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NAME OF AUTHOR/NOM DE L'AUTEUR Elizabeth Jane Hewes

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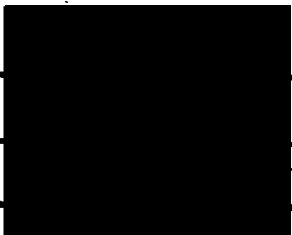
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CHILDTALK JABBERWOCK:

On Play as the Dominant Language of Childhood

by

Jane Hewes

B.A., University of Toronto, 1972

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
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APPROVAL

Name: Jane Hewes

Degree: Master of Arts

Title of Thesis: Childtalk Jabberwock: On Play
as the Dominant Language of Childhood.

Examining Committee:

Chairperson: Thomas J. Mallinson, Professor

Rowland Lorimer
Associate Professor
Senior Supervisor

Martin Laba
Instructor

Janet N. Strayer
Assistant Professor
Department of Psychology
Simon Fraser University
External Examiner

Date Approved: June 22, 1981

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CHILDTALK JABBERWOCK: ON PLAY AS THE DOMINANT

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Author: _____

(signature)

Elizabeth Jane Hewes

(name)

August 18/81

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the nature of the communicative process amongst children. It argues that play is the dominant language of childhood.

The first chapter addresses itself to the study of childhood in cognitive psychology and ethology. In the psychological model, the use of clinical methods and the emphasis upon assessing only verbal understanding is seen to be antithetical to the nature of childhood. By contrast, ethological studies concentrate upon the natural environment of children, but give little consideration to the influence of verbal understanding. The chapter introduces the central point of the thesis—that play, rather than language, organizes understanding and communication amongst children.

The second chapter reviews the definitional literature on play in an attempt to uncover a metaphor suited to the analysis of children's play from the perspective of the players. Traditional definitions are seen to be inadequate explanatory metaphors. They concentrate upon the function of children's play in the adult cultural context only, giving little consideration to the meaning of play for children. The metaphor of play as communication—a generative, interpretive form—is seen to be most suited to an investigation of children's play.

The third chapter considers the theoretical foundations for an examination of play as communicative form. Play is seen to be a system-

atic organization of behaviour and experience with feedback capacities and poetic functions. It is argued that play is an alternate means of understanding and perceiving reality from language, somewhat more ambiguous, analogic and suggestive than language, but no less intense or encompassing.

The fourth chapter proposes that the basic structural unit of play as a language is 'enactment'. The chapter explores the nature of play as a language system which is systematically and significantly related to verbal language. The particular arrangement of behaviour which distinguishes play as a syntactical system in its own right is described. The semantic system of children's play is described as one in which meaning is encoded in action and object as well as in verbal language. Finally, it is argued that play is a living language with its own conversational convention.

Having established a theoretical basis upon which to examine play as a language, the thesis proceeds to develop a methodology for the examination of children's play which will reveal something of the meaning of play for children. It is proposed that children's play is always an enactment which consists of some combination of players, resources of play or things being played with, and rituals of interaction which are devised by children and have a discourse all of their own.

The fourth chapter considers the activity of the playground—the games and linguistic rituals—as a language using both action and sound. It is argued that the child understands verbal language as a system of sounds and meanings rather than as a system of symbols and meanings. Playground chant and song is described as an adjunct to action and as a means by which children synchronize their interaction and achieve group

consensus. Rituals of interactions and ethical codes constitute another level of organization of playground activity. Play is seen to reinforce children's sense of themselves as a group and as well, to cultivate a sense of individual identity which is not mediated by adult categories. Play establishes a culture of childhood.

The thesis concludes that play is a medium of communication with its own logical and coherent discourse. Further, play is a system which presents more than one reality to the players, each of which represents a valid and significant perception of experience. It is argued that for children, this kind of system does not precipitate paradox. Children live quite comfortably in two realities--that projected by the adults around them and that created through their interactions with one another in play.

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CHILDHOOD AND THE STUDY OF CHILDREN

I forget how real they are, those childhood experiences which we grown-ups call fantasy. To the child it isn't fantasy: the fear of being abandoned, the wicked wolf, the darkness in the closet--it is all real. One puts a name on it in order to call it something else. What is real we say is a fantasy--and that is the fantasy.

Liv Ullmann, Changing

In Japanese brush painting, the blank white space out of which the painting emerges is said to be as significant as the painting itself. Somewhat ironically, the painting of childhood in the study of children concentrates upon the form of that which does not yet exist in children (on adult terms), thereby creating a negative image of childhood as well as ignoring the understanding which surrounds and shapes the child's 'lack' of knowledge. This thesis explores the blank white space in the academic painting of childhood and poses that it represents a dimension of childhood which is rich in understanding and unique in point of view.

To be more precise, in the tradition of academic research into the nature of childhood and children's behaviour, theorists have tended to focus upon describing the parameters of the child's lack of knowledge as a definitional feature of childhood and as an orienting metaphor in developmental research. Children are described in terms of what they cannot do, rather than what they can do. Studies of children, particularly those in psychology and anthropology, are frequently studies of learning in which the child is viewed as the human being with everything to learn.

Further, from a psychological perspective, 'everything to learn' is primarily defined by intellectual growth. There is little regard for the nature and existence of instinctive or intuitive knowledge and the dynamics of its unfolding.

This predominantly negative image of childhood is not solely the product of academic definition. It is a pervasive metaphor in Western culture and society as a whole. Childhood is viewed as a temporary and dependent fantasy. The child in each of us is expected to disappear at a socially and biologically determined age. The mannerisms, behaviours, and perceptions which are acceptable and even endearing in children are viewed with disdain if they appear in the adult. We make reference to such immature and unacceptable behaviour as 'childish'.

Western culture also poses that adulthood completes childhood-- socially, emotionally and intellectually. Implicit in this sense of completion is the somewhat curious notion that the coming of age in adulthood terminates the human need to learn. The adult 'knows' what he is doing because the structures of his intellect are complete. Similarly, the child does not 'know', and often his or her childish behaviours and perceptions are not only excused, but also disregarded on this account. There is no validity associated with childhood perception in Western culture. We do not place intrinsic value on children, nor do we assign to childhood a contributing role in human affairs.

It is the concern of this thesis to demonstrate that children's play exposes a realistic understanding of the world, one which may well be more than accidentally or incidentally useful in understanding the more subtle reaches of the human possibility. In addition to its perceptive humour, I am inclined to believe that there is considerable

wisdom in childish vision.

The study of children is a comparatively recent and popular academic pursuit. Clinical studies of children's behaviour, although they produce results which are experimentally valid, also reveal that the meticulous methods of the scientific experiment do not sit comfortably with the fluidity of the child's approach to the world. This approach is one which does not require consistency or fixity of definition for understanding, nor does it see any reason to respond consistently in studies which aim to measure cognitive growth. As Hardman points out, for children, "there is no reason why fact and fantasy should be discrete ways of looking at events and objects" (1974:128). The child does not need to know an absolute or unchanging reality. Because of this particular understanding of the world, children are continually breaking through boundaries which the experimenter did not know were there. For example, in a study by Brown and Bellugi (1964; cited in Wood, 1976:71), a two-year old child was asked "which is better . . . some water or a water?" The child's response was "Pop go weasel."

Despite the most exacting of methodologies, or indeed, perhaps because of their exactness, the results of many studies of children are not transferable into a basis of interpretation for the explanation of real-life experiences with children. Piaget, for instance, comes to the conclusion that children communicate very little with one another before the age of seven or eight (see Hardman, 1974:107). As he explains it, apparent dialogue is really only monologue during the egocentric stage of thinking. This result, however conclusively he presents it, is hopelessly untrue. Children do communicate effectively with one another

and from a very early age. As this thesis will demonstrate, children are continually devising systems of communicating with one another. Their communicative system as a whole is different from that of the adult, perhaps less differentiated, precise and organized, but no less intense or encompassing. Merleau-Ponty comments:

Sometimes children understand one another, for example, as they understand that a flattened cube drawn by another child actually represents a cube. As soon as a mode of expression is understood by the partner, it must be taken as valid at this particular level. With his global language the child makes himself understood by the other, who plunges into his consciousness and grasps the totality of the phenomenon through the rational order of his words. This comes from the fact that in drawing, where children do not project the object to be represented on a single plane, in language they do not project the signification only on the plane of logical speech. One would have to study language as a lived state, that is not the language of the logician but that by which the orator, the writer, or even the scientist makes himself understood. One would then see that in certain respects, language cannot help but be "egocentric." (1973:61)

Merleau-Ponty introduces a notion which is central to the present argument: the language of logical articulate speech is not the child's only form of meaningful communication or understanding. This notion explains in part the fluidity of the child's understanding, i.e., it is an understanding which is not yet fixed by the categories of language. Further, it intensifies the intractability of children as the subjects of clinical psychological research and throws into question the emphasis of cognitive psychology upon assessing knowledge in verbal terms. Finally, what cognitive psychological studies ignore, is that the fluidity of children's understanding is a definitive aspect of their behaviour and must be investigated rather than overcome in the experimental context.

Another theoretical perspective which has been used to study children's play is ethology. The great advantage of ethological techniques over the methodology of clinical psychology lies in the investigation of behaviour in the context of the natural environment. However, ethology runs the risk of going to the opposite extreme from psychology in dealing only with observable patterns of behaviour, with little regard for the influence of language and verbal understanding.

The techniques of ethology derive from the study of animal behaviour. What is realized by the ethologist is that children use ritualized sequences of active behaviours in communicative ways in much the same manner as animals do in their communicative behaviour. The results from ethological studies of children are refreshingly different, but the methodology has not been sufficiently adapted to the observation of human behaviour for the purposes of the present study. The researcher/observer is supposed to become effectively invisible in the natural habitat before observation can really begin. This approach represents a distortion of the natural context of children. Adults are in fact a part of the natural habitat of the child and children engage in meaningful exchanges—verbal as well as nonverbal—with adults and other children. In addition to the challenge of becoming invisible the researcher's refusal to respond to the entreaties of children in a playgroup would surely represent a bizarre circumstance to a child.

Ultimately, the ethological technique lacks followthrough on two counts with respect to human behaviour as communication: the refusal to enter into the dynamic of the natural context and the isolation of observable behaviours from their accompanying verbal behaviours.

The synthesis of these two approaches—the psychological, the ethological—provides a basis for understanding the communicative process amongst children. One of the fascinations of psychological investigation into language acquisition is the process whereby language is progressively freed of the context of its action in the speech of children. The ethologist, on the other hand, is fascinated by the language of action and movement in children. What emerges from these notions is that the communicative process of children consists of two aspects—a developing verbal understanding which is to a large degree still dependent upon the context of action and as well, a system of meaningful sequences of nonverbal behavioural communication. This thesis proposes that play is the ordered system which combines these two modes of representation—the language of action and the language of articulate speech—into a language of enactment. This language of play in turn organizes understanding and communication amongst children.

My research material is drawn from the oral traditions and playground culture of children in the beginning stages of literacy—from seven to eleven years. My intention is to argue for the acceptance of a metaphor for play as a communicative process amongst children—the dominant language of childhood. I see this work as a synthesis of conceptual perspectives—the perspective of the poet with that of the pedagogue—as well as academic ones. For the pedagogue, the child waits to be filled with knowledge; the poet idolizes the vision and instinctive knowing of the child. In "The Study of Children in Social Anthropology," Charlotte Hardman (1974) describes her investigation of children as an attempt to discern an order in what appears to be chaos. I have found myself searching for a reality in what appears to be fantasy.

PLAY: THE CLOAK OF METAPHOR

Towards a Definition

Since the publication of Homo Ludens in 1938, many writers from many disciplines have set themselves the task of theorizing upon the nature of play. Jean Piaget, Brian Sutton-Smith, Roger Caillois and Helen Schwartzman join Johan Huizinga as major theoretical contributors to an operative 'definition' for play. The purpose of this chapter is to comment upon these conceptualizations, hoping to extract and put to use that which is insightful as well as to consider and criticize each theory from the perspective of its suitability as a metaphor for the study of children's play.

In my consideration of each of these theorists, I will be particularly concerned with the impress of the metaphor itself, i.e., with the manner in which the definition is defined. What kind of a thing is play considered to be? Are the terms of the definition themselves defined? What kind of a bias is implicit in the metaphor? In these examples alone, I have found a certain amount of blatant assumption as well as considerable linguistic entanglement and incongruity in the usage of terms. Like terms are employed in entirely different senses, in some instances within the same theoretical construct, and with little or no concern for definition.

One of the most common misconceptions which emerges in the definitional literature of play is that play can always be viewed as a game of

sorts. Both Huizinga (1938) and Caillois (1961) use these terms almost interchangeably, posing that 'play' is synonymous with 'game' and/or that the game is the concrete manifestation of the play. This renders play isolable and thus more readily studiable; however, it is a highly questionable approach to its subject matter. All play is not reducible to games. As Bateson (1955) suggests, games tend to 'rule out' play. Moreover, the game model, which generally implies winners, losers and a competitive dynamic, cannot account easily for the vitally cooperative spirit of children's play nor for its prominent fluidity.

Another aspect of the 'play as game' metaphor is developed by Sutton-Smith (1971) and Piaget (1951) who argue that there is a developmental relationship existing between play and games. In these conceptions, play is considered to be the unstructured, undifferentiated precursor of the more social and sophisticated institution of games. I hope to show that this is an inadequate as well as an inaccurate metaphor for the study of children's play. Schwartzman's theory (1978) substantiates the notion that play and games may in fact belong to different levels of analysis.

Another misconception in the existing literature is that the definition of play is dependent upon contrast. Play is most often defined by comparison with, and on the terms of, that which is deemed to be 'not play'. Further, there is an emphasis upon the functional relationship between play and nonplay and a reliance upon their distinctness in academic research. This approach is indicative of the triviality associated with play and the playful in Western culture in general. Schwartzman comments upon the negative definition of play which emerges as a result:

In the West, our understanding of play has been most significantly influenced by shared attitudes about what play is not. Play is not work; play is not real; play is not serious; play is not productive; and so forth. These attitudes, which are related to that complex of beliefs that has come to be known as the Protestant Work Ethic, have made it very difficult for Westerners to see that work can be playful while play can sometimes be experienced as work. (1978:4)

As this thesis will attempt to illustrate, the distinction between play and nonplay is a tenuous one at best, particularly as it is interpreted as a distinction between the serious and the nonserious. Play, as this thesis will argue, incorporates and addresses some of the most serious and consequential aspects of human culture.

With the exception of Schwartzman, the theoretical perspectives under consideration in this chapter articulate their definitions of play within a framework of oppositions and contrasts. In the definitions of Caillois and Huizinga, play is understood to be a phenomenon which is not work, not real, not serious and not productive. Furthermore, it is described as an activity which is always pleasurable and voluntarily undertaken. This conception contradicts some of the most obvious characteristics of children's play: that it is very real, serious and consequential from the point of view of the child, and that it is not always a pleasurable experience nor one which children have any choice about being involved in. According to Piaget, play is not rational, not logical and not mature. Along with Sutton-Smith, he proposes that play is a phenomenon which must be understood in its functional relationship to nonplay, i.e., as it projects or reflects cognitive (Piaget) or enculturative (Sutton-Smith) processes. Although Sutton-Smith very significantly proposes further that play also generates new cultural

forms, there is little sense in either of these definitions that children might have their own reasons for playing.

Alternatively, Helen Schwartzman's theory suggests that although contrast may be an integral feature in any definition of play, these distinctions are more appropriately thought of as 'other than' rather than 'not'. She describes play as productive, consequential, interpretive behaviour which is arational, areal, and alogical. This point of view becomes particularly significant in the explanation of children's make-believe play which is so often opposed to 'reality'.

A third problematic area emerges in the vocabulary of play in that the definition of terms is often taken for granted. Of particular significance to the present work is the usage of the terms 'make-believe' and 'real'. These two terms are used repeatedly in the literature of play and yet they remain undefined and are obviously being used differently. In Huizinga's conception, make-believe is an attitude, and a characteristic quality to be a specific kind of activity: a category of play. Caillois refers to a quality of 'make-believe' which characterizes all play in some sense, as well as to a category of make-believe play (mimicry) in his classification for play and games.¹ The conceptual foundations of these theories are quite different from one another on this level. Yet there is consensus on one point: make-believe is not real. Moreover, to the extent that play is synonymous with make-believe, play is not real either. In commenting upon this distinction in the works of Caillois and Huizinga, Ehmann (1968:33) comments that 'not play' is being taken completely for granted in these definitions: reality is understood.

In some sense this thesis is very directly addressed to the

assumption that children's make-believe play is not real. As will become apparent in the next chapter, make-believe play is composed of elements of the 'real' as well as the 'unreal'—woven together by belief and design. Ironically, as Huizinga himself notes,

In play as we conceive it, the distinction between belief and make-believe breaks down. The concept of play merges quite naturally with that of holiness. (1938:25)

Distinctions between reality and unreality are irrelevant ones, particularly in the study of children's play. Play transcends questions of truth and falsehood, reality and unreality.

My criticism of these theoretical works is intended to reveal the significant aspects of each perspective as well as to demonstrate the ways in which those metaphors which attempt to delineate the nature of play as a kind of activity, obscure and conceal its true character. It is my belief that the problematic aspects of these definitions are in certain respects the result of attempting to define using language that which (play) exists as an alternate process of definition from language. The chapter concludes that it is the communicative aspects of play which are definitional and that a communicative metaphor is most likely to tell us something of the true nature of play, particularly the play of children.

The Theoretical Framework

Huizinga: Play as a Competitive Aesthetic

The pervasiveness of the play element in the history of human cultures is meticulously documented by Johan Huizinga in Homo Ludens.

Although the work was originally published in 1938, it remains today one of the most definitive in the literature of play. Homo Ludens is, in many respects, a humble work, one which belies an intuitive understanding of the transcendent, ephemeral qualities of play and of its perplexing consequentiality in human affairs. Huizinga's thesis is that play is an original level of human experience, "an absolutely primal category of life" (pg. 3), and that culture itself evolved originally from play. Homo Ludens is essentially an historical documentation of the evolution of human cultural forms through play. Play is seen to "permeate" all of the "great archetypal activities of human experience" (pg. 4): language, myth and ritual ultimately give rise to art, poetry, science, economics and law through competitive play. Civilization is "waged" from the outset as a contest or a game and play in all its forms is competitive.

Play is, in essence, a quality of mind—an independent, irreducible concept, "not susceptible of exact definition either logically, biologically or aesthetically" (pg. 6). Huizinga elaborates the main characteristics of play as follows:

Summing up the formal characteristics of play we might call it a free activity standing quite consciously outside "ordinary" life as being "not serious," but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means. (pg. 13)

These few lines are often quoted in the academic literature as the most comprehensive definition of play available. Yet the definition is in some senses much less useful than the philosophical metaphor from which

it arises. There are some problematic notions in this conception. All play is not in fact voluntary, nor is it always nonserious or even distinguishable from 'ordinary life', whatever that may be. Huizinga himself acknowledges the limitations of his definition when confronted by the paradoxes of play:

We can say: play is nonseriousness. But apart from the fact that this proposition tells us nothing about the positive qualities of play, it is extraordinarily easy to refute. As soon as we proceed from "play is non-seriousness" to "play is not serious," the contrast leaves us in the lurch—for some play can be very serious indeed . . . Children's games . . . are played in profound seriousness. (pg. 5-6)

The nature of Huizinga's elaboration of this antithesis between play and seriousness elucidates his uniquely architected explanation of the play concept. In addition to the philosophical paradox which Huizinga describes above, he also comments upon the semantic peculiarity associated with the antithesis between play and seriousness:

The conceptual value of a word is always conditioned by the word which expresses its opposite. For us the opposite of play is earnest, also used in the more special sense of work; while the opposite of earnest can either be play or jesting, joking . . .

. . . The significance of "play," . . . is by no means defined or exhausted by calling it "not-earnest," or "not serious." Play is a thing by itself. The play-concept as such is of a higher order than is seriousness. For seriousness seeks to exclude play, whereas play can very well include seriousness. (pg. 44-45)

There are two significant notions which emerge from this quote. The first is the notion that opposites may be unequal in value and are not necessarily mutually exclusive. This is particularly useful in the study of children's play where winning and losing for instance, are neither

mutually exclusive nor opposite in value according to children. The second notion is that play is a transcendent phenomenon, one which lies beyond antithesis itself:

Play lies outside the antithesis of wisdom and folly, and equally outside those of truth and falsehood, good and evil. Although it is a non-material activity it has no moral function. The valuation of vice and virtue do not apply here. (pg. 6)

In many respects it is this awareness of the existence of play in a realm which lies beyond the logical configurations of language which makes Homo Ludens an inspired and enduring work.

Curiously enough, although the import of his entire work seems to be saying that the whole of life is play, Huizinga makes a very clear distinction between play and ordinary life: play is a 'step outside' of ordinary reality. It takes place in a bounded and separate sphere of action. The child who pretends is literally acting "beside himself" (pg. 14). This quality of 'make-believe' is understood to be a 'representation' of reality; all play is mimesis.

Along with make-believe, Huizinga argues that competition and contest are qualities characteristic of all play:

The function of play in the higher forms which concern us here can largely be derived from the two basic aspects under which we meet it: as a contest for something or a representation of something. These two functions can unite in such a way that the game "represents" a contest, or else becomes a contest for the best representation of something. (pg. 13)

According to his point of view, all play then becomes a contest between opponents; "playing together" is a linguistic non-sequitur and a practical

impossibility (pg. 47). This notion fails to consider the essentially cooperative spirit and purpose of 'contest' as it exists in the realm of play. For example, in children's play-fighting, contest can be a means of extending the cooperation between children, and preventing fighting. In Huizinga's conception, all play revolves around the agonistic principle: it is an expression of the "urge to be first." The purpose of play is to "compete for superiority" (pg. 50). This metaphor emphasizes the divisive qualities of gaming, to the exclusion of the integrative features of play. Gaming should be understood as one of several forms of play behaviour.

It must be noted, however, that while Huizinga proposes that all play is a contest of some kind, he is careful to point out that the intrinsically competitive quality of play is not synonymous with "a desire for power or a will to dominate" (pg. 50). Ultimately, Huizinga's particular characterization of the competitive aspect of play must be understood within the conceptual framework which he develops of play as an aesthetic:

Inside the playground an absolute and peculiar order reigns. Here we come across another, very positive feature of play: it creates order, is order. Into an imperfect world and into the confusion of life it brings a temporary, a limited perfection The profound affinity between play and order is perhaps the reason why play . . . seems to lie to such a large extent in the field of aesthetics. Play has a tendency to be beautiful. It may be that this aesthetic factor is identical with the impulse to create orderly form, which animates play in all its aspects.

(pg. 10)

Play emerges as a competitive aesthetic, vital enough to have given rise to civilization. However, Huizinga does not deal directly with the implications of such a notion. Somewhere it is poetic profanity to

apply the agonistic principle, for instance, to the quest for Beauty, likewise a part of the rise of civilization. To strive and struggle for Beauty is one thing; the notion of Beauty arising solely from the opposition of forces--an adversarial dynamic--is quite another.

One of the most fascinating chapters in Homo Ludens explores the linguistic origins and character of the play concept as it is expressed in several languages, ancient and contemporary. Peculiarities in the English language spring to mind: 'play fair' and 'play it safe' are, technically speaking, grammatically incorrect. It would seem that the play concept lies somewhere between noun and verb, i.e., it combines the characteristics of a thing-named with an activity.

In similar vein, Huizinga notes that the semantic comparison between the expressions 'to play a game' and 'doing woodwork' re-emphasizes that "the act of playing is of such a peculiar and independent nature as to be outside the ordinary categories of action" (pg. 37). One does not ordinarily 'do' a game or 'play' woodwork. Playing is applicable to certain activities and not others and while there are variations and inconsistencies between languages, Huizinga notes that many of these examples are inexplicable. He cites the illustration in the English of the human voice as the only musical instrument which is not 'played'. These examples reinforce the notion that play lies beyond the logical configurations of language.

In further support of this notion Huizinga argues that there is no human society in recorded history with an idol or a divine figure for play, although there are many stories of the Gods at play. While it is possible to accept Huizinga's notion of the uniqueness of the play element

in human culture, his analysis overlooks the central educative role of the trickster in primitive oral cultures and as well, the centrality of such figures in the culture and belief system of childhood.² Trickster figures embody the spirit of play in the sense that they upset or invert expectations. In oral cultures, the trickster figure reveals some kind of truth about, or intimacy with, the norms of cultural behaviour through inversion and mockery. In Western culture as a whole these figures tend not to be incorporated into the general belief system, and are viewed as peripheral phenomena, i.e., as entertainment or comic relief. However, for children this is not the case. Bugs Bunny, the Roadrunner, Tom and Jerry and Woody Woodpecker are only a few examples of the trickster personalities of childhood which are significant elements in the creation and maintenance of the culture of children amongst themselves.

Huizinga's exploration of the semantic origins of the play concept further reveals an association between play and leaping or play and rapid, rhythmical motion in several languages, both ancient and modern. Expressions such as the 'play' of sunlight and the 'play' of a steering wheel are dismissed by Huizinga as attenuated usages of the term, however, they evoke a sense of the elasticity and flexibility in movement which I believe are intrinsic to play. Play is perpetual motion; it is also balanced motion, though often this is an asymmetrical balance. The balance of play is not the balance of weights and measures and equivalencies, but that of the line and form of visual art and sculpture. The play of little children ripples: it finds equilibrium in an even and unbroken social rhythm.

Piaget: The Intellectual Dimension of Play

Though the writings of Piaget on play are perhaps amongst the most influential in the literature, here they are probably the least useful, from a philosophic as well as a pragmatic viewpoint. According to Piaget, play represents a domination of the intellectual processes of the assimilation of reality over the accommodation to reality and it thus 'bends' and 'distorts' reality. Piaget does not consider play to be a function of the mature intellect. It exists only to exercise and refine those cognitive structures which are already apparent in intellectual functioning. Once cognitive structures are fully mastered, play disappears. In other words, Piaget proposes that play is a temporary and conservative element in the process of intellectual development.

In Piaget's conception, play is divided into three hierarchical developmental stages--practice play, symbolic play and games with rules. This progression outlines a trend from the solitary play forms of the infant to the social game forms of the adult. This classification scheme, however inherently logical, does not account for all of the data of play, nor even for all kinds of play and here, as elsewhere, accumulating empirical evidence threatens the pillars of Piagetian wisdom. Garvey (1974) has questioned the assumed progression from solitary to social, arguing and demonstrating that play is primarily a social activity, even amongst very young children. She proposes that the original model for play is to be found in the mother-infant paradigm. Rivka Eifermann (1971) has refuted the claim that participation in games with rules undergoes a steady increase with age. In a recent article, Elizabeth Mouldoux (1977) points out that it would be theoret-

ically inconsistent in Piaget's scheme for a game with rules to have a symbolic aspect as well. She writes:

The fact that in classification we were often forced by the data to make the inadmissible combination of symbolic play and rule games, argues for the inadequacy of Piaget's theory and classification, with regard to symbolism, symbolic play, and rules. (pg. 204)

In addition to being empirically impractical, Piaget's theory of play is philosophically and categorically confining and accounts for only a very small part of the data of play. According to Sutton-Smith, Piaget considers play to be only an "aborted variant" of intelligence (1971a:334). He argues that because Piaget is overridingly concerned with convergent intellectual processes, he cannot explain a process such as play which essentially represents divergent thought (1971b:340). Indeed, as Sutton-Smith suggests, play can be "best thought of as an entirely different type of process rather than simply a form of thought" (1971b:340). Furthermore, the strong undercurrent in Piagetian psychology that the human infant is asocial at birth and that sociability is a quality learned and accumulated during the maturation process, is both controversial and suspect. One eventually gets the distinct sense that the data of play are being molded to bolster and emphasize the staging metaphor of intellectual growth as observed by Piaget.

Sutton-Smith: The Enculturative Aspects of Play

Brian Sutton-Smith is a developmental psychologist and folklorist who is primarily interested in play as an enculturative process. He has made a substantial contribution to empirical research as well as to

the development of theoretical models. Unlike Piaget, Sutton-Smith considers play to be an adaptive behaviour, although not in a survival or achievement-oriented context. The most significant aspect of Sutton-Smith's approach for the present study is the notion that play has a fundamental role in human culture. The notion that the structures of play represent reversals and inversions of cultural forms is germane to his explanation of the role of play in culture. According to Sutton-Smith, these phenomena (reversals and inversions) can be "considered as proto structure, that is, as a source of novelty or as a source of new culture" ([1974] 1977:226)

Sutton-Smith's contributions to the study of play in effect constitute a microcosm of developing methodological and metaphorical trends in play research. His early works are assemblages of anecdotes; his most recent material proposes that play be viewed as a communication.

Sutton-Smith's work in play research began in the early 1950's as folkloric collections of New Zealand children's games. His interest rapidly expanded to include a concern with the possible meaning of play and games. In "A Formal Analysis of Game Meaning" (1959) appeared the beginnings of an inventory of game elements as follows: game challenge or purpose, player participation, player performance, the spatial scene and the temporal structure. This inventory has undergone some modification in the intervening years, most notably with the addition of 'game outcome' as an element. It has been used as a structural model in the analysis of informal play episodes as well as in formal games.

Using this inventory and the classificatory scheme—games of physical skill, games of chance and games of strategy—as developed by Roberts, Arth, and Bush in "Games in Culture" (1959), Sutton-Smith began

cataloguing and analyzing the play and games of a variety of different cultures. In collaboration with J.M. Roberts (1962), Sutton-Smith developed the 'conflict-enculturation' hypothesis of play which has come to be his trademark in the discipline. This is a combining of psychological and anthropological perspectives which identifies an enculturative process that is animated and enacted through play and games: child training practices which create psychological conflict in children are replicated and configured by them in their play and subsequently are transformed into adaptive social behaviours. The authors pose that play is instrumental in resolving the conflict between individual and culture by modelling conflict in games, i.e., in structures of role reversals which assuage conflict and promote the mastery of culturally appropriate behaviours. The hypothesis was tested and validated in cross-cultural study by Roberts and Sutton-Smith (1962).

As mentioned previously, the notion that the enculturative function of play is related to the reversal and inversion of cultural form in games is germane to Sutton-Smith's theory. In a recent theoretical work Sutton-Smith (1976) attempts, I believe, to synthesize the enculturative function with the structure of reversal by proposing that there is a dialectical relationship existing between play and nonplay (see Schwartzman, 1978:225). In a still more recent article delivered to the Association for the Anthropological Study of Play in 1978, Sutton-Smith argues that the most appropriate metaphor for the study of play text and its relationship to nonplay context is a communicative one. He bases his analysis of mother-infant play according to the structures of professional sport upon the notion that the structures of play are the infrastructures of games. I concur with Sutton-Smith that the appropriate metaphor is a

communicative one, however, I cannot agree with his choice of metaphor, i.e., sport, nor can I accept the notion, central to his theory, that play structures only prefigure the structures of games.

In *Child's Play* (1971), a compendium of articles representing various theoretical approaches to the study of play, editors Herron and Sutton-Smith state that much of the study of play has been the study of an "epiphenomenon" (pg. 2), a "derivative response system for expressing affects, cognitions" (pg. 344), and a study of context with little regard for text. While Sutton-Smith's theory retains a very strong sense of play as a response system, he sees a dynamic, systematic and revealing relationship between play and that which it expresses. In play can be seen structures which "parallel, reproduce or present transformations of nonplay structures" (Herron and Sutton-Smith, 1971:194). It could be said that Sutton-Smith sees play almost entirely in the service of non-play: there is an implication that all of the data of play is correlative in some way with the data of nonplay. However, his real interest lies in the dynamic aspect of the interaction between play behaviours and nonplay behaviours. The structure of this relationship, he argues, is one of reversal. As Schwartzman points out (1978:209), Sutton-Smith thus sees play as both generative and expressive of cultural and personality patterns.

In contrast to the Piagetian scheme upon which much of the study of play has been based and which models itself on the structures of the intelligence, Sutton-Smith attempts to develop a structural model for play which will employ ludic concepts, believing that

the use of a structural descriptive system appropriate for one class of functions to describe another class of functions can result in oversight as to the peculiarities of that latter class. (1971c:298)

He suggests that the structural descriptive concepts derived from games can more appropriately and less injuriously be applied to the subject matter of play than can concepts derived from ego-functions, cognitions or affects (1971c:298). However, as I will eventually attempt to show, this is an equally inappropriate model for the study of play and in some senses, quite a misleading one.

A key concept in understanding Sutton-Smith's theory of play and games and the relationship he establishes between the two, is an understanding of 'voluntary control systems'. Sutton-Smith links this notion of voluntary behaviour with the concept of intrinsic motivational systems as developed by Berlyne (1960) and he considers this to be an essential feature of play. Play is only play if it is voluntarily-undertaken. This immediately excludes some of the data of children's play. In Child's Play (1971), Herron and Sutton-Smith describe a voluntary response as one which is not directly linked to survival. It

implies various forms of mastery, such as the anticipation of outcomes, the choice of instrumental behaviours, freedom from immediate sensory controls, a capacity to sustain the direction of behaviour over a number of responses, sequential organization and skill in mobilizing resources.
(pg. 186)

In The Study of Games, published simultaneously with Child's Play in 1971, Avedon and Sutton-Smith describe both play and games as an exercise of voluntary controls, however, there are some distinctions introduced:

In a game, the participants voluntary control over procedures has been subordinated in anticipation of, but without guarantee for, a given goal. (pg. 7)

Play would thus be distinguished from games as a total exercise of voluntary controls. However the central foci of the difference between play and games revolves around the specific nature of their 'outcomes' and the degree and kind of organization which they display:

Games are repeatable because of their systematic patterns and their predictable outcomes. Play, on the other hand, is less systematic and open-ended with respect to outcomes. (pg. 7)

The 'predictable' outcome of the game is described as "determined but uncertain" (pg. 7). However, as we shall see, the outcome of play has at least two different senses in this scheme. Furthermore, what exactly is meant here by 'open-ended' is not really made clear, however, I assume that Sutton-Smith is hinting at a result which is less determined by rules than is the outcome of a formal game.

According to Sutton-Smith, both the outcome of play and the outcome of games are inherently disequibrial. In games this is easy enough to understand. Avedon and Sutton-Smith (1971) define games as

an exercise of voluntary control systems in which there is an opposition between forces, confined by a procedure and rules in order to produce a disequibrial outcome. (pg. 7)

The disequibrial outcome is represented by the winner and the loser, though the sense of imbalance between winning and losing might be questioned from the child's point of view. Play, on the other hand, was originally defined by Herron and Sutton-Smith as "an exercise of voluntary control systems with disequibrial outcomes" (1971:344). However,

according to Sutton-Smith himself (1971a), the disequilibrium outcome of play has not quite the same sense as that of games. It does not refer only to the result of the interaction between the players--this is what the 'open-ended' outcome refers to--but rather to the result of the interaction between play and nonplay. The 'outcome' of play in this sense becomes

the intentionality . . . to do things differently; to make a unique response to customary circumstances; and to move events away from their cognitive and affective equilibria." (1971c:300)

The term outcome is thus not being used consistently by Sutton-Smith.

According to Sutton-Smith (1971c), it is the intention of play to make nonsense out of sense. He suggests that play is characterized by an "illogic of nonsense" or a "paleologic" (1971c:300). This disequilibrium quality is not, as Piaget would suggest, a temporary function of the intellect, but rather the quality of play which makes it play, and a characteristic of the structure of play as a whole, not just of its outcome:

Again, it is my own prejudice that one of the difficulties that play poses to any theory of convergent intelligence or equilibrating adaptation, is that it has a relatively high component of disjunctive intent. That is, it is disequilibrium on purpose--not by mistake, by cognitive deficit, or by affective deficiency. Like festivals and Mardi Gras, like mountaineering and tight-rope walking, it is tension-enhancing. Equilibrium theorists often reduce this phenomenon to some higher-order adaptation. But that is like reducing the game to its outcome. The players are inclined to insist instead that their intent is not the ultimate resolution but the momentary imbalance. In short, to study play structurally is to study the character of disequilibrium or novelty. (1971b:342)

Sutton-Smith sees play as a form of imbalance with respect to the rest of

the world and yet he concedes that play may also be a form of counter-balance:

Or again, though defined as disequilibria, our discussion suggested that there is a balance between them and other realities. The antecedent misfortune of dreams, and the compulsion of involuntary behaviour is here balanced by mastery and voluntary display. (1972:518)

Presumably, this feature of 'disequilibrium equilibrium' is a part of what Sutton-Smith has identified as the enculturative aspect of play. However, with specific reference to the child's perspective and the upsetting of familiar balances, which is so characteristic of children's play, there is great significance in the notion that in doing so the child is also actively experimenting with the creation of alternate balances.

According to Schwartzman (1978:225), in The Dialectics of Play (1976), Sutton-Smith characterizes the disequilibrium aspects of play using a metaphor of reversals and reversibility. The notion of reversal becomes the dominant metaphor of analysis. It encompasses the reversal in the relationship between play and nonplay, i.e., nonsense and sense, as well as the role reversals and alternations which are a part of the internal structure of play and games. In The Dialectics of Play, Sutton-Smith proposes that play is a "reversal mechanism built in at birth which early in life permits the dissociation of instrumental from goal behaviours" (1976:1; Schwartzman, 1978:226). Because of this quality of reversal, Sutton-Smith argues that the relationship between play and nonplay is a dialectical one. He describes two dialectics: the ludic dialectic, which describes the relationship between play and its antecedent socio-cultural, biological, psychological and communicational contexts; and

the adaptive dialectic, which describes the relationship between play and its postcedent contexts, outcomes and influences. In a sense this scheme represents a reinterpretation of the process of conflict and enculturation. It is Sutton-Smith's conception of how text is 're-introduced' to context in play, taking into account the innovative functions of play as well as its integrative functions ([1974] 1977:231).

Ultimately the scheme is quite neat, but somehow inaccessible. Consider, for example, the following operative definition for play which emerges from the dialectical metaphor:

Play is a subset of voluntary behaviours involving a selective mechanism which reverses the usual contingencies of power so as to permit the subject a controllable and dialectical simulation of the moderately unmastered arousal and reductions of everyday life, in a way that is alternately vivifying and euphoric. (1976:5-6; Schwartzman 1978:226)

While there are certainly many instances of reversal in play phenomena, particularly in children's play, I question the notion that reversal is an all-encompassing dynamic, if this is indeed the implication of such a definition. Furthermore, this whole perspective rests heavily upon being able to distinguish between play and nonplay. This makes the theory problematic as an explanatory model for children's play where the distinction between play and nonplay is not always clear, nor is it always a significant or revealing one.

The notion of power and the reversal of power referred to above is also a problematic one. Although this is not a new theme in the work of Sutton-Smith, it acquires prominence in this definition. Games were first described by Sutton-Smith as models of social power in The Folkgames of Children (1972):

Our work on the enculturative end of this theory has led us to the formulation that games are, among other things, models of social power. Games are, we suggest, models of ways of succeeding over others, by magical power (as in games of chance), by force (as in physical skill games), or by cleverness (as in games of strategy). We have speculated that in games children learn all those necessary arts of trickery, deception, harassment, divination and foul play that their teachers won't teach them, but that are most important in successful human inter-relationships in marriage, business and war. Further that boys played games of physical skill because this is the power form that they can most easily command; and that girls showed a preference for games of strategy and chance because these are lesser power forms available to them.
(pg. 339)

Although I am somewhat affronted at the suggestion that play fosters the megalomaniacal side of human nature, this concept of power is one which I find not so much erroneous as ill-named and over-simplified. On another level, I find the above quotation to be sexist, pompous and presumptuous. Strategy is not necessarily a 'lesser power form' than physical skill. Further, playing dirty, i.e., using the 'arts' of foul play, trickery and deception in human relationships, is often quite adaptive, however it is not the only means of social efficacy. Social skill, even social power, involves much more than underhanded tactics.

Further to its impracticality as a model, is once again, the inability of such a concept to describe the realities of children's play. The structural categories established for the motive and action patterns of games as models of social power are inadequate to describe the spontaneous informal play of children as well as to explain their more cooperative games. While "race, chase, attack, capture, harass and seduce" may all well be transformations of social skills related to power, they do not encompass such motives as friendship, sharing and having fun, which are so much a part of children's play.

Another serious drawback in Sutton-Smith's overall theory of play and games is in the hierarchical developmental relationship which he attempts to establish between the two. According to Sutton-Smith, play embodies the ludic infrastructures of formal games (1971c: 299). In an analysis of the game of football (1971c:305) for instance, Sutton-Smith identifies a combination of the earlier play forms of dodge-ball (attack-defend) and tag (chase-elude). This is an ingenious analysis and probably an accurate one on some level, but it has staggering implications for the value and purpose of early play as well as for any sense of enduring play forms. In this analysis, play is represented as the immature undifferentiated activity of the preschooler; games by the more differentiated mature activity of 'childhood proper' and the adult.

The definition advanced by Sutton-Smith of the difference between play and games, is that play is a test of powers while games are a contest of powers (1971c:299). Implicit with this test/contest distinction lies the structure of competition: in the case of games Sutton-Smith describes this as an opposition between players; in the case of play it is an opposition within the self or a test of one's own capabilities.³ The contrast is apt, but disturbing. It assumes a more solitary, less social quality in play than in games and it is alien to the cooperative spirit of play. The attempt to apply ludic concepts, i.e., the structure of games, to the subject matter of play cannot account for all the data of play and in fact excludes some of its most consequential aspects. Play is not a 'thing' of comparable order to games, and it is only in a very specific sense rather than an expansive

one, that play can be developmentally related to games.

Are there mature forms of play other than games in this scheme? Although Sutton-Smith states that children's play becomes differentiated in a 'variety of ways', he does not explicate what those ways might be. The assumption that the play of children is undifferentiated is an erroneous one: children's play is a structuring activity. Furthermore, this assumption is one which is inconsistent with Sutton-Smith's own notion of play as the source of novel culture. For purposes of analysis, Sutton-Smith places play on a continuum with games such that it is of the same or an inferior order of being. The significance of play as a vital creative force in human culture dwindles when it is squashed into the game mold. Ultimately, Sutton-Smith's methodology does an injustice to his notion of play as innovative form.

Caillois: A Classification for Play and Games

From a philosophical point of view, Caillois' definition of play and games is at best a brittle one. It is based upon a concept of human nature as savage and brutal and a notion of play and reality as separate, incompatible and antagonistic spheres of action. While his definition is thus rigid, categorical and of little use to the present work, the classification scheme which he develops for play and games is, somewhat surprisingly, far more flexible than the theory which gives rise to it. Furthermore, this classificatory model has demonstrated applicability and usefulness in the explanation of the data of children's play (Mouledoux, 1977; Royce, 1972). There are several aspects of Caillois' approach which are significant to the present study. A brief

description of the model will highlight some of the features which make Caillois' classification particularly applicable to the study of children's play.

There are two distinct levels of analysis in the classification scheme which Caillois develops for play and games. The first of these describes the different kinds or types of play. The four categories of play represent human psychological attitudes and are described as

the desire to win by one's merit in regulated competition (agon), the submission of one's will in favor of anxious and passive anticipation of where the wheel will stop (alea), the desire to assume a strange personality (mimicry), and, finally, the pursuit of vertigo (ilinx). In agon, the player relies only upon himself and his utmost efforts; in alea, he counts on everything except himself, submitting to the powers that elude him; in mimicry, he imagines that he is someone else, and he invents an imaginary universe; in ilinx, he gratifies the desire to temporarily destroy his bodily equilibrium, escape the tyranny of his ordinary perception, and provoke the abdication of conscience.
(1961:44)

As Caillois suggests these attitudes are not unique to the playsphere; they are also at work in 'real' life but with different consequences.

These classificatory principles are quite different from those articulated in other models, specifically those of Piaget (1951) and Roberts, Arth and Bush (1959). In the first place, Caillois' categories of play each can incorporate games from the entire developmental range—from infancy through maturity—although certain types of play are more prominent and/or nonexistent at different age levels. He finds very few instances of games of chance in childhood for instance. This approach contrasts in particular with Piagetian framework which describes the three categories of play—practice play, symbolic play and games with rules—as separate developmental stages and forms of play. Furthermore,

each category in Caillois' classification encompasses games of physical as well as mental skill. This differs from the scheme of Roberts et al. (1959)—games of physical skill, games of chance and games of strategy—in which the distinction between physical and mental prowess is itself a prominent classificatory principle.

These differences by themselves might be of little significance, but for the fact that Caillois' classification has been applied to the data of children's play in comparison with each of the alternative schemes described above and found, in both cases, to be a more inclusive and flexible analytic framework. In a comparative application of the schemes of Piaget and Caillois to the data of children's play, Mouledoux (1977) discovers that Caillois' scheme has a greater degree of differentiation and is a more suitable model for the explanation of the play of school age children in particular. A study by Royce (1972) comparing the classification schemes of Caillois and Roberts et al. found the latter to be confining because of its concentration upon competitive play. Caillois' scheme then, is suited to the analysis of children's play in that the categories are not mutually exclusive nor are they developmentally staged, and in that it can account for play and games which are not competitively structured.

In addition to the distinctiveness of the principles upon which Caillois organizes the types of play, the addition of another level of analysis—the 'ways of playing'—further distinguishes Caillois' scheme from other classificatory models as well as expanding its applicability to the study of children's play. 'Ways of playing' as an analytic concept, is unique in the field of play research, and is particularly relevant to the present study in that it acknowledges that play has players.

In general, classifications of play describe kinds of activity. . . References to the attitudes of the players are the indirect result of such classification categories as competitive or cooperative play.

In the prototype of Caillois' scheme, the concept 'ways of playing' is quite distinct from the categories of play; it represents another level of analysis, which describe the play forms in each category in terms of their relative degree of "gratuitous difficulty." The notion expresses a continuum--somewhat awkwardly labelled paidia to ludus--which describes the degree of expertise, calculation and control required by the play. The discipline cultivated in play forms is described by Caillois to be gratuitous and impractical. It is this quality, i.e., the degree of gratuitous difficulty, which distinguishes play from other forms of behaviour.

Caillois describes the continuum 'paidia' to 'ludus' as follows:

At one extreme an almost indivisible principle, common to diversion, turbulence, free improvisation, and carefree gaiety is dominant. It manifests a kind of uncontrolled fantasy that can be designated by the term paidia. At the opposite extreme, this frolicsome and impulsive exuberance is almost entirely absorbed or disciplined by a complementary and in some respects inverse, tendency . . . to bind it with arbitrary, imperative and purposely tedious conventions, to oppose it still more by ceaselessly practicing the most embarrassing chicanery upon it, in order to make it more uncertain of attaining its desired effect. This latter principle is completely impractical, even though it requires an ever greater amount of effort, patience, skill, or ingenuity. I call this second component ludus.

(1961:13)

Paidia emerges as the essence of play. It is a pure instinct--unstructured, unbridled and in need of the control and discipline of ludus, but essentially 'capricious' rather than wanton, as Caillois portrays other human instincts (1961:27-28). Ludus is a metamorphosis of paidia and,

developmentally speaking, signals the onset of a taste for gratuitous difficulty which is exemplified by technique and discipline. Ludus is complementary rather than consequent in its relationship to paidia. Paidia is a priori; ludus cannot exist without its "primary power of improvisation and joy" (pg. 27).

The relationship between paidia and ludus is not developmental with respect to the maturation of play and game forms. Caillois finds dominant expressions of paidia in mature play forms, e.g., horseback riding, racing, wrestling. Further, ludus is not the only metamorphosis of paidia in Caillois' original scheme. The notion of 'wan' describes a contemplative attitude, also a part of play in culture, which in Caillois' words "designates the act of indefinitely caressing a piece of jade while polishing it, in order to savour its smoothness or as an accompaniment to reverie" (pg. 33). 'Wan' is also a metamorphosis of paidia. Moutedoux (1977) adapts Caillois' notion of paidia to ludus and paidia to wan for use as categories of play, finding them particularly suited to classifying the early 'pre-play' forms of infancy and childhood. In this regard, the notion of paidia refers to the unstructured practice play of infancy and wan to the 'onlooker' behaviour characteristic of preschooler's play (see Partens, 1933).

To summarize, the significance of Caillois' scheme with respect to an analysis of children's play is in its inclusiveness. As has been demonstrated by application to the data of children's play, the scheme can account for play forms which are not competitive, for play and games which combine elements of make-believe with rules, and for play forms which in other schemes are classified as 'pre-play' or which are unclassifiable as play at all, e.g., onlooker behaviour. Further, and with

particular reference to the present study, the greatest potential strength of this scheme is its inclusion of people as a part of the classificatory modelling. The use of psychological urges and desires to describe and classify games emphasizes the player rather than the game. Caillois' development of the analytic concept 'ways of playing' lends further significance to the sense in which play involves and requires players. This latter concept will be useful in the development of a methodological framework for the present study.

Schwartzman: Fundamentals of a Communicative Approach

An examination of the work of Helen Schwartzman in play research reveals a concern with developing an anthropology of children's play which can account for the innovative functions of play in culture. Schwartzman views play as a context for behaviour rather than as a behaviour per se, and as a generative communicative form. As her book Transformations (1978) illustrates, this notion represents a departure from the characteristic perspectives of anthropological, psychological, and sociological studies which consider play to be expressive, reflective, projective or cathartic behaviour. Schwartzman is one of a growing number of theorists who are looking at play as a communication about behaviour or, as Schwartzman suggests, a series of communications about behaviour. Consequently, the definition of play put forth by her is markedly different from those considered previously:

In brief, play is an orientation or framing and defining context that players adopt toward something (an object, a person, a role, an activity, an event, etc.), which produces a text characterized by allusion (not distortion or illusion), transformation (not preservation), and "pur-

purported imitation" of the object, person, role, etc. In this way, play gives shape as well as expression to individual and societal affective and cognitive systems. These are play's products, and they are extremely consequential. (1978:330)

This definition is, in part, a direct result of the concerns of Schwartzman's empirical research. She focuses upon the socio-dramatic or make-believe play of preschool children. The setting is naturalistic: Schwartzman is interested in using the social context of children's play to interpret the text of their play. She has attempted to apply the anthropological technique of participant-observation to the data of children's play. In the process, she discovers an entirely new dimension of children's play:

This dimension is referred to here as the sideways perspective of the child in play. For to the side of, or across from, one child there are often other children—his or her peers. Adopting this sideways perspective, it is proposed that make-believe play is itself a text or "a story the players tell themselves about themselves" (see Geertz, 1972). (1978:237)

Schwartzman's endeavour is complicated, both philosophically and practically. In the first place, she is extremely conscious of the nature and influence of metaphor and the process of 'metaphorizing' in the anthropological study of human culture and behaviour. Further, she assesses that in much of play research to date, the researcher's perspective has been assumed to be the same as the player's perspective and the player's perspective has therefore been ignored. The neglect of the player's perspective has, in part produced the separation of text from context to which Schwartzman's study of children's play is so directly addressed. Her methodological technique thus involves careful consider-

ation of her own role as researcher, as well as considerable attention to how information can be gleaned from preschool children about their own understanding of their play. Ultimately this involved positioning herself in the midst of the playgroup, taking notes and asking questions of clarification. Somewhat surprisingly, it worked.

Schwartzman's major theoretical work, Transformations, is very much concerned with the way in which explanations of play have been influenced both by concepts of culture and concepts of childhood. In much the same way as Charlotte Hardman (1974) advocates in "The Study of Children in Social Anthropology," Schwartzman works from a positive and purposeful image of childhood, one in which children act according to reason and design. She proposes a metaphor for play as a 'transformation' of reality (see also Garvey, 1977), rather than a distortion or negation of it. The power of her argument as to the influence of metaphor becomes evident when, considering this shift in perspective, i.e., to play as a transformation, questions such as the relationship of play and make-believe to reality and of play to games open entirely new areas of thought rather than presenting confining conceptual structures. Because of the significance of Schwartzman's perspective with respect to the present work, I will be presenting a detailed outline of the orienting principles of her writings and research on play.

a) Metaphor and Transformation

'Metaphor' and 'transformation' are integral concepts in Helen Schwartzman's theory of anthropology and play. She uses the terms in several different senses. Transformation is itself a particular kind of

metaphor. Schwartzman poses it as a new metaphor, an alternative to the notion that anthropologists engage in the 'preservation' of cultural data, or that play is a 'preservation' of culture. She suggests instead that the anthropologist is actually engaged in some kind of transformation of that data, as children at play are engaged in the transformation of culture. Essentially this point of view allows for the culture of the anthropologist to be taken into account: the perspective of the researcher is acknowledgeable in Schwartzman's metaphor.

To restate the above point briefly, the anthropologist at work and the child at play are engaged in a process of metaphorical transformation, or transformation through metaphor. Schwartzman argues further that anthropologists have in large part been concerned with making the strange and exotic customs of other cultures appear as familiar, predictable patterns of behaviour:

. . . anthropologists transform houses into settlement patterns, food into subsistence economy, mothers and fathers into kinship systems, and people into cultures. (1978:1)

However, all too often these metaphors assume definitional status, their original metaphorical quality and arbitrariness disappearing from consciousness:

In theorizing about play, a metaphorical transformation is often made (e.g., play is likened to a psychological projection, or play is viewed as a cognitive process). Unfortunately, this transformation is often disregarded and soon play is a psychological projection, or play is a function of cognitive processes, as the metaphor is now taken literally When this happens, a reduction of play to some other phenomenon occurs. I would suggest that by forgetting the intrinsically playful, "as if" quality of theorizing, an injustice is done to all phenomena, but an injustice is done particularly to play. (1978:7)

Perhaps the most significant theoretical point is revealed in Schwartzman's illustration of the ways in which concepts and metaphors can be, and are, significantly transformed by other concepts and metaphors. This is essentially the subject of her recent work Transformations: An Anthropology of Children's Play (1978). The work is intended as a critical review of the ethnographic literature on children's play from the point of view of the metaphorical basis of individual studies. It is also a specific examination of children's metaphors in play. Schwartzman conceives of children's play as their 'transformations' of their experience. As she describes it, children, like ethnographers

are continually constructing and transforming the contexts in which they exist in their efforts to make sense, and sometimes nonsense, out of the worlds in which they find themselves. (1978:1)

Schwartzman assumes that culture and play are co-extensive, that they 'mutually influence' one another. After Huizinga, she notes that culture has been 'played' from the outset. Concepts and explanations of play therefore, have been transformed by a particular concept of culture and similarly influenced by a particular concept of childhood. These metaphors, Schwartzman points out, are orienting concepts that "are relative to temporal or historical circumstances, as well as socio-cultural context" (1978:10). Transformations thus begins with a description of the history of Western images of childhood. The various descriptions of children's play are then contexted by the specific cultural metaphor in which they are grounded. The work is meticulous and comprehensive. Schwartzman concludes with a transformation of the transformations: suggestions of "new metaphors for old."

b) Play as Generative Form

As Schwartzman's definition outlines, play gives shape as well as expression to experience. This she calls its generative function. On the simplest level, this means that play acts to make sense out of real as well as apparent nonsense; it generates order and sensibility out of chaos. Schwartzman suggests that children interpret, reinterpret and comment upon their experience through play, thereby creating their own peculiar logic of people and events. In the description of play as generative form, there is implicit the notion that this interpretation is in turn fed back into experience creating new, possibly even novel behavioural alternatives, i.e., that the text of the play can significantly affect the social contexts with which it is associated. Schwartzman's sense of play as generative form is closely aligned with several recent theories which suggest that it is a source of novel culture (Bruner, 1972; Reynolds, 1976; Sutton-Smith, 1974).

The interpretive functions of play as well as its critical and satirical aspects have largely been ignored by anthropologists in their studies of play. Schwartzman cites several reasons for this. In her documentation of play research to date, Schwartzman finds that the large proportion of anthropological studies view play as a mechanism of socialization. The primary function of play they suggest, is enculturative, i.e., through play children learn and practice culturally-appropriate adult roles. Make-believe or sociodramatic play is believed to be primarily a process of the imitation of adult activities. Schwartzman labels this functional orientation of play as the "imitation/preparation" metaphor and comments:

By emphasizing the socialization function of play contexts researchers have ignored the satirical, critical, and interpretive qualities of play texts. (1978:329)

Socialization studies of play are frequently studies of context without text. What is apparently 'appropriate' behaviour may in fact be grounded in mockery or reversal of the existing social order, if text is "re-introduced" to context. The play as "reversal/inversion" metaphor is beginning to be explored by researchers as a framework for the explanation of the texts and contexts of play. (Sutton-Smith, 1974)

Another reason for the neglect of the interpretive function of play in particular, has been a rather narrow understanding of play as imitation. A notion of imitation as more than a copy is integral to Schwartzman's theory of play as generative form. In her definition of play, Schwartzman qualifies the term 'imitation' with the word 'purported', arguing that the imitation itself is unique, i.e., that it has no other existence aside from its own. Play only gives the appearance of—or purports to—the imitation of reality (1978:328).

Similarly, recent studies of child language reveal utterances in the child's speech which bear little relationship to anything in the adult corpus: speech production and language acquisition involve the generation of form as well as the imitation of utterance. In effect the generative aspects of language acquisition are a part of the child's play with language. In play then as in language, children use materials of adult reality, i.e., they 'imitate' them, and in so doing they generate a play text which constitutes a unique representation, rather than a copy, of reality.

Finally, Schwartzman attests that anthropologists have been unable

to account for the divergent aspects of play phenomena chiefly because they have attempted to force play into an inappropriate interpretive mold. I quote at length:

Anthropology was formulated, in part, as a way to make the familiar (our actions) novel by making the novel (others' actions) familiar. Therefore, anthropologists were from the start both playful and exploratory in their theoretical and geographical interests. Early in the discipline's development, however, ethnographers became attached to various definitions of culture that were used to transform other peoples' novel actions into expected, predictable, and most importantly familiar stages, traits, structures, patterns, domains, behaviours, and so forth. Anthropologists began to take these transformations (i.e., theories of culture) very seriously, and field work became the ethnographer's trademark.

In the process of "working" on other cultures, anthropologists neglected the study of play. This is reflected in the discipline's history in a variety of ways. In the first place, anthropologists forgot about their original interest in transforming familiarity into novelty into familiarity. A paradox soon developed, . . . whereby anthropologists, in their theoretical "inventions," began to define man as basically conservative and uncreative. For example, many diffusionists believed that humans were by nature uninventive creatures given to borrowing rather than creating cultures, while structure functionalists examined how societies maintained sameness rather than how they might produce differences and novelty. Naturally (and culturally) anthropologists would be perplexed by the phenomenon of play, and so they were led to ignore it (as they did their own theoretical inventions) or to preserve, categorize, socialize, pattern, or structure it—once again turning the novel into the familiar. (1978:326)

In the above quotation, Schwartzman draws upon the distinctions made between play and exploration by Corinne Hutt (1966), i.e., that play transforms the familiar into the novel, while exploration transforms the novel into the familiar. While Hutt's distinction is a controversial one, and there are theorists who maintain that exploration is a part of our play behaviour (see Schwartzman 1978:316), the notion is consistent with those theories which propose that play is involved in the development of variability, flexibility and adaptability, that is, with the

creation of novelty (Bruner, 1972; Miller, 1973; Reynolds, 1976; Sutton-Smith, 1974). Schwartzman's point is that anthropologists, in looking at play as if it were a transformation of the novel into the familiar rather than the familiar into the novel, have produced results which are both incomplete and misleading with respect to the nature of play.

c) The Researcher as Player/The Player's Perspective

Schwartzman's research technique lies somewhere between the methods of cognitive anthropology (ethnoscience) and ethology. From cognitive anthropology she takes the emphasis upon the player's understanding of the play, though this need not, as in pure ethnoscientific studies, be a verbal understanding, i.e., one which the players can express in verbal terms. From ethology comes the natural setting for research. In an approach similar to Hardman (1974), she gathers data from a context which is familiar to her informants—the children—and unfamiliar to herself—the observer. This kind of approach is almost unheard of in studies of children, where customarily even 'natural' settings are artificially created, the children are often strangers to one another and the observer remains inobtrusive behind two-way glass.

Schwartzman's research was conducted in a day-care center in a low-income, multi-ethnic community in Chicago. She observed the free play of children in the day-care by positioning herself in the midst of a play situation and taking notes and asking questions of the children. Such a technique would appear to be quite disruptive, but as Schwartzman points out, the children were quite capable of dealing with her in this role while continuing their play:

Often the children would ask what I was doing and I would inform them that I was writing down 'what they did and said'. Occasionally I would ask them to clarify what a particular object stood for in the play situation, or what role such and such a person had in the play event, or why they were doing such and such. As I was, in fact, doing exactly what I claimed to be doing, this explanation of my activity seemed to be satisfactory to both the children and the staff. ([1976] 1977:209)

This represents a milestone of sorts in the study of children. While Schwartzman had great potential to disrupt the flow of the play event, particularly as an adult asking questions about the ongoing activity, her role was in some way perceived as an acceptable one for a player (or for the researcher as player) from the children's point of view. Consider, for instance, Parten's theory of onlooker behaviour (1933). She suggests that children are sometimes observers of other children's play and that this itself is a type of play behaviour. This is also consistent with my own view that children readily and continuously slip in and out of the play mode in their interactions with one another as well as with the adults around them. Play does not negate reality for the child. Furthermore, it is not a bounded reality; play can incorporate other modes of interaction.

Charlotte Hardman too has put much thought into the nature of her role as an observer on the playground--her playground personality, as it were. At points she felt an almost complete acceptance of herself in the playgroup; at other times her behaviour was seriously constrained by her adulthood (1974:170-171). Often adults do not function easily in the child's world simply because of their size. Nonetheless the viability of the research technique of Schwartzman and Hardman is evident in the results of their studies. The information yielded is quite different, in

some senses much richer than what has gone before. The researcher behind the two-way glass has traded accessibility for objectivity. As Schwartzman attests, the participant-observation technique as she has applied it to the study of children's play opened up an entirely new dimension for study: the 'sideways' perspective.

d) Texts in Context: The Sideways Perspective

My own research . . . illustrates the importance of interpreting play texts in specific social contexts. The "sideways" approach . . . was revealed only when the researcher became familiar with the social context of her informants. In this way, it was possible to see how play can be both a text and a context, on many levels, because a sideways view portrays the texts in context and the context in the texts. (1978:247)

The sideways perspective is proposed as yet another way of describing play. Schwartzman expands upon her own metaphor, describing the other metaphors for play as follows: 1) the upward perspective or imitation/preparation metaphor; 2) the inward-outward perspective or expressive/cathartic metaphor; and 3) the backwards perspective or reversal/inversion metaphor. ([1976]1977:208). The sideways perspective on play looks at play texts from the point of view of the social milieu of the child. Schwartzman's methodology reveals that the players' relationships to other players is acutely important in the interpretation of their make-believe play; it is in effect what they are playing with, or the 'object' of their play.

In the development of this metaphor—the sideways perspective—Schwartzman makes use of Bateson's view of play as paradoxical meta-communication; Garvey's notion that amongst preschoolers "the saying is

the playing"; and the text/context relationships posited by Geertz (1972) and Ehmann (1968), whereby context becomes text within a larger context and players can be both the subjects and the objects of their play:

In this study, individuals' play styles were described in reference to the way they communicated their intention to act as both the subject and the object of their play. In these terms, in order to be a successful player, one must be able to communicate information that simultaneously (and paradoxically) defines one as a play subject (e.g., adopting the play role of a witch, mother, etc.) and as a person in the defining social context (e.g., the day-care center) and therefore play object. For example, a child (Linda) must be able to communicate to other players that she is both Linda (i.e., a person who leads, dominates, and directs activities, as she is known for this in the general classroom setting) and not-Linda (i.e., a witch or a mother) in a play situation. In brief, the purpose of this study was to describe play texts in context and the context in play texts. (1978:236)

When looked at from this kind of a perspective, the 'gambols of the immature of the species' take on a somewhat more sophisticated complexion.

Schwartzman organizes the data of play as a series of communications about specific kinds of transformations in the make-believe situation. Her inventory is a variant of that developed by Garvey in Play (1977). Schwartzman (1978:237-239) outlines nine different play statements as follows:

- 1) formation statements e.g., "Let's play house."
- 2) connection statements e.g., "Can I play with you?" or "You can be the sister."
- 3) rejection statements e.g., "You can't play here."
- 4) disconnection statements e.g., "I'm not playing anymore." or "I'm not the sister anymore."
- 5) maintenance statements - statements which transform a potential disruption into part of the play theme, as in the case of a child hurting himself e.g., "Daddy hurt himself; quick, Mary, bring the bandages!"
- 6) definition statements e.g., "I'm cooking dinner."
- 7) acceptance statements e.g., (of the definition statements)

"OK, now I'm eating it."

- 8) counterdefinition statements e.g., "No, this is meat, not rice."
- 9) reformulation or disintegration statements e.g., "Let's not play this anymore" or "Let's play cowboys now."

Schwartzman is careful to point out that children use these 'communications' in a variety of ways, i.e., they may be verbal or nonverbal and their functions are dependent upon the context of the play, the larger social context, and individual personalities and play-styles. In any event, the statements are continuous; the context of the play is continually being defined and redefined and transformed. The message "this is play" is not a single signal, as many have chosen to interpret Bateson, but rather as a series of signals (1978:220).

e) Play vs. Nonplay

The relationship between play and nonplay is referred to by Schwartzman as the most perplexing problem in the study of play. As has been illustrated in connection with the theories discussed previously, this relationship forms the foundation of many of the definitions of play. It implies an entire structure of oppositions and contrasts which have been used as definitional criteria in the study of play--play vs. reality, play vs. ordinary life, play vs. work, real vs. unreal, productive vs. nonproductive, serious vs. nonserious, etc. It has been argued that these distinctions are irrelevant from the point of view of the child, i.e., that play is real, serious, productive, and very much a part of the ordinary life of children; and further, that these oppositions are based upon a definition of reality which is organized by language and adult culture, and which is therefore not always consistent with the beliefs and values of children's culture.

Schwartzman addresses herself particularly to the notion that the distinction between play and nonplay is analogous to that between reality and unreality. Her research demonstrates that make-believe play, for instance, is a sophisticated and often astute comment upon 'reality' rather than a negation of it. Schwartzman proposes that play and nonplay are systematically related, but rejects the notion that "play creates a separate 'reality' characterized either by illusion or imitation" (1978:328). She comments further:

Children's play is often viewed as a distortion of reality (i.e., the adult's view of the world) that functions to compensate children for the fact that they cannot be adults, but over time, these "illusions" increasingly come to correspond to "real" reality as play development is conceptualized as the unfolding of stages that move children from play → games → reality. In contrast to this view, it is argued here that play creates and contains its own "reality," which is characterized by allusion to, not distortion of, events. Over time, the content and process of these allusions may shift, but these changes can in no way be charted by the construction of linear stages. (1978:328)

In Schwartzman's theory, play and nonplay are mutually influential states, rather than mutually exclusive ones. Play is seen to be distinct from nonplay; however, nonplay is not synonymous with reality. Play is distinct from nonplay in that it contains its own reality, a unique picture of events created in play constitutes an interpretation of the events of nonplay. In Schwartzman's conception, the importance of the use of the oppositions between play and nonplay as definitional criteria for play diminishes. Play presents a unique picture of experience—a particular organization of events which is real on some level, and one which is different from other modes of definition. In this sense, Schwartzman's theory lays the foundation for looking at play as a language-system.

f) "New Metaphors for Old"

Another problematic metaphor which appeared continually in the theories of play discussed earlier in this paper was the 'play as game' metaphor. Schwartzman suggests that this is a conception of play which has already been badly overused and now requires some careful rethinking. In the first place she refutes outright the linear metaphor which proposes that games are the more formal, conventional, institutional culmination of play forms. After Bateson, (1955), Schwartzman attests that games in effect 'rule out' play:

In games, the paradoxical reference system of play is embodied in a codified system of rules that organize the use of objects, space, and time, as well as player activities. Here it is not necessary for metacommunication to occur continually to define or "frame" the players' actions, as this is achieved by the game's explicit rule structure. In games, the ambiguity and paradox inherent in play, which necessitates constant metacommunication for maintenance of the event, has been "ruled" out. (1978:219)

Games are rigid, play is flexible. Furthermore the player's perspective, proven to be of such significance in Schwartzman's own study, is easily ignored when 'play' is viewed as a 'game'. Games can be studied as complexes of action patterns and rules, and thus, made comprehensible irrespective of their players. Ultimately Schwartzman advocates a clear separation of play from games suggesting that to "play a game" may be a "contradiction in terms," and a linguistic trick (1978:220).

The final chapter of Transformations proposes that the appropriate alternative to the old metaphors—play as game, play as socialization agent, play as psychological projection, play as cognitive process and so on—is a view of play as a defining activity:

Finally, play is also, and always, a defining activity, which is perhaps why it is itself so difficult to define. Because of this quality, play requires interpretation and resists operationalization. The study of play, perhaps more than any other topic, requires that researchers adapt themselves to the character of their subject and not the reverse. Researchers who have a compulsion for organization, predictability, and exacting definitions and methodologies produce only illusory theories and explanations, which distort play and fool only researchers. On the other hand, investigators who are more tolerant of disorganization, unpredictability, and loose and fuzzy definitions and methodologies are more likely to produce theories that allude to play (and this is the best we will ever do) and help to elucidate the nature of foolishness. (1978:329)

Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to review the major theoretical contributions to the definitional literature of play considering the significant as well as problematic aspects of each perspective. In this pursuit, I have been looking specifically for a metaphor which can explain the data of children's play and, as well, for one which acknowledges that children's play is meaningful for children.

The work of Johan Huizinga, Homo Ludens, is a seminal work in play theory. Its significance to the present study lies principally in Huizinga's development of the notion that play creates a transcendent reality which belongs in a realm beyond the logical categories and antitheses created by language. This notion is consistent with a central theme of this thesis, i.e., that play is not described by the distinction between reality and unreality nor by that between the real and the imagined. Further, Huizinga describes play as an aesthetic form which creates order and which has had a determining influence upon the evolu-

tion of human culture and society. This notion is consistent with an interpretation of play as a process of definition and as well, it presents a metaphor of play as a consequential aspect of human culture.

Although Huizinga's broad conceptual framework adheres to similar principles as those proposed in the present work, the articulation of his definition for play becomes problematic in that it proceeds according to a series of established contrasts between play and nonplay. The nature of definition by opposition and contrast complicates Huizinga's theory as a whole. According to the transcendent notions described above, Huizinga's description of play as 'not serious' must be reconciled with the notion that play lies beyond seriousness itself. Similarly, Huizinga's characterization of the inherently competitive nature of all play must be understood in terms of his portrayal of the deeply aesthetic quality of play. These notions are not irreconcilable, but they make Huizinga's overall framework unwieldy. However, the most unacceptable aspect of this definition with respect to an investigation of children's play, is Huizinga's characterization of play as an activity which is pleasurable and always voluntarily undertaken. This ignores the child's perspective of play in that children must play in order to communicate with one another. Play is often coercive as a result, and it is not always a pleasurable activity for children.

Piaget's conception of play as a temporary intellectual function is of little use to the present work. He argues that play is a form of thought found in the immature and unsocialized minds of childhood, and the sole function of which is to exercise evolving cognitive structures. This represents a narrow conceptual notion and ignores vast quantities of the data of play. Play emerges as a peripheral phenomenon with

marginal developmental significance and few mature forms. Furthermore, the implication that play is an asocial and solitary activity contradicts the central point of the present work: that play is a system devised by children as a means of communicating with one another.

Sutton-Smith develops a metaphor of play as an innovative cultural form, i.e., as a source of novel culture, which is particularly significant to the present study. This metaphor assumes a dynamic and evolving relationship between play texts and play contexts which forms part of the foundation for the explanation of play as a communicative process. Sutton-Smith's characterization of this relationship between text and context in play is one of reversal--a dialectic--in which play makes nonsense out of reality. Although the notion is an accurate one on some levels, I have found it to be an oversimplification of the relationship between text and context in play. Further, Sutton-Smith's understanding of the contexts of play is related only to adult culture, and the significance of play texts is thereby considered only in terms of their correlations with adult cultural norms and behaviours. Sutton-Smith ignores an obvious corollary of his own thesis: that play is the source of childhood culture. Finally, the methodology which Sutton-Smith evolves for the empirical study and analysis of play is inappropriate. He proposes that the structures of play correspond to, and coincide with those of games. His articulation of a structural model and syntax for play and games focuses upon a competitive dynamic as a result. This in turn limits the applicability of his methodology in the explanation of children's spontaneous and noncompetitive play forms.

Caillois' contribution to the definitional literature of play is highly problematic in terms of its conceptual foundations, however, his

classification scheme for play and games is perhaps the most inclusive and flexible in the field. In contrast with the framework proposed by Sutton-Smith, this scheme can account for noncompetitive play forms. In contrast to the categorization proposed by Piaget, Caillois' classification encompasses and acknowledges mature play forms. Further, it is a scheme which is more flexible in application to the data of play than is the Piagetian concept of the staging of playforms. Finally, Caillois' classification acknowledges that play is played by players.

Cultivating an understanding of the player's perspective of play is a prominent aspect of the definition of play developed by Helen Schwartzman, and her work is of considerable theoretical and practical consequence to the present study as a result. According to Schwartzman, there is a context which has been ignored in the study of children's play: the society of children amongst themselves, or the "sideways perspective" of play. Her investigation of children's make-believe play proposes that play is a transformation of reality--an allusion to reality rather than a distortion or an imitation--and further, that make-believe contains its own reality. Schwartzman argues that children's play is a means by which children give shape to experience. After Geertz (1972), she develops an interpretation of children's play as a "story the children tell themselves about themselves." The communication between children, i.e., their relationships to one another, forms the foundation of Schwartzman's metaphor of play. Her study represents the analysis of a play text within a specific and immediate social context and as such her methodology is particularly conducive to an analysis of the meaning of children's play for children.

On a more theoretical level, Schwartzman develops the foundations

for an analysis of play as a communicative form. She proposes that play has generative characteristics and critical interpretive functions with respect to society as a whole. In this regard, her concept builds upon that of Sutton-Smith, however, unlike Sutton-Smith, Schwartzman proposes that play and games are not comparable categories of phenomena, maintaining that it is theoretically inconsistent to define play as a game. Play, she concludes, is itself "a defining activity . . . which requires interpretation and resists operationalization" (1978:329).

A notion which emerges clearly from these attempts to define play is that play is difficult to define. In keeping with Schwartzman's conclusion, I propose that the entire question of definition may be antithetical to the nature of play. What Schwartzman's study and those like it reveal, is that children's play creates a kind of sense of reality and a logic of experience which represents an alternate mode of structuring reality from language. More particularly then, the obstacles encountered in the attempt to define play may be a function of the inherent structures of language. As Huizinga suggests, play may lie beyond the logical configurations of language.

This chapter as a whole has been addressed to the metaphorical bases of the major definitions of play and their applicability to the study of children's play. The discussion reveals that the most appropriate metaphor for the study of children's play is a communicative one. I propose further that the communicative metaphor is an encompassing one. It can explain all of the various functions of play proposed by other theorists--projective, reflective, cathartic and expressive--and as well, it

can account for the meaning of play for children, an aspect of play-- the interpretive function--which in general has been ignored.

The next chapter will be concerned with developing this metaphor, i.e., by considering specifically those aspects of play which distinguish it as a communicative form which is in some sense the complement of language, as well as those aspects which are indicative of the parallel structuring of play and language as communicative processes. The development of the communicative metaphor poses the central arguments of this thesis: that play is an ordered system of behaviour--a medium of communication in its own right as well as a language-system with a syntax, a semantic and a sociolinguistic component; and further, that play is the dominant language of childhood understanding.

BUILDING A COMMUNICATIVE METAPHOR: TOWARDS A STATEMENT OF THEORY

Paradoxical Metacommunication: Play Frames Interaction

Gregory Bateson's writings (1955, 1956) on the subject of play make two things eminently clear: first, play is a message about behaviour as well as a behaviour; and second, that the message "this is play" tends to "precipitate" logical paradoxes. According to Bateson, all communication takes place on a multiplicity of levels of abstraction. In the particular case of play as communication, play delimits "a class or set of messages (or meaningful actions)" ([1955] 1972:186). Play includes messages on two levels. The first level represents a psychological frame—a metacommunication—which tells the players how they are to perceive the messages on the second level—those within the frame, i.e., the content of the play. Bateson maintains that every action and utterance in play is framed by the message "this is play." Text and context are inseparable: the communication and the metacommunication occur simultaneously.

Bateson states that all psychological frames are metacommunicative, but in play the psychological frame is a paradoxical premise system. The paradox of play is a result of double framing, i.e., the attempt to draw a line between categories of different logical types. In a play fight for instance, a bite is framed by the message "this is not a bite" (the play frame) and also by the signal "this is a bite" (the nonplay frame), such that the frame "this is a bite" is subsumed by the frame

"this is not a bite." Bateson maintains that the actions which denote that "this is a bite" are not of the same logical type as the actions which signal "this is a bite which is not a bite." As Bateson says, the bite itself is also unreal, making play a situation in which the real is unreal and the pretend is real. He writes:

We face then two peculiarities of play: (a) that the messages or signals exchanged in play are in a certain sense untrue or not meant; and (b) that that which is denoted by these signals is nonexistent.
 ([1955] 1972:183)

The combining of these two characteristics of play can precipitate another paradox. As Bateson describes it, in play map and territory are both equated and discriminated. Play has the power to evoke the same psychological reality as it is representative of, without the actual consequences of that circumstance or set of circumstances. Bateson likens this 'reality' to the dream state:

It was stated . . . that the playful nip denotes the bite, but does not denote that which would be denoted by the bite. But there are other instances where an opposite phenomenon occurs. A man experiences the full intensity of subjective terror when a spear is flung at him out of the 3D screen or when he falls headlong from some peak created in his own mind in the intensity of the nightmare. At the moment of terror there was no questioning of "reality," but still there was no spear in the movie house and no cliff in the bedroom. The images did not denote that which they seemed to denote, but these same images did really evoke that terror which would have been evoked by a real spear or a real precipice. ([1955] 1972:183)

This explanation of the relationship between map and territory in play is Bateson's way of describing the relationship between play and reality. However, Bateson does not deal with the function of this characteristic of play. This notion of the psychological reality created

by play is a useful one in describing and understanding the intensity of children's play for the child. Other theorists have put forth parallel notions. Schwartzman (1978) maintains that play creates and contains its own reality and that it is the child's means of shaping experience. Geertz (whose work will be discussed presently), proposes that play is a social text which is characterized by its "use of emotion for cognitive ends" (1972:27), i.e., that the intensity of the psychological reality created in play serves a critical sociocultural function. Children's experience of their play is real in a psychological as well as an emotional sense. Furthermore, it is an expression of children's real knowledge and experience.

The "Saying is the Playing:"

Play Denotes a Non-Literal State of Engagement

Bateson's concept of play as a message about behaviour as well as a behaviour has been the directing metaphor in several studies of children's play. Helen Schwartzman develops an interpretation of children's play as a series of metacommunications in which the child paradoxically must be both him/her self and a fictional character (1978). Catherine Garvey (1974, 1977) has also employed Bateson's metaphor of play as context in her investigation of preschool children's make-believe play. After Bateson, and like Schwartzman, Garvey maintains that the signalling behaviour, i.e., the communication of the pretending is a significant feature of the play, in that these metacommunicative cues distinguish play from other modes of behaviour. Garvey's expression for this phenomenon in the make-believe play of preschoolers is "the saying

is the playing" (see Schwartzman, 1977:110). These 'sayings' can be nonverbal as well as verbal, i.e., they may be actions or enactments. Further, the sayings of play communicate the context for action as well as the content of the play. Garvey's metaphor reiterates the intimate and inseparable relationship between play texts and play contexts which is posed in Bateson's analysis.

Garvey's research is based upon her observations of the spontaneous social play of previously-acquainted children, aged three to five years, who were grouped as paired agemates for purposes of the study. Garvey defines play as a special subjective orientation to resources and experience—one which is characterized by a quality of non-literality (1977:103). According to Garvey, the ability to treat experience non-literally derives originally from mother-infant play. Working from the mother-infant paradigm, Garvey emphasizes that play is primarily a social activity and not a solitary one (1977:8). Further, social play involves the development of certain skills and competencies:

Social play is defined here as a state of engagement in which the successive, non-literal behaviours of one partner are contingent on the non-literal behaviours of the other partner. Viewed from the standpoint of either partner, this means leaving interstices in one's behaviour for the other's acts and modifying one's successive behaviours for the other's acts. ([1974]1976:570)

Garvey likens play to a mode of interaction, one of several that children can be said to engage in. Other modes of interaction include fighting or arguing, for instance. Her analysis of play as a particular mode of interaction rests upon the contrast which the child is able to make between this and other modes of interaction:

The existence of other orientations contributes to the identification of play itself, which is thus marked as a special state. This marking is particularly clear--and critical--when the child is interacting with another child, for in that situation the two must communicate to each other whether what is done is done as play or as nonplay. Successful interaction between children depends on the participants' mutual awareness of whether they are playing or not playing. (1977:15)

In the child's words, this contrast is the difference between "really" and "pretend," although Garvey is careful to point out that the child may be using these terms in an entirely different sense from what an adult would suppose. The distinction between play and nonplay, in her theory, is one of contrast rather than opposition.

Garvey devotes considerable attention to how the child distinguishes an action or utterance as a part of the enactment of the play from an action or utterance which is designed to explain or clarify the players' roles or what should be happening next. Some of these cues are enacted, e.g., a child identifies him/herself as a baby by adopting a baby voice. However, much of the pretend communication consists of explicit statements of identity and directions for action, e.g., "You be the baby" or "Pretend you're tired." These statements are woven skillfully into the fabric of the interchange rarely interrupting the flow of the enactment. Garvey finds numerous instances in which children make several smooth transitions between "really" and "pretend" in the maintenance of a single episode of make-believe. Garvey suggests that children engineer their play through their 'sayings', thereby creating a unique context for action. Her argument as a whole renders strange the notion that what is important in children's imaginative play is the fact that the child is pretending and is not really who they say they are, i.e., that the make-believe is not real. In play, children orga-

nize their experiences of people and events. There are expressions of real and developing understandings, for example, of what it means to be a Doctor or a Mummy.

As does Schwartzman, Garvey employs a metaphor of transformation in her analysis of children's make-believe play. She notes that some of the transformations are quite realistic, while others take great liberty with the real qualities of things and the relationship between people and objects and events:

When a child is able to arrange utensils on a table, serve another child, tell him not to eat with his knife, and warn him that the food is very hot--all quite realistically--she may also appropriate the iron to serve as a teapot, if a proper one is missing. She will drastically abbreviate the time needed to cook a supper and will be quite happy to serve apple sauce from an empty pan. She may be oblivious to the fact that the dining table was, moments ago, the family car, or she may tell her partner to use a stuffed animal for a chair. Some aspects of this episode are only suggestive or schematic . . . It appears that the complex action plan, here the notion of serving and dining, has become more important than the objects themselves. (1977:46)

In this kind of play, the child is acting according to a mental concept of an event and is isolating salient features of that event, making decisions as to what is important and what can be discarded in the enactment. In this sense Garvey maintains that there is an internal consistency in the way in which the child approaches pretending, although this is not always apparent to an adult. She comments:

Adults who may have accidentally or intentionally found themselves engaged in pretending with a child will have noticed that make-believing is not entirely free; one cannot behave *ad libitum*. There are restrictions and, apparently, guidelines for behaviour, since a "wrong" move will often be pointed out by the child. One might unknowingly sit down on an imaginary playmate, pour invisible coffee rather than the chocolate syrup on imaginary ice cream, or even forget some essential item of clothing and be told, for example,

that Mommies wear hats. (1977:82)

The important consideration in Garvey's analysis is the communication of the make-believe and the process whereby children attain a mutual understanding as to the appropriate course of events in a sustained sociodramatic enactment. In Garvey's conception, pretending becomes an index of the child's understanding of reality, rather than of what he or she misunderstands of reality.

Combinatorial Flexibility and "Galumphing":
Play is a Particular Syntax

Stephen Miller has written two fascinating articles on the subject of play. In the first of these, rather enigmatically entitled "Ends, Means and Galumphing," Miller (1973) describes play as a system of pretense, a particular organization of behaviour: ". . . a syntax, not a vocabulary" (1973:94). 'Organized' behaviour is defined as ". . . involving some kind of coordination of ends and means" (pg. 92). Like many animal ethologists, Miller sees in play behaviour which is uneconomical, characterized by a ". . . lack of streamlining or task-oriented efficiency" (pg. 91). In other words, play is an organization of behaviour in which means are not organized or determined by ends, as is the case in "more straightforwardly-adaptive contexts" (pg. 90). Rather, in play means are to a certain extent autonomous of ends. In much the same sense as Peter Reynolds explains the simulative nature of the play mode, Miller suggests that in play behaviour is unhooked from the demands of "real" goals (pg. 96). Further, goals in general are meaningless in the play context; the consequence of play is in process.

In other words, adaptive behaviours are modified and manipulated by play. The particular syntax or organization (and reorganization) of end-related behaviour in play is the means by which the message "this is play" is understood: This syntax is also the context of play. Play contexts are characterized by a systematic complication of means (pg. 92), a process which Miller likens to Lewis Carroll's notion of "galumphing." Galumphing involves a looser temporal organization of activities, including the exaggeration, reordering and repetition of sequences of behaviour (pg. 90). It is ". . . in general, the voluntary placing of obstacles in one's path" (pg. 92). It is not, however, a means without an end.

Miller speculates upon the reasons for the evolution of play as a complication of process in the human behavioural repertoire. As he sees it, some of the benefits of play derive from the actual activities involved, i.e., the text of the play constitutes an exercise of skills which may be of use in other contexts. But Miller is really more concerned with the benefits which accrue from the context or contexting of play. As noted above, he emphasizes the patterned elaboration of means which characterizes behaviour in the play context (pg. 97). Play is not a random or trivial manipulation of means, but rather ". . . gives us exercise in the control of means" (pg. 96). Play is thus characterized by a combinatorial freedom in the elaboration of means. According to Miller, the resulting "combinatorial flexibility" renders us more adaptable than organisms that are capable only of efficient, goal-oriented behaviours (pg. 95). In this argument, Miller contrasts play—a mode of behaviour characterized by a circuitous route to an end—with problem-solving—a mode of behaviour in which the end determines the

selection of the means in pursuit of the shortest route to its goal or solution. He comments:

If a successful solution to a problem is used in unchanging form to the point of stereotypy, then there is the danger that if the problem is varied, the solution will be too rigid to adapt. This danger would be smaller for an organism that varies its solutions, sometimes performing in less direct, less "efficient" ways, i.e., an organism that galumphs on occasion. (pg. 95)

Jerome Bruner and Peter Reynolds have also commented upon the adaptive role of the combinatorial exercise of play. Certainly the concomitant notions that play develops flexibility and the capacity for novel response are common amongst play theorists (Bruner, 1972; Reynolds, 1976; Schwartzman, 1978; Sutton-Smith, 1974). However, Miller's own approach to the adaptive role of play in human development is not solely related to the survival of the species, for he sees also in play a poetic value. Play cultivates the human desire to shape and change destiny. In the final lines of the article he writes:

But clearly there is somehow something very desirable about acting, at least for a time, in a framework designed by ourselves rather than by the existential forces that run most of our life. (pg. 97)

"The Playful, the Crazy and the Nature of Pretense":
Play Mediates Our Perceptions of Reality Creating New Mappings of
Experience

In this the second of his articles on play, Miller (1974) is interested in play as a system with a specific communicative function within the larger complex of systems that comprise human culture and

mythology. In this regard, Miller proposes that human systems be viewed as a complex of mappings--theories and mythologies--which organize and determine our perceptions of the world. Each system is capable of dealing only with certain kinds of information:

A theory is a myth: that is, an organized system of symbols which map and unify a field of confusing events. Theories can be manipulated at will while data cannot, though theory largely (and often unconsciously) determines which data we will be able to perceive and which data we will blind ourselves to. (1974:38)

According to Miller, Play is one of these mappings, theories or mythologies. It is a self-regulating system and can be represented by a feedback circuit. However, Miller argues that a single feedback loop is inadequate as an explanatory model for living organisms, for as Bateson states, ". . . the homeostatic controls of biological systems must be activated by variables which are not in themselves harmful" (Bateson, 1972:443; cited in Miller 1974:33).

Miller proposes instead that play and human systems be represented as double feedback loops, in which one loop carries information about the other loop which doesn't really exist as it would be lethal to the system. He states that in the human breathing system, for instance, information is processed about the amount of carbon dioxide rather than about the amount of oxygen in the environment:

In a sense, CO₂ excess "stands for" O₂ lack, so that the body will "know" about a developing oxygen deficiency without having the information carried by the lethal event itself.
(pg. 33)

Further, since it is actually the amount of oxygen which has real consequences for the system, the relationship between the oxygen circuit and

the carbon dioxide circuit is, Miller suggests, the same as the relationship between reality and pretending:

The purpose of breathing is to regulate O_2 intake, but in fact there is no feedback system that responds to O_2 ; there is instead a system that responds to CO_2 . The "pretend" system exists in the body, while the "real" system is an abstraction that we observers construct when we ask questions about the "purpose" of breathing. (pg. 34)

This paradigm is thus paradoxical in much the same sense as Bateson outlined: the playful nip denotes the bite which doesn't actually exist because the context is play.

According to Miller then, pretending is a mapping of a reality which is itself but an abstraction: the pretend is "real" and the "real" is fictional. In the play system, "fun," which ". . . has something to do with giving in to the tendency to entropy" (pg. 35), is a mapping of the abstract quality of "flexibility" which is identified as the real function or purpose of play.

Miller goes on to develop the notion that the reason why play evolved in the human species was to maintain a flexibility in the relationship between map and territory in all of the mythologies and theories that make up human culture. He argues that the original purpose of theory and myth was to establish and maintain pattern and consistency in the interpretation of what would otherwise be chaos. Theory therefore ". . . has a kind of inertia—it mediates vision, so it blurs distinctions that tend to weaken it while sharpening distinctions that tend to support it" (pg. 39). However play, in terms of information theory, (in which the data which is considered to be irrelevant and/or doesn't fit the theory is referred to as noise) is "the deliberate creation of noise, while art

(and scientific revolution, and good therapy) uses that noise to build new systems of assumptions" (pg. 47). Play is therefore a "mediative" system rather than an instrumental one (pg. 44). It patterns the "irrelevant" information that exists between map and territory (pg. 47). In a sense, play ensures that the map is kept conscious of its territory, thereby facilitating the creation of new mythologies.

Miller's 'theory' fits with some of the most interesting peculiarities of the data of children's play. Consider the child's delight in collecting the used and discarded relics of adult culture, both material and ideological, as well as their often surprising play with the inconsistencies of adult language and behaviour. In a certain sense, children live in between map and territory, at least from an adult perspective, making maps of their own.

Play As Behaviour In the Simulative Mode:

Play is a Communicating System Between the Environment and Nonplay Systems

Peter Reynolds' notion of play as behaviour in the simulative mode (1976) is a useful one in that it incorporates several other related theoretical notions. Firstly, it defines play as a kind of paradoxical context: the simulative mode renders normal consequences inconsequential. Secondly, it incorporates those theories (Loizos, 1967; Miller, 1973) which have described play as a kind of behaviour in which ends are not determined by means: Reynolds describes play as behaviour without "real" or "normal" consequences. Finally, to think of play as behaviour in the simulative mode implies that there is a feedback capacity in play with

respect to other human systems. This encompasses those theories of play which maintain that it has a generative, communicative function in human culture (Geertz, 1972; Miller, 1973, 1974; Schwartzman, 1976, 1977, 1978; Sutton-Smith, 1974, 1976). Reynolds himself puts it thusly:

Play has been said to be causally related to the acquisition of skill, environmental information, and adult social behaviour. Perhaps it would be more rewarding to consider play in the light of a more general proposition about the processing and flow of information. If we think of a system as operating in conjunction with other systems, so that its output is temporarily uncoupled from its normal input, relations to other systems will be said to be functioning in the simulative mode. It can in fact be shown that play involves the simulative execution of systems at several levels of biological organization, and that the function of play must be understood in the light of the function of simulation in general. (1976:621)

The simulative mode involves the placing of one context within another. This simulation implies paradoxical signalling behaviour: "The observer is not misled into thinking of the communication as real behaviour" (1976:631). Reynolds refers to this as the "intercontextual shift" (pg. 630), i.e., a redefinition of an ongoing context.

Like Miller (1973) and Bruner (1972), Reynolds links play with flexibility. Bruner refers to a "loosening of the primate bond" ([1972] 1976:32), and Miller to a "combinatorial flexibility." Reynolds talks about a "flexibility complex" described as "an adaptive complex involving ontogenetic plasticity in behaviour, infantile dependency, a capacity for learning from previous action, and parental care" (1976:622). Further, Reynolds proposes that the history of humanity can be viewed as a "progressive phylogenetic elaboration of the flexibility complex" (pg. 622). Play is a part of this complex of behaviours, a result of increased flexibility. It is also the context in which novel behaviour emerges. This

is in large part due to the buffering of the play context from risk or functional pressure. As Bruner put it, play "minimizes the consequences of one's actions" ([1972] 1976:38).

Reynolds also proposes that in a phylogenetic sense at least, the advent of observational learning significantly altered the nature of play:

When the [child] observer watches adult organisms, the behaviour learned will conform to the goal-oriented behaviour of adults. While such imitated behaviour may be playfully executed by the observer, as we see in human children, its non-play execution will conform to that of adults. If however, imitated behaviour is acquired from the play behaviour of other organisms, then the schematic representation should generate behaviour structurally identical to play itself. This phenomenon I term meta-play. (1976:627)

Further, Reynolds points out the importance of the consequences of behaviours as well as the behaviour patterns themselves in the observational learning process. Thus "imitation" is the imitation not of isolated behaviours, but of models or schemes of interaction.

The concept of meta-play is the basis of Reynolds' notion of play as a communicating system between the environment and nonplay systems. Meta-play facilitates the creation of behavioural patterns which are truly novel with respect to nonplay systems. Play takes on a "pivotal role in behavioural evolution" (1976:628) with the advent of meta-play. In the truly simulative sense then, play becomes more than just rehearsal; in play it becomes possible to ". . . evolve complex forms of behaviour that have no parallel in adult culture" (pg. 628). Behaviours formulated in play are fed back into the nonplay systems creating a new complexity in adult behaviours. Play then becomes a model for nonplay systems as well as vice

versa; and play behaviours, in a very significant evolutionary sense, can be understood³ to precede as well as imitate nonplay behaviours.

In an ontogenetic sense and with particular reference to children's play, the concept of meta-play is insightful. Reynolds points out that meta-play makes possible a "cumulative transmission of play behaviour" (1976:627). This is a large part of what children's play and childlore is all about. Much of a child's play behaviour is behaviour which is imitative of other children's play. It is the purpose of this thesis to demonstrate that the play of childhood is a network for the transmission of cultural information and thereby for the formation of a children's culture. Much of that cultural information is the result of children learning from other children those skills and behaviours which are deemed to be functional in their own culture and thus which may or may not be related to adult or nonplay culture.

This aspect of children's play--the meta-play perspective--has largely been regarded as nonfunctional, the elaboration of fun. Most researchers have preferred to view play phenomena as they make contact with, or are analogous to, adult or nonplay behaviour, and not as they exist autonomously as self-generating behaviours. Much of the lore of childhood can be described and investigated as meta-play: a result of a communication process between children themselves.

Play as Allegory: Play is a
"Story the Players Tell Themselves About Themselves"

Clifford Geertz' analysis of the Balinese cockfight in "Deep Play" (1972), reiterates, with slightly different emphases, several of the

notions of play as communication which have been the subject of this discussion.

The cockfight is seen to be a simulation of the Balinese social matrix, i.e., its practical consequences are removed:

The cockfight is "really real" only to the cocks—it does not kill anyone, castrate anyone, reduce anyone to animal status, alter the hierarchical relations among people, nor refashion the hierarchy; it does not even redistribute income in any significant way. (pg. 23)

However, as other theorists have done, Geertz identifies another level of reality in play. The cockfight is a concrete representation of an internal, ideational reality. Geertz likens its expressive import to that of King Lear or Crime and Punishment in western society. It picks up on underlying cultural themes—in this case "animal savagery, male narcissism, opponent gambling, status rivalry, mass excitement, blood sacrifice" (pg. 27)—and organizes them into an "encompassing structure" thereby revealing a "particular view of their essential nature" (pg. 23).

Geertz' analysis of play involves a view of culture as an assemblage of texts, which like literature and literary texts are ". . . imaginative works built out of social materials" (pg. 27), and which like lives "contain their own interpretations" (pg. 27). Geertz interprets the cockfight as a metasocial commentary upon the Balinese social order. In keeping with the literary analogy, Geertz describes the relationship between play and society as a poetic one, or as I have suggested above, an allegorical one:

It is this kind of bringing of assorted experiences of everyday life to focus that the cockfight, set aside from that life as "only a game" and reconnected to it as "more than a game," accomplishes, and so creates what, better than typical or universal, could be called a paradigmatic human

event--that is, one that tells us less what happens than the kind of thing that would happen if, as is not the case, life were art, and could be as freely shaped by styles of feeling as MacBeth and David Copperfield are. (pg. 28)

Geertz' analysis intimates that the status of the cockfight in Balinese society is like that of any art-form. The cockfight is an enactment which, although composed of the experiences of 'everyday' life, is separate from that life, and in fact has a life of its own as do all art forms. In the article "Rituals in Culture," Abrahams ([1977]) explores this dual nature of the art form. He suggests that rituals are enactments (performances) which have lives of their own as well as being tied to certain aspects of culture (pg. 19). Abrahams cites the work of Kenneth Burke as well as Geertz in his argument. From Burke comes the notion that forms of art parallel forms of experience outside of art (pg. 18). From Geertz (as above) comes the notion that ritual enactment (play) can be viewed and understood as a text much like a literary text, i.e., it can be isolated and analyzed on its own terms. According to Abrahams, rituals are dramatically "framed" performances which constitute art forms in that they exhibit both an aesthetic dimension--as an independent expressive form--and an evaluative dimension--as an expressive form which arises out of, and comments upon, the larger sociocultural and behavioural systems (Hymes 1975:11). Play as an art form must therefore be understood as a form of experience unto itself as well as a form of experience outside of itself.

In Geertz' conception, play as an art form is "reconnected to" the experience of everyday life in generative, interpretive ways. For the Balinese the cockfight is an interpretive response to the social status

hierarchy of Balinese society. As it is enacted and re-enacted, the cockfight becomes for the Balinese a means of understanding and dealing with their feelings about the structuring of their society. Cockfights are also "positive agents in the creation and maintenance" (1972:28) of the sensibility which they express.

According to Geertz, the Balinese cockfight is a play form which derives its intensity of meaning from the subjective experience of repeated enactment. Play is thus a form of ritual as well as an art form in Geertz' analysis. This notion of play as a ritual life experience as well as an art form which "tells us less what happens than the kind of thing that would happen if, . . . life were art, and could be . . . freely shaped by styles of feeling" (pg. 28), is useful in the explanation of children's play. There is a subjective experience in repeated episodes of playing house, for example, which is akin to the involvement of participation in dance, musical or dramatic performance.

Geertz analyzes the Balinese cockfight as a form of "deep play," or playing with fire: play in which the stakes are too high to justify playing at all. He maintains that the lure of the cockfight is emotional; it is a "sentimental education," characterized by its "use of emotion for cognitive ends" (1972:27). In the cockfight the Balinese learns

what his culture's ethos and his private sensibility . . . look like when spelled out externally in a collective text; that the two are near enough alike to be articulated in symbolics of a single such text; and—the disquieting part —that the text in which this revelation is accomplished consists of a chicken hacking another mindlessly to bits. (pg. 27)

Man is affectively equated with cock and thus experiences the

emotional consequences of extreme risk, utter triumph and total defeat (and perhaps also its monetary consequences), but not its social consequences. This notion is similar to Bateson's perception of the equation of map and territory in play. According to Geertz, the perceptual transformation of social status relations into the collision of roosters is "at once a description and a judgment" (pg. 26). It is a story the players tell themselves about themselves (pg. 26). In a sense then Geertz reconnects play with its consequences, both for the individual and the society as a whole.

Geertz' analysis also reveals a view of play in which text and context are inseparable, although not in the sense of signalling behaviour as has been previously discussed. His unique sense of text-context relations in play can be explained as follows. The cockfight is a context within which an internal context—in this case the Balinese males' perceptions of the hierarchical social ordering of Balinese society—is represented as a text, whose context then becomes the external representation of the internal context, i.e., Balinese society. In more general terms, our perceptions of the dynamics of interaction, normally the context of our communication with one another, become in play the subject or content of our communication with one another, and are thereby a comment upon the prevailing culturally ordained patterns of interaction. This concept is also expressed by Jacques Ehrmann (1968) in somewhat different terms when he says that the players can be both the subjects and the objects of their play.

The seminal notion in Geertz' argument as it relates to children's play is that play is an expression of abstract contextual information in textual form. Reynolds notes that observational learning involves not

only matching behaviour to a model, but also a knowledge of the reinforcing properties of that behaviour. This he maintains, is knowledge of "a very abstract and inferential sort" (1976:626). This kind of abstract, inferred knowledge is metacommunicative information, and it is a rich resource for children at play. Geertz' metaphor then is consistent with a view of children's play as a vehicle for the expression of abstract meaning. Children configure conceptual understandings in play long before they are able to do so verbally.

Summary:

Play is a Process of Defining

The purpose of the preceding section has been to outline the distinguishing features of play as a communicative system in an attempt to develop a theoretical foundation for the analysis of play as a language.

Bateson (1955), Miller (1973, 1974), and Reynolds (1976) focus upon the phylogenetic implications of play as a system of communication. Each of these theorists comments upon the relationship between map and territory which is articulated in play. Bateson refers to the simultaneous and paradoxical equation and discrimination of map and territory in play, which accounts for its intense psychological reality and as well, which has implications for the evolution of metacommunicative functioning. Miller and Reynolds, in somewhat similar senses to one another, suggest that play is a mediating system between the map and its territory. They propose specifically that play maps reality in ways which can generate new concepts of experience, and concurrently, that play has a continuing significance in the evolution of human communicative systems.

Miller proposes that play maps irrelevant data, i.e., data which no longer fits the map. Reynolds characterizes play as a communicating system between the environment (territory) and nonplay (map) systems. The feedback capacities of play derive from its simulative nature. Reynolds' development of the notion of meta-play as the context in which novel behaviour emerges provides a theoretical construct upon which to base an understanding of play as a generative form. Further, this notion is germane to an acknowledgment of the dimension of childhood play and culture which is the creation of childhood.

Both of these theorists argue that the organization of behaviour which distinguishes play as a particular combinatorial activity is a uniquely adaptive function. The particularities of the playful organization of experience are described most fully by Miller in the metaphor of "galumphing." This he describes as a patterned elaboration of means, "just for fun." The adaptive "end" of such a process is flexibility in combinatorial exercise. Both Miller and Reynolds propose that the evolution of flexibility depends upon play and has been critical to the survival of the human species.

The works of Garvey and Geertz highlight the generative, communicative functions of play as they appear in specific human cultural contexts. Garvey's work explores the make-believe play of children as a system of mutuality in which the maintenance of the play is dependent upon the subtlety of the communication between the players. She demonstrates that the structures of play replicate the structures of conversational exchange (see also Farrer, 1976). Further, she illustrates how play enactments elucidate emerging conceptual understandings.

Geertz interprets the play context, i.e., the player's relationships

to one another in play, as a text within the larger sociocultural milieu. This interpretation creates an understanding of the players as both the subjects and the objects of their play. Geertz' argument establishes the critical interpretive and poetic functions of play in human culture and demonstrates that this function is a critical one in the creation and maintenance of mature social behaviour, as well as in the developing behaviour of the young. Interestingly enough, Geertz poses that play presents a perceptual transformation of experience. Social status relationships are expressed in the collision of roosters: play is a symbolic form.

What emerges from a synthesis of these, in some ways diverse, starting points of analysis, is a concept of play as an ordered system of behaviour which articulates a particular frame for interaction and which acts upon reality in ways which transform our perceptions of experience, generating novel concepts of experience which are uniquely adaptive in human culture. In a less elaborated formulation, there exists a theoretical as well as a practical foundation for identifying play as a symbolic system which organizes and influences behaviour and the perception of reality. Upon this basis, it is now possible to examine play as a language system with syntactic, semantic and sociolinguistic dimensions. Furthermore, it is possible to compare the linguistic mode of definition with the playful one. These are the topics of the next section of the argument.

PLAY IS ENACTMENT

A Theoretical Stance

Within this thesis play is considered to be an enactment. The notion of enactment encompasses both physical action and verbalization. Action can be organized on a number of different levels in children's play, from simple motor movements, e.g., bouncing a ball, to more elaborate patterns of physical interaction, e.g., holding hands. Verbalization contains three elements, any one or all of which may structure it. The first of these is the element of phonological organization which includes rhyme, rhythm, pitch, loudness and intonational features, i.e., the prosodic features of language. A second element of organization is the semantic meaning of the words being used. A third is the syntactical structure of the utterance.

The position taken here is that (at least at the age level of the children who were the subjects of this investigation), enactments subsume action and verbalization to produce play. Play is seen as an emergent language with emergent properties which are not coextensive with those of action and verbalization combined additively.

7
In this chapter, physical and verbal language will be compared and contrasted for two purposes. The first of these is to define the similarities and differences between the two as distinct media of communication. The second is to build a case that play is a distinct language with its own syntax, semantics and sociolinguistic elements.

Play and Verbal Language: Alternate Modes of Definition

The overriding concern with play as an ingredient in processes of human growth and development, particularly in the evolution of formal language, has obscured to a certain degree the evolution of the play form itself. Play not only facilitates and precipitates the development of formal language, but also evolves into a 'language' itself. Play is a language like painting or music: it is a unique and untranslatable way of viewing reality.

Both play and language are processes of defining, organizing and giving shape to reality. Further, the syntax of play is significantly related to the syntax of language and strikingly similar in some respects. But play does not exist solely in the service of language; it does not disappear with the onset of language. What then are the characteristics of the playful definition of reality, and how do these contrast with the linguistic definition of reality?

In some senses play and language can be thought of as opposites. Language makes the concrete abstract; play tends to make the abstract concrete. Play is ambiguous, paradoxical and suggestive where language is clear and succinct. Language 'fixes' reality; play is "that special way of violating fixity" (Bruner, 1972). But to suggest that play is the opposite of language is somewhat simplistic. Play and language are alternative ways of giving meaning to the world. Play is always active and its meaning is never free of the context of its enactment. Language, by contrast, derives much of its significance as a communicative form in its power to free "the attention of the user from his immediate surroundings,

directing attention to what is being said rather than to what is being done or seen" (Bruner, [1972] 1976:52). Both are languages of discovery.

Interestingly enough, just as the command of language by a speaker is subject to ever-increasing facility and articulateness, so too play in its evolution is subject to considerable refinement and technique. Knowing how and when to play can create entirely new realities for the adult as scientist, poet, or pedagogue. Or, as Miller has suggested, play can produce new, more appropriate mappings of ever-changing territory and ultimately even new human mythologies. For the adult then, play in its mature forms is a very significant alternative to formal language as a means of giving shape to thought and definition to reality. For the child, I wish to argue that play is the dominant means of giving shape to reality.

In adult communication, language is supreme. For the child, however, formal language is not the primary vehicle for the expression of meaning, nor is it the central feature of the communicative dynamic. Language is metacommunicative in the child's model: it punctuates action. Play is the language of definition: Through play the child becomes fluent with the conventions of mutual exchange and understanding (Bruner, 1972; Garvey, 1977) and particularly with the processes of the assignation of meaning.

In the previous chapter the notion of play as a system of communication was introduced. More particularly, it was seen that play was a communication about communication. Herewith it is proposed that play can also be thought of as a language and with particular reference to children's play, as a language about language: a comment upon the custom and process of defining itself.

The Syntax of Play: Play is Action

It is currently the view of several theorists that language is contingent upon the development of skill and flexibility in organizing objects into patterns of skilled activity and therefore is in some way related to play, which is combinatorial activity (Bruner, 1972; Greenfield, Nelson and Saltzman, 1972; Reynolds, 1976). Accepting this argument, it is quite logical to find that the syntax of play is in some ways strikingly similar to language and that some of the properties of the logical syntax of formal language can be found in the playful manipulation of objects, by children as well as other nonhuman primates.

To say that play has a syntax is to suggest that play is a system in which identifiable elements are systematically combined according to observable patterns which produce certain consequences or meanings. Miller (1973), Bateson (1955) and Schwartzman (1978), have argued convincingly that play is a specific syntactical arrangement of behaviours and objects which fixes a certain mutual understanding and relationship amongst players by consistently maintaining the message "this is play." Further, Bruner (1972), Miller (1973), and Reynolds (1976) have characterized play as a particular combinatorial activity, i.e., a syntax, in which among other things, there are many possible ways of saying "this is play."

According to Miller (1973), the means by which the elements of play are combined, recombined and systematically modified, i.e., syntactically organized, involves such processes as repeating, reordering, exaggerating, substituting and altering the tempo and dynamics of particular actions or sequences of actions. All of these combinations say "this is play."

Several of these processes—for example the rules of substitution and reordering of sequences—parallel those of linguistic grammar. The writings of Jerome Bruner (1972) and Peter Reynolds (1976) identify more carefully the ways in which the syntax of play is significantly related to the syntax of formal language. They also discuss the processes involved in language which are prefigured and practised in play. These arguments rely upon the established correlation between language and action (Greenfield et al., 1972) and between play and flexibility of skill (Bruner, 1972; Miller, 1973; Reynolds, 1976).

In her study of children's manipulative play with seriated nesting cups, Patricia Greenfield has established a formal as well as a developmental parallel between action and grammar. She identifies three consistent and rule-bound strategies which were used by children to combine the cups. She argues further that each of the strategies represents a transformation of the linguistic structure actor-action-acted upon.⁴ The developmental sequence in the use of the manipulative strategies with the seriated cups was seen to correspond to the acquisition of related grammatical structures. Greenfield concludes as does Bruner, that very possibly it is a single competency which underlies skilled action and grammar.

Jerome Bruner draws some close comparisons between the growth of language in the individual and its evolution as human communicative behaviour. Like Greenfield, he argues that the syntax of formal language does not and did not originate linguistically. Syntax, he proposes, is a transformation of the structures of skilled action:

The initial use of language is probably in support of and closely linked to action. The initial structure of language

and, indeed, the universal structure of its syntax are extensions of the structure of action. Syntax is not arbitrary; its cases mirror the requirements of signaling about action and representing action: agent, action, object, location, attribution and direction are among its cases. Whatever the language the agent-action-object structure is the form soon realized by the young speaker what the child himself shows us is that initial development of language follows and does not lead his development of skill in action and thought. It is only after a distinction has been mastered in action that it appears in initial language. ([1972] 1976:50)

The significance of these findings is that action and language may possess common underlying forms of organization. In much the same sense, from a phylogenetic perspective, Bruner has suggested that language and tool use (the "incorporation of objects into skilled activity" [1972] 1976:38), emerged simultaneously and were derived from common programming capacities of the human brain.

The function of play in relation to the development of both active strategies and language is related to the development of flexibility of skill. There is now substantial evidence to suggest that initial play with materials is critical to the use of those objects in problem-solving (Bruner, [1972] 1976:42). Flexibility of skill involves the ability to perfect features of a task as observed from a model and then to combine them into more extended behavioural sequences in order to meet the needs of a specific task. As Bruner points out, this is similar to the linguistic ability to paraphrase: in skilled action, a different combination of actions or sequence of actions achieves the same end; in language, an alternative wording conveys a similar message. The rules for substituting and reordering thus appear in the perfection of skill as well as in language.

The relationship of linguistic play to language development also

appears to be structurally-oriented, i.e., play develops fluency within and around the structures of linguistic organization. Bruner cites the study of Ruth Weir (1962) as a case in point. The nonsensical utterances of the child are all organized according to topic and comment. Bruner extends the formal structuring of predication to active play as well:

Looked at logically, play has two crucial formal patterns: one consists of a function and its arguments; the other an argument and the functions into which it can fit. A ball or a stick are fitted into as many acts as possible; or an act, climbing, is performed on as many objects to which it can be applied appropriately. This pattern, I would speculate, is close to one of the universal structures of language, predication, which is organized in terms of topic and comment. ([1972]1976:43)

Peter Reynolds also focuses upon the language-like nature of the processes at work in play. Like Bruner, he argues that the evolution of language is contingent upon the evolution of play, i.e., that the natural selection of play led to the natural selection of language and tool-use. He interprets the absence of utility in play to make possible the beginnings of the perception and consciousness of causality, in play with objects as well as play with sound. In the beginning stages of evolution Reynolds suggests that meaning constituted a move in the object rather than any perception of an actor or action causing the object to move.

With particular reference to language as propositional referential communication, Reynolds suggests that "the precursor of propositionality lies in the capacity to parse auditory input with causal categories" (1976:632). Like Bruner, Reynolds sees language emerging as an auxiliary to action. Imitated vocal behaviour emerged in conjunction with object play and language thus became organized according to the schemas of object manipulation.

The intent of the foregoing discussion has been to give substantial support to the notion that the play of young children is systematically organized behaviour. Active strategies were seen to be systematically related to the grammatical structures of language. The playful mode of organization was seen to develop a flexibility with the strategies of action and the grammatical structures: a fluency with the rules of organization rather than the material being organized. To this end play manipulates, modifies and occasionally scrambles the structures of other modes of organization.

This systematic organization of behaviour constitutes the foundations of a syntax for play. It is described as a combinatorial exercise which is characterized by repetition, exaggeration, reordering, inverting, reversing and substitution of the elements of other modes of behavioural organization such that the message "this is play" is maintained. The syntax of play is based upon predication (like verbal language) and characterized by paraphrase: there are many ways of saying "this is play." Further, in its own right, i.e., without comparison to other modes of behavioural organization, children's play can be understood as a combinatorial exercise which puts together seemingly unrelated aspects of experience into narrative or dramatic sequences of events. Play makes comprehensible the discontinuous aspects of the child's experience by incorporating them into combinatorial wholes. The syntax of language describes an analytic process, i.e., it tends to take reality and experience apart; the syntax of play is synthetic, i.e., it puts reality and experience together.

The Semantics of Play: The Meaning of Action and Object

Play is meaningful. Like language it derives its meaning from its capacity to refer to the abstract, the invisible and the absent. For example, in playing house, children make reference to such abstract concepts as the system of family relationships--the roles, attitudes and personalities of its various members. More specifically, when playing house, children refer to and combine particular aspects of their experience of the family. These may be literal representations, i.e., the father may perform similar functions at dinner in the play enactment as he did the night before at the family dinner table. Or, as Garvey suggests, children may generate characteristics typical of fathers from their experience of the family which are then included in the sociodramatic episodes of play. Garvey uses the example of the child whose portrayal of the father in play involves the father bringing home a thousand dollars from work and giving it to the mother. As she points out (1977:88), this is likely an incident which the child has never witnessed in his or her own family and constitutes the child's interpretation of the role of the father in the family. Play translates concept into enactment.

Play thus does more than refer to other realities; it actually conjures and creates a transcendent reality, which is related to events outside it, but which also has a life and a meaning of its own. The transcendent reality created in play has meaning for children in their relationships to one another (see Schwartzman, 1978) as well as being a tool for the expression and expansion of their knowledge and understanding of the world. Further, the enactment of the Daddy giving money to the

Mommy is more than a reference to the child's experience and interpretation of that relationship; it can also become a symbol of that experience. For instance, amongst a specific group of children who play house regularly, such an interaction (or a similar one) may become a ritual occurrence between the mother and the father. This is illustrative of the ritualized symbolic nature of the play semantic as well as of its referential aspect.

As I will illustrate, the relationship between the symbol and its referent in play may be arbitrary as it is in language, but is often iconic or associational and tends to be a suggestive, even ambiguous reference in comparison with denotative communication. Further, and in significant contrast to language, the signifier in children's play is invariably concrete—an object or an action. Besides having their own identity, objects and actions in play can be made to represent ideas, relationships and emotions as well as other objects and actions. Play acquires its own semantic. Meaning is encoded in action and object as well as in words.

Semantic growth in language is a complex and mystifying process and, curiously enough, one of the least studied and understood aspects of linguistic development. The process of semantic growth is set apart from the processes of syntactic and phonological growth in language by the relatively longer period of its development. Theoretically speaking, the child has a complete working knowledge of the phonological and grammatical aspects of language long before he/she understands the conceptual implications of language as a referential system. With all but a few exceptions, normal children make no syntactical, grammatical or phonological mistakes

in their language production after the age of four, while semantic competence in language is in some ways an adjunct to cognitive maturation and the development of conceptual thinking, a process which runs into adolescence and adulthood. It is no surprise then to find that for young children, language is not yet an adequate vehicle for the expression of meaning.

Semantic growth in language involves not only the acquisition of a broad repertoire of appropriate dictionary definitions for words and an understanding of the word as a label for a category of things rather than a specific thing, but also the growth of an ability to reflect upon language and to perceive meaning outside of the context of action. In language this capacity for reference requires an understanding of the arbitrary relationship existing between the word and its referent. The set of metalinguistic/metacommunicative rules whereby we understand a signal to 'stand for' something other than itself allows for the development of the elusive skill of being able to translate what a person says into what they mean. In other words, semantic understanding involves the growth of an awareness of the processes of representation--in language, of the relationship between the word as a symbol and the object, event or idea to which it refers.

In a developmental sense, it is in the area of metacommunicative convention, i.e., in the rules whereby signifier relates to signified, that play can be seen to facilitate linguistic semantic competence as well as to possess a unique semantic character. In language the referent is not only arbitrary, but also invisible. I would like to argue that play, by using visible referents--objects and actions--for invisible realities--

concepts, relationships and perceptions--is an intermediate step in the developing use of language as a meaningful referential system.

Gregory Bateson and Peter Reynolds lend theoretical support to this notion. Speaking from the point of view of the evolution of communication, Bateson proposes that play is a part of a complex of behaviours including threat, ritual, histrionics and deceit, which by their very nature and existence, imply metacommunicative functioning at a prehuman and preverbal level. This he notes must precede the advent of denotative communication:

Denotative communication as it occurs at the human level is only possible after the evolution of a complex set of meta-linguistic (but not verbalized) rules which govern how words and sentences shall be related to objects and events. . . . It appears . . . that play is a phenomenon in which the actions of "play" are related to, or denote, other actions of "not play." We therefore meet in play with an instance of signals standing for other events, and it appears, therefore, that the evolution of play may have been an important step in the evolution of verbal communication. ([1955] 1972:180-181)

Peter Reynolds also argues that play was a seminal influence in the evolution of human communicative behaviour. As Reynolds (1976:631) describes it, play "simulates" or refers to one context within another. In a way which is significantly different from language then, the symbol in play acquires its meaning from its relationship to the context in which it is expressed, i.e., the context of action.

Reynolds (1976) also refers to the object play of nonhuman primates as a noninstrumental but meaningful use of objects. There is a tempting comparison to be made with children's play. The child at play also uses objects (and actions) in meaningful, but noninstrumental ways, i.e., in the conventional sense of the use of the object. A hammer, for instance, can become a machine gun or a bridge or a car or any number of other

things in children's play. The reference (symbol) is concrete; however, the referent is neither determined nor fixed in children's use of language. The child at play is in some sense exploring the boundary between the symbol and its referent in the process of representation in general.

How does the child at play use objects and actions to represent other objects, events and ideas? As illustrated above, the child frequently uses objects to refer to other objects in play in much the same way as words refer to objects in language. The relationship can be arbitrary, however the reference (symbol) is concrete. A single object can be used to represent many other objects in an arbitrary and often whimsical fashion. A plastic container bottle can become anything by simply naming it thusly. This is perhaps not as much an indication of an understanding of the arbitrariness of the symbol as of a reversal in the understanding of the referential process. It may well be that, for the child, the concrete object represents the word rather than the abstract word representing the object.

Children also and very significantly use objects and actions in their play to refer to people, as well as to ideas, emotions, concepts and relationships. This the child does in conscious as well as unconscious ways. Here the difficulties of separating play as referential behaviour from play as symbolic behaviour become evident. The object becomes a symbol in the truest sense of the word.

In the unconscious category are included a list of 'references' which adults identify in children's play. Play objects and episodes often bear an iconic similarity to nonplay events and relationships. Schwartzman (1978:146) cites an example from Freud (1920:33-34) of a young child whose

play with a wooden reel and a piece of string (making objects disappear and return again) which was interpreted as the child's means of alleviating the anxiety created by being unable to control the comings and goings of his mother. Emotions congeal around specific themes or symbolic objects. These kinds of expressions in play have been particularly useful to the psychoanalyst.

The child is an actor as well as a puppet in this process. What associations do children themselves make with the objects and actions of their play? The objects exchanged between children or possessed by them, and the actions performed by children at play, frequently acquire the status of symbols of friendship, secrecy, mutuality, power or proficiency. Further, objects may become associated by the child with a certain person or a certain relationship or event, or a kind of experience.

As we have seen, children assign meaning to objects in play. This meaning is never fixed: it is intimately associated with the motion and displacement of the objects and the actions of the children playing. The meaning of the object changes in accordance with the ongoing play. Garvey suggests that in children's play, the meaning of objects is subordinate to the "action plan" or schema of the play and changes to suit those purposes. Charlotte Hardman develops the notion that the objects in the playground acquire meaning in their relationship to one another (1974:178). Anyone who has watched young children at play will have noticed the meaningful exchange of objects. A very young child will often proffer an object as an invitation to play (a standard form of greeting between children). These actions, and in particular the exchange of objects, constitute meaningful communicative acts between children.

The relationship between play and meaning is also discussed by Lev Vygotsky, who is directly concerned with the relationship between words and meanings (as opposed to that between words and referents to produce meaning). His argument is developmental; he is interested in the role of play in the acquisition of abstract mental processes. Vygotsky proposes that through play the child moves towards the normal relationship between action and meaning, i.e., that determined by speech. In play, meaning becomes more important than the action or object that represents it. This, writes Vygotsky, amounts to a separation of the word from the object it represents (an inversion of the child's habitual way of perceiving) and as such is a stepping stone in the development of abstract intellectual processes. In Piagetian tradition, Vygotsky assumes the linguistic process to begin with a fusion of the word with the object. Through play, word and object become separate; the child is acting in a mental realm rather than a physical one and language becomes free of the context of action. According to Vygotsky, in play, children develop an entirely new understanding of relationship between the visible and the semantic fields. Play is "movement in the field of meaning" ([1966] 1976:550).

Curiously enough, however, play is considered to be neither referential nor symbolic behaviour by Vygotsky. Objects, he maintains, are used not as symbols, but as pivots. Vygotsky proposes that children use the objects of their play as pivots between the real and the imaginary, i.e., that in order to imagine riding a horse, most children require some kind of object which is "go-between-the-leggable." However, having refuted the claim that play is based upon the distinction between the real and the imagined, I would like to borrow the metaphor of play as a pivot and rephrase one of the central points of the preceding discussion. Play is a

pivot between the word and its referent in the growing understanding of language as an invisible, intangible, arbitrary and abstract representation of experience.

In summary, the semantics of play are related to, but different from, the semantic processes of language. In the preceding discussion, it has been proposed that, from a developmental perspective, the relationship between the symbol and referent in play represents an intermediate stage in the understanding of this relationship in language. Children use the concrete enactments of play to join the abstract symbols of language to the events of reality which they purport to represent. On another level of analysis, the peculiarity of the semantic process of play lies precisely in this use of concrete symbols and enacted forms to represent the experience of reality. Further, and in a way which is quite different from the semantic process of language (excepting poetry), play is characterized by a ritualized use of object and action (the signifiers) as symbols of events and experience (the signified).

Play as Conversation: Language in its 'Lived' State

Catherine Garvey is interested in looking at the structure of interpersonal behaviour in children's play. In her analysis of the "saying is the playing," she attempts to relate the structures of play to the "productive uses of language" (1977:1). After de Laguna (1927), she maintains that the basic unit of language is the conversation rather than the sentence. Language in its communicative function always has a context: the relationship between people. Garvey proposes that social play and particularly ritualized social play involves skills similar to those of

conversational exchange. In a developmental sense, she argues that the structuring of interaction in play provides "a basis for the acquisition of more specialized conversational exchange types" ([1974] 1976:582).

Garvey's thesis is a logical and child-oriented way of approaching the subject matter of children's play and assessing its relationship to children's language. The important aspect of language for the child is, after all, a conversational one. Children first see language at work in relationships. The substance of communication in general, and of language and verbal exchange in particular, is messages of relationship rather than those of information.

Another attractive feature of Garvey's metaphor of play as conversation is that it tends to highlight some of the competencies underlying children's play. The interactions between children at play are composed of 'turns' at acting or speaking in much the same way as conversation is composed of turns at speaking. The taking of alternate turns, pausing to allow the other to respond, implies the ability to identify a unit of social interaction, says Garvey. This involves an abstraction of critical features of an act from a model as well as an interpretation of the function of a particular act in an overall relationship. Further, play is based on the ability to generate patterns of social interaction from specific incidents or experiences. The example cited in the previous section—the father bringing home a thousand dollars from work for his wife—is an example.

Garvey proposes that play, like conversation, consists of alternating contingent behaviours and recurring patterns of interaction. She defines social play as a state of engagement in which the nonliteral behaviours of

each player are contingent upon the other. She notes further that social play is characterized by ritual interaction, i.e., by exchanges which are marked by repetition and the rhythmic regulation of the tempo of the interchange. In fact, Garvey proposes that the mutual regulation of the tempo of the interchange is what distinguishes play from other modes of interaction. She illustrates:

Two children stand close together in a playroom near a wooden car which both want to ride. One shoves the other who immediately shoves back, and simultaneous shoving occurs until one child is displaced from the area of the car. The behaviours are immediate, not spaced; neither child waits for the other to complete a behaviour. The same setting can result in social play. Both children stand near the car and one shoves the other, the second shoves back and waits; the first repeats the shove and waits for the other to shove in turn. The tempo of the activity appears to be mutually regulated. ([1974] 1976:570)

Garvey's study reveals a high degree of mutuality in children's play, finding that children as young as three participate consistently in sustained episodes of social play. She proposes that the most general rule of children's ritual play with one another is reciprocity. Reciprocity is, in turn, the underlying principle of much conversational exchange between adults. The highly ritualized quality of the exchanges between very young children at play give way to forms of social play in older children which rely less upon ritual for the regulation of interaction, and are more like the natural flow of conversation. Throughout the developmental period, these conversational exchanges at play consist of both verbal and nonverbal elements, with an increasing use of language by older children.

In keeping with her metaphor of play as conversation, Garvey classifies the interactions of children at play in terms of the characteristics

of their successive modifications of one action or statement by another. A statement or an action and a response constitute a 'round' or one turn for each child in the dyad. A sequence of rounds constitutes an episode of play. One turn may be a paradigmatic or syntagmatic response to another. Similarly, a round may be paradigmatically or syntagmatically related to the other rounds of a sequence or episode of play.

The simplest form of paradigmatic response is an exact repetition of the original response. The reply to "Hi Mommy" is "Hi Mommy" reproducing not only the words, but also the intonational and pitch features. A syntagmatic response, on the other hand, has a linear or sequential relationship to the initial statement. The response to "Hi Mommy" might be "I'm not the Mommy." Further, the resulting round of interaction may be symmetrical, i.e., a turn for each turn; or asymmetrical, i.e., an uneven distribution of turns. Garvey illustrates ([1974] 1976:573):

symmetrical -	"Bye Mommy"	"Bye Mommy"
	"Bye Mommy"	"Bye Mommy"
asymmetrical -	"I have to go to work."	"You're already at work."
	"No, I'm not."	
	"I have to go to school."	"You're already at school."
	"No, I'm not."	

From a developmental perspective, Garvey sees an initial use of paradigmatic, symmetrical responses in the form of exact repetition by one child of the actions or words of another, accompanied by appropriate cues as to the playful interpretation of the responses and pauses for the enactment of each successive turn. Gradually the child will respond in more complex ways. The exact repetition of an action or phrase is replaced by a modification of the original, i.e., the child substitutes another object of the same class for the initial object. "Hello Mr. Elephant"

becomes "Hello Mr. Tiger." Gradually this gives way to more frequent use of a syntagmatic or sequential response to the original statement or action, a more complicated relationship between rounds and longer sequences of rounds in each episode. Ultimately, the exchange is structured less by ritual interaction and becomes illustrative of such conversational techniques as the sympathetic or commiserative response. Garvey illustrates ([1974] 1976:582):

- X. "Why do brother and sister always laugh at me?"
 Y. "I don't know."
 X. "Every once a week they go out playing and start laughing at me."
 Y. "I know, um, that's an awful thing."

Garvey's analysis also reveals examples of assertion and counterassertion in children's play and invitation questions, i.e., questions which require more than a "yes" or a "no" answer. Interestingly enough, Garvey finds that children "play with conversational conventions even before they are able to conduct what adults would consider a coherent and 'sensible' dialogue" (1977:73). This supports the notion that children's play is very often play with pattern.

Summary: Play is a Language

The purpose of the preceding section has been to explore the relationship between play and verbal language, concentrating upon articulating the syntactic, semantic and sociolinguistic features of play as a precursor to verbal language and as a language in its own right. I have given particular consideration to the nature of these processes as they appear in children's play.

The chapter begins by proposing that the basic unit of structural organization of play as a language is the 'enactment.' Enactment is defined as a systematic organization of verbalization and physical action. The chapter goes on to explore the functional similarities between play and verbal language. Both are seen to be processes of defining which act upon reality to give shape and meaning to experience. In a comparison of the linguistic mode of definition with the playful one, it is argued that play is an alternate mode of structuring reality from language--a more ambiguous and analogic system and one which is never free of the context of its enactment.

The syntax which is characteristic of play is described as a combinatorial process in which there are many possible ways of saying "this is play." The basic rule of syntactical organization in play is the maintenance of this 'framing' of the play. The specific processes which comprise this combinatorial activity and distinguish play as a syntactical system in its own right can be understood as patterned manipulations of the organizational structures of other modes of behaviour and interaction. Play combines the structural elements of other modes of organization, e.g., fighting, in ways which represent a reordering, reversing, or exaggeration of the sequences of behaviour and which combinations are further characterized by the repetition of individual elements as well as the substitution of one element for another. With specific reference to children, play combines often disparate and discontinuous (from the adult perspective) elements of experience into enactments which represent constructions of reality. In these cases, the message "this is play" may be a serious rather than a ridiculous one, and the reorganization of other modes of behaviour is expressed in the ritualization of patterns of interaction.

The elaboration of play as a semantic in its own realm involves the use of objects to refer to other objects, ideas, emotions and relationships. Further, children's play is characterized by certain kinds of meaningful actions, e.g., the proffering of an object as a form of greeting and an invitation to play. Play is a ritual of childhood: the invitation to play is a standard form of greeting amongst children. The nature of play as a symbolic system is also considered in the use of objects to represent friendship or popularity, for example, and in the use of ritual actions to represent roles or occupations. This symbolic aspect of play is seen as a critical feature of its capacity to establish meaning in a realm which lies beyond the play realm itself.

The conversational dimension of play is seen as one of the most prominent indications that play is a mode of communication amongst children and a language system in its own right. Catherine Garvey's analysis distinguishes the conversational aspects of play from verbal language (and other modes of behavioural organization) by the ritual and mutual regulation of the tempo of interaction in play.

The discussion of play as a syntactic and semantic precursor to verbal language includes a consideration of various theories about the phylogenetic selection of language as communicative behaviour as well as with those concerned with the language acquisition process of young children.

In terms of its syntactical organization, Bruner (1972), Reynolds (1976) and Bateson (1955) all implicate play in the evolution of human communicative behaviour as language. Bruner (1972), Sylva (1976) and Greenfield et al. (1972) further implicate play in the language acquisition

process of young children.

The sense in which play is necessary for the onset of language both phylogenetically and ontogenetically involves a correlation between play and the acquisition of flexibility of skill in action, and as well, between the development of skilled action and the growth of language. From the point of view of individual growth, it has been established that play greatly facilitates the development of skilled action (problem-solving) involving objects (Sylva, 1976; cited in Garvey 1977:50); that certain strategies exhibited in the playful manipulations of objects are structurally related to certain stages of language acquisition (Greenfield et al., 1972); and further, that the mastery of active sequences in the play mode (as opposed to the problem-solving mode) precedes rather than follows corresponding linguistic developments (Bruner, 1972). Bruner's argument emphasizes that it is the playful manipulation of objects, i.e., action which is playfully organized, that is syntactically related to verbal language. According to Bruner, a prominent feature of the syntactical organization of play is the arrangement and rearrangement (paraphrase) of experience according to topic and comment (predication).

From a phylogenetic perspective, Bruner suggests that the agent-action-object form of language is really an extension of the arrangement of objects into patterns of skilled action and originally was an auxiliary to those actions. Further, he maintains that flexible skilled action was mastered in play before it was used in problem-solving. In a similar argument, Peter Reynolds proposes that the object play of nonhuman primates was the phylogenetic precursor of verbal language as human communicative behaviour. He describes the evolution from object play to language as a translation of the causal arrangements structuring object play, i.e., the

agent-action-object of action structure, into play with sound. According to Reynolds, this allowed sound to become categorized by cause and effect, thereby making possible the advent of propositional referential communication. According to these theorists, the playful manipulation of objects made possible the organization of action and object into instrumental sequences (tool use) and also (simultaneously--Bruner, 1972) the causal arrangement of sounds into verbal language.

Bateson (1955) suggests that it is the referential nature of play which was a critical influence in the selection of language as human communicative behaviour. He maintains that play was crucial to the development of the linguistic relationship between the signifier (map) and the signified (territory), in that it consists of actions which stand for, but are not the same as, those actions to which they refer. As Reynolds describes it, play simulates, or refers to, one context within another. From the discussion of Geertz, it was understood that play often consists of concrete symbolic references to abstract concepts, i.e., it is a symbolic representation of an unconscious reality. As a synthesis of these viewpoints, I have suggested that, developmentally speaking, play is an intermediate step in the use of language as referential behaviour. In language, the child is dealing with symbols which are both arbitrary and invisible, and with referents that are abstract and often absent. Play, by using concrete, often iconic, objects to refer to absent, abstract 'reality', becomes a pivot between the word and its referent.

PLAY AS THE DOMINANT LANGUAGE OF CHILDHOOD:

A METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Developing a Child-Oriented Approach to Children's Play in Groups

The methodological approaches to the study of children's play as reviewed in earlier chapters have, for the most part, focused upon the analysis of imaginative and sociodramatic material. There has been little attempt made to develop an interpretive classification for children's playground activity. My intent in this chapter is to extend these methodologies, particularly those of Schwartzman and Garvey, to incorporate more than the imaginative and sociodramatic aspects of children's play. These analyses fall short of explaining children's play in that they ignore the active dimension of playground games. This is an area of play which is integral in defining the culture of childhood. Traditionally these play forms—including the skipping and handclapping games and accompanying linguistic rituals which form the data base for this thesis—have been the subject matter of game collectors and cataloguers rather than interpreters.

The chapter also focuses on two other methodological problems. Firstly, much of play research concentrates upon the play of individual children and its significance to individual growth. There are very few studies of the play of children in groups and of the importance of play in the society of children. Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, there are only a handful of studies which approach play from the point of view

of the child's understanding. Classification schemes for children's play appear to be arbitrarily derived and primarily concerned with organizing the data of play in such a way as to elucidate its correlations with selected sociocultural variables.

What is needed in the study of children's play is a methodology which can account easily and adequately for the unstructured play episodes of children: for those 'games' which have no beginning or ending, no winners or losers and which emerge and fade in seeming whimsicality. Further, an appropriate methodology for children's play must in some way address the child's particular understanding of the relationship between reality and unreality as being an important defining feature of their play. At the basis of this thesis is the notion that children play, and must play, in order to communicate with one another. Any methodology for the analysis of children's play must also give consideration to the organized dynamics of interaction on the playground as well as to the kinds of activities found therein.

As was developed earlier in this thesis, the major definitions of play, and by implication their derivative methodologies, articulate conceptual categories which are peculiar to adults. They describe what a play activity or utterance would mean to an adult were he or she to act in the manner described. However, children's play is an expression of their developing understanding of one another in a world mediated by peer categories. As Charlotte Hardman (1974) points out, and as I have outlined in the preceding paragraph, what is needed is a model which will give consideration to how children themselves perceive their play and games.

My concern in the present discussion is with articulating a methodo-

logical framework and a vocabulary which can account for and describe the play of children in groups and as well, which acknowledges the concerns of that dimension of childhood which is the sole property of children. Before outlining a possible framework, I will give brief consideration to those methodological approaches which were particularly useful in its formulation.

A Consideration of Relevant Methodologies

Finding out what is really going on in children's play is a difficult task for an adult researcher. Furthermore, it would vary with children of different ages. Various methodological approaches have been tried. Amongst the most recent of these is the ethnoscientific approach. In these studies children are asked to describe their play and games verbally. Linguistic categories and the names of things then form the basis of interpretive classification. While such an approach is limited in the study of children in that children understand and communicate on levels which are not verbal, this approach produces some revealing insights as to the nature of children's own perceptions of their play.

In a recent study "The Ethnography of a Second-Grade Recess" (1972) Sue Parrott attempted to get children to describe and classify their recess activities verbally. A group of six second-grade boys acted as informants. They identified three categories of recess activity: "games," "goofing around" and "tricks." Focusing upon the information related to their games, Parrott extracted from the boys' descriptions a list of the distinguishing features of those games. The resulting categories include types of boundaries, types of penalties, kinds of roles, game outcomes

and whether or not there are teams or rules involved in playing. Interestingly enough, she found that there are games without rules, games with rules which carry no sanctions and games without specified outcomes. These findings become significant when compared with the working definition of games put forward by Avedon and Sutton-Smith:

At its most elementary level then we can define a game as an exercise of voluntary control systems in which there is an opposition between forces, confined by a procedure and rules in order to produce a disequilibrium outcome. (1971:7)

Parrott's results confirm several of my own observations regarding children's understanding of their play. The child's perception that some games have no specified outcomes substantiates to a degree the notion that for the child play has no beginning or ending; it is never-ending, unbounded and episodic. Children's games can go on for weeks at a time with each new episode picking up where the last one left off. Play is not a thing but a way of interacting. The child's purpose in play is not to direct action towards an end, but rather to direct action in such a way as to maintain the play. Play episodes do not conclude with an outcome in the sense that games (in an adult definition) end with winners and losers. They end in boredom or fighting or are suspended because of an outside constraint, e.g., dinnertime.

Moreover, children conceive of and understand their play in ways which may be quite surprising to an adult. For instance, there is no clear-cut distinction between winning and losing in children's play and games. These notions are variegated and colorful rather than absolute and binding. Furthermore, winning and losing do not necessarily signal the end of play, but rather are part of the propulsion which keeps the play going. "Olly

olly, outs are in free" signals the end of the game of Hide and Seek in a sense, however, it is also the signal for beginning the chorus of "not it" which will determine the new seeker. Similarly, "not to win" is not necessarily to "lose." It may mean being caught, tagged, found, becoming "it" or being "out." In the same sense, winning can be being "home free," "safe," "first" or "not it." These distinctions are also interchangeable, i.e., being "it" may be a desirable as well as an undesirable role, depending upon the particular game and the players' definition of that game.

In a similar sense, children conceive of the 'rules' of their games in a different way than an adult would. Further, what is indicated to the child by the word "game" is different from what is indicated to an adult. Parrott finds that children perceive of some of their games as having no rules, i.e., children perceive that certain activities are organized by means other than constraint and control. For instance, in Parrott's analysis, the "game" of Frisby is organized simply by trying to catch the frisby. There is no specified outcome, although there is a goal and there could be an outcome if a group of children decided to devise a scheme whereby they kept track of the number of "missed throws," for instance. Further the rules of some games carry no penalties for infraction. Parrott's informants described this as follows:

"In keepaway, you can do anything to the other guy, as long as you don't hurt him or do something the teacher don't like."
(1972:215)

Rules then are not rules in the adult sense of the term. In contrast to the rules of adult games, the rules of children's games can be changed, manipulated and even broken, although there is a fine line between breaking a rule for playful reasons and spoiling the fun. Compare the rules of the

game of Tag with the game of chess. In Tag the rules are not fixed as they are in chess; they vary greatly from one playgroup to the next, although the basic action pattern is the same the world over. Further, the particular course of events in any game often involves decisions as to which rules and whose rules will hold sway. The process of the making and breaking of rules in children's games is determined by various prescribed rituals. These rituals revolve around such things as who owns the ball or the skipping rope and the means whereby counting-out rhymes can be 'fairly' manipulated to determine the choice of the "it" player. Often factors of leadership and popularity affect who will choose the game and declare the rules, i.e., aspects of the children's understanding of their relationships to one another.

Parrott's study and those like it are convincing evidence that at least second-grade children define the parameters of their play and games in ways which are different from what an adult would suppose. Interpretive analyses of children's play rarely take into account the possibility, raised so clearly in Parrott's study, that children may conceive of such concepts as 'rules' and 'games' in a significantly different way than an adult would. Research into children's play must now seek to understand the organizing principles of children's play according to children's categories and definitions. Although these may seem to an adult to be logically incoherent, the fact that the children in Parrott's study could agree amongst themselves as to what qualified as a "game" and what should more properly be labelled as "fooling around," suggests at least the existence of some kind of internal consistency in their understanding.

The central notion in Catherine Garvey's analysis of preschool children's

play is that play is a mode of interaction rather than a kind of activity. It is distinguished from other modes of interaction, e.g., fighting, largely by a mutual and rhythmic regulation of the tempo of interaction by the participants. Along with her development of a way of looking at play according to the structures and conventions of conversation, Garvey's approach is consistent with a concept of play as a system of communication between children. In particular, her description of ritualized play, i.e., play which is marked by "controlled repetition" and the "mutual regulation of tempo" is pertinent to the analysis of linguistic rituals--songs, taunts, chants, rhymes--as a means by which children regulate their interaction with one another on the playground. Further, Garvey concentrates upon the inherently social nature of play. Play texts are considered from the point of view of a social context, in this case the relationship between previously acquainted nursery school children arranged as paired agemates.

Another significant aspect of Garvey's analysis and one which is uniquely suited to the data and perspective of the present work, is her use of an entirely different principle for classifying the types of play. In contrast to the many schemes which attempt to distinguish kinds of play according to kinds of activity, Garvey chooses rather to organize play forms according to the materials being played with. The predominant question posed by her analysis then is "What are the children playing with?" The result is an inventory of what Garvey has called the "resources" for play. She describes these in the opening pages of Play:

These resources are actually classes of experiences. They include motion and changes in perception resulting primarily from physical movement; objects and their physical as well as their combinational or associational properties; language and speech, which offer many levels of organization that can

be turned to play; social materials, such as roles, situations, and attitudes—the various notions concerning the way the social world is constructed; and finally limits, where following rules or consciously breaking them is the primary resource for play. These aspects, the way they emerge and develop, their possible combination and integration into complex episodes of play, are my central topics. (1977:9)

The inclusion of rules as a material resource for play is a conspicuous feature of this scheme. As Garvey describes it, playing with the rules involves "violating a convention, upsetting an expectation, or taking apart things that should go together" as well as "risking the consequences of transgressing the boundaries of the permissible or the possible" (1977:106). As described earlier, my own observations of children's play confirm that they are fascinated with the manipulation of the 'rules of the game'.

Another attractive feature of the scheme is its manner of handling the issue of make-believe. 'Make-believing' or pretending is herein seen to be an operation of transformation performed by children upon the resources of their play, rather than as a kind of play. This perspective emphasizes the communicative nature of play as a process which acts upon experience to organize it in distinctive ways. It further emphasizes that make-believe play constitutes an interactive dynamic, a sharing of imagination. In Garvey's conception, make-believing is something which children engage in together, rather than simply a characteristic of a certain kind of play.

The work of Charlotte Hardman (1974) is critically important to the development of a methodological framework in that it concentrates upon developing an understanding of the child's perceptions of the world and of

adult culture. In "The Study of Children in Social Anthropology," she develops the notion that children are a cultural grouping which is qualitatively different from adult culture. According to Hardman, children create comprehensible models of their own experience which govern their actions and interactions with one another. These models form a counterpart to the adult model of reality, rather than a miniature of it. As Hardman argues,

at the level of values, symbols, games, beliefs, and oral traditions, there may be a dimension exclusive to the child--it might be called an analogue of reality--in which adults appear in a very different guise from the one they themselves accentuate in their models of society. (1974:127)

In reviewing the various anthropological models used in the analysis of children's play, Hardman's chief criticism is that they are arbitrarily derived and give little consideration to the meaning of the analytic categories for the child. In a comment upon the Opies' classification, which identifies conspicuous features of games from an adult perspective, Hardman suggests that children may perceive different principles of organization:

Possibly for the children the important aspect of a game, its reference point, is whether a ball is being used, whether the action is hopping, whether they join the 'it' when they have been 'tiggered' .. (1974:186)

With this perspective in mind, Hardman attempts to classify children's playground games according to their own perceptions and the values esteemed by the children themselves. Underlying her analysis is an assessment of the purposes and motives of children in the playground. This understanding is useful in describing some of the rituals of interaction between children. Hardman writes:

The main aims of schoolchildren in their own world, I suggest, are as follows: to enjoy themselves and have fun in concert with others; to trick and make fun of their companions, of adults, and the adult world in general, and lastly, to hoard and collect things which have some special value, such as bus tickets, football cards, or old clothes, make-up, nails, etc., rejected by adults. (1974:131)

A significant aspect of Hardman's understanding of the world peculiar to childhood is her perception of the child's "open-ended" vision of the world. Children, she writes, live in a "Protean" world (1974:176) where there is no need for a "rigid distinction between fact and fiction, reality and illusion" (1974:128). This quality of fluidity in the child's understanding is contrasted by Hardman with the rigidity of the adult model:

For schoolchildren, in their own spontaneous world, there is no reason why fact and fantasy should be discrete ways of looking at events and objects. In their estimation the world may be made up of things, which have not only one meaning, but at the same time another (even a contradictory one), and another and another. There is almost no limit to what things may be and yet they are none the less real for that. From an adult's point of view the child's grasp of the concepts 'fact' and 'fantasy' seems blurred or intermingled, but to the child the rigid distinction applied by adults is merely irrelevant unless circumstances call for it. Childhood is a time for testing where to place the boundary between the two. It is this aspect of the child's model of society which to a large extent sets it apart from adults'. (1974:128-129).

Hardman's analysis is therefore quite consistent with my own observation that the child's perception and understanding of the world is one which is not yet fixed by language. The distinction between reality and illusion, and the knowledge of where to place the boundary between the two, is culturally determined and to a large extent it is language which fixes this reality. For children, the meaning of words and things and events is never quite fixed. Moreover, as Hardman points out, children

cannot be interpreted through their speech alone. She argues, for instance, that the biophysical environment can be interpreted as an alternative form of communication amongst children. Children assign and reassign meaning to objects in the playground according to the purposes of a particular game or shared fantasy situation. An object " . . . acquires meaning or value through its relative position with other objects of the specific context " (1974:178). In a similar sense, the orientation of children to one another in play, who plays with whom and under what kinds of circumstances, are also meaningful acts of communication. Further, just as the meaning of objects in the child's world is not fixed, but changes to suit the whims of the game, so too children's relationships to one another in play are not fixed but fluid. This notion of fluidity of identity and relationship is, I suggest, critical to children's understanding of themselves as players and to their ability to distinguish play from other modes of interaction.

Like Hardman, Helen Schwartzman is concerned with studying the play of children in groups. Like Garvey, she is specifically concerned with the communication of make-believe by preschoolers. Her study is significantly different from Garvey's, however, in that she considers the text of children's play within the natural social context of the child and not in a laboratory. Schwartzman's analysis is thus particularly relevant to the understanding of the player's perspective of their play. Players are considered to be both the subjects and the objects of their play. After Geertz, the make-believe play of children is seen to be "a story the players tell themselves about themselves." In this framework then children's play

is contexted not only by adult cultural values and relationships, but also by the evolving relationships between specific children in a specific social setting.

Schwartzman studies the play of a small group of children in a day-care centre. She concentrates upon what she has called the "sideways" perspective of children's play. This perspective looks primarily at how the immediate social context of the children is affected by and reflected in the play text. Information regarding the popularity and natural leadership qualities of individual children as well as data relating to which children most frequently play with which other children is important to her analysis. This information was inferred from direct observation of the children and confirmed by their teachers. Schwartzman's study attempts to interpret how these factors make themselves evident in the dramatic play of the children and conversely how the dramatic play of the children in turn influences the social dynamic as a whole. Children's developing understandings of one another are thus seen to have an interpretive significance in Schwartzman's analysis: the players have a social history.

A Methodological Framework and Vocabulary for Children's Play

The following descriptions of the "players," the "resources of play," and the "rituals of interaction" is intended as an introduction and definition of appropriate descriptive terms for the explanation of all forms of children's play. I introduce these as a contribution to a descriptive vocabulary for children's play, rather than as a completed framework of analysis. The terms—particularly in resources of play and rituals of interaction—do not represent distinct or separate kinds of play and are

not mutually exclusive. For example, all play is to a certain degree, play involving interaction. However, as I hope to show in the next chapter, some kinds of play-forms are predominantly play with one, or perhaps two, resources or rituals in particular, e.g., ritual insult is predominantly play with the rules of interaction. In this section I will be introducing and defining the terms in a general sense; in the next chapter, I will apply them specifically to my own field observations.

The Players

The players constitute a group of children, one, two or many, who play together. There may be a social history amongst the players as Schwartzman has suggested which is affected by and reflected in play. The group of players is characterized by the fluidity of their relationships to one another and of their individual identities. The players are continually devising systems of communication in the creation of an evolving and dynamic interaction. Generally speaking, the players foster a spirit of friendship and cooperation amongst themselves.

The Resources of Play

The ensuing inventory is essentially an adaptation of that proposed by Catherine Garvey in Play (1977). I have separated the categories of motion and interaction, adding "action" to the former, and, as well, I have added "sound" to play with language. The analysis in the next chapter will be particularly concerned with play involving action, interaction, language and sound. Specifically, I will explore the ways in which language and sound punctuate play involving action and interaction.

Each category below will be briefly described in terms of the kinds of play it encompasses. As Garvey points out, the categories are not mutually exclusive and generally there are at least two resources involved in any one play episode.

1. Play involving Objects

These can be objects which are played with, e.g., dolls, or objects which facilitate play, e.g., skipping ropes. The objects of children's play are frequently transformed or woven into fantasy narratives. In my discussion of the semantics of play, I described the ways in which children use objects in play to represent emotions, ideas and relationships as well as other objects. Furthermore, it was proposed that objects become symbols—of friendship, popularity, etc.

2. Play involving Motion and Action

This includes the category of practice play as developed by Piaget, the category of "ilinx" as developed by Caillois and much of the playground play and active games of children which require the mastery of specific sequences of skilled action. This category thereby includes play involving physical movement and motor skills as well as that concerned with testing the rules and principles of motion (ilinx).

Garvey's prototype for the resources of play suggests that this kind of play frequently involves interaction as well. Such play forms as the "rough and tumble" play of the preschooler studied by Blurton-Jones (1967) are a case in point. Further, the skipping songs which form the basic data for the present study are an example of the regulation of interaction through patterned motion.

3. Play involving Interaction

According to the understanding of play put forth in this thesis, i.e.,

that play is a medium of communication between children—all play involves interaction to a degree. Children are seen to play with the rules of interaction and acceptable patterns of interpersonal behaviour. This is particularly evident in the content of the taunts and teases of the playground.

Further, children's play with interaction involves the dynamics of the next level of analysis, i.e., the rituals of interaction. Examples are the rituals which determine the taking of turns, who will be "it," and who will go first, etc. These dynamics are in turn mediated by the code of ethics of the playground which decrees that everyone shall have a fair chance and a "turn."

4. Play Involving Language and Sound

Children play with the structures of language as sound, i.e., as acoustic constructs. They perceive meaning in prosodic features, i.e., rhythm, intonation, pitch, tempo, and loudness. Nonsensical rhymes, jokes, riddles, chants and the intonational structures of taunts and teases are examples of the ways in which children play with language. Jokes and riddles also introduce play with the semantic features of language.

Sound often accompanies action in the play of young children. This category of play also includes play which involves acoustic gesture, i.e., whooping, hollering, clapping. Acoustic gesture frequently takes the form of the onomatopaeic accompaniment to action, e.g., the imitated sound of a train or a car or a horse.

5. Play Involving Social Materials

This is perhaps the single-most studied aspect of children's play. It is in this kind of play that we most readily identify correlations with other aspects of culture and development. Garvey describes this category of play as follows:

Features of the social world, and of socially learned and transmitted expectations of the way objects, actions and people are related, provide the principal resource of make-believe or pretending. This type of play, when it involves recognizable "characters" and plots of story lines, has also been called dramatic or thematic play. (1977:79)

It is continually fascinating to watch how children weave social experience, intuitive projection and image into their make-believe play. Garvey points out that this kind of play tends to incorporate elements from all the other classes of resources into complex dramatic and thematic frameworks.

6. Play Involving Rules

Much of children's play involves playing with the rules—the rules of motion, of interaction, of language and of social convention. Children tend to reorganize the fixed conception of adult reality in certain ritualized kinds of ways. Further, the organizing principles of children's play may perhaps be better thought of as rituals than rules. The rigidity associated with the concept of 'rule' contradicts the child's continual manipulation of the dynamics of interaction.

Rituals of Interaction

Children's interactions with one another in play are ritualized. This is exhibited by the repetitious nature of their exchanges as well as by the rhythmic regulation of the tempo of interaction (see Garvey, 1977). For purposes of the present study, I propose that children's play can be described in terms of a number of 'rituals of interaction'. Rituals of interaction are defined here as culturally agreed-upon codes for behaviour (although the nature of the convention may vary from one playgroup to the next) which represent condensed realities, i.e., they focus upon one or another aspect of interaction, such as teasing or pretending.

The rituals of interaction of the playground provide structures in which children can collectively organize the elements and resources of their experience as outlined above into enactments. These rituals are focused interpersonal dynamics which are devised by children in order to mediate and regulate, as well as simplify, their interactions in play. Each of the rituals constitutes a logical discourse in its own right. Garvey (1977:82) comments upon the internal consistency of the guidelines for behaviour in children's make-believe play, i.e., in the ritual of pretending. Hardman (1974:132) describes the "coherent discourse" of "having fun." My own analysis of children's playground activity will explore the social dynamics of taking turns, ritual insult and ritual declaration amongst children.

The following list of rituals of interaction is a composite result of my own observations and the insights of those writers who have been particularly concerned with understanding children and play from the point of view of the child. The list is not intended to be exhaustive, nor are the

categories mutually exclusive, for example "having fun" is an almost sacred ritual of all of children's play. There are almost always several rituals of interaction in any one episode of play. I have tried to include only those dynamics which I believe that children themselves could describe themselves to be doing.

1. Sharing--of plans, ideas and secrets as well as objects
2. Taking turns
3. Pretending
4. Believing
5. Daring and Betting
6. Taunting and Jeering
7. Teasing and making fun of one another and adults
8. Goofing around and being silly
9. Having fun
10. Making up things--games, stories, songs
11. Competing and Contesting
12. Racing
13. Chasing
14. Mimicking, Repeating,, Copying
15. Counting-out, Singling-out, Choosing Favorites
16. Ritual Declaration and Chanting
17. Trading
18. Collecting and Listing

Summary: Play is an Enactment

As outlined in the previous chapter, this thesis proposes that enactment be used as the structural metaphor for the description and interpretation of children's play. This metaphor combines elements from each of the descriptive categories--players, resources of play and rituals of interaction.

The metaphor of enactment is attractive in that it can be used to describe children's make-believe play as well as their more active games, i.e., it encompasses all play forms. For example, a game of house involves players in the rituals of having fun, pretending and making up stories. They are playing with objects (often transformed) and social materials. They are enacting their concepts of the family system. The game of skipping

can be equally well described using this metaphor. It involves players in the rituals of having fun and taking turns at playing with objects, motion, interaction and language. It enacts children's concepts of inclusivity and the setting of standards of excellence and qualification for the group.

The notion that play is always enacted is a distinctive feature of play as a system of communication. The feedback capacity of play as an enacted form, functions to expand and develop children's conceptual understandings. Make-believe is the creation of enactment through shared imagination. Further, the enactments of play represent a configuration of concept which is largely nonverbal. Play is a nonsystematic (vis a vis language) form of conceptual knowledge.

FIELD OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

We have no idea of a sonorous and harmonious language, spoken as much according to sounds as it is according to words.

Rousseau, On The Origin of Language (1966)

Introduction and Description of the Present Study

There has always been something distinctly appealing to me about the sound which emerges from a large group of children in a playground. The sound of children in groups is quite different from the sound of an adult crowd. As I began to listen more carefully and purposefully to playground sound and to the sound of children in groups in general, I gradually came to realize that one of the attractive features of playground ambience was its musical qualities. For, in addition to the 'sing-song' delivery characteristic of so much of children's speech, the language of the playground itself consists mainly of songs, rhymes, and chants. I came to recognize and understand these as the natural language of children.

I spent several months collecting a sampling of playground lore and related data on the use of songs, chants and rhymes in specific activities and social situations. These included circle-game songs, skipping songs, ball-bouncing songs, hand-clapping songs, counting-out rhymes and taunting chants. My informants were children aged 6 - 12 years from 10 elementary

schools in the Greater Vancouver area. This initial part of my investigation of children's play took place in April, May and June of 1977. I spent 2 - 3 days at each school and worked with representative groups of children at each grade level, in their classroom situation (20 - 25 children) and/or in smaller group sessions (7 - 10 children). In these sessions children were asked to tell me about and/or write down their skipping songs, ball-bouncing songs, handclapping songs, as well as the rhymes they used to tease one another and any other of their favorite songs or sayings. They needed very little prompting in this pursuit. Occasionally I asked questions such as "What do you say when someone is bugging you?" to clarify my own purpose or to jog their memories. In addition to this method of data collection, I also spent recess and noon hour on the playground, observing the activity and occasionally asking children to demonstrate a game they had told me about or asking them questions about their rhymes and games, e.g., "Who are the Spanish dancers?" and "What color was the little car in 1948?" This was also done in several phys. ed. classes. I kept daily records in the form of field notes of these activities and observations. I was not interested in documenting differences in the play of the various age groups, but rather with acquiring a representative sample of the entire spectrum of elementary schoolage children's play.

In those situations in which children were asked to write down the rhymes, some interesting discrepancies emerged. What the children were actually saying and what I thought I was hearing or knew the rhyme to be were frequently different. The Opies make a relevant comment in the Introduction to The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren (1959) on these kind of accidental variations:

Thus we find that variations, even apparently creative ones, occur more often by accident than by design. Usually they come about through mishearing or misunderstanding, . . . 'Calico breeches', no longer familiar to youth today, become 'comical breeches'. "Elecampane" becomes 'elegant pain'. . . . At one school the pledges "Die on oath", "Dianothe", and 'Diamond oath' were all found to be 'current at the same time. (p.8)

From very early on in my own observations then, I became aware that the significance of the rhymes is rarely in the inherent meaning of the words, but is rather in the use of the utterance in a specific situation.

For the most part the material collected was a part of what Hardman (1974) has called the "autonomous sub-culture" of the child, i.e., a part of the lore that passes from child to child rather than from adult to child as in the case of nursery lore, and thus are a creation of the children themselves. I did a preliminary analysis of the material from the point of view of its musical qualities, the combination of melody and chant and the use of repetitive rhythmic structures as a basis for endless variation. I became very much interested in the musical use of language by children and in the relationship between speech and song.

Several months later I used parts of this collected material as well as other children's songs in conducting music sessions with three groups of seven-year old children. I was interested in gaining more information on how children used their voices as well as in seeing if some of the predominant organizing features of the playground lore -- the fascination with repetition, substitution and variation -- could be elicited using other kinds of musical material. I attempted to foster the spirit of play by encouraging children to participate in the direction of the session and by allowing for freedom of movement as much as possible. During the course of the sessions, which were documented on tape as well as in field notes and conducted twice weekly over a period

of five weeks, I began to gain some real insights into children's perceptions of the nature and function of language. I became convinced that in their use of language, children appear to make little distinction between speech and song. As their speech is often pitched or sing-song, so their song is often an enthusiastic form of shouting. However, of most consequence was the discovery that for children there is an intimate and carefully articulated relationship between sound and action. Ultimately, I have come to recognize that the particular integration of these two basic elements is a distinguishing feature of the communicative system of children.

Verbal language, acoustic gesture and action are combined and integrated by children in an evolving system of interaction: the language of play. Action is more than the context of children's use of verbal language; action itself is meaningfully structured in children's communicative system. The interplay of sound and action as systems of representation creates the language of play: they mutually contextualize one another.

This chapter initially addresses itself to the child's perception of verbal language and its place within the language of play. I will then illustrate the ways in which sound and action are integrated in the playground activity--games and linguistic rituals. This discussion will include a consideration of how the dynamic interplay of sound and action functions within the structures described by three of the rituals of interaction of the playground--taking turns, ritual insult and ritual declaration. The elucidation of this construct of sound and action as it characterizes the mediation of interaction through ritual, in turn forms an interpretive basis for the examination of the meaning of playground

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games and songs in the society of children. The final section will develop the notion that playground lore contains a cultural ethic and describes a systematic process of establishing meaning which is based quite specifically upon the child's unique perception of experience. The rituals of interaction will be seen to function on both syntactic and semantic levels in the language of play. Unless otherwise noted, all examples cited are from my own collection.



Words Without Meaning:

The Child's Perception of Verbal Language

In describing the child language model and comparing it with that of the adult, Sanches and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1976:77) argue that children's language exhibits a more strongly organized phonological component than that of adults. Further, phonological patterning is seen to be a generative feature of the child's developing model of language:

We would have to account for the priority of the phonological structure over both the semantic and grammatical in order to generate a "child" utterance, particularly that of a young child as distinct from an adult, and to determine the "connectedness" of the parts of the utterance. (1976:79)

According to Sanches and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, similarity of sound is a principle of generalization as well as classification in children's language. Children often assume that words which sound the same, mean the same, and in effect, within the linguistic structures they produce themselves, this is true. For example, the common childhood saying "Order in the court, the monkey wants to speak," is also heard as "Order in the court, the donkey wants to speak." The phonological similarity

between "monkey" and "donkey" extends to a similarity of meaning or usage amongst children, i.e., the monkey and the donkey both symbolize or 'stand for' idiocy in the child's vernacular (see Opies, 1959:194; Hardman, 1974:147). Sanches and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett propose that phonological dominance in the organization of language remains long after the child possesses theoretical competence with the syntactic and semantic features of verbal language (1976:105). These notions are certainly corroborated in my own analysis of the language of the playground.

In addition to phonological patterning, there is now some research into the means by which children acquire fluency with the prosodic features of language, i.e., with pitch, tempo, patterns of stress and intonation, and dynamics. It has been proposed that children begin this process in early stages of infancy. The form of babbling is seen to be related to the formal intonational patterns and pitch contours of the native language of the infant (Wood, 1976:208). Further, in research on the cries of infants, Philip Lieberman (1966:41) demonstrates that the perception of pitch contour and the use of pitch in communication is in all likelihood an innate human characteristic. The perception of meaning in sound then, may to a certain extent be intuitive. Whatever the case, children use the prosodic features of language in meaningful ways before they are able to produce appropriate syntactic and semantic constructions. The example of the question is the most prominent. Children perceive and use the intonational form of the question before they are able to perform the appropriate transformation of subject and predicate to produce a question grammatically (see Cazden, 1972:53).

Words need not correspond with an appropriate connotative or denotative meaning in order to be used meaningfully by children. Often, they are used as meaningful sounds rather than meaningful symbols. Many of these meanings are affective, e.g., a word may sound funny or sad. In the Piagetian conception of language acquisition, children originally fuse the word with the object or the word becomes a property of the object. However, when the context of the child's initial experiences with language are taken into account, this notion appears somewhat oversimplified. Much of the child's beginning experience with language involves an adult pointing at an object and naming it, i.e., the original function of naming is social, not referential. This action as well as the person who performs it are a part of the linguistic process for the child. It is therefore not enough to describe children's language as being inseparable from the context of action; the language of childhood is composed of both actions and verbal language. The action and the person performing it affect the child's growing conception of the relationship between words and the objects, situations and ideas to which they refer, and ultimately, to the relationship between language and meaning. The word is thus fused with an action as well as with an object. In commenting upon the child's use of holophrases in speech, de Laguna remarks upon the fluidity of this relationship for children:

A child's word does not . . . designate an object or a property or an act; rather it signifies loosely and vaguely the object together with its interesting properties and the acts with which it is commonly associated in the life of the child. The emphasis may be now on one, now on another, of these aspects, according to the exigencies of the occasion on which it is used. (1927:90-91)

For example, to a young child, the word "cookie" refers not just to the

object itself, but perhaps more significantly, to being given something good to eat, i.e., the word also refers to the action which it prompts.

For young children, language is primarily understood as a spoken phenomenon, perceived by ear rather than by eye. (see McLuhan, 1962). A humorous illustration of this point arose in my own observations. In probing for an interpretation of "Marijuana, marijuana, LSD" (cited below in example #77), I was told that "Ellis Dee" was the "guy who makes the marijuana." Language is also a phenomenon which is specifically associated with the actions and interactions of people, rather than with the expression of ideas. Often language is perceived by children in strings of acoustic utterance which are organized in a structure of phrase and response, such that structural relations supercede the concern with content. For instance, young children will often answer a question with a reply which bears no relationship to the original question and may even be nonsensical. It seems as though they sometimes feel a need to respond only to the intonational incompleteness presented by the questioning form by supplying any phrase which will give a sense of prosodic completion to the pattern. The example cited in the introduction to this thesis from the work of Brown and Bellugi is a case in point. Further, preschool children are unable to assess the number of 'words' in an utterance (Karpova, 1977:3). As the Opies' example (cited earlier)—"Dianoth" illustrates, children frequently 'run together' the words of an utterance into an apparently single construction.

The relationship between language and action is the subject of playful fascination for the child. Language is seen to affect people's actions: certain utterances produce not only other utterances, but also

(as illustrated above) other meaningful actions. According to de Laguna, language emerged originally as a means of social coordination. This is precisely the way children in their own society use language. While developmental studies are concerned with the progressive freeing of language from the context of action, the child may in fact be exploring and exploiting this relationship. The society of children is dominated by interaction through action, and language is a significant means whereby children ritually structure and organize that action. On the playground, a word or a phrase signifies or signals a complex series of actions rather than an idea or concept. In play, as I will demonstrate, language punctuates and directs action.

Furthermore, and I believe with considerable significance to the process of language acquisition and semantic development, children enact verbal understandings in play in an effort to attribute meaning to words which they do not understand. Children 'hear' or 'overhear' certain words and phrases more readily than others. Often an expression will stand out because of its phonological peculiarity. Alternatively, a child may pick up on words which have particular situational associations. For example, the child will often pick up on words or phrases in adult conversations which have an affective dimension. This is in part owing to the child's sensitivity to intonational patterning in language. However, the child is also associating the expression with a response, e.g., he may observe a word to produce laughter or anger. In order to understand the meaning of the word, the child then repeats it in as many situations as possible until he or she discovers a familiar or meaningful response. This process is common amongst young children in particular

and appears very often in their use of expressions which are associated with cultural taboo — words like fag, rug-riders, LSD, marijuana. Children right through the elementary school age are able to use such expressions in more or less appropriate circumstances having little or no idea of what they really mean. This particular dynamic will be a recurrent topic of discussion in my consideration of the meaning of the games and rituals of the playground within the society of children amongst themselves.

Language Punctuates Action:
Synchronizing the Activity of the Playground

The flow of activity and interaction amongst children at play is prescribed by patterns of skilled motor activity which in turn are accompanied and regulated by patterned acoustic utterances or appropriate acoustic gestures. Acoustic utterances comprise the songs, chants and rhymes of the playground; acoustic gestures consist of all other means of soundmaking, vocal and otherwise, e.g., whooping, hollering and clapping, as well as imitative and onomatopaeic sounds. Interestingly enough, these gestures, usually reserved for the 'striking moment' in adult communication are a part of the normal fabric of interaction amongst children. Skilled motor activity includes running, jumping, skipping, leaping, chasing and various physical sequences required by children's games. Action and sound are inseparable; these activities in themselves often create a certain kind of rhythmic sounding, e.g., the sound of a skipping rope on the pavement.

Within this corpus of material, language and sound are seen to accompany action in two distinct ways: language acts as a percussive ac-

companionment to patterned rhythmic action and language is seen to signal, or stand for, a particular action or sequence of actions. Sound adds another dimension to action, clarifying it and making it more precise and focussed. Action structures interaction through acoustic ritual.

Language is frequently used as a percussive accompaniment to the actions of skipping, ball-bouncing, clapping games, and counting-out rhymes. These rhymes are narrative in style and often bear no relationship to the activity in question and in fact are interchangeable from one activity to the next, although tradition often defines a single purpose for them in a particular playgroup. In this sense then, language comes to be associated with certain kinds of activities in the minds of children. Examples of the narrative style of skipping and clapping songs are voluminous. The following examples will serve as an introduction:

- 1) Marilyn Monroe broke her toe
Riding on a buffalo
Buffalo died, Marilyn cried
And that was the end of the buffalo ride

- 2) Down, down baby, up in a roller coaster
Sweet sweet baby, I'll never let you go
Shimmy, shimmy, shimmy, shimmy shimmy-boo
Shimmy, shimmy, shimmy, shimmy shimmy-boo
Old Grandma sick in bed
This is what the doctor said
She'll be out in a week or two
Nobody knows except us two
Shimmy, shimmy, shimmy, shimmy, shimmy-boo
Shimmy, shimmy, shimmy, shimmy, shimmy-boo

Example #1 is a skipping song; example #2 was collected as a clapping song.

These narrative songs often have no particular defining features, i.e., they do not prescribe a particular action for skippers to perform

but require only straight skipping, often with "pepper" at the end. The following example contains a section which is also found in a clapping song:

- 3) Cinderella dressed in yella
 Went upstairs to kiss a fella
 Made a mistake, kissed a snake
 Call for the doctor
 Call for the nurse
 Call for the lady with the alligator purse
 In came the doctor
 In came the nurse
 In came the lady with the alligator purse
 Out went the doctor
 Out went the nurse
 Out went the lady with the alligator purse

The section of rhyme beginning "Call for the doctor" is used in several clapping games, most notably in some variation of the following:

- 4) I have a little sister
 Her name is Susie Q
 I put her in the bathtub
 To see what she would do
- She drank up all the water
 She ate a bar of soap
 She tried to eat the bathtub
 But it wouldn't go down her throat
- My mother called the doctor
 My mother called the nurse
 My mother called the lady with the alligator purse
- She ate up all the doctor
 She ate up all the nurse
 She ate up all the lady with the alligator purse

This song can also be adapted as in example #3 to be used as a skipping rhyme. Curiously enough, when I asked what the lady with the alligator purse was doing with the doctor and the nurse (the only semantic incongruity in the sequence), I was told "she rhymes."

The use of an entire sequence of rhyme in more than one activity has been remarked upon by Sanches and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett in a recent study "Children's Traditional Speech Play and Child Language" (1976). They propose that children use a repertoire of narrative devices such as the one above in order to extend the length of the rhymes and thus the game. In addition to the rhymes which tack onto the end of skipping songs, they cite examples of rhymes which appear as introductions to any other skipping song:

- 5) Not last night but the night before
24 robbers came knocking at my door
I asked them what they wanted and this is what they said:

- 6) I went down to see Mrs. Brown
She gave me a nickel to buy a pickle
The pickle was sour so I bought a flower
The flower was dead so I bought a bed
The bed was hard so I bought a card
And this is what the card said:

Sanches and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett refer to these devices as expansions and concatenations. They state that it is also common to find extensions of rhymes in the use of fixed-order series. They write:

Concatenation involves joining a rhyme with another rhyme or with a series or list. These rhymes and series can also occur independently. Most common is the use of fixed-order series, such as the alphabet, numbers, days of the week, months of the year, or lists of members of classes (names of people, places, occupations, kinds of fruit, etc.). These series get attached to the end of a verse by means of such formulas as:

- (a) How many (doctors did it take?) 1, 2, 3, 4, . . .
(kisses did it take?)
 - (b) What's the initial of my sweetheart? A, B, C, D, . . .
 - (c) It happened on: Monday, Tuesday, . . .
 - (d) And this is where I went: London, Paris, Saigon, . . .
 - (e) Tell me when your birthday comes: January, February, . . .
- (1976:88)

These segments of multipurpose rhyme are not primarily an indication of a deficiency or lack of syntagmatic structuring in child language as Sanches and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett suggest. Rather, such devices are a feature of oral cultures in general (see Havelock, 1976) and their repetition is a function of the ritualized nature of the language of the playground. Further, the use of a rhyme or a segment of a rhyme in several situations is also indicative of the child's predisposition towards the perception and manipulation of pattern in speech, the phonological basis of the organization of language in childhood and the meaningful use of the acoustic peculiarities and patterns of language by children. The following example of a multipurpose segment of rhyme should serve to illustrate these points:

- 7) Ink pink you stink
Riding on a donkey's _____
Not because you're dirty
Not because you're clean
Just because you kissed a girl
Behind the magazine
- 8) Boy Scout walks out
Not because you're dirty
Not because you're clean
Just because you kissed a girl
Behind the magazine
- 9) Candy apple on my stick
Makes my tummy go 2-4-6
Not too dirty
Not too clean
Just the size of a magazine

In examples #7 and #8, a taunt and a counting-out rhyme respectively, the section of rhyme common to both would differ primarily in terms of intonation and delivery. The last variation, while similar in content to the first two, bears a remarkable formal similarity to another taunting rhyme:

- 10) I see London, I see France
 I see _____ underpants
 Not too big
 Not too small
 Just the size of Montreal

Children's variations upon rhymes and chants revolve around a dynamic interplay between remembered acoustic pattern and rhythmic patterns, rather than being the result of a deficiency in syntagmatic structures.

Finally, the following example of a narrative song used as accompaniment to a ball-bouncing game is worth quoting because of the charm of the rhyme as well as the uniqueness of the game itself:

- 11) Hello Hello Hello sir
 Can you come out to play sir?
 No sir
 Why sir?
 Cause I got a cold sir
 Where did you get a cold sir?
 From the North Pole sir
 What were you doing there sir?
 Catching a polar bear sir
 How many did you catch sir?
 None sir
 Why sir?
 Cause I left my gun behind the kitchen door, sir
 What was it doing there sir?
 Guarding my underwear sir
 Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye sir
 See ya next July sir

A ball is placed in the toe of an old nylon stocking. The game is played against a wall by bouncing the ball over and under the leg alternately. Other variations include bouncing the ball from side to side, over each shoulder, behind the back and in front. The sequences can become as complex as the imagination will allow, as can the variations on the accompanying song. As far as I could determine, this was the only song for this particular game.

Language in play is also used to refer to a specific action or sequence of actions. A word or a phrase signals or stands for, a complex series of actions, rather than an idea or a concept. Some of these directions to the player require considerable coordination to perform successfully while skipping or bouncing a ball for instance. Further, the directives themselves may be quite esoteric. In skipping, players may be required to do the "splits," the "heel-toe," the "wiggle-waggle," or the "rumble;" the rope may be turning "front-door," "back-door," "blue-bells," "double-dutch," or "buttercup." In ball-bouncing, there are "twirlsies," "clapsies," "jumpsies," "crossies," "roly-poly backsies," "curtsies," "salutsies," "bowsies," "tweedles" and "twaddles" (Fowke, 1969:76). Some of these instructions conjure images of appropriate movements in the sound of the word, e.g., the "wiggle-waggle." Others are completely mystifying, e.g., how does one perform the "tweedles" and "twaddles" while bouncing a ball? The exact performance of any of the motions alluded to undoubtedly varies from one playground to the next. Whatever the local idiosyncracies however, these cryptic instructions are further evidence of the equation of words with actions by children.

There are also many examples of playground games in which language stands for and directs action in a much more literal and less obtuse fashion:

- 12) I had a little car in 1948
 Turned around the cor—ner
 And slammed on the brakes
 The brakes didn't work
 So I gave 'em a little jerk
 Policeman caught me, put me in jail
 All I had was ginger ale
 How many bottles did I drink?
 2-4-6-8 (pepper)

- 13) Donald Duck is a one-legged, one-legged, one-legged duck
 Donald Duck is a two-legged
 Donald Duck is a pigeon-toed
 Donald Duck is a bow-legged
 Donald Duck is a knock-kneed
- 14) Cowboy Joe
 From Mexico said
 Hands up, stick 'em up
 Don't forget to pick 'em up
 Cowboy Joe
- Cowgirl Sue
 From Twobit Two
 Said hands up, stick 'em up
 Drop your guns and pick 'em up
 Cowgirl Sue
- 15) Teddybear, teddybear turn around
 Teddybear, teddybear touch the ground
 Teddybear, teddybear touch your toe
 Teddybear, teddybear now you go
- 16) Spanish dancers do the splits, splits, splits
 Spanish dancers do the kicks, kicks, kicks
 Spanish dancers touch the ground, ground, ground
 Spanish dancers turn around, 'round, 'round
 Spanish dancers get out of this
 T-O-W-N Town

In example #12 the skipper must run around one of the rope-turners to turn the cor—ner. Here the word corner is elongated for as long as it takes the skipper to jump back in. To "slam on the brakes," the skipper is sometimes required to stop the rope, though not in all groups. Example #13 is one of several rhymes which requires skippers to adopt a particular posture while skipping or to hop on one foot, two feet, etc. The actions in example #14 are more like pantomime and again this is only one of several rhymes which make similar requests. The sequence "turn around, touch the ground," is a standard one in skipping songs and appears in many different rhymes. Finally, one of the classic examples in the repertoire of skipping songs is the song "Girl Guide, Girl Guide," which

combines both esoteric action words and more obvious directions in a pantomime routine:

- 17) Girl Guide, Girl Guide, dressed in blue
 These are the actions you must do
 Stand at attention, stand at ease
 Bend your elbows, bend your knees
 Salute to the captain
 Bow to the queen
 Then turn your back to the dirty submarine
 I can do the heel-toe
 I can do the splits
 I can do the wiggle-waggle just like this

These narrative rhymes can be viewed as the musical accompaniment to the elaborate patterns of actions and interaction of playground games. As Garvey suggests, one of the critical defining features of children's play is a mutual and rhythmic regulation of the tempo of action by the players. The songs of the playground illustrated in this section ensure mutuality by coordinating and focussing the attention of the group through chant and song as well as by establishing and maintaining an even rhythmic tempo for action. The action of bouncing a ball inside a nylon stocking, for instance, becomes rhythmic only when it follows the lilting meter of the song "Hello, hello, hello sir." Sound (and song) punctuate action and interaction in play to make it rhythmic, predictable and regulated. In play, both action and interaction are rhythmically structured by song and chant. In this sense, the linguistic rituals of the playground are to the action of the playground what music is to the dance.

Taking Turns in Skipping: Action Structures Interaction

The ritual of taking turns is a significant aspect of children's play.

Catherine Garvey remarked upon the prominence of reciprocal interaction in children's make-believe scenarios, a dynamic which was maintained in a ritual of rhythmic pauses. In active children's games, rituals which determine whose turn is next are supposed to ensure equality and to be fair to everyone. The notion of reciprocity and of taking turns is a prominent aspect of childhood culture. It represents a simplified way of making decisions, e.g., about who gets to play with a coveted toy and for how long. Taking turns is a ritual of interaction used by children to extend the boundaries of their cooperation with one another. Sometimes these are rituals which take into account the skills of the player, however there are also rituals which describe a more arbitrary means of alternating players, usually rhythmic. Examples of these rituals can be found in both the counting-out rhymes and the skipping songs. I will focus the present discussion on the skipping songs, reserving the counting-out rhymes for a discussion of the process of ritual declaration.

Skipping songs regulate who will be turning the rope as well as the order of the skippers. As skipping games often involve upwards of ten players, these songs and the accompanying rituals can become quite complicated. Further, with many players, it is even more important that everyone gets a turn. In the game of skipping there is usually some kind of leader figure or figures, the "first up" and/or "second," who chooses and changes the songs being skipped to. Beyond this, the songs themselves prescribe the rituals for the alternating of players. I will consider those songs which alternate players one after another in equal turns, songs which involve two skippers at a time, songs which endeavour to involve all the skippers at the same time and thus are more complicated

in their prescription for how one skipper will follow another, and finally those songs which pose a test of difficulty for each skipper which results in variation in the length of individual turns.

There are many skipping songs which are used by children to alternate players one after another rhythmically such that there is no interruption in the motion until or unless a skipper misses the rope. Each player thereby gets an equal turn. Often the song will require the skipper to perform some simple action—to "turn around" or "touch the ground"—or to follow in a particular manner—to "be on time." Skippers sometimes use series or lists—of numbers, letters, months, etc.—in a rapid alternation of players. The ability to "be on time" becomes critical when there is one skipper for every turn of the rope. Missing the rope or being late usually results in having to turn the rope until someone else misses. These rhymes are frequently short and may make direct reference to the alternation of players as in the first two examples below:

- 18) Johnny kick the football
Be on time
- 19) Back door Susie
Miss the rope you're out
- 20) A, B-ee, M and M and O-o

In example #19 the rope may be turned "indoor," "outdoor," or "frontdoor" depending upon the local custom.⁵ Example #20 is sung to a simple melody which elongates the 'B-ee' and 'O-o' over a major second interval.

Children also make up short rhymes around a simple action which pose

no test of skill and thus can be repeated until a skipper misses the rope or until the "first up" changes the game. Examples #13 - 17 listed in the previous section can be used in this manner. Additional examples include:

- 21) Jelly in the bowl, jelly in the bowl
wigggle-waggle, wigggle-waggle
Jelly in the bowl
- 22) Matches on the floor, matches on the floor
Pick 'em up, pick 'em up
Matches on the floor
- 23) Late for school, late for school
Running, running
Late for school
- 24) I'm Bob Hope
Silly as a goat
Wigggle-waggle, wigggle-waggle
I'm Bob Hope

These kind of songs vary greatly from one area to the next. Example #23 is an isolated one in this corpus as well as in comparison with the collections of the Opies and Fowke. However, in talking to skippers I was informed that technically speaking you can skip to almost any song. Silly songs are often adapted as in the following examples:

- 25) Lincoln, Lincoln I been thinkin'
What the heck have you been drinkin!
Looks like water, looks like wine
Oh my gosh, it's turpentine (iodine)
- 26) Oh Charlie look at Uncle Jim
He's in the water learning how to swim
First he does the breast stroke
Then he takes a dive
Then he's in the water swimming against the tides

A large number of skipping songs require that the next skipper come

in just before the first one exits, occasionally performing some action to assist the first skipper in leaving:

- 27) Down the Mississippi where the boats go "push," or
Down the Okanagan where the apples go squish
- 28) Back door Susie had a cup of tea
In came company and out went she
- 29) Operator, operator give me number nine
Sorry, sorry _____ on the line

There are as well many songs in which two skippers are involved in more complicated ways. These songs become quite colorful in the relationship which they pose between the skippers:

- 30) While I was in the drugstore
Chewing bubble gum
In came a robber and asked for some
No you dirty rascal
No you dirty bum
You can't have any of my bubble gum.
- 31) Grapes on the vine
Ready to be picked
One fell down and
The other did the splits
- 32) Vote, vote vote vote for _____
In came _____ at the door
She's the little lady
Who can play the ukelele
And we don't need _____ anymore
Shut the door
- 33) Someone's under the bed
Whoever can it be
Getting on my nerves
So _____ follows me
_____ lights a candle
Under the bed she goes
Get out, get out, get out, get out
You're stepping on my toes (Tune: Farmer in the Dell)

In these songs the second skipper usually stays in the middle for the next

round of the song. A classic example involving two skippers and many variations which was found at all the schools and in all the collections of playground lore, is the song about the "two little dickie birds:"

- 34) Two little dickie birds
 Sittin' on a wall
 One named Peter, one named Paul
 Fly away Peter, fly away Paul
 a. Come back Peter, come back Paul
 Fly away, fly away, fly away all
 b. Don't come back till your birthday's called (also birthstone
 Fly away, fly away, fly away all colour, etc.)

In addition to songs which alternate one and two players at a time, there are a few very complicated songs which attempt to involve all the skippers at once prescribing various formulas for jumping in and out.

Examples are:

- 35) All in together girls
 This is fine weather girls (We are the weather girls)
 Jump out the month of your birthday
 (day of your birthday)
 (number of your birthday)
 (initial of your sweetheart)
- 36) Ten little monkeys jumping on the bed
 One fell off and broke his head
 Mama phoned the doctor and the doctor said
 No more monkeys jumpin' on the bed

 Nine little monkeys, etc., until all skippers out
- 37) Campbell's soup
 Carrots potatoes onions and peas
 Your mother says you gotta eat a lot of these

In the first two songs all the skippers jump in at the same time and perform the actions prescribed in the song. The first rhyme has many variants, only a few of which are listed above. It can also be further extended by requiring that skippers jump back in according to similar

dictums, e.g., "jump back the month of your birthday." Example #37 describes the reverse process, although there is nothing in the actual rhyme to suggest that many skippers are involved and is thus probably a local custom. The song is repeated with one new skipper coming in each time until all are in and then one skipper jumps out on each repetition until all are out. These songs often involve a dozen skippers or more at the same time and decisions as to which skipper has missed the rope are often difficult and somewhat delicate.

In addition to the songs described thus far which prescribe the taking of turns without an interruption in the motion of the game, are the many skipping songs which pose a question at the end. This question is most usually answered by having the skipper jump double time in manner specifically referred to as "pepper." Although there are other tests of skill, e.g., turning the rope very slowly or making the rope turn higher and higher off the ground, these examples are few in comparison with the pepper test. There are many possible variations of the final question. The pepper test usually involves a number series, and is often complicated by additional requirements, e.g., "you must get past your age or you're out." The following endings and variations thereupon appear in more than one rhyme:

- 38) How many kisses did she get?
 How many doctors did it take?
 How many bottles/gallons did I drink/fill?
 How many pounds did it weigh?
 How much money did I spend?
 How many inches can she lift?
 1, 2, 3, . . .
 2, 4, 6, 8, . . .
 5, 10, 15, 20, . . .
 10, 20, 30, 40, . . .

- 39) 39) What colour wedding dress shall I wear?
Pink, purple, orange, green
- 40) Tell the first initial of my sweetheart
A, B, C, D, . . .

These narrative devices are important in that they help to determine the length of each individual turn. However, the actual content of the question and the children's response to a skipper who kissed a snake 50 times (as in a variation of example #3), is a source of much teasing and hilarity in the playgroup. The narrative endings are functional, but they are also fun.

The indications to begin skipping "pepper" are quite colorful. These prepare the skippers as well as the rope-turners. Skippers may call out "1, 2, 3, pepper," "pitch-patch pepper," "jolly-go pepper," or they may begin the series count immediately after the question has been posed. The following are additional examples of phrases which appear frequently in answer to questions and are skipped in "pepper:"

- 41) yes, no, maybe so
- 42) salt vinegar mustard pepper
- 43) Tinker tailor soldier sailor
Rich man poor man beggar man thief
Doctor lawyer Indian chief
Royal Canadian Mounted Police

The last example is a very common skipping song and Fowke (1969:70) lists a number of intriguing variations upon the ending:

- 44) Mrs. Sippi lives by the shore.
She has children three and four.
The oldest one is twenty-four.
She shall marry:
Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor,
Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief,

Doctor, lawyer, Indian chief,
Royal Canadian Mounted Police . . .

What will she go to the wedding in?
Jag, Chevy, horse and carriage . . .

What kind of dress will she marry in?
Silk, satin, cotton batting . . .

What kind of ring will he give her?
Diamond, ruby, ten-cent ring . . .

What kind of house will she live in?
Big house, little house, pig pen, barn . . .

At what age will this take place?
15, 21, 50, never . . .

There appears to be a correlation between the number of variations of a rhyme or song and its age and distribution. The more common rhymes have more variations, often several within the same playgroup. Other examples of this phenomenon are "Two Little Dickie Birds," "Spanish Dancers," "All in Together Girls" and "Cinderella dressed in Yella."

This section has attempted to demonstrate how children structure their interaction with one another by prescribing the individual's turn in the exchange as an elaborate action pattern. Each turn of play—here specifically in skipping—is determined by the appropriate performance of a more or less complicated sequence of actions. Interaction is thus based upon an imitative and in some cases, competitive performance of an active sequence. The accompanying linguistic rituals prescribe the actions as well as describing the personalities of the players. The skipping rhymes are described as being designed to be susceptible of manipulation in order to include one, two or many players in a continuous and unbroken sequence of turns. This function of the linguistic rituals

represents another aspect of the way in which children use playground rhymes to punctuate and regulate action and interaction in play, discussed in the previous section. The present discussion has illustrated that interaction in play is described by ritualized action.

Ritual Insult:

The Meaning of Intonational and Rhythmic Structures

Jaunting, jeering and making fun of others is a favourite pastime of children in groups. Garvey has suggested that the child is breaking the rules of interpersonal conduct in such exchanges in an effort to test the limits of other people's tolerance (1977:108). These rituals can occur between two opposing children, amongst a group of children about another child or group of children, and very significantly amongst a group of children about teachers and adults. They frequently involve profanity, or the blasphemy of the sacred in adult terms. Ritual insults are created by varying popular phrases or retorts from TV, radio, etc., by parodying popular song and nursery rhyme, and, as well, in the use of specific melodic and rhythmic structures. The consistency of ritual insult in terms of form is remarkable.

The interaction surrounding the ritual communication of derision may be friendly or unfriendly, however, in the truly playful sense these sayings are not really meant. Ritual insult is frequently undertaken as an escalating exchange between children to prove who can say it bigger and better or who can have the last word. Sometimes the sheer humour of the exchange can transform the unfriendly into the friendly. By

revelling in ritual insult, children, in effect, practice a ritual dislike for one another. This has a tendency to defuse potentially hostile encounters and thus prevent incidents which attract adult intervention. Ritual insult organizes disagreement.

In the true spirit of play, the meaning of ritual insult is in process, i.e., there are few messages and many ways of saying each. The element of one-upmanship is obvious in the following example inspired by the TV series "Welcome Back, Kotter":

- 45) Up your nose with a rubber hose
 Twice as far with a chocolate bar
 Further yet with a jumbo jet

 In your ear with a case of beer

 In your jeans with a bag of jelly beans

 Up your bum with some bubble gum

 Up your nose, tip-toes

 In your gizzard with a rubber lizard

 In your crack with a Big Mac

 In your mouth with a sandwich

Another example which I recall from my own childhood and a variation of which is also recorded by the Opies, is:

- 46) Same to you and more of it
 Same to you and ten times more of it
 Same to you and a million times more of it
 Same to you and a million billion zillion times more of it

The phonological consistency of the series million, billion, trillion, zillion becomes a perfect play material for children who invent such

mythical and indeterminate quantities as a killion, a dillion, etc., to extend the sequence.

Taunting and jeering is also used in other kinds of social contexts. For instance, in the game of baseball, players ritually taunt the pitcher and the batter:

- 47) We want a pitcher, not a belly-itcher
- 48) We want a batter, not a broken ladder

Such comments are perceived to stimulate the action of the game as well as to intimidate players of the opposing team. Unpopular or peculiar children often bear the brunt of jeering when children become bored. The "Fatty, Fatty" rhyme is but one example of many. In other cases, children are tormented because of a specific incident or disposition. There are many rhymes enshrining the "cry-baby," the "tattle-tale" and the liar. Still other rhymes are used as retorts for such jeering.

Whatever the context, the meaning of the sayings is shaped in an intonational pattern which communicates derisions through the use of rhyme (often at the expense of sensicality) and a specific rhythmic structure (often a dotted rhythm to afford a more taunting lilt). The form is most usually two bars of 4/4 time, sung or chanted, usually to the tune of "Rain, rain go away." The following taunts are only a few examples of possible variations of this particular formal pattern:

- 49) Liar, liar pants on fire
Hanging on the telephone wire
- Shit, shit, you're it
Now you can't get over it

Fatty, Fatty two by four
 Can't get through the bathroom door

Ink pink you stink
 Riding on a donkey's _____

Stare, stare, like a bear
 Don't forget your underwear

Shame, shame double shame
 Now I know your boyfriend's name

John John leprechaun
 Went to school with nothing on

So so suck your toe
 All the way to Mexico

Baby, baby suck your thumb
 Don't forget your bubblegum

Chubby chubby chicken soup
 Took a poop in her soup

Yum yum bubble gum
 Stick it up the teacher's bum

Miss me miss me
 Now you gotta kiss me

Sometimes these taunts are extended by adding another two-line saying as in the following examples:

50) So so suck your toe
 All the way to Mexico
 While you're there, kiss a bear
 Then come home in your underwear

51) Yum yum bubble gum
 Stick it up the teacher's bum
 When its brown, pull it down
 Yum yum bubble gum

This particular melody is the classic example of children's song, embodying the characteristic rising 2nd and falling minor 3rd. It is a tune learned very early by children who as early as three will use the melodic pattern alone with no words, i.e., nya, nya,⁶ as a taunt. The two

line formal pattern is probably amongst the most common and widespread in all of children's lore. It is most often used in derisive communication, however, it also crops up in parts of other game songs, e.g., in the introduction to the following skipping song:

- 52) Fudge fudge tell the judge
 Mama's got a newborn baby
 Pearl, pearl it's a girl
 Papa's going crazy

Another common means of creating rhymes which can be used to tease and make people look ridiculous is by borrowing the formal patterns of popular song or nursery rhyme and creating suitable variations. Nursery characters, TV personages, teachers, adults and social institutions are often the brunt of these songs. The creation and exchange of these rhymes amongst children generally involves a certain amount of commiseration as well as a large dose of fooling around. I found variations on many songs. I include some of the more colorful variations:

- 53) Roses are red
 Violets are bronze
 You're a nerd
 And I'm the Fonz
- 54) See see my hippie
 Come out and smoke with me
 And bring your LSD
 Climb up my groovy tree
 Slide down my Honda
 Onto my mini-bike
 And we'll be outa-sight forever more
 (variation on children's song "Oh Little Playmate")
- 55) McDonald's is your kind of place
 Hamburgers in your face
 French fries up your nose
 Pickles between your toes
 And don't forget the chocolate shakes
 Straight from the sewer lakes
 McDonald's I want my money back

I just had a heart attack
McDonald's is your kind of place

56) Jesus Christ Superstar
Who in the hell do you think you are

57) Mary had a little lamb
She also had a duck
She put them on the windowsill
To see if they would fall off

In dealing with material similar to that in examples #56 and #57, Sanches and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1976:104) write:

Children of this age [14 years] are delighted by the obvious violation of the sociolinguistic rule of style level: one does not use profanity in a religious speech act. The beautiful "pure pun" in the following example from a fourteen-year-old, combined with the sex theme and the perversion of the original "Mother Goose" into a "goose mother" rhyme, make this rhyme attractive to the older child who will enjoy his ability to disambiguate a true pun:

Jack and Jill went up the hill riding on an elephant
Jill got off to help jack off the elephant.

This section has been concerned with children's ritual insult of one another in play as well as with the characteristic childhood notion that everything in the world is worthy of being made fun of. In this discussion of ritual insult, I have been particularly concerned with illustrating how children use sound and intonation to express meaning. The literal verbal content of playground taunts is seen to be an embellishment or an ornamentation around a very simple acoustic message. The parodic song cycles (#53 - 57) are characteristic of play forms in that they upset familiar balances and expectations by making fun of the world. The section as a whole highlights and emphasizes the child's perception of pattern and fascination with its manipulation and variation.

Ritual Declaration: Achieving Consensus

The nature and function of ritual declaration in children's play is a colorful and fascinating area of study. Ritual declaration represents a specific use of language by children, as well as a consecration of word in deed. The Opies write "the gestures with which the significance of the language is stressed, for example, spitting, crossing fingers and touching cold iron, are gestures which have been accepted part of ritual since times long before our own" (1959:121). In commenting upon the relationship between play and poetry, Huizinga remarks upon the importance of poetic language in the rituals of archaic culture:

In archaic culture the language of poets is still the most effective means of expression, with a function much wider and more vital than the satisfaction of literary aspirations. It puts ritual into words, it is the **arbiter** of social relationships, the vehicle of wisdom, justice and morality . . . At this stage cultural activities are performed as social games. (1938:134)

I use these two quotations in order to emphasize the importance of the ritual action as a part of the ritual declaration. Huizinga's comment suggests that the ritual itself preceded the words which accompany it. The ritual declarations of childhood reflect not only the child's belief in the power and magic of language, but also the extent to which actions are considered to be meaningful, and further the extent to which language is intimately intertwined with action in the affirmation of meaning.

Language lies somewhere between music and magic in the ritual declarations of childhood. The Opies describe these sayings and accompanying actions as the means by which children conduct the business trans-

actions of their society:

The schoolchild, in his primitive community, conducts his business with his fellows by ritual declaration. His affidavits, promissary notes, claims, deeds of conveyance, receipts, and notices of resignation, are verbal, and are sealed by the utterance of ancient words which are recognized and considered binding by the whole community. (1959:121)

Charlotte Hardman makes reference to the elements of the supernatural which are evident in such rituals:

The supernatural world, which for adults is evil and disordering, and therefore must be placed outside of society, for children is an access to order. Their figures of authority are the words which seal their transactions, their decision-making--the toss of a coin, a counting-out rhyme or the first to cry 'Bags not'. . . . They appeal to the power of a word alone, calling out 'Done', 'On', 'Quits', 'Square', expressing the agreement and obligation to the form of a bargain There is nothing earthly about their routines; they rely and refer to higher powers and given that they have their own society, the precedures make sense: no one child would have enough authority to achieve the effective order maintained by these powerful words and gestures. (1974:152-3)

The association of ritual declaration with the supernatural is exemplified in the saying "Step on a crack and you break your mother's back." The Opies classify these as statements of half-belief. However, ritual declarations as a whole require that children believe. Uttering the appropriate words or phrases and performing the accompanying actions can bring good fortune, verify the truth, determine possession, resolve arguments, render one invulnerable and seal secrets, promises and "swops" for ever and ever. The utterance is frequently performed simultaneously with a prescribed action, although there are instances where words alone can decree and transform. Consider the following examples from the former category:

- 58) Cross my heart and hope to die
- 59) King Sayer, Black Magic, 1977.
Touch the black to make it true
Touch green to make it very true
- 60) "Home Free" - player must touch home base
- 61) "Not it" - player frequently touches another and runs away
- 62) Touch blacks, no backs
Touch teeth, touch leather
No backsies for ever and ever (sometimes performed with little
fingers hooked; Opies, 1959:132)

In order for any declaration to have power, the utterance and accompanying act must be performed correctly according to local custom. The Opies cite several local variants, for instance, on the appropriate way to "cross" the heart (1959:124). Children are bound by these declarations, although there are rituals whereby their power can be reduced or eliminated, e.g., crossing one's fingers during any kind of promise or vow means that you protect yourself from recrimination should you happen to be telling a lie. The player is thereby relieved from acting according to the statements. Hardman makes an interesting case for the interpretation of the use of spittle in children's ritual transactions as a substitute for blood (1974:151). The above examples reaffirm the notion that the performance of the ritual action is as important as the utterance itself in ritual declaration. In fact the utterance itself is viewed as an action by the child.

The functions of ritual declaration in children's play and games are regulatory in much the same way as the previous discussions have revealed. Ritual declaration is used in beginning play, e.g., in choosing teams,

player roles, rules and identifying boundaries. Cries of "not it" (Tag, Hide and Seek) and "First up" (skipping) are examples, as well as the entire repertoire of counting-out rhymes. During the game of Hide and Seek, the seeker will cry "1, 2, 3 on _____" when he/she sees another player and then will race the player to "Home Free." At the end of the game, and by implication the beginning of another, the seeker cries "Olly olly outs are in free" which signals the beginning of the chorus of "not it" to determine the new seeker.

By far the largest and most easily accessible collection of this kind of material is to be found in the counting-out rhymes of the playground. Children perceive counting-out to be a way of giving all the players an equal chance. Children use counting-out in a variety of situations, both in the playground and outside of it to make decisions. Counting-out rhymes are used to determine who will be "it" or who will go first, to choose teams, to decide who will wash and who will dry or who will get to sit in the front seat of the car, and even to choose who will be the counter in the counting-out rhyme (see example #59). Rhymes may count out bodies, hands, fists, or feet. Some rhymes decree by custom that the first person counted out shall be "it"; other rhymes declare the last person left to be "it." The latter process becomes very involved if many players are being counted out and further, is increasingly susceptible to manipulation as fewer players remain to be counted out.

In spite of children's own perception that the counting-out process ensures them an equal chance of being chosen for a desirable role as well as avoiding an undesirable one, Kenneth Goldstein (1971) discovered that most children engage in some form of strategic manipulation of counting-out rhymes in order to influence the outcome to suit their own

purposes. From a very early age for instance, children know which people of two to begin the rhyme "eeney meeney miney mo" with in order to control its outcome. Goldstein reports that the most common means of manipulation is by an extension of the rhyme itself. Essentially this gives the counter the opportunity to pick another "it." Examples of such extensions from my own material are:

63) and my mother said to pick the very best one

64) and you are not it

Regardless of the consciousness of the manipulation, unless the changes are perceived to be unfair, the declaration still holds power.

One aspect not explored by Goldstein is that which deals with rhymes which add more of an element of chance by asking questions of certain players in the group as they are pointed to. Their answers are then incorporated into an extension of the rhyme:

65) Mickey Mouse built a house
How many bricks did he use? (the player pointed to on the word "use" picks a number, e.g., 10 and the rhyme continues)

66) My mother and your mother were hanging out the clothes
My mother punched your mother right in the nose
What color was the blood? (the player pointed to on the word "blood" picks a color, e.g., purple and the rhyme continues)

Purple—P-U-R-P-L-E spells purple and you are not it.

Curiously enough these are usually rhymes which declare the last person left to be "it." In example #65, it is feet which are being counted out which means that both feet must be counted out before a player is out.

Used in this way, the counting-out rhymes become games all in themselves.

Many of the counting-out rhymes are nonsensical, far more so than in

other game rhymes. This exemplifies the phonological organization of language by the child as well as emphasizing the notion that it is not the meaning of the words but the context of their use which is significant for the child. Further, with specific reference to the nature of ritual declaration, it is the magic and mystique of the sound of the words, the aura created when uttering the utterance, which affords power to the ritual declaration. The following are representative examples:

- 67) Aka, baka, soda cracka
Aka baka boo and out goes you.
- 68) I die chickadie
Umbum bony
Ala ala whiskey
Chinese checkers
Icky bicky boo
And out goes you
- 69) Entry kentry country corn
Apple cedar and apple thorn
Wire, briar, limberlock
Three geese in a flock
One flew east and one flew west
One flew over the cuckoo's nest
- 70) Intry mintry dibbity fig (Fowke, 1969:111)
Delia, dima, noma, nig
Hychee, pychee, dominichee
Gilaba, galaba, goo
Out goes Y-O-U

Rhythmic and Phonological Organization of Playground Lore

At the outset of this chapter it was argued that children attribute meaning to the sound of language and its prosodic features, often with apparently little need or regard for its conventional system of references. Further, with reference to the Sanches and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett study, it was proposed that children's organization and production of

language (particularly in speech play) is dominated by phonological patterning rather than grammatical or semantic convention. Throughout the chapter I have remarked upon instances of the meaningful use of intonation, rhyme and rhythmic structures. I would now like to expand, using specific examples, on the nature and complexity of rhythmic organization in children's playground language as well as on the peculiar combination of melody, chant and speech which is a characteristic feature of children's use of language in general. As before I will focus upon the ways in which sound and language are related to motion and interaction, here specifically with the incongruities between the meter of language and the meter of motion and the ways in which they are reconciled with one another. I will conclude with a discussion of the use of rhyme and assonance as it reflects the phonological organization of language by children.

Much of the language of the playground exhibits a regular rhythmic form, one which is balanced in terms of meter and rhyme and which is appropriate in terms of an adult model. However, there are as well many examples which exhibit a mixture of rhythmic forms and meters, frequently involving a combination of melody, chant and speech in a single rhyme. Many of these rhymes can be sung or chanted or spoken interchangeably, sometimes depending upon the tradition of the playgroup or the context of use. Further, the use of rhyme by children is much looser than what an adult would define it to be. In much of playground language, rhythm, assonance and alliteration create an impression of rhyme rather than a true rhyme.

A brief analysis of a popular skipping song will serve to illustrate several of these themes, as well as to introduce the notion of metric

irregularities in children's playground language:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------|
| 71) Fudge, fudge, tell the judge | (1) |
| Mama's got a new born baby | (2) |
| Pearl, pearl, it's a girl | (3) |
| Papa's going crazy | (4) |
| Wrap it up in tissue paper | (5) |
| Send it down the elevator | (6) |
| First floor stop | (7) |
| Second floor stop | (8) |
| Third floor turn around | (9) |
| Touch the ground | (10) |
| Get out of this town | (11) |
| T-O-W-N - Town | (12) |

Lines 1 - 4 are sung to the tune of "Rain, Rain, Go Away," while the rest of the song is chanted. Lines 5 - 6 and 9 - 11 are chanted at twice the speed of the rest of the song, however, this affects neither the speed of the rope nor the actions of the skipper. A close analysis of lines 5 - 6 reveals a considerable degree of phonological consistency in the use of aspirated consonants and the "s" sound, as well as in the imperfect rhyme of "paper" and "elevator" (also "baby" and "crazy" in lines 2 and 4). Lines 9 - 12 constitute an example of metric irregularity. Being chanted at twice the speed of the rest of the song, lines 9 - 11 constitute one measure of 5/4 meter, as does the final line of the song which returns once again to the regular tempo.⁷ The rest of the song is in 4/4 meter including lines 7 - 8 which apparently have only 3 beats. The implied musical rest is reinforced by the action requested of the skipper in stopping the rope. The ending "T-O-W-N - Town" also appears as an irregular metrical extension to the skipping songs "Spanish Dancers" and "Teddy Bear," cited in examples #15 and #16.

Metrical incongruities are found within the rhymes and songs themselves as well as in discrepancies which exist between the meter of the

accompanying motion. In a certain sense these are related phenomena and as I hope to show, irregularities in the rhymes are manipulated by children in order to better fit with the metric regularity of motion. Children employ a variety of means which change the rhythmic delivery of language to suit the rhythm of a particular motion or a prescribed intonational pattern. The most evident of these techniques is to alter the expected patterns of stress and intonation. This includes stressing unstressed syllables, elongating words and vowels and pausing in order to 'use up' beats, and cramming many syllables into a single beat.

Irregular stress patterns often appear at the end of skipping songs when the action changes and the skipper is required to skip "pepper." Usually the song itself constitutes a complete rhythmic form without the question. Often the question which precedes "pepper" belongs more to the realm of conventional speech rhythms and the normal stress pattern must be manipulated to suit the rhythm of the rest of the song, giving a somewhat awkward intonational pattern to the question. The following examples should illustrate the contrast between the regularity of the song's rhythm and the regularized quality of the final question (see also #44):

- 72) Blondie and Dagwood went uptown
 Blondie bought a wedding gown
 Dagwood bought a pair of shoes
 He also bought the daily news
 How much money did they spend?
- 73) Policeman, policeman do your duty
 Here comes _____ the bathing beauty
 She can do the rumble
 She can do the splits
 She can lift her dress right over her hips
 How many inches did she lift?

One of the most comical ways in which children adapt the rhythm and

structure of speech to suit the design of playground chant and rhyme is by cramming as many syllables as possible into a single beat, frequently trying to trip one another up on appropriate pronounciations. Often these examples appear in adaptations of popular songs to suit other purposes as in the following:

- 74) The Old Grey Mare she sat on an electric chair
 Burnt off her underwear
 In came a polar bear and out went she
- 75) On top of Old Smokey
 All covered with sand
 I shot my poor teacher
 With a red rubber band
 I shot her with pleasure
 I shot her with pride
 For I could not miss her
 She was 430 feet wide
 I went to her funeral
 I went to her grave
 Instead of red roses
 I threw a grenade

This technique tends to heighten hilarity because of the sheer ridiculousness of the thought of an old grey mare on an electric chair and a 430-foot wide teacher, as well as because of the staccato rhythmic effect produced by reciting "electric chair" and the exaggeration of size conjured in the sound of "430-foot wide." Other examples of rhythmic staccato, which is quite common in children's rhymes can be found in example #15-- "teddy bear, turn around, touch the ground" and in #71-- "wrap it up in tissue paper, send it down the elevator." Rhythmic form is meaningful form in the language of play.

Another means of explaining the metrical incongruities in the language of the playground is by examining the rhymes as a combination of song, chant and speech. In the examples cited previously, speech was

manipulated to fit the mould of the meter of the action or the conventional meter of rhythmic form or song. In the following examples there appears to be little concern with adjusting the natural syllabic accents of words or intonational patterns of phrases to suit a preconceived rhythmic form. The rhythms of speech and song and chant combine in an evolving rhythmic narrative:

- 76) Marijuana, marijuana, LSD
 Scientists make it, teachers take it
 So why can't we?
- 77) No more beetles in my tea
 Making googly eyes at me
 Trying hard to make me laugh
 No more slugs in my dinner. (Hardman; 1974:148)

Sanches and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett explain the notion of metric incongruity in children's speech as the result of a "stringing together" of several shorter rhythmic forms into a longer song or rhyme. While this is an accurate interpretation and a common occurrence, it does not always present a complete picture of what is going on. It is here that the context of the use of the rhyme becomes a critical consideration in the interpretation of speech play. As I will demonstrate presently, what is apparently an irregularity is made regular in the game itself by changing the expected stress patterns of words or lines of the song. The first example is cited by Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1976:87) and taken from the Abrahams collection Jump Rope Rhymes: A Dictionary (1969, #53). Two examples from my own collection corroborate the notion that children often string together different rhythmic forms to make a longer song:

- 78) Caroline Pink she fell down the sink, (1)
 She caught the scarlet fever (2)
 Her husband had to leave her. (3)

She called in Doctor Blue (4)
 And he caught it too-- (5)
 Caroline Pink from Chinatown. (6)

- 79) Little Tiny Susie had a bike
 Little Tiny Susie went on a hike
 She fell down a hill
 She landed in the mill
 Little Tiny Susie had to take a pill
- 80) You put ants in my pants and made me dance
 You put jelly on my belly and made me smelly
 You put cheese on my knees and made me sneeze
 You put beer in my ear and made me queer
 Stick it in your ear McGeer, you're a queer

Curiously enough there is a sense of finality in each of the examples in spite of the segmentation of form. In example #78, the repetition of "Caroline Pink" has the effect of rounding off the rhyme; in example #79,⁸ the last line has one more stress than the first two lines having the effect of balancing or concluding; in example #80, the last line contrasts with the repetitive nature of the rest of the rhyme, while maintaining the same internal rhyme, once again creating an impression of finality.

In discussing example #78, Sanches and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett remark that the "rhyme is irregular because, in terms of metrical organization, the couplet structure begins with the second line" (1976:87), where it would normally begin with the first. The first line produces a "pseudo-couplet" from two half-lines. The overall structure of the rhyme is thus two rhyming couplets, one pseudo-couplet to begin and one odd last line. The authors state that the segments are rhymes unto themselves and further that the children who composed the rhyme "did not see the organization of the six lines . . . as a totality" (1976:88). This they attribute to the limitations of the child's syntagmatic organization.

However, if the same rhyme is analyzed from the point of view of the

context in which it is used--skipping--a different metrical organization appears. Sanches and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett refer to the difficulties of assessing metrical units in oral verse. In their own analysis they choose to interpret this rhyme as being composed of six four-stress metrical units. This analysis becomes problematic in lines 4 and 5 in particular, which without inserting a musical rest, are difficult to think of in four beats. The natural accents for lines 2 - 5 are as follows:

/ / /
 She caught the scarlet fever
 / / /
 Her husband had to leave her
 / / /
 She called in Doctor Blue
 / / /
 And he caught it too

In all likelihood, lines 2 - 3 are recited with four stresses such that both syllables of words like "fever" become accented, making these lines read as:

/ / //
 She caught the scarlet fever
 / / /
 Her husband had to leave her

Lines 4 - 5 however may well retain only 3 stresses in the action of the skipping and may more appropriately be one line of 6/4 meter rather than as two lines of 3/4 or two lines of 4/4 with implicit rests. It is more difficult to speculate here upon how a group of children would use the rhyme than in the previous two lines, or to know whether or not this would be given 4 stresses if "Doctor Blue" became "Doctor Purple." Certainly it is unnecessary for the skipping meter to maintain a 4-stress line in either line 4 or 5. As an activity, skipping has an even and

regular tempo, however it need not be understood within a musical or poetic form.

A similar example occurs in lines 7 - 8 of example #71, cited at the beginning of this discussion, however, here the integration of language with motion is clearer. The skipper is required to stop the rope; the pause, or musical rest, is implicit in this action, though the meter may not always be rigidly maintained. In any case, it is the rhythm of the action which takes precedence over the rhythm of the accompanying song. The skipping songs then do not attain to the rhythmic form of poetry, but rather need only reflect the regular tempo of action.

Counting-out rhymes tend in general to be metrically regular, however the addition of extensions introduces incongruities. These extensions may add any number of additional stresses to the rhyme commonly in 4/4 meter. Further, the extensions stress each accent evenly, including words like "and" and "the." Usually there is one person counted out for each word. As in the skipping songs there is a discrepancy here between the meter of the rhyme and the metric use to which the rhyme is put. In the following examples, which are both written in 4/4 meter (I have left out extensions), the first is divided into 16 regular stresses for purposes of counting-out, as would be expected. The second example, however, is divided into only 13 stresses for counting-out although it has 16 beats. The pauses inherent in the musical analysis do not function as beats for counting-out, though they may be apparent in the child's recitation of the verse:

- 81) Engine, engine No. 9
 Going down Chicago Line
 If the train goes off the track
 Do you want your money back?

- 82) Icka, blicka, blinda
 The monkey washed the winda
 The winda broke
 The monkey got soaked
 Icka, blicka, blinda

The discrepancy between the rhythm and meter of the verse and the rhythm and meter of the accompanying action reaches its greatest complexity in the clapping games and songs. Traditionally these are chanted or sung at one speed, clapped at another. The clapping songs are in 4/4 meter—accented strong, weak, medium, weak; the basic clapping pattern is a 6-beat pattern as follows:

1. Clap both hands down on knees
2. Clap own hands together
3. Clap right hands with partner
4. Clap own hands together
5. Clap left hands with partner
6. Clap own hands together

This juxtapositioning of duple and triple meters means that the accented beats of the song do not always fall on the same clap. This is further complicated by the tremendous number of additions and variations to the basic clapping pattern as well as in considerable variation from one song to the next as to which clap will fall on the first accented beat of the song. This generally varies according to the number of upbeats in the clapping song.

In the first example below there are 3 upbeats which place the first accented beat of the song on the fourth clap of the 6-clap pattern as above, and thereafter, the strong beats appear on claps 2, 4, or 6. In the second example, there is only one upbeat which places the initial stress on the 2nd clap of the pattern and thereafter on claps 2, 4, or 6. The third example has 3 upbeats, however, there is another action added

to the clapping pattern for the word "cross," leaving only two upbeats in the regular clapping pattern and placing the first strong accent on the 3rd clap of the pattern and thereafter on clap 1, 3, or 5.

- 2 3 4 1-2 3-4
 83) Oh /lit/tle /Play/mate
 Come out and play with me
 And bring your dollies three
 Climb up my apple tree
 Cry down my rain-barrel
 Slide down my cellar door
 And we'll be jolly, friends
 Forever more
- 4 1 2 3 4 1-2-3-4
 84) My/ boy/friend's /name /is /Fatty /
 He comes from Cincinnati
 With 48 toes and a pickle on his nose
 That's my boyfriend Fatty
- 2 3 4 1-2 3 4 1-2-3-4
 85) Cross /down /when /John/ny /was /one /
 He learned to suck his thumb
 Thumb-sucker, thumb-sucker
 Half past one

Cross down when Johnny was two, etc.

Musically speaking, it requires considerable concentration and coordination to adopt and maintain different speeds in the song and the actions of the clapping games. Children do this unthinkingly.

The incidence of rhyme and assonance in playground language is frequent. In addition to the widespread use of perfectly rhyming words, there is as well much made of words which almost rhyme or which children use in rhyming patterns because of other phonological similarities. In my own collection of material are rhyming pairs as follows: turtle/girdle, paper/elevator, mustard/busted, chain/came, swimmin'/women, monkey/donkey, fun/gun, Hallelujah/ruler, charcoal/arsehole, batter/ladder, breath/rest,

diapers/windshield wipers, baby/gravy, kiss/splits, hips/splits, Chief/police, eight/brakes, dive/tides, Hope/goat, nine/behind, little lady/ukelele, sweet/cheek, soldier/told her, soap/throat, shopping/talking, mini-bike/outasight. Many other collections have similar material.

The use of rhyme by children is much broader than the 'rhyme' of adult understanding. In its broadest sense, and in a peer-oriented context, rhyming is an example of Sanches and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's notion that children organize language phonologically. Some of the pairs cited above are probably the result of careless or uncertain pronunciation, e.g., batter/ladder, however, in others the 'rhyme' is obviously the result of a repetition of a vowel or consonant group, e.g., sweet/cheek and mustard/busted. In still others, it is the repetition of a metrical pattern in conjunction with phonological similarity which constitutes rhyme, e.g., little lady/ukelele and mini-bike/outasight. Frequently, two or even three words strung together rhyme with one other. There is evidence also within the pairs cited above of the close phonological association between "t" and "k" and between "m" and "n," though a thorough linguistic analysis might reveal a more complicated relationship than just this, e.g., one involving long and short vowel groups as well.

In addition to these examples of rhyme in the linguistic rituals of the playground, there are also several combinations of objects which appear with one another repeatedly in playground lore, owing both to their phonological similarity as well as to a certain element of semantic association, e.g., bubblegum/fun and ants/pants/dance.

This section has outlined several of the aspects of phonological and

rhythmic patterning which emerge from children's playground lore using selected examples from other resources in addition to my own collection of material. I have concentrated again upon the nature of the interface between sound and action—here specifically with the ways in which children adapt and manipulate the meter of poetry and song (characteristic of many of their linguistic rituals) to fit the meter of the action of the game (or vice versa). I have tried to emphasize the complexity and sophistication of the dynamic interplay of sound and action in children's play, as well as to illustrate the kinds of manipulative devices employed by children to maintain cohesion between the active and acoustic dimensions of playground activity.

Discussion: Play is a Story Children Tell Themselves About Themselves

The previous section explored the ways in which children structure their actions and interactions with one another in play, i.e., it was essentially concerned with the syntactical organization of playground activity. The present discussion will focus upon the semantics of playground activity and its meaning for children amongst themselves. It is proposed that the structuring of action and interaction discussed previously establishes a peer coherence within the play group which in turn creates an age-link culture built upon culturally agreed-upon codes for behaviour.

Play establishes the culture of childhood. It binds children together, distinguishing them from the rest of society. Through play, children become aware of their identity as a group separate from adults. Play pro-

vides an opportunity for children to share mutual understandings of the world and to make reality and experience comprehensible according to their own perceptions. The elaborate linguistic rituals of the playground constitute a part of the folklore of childhood: they speak of the real everyday experiences of children, of their principal concerns and unique view of the world. They serve to validate children's interpretations of their experience. Play is truly a story children tell themselves about themselves (Geertz, 1972; Schwartzman, 1978).

In addition to fostering a sense of group and establishing a societal order, in play children also develop a concrete understanding of their own identity in relationship to their peers. The schoolage child spends a proportionately large amount of time playing with other children. This is a time of greatly expanding awareness and knowledge of the self in relation to others. In play children align themselves spatially, physically and verbally with one another. The emerging self is a central focus of childhood on the playground. In contrast to the adult approach, the child's identity in his/her peer group is to a large extent determined by what he/she can do rather than who they say they are.

The purpose of the present discussion is to illustrate how the games and rhymes of the playground function to reinforce children's sense of themselves as a group as well as to cultivate a sense of self-identity which is not mediated by adult categories. To this end, it concentrates upon the semantics of the utterance in the rhymes and chants within the enactments of play. I will be particularly concerned with how these self-images are articulated in the ethical codes of the playground and in the rituals of interaction discussed in connection with the present material. The initial part of the discussion will focus upon the ritual

of 'making fun' of the world, both as it is indicative of a deliberate counterposing of adult-defined reality and as it is a function of a qualitatively different system of categorizing experience. I will illustrate this latter point by trying to describe the organizing principles underlying a specific notion, i.e., the association of food with the body and its functions, which emerges as a recurrent metaphor in the present collection of playground lore. I will then expand my discussion of content by examining the recurring themes, characters and caricatures of playground lore for what they disclose of the salient features of childhood experience, as well as for what they say of children's interpretations of that experience. Finally, I will deal with the rituals of interaction--ritual insult, taking turns and ritual declaration--as focussed interpersonal dynamics whereby children can align themselves with one another in very specific ways. They are seen to contribute to children's sense of themselves as individuals, to enhance their awareness of other children as individuals, to promote their sense of belonging to a group and to maintain cohesion and unity within the group.

Play is the language which all children understand: it is their response to (the incomprehensibility of) adult-conceived reality. This response is built around the creation of an alternate reality or realities, organized according to children's perceptions and categories. These alternate and understandable realities are based upon real experiences, developing cognitions and often unconscious intuitions about the nature of the world and the people in it.

The creation of an understandable reality relies upon the adult cultural pose. This is the backdrop against which children enact their

own particular views of the world. By counterposing the perspective of adult-defined reality in ritual ways, children are better able to define and clarify the salient features of their own viewpoint. The assertion of independence from adulthood is both a group concern, i.e., something which children accomplish together in 'making fun of' the world; as well as an attitude which is required of individuals within the group, i.e., a test of their loyalty to childhood.

According to the dictates of childhood culture, a child must be able to discard adult viewpoints in order to establish his/her own self amongst peers. To a great extent this ability to counterpose adult reality mediates inclusion and exclusion in the playgroup. Children regard the ability to stand apart from adulthood very highly in their estimation of one another, e.g., in the worship of a school misfit. At a less extreme level, it is a rite of passage into the mainstream of childhood culture. This rite is embodied in an ethical code which considers the spirit and understanding of the child to take precedence over that represented by the adult. It becomes important, in fact sacred, for a child not to be a tattletale, a cheat, a spoilsport, a crybaby, a scaredy-cat, or a goody-goody. Further, the child is often required to engage in forbidden activities as a means of winning the approval and acceptance of fellow playmates. The code of the playground is harsh and coercive in some respects; it commands independence from adults, particularly from the intervention of mothers and teachers in solving disputes or dealing with difficult or 'unfair' situations. These are sacred behaviours required by children of one another.

The rejection of adult culture is enshrined in play in the ritual of 'making fun of' the world. This is a response both to the seriousness

of the adult world as well as to its avowed fixity. Anything can be made fun of including those institutions and personalities which children themselves hold sacred. The parody of the "McDonald's" song (#55) is a good example, as are the rhymes in which Popeye lives in a garbage can eating worms, Batman and Robin lay eggs and Santa rides in a 'crashed up Chevrolet': Making fun of the world produces laughter amongst children. Anything that is upside down, inside out or otherwise altered from its normal state is funny. Children's culture places value on the **ludicrous**; they mock and transform the solemnity and seriousness of adult culture. Children not only find adult seriousness unnecessary, boring and slightly beyond the grasp of understanding, but they are also often excluded from adult culture on occasions of significance (at least in Western culture). The inaccessibility of certain aspects of adult culture to children is counteracted in this ritual.

'Making fun of' the world and of adult reality is often a deliberate and conscious ritual adopted by children in order to produce an effect. As noted above, it involves upsetting, inverting or reversing the familiar, expected adult conceptions of the world. Children understand very clearly that what they say and do produces responses which can alternately amuse, horrify, upset or shock adults and other children. Being able to induce or precipitate desired responses in others appears to be a focus of mastery in childhood. When children play tricks on adults or other children, 'just for fun', they do so in some sense to confirm their knowledge of what the reaction will be as well as to affirm their own ability to effect that reaction.

In making fun of the world, children are manipulating patterns of expectation in order to produce certain kinds of responses and effects,

usually humorous ones. One of many illustrations of this process is found in example #57, a slightly off-colour version of "Mary Had a Little Lamb." The child usually refrains from making the last line rhyme knowing that the anticipation on the listener's part is more effective than the utterance of the profanity itself, particularly if the listener is an adult. This is also an example of the notion that children use words for which they do not yet have meanings, but which are, in their experience, associated with a definite response. In the case of the above example, the child knows that by uttering the profanity itself, he may cause a violent response in an adult or prompt another child to tattletale.

In addition to children's deliberate attempts to upset and subvert adult models and concepts, there are also many examples in which the child only appears to be making nonsense out of adult reality. These are actually attempts to make a kind of sense out of the world: they are the result of a qualitatively different categorization of experience.

It has already been proposed that children's nonsense rhymes actually make a phonological sense out of language, i.e., the child is not trying to make semantic sense or semantic nonsense, but rather is fascinated by his or her ability to create phonological patterns, organized by rhyme, assonance and rhythmic features. Example #71 illustrates each of these features. In the two lines "wrap it up in tissue paper" and "send it down the elevator" (which refer to a baby), meaning is organized in the rhyme of 'paper' with 'elevator', the predominance of short vowels and aspirated consonants, the 'whoosh' sound of the word 'tissue', and the exact repetition of the syllabic and stress pattern--a seven-syllable pattern accented on the first and fifth syllables. Children never give pause to wonder what this might do to the baby; this is not a part of the organi-

zation of meaning in the rhyme. Here, as elsewhere, the semantic features of verbal language play a subordinate role to the creation of meaning through phonology.

The child's means of categorizing experience is different from that of the adult. Studies of children's acquisition of appropriate conceptual categories for things suggest that initially children do not group elements according to a feature which is common to all elements, tending rather to construct "complexes" (Vygotsky, 1962) or to devise "grouping strategies" (Bruner and Olver, 1963) which are based upon physical similarities, associational characteristics and functional themes (Sanches and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1976:79-82). Cognitive immaturity is not a deficiency; it is a different point of view. In "The Study of Children in Social Anthropology", Charlotte Hardman demonstrates that children have a different conception of the boundary between nature and culture in an analysis of children's categorization of animals and their relationships to people (1974:140-149). From the present collection of material there emerges an association of food with the body and its functions which is further evidence of a different conception of nature and culture as well as of the sacred and the profane.

The body and its functions are a central focus of childhood. As the activity of the playground illustrates, mastering motor skills and physical activities is a predominant means of self-knowledge for the child. In the preschool years, children learn how to dress, feed and toilet themselves. Much of children's lives centre around nourishment and its consequent, complementary activities as well as around a rapidly expanding knowledge of the body and what it can do. It is natural in some sense, that children should associate these two categories of experience with one another.

Moreover, and with particular reference to this phenomenon, i.e., the association of food with the body and its functions as it appears in the linguistic rituals of the playground, the child's beginning vocabulary contains many 'food' and 'body' words. The parts of the body and various kinds of food are a natural basis for the learning of language. The schoolage child has acquired considerable fluency with this vocabulary making it perfect material for play.

Recalling once again the child's predisposition to the phonological organization of language, it is no surprise to find such rhyming pairs as jelly/belly (#78), ear/beer (#45, #78), crack/Big Mac (#45), bum, bubble-gum (#45, #51) and poop/soup (#45) in children's playground rhymes. However, there are also many rhymes and sayings in which children use food to explain or describe the various functions of the body. 'Passing wind' is known amongst children as 'cutting the cheese'. Given the pungent aroma of some cheeses, this is a logical categorical comparison if not an appropriate one within the adult cultural context. Other examples of this practice amongst children are as follows:

- 86) Milk, milk, lemonade
Around the corner, fudge is made
- 87) Mami mia, papa pia
Baby's got the diarrhea
Mama said it wouldn't hurt
So we had it for dessert
- 88) Papa's got the weiner
Mama's got the bun
Baby's got the mustard
Yum yum yum

These examples demonstrate that for children food and waste products are not dissimilar substances. For the adult, the association is appalling,

however children are assessing these substances in relation to body functions and to incidental physical similarities. Usually food goes into the body and waste comes out. However, the first example makes reference to breast feeding which is an example of food coming out of the body. This strengthens the basis for the association of food with body waste, as do the obvious textural similarities between the two. For the preschool child, the similarity is unconscious; the schoolage child is aware of the distinction which is made by adults and uses the material largely for its effect and its assertion of independence from adulthood.

In example #87, for instance, the child is deliberately mocking the social order as well as creating a phonological construct. Example #88 is used as a taunt. To an adult, the symbolism is obvious; for children it may be less so. Children often repeat rhymes such as this one in appropriate circumstances without ever understanding what they really mean. The repetition itself is some kind of an attempt to gain an understanding through clues garnered from the responses which the rhyme produces in others. For children in their own cultural context, it is often difficult or unacceptable to admit ignorance.

The association of food with body waste, and in fact with anything which is excreted from a body orifice, is not a confusion between eating and defecating. This becomes evident in the rhymes in which children use this association in derisive ways in order to taunt one another. The following examples illustrate:

- 89) Pick your nose, rub your bun
Then you'll have bubblegum
- 90) Fatty, Fatty, two by four
Couldn't get through the bathroom door
So she did it on the floor

Licked it up and did some more

- 91) Yum yum, bubblegum
 Stick it up the teacher's bum
 When it's ripe, take a bite
 If it's not, let it rot
 Yum yum bubblegum

The body and its functions is a category of experience which must appear highly ambiguous to the child. It is not only riddled with taboo, but things are not as they appear to be. Furthermore, for the child learning that there is a word for everything in the world, here is an entire category of experience for which there are few appropriate words. The words which are used to describe basic body functions are either impolite, e.g., poop, or overly scientific, e.g., feces. Children use food, which is a familiar substance, in order to describe and understand these functions. For children this is not a profanity, although they recognize and manipulate the sense in which this is not the case for the adults around them.

Children live in a world which is, to some extent, autonomous from adult culture because of viewpoints such as the one described above (Hardman, 1974). In my discussion thus far, I have suggested that the rhymes, songs and games of the playground can be viewed as an assertion of independence from adulthood and complementarily, as a recognition of the autonomy implicit in a unique mode of perception. I have proposed that the cultivation of this autonomy identifies children as a group and further ~~that~~ the assertion of independence from adult culture constitutes a rite of passage into the culture of childhood. The unique representation of experience in play, along with its ritual manipulation of adult

conceptual approaches, is the process whereby childhood culture is established. I will now turn to a discussion of what the concerns of that culture are. What do children communicate about in play? What are the themes and who are the characters in the elaborate linguistic rituals of the playground?

At the outset of this discussion, it was stated that the linguistic rituals of the playground were a part of the folklore of childhood and that they spoke of the experiences, attitudes and concerns of children in their daily lives. In addition to the focus upon the body and its functions referred to earlier, children's lives centre around their families and growing up, their teachers and going to school and one another and playing. Not surprisingly, it is these themes and characters which predominate in the songs and rhymes of the playground. There are also repeated references to certain everyday kinds of experiences, e.g., going to the store, going to the doctor, going to the movies, getting a haircut, as well as to the peculiar childhood fascination for things like bubblegum and underwear. To an adult, this list of concerns may appear amorphous and lacking in cohesion, however playground lore as folklore acts to integrate these otherwise disparate elements of experience into a comprehensible whole. I hope to show how the rhymes and sayings of the playground are a documentation of children's responses to, and feelings about, real experiences of people and events.

Family relationships and personalities form a central topic around which to compose rhymes and sayings. Characters who appear regularly are mothers, fathers, baby sisters, brothers and grandmothers. Aunts and uncles appear more rarely. Mothers are the most well-developed characters

in this scenario and appear more frequently than fathers. They are often portrayed in a nurturing role. They make sure that children eat properly (#37 - "Carrots, potatoes, onions and peas"). They take care of children when they are sick--#3, #4, and #36 are examples in which 'mother called the doctor'. Mothers are also portrayed as the persons who give children permission to do things, as well as asking children to do things:

- 92) Mother may I go and swim
 Yes my darling daughter
 Hang your clothes on the hickory limb
 But don't go near the water
- 93) Bluebells, cockleshells
 Evey, Ivey, over
 My mother sent me to the store
 And this is what she sent me for
 Salt vinegar mustard pepper

Mothers are also perceived to be knowledgeable and are often summoned in incantation in counting-out rhymes in order to validate decisions (#63) as well as in oaths of silence and secrecy to consecrate solemn vows (Opies, 1969:125-6). The relationship between mothers and fathers in children's rhymes generally involves the children. The reproductive cycle is more or less understood by children, although some of the playground rhymes are graphic illustrations:

- 94) My Mommy lies over the ocean
 My Daddy lies over the sea
 My Daddy lies over my Mommy
 And that's how they got little old me

As noted previously, these kinds of rhymes are often learned from older children and repeated by younger children who often have very little understanding of what they are saying. However, once again, the repetition is

itself an attempt to understand; the child is seeking a familiar response, one which will augment his own understanding.

Baby brothers and sisters are portrayed as doing strange things in children's rhymes and needing to be 'looked after'. In example #4 and its variations, Susie Q and Tiny Tim try to eat the soap and drink the bathwater. These rhymes are based upon children's real experiences with siblings. One of the classic skipping songs portrays an incident which many children have experienced or wished to experience with a brother or sister of similar age:

- 95) Down by the ocean, down by the sea
 Johnny broke a bottle and he blamed it on me
 I told Ma, Ma told Pa
 Johnny got a lickin', so Ha Ha Ha!

Interestingly enough, grandmothers are portrayed as being sick (#2) or inept as in "Hey, pitcher, you throw like my grandma." Occasionally, they are portrayed doing things which children cannot help but wonder if grandmothers ever have to do:

- 96) Goin down the highway doin 54
 Grandma blew a big one that blew right off the door
 The people couldn't take it, the motor fell apart
 Just because of Granny's super-sonic fart

Children often have difficulty understanding older people and are required by their parents to be respectful and quiet around their grandparents. These examples are a further indication that playground lore is an expression of children's response to their experience. These rhymes allow children to share their feelings--of not understanding older people, or of having to deal with brothers and sisters. These are experiences which are common amongst children.

Outside of the immediate family, the most well-known personage is the teacher, who is constantly insulted. In all of the examples cited thus far, the teacher is made to look ridiculous (#51, #76, #49). Teachers continually have 'bubblegum up their bums', or are '430 feet wide', or look like Frankenstein as in the following adaptation of a Walt Disney song:

97) Hi ho, hi ho, it's off to school we go
 The water tastes like turpentine
 The teacher looks like Frankenstein
 Hi ho, hi ho, hi ho

The ritual abuse of teachers and schools has been cultivated by generations of children. This is a sacred rite of childhood. Children even make fun of teachers whom they like. The teacher's pet almost always suffers some kind of ostracization from the playgroup. The abuse of teachers and schools is understandable in the sense that teachers tend to restrict movement and noise and to confine play.

The rhymes which ridicule teachers suggest that children have difficulty understanding that teachers are people like themselves or their parents. Children perceive teachers to be in a class by themselves. More than any other adult, the teacher demands that the child relinquish and abandon childhood. The tactics of teachers in this regard are often uncompromising and coercive. Teachers are adults with whom children have a great deal of contact in a very narrowly defined context. For example, children rarely see their teachers with their own children, or doing familiar kinds of things, like eating or sleeping. Moreover, the teacher has a great deal of authority over children and children have few avenues of recourse or defense against the whims of their teachers. As a result,

the rhymes about teachers often portray them doing terrible things to children, but equally as often children gain a symbolic retribution at least for the misdeeds of their teachers. In the following variation upon "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," the teacher suffers his or her just desserts:

98) Glory, glory Hallejulah
 Teacher hit me with a ruler
 So I got him at the door with a loaded 44
 And he ain't gonna teach no more

or

So I hit her on the bean
 With a rotten tangerine
 And she ain't gonna teach no more

There are many other characters who people the chants and rhymes of the playground. Doctors are familiar characters in these rhymes, usually appearing with nurses and at the request of mothers (#2, #4, #36, #76). Policemen are responsible for arresting people and putting them in jail (#12, #73). Cowboys and cowgirls have guns (#14) and come from somewhere else. Robbers are 'rascals' rather than menacing or fearful characters (#5, #30). Beneath their 'good' exterior, Boy Scouts kiss the girls (#8) and Girl Guides do the 'wobble-wobble' (#17). Hippies are 'outa sight', 'groovy' and 'smoke LSD' (#54). Some of these characters appear to have derived their personalities from the themes of children's play as they have been handed down through the generations rather than from contemporary sources or immediate experiences, e.g., cops and robbers, cowboys and Indians. In addition to these character types, there are also many appearances made by famous personalities from cartoon, movies, TV shows and nursery rhymes, both old and new. In the present material alone,

appearances are made by Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse, Jack and Jill, Mary and her Little Lamb, Popeye, Batman and Robin, Tarzan, Rudolph, Old MacDonald, Cinderella, Santa Claus, the Red Baron, the Fonz, Blondie and Dagwood, Marilyn Monroe and Bob Hope.

'Growing up' emerges as a central concern of children on the playground and in their linguistic rituals. Growing up may mean many things to a schoolage child, who is old enough to remember being different. Usually these are specific things, e.g., getting older, getting bigger, being able to stay up later, not being afraid of the dark, being able to ride a two-wheeler. A good example of the specificity of the child's understanding of growing up is in rhyme #83, where Johnny learns how to tie his shoes, climb a tree, swim and dive and write with a pen as he gets older. Learning how to do things is a large part of what growing up is all about for children.

Overcoming childhood fears is also a big part of growing up. In conversation with one another, schoolchildren will often refer to what they 'usta' think or do when they were younger. These conversations reveal the child's own awareness of growth as well as being a demonstration of mastery, particularly in connection with overcoming fears. There are several examples in this collection of rhymes which are obviously making fun of and/or making light of childhood fears. Example #33 addresses the very common childhood fear that 'someone is under the bed'. Amongst the less savoury examples in the present study are several rhymes in which children fall into the toilet and have to swim around. For the schoolage child, this may no longer be frightening; however, it may well still be a terrifying memory. Adults have all but forgotten such fears. The practice

of making fun of such fears amongst children is also their way of collectively dealing with terror. Adults may be able to protect children from what frightens them, however they do not always share the fears of their children. Through play children derive the comfort of knowing that someone else feels the same way. In this way, playground rhymes validate children's feelings.

As the linguistic rituals of the playground demonstrate, growing up also involves becoming male and female. Playground rhymes are full of references to the relationships between men and women, some of which are graphic and apparently lascivious descriptions of sexual relations (more or less accurate and more or less experientially based, depending upon the age of the children involved), and others of which teasingly intimate that kissing makes babies. Much of the material in the former category is meant for adult ears and in the present collection there are only a handful of such examples. In this material, by far the most frequently cited contact between the sexes is kissing, which becomes the source of much teasing and giggling amongst children (#3, #4, #45, #83). The relationship between children's rhymes and the prevailing social climate becomes very evident in this subject area. Today's children are perhaps more sophisticated in general. Compare the following examples, the second of which is a much more recent composition:

99) _____ and _____ sittin' in a tree
 K - I - S - S - I - N - G
 First comes love, then comes marriage
 Then comes _____ with a baby carriage

100) Jack and Jill went up the hill
 To fetch a pail of water
 Jill forgot to take her pill
 And had a baby daughter

'Becoming a Mommy' is the theme of many playground songs, particularly those associated with the predominantly female pastime of skipping. In these songs, females do the 'wobble-wobble' (#17) and the 'rumble' (#74), 'but most of all (they) can kiss, kiss, kiss' (#17--variation). Almost without exception, the songs which refer to growing up describe having boyfriends, getting married and having children. The skipping songs in particular are full of references to weddings. Example #44 outlines an entire concept of marriage. These songs frequently contain some kind of prediction about the quality of the future, i.e., will she be married in a dress of 'silk, satin, or cotton batting'; will they live in a 'big house, little house, pig pen, barn'; will she marry a 'rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief'. Another example of the broad conception of the various stages of growing up and of the child's perception of female familial roles is illustrated in the clapping song:

- 101) When Susie was a baby, a baby, a baby
 When Susie was a baby, she went like this--Wah, Wah!
- When Susie was a little girl, a little girl, a little girl
 When Susie was a little girl, she went like this--Hi there!
- When Susie was a teenager, a teenager, a teenager
 When Susie was a teenager, she went like this--Hi Honey!
- When Susie was a mother, a mother, a mother
 When Susie was a mother, she went like this--Get over to the
 supper table!
- When Susie was a grandmother, a grandmother, a grandmother
 When Susie was a grandmother, she went like this--Oh my aching
 back!

This particular conception of growing up is in some sense a function of the child's focus upon the family and its dynamics, however, there is another sense in which these rhymes are the product of a different era.

Interestingly enough, in examining the skipping songs in particular, I discovered that there are no songs which portray a more contemporary understanding of male and female roles, nor are there any contemporary personalities in the skipping songs. This is an indication that skipping songs are no longer being created and further, it corroborates my own observation of the declining popularity of this activity amongst little girls. It is tempting to pose a possible correlation between the decline in popularity of skipping and the changing male and female societal roles. More than once, girls who participated in this study became bored with skipping and wanted to go and play soccer with the boys. It is possible that skipping no longer represents a functional female playground personality. In any case, the absence of any kind of contemporary influence in the skipping songs contrasts with the other game songs, taunts, teases and sayings in the present collection of material.

To suggest that the linguistic rituals of the playground are anything like a complete expression of children's understanding and experience of the world and other people would be an oversimplification. Children do, I believe, possess a far more sophisticated understanding of family relationships, for instance, than is evident from these rhymes. Their sense of the family as a system of relationships is much more apparent in their sociodramatic play (see Garvey, 1977). The import of the preceding analysis has been to outline some of the concerns which emerge from the present material and which appear to make sense as meaningful perceptions of children. I have tried to illustrate how the playground rhymes are used by children to weave together the salient features of their lives in interpretive ways. I have suggested further that this creates an intimacy be-

tween children by validating their feelings and understanding of the world. In this discussion, it has become evident that there are elements of children's experience that are meaningful to children and not to adults, or that are meaningful to children in a different sense than they are to adults.

The rituals of interaction of the playground afford another angle of analysis of the meaning of children's play for children. Earlier in this chapter, it was shown that playground rhymes are used in ritual ways in order to punctuate specific sequences of action and patterns of interaction. I will now attempt to describe the possible meaning and purpose of these rituals of interaction which children themselves create. Why is taunting a meaningful ritual amongst children? What is really happening when children take turns? Of what use is ritual declaration on the playground?

The rituals of interaction on the playground are focused interpersonal dynamics which are devised by children as a means of simplifying and clarifying their interactions with one another, as well as unifying the responses of the group as a whole. They represent culturally agreed-upon codes of behaviour which support and reinforce the identity of children as a group and, as well, tell children something about themselves as individuals. Ritual insult demonstrates and develops verbal flexibility and self-confidence; taking turns allows children to observe themselves in relation to others as well as to set their own standards of excellence for the group; ritual declaration uses language as a persuasive tool-- it unifies the group response, decrees procedure and focuses attention, thereby streamlining and synchronizing activity on the playground.

At the outset of this discussion, it was suggested that a child's

identity on the playground is determined largely by active skills and competencies, i.e., by what he or she does rather than professes to do. Further to this point, the image of the self which is cultivated in play generally has some basis in a comparison of the self with others. In play, children align themselves with one another in terms of developing skills--verbal as well as physical. Because the skills are always developing, the hierarchy of the playground is never fixed or absolute. Children also identify themselves by who their friends are, however children, friendship is also a fluid and changing arrangement. In a group of children who normally play together, the pairing and grouping of 'friends' changes daily, even hourly, being mediated by such external factors as physical skill and proficiency or the possession of coveted objects.

When children tease and taunt one another, they are demonstrating their ability to deal with other children verbally and experimenting with the power and influence of language, as well as testing their confidence in themselves and the loyalty of their friends. Further, as Garvey points out (1977:107), children are also playing with the rules, i.e., they are testing the boundaries of interpersonal conduct and thus are expanding their knowledge of others. The structure of ritual insult often consists of a potentially endless series of statements and retorts. This demonstrates and develops verbal flexibility. The important thing is to be able to bounce back, not necessarily to make sense, but to be more outrageous or more insulting or louder or worse. The ability to engage in this kind of exchange without starting to cry or running away or telling an adult, is indicative of being able to 'take it', knowing that 'sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me', as well as being able to 'dish it out'. There are often observers to such exchanges between children

which greatly intensifies the importance of maintaining a tough exterior. At worst the child being tormented may walk away or join other friends.

Children's games often single out one person--the "it" person--for such treatment. They are goaded, baited and ridiculed by other children as a part of the game. In such cases the child being attacked can respond to "can't catch me for a bumble bee", by tagging the other child, i.e., the response to ritual insult need not always be a verbal one. In this kind of play children learn to assert themselves, to believe in their own abilities and most importantly they come to understand that what other people say is no more than an opinion and needn't be taken seriously. However, certain kinds of children, for example those with any kind of distinguishing physical characteristics, suffer inordinately under such attack and in some cases are never able to deal with this dynamic.

The entire process of calling one another names must at some point be understood as a function of language acquisition, i.e., of 'naming' the world. Very often children do not understand the cruelty of their own actions in this regard. Sometimes an entire group of children will 'gang up' on one child, chanting "Fatso" or "Crybaby" or some such like. At this point the loyalty of friends is tested. The chant has an infectious quality; it focuses attention and unifies response and has the effect, literally, of physically expelling the child from the group. Although this is not always the case, this entire interchange can begin quite innocently with one child attempting to name his world and the people in it. Ritual insult is an escalating process.

Children also identify themselves in relation to one another according to physical competencies in the performance of elaborate action sequences. The motor skills of skipping, ball-bouncing and handclapping games require

coordination, speed and practice in order for a child to be able to execute them well enough to maintain a functional identity on the playground. Generally these games require that each player execute the same action or sequence of actions simultaneously or alternately one after another. In other words, each player has a part to play in realizing a moving sculptural form. These parts are determined by the ritual and tradition of individual playgroups and children acquire a keen sense of belonging from a fluency with the idiosyncracies of performance of various playground games.

Skipping is an activity in which players are aligned with one another by being required to perform identical actions, most usually one after another, with other players watching and chanting the accompanying songs. In ball-bouncing games, children are frequently aligned more competitively with one another, each child attempting to outdo the length of the sequence performed by the previous child. Some of these games are long and difficult, and combine verbal skills and flexibility with a repetitive skilled action sequence. For example, one ball-bouncing game uses an alphabetical sequence in the accompanying song and requires that children think, sing and bounce simultaneously, never breaking the rhythm:

102) A my name is Angie
 My husband's name is Andy
 We sell apples in Arizona
 And on with the alphabet

The combination of verbal flexibility with skilled action is also found in handclapping games in which children must exactly match their movements with one another; they must synchronize themselves in space and time. Two common examples of this phenomenon as it appears in handclapping

games are in "Who Stole the Cookies from the Cookie Jar?" and "Concentration." In the first game, players are required to recite a standard series of phrases and responses with another player who has called their 'number'. In the second game, "Concentration," players sequentially are required to produce examples from lists such as 'names of girls' or 'names of cities'. These games can include any number of players and, understandably, do require considerable 'concentration' to avoid being tripped up or missing a beat or not answering on one's turn.

Handclapping games, and in particular children's spontaneous variations upon handclapping games indicate that children's sense of themselves acquires yet another dimension in their relationships to one another in space. In many games, children form configurations—a circle or a bridge or a train. In handclapping games, I have observed children to spontaneously vary their configurations amongst one another, i.e., from clapping in pairs to clapping in fours to clapping on each other's backs in a train. A significant aspect of this kind of activity is that movement in space is meaningful to individual identity. Children become a part of something larger than themselves; they become something together which is quite visible and concrete. Further, it is easy for each child to see where and how he or she fits into the pattern, thereby heightening the sense of belonging.

In the nature of its repetitiveness, the elaborate ritual of taking turns in play and games, provides for children a mirror of their own rapidly developing skills. Children's sense of their own identity is reinforced by watching other children execute the same actions. Some children obviously perform better at these activities than other children and, as a group of individuals, children are keenly aware of how they

stack up in relationship to their peers. They will often seek the friendship of the best skipper or the best runner as a means of adding another dimension to their own identity. However, as mentioned previously, the 'hierarchical' ordering with results from these distinctions is temporary at best, fluctuating from one day to the next according to the activity and the particular group of children playing. Further, assessments of the 'best' or the 'worst' are not necessarily decisive factors in determining inclusion or exclusion in a particular activity. It is more important in children's play to be sufficiently proficient to play along with the rest without unduly hindering the progress of the game than it is to be the 'best' player.

An implicit dynamic within the ritual of taking turns is that children are setting standards of excellence and qualification for themselves as a group. The relative performance of each child determines his or her role in the activity as well as mediating inclusion to a certain extent. Skill affects inclusivity in the sense that the poorer skippers for instance, are always turning the rope, however, the ritual of taking turns also counteracts and balances individual differences in capabilities. Giving everyone a turn is a part of the sacred code of the playground. Poorer players may get fewer turns than other players, however they usually get a turn at some point.

The standards which children set for one another in their games are subject to endless manipulation. The parameters of each 'turn' of play can be made more or less difficult depending upon the group of players. Children occasionally set impossible standards for children whom they don't like in order to 'fairly' exclude them and equally as often will

relax the standards for younger or less capable children who are likeable or acceptable for other reasons, e.g., they own the only skipping rope. It is an assertion of the self--an expression of mastery over situations --to manipulate these rituals in order to produce desired results. Choosing favourites is legitimate as long as one adheres to due process.

The ritual of taking turns addresses the concern for feeling the same as other children, i.e., for belonging, as well as for distinguishing the self from others in perceivable ways. In addition to the comparative aspect of this dynamic, children's own skills become visible to themselves through the actions of others. Further, the setting of standards of excellence which determine role and mediate inclusion to a certain degree, are a replication (see Farrer, 1976) and an interpretation of children's understanding of this dynamic as they experience it in situations in which adults are setting the standards. Both at home and at school children are required to perform in prescribed ways and to meet acceptable standards in their performances. Unacceptable performances in children's games have consequences in much the same way as they have consequences in the classroom and the family. The significant difference is, of course, that in play children have control over both the standards and their consequences.

The other ritualized pattern of interacting which has been discussed in connection with the material of the present study, is children's use of language as a persuasive social tool for making decisions, achieving group consensus and focusing and maintaining group attention, i.e., with ritual declaration. This particular ritual reveals children's understanding of the power and influence of language upon human behaviour. Further, it reflects children's expanded understanding of the semantic character

of language, i.e., associational or acoustic meanings may be as significant or more so than semantic ones. Language is used as oratory in ritual declaration. Chant solidifies the response of the group through the compelling nature of rhythm and sound. In ritual declaration, language acquires sacred, magical powers.

In ritual declaration, language is used to coordinate the actions of the group. The cryptic linguistic signals of field games direct and stimulate action as well as affording a temporal cohesiveness to play: language is used to maintain the rhythm of play. This function of language becomes particularly important in games with spacious boundaries or many players. In games like "Tag" or "Hide and Seek" for instance, ritual declaration is used at nodal points in the action in order to focus the attention of the group and direct them towards the next thrust of action in the play. In these games, children often appear to be throwing their voices, trying to wrap them around their playmates. Hollering '123 on Becky' has the literal effect of catching her: language is a lasso.

CONCLUSION

The thesis has developed the argument that children's play is an ordered system of behaviour with its own rules for establishing meaning, i.e., rituals of interaction, and as well, with its own realm in which meaning is established, i.e., the culture of childhood. Play is a medium of communication with its own logical and coherent forms of discourse, and like other artistic mediums, the representation of reality in play is untranslatable. The thesis has also argued for the acceptance of the notion that play is the dominant mode of representation, understanding and communication amongst children. It encompasses verbal language and action in the enactment of knowledge and understanding. A complementary argument has proposed that play is an alternate mode of structuring reality from that of language.

The significance of these arguments is most directly addressed to the dimensions of the relationship between play and reality which has been discussed as a part of the theoretical framework of the thesis. I have illustrated that in play children create alternate realities which are organized according to their own categorization of experience and which weave together the salient features of their lives. This is consistent with the theoretical notions put forth by Schwartzman--that play creates and contains its own reality; and as well with the model developed by Garvey, in which children's make-believe play constitutes the enactment

of concepts of relationships. These parallel notions are illustrated in the discussion of the characters and themes which emerge from the linguistic rituals of the playground.

The notion that play manipulates the behavioural organization of reality and concurrently that it represents combinatorial activity is developed in Chapter III. This syntactical organization of play emerges consistently in the analysis of playground games and rhymes as a manipulation of pattern. The syntax which characterizes play is found in the structures of the rituals of interaction amongst children as well as in the generative characteristics of the playground rhymes. The ritual of making fun of adult-defined reality in particular, is illustrative of the peculiarities of the syntactical organization of play as described by Miller (1973) and Sutton-Smith (1974). Making fun of the world is accomplished by upsetting familiar balances and reversing and inverting patterns of expectation.

The analysis of playground lore indicates that children also playfully manipulate the structure and content of their own rituals by combining and recombining elements in fixed patterns as well as by combining elements in such a way as to effect a change in the pattern itself. An example of the child's manipulation of elements within a fixed pattern is seen in the consistency of the structure of ritual insult in comparison with the great numbers of imaginative variations upon content. Examples of children manipulating the pattern itself are found in the counting-out rhymes and the ritual of taking turns. Children devise means of predetermining the 'winner' of the counting-out rhyme or they adjust the standards of qualification in games to suit their own purposes.

The feedback capacities and interpretive functions of children's play

as they are revealed in the present study also correspond with the notions put forth by Geertz, Reynolds, and Miller in Chapter III. Miller's notion that play maps data which no longer fits the theory is brilliantly illustrated in "Marijuana, marijuana, LSD" (#76). The sense in which the understanding acquired in play is fed back into a larger cultural context or comes to affect behaviour in a larger context, is illustrated in those rhymes which were described as addressing the fears of children. Further, the notion that play embodies a feedback system is illustrated in children's enactment of language in play. I refer specifically to those instances which described children using expressions which they did not understand in phonological constructs or as appropriate remarks in certain social situations. These were described as situations in which the child was not required to demonstrate an understanding of the utterance, but was in a position to augment his or her own semantic understanding utilizing the response (feedback) from others.

Geertz' notion of the unconscious cultural dimensions of play structures emerged in rhymes which addressed the incomprehensible or frightening aspects of children's lives. This process is also evident in those rituals of interaction, i.e., taking turns, which were described as an interpretation or replication of a more general aspect of cultural communicative styling. The setting of standards of excellence and qualification which is implicit in the ritual of taking turns is an example, as is the assertion of independence demonstrated in the ritual counterposing of adult reality. Children thereby comment upon cultural dynamics in play.

The notion that play represents an alternate and equally valid

reality has implications for the understanding of play as a paradoxical reference system. This latter notion, as it is presented in the theoretical writing of Bateson, must be reinterpreted from the point of view of the child.

Play is an exercise in combining experience in meaningful ways; it represents an intermingling of realities to the child. It is a system in which there is no dominant mode of representation, nor is there any representation which is necessarily more valid than any other representation. Each may be meaningful in different ways. This contrasts with the adult communication model in which language is perceived to be the dominant mode of organizing meaning and in which action is viewed as an adjunct to language or as a metacommunication. In play as the communicative model of the child, I have attempted to demonstrate that these processes-- language (sound) and action--mutually contextualize one another. For the schoolage child in the beginning stages of literacy, this is particularly true. Sound and action are finely integrated in the language of play. Furthermore, what the linguistic rituals of the playground reveal is that children do not require that these modes be used consistently. For instance, in example #3, the doctor and the nurse are obviously paired with one another according to an associational factor; the "lady with the alligator purse" is related to them by phonology. The combining of different senses of things is common in children's play. It is another expression of the fluidity of their understanding.

To reintroduce the notion of paradox, I refer specifically to Schwartzman's analysis of the characterization of the self in play, i.e., as both the self and an imaginary character. The sense of paradox in this arrangement is, I suggest, based upon a view of language as the

dominant mode of organization of experience. In make-believe play, children are organizing the salient features of their experience into condensed realities. The enactments of play, which include verbal language alongside action sequences, are a means of semantic storage, i.e., of digesting experience in an organized way. This is a function which language does not yet completely fulfill for the child. The dual characterization of the self in play does not conflict in any way with children's understanding of themselves as individuals. This is indicated in the apparently effortless way in which children slip into and out of the fictional personality.

The child's perception of the enactment of a fictional identity may not include any such division of the self into separate personalities. The contradiction in meta-levels which Bateson describes is not relevant for the child. Unlike his analysis of this conception with respect to the communication of animals, i.e., a situation in which it is significant for the message "this is play" to be understood in order for the behaviour to be perceived in a non-threatening way—in children's play, it is rarely important to make this distinction. The message "this is play" is a part of the child's direction of the episode: the text is inseparable from its context. However, the message "this is play" is not always a critical feature of the interaction amongst children at play. To be more specific, the fact that the bite is not really a bite is an important distinction to maintain in the context of animal (or human) play, however the message that the child is not really a doctor or a mommy is generally an unimportant one for children's relationships to one another in play. Furthermore, this does not create a paradox in children's understanding of themselves or their relationships to one another. She is

the mommy; she is herself. He is the daddy; he is himself.

The refinement and subtlety of the sayings in children's play, which are expressions of enacted personalities as well as external directions of the action, are testimony to the notion that play is a part of reality. It is in no way opposed to reality in the child's mind: play is reality. It creates a logic of experience in which the adult can perceive two realities—that characterized by the adult definition of experience and/or that which explicitly directs the enactment, as well as that which is being created and/or communally recreated according to the child's unique vision of the world. From the point of view of the child, this is but one reality.

NOTES

1. Mouldoux (1977:205) comments upon this aspect of Caillois' theory of play:

Caillois... supports the confusion in terminology by distinguishing, in his criteria of play, between "governed by rules" (which include Competition and Chance) and "make believe" (Mimicry and Vertigo). However, he describes the former as "under conventions which suspend ordinary laws," and the latter as "awareness of a second reality" (p.10), and both of these imply awareness of the not-ordinary and not-real, that is, a make-believe attitude.

2. Huizinga's oversight of the importance of the trickster figure in children's culture may in fact be related to the original date of publication of Homo Ludens in 1938. The popular childhood idols of movie, comic strip and T.V. were only just beginning to appear at this time.
3. On another level, the notion that play is a "test" of powers can be interpreted as an articulation of Sutton-Smith's notion of play as proto-structure and the source of novel culture, i.e., as a test of the existing social order.
4. The authors explain the experimental procedure as follows:

Children sat at a table either in a small chair or on the mother's lap. The experimenter sat opposite the child and presented five cups measuring from 3.3 to 7.7 cm. in diameter across the bottom; the cups increased in diameter by 1.1 cm. steps (Greenfield et al., 1972:292).

The first of the manipulative strategies used by children on the cups represents a simple descriptive sentence, i.e. one cup (actor) is placed inside a second cup (acted upon). The second strategy represents the joining of two ideas or sentences with a conjunction, i.e., one cup is placed inside a second cup and a third cup is also placed inside the second cup. The third strategy represents the combining of two sentences or ideas with a relative clause, i.e., one cup is placed inside a second cup which two cups are then placed inside a third cup.

5. It is interesting to note that children associate jumping into the rope with going in a door. Indoor/frontdoor indicates that the rope is being turned towards the skipper. Outdoor/backdoor indicates the rope is being turned away from the skipper, and is considerably more difficult to execute. Many skipping songs use the phrase 'shut the door' to end the songs, e.g. #32.

6. Interestingly enough, in children's linguistic rituals there are several instances of phonetic groupings which are not a part of English, e.g. , 'ny' and 'vr'.
7. This is 'as collected'. It is important to note the variations from one playgroup to the next. This line could possibly still be chanted at twice the speed: T—O—W—N TOWN. This would make it an irregular measure of $3/4$ time; curiously enough, this does not represent an exact double time of $5/4$.
8. The similarity between this rhyme and the nursery rhyme "Jack and Jill" is obvious both in structure and content. It lends support to the notion that children make use of and manipulate familiar patterns in the creation of rhymes and songs.

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