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### A Journey Into Creative Play: Its Purpose, Effects and Overall Impact

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A Journey Into Creative Play: Its Purpose, Effects and  
Overall Impact

Meagan T. Bender

An Abstract of a Project  
in  
Creative Studies

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Master of Science

December 2011

Buffalo State College  
State University of New York  
Department of Creative Studies

### Abstract

An interactive journey into the effects and impacts of play on the creative process is explored through an online blog using Google Blogger. The purpose of my project was to explore the connection play has on the creative process. I combined my curiosity of playfulness as a key affective skill with my love for playing with my children onto an interactive website for all to be able to experience my journey. My hope was that by viewing my blog it would inspire others to incorporate more play in their daily lives. My intent was to show that creative play fosters creativity and skills linked to creativity such as divergent thinking. It is my belief that more play instituted on a regular basis enhances affective skills and leads to creativity. As a result of my project I have learned the value of play as an important life skill and its ability to foster the creative process.

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Meagan Bender

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Date

Buffalo State College  
State University of New York  
Department of Creative Studies

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Dates of Approval:

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Ms. Marie Mance  
Lecturer

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Meagan T. Bender  
Candidate

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## **Section One**

### **Background to the Project:**

#### **A Journey Into Creative Play: Its Purpose, Effects and Overall Impact**

The purpose of my project is to explore different kinds of creative play both at home amongst my children and within myself. Play serves an important role in the creative process; it allows individuals to express themselves and tap into their inner talents. I will reference the connection between essential creativity skills such as; risk taking, flexibility, originality, and curiosity and illustrate how they are also essential to play. Throughout my project, I not only hope to describe play but more importantly describe what purposes play serves. I will explore how children learn through play and also the importance play has on a child's cognitive development.

I intend to observe and document various kinds of play in an online blog titled "A Journey Into Creative Play." A blog is a web site containing the writer's own personal experiences, observations and opinions. Blogs often contain images, videos, and links to other web sites. Throughout my blog I will include stories, videos, pictures, and also discussion pieces all focused on creative play. It is my hope that my interactive blog will show the importance of play and also inspire others to include more play in their daily lives. I will also generate a running list of potential research topics for those interested in creative play.

**Rationale for Selection:**

The role “play” has on fostering creativity is often overlooked. Throughout my research I have discovered that both play and creativity demonstrate some of the same skills, thus I hope to indicate such in my blog. Through my own observations as a graduate student in the field of Creativity at Buffalo State College, I have witnessed play being used first hand. Often times during a lengthy class my professor’s would provide a brief break where the class was given an opportunity to manipulate an object or construct something out of Legos. In many instances this was enough time for the class to regain their focus and to trigger divergent thinking. This supports my conclusion that play is crucial to the creative process. In regards to creativity, play is important, but also being the mother of 3 daughters ages 1, 5 and 8, I am very passionate about my selected topic. Too often I see small children sitting in front of the television watching cartoons or playing a video game while their abilities to play and create sit undeveloped. I intend to incorporate more play with my own children and document the results through my blog. I also hope to show that the same skills reflective of creativity are displayed during play. For example, risk-taking is highly representative of a creative individual and at the same time is highly displayed during play.

**Section Two****Narrative of Literature****Defining Play:**

When discussing the topic of play, one thing that I have discovered is that you cannot easily define it. Similar to creativity, it’s a broad term that varies depending upon

the individual. For some play is a literal term meaning to participate in a game or activity. Others may view play as a break from reality or a time to relax. Regardless of how you define play, many experts in the field agree that play is important to human growth and development.

In Stuart Brown's (2009) national bestseller *Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul* he makes it a point to mention how he refuses to give an absolute definition of play because it is so varied. Brown (2009) considers play a primal activity and compares it to digestion and sleep. This comparison further supports Brown's view that play is a natural process that promotes growth and development in humans and animals (Brown, 2009). Brown (2009) goes on to say, "I hate to define play because it is a thing of beauty best appreciated by experiencing it. Defining play has always seemed to me like explaining a joke—analyzing it takes the joy out of it" (p. 15-16).

In Thomas G. Powers' (2000) book *Play and Exploration in Children and Animals* he concurs with Brown (2009) that play has defied simple definition. However, Powers (2000) does suggest that defining play from a researcher's perspective may be the most beneficial (Powers, 2000). Powers (2000) states, "From this perspective, the research suggests that play encompasses a wide range of apparently "nonfunctional" solitary or social activities that involve the manipulation or use of objects (real or imagined), language, loco motor activities, or modified agnostic patterns" (p. 391). This definition leaves the concept of play open ended, however as Brown (2009) previously warned, over analyzing play can be detrimental more than it is beneficial. Powers (2000) suggests this as his final thought on defining play, "The definition of play itself should

best be thought of in prototypical terms, with an understanding that many individual instances of play will not meet many of the criteria usually offered for its definition” (p.392).

In a book titled, *Why People Play* by M.J. Ellis, the author stresses the importance of understanding why play occurs, rather than focusing on defining what play is. Ellis (1973) discusses a particular view which labels play as un-definable. Ellis (1973) states, “The traditional process of defining play is counter-productive. The behavior it attempts to include in one category is not an exclusive one (pg. 21).

The three similar yet distinctive views on defining play that I mentioned above are central in capturing the essence of my project. Brown’s (2009) reference of play as a primal activity really embodies what I hope to view and document in my work. I want to observe play in its most natural form, amongst children. Brown’s (2009) ideas inspire me to capture the beauty within play and to display it as an art form. Powers’ (2000) views on play are a bit more grounded and allow me to envision specific activities that encompass his views on play. For example, when he referred to play as “non-functional” (p.23) it really helped me come to terms with the fact that play does not have to fulfill any specific purpose, it only needs to somehow benefit the individual in some way. Finally, Ellis’ (1973) views create an important theme I will weave throughout my project. Focusing on why play occurs rather than defining it is key. Throughout my blog I will use that as a central discussion piece. As I document examples of play, I will discuss why I think that particular form of play occurred. This will also allow me to identify areas of further research about play that I can add to my list.

**Importance of Play:**

The concept of play is often misinterpreted as frivolous and an avoidance from work. In my project, I hope to minimize that belief and show how play promotes personal growth and development. Through my blog entries, I will report my observations on how play promotes creativity and expression and helps develop affective skills such as; problem solving, socialization, and acceptance of others.

In Peter Slade's (1995) book titled *Child Play, its importance for human development* he discusses play as being divided into two main parts, Projected Play and Personal Play. Slade (1995) describes Projected Play as follows: "Here the body is mostly still; the person is either lying down, squatting, kneeling or sitting and the idea, or dream in their mind, is projected into, onto or around objects outside them" (p. 2). While Personal Play, on the other hand, is described as follows: "In this the whole person is used, in a wider sense. The person gets up and moves about and takes total physical, emotional, or spiritual responsibility for the action. Thus, running, dancing, acting, swimming, active sports of all kinds tend to come under this heading" (p. 3). I like that Slade (1995) provides two distinct categories for play, and I used them throughout my blog as I identified and observed different forms of play. For example, my daughter Cailin wrote a poem that I displayed on my blog, which is representative of Projected Play. Personal Play on the other hand is much easier to visualize and is discussed throughout my blog through various physical activities of play. For example, apple picking, pretend play, and playing board games are all example of Personal Play on my blog. Slade (1995) discusses how each form of play, Projected and Personal, help develop

ones ability to problem solve and socialize. This concept is important to my project because it further demonstrates the importance play has on the creative problem solving process.

In David Elkind's (2007) book titled, *The Power of Play, how spontaneous, imaginative activities lead to happier, healthier children* he further drives home the point that play is an important part of ones personal growth and development. Elkind (2007) discusses a form of play he refers to as therapeutic play. In this kind of play it is used as a coping mechanism in order to deal with stress. He uses "peekaboo" as an example of therapeutic play for a baby dealing with separation anxiety (Elkind, 2007). Peekaboo is a game played by or with very young children, typically in which one covers the face or hides and then suddenly uncovers the face or reappears, calling "Peekaboo!" At first glance, I was confused as to how peekaboo helps a baby cope with separation anxiety until Elkind (2007) offered this, "In peekaboo, the missing person can always be discovered again after brief waiting" (p. 114). This helped me recognize a whole new form of play I had never thought of before. As I concluded the hands-on part of my project, I included a blog titled "What is Your Therapeutic Play" as a means to document how individuals cope with particular stressors in life by using play. It made me reflect that I myself probably have some form of therapeutic play that I partake in when faced with a stressful situation. Elkind's (2007) work helped me in determining that therapeutic play was an area I wished to focus on in my project.

### **How to Play:**

Learning the different meanings of play helps one understand how to recognize it, but how can one make an effort to incorporate play into their daily life? People lead busy

lives and often forget to stop and smell the roses every now and again. You would think if someone was told, “go play” they would know exactly what to do, but to some it can be a foreign concept simply because they don’t make an effort to play. To overcome this problem, reading about how others play and what activities constitute play for them can help.

In Vivian Gussin Paley’s (1992) book titled, *You Can’t Say You Can’t Play* she discusses how everyone, regardless of their circumstance is capable of playing. Paley (1992) is a kindergarten teacher who decided to try an experiment with her classroom. She made a rule that no one would be excluded from participating in play while in her class. Paley (1992) began noticing a pattern in classrooms of teachers using timeouts from recess and activities as a means of punishment. In order to value the concept of play and show its importance, she decided that it would not be limited for anyone. Paley’s (1992) book does not offer a lot of evidence as to the outcome of her experiment, but her idea really offered inspiration for me as I begin my project. Play should not be a privilege but a right. As I incorporated play at home with my children I was very careful not to use it as a reward, but rather as a part of our normal routine. Only then did the true effects of play begin to flourish.

In Marge Kennedy and Karen White’s (2000) book titled *Parents Play and Learn*, it offers numerous activities you can use at home to ignite play. I found this particularly helpful throughout my project as I incorporated play on a regular basis. One section of the book titled *Out and About*, recommends familiarizing your child with places around your home and neighborhood in order to expand their view on the world. Kennedy and White (2000) offer this, “You don’t have to travel far to expand your child’s

understanding of the world. Neighborhood jaunts, in fact, provide a universe of stimulation and meaning for your child” (p. 270). One recommendation offered that I incorporated into my project refers to going on a nature walk. While this idea seems simple, there is a list of items to bring with you on your walk. Kennedy and White (2000) suggest packing a bag with these items while on your walk: seed to feed the birds, classical music, sidewalk chalk, and a sketchbook and pencil. I used this activity with my own children and will be documenting the results on my blog.

Another book, which offers excellent ideas on how to play is titled *36 Games Kids Love to Play* by Adrian Harrison (2002). This book caught my eye because of its initial views on play offered in the introduction. Harrison (2002) offered this:

It is in our nature to play. We play games to have fun, to build community, and to develop physical skills. Through play we also develop social skills like cooperation, empathy, assertion, and self-control. Well played, games are clique busters because they require us to include everyone in the group, to mix and mingle with people other than our best pals. Well played, games are challenging and fun without being mean. They invoke rule and compromise. They're about winning and losing and losing and winning and learning that it's no big deal either way. (p.1)

The above paragraph really captured the reason of why I want to incorporate more play in my home. Having 3 daughters and a stepdaughter, often times 2 or 3 pair up and leave 1 out. If I can use games as a way to involve everyone it might help eliminate some of the fighting and hurt feelings involved with being left out. More importantly than the game



suggestions offered in this book is the explanation as to why games are an important form of play.

### **Play and Creativity:**

Understanding the concept of play and its importance is only one of the goals I hope to achieve through my blog. Another important goal is to observe the connection between play and creativity. Many of the attributes of a creative person, i.e. flexible, willingness to take risks, curious, etc. are commonly expressed during episodes of play.

In an article by Sandra W. Russ (2003) titled, *Play and Creativity: developmental issues* she discusses the importance play has on developing cognitive and affective processes. Russ (2003) states, “Central to both play and creativity is divergent thinking. Both cognitive and affective processes in play have been related to divergent thinking in children” (p. 291). This concept as presented by Russ is key to the observations I have been making in regards to play. I have observed idea generation at its peak during episodes of pretend play rather than during instances of watching television where idea generation is minimal if occurring at all. In regards to play and divergent thinking, Russ (2003) offered this:

A growing body of research has found a relationship between play and creativity. There is a strong theoretical rationale for this relationship. Pretend play is important in developing creativity because so many of the cognitive and affective processes involved in creativity occur in play. involved in creativity occur in play. As defined by Guilford (1968), divergent thinking generates a variety of ideas and association to a problem. It involves free association, broad scanning ability and fluidity

of thinking and has been found to be relatively independent of intelligence (p. 292).

The work Russ has done in regards to the relationship between play and creativity provides a strong foundation for the premise of my project. During play is when I notice some of the most creative acts exhibited by my children and documenting it through my blog helps display the importance play has not only on growth and development but developing ones creativity. By making an effort to incorporate more play into our daily lives you are also enhancing affective skills such as divergent thinking, which is essential to the creative problem solving process.

#### **Additional Selected Works**

Brown, B. (2010). *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think Your Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are*. Center City, MN: Hazelden Press.

Hirsh-Pasek, K., & Michnick, R.G. (2003). *Einstein Never Used Flashcards*. New York, NY: HoltzBrinck Publishers.

Paley, V.G. (2001). *The Girl with the Brown Crayon: How Children Use Stories to Shape Their Lives*. Chicago, IL: First Harvard University Press.

Paley, V.G. (2005). *A Child's Work: The Importance of Fantasy Play*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Soule, A.B. (2008). *The Creative Family: How to Encourage Imagination and Nurture Family Connections*. Boston, MS: Shambhala Publications, Inc.

### Section Three: Process Plan

#### How Do You Plan to Achieve Your Goals and Outcomes?

To achieve my goals, I did extensive research on the concept of play and its importance to the field of creativity. I must admit, my knowledge in the field of play was definitely lacking at the beginning of my project, I had my work cut out for me. Amongst my research I was most drawn to Stuart Brown's book *Play*, which I used as a framework for my project. Brown (2009) offers many insights into play and demonstrates its importance as a life skill. He retells a story in which he reviewed the obituaries of numerous 9/11 victims and the common thread amongst all the articles was that the most memorable moments mentioned were those involving some form of play. Brown (2009) offers this:

That is something that struck me as I was reading obituaries of those who lost their lives on September 11, 2001, stories I began collecting because they were such poignant and gripping portraits. Soon I realized that what people most remembered about those who died were play moments or play activities. The March 31, 2002, edition of *The New York Times*, to take one example, has obituaries with these headlines: "A Spitball-Shooting Executive," "A Frank Zappa Fan," "The Lawn King: A Practical Joker with a Heart," "A Lover of Laughter." What dominated the profiles beneath the headlines were remembrances of play states with loved ones, which were like joyful threads running through their lives, weaving memories and binding them together

emotionally. (p.5)

As I began working on my project, I used Brown's research as a platform to convey the importance of play to others. Brown (2009) also suggests in his work that there is no way for a person to really understand the meaning of play without remembering the feeling of play. In order to really capture that feeling I incorporated several kinds of play in my blog; bike riding, nature walks, building a fort, playing catch, producing our own play, arts & crafts, dress up, and also spontaneous play.

I opted to use a blog as means to document my findings because I thought I could reach a wide range of people fairly quickly that way. I researched several blogging sites and the Google Blogspot site was the most user friendly I came across. By simply clicking "create a blog" it offers step-by-step directions in setting up your blog, displaying your information, creating additional tabs or pages, and naming your URL address for users to easily access your blog. The uploading of videos and pictures was also fairly easy and allowed you to place them directly within the text of the blog to which they pertained. I used photographs, video, dialogue, and drawings as my main sources of documenting play throughout my blog. The Google blog site also allowed me to select my own background, and I chose colorful spools of ribbon in order to make it appealing. Overall, I think using an online blog was the right choice in order to present my observations about play in an organized, user-friendly manner. I can also share my URL ([www.creativeplayjourney.blogspot.com](http://www.creativeplayjourney.blogspot.com)) on my other social networking sites and viewers can post comments and feedback to make the blog more interactive.

**Project Timeline:**

- Week 1 (Sept. 25<sup>th</sup>-Oct 1<sup>st</sup>):
  - Read Stuart Brown's book "Play".
  - Spent 4 hours in the Creative Studies library reviewing literature.
  - Polled family and friends regarding what kind of play they enjoy.
  - Observed play around me and documented it in my written journal.
  
- Week 2 (Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>):
  - Researched PhD David Elkind and his work about learning through play.
  - Read the "Importance of Fantasy Play" by Vivian Paley.
  - Began compiling list of research questions about future topics regarding play and creativity.
  
- Week 3 (Oct. 9<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>):
  - Read "Not a Stick" by Antoinette Portis.
  - Spent 4 hours in the Creative Studies library reviewing literature.
  - Compiled list of research questions that may arise from literature review.
  - Spent 2 hours reading *The Power of Play* article by New Visions of Creativity.
  - Spent 2 hours reading *Kids Play* by Michelle Cassou, particularly focusing on pg. 25 titled: When the Creative Connection Is Cut.

- Polled family and friends about the concept of “therapeutic play” according to author David Elkind.
  
- Week 4 (Oct. 16<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>):
  - Researched the National Institute of Play’s online website.
  - Read Melinda Wenner’s article, “The Serious Need for Play.”
  - Further researched therapeutic play and its uses.
  - Gathered information and books for my literature review at the beginning of the week.
  - Have the literature review finished by the end of the week.
  - Finished draft versions of sections 1-3.
  
- Week 5 (23<sup>rd</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>):
  - Create an online blog using Google Blogger.
  - Set up blog template.
  - Meet with Jenna Smith at Buff State to review any issues with project.
  - Documented and updated the blog this week with 3 different entries of play from my journal. Entries include: An Apple A Day Creates Personal Play, When Mom’s Away Allison Will Play, and How Do You Define Play?
  - Uploaded and configured pictures and video for entries on the blog.
  
- Week 6 (Oct 30<sup>th</sup>- Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>):

- Documented and updated the blog this week with 3 different entries of play from my journal. Entries include: What Is Your Therapeutic Play, What Might Be All The Ways To Play A Board Game, and Spontaneous Play.
- Completed the “About” section on blog.
- Began draft version of section 4, Outcomes.
  
- Week 7 (Nov. 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>):
  - Documented and updated the blog this week with 3 different entries of play from my journal. Entries include: Bonding Through Play, Cailin The Movie Star, and Can the Theater be Play?
  - Begin draft version of section 5, Key Learning.
  - Added tabs section to blog.
  
- Week 8 (Nov. 13<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>):
  - Document and update the blog this week with 3 different entries of play from my journal. Entries include: Role Playing, Too Sick to Play, and Allison Meets Biscuit.
  - Begin draft version of section 6, Conclusion.
  - Review sections 4-6 for submission.
  
- Week 9 (Nov. 20<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>):
  - Document and update blog. Add entry, How Might I use A Paper Plate?

- Review video clips and pictures.
  - Verify that I referenced pertinent literature on the blog.
  - Work on final version of completed project write up.
  - Edit and review list of pertinent research questions.
- 
- Week 10 (Nov. 27<sup>th</sup> - Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>):
    - Meet with Marie Mance regarding edits of paper.
    - Review videos of play and observations of spontaneous play.
    - Prepare and revise 20-minute presentation with sounding board partners.
    - Create 5 tab sections on blog. Tabs include: Why Do A Blog About Play, Affective Skills, Defining Creative Play, and Areas of Future Research.
    - Print out handouts to use during presentation.
- 
- Week 11 (Dec. 4<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup>)
    - Continue to revise and edit final paper.
    - Submit revisions to Marie for review.
- 
- Week 12 (Dec. 12<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup>)
    - Complete any additional revisions.
    - Meet for final class meeting on 12/15.
    - Submit digital copy of project to the Creative Studies Commons.



## **Section Four: Outcomes**

### **The Creative Play Journey Blog**

The main goal of my project is to document the importance of play and hopefully encourage others to incorporate more play into their lives. As I attempted to achieve this goal, several products resulted as a reflection of my work.

The most important product, which I still continue to work on and update each day, is my online blog. As mentioned earlier, my blog can be accessed by entering the URL [www.creativeplayjourney.blogspot.com](http://www.creativeplayjourney.blogspot.com) into your web browser. The main page of my website displays the title of my project, which is “A Journey Into Creative Play.” The design elements on the page are very simple and easy to navigate. Below the title, there are 5 tabs that users can click on to take them to a particular page on the blog. The tabs are labeled as follows: Home, Why Do A Blog About Play?, Affective Skills, Defining Creative Play, and Areas of Future Research. With the click of a mouse, each tab will take you to a new page containing pertinent information about the importance of play both as a life skill as well as to creativity. The home tab takes you back to the main screen where the most recent blog is displayed along with the date in bolded black print. As you scroll to the bottom of the screen there is a link that says “older posts.” Upon click that link you can view previously posted blogs. On the right side of the home screen there is also a blog archive, which displays all of my blogs organized by month. A single click on the selected month will then display the titles for each blog, which you can then click again in order to view them. In regards to the setup and display of each individual

blog, as you can see in Appendix B figure 1, the title of that particular blog is “How Might I Use A Paper Plate?” The date, (**Thursday, November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011**), is bolded and displayed underneath the photograph of my daughter standing on top of a paper plate. This setup is representative of how all the individual posts are displayed in my blog. In Figure 2, the tab “Affective Skills” is highlighted and displayed for your viewing. I incorporated the tabs so that viewers of my site can become more familiarized with the concept of play and its importance to creativity. Each tab is displayed at the top of the home page as it appears in the screen shot of figure 2. Figure 3 displays a blog titled “What Might Be All The Ways To Play A Board Game?” This blog is representative of how videos are displayed throughout my posts. They appear similarly to how photos are displayed, but have a small play button in the bottom left corner. The videos have volume controls and can be expanded to full screen. Figure 4 displays a blog titled “What Is Your Therapeutic Play?” This post is representative of online polls I administered and the responses that I received. For example, on one occasion I posted a question on my Facebook page and documented all the responses on my blog. In another post, I presented a question about play to fellow students in my Creative Studies course, and documented the responses on my blog. Beneath each post is a text box which allows individuals to post comments and feedback, or in regards to my polls they could post their response to the question raised. Throughout my blog there are pictures, videos, and stories I have written which reflect my views on play in relation to the research in my pertinent literature section. I used key pieces from my research as central discussion topics for each blog. For example, ‘personal play’ is a concept from the work of Peter Slade, and I discussed it in one of my blogs as it related to my observations that day. My blog is a true

representation of the journey I embarked on and how it continues to grow and change each day. I attempted to make the layout simplified so that anyone can easily navigate throughout my blog, regardless of his or her Internet capabilities.

### **Areas of Further Research:**

The next tangible product that will result from my work is a running list of potential research topics in reference to play and creativity. I derived this list mainly from the research I was doing as well as from questions that arose throughout the duration of my project. In particular, Sandra W. Russ's (2003) article titled *Play and Creativity: developmental issues* she offered many suggestions for further research topics in regards to the impact play has on creativity. For example, the research topic from my list "Do different types of play facilitate different types of creativity" is derived from Russ's article. The purpose of my list is to offer opportunities for those interested to further explore the connection between play and creativity and in some instances to specifically research the impact of play. The list as shown in Appendix C is organized in order with those most pertinent to creativity being listed at the top.

### **Online Video Diary:**

As I reflect and look back upon my blog entries over the past 3 months, I have realized I not only learned about the connection between play and creativity, but I have captured a digital diary I will always have to look back on. The long-term effects of my blog will demonstrate how my children adapt to new forms of play as they grow older. It will also allow me to deepen my understanding into the connection between play and

creativity and reveal further demonstrations of play fostering the creative process. I can also explore the idea of allowing my older daughter who is about to be 9 the ability to add entries to the blog.

### **Sections Five: Key Learnings**

#### **Content:**

Throughout the duration of my project, the most important concept I learned is that play is an essential part of growth and development and it should be regarded as such. Play is also essential to creativity and as I observed instances of play I was able to notice this. When my children were involved in play (i.e. arts and crafts, make believe, physical activity) their excitement, curiosity, and ability to generate new, novel ideas was definitely at its peak. This observation led me to another key learning; play helps foster ones inner creativity. During play there are no set rules and therefore the worry that you might make a mistake is not there. I observed my daughters generating endless ideas during imaginative play, and if a problem occurred they solved it without hesitation because they were playing make believe, and were not in fear of being graded or told they were wrong.

#### **Process:**

The only thing I would advise others to do differently is to update blog entries in a more timely fashion. I became so consumed with the research that as I would observe creative play I would jot down information in a journal and add it to my blog at a later date. While this seemed like a workable solution at the time, it definitely took away from my blogs being entered as they were fresh in my mind. I have learned the purpose of a

blog is to capture events from the same day rather than to update events from an earlier time. Otherwise, I am very happy with the outcomes from my project. From this point forward, as I continue to update my blog, I will add entries on the same day they occurred.

## **Section Six**

### **Conclusion**

What I have learned about creativity since beginning this project is not measurable. If creativity is the act of turning novel and useful ideas into reality then play, as it pertains to my project, is the act of fostering ones inner creative traits. Play allows for risk taking without fear of being judged, relaxation of the mind and body which creates the perfect environment for idea generation, and creative expression. Play in relation to creativity, is a state of mind that allows you to leave your worries at the door and truly let loose. Before I began my project I had no idea that the concept of play could actually serve a greater purpose. Each time I observed my daughters or others around me 'playing' I noticed not only that they were enjoying themselves but also the repeated phrases such as, "And then next we can do this..." "Why don't we try it this way?" "Oh yeah, I have a great idea!" being uttered. Play was not only fulfilling their need to relax but also fostering their inner creativity and problem solving abilities.

What I see myself doing next is creating a list of warm-up activities all centered around 'play' to be used during facilitations. A facilitation refers to a session where someone (a facilitator), helps a group of people understand their common objectives and assists them in planning to achieve them without taking a particular position in the discussion. A warm-up activity would be used to prepare and loosen up the group prior to

the session. This could include: building a house out of legos in 5 minutes or less, sculpting a creature out of play-doh, a 10 minute fantasy role playing activity, etc. I also intend to create a questionnaire to distribute amongst my creativity colleagues to determine which 'play' activities they feel help get their creative juices flowing.

### References

- Brown, S. (2010). *Play: How it Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul*. New York, NY: The Penguin Group.
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## SECTION SEVEN

### **Appendices:**

A: Concept Paper

B: Screen Shots: Figures 1-4

C: Areas For Further Research

## Appendix A: Concept Paper

### **A Journey Into Creative Play: Its Purpose, Effects and Overall Impact**

**Project Type:** Talent to Improve the Quality of Life for Others

#### **Section One**

##### **Purpose and Description of Project:**

The purpose of my project is to explore different kinds of creative play both at home amongst my children and within myself. Like creativity, play can be difficult to define. Throughout my project, I not only hope to describe play but more importantly describe what purposes play serves. I intend to observe and document various kinds of play and attempt to understand what needs it fulfills for the player. I will explore how children learn through play and also the importance play has on a child's cognitive development. In regards to creativity, play allows for individuals to express themselves and tap into their inner talents. I will observe and report on a connection between a child's level and engagement to different kinds of creative play as well as how creative play can benefit the child's overall well being. My hope is that other families will be able to see my project and hence incorporate creative play into their daily lives.

##### **Rationale for Selection:**

Being the mother of 3 daughters ages 1, 5 and 8, I am very passionate about my selected topic. Too often I see small children sitting in front of the television watching cartoons or playing a video game while their abilities to play and create sit undeveloped.



Since I live such a busy life, working full time, I will introduce my children to new forms of play on a regular basis and attempt to determine what need the play fulfilled for them. I will also keep a running list of all the play activities we use so that other families may use them as an example.

## Section Two

### **Pertinent Literature**

- Brown, S. (2010). *Play: How it Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul*. New York, NY: The Penguin Group.
- Elkind, D. (2007). *The Power of Play, how spontaneous imaginative activities lead to happier, healthier children*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Lifelong.
- Ellis, M.J. (1973). *Why People Play?* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
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- Slade, P. (1995). *Child Play, its importance for human development*. Bristol, PA: J. Kingsley Pulishers.

### **Additional Selected Works**

Brown, B. (2010). *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are*. Center City, MN: Hazelden Press.

Hirsh-Pasek, K., & Michnick, R.G. (2003). *Einstein Never Used Flashcards*. New York, NY: HoltzBrinck Publishers.

Paley, V.G. (2001). *The Girl with the Brown Crayon: How Children Use Stories to Shape Their Lives*. Chicago, IL: First Harvard University Press.

Paley, V.G. (2005). *A Child's Work: The Importance of Fantasy Play*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Soule, A.B. (2008). *The Creative Family: How to Encourage Imagination and Nurture Family Connections*. Boston, MS: Shambhala Publications, Inc.

### **Section Three**

#### **How Do You Plan to Achieve Your Goals and Outcomes?**

To achieve my goals, I intend to incorporate several forms of “play” into our everyday lives. Stuart Brown, author of the book “Play”, which I intend to use as a framework for my project, offers many insights into play that I will explore. He suggests that there is no way for a person to really understand the meaning of play without remembering the feeling of play. In order to really capture that feeling I will incorporate several kinds of play; bike riding, nature walks, building a fort, playing catch, producing our own play, arts & crafts, dress up, and also spontaneous play that occurs which I will document. I

intend to use photographs, video, dialogue, and drawings as my main sources of documenting play. I will update this information into an online blog that I intend to maintain throughout the duration of my project.

### **Projected Project Timeline:**

- Week 1 (Sept. 25<sup>th</sup>-Oct 1<sup>st</sup>):
  - Read Stuart Brown's book "Play".
  - Spend 4 hours in the Creative Studies library reviewing literature.
  - Ask family and friends what kind of play they enjoy.
  - Journal and document various play activities I observe.
  
- Week 2 (Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>):
  - Research PhD David Elkind and his work about learning through play.
  - Read the "Importance of Fantasy Play" by Vivian Paley.
  - Compile list of research questions that may arise from literature review.
  
- Week 3 (Oct. 9<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>):
  - Read "Not a Stick" by Antoinette Portis.
  - Go to the Creative Studies library and review pertinent literature.
  - Compile list of research questions referencing pertinent literature.
  - Read *The Power of Play* article by New Visions of Creativity.
  - Read *Kids Play* by Michelle Cassou, particularly focusing on pg. 25 titled:  
When the Creative Connection Is Cut.

- Research the concept of “therapeutic play” according to author David Elkind.
  
- Week 4 (Oct. 16<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>):
  - Read Melinda Wenner’s article, “The Serious Need for Play.”
  - Further research “therapeutic play” and its uses.
  - Research the International Play Association’s website.
  - Begin compiling important information for my literature review at the beginning of the week.
  - Have the literature review finished by the end of the week.
  - Finish draft versions of sections 1-3.
  
- Week 5 (Oct 23<sup>rd</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>):
  - Create an online blog using Google Blogger.
  - Set up blog template.
  - Document and update the blog this week with at least 3 different forms of play.
  
- Week 6 (Oct 30<sup>th</sup>- Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>):
  - Document and update the blog this week with at least 3 different forms of play.
  - Begin draft version of section 4, Outcomes.
  
- Week 7 (Nov. 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>):
  - Document and update the blog this week with at least 3 different forms of play.

- Begin draft version of section 5, Key Learning.
  
- Week 8 (Nov. 13<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>):
  - Document and update the blog this week with at least 3 different forms of play.
  - Begin draft version of section 6, Conclusion. Review sections 4-6 for submission.
  
- Week 9 (Nov. 20<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>):
  - Document and update blog.
  - Review video clips and pictures.
  - Edit and review list of pertinent research questions.
  - Work on final version of completed project write up.
  
- Week 10 (Nov. 27<sup>th</sup>- Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>):
  - Review videos of play and observations of spontaneous play.
  - Revise 20-minute presentation with sounding board partners.
  - Electronically submit copy of project to the Creative Studies Commons.
  
- Week 11 (Dec. 4<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>):
  - Continue to update blog.
  - Revise and edit final paper.
  - Schedule meeting with Marie to review final paper.
  - Meet with sounding board partners.
  
- Week 12 (Dec. 12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>):
  - Continue final editing phase of paper.

- Meet for final class on the 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Have paper copy submitted to digital commons.

#### **Section Four**

##### **What will be the Tangible Product (s) or Outcomes?**

The tangible products that will result from my work will be an online interactive blog with pictures, videos, and commentaries all documenting play in my daily life. I will also create a running list of potential research questions that arise as I complete my project.

#### **Section Five**

##### **Personal Learning Goals:**

- I would like to incorporate creative play as a regular activity in the lives of my children and myself.
- I would like to create my own personal definition for play as it pertains to my life.
- I would like others to use my project as a reason to incorporate creative play into their families' lives.

##### **What Criteria Will You Use To Measure The Effectiveness Of Your Achievement?**

- Will I begin incorporating more play in my daily life?
- Will my project add to my knowledge base about play?
- Outside reactions and comments to my blog. Will it spark conversation about play?

- I can use video to display the children during different kinds of play and show their interactions independently and together.

**Evaluation:**

I intend to evaluate my results as mentioned above, by referencing my weekly journal entries and logging changes and outcomes as a result of play both in a journal and on my online blog. I also intend to display videos in sequence from beginning to end, in order to display how their behaviors and interactions may have changed and developed during creative play. I will also keep a running list of the different kinds of creative play they are engaged with over the 10-week period. I will present my findings to an outside audience and ask them to complete a small survey giving their overall opinion on whether regular creative play had a positive impact, negative impact, or no impact at all based on my findings.

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## Appendix B: Screen Shots

Figure 1

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying a Blogger blog post. The browser's address bar shows the URL `creativeplayjourney.blogspot.com/2011_12_01_archive.html`. The blog's title is "A Journey Into Creative Play" and the navigation menu includes "Home", "Why Do A Blog About Play?", "Affective Skills", "Defining Creative Play", and "Areas of Future Research".

The main content area features a post dated "THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2011" with the title "How Might I Use A Paper Plate?". The post is dated "Thursday, November 24th, 2011" and includes a photograph of a young child in a red outfit standing on a white paper plate. The text of the post describes a family activity where children decorated a Christmas tree using paper plates as ornaments. The author reflects on the children's creative use of the plates as ice skates.

On the right side of the page, there is a sidebar with several sections: "FOLLOWERS" with a "Join this site with Google Friend Connect" button and a "Members (1)" list; "BLOG ARCHIVE" with a tree view showing "2011 (13)", "December (3)" (with the current post highlighted), and "November (10)"; and "ABOUT ME" for "Meg", who states she started the blog to document creative play at home.

Figure 2



The screenshot shows a web browser window with two tabs: 'MASTERS PROJECT 3000' and 'A Journey Into Creative Play:'. The address bar shows the URL 'creativeplayjourney.blogspot.com/p/affective-skills.html'. The browser's status bar indicates 'Imported From IE' and 'Lalaloopsy'.

The main content area features a large title 'A Journey Into Creative Play' in a cursive font. Below the title is a navigation menu with the following items: 'Home', 'Why Do A Blog About Play?', 'Affective Skills', 'Defining Creative Play', and 'Areas of Future Research'. The 'Affective Skills' item is currently selected.

The main text of the page is as follows:

**Affective Skills**

**Affective skills are a type of learning that focus on growth in areas of feelings and emotions. These skills are essential to the creative process. Take note that "playfulness" is listed as a key affective skill. This further stresses the importance play has on fostering the creative process.**

**Seven Key Affective Skills to the Creative Process:**

- Mindfulness
  - The ability to attend to our thoughts, feelings and sensations, relative to the present situation
  - Used to gather relative data and to determine the next process step
- Dreaming
  - Exploring the vision
  - By dreaming we imagine our hopes and desires
- Sensing Gaps
  - Formulating Challenges
  - Becoming consciously aware of discrepancies between what currently exists and is desired or required
- Playfulness
  - To freely enjoy toying with ones ideas
- Avoiding Premature Closure

The right sidebar contains the following sections:

**FOLLOWERS**

Join this site with Google Friend Connect

Members (1)

Already a member? [Sign in](#)

**BLOG ARCHIVE**

- ▼ 2011 (13)
  - ▶ December (3)
  - ▼ November (10)
    - Role Playing
    - Can The Theater Be "Play?"
    - Callin the Movie Star!!
    - Bonding Through Play
    - Spontaneous Play!
    - What Might Be All The Ways To Play A Board Game??
    - What is Your Therapeutic Play??
    - When Mom's Away...Allison Will Play!

Figure 3

The image is a screenshot of a web browser window. The address bar shows the URL [creativeplayjourney.blogspot.com/search?updated-max=2011-11-26T12:03:00-08:00&max-results=7](http://creativeplayjourney.blogspot.com/search?updated-max=2011-11-26T12:03:00-08:00&max-results=7). The page title is "What Might Be All The Ways To Play A Board Game??" and the date is "Monday, October 10th, 2011". The main text describes how three children (Allison, Cailin, and Camryn) played a princess-themed board game with their own rules. Below the text is a video player showing a child playing a board game on the floor. The video player has a progress bar at 0:00 / 0:00. To the right of the text is a large image of a roll of fabric with a light blue background and large grey polka dots.

MASTERS PROJECT 3000 x A Journey Into Creative Play x

← → ↻ creativeplayjourney.blogspot.com/search?updated-max=2011-11-26T12:03:00-08:00&max-results=7 ☆ 🔍

Imported From IE Lalaloopsy

### What Might Be All The Ways To Play A Board Game??

Monday, October 10th, 2011

This Evening my 5 year old Allison pulled out a princess themed board game and spread it out on the living room floor. As she started playing I noticed she was making up her own rules to the game but to her it seemed to make perfect sense. She spent about 10-15 minutes, then she proceeded to walk away and leave the game lying on the floor. Shortly after, my 8 year old Cailin sat down and started playing the same princess game. She also was making up her own rules, but they were more complex than Allison's. Cailin had multiple steps and directions, which I asked her to describe for me. After Cailin was finished, Camryn my 1 year old decided to give it a try....of course "playing" for Camryn included throwing the pieces around and stepping on parts of the board game. Although, each child had a completely different set of rules and directions for the exact same game, they adapted it to their own personal level of fun and play. Watch the videos below to see :)





Figure 4

MASTERS PROJECT 3000 x A Journey Into Creative Play x

creativeplayjourney.blogspot.com/search?updated-max=2011-11-26T12:03:00-08:00&max-results=7

Imported From IE Lalaloopsy

### What Is Your Therapeutic Play??

Wednesday, October 5th, 2011

David Elkind described a kind of play called "therapeutic play" which is a kind of play used as a coping mechanism to deal with stress. I found this very interesting, yet challenging to observe. It is much easier to identify this kind of play within yourself rather than trying to determine someone else's level of stress. I posed this question to friends: **Help me out guys---I am doing research on David Elkind's work on therapeutic play... This refers to a particular activity someone might do when faced with stressful situations...For example: listening to music, writing in a journal, etc...Can you tell me what your therapeutic play is??**

**Below are the unedited responses I received, anonymous of course.**

- when i get stressed out i usually turn the music up and sew :)
- Eat! :)
- Tap my feet and once in awhile twirl my hair around my finger!
- Building something with legos, play-doh, or doing some fun exercise/activity with someone else (spinning class, etc. where I can laugh with the other person).
- Beer. The kind of beer drinking that would break a lesser man's jaw...and yes, I stole that from a Dos Equis commercial cuz it sounds so damn cool. =P
- Swearing!!! The F bomb Works wonders....lol
- Retail therapy= shopping!!!
- What about DEEP BREATHING when the kids are too much to handle bahahaha!
- Running
- Wine and Wii
- oil painting... sculpting, and floor puzzles or coloring with the kids...

**What is your therapeutic play??? Generate a list for yourself.**

## Appendix C- Areas of Further Research

- Can play facilitate creativity?
- The effects of play on divergent thinking.
- The relationship between play and creative problem solving abilities.
- Do different types of play facilitate different types of creativity?
- How to use play to enhance a person's creative problem solving abilities.
- What effects does play have on developing affective skills.
- Affective skills portrayed during play.
- Can regular play enhance ones creativity?
- What activities constitute play?
- How does play change from childhood to adulthood?
- How to define play?
- The Impact play has on the learning process.
- What long-term effects does regular play have on intelligence?
- Can one improve their ability to play?
- What skill set is necessary to play?
- How does play impact a child's behavior?
- How might therapeutic play be observed more closely?
- What purpose does play serve for animals in the wild?
- In what ways might play be associated with intelligence?
- How to incorporate play into classroom instruction?

**Permission to place this Project online as part of the International Center for Studies in Creativity resources.**

I hereby grant permission to the International Center for Studies in Creativity at Buffalo State College permission to place a digital copy of this Master's Project (A Journey Into Creative Play: Its Purpose, Effects and Overall Impact) in an online resource.

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Meagan Bender

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Date