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Appendix A

Definition of Terms

These definitions, generally accepted in the fields of child development and play theory, were compiled from the following sources: *Developmental Psychology* by G. Novak, *Child Development* by J. Santrock, and *Development across the Lifespan* by R. Feldman.

Accommodation – in Jean Piaget’s cognitive theory, the adjustment of the intellectual structures in response to the incorporation of new information from the outside world.

Adolescence – the developmental period of transition from childhood to early adulthood, beginning at approximately 10-12 yrs. and ending at 18-22 yrs.

Arousal Modulation Theory – the theory of children’s play that assumes some optimal level of central nervous system arousal that a human being tries to maintain, with play being a way of maintaining this level.

Assimilation – in Jean Piaget’s cognitive theory, the taking of new material from the outside world and fitting it into one’s already existing intellectual structures.

Cognition – the process of thinking. Cognitive processes can only be measured indirectly.

Cognitive development – changes in an individual’s perception, language, learning, memory, problem-solving and other mental processes over the lifespan.

Concrete operational stage – Piaget’s third developmental stage which lasts from approximately 7-11 yrs. of age. Children can now perform operations, and logical reasoning replaces intuitive thought as long as reasoning can be applied to specific or concrete examples.

Conservation – the idea that the amount stays the same regardless of how its container changes.

Constructive play – play that combines sensorimotor and practice repetitive activity with the symbolic representation of ideas. Constructive play occurs when children engage in self-regulated creation or construction of a product or problem solution.

Cooperative play – play that involves social interaction in a group, with a sense of group identity and organized activity.

Creativity – the ability to think about something in a novel and unusual way and to come up with unique solutions to problems.

Decentration – the underlying element of symbolic play that refers to the degree to which the child is able to shift the focus of its interest from self to external objects. More generally, the ability to attend simultaneously to two or more features of the environment.

Development – the pattern of change that begins at conception and continues through the life span; progressive changes in the interactions between a person and his/his environment.

Developmentally appropriate – based on knowledge of the typical development of children within an age span (age appropriateness) and the uniqueness of each child (individual appropriateness).

Early childhood – the developmental period that extends from the end of infancy to about 5-6 yrs. of age; sometimes called the pre-school years.

Egocentrism (toddler) – thought process characteristic of children in the preoperational stage of cognitive development in which they view their perspective as the reference point from which they, and all others, view the world.

Egocentrism (adolescent) – state of self-absorption, adolescent's view themselves as the center of everyone else's attention

Fine motor skills – motor skills that involve more finely tuned movements, such as finger dexterity.

Formal operational stage – Piaget's fourth and final development stage which appears between the ages of 11 and 15. Individuals move beyond the world of concrete experiences and think in abstract and more logical terms.

Games – activities engaged in for pleasure that include rules and often competition.

Gross motor skills – motor skills that involve large muscle activities, such as walking.

Individualism – giving priority to personal goals rather than to group goals; emphasizing values that serve the self, such as feeling good, personal distinction and achievement, and independence.

Infancy – the developmental period that begins at birth and ends at about 18-24 mos.

Intelligence – verbal ability, problem-solving skills, and the ability to learn from and adapt to the experiences of everyday life.

Language – a system of symbols, or word sequences, used to communicate with others, that involves infinite generativity, displacement, signal simultaneity and overlap, and rule systems.

Learning – a relatively permanent change in behavior in relation to the environment that is due to experience.

Logical Classification – the ability, which first appears at the age of five or six, to sort objects according to their logically defining properties.

Memory – the retention of information over time. Memory is essential to information processing.

Middle/late childhood – the developmental period that extends from about 6-11 years, approximately corresponding to the elementary school years; sometimes called the elementary school years.

Moral development – development regarding rules and conventions about what people should do in their interactions with other people.

Naturalistic observation – a method in which scientists observe behavior in real-world settings and make no effort to manipulate or control the situation.

Parallel play – play that occurs separately from other children, but with toys like those the others are using or in a manner that mimics their play.

Practice play – play that involves the repetition of behavior with new skills are being learned or when physical or mental mastery and coordination of skills are required for sports.

Preoperational stage – the second Piagetian developmental stage, which lasts from about 2-7 years of age. Children begin to represent the world with words, images, and drawings.

Pretend/symbolic play – play that occurs when a child transforms the physical environment into a symbol.

Problem solving – an attempt to find an appropriate way of attaining a goal when barriers prevent its immediate attainment.

Psychosocial development – change and carryover in person and interpersonal aspects of development such as motives, emotions, personality traits, interpersonal skills and relationships, and roles played in the family and in the larger society.

Recapitulation Theory – early twentieth century belief that each person's development reflects the evolutionary progression of the entire human species

Reversibility – a characteristic of thinking that does not appear before the age of five or six, this is the ability mentally to reverse an action.

Self-esteem – the global evaluative dimension of the self; also referred to as self-worth or self-image.

Semantics – the meaning of words and sentences.

Sensorimotor stage – the first of Piaget's developmental stages, which lasts from birth to about 2 years of age. Infants construct an understanding of the world by coordinating sensory experiences (such as seeing and hearing) with physical, motoric actions. (practice play)

Social play – play that involves social interaction with peers.

Solitary play – play when a child is alone.

Surplus Energy Theory – belief that the function of play is to allow children to discharge pent-up energy.

Symbolic Play – make-believe, or pretend, play that first appears at the beginning of the infant's second year of life and continues as the dominant form of play throughout the preschool years.

Telegraphic speech – pattern of speech following the two-word stage in which children rely on grammar of strict word order to convey their meaning and do not use conjunctions, propositions, or other function words.

Vita

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Special thanks to my family for all of their support and encouragement throughout this long process.