

empirical research from prominent play scholars such as Kathy Hirsh-Pasek and Deena Weisberg, she positions guided play as a developmentally appropriate and evidence-based approach to supporting early learning and well-being. In another chapter, Pica highlights influential work by Ellen Beate Sandseter on the value of risky play in children's development. Pica emphasizes how exposure to manageable risks can promote confidence and physical competence, and she offers a suggested framework for designing activities that safely encourage these skills.

Why Play? is a well-written, practical guide that helps educators communicate the value of play in early childhood development to parents and care givers. Although it is ideal for early childhood professionals working with children ages three through six, many of the insights apply to older children as well. The book also offers value to parents, administrators, and other advocates of play looking for succinct, evidence-based support for play-based learning. Grounded in developmental science and pedagogy, the book's digestible format, accessible tone, and focus on practical strategies make it an especially strong resource for professional development, parent workshops, and early childhood teacher preparation programs.

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**The Virtue of Playfulness:
Why Happy People Are Playful**

Boomer Trujillo

New York: Routledge, 2024.

Acknowledgments, abbreviations

of Aristotle's works, introduction, conclusion, references, and index. 120 pp. \$48.74 hardcover. ISBN: 9781032717746

Is reading a book a playful experience? Even if curling up in a chair with a cat and a book with a provocative title seems not to be a typically playful activity, reading *The Virtue of Playfulness* certainly proves an extremely good use of one's leisure time. As the author Boomer Trujillo asserts, playful individuals regulate their leisure time to rest, to develop themselves, to engage with their communities, and to be happy. In this contented way, setting time aside to read an interesting book and then to write a review of it, is indeed a playful activity.

The author's main take away is that play prepares us for life, and that playfulness in general is not only a recognizable, global moral character trait, it is also a virtue to be developed. For the author, playfulness should be held in the same regard as courage, honesty, justice, wisdom, temperance, compassion, integrity, fortitude, perseverance, loyalty, and patience. And, just like these virtues, playfulness should be encouraged, developed with care, and deployed wisely. Therefore, a playful person is not flaky, unruly, or reckless. Rather, a playful person hones an ability to allocate precious leisure time to being playful.

The Virtue of Playfulness starts with a summary of what is to come in the book and a defense of the seriousness of playfulness which is—Trujillo claims—the way to sort the good from the bad in such a diverse sphere of life as leisure. The entire approach is neo-Aristotelian—from the outset, playfulness is determined to be

contextual and requiring moderation. It is easy to get the dose of playfulness wrong, yet it is wrong not to try to get it right. Furthermore, not only is playfulness a virtue for the individual, a society can be evaluated by considering how much leisure time it has and what it does with this time. For example, Aristotle recalls that the Spartans excelled at preparing for war. When the threat of war passed, and the need for war preparations diminished, Spartan society collapsed because it did not know how to thrive in times of peace and leisure. Building on this point, Trujillo asks what is the point of work if we cannot play in our leisure? Playfulness is not just a character trait, it is a virtue and a route to happiness—not momentary cheerfulness, but the sort of happiness that arises from knowing when to play, when to feel good about playing, and how to play well in any relevant context.

In chapter 3, Trujillo tackles play from a well-documented, evolutionary perspective. The summary of play in animals seems well supported and thorough, yet, as the author points out, humans in particular prove interesting because of the implicit and explicit values they carry with them as they play. I take exception to Trujillo's comment that animals do not have as complex a relation with play as humans do, because we can never know everything about a dolphin's play or the possible play of a mushroom's mycelium. But humans—and, we can speculate, non-humans—certainly play to be curious, perhaps to subvert convention or expectation, or to exercise their limits, or to just “be.” Play, the activity in which we humans engage when we are not busy with other matters, might not exist for the purpose of

human development, but it is inextricably linked with it, so the argument becomes that playfulness is a part of a full, flourishing life.

The next chapter constitutes the business part of the book. I enjoyed Trujillo's “characteristics of playfulness,” contextually illustrated with examples from philosophy, play scholarship, and literature, as well as from Aristotle's writing. I am involved in education, and I strongly believe that the activity of play is more than useful, and that we should take great care when manipulating the play of others for nonplay purposes. It is helpful therefore that the author flips the focus to playfulness rather than play. If the stakes are that high—if playfulness is essential to a good life—then it helps document the stance toward play, or the pattern of expression of the play, as play scholar Thomas Henricks might put it. Playful characteristics, according to Trujillo, are irreducibly social, and they include seriousness, creativity, humility (when you fail at playing yet want to do better), optimism, and socialbility. They exclude being flaky, severe, rigid, and unruly. If you need to engage in the unplayful activity of assessing how playful an activity is, then Trujillo offers a really useful checklist. If you are a world leader wanting your people to flourish, these qualities would engender a rather wonderful society.

The message of Trujillo's book is philosophical. Without dwelling on the impossible question of what play is, Trujillo suggests that one can assess play through its relation to playfulness, which is something that can be held in terms of virtue. Therefore, the author's assessment of play is useful—a comment that would have

pleased Aristotle who was rather keen on utility in the context of pleasure and virtue. So, as the cat stirs and my watch tells me to stop reading and to get up and move, I note that play is not the only thing necessary for living well. Trujillo reminds us that the playful person understands this.

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Playing the Archive: From the Opies to the Digital Playground

Andrew Burn, John Potter, Kate Cowan, and Julia Bishop, eds.

London: UCL Press, 2025. Contents, list of figures, list of contributors, preface, acknowledgments, bibliography, and index. 268 pp. \$40.00 paper.

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Playing the Archive: From the Opies to the Digital Playground is an edited volume that focuses on the Opie Archive project in England. The authors, scholars mostly from University College London and the University of Sheffield, also include a contributor from the University of London and a representative from the Arts Council England. Specializations vary from folklore to media studies, from digital humanities to public engagement, lending different perspectives to the overall project. Geared more toward research-oriented readers and interdisciplinary in content, the book is also accessible to any readers—such as practitioners or advocates—interested in play research.

An introductory chapter describes the research project that brought the book into being. It introduces the archived works of

Iona and Peter Opie, distinguished play scholars documenting a life of joint play research from the 1950s to the 1980s. Peter Opie passed away in 1982, but Iona kept working, publishing books well into the 1990s. As a result, the Opie Archive constitutes an extensive project collaboratively maintained by the University of Sheffield, University College London, the Bodleian Libraries at Oxford University, the Folklore Society, and the British Library. The project *Playing the Archive: Memory, Community and Mixed Reality Play* had three purposes that this book covers. Abbreviated, the first was digitizing the archives; the second, developing innovative digital interfaces to interact with the archives; and the third, conducting new research of play in the same vein as the Opies' works.

Accordingly, the volume consists of four parts, though part 5 essentially offers a conclusion rather than a discrete section. Parts 1, 2, and 3 each have three chapters dedicated to the overarching theme. Part 1, "The People in the Archive," focuses on the digitization component of the project. More than simply scanning documents, it reviews working papers and handwritten notes and connects with previous research participants. It evaluates the Opies' body of work in a way that goes beyond the more popular books they wrote by looking at rough drafts, lesser known papers, research refinement, and correspondence. This section connects to part 2 by placing the reader inside the Opies' work and placing it against a modern-day background.

In part 2, "Capturing Play," chapters integrate innovative research methods as a way of connecting the Opies' research to contemporary play inquiry. This sec-