
In Memoriam

DORIS BERGEN

DORIS BERGEN, the esteemed educational psychologist whose work enhanced our understandings of play in child development, pretend play, technology play, and humor development died on July 5, 2023. She was a charter member of the editorial advisory board of the *American Journal of Play*, and a collection of her professional papers lies in the care of The Strong's Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play.

Born in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1932, Bergen grew up in Bucyrus, Ohio. She attended Heidelberg College and Ohio State University where she earned a bachelor's degree in education in 1953. She took her first job teaching second grade. After raising three daughters, she went back to school and earned a PhD in educational psychology from Michigan State University in 1974. She held professorships at Oakland University (Rochester, Michigan), Wheelock College (Boston, Massachusetts), and Pittsburgh State University (Pittsburgh, Kansas) before accepting a position at the University of Miami (Miami, Ohio) in 1988. She served as director of the university's Center for Human Development, which it renamed in her honor when she retired in 2013.

Bergen's earliest works—*Play as a Learning Medium* (1974) and *Play as a Medium for Learning and Development* (1988)—responded to a changing school environment that increasingly pushed play out of early childhood curriculums and to a changing home environment in which parents were encouraged to structure their children's out-of-school time and teach them rote academic skills. In addressing these pressures on teachers and parents, Bergen assembled impressive collections of essays from educators, theorists, and psychologists such as Inge Bretherton, Kenneth Rubin, Olivia Saracho, Dorothy Singer, Jerome Singer, Bernard Spodek, and Brian Sutton-Smith to demonstrate the critical importance of play inside and outside the classroom. These early books combined Bergen's

penetrating analysis with the editorial and collaborative work for which she would become known and at which she would excel.

Most of Bergen's significant scholarly contributions followed this pattern, including in such works as *Play from Birth to Twelve and Beyond: Contexts, Perspectives, and Meaning* (edited three editions with Doris Fromberg in 1998, 2006, and 2015); *Brain Research and Childhood Education: Implications for Educators* (authored with Juliet Coscia in 2001); *Educating and Caring for Very Young Children: The Infant/Toddler Curriculum* (authored with Rebecca Reid and Louis Torelli in 2001); *Technology Play and Brain Development: Infancy to Adolescence and Future Implications* (authored with Darrel R. Davis and Jason T. Abbitt in 2016); *Brain Research in Education and the Social Sciences: Implications for Practice, Parenting, and Future Society* (authored with Joseph Schroer and Michael Woodin in 2018); and *The Handbook of Developmentally Appropriate Toys* (edited in 2021). All these works illustrate Bergen's willingness to cross traditional disciplinary boundaries and create collaborations that provided new insights into play, brain science, and human development.

Bergen spent much of her professional life examining the role of play in human development. Her 1987 essay "Play, Technology, and the Authentic Self," in *Play as a Medium for Learning and Development* reminds us of play's transformative potential. In it, Bergen used one of her favorite stories, Margerie Williams Bianco's *The Velveteen Rabbit: Or How Toys Become Real* (1922), to explore how play could help children and adults living in a technological age learn about their authentic selves and become real. It's conclusion is a fitting one: "As we open ourselves up to the 'as ifs' and 'what ifs' in our futures, transform our work into play and our play into work as the need arises, and see beyond our props, roles, and appearances to embrace our realness—even those parts of us that are a bit worn and shabby—we will convey to children our knowledge that a life playfully and actively lived is worth the risk. We will know (as the Toys know) that 'once you are Real, you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand.'"

—Jeremy K. Saucier