"I hate to define play because it is a thing of beauty best appreciated by experiencing it. Defining play has always seemed to me like explaining a joke – analyzing (sic) it takes the joy out of it ." Stuart Brown.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE STUDY - IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF OTHER PLAYERS

One of the things I do for play, outside of work, is hiking. Not that hiking is not hard work. But it stands apart from work as an activity of recreation, and is therefore not part of the subject of this research. I do, however, want to invoke it as a metaphor for this chapter.

Hiking has helped me with work. It has taught me about perseverance, appreciation, teamwork, and other skills that are transferable to work. A couple of years ago, I even facilitated a session for a group that was built around the theme of Mount Everest. Perhaps how we play outside of work is not that distinct after all. An important lesson in hiking over mountainous territory is to conserve energy by finding paths of least resistance. These may include footpaths that conveniently level out some of the rough territory. It may also including picking a contour and hiking along it to circumvent valleys and hills instead of hiking down into them or up over them.

Contours take us over longer routes, but are essential in sparing our energy for the necessary inclines and declines that we have to undertake. On the other hand, contours are not necessarily good for taking us to the best views and unexplored treasures.

The topic of play is a wilderness in many respects. Even after decades of play scholarship, play remains notoriously elusive to define. The renowned author on animal play, Robert Fagen, is often quoted saying that play's elusiveness "taunts us with its inaccessibility." (Fagen, 1981, as cited in Gordon, 2008; Sutton-Smith, 2001). The one thing scholars and academics seem to agree on, is that defining play is like navigating a wilderness. It includes valleys and hills, unexplored territories, hazards and viewpoints. There is no one clear route. It is easy to get lost. And if simply

getting through it is the only goal, one may miss out on the beauty that is inherent in its diversity.

But there are some footpaths which others have created. And there are some contours that make it easier to navigate.

I therefore follow in the footsteps of giants in play theory, who have always stressed a balance between maintaining a needed respect for play's mystery, while also pursuing the knowledge that can help us harness its inherent goodness. The number of scholars that have already blazed a trial has also surprised me. When I started this research, literature searches returned a meagre list on workplace play and well-being. I opened up my scope, looked a bit further back, pursued a few unconventional channels and came away astounded. Not only did I discover a few giants, but I came across passages that made me throw my hands in the air and exclaim: "They've been saying this for decades!" The rest of this chapter follows in the contours and paths created by their footsteps.

1. Defining play and playfulness

1.1. Beyond ambiguity

Approaches to the ambiguity of play and play theory have varied between passive resignation and obsessive thoroughness. Gordon (2008), for example, acknowledges that "The ambiguous, variable, and paradoxical nature of the play concept is so widely accepted, that most play theorists consider the search for a universal definition to be pure folly" (p. 1). Gordon defiantly proceeds up the stream and crafts a fairly complex definition:

> Play is the voluntary movement across boundaries, opening with total absorption into a highly flexible field, releasing tension in ways that are pleasurable, exposing players to the unexpected, and making transformation possible. Transformations occur as frames bisociate and the parts and the whole interpenetrate, increasing the differentiation of the part, the integration of the whole, and the range, coordination, and spontaneity of movement between and among them. (p. 10)

As is evident, Gordon's self-termed "cosmic definition" of play introduces higher levels of abstraction and ties larger principles of chaos, order and complexity into

play. Gordon's work offers a broad description of the inner workings of play, and describes the relationship between players and playground, as well as the parts and whole from which differentiation, integration and transformation can come. However, as much as I appreciate the rigour and insightful overview that Gordon offers, the usefulness of such a definition further locks up play's necessary accessibility and experiential simplicity.

For related reasons, it is often observed that prominent scholars and philosophers on the subject warn against rigidity and comprehensiveness, and encourage us to live with the ambiguity. Such sentiments can be seen in Stuart Brown's quote at the start of this chapter: "I hate to define play because it is a thing of beauty best appreciated by experiencing it. Defining play has always seemed to me like explaining a joke—analyzing it takes the joy out of it " (Brown & Vaughan, 2009, p.15).

In accord with Brown, House (2008) goes one step further and attributes such attempts to misplaced modernist tendencies:

> Perhaps there is a need to explore just what authentic, unintruded-upon playing might consist of, and how we might begin to think and speak about it, so that we can preserve its intrinsic reverence, rather than betraying or destroying it through the coarse bludgeon of 'modernity'". (p. 102)

House personifies play as a trickster that tends to "triumphantly subvert all such attempts to capture it in categorical or scientific language" (p. 107).

This degree of ambiguity and elusiveness has led some to call into question the very legitimacy of play as a construct, or a "thing". Straton (2008), for example, echoes such sentiments when he says that " just because we have a word for it doesn't mean it is a thing" (p. 169). Sutton-Smith (2001), however, points out that the same problem plagues other concepts which he refers to as omnibus categories, such as "religion, art, war, politics, and culture" (p. 3).

Despite these difficulties, all these authors have proceeded to offer useful perspectives. Some scholars define play by looking at its qualities. Others have approached it by looking at the activities that typically comprise play in different settings. Thirdly, some also stress that play is an attitude (Kalliala, 2006) or a

behavioural orientation (Mainemelis and Ronson, 2006) that can be expressed in any number of activities. Between these inherent qualities, play activities, and ideas of playfulness, it seems like there is plenty of territory mapped out that can help us navigate through it.

1.2. Qualities and characteristics of play

Every journey begins with a first step, and for this definition journey, Johan Huizinga remains arguably the best place to start. Huizinga (1949), in his classic book on play, "Homo Ludens: The play element in culture", offers one of the first comprehensive sociological studies on play. Huizinga's book title juxtaposes "homo ludens" to "homo sapiens" to carry his premise: man is a player (ludens) as much, if not more, than man being a thinker (sapiens).

Huizinga conducts a thorough review of how the word "play" and its related forms appear in a variety of languages, covering Western (e.g., Greek and Latin), Eastern (e.g., Japanese and Chinese), Semitic (e.g., Hebrew and Arabic) and more. In the process of demonstrating his vast knowledge of different cultures, Huizinga lists games, contests, gambling, joking, jesting, mocking, laughing, and more, all as examples of play. He concludes that play is either a *contest for*, or *representation of* something. Huizinga proceeds to define play along the following lines:

1. Play is free, voluntarily chosen, and in fact represents freedom.
2. Play is separate from "ordinary" or "real" life and therefore has a "pretend", or "as if" quality.
3. Play has specific boundaries in place and time that demarcate it as separate.
4. Play has rules, and thereby has an order-creating quality.
5. Play is done for its own sake, and profit cannot be gained from it.

Other qualities encountered throughout Huizinga's writing, but not explicitly listed with the above, is that play is done for enjoyment, play has an aesthetic characteristic and play also involves itself with poiesis (the act of creating something).

The characteristics of play offered by contemporary scholars, while strongly approximating Huizinga's work, offer a few interesting nuances worth considering. Kane (2005), borrowing from Sutton-Smith, centres his theory on the idea that play

has adaptive potential, a process he calls 'adaptive potentiation', Although it can be argued that this is more a function of play, and not a characteristic. Gordon (2008) notes a paradox between play's relative rule-boundedness versus its freedom, and ascribes play's power to differentiate, integrate and transform, to this paradox. Schaefer (2003) includes dimensions such as intrinsic, means over ends, positive feelings, flow, "as if", flexible meanings, and active involvement in play. Organisational scholars have also stressed the "autotelic" (done for its own sake) quality, and have linked this to the intrinsic motivational quality of play.

Caillois (1961) separated play into two broad types, i.e., *ludus* (structured and rule-bound, e.g., games) and *paidia* (more unstructured and spontaneous, akin to playfulness). Callois stressed the imaginative quality of play, and agreed that it is separate from ordinary reality. Woods (NCCA, n.d.) picks this up by supporting the imaginative quality, which she describes as symbolic activity, and then argues that although play is pretend, it remains real. Woods also explicitly elevates that three-letter word slightly neglected by Huizinga, FUN, as an essential quality of play. Henricks (2006) puts it in slightly more academic terms and suggests that "play is an affective event, a time when experience is gathered and evaluated in terms of its emotional resonance" (p. 12). The same emphasis on positive affectivity is also highlighted by Mainemelis and Ronson (2006) and O'Connor (2000). According to Fitzmedrud (2008), this quality also provides the most explicit link between play and Positive Psychology. Although the wording among all these definitions differs, there is substantial agreement.

1.3. Typical play activities, and games

Another common approach to defining play is to categorise it in terms of its activities. Numerous scholars have taken this approach which, although more restrictive than the qualities-approach, does provide a more tangible perspective. Defining play as an activity draws play much closer to the related concept of games. Although some prefer to draw a strong distinction between play and games (Grey, Brown, & Macanufo, 2010), classic scholars such as Callois (1961) accept play as the foundation for game, and play activity as a form of game.

Caillios (1961), one of the first scholars to provide a comprehensive scheme, categorises play activities, or games, in the following four ways:

- Competition (or "agon"), e.g., games and contests.
- Chance (or "alea"), e.g., games of chance, such as gambling or dice.
- Imitation (or "memesis"), e.g., role playing.
- Dizziness (or "ilinx"), e.g., spinning, vertigo, and disorienting activities.

Caillois emphasises that play activity is often a combination of these categories, e.g., a game of cards combines the "ilinx" of shuffling, the "agon" of card-play and the "alea" of dealing into a single game.

The idea of competition in play is a contentious one, and some play theorists are sceptical about its inclusion. Donaldson (1993), makes an interesting distinction between cultural play (learned through enculturation) which has an emphasis on competition and hence, scarcity, as well as original play (stemming from a more fundamental "instinct"). In the "playshops" that Donaldson offers, he purportedly teaches people to complement the encultured play-form that relies exclusively on contest with a non-contested play that he argues is naturally available to children under three, but almost completely forgotten in later years. There is, however, no denying that it is present and deserves consideration, even if it gives rise to the darker elements of play.

Table 1. Qualities and categories of play

Qualities of play	Categories of play activities
• Free and voluntary • Pretend, "as-if", separate from ordinary reality • Has boundaries and rules • Intrinsic, means above ends, autotelic (and essentially unproductive) • Symbolic and imaginative (linked to creativity)	• Competition, contest (including games of chance) • Imitation, performance and role-play • Physical, bodily (including rough and tumble and dizziness) activities • Festive and ceremonial activities • Ritualised play activities • Creative/sensory activities (creative arts play) • Exploratory • Informal / social

In other categorisation attempts, Sutton-Smith (2001) suggests that a large category of play includes behavioural orientations that result in what he lumps together as *playful behaviours*. Sutton-Smith furthermore distinguishes between mind/subjective play, informal social play, vicarious audience play, performance play, celebrations (e.g., festivals), contests, and a category he calls *play behaviours*. Others essentially agree, but add slight variations. For example, Stuart Brown (2008b) also distinguishes between social play, spectator play, and imaginative play, but adds rough and tumble play as well as ritual play. McMahon (2009) follows a similar framework but also suggests that creative/sensory play and exploratory play should be added to the list, which hints towards either motive or function of the play.

Table 2. Playfulness

Expressive	Outgoing, friendly, sociable
Spontaneous	Uninhibited, unpredictable, uncalculated *(why so many negatives?)*
Humorous	Funny, joking, teasing
Silly	Whimsical
Dynamic	Energetic, adventurous
Defiant	Throw of constraints, ignore consequence, naughty
Creative	Original, novel, sensory

1.4. Digital play and games

In speaking about play and games, it is almost impossible in this day and age to ignore computer play, or digital play, as a category that is distinct from what has been mentioned above. It is also not the kind of play that forms the focus of the present study. I will therefore be bold and do the impossible, and pass over the opportunity to write about digital play while referring the reader to interesting work that relates digital play to workplace benefits. Among the highly recommended reading, Jane McGonigal's (2011) popular book "Reality is Broken: Why games make us better and how they can change the world," is a good starting point. Work on "gamifying" our world for social good involves other ideas, borrowed from gameplay, that are making an interesting buzz (Priebatsch, 2010).

1.5. From play to playfulness

In the attempts to categorise play, Sutton-Smith's (2001) approach included a category of *playful behaviours*. This implies that any behaviour can be infused by play, depending on our orientation. This is also what is meant by the distinction between play and playfulness.

Wood describes playfulness as simply "moving into the mood and spirit of play" (NCCA, n d). Youell (2008) elaborates on the state of mind signified in play and specifies that while, "In ordinary parlance, the word 'playful' carries an assumption of enjoyment, fun or amusement . . . I am using it in a very specific way to describe a state of mind in which an individual can think flexibly, take risks with ideas (or interactions), and allow creative thoughts to emerge" (p. 122).

Schemes for playfulness

Numerous scholars have offered extensive schemes of qualities or descriptors of playfulness. In a fairly elaborate scheme, Barnett (2007) groups playfulness into characteristics such as gregariousness (cheerful, happy, friendly, outgoing, sociable), uninhibited (spontaneous, impulsive, unpredictable, adventurous), comedic (clown, joke, tease, funny, humorous), and dynamic (active, energetic). Similarly, Fitzmedrud's (2008) work emphasises such characteristics as fun-loving, sense of humour, enjoys silliness, informal, whimsical. According to Gordon's (2008) extensive review, characteristics such as flexibility, freedom, and risk also appears on the list. Gordon proceeds to argue that playfulness comprises an attitude of throwing off constraints, a process whereby we can detach meaning from its original context (e.g., office halls becomes a put-put course and a dustbin becomes a basketball hoop). There is therefore a quality of defiance, the ability to rebel and go against odds, that is also part of playfulness.

Creativity receives a few mentions as an essential part of play, but according to Barnett's (2007) study, this view is not uncontested. . Yet scholars strongly support the connection between play, playfulness and creativity (T. Brown, 2008; Mainemelis & Ronson, 2006). One possible reason for Barnett's result could be a limited definition of creativity that ties creativity intrinsically to art, or artistic. Prominent figures in the creativity space, such as Robinson (2006), argue against such limited

definitions, and we may therefore argue for creativity as an important entrant on the list of playfulness.

Not guaranteed

We see therefore that play and playfulness go hand in hand, but the relationship is not necessarily guaranteed. Youell's (2008) thought-provoking article draws attention to this and warns that while playfulness is essential for play, a great deal of what passes for play is devoid of playfulness. This is of particular relevance to people whose profession takes them into play, whether this is the professional dancer, athlete, rugby player, play therapist or play facilitator.

1.6. Seven rhetorics

From the above exploration, it is easy to see how we can easily get lost in the ambiguity. Sutton-Smith's (2001) influential work, "The Ambiguity of Play," offers a useful clarification to conclude this section. In his comprehensive review, Sutton-Smith proposes a way of making sense of seven rhetorics to understand play. Accordingly, these rhetorics, i.e., "persuasive discourse…adopted by members of a particular affiliation to persuade others of the veracity and worthwhileness of their beliefs" (p. 7), offer a framework by which to work towards greater coherence. He identifies the following rhetorics:

- Play as fate (e.g., games of luck and fate)
- Play as power (e.g., contests)
- Play as identity (e.g., community celebrations, customs, rituals)
- Play as the imaginary (e.g., creativity and innovation)
- Play of the self (e.g., hobbies and activities pursued for their intrinsic aesthetic and satisfaction)
- Play as frivolous (e.g., idle or foolishness, often in protest of accepted order)

Sutton-Smith admonishes us to critically evaluate these streams of work on play on the presuppositions that underscore them, in a "modest" attempt to spur scholars on in a "greater hope of coming to understand the general character of play theory" (p.11).

The above sections explored the phenomenon of play in an attempt to provide some traction, some footpaths for navigating the wilderness. The perspectives provide a useful spectrum off which to bounce empirical ideas and to illuminate the subject. It would be prudent, however, to heed Sutton-Smith's (2001) reminder that this topic will always be characterised by "sloppiness, broad potential, quirkiness, unpredictability, and, above all, massive redundancy.". Sutton-Smith concludes by pointing out that "[t]he key is flexibility, not admirable precision" (p. 221). Instead of trying to define play with precision therefore, these ideas will be used as a buffet to compare empirical experience against.

2. Play and work

2.1. A contentious relationship

As mentioned in the introductory pages of this dissertation, play and work seem to share a precarious relationship. Work is serious, adult-like, dutiful, and important. Play, on the other hand, is light, child-like, and distinctly unimportant. To study play within work contexts has therefore not been a focus in Industrial Psychology or other management sciences.

Some organisations, however, have succeeded in making play an essential part of work. Organisations like Google are renowned for their playful work culture, the mandatory play time, or experimentation time they allow their employees, their beanbags and lava-lamps, as well as quirky and playful features they build into their products. Organisations like Disney and Pixar were founded on foundations of play, and, given their specific products and services, this seems obvious and necessary. Yet other design companies such as IDEO, and technology firms such as Apple are also known for the ways in which they marry science and play, or engineering and the aesthetic.

Taking a closer look, it is interesting that many companies such as Google, a company that frequents the Fortune's list of the top 100 companies to work for (BestCompanies, 2010), often face public criticism and backlash for their playful and whimsical approaches. A recent example worth citing occurred when Google recently bid on patents against some of its competitors (Nadia Damouni, 2011). Google went into the bidding process by submitting seemingly random bids, such as

$1,902,160,540, $2,614,972,128 — and $3.14159 billion (Brun's constant, Meissel-Mertens constant and Pi, respectively). What a playful thing to do! However, in the end, Google lost the bid, and were blasted for this "silly" and "misplaced" stunt that, according to an online article, amounts to "'Pi' in the Face" (Siegler, 2011).

The comment stream on the article reveals an interesting and entertaining debate that reflects this tension between work and play. Some people feel it is inappropriate. Others feel it is essential. There are those that support the bastion of work, seriousness, and denounce play as silly. And then there are those that are starting to view seriousness as the very thing that is silly.

2.2. Work ethic and its consequences

Work ethic is defined as "the principle that hard work is intrinsically virtuous or worthy of reward" (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 2006). This closely relates to the "Protestant Work Ethic", a phrase coined 1904 when Max Weber published "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" (1904/2003). Weber accused modern capitalism of alienating man from his labour. In this system, people become objectified and depersonalised. To Weber, the spirit of this philosophy that abolishes idleness and exalts concepts such as duty and diligence is underscored by a philosophy of material gain. Material gain becomes *an end in itself*:

> Truly what is preached here is not simply a means of making one's way in the world, but a peculiar ethic. The infraction of its rules is treated not as foolishness, but as forgetfulness of duty. That is the essence of the matter. (p. 51)

Beder (2001) further examines the more contemporary state of the work ethic and concurs that "work and production have become ends in themselves." Beder's work explores the precedents of the prevailing work ethic within western capitalist societies and concludes that this ideology of work has been actively promoted and preached from pulpits, the sources from which a majority of people take their moral cues.

The extent to which our allegiance to a work ethic has gone too far is easily visible in the explosion in Industrial Psychological work on topics such as wellness and well-being (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2010). With hot-off-the-press stories about oil spills, acid drainage, deaths in factories, suicide, and road rage, this ideology has

prevailed to the extent that the sacrifice of other moral issues, such as the degradation of the environment and the well-being of people, has abounded, with the blood dripping off the altar of work, efficiency and material gain, onto the pages of our everyday newspapers.

The centrality of work to our lives and the strength of the work ethic together with these consequences, has come under fire in recent years. Kane (2005) criticises the fixation on work that makes it the defining element of our identities, or, as he had put it earlier:

> This is how the work ethic continues to grip us. It doesn't matter how many machines could do our more tedious mental and physical labours. Forget the promise of the future, or even the possibilities of the present. Too many of us still regard turning up for work, however dispiriting or futile, as the very mark of inclusion and legitimacy, the measure of our moral fibre. 'I put in the hours, therefore I am.' (Kane, 2000, p.20)

Again, Beder (2001) ironically observes that the values of progress, ambition, materialism, social respect and identity have been so entrenched in Western capitalist societies, that the suffering and boredom resulting from work, is simply seen as the price-tag for their pursuit of happiness. Seligman (2002a) and other prominent authors on happiness, testify to this fallacy – despite having more, people are not more happy.

2.3. Work well, play well - bringing it together

There is subsequently a growing disillusionment in work and work ethic among new generations (Howe and Strauss, 2000). Pat Kane (2005), in his book, "Play Ethic", demonstrates this disillusionment when he proposes an alternative:

> Welcome to the play ethic. First of all, don't take 'play' to mean anything idle, wasteful or frivolous. The trivialisation of play was the work ethic's most lasting, and most regrettable achievement. This is 'play' as the great philosophers understood it: the experience of being an active, creative and fully autonomous person. (p.1).

These signals clearly indicate that, if we want to solve the pending wellness problem related to work, the "either/or" mentality of work or play accompanied by the work-hard-play-hard mantras needs a revisit. We need to reconstitute our ideas about work and play to devise a healthier integration of the two. Instead of only

learning how to work well, we need to also learn to play well. Let us briefly touch on some preliminary ideas of how such work and play may look.

Play as engagement or divergence from work

One useful approach has been developed by Mainemelis and Ronson (2006) who, in studying play and workplace creativity, provide a useful distinction between play as *engagement with* and play as *disengagement from* work. In terms of play as engagement with work, Mainemelis and Ronson indicate how play is weaved into cognitive processes such as divergent thinking, transformation abilities and problem reframing. Similarly, they argue that play also promotes certain affective processes, like finding pleasure in challenge, emotional regulation and access to affect-laden thoughts. Thirdly, they demonstrate a link between play and task motivation through the intrinsically motivating qualities of play. Lastly, they explore play's efficacy in fostering involvement, exploration, experimentation, flexibility and quality learning.

Mainemelis and Ronson (2006) also caution us against thinking that play as divergence from work renders it unimportant to work. This is not the case:

> Play as diversion may include office celebrations, surfing the Internet, joking with colleagues, and other activities that are not part of an individual's core work tasks. Although such activities are external to task performance, they are integral to the social context in which task performance takes place. (p. 85)

While Mainemelis and Ronson's work places a strong emphasis on creativity, the applicability of their ideas are self-evidently more generic. Although most organisational scholars have used the theme of creativity to broker play into the workplace, others have avoided this explicit link. Heracleous and Jacobs (2005) suggest the following workplace benefits:

- Play triggers insight (intra- and inter-personal insight).
- Play allows for contentious and sensitive issues to surface.
- Play helps develop a shared language.
- Play enhances involvement and ownership.

From the above, we clearly see that conceptions of a work ethic that embraces play and a play ethic that incorporates work, are encouragingly gaining traction, but still stand in their infant shoes.

3. Work-related well-being and Positive Psychology

In the opening chapter, the importance of employee wellness and our relatively poor performance as a society in this regard were argued as an important motivation for this dissertation. To then purposefully reiterate, I want to quote Sieberhagen, Rothmann, and Pienaar (2009):

> According to world-wide estimates, job-related accidents and illnesses claim more than two million lives annually, while 270 million accidents and 160 million illnesses occur over the same period worldwide. (p. 1)

Say what? The human brain battles to work with millions. In order to overcome that well-known limitation, expressed as "one death is a tragedy, one million deaths is a statistic,"[8] let us exercise some perspective.

A tragic incident such as the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001 claimed 3000 deaths. I remember watching and feeling horrified by it, as I saw on live TV how the second airplane struck and the Twin Towers collapsed. I vividly remember black dots on the TV screen falling from the skyscrapers. I also remember the churning in my stomach as the cameras zoomed in and we all realised it was people, jumping from over a hundred floors high in desperate attempts to save their lives.

If more than two million people die of work-related illnesses and accidents worldwide, that is like a Twin Tower, not once, but twice a day.

Two times, every day. Every day for a full year.

This is simply unacceptable. We need to find ways that allow work to be live-giving. We need to find ways in which work does not kill, but gives life. By understanding how play relates to work-related well-being, we move in that direction.

[8] This quote is widely attributed to Stalin, but the source remains ambigious.

3.1. Theoretical perspectives on wellness and work-related well-being

An interest in wellness and work-related well-being is a well-documented, worldwide phenomenon in the field of Industrial Psychology. Within South Africa specifically, this has been mirrored through an explosion of related research between 2000 and 2008 (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2010). Related topics included burnout, stress, coping, sense of coherence, job demands and resources, Employee Assistance Programmes, and Positive Psychology.

Kirsten, Van der Walt, and Viljoen (2009), in a broad survey of literature on health, wellness and well-being, demonstrate the interchangeable way in which these words are often used. They found that well-being "has been variously interpreted as 'living and faring well,' or flourishing, and that the notion of well-being is intricately bound up with our ideas of what constitutes human happiness and the sort of life that is good to lead" (p. 5).

Kirsten et al. proceed to craft a systemic definition of well-being and wellness. According to them, where wellness refers to 'a whole life' view, well-being refers to a positive valuation of different constitutive elements of wellness (e.g., biological, psychological and spiritual contexts). Wellness then refers to the optimisation and harmonisation of all those different domains. Siberhagen, Rothmann and Pienaar (2009) define wellness in a way that mirrors this: "wellness is the experience of optimal health, good relationships with others, being emotionally and cognitively well stimulated and experiencing significance and purpose in life" (p. 2).

Picture 2. Time magazine cover: the science of happiness.

When it comes to specifically work-related well-being, Warr (2002) suggests four possible axes: pleasure-displeasure, anxiety-comfort, enthusiasm-depression, and vigour-fatigue. Rothmann and Rothmann (2006) introduce a functional component to the definitions when characterising employee health; wellness employees demonstrate energy, motivation, health, productivity and commitment to both the organisation and its goals. Well-being

therefore includes both subjective well-being as well as more objective functional behaviour.

3.2. Positive psychology and play

Positive psychology, internationally recognised and branded by the smiley face, was featured on the cover of Time Magazine in 2005 with the title "The science of happiness." The cover, as can be seen in figure 3.1, looks more like a book for a child than for adults. Other articles featured on the front cover of this "special mind & body issue" include "why optimists live longer," "why we need to laugh," and "Dave Chappel on what's funny." It feels light. It also feels playful.

Obviously, Positive Psychology is about more than putting smiles on people's faces, although this remains an important and explicit goal. As Carr (2004) explains, "understanding and facilitating happiness and subjective well-being is the central objective of Positive Psychology" (p. 1). The field of Positive Psychology therefore concerns itself with "positive subjective experience (positive emotions), positive individual traits (positive character) and positive institutions" (Crous, 2007, p. 4).

Although positive phenomena have been studied throughout the last century, it was Martin Seligman's (1999) presidential address, delivered to the 107th Annual Convention of the APA, that brought focus and unification to the field. One of Seligman's own descriptions of Positive Psychology reveals something of interest to this study:

> Psychology is not just the study of disease, weakness, and damage; it also is the study of strength and virtue. Treatment is not just fixing what is wrong; it also is building what is right. Psychology is not just about ill-ness or health; it also is about work, education, insight, love, growth, and play. (p. 4)

Spot it? There it is. Play! Finding play in positive psychological work is like finding a needle in a haystack. As illustrated in chapter one, most prominent works ignore it completely, and when it is mentioned, it is done so in relation to children. This is interesting, given that Seligman explicitly relates this to play, and Csikszentmihalyi, another renowned author in this field, wrote his book entitled

"Beyond boredom and anxiety: Experiencing flow in work and play" in 1973. Note the date on this. Yes, it has taken us a long time to catch up.

Even though play has apparently been forgotten by Positive Psychology, the reverse is not true. Numerous play scholars have called for play to be viewed in light of Positive Psychology and have developed theoretical links to support this (Fitzmedrud, 2008; Pearson, Russ, & Spannagel, 2008; Saldaña, 2008; Straton, 2008). Pearson et al. investigate the link between "pretend play" and Positive Psychology, listing resilience and coping, creativity, and emotional intelligence (including emotional regulation, empathy/emotional understanding) as important relations. Other scholars have focused on play and how it relates to positive emotion (Fitzmedrud, 2008; Wu & Liang, 2011).

Aside from the ideas listed above, other aspects of Positive Psychology have obvious links to play. Ideas such as spontaneity in play could be related to authenticity in Positive Psychology. Recovering our "inner child" through play, such as is suggested by Legerstee (2007), also provides perspectives on this. Furthermore, the kind of holistic integration of mind, body, and spirit is encountered in both play (Schaefer, 2003) and Positive Psychology (Lopez, 2009).

The central research question of this study, i.e., how play relates to work-related well-being, therefore comes into close proximity to Positive Psychology. The lists of links to concepts in Positive Psychology, such as those mentioned above, are therefore in the forefront of the field work in this dissertation.

4. Play therapy and play-based methods

The success of play therapy in both child and adult populations is arguably one of the most indicative illustrations of the power of play for healing and well-being. But before we explore this in more detail, a quick side comment on therapy and Positive Psychology is perhaps warranted. Proponents of Positive Psychology have made no secret of their growing aversion to the deficit- and illness-based models often encountered in therapy. Instead, Positive Psychology focuses on a strength-based approach. That being said, it is unnecessary and unwarranted to exclude play therapy, or any therapy for that matter, from perspectives outside of Positive Psychology per se. There are a number of different approaches and much work has been done to

relate therapy to Positive Psychology, approaches that are called positive prevention or positive therapy (Seligman, 2002b). While therefore maintaining a Positive Psychology stance, I find it useful to explore play therapy as a complimentary perspective.

Play therapy has received a good deal of attention and is recognised for its efficacy in child populations (L. McMahon, 2009). We are also seeing more developments in theory and practice among adult populations, including a number of studies in organizational settings (Nel, 2006; Schaefer, 2003). Most theoretical work, however, stems from the former, child-based developments.

When it comes to defining play therapy, O'Connor (2000) states that:

> Play therapy consists of a cluster of treatment modalities that involve the systematic use of a theoretical model to establish interpersonal process wherein trained play therapists use the therapeutic power of play to help clients prevent or resolve psychosocial difficulties and achieve optimal growth and development and the reestablishment of the child's ability to engage in play behaviour. (p. 7)

From this definition, we see that play therapy is explicit therapy, is process oriented, rests on strong theoretical models, stresses the therapeutic relationship and has goals of addressing psychological illness or promoting psychological health.

But clearly, not all play is necessarily therapeutic and health promoting (think Russian Roulette). And not all play that is therapeutic can be explicitly seen as play therapy. It is therefore useful to reflect on O'Connor's definition and to distinguish between play therapy and play-based methods in organizational settings where therapeutic goals are not that explicit, and theoretical models are applied less formally and with less orthodoxy. With the myriad theoretical leanings in play therapy, I briefly test the lay of the land in an attempt to clarify what play therapy is. I will then explore how we can look at play as therapeutic in an everyday sense in order to avoid being restricted by play therapy.

4.1. Theoretical approaches to play therapy

O'Connor confirms that, while play therapy is indeed dominated by strong psychoanalytical, humanistic, and cognitive-behavioural models, there has been a

noticeable expansion and divergence of models in recent years. He proceeds to point out as many as 13 distinct models that have recently surfaced and gained traction and illustrates that many of them have developed strong ties to phenomenological approaches. Sentiments to intervene from the experiential world of the child have therefore become more popular. O'Connor's work elaborates on a few of these models, notably approaches such as 'Ecosystemic Play Therapy', 'Theraplay', 'Filial Play Therapy', and 'Adlerian Play Therapy.'.

L. McMahon (2009) agrees with O'Connor in broad terms, but very specifically elevates child-centred play therapy (treated in O'Connor under the 'Filial movement'). McMahon traces child-centred play therapy back to Virginia Axline, who was among the first to convey particularly striking Rogerian sentiments when she said:

> The therapeutic value of this kind of psychotherapy is based upon the child experiencing himself as a capable, responsible person in a relationship that tries to communicate to him two basic truths: that no one ever really knows as much about any human being's inner world as does the individual himself; and that responsible freedom grows and develops from inside the person. (cited in L. McMahon, 2009, p. 28)

This expresses an optimistic and hopeful attitude about the inner resources and wisdom of children in play therapy. This will arguably be even more applicable when it comes to adults.

Although not mentioned by O'Connor or McMahon, gestalt play therapy offers another important theoretical model that has received much attention in more recent years. Violet Oaklander, the widely recognised founder of gestalt play therapy, simply describes it as play therapy that is anchored in gestalt therapy. We find then that the parent field, gestalt therapy, is defined as a "process-oriented mode of therapy that is concerned with healthy, integrated functioning of the total organism – the senses, body, emotions, and intellect" (cited in Blom, 2006, p. 20). Oaklander further clarifies that gestalt therapy has paradigmatic roots in psychoanalysis, humanism, phenomenology and existentialism. Concepts of holism, homeostasis, integration, self-nurturing and awareness, therefore all play strong roles in gestalt lay therapy.

4.2. Adult play therapy and play-based methods

In bringing play therapy into an adult context, scholars and authors seem to emphasise the theoretical underpinnings less and tend to focus more on methods (Hoffman, 2003; Schaefer, 2003). Schaefer categorises play therapy with adults into dramatic role play (psychodrama and improvisational play), therapeutic humour, sandplay, hypnoplay and games. Hoffman (2003) utilises a method that combines games and story-telling, and Nel and Spies (Nel, 2006) also experimented with sandtray play, expressive arts play (clay and drawing), dramatized play, and relaxation or recreational play (including music therapy, and visualization techniques for relaxation).

As mentioned earlier, play is not limited to specific activities, but can rather be looked at as a behavioural orientation, or attitude. It is therefore important to understand that, although we can distinguish between methods, methods often overlap and integrate and clear-cut distinctiveness is seldom found in practice. Specific methods that have received attention in organisational studies include expressive arts, psychodrama, role-play, games, metaphor, stories and music (Mattern, 2006; Nel, 2006; Saldaña, 2008; Snyder, 1997).

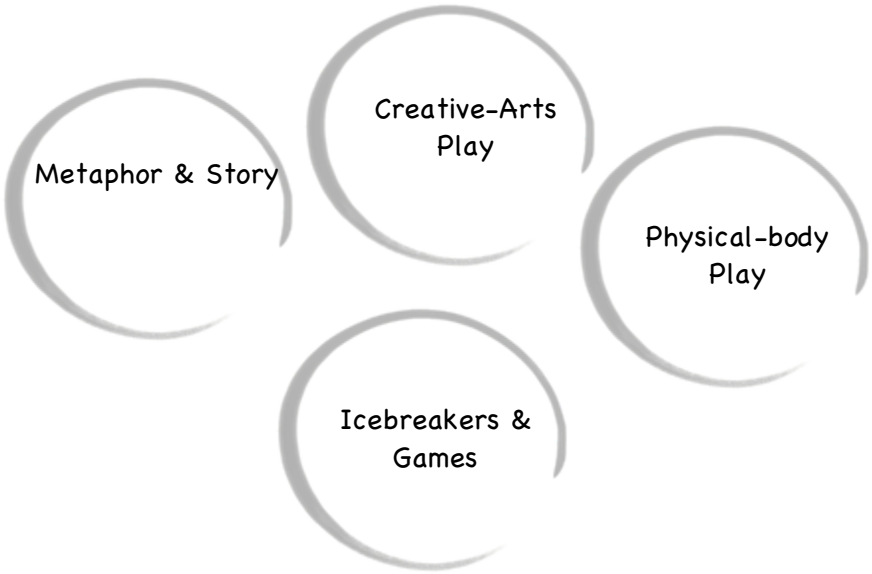
- *Icebreakers and training games*. One of the most ubiquitous examples of play in workshop setting is that of icebreakers and training games. A quick search on the Internet or in a bookstore will reveal a sheer abundance of practical application guides. Despite their prevalence, they have simply not been serious enough for academic pursuits. One such guide describes the activities as ranging "from the simple and light-hearted to the complex and risky. Some take only a few minutes, while others take longer. Some will provide an obvious "ah-ha" to the learner, while others will require more contemplation and analysis" (Berry, Cadwell, & Fehrmann, p. 3).
- *Metaphors and stories*. Metaphors and stories, which both rely on imagination, symbolism and language, are often used as play-methods (De Klerk, 2007; Nel, 2007; Saldaña, 2008). Metaphor and stories are similar in that they have the ability to create mental pictures with emotional resonance. When we use stories and metaphors in play, we are doing

associative play (Grey, Brown, & Macanufo, 2010) in the sense that we replace real life objects and ideas of symbolic representatives.

- *Expressive-arts play*: Expressive-arts play includes aspects such as art, clay, music, dance, and poetry (Legerstee, 2007). Expressive arts play taps the imaginative and symbolic qualities of play. This is elsewhere referred to as creative play (Nel, 2006). Such play techniques are especially useful in encouraging tactile and sensory experiences.
- *Physical/body play:* Physical play, or as Wenner (2009) termed it, body play, is also frequently encountered in play literature. Physical play encourages the use of the body and promotes movement and exercise. Physical play in workshops can take on the form of dancing, physical games, sports, and other activities that require physical proximity and dexterity.

Although the play-based methods mentioned above receive the greatest attention in this dissertation, the study also ventures into other methods where relevant.

Illustration 3. Play-based methods



4.3. From play therapy to therapeutic play

McMahon (2009) provides a useful perspective on play therapy by reminding us of this Winnicottian idea: "Since play is a 'being honest with oneself' then 'playing is itself a therapy'"(p. 14). McMahon for instance describes how Winnicott criticized therapists who only look at play as a medium for diagnosis and interpretation while missing its vital importance:

> Winnicott makes 'a plea to every therapist to allow for the patient's capacity to play, that is, to be creative in the analytic work. The patient's creativity can be only too easily stolen by a therapist who knows too much' and does not hide his knowing. (p. 14)

While therefore important to be cognizant of the roots of play therapy, it is essential not to limit a focus on play and play-based methods by strictly conceptualizing it as play therapy. This approach finds tongue in Wood's (2008) insightful confession:

> I am not a play therapist, nor am I knowledgeable about the discipline and practice of play therapy…However, I have a lifelong interest in play, and spend a great deal of time observing people at play whenever and wherever play occurs. I am a skilled player, and I have a firm belief that lifelong playing is as important as lifelong learning. (p. 111)

In her thought-provoking article entitled "Everyday play as therapeutic and pedagogical encounters," Wood reminds us of the etymology of the word therapy, which originated from attendance, or "to tend." Attention, attendance, and tending to one another are therefore the simplest form of therapy, and something we should keep in mind when it comes to play. This, perhaps more than explicit theories and formal play therapy, qualifies it as therapeutic.

In this dissertation, play is therefore deliberately freed from strict ideas of play therapy and incorporates a more fluid understanding of play as therapeutic. In freeing play from a potentially orthodox grip of play therapy, play will be made accessible. We embrace Schaefer's (2003) adaptation of a Jung when he said: "Learn your theories as best you can, but lay them aside when you touch the miracle of the human soul. Lay them aside and play!" (p. 10)

5. Shadow-side of play

As a final thought, it is useful to remind ourselves that not all play is universally positive. A few authors call our attention to the idealisation of play, and warn against ignoring the shadow-side. For example, Green (2005) questions how "health can be integral to some kinds of play such as the Roman games or playing a game of football with the heads of defeated enemies in Latin America" (p. 11). Gordon (2008) also suggests that there "is a distinct intention that accompanies playfulness and which distinguishes the ecstatic boundary crossing of play from that of aggression and manipulation" (p. 7).

Examples of this shadow-side in play include macho-play, where bravado, boasting and contests take centre-stage. This is also an important form of cultural play (Huizinga, 1949), but often leads to a glorification of winning, a desire to humiliate and an exclusivity. It has also been noted that play in general, and macho play specifically, can lead to the further marginalisation of the feminine (Cattanach, 1994). Wood (2008) lists "teasing, joking, hazing, pranks, telling tales, playing tricks, gossip, blogging and social networking activities such as posting videos that involve violence and humiliation" (p. 118) as other negative examples.

One particular example of dark play includes a situation where others are depersonalised as objects of play. Gordon (2008) picks up on this and states that:

> Play stops when participants are not free to play or not, become objects of play, or are unaware that they are involved in play. War, violent crime, and practical jokes may be play for the perpetrators, but it certainly is not for the victims. In this case, the consensual nature of play is lacking. What might be a playmate is instead an object of play. Here we start to see the need for a developmental model for adult play that can account for the capacity for intersubjectivity as a function of maturity and increasing play capacity. For now, we need only understand that if we are not free to play or not play, we are not playing. (p. 15)

For play therefore to be a positive phenomenon, close attention needs to be given to the intents, contexts, and mutuality of play. While not being oblivious of this shadow-side, this study is primarily concerned with positive, constructive and inclusive expressions.

6. Chapter summary

Play is a potential wilderness. This chapter explored in more detail the literature related to three larger topics. Firstly, we explore definitions and theory on play and playfulness. Much has been written on these aspects, but the field remains ambiguous. In addition, characteristics typically associated with playfulness were also explored. Although scholarly consensus is lacking, the emergent themes from these areas have a great deal of commonality. A buffet of the qualities, activities and characteristics were presented and will be used as reflection perspectives in the autoethnography. Also, the rhetoric analysis of Sutton-Smith (2001) is offered as a useful footpath to navigate this wilderness.

Secondly, the chapter explored more deeply the contentious relationship between play and work. Definitions that separate play from work are archaic and the need to find definitions that integrate play with work was explored. In particular, the work of Mainemelis and Ronson (2006) is offered as a useful perspective in this regard. Kane's (2005) thought-provoking concept of "play ethic" was also briefly explored. We need to radically reconstitute our conceptions of both play and work, and options are presented to help us achieve greater synthesis and synergy.

The third major perspective from this chapter focused on well-being and Positive Psychology. We looked at definitions for wellness and well-being, and also reviewed the wellness dilemma with which work and workplaces are faced. It seems that we have lost something in work, something that, according to play scholars and practitioners, we are optimistic about regaining through play. Furthermore, despite the cold shoulder that play receives from Positive Psychology, the emergent between play and Positive Psychology was presented and the case for inclusion was reinforced. This was also related back to the inception of Positive Psychology, where play was an unmistakable part, but then somehow fell by the wayside as more "serious" pursuits were sought.

The final perspective offered in this chapter looked in more detail at play therapy and play-based methods. While the theoretical underpinnings of play therapy are offered as useful, caution is drawn as to the professionalization of play, and it is

argued that a more everyday sense of play can easily retain play's therapeutic power, without being overtly and explicitly framed as play therapy.

This chapter, in the ways described above, pulls together concepts that have a clear relation to one another but are seldom studied. Although this is not good science, the real victims of the play deprivation and suppression we allow in both our science and our practice stretch further. The call for scholars, practitioners and Industrial Psychologists to make play at work credible and accessible is, however, constant. It comes in a variety of voices. There is the technically astute alto voice of scholars and academics. We hear them clearly, but they seldom play a lead role. Then there are the tenor voices of leaders and managers who want to understand how they can rejuvenate their workplaces. In the right corner, we have the constancy and foundational base voices of play-workers – the facilitators, trainers, consultants and playful employees that have done their bit to inject energy and vitality into the workplace. And finally, there are the soprano voices that have unfortunately turned into screams and shrieks. They are the voices of the sick, burnt-out, downtrodden and hopeless employees, a disempowered SOS to the impersonal and disembodied "workplace" to stop sucking the life and soul out of their lives.