

## **Intergenerational shifts and continuities in children's play within a rural Venda family (Early 20<sup>th</sup> to Early 21<sup>st</sup> Century)**

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**Introduction:** This research involved studying the childhood play of three generations within one family based in the Venda region, Limpopo Province, South Africa.

**Objectives:** •Describe the nature, roles, and meanings of childhood play within each of the three generations •Identify and outline shifts in childhood play across the three generations •Identify and outline continuities in childhood play across the three generations •Describe factors that could have played a role in bringing about the shifts •Describe factors that could have played a role in ensuring continuities •Describe first and second generation participants' thoughts, feelings and perceptions associated with the shifts.

**Methods:** The family was studied as a single case. Case study was approached with an understanding proposed by Stake (1998) and supported by others like Flyvbjerg (2006), who regard it not a research method, but the object of study. Handling the family as a bounded system, information was gathered from multiple sources, situating the case within its context. Interviews were conducted with grandparents, parents and children in order to gain an understanding of their childhood play, foregrounding participants' own view of what constitutes play. In addition, an ethnographic lens was used to investigate the third generation's everyday culture, with specific attention to their play.

**Results:** Situating childhood play within the context of rapid social change in South Africa, the findings detail how just over three generations, the play of children in a family can become complex. The role of social institutions in either ensuring continuities or promoting the complexification of play is highlighted, and discussed.

**Conclusion:** While social institutions have an important function in the nature of children's play engagements, intergenerational disconnection brought about by rapid social change can render adults unable to play a facilitatory role in these engagements within families.

**Contribution to the practice/evidence base of occupational therapy:** This research offers occupational therapy practitioners working with children insight into how children's play within homes is changing with time, the role of context, and possible ways of empowering parents to understand and maybe mediate their children's play.