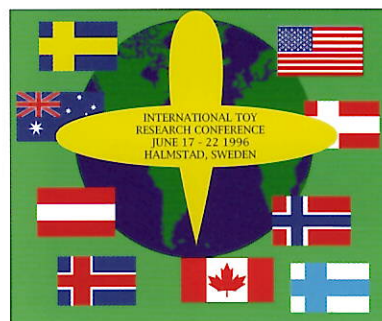
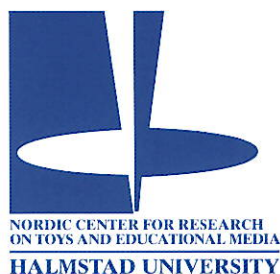
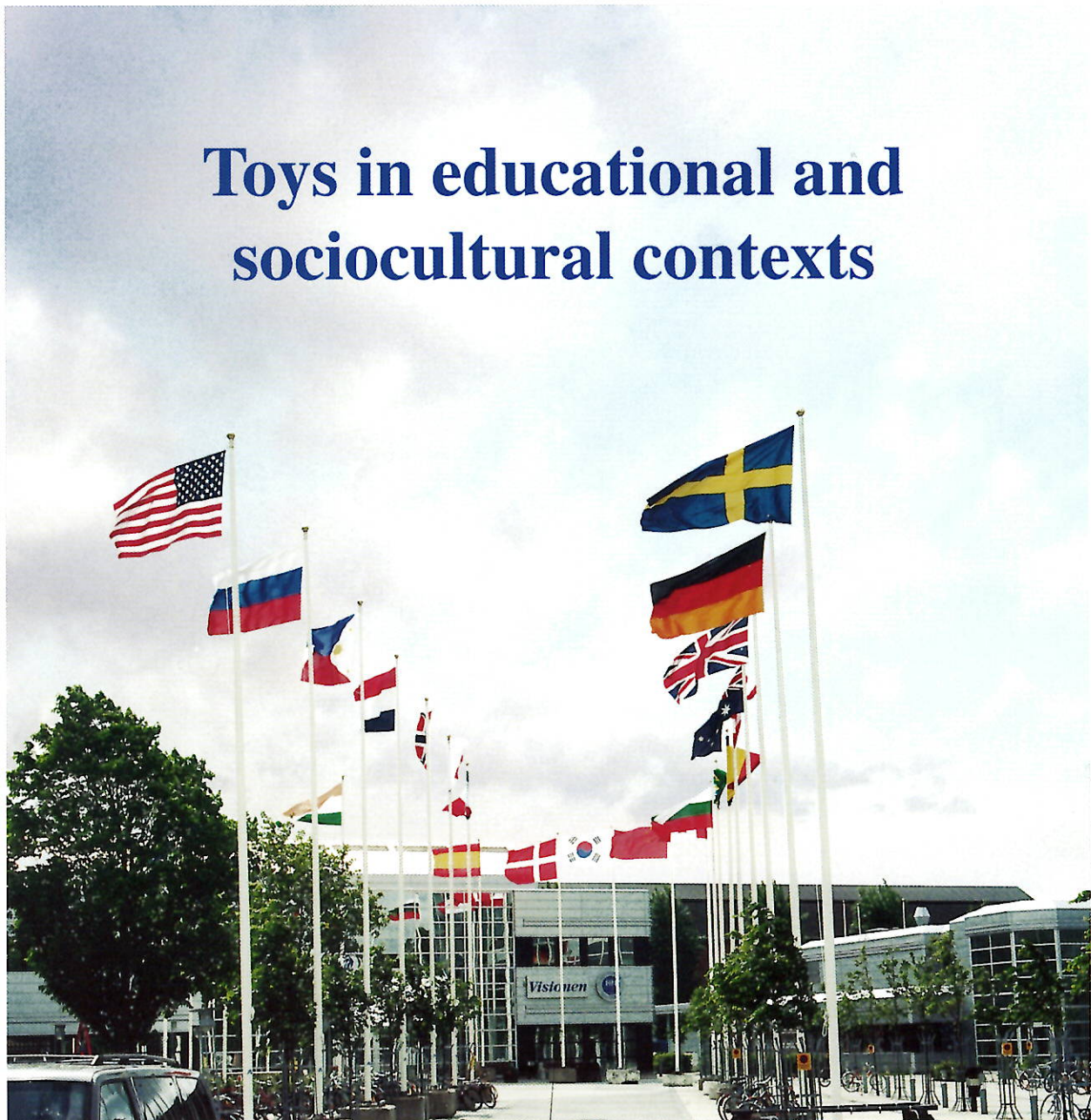


CONFERENCE REPORT

INTERNATIONAL TOY RESEARCH CONFERENCE

JUNE 17 - 22 1996, HALMSTAD, SWEDEN

Toys in educational and sociocultural contexts



A MAGIC MOMENT

The first International Toy Research Conference, arranged by the Nordic Center for Research on Toys and Educational Media (NCFL) at Halmstad University, Sweden, June 17-22, 1996, was a manifestation of world-wide cooperation of researchers knowledge about the role of toys in childrens play, learning and development and in adult leisure time.

It was indeed a magic moment. At last all the people that we had known by their work were gathered in person.

We had waited three years for this moment to come. The planning of the conference had been going on for more than two years. The participants had prepared themselves for one year.

Everyone that we hoped for and who could be there sat in the benches waiting for the conference to start. 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5,

There had been three years of evolving a toy research centre to organise and support research on the tools of play. This object that reflects all perspectives of every day life was for the first time in focus for an international conference of researchers.

I will take the opportunity to express my gratitude to those who made this conference possible and those who in different ways supported it.

First of all I would like to thank the Swedish Minister of Education, Carl Tham, who opened the conference. He declared that toy research is an example of new and untraditional areas for research that will contribute to increased knowledge about society in general. Opening the conference, the minister recognized toy research and thereby gave it an important status.

I also express my gratitude to Professor Emeritus Brian Sutton-

Smith who has not only identified and developed modern research on toys but also given his personal support to all of us who put effort into toy research.

This first conference was economically supported by The Swedish Institute, Toy Manufacturers of America, BRIO AB, HAGS AB and LEGO A/S.



The secretariat staff were busy in the time between sessions

Funding from these organisations and companies made it possible to invite researchers from all over the world. Contributions were an acknowledgement of the importance of independent research on toys. Future cooperation between researchers and companies can now develop.

The municipality of Halmstad organised cultural activities and gave the conference a frame by presenting different sides of Swedish culture.

The most important contribution was offered by the researchers themselves. Their deep engagement and skill in the research on toys is the foundation and inspiration for many new generations of toy researchers. Their work will continuously gather people to conferences all over the world with the purpose to explain the toys as companions to mankind.

The staff at NCFL also deserves to be mentioned. A total dedication to a project much bigger than we all could imagine was the challenge. They all knew that it was important for the future to make this conference

successful as far as it depended on them. Our experiences will be useful in 1999.

To all of you who made this first International Toy Research Conference possible, thank you.

The results of this conference will hopefully be an increased activity of international projects and research, courses and exchange programs including students and senior researchers. The great number of qualified

papers which were presented at the conference will be published during 1997.

The conference has shown that toy research has a prosperous future as an international enterprise, and it has just begun.

The future also contains another challenge, namely to organize an international program for doctoral students. NCFL will try to establish an internet based education that will connect students with tutors and lecturers in a world wide system. This should be in operation before the next conference in 1999.

We look forward to see you again in Halmstad in 1999.



Children, toys and the life itself

The Swedish Minister of Education, Carl Tham, ended his address with the words: -"To reflect on the function of play, games and toys is to reflect on life itself!"

There are those outside the realm of science who take the view that toys are a self-evident aspect of our daily lives and not worthy of closer examination. The Minister of Education, Carl Tham, is of another opinion and emphasizes that research on toys, with its studies of the ideology of toys, cultural patterns and cultural artifacts, contributes to increased knowledge about the world of children and society in general.

Gender aspects

A field that is of importance and which requires more knowledge is the field of gender aspects. Since toys reflect gender attitudes and behaviour in society, toy research is able to promote further knowledge regarding how the world and the values of children are created and shaped.

Safety aspects

That the conference is held in Sweden is not a coincidence, according to Carl Tham. Sweden is a leading country concerning matters of children's needs, including their toys. Sweden, with its welfare model, has taken an active role, among other things, in making parents aware of safety aspects concerning toys. Today,



The Swedish Minister of Education gave the opening speech.

toys make up a large industry with powerful economical forces. Toy research has an important task in illuminating these questions of children's needs and safety.

Toy research

The Minister of Education said he was hoping that this conference and Nordic Center for Research on Toys and Educational Media will strengthen the position of toy research in Sweden and the rest of the world. He ended his address: *There is a line in the famous book by Huizinga, "Homo Ludens", a line which has always fascinated me. Concerning the Japanese*

lifestyle, he says: "The extreme seriousness of the Japanese lifestyle hides behind the fiction that everything is only a game." Taste that sentence. Serious ceremonies are deadly serious just because they are a part of a game. That is also the experience of the child. If you just get that sentence into your head and think about it, then a lot of things look different. To reflect on the function of play, games and toys is to reflect on life itself.

By: Mattias Nilsson

The festival of toys

Guest of honour at the conference was Professor Emeritus Brian Sutton-Smith, USA. His career began at the Department of Developmental Psychology, University of New Zealand, where in 1954 he became a Ph.D. He formally retired a few years ago from the University of Pennsylvania where he was chair from 1977, but is still busy writing books and articles. Brian Sutton-Smith's works have rendered him several awards over the years.

A very good reason to hold the first International Toy Research Conference to the honour of Brian Sutton-Smith is his untiring, seemingly everlasting inspiration and support of young scholars with the ambition to enter the field of research on play and toys.

On the first day of the conference, Sutton-Smith gave an opening speech entitled "The Festival of Toys". He started by pointing out the importance of toy research, "we are not just toying around", he said.

He reminded the participants of the rapid change in the field of toy research caused by the expansion of the toy market. Not many years

ago a researcher studied one child playing with one toy in a controlled setting. There were studies of different groups of toys and their effect on children's play and development. Researchers have also studied the players and described them in terms of their characteristics.

But, asks Sutton-Smith, is this still an adequate approach? Today, there is a world wide cultural pattern, which Sutton-Smith calls the Festival of Toys. If you compare it with other festivals,

like the Olympic Games or Christmas, you will find that the festival of toys is by far the largest. The modern media toy festival is ongoing and expansive and includes nearly all children under the age of ten years. It enters the families and the homes and it turns inward towards the subjective minds of the players and continues in dreams and play. It infiltrates the habits, the dreams and the thoughts of children.

By: Ingrid Engdahl



Foto: Patrik Leonardsson

Guest of honour Brian Sutton-Smith



An image of the toy world in the late twentieth century



Discussions on eastern and western toy research?

Video games and postmodern play

Stephen Kline talked about toys as significant and controversial artefacts.

Stephen Kline takes his departure in the passive - active dichotomy, referring to attitudes in everyday life that label toys (and possibly also play) as passive reflections of society on the one hand and, on the other, as more autonomous dynamic cultural forces. Kline's own position is on the active side. Toys are "significant and controversial artefacts" giving distinct contributions to "gender roles, teaching social concepts and relations and to supporting the mastery of technical skills". These traits, linked to the fact of mass production/distribution make toys important in a postmodern society. He considers the giant commodification of play that is going on, partly by looking at the ever rising figures for toy merchandise.

The special focus is the growing demand for video games, "demand" being defined within "a



Stephen Kline received the BRIO Scholarship 1996.

dialogue between toy makers and consumers". This is illustrated by the history of the birth and growth of the video games. The victorious companies always have been sensitive to both children and parents concerning the most important characteristics of the games. For example they soon found out that it was not the

curiosity of new technology that was important, but the experience of the elementary joy and thrill of play. From this, marketing agents began enhancing sensory stimulus in the products.

One point that supports Kline's argumentation about the active-passive dimension is that video games build much of their attractiveness on being "interactive" toys with a demand for "dynamic play activity", especially compared with ordinary TV-watching. Three questions which dominate this debate are: 1) Are video games good or healthy, or are they physically too passive? 2) Are they violence creating? 3) Are they good learning tools? Kline's present research also turns to these questions, especially focusing on the emotional aspects of the games.

By: Lars-Erik Berg

continue their own autonomous play practises, but they absorb into those plays the materials and ideas from the developing first world about them. This phenomenon has often been noted in anthropology, and in this conference is recorded by Jean-Pierre Rossie in his study of the toy automobile construction and play of Moroccan children.

More modern European ways to sustain the notion of a special toy place for the children's imagination are illustrated here by papers which find in toy play some special forms of excellence not so easily achievable elsewhere. The primary source historically of this attitude derives from Froebel's famous toys as "gifts" each of which was a play object which embodied fundamental concepts about reality and the universe (Brita Lena Öman).

Modern interpretations do not claim quite so much but some still find in toys some special aesthetic value (Olga Sulova: Maria Lauka), emotional value (Theodora Mehandova), sensory value (Siegfried Zoels) or value of opportunities for free play (Arne Trageton). We should add here that most modern play theory about children also has been about the private spaces of the childhood imagination. When we talk of the great child play theorists, Freud, Isaacs, Piaget, Erikson, Winicott, Berlyne or Singer, by and large we are talking of the child's solitary imaginative play. In their various ways they are all writing within the frame or cultural metaphor of the child's secret garden. In this expanded sense it is impossible for the garden not to continue.

The Modern Media World

The commercial world takes its primary cues from what sells, not so much from romantic theories of childhood such as listed above (Kathleen Alfano: Åsa Enerstvedt). Through the first part of this century, toy makers were much affected by selling toys that were appropriate for particular age levels and they frequently employed child psychologists to give them advice about such matters. However, in the past decade or so they have discovered that a more powerful way of appealing to children is by

associating toys and their advertising with television story contexts. The account of this massive shift in the commercialization of toys is well told in



Anthony Pellegrini was one...

the 1993 book of our colleague Stephen Kline, significantly entitled Out of the Garden (Garamond, Toronto). He implies that the world of child toy play is no longer the world of the solitary imagination, it is the world of children's fantasies driven by commercial means, so the children are now out of their garden. But this change from an age level determinacy of toys with its individualistic connotations, to a

television determinacy, seems a little more like going into some kind of adult constructed fabulative garden than just coming out of an innocent child one. It might be more appropriate to construe the current massive change in toy contexts as from one garden to another. That is from the metaphor of child's play as a secret place of the imagination to a metaphor of child's play as an adult constructed consumer world for children. This is a change from the relative innocence of fairy tales for children to the level of 21st century space mythology.

Some criticize this new adult fabulated world as not having much play value, as illustrated here by Wendy Varney when she says "it is the worst aspects of our society that are most influencing toys. . . Gender, sensual and warlike values are emphasized." Her criticism is widely shared throughout the world. Many are shocked by the great change that has come about from the play they remember as children to the play now being stimulated by large scale toy companies. They remember playing with boxes and making their own toys. Or they remember playing with their friends in their backyards and in the streets where they lived. They resent that their own children are now less like they were when young and are more influenced by the media than by themselves as parents. They perhaps do not notice that increasingly the middle classes of modern societies have moved their children off the streets



...and Theodora Mehandova was another of the participants at the conference

OUT OF THE GARDEN AND OUT OF THE STREETS

The guest of honour at the conference, Brian Sutton-Smith, here gives a personal reflection of the paper presentations.

The implicit question throughout this conference, and much contemporary scholarship on toys is whether or not the childish imagination is well served by commercialization. Since the early nineteenth century idealizations of imaginative play, by Schiller, Wordsworth, Pestalozzi and Froebel, and the later nineteenth century exaltation of "primitive"

The Romantic dilemma for current scholars of folk toys, is the same as has existed for all kinds of folklore from the past, namely, that although often aesthetically desirable, and traditionally significant, folk toys are not surviving in the face of modern commercialization. In the present conference, papers about folk toys from India (Sudarshan Khanna), from Brazil (Rachel Altman Zumbano), from the Philippines (Shirley Tan), and from Korea (Dongju Shin), show that the international media revolution is attenuating their parochial and

the people that are preserving these traditions. What its scholars tell us is that, typically, some part of the older traditions are preserved in museums, or in schools, or by special societies, for example, folk dance societies, or by professional performers who are sustained also by tourist investments. Or the traditions are preserved by scholars who seek to put these older ways of life on record in their books and libraries. They also tell us, however, that for nostalgic or political reasons the actual character of the earlier traditions is typically transformed



Sudarshan Khanna talked about folk toys from India

and child art, it has been widely presumed that folk toys, wooden toys, or self made toys, are preferable for child development. From then until now, through play, literature, and toys, Western Culture has sustained the romantic view that children have a secret and imaginative world of their own, often termed their "secret or enchanted garden".

national craft traditions. Beautiful and well made craft toy forms are losing competitiveness with mass market forms, many of which are also beautiful.

Folklore as an academic discipline has its origins in attempts to dignify, record and preserve these older folkways as a celebration of the identity of the people that they represent, or of

into practises that are not the same as were the originals. For all the desire to preserve the past, modern tastes are often offended by order practises, and modern groups often use only those parts of order practises that bolster their own current political or social agendas.

Another occasional alternative for toys, occurs in some parts of the third world where the children

into indoor playrooms and television rooms and given them access to computers and video games. Increasingly also that same class has increased its control over children's outdoor behavior through organized games, sports and forms of art, as well as through public fantasylands from McDonalds to Disney. And finally the same class has brought its children the repertoires of toys that have, therefore, become a part of the standard consumer toy culture of modern childhood from Barbie to the Power Rangers. Though members of the lower classes spend proportionately more of their own money to help their children keep up with this modern toy culture, not surprisingly their children are often still to be found in the older life on the streets with their peers and gangs.

Most probably the toy makers, who were partial sponsors of this present conference, the BRIO and LEGO companies, would argue that their own toy museums and fantasylands, and their wooden and ingenious construction toys, indicate that the original garden still exists, but that it is now being upgraded through its fusion with modern computer extensions and fantasy Legolands. They appear to make genuine attempts to have this second consumer garden represent some of the old values as well as some of the new ones.

The problem with most such attempts to generalize about and evaluate toys, however, whether ancient or modern, is that they are not scientific. They are the interpretations that adults impose upon the children's observed actions or, more minimally, on whatever the toys suggest, sometimes without even observing child toy usage. The concepts of toys as pedagogic (Manuel Aragones), as good (Lars-Erik Berg), as educational (Nanna Due and Marit Flakne), as learning (Lynne Bartholomew), as semiotic (Theo van Leeuwen), and even as bad, as plastic, or as having low play value, varies from one person to the next, and from one period in history to another. What the evidence suggests is that there are few fixed meanings; there are only texts (Staffan Selander) or frames (Stig Broström) by adults about what

toys can mean. Toys in the modern world are not fixed objects, they are the objects of rhetoric as we argued earlier in 1986 (Toys as Culture).

Several papers demonstrate empirically this toy relativity which is being spoken to here. The Anders Nelson and Mattias Nilsson classification of play objects and toys in children's bedrooms showed not only that

Jessen.; Elena E Khramtsova).

One way to find out what a toy means in educational terms which is the focus of many investigators (Ole Frederik Lillemyr; Kärt Mere) is, of course, to subject it to experimentation which is what psychologists do. And in the present conference various correlations were established between the availability of toys in play, and child improvements in



The sessions were held in "Visionen" at Halmstad University.

there were many hundreds of objects for each child, but that about two thirds of them were put to quite original purposes and only a third put to conventional or commercially indicated purposes. The reported creativity of children when playing with computers also adds further strength to the view that stereotyped interpretations of children's toy play are not justified simply from knowledge of the character of the toy (Carsten

cognition and literacy (James Christie, Anthony Pellegrini). Whether these small correlated variances really tell us much about either toys or development however, was disputed by some of those present (Peter E. Johnsen).

Another scientific approach to see if indeed the toys do mirror adult preoccupations is tackled directly in this conference. The question is whether children's play directly reflects the character of

the toys being given them? Not according to Gilles Brougère who is the researcher who has most studied the problem. In earlier work he found that you could not simply predict what a child would feel about and do with a Barbie doll just because it was a Barbie doll (Le Jouet, 1992; *Jeu et Education*, 1995). In his new work on Power Rangers, he points out that even when children want to

children who are to take the positions of the bad guys may have to be bribed to do so. Everyone wants to be a hero. The fantasy must compromise with the group and the group with the fantasy. And again, play fantasies come from many sources in childhood, not just from the television screen or the commercial toy (Jerome Singer). Children make up their own stories much of the time

children's play of their gender affiliations. Playtime is gender time. Gender oriented behavior is more required in playtime than at any other time in child life. And those rigidities limit and dramatize how the children will play with the gender oriented toys that are made available to them as several of the conference members have demonstrated (Greta Pennell; Waltraut Hartmann; Vickii B. Jenvey; Ana Maria Arànjo Pessanha).

In sum, given the originality of children in their bedroom play, given their television play infidelities (as recorded by Brougère), given their rough and tumble play hierarchy problems in all of their social play and now given these gender rigidities, it demonstrates that the massmedia as compelling child oriented stimuli, no matter how powerful they may appear to be otherwise, have to take their place alongside all of these other influences in the determination of child behavior with toys. Play behavior, as some theorists point out, is epigenetic. It is seldom determined by one of the many sources listed above but is always arising from the negotiation of these many influences to accommodate with the contemporary situation of other players. There is not only the toy and the rules of the game to be reckoned with, there is the pre-existing culture and norms of the playing group and the preexisting psychology of the individual who will play, and then there is the accommodation that they all must make to each other on this particular occasion making proper allowance for their gender, their parents, their school teachers, etc in having any play take place at all.



Inset; Waltraut Hartmann

behave like Power Rangers and try to copy what they know of the toys and the television, they have first to mediate these attempts through their own group life. In order to play together there has to be group leaders, hierarchies of power, some children being accepted and some being rejected. The desire to be a part of the game is usually so strong that some children will make bargains for membership that others find unacceptable. The

(Greta Fein). And what children share as a subculture is also their subordinate power which means that they very much enjoy playing at dramas in which the adults are made mock of, or children who are silly enough to be over obedient are made mock of (Cleo Cougoulis). Yet another check on the one sided influence of the models made for imitation by toys or television is surprisingly enough the great power in

Historical Possibilities

Despite these precautions about simplistic toy interpretation, paradoxically, we would certainly not wish to stem the flow of such interpretations because, whether simplistic or not, they are also the source of metaphors, some of which are sometimes productive avenues for future research. Historical concepts, for example, often bring exciting reconsiderations into our conventional

views. In this conference Hein Retter tells us that there is increasing intermixing of the generations in toy play, as well as an increasing use of media by children even greater than their use of toys. And in this conference substantiation for the first of these claims is provided by evidence of attempts in China to increase grandparent with child play. There is a surplus of only children, working parents and grandparent caretakers in China, who must look after the children, although they know little about play techniques with modern children (Jeffrey Goldstein, Dorothy Singer, & Liu Yang). Even more

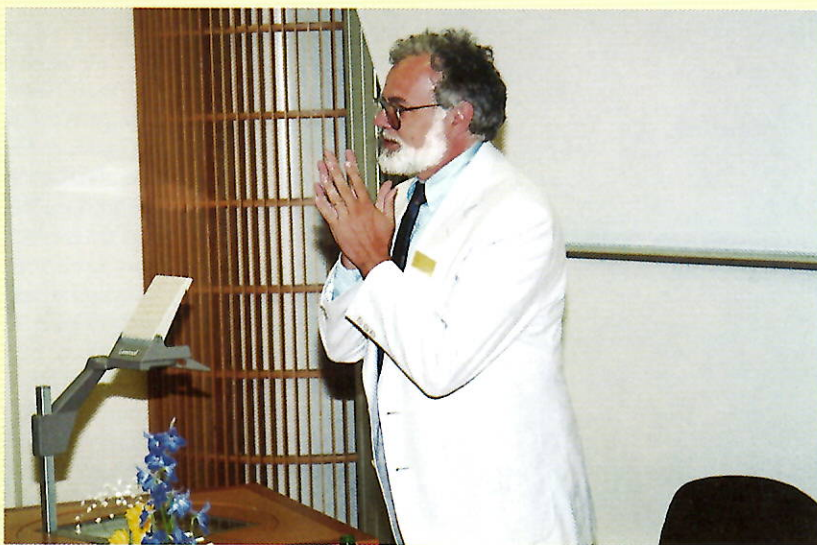
children to be more searching for their own self definitions, a shift made evident in the present study of children's letters to Santa Claus (Birgitta Almquist). We could say that the children's garden has changed, not just because of its invasion by toy texts from without, but also because of the toy makers attempts to control these intra family sentiments sometimes succeeding and sometimes failing. Toys like movies and all other entertainment phenomena are sometimes in the right place at the right time, and sometimes not. But still the striking point here is that according to this interpretation there are new qualities to family

gross horrorbooks, and at the toy level such products as Slime, Gak, and Garbage Pail Kids.

The Street and the Media

Up to this point we have followed Kline in contrasting the children's garden metaphor with the metaphor of the media world as a public situation of commercially managed toy and television fantasies for children. But what this leaves out is children's culture which was always there in the streets and the school and public playgrounds of this century. Children come with their own child level and group fantasies of heroism, tragedy, comedy and chaos. They have their own child culture with its own traditional rhymes, jokes, games, riddles, ghosts, slang, sex play, nonsense, and obscenity. All of this has been and still is recorded by children's folklorists, and it still exists even if there is less opportunity for street play. See, for example Children's Folklore: A Source Book (Sutton-Smith, et. al eds.1995) and in this conference the work of Flemming Mouritsen. The bigger historical shift is not from the private garden to the public commercial garden, it is from a life lived on the streets to a life lived indoors or in places of publically managed fantasy.

A further distinction is that, though the secret garden may not exist in some of the older forms, to deny its existence completely is to deny that modern children have their own individualized fantasies quite apart from what any one provides for them publically. The "greatest protection that children have against the development of the consumer public garden is that their secret imaginative lives still thrive. Their furtive or brilliant daydreams are still there and probably more stimulated by the diversity of modern society than they could ever have been before. Obviously they may have much less innocent fantasies than was previously the case and some interpreters might be reluctant to see them as worthy because of that. But still it makes sense indeed to say that the great change that has come about in this century is twofold. First there is the incomplete change from a child



Gary Cross presented a paper entitled "Origins of the American Fantasy/ Character Toy"

historically striking are attempts to show a tie between the evolution of the character of the modern family and the facilitating commercial influence of particular toys (Gary Cross). Some toys such as Alice, Peter Pan, Dorothy, Teddy Bear, Shirley Temple, Barbie and G.I. Joe, are linked by Cross to the ever expanding twentieth century cultural definitions of the desirable relationships between parents and children. Across this century the notions of appropriate parental behavior have become decreasingly authoritarian and more permissive, and of expected child behavior, have become decreasingly submissive and more assertive. Parents are seen as increasingly expected to be more giving with their children and

relationships in this century and these are in part what is being fought over. The old secret garden of child innocence was probably mainly a garden dreamed of by adults to satisfy their own nostalgia and at the same time to control children from potential sexuality and violence. The new garden reflects the preparedness of some television channels, and some literature, and some toys, to subject children to the violence, sexuality, horror, grossness and grimness in general which are already a part of adult media culture. There are various USA evidences of this trend such as Fox Children's Television Network with Power Rangers and Simpsons and the Nickelodeon's channel's Clarissa, Rugrats, & Ren & Stimpy; R.L. Stine's multiple

street culture to a public child consumer culture and secondly the incomplete change from the upper status secret garden of the imagination to the more open and creative engagement of the child's private imagination with the wider resources that are now available in private bedrooms or computer networks.

Conclusion

Obviously many conclusions from this conference are possible, but the one I would like to emphasize is that we should begin to think more carefully in terms of the various contexts in which we find toys. Toys are, like most play objects, rather labile entities allowing for varied related play behavior forms. Toys are meant to be "toyed" with as plays are meant to be "played" with. So we must look to their contexts if we are to make some sense out of these protean existences. If we want to study toys in classrooms we should be careful to do ethnographic studies to discover

how children use them in those settings. If psychologists wish to do studies of toys and cognition we should expect more intensive descriptive work of the specifics that display these interactions not just broad correlations between the presence of toys and very distant cognitive scores of some sort. If we study toys and peers, we need to see how toy usage varies with siblings, friends, gender and schoolmates in each of the various situations in which such companions are to be found. If commerce is the issue, then there is toy play in front of television, there is the role of commercial "prestige" toys verses more ordinary toys interacting with the peer groups already mentioned. There is also the conversation and debates about toy value with parents and how that may be an important part of the family relationships. In addition there is some need to understand the festival of toys that is generated by membership in the modern consumer world with all the various sources of stimuli that

descend upon the player. Being a modern toy player is not unlike being a regular movie goer. Each is a world of discourse to be shared with others. Finally, there is the way in which the toys may be icons within the development of the child's own private imagination. In my own judgement this is the most important focus for future research. Only when we understand the development and possibilities of the private imagination will we begin to comprehend the power of the toys we play with. Nor surprisingly that task might well begin with a reading of The House of Make Believe (1990) by our colleagues at this conference, Dorothy and Jerome Singer.

By: Brian Sutton-Smith



The delegates circulated around the Spinning Top in the conference building "Visionen" at Halmstad University

ITRA MEETING

at the conference

An ITRA meeting was held June, Friday 21, on the closing of the International Toy Research Conference, University of Halmstad. The meeting was attended by the following members:

Kathleen Alfano, Fisher Price (Mattel), Aurora, USA; Birgitta Almqvist, University of Halmstad, Sweden; Giorgio Bartolucci, Centro Internazionale Ludoteche, Firenze, Italy; Lars-Erik Berg, University of Gothenburg and NCFL University of Halmstad; Gilles Brougère, Université Paris-Nord, France; Jim Christie, Arizona State University, USA; Jeffrey Goldstein, University of Utrecht, Holland; Waltraut Hartmann, University of Vienna and Charlotte Bühler Institute, Vienna, Austria; Jackie Jukes, Hove, Sussex, England; Sudarshan Khanna, National

Institute of Design, Ahmenabad, India; Stephen Kline, Simon Fraser University, Canada; Anthony Pellegrini, University of Georgia, Athens, USA; Greta Pennell, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, USA; Jean-Pierre Rossie, University of Ghent, Belgium; Brian Sutton-Smith, Florida, USA; Krister Svensson, NCFL, Halmstad University, Sweden; Wendy Varney, University of Wollongong, Australia; Siegfried Zoels, Fördern durch Spielmittel - Spielzeug für Behinderte Kinder, Berlin, Germany.

The following ITRA board was constituted: President; Gilles Brougère, France. Secretary/ Treasurer and Editor of the ITRA Newsletter; Birgitta Almqvist, Sweden. Other members of the board; Jeffrey Goldstein, Holland; Waltraut Hartmann, Austria;

Stephen Kline, Canada; Sudarshan Khanna, India; Anthony Pellegrini, USA; Dongju Shin, Korea; Krister Svensson, Sweden.

The meeting decided that "Member of ITRA" will be any person who can document his/her own toy research or interest in research on toys and its use and development.

Application for membership should be sent to the ITRA Secretariat and distributed to the other board members for consideration.

Each member should send a paragraph of his/her work to the ITRA Secretariat.

A member fee of \$25 per year would help financing the secretarial work and the printing and distribution of ITRA Newsletters.

ITRA shall initiate future conferences on specific themes in cooperation with convenient University Departments, and a proposal will be made for a conference on Toys and Safety.

BRIO Scholarship 1996

Stephen Kline, Canada, was granted the BRIO Scholarship 1996. The prize money, 30,000 SEK, was handed over to him by former President of BRIO, Lennart Ivarsson at a ceremony arranged during the International Toy Research Conference. The BRIO fund board motivation for honoring Stephen Kline with the

scholarship 1996 was his contribution to the sociological study of toys, as demonstrated in his book *Out of the Garden. Toys and Children's Culture in the Age of TV Marketing*, published in 1994.

The BRIO scholarship was founded in 1991 to the honor of Lennart Ivarsson, and has earlier

been given to Birgitta Almqvist, Sweden, 1992; Brian Sutton-Smith, USA, 1993; the Montessori Association, Sweden, 1994; and Waltraut Hartmann, Austria, 1995.



Cultural activities during the conference week



A choir with school children from Lyngåkraskolan sang together with the delegates during the opening of the conference. During the midsummer feast the participants enjoyed Swedish folkdance and folkmusic. Elin Arvidsson and Louise Heimler played the violin and the "Nyckelharpa". The jazz pianist Åke Johansson played the piano between sessions.

Halmstad municipality invited the delegates to buffet on the ship "Najaden" in Halmstad.



NORDIC CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON TOYS AND EDUCATIONAL MEDIA

NCFL is a research center at Halmstad University with the aim of establishing a foundation of multiple research on toys and educational media. NCFL works in cooperation with a network of toy researchers, toy manufacturers, organizations and authorities across the world to increase progressive research on toys. The center is run through the

collaboration of the director, scholarly leaders, experts on toy research and the secretariat administrator. NCFL facilities include computer support, a toy library and literature, journal and article databases relating to toys. In addition, the secretariat of International Toy Research Association, ITRA, is hosted by NCFL at Halmstad University.

WELCOME TO THE NEXT CONFERENCE



NCFL, Halmstad University
Box 823, S - 301 18 Halmstad

Phone: + 46 35 16 72 57 (Director), + 46 35 16 72 92 (Secretary), + 46 60 61 43 11 (ITRA secretary)
Fax: + 46 35 15 73 87 E-mail: Secr@ncfl.hh.se Internet: http://www.hh.se/dep/ncfl/index_eng.html