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The Meaning of Play for Adults from a Reversal Theory Perspective

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The Meaning of Play for Adults from a Reversal Theory Perspective

The Meaning of Play for Adults from a Reversal Theory Perspective

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Recreation and Sport Management

by

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ABSTRACT

Play is important to adults' mental creativity and happiness (Marano, 1999), and stress reduction (Apter, 2009a; Baptiste, 1995). Yet play may be considered as trivial behavior that is not appropriate for the adult population. The purpose of the study was to examine how adults describe the concept of play and to determine whether this description reflects their dominant metamotivational state. According to reversal theory, these states are the frames of mind that characterize an individual's motivation at any given point in time (Apter, 1982). An individual tends to be in a more playful (paratelic) state or serious-minded (telic) state depending upon the circumstances at any particular moment.

One hundred fifty-six adults between 40 and 65 years of age ($M_{\text{age}} = 51.8$) participated in the study. Data collection was accomplished entirely online through the Paratelic Dominance Scale and the submission of written narratives describing the meaning of a memorable episode of play in participants' own words. A new instrument developed for this study intended to quantify the words used to describe play found no correlation between an individual's dominant motivational state and the words that they use to describe play ($r = -.024, p = .85$). However, several themes emerged from the written narratives including play as: fun, relaxation, being in the moment, along with goal-oriented play. These themes supported previous research findings (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Jackson, 1995; Stebbins, 2007; Yarnal et al., 2008)

The current study demonstrated that examining the words people use to describe play is not enough to understand the meaning that play has for them. Understanding one's tendency to be paratelic or telic is useful in the sense that the value of play is revealed to the individual, but it is equally important to understand that this view depends on the situation at the time of its

occurrence. While a relationship was not found, it did provide valuable insight into how play was viewed by the adults who participated in the study. Understanding the complexity with which adults view play may help practitioners in the field with the provision of programs and services for this age group.

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To my committee: Dr. Merry Moiseichik, Dr. Gregory Benton, Dr. Margaret Reid, and Dr. Angela Smith Nix – thank you for your insight, expertise and subtle kicks (when necessary!) that allowed me to complete this dissertation so that I may now begin the next chapter in my life. Thank you also to the play experts who graciously agreed to lend their expertise to this project.

To my family and friends for their love and support; especially Mom and her care packages that kept me well fed – thanks Mom! And to my brother Scott, without whose help this project would never have been completed.

A heartfelt thank you to all of you – I could not have done it without you!

DEDICATION

In memory of my dad and grandparents, gone but with me in spirit...

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

“We do not cease playing because we grow old; we grow old because we cease playing”.

This quote, which so eloquently describes the idea that one is never too old to play has been attributed to, among others, Joseph Lee (O’Sullivan, 1996, p. 7). A lawyer by training but a philanthropist by avocation, Lee participated in a 10 year study of child delinquency in the late 1800s in Boston. His research led to the development of playgrounds that featured organized and supervised play (Russell, 2005), thus earning him the title of the Father of the American Playground Movement. There have been multitudes of individuals who have studied the phenomenon of play before and after Lee, but his quote clearly implies that play should not be considered to be solely the realm of children. An example of that sentiment is exemplified in the following account of one particularly memorable episode of play experienced by this author.

Shortly after moving to Texas in 1981, I started working on a dude ranch. My particular position was to oversee the housekeeping staff, waitress on weekends, and whatever else I was asked to do. There were approximately 20 full-time employees and five or six part-time staff. We ranged in age from early 20’s to around 60 years old and the majority of us lived on the property. As summer gave way to fall and then to winter, I was looking forward to my first winter season without snow as I had grown up in the northern part of the country. Mother Nature however, had a different idea.

One weekday morning that winter, it started to snow. I found it difficult to keep my housekeeping crew on task as their attention turned to the snow and their work pretty much stopped. What I had failed to take into consideration was the fact that I was the only one on the

housekeeping crew that had ever seen snow! The lack of experience with snow was not restricted to just the housekeeping crew; I discovered that more than half of the staff had never seen snow either. At that point, work pretty much stopped for the morning as *everyone* went outside to play in the snow.

To say that most of the staff was delighted to play in the snow is an understatement. It was not really a big snow event by “northern” standards, just a few inches, but it was enough to bring out the playfulness in most everyone. Young and old alike took turns throwing snowballs and making snow angels. I think someone tried to make a snowman even though the snow was not the good packing kind. Then someone brought out one of the large metal baking sheets from the kitchen and began using it as a sled. One of the more popular amenities of the ranch was a golf course, and the first tee of the course was located on a low hill immediately behind the main ranch building. It was just high enough to be transformed into a sled run. It was quite a sight to see the adults taking turns sledding down the hill on what was basically an enormous cookie sheet. It was amazing to me that I was with so many people who had never played in the snow. Needless to say, work was halted for the rest of the morning so that everyone could continue to play in the snow. After lunch however, everyone went back to work. Of course, being in south central Texas, the snow was completely gone the next day.

While the story related above clearly depicts an actual play episode among the participants, there is still some reluctance on the part of many individuals as to the acceptability of play in adulthood. One difficulty regarding the suitability of adult play is that for many individuals, play signifies behavior that is perceived to be trivial or unimportant (Ellis, 1973). Furthermore, play according to Caldwell (2003), can be seen as “culturally taboo” as it involves

behavior that is perceived to be “childish, frivolous and contrary to the productive work that is expected” (p. 301). She continues,

Children have one job – to play. They play to learn, to grow, to develop capacities, to anticipate change, and to recover from upsets. We grown-ups have these jobs and more. We also need to take care of others, to go to work and be productive, to cope with loss and aging, to find meaning and purpose in our lives, to feel creative, to problem-solve, to self-reflect, to express our sexuality, to develop spiritually, and to get ready to die. It is because of the extra developmental tasks that we need to appreciate how different adult play can and should be from the play of children (p. 302).

Basically, play in children is seen as a critical element in various aspects of their growth such as cognitive development (Piaget, 1962) and normal personality development (Erikson, 1950), whereas play in adults is often viewed as an inconsequential endeavor. This may be especially true in our society where for many, vestiges of the Protestant work ethic still survive; hard work is perceived to be a virtue whereas play is not (Fine, 1991). In her work, Terr (1999) concurred with this observation when she wrote: “unfortunately, people today devalue their play. We tend to play less and less, the older we become... We are forgetting how to play. And we are failing to realize how important play really is” (p. 25). Whereas play may not be perceived to be an important element in an adult’s life, there are two concepts associated with play that adults may experience during participation in their leisure activities: flow and playfulness.

Flow, defined by Csikszentmihalyi (1975a) is “the holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement” (p.36). In other words, flow is “the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 4). Numerous studies examining flow have been conducted over the past three decades in a variety of settings including sports (Jackson, 1995), the classroom (Egbert, 2003) and other cultures (Asakawa, 2004; Moneta, 2004b). Early in his work on flow,

Csikszentmihalyi (1975b) noted that play is the most typical kind of flow experience; and furthermore that “play is the flow experience *par excellence*” (1975a, p. 36). His seminal work on flow emerged from his desire to investigate the experience of playfulness, not specifically on play itself (Csikszentmihalyi, 1979).

Therefore play and playfulness are inexorably linked, even though it is possible for an activity that one perceives to be play to be devoid of playfulness (Youell, 2008). As it is with children, playfulness in adults is perceived to be an individual characteristic. Glynn and Webster (1992) defined playfulness as a “predisposition to define and engage in activities in a nonserious or fanciful manner to increase enjoyment” (p. 81). In her work, Lieberman (1977) defined playfulness as “physical, social, and cognitive spontaneity, manifest joy, and sense of humor” (p. 23). While her work focused mainly on playfulness in children, she argued that the elements of spontaneity and fun were also important components in the leisure activities of adults. Recent research by Barnett (2011) has indicated that playfulness is associated more with how an individual perceives their leisure and what they seek from it than from what they actually do during their leisure; thus solidifying the idea that playfulness is an attitude within the individual.

In a similar fashion, examining play and playfulness through the lens of reversal theory also focuses on the mindset of an individual. The foundation of reversal theory rests on the idea that an individual’s experience is formed by a set of alternative ways of viewing the world and that one switches or *reverses* between these views in the course of everyday life. These are called metamotivational states and may be considered as “frames of mind” that characterize an individual’s motivational state at a given time. There are eight metamotivational states that occur in pairs of opposites (telic/paratelic, conformist/negativistic, mastery/sympathy, and autic/alloic); switches between these states are called reversals. Furthermore, the theory suggests

that an individual spends relatively more time in one state than the other, a concept referred to as dominance (Frey, 1997). While there have been numerous psychological theories that have sought to explain personality and motivation, reversal theory is the theory that pays the most attention to the phenomenon of play (Apter, 2009b). As Apter noted (1991), play is “a state of mind, a way of seeing and being, a special mental ‘set’...it is therefore impossible to define play from the outside by relating it to particular activities or behaviors” (p. 13). Similarly, flow and reversal theory share common points; both are psychological theories that strive to explicate trait qualities of motivation, and each is concerned with the individual’s perception of their experiences (Rea, 1993).

Reversal Theory

Reversal theory will be utilized to determine the metamotivational state and dominance that may be prevalent in contributing to the definition of play. Reversal theory is a general psychological theory of human behavior that deals with motivation, emotion and personality (Apter, 1997a; Frey, 1997). Developed by Smith and Apter in 1975 and further refined by Apter (Apter, 1982), reversal theory has been utilized in a variety of research areas related to recreation, leisure and play including sports activities (Frey, 1993; Kerr, 1987; Kerr, Fujiyama, & Campano, 2002), high risk activities (Apter & Batler, 1997; LeGrand & Apter, 2004), and gambling (Brown, 1991). The theory has also been employed in the study of humor (Murgatroyd, 1991), religion (Fontana, 1991), and stress (Apter, 1997b; Martin, Kuiper, Olinger, & Dobbin, 1987) among other areas. The fundamental premise of the theory is that an individual’s behavior cannot be totally understood without an understanding of the *personal meaning* that the behavior has for that individual (Apter, 1982). As Apter (1997a) explains:

The basic idea is that there are a number of identifiable and discrete ways of experiencing the world, which are universal in the sense that everyone experiences things through the same set. As we pass through our everyday lives, from minute to minute and hour to hour, so we move between these qualitatively different experiential states. This means that we not only differ from each other, but also, over time, from ourselves. We are all, as it were, different people at different moments of our lives (p. 218).

Therefore, an individual's experience is formed by a set of alternative ways of viewing the world and one switches or *reverses* between these views in the course of everyday life. Apter (1982) designates these as metamotivational states and defines them as:

A phenomenological state which is characterized by a certain way of interpreting some aspect(s) of one's own motivation. Such metamotivational states...go in pairs of opposites, only one member of each pair being operative at a given time, but reversal always being possible between members of a pair (p. 366).

Metamotivational states may be considered as "frames of mind" that characterize an individual's motivational state at a given time. There are eight metamotivational states that have been identified within reversal theory and they may be combined in various ways to determine an individual's motives and experiences at a particular moment in time. The states appear in pairs of opposites (telic/paratelic, conformist/negativistic, mastery/sympathy, and autic/alloic). Furthermore, the states of each pair are mutually exclusive; an individual can only be in one state or the other at a given moment in time, and never in both or neither (Frey, 1997).

The pair of metamotivational states most relevant to the concept of adult play is the telic/paratelic pair. The word telic is derived from the ancient Greek word 'telos' meaning goal or end. Paratelic results from adding the ancient Greek word 'para' meaning beside to the word telic (Apter, 1982). Basically, the telic state is a serious-minded, goal-oriented state focusing on some essential goal or goals whereas the paratelic state is a more playful, spontaneous state in which the pleasure that is derived from the activity itself is the focus of attention.

Statement of the Problem

There is no doubt that engaging in play is critical to a child's development as has been examined by a host of researchers and theorists (Barnett, 1990; Erikson, 1950; Garvey, 1990; Piaget, 1962). Yet many adults fail to understand the benefits to them that can be derived from engaging in episodes of play. Play is important to adults' mental creativity and happiness (Marano, 1999), and stress reduction (Apter, 2009a; Baptiste, 1995), among others. Understanding the personal meaning behind an individual's behavior such as play is the foundation of reversal theory, therefore it would be an appropriate lens through which to study the phenomenon of play. As a field that studies play, it is essential to increase our understanding of the phenomenon of adult play through further study of this population.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine how adults describe the concept of play and to determine whether this description reflects their dominant metamotivational state. These states are the frames of mind that characterize an individual's motivation at any given point in time. For this study, the telic or paratelic dominant states are the states of interest. Telic individuals look at life from a more serious, goal-oriented standpoint while paratelic individuals view life from a more playful, spontaneous viewpoint. When the word play is used, everyone seems to know what is meant. But is the definition of play colored by the motivational state of the individual?

Hypothesis

This study will attempt to answer the question: how does being telic or paratelic dominant impact an adult's description of play? The theoretical model is graphically depicted in

Figure 1. It is expected that as the metamotivational score obtained from the Paratelic Dominance Scale becomes more playful in nature (paratelic), the playfulness level of the descriptors will also increase. The following null hypothesis will be examined:

1. There will be no significant relationship between telic or paratelic dominance and a person's seriousness of play score.

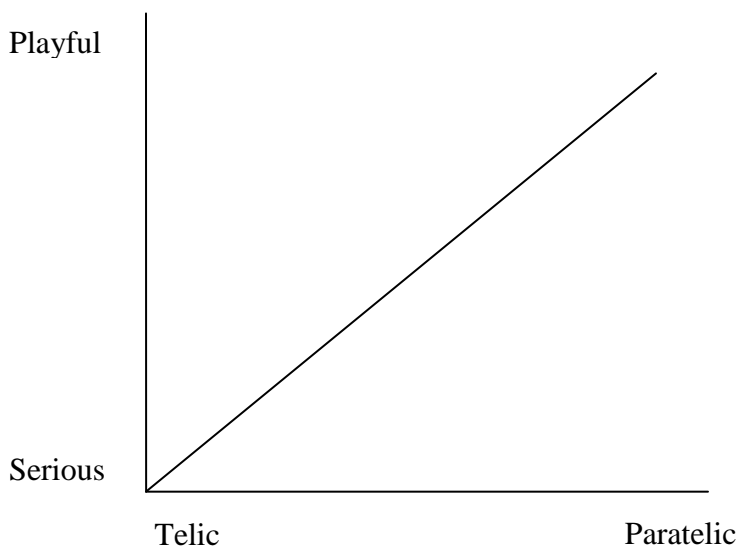


Figure 1. Theoretical model depicting the hypothesized null relationship between the level of playfulness and the metamotivational state of the individual at play.

Operational Definitions

The following terms are defined as used in this study:

1. Adult – those individuals between 40 and 65 years of age.
2. Telic - a frame of mind in which the “individual is oriented towards, or feels the need to be oriented towards, some essential goal or goals. It tends to be associated with serious-mindedness and planning ahead” (Apter, 1982, p. 369) as measured by the Paratelic Dominance Scale.

3. Paratelic - a frame of mind in which the “individual is oriented towards, or feels the need to be oriented towards, some aspect of his continuing behavior and its related sensations. It tends to be associated with an interest in the activity for its own sake, playfulness and spontaneity” (Apter, 1982, p. 367) as measured by the Paratelic Dominance Scale.
4. Seriousness of play – the level of seriousness associated with play for an individual as determined by the Seriousness of Play scale developed for this study.

Delimitations

The delimitations of the study include the following:

1. Study participants will be limited to adults between 40 and 65 years of age.
2. Data collection will be accomplished entirely through the use of online protocols.
3. Data collection instruments will be web-based and accessed through the URL supplied by the researcher to all participants.
4. Study participants were all from one company, a large behavioral health organization.

Significance of the Research

There appears to be limited research regarding the definition of play for middle-aged adults, specifically those individuals between 40-65 years of age. Individuals in this age group are perceived to be at the peak of their career; thus play may be considered as trivial behavior that is not appropriate for an adult or as activity to be engaged in only if time allows after the workday has ended. As a result, it is possible that the study of play among this group is

perceived to be less essential than other areas that influence well-being such as leisure preferences. Additionally, work in this area may be difficult to accomplish due to the emphasis that most middle-aged adults appear to place on their work lives. Therefore, this study endeavors to make a contribution to the study of play in this age group.

Understanding the phenomenon of play for adults is important for the profession of recreation and leisure studies. The argument could be made that it was the phenomenon of play and its study that provided the impetus for the burgeoning field of recreation and leisure studies in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Sand Gardens, established in Boston in 1886 are credited as being the first supervised public playground in this country and their development heralded the start of the Playground Movement on American soil. Other early playground locations included New York City (1890) and Chicago (1894) (Anderson, 2006). By 1912, over 330 cities across the country were directing organized play under the guidance of trained play leaders (Wood, 1913). As a result of the movement, the Playground Association of America (PAA) was founded in 1906 and later became the National Recreation Association (NRA) in 1930 (Anderson, 2006). In 1965, the NRA merged with four other public recreation organizations to form the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA); today's leading advocacy organization for the park and recreation field (NRPA, 2012). Ultimately, the play of both children and adults is a vitally important facet of the profession.

Increasing the understanding of adult play can potentially assist those who work with adults through leisure education and those who advocate healthy lifestyles to lobby for more opportunities for play. Studying the play of adults can also help to elucidate the role of playfulness in adulthood. Is play only those playful moments we fall in to when sledding down a snowy hill for the first time? Or is it that tennis match where our attention is totally focused and

we want to win? Perhaps it was not the match at all, but a euphoric feeling that made Serena Williams dance after she won the 2012 U. S. Open in September. One of the difficulties with studying adult play is that we are not sure where it starts. Consequently, as a profession we need to be able to define adult play so that there is a solid foundation from which to begin studying the phenomenon. There is much that can be learned from studying the play of adults; understanding how play is defined by the middle aged population can provide the first step toward additional research regarding the importance of play for adults. As the philosopher Plato observed, “You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation” (O’Sullivan, 1996, p. 6).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Adulthood is perceived to be the life stage when work is central to an individual's existence (Erikson, 1982; Levinson, 1978). These individuals are focused on being able to contribute creative and meaningful work be that a "generation of new beings" (i.e., children) or "new products and new ideas" (Erikson, 1982, p. 67). Therefore, play for these individuals may be considered as trivial behavior that is not appropriate for an adult or as an activity to be engaged in only if time allows after the completion of the workday. As a result, many adults may fail to recognize the benefits that can be derived from engaging in episodes of play including happiness (Marano, 1999) and stress reduction (Apter, 2009a; Baptiste, 1995). Along with this lack of recognition surrounding the benefits of play for adults is a lack of understanding within the recreation and leisure studies field regarding the definition that adults give to the phenomenon of play. Studying the definition that adults give to the concept of play can provide insight to those in the profession, which in turn can lead to a better understanding among the adult population.

This review of literature will present concepts identified in the literature that contribute to the understanding of adult play. These include the definitions and theories of adult play, the study of playfulness in adults and the concept of flow and its relationship with play. Additionally, the theoretical framework of reversal theory will be discussed including the philosophical foundation of the theory, domains and metamotivational states, the concept of protective frames, the reversal process, and dominance.

The experience of adult play

Capturing the essence of play is a difficult endeavor as the word “play” itself can be used in a variety of ways and thus conveys different meanings depending upon the context of the situation. Children are told to “go play”, friends “play” a pick-up game of basketball, musicians “play” musical instruments, and actors perform in stage “plays”. Melancholy stories “play” with our emotions. People “play up” their strengths and “downplay” their weaknesses. An easy endeavor is referred to as “child’s play”. In all of these instances, play has taken on a different meaning. Play behavior however is ubiquitous; children play, adults play, indeed most mammals play as any pet owner or zoo patron would attest. We recognize play when we see it; yet defining the concept has proven to be a difficult endeavor as for centuries, philosophers, anthropologists, historians, and others in various fields have offered numerous definitions and theories regarding play. As noted play theorist Sutton-Smith (2008) reflected on his long search for the meaning of play:

I thought time and again I had at last discovered the meaning of play. But, somehow, it always turned out otherwise, somehow there always seemed other questions to ask, other lines of inquiry to follow, all auguring answers more promising than those I thought I had in hand. Something about the nature of play itself frustrates fixed meaning (p. 81).

There has been some recent research regarding the meaning of play as perceived by adults, albeit not specifically the definition that they give to the concept. Sandberg (2001) examined the meaning of play for adults through an examination of their play experiences during childhood. Participants (ages 20-60+) were asked to reflect on how they played during the following age periods; 3-6 years old, 7-12 years old, 13-18 years old and as an adult. Participants were instructed to draw a picture that illustrated their play during each age grouping and combine it with a written description of the episode. Additionally, participants completed a

questionnaire. Results indicated that the ages of 7-12 held a special significance in the play memories of the participants due to remembered persons, places, and interaction.

Similarly, Hoppes, Wilcox, and Graham (2001) investigated the meaning that older adults assigned to the games that they regularly play. Twenty participants (established groups of bowlers, tennis players, and domino players) ranged in age from 62-89 and were asked a series of open-ended questions about why they engaged in playing these games. Five themes were discovered that held meaning for the older adults: mental and physical fitness, continuity (comfort gained from deeply rooted activities), competition, temporal structure (being able to fill the hours that were formerly occupied by work activities), and a sense of belonging. Consequently, the researchers argued that play can be seen as an activity that created meaning in the lives of older adults.

Play in the lives of older women was the subject of examination by Yarnal, Chick, and Kerstetter (2008). In their study of Red Hat Society® (RHS) members, the researchers attempted to determine how older women define play and the outcomes that they sought from participating in play behavior. RHS is an international women's organization with most members over 50 years of age. For this study, 1,693 members responded to an online survey and the open-ended question, "We are interested in any stories you might like to share about meaningful experiences you have had through your Red Hat Society membership" (p. 241). Three themes emerged from this study. Play provided the participants with: (1) a context for fun, laughter, and feeling good; (2) the chance to be silly and goofy, and (3) positive public reaction that resulted in pleasure for them.

While these studies have provided valuable insight into the phenomenon of play for adults, none of them has actually uncovered a definition of play. The meaning of play in

everyday life is understood, and most people can distinguish play from non-play activities. But as Ellis (1973) observed:

That which makes for playfulness can be easily recognized by humans in chimps, dogs, whales, and other species and most probably individuals of these species can reverse the process and recognize some playful responses in man. Since we can in large measure agree, play should be easy to define. However, it has proved a puzzle for centuries (p. 9).

Definitions and Theories of Play

The phenomenon of play has been the topic of scholarly works for millennia. Among the ancient Greek philosophers for example, the play of man was viewed as an important aspect of life. Centuries ago, Plato extolled the virtues of play in his *Laws* as he wrote:

God alone is worthy of supreme seriousness, but man is made God's plaything, and that is the best part of him. Therefore every man and woman should live life accordingly, and play the noblest of games, and be of another mind from what they are at present... What, then is the right way of living? Life must be lived as play, playing certain games, making sacrifices, singing and dancing, and then a man will be able to propitiate the Gods (In Huizinga, 1955, pp. 211-212).

Additionally, Plato believed that philosophy was a sublime game and that play provided the basis of good argument. With regard to Plato's philosophy of play, Ardley (1967) wrote, "Fecundity, genuine seriousness, real understanding, are to be found only in aerial flights of play; without play, our intellectual exertions lead but to fatuous solemnities" (p. 226). It is thinking such as that perhaps that led to the old adage of "all work and no play make Jack a dull boy".

There have been numerous definitions of play offered over the centuries from researchers of various backgrounds. Some definitions stress the structural aspects of play such as movements or gestures, while others focused on the idea that play seems to have no particular function (Smith & Vollstedt, 1985). Others have focused on the social, biological and

psychological functions of play. Thus, play is a complex construct for which no single, comprehensive definition exists (Schaefer, 1983).

Play as a contest. One of the early works regarding play was provided by Dutch cultural historian Johan Huizinga in his seminal work *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (1955). For Huizinga, the most defining characteristic of play is the element of fun. He defines play as:

free activity standing quite consciously outside “ordinary” life as being “not serious”, but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained from it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groups which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means (p. 13).

The thesis of his work is the notion that play provides the very foundation of culture; characteristics of play are found in many of the elements that combine to form a culture. Tylor (1871) defined culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (In Schwartzman, 1978, p. 61). Put simply, culture is the coalescence of traditions, beliefs, rituals and norms that are transmitted socially to a group of people that creates a sense of community. In his work, Huizinga examines the manifestation of play in such elements as language, law, war, poetry, philosophy and art. Play can be seen to function in two ways within these elements: as a contest or as a representation of something. For example, play can be considered as a metaphor in language or a riddle game in philosophy (i.e., a representation) or in the arenas of law and warfare as competition (Anchor, 1978). Huizinga (1955) summarizes his findings as:

It has not been difficult to show that a certain play-factor was extremely active through all the cultural process and that it produces many of the fundamental forms of social life. The spirit of playful competition is, as a social impulse, older than culture itself and pervades all life like a veritable ferment. Ritual grew up in sacred play; poetry was born

in play and nourished on play; music and dancing were pure play. Wisdom and philosophy found expression in words and forms derived from religious contests. The rules of warfare, the conventions of noble living were built up on play-patterns. We have to conclude, therefore, that civilization is, in its earliest phases, played. It does not come *from* play...; it arises *in* and *as* play, and never leaves it (p. 173).

Thus, for Huizinga, play is not viewed from a behavioral perspective but as a contest or competition that forms the basis of culture.

In his work Caillois, French writer and philosopher, takes a slightly different perspective regarding the phenomenon of play although he too examined play from a cultural standpoint. In his seminal work *Man, Play and Games* (1961/2001) he defines play as a free, unproductive activity that takes place in a protected universe, governed by rules with elements of make-believe and an uncertainty as to the course that the activity will follow. As he wrote, “play is an occasion of pure waste: waste of time, energy, ingenuity, skill, and often money” (p. 5-6). His main focus however revolves around the idea that games are a form of social play; as he argues that “play is not merely an individual pastime” (p. 37). He classifies games into four categories; agon, alea, mimicry and ilinx.

Games in the first category of *agon* are characterized by competition and rivalry through displays of skill, speed, endurance, etc., bounded by defined limits (i.e., rules), in which the winner appears to be superior to the loser (Caillois, 1961/2001). Sports are a prime example of this category of games as are chess, checkers, bridge and any other activity in which a winner is determined at the end of the contest. This category also includes those activities that involve displays of prowess such as hunting and crossword puzzles; where the individual is not in direct competition with another person, but is in competition with himself as a means of bettering his skills and abilities (Caillois, 1961/2001).

Alea is the second category of games. The outcomes of the games in this category are out of the control of the player; fate determines the winner, not any particular skill on the part of the player. Games of chance, (i.e., gambling) are the best example of *alea*. Gambling implies activity in which there can be material gain for the player, which is a departure from Huizinga's (1955) definition of play as he stressed that play is "connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it" (p. 13). The social aspects of this category are typified within such settings as casinos and race tracks.

The third category of games is *mimicry*. Activity in this category is characterized by illusion as an individual pretends to be someone else. Children often pretend to be adults "working" in such professions as firemen, teachers, or airplane pilots. Oftentimes, they will also pretend to be their favorite cartoon characters or a character from movies or television shows. As Caillois (1961/2001) notes, "acts of mimicry tend to cross the border between childhood and adulthood" (p. 21). Adults engaged in mimicry can be found on the stage, television or movies playing a role that is someone different from them. Halloween is another good example of mimicry; it an occasion where everyone pretends to be someone (or something) else for at least one night.

The final category of games offered by Caillois is *ilinx*. Games in this category are characterized by a quest for the sensation of vertigo that works to "momentarily destroy the stability of perception and inflict a kind of voluptuous panic upon an otherwise lucid mind" (Caillois, 1961/2001, p. 23). Amusement park rides, dancing, and the drinking games of college students are examples of activities in this category of games. For adults, Caillois (1961/2001) maintained that vertigo can be linked to the "desire for disorder and destruction" (p. 24).

To further explain the concept of play, Caillois (1961/2001) proposed that play exists on

a continuum between two opposing conditions. On one end of the continuum lies paidia, characterized by play that is unstructured and spontaneous. At the opposite end of the continuum is ludus; games on this end are more structured and rule-bound. All play moves back and forth between these two poles; between the freedom of simple play on one end to the structured competition on the other. By placing play along a continuum, Caillois recognized the “contradictions and ambiguity of play” (Masters, 2008, p. 859).

Play as adaptation. This ambiguity of play has been the focus of much scholarly examination by play theorist Brian Sutton-Smith. As he wrote in the opening of his most noted work *The Ambiguity of Play* (1997); “We all play occasionally, and we all know what playing feels like. But when it comes to making theoretical statements about what play is, we fall into silliness. There is little agreement among us, and much ambiguity” (p. 1). He argued that the ambiguity is due in large part to the diversity of play forms (i.e., different types of play activities), players (infants, adolescents, adults, etc.), play equipment (balls, dolls, toys, etc.), and play arenas (playgrounds, sports, fields, casinos, etc.).

While Huizinga and Caillois viewed play as a game or contest, Sutton-Smith takes a more biological approach. He defines play as adaptive potentiation, a “trickle down” theory that there is “an occasional transfer of play skills to everyday skills” (p. 230). For Sutton-Smith then, play is closely tied to survival and successful adaptation of the individual, play is a “fascimilization of the struggle for survival” (1997, p. 231). An organism or individual must adapt to the environment it is in order to survive, and flexibility is the key. Drawing on the work of evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould and his notion of adaptive variability, Sutton-Smith (1997) found correlation between the characteristics of play and Gould’s principles. As he noted, “if quirkiness, redundancy, and flexibility are keys to evolution, then finding play to be

itself quite quirky, redundant, and flexible certainly suggests that play may have a similar biological base” (p. 224).

Play as communication. Bateson (1955/1972), an anthropologist, did not start out to research play per se; his focus was on communication and the messages that flow between individuals. His early work involved an investigation into the evolution of communication; he concluded that there comes a point when an organism stops responding automatically to the “mood-signs” of others (such as a scent) and can recognize that these signs are signals that can be “trusted, distrusted, falsified, denied, amplified, corrected and so forth” (p. 138). From there, he began to investigate whether or not animals were consciously aware of the communication between them (Schwartzman, 1978). While on a trip to the zoo to test his theory, Bateson found his answer in an episode of play. He wrote:

What I encountered at the zoo was a phenomenon well known to everybody: I saw two young monkeys playing, i.e., engaged in an interactive sequence of which the unit actions or signals were similar to but not the same as those of combat. It was evident, even to the human observer, that the sequence as a whole was not combat, and evident to the human observer that to the participant monkeys this was “not combat”.

Now, this phenomenon, play, could only occur if the participant organisms were capable of some degree of meta-communication, i.e., of exchanging signals which would carry the message “this is play” (Bateson, 1955/1972, p. 139).

Metacommunicative messages can be thought of as frames or contexts that offer information about how a message should be interpreted. In order to be interpreted as play, it is necessary for an action to be framed by the message that “this is play” (Schwartzman, 1978). According to Bateson (1955/1972), the message that “this is play” contains a paradox in which a negative statement includes an embedded negative metastatement. Consequently, the message “this is play” states: “these actions, in which we now engage, do not denote what would be denoted by those actions which these actions denote” (p. 139). For example, in a play fight, “the

playful nip denotes the bite, but it does not denote what would be denoted by the bite” (Bateson, 1955/1972, p. 139). Put simply, it is at once both a bite and a non-bite and the participants in the play fight rely on the signals that the fight is actually play. For Bateson then, play only occurs between beings that are able to metacommunicate; able to distinguish between different types of messages (Schwartzman, 1978).

Attributes of Play. As there are differing viewpoints as to the definition of play, perhaps then it may be more appropriate to describe play through its attributes. According to noted play theorist and developmental psychologist Catherine Garvey (1990), there are certain characteristics of play that most play scholars would accept:

1. Play is pleasurable, enjoyable. Even when not actually accompanied by signs of mirth, it is still positively valued by the player.
 2. Play has no extrinsic goals. Its motivations are intrinsic and serve no other objectives. In fact, it is more an enjoyment of means than an effort devoted to some particular end. In utilitarian terms, it is inherently unproductive.
 3. Play is spontaneous and voluntary. It is not obligatory but is freely chosen by the player.
 4. Play involves some active engagement on the part of the player.
 5. Play has certain systematic relations to what is not play.
- (p. 4-5)

Ultimately, it would appear that attempts to develop one single definition of play have been stymied by the fact that play has been studied through the lens of so many different disciplines. Perhaps Millar (1974) had the most workable suggestion in attempting to define play when she offered that, “perhaps play is best used as an adverb; not as a name of a class of activities, nor as distinguished by the accompanying mood, but to describe how and under what conditions an action is performed” (p. 21).

Theories of Play. Just as there have been several definitions of play over time, there have been equally numerous theories proposed that have sought to explain the phenomenon of play.

Generally these theories can be divided into three categories: 1) classical theories of play, which originated before the turn of the twentieth century; 2) recent theories, which contain the theories developed just after the turn of the twentieth century; and 3) modern theories of play, which originated after 1920 (Ellis, 1973; Mellou, 1994; Takhvar, 1988). The majority of the proposed theories attempted to explain play behavior in children; however the main focus here will be on the theories that are most applicable to adult play.

Classical theories of play. The classical theories were an attempt to explain what led man to play and what purpose was served by undertaking play behavior (Ellis, 1971; Mellou, 1994). There are five classical theories of play: surplus energy, instinct, preparation, recapitulation, and relaxation. Surplus energy theory postulated that play is caused by the need to expend energy leftover after survival needs have been met (Ellis, 1973; Levy, 1978/1983). Instinct theory is based on the notion that play is caused by the inheritance of unlearned or instinctual capacities within an individual (Ellis, 1971; 1973). Preparation theory posited that play behavior is preparation for adult life. In his work, Groos (1901) considered the child's imitation of an adult to be an essential element in play. He observed that "play is the agency employed to develop crude powers and prepare them for life's uses" (p. 375). Recapitulation theory is based on the belief that development of an individual recapitulates (i.e., repeats or re-enacts) the development of the species (Ellis, 1973; Mellou, 1994, Takhvar, 1988). The final classical theory, relaxation is the theory that is most applicable to adult play.

Relaxation theory, proposed by Patrick (1916) is a refinement of the recreation theory espoused by Lazarus in the late 1800s. Lazarus believed that play was recreational activity that restored vitality to an individual after a strenuous day of work. The difficulty with this theory lies in the fact that Lazarus did not specifically elucidate how play restored energy to the

individual (Takhvar, 1988). Patrick believed that play and sports were restorative; they helped the individual recuperate from work (Ellis, 1973). Patrick (1916) went further and sought to explain why certain activities were restorative and others were not:

There is a striking similarity between the plays of children and the sports of men on the one hand and the pursuits of primitive man on the other. This similarity is due to the fact that those mental powers upon which advancing civilization depends, especially voluntary and sustained attention, concentration, analysis and abstraction, are undeveloped in the child and subject to rapid fatigue in the adult. Hence, the child's activities and the play activities of the adult tend always to take the form of old racial pursuits (pp. 48-49).

Thus, the relaxation theory appears to be the most applicable of the classical theories to adults due to the recuperative powers of play and sports in restoring energy to an individual. However, the theory does not consider that there are some individuals who do not experience stressful lives or that certain recreation activities can be competitive and thus become stressful in their own right (Krumpe, 2007).

Recent theories of play. Recent theories of play include generalization, compensation, catharsis, psychoanalytic, developmental and learning theories (Ellis, 1971, 1973). These theories of play, developed just after the turn of the twentieth century, were concerned with the form or content of play behavior and endeavored to connect “antecedent and subsequent events” through causes and effects (Ellis, 1973, p. 49). Of these, generalization, compensation and catharsis theories appear to be the most applicable to explaining adult play. Both generalization and compensation theories are contingent upon the idea that the selection of an individual's leisure choices relies on the nature of their work (Ellis, 1973). Generalization theory posits that adults will select activities in their leisure time that are similar to those that are satisfying to them at work (Ellis, 1973; Witt & Bishop, 1970/2009). Compensation theory proposes that leisure activities are chosen to compensate for the lack of needs satisfaction in the work environment

(Ellis, 1973). In a similar fashion, catharsis theory is based on the concept that play behavior allows an individual to purge undesirable emotions (Ellis, 1973). Thus, an individual who encountered an unpleasant experience in the workplace could, for example choose activities of a physical nature that would allow for the purging of negative emotions.

Modern theories of play. The modern theories of play, originating after 1920 are perhaps the most relevant to the study of adult play and are predicated on the idea that all behavior is motivated; driven by some “thing” (Ellis, 1973). Motive can be defined as some factor, internal to an individual that provokes and guides their behavior (Iso-Ahola, 1999).

In his work, Berlyne (1960) proposed the arousal modulation theory, a theory based on the principle that all behavior is initiated by a particular drive or a combination of them. He discovered that much of an individual’s exploratory behavior took place outside of the “organic” drives of hunger, thirst or pain (p. 164). Furthermore, the need to explore a new environment could be stronger than hunger or thirst, the implication being that there is a need for an optimum level of arousal. Too high of an arousal state results in the need for arousal reduction behavior and too low of an arousal state requires a search for activity that would increase stimulation (Berlyne, 1960, Mellou, 1994). Consequently for Berlyne, play is caused by the need to maintain an optimum level of arousal.

Ellis (1973) posited an alternative to Berlyne’s theory. Where Berlyne’s theory suggests that the individual responds to “produce” stimulation, Ellis’ theory suggests that an individual “seeks” stimulation. For Ellis, play is a stimulus seeking activity caused by the need to “generate interactions with the environment or self that elevate arousal (level of interest or stimulation) towards the optimal for the individual” (p. 111). Thus he defined play as “behavior that is

motivated by the need to elevate the level of arousal towards the optimal” (p. 110). Each individual has an ideal or optimal level of arousal and is either seeking or avoiding interactions within the environment that maintain that preferred level (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). For example, an individual experiencing a low level of arousal would seek out more challenging activity (e.g., skiing a more difficult course, playing against a more seasoned opponent in chess) that would work to increase the level toward the optimal. Similarly, an individual whose arousal level is above the optimal will look for activities that will decrease their arousal level back to the optimal. The relationship of performance to arousal is depicted in Figure 2.

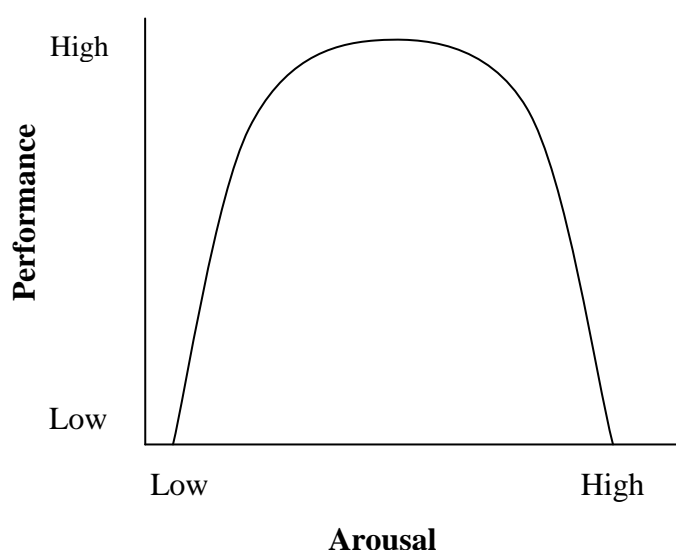


Figure 2. Inverted “U” relating performance to arousal. Adapted from Ellis (1973, p. 90).

Similar to Ellis’s theory of play as arousal seeking is the competence/effectance theory. Proposed by White (1959), he contended that a “different kind of motivational idea” was needed to “account fully for the fact that man and the higher mammals develop a competence in dealing with the environment which they certainly do not have at birth” (p. 297). Competence in this context refers to the individual’s ability to interact with the environment (White, 1959). The individual considers themselves to be qualified and capable; their skills and abilities are useful in

overcoming a challenge or problem. In other words, one's perceived abilities are relatively equal to their "perceived responsibilities" (Mitchell, 1988, p. 44). White (1959) maintained that competence was not acquired in its entirety through behavior initiated by internal drives, but was reinforced by activities that showed "direction, selectivity and persistence in interacting with the environment" (p. 329). Therefore, his concept of effectance refers to the idea that feelings of efficacy reinforce the demonstration of competence; thus the individual would experience the feeling of being in control and would continue the attempt to attain competence (Ellis, 1973). Thus competence is the result of "interactions with the world motivated by effectance" (Ellis, 1973, p. 102).

To summarize, the theories that have been offered to explain the construct of play have changed focus from the attempt to explain what led man to play to the form that play took to the notion that play behavior is motivated by something internal to the individual. Thus, play is a multidimensional concept that contains several behavioral elements. Similarly, the related concept of adult playfulness has been identified as a multidimensional concept that contains cognitive, affective and behavior elements (Glynn & Webster, 1992).

Playfulness in Adults

Studying the experience of adult play necessitates an examination of the related concept of playfulness. Play and playfulness are inexorably linked, even though it is possible for an activity that one perceives to be play to be devoid of playfulness (Youell, 2008). Research of playfulness in children has a longer history than that of adults. In general, playfulness in children is seen as "an internal disposition to bring a playful quality to interactions within the environment" and as a trait that is an "individual characteristic and its expression, relatively

stable, reproducible, and recognizable” (Trevlas, Grammatikopoulos, Tsigilis, & Zachopoulou, 2003, p. 33).

In some of the earliest work examining playfulness in children, Lieberman (1977) described playfulness as a personality trait that explains “how children play” and was operationally defined as “physical, social, and cognitive spontaneity, manifest joy, and sense of humor” (p. 23). According to Lieberman’s (1977) model, physical spontaneity refers to the spontaneous physical movement a child may engage in such as running or skipping, whereas social spontaneity refers to the ability to move freely in and out of a group setting, interacting with and responding to others. Cognitive spontaneity refers to the imaginative or creative capacity of the child. Manifest joy refers to the expression of joy (i.e., enthusiasm, lack of restraint, etc.) during play through such behavior as smiling or laughing, and sense of humor refers to the ability of the child to find events funny, even those pertaining to themselves (Sanderson, 2010). Though Lieberman’s work has been criticized for methodological reasons, it did provide a solid foundation which has allowed other researchers to work toward refining the measurement of playfulness in children (Barnett, 1990).

Playfulness and Adults. Playfulness in adults is perceived somewhat differently than it is in children. As it is with children, playfulness in adults is perceived to be an individual characteristic. Glynn and Webster (1992) defined playfulness as a “predisposition to define and engage in activities in a nonserious or fanciful manner to increase enjoyment” (p. 81). Similar to Lieberman, the researchers maintained that adult playfulness is a multidimensional concept that contains cognitive, affective and behavior elements. They argued however that the playfulness measures utilized for children and adolescents were not suitable for use with adult populations. Two reasons were offered for this assertion: 1) actual assessments were conducted by teachers,

daycare providers or other educational staff members, and 2) the instruments contained items that were not appropriate for use with adults such as “The child is physically active during play” or “The child uses unconventional objects in play” (Barnett, 1991, p. 377). The resultant Adult Playfulness Scale (APS), developed by Glynn and Webster (1992) contained 32 items suitable for the study of playfulness in adults. It has been argued however that the content and construct validity of the instrument was not adequately addressed by the researchers (Kruger, 1995). A second instrument, the Playfulness Scale for Adults (PSA) was developed by Schaefer and Greenberg (1997) for the purpose of focusing on the “fun” element of playfulness; i.e., a general predisposition to have fun. Developed with a focus of examining playfulness among therapists, the researchers posited that a “playful” therapist was more likely to be successful when working with children within the play therapy setting.

Playfulness in young adults has been studied by a number of researchers. In her work, Barnett (2007) attempted to determine if playfulness in university students could be more specifically recognized as a meaningful psychological construct. Toward that end, 649 undergraduate students participated in focus groups in order to ascertain the characteristics of playful and nonplayful people. Fifteen qualities were found that describe a playful individual, resulting in four components of playfulness; “gregarious”, “uninhibited”, “comedic”, and “dynamic” (p. 957). Further investigation by Barnett (2011) sought to determine how leisure perspectives, motives and preferences differed between more and less playful college students. Her results indicated that playfulness is associated more with how an individual perceives their leisure and what they seek from it than from what they actually do during their leisure.

Other researchers have focused on the relationship between playfulness and stress perception, coping and overall well-being in young adults (Qian & Yarnal, 2010; Staempfli,

2007). In their work, Bozionelos and Bozionelos (1999) sought to determine if instrumental and expressive traits contributed to the variance of playfulness scores among British undergraduate and graduate students. The terms instrumental and expressive were utilized in this study in place of the terms masculine and feminine. The researchers argued that the former terms are much more “unambiguous” (p. 750) than the latter terms. They concluded that instrumentality and expressiveness do contribute independently to playfulness scores among their participants.

Guitard, Ferland, & Dutil (2005) took a different approach in the study of adult playfulness. For their qualitative study, the researchers utilized a grounded theory approach in an effort to develop a conceptual definition of adult playfulness. Fifteen study participants, ranging in age from 28 to 63 years old, were purposefully chosen rather than randomly selected based on their exhibition of external characteristics such as sense of humor and creativity and high or low levels of playfulness. Data collection was accomplished through semi-structured interviews conducted in each participant’s natural setting. Results indicated that playfulness in adults appears to be due to the presence and interaction of five components: creativity, curiosity, sense of humor, pleasure and spontaneity. Study participants defined each component as follows:

- Creativity is the ability to use one’s imagination in an original, concrete, and tangible result of either an artistic or intellectual nature.
- Curiosity is an intellectual phenomenon that manifests itself in a constant thirst for knowledge and a quest for new experiences.
- Sense of humor represents one’s ability to understand the amusing side of situations, the ability to laugh at one’s self...and the ability to make others laugh.
- Pleasure is conceived as a visceral response to a sensory stimulation or as a contentment state following satisfaction of a need or desire.
- Spontaneity refers to what is produced naturally without external intervention. (Guitard et al., 2005, pp. 15-18).

Therefore based on these components, Guitard et al. (2005) defined adult playfulness as “a state of mind, an internal predisposition that is composed of creativity, curiosity, sense of humor,

pleasure and spontaneity” (p. 19). Furthermore, “in adulthood, playfulness crosses the boundaries of play and extends to all life situations” (p. 19).

Playfulness in Older Adults. Playfulness in older adults has recently been investigated by researchers. In their work, Yarnal and Qian (2011) undertook a four-step, multimethod approach to test the proposition that playfulness in older adults is an important component of healthy aging. Step 1 of the study involved the determination of the characteristics associated with older-adult playfulness. To accomplish this, the researchers recruited older adults ages 65 years and older from a senior center and the local chapter of a national senior organization. In total, there were 46 participants, 20 from the senior center and 26 from the national organization. The participants were divided into six focus groups and asked to describe the traits of a playful person, as well as a playful person that they knew and someone they knew who is not playful. The focus group discussions resulted in the identification of 86 descriptors of playfulness. Subsequently, the researchers developed a questionnaire using the 86 identified descriptors and several demographic factors for use in the second round of data collection. The questionnaire was administered to the same participants. Analysis of the data from the questionnaires resulted in the exclusion of 31 descriptors, leaving 55 descriptors of playfulness (33 positive and 22 negative descriptors).

In Step 2, Yarnal and Qian (2011) recruited 115 participants from a regional older adult volunteer organization. Participants were asked to rate themselves, a playful older individual they knew and a nonplayful individual they knew on the 55 descriptors identified in Step 1 as well as the word playful. Exploratory factor analysis identified four factors, containing 23 positive descriptors that explained over 52% of the total sample variance. Step 2 culminated in the development of the Older Adult Playfulness Scale (OAP).

In Step 3 of the study, the researchers endeavored to validate the reliability of the OAP scale and looked for any remaining redundant descriptors. To accomplish this, they conducted confirmatory factor analyses; participants for this step were recruited from the alumni association of a large public university. A total of 349 older adults participated in Step 3. Two additional scales, the Positive Affect and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) and the Behavioral Activation Scale (BAS) were used in this step in an effort to test both convergent and discriminant validity of the OAP. Step 4 of the study has not been completed as of this point in time.

At the conclusion of their study, Yarnal and Qian (2011) identified 15 qualities of older playful adults and the following definition:

Playful older adults are happy, optimistic, cheerful, amusing, positive, enthusiastic, and relaxed. In everyday exchanges, they tend toward mischief, naughtiness, clowning, joking, and teasing; they embody fun and humor in ways that translate into laughter and amusement in others. Although impish, they are circumspect about their behavior in ways that teenagers have not yet mastered. Nevertheless, again, they continue to approach the world with a measure of creativity and whimsy (p. 71).

The results of these studies provide a strong argument for the existence of adult playfulness well into older age. Spontaneity, a sense of humor, gregariousness, and fun appear to be common themes discovered amongst the various studies. This lends credence to Solnit's (1997) observations when he maintained that the play of childhood evolves over the course of an individual's life into playfulness and is of fundamental importance throughout life. He noted that:

Play in childhood can be traced into adulthood as playfulness. Adults usually give up play, partly because they become self-critical of its regressive aspects and also because playfulness, especially playing with thoughts, fantasies, and imaginings, is more grown-up – that is, efficient, socially useful, and private (p. 108).

Recent research has indicated that playfulness is associated more with how an individual perceives their leisure and what they seek from it than from what they actually do during their

leisure; thus solidifying the idea that playfulness is an attitude within the individual (Barnett, 2011). There are individuals however who take their play very seriously.

Seriousness of play. Whereas spontaneity, a sense of humor, gregariousness, and fun have been identified as common themes associated with playfulness in adults (Barnett, 2007; Yarnal & Qian, 2011; Yarnal et al., 2008), the antithesis of playfulness (i.e., seriousness) has also been identified in the literature. In his definition of play, Huizinga (1955) maintained that play could be considered as an activity that was “not serious, but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly” (p. 13). At the same time, he argued that some play can be very serious for the player when he wrote that “laughter, for instance is in a sense the opposite of seriousness without being absolutely bound up with play. Children’s games, football, and chess are played in profound seriousness; the players have not the slightest inclination to laugh” (Huizinga, 1955, p. 6). Ultimately, while seriousness might work to inhibit play, play can absolutely include seriousness (Huizinga, 1955).

Play for de Grazia (1962) is considered as more of a distraction; there is a detachment in the activity that is related to the lack of seriousness in the phenomenon. However, he argued that tension within the player during a game comes from the imagining that the play is serious; the player acts as if the outcome counts for something. He continued:

[T]he idea of fair play and being a good loser belongs to the same quality of unseriousness. If absorption goes too far, it becomes a trance or ecstasy or leads to breaking the rules of the game. A justified and common complaint of players is that one or another person takes the game too seriously (p. 375).

Once again, play can be considered non-serious or serious depending upon the player and the circumstances in which the activity is taking place.

As it could be argued that some individuals perceive play and leisure to be synonymous; perhaps the best known research into the seriousness of play is Stebbins' work on serious leisure.

According to Stebbins (2007), serious leisure can be defined as:

[T]he systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer core activity that people find so substantial, interesting, and fulfilling that, in the typical case, they launch themselves on a (leisure) career centered on acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience (p. 5)

There are six distinctive qualities that defines serious leisure: 1) the need to persevere, 2) finding a career in the activity, 3) the expenditure of significant effort to gain the knowledge and skills required to participate in the endeavor, 4) the attainment of durable benefits or rewards, 5) a strong identification with the pursuit, and 6) the development of a unique ethos develops around the activity (Stebbins, 1999). In other words, there is nothing necessarily playful about engaging in serious leisure. Indeed, Stebbins (1999) contrasts serious leisure with casual leisure; leisure that is immediately pleasurable or gratifying, typically short-lived and requires very little effort or training on the part of the individual. In other words, one type of casual leisure is play. However, should all play behavior be categorized as casual leisure; behavior that is solely hedonistic in nature, that has no hint of seriousness at all? The answer is not necessarily.

Recently, Shen and Yarnal (2010) examined this accepted dichotomy that exists between serious and casual leisure in their study of the leisure activities of older women of the Red Hat Society® (RHS). Analyzing the responses to an open-ended question about meaningful experiences, the researchers determined that while RHS members' behavior appeared "superficially casual" (p. 174) in nature, there was a broad range of serious leisure characteristics present as well. If a true dichotomy had existed, the researchers felt that they should have observed instances of characteristics associated with serious leisure such as low levels of self

esteem and accomplishment among the RHS members. They determined however that the women experienced a wide range of dimensions associated with both serious and casual leisure. Therefore, the researchers concluded that serious leisure and casual leisure are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but form a continuum of behaviors.

One of the hallmarks of serious leisure (play) is that the rewards an individual receives from a core activity are “not only fulfilling in themselves, but also fulfilling as counterweights to the costs encountered in the activity” (Stebbins, 2007, p. 13). This idea of an intrinsically fulfilling activity is one of the fundamental elements of the concept of flow. Flow is experienced when an individual wholeheartedly invests commitment, time and energy into activities that are engaged in freely and are rewarding in their own right (Mitchell, 1988).

The Concept of Flow

The concept of flow emerged from the work of psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and his interest in playfulness. As he reported (1979), “Very simply, I wanted to study the *experience of playfulness*, rather than play itself” (p. 260). Glimpses of the concept however can be found in his early work involving the development of a conceptual model of play. He described what happens when people play as:

a state of experience in which the actor’s ability to act matches the requirements for action in his environment. It differs from anxiety, in which the requirements outnumber the ability, and from boredom, in which the requirements are too few for the ability level of the actor (Csikszentmihalyi & Bennett, 1971, p. 45).

In other words, play is experienced when an individual is participating in some form of activity where their skill level and the challenge level of the environment in which the action is taking place are in harmony. This match of skill and challenge is the fundamental premise underlying the concept of flow.

Csikszentmihalyi (1975a) defined flow as “the holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement” (p.36). In simpler terms, flow can be described as “the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 4). Flow is characterized by: (a) the feeling that one’s skills are sufficient to the challenges at hand, (b) concentration in an activity so intense that one is aware of nothing else (i.e., a merging of action and awareness), (c) goal-directed activity, (d) immediate feedback (i.e., the individual knows what they are doing is right or wrong), (e) a lack of self-consciousness, (f) the perception of control (i.e., control is possible), and (g) a distorted sense of time (Csikszentmihalyi, 1979, 1990). Being “in the zone” or “in the groove” is a common way of articulating the feeling an individual experiences while in the flow state.

The hallmark of flow is the idea that an individual is striving for an intrinsically rewarding experience that is chosen for its own sake (Privette & Bundrick, 1991). Csikszentmihalyi (1975b) called this “the autotelic nature of flow” (p. 53). From the Greek *auto* meaning self and *telos* meaning goal; autotelic refers “a self-contained activity, one that is not done with the expectation of some future benefit, but simply because the doing itself is the reward” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 67). As a result, flow is experienced through achieving a balance between one’s skill level and the challenge level in a given activity, thus avoiding a sense of anxiety or boredom while engaged in the activity. If, for example, an individual’s perceived skill level is less than the perceived level of challenge in a particular activity, they will experience anxiety and will endeavor to achieve balance by improving or learning new skills. On the other hand, if their perceived skill level is greater than the perceived level of challenge, boredom will result and the individual will strive to make the activity more challenging

(Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Moneta, 2004a). This balance between skill and challenge is illustrated in Figure 3 using the example of a game of tennis. An individual starts out hitting the ball against the wall displaying low skill and low challenge (A1). Repeated practice results in an increase in skill level and simply hitting the ball against the wall becomes boring (A2). Or it is possible that the individual starts to play with a more skilled opponent; the increased challenge level results in anxiety (A3). When the individual experiences boredom (A2) it is necessary for them to increase the challenge level they face which allows for a return to the flow channel (A4). Likewise, when the individual experiences anxiety due to a formidable opponent (A3), an increase in skill level will provide the means to return to the flow channel (A4) (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

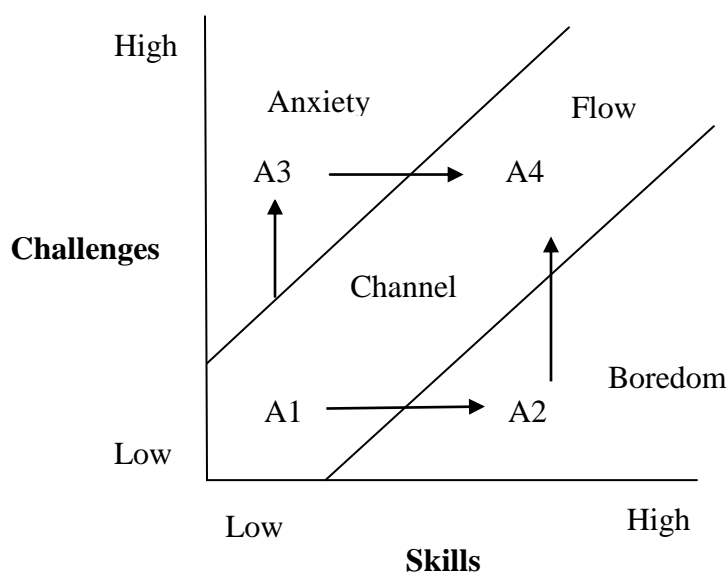


Figure 3. The flow model. Adapted from Csikszentmihalyi (1990, p. 74).

Over the past three decades, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) has studied the concept of flow in such diverse activities as rock climbing, chess, dance and basketball. In all of these studies, he reported that:

...every flow activity, whether it involved competition, chance or any other dimension of experience, had this in common: it provided a sense of discovery, a creative feeling of transporting the person into a new reality. It pushed the person to higher levels of performance, and led to previously undreamed-of states of consciousness (p. 74).

While it is possible that flow may occur by chance, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) maintained that it is “more likely that flow will result either from a structured activity, or from an individual’s ability to make flow occur, or both” (p. 71). However, he argued that certain kinds of activities lend themselves to the flow experience as he reported (1975a), “games are obvious flow activities, and play is the flow experience *par excellence*” (p. 36).

Experiencing the state of flow is not restricted to play, leisure or sport behaviors as individuals frequently report being in the flow state in work-related situations (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). In an early study, Csikszentmihalyi and LeFevre (1989) examined the question of whether conditions favorable to flow (i.e., high challenges and high skills) were more likely to occur within the leisure setting or the work setting. Utilizing the Experience Sampling Method (ESM), a method that entails the generation of random self-reports throughout the day, 78 adult workers were followed for one week. At the receipt of a page, participants were to fill in their response sheets with information regarding the kind of activity they were engaged in at the time of the page, current challenges and skills, and the quality of the experience. Results indicated that the majority of flow experiences reported by participants occurred within the work setting, not the leisure setting. Flow has also been studied extensively in a variety of educational settings (Egbert, 2003; Schweinle, Meyer, & Turner, 2006; Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider, & Shernoff, 2003) and in the sport setting (Jackson, 1992, 1995; Jackson, Thomas, Marsh, & Smethurst, 2001; Russell, 2001; Hall, Smith, & Nelson, 2007).

Flow has also been studied across cultures as well. Asakawa (2004) investigated the relationship between flow and the psychological well-being of Japanese college students. Results indicated that situations containing high challenge/high skill created an optimal state in Japanese students. Similarly, the experience of Italian high school students was examined by Bassi and Delle Fave (2004) and focused on the influence of historical and societal changes upon students' optimization of daily experiences. In his work, Moneta (2004b) studied Chinese college students and the applicability of the flow model to this particular cohort. He determined that Chinese students prefer a low challenge/high skill situation as a state of optimal functioning; a situation that reveals a cultural variation of the flow model. Lee (2009) investigated the influence of flow on an individual's enjoyment of online gaming situations. He hypothesized that the flow experience was positively related to one's attitude toward playing online games and also positively related to the intention to play online games. Utilizing structural equation modeling techniques, his findings indicated that the flow experience was a major factor in influencing the intention to participate in online games. Just as flow is an important element in understanding the dynamics of play, the study of playfulness - from which flow theory emerged - is equally important to an examination of play.

Flow has also been examined in conjunction with other psychological theories. In his work, Rea (1993) examined the optimal experience of flow through the lens of reversal theory. His purpose was not to "force-fit flow theory into reversal theory" but to investigate how each of the theories could be "expanded and integrated to provide a deeper understanding of optimal experience" (p. 75). He argued that reversal theory and flow share common points; both are psychological theories that strive to explicate trait qualities of motivation, and each is concerned with the individual's perception of their experiences (Rea, 1993). Furthermore, flow experiences

and paratelic experiences are similar due to the notion that each has “no goals or rewards external to the experience itself (Apter, 1982, p. 65). As a result, flow could be considered to be a form of paratelic experience.

The idea of reversals from one state to another, so central to reversal theory was noted by Csikszentmihalyi in his early work on play. When discussing the episodic nature of play, he noted “play emerges out of the context of everyday life whenever the latter becomes too worrisome, and slips back into everyday life whenever the play experience becomes boring” (Csikszentmihalyi & Bennett, 1971, p. 56). Furthermore, they noted that “we have the ability to flip back and forth from worry to play to boredom and sometimes these changes are very swift” (1971, p. 56). This tendency to oscillate between states is the hallmark of reversal theory.

Reversal Theory

Reversal theory is a general psychological theory of human behavior that deals with motivation, emotion and personality (Apter, 1997a; Frey, 1997). The fundamental premise of the theory is that an individual’s behavior cannot be totally understood without an understanding of the *personal meaning* that the behavior has for that individual (Apter, 1982). Individuals may be considered to be inherently inconsistent; one may vary in behaviors at different times under similar situations or behave in similar ways in different situations depending upon their principal motivations at any given point in time (Potocky and Murgatroyd, 1993). This inconsistency provides the premise for one of the key themes of reversal theory, that of understanding gratuitous and paradoxical behavior in individuals. Human beings have a propensity for behaving in ways that do not appear to help in the survival of themselves or the species (gratuitous behavior). Individuals also display behaviors that can seem to work against their

survival (paradoxical behavior) (Apter, 1982). Examples of gratuitous behavior include religious behavior and play behaviors while paradoxical behaviors include potentially dangerous activities such as extreme sports. Apter (2009b) noted that while there have been numerous psychological theories that have sought to explain personality and motivation, reversal theory is the theory that pays the most attention to the phenomenon of play.

Theoretical foundations

There are four basic assumptions underlying reversal theory that work to denote it as a distinctive paradigm (Apter, 2001b):

1. *Structural-phenomenological*: Conscious experience as structure.
 2. *Motivational*: This structure derives from motivation.
 3. *Temporal*: This structure changes in systematic ways over time.
 4. *Universality*: Certain fundamental aspects of this structure apply to all human beings.
- (p. 38).

The theoretical foundation of reversal theory is built upon a structural phenomenological approach; an approach defined by Apter (1981) as “the search for pattern and structure in the way in which experience is interpreted” (p. 173). In a broad sense, the word “structural” can denote the search for any kind of structure that lies beneath a set of events, while “phenomenological” signifies the experience of an individual rather than behavior (Apter, 1981). In other words, a structural phenomenological approach is concerned with the way in which an individual *interprets* their experiences (structure), as well as the experiences themselves (phenomenon). As noted by Murgatroyd (1985):

It may be thought that the use of the terms “structural” and “phenomenological” in the same paragraph as descriptions of the nature of reversal theory reveals the theory to be self-contradictory – since structuralism and phenomenology may be said to be inherently incompatible as philosophical movements. Yet the way in which a person experiences his or her world (phenomenological field) is clearly structured in various ways. It is in this sense that reversal theory can be thought of as a “structural phenomenological theory of human action” (see Apter, 1979): it is concerned both with experience (phenomenology) and with the systematic interpretations given to events within experience by the person (structure) (p. 1).

There is another philosophical source on which reversal theory is built; namely, that of cybernetics. Cybernetics, as defined by Wiener (1948) is the “science of control and communication in the animal and the machine” (in Ashby, 1956, p. 1) or what Ashby called the “art of steermanship” (p. 1). As seen through the lens of cybernetics, an individual is thought of as a highly complex “machine” that utilizes the information from the environment for their own purposes, instead of being “pushed around by it” (Apter, 1982, p. 13). Depending upon the way in which the individual wants to use this information, they may behave according to one “program” at one time and a different “program” at another (Murgatroyd, 1985). In other words, an individual may want different things at different times; or as Apter (2003) reported: “our personalities are shifting and unconstant” (p. 474). Thus, reversal theory is both phenomenological and cybernetic; it may be seen “at one and the same time as a mechanistic interpretation of subjective phenomena” (Apter, 1982, p. 15).

One principle of cybernetics that is important to reversal theory is the principle of bistability. As reported by Lachenicht (1988), reversal theory is the first psychological theory to utilize this principle. Regarding bistability, Apter (1982) wrote: “A system exhibits bistability if it tends to maintain a specified variable, within one or another of *two* ranges of values of the variable concerned. This contrasts with homeostasis in which only *one* range of values is involved” (p. 365). Put another way, a system is bistable if it has two different positions, such as a light switch, that it tends to return when it is disturbed. For example, a light switch can reverse

back and forth between the on and off positions; these two positions are considered to be stable. Of course, only one position can be active at any one time. In contrast, homeostasis refers to the tendency to return to a single position.

Structurally then, reversal theory can be thought of a set of switches (see Figure 4). Each switch can be either in the “up” position or the “down” position at any given point in time, but never both. The switches represent disparate states of mind within the individual, what Apter (2001a) called metamotivational states. These states are not motivational states in themselves but work to reveal something *about* the individual’s motivation. Each state has a specific motivation associated with it and a series of emotions. These domains and states will be discussed in turn.

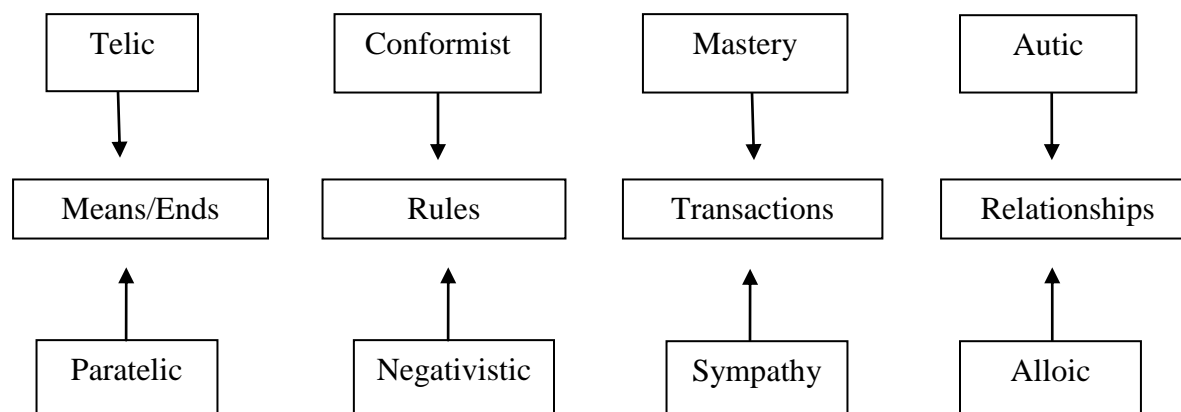


Figure 4. Metamotivational Matrix depicting the pairs of states and domain. Adapted from Apter (2001a, p. 6).

Domains and Metamotivational States

Domains. Apter (2001a) has identified four domains into which the characteristics vital to the very nature of an individual's experience falls; means and ends, rules, transactions, and relationships domains. A domain can be defined as "an aspect of experience which constitutes a permanent feature of mental life, and which is characterized by the opposite interpretations that go to make up a pair of metamotivational pairs" (Reversal Theory Society, 2011). Each domain can be described as follows (Apter, 2001b):

- Means and ends domain: in this domain the individual has a sense of where they are going (purpose) and the activities (action) that they are doing to get there. This domain is characterized by the telic and paratelic states. In the telic state, the goal is all-important. Conversely, in the paratelic state, the behavior and experience are of utmost importance.
- Rules domain: in this domain rules refers to laws or orders, expectations, conventions, routines, etc. that govern how an individual should behave. This domain is characterized by the conformist and negativistic states. The former views rules as useful ways of organizing behavior, while the latter perceives them as restrictive.
- Transactions domain: in this domain the individual is always aware of interacting with someone or something resulting in some form of transaction (i.e., words, money, gestures, etc.). This domain is characterized by the mastery and sympathy states. In the mastery state, one perceives transactions as being about taking or giving up something, whereas in the sympathy state one sees them as being about giving or being given something.
- Relationships domain: in this domain the individual is aware of a direct relationship between themselves and another person or object that can be open or closed, formal or

informal, etc. This domain is characterized by the autic and alloic states. The former views others as separate and unrelated, and the former tends to connect with the other.

There is another concept that is important to the understanding of domains within reversal theory. Saliency refers to the notion that over time an individual is generally more aware of the pair of metamotivational states that make up one domain than they are of the states that make up the other domain (Apter, 2001a). For example, one individual may be more aware of the means and ends domain (telic and paratelic pair) than of the transactions domain (mastery and sympathy pair).

Metamotivational states. The foundation of reversal theory rests on the idea that an individual's experience is formed by a set of alternative ways of viewing the world and that one switches or *reverses* between these views in the course of everyday life. Apter (1982) designates these as metamotivational states and defines them as:

A phenomenological state which is characterized by a certain way of interpreting some aspect(s) of one's own motivation. Such metamotivational states...go in pairs of opposites, only one member of each pair being operative at a given time, but reversal always being possible between members of a pair (p. 366).

Therefore, metamotivational states may be considered as "frames of mind" that characterize an individual's motivational state at a given time. Another way to describe them would be as the alternative means available to an individual to give meaning to their actions, lack of actions or intended actions. Fundamentally, these states are a critical part of an individual's interpretation to himself of his world, along with his intentions and behavior in that world (Apter, 1982).

The eight metamotivational states that have been identified within reversal theory may be combined in various ways to determine an individual's motives and experiences at a particular moment in time. The states appear in pairs of opposites (telic/paratelic, conformist/negativistic,

mastery/sympathy, and autic/alloic). Furthermore, the states of each pair are mutually exclusive; an individual can only be in one state or the other at a given moment in time, and never in both or neither (Frey, 1997). Each of these states has numerous defining qualities or characteristics associated with it as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

Principal Characteristics of the Four Pairs of Metamotivational States

<p><u>Telic</u> Serious Goal-oriented Prefers planning ahead Anxiety-avoiding Desires progress-achievement</p>	<p><u>Paratelic</u> Playful Activity-oriented Living for the moment Excitement-seeking Desires fun and enjoyment</p>
<p><u>Conformist</u> Compliant Wants to keep to rules Conventional Agreeable Desires to fit in</p>	<p><u>Negativistic</u> Rebellious Wants to break rules Unconventional Angry Desires to be independent</p>
<p><u>Mastery</u> Power-oriented Sees life as struggle Tough-minded Concerned with control Desires dominance</p>	<p><u>Sympathy</u> Care-oriented Sees life as cooperative Sensitive Concerned with kindness Desires affection</p>
<p><u>Autic</u> Primary concern with self Self-centered Focus on own feelings</p>	<p><u>Alloic</u> Primary concern with others Identifying with other(s) Focus on others' feelings</p>

(Frey, 1997, p. 6)

There are three related characteristics associated with these states: 1) each originates from a basic psychological value or desire, 2) each has their own associated range of emotions, and 3) each entail viewing the world in a particular fashion (Apter, 1997a). The pair of

metamotivational states most relevant to the concept of adult play is the telic/paratelic pair. The word telic is derived from the ancient Greek word 'telos' meaning goal or end. Paratelic results from adding the ancient Greek word 'para' meaning beside to the word telic (Apter, 1982).

Basically, the telic state is a serious-minded, goal-oriented state focusing on some essential goal or goals whereas the paratelic state is a more playful, spontaneous state in which the pleasure that is derived from the activity itself is the focus of attention.

As noted previously, the modern theories of play are predicated on the idea that individuals either strive to maintain an optimum level of arousal (Berlyne, 1960) or seek stimulating activities to elevate their arousal level (Ellis, 1973). In general, individuals feel bored if their arousal level is too low, and experience anxiety if it is too high; both of which may be considered unpleasant for the individual. Consequently, individuals are comfortable only within the middle range between low and high arousal. Reversal theory however acknowledges individuals may experience low and high arousal as pleasant depending upon the state that they are in any given time (Potocky & Murgatroyd, 1993).

Protective Frames

Another defining characteristic of reversal theory and very important to the concept of adult play is the idea of frames. According to Apter (1993), each pair of metamotivational states corresponds to a different frame that colors experiences in a particular way. As he explained: "it is like a pair of magic spectacles which color the world in a particular hue, or a frame around a painting which 'picks up' certain colors and forms within the painting itself" (p. 28).

Furthermore, within each pair, one state will be distinguished by the presence of and the other state the absence of, a specific type of frame relevant to that particular pair. For each pair of states then, the implication is that one state allows for experiences that are more truthful than the

other, whereas the opposite state would transform an experience into something, strictly speaking, that it is not (Apter, 1993). Associated with the telic/paratelic pair of states, (i.e., the pair of states most relevant to adult play) is the protective frame.

In the telic, or arousal-avoiding state, an individual perceives danger and threats for what they are; the possibility that one may be injured or harmed in some way (Apter, 1993). On the other hand, when an individual is in a paratelic or play state, they experience a protective frame that stands between them and the real world. This creates “an enchanted zone” (Apter, 1991, p. 15), in which one is confident that no harm may come to them in the end. Instead of invoking feelings of anxiety, the potential menace is a source of stimulation with which to be played. The frame “filters out” the “threatening quality of threat” (Apter, 1993, p. 29), without diminishing the fundamental essence of threat. Consequently, the threat still causes arousal for the individual, but it is enjoyed as excitement instead of as anxiety.

There are three different types of protective frames; confidence frame, safety zone frame, and detachment frame. Within the confidence frame, an individual feels capable (i.e., confident) of dealing with the danger or risk that is present. The danger is there, but the individual feels that they will not be harmed due to their skills and abilities to handle any situation they encounter (Gerkovich, 2001). Within the safety zone frame, the individual feels that there is not really danger at all. This safety zone can be an actual physical space or an emotional one. Furthermore, an individual does not consider that there are any negative consequences that could arise from the situation. Therefore, other sources of arousal are required for excitement to occur. According to Apter (1993), it is within this protective frame that people engage in such activities as playing sports or gambling. The third protective frame is the detachment frame. In this frame, the individual feels detached or removed from any danger. They are more of an observer

than participant within this frame (i.e., a spectator at a sporting event or movie). They are vicariously experiencing danger through another, whatever the danger is it cannot affect them (Gerkovich, 2001).

Reversal Process

As previously explained, reversal theory can be thought of as a set switches that can be in the up (on) or down (off) position at a given point in time. What then causes the “switch” to turn off or on (i.e., reverse from one state to another) in the individual? There are three factors that can lead to a reversal within the individual; contingency, satiation, and frustration.

Contingency deals with environmental events or situations that are affecting the individual at a given point in time. Therefore, the reversal is contingent on the occurrence of some external event (Frey, 1997). For example, being in a soccer stadium can bring about a paratelic state, while attending a church service can generate a conformist (rule adhering) state.

With regard to satiation, a reversal takes place spontaneously for no particular reason regardless of what is occurring within the environment. Some force builds up over time, reaches the saturation point within the individual and then, a reversal takes place (Apter, 2001a). Sleep provides a good example of this factor; one can only stay asleep so long before they wake up without any assistance from outside events or situations.

Frustration refers to the idea that an individual can be stymied in attaining satisfaction for too long while in a particular state and as a result, will spontaneously reverse to the opposite state (Apter, 2001a, Frey, 1997). For example, being in a playful (paratelic) state of mind and not having anything stimulating to do could cause an individual to reverse to the telic state. As Frey (1997) observed, when an individual is not getting what they want, “eventually one

spontaneously reverses to an opposite state of mind in which one is less likely to be frustrated” (p. 15).

Dominance. Dominance is an important facet of the reversal process. The notion of dominance implies that an individual spends more time in one of the states from each pair than in the opposite one. Furthermore, every individual has a bias toward one state or the other in each set of pairs (Frey, 1997). For example, a telic dominant individual would spend more time in the telic or more serious-minded state, than the average person. These biases may be learned or programmed genetically and characterize key interindividual differences (Svebak & Murgatroyd, 1985). It must be understood that the concept of dominance differs from that of a trait. The possession of a particular trait suggests that the characteristic is a part of an individual’s personality. Dominance suggests however that an individual spends more time in particular state than another (Frey, 1997).

Individuals also differ in the ease and frequency with which they reverse between opposing states; a concept known as lability. Basically, some individuals are more labile, or reversible than others (Apter, 2001a). Therefore individuals who share the same dominance within a pair of states may reverse at different rates. The occurrence of extremely frequent reversals is known as shimmering (Frey, 1997). An example of this phenomenon would be the extremely rapid reversals between anxiety and excitement experienced by someone riding a roller coaster or other thrill ride.

Summary

Most people recognize play when they see it, yet attempts to define the concept have been ongoing for centuries. There have been numerous attempts to define play and equally many theories proposed all in an effort to explain the phenomenon of play. While a variety of definitions have been posited, a review of the literature suggests that there is limited research regarding the definition of play for middle-aged adults, specifically those individuals between 40-65 years of age.

Two concepts associated with play that are relevant to adults are playfulness and flow. Playfulness is a predisposition to engage in an activity in a nonserious manner in order to increase enjoyment (Glynn & Webster, 1992). Flow is the “holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975a, p. 36). In other words, flow is what is happening when one is “in the zone”. Both flow and playfulness are predicated on the perceptions of the individual; an attitude within the individual.

As a general psychological theory of human behavior, reversal theory is an appropriate theory in which to examine the concept of play. The basic premise of the theory is that an individual’s behavior cannot be completely understood without an understanding of the personal meaning that the behavior has for that individual (Apter, 1982). Play is arguably a most personal experience for the individual.

Chapter III

PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to examine how adults describe the concept of play and to determine whether this description reflects their dominant metamotivational state. Additionally, as a profession that studies play, it is important to study the phenomenon in the majority of the population. This chapter describes the procedures that were used to address the research hypothesis. It is divided into the following sections: study design, participants, procedures, instrumentation, and data analysis.

Design

This study utilized a mixed methods design; a process of analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data within a single study for the purpose of reaching more depth of understanding (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). In quantitative studies, numeric data is collected and analyzed regarding the topic of study. This type of method identifies a specific attribute possessed by the subjects or objects in a study as well as measures the amount of that attribute (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). Conversely, qualitative studies search for the meanings, definitions, characteristics and descriptions of some attribute or thing (Berg, 2009). A mixed method approach can be a better tactic for research than a strictly quantitative or qualitative one for several reasons such as when a single source of data is not adequate enough for understanding the subject or exploratory results need to be generalized (Wisdom, Cavaleri, Onwuegbuzie, & Green, 2012).

Utilizing a mixed methods design is appropriate in the following situations: (1) when attempting to corroborate results from different methods regarding a single phenomenon

(triangulation); (2) when attempting to elaborate, enhance or clarify the results from one method with the results from another (complementarity); (3) when seeking to utilize the results from one method to inform the other method, such as is the case with the creation of a measure (development); (4) when attempting to discover the paradoxes and contradictions in findings from one method that can suggest revision or reframing of research questions (initiation); and (5) when attempting to expand the breadth and depth of a study through different methods that utilize different components (expansion) (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989). Ultimately, a mixed methods design capitalizes on the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methodology (Johnson et al., 2007). In the case of the present study, a mixed method design is appropriate due to the quantitative and qualitative nature of the data collected from study participants.

Participants

The target population for the current study is adults between 40 and 65 years of age. Individuals in this age group can be categorized within the developmental stage of middle adulthood. Theorists have long sought to uncover the characteristics of individuals at various ages in an effort to make generalizations for each developmental stage of life; the decision to target this particular age group is predicated on these stages. One of the most well-known individuals in this area of inquiry in developmental psychology is Erik Erikson. In his work, he identified eight developmental stages (from birth to death) that all individuals must work through sequentially as each stage is marked by a conflict that needs to be resolved before the next stage can be negotiated (Erikson, 1950). For the present study, middle adulthood is the developmental stage of the target population; in this stage the conflict that arises is that of generativity versus stagnation. According to Erikson (1982), generativity “encompasses *procreativity*, *productivity*,

and creativity, and thus the generation of new beings as well as of new products and new ideas” (p. 67). In other words, at this stage an individual’s strength comes through the care of others and the production of something that contributes to the advancement of society. Thus, success at this stage leads to feelings of accomplishment while failure leads to self-absorption and a shallow investment in the world. For individuals in the middle adulthood stage of life, work is most central to their existence. They are perceived to be at the top of their game work-wise, able to contribute creative and meaningful work (Erikson, 1982).

In a similar fashion, Levinson (1978) examined the life structure of individuals, defined as the “basic pattern of a person’s life at a given time” (p. 41). Levinson divided adulthood into six developmental stages; his middle adulthood stage roughly corresponds to Erikson’s stage of the same name. To Levinson, the middle adulthood stage is marked by an individual striving to determine what he has accomplished in life through work and family. The conflict here is dealing with the discrepancy between what is and what could have been. Gender does not appear to influence the transition through the stages, as men and women go through these developmental stages at approximately the same ages (Levinson, 1996). For both Erikson and Levinson, individuals at this point in their lives are heavily invested in their work lives and the passing on of knowledge and skills to the next generation. Thus for these individuals, play may be seen as a frivolous and inappropriate activity in which to participate. This in turn, could impact the definition of play for this age group.

Participants for the present study were recruited from a large behavioral health organization that provides recovery-based programs and support. The organization employs 750 people and is headquartered in a major metropolitan area of the southwestern United States. Additionally, the organization has facilities located across the country and in the Oceania region

of the South Pacific. Of the 750 employees, it was expected that not all of them would meet the age criteria, individuals between 40 and 65 years of age, but that the organization was large enough to meet the researcher's goal of recruiting 150 participants within that particular age group.

Procedures

Initial contact between the researcher and the organization was accomplished through an insider known to the researcher. This insider holds a management position within the organization and has been employed there for approximately six years. Working as an intermediary, this individual presented an explanation of the study to the organization's CEO and procured permission for employee participation. A second individual within the organization was identified to the researcher and acted in the role of gatekeeper, controlling the flow of communication between the researcher and study participants. An invitation email outlining the study was sent through the organization's internal email system by the gatekeeper to all 750 employees (see Appendix A).

Data collection was accomplished by following an online protocol. One of the advantages of utilizing a web-based platform for data collection is that participants' responses are automatically stored in a database. The email sent by the gatekeeper directed participants to a secure website to complete the survey instrument which included the Paratelic Dominance Scale, the individual narratives of play, and demographic questions (i.e., age, gender, occupation, and state of residence) (see Appendix B). The website remained open for three weeks, and two follow up emails were sent to all participants (see Appendix C). Upon accessing the site, each participant was first shown the "Consent to Participate in Research" page that outlined the study protocols and the voluntary nature of the project (see Appendix D). Consent was assumed if

participants chose to continue the survey. Anonymity of the participants was assured; once the survey had been accessed a message appeared on the bottom right corner of the screen that read “Certified Anonymous Survey”. As a result of these procedures employed to assure anonymity, the identity of the participants was not known to the researcher. It was estimated that the entire study would take the participants approximately 15 minutes to complete. Data from the submitted surveys was compiled into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for statistical analyses utilizing SPSS software.

Instrumentation

The following data collection instruments were combined into one instrument by the researcher for ease of data collection.

Paratelic Dominance Scale. The Paratelic Dominance Scale (PDS) is a 30-item scale intended to measure an individual’s tendency to be in the paratelic (i.e., spontaneous, playful) or telic (i.e., serious, goal-oriented) state the majority of the time (Cook & Gerkovich, 1993). Each statement contained in the PDS is answered as either true or false. The PDS contains three subscales: playfulness, spontaneity, and arousal-seeking. Each subscale consists of 10 items; thus the maximum subscale score is 10 and the maximum PDS score is 30.

The PDS is based on the Telic Dominance Scale (TDS; Murgatroyd, Rushton, Apter, & Ray, 1978); this instrument became a mainstay of reversal theory research for many years (Apter & Desselles, 2001). While the TDS did show evidence of convergent and discriminant validity with other measures of personality (Apter & Desselles, 2001), psychometric problems such as low internal validity have arisen when the TDS is utilized in countries other than the United Kingdom, its country of origin (Apter & Desselles, 2001; Cook & Gerkovich, 1993). Thus, the

PDS is a “second generation” instrument designed specifically to address some of the issues discovered with the TDS (Cook & Gerkovich, 1993).

During the development of the PDS, Cook and Gerkovich (1993) attempted to select the best items from the TDS instrument and used expert judgment to establish content validity in an effort to overcome the difficulties encountered with the TDS. Internal reliability of the PDS was determined through factor analyses of the three 10-item factors executed with odd and even numbered subjects. Alpha values were reported to be .75 and .78 for playfulness, .83 and .84 for spontaneity, and .83 and .84 for arousal seeking. Total alpha scores were determined to be .87 for the odds, and .86 for the evens. Kurtosis and skewness were found to be normally distributed and no gender differences were found (Cook & Gerkovich, 1993).

The PDS underwent a re-analysis when it was discovered that a factor model containing all 30 items could not be confirmed as there was too much “noise” associated with some of the items (Gerkovich, memorandum, September 19, 1997). PDS data from a variety of sources was incorporated into a master exploratory data set in order to identify a reduced set of items for analysis. Confirmatory factor analysis was performed to validate a theoretical 3-factor model that consisted of 15 measured variables; four items for playfulness, five items for spontaneous, and six items for arousal seeking. Alpha values were computed for each subscale and were reported to be .740 for playfulness, .819 for spontaneous, and .730 for arousal seeking. These alpha values were deemed acceptable by the researchers and results indicated that scale reliability would not be improved by the deletion of items (Gerkovich, memorandum, September 19, 1997). The revised, 15-item version of the PDS was utilized in the current study (see Appendix B). The maximum score for the revised PDS is 15.

Demographics. Immediately following the PDS, a researcher-designed demographic section was used to collect demographic information from all study participants. The following demographic information was included in the section: age, gender, occupation, and state of residence.

Individual narratives of play. Study participants were instructed to complete two open-ended items regarding the meaning of play as described in their own words. The two items were:

1. Please write one sentence that describes a memorable episode of play that you have experienced within the last 5-10 years.
2. Reflecting on that memorable episode, write one paragraph describing what play means to you. What is it about this particular episode that signifies it as play?

The purpose of the open-ended items was to elicit the impressions and feelings surrounding that memorable episode of play. Having participants answer these in their own words allowed for the collection of rich descriptive data designed to provide insight and perspective into how each defines the concept of play. The collection of rich, thick data provides not only a solid foundation for qualitative analysis, but also helps to transport the reader into the situation being described (Patton, 2002). The narrative data was then used in the creation of a new instrument, the Seriousness of Play scale.

Instrument Development

In order to determine if a relationship exists between the study participants' metamotivational states (i.e., more serious-minded or more playful) and the words they used to describe play, it was necessary to develop an instrument that quantified the words and phrases contained in the individual narratives of play. This new instrument, the Seriousness of Play

scale, is a 5-point Likert-type scale designed to indicate the level of seriousness or playfulness of the words and phrases used by study participants in describing their episodes of play. The intent behind the scale is the ability to categorize the words used to describe play within the five response categories as well as obtain a numeric score that can be utilized in other statistical analyses.

The five response categories of the Seriousness of Play scale are: (1) Very High Seriousness, (2) High Seriousness, (3) Neutral, (4) High Playfulness, and (5) Very High Playfulness. Reviewing the literature pertaining to the construct of playfulness, existing playfulness scales and measures (Barnett, 2007; Glynn & Webster, 1992; Guitard et al., 2005; Schaefer & Greenberg, 1997; Yarnal & Qian, 2011), and the construct of serious leisure (Gould, Moore, McGuire, & Stebbins, 2008; Schulz & Watkins, 2007; Stebbins, 2007) provided the basis for the definitions of each response category. The response categories are defined as follows:

- Very High Seriousness (VHS): describes play that is characterized by a very high degree of purpose, intention, focus, self-improvement and outcome-orientation
- High Seriousness (HS): describes play that is characterized by a high degree of purpose, intention, focus, self-improvement and outcome-orientation
- High Playfulness (HP): describes play that is characterized by a high degree of spontaneity, humor, freedom and pleasure
- Very High Playfulness (VHP): describes play that is characterized by a very high degree of spontaneity, humor, freedom and pleasure
- Neutral (N): describes play that is neither playful or serious in nature

The construction of the Seriousness of Play scale also required the employment of two analysis techniques, content analysis and the Delphi method, both of which are discussed in the following sections.

Content analysis. Content analysis is a methodology that has been utilized in a variety of disciplines and allows the researcher to examine written content in an effort to analyze the subject at hand. According to Berg (2009), content analysis is defined as “a careful, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases and meanings” (p. 338). As the data collected from the individual narratives consisted entirely of written text used to describe play, the use of a content analysis was considered to be the most appropriate technique. Therefore, the objective for using content analysis was to determine what words and/or phrases individuals used to describe the phenomenon of play.

Conducting a content analysis on the individual narratives of play generated by the study participants required the creation of a coding system. There are two approaches that may be utilized in the coding of the data; emergent coding and a priori coding. Emergent coding allows the researcher to create categories following a preliminary inspection of the data; while in a priori coding categories are determined prior to the analysis usually based on a particular theory (Stemler, 2001). For this study, a priori coding of the data was employed as the five response categories of the Seriousness of Play scale into which the play descriptors would be placed had been identified prior to data analysis.

Accomplishing the content analysis required several readings of the play narratives by the researcher in order to get a sense of the data as well as to look for reoccurring words and phrases

that were used to describe the phenomenon of play. As these words and phrases were identified, they were compiled into a list; the initial list contained 133 items used by participants to describe play. Due to similarities in meaning surrounding several items, consolidation of these items was required and resulted in a revised list containing 101 words and phrases that signified play. For example, the items “feel childlike” and “takes you back to childhood” were combined and simply labeled “feel childlike”. Using the definitions of the five scale response categories as a coding system, the researcher placed each of the 101 items into the response category that best captured the essence of the word or phrase.

Inter-rater reliability. One of the key components of good measurement is the notion of reliability. Reliability can be defined as “the extent to which a measuring procedure yields the same results on repeated trials” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 112). When human coding is used in content analysis, it is not sufficient to rely solely on one individual’s coding of data. Therefore, inter-rater reliability, or the “amount of agreement or correspondence among two or more coders” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 141) is necessary to add credence to the coding system.

In the current study, two individuals from the same large Division I university department as the researcher were recruited to serve as inter-raters for the new instrument. The first inter-rater is an associate professor of recreation and sport management in the Health, Human Performance and Recreation program with 26 years of experience in higher education, 23 of which have been accomplished at the current university. The second inter-rater is an incoming doctoral student in the same recreation and sport management program who has an interest in the study of serious leisure. Each inter-rater was sent an email that contained an explanation of the purpose of the study along with the list of items from the play narratives compiled by the researcher and the operational definitions of the five response categories for the new Seriousness

of Play scale. They were instructed to place the words used to describe play into the category that they believed best captured the meaning of play. The agreement rate between the researcher and the two inter-raters regarding item placement was 78%, considered by many to be an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability (Neuendorf, 2002). Following the completion of the content analysis and the rating of all the words and phrases, the Delphi technique was employed for the second phase of scale construction.

Delphi Method. As defined by Linstone and Turoff (1975), the Delphi technique is “a method for structuring a group communication process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem” (p. 3). Developed in the 1950’s, this technique was first employed by the Rand Corporation for the Air Force study named “Project Delphi”. The purpose of the study was to obtain consensus of opinion from a group of experts through a series of questionnaires interspersed with controlled feedback (Linstone & Turoff, 1975). Today, the technique is perhaps the most commonly utilized consensus method available to researchers (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1995).

The Delphi method has been previously utilized in the development of rating scales within the field of recreation and leisure. In their work, Marques et al. (2011) examined the designing of physical activity programs for the elderly. Utilizing experts from the areas of sports management, quality management and gerontology, the researchers conducted a three round Delphi process that resulted in the development of the Q-STEPS (**Q**uality **S**elf-assessment **T**ool for **E**xercise **P**rograms for **S**eniors). This tool consists of 165 statements that are utilized to assess nine management areas involved in the development of physical activity programs for seniors.

Delamere, Wankel, and Hinch (2001) employed the Delphi method in their examination of the social impacts of community festivals. Their primary purpose was to develop a scale that would measure residents' attitudes regarding these impacts on their communities. Toward that end, the researchers first utilized the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) with community residents to generate a list of items that relate to the social impacts of community festivals. As defined by Delbecq, Van de Ven, and Gustafson (1975) the NGT is a "structured group meeting" (p. 8) where individuals share their ideas in round robin fashion while a recorder writes all of the ideas down for everyone to see. Following item generation by community residents, the Delphi method was employed to critically analyze the pool of items. The expert panel consisted of six individuals who had academic backgrounds in tourism and festival-related issues. The resulting scale contained 47 items that measured the social impact of community festivals (Delamere et al., 2001).

Gould, Moore, McGuire, and Stebbins (2008) utilized an expert panel in the development of their Serious Leisure Inventory and Measure (SLIM). In this study, the researchers were endeavoring to develop an instrument that would quantify the six dimensions of the serious leisure construct. The researchers generated potential items for the instrument through the review of related existing instruments as well as developed definitions for each dimension. Following the implementation of a Q-sort technique by graduate students which worked to link the pool items with their definitions, the results were sent to an expert panel for evaluation. The experts, all academics from the United States, Canada and Australia were asked to review and critique the items and definitions. Their efforts not only resulted in a relevant pool of items for the SLIM, but also helped to establish the validity of the instrument (Gould et al., 2008).

The first step in utilizing the technique is the selection of a panel of expert judges for the topic under consideration. Individuals selected for the expert panel should be highly competent in the specialized area of knowledge that is relevant to the area under investigation (Hsu & Sandford, 2007). There is flexibility regarding the actual number of experts that are required for the technique as the main emphasis is on the quality of the panel not the quantity of judges seated on it (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1995). For the present study, potential panel members acknowledged as experts within the field of recreation, leisure and play were identified through a review of the literature, professional organization listings and conversations with University of Arkansas faculty members. Ten experts were initially invited to serve on the panel. Each prospective panel member was contacted via electronic mail, which contained an information sheet/invitation to participate in the study as well as contact information for the researcher (Appendix E). Six of the ten invited experts did not respond, resulting in a panel consisting of four individuals. The panel included 2 males and 2 females, all PhD academics at universities located across the United States.

The Delphi technique is implemented through a series of rounds. Each is conducted anonymously and allows for debate among the researchers on the topic under consideration (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1995). In the present study, the expert panel was tasked with reviewing the original placement of the words/phrases into the five response categories (Very High Seriousness, High Seriousness, High Playfulness, Very High Playfulness, and Neutral) for the Seriousness of Play scale and the rank ordering of each item within those categories in an effort to quantify the words/phrases used by study participants to describe play. A total of four rounds were implemented over the course of an eight week period from mid-February to mid-

April. Contact between the researcher and the panel members was conducted exclusively via electronic mail.

Delphi rounds. In the first round of the Delphi process, the judges were sent a brief description of what the study participants were asked to do (i.e., the individual narratives describing the memorable episode of play), and the definitions of the five response categories for the Seriousness of Play scale. Also included was a list containing the words and phrases identified in the content analysis portion of the study and their initial placement by the researcher into the five response categories. The judges were asked to review the words in each of the categories and decide whether or not they agreed with the placement. If they did not agree, they were asked to indicate which category they believed best captured the meaning of play for that particular word or phrase. At the end of the first round, consensus of item placement among the judges was reached for 84 of the 101 items, an 83% agreement rate.

Therefore, in round two the judges were asked to recategorize the remaining 17 items and to explain their reasoning behind their placement decision. The end of the second round raised the agreement rate among the judges to 86%, an agreement rate acceptable to the researcher and her advisor. Regarding the agreement rate of expert panels, there appears to be a range of levels set by researchers as to when consensus has been reached (Powell, 2003). Williams and Webb (1994), for example, strove for 100% consensus in their study of nursing curriculum while noting that others set the level of consensus as low as 55%. Thus, the agreement rate of 86% in the current study was deemed as an acceptable level of agreement. Items for which consensus was not reached after two rounds of consideration by the judges were categorized as neutral.

The third round of the process initiated the ranking process of the items within each of the four scored response categories: Very High Seriousness, High Seriousness, High Playfulness

and Very High Playfulness. Items that had been categorized as Neutral would be scored as zero on the scale, so no further action was needed by the judges. A total of 40 items, the first ten from each of the four response categories was sent to the judges to begin the ranking process. These items were listed in no particular order and the judges were asked to rearrange the items in order from bottom to top based on their professional opinion as to which item captured the lowest level of playfulness/seriousness within the category. At the top of the lists were to be those items that captured the highest level of playfulness/seriousness within the category. Essentially, the higher the score that was given for each item, the higher the level of playfulness/seriousness that was captured by the item. For the fourth round, the remaining 52 of the original 101 items (the nine items rated as neutral were not included in the ranking process) were sent to the judges to continue the ranking process.

At the end of the fourth round, it became apparent that due to time constraints, it would not be possible to continue the Delphi process. While agreement had been reached regarding categorization of the items on the scale, there was a lack of consensus among the judges as to the ranking of the items within each of the response categories. This lack of agreement resulted in a wide range of scores for each of the items that would have necessitated several additional rounds of the process for resolution. Difficulty had already been encountered regarding the timely response of some of the judges to each round of the process; it was not uncommon for the researcher to receive timely responses from three of the judges and encounter a lag of a week or longer to obtain the response of the fourth judge. Therefore, it was decided that the Delphi process would be suspended.

Work on the Seriousness of Play scale however continued. The researcher and a play expert, a faculty member from the same large Division I university department as the researcher,

worked together to construct their own scale. Each of the response categories was examined in order to determine if the items contained within it met the definition assigned to that category. At the end of this examination, it was decided that 12 of the 101 items should be recategorized but on the same “side” of the scale (i.e., moved from the Very High Playfulness category to the High Playfulness category). Two items were moved from the playfulness side of the scale and placed on the serious side of the scale, and three items were recategorized as neutral. After this analysis was completed, 17 of the original 101 items had been relocated on the scale.

The ranking of the items within each of the categories was undertaken in the same manner as that of the expert judges. Utilizing the definitions for each response category, each item was examined and given a score between 1 and 10 depending upon the level of seriousness/playfulness exhibited by the item. As before, all items categorized as neutral received a score of zero. In this fashion, scores were given to all 101 of the items; items categorized on the playful side of the scale (i.e., Very High Playfulness and High Playfulness) received scores between 1 and 10, and items on the serious side of the scale (i.e., Very High Seriousness and High Seriousness) received scores between -1 and -10. As before, the higher the score that was given for each item, the higher the level of playfulness/seriousness that was captured by the item. The final version of the scale contains the items listed in numeric order as determined by the researcher and the play expert (see Appendix F).

Data analysis

Frequencies and descriptive statistics were obtained on the demographic variables of age, gender, occupation and state of residence. Frequencies were also determined for each of the 15 statements of the Paratelic Dominance Scale. Each statement was answered either as true or false and the intent was to measure the participants’ tendency to be in the paratelic (i.e., playful,

spontaneous) or telic (i.e., serious, goal-oriented) state the majority of the time. The 15 items were scored with a “0” or a “1” depending upon whether agreeing with the statement signified playfulness or disagreeing with it signified playfulness. Statements indicating playfulness and scored as “true” (1) include numbers 1, 4, 5, 6, 10, 12, and 14. Statements indicating playfulness and scored as “false” (1) include numbers 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, and 15. The maximum score on the PDS is 15.

The newly developed Seriousness of Play scale was utilized in the analysis of the individual narratives submitted by participants describing the meaning of play in their own words. The words and phrases contained within each narrative were scored according to the rankings contained within the scale as determined by the researcher and the play expert. The total score for each participant was determined by adding together each ranking score for all of the words and/or phrases that appeared in the narrative. Due to disparity in the length of the individual narratives, it was necessary to take steps to mitigate this occurrence. Therefore, a point total was calculated for the serious/playful words used, and this total was divided by the number of words that respondents used in their narrative. For example, if a respondent described play as “silly” and “fun” in their narrative, they would receive a score of total 9.5 as on the play scale “silly” was ranked as a 10 and “fun” as a 9 ($10 + 9 = 19/2 = 9.5$). This resulted in an average score for each participant that was unaffected by the length of the submission.

Pearson product-moment correlations were determined for the PDS score and the score of the individual narratives in order to answer the proposed hypothesis regarding an individual’s metamotivational state and its relation to level of seriousness or playfulness of the words used to describe play.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine how adults describe the concept of play and to determine whether this description reflects their dominant metamotivational state. Additionally, as a profession that studies play, it is important to study the phenomenon in the majority of the population. In this section, descriptive statistics will first be presented regarding demographic variables, followed by the frequencies of the PDS scores. The scores generated by the Seriousness of Play scale will be presented as well as the results of the correlation analysis. A comparison of the narratives will be presented, and finally, the themes identified in the content analysis will be presented.

Descriptive Statistics

Demographic variables. There was a total of 252 surveys submitted online, however 96 of them (38%) were discarded due to either missing information ($n = 53$) or failure to meet the age criteria of 40 - 65 years of age ($n = 43$) resulting in 62% of the submissions being deemed as usable responses ($n=156$, $M_{age} = 51.8$). The sample consisted of 61 male and 95 female employees of the behavioral health organization. Over two-thirds of the respondents (68.6%) were employed in the provision of direct services to organizational clientele including the service areas of peer support staff, peer recovery counselors, behavioral therapists, social workers, physicians and nurses. Administrative/management personnel such as department heads and coordinators accounted for 21.8% of respondents, while clerical staff (administrative assistants and accounting personnel) accounted for 4.5%. Individuals who did not fall within the three categories were designated as other and accounted for 5.1% of respondents. With regards to

state of residence, 58 (37.2%) reported residing in the state of Arizona, 37 (23.7%) in California, 16 (10.3%) in Delaware, 23 (14.7%) in North Carolina, 16 (10.3%) in Washington state, and 6 (3.8%) in other states. Frequencies for each demographic variable are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N=156)

Variable	N	%
Age		
40-45	32	20.5%
46-50	43	27.6%
51-55	33	21.2%
56-60	25	16.0%
61-65	23	14.7%
Gender		
Male	61	39.1%
Female	95	60.9%
Occupation		
Direct Services	107	68.6%
Admin/Mgmt	34	21.8%
Clerical	7	4.5%
Other	8	5.1%
State of Residence		
Arizona	58	37.2%
California	37	23.7%
Delaware	16	10.3%
North Carolina	23	14.7%
Washington	16	10.4%
Other	6	3.8%

Paratelic Dominance Scale

Respondent scores on the Paratelic Dominance Scale ranged from a score of zero points to 14 points, out of a possible high score of 15 points (Mean = 6.51, SD = 2.83). When determining metamotivational dominance, participants with scores higher than one standard deviation above the mean (10 and above) are considered to be paratelic, while those with scores lower than one standard deviation below the mean (4 and below) are considered to be telic

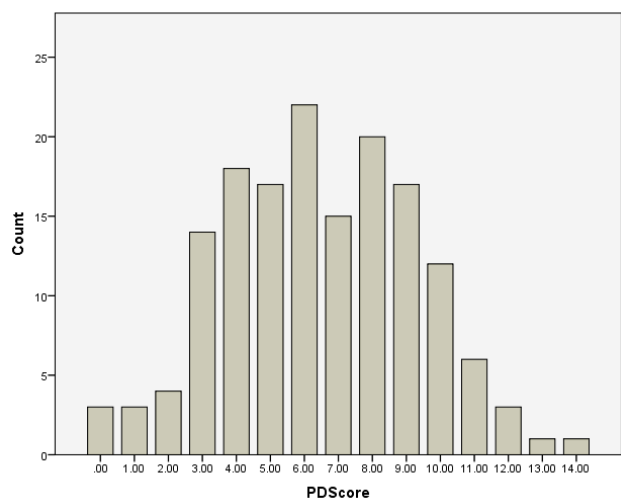
(Gerkovich, Cook, Hoffman, & O'Connell, 1998). Therefore, participants with scores within one standard deviation of the mean are considered to be nondominant. The middle third of the score distribution, those scores ranging from five points to nine points, accounted for 58% (n=91) of all scores within the sample. Forty-two respondents (26.7%) scored in the bottom third of the score distribution with scores ranging from zero points to four points, and thus were rated as telic dominant. Nearly 15% of respondents (n=23) scored in the upper third of the distribution with a range of scores between 10 and 15 points, which resulted in a paratelic dominant rating. Frequencies and percentages for the scores are shown in Table 3. The score distribution is graphically displayed in Figure 5.

Table 3

Paratelic Dominance Scale (PDS) Results (N=156)

PDS Score	Frequency	Percent
0	3	1.9%
1	3	1.9%
2	4	2.6%
3	14	9.0%
4	18	11.5%
5	17	10.9%
6	22	14.1%
7	15	9.6%
8	20	12.8%
9	17	10.9%
10	12	7.7%
11	6	3.8%
12	3	1.9%
13	1	.6%
14	1	.6%

Figure 5. Histogram of the Paratelic Dominance Scale score distribution.



Seriousness of Play scale

Quantitative scores were calculated for the words and phrases used by respondents to describe play utilizing the Seriousness of Play scale developed for the study. The completed scale contained all of the items in ranked order within the scored categories. Scores on the “playful” side of the scale (Very High Seriousness and High Seriousness) ranged from +1 to +10, while items scores on the “serious” side of the scale (Very High Seriousness and High Seriousness) ranged from -1 to -10. Items rated in the Neutral category received a score of zero (see Appendix F). Respondents’ scores ranged from a low score of -9 to a high score of +9, (Mean = 4.49, SD = 4.86).

Correlation

A correlation analysis was conducted to evaluate the relationship between the respondents’ score on the Paratelic Dominance Scale (PDS) and their score on the Seriousness of Play scale instrument developed for the study. Only the scores of those participants who scored 10 and higher indicating paratelic dominance (n = 23) and those scoring 4 or lower indicating

telic dominance ($n = 40$) were utilized in the correlation analysis. Two of the respondents that had been scored as telic dominant by the PDS were dropped from the correlation analysis as they did not use any of the words or phrases contained in the Seriousness of Play scale. The results of the analysis indicated that there is no significant correlation between the two variables ($r = -.024$, $p = .85$). Furthermore, coefficient alpha was also computed to obtain the internal consistency estimate for reliability of the newly created instrument. Alpha was determined to be $-.048$. This extremely low alpha value indicated that the Seriousness of Play scale was not a reliable instrument and could not be utilized in the study.

Comparison of Narratives

Due to the unreliability of the Seriousness of Play scale, it was necessary to examine the written narratives from a different perspective to further study the seriousness and playfulness of the words used by study participants and their scores on the Paratelic Dominance Scale.

Frequency rates. While the scores associated with the play scale were unreliable, the placement of the words and phrases into the categories was acceptable. All of the written narratives were examined and the frequencies of the use of the different word types (i.e., playful, serious, neutral) was determined. Seven of the original 156 narratives were discarded due to the lack of utilizing any of the identified words or phrases leaving a total of 149 narratives for examination. The results of the frequency count are shown in Table 4. The frequency counts for the telic and paratelic dominant respondents only ($n = 63$) are shown in Table 5. As indicated in the tables, nearly half of all study respondents utilized only playful words and phrases when describing their memorable episodes of play.

Table 4

Frequencies of Word Types Used in Written Narratives (n = 156)

Word Type	Frequency	Percent
Used Playful words only	74	47.4%
Used Serious words only	6	3.8%
Used Neutral words only	3	1.9%
Used Playful and Serious words	23	14.7%
Used Playful and Neutral words	29	18.6%
Used Serious and Neutral words	6	3.8%
Used Playful, Serious and Neutral words	3	1.9%
Used none of the identified words	7	4.4%

Table 5

Frequencies of Word Types Used in Written Narratives by Telic/Paratelic Respondents (n = 63)

Word Type	Frequency	Percent
Used Playful words only	31	49.2%
Used Serious words only	5	7.9%
Used Neutral words only	2	3.2%
Used Playful and Serious words	7	11.1%
Used Playful and Neutral words	16	25.4%
Used Serious and Neutral words	2	3.2%

Narrative Comparisons. The narratives submitted by the 63 respondents identified as telic or paratelic dominant were further analyzed in terms of the type of words (i.e., playful, serious, neutral) utilized and the score received on the Paratelic Dominance Scale. This analysis

revealed that the use of playful or serious words was not a good indicator of the individuals' score on the PDS as illustrated by the following examples.

The definition of play from a 50 year old male participant contained words identified as serious: "I would have to say **competition** with someone of like skills. I like to bowl and play games where the **outcome** could really go either way. I have a problem with playing down and I hate to get smoked". The serious goal of winning comes through very clearly in his narrative yet conversely, he scored 12 out of 15 on the PDS which identified him as paratelic dominant (i.e., more playful and spontaneous). Similarly, according to a 61 year old male, his definition of play was: "meeting new and different people. **Learning** about new cultures and their foods". Learning was categorized as a serious word as it is goal-oriented. His PDS score of 10 however identified him as paratelic dominant.

The results indicated that the reverse also occurred in the sample. Play, for one 64 year female respondent meant "accessing a **silly**, fun-loving aspect of my personality where **laughter** is the key. Playing for me implies I can be **enjoying** all humorous thoughts. **Silly** words, **silly** dress, **silly** thoughts, and have **silly** conversations". This narrative is very light-hearted as indicated by the use of the words laughter and enjoy and especially the repeated use of the word "silly". Her score on the PDS however was 0, which identified her as completely telic dominant (i.e., serious and goal-oriented). As one 50 year old female wrote, play is "just my husband and myself, together, **enjoying laughing** together sharing an interest we both have. **Leaving the responsible world behind...**". The description of play is again happy and carefree in tone, yet her score on the PDS was a 3 out of 15 points, indicating telic dominance.

Emergent Themes

The content analysis conducted to determine the words and phrases that study respondents used to describe play also resulted in the emergence of identifiable themes related to adults' description of play.

Play as fun. For many respondents, play involved such constructs as fun, laughter, enjoyment, and silliness. For one 41 year old female, play “means going out and having fun, or staying in and having fun”. Almost 70% of all respondents (n = 104) used one or more of these terms to describe their memorable play episode. Of that number, 8.7% (n = 13) used both fun and laughter in their description. As one 64 year old female respondent wrote, “play means...being in a place or having feelings that are happy, fun – laughter...”. Almost as many used fun and enjoyment together in their narratives (n = 12). “Play means to me, is when you are doing something you enjoy. It may or may not have any value other than the immediate gratification of enjoyment” according to one 58 year old male respondent. Providing the opportunity to be silly, goofy and childlike was mentioned by 6.7% of respondents (n = 10). Another 7.3% reported that play is a time to be carefree and spontaneous (n = 11). As one 59 year old female wrote in her narrative, play is “being totally happy, joyous and free. Happy with myself, joyous to be me and free to be me with everyone and anyone I meet”.

Play as relaxation and getting away from it all. Another theme that emerged from the content analysis is that of relaxation and escape. Over 21% of study participants (n = 33) described play as relaxing or as a means of escape as illustrated by the following excerpts from the respondents' narratives:

“Play to me is being able to relax” (65 year old female)

“To play for me is leave the world behind” (54 year old female)

“Play is relaxing free time. No work, no housework, no worries.” (55 year old female)

“Play means freedom to relax” (57 year old female)

“It’s an opportunity for me to get away from the hum drum and the obligatory matters of the day” (50 year old female)

“Play sometimes means a total escape from life” (52 year old female)

“It’s nice to get away from the everyday grind of working full time” (43 year old male)

“Play is something that helps you relax from the intensity of the day” (42 year old female)

Play as being in the moment. Focusing on the present moment also emerged as a theme among respondents. Nearly 7% of respondents (n = 10) wrote that play allowed them not to escape, but to focus on the present moment. “Play is about living in the moment” wrote one 47 year old female. As one 51 year old male wrote, “To me play means just being in the present moment with friends or family doing something that is fun and easy”. The idea of being in the moment and focusing on the present is summed up by one 56 year female respondent as she wrote:

Play means relaxing and just enjoying the moment for what it is. It means not having to think too hard in the moment, not worrying about all of life’s pitfalls, trials, and tribulations. It just means being in the present moment and truly getting pleasure out what you are doing in that exact moment.

Goal-oriented play. One final theme that emerged is play that is more goal-oriented or serious in nature. Just over 10% of respondents (n = 15) wrote of the thrill of competition, winning, learning and self-development or improvement that came from participating in their play episode. As one 49 year old female wrote, play for her is “sightseeing and learning about

new cultures”. Participating in goal-oriented play, such as self-development is summed up exquisitely in the following narrative submitted by a 42 year old male regarding what he gets from playing football:

In its purest form, it’s just a game. If it is played properly it can develop most tools needed to operate at a level (self-sufficient) that will benefit us throughout life. It allows you to develop an understanding of no one individual is greater than the whole, but whole is no greater than the sum of its parts working in unity. The game of football; or any other team sport allows for development of accountability, responsibility and integrity you may not find but much later in life. If an individual can develop an understanding of how valuable they are but simultaneously understand that they are no greater than the other parts is a life lesson.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine how adults describe the concept of play and to determine whether this description reflects their dominant metamotivational state. Additionally, as a profession that studies play, it is important to study the phenomenon in the majority of the population. This section includes the summary of findings, conclusions, implications and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of the study was to examine how adults between 40 and 65 years of age describe the concept of play and to determine whether this description reflects their dominant metamotivational state. According to reversal theory, these states are the frames of mind that characterize an individual's motivation at any given point in time. Of the eight metamotivational states identified in reversal theory (Apter, 1982), the states of interest in the current study were the telic and paratelic dominant states. Telic individuals view the world from a serious, goal-oriented standpoint while paratelic individuals view life from a more playful, spontaneous viewpoint. When the word play is used, everyone seems to know what is meant. But is the definition of play colored by the motivational state of the individual? Therefore, the study attempted to answer the question: how does being telic or paratelic dominant impact an adult's description of play?

A second purpose was the development of a new instrument, the Seriousness of Play scale that could be used to quantify the level of seriousness or playfulness associated with the words people use to describe play. As the relationship between an individual's tendency to be

telic or paratelic dominant and the words they use to describe play has not previously been examined, the null hypothesis for the current study was that there would be no significant relationship between telic or paratelic dominance and a person's seriousness of play score.

Telic or Paratelic Dominance. The telic/paratelic pair of states has been examined in a variety of areas including gaming and gambling (Brown, 1991), smoking cessation (Gerkovich et al., 1993), and sports performance (Kerr, 1987; Kerr et al., 2002). There is however a lack of research in association with the words that adults use to describe play. For the current study, 156 adults between 40 and 65 years of age completed the Paratelic Dominance Scale (PDS), a 15-item scale intended to measure an individual's tendency to be in the paratelic (i.e., spontaneous, playful) or telic (i.e., serious, goal-oriented) state the majority of the time (Cook & Gerkovich, 1993) (see Appendix B). The 15 items were scored with a "0" or a "1" depending upon whether agreeing with the statement signified playfulness or disagreeing with it signified playfulness. The maximum score on the PDS is 15.

In the present study, respondent scores ranged from a score of zero points to 14 points (Mean = 6.51, SD = 2.83); 15% of participants were considered to be paratelic dominant, and 26.7% were considered to be telic dominant. The majority of participants however, scored within one standard deviation of the mean. The findings indicated that 58% of the study participants (n = 93) were considered nondominant.

Seriousness of Play scores. The intent behind the development of the Seriousness of Play scale was to provide a method of quantifying the words used to describe the concept of play that could be useful when used in combination with a variety of statistical techniques. For the current study, participants had been instructed to complete two open-ended items regarding the

meaning of play as described in their own words. Words and phrases taken from those narratives were rated into response categories on a Likert-type scale based on the level of seriousness or playfulness captured by each and then ranked ordered within those same categories. The categories were Very High Seriousness, High Seriousness, High Playfulness, Very High Playfulness and Neutral. The idea was that the words and phrases would be given a numeric score from the scale that would denote the level of seriousness or playfulness of each item.

The construction of the play scale involved utilization of the Delphi technique, a common method of obtaining consensus of opinion from a group of experts (Linstone & Turoff, 1975). The Delphi method is a technique that has been an effective method in the construction of scales in a variety of areas within the recreation and leisure field including activity programs for the elderly (Marques et al., 2011), the impact of community festivals (Delamere et al., 2001), and serious leisure (Gould et al., 2008). In the case of the current study however, time became a critical factor that necessitated the termination of the technique. While there had been an 86% agreement rate among the expert panel of judges regarding the initial placement of the words and phrases in the categories, after an eight-week period, there was little consensus among the panel as to the rankings of the items within those categories. A similar attempt to construct the scale with a play expert was also unsuccessful. Internal reliability of the play scale was extremely low, -.048 which indicated that the Seriousness of Play scale was not a reliable instrument and could not be utilized in the study.

The results of the correlation analysis conducted between the scores on the PDS and those of the Seriousness of Play scale indicated that there was no significant correlation between the two variables ($r = -.024, p = .85$). Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant

relationship between telic or paratelic dominance and a person's seriousness of play score was retained.

Narrative Comparison. Due to the unreliability of the Seriousness of Play scale, it was necessary to examine the written narratives from a different perspective. A qualitative approach was employed in order to capture what the participants were telling with their narratives as “qualitative data describe...and tell a story” (Patton, 2002, p. 47). Qualitative studies are a way to capture the thoughts, feelings and perspectives of individuals and are utilized often in the recreation and leisure studies field and especially when investigating the phenomenon of play. Through interviews, Hoppes et al. (2001) explored the meaning that older adults assign to games that they play regularly. In his work, Henniger (1994) investigated adults' perceptions of their childhood play experiences through the use of drawings that depicted favorite experiences. Drawings were also used by Sandberg (2001) in her study examining the play memories at different ages. Her results indicated that during the ages 7-12 years, people and interactions had a special importance in participants' memories of play.

In the current study, the overall tone communicated by the narratives was examined in terms of the words used to describe play and compared to the PDS scores for those participants who scored as telic or paratelic on the PDS. As in the correlation analysis described earlier, the comparisons did not reveal a relationship between the PDS score and the narratives. Individuals who scored extremely high on the PDS (e.g., 14 out of 15 points), indicating a high level of playfulness were just as likely to use serious, goal-oriented words such as “winning” and “competition” as individuals who scored lower on the PDS. Similarly, some of those participants who described play in an extremely playful manner (e.g., as fun, silly, goofy)

received some of the lowest scores on the PDS (e.g., 0 points) indicating a more serious, goal-oriented dominant state.

Themes. There were identifiable themes that emerged from the current study related to adults' description of play. For many respondents, play involved such constructs as fun, laughter, enjoyment, and silliness. For others, play provided the opportunity to be carefree and spontaneous, and provided permission to look foolish. This result supports the findings of Yarnal et al. (2008) in their study of older women's play. Their analysis of Red Hat Society® members revealed similar themes regarding women's play including the "context for fun, laughter and feeling good, and a chance to be silly and goofy" (p. 242).

Relaxing and getting away from it all was a second theme that emerged from the present study. Remarks such as "Play means freedom to relax" and "to play for me is to leave the world behind" illustrate this finding. In an early examination of the meaning of play for adults, Hall (1978) discovered similar themes of escape and relaxation, as did Halmo (1986) in her study of the meaning of adult play. For the Red Hat Society members, play provided escape or freedom from issues such as loneliness, stress and isolation (Yarnal et al., 2008).

In opposition to the chance to escape through play, the third theme that emerged from the current study was the opportunity to live life in the moment. As one participant wrote regarding the meaning that play has for her: "It just means being in the present moment and truly getting pleasure out what you are doing in that exact moment". This feeling of being in the moment is one of the hallmarks of the flow experience; one is so involved in what they are doing at that specific moment, that nothing else seems to matter (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Previous studies into flow have examined the phenomenon in chess players, climbers and dancers

(Csikszentmihalyi, 1975a), elite athletes (Jackson, 1995), and collegiate athletes (Russell, 2001) among other participant groups and settings. In the present study, it is not known if any of the participants would be considered athletes, but the feelings of being in the moment reported here do coincide with those reported in other studies of flow.

The final theme that emerged was that of goal-oriented, more serious play. Play as a competitive outlet, winning, learning and self-development were commonly written words and phrases in the narratives that were more serious in tone. Previous research into serious leisure identified six qualities or characteristics that exemplify the concept of serious leisure (Stebbins, 2007). One of those qualities is durable outcomes, where the individual is working toward areas such as self-development, enhanced self-image and group accomplishment (as a member of a team, for example).

Conclusions

Based on the findings and limitations of the present study, people's view of play has no relationship with their being serious and goal-oriented (telic) or more playful and spontaneous (paratelic) in nature. Capturing the essence of play is a difficult endeavor as the word "play" can be used in a variety of ways and thus conveys different meanings depending upon the context of the situation. Defining play for adults adds another layer of difficulty to the search as play is not always viewed as an activity that is appropriate for this group. While play in children is perceived as a critical element in their normal growth and development (Erikson, 1950; Piaget, 1962), the same behavior can be viewed as an inconsequential endeavor in adults. Yet adults can and do play as much of leisure time activity involves play (Sutton-Smith, 1997). That is

apparent from the enormous variety of activities written about by the adults in their narratives in the current study.

Adults can define play as fun, enjoyable, and an opportunity to escape or as competitive, challenging or a learning experience. Play can be as relaxing or as physical as one wants it to be. In other words, play can mean different things to different people. The fundamental premise of reversal theory is that an individual's behavior cannot be totally understood without an understanding of the *personal meaning* that the behavior has for that individual (Apter, 1982). The current study has demonstrated that examining the words that people use to describe play is not enough to understand the meaning that play has for them. Categorizing individuals as playful or serious also does not adequately provide enough understanding into the meaning of play. Play is a complex construct in which a "one size fits all" definition will never suffice. Ultimately, while reversal theory is an appropriate lens through which to study adult play, based on the results of the current study, how an individual describes play is not related to whether they are inherently playful or not. Since individuals frequently switch back and forth between metamotivational states according to the theory, perhaps the reversals themselves have more of an impact on how one describes play regardless of their tendency toward a dominant telic or paratelic state. In other words, how an individual describes the meaning of play may be based more on the circumstances surrounding the play episode at the time of the reversal and not on whether one is inherently playful or serious minded in nature.

Implications

Play is a highly individual experience, and the propensity to be playful or serious minded varies widely from individual to individual as evidenced by the results of the current study. One

of the difficulties in generalizing about being completely paratelic (i.e., playful) or telic (i.e., more goal-oriented and serious) is that it is possible for people to be considered nondominant; in essence, a combination of both paratelic and telic characteristics. In the case of the present study, almost 60% of the participants were categorized as such and the argument could be made that this reflects simple human nature – no one is completely playful or serious all of the time. Understanding one's tendency to be telic or paratelic is useful in the sense that the value of play is revealed to the individual, but it is equally important to understand that this view depends on the situation at the time of its occurrence.

With modifications, the Seriousness of Play scale can still be a viable instrument in assessing the meaning of play for adults. Many of the words and phrases contained in the scale have been identified and discussed in previous research that has attempted to examine the essence of play and playfulness in adults. Understanding how one perceives play can provide the opportunity to make it a more prominent activity in an adult's life instead of viewing it as a frivolous one. Previous research has determined that play is important to adults' happiness (Marano, 1999), and discovering how one describes play can provide insight into the benefits that one seeks to get out of it.

To improve reliability, the scale needs further refinement as it contained words and phrases that were too similar in meaning; combining them and not counting them as separate items could improve the reliability of the scale. Moreover, additional time is needed to allow the Delphi process to run its proper course. The Delphi technique is perhaps the most commonly utilized consensus method available to researchers (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1995) and has been used not only in the recreation and leisure field but in a variety of disciplines including education, business, health care, and transportation (Gupta & Clarke, 1996). However the

technique takes time to work effectively and unfortunately in case of the current study, time became a critical factor that necessitated suspending the process before it could come to a successful conclusion.

Recommendations for Future Research

The current study sought to determine if there was a relationship between how a person describes the concept of play and whether this description reflects their dominant motivational state (i.e., telic or paratelic). While a relationship was not found, it did provide valuable insight into how play was viewed by the adults who participated in the study. Understanding the complexity with which adults view play may be of help to practitioners in the field involved in the provision of programs and services for this age group.

One limitation in the current study is that conclusions can only be made regarding the employees of the behavioral health organization who participated in it. It is possible that the nondominant tendencies displayed in the majority of the study participants could be related to the type of organization with which they are associated. It is a behavioral health organization that focuses on the recovery of individuals who have struggled with addictions and other behavioral issues. Many of the individuals who provide direct services to agency clientele have gone through the recovery process as well (Organizational insider, personal communication, December 1, 2012). Therefore, it is possible that they have a different outlook on life, and play than other adults in the population. Repeating the study with individuals who are not associated with one particular organization might produce a completely different result.

Future research is warranted also with regard to gender and play. Are there differences between the genders with regard to the meaning and benefits of play? The current study did not

examine this question, but in analyzing the written narratives there were some indications that perhaps gender might play a role.

Continued research into the construct of adult play could reveal much about the benefit of revisiting the release that play provided in childhood. As one 45 year old female respondent wrote regarding the meaning of play for her; "...I secretly wish I was 5 years old again. No one judges a 5 yr (sic) old for making noises or being goofy. I want to make noises and be goofy most of the time. Society does not see this as a strength, especially in the workplace".

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Appendix A

Email to Invite Participation in Study – Participants

Email to Invite Participation in Study

Good Morning,

My name is Linda Lane and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Health, Human Performance and Recreation at the University of Arkansas. I am conducting a research study to examine the meaning of play for adults between 40 and 65 years of age, and (XXX) has graciously agreed to assist me in this project. This email is an invitation for your participation in this study.

The study consists of a survey and a short written narrative, one paragraph in length that can be completed online. The URL to access the survey can be found at the end of this email. Your anonymity will be assured; once the survey has been accessed a message will appear on the bottom right corner of the screen which reads "Certified Anonymous Survey". You will be able to complete the survey once you have read the "Consent to Participate In Research" message by simply clicking on the "Next" button.

The total time required for the study is approximately 15 minutes. Your participation is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The results of the research will be utilized for my doctorate dissertation. Your name and identity will not be revealed in the dissertation or in any publications that may result from the study. Additionally, your name and identity will remain unknown to the researcher.

Your participation will help professionals in the recreation field better understand the phenomenon of adult play. There are no anticipated risks to participating in the study.

The website will remain available for response for the next three weeks. Reminder emails will be sent to all participants on a weekly basis. If you have any questions regarding the research study, please feel free to contact me by email or phone (XXX-XXX-XXXX).

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Linda Lane, MSRLS
Doctoral student
University of Arkansas
Email: XXX

URL Address of Survey:

<http://www.surveymethods.com/EndUser.aspx?C2E68A93C0819E96C6>

Appendix B

Paratelic Dominance Scale

Personal Style Questionnaire

Directions: Here are some statements that describe different characteristics of people. Please read each statement carefully and decide whether the statement is TRUE or FALSE as it applies to you.

1. Usually, my leisure activities have no specific purpose. True False
2. I have long-term life ambitions. True False
3. If I have extra time, I prefer to spend it accomplishing something important. True False
4. I often take risks. True False
5. I like being in unpredictable situations. True False
6. I am an adventurous sort of person. True False
7. I usually enjoy thinking about my long-term goals. True False
8. I almost never like to take chances. True False
9. I usually make decisions based on my long-term goals. True False
10. I often do things just for excitement. True False
11. I prefer leisure activities that have a serious purpose. True False
12. I seldom make long-term plans. True False
13. I prefer a peaceful, quiet environment. True False
14. In my free time, I prefer activities with no serious purpose. True False
15. I prefer to think in the long term. True False

Demographic Information

What is your age? _____

What is your gender? _____

What is your occupation? _____

What state do you live in? _____

Continue on next page

Part 2.

Please write one sentence that describes a memorable episode of play that you have experienced within the last 5-10 years.

Reflecting on that memorable episode, write one paragraph describing what play means to you. What is it about this particular episode that signifies it as play?

Scoring of Paratelic Dominance Scale (Personal Style Questionnaire)

The original design of the questionnaire called for all 30 items to be used in the scoring of subscale and total scores. The factor structure of the scale using only 15 items has been validated using confirmatory factor analysis. The shortened scoring is recommended by the authors.

AX@ indicates the Aparatelic@ response for each item.

Code A1" for each Aparatelic@ response; A0" for the alternative.

Sum over the items for each subscale:

Playful	2, 5, 21, 26
Spontaneous	3, 12, 16, 22, 30
Arousal seeking	6, 8, 11, 13, 17, 24

Total	Sum over the 3 subscales
-------	--------------------------

If you are interested in comparing your data to others who used the full 30-item scoring, the following is a list of the items for each subscale.

Playful	1, 2, 5, 9, 10, 15, 18, 19, 21, 26
Spontaneous	3, 4, 7, 12, 16, 20, 22, 25, 27, 30
Arousal seeking	6, 8, 11, 13, 14, 17, 23, 24, 28, 29

Total	Sum over the 3 subscales
-------	--------------------------

Appendix C

Participant Reminder/Thank You Emails

First Participant Reminder/Thank You Email

Good Morning,

About one week ago, you should have received an email invitation that contained a link to an online survey to help me complete my doctoral dissertation project. My dissertation is focused on examining the meaning of play for adults between 40 and 65 years of age. Your participation in this study will provide a better understanding of the phenomenon of adult play.

If you have already responded to the survey, I sincerely thank you for your participation. Please disregard this email. If you have not yet completed the survey, I would greatly appreciate your taking the time (about 15 minutes) to complete the survey by following the link below. Your responses will be anonymous, and your participation is completely voluntary.

<http://www.surveymethods.com/EndUser.aspx?C2E68A93C0819E96C6>

Your participation would greatly help me complete my dissertation project. If you have any questions, please feel free to email me or my advisor, Dr. Merry Moiseichik (XXX).

Thank you in advance for your assistance with my research project.

Sincerely,

Linda Lane
University of Arkansas
Email: XXX

Second Participant Reminder/Thank You Email

Good Morning,

About two weeks ago, you should have received an email invitation that contained a link to an online survey to help me complete my doctoral dissertation project. My dissertation is focused on examining the meaning of play for adults between 40 and 65 years of age. Your participation in this study will provide a better understanding of the phenomenon of adult play.

If you have already responded to the survey, I sincerely thank you for your participation. Please disregard this email. If you have not yet completed the survey, I would greatly appreciate your taking the time (about 15 minutes) to complete the survey by following the link below. Your responses will be anonymous, and your participation is completely voluntary.

<http://www.surveymethods.com/EndUser.aspx?C2E68A93C0819E96C6>

Your participation would greatly help me complete my dissertation project. If you have any questions, please feel free to email me or my advisor, Dr. Merry Moiseichik (XXX).

Thank you in advance for your assistance with my research project.

Sincerely,

Linda Lane
University of Arkansas
Email: XXX

Appendix D

Informed Consent

Informed Consent

Consent to Participate in Research

You are being invited to participate in an online dissertation research project conducted by Linda Lane, a doctoral student from the Department of Health, Human Performance and Recreation at the University of Arkansas.

Title: The Meaning of Play for Adults from a Reversal Theory Perspective

Description: The purpose of the study is to examine how adults between 40 and 65 years of age describe the concept of play and to determine whether this description is a reflection of their dominant motivational state. The Paratelic Dominance Scale will be administered as an assessment tool to determine the level of seriousness or playfulness that characterizes your motivational state in everyday life. You will be asked in the survey for personal information including age, gender, occupation and the state you live in. You are also being asked to write one sentence describing a memorable episode of play and a paragraph that describes what play means to you. Your participation in the study should only take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Risks and Benefits: Participation in the current study will help better understand how motivational profiles are associated with descriptions used by adults to explain play. There are no anticipated risks to participating in the study.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without any negative consequence or penalty from doing so.

Confidentiality: Every effort will be made to maintain the anonymity of your participation in this study. All data will go to a database with no means of identifying the participant.

Modified Informed Consent: After reading this consent form and noting your option to withdraw from the study at any time, if you would like to participate in the study, please use the "Next" button to access the survey. Completing the instruments indicates that you freely agree to participate in this study.

Project Contact Information:

Linda Lane, MSRLS
Doctoral Student
University of Arkansas
Office Phone: XXX
Email: XXX

Dr. Merry Moiseichik
Dissertation Advisor
University of Arkansas
Office Phone: XXX
Email: XXX

You may also contact the University of Arkansas Research Compliance office listed below if you have questions about your rights as a participant, or to discuss any concerns about, or problems with the research.

Ro Windwalker, CIP
Institutional Review Board Coordinator
Research Compliance
University of Arkansas
120 Ozark Hall
Fayetteville, AR 72701-1201
479-575-2208
irb@uark.edu

Appendix E

Information Sheet/Letter of Invitation – Expert Panel

Email Notifications to Delphi Panel

Good morning,

I am contacting you because of your experience and contributions to the recreation and leisure services field. You have been purposely selected because of your past experience, expertise, and general interest in the area of play and/or youth/family development. Your name was obtained through a literature search, professional organization listings, and conversations with faculty members at the University of Arkansas.

My name is Linda Lane and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Arkansas, conducting my dissertation research on the meaning of play for adults. The purpose of the study is to examine how adults describe the concept of play and to determine whether this description is a reflection of their dominant motivational state. A key component of the study will be an analysis of the words that the participants will have used to describe a memorable episode of play and the level of seriousness and/or playfulness associated with those words. Your expertise is needed to develop an instrument on adult play seriousness.

The Delphi method, a technique used for the systematic development of expert opinion consensus will be utilized. This technique involves gathering data from a small group of persons who by professional reputation have been identified as experts. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to: (1) reach a consensus regarding the rating of these words into one of five (5) response categories ranging from Very High Playfulness to Very High Seriousness, and (2) rank order the words within these same categories. The resultant Seriousness of Play Scale will then allow a numeric score to be assigned to the words as an assessment of the level of seriousness and/or playfulness associated with the words. This score will then be utilized in other statistical techniques that will be employed in the study.

This study is confidential and any link between the participant's identity and the data shall not be disclosed. No identifiers linking you to the study will be included in the dissertation or in any publications that may result from the study.

Thank you for considering this request. Please let me know if you are not able to participate at this time so that I may extend an invitation to others in the field. Your input and opinions are valued and I look forward to hearing from you.

Project Contact Information:

Linda Lane, MSRLS
Doctoral Student
University of Arkansas
Office Phone: XXX
Email: XXX

Dr. Merry Moiseichik
Dissertation Advisor
University of Arkansas
Office Phone: XXX
Email: XXX

Appendix F
Seriousness of Play Scale

Seriousness of Play Scale

<u>Very High Seriousness/High Seriousness</u>		<u>Very High Playfulness/Playfulness</u>	
Fear	-10	Immersion into fantasy	10
Frustration	-10	Silly/goofy	10
Competition	-9	Permission to look foolish	10
Winning	-9	Frivolous	10
Ambition	-9	Feeling young/feel childlike	10
Outcome	-9	Laughing	9
Challenging	-9	Fun	9
Getting heart rate up	-8	Joy	9
Being assertive	-8	Blissful	9
Stress relief	-8	Sheer pleasure	9
Learning/learned skill	-7	Feeling vibrant	9
Using brain power	-7	Indulgence	9
Self-development	-7	Free-spirited	8
Self-improvement	-7	Carefree/light-hearted	8
Discovery	-7	Being in the moment	7
Self-examination	-7	Spontaneous	7
Sense of accomplishment	-7	Go with the flow	7
Self-worth	-7	Freedom	7
Restorative	-6	No purpose	7
Ritual	-6	Unknown outcome	7
Renewing	-6	Unrestricted	7
Adventure	-5	Get outside yourself	7
Taking new risks	-5	Letting go of inhibitions	7
Explore	-5	Freedom of expression	7
Stimulates curiosity	-5	Escape	7
Living vicariously	-4	Let guard down	7
Life-inspiring	-4	Excitement/anticipation	6
Making best of situation	-4	Happy	5
Planning	-3	Enjoyment	5
Cooperation	-3	Taking time to enjoy life	5
Respectful	-3	Simple things in life	5
Bonding experience	-2	Distraction	4
Building memories	-2	Pleasant respite/getting away	4
Connection w/others	-2	Bantering/camaraderie	3
Devoid of attachment	-2	No sense of time/unstructured	2
Serenity-seeking	-1	Active/creative/unusual	1
Peace	-1	Different from norm	1
Sense of well-being	-1	Opposite of work	1

Neutral

Activity	0
Be myself	0
Discretionary	0
Down time/free time	0
Leisure	0
Leisurely	0
Optional	0
Passive	0
Quality time	0
Quiet time	0
Relaxing	0
Unwind	0
Wholesome	0

Appendix G
IRB Approval Letter



Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board

December 21, 2012

MEMORANDUM

TO: Linda Lane
Merry [Moiseichik](#)

FROM: Ro [Windwalker](#)
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 12-12-348

Protocol Title: *The Meaning of Play for Adults from a Reversal Theory Perspective*

Review Type: EXEMPT EXPEDITED FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 12/21/2012 Expiration Date: 12/20/2013

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (<http://vpred.uark.edu/210.php>). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

This protocol has been approved for 150 participants. If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 210 Administration Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

210 Administration Building • 1 University of Arkansas • Fayetteville, AR 72701
Voice (479) 575-2208 • Fax (479) 575-3846 • Email irb@uark.edu

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