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PLAY AND PLAYGROUNDS
FOR CHILDREN OF AGES SIX TO TWELVE

AN INDEPENDENT STUDY

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE BEIRUT COLLEGE FOR WOMEN
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE
DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS

BY

LAMITTA CHEMOR

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The writer of this Independent Study was born in Lagos, Nigeria, of Lebanese parents. When she was four years of age, her family returned to Lebanon and settled in Kfar hatta, their home town.

She attended a French school in Tripoli, L'ecole des Soeurs de la Charité, where she received her elementary and secondary education. In 1957, she enrolled as a freshman student at the Beirut College for Women. She expects to graduate in June, 1961, with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Child Development.

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the first of these is the fact that the system is not a simple one, but a complex one, involving many different factors, and the second is the fact that the system is not a static one, but a dynamic one, involving many different factors, and the third is the fact that the system is not a homogeneous one, but a heterogeneous one, involving many different factors.

It is the purpose of this paper to discuss the various factors which are involved in the system, and to show how they are related to each other. The first of these factors is the fact that the system is not a simple one, but a complex one, involving many different factors, and the second is the fact that the system is not a static one, but a dynamic one, involving many different factors, and the third is the fact that the system is not a homogeneous one, but a heterogeneous one, involving many different factors.

The first of these factors is the fact that the system is not a simple one, but a complex one, involving many different factors, and the second is the fact that the system is not a static one, but a dynamic one, involving many different factors, and the third is the fact that the system is not a homogeneous one, but a heterogeneous one, involving many different factors.

During the last centuries, life was rugged and hard, and people did not expect to have leisure. Only recently did people look forward to a period of retirement, then to vacation, then to week-ends and finally to leisure hours within a day. If recreation is to make its complete contribution to life, it will need to consider the wholeistic approach to life and to help fill all of life with zest for one is recreated through recreation. However, work too is often regenerative. Both are important functions in life. In various things we do, we experience regeneration of spirit and body and thus find ourselves more capable of facing life. It is not enough to struggle through life for a happier existence. As much as we need love, affection, security, success and recognition for our achievements, we need rest, relaxation, and recreation. In the same way as we have to satisfy our bodies biologically, and our brains intellectually, we also have to satisfy both our brains and our bodies emotionally.

Dissatisfaction is a prominent aspect of our daily life. People are dissatisfied with their jobs, or with their married lives, or with their families or friends. In one way or another there is dissatisfaction, and with dissatisfaction comes stress and strain.

Recreation is anything which satisfies us, which sets us at ease, which makes us enjoy life and ourselves.

Many people understand recreation as running away from oneself, while it is really taking oneself in hand and enjoying every minute or whatever one is doing. The running away from oneself, makes it that people speak so much about the what, how, and why of their leisure. They often speculate much but do not know what to do with themselves on a day off. >

An individual approach and complete freedom is needed in recreational activities, for after all, leisure time activities are by definition something we carry out in order to enjoy ourselves.

To have recreation is to derive pleasure and satisfaction; it is a way of recharging one's "batteries" so that one can enjoy new strength and vitality. "Thus work becomes fun, play aims at a goal of perfection, and a passion for excellence is achieved for many children who would not develop it otherwise."⁽¹⁾

(1) Breckenridge and Vincent, Child Development, p. 212.

PART I

A. DEFINITION OF PLAY

(Referred to as "off the job living", recreation today is that "activity voluntarily engaged in during leisure time and primarily motivated by the satisfaction or pleasure derived therefrom."⁽¹⁾ It is refreshment, diversion, less serious and more passive type of playful activity. Joseph Lee defined play for children as creation or the gaining of life. Butler considers recreation "as any activity which is not consciously performed for the sake of any reward beyond itself, which is usually engaged in during leisure, and which offers man an outlet for his physical, mental or creative powers and in which he engages because of inner desire and not because of outer compulsion."⁽²⁾)

"Play or recreation is leisure time activity motivated by pleasure and serves as diversion from the pressing and serious occupations of daily living." ⁽³⁾

To quote Butler again, "Recreation is a fundamental

(1) E. Brighbill & H. Meyer, Recreation, p. 50.

(2) George Butler, Introduction to Community Recreation, p.10.

(3) Ibid., p. 12.

human need found among all people and in all stages of history; man has always found outlets for self-expression and personal development in forms of recreation which have a striking similarity."⁽¹⁾

Hall has still another definition, ".... I regard play as the motor habits and spirit of the past of the race, persisting in the present, as rudimentary function... akin to rudimentary organs.... Thus we rehearse the activities of our ancestors and repeat their life work..."⁽²⁾

For the German philosopher Shiller, "Play is aimless expenditure of exuberant energy", whereas to Froebel, "Play is the natural unfolding of the germinal leaves of childhood". Still others define play as "Activity which is in itself free, aimless, amusing or diverting", or again "Is any deep exercise or series of actions intended for amusement or diversion."⁽³⁾

John Dewey pictures play as "Activities not consciously performed for the sake of any result beyond themselves." Allis refers play to those activities which are accompanied by a state of comparative pleasure, exhilaration, power, and the feeling of self-initiative.⁽⁴⁾

(1) Butler, Op.cit., p. 12

(2) E. Mitchell and B. Mason, The Theory of Play, p. 59.

(3) Ibid., p. 86.

(4) Ibid., p. 87.

Freud considers play as the gratification of the sex need, a kind of substitute activity.⁽¹⁾

Play could take countless forms but it is always a form of human expression, whether it be entirely physical in nature or largely mental or social. It could be group or individual play. It is nonetheless often the only outlet for self-realization and self-discovery, and gives a chance to create, to express, to serve, to gain growth and develop the personality.

The multitude of forms, which play takes, have a varying appeal as the age, interests and desires of the individual change.

Play is an activity distinct from both work and games, an activity which is pursued for its own sake and is free from compulsion inherent in the necessity of completing a task, as well as from the keen sense of rivalry which enters into most games.⁽²⁾ It contributes to human happiness, for happiness is attained only if one has a well-balanced life, and recreation holds an important place in the balanced life along with work, rest, love...

(1) P. Witty and H. Lehman, The Psychology of Play Activities, pp. 21-22.

(2) K. Todd and L. Jackson, Child Treatment and the Therapy of Play, p. 6.

To children, play is life. Through play they develop body and intellect, drain off excess energy, attain growth and experience. As they grow older, other forces of activity make increasing demands on their time, energy and attention. >

The choice of recreation and hobbies is related to inner tension and character structure as well as to opportunities and environmental influences. The preference for a type of recreation is frequently determined by permanent or temporary disposition. The child often chooses out of interest in his immediate surroundings, and more often so, according to his talents. Recreational choices vary from time to time in the same individual according to the energy available, to the frustrations encountered, to the need for active expression or the relief from over-activity, to the solitude or desire for companionship.

Play then is chosen for many reasons, among them one could mention: to discharge aggressive drives, as a form of escape from reality, due to the need to escape the pressure of one's life, or as a kind of wish-fulfillment.

Play may also be chosen for the satisfaction of social hunger, for the feeling of belongingness...

Recreation provides a discharge of repressed cravings and impulses in a manner approved by society. To repress primitive drives is not desirable. To redirect them, to sublimate them, that is what play helps achieve.

Play could be the child's best opportunity for an enriched, abundant and satisfying life. It can bring to him the social and physical nourishment that he needs.⁽¹⁾

(1) Mitchell and Mason, Op.cit., p. 87.

B. HISTORY OF PLAY

Recreation has played a role of varying importance in the life of all peoples. The earliest known races had their games, dances, music and ceremonials, activities similar to those the savage engage in today.

Evidences of different forms of recreation have been left by the Chinese, Egyptian, Aztec, Babylonians and others. The Greeks at the height of their achievements held in high esteem games, athletics, and the cultural arts; with the Renaissance, a popular interest in the arts and sports was reinforced, growing steadily up to the present time, in spite of attempts of small groups to suppress it, the advance was aided by a number of philosophers and educators who, since the 16th century have advocated recreation as an activity of social and educational value. (1) >

The history of municipal recreation in the United States of America like that of other movements of social significance cannot be told fully in terms of a series of specific events which mark distinct stages or periods of evolution, for the recreation movement was the result of a combination of ideas, experiments and developments.

(1) Mitchell and Mason, Op. cit., pp. 2-14.

Many influences have been at work and over a long period of time to bring the recreation movement to the point it has reached today. Events now regarded as significant had only a remote relationship with other events immediately preceding them, yet, they all contributed to the growth of the recreation movement.

The opening of the Sand Garden in Boston in 1885 is generally considered as the event marking the beginning of the recreation movement in the United States of America.⁽¹⁾ In 1853, New York city purchased a large tract of land, later known as Central Park, which also was of great significance. This is believed to be the first municipal park in the United States to be established as a result of a "conscious effort of a democratic body to meet a proven need."⁽²⁾

Many cities followed the example, but for years parks were used primarily for rest and contemplation and not for recreational activity.

The year 1885 is memorable in playground history because of the outdoor play center for children established

(1) Butler, Op. cit., p. 72.

(2) Ibid., p. 71.

in Boston in that year, and its influence on later playground development. This playground consisted of large sand piles placed in the yard of the children's Mission on Partmenter Street in Boston. Each day an average number of 15 children attended this first Boston playground which was opened three days a week for six weeks during July and August. The children dug in the sand, sang songs, and marched about under the guidance of a woman who lived in the neighborhood.

This experiment was continued and by the year 1887, ten centers had been opened. It was not until 1893 however that supervisors and trained kindergarteners were used to conduct the play activities.

Taking a glance backward we see that 'playgrounds', started as a private project, were later taken over and operated as a public responsibility supported by public funds on public properties.

Many cities followed the movement and playgrounds were opened here and there with more or less apparatus. These were called by Theodore Roosevelt "The most notable civic achievement of any American city."

In 1904, the appointment of a Board of Playground

Commissioners in Los Angeles was a significant event. This step, like all the previous ones resulted from the initiative of several local organizations.

Around the year 1900, gradual introduction into school buildings of features which serve both school and the community recreational use became wider.

< As interest in playgrounds spread, leaders in cities decided to come together to discuss ways in which help could be extended to other communities. During the course of these meetings it was decided to organize a national body. The purpose of this body, the Playground Association of America, as stated in its constitution was "to collect and distribute knowledge of, and promote interest in playgrounds throughout the country, to seek to further the establishment of playgrounds and athletic fields in all communities and directed play in connection with the schools."(1) >

"The Playground", a monthly magazine was started.

In 1911, the name of the association was changed to "Playground and Recreation Association of America". Years later it was again changed to "National Recreation Association"(NRA), its present name.

(1) Butler, Op. cit., pp.77-78.

In 1918, the N.R.A. focussed attention upon leisure as a major community problem by declaring that the training for the worthy use of leisure was one of the seven objectives of education. The rising tide of recreation during the 1920's was an interesting phase of American life.

The recreation movement in America has no stereotyped pattern or standard program. Over the years, it has evolved and expanded to meet the increasing, ever-changing needs of the people. Though some form of play has always existed, today's play, existing as a highly organized institution is only a product of the twentieth century. But opportunities for wholesome recreation are still far from universal.

The term "play" used to be given to all aimless activities. Later, it was extended to those make-believe plays. Lastly, play was thought of in terms of more serious activities and today play is thought of as "life itself".

C. NEED FOR PLAY

Many very significant changes far reaching in their effects have taken place in our social life in recent years, and have resulted in serious social maladjustments. A general survey of man's physical activities previous to the present era of civilization shows that he was an active person, which he is no more, due to the fact that work has become so highly specialized. The opportunity for all-around work that will contribute to the development of the big muscles of the body has quite disappeared.

Man enjoys increased leisure time provided through the invention of so many time-saving devices, and it is through this leisure time that the body must be trained in the wholesome activity that one's occupation denies.

Recreation has always afforded an outlet for release, self-expression, and for the attainment of satisfaction in life, along with its undeniable efficacy in the development of vigorous physique and strong health. Since earliest times, festivals, dances, games, and music have been a part of life, although at times they have been looked upon with disapproval by certain groups. But recreation nowadays has expanded in its various forms to an unprecedented degree.

In all lands, play is the chief occupation of the young child to whom it is the major business of life. Through play, he attains growth and experience and at it he does a variety of interesting things. Play is nature's way of affording outlets to the great biological urge for activity and the means of acquiring skills needed in later life.

Recent changes affected the need for recreation, changes like the growth of crowded cities, changing home conditions, specialization and automation in industry, rising economy, population changes, and the strain of modern life.

Man needs play if he wants to achieve happiness, for happiness is essentially a by-product which can best be achieved in a balanced life, and play holds an important place in the balanced life along with work, rest, love and worship. Dr. Austin Fox Riggs, emphasized the meaning of play when he wrote "The Function of play is to balance life in relation to work, to afford a refreshing contrast to responsibility and routine, to keep alive the spirit of adventure and that sense of proportion which prevents taking oneself and one's job too seriously, and thus to avert the premature death of youth and not in-

frequently the premature death of the man himself." (1)

Play, especially guided play, is undoubtedly needed in our modern society where leisure has so much increased. Man, throughout history has always prized leisure and has longed for it. Now that he has obtained leisure, he does not know what to do with it. People unequipped for leisure often tend either to go into trouble or stagnate, and the only way to avoid both situations is to start educating the children for leisure from their tenderest age.

Fortunate is the individual well endowed with the tools of recreational living for he has an investment that will bring him compound interest in the years ahead, whatever trade, occupation, or profession he may enter.

(The chief value of recreation lies in its power to enrich peoples' lives. He who has a rich recreational life is more likely to be a healthy, well-balanced, law-abiding citizen, than the person who is deprived of recreational opportunities.)

(1) Butler, Op. cit., p.73.

D. THEORIES OF PLAY

Several theories have been developed to explain the reasons why an individual plays. Each has given a partial explanation but not a single one has given a fully convincing one. Hence, each is necessary to supplement the others.⁽¹⁾

The most explanatory theories today include, according to Mitchell and Mason:

1. the surplus energy theory.
2. the recreation theory.
3. instinct-practice theory.
4. the recapitulation theory.⁽²⁾

A. Surplus-energy theory: this theory is the oldest and most wide-spread theory of play. Shiller, the German poet and philosopher, defined play as "aimless expenditure of exuberant theory", adding, "The animal works when a privation is the motor of its activity and it plays when the plenitude of force is this motor, when an exuberant life is excited to action."⁽³⁾

This theory wrongly called the Shiller-Spencer theory

(1) Stuart Carten Dodd, Social Relations in the Middle East, p. 385.

(2) Mitchell and Mason, Op. cit., p. 48.

(3) Friedrich Shiller, Essays, Aesthetical and Philosophical, p. 112.

was mentioned in educational literature long before the days of Shiller and Spencer.

In this theory, play consists of using up accumulated energy. Children and animals are supposed to have more energy than is needed for subsistence and so play is due to the need to use surplus energy or unused surplus energy. Play affords the individual with the necessary wholesome outlet. Thus, after some indulgence in play, the surplus energy is expended and the organism is restored to normal condition.⁽¹⁾

Against this theory, it has been proved that children would play the whole day long forgetting even to sleep or eat. Starving children join in harsh play, forgetting their empty stomach.

This theory is true however in so far as all organic beings possessing energy, tend to do what they like whenever they are freed from "pressure" or "work". They play... After having played for some time and thus released enough energy, they tend to sleep to gain this lost energy back. This theory helped the installment of the first playgrounds, hoping thus to avoid delinquency.

(1) Ibid., p. 386.

B. The Recreation Theory: this theory is very popular in Germany. It was popularized by professor Lazarus in his book, "Games for the Exercise and Recreation of the Body and the Mind".⁽¹⁾

This theory states that sleep and rest are necessary but beyond that, activity and an interesting occupation are more restful than complete idleness.

Play recuperates and restores the mentally and physically tired for as Lazarus puts it, "After work we require rest which accomplishes recuperation. But hardly ever does mere empty inactive rest suffice for recuperation."⁽²⁾

The recreation theory considers play as a way to recuperate energy while the superfluous energy theory looks upon play as a way to get rid of one's excess of energy.

Let us not forget that if a person is tired from daily work, his whole organism is not equally tired. A child weary from studying, will shout, run and jump when recess comes. This will relax him, due to the change in activities. People are supposed to relax by accomplishing those activities involving all our muscles and which are racially old

(1) Mitchell and Mason, Op. cit., p. 53.

(2) Mitchell and Mason, Op. cit., p. 53.

like swimming, fishing, canoeing... Active outdoor amusements are much more wholesome than quiet amusements. They relax, restore lost energy, and renew strength.

C. The Instinct-Practice Theory: Groos, a Swiss Scientist, advanced two doctrines:

1. that children and animals are for a long period of time immature to have the opportunity to play. To quote him, "Animals.... have a period of youth to play."
2. that play is a preparation for adult life, "A means by which the young of a given species obtain practice in those forms of activity which in later life are necessary for subsistence." (1)

But play is not necessarily a means to an end, for play has an end in itself. Children play to satisfy cravings, and fulfill a natural need.

Groos' hypothesis of motivation might not be generally accepted today, but his work helped to hasten a realization of the social value of play and to focus attention on the important place of play in education in general. His theory, like all the other theories, might be valid but is incomplete.

(1) Ibid., p. 56.

D. The Recapitulation Theory: Stanley Hall, the most brilliant sponsor of the theory, believed that the growing child passes through a series of stages which recapitulate the "culture epochs" in the development of the race, and that the child at certain ages relives the animal, the savage, the nomad, the agricultural and the tribal life stages and rehearses the activities of his ancestors.⁽¹⁾

Recent scientists have proved that acquired characteristics are not really acquired and that it cannot be proven that individuals live over the history of the race. The type of play the child engages in depends primarily on environment, on available material and on his stage of development. This theory, due to Hall, helped stimulate research in the interests of children of various ages.⁽²⁾

Other explanations of play have been advanced. The catharsis theory maintains that play is a "safety valve for pent-up emotions".⁽³⁾ Through play, the child releases that unused energy in him.

Among the newer interpretations of play motivation, the self-expression theory is widely accepted today. It recognizes the nature of man, his anatomical and physiological

(1) Ibid., pp. 59-60.

(2) Ibid., p. 61.

(3) Ibid., p. 62.

structure, his psychological inclination, his feeling of capacity and his desire for self-expression. Recreation is a form of activity, an attempt at self-expression, resulting from man's urge to be active and to use his faculties and equipment to the utmost.

Still other explanations of play center around the fact that recreation is for the fulfillment of human needs, the need for affection, need for belonging, need for independence, need for achievement, need for recognition and need for self-esteem. These needs are essentially psychological, while the first four theories are essentially physical.

The great variety of forms which recreation takes is accounted for by the complexity of man's nature and of his social environment.

To Mitchell and Mason, habit is supposed to play a great role in play. The child will be inclined to share in those activities to which he is habituated. If we find so many differences in play, it is because the individuals who engage in play are so different.

The social and physical environments of the organism are important in the understanding of children's play.

Habits and attitudes are formed through contacts. To many, play activities are due to innate tendencies but are moulded under the pressure of the social environment.

Play then, is the result of pressures from within and without. Environment sets limitations.

W. I. Thomas, a sociologist, reduced the universal wishes to four types, most widely accepted. These are:

1. the desire for new experiences. "Children crave for adventure."
2. the desire for security, based on fear, and expressed in timidity, avoidance and flight.
3. the desire for response, primarily related to the instinct of love. The most social of the wishes, it contains both a sexual and a gregarious element.
4. the desire for recognition expressed in the general struggle for position in one's social group.⁽¹⁾

To the four wishes, found in everyone of us, two additional wishes should be added: the wish for participation taken from Faris' classification⁽²⁾ and the wish for the aesthetic or beautiful.

These wishes are regarded as the result primarily of

(1) E. T. Krueger and W. C. Reckless, Social Psychology, pp. 171-173.

(2) Ibid., p. 175.

experience rather than as fixed and rigid inborn drives. They are the result of socially acquired experience.

Man has habits and attitudes, desires and motives which make him seek self-expression and satisfaction. Play is one activity which brings satisfaction. Man plays to achieve, to create, to conquer, to acquire, to impress and to win approval. Consequently, he plays at activities in which he can accomplish these things with the abilities he has.

Any individual has many predispositions toward a very wide variety of activities; and what he engages in at any particular time depends upon the strength of the various desires at the moment, these desires being dependent upon how he feels physically, and what the environment offers in the way of positive and inhibiting stimuli at the moment. Once the motive is aroused, play is indulged in voluntarily in an effort to satisfy it and this whether the child recognizes it or not.

There are different theories of play because none could be complete. Play will not be understood and explained till life itself would be understood and explained, for play is an integral part of life itself.

PART II

A. INFLUENCE OF THE FAMILY AS A SOCIAL INSTITUTION

The family is the one social grouping that has the highest degree of life continuity to the individual. As a particular group of people, the family represents the smallest group unit, yet, the most important of the primary association groups. It may change its composition during the life span of the individual, but as a symbol of the primary social group, it has continuity.

The child is exposed to the environment into which he is born. Most of the elementary problems and phenomena of human associations are experienced within the family. As he grows and gains confidence in himself and in the people who are around him, he begins to move out and into the community. What he experiences in the informal neighborhood settings as a child will influence the way he regards and uses the environment of his daily life as possible sources of enjoyment and satisfaction of his basic life needs as an adult. He is sensitive to the tone of the life about him and to what adults do and say.

Recreation as a social force affects family life, and if in the past the family had definite responsibilities regarding the leisure interests of its members, nowadays a great deal of these responsibilities are taken over by organized agencies, church and school...Yet, the family is still a unit in recreation, and it is its function to guide its members into wholesome leisure pursuits, thereby encouraging achievement, satisfaction and happiness. Efforts must be made to recapture the family as a center for recreational satisfaction.

"Wherever a man is, the use he can make of his own leisure will always be limited by the use that other people are making of theirs."(1)

Leisure time makes life worth living. It has great potentialities for shaping cultural patterns and determining the social values of civilization, the beneficial effects of which upon the social fabric grow out of the opportunity for man to live a full, free, creative, and joyous existence in his free time. Leisure is a tremendous force for social good, and a worthwhile and constructive use of it is a necessity.

(1) Williams, Op. cit., p. 159.

Lasting habits and ways of behaving are developed in the family, which proves once more that public centers should not be and certainly are not the only place to play in.

B. INFLUENCE OF AGE AND SEX UPON PLAY

The nature of the child became the object of thoroughgoing study only recently. People were awakened to a realization of the importance of child life and the necessity of giving every child an opportunity for the best of training while a number of interesting and significant facts regarding the characteristics of the different age stratifications of children were brought to light. Children are not only smaller than adults, but the body has altogether different proportions in the child; children have less ability than adults in some lines and more in others; they have different likes and dislikes; their interests are not at all the same as the interests of adults, and they have a wholly different outlook of life. Every normal life consists of several rather well-marked stages, of which childhood is only one, and the things that appeal most to a person in one stage of life may mean nothing at all to the same person when he reaches another stage. (1)

Rousseau, the French philosopher, emphasized the difference between adults and children in his book "Emile" when he said that children have a world of their own of

(1) Bowen and Mitchell, Theory of Organized Play, p.246.

which adults are excluded. But differences are not only to be found between children and adults, for enormous differences in interests are found as one goes from individual to individual, resulting in variations in play behavior. One can safely say that no activity will prove interesting and satisfying to all individuals in any age group.

<A child between ages of six to twelve is in a period of great change and turmoil.> He has to adjust to physical and mental growth, while he has to learn to understand and adapt himself to adult concepts and ways of behaving, during this same age we have gangs, clubs, secret meeting places, all of which prove that the child is attempting to achieve independence from his parents.

<The child's play is largely individualistic during this age group, for he wants to dominate the play instead of limiting his efforts to his own role. Gradually however, he learns to cooperate. By the age of ten or eleven, solitary play has disappeared. The child needs security but also needs and seeks adventure. Through play, he meets this need and also prepares himself for adult life responsibility, discovering not only his own strength and limitations, but those of others as well.>

During these childhood years, the child is creative, he uses his imagination, is happy, mixes work and play, is not inclined to be tense because he is more open about his feelings. The desire for status and social recognition is also evident.

Recreation helps the child to grow and mature by providing the medium through which he can recognize the ways in which he is unlike or like other children.⁽¹⁾ Any given play activity might be characteristic of one age group, but this does not mean that it should be limited to it. Play interests and activities of each age period differ necessarily, but the transition is never abrupt, rather, it is gradual and partial, the body changing proportionately with growth, and the interests developing slowly with experience. >

There are sex differences in the play interests and habits of children. These differences are due primarily to two factors:

1. difference in physiological structure and function.
2. difference in social conditioning.⁽²⁾

There are differences in skeletal framework of the

(1) Mitchell and Mason, " Op.cit.", p.156.

(2) Ibid., p. 161.

two sexes, boys being on the average taller, heavier and larger about the chest. (1) Girls have less muscles than boys and more adipose tissue which make them not so well adapted to withstand the effects of strenuous forced effort. (2) They are more emotional, tender, tactfull and sympathetic than men. These differences however are not inborn, and Allport has pointed out the tremendously important role of conditioning in developing these feminine characteristics, and indicates that with different training from infancy on they could be decidedly alerted. (3) When we regard infancy as primarily a state of teachability, it becomes evident that through a different type of training we can remedy the relative destructiveness and lack of sympathy of boys, and the emotionality of girls. (4)

Even through the behavior differences of the two sexes are largely the result of tradition and education, they are none the less real. This difference is shown not so much in the kind of play activity both sexes engage in as in the way they engage in.

(1) Ibid., p.

(2) Lowe and Porritt, "Athletics", p. 310.

(3) F. Allport, "Social Psychology", p. 345.

(4) M.W.Curti, "Child Psychology", p. 494.

C. PHYSICAL BENEFITS OF PLAY

To lead a happy and successful life, one has to have a good deal of resistance, to be all right "all over", to be able to meet the demands of everyday life, for health is more than absence of disease, it includes vigor to fight the battles of life enthusiastically, and success in facing emergencies. Big muscle activity which will lead to organic health and muscular development is the primary concern of physical education.

Mitchell and Mason in their book "Theory of Play" give the objectives of physical education as set by Neilson and Van Hagen. To cite only a few:

1. The development of organic vitality.
2. The establishment of desirable habits of conduct.
3. Promoting the desire for wholesome associations and recreation.⁽¹⁾

Play is essential, for the one who can do things is the one who has done things before. Nothing but practice can lead to any positive result.

(1) Mitchell and Mason, Op.cit., p.198.

Play is natural activity in which we use our natural capacities and perform things easily and joyfully. All kinds of pleasure are conducive to good health. The problem is to provide natural means for children to supply themselves with the exercise that is denied through lack of time, space or through unwholesome employment.⁽¹⁾ Play is essential to health and is natural activity involving chiefly those fundamental movements of the body that are natural to the race and are performed easily and joyfully, while demanding little of the player in the way of sustained attention. But to be able to play one has to be prepared. 'Doing' is not enough, 'how' to do is primordial.>

Play develops the body as nature intended to, systematically, in form, with poise and spirit.⁽²⁾

< Physical activities are needed to help the youngsters grow and to help him come to understand his strength and limitations. There are chances for satisfying many basic needs through active work and play. Besides, the child has little or no thought for health. It is given to him out of his fun. >

(1) Mitchell and Mason, Op.cit. pp.195-209.

(2) Ibid., p. 217.

The physical benefits of play and exercise are unquestionable; the problem is simply to provide natural means for children to satisfy their play motives.

D. PLAY AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

The value of play in the promotion of character has long been recognized by foremost educators. In ancient times, Plato, Aristotle and others expressed their convictions on this aspect of play. Locke, Basedon and others in early modern times, also credited plays and games with possessing moral potentiality.

Man has a three-fold nature of which, character is the keystone.⁽¹⁾ Physic and intellect would really mean little would it not be for character. But character is at its best when allied with a healthy body and mind.

Character is hard to define. It is the sum of man's habits and attitudes while to Bowen it is "all the reactions which a person makes to the situations of his environment".⁽²⁾ It is evidenced by an individual's conduct in general.>

Character is based upon emotions, for attitudes always have an emotional connection, being based on interaction with people and man's conduct being more dependent upon feeling than upon thought.

(1) Mitchell, Mason, Op.cit., pp. 243-244.

(2) B owen and Mitchell, Op.cit., p.328.

Most emotions require muscular activity for their expression; play, which provides for this natural expression is then one of the strongest factors in the development of character. Through play, the child develops right habits, attitudes and responses in various play activities. He learns to recognize and respect the rights of others and to discover the meaning of freedom through cooperative action. He comes to learn by first-hand experience how to get along with others. Being on his own, the child makes his own decisions, and experiences the results, good or bad, that come directly from these decisions. Through actual practice, the child acquires judgment, self-reliance, and the ability to handle responsibilities.

There are four main processes by which society alters and shapes the child's character. These are: a) imitation. b) suggestion. c) instruction and d) control.⁽¹⁾ Man is an imitative creature. Habits and attitudes are "borrowed" from those we admire; imitation would be an unconscious process, just as it could be deliberate and conscious.

Man is also suggestible. Children are highly susceptible to suggestion, and the remarks and comments of their

(1) Mitchell and Mason, Op.cit., p. 253.

play associates and particularly of leaders are thus implanted in their minds.

Education is a necessity in morality. Children will receive training in morality from some source, and chance information will not always be the best. Direct or indirect methods are both good methods for instruction as long as information is given by competent people.

The fourth process is control. Society has always utilized some form of control to protect its standards and enforce conformity. Generally we have two types of control, rewards and punishments.

Reward in the form of praise is "sweet music to the ears". It could also be the form of material rewards.⁽¹⁾ Punishment must accompany the wrong. Socially, laughter, ridicule and satire are three forms of annoyance.⁽²⁾ Punishment could also be in specific penalties. Reward and punishment should be used with great caution. Adults' attitudes, their fairness or sidedness, their comprehension or stubbornness, all bear an immediate consequence upon the child's character-formation.

Through play the child meets other children as he comes

(1) Ibid., p. 268.

(2) Ibid., p. 269.

into free association with them as individuals and in groups. Under the guidance of a capable recreation leader, the child has a great opportunity to develop desirable character traits.

E. PLAY AND MENTAL GROWTH

Mental growth goes hand in hand with bodily growth for both rely on each other, and the more solid the physical foundation is, the more durable is the mentality.⁽¹⁾

Rousseau expresses a similar opinion when he says, "If you wish to cultivate intelligence, cultivate the powers it should rule...Exercise the body continually... Let the pupil be a man of vigor and soon he will become one in reason."⁽²⁾

It has been said that children retarded in their physical development are backward mentally and vice-versa. Courtis, after an extensive study of the Detroit schools, remarks: "...on the average, children progress in school in proportion to their physical development."⁽³⁾ Bodily development therefore, is a factor contributing greatly to increased mental efficiency.

Play is one factor which gives control over the body, for in playing, the child learns to control the fundamental bodily coordinations while he gains a wide range of experiences.

(1) Bowen and Mitchell, Op.cit., p. 309.

(2) Ibid., p. 307.

(3) Ibid., p. 310.

The child's knowledge keeps growing with him. He gradually masters increasingly difficult situations. As his physical abilities grow, his mental capacities grow too, for the mind develops through activity.

Play is to the child what travel is to the adult, because as Froebel puts it, "it is through play that the child comes to know the physical qualities of the objects that surround him," (1) and also it is through play that the child comes to know people around him. "One should rub his mind against the mind of others," said Montaigne, the sixteenth century French writer.

Play absorbs the child's whole interest; it cannot be differentiated from real life.

(Our experiences are the raw products from which the finer thoughts and emotions are later fashioned. Every new experience that the child can gain has an influence on his later life. Psychology tells us that every experience records an indelible mark upon our sensitive nervous system, and that our present thoughts and actions are largely an outcome of antecedent acts or impressions. Play life, which is the natural life in the tender years of childhood,

(1) Mitchell and Mason, Op.cit., p. 232.

is the way to acquire plentiful experiences; and play should be organized in order to give a proper and wholesome training to children from all walks of life. >

The value of recreational activity as a means of maintaining physical vigor has long been recognized and the necessity for a wide variety of emotional interests in order to assure good mental health has received much emphasis in recent years.

F. PLAY AND EDUCATION

All of life's experiences may be said to be educational if the individual acquires new knowledge, new learning and new information. It is possible to follow the relation in history between history and cultural growth, and the influence of one upon the other. Significant cultural expansions of all civilizations have occurred during those times when man has been free from toil. The primitive man learned to jump, run, climb, throw and wrestle in order to survive. Later, he used these skills in the form of sports and games to amuse himself, to win glory and honor and to entertain his fellow men. The Greeks, through their Olympics and daily participation in sports, developed their bodies and improved their physical culture. Such activities also had their bearings on religion in that sports were placed under the patronage of the gods, and upon sculpture, painting, and writing by providing the subjects for such pursuits.⁽¹⁾

Recreation is a new road to learning for all age groups. "Play is nature's way of preparing the child for the responsibilities of maturity, allowing him to discover his natural possibilities and his natural limitations, giving him the

(1) Brighbill and Meyer, Recreation, pp. 35-38.

the chance to find that right limitations vary with the frame of reference, that he is like other children, yet differs from them, and that individual interest is not necessarily opposite to group interest".(1)

Recreation is educative. Schools and curricula are far from providing the children with all the education they need. Recreation has similar but not identical objectives, methods and programs than education. It affords immediate satisfaction, whereas education aims at a more distant goal. In recreation we have no compulsion. In education, compulsion is one way of attaining one's goal.

Through play the child disciplines himself, and learns that failure does not necessarily need to be a catastrophe, that strength does not necessarily lead to victory, that a spirit of cooperation is essential and rewarding...Play strengthens the freedom of imitation and choice so indispensable in democratic living.

Leisure could be activity lacking constructive qualities as it could be opportunity for the enrichment

(1) Wayne Williams, " Recreation Places",

and the enhancement of the individual. Cultural growth prevails, where the last of these prevails.

Today we have much time to spend on leisure. All this time could be used fruitfully, for one's education and amusement if only one knew how to combine the two.

With the life span increasing and people enjoying more healthy lives, leisure becomes a common thing instead of remaining a luxury. It is one's task to get most out of it.

PART III

A. THE PLAYGROUND

The neighbourhood playground almost unknown at the beginning of the century, is today the most important type of outdoor recreation area. It is recognized as an essential feature of every residential neighbourhood.)

Aside from the fact that it is an area designed to serve the primary play interests and needs of children, it also affords limited recreation opportunities for the entire population of a neighbourhood. Considered to meet the needs of children of the age group six to fourteen inclusive, it has become a place where the people of the neighbourhood can find recreation and relaxation with their families, neighbours and friends.

If they are put under competent leadership and are well-developed, playgrounds contribute to fun, safety, health and character development. Fun has been called the birthright of every child and prerogative of every adult. Playgrounds offer opportunity for the children to enjoy themselves, while being safe to play in, for

they keep the child away from the streets, thus reducing the number of street accidents.)

An ideal playground according to Georges Butler is a place where all children in the neighborhood have enough room to engage in their favorite play activities which means large playgrounds where crowding is not the usual. In this playground small children are not bothered by "big boys", having their own area with activities provided especially for their own age group. Everybody can "let-off-steam", use energy without repression or annoyance from anyone. This ideal playground recognizes all degrees of ability and procures a wide variety of interests; youngsters learn to take responsibilities, new friendships are made, characters are developed through the development of right habits, attitudes and responses in the various play activities.(1)

Howard Braucher, former president of the National Recreation Association, defined the task of the playground when he said, "Helping the individual child to do well and happily what he most wants to do now and will want to do later is pre-eminently the task of the playground."(2)

(1) Butler, Op.cit., pp. 3-6.

(2) Butler, Op.cit., p. 6.

For all children, whether in a city or in the country, in large families or small families, the social training of the playground is invaluable. It develops the character and makes for an intelligent democracy where each man contributes his best for the welfare of all. Because needed on a wide scale, play requires more than private undertaking. Governmental help is essential.

Playgrounds are the result of developing large cities with crowded neighborhoods. The need for areas for play was felt by both parents and children. Playgrounds can be used by boys and girls till the age of fourteen inclusive.

< In considering a playground we should consider the location first of all, for no matter how well equipped a playground is, it is useless if it is not convenient. It should be as near as possible to the center of the residential neighborhood to be served, and away from streets, dumping grounds, deep water....>

< The size of the playground also is important. The size obviously enough depends on the number of the children it plans to serve, and on their age.>

Areas should be divided into smaller sections for different age groups, and for different uses of the apparatus, but

usefulness of divisions applies to grounds where space is fairly ample, where two or more supervisors are always at hand, and where there are heterogeneous groups of people attending. Shaded areas for quiet games, story telling and the like is also to be considered when building a playground.

Utility should not be sacrificed in order to beautify the grounds, but the grounds should be made attractive, for children have the right to enjoy attractive surroundings.)

Wayne Williams thinks highly of playgrounds when he says, "It takes courage, initiative and faith to organize an adventure playground, but I believe that few things today can be more rewarding."⁽¹⁾

(1) Wayne Williams, Recreation Places, p. 233.

B. LAYOUT AND EQUIPMENT

The fully-equipped play-ground must provide space and apparatus for play, as well as play material of all sorts. There must be adequate provisions for the comfort and welfare of the children and parents.

The size of the ground, the amount of money available, the ages of children, and the special neighborhood interests, are all factors that enter in when playground equipment is being planned.

No two playgrounds are identical in their layout and facilities, but several types of features are found on most playgrounds. Apparatus, game courts and fields, a wading pool, a shelter building, seating facilities and various types of miscellaneous equipment are the most common types. Apparatus has an important place on the playground for its usefulness in developing skills, as body developer and for the joy it provides for children, without its requiring constant supervision. >

A large assortment of carefully selected supplies and materials is essential to the successful operation of the playground, for without them, the leader finds himself limited in the use he can make of the space and facilities

available, and the use of the space and facilities is then considerably limited. A variety of appropriate play materials makes for a wide range of activities and helps assure maximum use of the facilities.

< A committee on standards in playground apparatus, appointed by the National Recreation Association has recommended a list of apparatus as the minimum standard for the average playground.>

< For children of elementary school age, between the ages of six and twelve and older, swings, the frame of which are twelve inches high, slides, eight inches high, horizontal ladder, giant stride, balance beam and horizontal bars are recommended.(1)>

Because of limited funds, playground authorities must use great care in the selection and purchase of supplies. Only high grade quality articles should be purchased, for in the long run, they will prove to be more economical as well as more satisfactory than inferior, cheaper products. Children should always be encouraged to bring their own toys to the playground, but it is the duty of the playground to provide some basic materials, such as croquet

(1) Butler, Op.cit., pp.12-13.

sets, footballs, jumping ropes, and for quiet games, building blocks, chinese checkers, jackstones, balls, etc.⁽¹⁾

Most children come to the playground to take part in games and sports, so that it is but fair to devote a large percentage of the space on the playground for games and sports⁽²⁾, but apparatus should always be plentiful and at hand.

Dan Corbin, professor of physical education at State Teachers' College, Lock Haven, Pa., stresses the utility of a good choice of apparatus when he says, "The craving for play opportunities is omnipresent. To the child, play is perhaps as essential as the air he breathes and as natural for his normal development. Whether we will it or not, children will play; for it is a normal manifestation of their growth and development. It is their manner of expression. It is their way of life. It is the laboratory in which the child experiments and learns of the world about him. The degree of learning is, to a great extent, dependent upon the success with which the play things are chosen and put to use."⁽³⁾ In choosing play things, one

(1) Ibid., pp. 28-29.

(2) Ibid., p. 14.

(3) Dan Corbin, Recreation Leadership, p. 324.

should consider whether they meet the needs and interests of the child and aid his development, whether they are creative and safe to use, whether they encourage self-expression through play and provide opportunities for physical activity, so that normal growth and mental, emotional and social betterment may result. Selection, vigilance and guidance further safety;

One should always keep in mind that an interestingly occupied child is a happy child.

C. MAINTENANCE

The function of a playground is to provide open space for free play and a background of basic facilities, qualified leadership and services on a community wide basis. The usefulness of recreation areas depends as much upon the way in which they are designed, developed, and equipped, as upon the way they are maintained and operated.

A well maintained and operated playground is a place where attendance is high and where everybody gets its share of fun and amusement.

Considering that a playground requires a great amount of investment in land, facilities and equipment, regular maintenance and repair is necessary if it is to give maximum service.

The time allotted for maintenance depends largely on the size of the area and the number and variety of facilities. There are generally two types of operations: the more important steps that must be taken to prepare the playground for seasonal use and the major repairs that must be made from time to time. Advance planning of all maintenance operations is necessary.

Playground maintenance is important because it prolongs the time of use of the material and therefore minimizes loss due to depreciation.

A well-maintained playground is more often attended by people, as said, and is a source of pride to the community. Also obviously enough, safe and satisfactory play depends in large measure upon well-maintained areas and facilities.

The attitude of the children and adults attending a playground often reflects that of the paid leaders and depends on the condition of their environment and good maintenance, respecting that property which is well-kept, clean, attractive and orderly.⁽¹⁾

(1) Butler, Op.cit., pp.42-43.

D. ADMINISTRATION OF THE PLAYGROUND

<The function of the playground administration is to bring to reality the limitless possibilities which the playground affords for fun and good citizenship. In every city the plan of administration of recreation depends upon local conditions, so that no uniform plan is possible. Regardless of local conditions, however, there are several essential principles which must be safeguarded.

First, a responsible Board of control, whose function it is to promote, control and regulate proper leisure-time activities. The advantages of a Board of control are many: The Board gives recreation interests adequate attention, as it is not overloaded already by other functions. It insures trained leaders in recreation work, and keeps close ties with the public through publicity. Its task is to provide a safe and healthy place where to play, and educate through play and games. (1)

Such a board is efficient only if the members are really interested in the work. Usually they are not paid and hold this position in an honorary sense rather than from any special ability in recreation work.

(1) Mitchell and Mason, Op.cit., pp.328-329.

This board is selected for the sole purpose of studying recreation needs and meeting these needs.

(Second, a full-time executive, appointed by the Board, with a broad social education, thoroughly trained in the administration of recreation, and employed to direct the program, helped by assistants and specialists.

Third, a definite budget set aside for recreational purposes only.

Fourth, all city-owned property, regardless of what branch of city government may have jurisdiction over them, would be available.

Fifth, a challenging program of recreational activities, suitable to meet the needs of all elements and age groups in the city.

The playground administration can function effectively only if its staff and resources are organized in a way that enables it to accomplish its purpose-that of providing recreation service for the people-;

E. PLAY LEADERSHIP

Leadership is the greatest single factor in determining the success of a playground. It is more important than facilities, equipment or supplies and has proved to be a necessity on the children's playground, for a playground thrown open in the belief that space and equipment are sufficient is likely to become a nuisance to the neighbourhood and to bring more trouble than happiness. < Joseph Prendergast says: "There is no substitute for qualified leadership and any compromise in this matter is false economy."⁽¹⁾

Leadership is guidance, adds George Butler, for the child needs wholesome activities which it is the leader's task to provide. He helps free the child for the fullest enjoyment of various forms of play by encouraging him to develop imitative, spontaneity and originality, thus promoting freedom in his play.⁽²⁾>

The play leader is really a creation of the present generation. Previously it was considered quite absurd to engage a teacher solely for the purpose of directing play. But people came to change their minds on this question with

(1) Butler, Op.cit., p. 95.

(2) Butler, Op.cit., pp.57-59.

time, for it is only too evident that the playgrounds, if undirected, will defeat their own purpose. No thinking parents will send their children to a place where they will be bullied by the rough element, or where they will learn obscene language, habits of vice, uncleanness and discourtesy. The play leader is not only supposed to combat the negative influence of the playground he is to be more than a guardian; he must be an acting force, a leader whose objective is to give an uplifting personality to the playground.

Whenever interest in play is aroused, children's minds are wholly occupied with the wholesome activities at hand, which it is the task of a wise, sympathetic and trained leader to maintain; children cannot create interest for themselves except in spasmodic efforts. Here is where the play leader comes in. His presence makes for discipline and order, for system and variety and for technique.

Play has always been taught by parents, sisters, brothers and companions, either by offering an example for children to imitate or by actually instructing them. The recreation leader, in supplementing the teaching of parents and companions, gives a deeper significance to the child's play

life by bringing to it a wider experience and trained understanding.

< The playground leader is a teacher in the sense that children have to be taught to play, and they are constantly imitating others, observing their ways, and selecting activities which appeal to them. Through his role of teacher, the leader opens new avenues of enjoyment and development for the child that may continue long into adult life.>

Like all organized activities, the success of organized recreation depends upon the quality of its leadership. The most successful recreation leader is that leader whose followers are least conscious of being led.

Highly desirable or essential attitudes and qualifications for all recreation workers in leadership positions include a sense of humor, an understanding of the interests and needs of people, a desire to serve, a concern with the growth and development of individuals through creative expression, a keen and understanding mind, the ability to organize and to get along with people, a good deal of imagination, emotional stability, patience and tolerance.

The range of qualities which are sought in recreation leaders is wide as one can see, but none are more important to a recreation leader than personality, resourcefulness

and imagination.⁽¹⁾

Leadership is a combination of basic intelligence and specialized skills added to attractive personal qualities which account for the diversity of quarters leaders are drawn from.)

The leader is the most valuable asset of organized recreation for it is through leadership that a playground is made interesting or boring. A leader should have academic training if possible, though we find very able leaders who have never been on a campus; he should be fair, calm, and should not show any favoritism or anticipate mischief, for children sense it and just love to irritate and go against a strict discipline.

A leader should participate from time to time in the games; good health then is a prerequisite to being a good leader.

Children between the ages of six and twelve, being in the stage of hero worship, are apt to imitate the leader in all their doings, which gives the leader the responsibility for setting a high standard of personal conduct.

Miss Dorothy Enderis, former responsible for the

(1) Brighbill and Meyer, Op.cit., pp. 362-365.

playground program in Milwaukee had an inspiring conclusion in the foreword to "The Playleaders' Guide". She says, "A playleader who perfunctorily carries on activities and guards his playground against physical mishap has a job. He who adds skill and technique to these duties creates a profession, but he who crowns his profession with consecration and devotion performs a mission, and the children, youths, and adults who come to him for play and sport carry away deeper values and greater riches than the mere memory of a happy day, and the community which has entrusted to him the leisure hours of its citizenry shall call him blessed."(1)

(1) Butler, Op. cit., pp.444-445.

PART IV

AVAILABLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLAY IN LEBANON

Children in Lebanon play like other children all over the world. Like other children, they enjoy having moments of fun. However, they do not have enough opportunities to play in our country.

The family does not know how to play with the child either, nor does it provide the latter with anything consistent regarding play. A few toys are believed to be sufficient to fulfill the child's need for play.

The school offers the mere minimum, if any. Playgrounds are poorly equipped, if ever. The school play yard offers little opportunity to liberate the pent-up energy within the child and does not provide for adequate wholesome development.

There is no place where children could play under supervised guidance, after school.

With all these facts present before us, one may wonder how our children ever come to play, having nothing to play with, how they may ever enjoy work when play itself is so dull!

The term "playground" in Lebanon is used to include the school play yard and playgrounds associated with private organizations.

These two types of play centers are the only available ones serving a limited number of lebanese children.

The playgrounds visited by the writer do not fulfill the requirements of an ideal playground at all, as they are not supported by any governmental agency, they are not located in a central area where they are most needed. These playgrounds are usually built in the vicinity of a school which already has a play yard. They serve a selected group of children only and not the community in general, thus, they do not provide equal opportunities for all. They have no leadership program and no guided supervision. The layout and equipment are far from being satisfactory as they are very simple, rather scarce and not varied in type. The playgrounds are often bare, with few trees here and there. Drinking fountains and toilets are not properly maintained.

The conditions of play are such that many children turn to mischief to provide themselves with the thrills they need.

SAIDA GIRLS' SCHOOL

The Saida Girls' School comprises a newly built building made up of two stories, used as a nursery school with a well-equipped playground. The latter is also used by children between the ages six and twelve. This is a very large playground which could accommodate around 80 children at a time. To avoid having older children interfere with the play of younger ones, the playground has been divided by means of a wire fence.

The material is varied and well distributed around. There are eleven swings in one corner near the two seesaws. The sand box is in another corner near a tap of water. There is a drinking fountain next to it. The bathrooms are in close proximity. A junglegym occupies the third corner. There are four benches used for quiet games, if necessary. The whole place is protected by wire.

The children's play is directed by the teacher of the class and she prepares the various games to be played. On the whole, it is a good playground, but unfortunately it serves only the children of the school.

SAIDA BOYS' SCHOOL

Started ten years ago with the help of older students from the school, the playground was completed only in 1958. The material is composed of fixed bars, one slide, three swings, and one junglegym. This equipment occupies one part of the play yard only.

Neighborhood boys can use it too, but only during the recess time of the students.

No teacher supervises the play of the children and there is no separation of ages.

According to the person whom I interviewed, the school board has had plans, to be carried out in the near future, for the construction of a larger and better equipped playground. Due to financial difficulties, however, this plan has not been put into practice yet.

TRIPOLI SCHOOLS

The writer visited French parochial schools as well as American and moslem institutions. No playground was available in any of those places.

Children in Tripoli play in their school yard without any kind of equipment. Once in a while, a child brings his ball or bicycle to school and plays. There are teachers around but they act as mere supervisors to prevent fights.

It seems that the importance of organized play has not been recognized by the leaders of these institutions.

ALUMNI CLUB OF THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

The playground of the Alumni Club of the American University of Beirut is situated on Clemenceau Street. It provides for children of six to fourteen years of age inclusive. Not very large, it could accommodate around thirty children more.

The equipment is composed of one slide, one jungle gym, six swings, one seesaw, all of which stand on the sandy ground.

A rudimentary division of ages is allowed by long wooden bars; these are not high enough to prevent the children from jumping from one side to the other. In one corner of the playground, a shelter house comprises toilets and few benches.

A wire fence surrounds the total area. This is a private playground, attended by a selected group of children, mainly the children of A.U.B. staff. They come with their nurses who usually sit on benches and watch over the children. This group is allowed to use the facilities of the playground free of charge. However, children of the neighborhood are also permitted to come and play, provided they pay a membership fee.

There is a paid supervisor whose main function is to collect fees and to report to the Alumni Club about the activities of the playground.

RABIEH PLAY CENTER

Rabieh is a planned residential community of around fifteen families, located eighteen kilometers from the center of Beirut, on the slope of a mountain overlooking the sea.

The Rabieh Play Center is a recent development and serves the children of the Rabieh community families only.

Not very large and yet large enough to accommodate approximately thirty children at a time; this is a well-conceived playground offering variety in the equipment and apparatus.

A junglegym, five parallel bars, four swings, and a large slide, all painted in very attractive colors occupy one corner of the area. Opposite, there is a large section filled with sand, where we find seesaws, a merry-go-round and more swings.

A lighting system enables the children to play during the long summer evenings. A covered area which accommodates toilets and drinking fountains, offers an opportunity for play during winter days, and for storage of the equipment.

Colorful benches are scattered here and there giving the total area an atmosphere of peace and quiet.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE BUILDING OF
AN IDEAL PLAYGROUND IN BEIRUT

After many investigations in various cities of Lebanon concerning playgrounds, and which gave no positive results, the writer had an interview with Mr. Emile Yanni, the Administrator of the city of Beirut. The purpose of the interview was to find out about the types of playgrounds available in Beirut and the types of play facilities, if any, for children between the ages of six and twelve.

According to Mr. Yanni, there are no playgrounds in Beirut or other cities in Lebanon and no attempt has ever been made to plan such a project. "The advantages of playgrounds are many", Mr. Yanni said, "especially in providing the children with wholesome activities which could decrease the incidence of juvenile delinquency in this country.... Playgrounds also contribute to the embellishment of a city and to a certain extent are an index of the degree of civilization of a country..."⁽¹⁾

Mr. Yanni was extremely interested in the idea of playgrounds and he asked the writer to send him her suggestions about an ideal playground, in the form of a letter.

(1) Interview with Mr. Emile Yanni, Administrator of the City of Beirut, at his office, Beirut, February 15, 1961.

LETTER TO THE ADMINISTRATOR
OF THE CITY OF BEIRUT

Dear Mr. Yanni,

Our recent interview concerning the recreation movement in Lebanon led me to write this letter. In compliance with your request, I shall attempt to make suggestions for the building of an ideal playground in Beirut, where lack of public understanding of the value and need of recreation has been, and still is, one of the greatest obstacles to the growth and support of the recreation movement.

Every community recreation program owes its origin and development to the initiative of an energetic citizen or group of interested community leaders. Unfortunately, this has not been the case in Lebanon.

To plan a playground is a difficult task, but the positive results that come out, ought to be stimulating enough to initiate action.

Regardless of the types of recreation areas to be built, certain factors should be considered and certain objectives should be sought.

To make my suggestions clearer, I shall put them in an outline form:-

1. Location: The playground must be located near a crowded neighborhood, preferably in the center of the city in order to be available to most children. Ideally, there should be a playground in every district, to have it in the proximity of the child's house.

The entire area allocated to the playground must be used effectively. No matter how the area presents itself, one ought to be able to put every single part into use. This is possible through careful planning.

2. Size and Divisions: If only one playground is planned for, a rather large one has to be considered to accommodate a great number of children at a time.

To give maximum output, a playground should have divisions between different ages; the following divisions are desirable:

- a. a 'small area' for the exclusive use of children of preschool age, with appropriate apparatus for that age group.
- b. another area for older children, between six and twelve years of age, with the equipment and supplies necessary for organized games and activities.

- c. a 'multiple use' paved area, which can be used for cycling, roller-skating, and various types of free play.
 - d. a 'shaded area' for handicrafts and quiet activities that do not necessitate the use of basic supplies and equipment. This area can be equipped with benches and small tables.
 - e. it is necessary to have a 'shelter house' located near the main entrance of the playground. It can be used as a center of control for the total area by the leader. Also, in rainy days, it can be used for indoor play as well. It is preferable to have this shelter house as attractive as possible.
3. Basic Supplies and Equipment: Careful planning is necessary to provide for all the conveniences to be used by children. These include the toilets which have to be in the shelter house to permit privacy mainly.

Drinking fountains have to be both in the shelter house and scattered all over the playground for reasons obvious enough.

Regarding equipment, the material ought to be

divided into two major categories, the bulky equipment which is relatively stable and the lighter equipment which could be displaced.

The bulky equipment includes swings, seesaws, jungle-gyms, slides, parallel bars, a merry-go-round. The lighter equipment includes tricycles, shovels, balls, ropes, for the outdoor play.

For their indoor play, the children need a great variety of materials; these include books of various types, building blocks, different games such as Chinese chess, a record player, and so on. This lighter equipment may be adjusted to the needs of the moment.

4. Organization of the Playground: Careful program planning is one of the major factors in running a playground and its main purpose is to help individuals gain the greatest satisfaction and benefit from their leisure time. This purpose is accomplished through organization and promotion of activities in ways that contribute most to it.

It is essential to have a trained leader to supervise, control, and direct the activities of the children on the playground.

The leader should have a special preparation for the type of task expected of him, namely, a sound general education which should include courses in child psychology and in leadership.

This type of preparation will enable the playground leader to:

- a. provide for children of all ages, by recognizing the differences in play interests at different age levels.
- b. provide equality of opportunity for all, by having broad facilities and programs.
- c. offer possibilities for varying degrees of skill and ability, remembering that children desire to improve existing skills and to acquire new ones.
- d. recognize the different tastes and interests of the individual, considering that the economical, social and cultural backgrounds of children affect their recreation interests and needs.
- e. critically evaluate the program and introduce any type of change whenever a need for it is felt. The program, therefore, ought to be flexible.

All these requirements ought to be met, if we wish to have the type of playground which will be most suitable to the wholesome development of the child in relation to his physical, social and emotional needs.

This playground will be a novelty to our city, most welcome by all those who are concerned with the welfare of children and who feel the need for an adequate playground. We do understand that this will be a difficult task, the consequences of which, however, will be so rewarding that it will constitute a worthwhile plan to be carried through.

We are hopeful that the Government will consider this plan through your administrative function and will give you the necessary financial and moral support in the building of this much-needed playground in the City of Beirut.

Respectfully yours,

Lamitta Chemor