

Chapter Four

Play for All Ages

An Exploration of Intergenerational Play

Lynn E. Cohen and Sandra Waite-Stupiansky

The purpose of this study was to determine how play has changed over the generations and find patterns and trends in childhood play from generation to generation. Continuity theories of reminiscence framed intergenerational play memories. The overall method was qualitative with a descriptive design. The investigation was an assignment in a play course in which over 70 college students conducted interviews with someone 25 years older than themselves. The results indicated that an important place for play was outside within participants' neighborhoods. The toys of choice were dolls and figurines, balls, bikes, and board or card games. The most popular play material reported was natural or homemade items such as sticks, dirt, or structures made out of cardboard. Results reported from technology interview questions indicated differences between elders and university students' use of technology play. Providing the opportunity to bridge older and younger generations highlights the importance of tapping into the potentialities of using play in interdisciplinary programs to understand play theory and research across the life span.

The United States will experience many demographic changes in the 21st century and trends indicate that there will be a changing age structure driven by increased longevity. *Healthy People 2020's* (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2010) vision is to create a society in which all people live long, healthy lives and includes healthy development and behaviors across all life stages. Bengtson (2001) claims multigenerational relationships will be more important in the 21st century for 3 reasons: (a) demographic changes of population aging, (b) the importance of grandparents fulfilling family functions, and (c) the strength of intergenerational solidarity over time. The guiding questions for this chapter are how play will be affected by

