

ROUGH AND TUMBLE PLAY: CONSIDERATIONS FOR SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL INTERACTIONS

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SUPERVISION VS. FREEDOM

- The non classroom time can be the make or break of the daily experiences for teachers and children.
- Common concerns:
 - Why are the children so discomobulated?
 - What real learning is happening here?
 - How can I improve the experience for the children and myself?
- Main reason teachers are concerned about these times ~ behaviour.

2

LEARNING EVERYWHERE

- Cognitive
 - creativity
 - imagination
 - problem-solving
 - social cognition
 - empathy
 - perspective-taking
- Emotional
 - enjoyment, fun, love of life
 - release of energy, tension reduction
 - self-expression

3

LEARNING EVERYWHERE

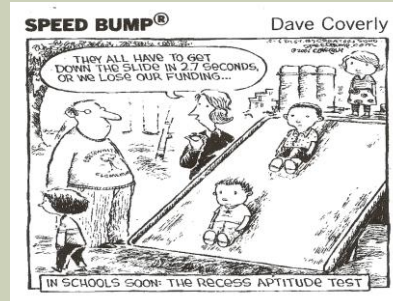
- Social
 - cooperation
 - sharing
 - turn-taking
 - conflict resolution
 - leadership skill development
 - control of impulses and aggressive behaviour
- Physical
 - gross motor development
 - fine motor development
 - physical challenges
- Educational
 - experimentation and risk taking
 - practice of skills
 - self-confidence
 - self-esteem
 - communication skills
 - attention regulation
 - persistence

4

PLAY RESEARCH

- Increasing documentation and dissemination of information and research on children's health, especially the increase in obesity and inactivity levels of children.
- The majority of Canadian children are not active enough for their optimal growth and development (Health Canada, 2002).
- "there is a rapidly growing body of evidence that play is central – indeed critical – to childhood development" (Frost, 1997, p. 54)

5



6

RESEARCH A little dirt could make kids smarter



SHARON KIRKEY

Column-Hill Science

Parents, here's another reason for your kids to play outdoors in the dirt: It may make them smarter.

And, as a side benefit, dirt appears to be a natural anti-anxiety drug, but without the side effects.

Mice exposed to a bacterium found in soil navigated a maze twice as fast, and with less anxiety, as control mice, in studies presented yesterday at the 136th general meeting of the American Society for Microbiology in San Diego.

The researchers say we've become so sanitized we risk losing a connection with an organism in nature that may actually be beneficial to humans.

Dr. Dorothy Matthews became intrigued by opportunistic bacteria — a natural soil microbe — in 2007 when British scientists published a study showing that when mice were exposed to a heat-killed version of the organism, it stimulated neurons in the brainstem to start producing serotonin.

"Serotonin is a molecule that has a number of different effects, but one of them is mood-

Mice exposed to a bacterium found naturally in soil were smarter, faster and less anxious in tests. Researchers fear our urban lifestyle may be keeping us away from an organism that is potentially beneficial to humans.

7

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

- Froebel blocks as the foundation for his interest in architecture.
- We don't know what the core influence is for the children in our schools.
- Give them the chance to find and celebrate their core.
- Transitions, recess, lunch may be just a part of the day.
- For some children, this is where the growth of their essence occurs.
- We respect the individuality of the life experiences of the children.

8

WHAT IS ROUGH AND TUMBLE PLAY?

- Children who display acts involving *running, climbing, chasing, play fighting, fleeing, wrestling, falling, and open-handed slaps* (Pellegrini & Smith, 1998; Reed & Brown, 2000)
- Display of the cheerful *play face* (Reed & Brown)
- R&T play is defined as fun, social-interactive behavior that includes running, climbing, pouncing, chasing and fleeing, wrestling, kicking, open-handed slapping, falling, and other forms of physical and verbal play fighting (Freeman & Brown, 2004; Pellegrini & Smith, 1998)

9

DEFINING PLAY

- Play is an abstract concept which is difficult to describe in its entirety.
- We all recognize play when we see it in action, but are restricted by a limited vocabulary when asked to reach a definition as to what play is.

10

TYPICAL PLAY DEVELOPMENT

- What we see
 - Maturation.
 - Increasingly complex.
 - Increasingly elaborate.
 - Planning.
 - Expanding base of experiences.
 - Greater control of play through planning and creative ideas.

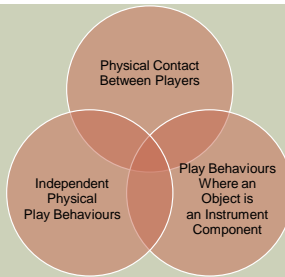
11

ROUGH AND TUMBLE PLAY

- Grabbing body of other player
- Use of voice – roaring
- Chasing (e.g., in pursuit of other player)
- Grabbing and moving body of other player
- Falling
- Banging body into body of other player
- Hitting motions
- Kicking motions
- Rolling around on ground with other player
- Running (e.g., without intent to chase or flee)
- Large body motions (e.g., twirling body with arms outstretched)
- Pushing other player
- Open handed slaps
- Jumping on object (e.g., couch)
- Kicking object
- Making crashing motions with held object
- Throwing objects
- Banging body into fixed object (e.g., wall)
- Hitting self
- Holding hands
- Making hitting motions while holding an object
- Pulling other player
- Rolling around on ground on own
- Use of a loud voice
- Crashing body into object
- Fleeing (e.g., avoiding being caught by pursuing player)
- Wrestling (e.g., lifting other's body, rolling on ground, etc.)

12

OBSERVED R&T PLAY



13

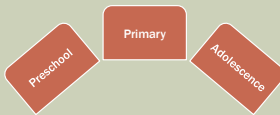
OBSERVED R&T PLAY

- **Physical Contact Between Players**
 - 40% of recorded incidents
 - Previously identified R&T play elements
 - Pushing, open handed slaps, wrestling
 - Newly identified R&T play elements
 - Grabbing the body of another player
 - Banging body into body of another player
- **Independent Physical Play Behaviours**
 - 46% of recorded incidents
 - Previously identified R&T play elements
 - Floeing, running, falling, chasing
 - Newly identified R&T play elements
 - Use of a loud or roaring voice
 - Large body motions, hitting and kicking motions
- **Play Behaviours Where an Object is an Instrument Component**
 - 14% of recorded incidents
 - No previously identified R&T play elements
 - Newly identified R&T play elements
 - Banging body into fixed object
 - Crashing into object, kicking and throwing objects

14

THE INVERTED 'U'

- Pellegrini and Smith (1998) discussed the emergence of R&T play as represented by an inverted-U shape and reported that "Rough-and-tumble increases during the late preschool and early primary school years, accounting for about 5% of observed recess behavior, peaks in later primary years at around 10%, and then declines during early adolescence, accounting for less than 5% of play" (p. 580).



15

PERSPECTIVES

- **Teachers and Parents**
 - Thought rough and tumble play to be a normal part of childhood
 - R&T play aids in the development of social competency
 - Learning to make judgments, self-control, compassion, boundaries, and how to adapt play for other players
 - Aggression is viewed as a separate issue from rough and tumble play
 - Educators and parents acknowledged a lack of education on R&T play

16

SUPPORT FOR COGNITION

- R&T can lead to heightened arousal and, "exercise play might, by breaking up cognitive tasks, provide spaced or distributed practice rather than massed practice." (Pellegrini and Smith, 1998, p. 584).
- This distributed practice might, according to Pellegrini and Smith, *help children to attend to cognitive tasks.*

17

PERSPECTIVES

- **Children**
 - Expressed concerns about safety
 - "someone might get hurt"
 - All the children were observed engaging in rough and tumble play
 - 40% stated they **do** R&T play
 - 60% stated they **do not** R&T
 - Rough and tumble play is more acceptable at home
 - Considered a family form of play

18

IMPLICATIONS

- Need for educator and parent information on rough and tumble play.
 - Parents and educators articulated a lack of knowledge about rough and tumble play.
 - Teacher preparation programs
 - Professional organizations and conferences
 - Parenting books, websites and other resources
 - Programs and schools should be planning for the inclusion of R&T play.
 - Policies and procedures, staff discussions

19

ESCAPE THE CLASSROOM

- Children who spend extensive time frames in learning environments engage in play with increased excitement once they were outside of the classroom (Scott & Panksepp, 2003)
- Children are most active R & T players at the age of seven years (Humphreys & Smith, 1984)

20

FAMILY CONNECTIONS

- McBride-Chang and Jacklin (1993)
 - Choice of sex-typed play an indicator of rough and tumble play.
 - Choice of 'girl' play (e.g., having a tea party) was negatively associated with R&T.
 - Choice of 'boy' play (e.g., playing football) was positively associated with displays of R&T.

21

FAMILY CONNECTIONS

- Fagot (1978)
 - No significant gender differences in the play behaviours of the parents with their son or daughter up to the age of 3 years.
 - By 3 years of age, parents direct rough and tumble play towards their sons rather than daughters.

22

PARENTS AND ROUGH AND TUMBLE PLAY

- Mother's arousal and encouragement of rough and tumble play is not associated with later displays of rough and tumble play by children.
- Children who are encouraged or discouraged from R&T by their fathers exhibit long-lasting tendencies either to participate in or to shy away from R&T play.
- Rough and tumble play of fathers with their children is associated with later (i.e., first grade) displays of rough and tumble play.

23

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

- Rough and tumble play for boys:
 - Practice for caring friendships.
 - Development of social competence.
 - A place for negotiation, problem solving, fulfilling the need to belong to a group, having intimate contact with friends, experiencing friendly competition.
 - Development of a sense of community.
 - Between the warmth and closeness of family and the isolation and indifference of the adult masculine world.

24

EXPRESSIONS OF CARING

- Reed and Brown (2000)
 - "Boys and girls have different perspectives on intimate relations and different interpretations with regard to connection and expression of care" (p. 105)
 - Rough and tumble play may be one of the few socially acceptable ways for males to
 - "Express care and intimacy for another male"
 - "A camouflage for expressions of intimacy and care." (p. 114).

25

GIRLS AND ROUGH AND TUMBLE PLAY

- Girls participate in rough and tumble play to a lesser degree than boys.
- Absent rough and tumble play behaviors for girls included banging into another player, making hitting motions, throwing objects, pulling other players, crashing body into an object, and wrestling.

26

AGGRESSION

- Rough and tumble play *mimics* intentionally aggressive actions.
- *Symbolic* of aggression, not true aggression.
- Players do not intend to hurt their partners.
- Boys declared their friendship as R&T gave them an opportunity to show that they cared for each other.

27

"ROUGH AND TUMBLE PLAY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOCIAL BRAIN"

- Pellis and Pellis (2007)
 - Study involving laboratory rats and R&T
 - "experience in play fighting in childhood is causally related to social competence later in life"
 - It is not that more socially competent children engage in more rough and tumble play, rather that rough and tumble play may promote the development of social competency.
 - ***Rough and tumble play can lead to organizational changes in the brain related to social behaviour.***

28

TOPICS OF CONCERN

- Provision and adaptation of play spaces or playgrounds with a section dedicated to R&T play.
- Training of adults and children to recognize and identify emotions in others.
- Training of educators on the role of R&T play in developing caring relationships and friendships.
- Encouragement of teacher self reflection on gender differences and gender stereotypes.
- Involvement of children in decisions about where and when to allow R&T play.
- Education of children about R&T play, the process of creating explicit rules, and respect for others.
- The need to continue to promote research on this type of play.

■ Reed, Brown and Roth (2000)

■ Freeman and Brown (2004)

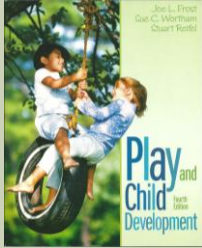
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DIFFERENCES AMONG CHILDREN

- Children are selective in what they choose to play.
- Play styles vary.
- Temperament.
- Sense of security.
- Social and cultural backgrounds.
- Gender differences.

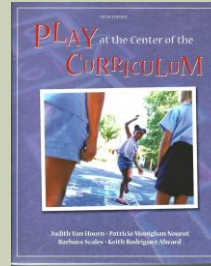
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TEXTBOOKS



- Frost, J.L., Wortham, S.C., and Reifel, S. (2012). *Play and child development* (4th ed.).
 - "Although caregivers and teachers express concern about violent themes and possible injuries in superhero and rough-and-tumble play, they can take a broader view and try to see the benefits of these types of sociodramatic play for young children." (p. 157)

31



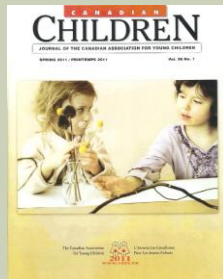
- Van Hoorn, J., Nourot, P.M., Scales, B., & Alward, K.R. (2011). *Play at the center of the curriculum* (5th ed.).
 - Play as the centre of learning for math, literacy, science, the arts, etc.
 - Some descriptions of rough and tumble play elements in a section on "Understanding Children's Outdoor Peer Play" (pg. 306).

32

JOURNALS

■ Canadian Children

- Tannock, M.T. (2011). Young children's rough and tumble play: Apprehensions and opportunities. *Canadian Children*, 36(1), 4-12.



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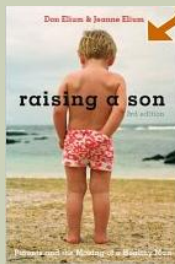
■ Young Children

- Carleson, F.M. (2011). Rough play: One of the most challenging behaviors. *Young Children*, 66(4), 18-25.
- In an issue titled "Behaviors That Still Challenge"



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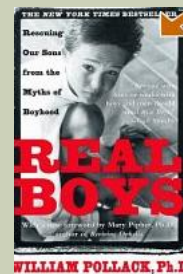
PARENTING BOOKS



- Elum, D. & Elum, J. (2004). *Raising a son* (3rd ed.).

- Rough and tumble play serves as a means for fathers and sons to connect.

35



- Pollack, W. (1999). *Real boys: Rescuing our sons from the myths of boyhood*.
 - "Research shows that such father play, or enthrallment, has many developmental benefits because it forces children – and this is especially significant for young boys – to learn to regulate and tolerate their feelings . . . to identify these feelings more clearly, and to adapt to a variety of complex social situations" (p. 114)

36

[illegible]

PLAYFUL LEARNING OR PLAY

- Everything is play. Everything is learning.
- Is play innate, or is play learned?
OR
- Is play a mix of nature and nurture?
- Though we may not perceive the play as play, it is no less or more for the children.
- Utilize your inquiry to determine what you accept, what you reject, what you change, and why you believe it to be so.

THANK YOU!

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