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## A Three Month Study of the Play Habits of the Warsaw Elementary School Children Kaufman County, Texas

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A THREE MONTH STUDY OF THE PLAY HABITS  
OF THE WARSAW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
CHILDREN KAUFMAN COUNTY, TEXAS

By

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Audrey Vernice Smith

A Thesis in Child Care Submitted in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Bachelor of Science

in the

Division of Home Economics

of the

Prairie View State Normal and Industrial College

Prairie View, Texas

August, 1938

DEDICATED

To

Those relatives and friends -

who made it possible

for me to stay

in school and write this thesis.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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I wish to express my sincere appreciation to

Miss E. J. Anderson

For her interest and unbiased assistance during the preparation of this thesis.

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## INTRODUCTION

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Play is the child's way of learning, of experimenting, of trying himself out, of finding out about everything in the world around him, for it is full of new experiences and a new combination of past ones.

Play is a key to the child's development, to fill the child's needs to the best advantage, we must know what is taking place in his development. The period of growth, as we have seen, is a time of extremely rapid development and is concerned with bringing out the important muscles of the child. The child is engaged in the tremendously important business of controlling muscles that help him run, jump, climb, haul, push, walk, laugh and sing, touch and taste, feel and handle as many different things in his surroundings as possible.

Play is the child's education, it is a serious thing for him and should be planned for seriously by the parents and teachers or anyone responsible for the rearing and education of children.

In providing child play, it is well to remember to keep the activities related to the life he knows. As he grows mentally and physically there must be a

gradual widening of his horizon to include that with which he is familiar.

Many good habits are encouraged by the careful planning of play. Children who are busy with something that interests them, have little time for aimless fooling, teasing or quarreling. If toys or play materials are bought or made with this in mind, concentrations and purposes enter into the child's life. The child begins to learn to acquire habits of workmanship which will serve him well, if his play is properly planned. Materials such as blocks, sand, clay, wood, paper and cardboard, which can be changed and modified to meet the constantly growing needs of the child, should be substituted for all toys or games which offer little or nothing for the child to do. All materials used by children should be permanent and for a lasting nature, and should be readily adopted by the child as he develops.

### Theories of Play

Herbert Spencer, one of the earliest writers on this subject, claimed that play is the expenditure of surplus energy not yet absorbed into the direct activities of life. While this theory may fit the early forms of the play impulse, it does not cover so well the more

highly organized forms. For the latter, other theories have been advanced.

Carl Groos, in writing of the play of animals and the play of men, advanced the theory that play is more or less literally preparation for adult life. The little girl playing with her doll today is the mother of tomorrow; the lad shop is the merchant of the future. That the imitative tendency is present in the play of children is unquestionable, but that there is any underlying adaptive purpose even unconscious, is hard to accept. Indeed, such purposive behavior as this theory portrays would seem to contradict the very nature of play.

Another theory is that propounded by G. Stanley Hall, known as the Recapitulative Theory of Play. This theory attempts to trace in the play behavior of children certain well-marked developmental stages corresponding to the various periods of racial development - the hunting stage, the fishing stage, the fighting stage, etc.

Other theories have been put forward from time to time - play as recreation, that is, relaxation from work, tension; play as an expression of the impulse to activity, etc.

To us play activity of children is a dynamic process, stimulating further growth and integration of the entire organism as no system of training however skillfully devised could do.



### PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to show or point out the play habits of the elementary school children between the ages of six and twelve years. It aims to show how different play materials affect age levels in regard to diversity of interest in materials. It aims to stimulate greater interest in the appreciation of play of the elementary school child.

### METHOD

To study the play habits and discover the differences in the use of play materials of children between the ages of six and twelve years, the following plan was used:

1. To observe the children of the elementary school in free play situation. The element of interference of other children as a hindrance in a child's free choice of materials was taken into consideration.
2. To record the time which each child spent in certain games or with play materials during a given period of time (3 months). Then a summary of games played and materials used was made.

3. An observation of the use to which the play materials were put by the child was also made.

The school, a very small two room house which at one time was used for residential purposes, is located in a low swampy like place in a privately owned pasture. The location is seven miles west of Kaufman, Texas, on a farm owned by one of the trustees of the school.

As stated above, the school building consists of two rooms, one small and one large room. The large room is used for class studies and work, while the smaller room which is the back of the building is used as a clock room, lunch room and a room in which most of the infant play is carried on.

## THE SCHOOL PLANT

The school, a very small two room house which at one time was used for residential purposes, is located in a low swampy like place in a privately owned pasture. The location is seven miles west of Kaufman, Texas, on a farm owned by one of the trustees of the school.

As stated above, the school building consists of two rooms, one small and one large room. The large room is used for class studies and work, while the smaller room which is the back of the building is used as a cloak room, lunch room and a room in which most of the indoor play is carried on.

The part the teacher played - With the use of the equipment on hand nothing was done by the teacher to stimulate any child towards choosing a material with which to play or in the selection of a game, except in extreme cases where the child was dull and quiet to the extent that he actually needed motivation. In general nothing was allowed to interfere with the child's play during the observation period. The teacher was present at all times to supervise and serve as a guide for the group.

## THE STUDY

The following play materials were present at all situations or observations made:

Blocks	Pictures	Work bench
Books	Sand tables	Scissors
Boxes	Fruit boxes	Papers
Ropes	See-saws	Hammer
Slides	Pencils	Saw
Colored crayons	Nails	

As much as possible the play activities were carried on outside. However, provisions were made for indoor play also.

The play materials were for the most part, inadequate for a group of children this size. (Twenty-four)

The part the teacher played - With the use of the equipment on hand nothing was done by the teacher to stimulate any child towards choosing a material with which to play or in the selection of a game, except in extreme cases where the child was dull and quiet to the extent that he actually needed motivation. In general nothing was allowed to interfere with the child's play during the observation period. The teacher was present at all times to supervise and serve as a guide for the group.

The indoor play of this group was carried on only when the weather was so windy, cold or rainy that outdoor play was prevented. This type of play, for the most part, was not as enjoyable to the group as was the play outside. Especially the older children of the school. One reason given for this was the crowded conditions of the room in which the indoor play activities were carried on.

In this room was the sand table, a work bench, or table, on which were pictures, crayons, papers, scissors and pencils; blocks, books and boxes. There are also posters and paints found in this room.

In the indoor play we find the largest girls more interested in the making of things. This was detected from the continuous play habits of a group of little girls whose ages ranged from nine to twelve years. They were more concerned with activities at the work table. With the use of such materials as paper, paste, scissors, pictures and magazines, they made very nice little booklets. Some were animal books, while others were flower books and booklets called my pets or my pals. Then another very excellent booklet was made by a little girl eleven which was a book of nicely arranged recipes and was labeled "My Cook Book."

The smaller girls of the group who were experiencing their first year or perhaps second year of the class-

In summing up the type of play in which the largest boys were interested when the play was limited to indoor play, it was decided that they were mostly concerned with drawing and making things with the use of the hammer and saw and nails. Two brothers who were twins and eleven years of age, made airplanes in the play room from some of the materials they found in the school and from some of the materials they found they needed and was not at school and were brought from home. The materials they brought from home for the construction of these planes were old Prince Albert tobacco cans. Two other planes were made by boys of the school. These were made from old parts of wooden boxes.

Another group of boys were concerned with drawing. One little boy from this group drew a very nice picture of the house in which they went to school.

This group of girls and boys were mostly concerned with the making or construction of things, and decided upon as characters interested in doing rather than looking on. This type of play was encouraged in this group, because it is a fine thing to help a child develop into the kind of person who is a doer rather than a looker-on.

The smaller girls of the group who were experiencing their first year or perhaps second year of the elemen-

tary school were interested in the materials on the sand table. Even though they did wonder from one play activity to another, as from the sand table to play with a doll in the room, to play with one another or to stand and look for a period of time, the sand table was found to be the most popular play thing for indoor play of this younger group of girls.

As for the smaller group of boys who were beginning their work in the elementary school, their greatest interest was also the sand table. A group of four little boys made all by themselves trains out of match boxes. They made trains out of these boxes by joining them together with strings and paper clips. After the trains were made they built railroad tracks on the sand table by using dirt, sticks and wire. The dirt was used to make hills, tunnels and mountains, the sticks were used for bridges and the track was made from wire. This train play was interesting to all of the group. The teacher helped them build the tracks, at least she told them how they could use the materials for the track and she introduced the tunnel idea to them.

There were other boys of this same group who were less active and their play was not so stable. They were from one type of play to another. Their attitude

was that of restlessness. This seemed to have been caused from the few materials that the play room had to offer. Seemingly his play would have been more effective if there had been just a few more things or materials from which to select his play. Another reason to account for the dullness or inactiveness of this group is the lack of contact they had had with other children or people.

There were several types of indoor play which took in the activities of the entire group. Some of them were: hiding the strap, a play where the strap or any given object was hidden in the front by one member of the group while the rest remained in the play room. After the strap was hidden all were called in to find it. The object of the game was to be the first one to discover hidden article in order to be the next to do the hiding of article. Another was a game called "Who has it?" This was a very nice game in the teaching of language arts or correct English, in that the object of the game was to hide a ball or a top or an eraser, etc., on some one member of the group while one person was out. When the person who was out returns to the group he looks them over and the person who looks like he might have the object she calls his name, being very careful to use the



right verb, as John has it. If the wrong verb is used she takes her seat and the person holding the hidden object goes out for it to be hidden again. If the person seeking the hidden object uses the right word and the one answering uses the verb wrong the one who used the wrong verb has to go out. This play is very popular with the older group of the school, however all take an active part in it, and seem to enjoy it very much.

The first group play mentioned above was enjoyed by the younger group than this last play mentioned. There were a few others on this same order but the two mentioned were more popular than the others.

The arrangement of play facilities is fair, considering the size and location of playground.

The out of door play was far more interesting to the group than that of inside.

Baseball was the popular outdoor game. The young and the old enjoyed baseball. The girls and boys played this game together. The large girls and small girls had a team together and the small boys and large boys had a team. The girls' team played that of the boys' and in most instances

## THE PLAYGROUND

The playground is a very small plot of land very, very small for play purposes for a school of this size. The largest space for playing is on the north side of the house, where is located the baseball diamond which is the most used spot for outdoor play. The boundary lines of the baseball diamond are a ditch, a wire fence and field of rough ground used for farm purposes, which serve as a disadvantage for free play. On the south side of the school house is the next largest plot of ground for play, on which is located the slides, one small and one large, and a double swing built of iron posts, strong poles and ropes.

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proved to be the best players. The girls were quick and active while the boys on a whole were inclined to be a little stiff and awkward. All of the games of ball were on the north side where the largest space of the playground was found.

The swings and one of the slides were added to the equipment about a week after the observations were being made. The very youngest girls of the school paid little attention to them. They continued to play which heretofore had been their biggest outdoor game for all of the school children. This small group of girls enjoyed watching the older boys and girls use the new swing and slide more than using them. Swinging in the swing was frightful to most of them.

With the small boys of the group there was an increase in the use of the new swings and slides, most especially the slide. They enjoyed the slide most in this way: Each boy would take his turn to slide being very careful to wait till his time came, and as he would slide down the slide he would keep his same position till the slide was filled with boys then they would all roe up and begin again. The person who was left at the top of slide was the first to slide next.

A number of ring plays were played outside which gave opportunity for group play and much activity. The most common used ring plays were: London Bridge and Slap Jack. The latter was more popular. It is a game where all pupils were formed in a ring with the exception of one person who was to walk around the ring and slap someone in the palm of the hand (the group forming the ring have their hands clasped behind them with palms turned up) and runs to the right of circle to beat the person who was hit back to his place. The person who was hit begins to run immediately around circle to the left. The object of game is to be the first to fill empty space. The person who was left out is the slap Jack and proceeds around circle to slap someone else.

Another outdoor play that was enjoyed was the jumping of rope. The large girls were more active in rope jumping. However, the boys did jump quite a bit. The small girls were a little afraid of the rope. This type of play afforded entertainment for the entire group. Some were singing, some were throwing the rope, some jumping, others were looking on patting and keeping time with music.

When you watch children as these elementary school children were observed as they jumped rope to

the sounds of their voices and that of their school mates, it is easy to realize that the working together of ear, eye and muscles in perfect rhythm is the results of the lessons learned through play of this sort.

It is especially those of the very youngest age level, who readily detected. To account for this we may say it was the lack of special playgrounds and facilities for the members of the younger groups. Separate play is given provision to make for the younger group to that it gives them an opportunity to play freely without the interferences, influences and hindrances of the older members of the school.

The crowded conditions of the playground and play room retarded the development physically and mentally in that some of the members of the group were left almost entirely out of the play activities.

One of the best things that can be done for this school is the improvement of the playgrounds and play facilities. Favorable play environments promote favorable play habits.

Finally to describe the play of the older group of the school, we may say that the children who worked together very happily and in a spirit of cooperation. The children of this group are in the habit of leading the activities of some of the younger children.

## SUMMARY

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Briefly reviewing the play conditions of the elementary school, poor adjustment in the play habits of the children, most especially, those of the very youngest age level, was readily detected. To account for this we may say it was the lack of special playgrounds and facilities for the members of the younger groups. Separate play is nice provision to make for the younger group in that it gives them an opportunity to play freely without the interferences, influences and hindrances of the older members of the school.

The crowded conditions of the playground and play room retarded the development physically and mentally in that some of the members of the group were left almost entirely out of the play activities.

One of the best things that can be done for this school is the improvement of the playgrounds and play facilities. Favorable play environments promote favorable play habits.

Finally to describe the play of the older group of the elementary school, we may say they played and worked together very cooperatively; another marked distinction of this group is the development of leadership trends, by directing the activities of some of the younger children.

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