"As A Flower Needs Sunshine" The Origins of Organized Children's Recreation in Philadelphia, 1886-1911

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Philadelphia at the turn of the twentieth century was a burgeoning "Industrial Metropolis". With five discernable metropolitan districts and a highly specialized economy, the city embodied the beet and the worst of urbanized America. Most of its million inhabitants were only dimly aware of the profound changes influencing their lives. One of the, most unnoticed of these, and one which was to have an increasing influence throughout the century, was the "play movement" or growth of organized children's recreation.[1]

Tracing the origins of any movement is always problematic; tracing those of an essentially unpublicized one is especially frustrating. Perhaps this explains why no history has been written of Philadelphia's early efforts at organized recreation. On another level, there has been no systematic study of the ideology of the "play movement"—its tenets, its assumptions, and its goals. In a modest attempt to rectify these inadequacies, this paper will set out the chronology of the "play movement" in Philadelphia and place that chronology in its national context. Next it will present and analyse the rationalizations of contemporary advocates of the "play movement", showing how they evince a common ideology. Lastly, an attempt will be made to interpret the historical significance of the movement for organized children's recreation, especially in the context of the Progressive Era.

I.

At the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876 Dr. Henry I. Bowditch presented the results of "the first survey of public hygiene in America." At the same celebration, Dr. Robert Koch "reported his success in obtaining a pure culture of the anthrax bacillus on artifical mediums."[2] These two breakthroughs, one in public health research and the other in bacteriology, signified the end of an era characterized by one student of the period as the "Age of Sanitation".[3] No longer was the "filth theory of

disease" prevalent; substituted for haphazard attempts to control the environment of "bad" areas was a new reliance on scientific bacteriology and immunology to suppress specific diseases. Indeed, one of the world's first social efforts to eradicate a specific disease was organized in Philadelphia in 1892. Dr. Lawrence R. Flick formed and directed the Pennsylvania Society for the Prevention of Tuberculosis which devoted itself to educating the public on the causes and prevention of this dread disease.[4]

The effects of urban environment and contagious diseases were particularly evident among the children of the city. In New York, the Children's Aid Society (est. 1853) and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (est. 1875) provided lodging, sustenance and protection for hundreds of thousands of outcast, homeless children. Colonel Auchmuty inaugurated a system of trade schools for poor children; Mrs. Astor and others established a vast foster home network for the orphans of the city. Yet what needs to be mentioned is that such philanthropic efforts by the 1890's were increasingly unable to meet the needs of the growing urban population. As Jacob Riis succinctly noted in his *How the Other Half Lives* (1890): "Nothing is now better understood than that the rescue of the children is the key to the problem of city poverty . . . that character may be formed where to reform it would be a hopeless task."[5]

Riis' writings influenced reform in New York City and helped focus attention in other cities on the amelioration of urban problems. The thrust of *How the Other Half Lives* and other books of its genre was to place the responsibility for desired social reforms on the local government. Private philanthropy, especially in the realm of child welfare, could not bear the public burden much longer. It was improper, Riis declared, that "to private charity the municipality leaves the entire care of its proletariat of tender years, lulling its conscience to sleep with liberal appropriations of money to foot the bills."[6]

Throughout the fabric of Riis' analysis runs an abiding concern for the children of the tenements. This reflects a growing awareness on the part of students of society, like those who worked with Jane Addams in Hull House, that urban life was most harsh on children. It was widely recognized that not only were infectious diseases more prevalent in the cities, but that children, especially the homeless and the poor, were more inclined to contract them. Coupled with the abysmal physical

conditions of urban slums and the widespread "evils" of gambling and drinking, these health problems presented a complex set of challenges to the urban reformer.

It is the contention of this paper that the new methods of the scientific detection and cure of diseases and the growing civic interest in the physical conditions of urban life helped set the stage for the "play movement" in America. On one level, the advances in public health made reformers optimistic about the possibilities of counteracting all the unhealthy effects of an urban environment; on another level, these advances convinced reformers that improved public health was a pre-condition to improved public self-help on a variety of planes. Too, the restricted physical design of urban areas—tenements, row-homes and factories clustered together on narrow streets—provided young city dwellers little opportunity for healthful living and none for recreation.

The "play movement" was a response to a perceived need to improve the living conditions of urban dwellers in late nineteenth century America. It was predominantly a philanthropic venture at the outset, pervaded by a positive philosophy of self-betterment and physical improvement. Through a series of transitions, parallelling those in the child welfare movement, the "play movement" was subsumed by local government and its philosophy and organization became institutionalized in the public realm.[7]

II.

In 1886 the Massachusetts Emergency and Hygiene Association at the advice of Dr. Maria Zakrzewska established three "sand gardens" for small children in Boston. During her visit to Berlin the previous year, Dr. Zakrzewska had observed heaps of sand in the public parks in which the children of both the rich and the poor were permitted to play under supervision of the police."[8] At first, Boston's "sand gardens" were voluntarily supervised by interested mothers; by 1893 the Massachusetts Emergency and Hygiene Association employed a superintendent with kindergarten assistants and matrons. In 1899 a superintendent and sixty-six supervisors directed twenty-one playgrounds of this type in Boston, all of which were located in schoolyards. The city government was persuaded to appropriate $3,000 in that year to the playgrounds which were serving approximately 4,000 children for three hours a day (except Sunday) during the summer months.[9] With these

inauspicious "sand gardens" of Boston the "play movement" in America had begun.

The first city to follow the example of Boston was Philadelphia. Although a municipal swimming pool had been opened there as early as 1886, it was not until the winter of 1893 that an organized drive for children's recreation was commenced by various private and philanthropic organizations. At that time the Cultural Extension League, the City Parks Association, the Civic Club and the College Settlement met together and determined the opening of a playground the following summer along the lines of the Boston "sand gardens". Subsequently, several playgrounds were opened and an appropriation of $1,000 was received from City Council in 1895. A contemporary observer wrote:

> The result was favorable so that for the year 1897 the appropriation was increased from $1,000 to $3,000, thus insuring the growth and effect of the movement. In 1898, twenty-five playgrounds were maintained by the board of education with aid from the Civic Club.[10]

The play apparatus of this early period was quite crude. Sand-piles, swings and see-saws were provided at most locations. A playground in Dickinson Square operated by the Cultural Extension League had a bit more to offer, including "separate buildings for boys and girls with baths . . . a running track, sandgarden, swings and other apparatus as well as space for games."[11] The playground was open year-round since the game fields were flooded for skating and one of the buildings was steam-heated. When the Dickinson Square Playground was opened in 1898, it was the most complete playground of its kind in the United States.

This "model playground" in Dickinson Square marks the transition from the "sand garden" stage of the "play movement" to more sophisticated recreational facilities for children. In 1899 a similar "model playground" and playhouse was opened in East Fair-mount Park with $200,000 from the Estate of Richard Smith. Smith had requested that the Fidelity Trust Company erect a children's playhouse in the park to be "devoted to the interests of small children and their caretakers."[12]

It is important to note several things about these early stages of the "play movement". The impetus for children's playgrounds came from private, philanthropic agencies whose chief interest was to remove pre-adolescent children from the

A Comparative analysis of the Structure and Function of Provision for Play in Boston, New York, Chicago, Providence, and Philadelphia Between 1885 and 1895

CITIES	AGE	SEASON	PERIOD	EQUIPMENT	LOCATION	SUPPORT	ACTIVITIES	MOTIVE
Boston	Under 12 Years	July and August or during vacation	Generally afternoons	Sand pile, swings, see-saws, mostly*	Congested districts	Societies and individuals; Mass. Emerg'y & Hygiene Ass'n	Sand and apparatus, games, manual work, songs, toys†	To keep children off street and out of mischief and vice
New York City	Under 12 Years	July and August or during vacation	Generally all day	Sand pile, swings, see-saws, mostly*	Tenement districts	Societies and individuals as Parks & Playgrounds Ass'n.	Sand and apparatus, games, manual work, songs, toys†	To keep children off street and out of mischief and vice
Chicago	Under 12 Years	July and August or during vacation	Generally all day	Sand pile, swings, see-saws, mostly*	Congested district	Hull-House and land donated by individuals	Sand and apparatus, games, manual work, songs, toys†	To keep children off street and out of mischief and vice
Providence	Under 12 Years	July and August or during vacation	Generally afternoons	Sand pile, swings, see-saws, mostly*	Congested districts	Union for Practical Progress, Kindergarten Ass'n.	Sand and apparatus, games, manual work, songs, toys†	To keep children off street and out of mischief and vice
Philadelphia	Under 12 Years	July and August or during vacation	Generally afternoons	Sand pile, swings, see-saws, mostly*	Congested districts	Societies and individuals; Civic Club, City Park Ass'n, etc.	Sand and apparatus, games, manual work, songs, toys†	To keep children off street and out of mischief and vice

*Outdoor only.

†Free play in sand and on apparatus.

From C. E. Rainwater, *The Play Movement in the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1921, page 52.

hazards of the streets in crowded areas. Not only were the children of the city noisy, careless, and destructive in the narrow streets, but they were also subject to physical dangers. Perhaps some of the impetus of the Philadelphia playground movement can be better understood when it is realized that trolley service, and trolley accidents, commenced in 1895. Moreover, the operations began as short-term, outdoor endeavors which gradually became year-round, indoor/outdoor "model playgrounds" with directed activities. Finally, the support of City Council and the Board of Education was minimal before 1900, since this assistance primarily involved the leasing of facilities or lands to private organizations for playgrounds.[13]

Through the first seven years of the twentieth century the Philadelphia playgrounds flourished under private leadership and control. In 1907, the year of the founding of the nationwide Playground Association of America, several Philadelphia civic leaders, among them Dr. Martin G. Brumbaugh, the Superintendent of Schools, organized the Children's Playground Association of Philadelphia. The city's schools at that time had experimented with physical training on the elementary level; Dr. Brumbaugh, as many progressive educators, felt that recreation was an important part of the educational process.[14]

In 1908 the newly-formed Children's Playground Association took over the functions of the Cultural Extension League and "hired an executive to be in charge of the eight playgrounds then being operated." During that year and the next the Association conducted an effective propaganda campaign on behalf of Philadelphia's playgrounds. On May 27, 1909 Common Council passed a resolution recognizing recreation as essentially a municipal function and appropriating $5,000 for a new Public Playground Commission to study the playground needs of Philadelphia. This Commission was appointed by the Mayor and was composed of several notable Philadelphians.[15]

The report of the Commission was presented to Common Council on May 5, 1910 and a Playgrounds Commission was immediately created in the Department of the Mayor to operate the existing city playgrounds. Council also appropriated $100,000 at this time to fund the activities of the Playground Commission.[16]

The Commission's report set forth in detail the arguments for improved playgrounds. The Commission had studied recreational facilities in Cleveland, Boston, Rochester, Buffalo, New

York, Chicago and Detroit, and had found that 49% of all playgrounds were controlled by municipal governments. In rationalizing the purchase and conversion of new lands and recommending the expansion of existing facilities, the report acknowledged the desirability of a "unified recreation system" and the necessity of cooperation by local government agencies.[17]

In January, 1911 a bill was presented to the Pennsylvania State Legislature authorizing cities of the first class to establish departments of recreation to be managed by a Board of Recreation. This legislation, passed and signed into law by the governor in the early summer, prompted Philadelphia's Common Council to create the first Philadelphia Department of Recreation in July, 1911. The following month the new Board of Recreation took over all of the Philadelphia playgrounds administered by hte Playgrounds Association. Named as Recreation Center Number One under this new city-wide Department was the Starr Municipal Recreation Park at Seventh and Lombard Streets, heralded as a major advance in the national "play movement" for its progressive design and comprehensive programming.[18]

From the "sand gardens" of 1893 to the complete recreational facilities of 1911, the "play movement" in Philadelphia had undergone several notable transitions. For one thing, recreation became available to adults as well as children—by 1912 playground facilities were open in the evenings as well as during the winter months. Moreover, the facilities themselves were improved and expanded, making possible a variety of organized activities. The Starr Gardens, for example, offered a program of arts and crafts, an indoor gymnasium with shower and meeting rooms, and a program of outdoor supervised play facilities. The transition from philanthropic to public support for children's recreation was aided by a growing realization, via a propaganda program initiated by the Children's Playground Association of Philadelphia, that playgrounds were in the public interest. Group activities and group goals superceded individual recreational interests ; voluntary groups and community organizations became the primary characteristics of the play movement in the second decade of this century. In all these ways, Philadelphia mirrored the changes occurring in the "play movement" in other American cities.[19] It was especially during the last transition, however, that a changed ideology became so crucial to understanding organized children's recreation in America.

III.

The Massachusetts Civic League Playground Committee Annual Report for 1900 began with the following sentence:

> We are coming to understand that a child needs play just as truly as a flower needs sunshine; that play is not a luxury, but a necessity, without which there can be no healthy growth.[20]

This concept stands at the intellectual core of the "play movement", underlying a set of rationalizations on which the movement was baaed and by which it was explained. Though the rationalizations were adapted and changed over time as the "play movement" itself changed, the core concept, with its dual emphasis on public health and public welfare, remained intact.

The major differences between the early, philanthropic rationales on children's recreation and the later, civic-oriented arguments for improved recreational facilities and increased government control can be seen by examining the writings of several contemporary advocates. In general, up until 1907 the philanthropic interests—and the philanthropic rationales—prevailed in Philadelphia. These interests are perhaps best reflected by Stoyan Vasil Tsanoff's *The Educational Value of Children's Playgrounds,* published by the author in 1897. Tsanoff was the General Secretary of the Cultural Extension League in Philadelphia and thus very much in the forefront of the philanthropic effort for improved children's recreation.[21]

Tsanoff was motivated to write because he perceived "a pressing need for a better understanding of the value and possibilities of Children's Playgrounds." The interests of "play movement" advocates were not solely devoted to the physical development of the individual and protection from the physical dangers of unstructured street play. Tsanoff and his peers in the Cultural Extension League were well aware of the "most important educational factors" of playgrounds: adult socialization and social problems. Tsanoff noted that

> the collective play of the children has a greater influence in forming habits of personal and social conduct of life that has school or even home instructions and advices. Many practical questions for the solution of which we have been looking to the school, the home or the church, will be found to belong to the playground to solve.[22]

In an obvious attempt to persuade the unconverted, Tsanoff then lists several "accomplishments" of playgrounds. They

provide "breathing spots" and "cheering environments" for the slum areas where unsanitary and stifling conditions prevail. They remove squabbling children from the path of traffic, the stores of businessmen, and the grasp of the policemen, whose "heaviest duty all day long is to chase the children with their games from one corner and street to another, in a vain attempt to keep them from breaking windows, hurting passers-by, committing nuisances and breeding tumult and disorder." Playgrounds, moreover, "give comfort to the mothers at home as well as to the children at play." Mother's peace of mind is balanced by her child's happiness at the opportunities for undisturbed play afforded by playgrounds. Indeed, "the most valuable service of the playgrounds is that rendered to the soul." Play is a basic part of Nature, especially of a child's nature ; Tsanoff states the goal of every play advocate in simple terms :

> We must open the avenues to his (the child's) full and harmonious development by supplying food to the feelings as well as to the mind, and thus create proper manhood and womanhood.

Most importantly, playgrounds are "indispensible to formation of ideal character." Character is the accumulation of proper habits; the best way a child's character can be developed is to encourage proper habits of play. Indeed, the playground "will educate the feeling as the school educates the mind, and both are necessary supplements to each other for man's perfection."[23]

The major emphasis in Tsanoff is obviously the perfectability of the individual child. Even when discussing "collective play" and socialization, Tsanoff emphasizes the benefits to be derived by the individual. It is the child whose physical safety and moral development must be assured through supervised play activities. The playground reinforces but does not supercede or subsume the values of the home.

The weakness in this early rationalization of the "play movement" is in its obviously negative characteristics. Playgrounds *save* children *from* the physical dangers of urban environments, *halt* the moral dissolution of mass society, *prevent* delinquency and disobedience. True, they allow for a vague sense of happiness and provide opportunity for the "proper" construction of character, but only as an afterthought and only in a general, undetermined sense. The main thrust of the Tsanoff rationale, as the main purpose of the early "sand gardens" and "model

playgrounds", was focused on individual reform and reinforcement of commonly-held values threatened by urban life.

Philanthropic playground advocates throughout the nation echoed Tsanoff's rationalizations. Joseph Lee, the first President of the Playground Association of America and leader of the early movement for "sand gardens" in Boston, had claimed prior to 1907 that "subordination to ideal ends" through the formation of "proper moral attitudes" was the purpose of playgrounds. But by the founding of the Playground Association (1907), Lee had concluded that an active propaganda campaign had to be mounted to further the purposes of the "play movement". To achieve this, it was necessary that the goals of the "play movement" be more rigorously defined. In a series of articles written and published between 1907 and 1912 Lee set forth his advanced rationalizations on the positive need of Americans for public-supported playgrounds.[24]

In "Play As A School of the Citizen" (1907), Lee noted that the child has social impulses at a very early stage in life. These impulses naturally give the child "a sense of the team", a consciousness of the obligations and responsibilities to others around him. This makes play—especially team sports—an ideal socializing agent in a democracy, "a school for the citizen". Through varied exposure to team sports, children would become imbued with the "ideals of good citizenship." The "ideal ends" of Lee's previous writings had now become concretized as civic virtues. In strong, Lombardi-like prose, Lee observed

> The team is not only an extension of the player's consciousness, it is part of his personality. His participation has deepened from co-operation to membership. Not only is he now part of the team, but the team is part of him.[25]

Lee elaborated on the educational value of play in his article on "Play and Playgrounds" (1908). Describing play as "a serious matter to the child", Lee viewed it as "more than an essential part of his education; it is an essential part of the law of his growth, of the process by which he becomes a man at all." Play is, moreover, an "inevitable instinct" which must be provided for lest it be twisted by environment and shaped into disobedient or delinquent behavior. Seen in this light,

> the whole question of juvenile law-breaking—or at least nine-tenths of it—is a question of children's play. The child is just following Nature's impulse to be a man.

In "Play As An Antidote to Civilization" (1911), Lee took the social control argument one step further. Fourteen-year-old boys should be out-of-doors, Lee claimed, not in factories all day and in the streets all night. Boys of that age enjoy difficult and daring games like flight and capture where law-breaking is part of the play. Lee views juvenile law-breaking as a protest against the "degradation of society", i.e., its over-specialization which alienates individuals from one another. Since play restores individuals to themselves and builds pride in teamwork, perhaps what is needed is to

> introduce into each industry the element of co-operation or team play, as far as people can be trained for it.

Though this startling pre-Mayo suggestion is at the root of "industrial sociology", it also reflects a perceived need to redress the imbalance of industrialized, urbanized America by learning to accommodate its most alienating aspects.[26]

In discussing the legal aspects of playgrounds, Lee makes several interesting points which serve to distinguish him as a pragmatic civic reformer appealing for government assistance. In "Playground Legislation" (1908) Lee stressed the educational value of play by applauding the New York statute of April 17, 1895 which stipulated that no new schools be erected without an adjacent playground. Lee made the point that the school committee should be in charge of all playgrounds because, based on his belief in the educational value of play, "teachers should educate, not just teach." In "Sunday Play" (1910), Lee took on the "Blue Laws" which, he claimed, had made Sunday a day of "demoralization and lawlessness". By forbidding work *and* play, much good was prevented and much harm permitted. This was, in a sense, the only position that Lee took which could be termed "radical". His attack on the "Blue Laws" indicates both the extent to which "play movement" advocates would press their arguments as well as their concern for the legal aspects and technicalities of play reform. The "play movement" had to be rationalized and justified as a legal entity in order to secure government assistance.[27]

In a final article in 1912 "Play for the Home", Lee returned to the family. By stressing the need for play as part of the home life of the child, Lee indicated that he viewed play as an expression of basic social institutions. He claimed that the existence of playgrounds had indeed heightened the importance of the home as a source of play and had reinforced the characteristics desirable in every child: obedience, respect, and con-

sideration for others. The playground played an important role in family socialization. As Lee wrote

> Our effort must be to return the child at night in better condition to take part in the home life than we found him. We must make him a better player, a better listener, a better loser, a better comrade—in short a better mixer even in the home circle as a result of his experience in the playground.[28]

It is obvious that the rudimentary ideology of Tsanoff had been enlarged both in depth and breadth by Lee and his contemporaries in the "play movement". Henry Curtis, the Secretary of the Playground Association of America and supervisor of playgrounds in the District of Columbia, stressed again the educational value of play in his book *Education Through Play* (1915). A selection of chapter subheadings indicate his wide-ranging emphasis ; under "Play as Physical Training" Curtis discusses "nervous stability", "a good digestion", "physical development for women" and "the prevention of tuberculosis" ; under "Play and the Formation of Habit and Character" he treats such topics as "play and honesty", "play and idleness", "cigarettes, drinking and sex", "play is the most perfect democracy", and "obedience to law". In all this Curtis amplifies the multifaceted nature of play and its positive usefulness in help ing build a better society.[29]

It is of some importance that Curtis had been at the forefront of a parallel movement in American higher education—he had lectured in physical education at over thirty American colleges. "It was really after 1900 that the colleges in America began to train teachers by producing graduates in physical education." In this endeavor, they were perhaps helped along by the

> invention and rapid spread of two games of American origin. Basketball was invented by James Naismith in 1891 and Volleyball by William Morgan in 1895. Both have become characteristic and almost invaluable adjuncts of American physical education programs.

The impetus of the "play movement", then, had clearly spilled over to the higher reaches of Amedican education.[30]

This may have been only logical when the nature of Progressive education is considered. Rebelling against artificial formalism in education, Progressive educators experimented with many learning methods in their attempts to educate "the whole man". It is not unusual, then, that a progressive edu-

cator should stand in the vanguard of the civic-minded advocates of playgrounds in Philadelphia. By leading the Children's Playground Association in seeking public support for playgrounds, Dr. Martin G. Brumbaugh established his firm personal belief in the educational values of play. By encouraging Professor William Stecher, another progressive educator, to experiment with various methods of physical training—in the elementary schools of the city, Brumbaugh demonstrated his confidence in the basic moral soundness of all types of play activities. And in serving with Stecher as a member of the first Philadelphia Board of Recreation (1911), Brumbaugh found that his dual interests in recreation and education were being simultaneously recognized and rewarded in the public eye.[31]

The function of Philadelphia's first Board of Recreation was to carry out the spirit of the State legislation of 1911 as well as implement the recommendations of the Playground Commission *Report* of 1910. It was in this latter task that the rationale of the Commission's report becomes important. Written by prominent Philadelphia civic reformers, the *Report* effectively synthesizes the advanced rationalizations for local government control of playgrounds. Part Three of the *Report* is devoted to extracts culled from various sources, all in enthusiastic support of playgrounds. President Theodore Roosevelt is quoted as advocating playgrounds for the development of "wholesome citizenship" in urban areas; President Taft perceived playgrounds to be the city's "obligation" to its citizenry. Part of the report of the Committee on Playgrounds of the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce is cited for its stress on the socializing aspects of playgrounds

> organization, recognition of certain rules governing the actions of all — submission to discipline, cooperation, respect for the rights of property and personality, loyalty, recognition and acceptance of defeat.

The Playground Association of Philadelphia stressed the public health aspects of playgrounds : "since disease and sub-normal vitality are the prime causes of a large percentage of poverty, well directed play is a preventive of poverty." The *Report* cites the International Conference on Tuberculosis resolution which claimed that "playgrounds constitute one of the most effective methods for the prevention of tuberculosis." Joseph Lee's article on "Play and Playgrounds" is quoted at length in the *Report* to establish the necessity of play for a child's education. And,

lastly, the *Report* cites judges and scholars who emphasized the social control and good citizenship benefits of playgrounds-the prevention of juvenile delinquency and the creation of a generation of clean, healthy and respectful young Americans.[32]

This compilation of the ideology of the "play movement" in the Philadelphia *Report* of 1910 indicates that local government was listening to the chorus of voices demanding public management of playgrounds. The early idealism and individualism of Tsanoff had been transformed by Lee, Curtis and others into a pragmatic sales-pitch which stressed the societal benefits to be derived from publicly operated playgrounds. Playgrounds now emerged as the new social panacea, if one can take these advocates seriously. Playgrounds would stop deliquency, hold the family together, prevent disease, build strong citizens, establish a healthy moral life, eliminate poverty, and lead to the complete education of the twentieth century version of the Renaissance man.[33] In short, the common ideology evinced by the "play movement" proved to be most effective in convincing local government to take on a recreational function in its own interest.

IV.

Any segmented view of history, especially one which purports to trace "origins", is at best incomplete if it does not employ the perspectives of historical context. Both the movement for organized children's recreation and its ideology did not emerge from nor existed in a vacuum. In order to clarify the importance of the "play movement" as well as do justice to its ideology, the historical background of American play and American progressivism will be probed.

It must be noted that Americans were familiar with "play" prior to the "play movement". Indeed, it has been claimed that Amercian children possess "a richer play tradition than those of any other civilized nation," due to the inheritance of play from Elizabethan England. To be sure, play has always been an integral part of American social life. Even the Puritans approved of moderate recreation "now and then"; the Boston Commons was used by generations of children for play. It was idleness, not play, that worried the Puritan family and that continued to trouble Americans up to the twentieth century.[34]

In the frontier towns of Louisville, Cincinnati, Lexington, Pittsburgh and St. Louis where time for recreation was at a

minimum, frontier citizens still took their pleasures whenever and wherever they could. Riding and hunting derived their status as sports from what men did for pleasure on the American frontier. The "rugged individualism" ideology of the frontier and the popularity of dime novels relating the tales of the "sons of Leatherstocking" stirred hundreds of young Americans in this period to join boys clubs and seek similar vicarious experiences out-of-doors. By the time of the "closing" of the American frontier in 1890, Americans had built onto their Elizabethan play tradition a whole set of new values backed by a unique mythology. Since that time, millions of American youths have played at such games unique to America as "cowboys and Indians" or "sheriff and outlaws".[35]

But if play was an "American Way of Life" it was an informal, unorganized one. With increased urbanization and the decline of village social life, America's play tradition became fragmented and disoriented. Indeed, traditional forms of community recreation like folk dancing and husking bees were impractical in the crowded urban environment. Young men attempting to satisfy their natural urges for recreative play became "juvenile delinquents" ; in city slums, play impulses became criminal impulses.[36]

The "play movement", then, was one effort to remedy the deleterious effects of urbanization on American life. By at first educating the public and then persuading the government, playground advocates attempted to ensure the continuance of the American play traditions. A noted historian identified this trend : "The pursuit of happiness tended to become a breathless chase, the provision of recreation an organized traffic." In fact, the organization of children's recreation in the late nineteenth century and its institutionalization in the early twentieth was part of a broader attempt at social meliorism known as "progressivism".[37]

The ideology of the "play movement" can be better understood in its progressive context. The intellectual atmosphere of turn-of-the-century America was characterized by the new "pragmatism, skepticism, and restlessness" of a generation of social critics who perceived the laissez-faire doctrine of social darwinism as being "unsafe in politics and unsound in morals." John Dewey's *School and Society* (1899) challenged a Whole set of deterministic assumptions and substituted experimentation and educational innovation, including play as an important learning technique. President G. Stanley Hall of Clark Uni-

versity gave a boost to experimental psychology as he provided a new description of the period between childhood and adulthood in Adolescence (1904). Muckrakers, like Jacob Riis, and civic reformers, like Joseph Lee and Martin Brumbaugh, turned frequently to these progressive arguments for ammunition in their assaults on contemporary social problems.[38]

In all this it became increasingly obvious that government had to play an important and enlarged role. Pragmatic attempts to make cities tolerable like city planning and slum clearance had their start at this time and provided a parallel impetus to organized recreation. Voluntary, philanthropic attempt at reform gave way to government control, as the ideology of a new progressive middle-class stressed the necessity for public monies and public organization to do what, after all, was in the public interest.[39]

If play had been disorganized by urbanization, it must be organized and institutionalized by government. The values of play, like many others, had been distorted by the rapid urban growth. If individuals were to be healthy and happy and if society was to be free from tumult and disorder, it became incumbent upon government to preserve and protect these values lying at the root of American society. Of course, government itself had first to be cleansed of its corruption before its bureaucratic skills could be brought to bear on this problem.

In this sense, the progressive ideology and play ideology can be seen as essentially conservative. Reformers like Brumbaugh, who was born in a rural farmhouse and rose to become Governor of Pennsylvania, were essentially middle-class progressives who believed in the efficacy of bureaucracy in problem-solving. And the ideology of the "play movement"—especially that of its pre-public period—is rife with references to traditional American values emanating from the home and the family: obedience, respectfulness, civic pride, and orderliness. Seen in this light, the "play movement" can be interpreted as a search for a lost world of moral integrity and social stability.[40]

But such a view, as Frank Furstenberg and others have recently pointed out, clearly ignores the reality of pre-industrialized America. More importantly, it tends to stereotype the progressive ideology as basically reactionary. It may perhaps be more useful to describe the progressives as reformers in the traditional American sense—applying essentially time-worn values to new circumstances and producing essentially unprecedented solutions.

The uniqueness of the reform aspects of the movement for organized children's recreation is best seen by understanding its quite anti-traditional emphasis on the child. Children were the focus of much progressive thought and action; they were the prime objects of the "play movement". The progressive view of the child as essentially redeemable, as the "carrier of tomorrow's hope", was substantially different from that of previous generations who viewed child socialization in terms of following parental patterns. This reformed view of children and this redefinition of the purposes of child socialization, championed in this period by Dewey, Hall and others, found great opportunity for expression in the movement for organized children's recreation.[41]

The middle-class progressives did favor change: in viewing progress as desirable and malleable they helped to create, if only for a while, a world of ordered pluralism. And through their advocacy of institutionalized recreation they did foster a widespread structural change in the definition of the nature of play. For play had been an eclectic term at best; the early ideology of the "play movement" gave it some boundaries along moral lines; the progressive play ideology identified its usefulness in social control and socialization; and the wholehearted adoption of play by universities in physical education and by government through Boards of Recreation reduced *play* to a substratum of a broadly-based concept of general education. Like many other human actions, *play* had become rationalized, bureaucratized and atomized in the twentieth century. Paradoxically, though the mode of play was substantially altered by organized recreation and the social goals of play were more rigorously defined, the result was in fact the maintenance of regularity and order in urban society.[42]

The Philadelphia experience with organized children's recreation from 1886 to 1911 was, then, part of a larger context of events and ideas. The social meliorism of progressive reformers acted simultaneously to reinforce traditional values as it produced unique solutions to situations in which those values were threatened. Yet it all was in the service of the social order; the maintenance of a sense of community and a feeling of neighborliness was and is still at the heart of all American reform movements. Though the definitions changed the terms persisted. The "play movement" was one of many factors in the progressive response to an urbanized society lacking order and direction. The movement for organized children's recrea-

tion was perhaps most significant in the unique way it supplied old values with new meanings at the beginnings of twentieth century American society[43]

FOOTNOTES

[1]Sam Bass Warner, The *Private City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), Part III. For a different but not necessarily contradictory view of earlier Philadelphia see Stuart M. Blumin, "Mobility in a Nineteenth Century American City, 1820-1860," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of American Civilization, University of Pennsylvania, 1968. Parallel to, but more incisive than Blumin's work is Stephan Thernstrom's *Poverty and Progress; Social Mobility in A Nineteenth Century City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), Also relevant in some ways is Sidney Goldstein's *Norristown Study* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961). And see H. W. Pleket's insightful article on "Games, Prizes, Athletics and Ideology," in *Arena,* I (1975) 44-89, especially at page 89 where he notes that "the history of sport cannot be separated from the history of society at large."

"Robert G. Paterson, *The Foundations of Community Health Education,* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co.. 1950), pp. 117-118. Dr. Bowditch published his study as Public Health in America, (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1877).

[3]Paterson, pp. 120-132. Of course, the main impetus of the "Age of Sanitation" in the United States can be attributed to the groundbreaking efforts of Lemuel Shattuck and his monumental 1850 study of European and American public health.

[4]*Ibid.,* p. 132. Statistics on tuberculosis show some of the effects of the massive public education program undertaken by Flick and others. In 1900 the United States death rate from tuberculosis was 194.4 per 100,000 citizens; by 1920 it was down to 111.3 per 100,000. *Ibid.,* p. 150.

[5]Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives,* (New York: Hill and Wang, Inc., 1957), p. 140.

[6]*Ibid.*

[7]Clarence Elmer Rainwater, *The Play Movement in the United States,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1921), pp. 9-11.

[8]*Ibid.,* p. 22.

[9]*Ibid.,* pp. 22-37.

[10]Everett B. Mero, *American Playgrounds,* (Boston: American Gymnasia Co., 1908), p. 248. See also Mary Jean Elkin, "A Survey of the Recreation Programs and Facilities of the Bureau of Recreation and the Board of Public Education in Philadelphia with Consideration of Coordination." Unpublished M.B.A. thesis, Institute of Local and State Government Administration, University of Pennsylvania, 1943, page 5.

[11]Mere, p. 248.

[12]Phoebe Hall Valentine, *A* Review of Two Charitable Trusts, (Philadelphia: Fidelity-Philadelphia Trust Company, 1936), p. 8.

[13]Rainwater, pp. 51-53; Charles B. Cranford, personal interview, Philadelphia, October 16, 1970.

[14]Elkin, p. 5; *Philadelphia Inquirer,* March 3, 1907, page 2a. "Professor William A. Stecher, director of physical training in the elementary schools of this city, has arranged the games of the children in a systematic and progressive order, which it is expected will become operative at an early date." For Brumbaugh see Salvatore Messina's excellent dissertation, "Martin Grove Brumbaugh, Educator," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania, 1965, esp. 268-270.

[15]Elkin, p. 5; Lloyd J. Vye, personal communication, October 6, 1970; Journal of Common Council, Ordinance of May 27, 1909; the Philadelphians on the Commission were Joseph R. C. McAllister, President;

Otto T. Mallery. Secretary; Judge William H. Staake; John W. B. Carson; and Alfred S. Eisenhower.

[16] *Journal of Common Council,* May 5, 1910: Ordinance, page 69; Report at Appendix XXII, pp. 87-125.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18]Personal communication with Lloyd J. Vye, October 6, 1970; Elkin, p. 5; Rainwater, p. 82.

[19]Rainwater, chapter IV *passim.;* Joseph Richard Fulk. The Municipalization of Play and Recreation: The Beginnings of A New Institution (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1922). For Boston's development along these lines see the Annual Reports of the Massachusetts Civic League Playground Committee, especially that of 1901-1902. For evidence of development in smaller Pennsylvania communities see Ely J. Smith, "Games and Play of Children," *Bucks County Historical Society Collections,* IV (1917), 1-5; and Frank W. Landis, "Lancaster City Kid Baseball Leagues," *Journal of The Lancaster County Historical Society,* LXXX (1976)) 178-187. The first baseball league for children in Lancaster was organized in 1911.

[20]Massachusetts Civic League Playground Committee Report, 1900. p. 1. The motto of this organization was: "The boy without a playground is father to the man without a job."

[21]Stoyan Vasil Tsanoff, *The Educational Value of Children's Playgrounds*, (Philadelphia: Published by the author, 1897).

[22] *Ibid.,* p, iii, 15.

[23] *Ibid.,* p. 32, 38, 39, 45, 52.

[24]Rainwater, pp. 195-203; see also chapters IV, V,, and VII in Arthur Leland and Lorna H. Leland's *Playground Technique and Playcraft,* (New York: Doubleday Page & Co., 1913).

[25]Joseph Lee, "Play As A School of the Citizen," *Charities and the Commons,* August 3, 1907; Mero, pp. 264-265. The quote from Lee is p. 4.

[26]Joseph Lee, "Play and Playgrounds." *American Civic Association,* Department of Public Recreation, Leaflet No. 11, January, 1908, pp. 3-6; Joseph Lee, "Play As An Antidote to Civilization," *The Playground,* July, 1911, p. 7, 15. The reference is to Elton Mayo's classic study of a Philadelphia textile plant in 1925. See also the discussion of the "bank wiring room" in George C. Homans, *The Human Group,* (New York, 1950), *passim.*

[27]Joseph Lee, "Playground Legislation," *American Physical Education Review,* XIII, No. 6 (June, 1908), pp. 2-7; Joseph Lee, "Sunday Play," *The Playground,* October, 1910, p. 1, 14.

[28]Joseph Lee, "Play for Home," *The Playground,* August, 1912, pp. l-6.

[29]Henry S. Curtis, Education *Through Play,* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1915). xl-xiii; *Mero,* pp. 253-256.

[30]A. D. Munrow, "Physical Education in the United States of America," *Landmarks in the History of Physical Education,* ed. J. G. Dixon et al., (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957). pp. 149-176. The quotations are at pp. 170-172. An increase in intercollegiate athletic competition was another parallel phenomenon of the early twentieth century. See Oscar and Mary Handlin, *Facing Life: Youth and the Family in American History,* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1971), pp. 201-202.

[31]Harvey C. Lehman and Paul A. Witty, *The Psychology of Play Activities,* (New York: Samuel A. Barnes & Co.. 1927), p. 2: Messina, pp. 267-268 for Stecher see *supra,* p. 8, n. 14; *Journal of Common Council,* July 13, 1911, Resolution in Appendix XC, pp. 150-153. There were five members of the first Board of Recreation: Brumbaugh, Stecher, McAllister *(supra,* n. 15), Charles Walker and Ernest Tustin. In addition, the Mayor and the Director of the Department of Public Health and Charities were members *ex officio.* This last position bears out the importance of public health as a motive for public playgrounds. All Board members served without compensation.

[32] *Report of the Philadelphia Playground Commission,* May 5, 1910 in *Journal of Common Council,* same date, Appendix XII, Part Three, pp. 94-101.

[33] Sophonisba P. Breckinridge, ed., *The Child in the City,* (Chicago: Published by the Department of Social Investigation, Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy, 1912). This series of papers presented at the Chicago Child Welfare Conference presents several excellent examples of these points.

[34]Rainwater, pp. 8-9; Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Family,* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1966), pp. 66-67.

[35]Richard C. Wade, *The Urban Frontier,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), pp. 111, 310-313; Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land.* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1957), especially Book II; Oscar and Mary Handlin, pp. 153-154.

[36]Rainwater, pp. 9-11. This analysis admittedly ignores the importance of European—especially German and Scandinavian—influences on American play. The point here is simply to illustrate the richness of America's own recreation traditions.

[37]Ibid.; Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Rise of the Citys 1878-1898,* (New York: Macmillian Co., 1933), p. 319; see also Paul F. Douglass and Robert W. Crawford, "Implementation of a Comprehensive Plan for the Wise Use of Leisure," *Leisure in America: Blessing or Curse?,* ed. James C. Charlesworth. Monograph IV, (Philadelphia: American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1964, pp. 47-69), pp. 47-52.

[38]Harold U. Faulkner, *Politics. Reform and Expansion.* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1963), p. 15-22; the quote is from Richard Ely, first President of the American Economic Association, in Faulkner, p. 15; Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920,* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), pp. 151-152; Oscar and Mary Handlin. pp. 152-153; Paul F. Boller, *American Thought in Transition: The Impact of Evolutionary Naturalism,* 1865-1900, (Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1969), pp. 138-147.

[39]Faulkner, pp. 33-35; Maurice R. Stein, *The Eclipse of Community,* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1960). Chapter 1; also relevant here is Park D. Goist's synthetic article on "*City and Community;* The Urban Theory of Robert Park," *American Quarterly,* XXIII (1971), 46-59.

[40]Wiebe, Chapter Seven; Messina, p. 8.

[41]Frank Furstenberg, "Industrialization and the American Family: A Look Backward," *American Sociological Review,* XXX1 (1966), 326-337: C. S. Griffin, *The Ferment of Reform,* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1967), Chapter I; Although Griffin treats a previous period, his general discussion of characteristics of American reform is provocative 399-420.

[42]Wiebe, pp. 301-302; see also the heritage of the "play movement" in the 1920's in Robert S. and Helen M. Lynd, *Middletown,* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1929), Chapters XVIII and XIX; Douglass and Crawford, *passim.* See also the synthesis of Bernard Mergen, "The Discovery of Children's Play, *American Quarterly XXVII* (1975), and germane here; Wiebe, pp. 168-169.

[43]E. Digby Baltzell, *The Search for Community in Modern America,* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1968), Introduction, pp. 1-13.