

Competence with Caring:

From Nine to Thirteen Years

At eleven she wants to be a herpetologist. We ask her why. "Because I like snakes better than boys." "You believe that a snake is a better companion than a boy?" "On no," she says. "After a snake comes a lizard, then a tortoise, then a gila monster, and then comes boys maybe." [Art Linkletter]

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He enjoys the psalm:

The Ford is my auto, I shall not want.
It maketh me lie down in mud puddles,
It destroyeth my soul. It leadeth me
Into the path of ridicule for its name sake.

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At twelve she has a party for eight girls and four boys. She orders forty-three hot dogs and five dozen bottles of Coke. Although the music is on, no one dances except a couple of girls. Then one girl runs round the block, and four boys follow her. They come back and drink one dozen bottles of Coke. Then the one girl runs round the block, and this time everyone follows her. They come back and drink two dozen bottles of Coke, breaking three bottles. [Margaret Mead]

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She stretches out her arms stiffly and demands to know who put the concrete in her deodorant.



The important thing about children from eight or nine onward is that they want access to skill and technique. Prior to this they have been very happy with fantasy. They have taken their own dreams with them to school, and they were pleased to have the teacher wrap them up in legends and folktales. Up until the fourth grade teachers can often get their group to work hard on a task that is totally imaginary. For example, children can pretend that the classroom is a city, with one corner a shop and another corner the post office. They can build a make-believe monetary system, and some children can be make-believe accountants and some can be mailmen. Everyone can write letters to everyone and deliver them through the make-believe post office. The arithmetical genius can be the banker and issue credit.

Classroom make-believe of this sort can carry most of the curriculum if the teacher has the heart for it. The wise teacher, however, usually knows that each such world-fantasy cannot be expected to last more than a month or so. Schools follow "seasons" just as games do. Next the teacher can convert the whole room into a publishing enterprise, and a month later into the mint, and after that into a ship at sea. The romance of early childhood becomes the romance of the world in the second to fourth grades.

But romance is followed by industry, application, and sobriety in most places where it is found, and childhood is no exception. What today we love, tomorrow we seek to control. This age then is a period of technique. Children are generally less spontaneously creative during this age period than they were earlier. They are often more interested in how to do things. They are interested in learning how to use tools

and musical instruments and how to do crafts, leather work, bookbinding, weaving, carving, sewing, and metal work.

During this period they are able to sit still for concentrated periods of work, and they have the dexterity to accomplish these tasks. Fingers that can manage marbles or jacks can certainly be trusted with chisels and needles. The eleven- and twelve-year-olds often hunger for a real job and money-earning possibilities. They prefer visits to real wharves, factories, and newspaper plants; they want you to take them camping, riding, or on a cycling tour. In all of these activities children need help and guidance always, but they want their play to be "real" rather than pretend.

While their very real need for new skills should be satisfied, it must not be exploited. If we reduce skills to routines and allow no scope for children's imagination and playfulness, when adolescence arrives and creativity again yearns for expression, there will have been no continuity.

Much of our emphasis here will be on means of continuing creativity while at the same time satisfying skills. The unity of the two is the most important form of self-discipline children can get. The best evidence of this is the finding of one researcher that although most normal adults have much self-control, they have lost access to their feeling life. Conversely, disturbed persons have access to their feelings but have lost control. Artists, unlike either normal or abnormal people, both control and have access to their feelings.

This lends support to the view that a better way to think of bringing up children with self-discipline is after the manner of a person who is schooled in the arts, rather than the earlier, accepted methods. In the arts we first allow much free expression with media in a preliminary way. Then, when children are thoroughly attached to the medium, we increasingly introduce technical skill. There follow the long rigors of personal application that are denied to most children because we have not known how to handle the preliminary period of

romance for them. A home or school that followed the career of an artist as its model of growth might do much better than we have so far managed.

The model of growth that we sometimes follow is that of the Australian aboriginal initiation rite, where the old punish the young to keep them in their rightful place. Most often it is a watered-down version of the army or the church; in these disciplines it is the good of the organizations and the purposes they serve that are at stake. In the arts it is the expressive uniqueness of the individual that is at stake, which is why this chapter has been called "Competence with Caring." Parents can contribute to children's skills and help keep their trust in the authenticity of their own feelings by trying to enjoin their playfulness with the arts.

GAMES AND OTHER THINGS TO DO

Dreams

In their night dreams children become somewhat more active as a character. They are less often the victim. They might not yet be the victor, but often they will get help from others. There are fewer threatening monsters and more children in their dreams. More adults represent authority figures rather than monsters. The children sometimes cooperate together. The dreamers are concerned with their skill and their adequacy and whether a job was well done or not. Interestingly, the dreams of disturbed children show much less mention of other children and of authority figures but still show more of the terror of the five-year-old.

If you have not yet told your children how the Malaysian group handles their dreams, now is the time. By and large, however, unless dream telling and playfulness about dreams have become a way of life in your family, children will not

often spontaneously tell dreams during this age period. Their increasing need for privacy, for independence of adult thinking and adult concern, usually leads to a less willing communication of intimate things. If you have continued discussing dreams and being creative about them, however, then the dreams will continue to be an occasional center of playfulness.

Perhaps the most important thing to say here has to do with listening to the feeling in a dream rather than to its contents. If you are welcomed to share your children's dreams, listen for its feeling or even ask, afterward, what the dream felt like. Of course, having said all this, we have to recall our earlier statement—that sometimes a child brings a dream to you simply because he *feels* terror and needs relief. In that case, you must be reassuring rather than provocative. "Remember," you say, "it is only a dream. I am here. The house is still here. You feel that way in the dream. But the daytime goes on. Perhaps next time you will feel stronger in the dream. Run harder or fight harder." Let your message of reassurance be carried over as a view that even in a dream one can fight back.

The question "what did it feel like?" is a key question for all creative work with children or with ourselves. "What did it feel like?"

Most of our everyday world is geared rather to asking what did something *look* like or what did someone say, or what did you *learn*. We tend *not* to ask what it felt like. We tend not to say, "Yes, I know that's what he said, but what did it make you feel?" Yet constantly in our relationships with others we "know" one thing but "feel" another, and just as constantly in our education we neglect the latter. But the latter is the source of our most personal responses and, therefore, of our own creativity.

A dinner table game in which players take turns can be "What did they look like and what did they feel like?" They

looked like *this*, but they felt like *that*, with appropriate mimicry; for examples, "He looked like a stuffed shirt, but he felt like a zilch." The same duality can be asked of a dream. "What happened and what did it feel like?" Usually, however, dreams are more of one piece, so the question may be unnecessary. The things that happen in the dream are pictures of the feelings we have anyway; they mirror our feelings. Perhaps that is why we need them. We do not get to picture our more basic feelings in other areas of our existence.

Improvisation

Up to this point in our improvisations with young children we have made believe that we were *moving* in some way, relating to an imaginary *object*, being an imaginary *character* doing routine things, and creating an imaginary *situation*. We have also played *fantasy* characters, characters with *feelings*, and *exaggerated* characters in some brief *plot*.

At this age the big step for children is to *interact* with others in dramatic activity. Up until this point children have interacted in their own group play, whether it was informal play or more-formal games. They have interacted also in group performances at home (circuses, carnivals) and have learned performances at school (history plays and the like). Past relationships with others have been diffuse and more like play than like characterizations.

If we have been working with improvisation, we have encouraged children to do things one-by-one, because this aids them in their concentration and allows them to develop a better focus on their own characterizations or imaginary actions. The presence of other children makes improvising very difficult for children up until about eight years. Other children infect them so strongly that they find it difficult to keep their characterizations in mind.

Competence with Caring

In one of our studies with Dr. Gilbert Lazier there was a scene in which a child finds a wallet with money in it and then a policeman comes on stage and demands that it be handed over. Up until about the age of eight years, the children could not handle this latter scene. It was too exciting for them. When the policeman demanded the wallet, they would cease to act and change quickly into a game of hide and seek, running away and screaming with the policeman after them.

Older children, whether they resisted or not, were able to handle the matter dramatically. They might resist, but they would do so with explanations and evasions rather than by breaking down into flight or laughter. Partly their new attitude is because from about seven onward children are much more able to use language to *organize* their actions. In addition, after the age of nine children are not quite as excited about authority figures as they were in earlier years; they have learned ways in which to cope with that problem, whereas five- and six-year-olds are just realizing that authority is a problem for them.

In any case, our new age, nine through twelve, is the age of social concern and social conformity, and this bodes well for improvisation that asks for roles to be played with and against other children. If one asks why it takes so long for interaction to be put on stage (age nine) after it has appeared spontaneously in games (age six) and group play (age four), we can only suggest that the stage is a much more complex and self-conscious place than are either a game or play. One has to consider the medium (the acting) and the audience, as well as one's immediate subjective feeling (as in play). We are not really talking about the theater stage in the formal sense. It is just that whenever you are explicitly asked to improvise something and others are watching you, you are in all essentials on stage. Any time children have to think both of what they do and of someone watching it, they are on stage in our way of putting it.

The easiest place to start is with the elements we have already mentioned: two characters showing by their movements what they are doing (one old, one a child), two characters relating to an object (both carrying a weight) or to a situation (a kitchen). These are the first and preliminary steps that can be acted out without words, and even younger children can handle this level of interactive complexity, just as they can handle speaking through puppets or telephones.

But what we hope to achieve from now on is something more complex. We want to see them act out characters who have feelings and who are in conflict with each other. We want to see them do fantasy characters interacting in an imaginary environment. Although in general we are just putting together the old elements in more-complex combinations, the addition of the element of conflict is most important. Working up to a *conflict* between characters and dealing with it after it has occurred is, after all, the essence of the dramatic plot.

At this point we come to a "conflict" in the views of those who advocate drama for children. There are those who think it should deal mainly with children's feelings; it should begin with the things they care about and let them act out those feelings. In this way the art form truly deals with problems the children have and is a living reality to them. "Plays" should be constructed around these feelings. This is often called psychodrama.

Then there are those who see drama mainly as an art form, and they say that what we have to do in improvisation is to teach children how to perform. They emphasize the discipline. They suggest, for example, that dealing with children's own conflicts leads only to superficial dramatic behavior. The children are mainly playing out their conflict ("one pretends to be the sheriff, the other the bad guy"), and they do not, as a result, really focus on the nature of the improvisation itself.

To help improvisation, it is further argued, it is better if

each player focuses on some concern that they have with objective things. Thus, two players can both pretend to be unloading a station wagon. In this way their focus and ours as the audience is on the actions of arms and bodies and their relation to the wagon and the shopping baskets being carried. This focus keeps involvement in the nature of acting, not in other things. If conflict arises in the course of this careful improvisation (they start to argue about who pulls out a certain bag of groceries), then the conflict grows out of the actions rather than being only loosely expressed through them.

One finds this conflict between those who want to use the art form to motivate children for educational purposes and those who want to use the art form to train children to be artists in every art form. The first group is more concerned with immediate self-expression and with the participants' enjoyment. In music they like teaching to begin with the children's own free compositions. In graphics they prefer free activity with finger paints, clay, large brushes, and the like. In movement they like free interpretive activity to modern music. In writing they want personal accounts of the children's lives or their sense of adventure. In drama they prefer psychodrama to training in acting.

In recent years there has been a great deal of work with free expressive forms, both with preadolescents and with adolescents. Although the evidence is only anecdotal, it shows fairly conclusively that when these programs are well conducted, the children become highly involved in them and there is an improvement in their general behavior and their concentration on more-orthodox school subjects. In one group of adolescents who came from economically poor homes, over 90 percent of a voluntary youth drama group subsequently went on to college, whereas the usual college attendance for these children was under 10 percent.

The record also shows that the free expression stage is only

a preliminary one. Depending on the group, the desire for such expression lasts a few weeks or a few months. The more disturbed or repressed the children, the longer the need for this initial period of using the materials in a highly personal and nontechnical way. In summer camps for disturbed children, for example, for months finger painting has to be body painting with paints and body smearing with clay before they are ready to attempt finger painting as an art form.

In drama at our preadolescent age level there is often a gross acting out of excretory functions and of violence in the earlier stages. This occurs because such feelings have never been on stage before. It happens because "rationality" has been restricted to reading and arithmetic and how to behave. Children have been taught how to control feelings but never how to express them with control. They have not been taught how to be rational with feelings. One young dramatics teacher we know uses the technique of having children go on stage and act out "their secret," which everyone else has to guess. The secrets chosen to be acted out by the group were "Don't bother me," "Failing a test in school," "Fuck," "Wanting to be a ballerina," "My name," "My shoes are on the wrong feet," "I have grown a moustache," and "I have a jar of candy hidden on stage."

If, however, children's feelings are freely allowed into their play activities, so that the children learn to handle them rationally, then explosive use of the art forms tends to be minimal. To handle feelings rationally means, in this context, to know how to express them in a socially valuable way. For example, when children have been allowed to mime their feelings as a regular part of their play life with adults, then when they are suddenly overwhelmed with annoyance, they may mimic their annoyance or mimic the person annoying them. In so doing they create laughter for themselves and for others, and their annoyance is not then turned into unmanageable anger. Alternatively, they may go off and write a

limerick or something else. This is a rational expression of feeling.

We are not suggesting that people should not sometimes express anger directly. Rather, we are talking about a quite different problem; namely, that throughout history people have imagined that expression itself is irrational and that rational people inhibit their expression as much as possible. We so tend to believe this that in the past the normal response to children who handled their frustration by mimicking their host was to swat them over the head rather than to appreciate the "civilized" character of their response.

For most children in most places art begins as free expression but after a time moves into technical skill. It should be emphasized, however, that it is not just because children have been overcontrolled or because they are disturbed that art forms must begin with these resources in the children themselves. If this is not done, as children grow older they get more intelligent about art forms, but they do not develop any higher levels of aesthetic response.

In another study of our own we found that younger children of seven years, although not very communicative in the content of their paintings, used more color than did older children of eleven years, in their stories they used more novel characters, and in their improvisation they were more involved in the acting. They seemed to a set of judges to put more feeling into their characterizations. The older children of eleven years or so were much clearer and more intelligible in what they did in all these media—painting, story writing, and drama—but they were relatively lifeless. As they grew older, they seemed to learn how to be more intelligible, but at the price of being less expressive.

This gain in intelligibility but not in sensitivity is not something that can be easily overcome. Ours is overwhelmingly an information culture. We double the total sum of knowledge every few years. Our political and scientific leaders

require enormous amounts of information even to begin to make sensible decisions about the extremely complex matters that face them. It is very hard for even those who are in arts education not to find themselves spending much of their time making decisions about how to think about the arts rather than about artistic quality as such. Thus, it is not surprising that too early a grasping of the technical stage of an art form by children is likely to lead to expertness that has no depth in feeling, in which there is competence but not great caring. The whole thrust of our culture is toward the informed rather than the "sensible" mind.

Although nobody knows how long children should stay in the most personal and most expressive uses of an art form, it seems wise to argue that they should not be pushed out of them and into technicalities too early. Perhaps we can clarify our position this way. By the age of nine and ten years if improvisation has proceeded as advocated earlier, children will be able to handle some acting with others around conflicts and with some sense of plot. From here on there are a series of three stages, which you can have in mind, as the dramatization proceeds. The first two are quite personal; the third is the technical stage.

In the *realistic stage* improvisation is seen as a mirror of society. Up until about eight years of age children, when asked to "think" about art, pretty much see it in this way. The art is a picture of the way things are, whether they are talking about a painting or a dramatization. But there are two levels to this realism. The first level, which we have already dealt with, has them acting out the everyday lives of those about them ("This is the way we wash the clothes"). By the age of nine or ten we are ready for the second level, having them act out their own feelings.

This second level is where the psychodrama enters in, and so we have them act out such gross matters as an argument between siblings over which parents love each child most, a

dispute between kids who come from rival neighborhoods, an argument between parent and child over whether the chores were properly done, and an argument between husband and wife about what to do with the kids (shades of "Hansel and Gretel"). Often, asking children to think of the time when they were most angry or sad touches off a theme for an enactment between two people. When the event is recalled, you as the parent, another child in the family, or another child in the class can play the other role.

In psychodrama there is a whole set of interesting techniques that involve such things as the players' acting out both their own role and then the role of the other person or the players' acting out how the other person is and other players' acting out how they are; or the players' acting out two sets of thoughts, first what they will do and second what they would like to do. The conflicts of feeling that children feel toward each other, toward parents, and toward teachers and that they get joy out of representing either realistically or in exaggerated form are endless. In some ways there is sufficient material here for the rest of your life.

In the *moralistic stage*, the second stage in developing our appreciation of art, lies the notion that the play or the picture has a message. Here we believe there is some meaning to it over and beyond what is simply to be seen there. Many children see art this way by ten years of age. Many adults never see art in any other way. Thus, this is the stage of soap opera. One of the tragedies of education has been that the sophisticated people who deal with the arts and abhor the lower forms have been reluctant to realize that there is an age in childhood when this is the most relevant form.

Making up improvisations that teach a lesson is a lot of fun and an excellent way of developing a sense of the rise and fall of plot and the conflict between characters. Inadvertently, many of the "historical" dramatizations that teachers have often used are of this nature. They tell a story. The simplest

of these morality tales are fairy tales. If adequately dressed up, they are still acceptable. The "virtues" of Cinderella and the wickedness of the sisters can be exaggerated and played upon with great delight from nine onward.

At the prior stage of aesthetic development what we gained was the projection of personal feeling on stage. Children were able to represent themselves in action, even if in fairly gross form. What we get at this stage is the projection of self into character. By playing an exaggerated and wicked stepmother the child explores the nature of characterization. This is the time of life for being a ham on stage. Culturally we have been so inhibited about the inappropriateness of "acting out" behavior that we have tended to stop children from this sort of overacting. But in a sense this is the most important preliminary form for understanding character. Just as one often must throw oneself totally into a sport before one learns its more subtle maneuvers, so one must throw oneself into character in a similar fashion. This is the age where the Keystone Cops, the great comedians of action (Harold Lloyd, the Three Stooges, Abbott and Costello) and a hundred cartoon characters represent what character is all about.

In the *stage of technique* we come to the truth argued by those who believe that improvisation should be acting, not psychodrama. But, as we have argued, what they will get if they start here is shallow if intelligible performances. This approach is often advocated by those who have this professional point of view because they tend to deal only with volunteers or with students of acting rather than with the general run of children. The children they deal with have talent, and talent has a capacity to skip the stages that the rest of us must labor through.

The great modern device for developing technique is *theater games*. These are entirely appropriate for children and a

which two players act as if one is looking in a mirror and the other is the reflection in the mirror. It has the advantage that it can be played anywhere any time. It calls for considerable thought on how to make actions that the other can follow or how to concentrate sufficiently so you can mimic the other's actions.

These are really games of order, because both players are trying to overcome anarchy. They are not meant to be games of competition, which children of this age tend to make them if you do not explain to them carefully that these are games of communication. You win if the two work together perfectly. The growth of these kinds of games and their extensive use in "sensitivity" groups seems to indicate that we have a need for more collaboration and more order in our society.

In the audience game one or two players have to communicate to the others by their behavior a sport that they are observing. Tennis is the easiest. The players agree beforehand what sport they will watch, but they must make no other verbal arrangements. All the rest is done by mutual paying attention to each other. They must not communicate by words the meaning of their audience behavior either.

In another game, the "who are they?" game, one person begins by being somebody in action; when one of the watchers recognizes the role, she joins in the actions appropriately, as do others as they "get" the act. Perhaps, for example, the first person is gardening. Others will, in effect, join in the gardening; some weeding, some digging, some wheeling the barrow. An excellent source for hundreds of these games, which call the players' attention to acting as a technique (but in a playful way), is Viola Spolin's *Improvisation for the Theater*.¹

This is not of course the end of improvisation or drama, but it is usually about as far as we will get with children

¹ Viola Spolin, *Improvisation for the Theater* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1963).

through the age of twelve years. There are at least two more stages that we know of, thanks to the work of our student Cornelia Brunner, but these usually occur in adolescence and then only for those who gain some sophistication in their art form. The first, stage four, is *art as feeling*. This is when the children begin themselves to see their use of realism, message, or technique as a way of conveying feeling. Here they see any art form as the use of the media for personal expression.

A final stage, *art as empathy*, involves children's knowing what the author was trying to communicate and the way in which the author did it. Here the emphasis is on conveying or appreciating the feeling that the author had in mind through the techniques that were used. It is important to know that such higher levels exist, because there are occasionally children of eleven or twelve years who reach forward to such levels. It is also important to realize that these stages are cumulative. There is always some sense in which the realistic, moralistic, technical, feeling, or empathic responses to an art form are relevant.

Creative Writing

For some children it is much easier to express their feelings through writing than through acting. Not all forms of expression are equally available to all children. Thus, while some might be acting out the scene of an accident, others can be "reporting" it. Some may want to act the play, others may prefer to write it up and edit it, some may want to illustrate it, and still others may try to add verse, song, or musical accompaniment.

The stories that children make up during childhood, like their art, go through a series of levels which provide us with an important way of understanding where they are.

At level 1 (5-6 years) the youngest children tell stories in

which monsters threaten, accidents happen, and there is a sense of terrible things going on. But nothing is done about it. Here is an example:

Once upon a time there was a giant monster. When he was asleep his Mommy came in. She woke him up because she wanted to tell him that dinner was ready. The giant ate the first bowl of cereal and then he ate ten more. He got so fat that he blew up the whole house.

At level 2 (7-8 years) the story characters begin to respond to the threat or trouble. They call for help, they hide, they run away, they laugh at the devil. But they do not really do much for themselves. For example:

This is a story about an alley cat. He worked for a living by digging ditches. He was a very playful cat and liked to play tricks on the keeper of the building. He liked to look at the globe of the earth because he liked to dream about taking a long sailing trip. One morning he woke up to find himself on a sailing trip in the Caribbean with his mother. He met another sailing ship in the ocean that had a devil as a captain. The cat laughed when he saw the devil. He did not fear him because he knew he could bite him. The devil's pig came along and found ink and drank it. Then he turned into a dress sitting at a desk. The cat shut his eyes when he saw this and rubbed his magic ring. He woke up and found he was having a dream and it was all done.

At level 3 (9-10 years) the story characters begin to be successful in reacting to the danger or threat. They safeguard themselves effectively even if they do not finally re-

move the danger. Perhaps more importantly the storyteller can move up and down in the story, exhibiting both defeat and victory as in the adventures of Harold Hoot the Owl. There are three episodes.

1. *Mr Hoot and the Married Lady*

One night Mr Hoot was sitting in his house thinking why he never had any fun. He said to himself, "Maybe I'm too shy" So he said to himself again that he was going to go out and get into mischief. He got on his coat and put on his contact lenses and he was off.

There he was strolling from bar to bar. At his fifth bar, he decided to have a drink. He pounded on the table and said two martinis on the rocks. While he was waiting for his two drinks, he took off his shoes and socks and picked his feet. Then he got his drinks and chug-a-lugged them down the hatch. After his drinks, he saw a beautiful lady in the corner of the bar. So he went over to her and said "Can I buy you a drink." She replied "No thank you. I'm not finished with this one." Then she said "Anyway please sit down and we will talk".

A big guy walking out of the mens room came over to Mr Hoot and said "Are you fooling around with my wife?" How dare you" and picked Mr Hoot up and threw him on the ground. The moral of the story is—you can't tell a married lady from a single lady.

2. *Mr Hoot and the Stewardess*

Once Mr Hoot was sitting in the bar with his friend Bobby the Baboon. They were discussing going to Hollywood. Mr Hoot said to Bobby lets go next week. So they made all the arrangements and before they knew it they were on the airplane going to

Hollywood. While they were on the airplane, Mr Hoot saw this very attractive stewardess. So Mr. Hoot called her over and said "Hi what's your name?" She said "Laura Sinch," "whats yours"? "Harold Hoot, He said. Then he said, "How long have you been working for the airlines." She replied, "Two years and seven months. Then they started talking about where they lived and other things like that. Then a little baboon said, "Hey would you stop it with the lady and let her do what she's supposed to be doing." Then Harold got mad and said "Shut up you little baboon." Then Bobby said, "Hey are you sounding on my kind "How dare you." Oh Bobby but out of this Harold replied. Then the little baboon said "Shut up you overgrown owl." Then they really started going at it. They were throwing pillows and suitcases at each other and cursing at each other. Then Harold gave him a good sock in the face and that was the end of that adventure.

In level 4 (11-12 years) we get the conventional hero or fairy tale ending. The hero wins out and not only beats out the bad guy but takes over the kingdom and there can be no more threat.

It seems that all children normally go through some such series as this between the ages of five and twelve years if they are free to do so. They undoubtedly do it in their daydreams even if they cannot reach for it in their stories. It is probably very important for them to have this other storytelling avenue also. When a school system is free enough to let children tell stories in this way they can also grow through their stories. They can be regressive in them (Mr Hoot, episode 1) or progressive in them (Mr Hoot episode 2), and they can end up with a rosy ending as in the following final episode in the story of Mr Hoot:

3. *Mr Hoot gets married*

Once Harold was sitting in a restaurant at a table all by himself. Then he noticed there was a female owl sitting down by herself. Mischievously he walked over and asked her what her name was. She said, "Mary Gline" Then Harold thought for a moment and said, "Are you the girl that broke her wing when you were nine years old?" Then she said, "What's your name and how did you know about my wing?" "Well said Harold I knew about your wing because your name sounded very familiar so I thought back to my childhood and remembered that a girl named Mary broke her wing, and my name is Harold Hoot" Then she said "You were the kid they called Hoot the Toot" "Oh yeh Harold replied, "I forgot about that." Then they started to talk about their childhood and ate dinner together.

After that night they went out to dinner, to movies and did lots of other things like that. After about a year they told their parents they were going to get married. Their parents agreed and they had a wedding. They had the most beautiful wedding you could imagine. For their honeymoon they went to Niagara Falls. Then after that they settled down in a nice house in poughkeepsie and had to boys named Bobby and Peter. Last and not least—lived happily ever after.

As a child does not normally become aware of himself as a self ("I am me!") until about nine or ten years, stories like play are one of the ways in which he tries out who he is; one of the ways of being a self. We can tell something of a child's flexibility by his flexibility in these stories. Is he flexible in them, or does he always tell rather routine stereotyped tales?

In most schools the teaching of stories is so stereotyped that we cannot answer this question. Teachers show the children just how to compose a story and expect them to copy set models. As a result stories are no longer a place where the children can play, which means they are no longer a place for very personal growth.

Where story writing is a freely encouraged activity we can see the child gradually building a narrative plot in his head. The first stories are simple actions or climaxes. The final ones have characters and plot. Probably each child has to build such soap operas in his head, before he can really grasp them in the films and television as they are presented to him. Usually children under nine and ten do not retell a very coherent tale after they have seen or heard it. Our argument would be that they cannot do this because they haven't constructed the counterpart in their own heads. Playfulness allows the growth of these internal soap operas.

Of course, it is more serious than that. The internal narrative also allows the understanding of legend and mythology and all the patriotic stories which we try to tell them. When we talk about children being able to tell and therefore understand stories we are talking about the origin or genesis of mythology. In children's stories as in the myths of the world, the heroes come to a fate that can be judged by the same four levels above. It is no small insult, we believe, when parents or teachers interfere with the maximum flexible growth of this internal narrative, on the grounds that they are teaching sentences or paragraphs. On such trivial grounds we make it difficult for children to develop their own capacity for myth making, which is what writing stories, novels, and plays is all about.

The big shifts that occur in *verse* from the earlier age periods to this one are as follows. Up until about nine children are very much affected by sounds in language, more often

than they respond to sense. This is why they are inclined to see poetry only as a matter of rhyme or to like the many "sounding" nonsense rhymes of childhood:

Hibberty, Bibberty, I Saliberty,
Pompalary Jig,
Every man who has no hair,
Ought to wear a wig.

It is said that the four-year-old John Keats went about providing rhymes in response to anything said to him. Younger children also have a shorter memory span and consequently prefer shorter lengths to their verses. The following is an old counting-out rhyme used by eight-year-olds that is for them also high poetry:

First grade, baby,
Second grade, tot,
Third grade, angel,
Fourth grade, snot.

It is not hard to remember the following verses:

There was an old woman
And her name was Pat,
And when she died,
She did like *that*.

Pig snout
Walk out.

Another childish feature of verse is the use of a series of numbers or letters, which children already know well and can use as a memory device to handle a larger amount of information;

thus, "What's the initial of my sweetheart? A. B. C. D. . . ." or "Ten little, nine little, eight little indians. . . ."

Children's thinking also tends not to be as systematic as it is habitual. Thus, for example, if they are given the word "red" and asked to tell you what it makes them think of next, the next word they give you will probably be "apple" (as in red apple) or "rose" (as in red rose). Older children of ten are as likely to respond with another color, such as "green," or with the word "color" itself. Older children thus give you a classification of the word you have given them, whereas younger children give you a response to which they have become accustomed. One idea leads by association to another:

I went downtown
To see Mrs. Brown.
She gave me a nickel
To buy a pickle.
The pickle was sour,
She gave me a flower.
The flower was dead,
She gave me a thread.
The thread was thin,
She gave me a pin.
The pin was sharp,
She gave me a harp.
The harp began to sing
Minnie and a minnie and a ha, ha, ha.

Increasingly from the age of eight onward children become interested in the relationships between meaning rather than those between sounds. The riddles of the last chapter and the verse with which that chapter ended ("I come before you to stand behind you . . .") both make a joke out of changing meanings. Usually by eleven years of age the types or rhyme that we have listed above are of little interest to children.

They seem too babyish to them. Where simple rhymes occur, they begin to feature social commentary and violations of moral decor, such as obscenities:

Violets are blue
And I turned red
As soon as I saw you
Nude in bed.

Jesus loves me, this I know,
For the bible tells me so,
I am Jesus little lamb
My bloody oath I am.

From a creative point of view children at this time prefer to invest themselves in prose poems rather than in rhyming verses. Thus, although we might advocate sounding and rhyming madresses, alliterations, and the like for younger children, we now focus attention on what is to be said. Arranging a series of thoughts in order is sometimes a more profitable approach to verse at eleven years than is thinking in terms of poetic structure.

The same focus is important in story writing. We should emphasize what children care about, and all the remarks made above about improvisations and art apply again here. Sometimes story writing can be prompted when children write a "novel." To make their own first book is exciting to the fifth graders, particularly if they can make drawings and cartoons to go with it. Making up stories orally always helps. This can be around the dinner table, in the car, or in the classroom. One person starts off. Others have to pick up the story where the first one leaves off. Usually they leave the hero in dire straits, and some fancy extrication is necessary for the following person.

Game Simulation

Nine through twelve years is a time of great enthusiasm for games, an enthusiasm that has been fully seized upon in education only in recent years. In *The Study of Games* we have written extensively about the use of games for teaching purposes first by the armies of the world in the eighteenth century and then by business education in this century.² It appears that children can learn as much through games as they learn in more-ordinary ways, and they have a much higher motivation when doing so.

As a result of this, there are now innumerable game curricula in which parents and teachers attempt to get their children reading, doing arithmetic, and so forth through games. A good example is the recent book by J. H. Humphrey and Dorothy D. Sullivan called *Teaching Slow Learners through Active Games*.³ There are also many companies that market game simulations. These are attempts to teach everything from economics to history through a game. Usually game simulations, unlike real games, are good for only a few lessons, after which all the tricks have been learned and one must move on to another gamelike lesson.⁴

What all this means is that our old attitudes about games' being trivial and of no account were apparently wrong. Throughout human history different cultures have used different games to teach what had to be known. Games were the first schools. Games of strategy (checkers, chess) arose in human history with the rise of systematic social-class distinctions and the rise of warrior classes. They were ways of

² Eliot Avedon and Brian Sutton-Smith, *The Study of Games* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1971).

³ J. H. Humphrey and Dorothy D. Sullivan, *Teaching Slow Learners through Active Games* (Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, 1970).

⁴ There is even a newspaper called *Simulation Gaming News*, which is published at Stanford University.

teaching strategic thinking to beginners and for keeping diplomats and military men in a state of preparation. Likewise, games of chance arose where divination and magic were ways of attempting to influence the gods. Games of physical skill arose where there was a need to practice the arts of hunting and gathering.⁵

We are not going to list here all the games to play with children. There are too many, and they are well documented elsewhere. Perhaps we should say that just as there are personality differences, so there are differences in the way parents like to be playful with children, which means that not all parents who want to be playful will want to play games, just as not all will want to improvise or to talk about dreams.

These are just different media that will be used by different kinds of parents. Some parents do all their play through witty conversation, for example, and that is it; that is all they do. We had to point this out here because in a book on play it might seem that games would be orthodox. They are not. Games are only one of the ways in which people get to be playful with each other. Like all the other ways people can be a bore in games just as they can elsewhere. Some playful people find games boring!

Games are usually fun for children, even if they are not your cup of tea. Almost anything can be made acceptable at this age if it can be turned into a game. Note that in this respect children's tolerance for games lasts longer than does their tolerance for fantasy, which tends to fade around ten years. Games are at a high peak at least through fifteen years. A particularly "playful" use of this mania for games is to have your children construct them. In this way the parallel urge for technical craft competency and interest in the games themselves both get scope.

⁵ The reader who is interested in this kind of anthropological material will find more details in our book *The Folkgames of Children* (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1973).

Naturally, the most interesting constructions are of Monopoly-type games, where the game can be converted to quite different uses and children can have fun making the boards, and the like. For example, one game expert, Bernard de Koven, has suggested that Monopoly could be renamed Treaty and stand for two countries negotiating for peace. Then the Chance and Community Chest cards would have to be rewritten to include "Your ambassador has a cold. Go back three spaces." The playing pieces become doves and hawks. Dollars become bombs.

Still, the idea is not just to do this or that but to play the game a lot and then have a playful time arguing about the changes you would like and why you would introduce them. In this way you become your own game simulators. It seems advisable to begin this with one of the well-known race games like Monopoly (the players are competing to see who gets to a certain goal first). With experience, however, it becomes possible to make a comparative survey of some of the other favorite games with a discussion of their techniques. To what extent are they different? How do Ludo or Chutes and Ladders differ from checkers or chess? What are the combinations of pure chance, shrewd guessing, and strategy (we define strategy as rational decision making)?

This playful game simulation is of incredible promise because the games are models of almost everything we do in human life; for example, an examination of the games with sophisticated eleven- and twelve-year-olds takes you into social science and politics. We have argued that games are models of power in human history and that they are ways of teaching the techniques of power to those who play them.⁶

In the simple abstract of games people could learn these techniques without the dangers that usually ensue if they tried out their power in a real situation. Without a knowl-

⁶ See, for example, Sutton-Smith, B., and Rosenberg, B. S., *The Sibling* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971) chap. 4.

edge of power tactics (deception, decision making, bribery, feinting, blackmail) how could anyone possibly succeed in business, war, politics, and even marriage? One must know these things even if only to defend oneself against them. Yet we do not teach them explicitly in school. We leave the study of power to children themselves and to the playground, as we have seen in prior chapters.

More can be done than that. Constructing games and discussing what goes into them are the kind of practical activity that leads to questions about the whys and wherefores of human behavior with this age group. Begin at age nine with the simplest chance games, where the rolls of dice take the children through different territories. Here the fun is in moving through the territories and being sent back so many spaces or whatever. Then move on to the addition of strategic exchanges, such as in the game of Monopoly. After that there is chess; in the future, the presidency?

The Sandlot Sport

Nothing angers some people more than whether children of this age should be playing little league baseball or pony football. Many adults see in it a travesty of adult-child relationships. They argue that the children become pawns in the parents' concern for victory. The coaches play with the youngsters like checkers on a board. As a result there is not much real fun for the children, and often, as soon as they get into adolescence, they drop these games forever. This is one side of the picture.

Other parents argue that their children love these sports. They love the uniforms. They love having such well-organized competition. These parents say that without these games their children would have nothing to do (nor would the parents). The alternative is just more television or more

horsing around in dangerous streets. With such divided opinions we are clearly talking to different parents with different life styles. There are some parents who can suggest plenty of alternative activities for their children. There are some parents who have few.

This conflict is similar to the one about whether high school athletics helps or hinders academic progress. The evidence shows that for an upper-income boy it is a hindrance. Upper-income achievers tend to play individual games (tennis, golf, etc.) rather than team games. But for lower socioeconomic team players, their grades rise. Team games contribute character formation of an orthodox nature to those who are not used to it. They are not of great value to those who can take such character formation for granted.

A similar situation occurs in the T-shirt leagues of this country. For children whose parents have been rising in social status, T-shirt leagues represent an organized experience of team activity. This was not a part of the gang activity to which their parents may have been formerly accustomed. Although these leagues may not be well conducted nor ideal in themselves, they are associated with the kind of status for which such people are striving. One has to find a substitute, not merely deplore the form.

The substitute is, of course, some form of sandlot provision. Many adults would not oppose little leagues if they consisted of games in which teams were picked out for each occasion on home ground and did not require too much apparatus and costuming. If adults would be willing to give their voluntary supervision to such informal events, staged at regular times on local grounds, all the legitimate purposes would be served as far as preadolescence was concerned. This would not, of course, preclude competition between areas in the same townships toward the end of a season.

What has to occur, however, is the making of such provisions not only for children but also for people of all ages who

are not linked into the fairly professional streams that begin to affect children when they get into high school. There is a need for sandlot games for those over thirty and forty as much as for those under ten. A healthy community would seek to build an informal sports organization for members of all age levels rather than for just one age level. It is more likely that under these circumstances better supervision and better sponsorship of play for the young would occur, because the parents would be proceeding with a concern for total community health rather than just the willingness of a few parents who aspire to be coaches and to force their young charges along a quasi-professional path.

In the *sandlot principle* play and sports both meet and part company. Where the group is one of acquaintances who know each other well, allowances are made (by handicapping) for age and skill differences. The major concern is a good game on a particular afternoon. It may require some elder statesmen or "coaches" to pick the teams on each occasion. The aim of these elders is to get a drawn match by their skill at selection, or it may just emerge from the alternating choices of two leaders. But however chosen, the aim is a match of skill. Without that match attention and interest wane.

The value of the small game or small sport of this kind is that if it engages attention, it recharges the battery of the participants. All we know both anthropologically and psychologically about sports is that they reproduce the desires and attitudes of the culture in which they are played. There is exhibition of skill, courage, achievement, and the like, but all these traits can be displayed here without the usual complexities of ordinary living. The usual harassments and ambiguities are gone.

In the game we take out these drives and give them a quick and clean production. We commit ourselves in a thoroughly self-concerned way to a demonstration of our skill. We focus our attention totally on the limited field and get an unambig-

uous feedback. As a result, we come up out of a good game with our ambitions revamped and our usual attitudes retined with optimism. Games regenerate us.

It is this, we think, that underlies the constant concern of many people that children should be taught to play for the game's sake rather than for winning. To play just to win is to sacrifice this life-sustaining value that truly playful indulgence can bring. Of course it is seldom that one does either one or the other. What is necessary is engrossment in the game itself, and that the engrossment be attached to ways of gaming that can last throughout the adult years, when they are often most needed. The professionalization of sports in the young is no help to the middle-aged, who would have been better off if introduced to a sandlot principle they could continue as the years went by.

Playfulness and Creativity

Sometimes it may be difficult to decide whether we are advocating playfulness or creativity. That is because playfulness and creativity are interrelated. There is experimental evidence that shows that when children are trained to be more imaginative, by having an adult play imaginatively with them over a period of time, their scores on independent creativity tests also increase.

Being playful, which means doing novel things for the fun of it, may not be too much different from doing novel things because you want to. Usually when we ask children to give us unique answers (what are all the things you can think of to do with a pencil?), their first responses are pretty conventional (draw, write), but as time goes by, they get more unique (make a candy apple stick, balance it on my nose). Similarly, when children explore something, they are at first pretty careful, and their responses are appropriate to the

object; as time passes, however, they begin to introduce more novelty. They get more playful. Both creativity and play, therefore, require a considerable period of habitual response before they usually come into action. In that they are quite similar. They are responses that come late in the human repertoire.

But although they have novelty in common, creativity, like work, is more purposive and intent than is play. Play need not produce novelty. It can be idle, be offhand, and be repetitious. Play is more subjective. It produces its novelty as much by willfulness as by intent. What we think happens is that through play children incidentally produce much novelty, which is then available to them at a later time if and when they should be called upon to make creative responses. Play provides the repertoire of novelty that creativity uses.

THE CHILD'S OWN PLAY

We do not think of children "playing" solitarily in this age period. But of course in their manifold model construction, collections, hobbies, crafts, and even reading they are often almost as much at play as they were at an earlier stage with blocks. The play is masked beneath the excuse that this is a construction of some sort. But during the process of the building and the making the activity is often immersed in emerging daydreams and must be reckoned as play. Not unnaturally, the daydreams are of a potential future when the players are the flyers of the airplane model they are constructing or the beauty behind the miniature doll whose fashions they are busily displaying. With one or more companions the same loose web of daydream and reality may wind around their performance of musical instruments together or dancing to the record player.

Occasionally children of this age will continue to play out

their fantasies with more elaborate imitative play than they were capable of when younger. We have seen ten- and eleven-year-old boys engaging in elaborate imaginative space games with very few properties and much complex discussion, following very closely the type of discourse picked up from the various moon shots. This is not solitary play, but it is a more sophisticated form of the first informal group play that we noticed as early as four years. Girls, in the same fashion, may imagine themselves as doctors, lawyers, and teachers.

Although the content of this informal play represents the preoccupations that the men and women of a particular culture might have, what is most important is that the level of imaginative complexity in social behavior is probably greater than is that to be found anywhere else in these children's behavior, at least at a level they can maintain spontaneously without the help of elders.

Another feature of informal play at this time is its *secrecy*. This is an age when children realize they are mentally free of adults. It is about nine years of age or so that children sometimes report their first "I am me" experience—the experience of being a person in their own right, with their own mind and their own thoughts.

Much of the peer activity of nine- through twelve-year-olds is discovering that there are others who share the same feelings and that one is not alone in being a nine- or ten-year-old self. One way to validate oneself is through endless conversations with other selves. They find out what they are like and what others are like. Another way to validate oneself is through endless actions with other selves. They discover what they can do and what others can do. Both the talking and the actions reveal the self, show that one is like others, and lead to acceptance by others.

Furthermore, they have in common that they are mentally free of adults, and children have to explore that new freedom also. Often they symbolize the new freedom physically by

having a fort or some special hideaway under the house, in the basement, or in the woods; or they adopt one of the many gibberish languages that enable them to communicate secretly, even if at great length, in the presence of others, although they are often more concerned with the power of the idea of secrecy rather than with its use. Parents who can occasionally contribute the rules of secret languages are useful to have around.

Formal Games

In general, the concern with technique in art and crafts and with construction in play becomes a concern with skill in games. The two prior stages give way in this stage to a focus on individual skill. One's position is now maintained in a game not by any magically given powers, as when one is chosen to be "It" by some counting-out rhyme; now one usually gets and maintains one's position only by competence.

Competition with other players, however, is still by and large fairly indirect. Seldom does one player face up to another player alone (as in boxing and wrestling). Competition takes place among numbers of players, each playing for himself or each occasionally or usually cooperating with others. This reduces the intensity of the contest and makes its more difficult and dangerous aspects more easily assimilable. There is also a beginning of team games, although only in the sense of two packs or mobs contesting against each other. It is too early yet for specialized team games in children's spontaneous play.

Chasing and Escaping

In all the earlier forms of chasing and escaping we dealt essentially with one individual against the others. Now we

begin to see at least temporary groups forming. Some of the new games of chasing and escaping that nine- to ten-year-olds play follow.

In Red Rover the player who is "It" in the center calls the other players to come across one at a time. If she catches them, they join her in the center and help her catch the others. If one player runs across from base to base, all players are entitled to run across. She may have to tag the running player, to drag him down to the ground, or to "crown" him. In the latter case she holds her hand on the other player's head, crying out some words such as "One-two-three-Sinio" or "King Caesar, one two, three." In "kinging" the captured player has to be held on the ground while patted on the head. The last player caught calls the next player across. Should a player succeed in crossing, that player calls out "All over" or "Pass over," and the rest run across, as many as are then caught taking their place in the middle. Naturally, the first child called is usually the weakest runner. Under many different names this game is the most widespread and popular game of children of this age level.

There are also various games in which those who are discovered join the seeker in looking for the rest or in which one person hides and, when he is discovered, he is joined by the seekers, one at a time, so that the last person to discover him becomes "It" next time. (Sardines is the usual name of this game.) Sometimes intensity is added to these games in a special way. Thus, although ball tag is the same game as the chasing or tagging of the earlier age, the players here tag by throwing a ball at each other, particularly a wet ball, which means that it can hurt.

In these games we can see the momentary appearance of a team relationship, as in Red Rover, where in the middle of the game the number of players in the middle approximately equals the number at the end bases. Here are, in effect, two contending sides of transitory, yet organized, nature. Simi-

larly, in sardines at one point half the players are hidden and half are still searchers. In Red Rover the teamanship is parallel. All have the same aim in view but do not interrelate with each other in any more fundamental way than that. There is momentary role differentiation within the middle team insofar as each latest-caught player gets to call the next one across, so that for the moment that player is the leader. Both team relationships and leadership are thus transitory at this level.

Another important change in role relationships is the increasing focus on the individual player who can withstand all the rest. This is not now the harassed central player, as at the previous age level, but is another individual who in the course of Red Rover or hide and seek becomes the last individual left whom all the rest of the players either try to catch or to find. In Red Rover that player is often the best runner or the strongest player, who has been able to fend off the other players throughout the course of the game. At the end, however, they gang up against her and drag her to the ground, showing their best collaboration in that final moment of the game.

The hiding, chasing, and capturing remain in these games, but the *acts* have increased in forcefulness. There is less symbolic action associated with the performance (tagging) and more out and out direct physical contact in the grabbing hold of the runner and slapping him on the back of the head three times. Mothers speak of Red Rover as the "clothes-tearing" game, and it is often temporarily halted in the playground as a result of their outcries. Although we want to emphasize the increase in direct testing of each other, it is important to note that this testing is momentary rather than continuous, as will become the case at the next level.

With the two bases at each end and most of the action taking place between them, the bases take on a more neutral and less dynamic quality than in the previous age levels. Whereas at the previous age levels the bases are in a sense the

goals of the game (to hide in a safe space, to return to the den or home base, to hold one's prisoners), at this level bases serve more as conventional instruments to the action taking place between them. Perhaps this is symbolized by the shift to a rectangular playing field from a mainly radial or circular one. (At the two previous levels, the players radiated out from some central base or circled around it.) The game has moved from bases and safe spaces to action over territory within *boundaries* at the sides and at both ends. Some would say children have moved from a sacred to a profane definition of space.

More *plot* exists in these games also, instead of just a series of episodes. The plot "thickens" as it extends over time. There is indeed a sense of *climax* among the players as they make the final efforts to pull down the most powerful remaining player who has succeeded in running through the middle on all other occasions. There are more evidences of their whispering together and of their ganging up on the final runner.

We can sum up the different uses of time in games from age five through twelve as follows. Time in the games of five- and six-year-olds is largely episodic. Each piece of the game succeeds each other, as in games of tag, without any larger organization. The game can break off at the end of any piece with no consequences. We can call this episodic time. In novels we call it picaresque: one thing leads to another; a series of events are chained together, but there is no larger plot.

In the games of seven- and eight-year-olds, however, we begin to see a joining of the episodes into a larger structure. In the game of ringolevio, release, or kick the can the player who is "It" must capture all the players one after the other until they are all accumulated in the base; then and only then can we say that phase of the game is over. This is also true of ring games, such as "The Farmer in the Dell." The episodes

are strung together, and although similar in nature, they add up cumulatively to the final phase, when everyone pinches the cheese. We can call this *cumulative* time. Seven-year-olds have a more complex sense of play time than do five-year-olds. There are folktales that also have this cumulative character, like "Henny Penny."

By nine and ten years of age we have added, at least momentarily, *climax* time. In the game of Red Rover there are moments when everyone is after the strongest player. This is a climax. This is even more true of king of the castle, when after a series of efforts the many players manage to drag down the strongest. By the age of twelve and the emergence of sports, of course, time gets arranged into regular periods and can be called *interval* time. In those cases the time within the regular period is still at times episodic (one down in football), cumulative (three downs), or climactic (a touchdown). Modern football's invention of *elastic time* is something else.

At about eleven or twelve years we are ready for the final childhood stage in games of chasing and escaping, when the two teams become fixed in nature to start with, although they may attempt to capture players from the other side as the game proceeds. Hares and hounds, paperchase, or prisoner's base are games of this kind. In hares and hounds one group pursues another over a great distance. These major games of twelve-year-olds in days gone by were practiced as various forms of pursuit and combat. Usually there was little clear leadership or specialization in positions (as there is in baseball, for example). On a childhood level they are like the mob games that used to be played in the Middle Ages, when two separate villages would vie for the possession of a ball at a festival once a year.

When playing group games with children, it is probably easier and more fun when the teams are of this relatively diffuse variety and the positions are not particularly special-

ized. In this way everyone gets experience in doing everything. Later in adolescence sufficient differences emerge in the skill of the players, and games may not proceed well without allowing for the specialists.

The subsequent history of chasing and escaping in games is to be found in baseball players' running around the bases or football players' running for a touchdown pursued by the opposition. It is surprising that this theme in human relationships, which we saw begin one-sidedly at the end of the first year of life, continues to excite us even in adult years. If our argument is correct, we never quite overcome our feeling that we have to be alert to matters of this kind.

Success and Failure

Younger children were concerned with being correct and not making mistakes. More and more at this age level the issue becomes winning and losing because of the more direct confrontation between players. By ten years of age players are more ready to win and lose. The outcomes of the game are clear-cut. Today this tends to take place with the use of the ball in some form as the agency (baseball or football), although in former times (and in some places still) marbles, tops, hoops, buttons, knives, stones, and coins were the center of the action. If we focus on actions rather than on agencies of play, then there are games in which running, hopping, jumping, throwing, hitting, pitching, and dexterity are the central issue.

What tends to happen between the age of nine and twelve years is that the confrontations from player to player get more direct and the force and danger of the actions that they carry out become more severe. Often there is no change in the structure of the game (from tag to ball tag), but its dan-

gers increase tremendously. The organization of mumbly peg was not very different from jacks, but played with a knife its consequences for cut hands were very different.

Because ours is an information culture, success these days is scored as often through items of information as through moments of physical prowess. Each of the following games usually capitalizes on the mastery of some intellectual skill that is reaching ripeness at the time the game seems most appropriate for the participants. Some games evoke reasoning and classificatory ability, as does twenty questions (which is also one of the most useful of automobile games). There are *memory* games, in which each player must retain everything already mentioned by every other player. There are *decoding* games, involving initials, alphabets, anagrams, and classes of things; *observation* games; *number* games (buzz); and *vocabulary* games (Scrabble).

Attack and Defense

The fantasy of attack and defense begins in games of cowboys or witches. By the age of nine it is often hard to tell whether the main aim of a game is chasing and escaping, success or failure, or attack and defense. It is partly a matter of how hard the players are handled. If players are punched as they run across the middle in Red Rover, is that pursuit or attack? Still, this age involves games where attack and defense become central, as in king of the mountain and dodge ball, in which everyone attacks the central player and she for her part attempts to hold her position against all attackers. There are also various forms of rough and tumble or wrestling, which become increasingly popular during this period, as strong players become more ready to engage in direct attack and defense.

Probably, however, most of such attack and defense occurs

indirectly, as in games of success and failure, where one attacks the opponent's marbles or tops, or in baseball, where one pitches the player out with strike three rather than hitting him directly. In football, of course, both attack and pursuit are combined with high intensity. In games of *strategy*, such as checkers and chess, which become popular at these ages, the attack is also indirect via the chessmen. But to some this indirect means of attack is even more devastating than is direct physical attack, particularly in an age like our own, where mental power and decision making (rather than physical prowess) have become much more central to both our economic and our cultural survival. It can feel worse to be mentally wiped out than to be tackled physically.

With these games occasional participation and occasional example seem to be the best way for parents to contribute. Children need information, and they need skill. The right games introduced at the right age can endow children with a technique both for their own intellectual and physical development and for that interaction with others that is most sought after throughout childhood.

EPILOGUE

Put simply, we have argued that the family that plays together stays together—and laughs together and generally celebrates each others' existence together. If we admit that families are going to be fewer and smaller, it makes sense to realize that child rearing and parent rearing may become a highly specialized and precious activity. It has always been a difficult thing to do anyway. The hazards of raising a group of adequate human beings, although they have not been glossed over in the past, are being positively gloated over now.

For now we can choose to be a family. We can choose to

have our children. The highest achievement of parenthood should be that as our children reach adulthood, they would choose to have us as parents. We have a better chance of this happening if for twenty-odd years we have all lived together in an atmosphere that has been full of playfulness and fun. By playing with your children, you as the parents can turn the roles of life around the other way. *You* or they can be the clowns, horses, babies, monsters, the ones who are "It," and the tricksters. Your children feel comfortable with you because you can change places with them and they can change with you. It is an optimistic and lighthearted way of life to be able to go back and forth from the way things really are to the way things might be.

But as we have said all along, there are times *not to play* with your children—not ever *if* you feel you are intruding (and you may be), or you feel it is a duty (for their "own good"), or you are too grumpy, preoccupied, or just plain exhausted to enjoy the fun you are supposed to be having together. By and large as children get older, we have to play with them less, but we have to understand them more. At an earlier age they are so dependent upon us that they come to us with their play. At these later ages they do not, and we have to have a wiser understanding of what they are about in order to be of occasional help.

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Conclusion