

#22

PLAY IN THE DAY CARE CENTER

BY CAROL HARDGROVE, M.A.
ASSOCIATE CLINICAL PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY HEALTH CARE NURSING

What do the children do all day besides "just play"? Mrs. Jones wants to know when she comes to look over the day care center with the idea of enrolling Jody. Mrs. Jones wants Jody to learn. She wants him to get a good start. Mrs. Jones worries that Jody might fool around, flitting from one attractive but meaningless time filler to another. Shouldn't he have to sit quietly and pay attention to an adult who teaches about things like shapes. ABC's and numbers? Shouldn't he memorize nursery rhymes, use a workbook? Is it too soon for Jody be taught that the right to play must be earned by finishing work first? As she watches Jody get acquainted, Mrs. Jones begins to see more to "just play" than she had thought. Play is not haphazard here, she sees. The children are deeply involved with the materials and with each other. They are, in their play, doing the work of childhood.

ABOUT PLAY

The word "play" is as overworked as the word "love". Play means different things to different people; serves different purposes at different stages of development. Play is to the infant, the toddler, and the pre-schooler the life breath of childhood; the force that carries into experiences of reasoning, relating, rehearsing, and researching. Through play, the child works to understand, to master, to integrate, to try on different roles in fantasy. Children learn through play. They get in touch with new aspects and abilities from within themselves, learn to imagine; create; develop and use speech to become more effective; stick to a task until it is finished; extend physically, solve problems, and increase self-respect. Each accomplishment sets the child toward more challenging tasks.

THE CURRICULUM OF PLAY

Each child is an individual, learning best through self-selected activity and a multi-sensory approach. Children need to move and feel and hear and smell as well as look and listen. Sitting still on command (begin forced to "be quiet and pay attention to the teacher") may make the teacher feel useful but robs the children of the real learning that constructive play offers. An adult performance of an organized lesson plan for the under-fives is not the way to help the child learn anything more than how to please that particular adult. There is no evidence that children's learning centers rest in the seat of their pants. Forced immobility is too often a device that interferes with the kind of activity necessary to form a solid foundation for later academic learning and mature responsibility.

"Identity is safest", says Erik Erikson, where it is grounded in activities. . . work, competence and gamesmanship emerge out of the matured ability to play meaningfully. . ." (1) The child, deprived of opportunities to play meaningfully, is deprived also of the experiences needed to develop later competencies to work meaningfully.

Take the ability to reason, for example. When do adults resort to reasoning? When they encounter a new and unique situation. In reasoning, they draw on previous experiences similar in nature, and in imagination develop an explanation or a course of action. But Jody can't draw on previous experiences not having had enough to form a pattern that allows him to predict an outcome. He doesn't even have the vocabulary to assign words to the ideas he encounters. Yet everyday Jody has more unique experiences that demand reasoning than does his father. So what does he do? He plays. Play serves the same function for children as reason does for the adult.

Footnote: 1. Erikson, Erik Dimensions of New Identity.

Play for the adult serves as a refreshing step sideways; an opportunity to gain perspective and momentary relief from the serious business of work. For the child, the play is both the serious business and the refreshing stimulation that pulls and stretches muscles, mind, manners, and mood toward growth. True children love the sense of doing "real" work: making real bread, hammering with grown-up tools on real wood but adults who care must remember that the really real work is still the work of play. Adults can spoil learning by inflicting demands more appropriate to their own work standards. Demands for performance, competition or end-product can defeat the purpose of play. With children of this age, the process, not the product, is what counts. . . discovering muscles and what they can do; discovering words and their magic effect on social relationships; discovering ways of categorizing, problem solving; creating representations of inner pictures and emotions, discovering how things work, like the properties of paints, water, blocks, and dough. Play that feels like work helps the child identify with those powerful, capable adults. Children feel big and strong as they imitate the grown-ups so long as their efforts are taken seriously however unidentifiable is the end product. But using standards applicable to older children or adults spoils the rehearsal and instead of adding to self-esteem, brings the child down by reminding her or him of her/his inadequacy and smallness.

Tools that put children closely in touch with their activities are fun and instructional. Lemon squeezers, hand grinders, potato peelers, egg beaters and slicers are all fun to use innovatively as well as in cooking projects. Even knives and scissors, under good supervision can be mastered without loss of life or limb. It helps more to teach respect for tools by teaching their correct use, than to preach "don't touch", "too dangerous" and "you're too little." Children, hungry to grow, sneak matches, knives, saws and other potentially dangerous but thrilling grown-up effects, and, using them hastily, stealthily, and ineptly, have accidents. Where a child shows interest, there is the learning edge. Especially is this true

in a day care center where the child may be otherwise cut-off from the homelike but exciting day-to-day adventures of fixing, cooking, responding to everyday emergencies with another set of skills. Without attention to these home-like chores, children in day care may be forced to fill their time with boring repeats of the same child-centered equipment day after day. Putting pegs in holes or rings on a stick has a function, but a child whose daily activity is limited to such experiences is deprived, even though the equipment is expensive and comes in bright red, bright green and bright orange.

When children are doing "real things", the adult helps them achieve success by letting them do as much or as little as they wish. In some tasks, putting the finishing touches on the project brings a clearer sense of accomplishment and participation to the child than does starting him out at the beginning and, as he loses interest, letting him drift away without a feeling of accomplishment. Worse still is the situation where the adult insists that once the child begins an activity, she or he must see it through to the bitter end almost as a punishment for having begun. Better to sit alongside, show interest and affection lending moral support to the child's own desire to complete a project. Children are not always wise enough to choose a project that they can complete. The adult can simplify and help them emerge with a feeling of some success, necessary if they are to move on to new accomplishments. Incarcerated in a space such as a day care center or a small apartment without materials or companions, a child suffers deprivation. A day without play is a wasted day, and a wasted day in these early years equals a wasted month later. ~~It's value, or don't see activity as desirable~~ "Sit still and shut up" is the rule that makes poor day care center into a prison; not "better than nothing".

ADVANTAGES OF DAY CARE CENTER PLAY

For children enrolled in day care centers, most of their play life happens

at the center. Ideally, the good things that occur in a loving home can be replicated and expanded in a good center. What might be happening with Jody at home all day?

Home play often imitates the work of the adults. Mama stirs something in a bowl; Jody extracts his bowl from his special cupboard under the sink and stirs, too. Jody and his mother interact companionable and frequently with Jody usually initiating the interaction. Jody asks questions, requests help, decides what he will do. He moves around the familiar terrain, venturing out of range and then returning to Mama. He knows the people and landmarks at home through touch and warmth as well as through sight and sound. If a stranger appears on the scene, Jody can hide behind his mother or sit on her lap until he checks the person out. He is in his castle.

Although one would say he is playing, careful observation over an eight hour period would show him spending relatively small amounts of time with commercial or educational toys.

Most of his activities utilize adult sized furniture and equipment. He cuddles against a soft chair on the rug, or sits on the couch beside his mother for a story or chat. They eat together at the kitchen counter for lunch and maybe rest together afterward on his parents' big bed.

This environment continually shows Jody how to be a human being in this culture. He sees how adults work, speak, cope, and take care of people and things. As he watches, he practices using his own style of comprehending through play. From these homely interactions, Jody learns to value himself, to solve some of his problems. He can alternate his requests for help with his insistence on doing for himself. It is not the equipment of Jody's play that enriches his home life as much as the atmosphere and the continuing familiar presence of his mother that frees his energy for growth and learning.

Life in the day care center is different. Strange surroundings, unfamiliar adults interrupt Jody's sense of well-being and inhibit his venturing out. The center staff must carefully consider the kind of nurturing that Jody and his friends need from the environment of the center so that they benefit from this out-of-home,

away from mother experience. What makes a nourishing environment?

Jody spends most of his day at the center, so he needs a place of his own if he is to maintain his sense of being somebody. A nourishing day care environment is one where each child has some retreat for privacy. A second need is for a special adult. Not only must this adult be special to Jody, but Jody must be special to the adult. It is not enough to have a number of interchangeable adults who are nice to children; each must have a special attachment, ^{relationship} or play and development suffer. It is a struggle to keep a day care center from becoming an assembly line process or a child care factory. . . . efficient but dehumanizing. Special assignments of adults and children in order to form attachments is essential to keeping the day care environment home-like and nurturing. Until Jody is at home in the center, he relates to his special teacher and uses the other staff members as casual extended family. His bonds to his special teacher strengthen rather than weaken his affectionate ties to his own parents and family. Although children may adapt to institutions where no such attachment is encouraged, a considerable body of research indicates that such personalities are set adrift and rendered incapable of ever forming deep attachments. This shallowness of relating, while it may appear unimportant on the surface. . . may even seem preferable to the clinging, demanding behavior associated with attachment. . . has serious consequences to society. People who make no strong commitment to other people assume less responsibility for their behavior. After all, if no one cares, why not do whatever occurs to you? Responsibility for one's actions is rooted in the belief that you matter to someone who would be proud or disappointed in your behavior. Later in life, people internalize the attitudes of the caring adults of their childhood. If at this early age, there is no caring person whose voice one can hear, that sensitive area of growth atrophies.

In addition to satisfying the child's need for a special place and a special person, what kinds of play materials and activities are best?

Given the above mentioned safeguards, Jody has advantages that few homes afford. Space, challenging structures for climbing and building, friends to choose among, puppets, puzzles, dress-ups, tools, books, animals, paints and clay, water and dirt all are accessible without the restrictions such activities demand at home.

More and more, centers are mixing age groupings to make the atmosphere more like that of a family. Children learn by watching slightly older children, and feel their own competence and strength as they compare themselves to those slightly younger. Jody can watch the older kids cope with situations too hard for him at present, and then he can show off his superior skills for younger children. Younger children also call upon Jody's tender side, allowing him opportunities to develop that aspect of himself. In this way, the day care center offers a substitute set of siblings as well as an extended home and parent-set up.

Equipment, too, allows a developmental mix. Jody can try his hand at something too hard, complete a task that calls for skills at this current level, and fall back for reassurance and relaxation on something like a too-easy puzzle, long mastered.

The work of play calls for good sturdy equipment. Jody's physical self has a hunger to climb, to push and pull and tug. He and his friends spend long excited periods hauling the large hollow blocks from one side of the yard to another. As they grunt and tug, they shout orders to each other, dramatize their play by assigning important sounding workman-like names to each other, "Over here, Pete. We need a whole bunch of more boards on this hole" - they must cooperate with each other in order to maneuver packing boxes and hurdles, tires and wagons, into the desired positions. So that they will get the most from all this physical exercise, their yard offers maximal opportunities for adventure. Instead of a structural steel giraffe that can be climbed on safely by only a few children at a time (and where the biggest part of the adventure consists of seeing who can push whom off)

there are sturdy wooden multi-level amorphous structures that can be added to, expanded, now, a house, now, a look-out, now, a jail, now, a zoo, now, a wharf for fishing, accommodating the comings and goings of several children and groups at a time. The more such structures can be changed about the suit the mood of the day, the more interesting and safe they are, and the more learning they inspire. Large muscle equipment includes so-called junk materials such as old tires, packing boxes, planks, tree tops, abandoned milk wagons and rowboats. Everything is carefully checked out for safety. Planks are splinter-free and fitted with cleats that the children learn how to place for maximum security. The doors and glass are removed from the old car; access to slides is gained by climbing a mound or by several wide spaces for climbing up. The traditional playground equipment of the sterile elementary school playground, such as metal slides, merry-go-rounds, heavy swings, teeter totters and structural steel climbers, are out of place in the day care center yard. They are expensive, dangerous, and do not call forth the learning experiences or physical exercise that the pre-school child needs. Even tricycles should take lower priority on the center's shopping list. Instead, packing boxes, wagons, shovels and spades, sand box, water play, mounds and tunnels, barrels and boards, blocks and sheds turn the children on to play.

Art activities, inside and out of doors, vary from day to day building the children's awareness of their own power and control. At Jody's age, he's getting acquainted with the nature of paints and clay, experimenting with color and form but not yet ready to focus on making recognizable objects. It is inappropriate to interrupt his learning at this stage by pushing him to "make something that looks like something". Now is the time to reinforce experimentation and enjoyment of process. Better to say things like: "You're using lots of blue, I see", or "You are really working with that clay today." Adults don't have to say "Oh, isn't that pretty" or play guessing games about what the picture or object is "supposed to be". Teachers as well as parents learn to stifle automatic compliments. Who knows. . . the picture that elicits raptures of "How lovely" may really be about

the massacre of baby sister.

Involvement in every phase of a project. . .mixing the fingerpaint, cutting the clay with a wire, passing things, scrubbing tables and easels. . .all add pleasure and are part of play. If children are involved and encouraged along each step, they may continue to view work as an interesting adjunct to play as they grow older. Too often, adults teach them not to enjoy activities that they otherwise would love by insisting that they must do their share of what (to adults) is dirty work or by taking over and doing all the really interesting things themselves. Mopping may be distasteful to some adults, but it's pure joy to lots of kids. Many a child who doesn't care for fingerpaints enjoys beating up the mixture and serving it to those who do like it.

Crafts in the day care center focus on the home-like, too. Sometimes staff members get bored with simple activities aimed at the two, three and four year olds. They collect jolly craft ideas partly to keep themselves interested. To the extent such ideas don't take too much adult preparation time away from the group, and to the extent such ideas are simple and call for creativity and participation from the children, they are fine. Good examples are scrubbing pots, polishing pennies, washing windows, planting seeds and other messy, home-like projects that call for skills the children possess. Projects that interest adults more than children include those that call for paper mache, plaster of paris, elaborate seasonal cut-outs. These take a disproportionate amount of preparation time and are more likely to deprive the children than to enrich them.

LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

A day care center is ideal for teaching health care in the fullest sense of the term. Nutritional information can be integrated as the children work together with teachers, nurse or cook to add good nutritional sense to the fun of cooking. Preparation for inoculations, for hospitalization, for regular health care check-ups take place in the doll corner using props and stories to encourage dramatic play.

As they watch the children play out their conception of what medical examinations are all about, adults pick up on misconceptions that need correcting and can follow through. This helps children develop healthy attitudes about their bodies. A day care center is ideal for developing comfortable, non-neurotic attitudes toward physical, racial, cultural and sexual differences among people. Keeping parents in touch with all such aspects of center life provides continuity into home and community. A good day care center stimulates children intellectually through the use of books, records, opportunities to listen and to be heard. There are more novel situations, more problems to solve, more immediate help to insure success, more people to watch and tools to use.

For city children, the center allows more physical challenge and daring than a home safely can. Along with the climbing, construction and carpentry possibilities available to the children, the center offers the child and the family such advantages as trips, and excursions to help families venture into the community fire stations, zoos, grocery stores and libraries. Interesting people can come to them, too. Doctors, nurses, policemen, mailmen, all somewhat mysterious and a little frightening in their natural habitats become friends when they are on the floor with the children on their turf. Children find out that these remote characters are really flesh and blood. . . maybe even Mommies and Daddies. As they handle the stethoscope, listen to their friends' hearts observe the doctor putting on and taking off the dread white coat, they overcome some of their earlier panic related to health care.

SPECIFICS TO BUILD INTO CENTER LIFE

Play in the center would seem to be a natural end product considering that children here have space, supervision, equipment and companions. However the style of these ingredients is important. In order to provide the proper emotional diet for the early years, centers need to build-in coziness, softness, privacy and time and space for intimacy. Although the center is designed for children with child-sized equipment, child-centered activities and childproof equipment, it is

important that homeliness takes precedent over efficiency. Otherwise, there is a danger that the center becomes a storehouse for child care. Shiny surfaces of formica, linoleum, plastic and vinyl need to be relieved by plump couches, rocking chairs, cushions and variety. Even the group thrives on variety in height, ability, age and culture within its members. Efficiency can be an enemy to humanism. This is why the center should not grow larger than fifty children; why opportunities for controlled risk and adventure need to be built into the curriculum and the equipment; why schedules are flexible and play is free.

The good center environment states its message: "Welcome. Help yourself. We understand you and expect you to be who you are. Here is space for you and your things. This is a child's world, but not an assembly line that you must fit yourself into."

Such messages come across partly through the decor of the center. Art... sometimes children's own, sometimes single object pictures familiar to the children, placed at eye level convey the message better than do cute caricatures or cartoons figures drawn to intrigue adults.

Mobiles, poster, three dimensional wall decorations offer invitations for children to feel, examine, and question.

Because children usually enjoy ^{feeling} ~~feeling~~ around with discards and junks, utilizing such materials in the decor of the center invites experimentation. The environment states its message through the materials displayed on the walls as well as on the shelves. The function of coziness and junk is the involvement of the children so as to encourage them to use the stimulating materials available to create in their own way. Only as children relate to their environment do they permit themselves to choose and create in their own way.

SENSE OF TRIBE

In a good day care center the sense of tribe that develops among participating

families makes the place an extension of the home and a positive experience for families and staff members alike. It is hard for the nuclear family, often a single parent, to satisfy the socialization needs for either child or parent. When center activities include the whole day care tribe, avenues open that are life-enriching at school and beyond.

Children learn more when exposed to a variety of adults so long as they have a secure relationship with a few consistent caretakers to return to after venturing out. The little variations of viewpoint and style make life interesting. Values and philosophy are reinforced when shared by many adults. For the only child and the single parent, the day care center offers instant family and instant neighborhood. Families who first meet when their children attend day care centers together often form friendships that last through and beyond those same children's young adult years, and the shared experiences in child-rearing are like kinships.

In many homes, the parent-child relationship suffers from undiluted, prolonged interaction and irritation. The day care center can lessen some of this irritation by offering other friendly adults and permitting weary parents a break. . . something that the most loving and involved parents need in order to maintain their freshness with their children. In addition to the home parent, the center offers other adults for children to turn to, and other spaces where the child may feel welcome and belongingness. When parents view the center's focus as including and extending the family (rather than substituting for or replacing it) then the center may offer more advantages to the child and the society ~~that child will eventually take a~~ ^{place} ~~place~~ than the suburban tract home or the city apartment where life can ~~be~~ ^{become} sterile, uninteresting, and unpleasant by in-attention and snapishness of a bored, harassed parent or sitter. Adults tend to become distracted from the children when they do not have adequate challenge and stimulation to interest them in the children's play and delight.

Just as the children need balance in their diet. . . between home-like activities and educational activities, between privacy and groupiness, between safety and

adventure, so do the adults need to balance their activities and preparation between organization and spontaneity. But they must remember that the value in spontaneity for the children lies in the prepared adult's ability to utilize and extend the play with materials assembled and information at the ready. Otherwise, the children could be in any old environment under the eye of any old adult. The advantage to children of a good day care comes from extending horizons, physical, intellectual, social and emotional.

GENERAL CRITERIA FOR EQUIPMENT SELECTION

Some playthings are amorphous, simple and non-specific. They can be different things on different days, calling on the children's imagination and ingenuity to bring them to life. Examples of such play equipment are blocks, boards, packing boxes, sand, dirt, clay, water and paints. Other equipment is self-correcting. There is only one way to "do it right" but the equipment makes the demand. The contract is between the child and the material he or she selects. There are dramatic play props study life sized, real. . . lunch boxes, neckties, fireman hats as well as dolls and lace curtains to make bridal veils out of.

And plenty of interesting junk stands ready not tossed together into an unappealing heap, but displayed in such a way as to invite creativity and use. Free access to the outdoors allows children to group themselves according to their interest of the moment. Because they can work on a project that delights them with others who share their enthusiasm, the discipline is easier. Teachers are not trying to herd the reluctant or to limit the involved children to the same degree as when the program is chopped into "times" and "projects" where everyone must participate or appear to participate in the same thing. Good equipment allows for controlled risk. . . adventures that permit each child to test his/her own limits without going overboard. The two year old has low platforms and curbs to master; the four year old has a tree trunk with branches to try. Enough challenge is built into the equipment that the children's need for danger is met without their having to

build in extra amounts of pushing and shoving in order to satisfy their appetite for daring.

Good play things are amorphous. Their form lends itself to many activities. Blocks can be everything from the toys in Santa's bag to the morning breakfast food. Large blocks and boards require that the child have a friend's assistance in order to move them to the construction site. Most of the materials in a good day care center demand the involvement of the children in order to become something. Equipment alone doesn't do the job; it is the call to the child's imagination and energy that makes the play equipment educational and body building. Swings and wheel toys should not be the first choice for day care equipment. They separate children, call upon their competitiveness, and offer little challenge to the imagination. Where funds are limited, priority should go to those playthings that lend themselves to imaginative play rather than the endless circling of the yard in the solitary self absorption that trikes and swings often induce.

Sand and water, gardens and tools, pets and paints, props for dramatics, all are more involving, encourage cooperation, learning, and growth. They also call forth more creative interaction from the adults than do swings and trikes.

Safe, smooth wood and stone materials are more soothing and offer more possibilities than do structural steel apparatus. Teeter totters and merry-go-rounds are not appropriate.

ROLES OF ADULTS

For play to be flexible, free and homey, appropriate props need to be ready at the right time. This calls for advance organization. If the adults want to watch and listen in order to enrich play situations and catch the teachable moment they must be present. They can't be flitting about rounding up and preparing projects or ordering tomorrow's lunch and still be with the children. For children to have free, spontaneous, meaningful play, adults must plan, make choices, keep materials orderly and ready in advance.

Toys and playthings are bridges to other people and to the child's inner self. They have no other magic powers in and of themselves. Dough is fun to manipulate; so is water. Children learn a lot by using these materials, but how much they continue to learn at the dough table depends in part on the conversation and observations that take place. This is where the presence of the adult focuses attention on color, texture, and the child's power to effect the dough. Is Jody encouraged to talk to Mary Lou when he wants her tongue blade? What happens when George and Mary Lou mix her red dough with his blue? The adult enhances the play and makes it become a vehicle for learning, not just an amiable time-filler.

At the water table children are testing objects discovering what sinks and what floats. How much water does it take to fill this container as compared to that? There is much to be learned from using these materials just how much depends in part on the teacher.

For some portion of each day, teachers offer planned activities. Some children will enjoy these, some will observe, some will reject. Alternate activities should be available for children with different tastes. By offering alternatives, the message is conveyed that differences in people are fine. Few activities involve the entire group, partly because involving too many children negates the value of the activity. The trick is to have spontaneity without chaos; planned activity without regimentation. No planning results in low interest. Over-planning results in non-individualized and sterile curriculum. An emerging curriculum is different from a curriculum that depends entirely on the children for leadership. Between the time the children ask for an activity and the time the adult can get it ready, interest dies. Children are limited as to what to ask for when they are not exposed to novelty and variety. Adults need to plan adequately so that they themselves won't become too bored by the monotony of the same play or day after day.

SAFEGUARDS AGAINST ASSEMBLY-LINING CHILDREN

Whether or not children "just play" all day depends, in part, on how play is

defined. The infant playing peek-a-boo or patty-cake enjoys the play. At the same time she/he works at the serious business of research. . .discovering object permanency; initiating motor games to elicit a response from the adult; deepening memory paths. What more important tasks could an infant be engaged in?

The toddler, defiantly screaming "NO" appears to be doing anything but playing, yet she/he is playing with the new and awful knowledge the she/he is a separate being and must develop the ability to effect the world with ^atheir puny and primitive repertoire. This is a trying time for them and the adults around them, but if their activities have many targets for their experimentation in encountering the world with its pleasures and its frustrations, life in the world of two becomes more tolerable.

On the other hand, if adults emphasize the chore aspect of activity rather than the joyous quality, the appeal may be washed right out. This is part of the problem of crafts periods where "we all make tulips out of egg carton cups." Games with rules seriously handed down by the adults. . .even such simple rules as those for London Bridge and Looby Loo may prevent play rather than enhance it, because those games meet the developmental needs of older children. Some nursery school aged children love them, but usually more because they enjoy the adult attention than for the game itself. There are more effective and age appropriate ways of delivering that attention where and when it is needed than by insisting on a sort of doggie obedience training session under the guise of teaching "drop-the handkerchief: or "farmer in the dell". Play energy springs from within the child. Too much order following creates a dependency on adult-set patterns, threatening the child's own creativity. Adults in the day care center must beware of the tendency to liven up their own day by using real children as entertainment.

Children need and enjoy the attention of a special adult who is there to admire the height of a climb, the length of a jump, the taste of the pretend pie. From those adults they learn that people are people, not things. They learn how to communicate and cooperate and stand up for themselves. Learning how to play means

learning to trust yourself, feel empathy for others, work things out with others. This, rather than lining up to wait, is the preparation for kindergarten that helps children most. The child who learns to concentrate on his or her own activities is at an advantage over the child who must take in all the newnesses of kindergarten at once: new authority (other than parent), new demands from curriculum and equipment; new distractions. Day care children come to kindergarten ready and expecting to continue the learning that they have been experiencing all along.

SUMMARY

The infant, the toddler and the pre-schooler are dependent on the force of play to pull them toward growth. For them, play is the serious stuff that development feeds on. This is why it is most important for the staff, administration, and parents of a day care center to understand the value and meaning of play for their young charges. If the day care center attempts to become a sort of pre-school for kindergarten, or a finishing school to teach etiquette, or a child labor force to do adult assigned tasks, it fails the children by depriving them of activities that undergird their later ability to learn, think, act, and work constructively.

The good day care center enhances the home, extends the family, deepens affectionate bonds by supporting the parents; adds the play resources of the center to the child and family without competing or diminishing anyone. Play in the day care center offers instant siblings, instant neighborhood, instant adventure with the comforts of home plus the learning and excitement of the world beyond. . . in bite-sized doses, self-administered, in safety.

PLAY IN THE DAY CARE CENTER

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arnaud, Sara (ed.) PLAY: THE CHILD STRIVES FOR SELF-REALIZATION. NAEYC, 1971
- Auerbach-Fink, Stevanne PARENTS AND DAY CARE. Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development. 1974
- Cohen, Dorothy. "Finding and Using Children's Cues to Clarify Meanings", in A LAP TO SIT ON AND MUCH MORE. ACEI. 1971
- Day Care and Child Development Council of America, Inc. 1401 K. Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20005 PARENT PROGRAMS IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTERS.
- Engel, Rose. LANGUAGE MOTIVATING EXPERIENCES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN. DFA Publishing Co. 1968.
- Hartley, Ruth THE COMPLETE BOOK OF CHILDREN'S PLAY. Crowell. 1963.
- Hymes, James TEACHING THE CHILD UNDER SIX. Merrill, 1963.
- Lambert, Carroll. "This is me" in A LAP TO SIT ON AND MUCH MORE. ACEI, 1971
- Marzollo, Jean LEARNING THROUGH PLAY Harper and Row, 1974.
- Murphy, Lois B. "Multiple Factors in Learning in a Day Care Center". in A LAP TO SIT ON AND MUCH MORE. ACEI 1971
- OCD/HEW series of day care training pamphlets. #8: "Serving Children with Special Needs".
- Piers, Maria. PLAY AND DEVELOPMENT. Norton. 1973.
- Provence, Sally, M.D. GUIDE FOR THE CARE OF INFANTS IN GROUPS. Child Welfare League of America. 1967.
- Read, Katherine. THE NURSERY SCHOOL. Saunders. 1970.

Biography, Carol Hardgrove

Carol Hardgrove teaches about play in the department of Family Health Care Nursing, University of California, San Francisco. She participates also in the hospital's Care Through Parent project, a living-in program for parents of pediatric patients,* and works to prepare nursing students for clinical specialist roles in Parent-Child nursing. She is a member of the campus day care center committee.

Before joining the UCSF faculty, Mrs. Hardgrove taught in and directed nursery school programs in day care centers, parent co-operatives, and therapeutic nursery schools.

She did undergraduate work at Broadoaks School of Early Childhood Education (now Pacific Oaks) in Pasadena, California with Dr. Dorothy Baruch. She completed her B.A. and M.A. at San Francisco State College in Early Childhood Education and Counseling and Guidance in 1964.

Her teaching career began during World War II in the Child Service Centers that operated around the clock for children of workers at the Kaiser shipyards.

Interest in play and parent participation for hospitalized children brought from the discipline of early childhood education has led her to investigate** relevant programs in this country and in Europe. NIMH funded the first study.* World Health Organization allowed a travel-study grant to visit hospital play and parent programs in England, Sweden, Denmark and Holland.***

Mrs. Hardgrove serves as Liaison with Parent Groups chairman for the Association for the Care of Children in Hospitals. She is one of the founders of the Northern California chapter of that organization. She lives in San Francisco with her husband, Robert, a writer. They have four grown children and two grandsons.

* Reprted in 16mm color sound film: CARE THROUGH PARENTS: CREATING NEW SPACE IN PEDIATRICS. Available through University of California Extension media center.

** Hardgrove and Dawson, PARENTS AND CHILDREN IN THE HOSPITAL, THE FAMILY'S ROLE IN PEDIATRICS. Little, Brown and Co. 1972

*** Hardgrove, C. PARENT PARTICIPATION AND PLAY PROGRAMS IN HOSPITAL PEDIATRICS IN ENGLAND, SWEDEN AND DENMARK. WHO publications.

Reference #HR/FEL/D/3137/74