

# [Examining the nature and role of play in early childhood essay](https://assignbuster.com/examining-the-nature-and-role-of-play-in-early-childhood-essay/)

Nature and Role of Play in Early Childhood

“…we play non because we

are kids, but

we are given our childhood

so that we can play”

( Groos, 1916, p. 72 )

Not merely play healers, early interventionists, societal workers or sociocultural research workers like for illustration Goncu ( 1999 ) have focused in the last four decennaries on child drama but besides all major developmental theoreticians like Piaget, ( 1962 ) , Vygotksy, ( 1976 ) , Bruner ( 1972 ) or Erikson, ( 1977 ) . Today, hence the indispensable function that drama possesses in the development of an baby during childhood has been acknowledged by most theoreticians and developmental psychologists strive to assist mentally sick kids with different drama therapy techniques.

Despite the fact that there is neither a satisfactory definition of drama nor consent about its intent, as maintained by Bundy ( 2001 ) , one can depict and specify children’s play behavior as enjoyable, personally directed, per se motivated and voluntary activities which are conducted in a safe, self-generated, scoreless context ( Hughes, 2001 ) and which involve “ much repeat and fluctuation as the kid explores the scope of possibilities of behaviour” ( Butterworth & A ; Harris, 1998, p. 140 ) in contents and purposes where the kid possess a sense of control. Child drama is both performed in lone or in societal groups and it is ever more per se so extrinsically motivated even when kids are thirstily and earnestly engaged in drama activities which are regulation governed. It besides may to function to research inanimate objects or to research human relationships and societal functions.

Therefore, child drama is non merely a straightforward term for simple actions but includes multiplex activities with multiplex intents. It besides has many diverse aspects as it for, case, represents world in as-if or what-if term ( symbolic nature of drama ) while at the same clip linking or associating different experiences ( meaningful nature of drama ) . As it includes so many diverse facets many definitions have arose in the past with each definition supplying a different apprehension and reading of children’s drama. In general, the drama theories are divided into classical theories of drama ( e. g. Hall’s Recapitulation Theory, 1920 ; Groos’ Pre-Exercise Theory, 1984 ) and modern theories of drama ( Mellou, 1994 ) . Classical theories of drama originated in the 19th century and tried to explicate the being and intent of drama ( Mellou, 1994 ) . However, this brief paper intends to look into and discourse the nature and function of drama in early childhood with mention to theories of development and will concentrate on modern-day theories ( e. g. Psychoanalytic theory, Cognitive theories ) which were chiefly devised after the 1920s and which try to explicate the function of drama in kid development ( Saracho and Spodek, 1995 ) .

Psychoanalytical Theory

Freud ( 1938 ) and co-workers developed the Psychoanalytic theory of drama which arose through therapies which examined pent-up memories of patients. In this sense, Freud concluded that kid drama is a manner of replacing negative feelings and emotions in a psychotherapeutic manner with positive emotions. Therefore, consequently, kids who do non play sufficiently will stay traumatized and possess destructively negative feelings throughout the remainder of their lives.

Freud ( 1938 ) believed that playing represents non merely a accelerator of negative feelings but serves besides as a facilitator for hold oning and groking unpleasant and agonising experiences and represents, to boot, a tool for kids to show their feelings and emotions ( Wehman and Abramson, 1976 ) . Psychotherapists like Takhvar ( 1988 ) or Erikson ( 1963 ) have modified and altered Freud’s initial theory by associating self-importance procedures, fright, anxiousness, and wish fulfilment to play activities in kids. Conflict work outing and the dramatization of both past, present and future were, to boot, identified by Erikson ( 1950 ) as the chief features of drama and he, accordingly, transformed Freud’s psychosexual development phases into psychosocially relevant phases. Peller ( 1952 ) concluded that grownup functions are imitated in children’s phantasy drama which, in bend, provides kids with a sense of command that empowers them to cover with hard existent life state of affairss and experiences. It was Murphy ( 1962 ) who concluded that in add-on to all the mentioned benefits of kid drama, the moving out elements of drama enable kids non merely to understand negative experiences from the past but let for processing of positive or mundane experiences.

Play Therapy

Acting out is one of the polar elements of drama therapy which can be regarded as an progeny of these psychoanalytic thoughts ( Axline, 1974 ) . Play therapy has been preponderantly employed in kids with emotional troubles and deformations and intends to understate and decrease children’s chiefly destructive emotions ( e. g. anxiousness, fright, insecurity ) through moving out these emotions. Observation of a kid during guided drama state of affairss provides the healers with penetrations about the emotional jobs and troubles faced by the kid and enables the healers to research ways for restoring the child’s security and command of ego, state of affairs and sentiments.

Cognitive Theories – From Piaget to Vygotski

The most influential figures for cognitive theories are Piaget ( 1962 ) and Vygotsky ( 1978 ) who both attempted to grok the precise relationship between cognitive developments and play behavior in a kid. In order to understand Piaget’s thoughts on kid drama one has to be foremost acquainted with his cognitive development theory in which assimilation and adjustment are the two most of import and prevalent factors. Assimilation involves the procedure of a kid absorbing and incorporating external information from the outside universe into preexistent mental constructions while the ultimate end is to obtain a province of equilibrium where the cognitive balance is maintained. This is reached by kids continuously accommodating and suiting their progressive and unbalanced mental constructions in order to better their response of existent universe information.

This explains partially why kids enjoy playing as they do non necessitate to accommodate their cognitive strategies to the universe any longer when they play but instead the universe has to suit to the existence which they have created harmonizing to their ain simple regulations. Playing can be accordingly seen as opposed by copying where in contrast assimilation predominates over adjustment.

Piaget ( 1962 ) has, in entire, identified three phases of drama and has described the sensorimotor phase as the first followed by the symbolic and games with regulations phases.

A kid experiences the different phases in a consecutive order while every individual phase includes different types of drama.

Harmonizing to Piaget ( 1964 ) kids indulge more in physical activities ( e. g. play contending ) in the sensorimotor phase which frequently involve objects but since playing with objects is excessively practical as to be concerned for the symbolic phase it entirely occurs in the first phase of drama development. The 2nd phase evolves when kids are about two old ages old and involves symbolic or making-believe drama. One object stand foring another is a characteristic of symbolic drama and represents a qualitatively new signifier of behavior which is a polar grounds for the passage from early childhood to a new phase. Symbolic procedures besides enter into the playful geographic expedition of societal functions, as when kids play at being coach drivers, nurses, instructors, or female parents and male parents. Unlike the simple pattern of physical accomplishments, symbolic drama hence involves fanciful world. Harmonizing to Baldwin ( 1905 ) , imaginativeness is the general power of holding mental images. Baldwin distinguished rehabilitative imaginativeness ( as when one imagines a adult male on a Equus caballus from old experience ) from compounded imaginativeness ( as when one imagines a centaur from the antecedently separate memories of a adult male and a Equus caballus ) . Children enter the “ games with rules” phase when they are about seven old ages old and this terminal phase of child drama is complementary to Piaget’s concrete operational phase of development. In this phase, kids become more and more interested in holding societal interactions while playing ( e. g. cheat, cards ) , harmonizing to Piaget ( 1968 ) , and take composing down fictional narratives alternatively of dramatic drama. Physical or symbolic games are still played throughout one’s life although one chooses preponderantly to play games which have touchable regulations and which besides satisfy the demand in everyone to socialize and which come every bit near as possible to world.

However, mentioning to Lloyd and Howe ( 2003 ) one of today’s principal and main theoretical arguments in the survey of drama is whether lone drama represents either an advanced or immature type of drama. As a affair of fact, Piaget’s ( 1968 ) position that the frequence of lone drama does significantly worsen with age is non supported any longer. Moore and co-workers ( 1974 ) have instead discovered that lone drama persists throughout different phases and becomes even more mentally mature with age In a similar vena, Rubin and confederates ( 1983 ) reported that kids below 5 old ages of age were yet non able to prosecute themselves in sophisticated lone games every bit much as 5-year-olds were and while kids traveling to kindergarten were found to prefer solitary-constructive drama, kindergartners play perceptibly more functional lone games. Consequently, in contrast to what has been assumed by Piaget ( 1968 ) one can impossible one’s societal adulthood by strictly looking at the sum of societal interaction and pretermiting relevant cognitive facets ( Lloyd and Howe, 2003 ) .

In amount, Piaget ( 1968 ) believed that alterations in cognitive development underlie alterations in signifiers of drama with merely mirroring the achieved cognitive developmental phase but without drama assisting to take to more mature cognitive developmental phases. He was late criticised by Elkonin ( 2005 ) as he did non offer any inside informations about the indispensable child-adult interactions during his experiements but wholly omitted them.

Piaget’s ( 1968 ) point of view bases in blunt contrast to Vygotsky ( 1976 ) who strongly believed that drama facilitates and accelerates cognitive development in kids. Vygotski’s attack was non merely dissimilar to that of Piaget but besides to those of Freud as he focused on normal jobs in children’s development whereas Freud took more the utmost instances of traumatised kids into consideration. His thoughts were, however, in conformity with many other well-known theoreticians like for case Bruner ( 1972 ) or Russ ( 1995 ) who like him saw sociodramatic drama which is discovered by 2-year-olds as indispensable for emotional, cognitive and emotional development. In his eyes, sociodramatic drama serves as a tool to copy the grownups and therefore enabled kids to see state of affairss and activities for which they were really excessively immature in order to see them in existent life state of affairss. “ In play the kid maps above his mean age, above his usual mundane behavior, in drama he is head high above himself” ( Vygotsky, 1976, p. 552 ) . Similarly, in sociodramatically play state of affairss objects can be better defined by kids and societal norms are more successfully internalised and behaviour can be steadily accommodated harmonizing to these norms. An bing fanciful state of affairs and regulations are the two factors that distinguish this self-regulatory drama from other early childhood behavior ( Elias and Berk, 2001 ) .

The fanciful state of affairs includes kids geting the accomplishment to do a differentiation between cognitive head and physical action from external stimulations. As a effect, kids control external stimulations and objects in drama state of affairss as they voluntarily determine the significance and individuality of the state of affairss and stimulations. The kid, for illustration, decides independently whether a stick represents a telephone, a sparrow, a serpent or anything else which he or she uses in pretend state of affairss. This independent power to choose and make one’s ain existence above the bing world transforms unprompted actions of a kid into self-regulation ( Vygotsky, 1978 ) . Harmonizing to Elias and Berk ( 2002 ) with increased age the children’s imaginativeness becomes stronger and stronger and the more they grow up the lupus erythematosus they need an object to be every bit similar as possible to the existent universe in drama state of affairss and therefore they can match in more self-regulatory ways with both the existent and fantasy universe.

The obeying of regulations during drama is congruous with the child’s desire to accommodate to the societal environment which demands moving aboard socially accepted and internalised norms and values. Hence, Vygotsky ( 1978 ) concluded that the attachment to regulations during drama is a cardinal accelerator of satisfaction which kids gain from playing. In amount, one conclude that sociodramatic drama provides kids with the “ greatest self-control” possible ( Vygotski, 1978, p. 99 ) as it demands from kids to steadily battle against prompt and incarnated urges while emphasizing “ social regulations and coordination of ends and behavior with those of others” ( Elias and Berk, 2002, p. 218 ) .

Many research workers have attempted to prove Vygotsky’s ( 1978 ) sociadramatic drama theory. The consequences of Elias and Berk’s ( 2001 ) survey, for case, in which they investigated complex sociodramatic drama ( CSD ) , lone dramatic drama, and dramatic drama in preschool kids, demonstrated that those babies are profiting significantly from CSD drama who are most in demand of bettering their self-regulatory abilities. This determination was congruous to Vygotsky’s claim that temperateness is really strongly related to sociodramatic drama and that playing kids invariably resist present urges in order to adhere societal norms that exists in the pretend context.

Kraft and Berk ( 1998 ) offered more support for this theory in uncovering that babies seek to command their behavior to move harmonizing to their ideas and mental images as CSD was positively correlated to the use of self-guiding private address.

In amount, one can state that today Vygotsky’s impressions about drama in early childhood have received significantly more support than Piaget’s thoughts. However these are by far non the lone influential figures in developmental psychological science and many theoreticians hypothesis about kid drama had to be left out due to the brief nature of this paper.

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