

Popcorn Pickup

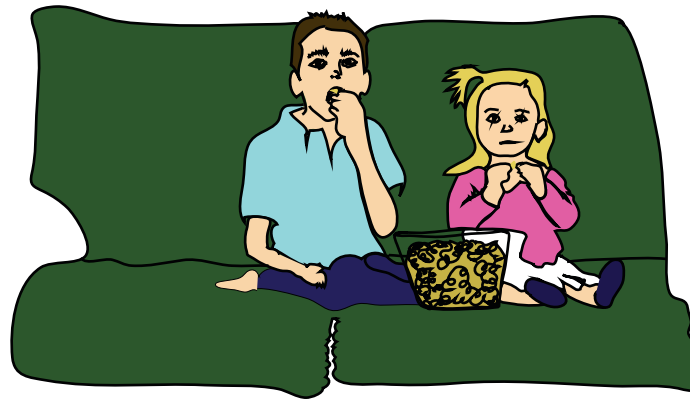
Who is going to pop the corn for the movie? Better yet who is going to pick up the popcorn that fell during the movie? Popcorn pickup is a form of play created to get people off the couch during a movie and participate in an absurd form of cleaning. Children ages 6-8 spend more than twice as much time watching TV than they do playing sports and more than twenty times watching TV than engaging in household conversation. (1)



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The position that the "vacuum" is held in is a precarious one that requires trust (5,2). The "vacuum" knows that if the "cleaner" lets go they will fall. The game requires a level of coordination with another to find and get to each piece of popcorn. The two participants are practicing coordination, communication, and trust to achieve a common goal. These traits are the foundation of relationships.

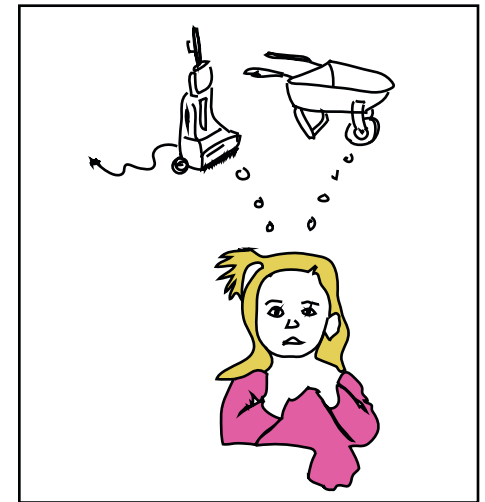
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The rules in the game are very minimal but they must be followed. In Melinda Weeners paper it is stated that games with rules must be followed in order to participate which in turn helps create social skills such as give and take, empathy, and registering social cues (3). In this form of role-play the player acts out a social role, one being the "vacuum" and the other being the cleaner. Role-play helps one form a sense of self and identity in a social world (2) and requires that players take the perspective of other players. This form of cleaning helps to establish, or eliminate for that matter, social sexual identity constructions. In many domestic setting the woman has taken on the role of house cleaner. Popcorn pickup allows both genders to participate in the game in both roles which helps establish domestic ethics when older. Children learn it takes two to clean or both genders are capable of cleaning. Players learn what is fair.

As shown in the illustration the game requires a minimum of two participants who must come to a common understanding and allot roles (2). It is the classic game of wheelbarrow where one person holds the others feet while they pretend to be a wheelbarrow and walk on their hands. In this case the wheelbarrow becomes a vacuum and the person playing the vacuum eats up the popcorn to clean the floor.

Popcorn pickup helps in developing motor skills and the formation of synopsis in the cerebellum. The strongest synopsis growth occurs during adolescence (4,5). This is a form of locomotor play that puts the person posing as the vacuum in a position they would not often find themselves, which can prepare them for unknown situations in the future that demand physical flexibility. This exploratory body movement helps mold the brain and develop mental and motor dexterity. In the abstract sense movement creates structure for the players to create a context within space and time. (5)

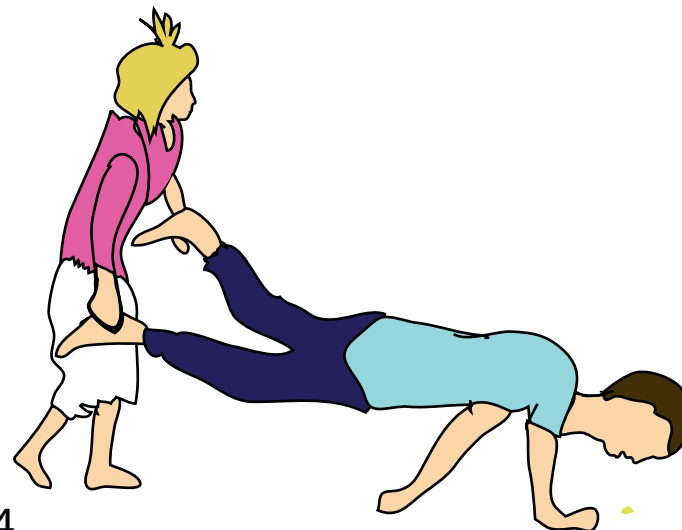


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Popcorn Pickup is a game requires the imagination. It is a fantastical idea that adds excitement to a mundane activity (5). The role of being a vacuum is absurd and it allows one to escape the confines of reality and become something new entirely (even an object). In this way the players can feel free to explore new behaviors, defy current patterns and transform into something new. Cleaning is often seen as a stressful activity and creating a narrative, imagining a story and giving it context to the real world can relieve that stress and anxiety (3).

Pop and Imagine

4



Annotated Bibliography

1) Hofferth, S. and Sandberg, J. (2001). How American Children Spend Their Time. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, p. 295-308

-This article provided quantitative research into time spent on activities for children and insight into the motor, emotional, and cognitive benefits of one activity over another.

2) Whalen, M. (1995). Working toward Play: Complexity in Children's Fantasy Activities. *Language in Society*. Cambridge University Press p. 315-348

-Gave breakdown of key aspects in fantasy play vs. organized game play such as selecting materials, defining materials, participation rights, allocating tasks, and developing characters. It was helpful in identifying the often overlooked and sometimes abstract benefits of fantasy play.

3) Wiener, M (2009). The serious need for play. *Scientific American*, Inc.

-This article provided information on stress and anxiety in children during play and non play activities. It highlighted the development of social skills and creative response in the light of rule based games and fantasy driven play.

4) Byers, J. and Walker, C. (1995). Refining the Motor Training Hypothesis for the Evolution of Play Author. *The American Naturalist*, Vol. 146, No. 1, accessed: 11/17/12, The University of Chicago Press for The American Society of Naturalists Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2463035>

-This article discussed the motor development of the adolescent and adult brain while playing and the formation of synapses in the cerebellum.

5) Brown, S with Vaughn, C (2009). Play: how it shapes the brain, opens the imagination, and invigorates the soul. New York. (Avery) Penguin group Inc. New York

-This reading gave information and examples of the three types of play seen in *Popcorn Pickup*, locomotor, imaginative, and social play.