CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIEGE

AN INTRODUCTION TO PLAY

A project submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Recreation and Leisure Studies

by

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this project is to briefly present theories of play using slides. This project is intended for use by instructors who are teaching the first or second year student play theories. It is designed to be used with a cassette tape or with the instructor reading the narration while the slides are shown.

The theories that are covered in the presentation are divided into the Classical, Recent and Modern Theories. The Classical Theories include the Surplus Energy, Preparation, Instinct, Recapitulation and Relaxation Theories. The Recent Theories include the Generalization-Compensation, Catharsis, Psychoanalytic, Developmental and Learning Theories. The Modern Theories include the Arousal-Seeking and the Competence/Effectance Theories.

In the narration for the slides, each theory is
briefly described. What causes play and what assumptions each theory makes concerning play are described. Also included is the weakness of each theory. At the conclusion of the slides there are areas for discussion and ways to provide for play in recreation programs.

The research for this project consisted of reading the writings of various play theorists to determine what they thought of play. Of special importance was the book *Why People Play* by Michael J. Ellis. This book was the major source for the ideas presented in the narration.
Chapter 1

INSTRUCTORS GUIDE

The purpose of this presentation is to briefly present some of the theories of play. It is intended for use by students who are just beginning their study of play. The presentation should be accompanied by a group discussion of play and the role of recreation in providing opportunities for play.

The theories included in the presentation are divided into the Classical, Recent and Modern Theories. The Classical Theories include the Surplus Energy, Preparation, Instinct, Recapitulation and Relaxation Theories. The Recent Theories include the Generalization-Compensation, Catharsis, Psychoanalytic, Developmental and Learning Theories. The Modern Theories include the Arousal-Seeking and the Competence/Effectance Theories.

After viewing the presentation, some of the areas that might be included in the discussion are: the role of leadership in providing play opportunities; whether the child is allowed to freely express himself in recreation activities or if they are channeled into a certain way to respond; if there is growth of imagination and creativity in recreation programs or if everything is pre-planned for children and if there can ever be one play theory.
Other theorists whose ideas might be included in the discussion are Erik Erikson, Joseph Lee, Luther Gulick, Austen Fox Riggs, Elmer Mitchell and Bernard S. Mason, Johan Huizinga and V. M. Axline.

When showing the slides with the tape, the slides should be changed when the click is heard. If the instructor would like to discuss each theory as it is presented, do not use the tape but read the narration to the class as the slide is shown. This enables the instructor to discuss each theory as it is presented and to add comments.

Included in this instructor's guide is the narration for the slide presentation and a list of references for further reading.
Chapter 2

NARRATION

Slide 1 - Play is a world involving imagination, growth, learning and experience. (Slide - An Introduction to Play)

Slide 2 - Play has been defined as: (Slide - List of play definitions)

Slide 3 - This presentation will cover the theories of play. (Slide - List of play theories in presentation)

Slide 4 - For this presentation, a theory is a set of concepts, definitions and propositions that present a systematic view of the phenomena being studied by specifying relationships among variables to explain and predict what will happen. (Slide - Diagram of theory)

Slide 5 - The first set of theories presented will be the Classical Theories. (Slide - List of Classical Theories)

Slide 6 - The second set of theories presented will be the Recent Theories. (Slide - List of Recent Theories)

Slide 7 - The last set of theories presented will be the Modern Theories. (Slide - List of Modern
The Classical Theories are the foundations of play theory and attempt to explain why play exists. (Slide - Classical Theories)

The Surplus Energy Theory was first stated by Schiller then added to by Spencer. (Slide - Surplus Energy, Schiller-Spencer, 1870's)

According to this theory, there are two assumptions for play. (Slide - Child playing)

First, play is excess energy beyond that needed for survival. (Slide - Two children running)

This assumes that energy is produced at a measurable rate and any excess is expended through play. (Slide - One child chasing two with hula hoop)

Second, play releases pent-up energy stored in body systems. (Slide - Child running with kite)

This assumes that any play activity is the release of energy. (Slide - Child jumping)

One weakness of this theory is it doesn't explain why children play when fatigued. (Slide - Children playing team games)

Also, if there was a measurable rate of energy, it would have been assimilated through the process of evolution. (Slide - Child running)

The Preparation Theory was the idea of Karl
Groos and was based on his view of play behavior being instinctive. (Slide - Preparation, Groos, 1890's)

Slide 18 - Play helps the individual prepare for later life by practicing behaviors and instincts of the species. (Slide - Two children holding hands)

Slide 19 - The individual is prepared for responses toward later social acts. (Pictures of couples and families)

Slide 20 - Instincts are evident in the early stages of development. (Slide - Pictures of babies)

Slide 21 - However, through play, they are nurtured for further growth. (Slide - Girl ironing)

Slide 22 - One weakness of this theory is that it does not explain why adults play. (Slide - Adults playing)

Slide 23 - Another weakness is that the theory implies predicting role preparation. (Slide - Drawing of two children playing different roles)

Slide 24 - McDougall added to the instinct idea of Groos in his writings during the early 1900's. (Slide - Instinct, McDougall, 1923)

Slide 25 - To McDougall, what determines play behavior is inherited, just like the genetic code for structure. (Slide - Pictures of parents and children)
Slide 26 - McDougall does not explain how children learn new play behaviors. (Slide - Child playing)

Slide 27 - The Recapitulation Theory was developed by G. Stanley Hall and combines the ideas of evolution and the instinct theories of behavior. (Slide - Recapitulation, Hall, 1908)

Slide 28 - With these two ideas, the individual inherits instincts to express behaviors that recapitulate the history of the animal order. (Slide - Child on swing)

Slide 29 - All stages in the development of the animal order correlate with the development of the human order. The higher the order, the more significant is the phenomena of play. (Slide - Child in water tank)

Slide 30 - The major weakness of this theory is that it does not explain play activities affected by today's technology. (Slide - Group of children on tricycles)

Slide 31 - The Relaxation Theory was developed by Lazarus and is the first theory to deal with work and adult play. (Slide - Relaxation, Lazarus, 1910's)

Slide 32 - According to Lazarus, work is not totally satisfying for the individual, therefore, play is needed for relaxation. (Slide - Adults playing)
Slide 33 - Lazarus assumes that the individual works and that rewards in work are different than those in play. (Slide - Adults working)

Slide 34 - The major weakness of this theory is that it does not explain the play of children. (Slide - Children playing)

Slide 35 - The Recent Theories were developed essentially after the turn of the century and are concerned not with explaining play, but with its form. (Slide - Recent Theories)

Slide 36 - The Generalization and Compensation Theories are both related to work. (Slide - Generalization-Compensation, 1960's)

Slide 37 - The Generalization Theory assumes that play is caused by the individual using in his play what has been rewarding at work. (Slide - Adults at work and play)

Slide 38 - The Compensation Theory assumes that play is caused by the individual using play activities to satisfy needs not met at work. (Slide - Adults working)

Slide 39 - The individual does not use activities in play that are not satisfying at work. (Slide - Adults playing)

Slide 40 - One weakness with both theories is that they do not explain the play of children. (Slide - Child
Slide 41 - Also, the theories assume that work is either rewarding or boring. (Slide - Picture of people working)

Slide 42 - The Catharsis Theory was developed in the early 1900's. (Slide - Catharsis, Carr, Freud, Early 1900's)

Slide 43 - According to this theory, play is caused by the need to express emotions in a socially acceptable manner. (Slide - Child playing)

Slide 44 - It assumes that the emotions must be released to prevent damage to the individual. The major weakness of this theory is that it focuses on play only as it relates to hostility and aggression. (Slide - Children fighting over milk crate)

Slide 45 - Also, it does not consider planning for expression of positive emotions. (Slide - Child playing)

Slide 46 - The Psychoanalytic Theory was developed by Sigmund Freud. (Slide - Psychoanalytic, Freud, 1920's)

Slide 47 - It states that when unpleasant experiences are repeated in play, it reduces the anxieties produced by the unpleasant experience. (Slide - Children upset)
Slide 48 - According to this theory there are two ways to reduce these anxieties. First is when the individual takes an active role, through role play or dramatic play for example, to reduce the anxieties. (Slide - Picture of children in a play)

Slide 49 - Second is the passive role, where the individual projects himself mentally into a situation. (Slide - Pictures of children watching activities)

Slide 50 - The major weakness of this theory is that it does not account for play that is motivated by pleasant situations. (Slide - Children in car)

Slide 51 - The Developmental Theory is based on Jean Piaget's ideas of the growth of intelligence. (Slide - Developmental, Piaget, 1962)

Slide 52 - This theory states that play occurs when the individual forces his own ideas and limitations on reality. (Slide - Child playing in tires)

Slide 53 - Play is caused as the growth and development of the child's intellect occurs. (Slide - Child looking at a plant)

Slide 54 - It assumes that play and the intellect are interrelated and they increase in complexity with maturation. (Slide - Adults looking at flowers)

Slide 55 - The major weakness is that it does not account
for play that is not correlated to mental development, nor does it account for play in adults. (Slide - Child turning)

Slide 56 - The Learning Theory is the only theory that deals with the enculturation component of the child. (Slide - Learning, Sutton-Smith, 1960's)

Slide 57 - It states that play is caused by some of the same processes that produce learning. (Slide - Pictures of children in learning situations)

Slide 58 - The physical and cultural environment of the individual determine his play behavior. (Slide - Pictures of children in different cultures)

Slide 59 - The major weakness of this theory is that it does not account for the genetic contribution to individual play behavior. (Slide - Child playing with blocks)

Slide 60 - The Modern Theories were developed after World War II and both deal with the idea of optimal arousal. (Slide - Modern Theories)

Slide 61 - The Arousal-Seeking Theory states that play happens when people interact with the environment. This interaction is vital to elevate interests to an optimal level. (Slide - Arousal-Seeking, 1960's)

Slide 62 - This is accomplished through arousal-seeking
behaviors. (Slide - Child looking at engine)

Slide 63 - Stimuli which cause arousal involve varying levels of novelty, complexity or conflict. (Slide - Children playing on apparatus)

Slide 64 - This theory states that some aspects of work can be arousing and successfully relates play and work. (Slide - Adult working)

Slide 65 - Although this theory handles work and play well, it is too general. (Slide - Children with parachute)

Slide 66 - The Competence/Effectance Theory states that play is caused by a need to produce effects on the environment. (Slide - Competence/Effectance, White, 1959)

Slide 67 - These effects show competence and create feelings of effectance which are assumed to be pleasant. (Slide - Child rolling barrel)

Slide 68 - The feelings of effectance create chances of increased testing of competence. (Slide - Child pouring sand off platform)

Slide 69 - The major weakness is that this theory can be considered arousal-seeking. (Slide - Child in sandbox)

Slide 70 - The theories covered in this presentation are some of the many involving play. (Slide - List of play theories)
Slide 71 - There are other explanations of play and new ones are being developed. (Slide - List of other theorists)

Slide 72 - The important thing to remember is that all people play. (Slide - Man kicking foot in air)

Slide 73 - Everyone needs opportunities to spontaneously express their feelings and desires. (Slide - Child expressing himself)

Slide 74 - Recreation programs can provide this opportunity by creating an atmosphere which allows the person to be free and creative. (Slide - Pictures of people in recreation programs)

Slide 75 - The question for recreators is whether play can be part of a recreation program. (Slide - Pamphlets of different recreation programs)

Slide 76 - If it can, how can opportunities for play be provided in recreation programs? (Slide - Ways to provide for play)

Slide 77 - Hopefully, this presentation will bring about future discussion of play by its viewers. (Slide - Areas for discussion)
BIBLIOGRAPHY


REFERENCES FOR FURTHER READING


