

Project Title: Seeding the Future in Children's Literature and Film

Research Sponsor: Elizabeth Goodenough

Presentation Title: Making Play Possible: A Study Through Film

Presenting with: Shannon Cash

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RESEARCH ABSTRACT

Until recent decades, the connection between childhood and free play never necessitated study. However, because of the influence of new media and the loss of public playscapes, unscripted and unsupervised play is declining. Studies show that unstructured play enhances cognition; time and space to pretend and invent worlds during developmental years build confidence, imagination, and independence. As the number of safe spaces where children can travel freely declines, groups like Detroit's Front Porch offer an afterschool setting, "providing educational and recreational activities and opportunities to youth according to their interests, initiatives and needs." Girls' Group in Ann Arbor focuses on "building a better future one girl at a time," through college prep and social support. Recognizing the need for change in the way children are raised and encouraged in today's world sparked the mission of these two groups. However, our project studied noteworthy similarities and differences in the management structures of these non-profits. We observed Girls' Group meetings and met with the head of Front Porch to learn about the makeup of her program. As secondary research, we examined the administrative structure of another professional initiative: a television film crew. For a week in March we learned firsthand the complications and challenges of film production. We saw how films can be used to document and promote live group experiences. As community members of Ann Arbor and metro Detroit, we seek to understand how play inspires young people to become resilient and creative citizens. As filmmakers we are learning how we can create a short trailer on Girls' Group to support and encourage this behavior.