider the potential of 21st century media tools to enable children to express emerging ideas about their internal (feelings, imagination) and external (objects, people, places) worlds (see National Association for the Education of Young Children, the National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC] and the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media at Saint Vincent College, 2012). The qualities for child learning and development of emerging digital literacies as well as traditional literacies (writing, drawing, gesture, creating with a graphic organizer, and play) can be considered as choices (see multi-literacies - New London Group, 1996). Those who look to the potentials of technologies make informed decisions about appropriate scaffolding with all literacy tools (high and low tech. tools). They believe that young children are capable of representing their ideas in creative, symbolic, and concrete forms with multiple media of all forms and in *one hundred languages* (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1998), such as - taking and using digital photos to research a topic, using software to create books, and engaging in web quests - expand children's understandings of those arts and verbal and visual signs, symbols, as well as their information uses (Hartle, & Jaruszewicz, 2009; Labbo, 2000; Labbo, Sprague, Montero, & Font, 2000; Resnick, 2006; Yelland, Hill, & Mulheam, 2004).

Guidelines for technology and play balance

On March 2012, after three years of revisions based on input from members of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC] and the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media at Saint Vincent College (2012) completed a revised position paper on technology for young children: *Technology and interactive media as tools in early childhood programs serving children from birth to age eight*. Examples of high quality practices, those that do NOT supplant but rather supplement and

enhance play and learning can be found at <<http://www.naeyc.org/content/technology-and-young-children>> and <<http://www.fredrogerscenter.org/>>

Examples of Effective Practice
(links work when downloaded to your computer or find these on the website above)

- [Examples of Effective Practice with Infants and Toddlers](#)
- [Examples of Effective Practice with Preschoolers and Kindergarteners](#)
- [Examples of Effective Practice with School-Age Children](#)
- [View Examples of Effective Practice \(PDF\)](#)

Technology That Supports Early Learning
(links work when downloaded to your computer or find these on the website above)

- [Digital Story Helps Dual Language Learner Connect with Classmates](#)
- [Virtual Tour of the Titanic Helps a Kindergartner Make Social Connections](#)
- [Supporting Family Involvement and Readiness for Migrant Children](#)

The position paper offers guidance for the opportunities and challenges of the use of technology and interactive media. The key messages in this position statement include:

- 1) When used intentionally and appropriately, technology and interactive media are effective tools to support learning and development;
- 2) Intentional use requires early childhood teachers and administrators to have information and resources regarding the nature of these tools and the implications of their use with children;
- 3) Limitations on the use of technology and media are important;
- 4) Special considerations must be given to the use of technology with infants and toddlers;
- 5) Attention to digital citizenship and equitable access is essential; and

6) Ongoing research and professional development are needed.

To follow up on the key messages of the position paper on technology for young children and provide concrete examples of a balanced learning environment, Chip Donahue (2014) and colleagues created another resource: *Technology and digital media in the early Years: Tools for teaching and learning*. Chip is quoted as saying about this resource that authors present distinctions about the uses of technologies "...including the importance of developmentally appropriate practice; the important role of attentive, responsive caring adults; the importance of using media together; and the importance of using media to help kids engage in what they do best: explore and discover through play and hands-on activities." One early learning and development center director who follows best practices reports that children in his center are engaged with all mediums in their play; the technology is there and available, but that the "...technology in the classrooms at the school is 'almost invisible' " as seamless supports to all of the other engagement in authentic learning experiences. (Jackson, 2011).

Conclusion and recommendations

Rather than put blame on technologies as a "Godzilla" that stomps on young children's play, this article provides resources and links to specific examples of classroom practices involving technology tools and interactive media. The intent is to stimulate future discussion about the potential to support young children's play with BOTH natural materials and technologies in preschool and primary early learning settings, home, and after-school programs. Since technologies are a central part of society and may be even more so in the future, researchers, teachers and families will need to continually scrutinize relevant research on: how well, when, where and why use technology with young children (pros and cons). Guidelines are available for choosing appropriate play supports/ toys / natural materials/ technologies, such as how well the technology supports interaction with peers

and adults, and multiple or open-ended ways to work or play with or without the technology. As with all aspects of child care and education guidelines must be understood as just that "guidelines" and not directions. Decisions depend on responsible, thoughtful adults who know the individual children in their care.

References

- Berk, L. E., Mann, T. D., & Ogan, A. T. (2006). Make-believe play: Wellspring for development of self-regulation. In D. Singer, R. M. Golinkoff, & K. Hirsh-Pasek (Eds.), *Play=Learning: How play motivates and enhances children's cognitive and social-emotional growth*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Common Sense Media. (2013). *Zero to eight: Children's media use in America*. San Francisco, CA: Common Sense Media. <<http://www.commonsensemedia.org/research>>
- Donahue, C. (Ed.) (2014). *Technology and digital media in the early Years: Tools for teaching and learning*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Edwards, C. Gandini, L. Forman, G. (Eds.) (1998). *The hundred languages of children: The Reggio Emilia approach – advanced reflections*, 2nd Ed. Ablex, Norwood N.J.
- Guernsey, L. (2012). *Screen time: How electronic media—from baby videos to educational software—affects your young child*. Philadelphia, PA: Basic Books.
- Hartle, L. & Jaruszewicz, C. (2009). Rewiring and networking language, literacy, and communication through the arts: Teacher's and young children's fluency to create with technology, pp187-205. In Narey, M.J. (Ed.). *Making Meaning: Constructing Multimodal Perspectives of Language, Literacy, and Learning through Arts-based Early Childhood Education*. NY, NY: Springer Publishing Company. (Volume in the series - Jalongo, M.R., Isenberg, J., &

- Fennimore, B. (Eds.). *Educating the Young Child: Advances in Theory and Research, Implications for Practice.*
- Hirsh-Pasek, K., & Golinkoff, R. M. (2003). *Einstein never used flash cards: How our children really learn and why they need to play more and memorize less.* Emmaus, PA: Rodale Press.
- Jackson, S. (2011). Learning, Digital Media and Creative Play in Early Childhood. *Spotlight on digital media and creative play in early childhood.* Retrieved from the Internet at <http://spotlight.macfound.org/featured-stories/entry/learning-digital-media-and-creative-play-in-early-childhood/> <see more at <http://www.pacificu.edu/our-resources/early-learning-community> >
- Labbo, L.D. (2000). 12 things young children can do with a talking book in a classroom computer center. *Reading Teacher*, 53(7), 542-546.
- Labbo, L.D., Sprague, L., Montero, M.K., & Font, G. (2000, July). Connecting a computer center to themes, literature, and kindergartners' literacy needs. *Reading Online*, 4 (1). Available: <http://www.readingonline.org/electronic/labbo/>
- NAEYC & Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media. (2012). *Technology and interactive media as tools in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8.* Joint position statement. Washington, DC: NAEYC; Latrobe, PA: Fred Rogers Center at Saint Vincent College. www.naeyc.org/content/technology-and-young-children.
- New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 60-92.
- Resnick, M. (2006). Computer as Paintbrush: Technology, Play, and the Creative Society In Singer, D., Golikoff, R., and Hirsh-Pasek, K. (eds.), *Play = Learning: How play motivates and enhances children's cognitive and social-emotional growth.* Oxford University Press.
- Singer, D., & Singer, J. L. (2005). *Imagination and play in the electronic age.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Yelland, N., Hill, S., & Mulheam, G. (2004). Children of the new millennium: Using information and communication technologies for playing and learning in the information age. *International Journal of Learning*, 11.

Don't forget to check out our online interactive version of *Connections* at <http://pppconnections.wordpress.com/>