



PARADIGMS OF INTERVENTION

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The Dilemma of Intervention

This introductory chapter is about the multiple ways in which we as parents or as professionals have intervened in children's play these past 200 years, as well as about the multiple rationales we have used for such interventions. Throughout this paper I wish to speak occasionally in the first person about my own feelings and reactions to the different kinds of research in which I have participated. I have reached that point in life when the scholarly pretense of impersonality is no longer a convincing disguise for myself. It is my belief, furthermore, that a central issue in social science at this time is to understand the way in which the narrative of the investigator's personal life interacts with his or her scholarship (Sutton-Smith in press-a).

I had my first experience of play "intervention" in children's lives in 1952, when I arrived in the United States as a Fulbright research scholar. I was for a time a member of a research team headed by child psychiatrist Fritz Redl, famous for his work with aggressive children. We spent our time making observational samples of extremely disturbed children in a variety of settings provided for them in a therapeutically oriented outdoor camp in Michigan. We watched them in their games, at crafts, boating, swimming, indoor and outdoor meals, and sought to discover what interaction of ecological and clinical variables could account for any therapeutic or untherapeutic experiences they might have in these programs (Avedon & Sutton-Smith 1971, 408-418). It was our assumption that any such knowledge we discovered could be used in future programming for these children.

At the time I found myself somewhat culturally disoriented by the extremity of the children's symptoms, both violent and regressive: some of them attacked each other with oars while in boats on the lake, in my presence as I took notes; and at least one stored up his feces in a suitcase under his bed in the log cabin. More importantly for the present focus, I was disturbed by the very idea that children's play should be programmed. Unwittingly, in my prior years in New Zealand I had come to assume that children's own folkplay was traditional and valuable and that games organized for children were, on the contrary, an unfortunate invasion of their playlife. This attitude was probably derived from the historical movement called romanticism which English speakers associate particularly with Rousseau, Wordsworth and Coleridge, and which continues to permeate the disciplines of folklore, children's literature, children's art, and progressive education. In particular, much of my dissertation work on the history and psychology of the unorganized games of New Zealand primary school children (Sutton-Smith 1954, 1981) was directly influenced by correspondence with various world folklorists amongst whom the view prevailed that in the modern world children's traditional games were being constantly encroached upon by adults and should be preserved if at all possible. To them, to organize children's play was an anathema.

Paradoxically, in my reaction at that time I did not remember that in my own personal game history I had derived excitement from organized sports equal to that from any unorganized folkplay. Nor could I have predicted that 40 years later I would spend much of my time in a Headstart-funded project on how to enlist the support of highly skilled four-year-old players to teach less skilled players how to play. This being done in order to decrease the latter's probability of a life history of peer rejection and school dropout (Fantuzzo 1990).

I resurrect my memory of this earlier attitude against intervention in children's play not to justify it, although in many circumstances it may be justifiable, but to bring into the foreground that there are many different attitudes towards the nature of childhood and the nature of play. Therefore, it seems imperative to me to try to approach this question of intervention, of the use and misuse of children's play, by some analysis of the sources that underlay our different ideas about this issue. I will call these *paradigms* of intervention in order to suggest that I am talking about deepseated and systemic patterns of thought, most of which have existed in Western Culture for between one hundred and two hundred years.

Paradigmatic Childhoods

If modern childhood has been invented, as Aries says (1962; Luke 1989), and if child psychology has also invented its own childhood, as William Kessen says (1981), then we need to attend to the presuppositions thus engendered to see how they are fundamentally affecting our notions of intervention. The position to be taken here is that Western society has constructed (as in Berger & Luckmann 1966) a number of very general paradigms to define “childhood”; and that the starting points for their evolution are the well-known historical events and ideologies, i.e., the Reformation and the rise of Capitalism, the Enlightenment, romanticism, the theory of Evolution, and, more recently, Feminism and the child-oriented Market Place. The paradigmatic childhood that may be derived from each of these historical occasions can be labelled as follows:

- The Child of God
- The Child as Future
- The Predictable Child
- The Imaginary Child (and the Disorderly Child)
- The Child as Consumer
- The Gender Androgynous Child

The opinion advanced here will be that the paradigmatic childhoods we have come to construct have been substantially selected from one or other of these packs of historical and ideological playing cards and that each pack predisposes different views about intervention. What they have in common is the advocacy of intervention itself. Leaving children alone has apparently not been much of an alternative since Rousseau stage-managed the discipline of natural consequences for Emile, and John Locke created his alphabet blocks to get children off the streets.

Once again, to begin personally, let me tell you first of my life experience of being in turn and in various combinations a Professor of Education, of Psychology and of Folklore. It is only quite recently that I have been able to acknowledge to myself that in each of these roles I was working with a different paradigm of childhood. I always thought of myself vaguely as an interdisciplinary person using the premises of one discipline to critique the products of another. I began my work life as an adolescent in Teachers College and from the very beginning was enshrouded in idealization. In order to pass the entrance interview it was doxological to answer the question: “Why do you want to teach?” with the response, “Because I like children.”

After passing that entry point about liking children, most subsequent ideology about children in Schools of Education focused, not surprisingly, on the pursuit of multiple methodological promises for the possible ascension of children and youths into some successful future. "Children could learn. Teachers could have enduring effects. Children are the future", it was said. On two occasions, as a Professor of Education at different Universities, it was my experience that in Colleges of Education, particularly as one passes through the job interview, there is some pressure to demonstrate that your own research and practical activity has or could make a meaningful contribution to the future of children and their schooling. In consequence, I believe there is a fundamental missionary quality to education. If you are not in some sense in the business of saving literate or mathematical souls or of aspiring to educational progress, Schools of Education will make you uncomfortable.

Obviously the historical pack of cards from which such a phenomenology is derived must include the Reformation and its promise of a personal future with God, if one follows the appropriate prescribed behaviors. There are many religious countries and religious schools where the child that has been constructed is the Child of God. Usually in those places a maximum amount of intervention in the lives of children is warranted by the desire for the preservation of their innocence and for their salvation. For example, in Protestantism there could hardly be enough intervention, because every moment in the day (not just the ritual moments) was in His Presence. Prior to today this often meant the exclusion of play from the child's school life. My own experience in New Zealand was that in those private religious schools where there was some comprehensive control over free play, the children's own illicit play was incredibly more rebellious. Gross intervention almost guaranteed grossness of response. I have mentioned this issue of religiously instigated intervention because it is obviously so fundamental to all that follows in Western society, and because it begins that permanent uneasiness with playfulness which I believe still exists almost universally in our secular world, and which continues to make it difficult to think on the matter without ambivalence. How otherwise to explain that play, the major interest of children, is nevertheless the major form of social scientific neglect in research on childhood?

As a footnote, let me indicate that this generalization does not in any way cover the heterogeneity of religious practice. In a New Jersey Quaker school where one of my students carried out intensive observations, the playground was notable for the extent of positive intervention by teachers to help newcomers be integrated into play,

to participate occasionally on demonstrating new games, to prevent any signs of aggression either of the playful or hostile kind, but surprisingly enough not to intrude on signs of boy-girl play, even when it was of the rough-and-tumble implicitly sexual kind. These Quakers apparently took seriously, "make love not war." They intruded against war foreplay but not against love foreplay.

The eighteenth century Enlightenment picked up this religious belief in the City of God, or the millenarian future, and promulgated the notion that the rationality that had been achieved in the physical sciences could be achieved in the social sciences. The secular republic could ensure rational and inevitable progress. Various programs of utopian historical inevitability were heralded and, as we know, our twentieth century has been in part succored and in part cursed by that historicist inheritance. About mid-nineteenth century, in the United States in particular, children increasingly were located as the medium by which such future progress could be ensured. At that time the noted American educationist Horace Mann contended that the schools alone could ensure that equality of opportunity would prevail and inequities be removed from the economic landscape. By this century Historicism, the view that progress is irrevocable and its course predictable, has in general ceased to appeal to historians. Megill (1985), in his *Prophets of Extremity*, holds that the failure of the Socialist International in World War I was the final blow. The paradox is that, even so, childhood has subsequently continued as Historicism's residual legatee. Children are still thought of as "the future." Our progress inevitably lies in their hands, so we constantly tell them.

One could argue that such certainty about children's role in the future is itself a major burden for them and leads to all sorts of justifications for sacrificing their playing pleasure for society's long term benefit. The hothousing of early childhood is the most potent example. David Elkind's polemic *The Hurried Child* (1981) suggests, at least, that some percentage of the American population proceeds with such intemperance.

The Child as the Future then can be associated with some combination of religious enlightenment and educational history. It is a construction that we cannot do without (after all: who doesn't want children to make some progress?) and yet it can lead to quite profound future oriented interventions in their everyday lives. Apparently, although we have long conceded cross-cultural relativity (as in the United Nations), we have not yet conceded cross-age relativity to children of different ages. It is after all possible to think that, say, two-year-olds (or four, six, eight, etc.) have something special to con-

tribute to us ludically and aesthetically, and to celebrate that fact.

Although I began as a schoolteacher, the bulk of my professional academic life has been as a child psychologist examining children's play, their impulsivity, their aggression, their masculinity and femininity, sibling position differences, children's narratives, their film making, their drama, their toys, and their games both within and across cultures. Throughout all of this work I was concerned with being a scientist, not a teacher or a missionary. It is not that I ever said to myself, "it is my concern to be a scientist," it is just that within psychology one becomes immersed in the conventions of methodological reliability and validity. There is a self-justification in the feeling that one is working on the discovery of permanent systems of behavior and relationship. It is assumed that one is deriving laws which will have some inevitable usefulness simply because they are empirically based. In subsequent years I have come to realize that this notion of psychology has more to do with the promise of the medical sciences than the possible achievements of psychology. Psychology deals largely with what I like now to call local science. That is: with regularities of behavior and attitude which are customary but seldom permanent in the groups studied. Still, whatever the aspiration about science, one is dealing therein with what might be termed The Predictable Child. Within this framework it is not one's major function to bother much with the practical consequences of a moral or idealistic kind. One presumes in a general way that all this empirical activity will be of some use to mankind, but maintains a rather skeptical attitude towards those who try to make practical applications from one's findings. In fact, one's academic promotion is likely to be withheld by one's colleagues if too much attention is given to such idealistic or practical motivations. Science is meant to be hard, not only in methodology but also in ontology. Science is primarily the pursuit of knowledge, not the pursuit of intervention.

Imagine my surprise, therefore, to discover in recent years the point of view of Michel Foucault, who says quite contrarily that from the very beginning the biosciences (psychology, sociology, medicine, etc.) have been about experts intervening and gaining control over other people (1973). Children, the insane, the poor, and the criminal, were irrational elements in the developing seventeenth-century national states. The children were confined increasingly in schools where they would ultimately be divided into different age groups and defined by their status in a variety of physical and mental exams, which is how we know them today. As they were examined they became predictable, whether those exams were carried out by

physicians, school psychologists, clinical psychologists, pediatricians, or others. The examinations categorized them according to developed norms, and they were treated by the experts in terms of those norms which this very science had created.

Bioscientific knowledge as conceptualized by Foucault, therefore, is intervention, not just objective science. It creates the categories of the language by which we confine and help both others and ourselves, because we convert these forms of knowledge into the evaluations which we manage. Think, for example, of the enormous practical effects of the social construction of such terms as: stage of development, mental retardation, IQ, schizophrenia, self-concept, achievement motivation, prosocial behavior, sex typing, hyperactivity, and so on. In Foucault's view we become the victim or victims of the language we create in our science. Either we are put in expert control of the category or we are controlled by the experts of the category, but in both cases the category controls the thinking.

Now it is possible to be somewhat less pessimistic about all of this than Foucault, because life is not quite that predictable and because there is a heterogeneity of response regardless of categorizations. Furthermore, in diminution of human pain and suffering it is not clear that these socializations have caused more pain than they have alleviated. Nevertheless, such retort cannot gainsay that we have developed a notion of childhood development in our society as something which is predictable; and for which we can find the remedies sanctioned by science whatever the problem may be. In the United States this does seem so self-evident to much of the population that columns of psychological advice appear everywhere (every Thursday even in the *New York Times*) on the guidance of childhood, family, sex life, etc. One reads these essays written in what is often only desperate or mundane common sense with the realization that they have very little to do with science as methodology and much to do with science as a myth. In sum, if we see the Enlightenment and Religion as playing a strong role in our belief of the Child as the Future and as often justifying our stringent control of them to ensure that future; we can see science, particularly evolutionarily influenced developmental psychology, as justifying the view that we know and can predict how children will develop, and that therefore we are justified to be the ones in control of the information and interventions in that process.

My own saving grace in much of this is that I have also always believed the Imaginary Child is found in children's folklore, although it was only with my appointment to a Professorship in Children's Folklore at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia that I

began to assume some responsibility for that institution. I was by then, in 1977, so much of a developmental psychologist that at first I had some difficulty in even hearing what those folklore students were saying to me. I proceeded as I had for some years at Teachers College, Columbia University, where most of my students were either in psychology or education, in presenting material about children's games, story making, film making, etc. in developmental order, illustrating that my major interest was in such things as how seven-year-olds differed from eleven-year-olds who differed from adolescents, and so on. Developmental psychological information is largely about age sequences and as a discipline it still carries on the nineteenth-century ideology of species and personal evolution as its central concern.

My folklore students were not interested. They were interested in the quality and character of the play performances in the contexts in which they took place. They were not interested in abstractions about the individual players (their aggression, their need for arousal, their intrinsic motivation, their flow). They were interested instead in groups and their communications, their customs and traditions and their aesthetic face. All of a sudden I was face to face with the very Romanticism that had first brought me into the study of childhood. This was what had first affected me when, like Wordsworth, I began to use my own memories of childhood to inform the several books I wrote for children and published in the 1940-1950s. What we have to discuss now is, therefore, the Imaginary Childhood (not the Child of God, the Child as a Future or the Predictable Child).

These folklore students were very antagonistic to most of the controlling mechanisms which Foucault had in mind. Their intuitions were to support and foster and investigate those folk (including child folk) who were left over from another industrial era, or to find ways in which people within our contemporary era continued their quirky collective life despite the surrounding industrial, bureaucratic and informational oppressions. They studied play as graffiti, as riddles, as obscene rhymes, as jump rope, as superstition, as playground festival, as kissing games, camp songs, parody, swapping, garbage, collections, levitation, etc. This was classic romanticism insofar as it was concerned with what is imaginative, what is outside the conventional expectations, what has a moral and aesthetic heart that defies those conventions, and what is often also quite irrational and typically a fringe behavior. In fact, one is inclined to think that the twin of the Imaginary Child is the Disorderly Child, or perhaps even the Trickster Child.

Romanticism is a large household and also provides the historical frame for much of the work in children's literature, child art, and progressive education, which sees the child's future very much as a product of the child's imagination and the collective imagination of the group. The Imaginary Child is clearly a child who should not be much intervened with and one senses that attitude in most of those who defend the freedoms of child play, child art and child centered education. Nevertheless, the actual history of child care, of child education and of child play is, I believe, a history of relative defeat of these aspirations. Foucault wins and Rousseau and Wordsworth go down to relative defeat. Even most of the literature on the imagination indeed is a literature that rationalizes the imagination as a handmaiden to reason. This is as true of the philosopher Kant, who is the first to accept the imagination as a revered faculty, as it is of Piaget in our own time. In general, such rationalists of the imagination deal with the issues of the imagination as an irrational force, simply by excluding them from view or by saying, for example, that they are not play at all, but are rowdiness or obscene or unmanageable. Only children's folklore holds on with this left-over irrational detritus of older culture. The very triviality of children's folklore as an academic discipline is itself symbolic of our loss. Children's folklore is to child psychology as a drugged mouse is to a caged elephant.

The message of the Imaginary Child then is to discover descriptively what is there and to celebrate it as well as to understand it in terms of its aesthetic face; the latter being a way to be inquiring without controlling. Much of my current play research is focused on this aspiration and has led to intricate studies of the way in which children's play can be considered as dramatized performance involving its own distinct nonverbal gestural semiotics (Sutton-Smith 1989). The moment this is said, however, most adults will think of the excesses to which that might lead rather than think of what it might yield in its own right. I imagine the reader is no exception. And what that tells us, I think, is that the Imaginary Child is pretty much a fugitive in our society, and that almost anything we do about childhood is a Foucault-like form of intervention, usually hiding under the name of socialization. The only "imaginary" we really enjoy with respect to childhood is, as with Wordsworth, the imagination of our own childhood. The reason that we have declared childhood as "innocent" is perhaps that it is necessary for us to hold ourselves innocent of the kinds of irrationalities that childhood actually engenders. Or perhaps to hold children innocent of the kind of irrationalities that characterize our own adulthood and that, therefore,

implicitly deny the validity of our worthiness for the future towards which they are supposed to work.

What these speculations promote is that there is a dialectical aspect to the Imaginary Child. A great deal of our canceling out of the promise of romanticism comes from our fear of the Disorderly Child. We want our romanticism but only in civil terms. We do not wish the freedom we ask for to be used to countenance children's disorderliness, rowdiness, nonsense or destructiveness.

There is another rather awkward childhood to be considered, derived from developments in The Market Place, which we might call the Child as Consumer. The historical antecedent here is that of the child exploited as a work unit throughout most of history; The child as a piece of property. It is towards the end of the eighteenth century that many European children begin to receive children's books, toys and clothing, and become established as a category in their own right by the very property they possess. The subsequent story in Zelizer's words in *Pricing the Priceless Child* (1985) is that as children have become more useless as workers, they have become more valuable as consumers; symbolized by all the gifts we give them and by their own conspicuous consumption of multiple possessions. That heyday for children has arrived only quite recently, however, with the vast expansion of the toy industry and of television's influence. We may predict a future of increasing intervention by the market place in children's own solitary play. As enraged parents sometimes say of each new media or toy that appears: "It leaves no room for the imagination"; "It is an invasion of the family space"; "It interferes with the parent-child relationship." But then parents have been saying this since the more traditional and violent fairy tales were marketed for children in the early nineteenth century. So this kind of commercial and media intervention has long been a source of parental irritation.

It seems that the child's world is becoming, like the adolescent world has been for sometime, a special marketplace for the marketing of recurrent fashions in media, clothing, food and travel. Children now control enormous amounts of money and have in consequence entered the market economy as consumers. We have moved to what we might term the commodification of childhood.

Finally, another childhood which has emerged on the scene from the Feminism of these past two decades is the Gender Child or perhaps the Androgynous Gender Child. There is increasing pressure from some feminists for both girls and boys to get more prosocial training; and they urge that boys in particular must be socialized to be more cooperative and be prepared to participate in child and

home care and not indulge in playfighting nor play with war toys. Alternatively, the girl of the future is one who should have the equality to participate in the practice of male sports or male politics. Both suggestions are androgynous, implying cross-sex participation in traditional opposite-sex characteristics.

Converting Paradigms to Rhetorics of Intervention

Most current examples of intervention make it possible to see the impact of the tacitly presupposed paradigmatic childhoods, sometimes operating alone, sometimes in concert.

(1) First, there is the presupposition that has recently become a hot issue in the United States, i.e., whether playtime or recess for children during school hours should be abolished or very much curtailed. Traditionally it has occupied fifteen minutes mid-morning and sometimes an additional thirty minutes after lunch. Most typically, this traditional practice of providing children with a lightly supervised free play time is being curtailed because of greater legislative and educational pressure on the schools to improve their standards of achievement. But there are ancillary reasons given for intruding on the playground which have to do with pressure on schools from ambitious working parents, from liability suits following frequent playground accidents, from costs of playground supervision after the unionization of teachers, from playgrounds being endangered by criminal behavior (drugs, molestation, violence), and from physical educationists or teachers who wish to substitute what they see as their own more adequately designed forms of play exercise. Most recently, it is being argued that because of legal liability children must have as much supervision in the playground as they have in the classroom (one teacher for every twenty-five children), a requirement which would make recess time prohibitively expensive. Clearly you can see this intervention as a wanton deprivation of children's rights to traditional social play, or you can see it as a wise administrative measure to decrease accidents, unhealthy associations and legal liabilities for the schools. The Child as the Future seems most implicated, but the Disorderly Child who falls off the jungle gym, has accidents and molests other children is also a phantom presence.

(2) A second example is the increasing advocacy at the Nursery School level that playfighting (also called rough-and-tumble, pre-tense aggression, etc.) be stopped in the playground as it is usually stopped within the school itself, because it is noisy and it is believed

to be associated with real fighting. There are those who associate it with violence, war and sexism, and feel it should be abolished altogether, a movement given vote in the recent book *The War Play Dilemma*, by psychologists Carlsson-Paige and Levin (1987). On the other hand there are those whose research demonstrates that play-fighting is not the preserve of violent children but rather, at these earlier age levels, is the practice of nonviolent boys whose ability to pretend to fight rather than to actually fight is the mark of their general maturity and social acceptability (Pellegrini 1988). Seeing that most of the Paige and Levin data are taken from interviews with nursery school teachers, we might assume that the new feminist conceptions of what is now more suitable androgynous behavior for boys is an underlying influence. As one goes back historically, the statement would be made that "boys will be boys"; and after some corporal punishment administered to those who had acted most outrageously, the playfighting would continue (Turner 1948).

(3) Along the same lines but of greater political significance is the widespread attempt to ban war toys. There is little satisfactory evidence that playing with war toys makes children more violent in general (see the review in Sutton-Smith 1988a). What my student Kathleen Connor (1991) found in her research was that when shown films of war toy play, males and females differed radically on whether they thought they were looking at merely playful aggression or at real aggression. Presented with fourteen video examples of playful toy aggression, the four-year-old subjects of the study found only two of them to be true aggression. The male students were very much like the children, seeing few events as real aggression. The female college students saw over half of them as aggression, and the nursery school teachers saw practically all of them as aggression. It is very clear from this data that playfighting or war toy behavior is gender-coded. However, experience is also important: women who had played with war toys when young voted more like adult males, and men who had not played with war toys when young voted more like adult females. Females are apparently more likely to see such playful aggression with toys as "nasty"; they point in defense to the children's words such as "I'll shoot you" or "I'll kill you." Males by contrast are more likely to see it as good rough-and-tumble fun, pointing to the fact that no one is actually hurt. What is play violence is clearly in the eye of the beholder. So is the intervention which follows. While there is much that is new in this intervention deriving from modern feminist views about childhood, as well as in their greater worries about a patriarchal engendered violent world, there is also much that is quite old. Female nursery teachers and school

teachers have been active in suppressing the excess of male play-fighting and male aggression throughout the twentieth century.

(4) A fourth example is the attempt to have sexist differences in games or play objects removed from school playgrounds. Usually this takes the form of changing the toys that are available at the preschool level (Liss 1983), but it can include proscriptions about any games being allowed in the playground that are not open to both sexes. This usually means requiring the girls to be allowed participation in ball and bat games. Given the finding that children's play seems to be the major cultural agency for the development of sexist attitudes, we can expect much greater pressure of this kind. Eleanor Maccoby (1990), famous for her work on sex differences, has recently talked about children's play as "Gender School," and as the critical setting where sex differences are more marked than anywhere else.

(5) Then there is the issue of play in schools in general. In their book on *School Play*, Block and King (1987) and their collaborators record multiple examples of teachers using play and games as positive and negative reinforcers in ways that might be regarded as injudicious. The opportunity to play is used manipulatively as a reinforcement for work and sometimes is likely to be captiously withdrawn. Much of school play is carried on surreptitiously by the children and seems to be a form of self-preservation in hard circumstances. King calls this "illicit play." On the other hand, there is the outstanding group of studies beginning with the work of Sara Smilansky (1968), in which teachers train children in fantasy, for example, to act out stories that were read to them. This appears to improve the children's performance in a variety of cognitive and verbal curriculum skills. The section, later in this volume, on Theory and Research on School Play Intervention shows that here, too, there is debate about the validity of the claims and the reality of the playfulness involved. In general, it seems that the use of play in the classroom greatly contributes to children's motivation for classroom studies and is quite justified for that reason. It is benign intervention in a situation otherwise made boring by overly serious pressure on the very young, which in the long run makes them more likely to drop out of the educational process. Classroom play can palliate an excessive concern with intervening on behalf of a time-frozen conception of the child's future. Although by way of codicil it must be added that if this kind of curriculum play is used as an argument for the dismissal of playground play, as has happened in the disputes over the worth of the latter in the United States, then obviously the curriculum play can be part of a larger and more pernicious form of

intervention. For an example of this larger usage, in a battle between parents and administrative authorities over whether playground play should be restored, see my account of the Loudon County case in which after seventeen years of no recess it was finally restored in 1988 (Sutton-Smith 1988b).

(6) This is the century of solitary play. Up to this point, we have been largely discussing interventions in social or public play. Most controversy over play is about what children do with each other in public settings. Little attention is usually focused on the important distinction between public and private play. This is the century in which more time than ever before has been spent by children in playing alone. Family size and the shift from a collective and manual way of life to an individual and symbolic way of life appear to be the underlying causes. Not incidentally most of the major work in play theory in child psychology is predominantly concerned with the reactions of solitary children to objects of play: Piaget's cognitive processes of assimilation (1951), Erikson's hallucinated masteries (1950), Berlyne's novel stimuli (1960) or the Singers' individual imaginative children (1990). Although the 1990 United Nations Children's Right Charter does not make the distinction between public and private play, the latter is implicit in its 16th article which quotes the child's right to the protection of privacy (Wilcox & Naimark 1991). What children do most with their privacy is play. The protection of private play is what is at stake here. And this brings us back to interventions deriving from the market place and having to do with the child as a consumer of toys or of television. It is often said that these interventions leave nothing to the imagination, suggesting negative consequences for the future of childhood.

Talking about private play, consider again the issue of toys which was discussed earlier with respect to whether or not they increase aggression. This is the century of the development of a mass toy market for children's private play, unprecedented in history (Sutton-Smith 1986). Much of the recent public discussion has to do with whether war toys should be banned. In Sweden the government has succeeded in getting the local toymakers not to produce such toys anymore. The International Playground Movement (IPA, the association for the Child's Right to play) succeeded in getting a UNESCO resolution against such toys (Nilsson 1990). Apparently this is not much of a problem for most schools which do not allow toys to be brought in anyway. In extensive observations in nine Philadelphia preschools we found no war toys present although the children often used other school-provided toys quite ingeniously for the same end

(Sutton-Smith, Gerstmyer & Mechley 1988). Ironically, in Sweden the toy retailers import such toys from overseas and the Swedish armament trade is as healthy as ever. The question arises: if one could deny war toys in the market place, would this be an unfair intervention in children's free choice? In the United States with its archaic if constitutional gun laws this is a highly controversial issue.

It would seem characteristic of toys that the best of them (blocks, clay, houses, dolls and toy characters) are engineered to allow a child to play with them privately, even though parents may also hope that they will play with them persistently and gain valuable information. What the children see as toys, to be used for their imaginative purposes, the adults often seem to envisage as tools for learning about reality. Children watch television for fantasy excitement, when their parents and many communication theorists see only a tabula rasa interaction in which the child must copy everything he or she sees (Postman 1982). The children, it seems, take the caricatural toys (they are never very real) and transform them to their own empowerment. The children perceive ontology when the adults conceptualize epistemology. The children feel the enjoyments of present play while the adults cognize future consequences.

Unfortunately, the adult cognitive and futuristic premises appear supported in a general way by the function-oriented cognitive theories of Berlyne, Piaget and Vygotsky. Although these theories have seldom been examined by specific research for their applicability to the case of toys, they have nevertheless become the public relations argument of toy companies who find profit in sharing with the psychologists and the general public the same desperate concern with the children's future. The dilemma here is the conflict between the adult aspiration for functional outcomes and the children's desire for enjoyment and autonomy. Most probably, intervention occurs at the moment of choice of toys, by eliminating those that the child might prefer. Given that children are, decade by decade, becoming increasingly influential in making their own consumer choices, parents may become more desperate about this "invasion" of their own powers.

Private play presumably includes the right to play with television-advertised toys, and to play in the presence of television, as children often do, and even to play imaginatively in one's head with the images of people seen on the screen. In a current study, we found that in our sample of twenty-four, blue collar nine-year-olds, who on first interview named us (on the average) fourteen persons with whom they played in their minds, only a quarter of these personages were derived from television and most of them were song-

sters. Three-quarters were real persons, family, friends, or teachers. Apparently, television is not quite as powerful an influence on mind play as has often been opined. Consider, for example, the vein of thought which suggests that the commercial development of television's character toys (G.I. Joe, etc.) is taking away the individuality of children's play (Kline 1991). Our data and that of some others suggest that this invasion of private play may not be as complete as has often been asserted (Snow 1974; James & McCain 1982). Still, the issue is whether television is an upsetting intrusion into play life or whether it is not. It is conventional middle-class opinion that it is such an intrusion (Zuckerman 1976). But then it has always been conventional middle class opinion that novel media for children are unfortunate interventions into family life, beginning with fairy tales in the early nineteenth century and currently focusing on video games and cartoon programs. Here we have a clash between those who are concerned with the child as consumer. As the commodification of childhood becomes increasingly extensive, this clash of interventions should increase in intensity.

A third intervention in children's private play, oddly enough, comes from the recent advocacy that parent-child play should be greatly increased. It was the central theme for the biennial meeting of the International Council for Children's Play (ICCP) in Andreasberg, Germany, in 1990 (Sutton-Smith, in press-b). It was said that with increased alienation within families and between generations because of television, single families, divorce etc., there was a need to reach out for new unifying forces for the family. Examples were given by the scholars present at the conference of parents playing sports with their children, reading fairy tales to them, playing with computers with them, and playing games with them. Interestingly, almost no one gave examples of fantasy play with children (something advocated both by the Singers (1985) and the Sutton-Smiths (1974)). One study presented by Otto & Rieman (1990) of Germany showed that fantasy play with parents was what most children preferred, while sports play with children was what most adults preferred. In short, most adults thought about playing with children primarily as a form of skill training, teaching or moralizing and used it as a form of socialization (the Child as Future). Most children, however, wished for more participation in their imaginative play (the Imaginary Child), although whether that would guarantee them against further intrusion must be held doubtful. When Kelly-Byrne (1989) played with a child for a year in the child's chosen fantasy play, she found the child to be a complete

despot for about three months, after which there was a gradual relaxation and granting of more equal rights to the investigator. Perhaps parents know intuitively that there would be such an invasion of power (the Disorderly Child) if they actually played along with their children's fantasies. Clearly, the kind of intervention represented by parent-child play is a tricky phenomenon requiring much more play knowledge than most parents currently possess.

A recent example of direct television intervention in parent-child play is provided by a program on the children's cable television station called Nickelodeon in the United States. This program, called Family Double Dare, has families competing against each other as teams going through obstacle courses, in which family members share in common a great deal of amusing unpleasantness such as getting pies in the face, falling in pools of water and being covered with green if antiseptic slime. The network also specializes in comedies in which the power roles of parents and children are reversed; sometimes the scene is a school (Welcome Freshmen, Pete and Pete); sometimes a ranch (Hey Dude); and sometimes a court (Kid's Court). The latter is the most serious because the child juries recruited from children visiting Universal Studios in Orlando, Florida, have to decide who is guilty, child or parent, child or child, according to the reputed crime. Guilt or non-guilt is finally determined by the amount of noise registering on the noise meter as parties in the jury shout their choice. These child juries very often find parental laws and attitude are the guilty party. Across this network there is a heavy attempt to suggest in these play forms that children should have more power. In effect, in its own eyes the network is intervening on behalf of the children, and incidentally also on behalf of their play rights. Their sanctioning of the Disorderly Child is perhaps the harbinger of a time when our culture will permit children to live in their own present rather than in our future, although one suspects that that time is a long way off yet. A recently formed adult society in the township of Loveland, Cincinnati, Ohio, has named itself "Citizens against Mind Pollutants," and they have chosen the Nickelodeon channel as one of their targets.

A final issue concerning private play has to be the way in which the therapist does or does not play actively with the child. Traditionally, the therapist purportedly did not much intervene, but now participation is said to be increasing. Whatever its special benefits (also documented in the section on Play Therapy in this volume), this is a much more intrusive sort of play therapy. The paradox of

therapeutic intervention is that the Disorderly Child is allowed expression, but in the long run on behalf of the Child of the Future. Therapists, more than any other adult of this generation, understand the children's need for the expression of irrationality. But unfortunately they do not balance this with an understanding of the needs of everyone for such sublimation. The end of their therapy should not only be a child who is reasonably well oriented to reality and to the future, but one who has also learned how to continue playing with his or her irrationalities. As this paper shows I do not hold that play is much about growth, it is more about compensation. So the function of play in my mind is to pretend that we exist in a life worth living, which is something required by both children and adults at all times in their lives. The Imaginary or Disorderly Children do not exist so that they can become the adults of the future, but so that they can become the Imaginary and Disorderly adults of the future, in ways that are sufficiently theatric to be consonant with civilization.

Conclusion

One may sum up by saying that the variety and extent of intervention in children's play has been greatly increasing over this century. In public play we have proceeded from the institution of organized sports and playground provisions to the abolition of recess, the abolition of playfighting, the control of sexist play and the control of play in school by teachers (Cavallo 1981; Mangan 1986). In private play, we have intervened with toys, with television and with the advocacy of parent-child play. While there is much controversy over the particulars, intervention of one kind or another, by one authority or by another, appears to be the typical answer to the conflicts involved around contemporary children's play.

The implicit message of this paper is that if our interventions are themselves genuinely playful, or allow children their own genuine playfulness, we will be further ahead than we were with our present array of rhetorics about the paradigms of childhood. It is more probable that by allowing there to be a generation of child players as well as being ourselves a generation of adult players, we will treat children and ourselves more fortunately. As it stands we are typically hypocrites who pretend that children play and that we adults do not. In this way children remain the residual legatees of historicism and as such assure us of their innocence and our righteousness; of their prospects and our good faith in the future we

have provided for them. In fact we have provided them with an increasingly stressful childhood and an increasingly undesirable future. We are well overdue in substituting for all these paradigms of childhood one that will put both adult and child on the same existential footing, that would be the paradigm of the Playful Person.