

THE SOUTH AFRICAN INDIGENOUS GAMES RESEARCH PROJECT OF 2001/2002

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ABSTRACT

Research on indigenous games and play behaviour within the South African context has to a great extent been ad hoc, and influenced by theoretical traditions and practices. Informed by global research trends and national interest, a research project was undertaken in an attempt to address the need for indigenous knowledge-research. This paper reports on the National Indigenous Games Research Project of 2001/2002 in which eleven tertiary institutions collaborated. Researchers from these institutions collected data from 6489 participants through questionnaires (quantitative data on trends, content and nature of games), triangulated with focus groups, case studies, observations and visual recordings (qualitative data). The sample is representative of the ethnic, gender, geographic (urban and rural), and socio-economic diversity in all nine provinces of the Republic of South Africa. A rationale is offered for an ethno-scientific taxonomy, representing a culturally informed reconstruction of South African children's games. The paper explores and reports on game preference, socio-cultural themes and play behaviour. An analysis of the theoretical underpinnings, participant-constructed meanings, reasons for playing and play patterns are reflected upon.

Key words: Indigenous games; Play; Culture; South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Historical sources bear witness to play behaviour and types of games documented since pre-historic times. Rock paintings and engravings represent sporting activities, scenes of combat and a wide spectrum of play manifestations from early civilizations in the African continent (Hirth, 1991). Historical evidence informed early academic interest of social historians and anthropologists who traced patterns of diffusion and acculturation over different continents and historical periods. Generalizations were made by anthropologists and historians with the intent of reconstructing games, tracing game origins and offering explanations on cultural contact between members from different geographical areas (Opie & Opie, 1959). The functionalistic and structural approaches provided the framework for analyses, constructions as well as for cross-cultural game typologies and comparisons (Cheska, 1987; Callois, 2001).

An understanding of play-related behaviour and games as a subject worthy of scholarly investigation, dates back for more than a century to the anthropological contributions of Sir Edward Burnett Tylor and Stewart Cullin. In terms of cultural analysis and classification, they set the scene for folklorists and other social scientists (Blanchard, 1995). Ethnological insights and the ideology of cultural relativism also drew from interpretive models such as Geertz's (1983) account of the Balinese Cockfight where symbolic messages about a social

life provided rich descriptions and cultural relativist interpretations. It paved the way for ethno-scientific investigations and the construction of 'cognitive domains' by members of a certain culture (D'Andrade, 1995). Interpretivism recognizes the researcher and local knowledge that co-produce the cultural reality of play and games through polyphonic text and cultural mediation and interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Sands, 2002). Micro-analysis and description place emphasis on the lived realities of participants, and may also utilize other theoretical perspectives for understanding and analyses.

From the psychological and biological sciences research, interests related to the analysis and therapeutic implications of play behaviour, whereas the didactical research, informed by ecological taxonomies of play, stemmed from an interest in child development and socio-cultural learning (Avedon & Sutton-Smith, 1979; Cohen, 1993). Qualifying the self-expressiveness and environmental control characteristics of play behaviour, the recreation theory of play ties in with the psycho-analytical framework, as it postulates that play is utilized by individuals to recover from work-related activities and to restore energy (relaxation theory) (Levy, 1978).

Social psychologists studied the role of play in the socialization process and applied the psychological dynamics to educational practices (Avedon & Sutton-Smith, 1979). In this sense it has bearing on didactical paradigms that have been explored by ecological taxonomies of play and developmental frameworks (Cohen, 1993). Piaget and Chateau (in Levy, 1978) offered a developmental rationale based on the cognitive interaction with the environment through assimilation and accommodation, whereas other educationists utilized the teaching of games and analysis of game behaviour as means of 'role-taking' and preparing players for life in society (Calhoun, 1987; Uuh, 1999; Callois, 2001).

Utilizing insights from diverse disciplines and practices, play theorists (Cheska, 1987; Van Mele & Renson, 1990; Callois, 2001) meaningfully contributed to the development of a comparative framework for documentation, analysis and classification of play-related behaviour relevant to the socio-cultural context of societies.

It is evident that over the years, research on play, games and traditional sport has been guided by paradigmatic frameworks and perceived practical value that impacted on the conceptual framework, methodology and conclusions (Roopnarine, 2002). Tapping into these diverse theoretical frameworks, the aim of this paper is to: a) provide a rationale for the National Indigenous Games Research project conducted in the Republic of South Africa during 2001 and 2002 (National Project 2001/2002) that would guide the methodology and knowledge-construction, b) utilize the ethnic-scientific conceptualisation as a 'cognitive map' for the classification of indigenous games; and c) report on the findings of the National Project 2001/2002.

PLAY-RELATED PHENOMENA

The interrelatedness of play-related phenomena and the presence of play-like behaviour within games and sport contribute to the complexity of these aspects. The structural and semantic qualifications inherent to the different play-related phenomena necessitate differential treatment within a framework for analysis and classification. Play behaviour is not easily constrained to conceptual categories, as it possesses biological and cultural dimensions.

There seems to be a progression from a self-structured activity done for its own sake (play) and an activity directed by rules (games), to an activity that is an instrumental event and is essentially officiated or judged (sport) (Suits, 1973; Schwartzman, 1983). The fluidity and spontaneous character of play activities that Callois (2001) referred to as *Paidia* (tumultuous exuberance) represents one end of the continuum that moves to more organized forms of competitive rivalry (contests), from rule-bound games to activities with an increase in the structuring or *Ludus* (Callois, 2001). Games possess structured content for description and analysis that in its institutionalized form as sport, adheres to universal laws and the quest for excellence and external rewards (Guttman, 1978; Harris & Park, 1983). Cheska (1987: 14) places 'games' as fluctuating between the activity poles of play and sport in which "play stresses more the participant's expressiveness" and "sport stresses the participant's instrumentality or the achievement of some goal". The play-sport continuum as adapted from Guttman (1978: 9) and integrated with Callois' categorization (2001: 36) serves as a heuristic tool to distinguish between the structural aspects and semantic qualifications of these phenomena.

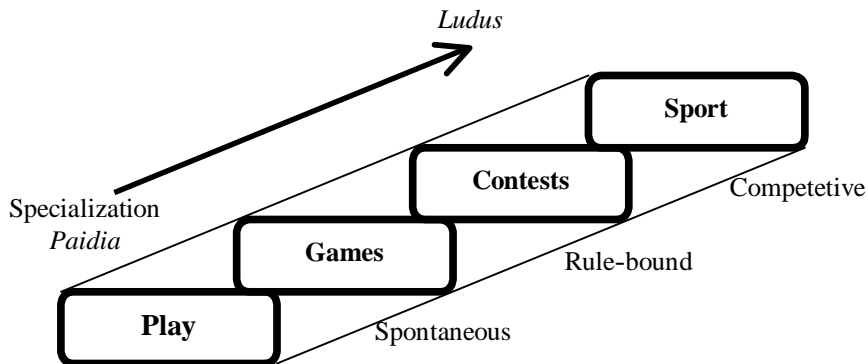


FIGURE 1. PLAY-SPORT CONTINUUM ADAPTED FROM GUTTMANN (1978) AND CALLOIS (2001)

Despite the distinct characteristics of the different play-related phenomena, the boundaries become less clear in real-life settings. At the conceptual level, the practice of play meets certain observable criteria but on the attitudinal level, an activity may thus be considered as being 'play', 'game' or 'sport' where the intension of the player ('emic' or insider's approach) and context of the activity, predominantly determine the categorization of the activity (Harris & Park, 1983; Meier, 1988; Sands, 2002). Due to the focus on indigenous games, play behaviour in this paper is viewed as an integral part of these games in which it finds individual and cultural expression and meaning.

INDIGENOUS GAMES

Indigenous games are viewed as being recreational and characterized by organized play that follows a certain structure and flow according to agreed-upon rules that reflect a socio-cultural dimension of reasoning and behaviour (Van Mele & Renson, 1990). The term 'indigenous' needs to be viewed in the historical and cultural context with reference to related labels such as 'traditional', 'contemporary' and/or 'modern'.

Van Mele and Renson (1990: 16) distinguishes between traditional and modern sport forms as the former are recreational activities with local and cultural dimensions, having roots in traditional life of people and are distinguishable from later adaptations as being “contemporary traditional games”. The ‘traditional’ label represents a time dimension of being preserved and transmitted from one generation to the next among a particular group (Van der Merwe, 1999). In this sense, traditional games communicate localized ethnic and socio-cultural identity of earlier times (Hirth, 1991).

Some traditional or functional play activities became absolute and others were adapted in new environments (Van der Merwe & Salter, 1990). Over time, the religious and/or communal rituals disappeared from earlier games and were replaced by the trappings of modern competitions such as in the Afghan *buzkashi* game, Spanish bullfighting or Japanese Sumo wrestling (Guttman, 1994: 6, 158-160). These forms are however recognized as being ‘indigenous’.

Indigenous knowledge and games within the South African context, reflect the circumstances, traditions and cultures of the various population groups and communities which have been identified by the people as being part of their cultural heritage (Corlett & Mokgwathi, 1986). In this sense the Afro-centric nature of knowledge and games form an integral part of the Nguni, Sotho and Venda-speaking peoples as they originally migrated from the central lakes of Africa and settled in the southernmost end of Africa, during the 12th century (Junod, 1927; Schapera, 1966). In the same way a more Euro-centric and Oriental knowledge base is reflected by the Afrikaans- and English-speaking minorities that include people from European, Asian and Indian descent (Stow, 1905; Bailey, 1991). Another pool of indigenous knowledge and games derived from the traditional life and livelihood of the Bushmen and Coloured races (Afrikaans and English-speakers), also known as the Khoisan, (collectively referring to the San or Bushmen as the original inhabitants of South Africa and the Khoi or Hottentots) (Van der Merwe, 1999).

Culture is never static and emerging play patterns and games develop through acculturative influences such as cultural exchanges in schools and the western-based sport (Van Mele & Renson, 1990). The acculturation process most common to play and games, is known as syncretism which refers to a process by which ideas from one culture are adopted by another so that what ultimately evolves, are actually novel ideas and manifestations (Blanchard, 1995). Indigenous games were identified (from an ‘emic’ or insider’s perspective) as indigenous (‘belonging to us’), having been passed on between generations (‘traditional’) or created locally (‘indigenous’). Another criteria for the identification ‘games’, is that of requiring structure and rules. In this sense, spontaneous play such as ‘throwing mud’ or playing with dolls (games that demonstrate no clear organization or rules), were excluded from this research.

Having identified and documented indigenous games, the following conceptual challenge was the categorization of games. A literature survey revealed various directive frameworks for categorizing games, with relatively few academic contributions to the rationalization behind classification systems and game-related taxonomies.

THE CLASSIFICATION OF GAMES

A major thrust for the development of fundamental and universal categories relevant for cross-cultural research, came from Callois (2001) who proposed four broad categories for the classification of games, namely competitive games (*Agôn*), games of chance (*Alea*), simulation games (*Mimicry*) and games that are based on the pursuit of vertigo (*Ilinx*). Within each of these categories, he placed the games along a continuum from *Paidia* (spontaneous play) to *Ludus*, representing an increase of elements of discipline, rules, skill, problem solving, conventionality and institutionalisation (Harris & Park, 1983).

Classification parameters for cross-cultural analysis were developed through anthropological frameworks, despite the earlier attempts of folklorists to document, classify, analyse and explain the cultural dimensions of traditional games (Opie & Opie, 1959; Avedon & Sutton-Smith, 1979). Redl *et al.* (1979) developed 30 such categories to represent the 'dimensions of games'. Within a broad anthropological paradigm, Cheska (1987) developed a typology of games based on their structural characteristics which deductively informed several South African based studies, which set out to contribute to the preservation of ludodiversity (Goslin & Goslin, 2002), to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by classifying games according to the 'basic idea of the game' (De Jongh, 1984) or movement content (Saayman & Van Niekerk, 1996).

In search of a cross-cultural model for the classification of traditional games, local researchers (Van der Merwe & Bressan, 1995) applied the seven-category classification system of Cheska for the categorization of the traditional games of the Xhosa of South Africa, by utilizing documented sources. This type of deductive research posed methodological dilemmas (an analysis of 11 historical documentations of Xhosa games) and epistemological problems (inadequate socio-cultural and ethnographical data). The present research explores an ethno-scientific framework derived from inductive empirical research and as such, provides a model for cross-cultural comparisons of the cognitive process (classifying indigenous games) and the product (a taxonomy of indigenous games).

THE INDIGENOUS GAMES RESEARCH PROJECT 2001/2002

Background

Indigenous games research in South Africa has over the years received sporadically ad hoc attention without any inclusive, co-operative and systematic effort to compile a representative inventory of traditional play patterns, adequate historical and social-cultural contextualization and interpretation (Van der Merwe, 1999). In 2000, the National Research Foundation established a research programme to support and promote research in the Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) in South Africa. The South African Sports Commission had already embarked on promoting indigenous games in the different provinces and co-funded this research project to enlarge the geographical representation and produce a national profile in this regard (Burnett, 2001).

In response to this initiative, senior researchers were recruited from 11 Human Movement Studies or related departments at tertiary institutions in South Africa. The first phase of the project in which students, researchers and fieldworkers were provided with a comprehensive

research manual (Burnett, 2001) was launched in February 2001. Orientation and training sessions were held to equip them for gathering representative and comparative data through similar procedures and methodology. The second phase was completed in January 2002, by which time researchers had completed their fieldwork and received reciprocal feedback as part of the monitoring and assessment procedures. The third and last phase entailed consultation with researchers and the production of the national report by September 2002. Two clusters of regional statistical data came in late which caused some shifts in the quantitative data that was published in the preliminary report (Burnett & Hollander, 2002).

Methods

Quantitative data was collected through the completion of questionnaires (adapted from De Jongh, 1984) by a representative sample of grade seven learners and senior citizens. The participants were randomly selected with prior allocation of participants from different cultural, language and/or population groups.

Qualitative data was collected through structured interviews (case studies), focus groups and observations of play activities. After a complete list of games had been compiled, the research participants were consulted through interviews and/or focus group sessions to classify the games according to descriptors or cognitive labels suggested by them. Visual and tape recordings assisted in the capturing of songs, physical skills, strategies and play patterns. Once the qualitative data was collected, it was transcribed, coded and classified.

The different methods of data collection ensured the validity and reliability of the data. Triangulation was thus achieved by utilizing different methods and different researchers in the data-collecting process.

Geographical Spread

Due to geographical ethnic representation of the research, a target was set for each tertiary institution to conduct research in urban and rural communities, representing the major ethnic and/or language groups within a region. Except for the University of Durban-Westville and the University of Zululand that individually focused on the Indian and Zulu-speaking communities respectively, the other nine institutions focused on collecting data on the indigenous games of the main population groups within a radius of about 150 kilometres from their institutions. The Rand Afrikaans Universtiy, Technikon Witwatersrand, Stellenbosch University and the University of the North volunteered to cover a wider geographical spread in Mpumalanga, Northern and Western Cape and the Limpopo Province respectively (see map, Figure 2).

Sample

In total 170 communities (89 urban and 81 rural) took part in the research, representing all four major population and 11 language groups in the nine provinces of South Africa. Three thousand four hundred and one (3 401) grade seven learners completed questionnaires and an additional two thousand and sixty (2 060) also took part in focus group sessions. Data was also gathered from one thousand and twenty eight (1 028) senior citizens who completed questionnaires, participated in focus group sessions, and/or were interviewed as case studies to provide the context and content of traditional play patterns and games.

The 'ethnic' representation of the sample (N=6 489) also reflects the representation of the language groups, as participants from the black population group (30%) indicated an African language as their first language, whereas participants from the white population group (38%), and coloured population groups (30%) were more or less equally represented by Afrikaans and English speakers. The Indian population group (2%) indicated English as their language of communication.

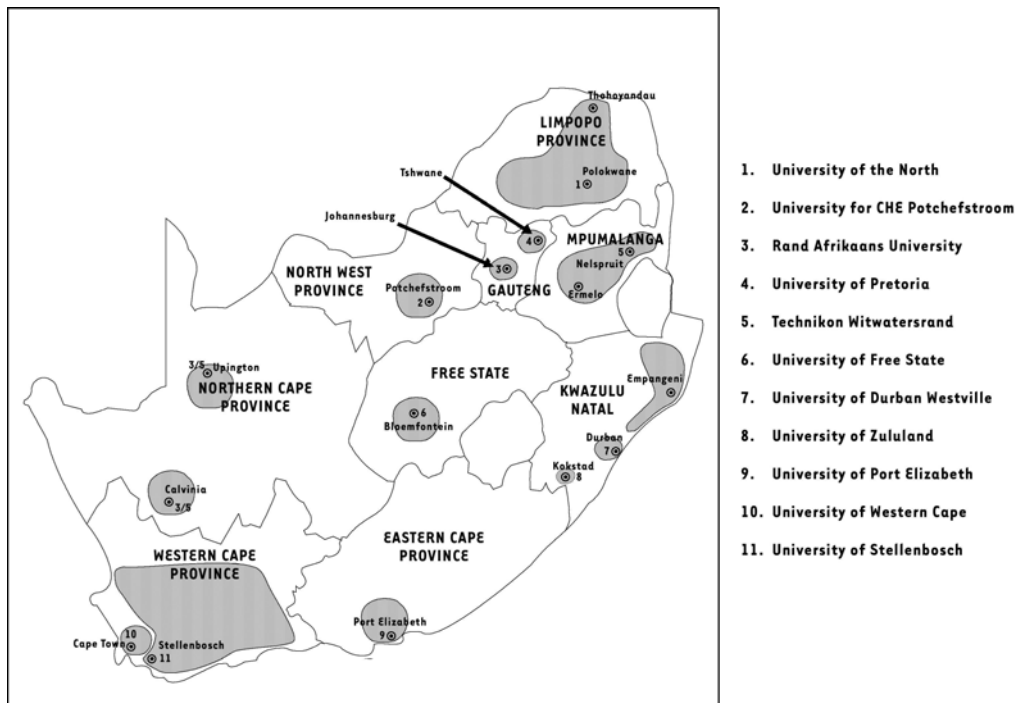


FIGURE 2. GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD OF RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS AND AREAS

RESULTS

The classification of games

A total of 536 indigenous games were identified and collected although a relatively large number of the games seem to be variations of similar games. There were 37 variations of *Rope Jumping*, 18 variations of *Hide-and-Seek* and 13 of *Hop Scotch* alone. Participants also utilized different frameworks for classifying the games, although the differences mainly existed along the lines of age, rather than any other denominator. Senior citizens mainly utilized 'place' (indoors versus outdoors), 'context' (hunting or different social gatherings), 'intension' (lover's games) or 'apparatus' (ball games) as category indicators. Differences between the categorization of games based on race and environment were mainly in the presence of more subcategories among the white and coloured children from urban areas, as opposed to their Indian, black and rural counterparts. Children mainly differentiated between

physical, imitative and mind games and added psychologically informed sub-categories of 'challenge', 'strategy' and 'interaction', as well as qualifying the movement content in terms of a 'rhythm and singing' category of games. Children identified 'games of imagination' as those games in which role-play in terms of acting out a story and miming or imitating different characters, are prominent. The last category identified by the participants allows for the grouping of games that are mainly determined by a form of interaction with the 'environment' ('hunting games') or 'context' ('party games' or 'boeresport'). Counting rhymes are perceived as a 'count-out activity' and they serve the purpose of acting democratically and fairly in the allocation of certain tasks or roles.

It should also be noted that three regional reports made use of Cheska's classification of games, and three others did not follow the same procedures for an 'emic' classification. However, an attempt was made to construct a representative taxonomy (see Figure 3).

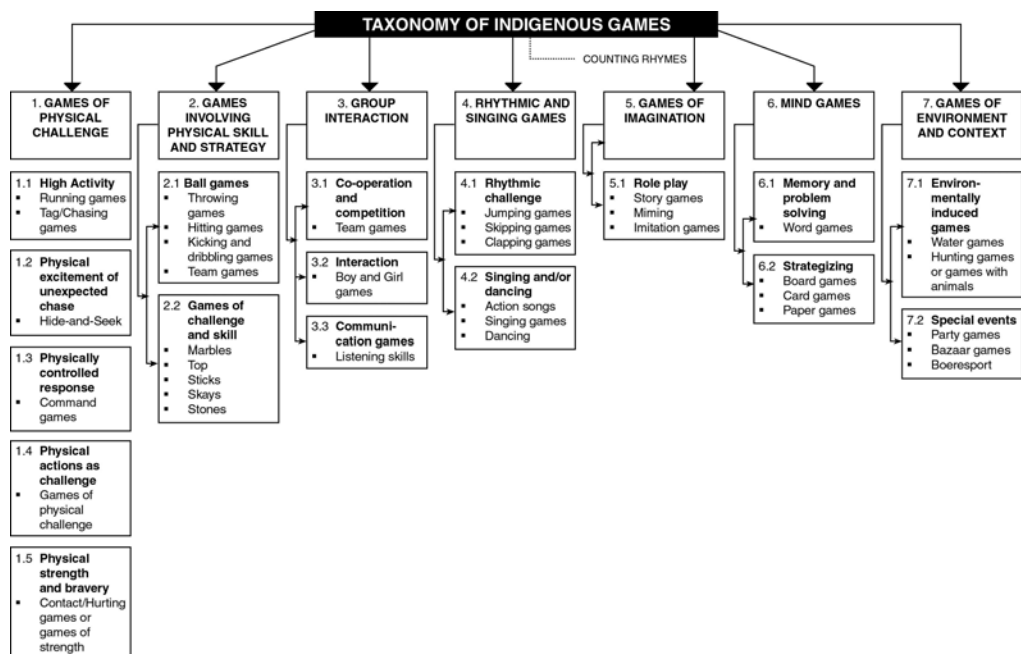


FIGURE 3. THE TAXONOMY OF INDIGENOUS GAMES CONSTRUCTED BY SOUTH AFRICAN CHILDREN 2001/2002

The construction of this taxonomy reflects mainly the biological and psychological orientation of players that is linked to the aim, intention or perceived nature of the game. The only category falling outside this paradigm seems to be the more traditional or environmentally determined games where either the medium (water), functionality or survival (hunting) or special occasions (a party, a bazaar or traditional sport day) bear witness of the particular context and cultural content.

Indigenous games' profile

By ranking the games according to the percentage of children who either know or have played them, an overview is provided of the popularity of the games. It should also be noted that the games are known by different names and even if a game is known by a particular name among children from a specific language group, the alternative names are also listed so as to indicate the relevant cluster of games. Due to limited space on the graph, only some of the names of games within a particular cluster are presented. The graph (Figure 4) illustrates the ranking of the 20 most popular games as identified by all participants from different population groups who completed questionnaires. The twentieth most popular games (*Kettie* and *Stickfighting*) represent two different games and do not indicate a cluster.

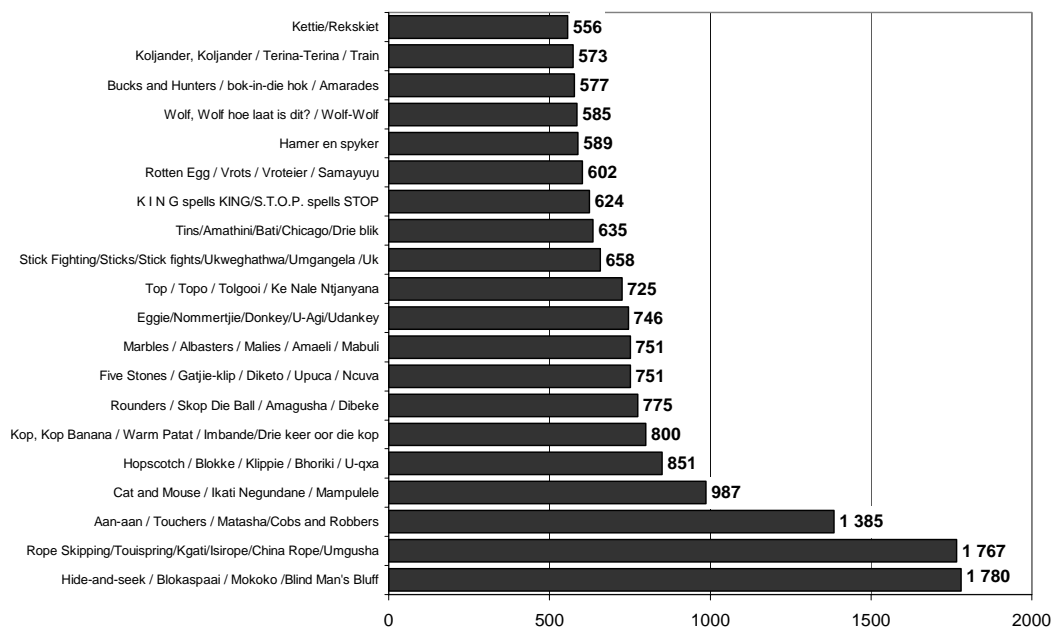


FIGURE 4. RANKING OF INDIGENOUS GAMES BY ALL PARTICIPANTS

Due to the limited space and comprehensive data, the ranking of games by different population groups will only be summarized and not exposed in graph format well. It should also be noted that the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires is merely an indication of the popularity of games, as other qualitative methods (focus groups and observation) may render a different picture.

Traditional games were particularly popular among the following population groups, namely *Diketo* and *Marabaraba* (black participants), *Warm Patat* and *Hide-and-Seek* (coloured participants), *Three Tins* and *Top* (Indian participants) and *Koljander, Koljander, Wolf, Wolf hoe laat is dit?, Kennetjie* and *Hide-and-Seek* (white participants). *Carrom*, a traditional game among the Indian and the Cape Coloured community is played less extensively, as these participants rated *Hide-and-Seek*, chasing, rhythmic and challenging games (such as *Marbles* and *Top*) of western origin as the most popular games. A similar trend is evident among the

other population groups, with the exception of *Rope Skipping* as the second most popular game among the black participants. The games reflect the preference of 'younger players' as boys and girls used to play together and embarked on playing within the same age peer and gender group in games where physical strength and motor skills play a more important role (such as in chasing games like *Tag*, *Rounders*, *Stickfighting* and *Buck-and-Hunters*).

From the results it can be deduced that the majority of children prefer to play games in which the unexpected chase provides excitement and a challenge. *Hide-and-Seek*, *Tag (Aan-Aan)*, *Kop*, *Kop Banana*, *Cat and Mouse* and *Warm Patat*, require no apparatus, yet they offer children the physical and psychological excitement of 'the chase' (see Figure 4). The second most popular category of games entails rhythmic jumping as in *Rope Skipping* as well as in *Hopscotch* that is the fifth most popular category of games (see Figure 4). Another category of the most popular games are games of challenge that provide the challenge of competing and of physical skill such as *Top*, *Kettie* and *Marbles*. Fine motor skills, hand-eye-co-ordination and concentration are required in these games which challenge an opponent in play.

Socio-cultural aspects

The more senior participants in the research indicated that they lived mostly in the rural areas in relatively large family units. As children they always had family members and/or friends to play with on the farms. Especially boys went out hunting and filled the time with wrestling, boxing or hunting games which also involved dogs and/or the hunting and gathering of food (birds or insects) and materials (clay, sticks, grass etc.) from the natural environment. These they utilized to construct toys, implements or other play items. Children from African descent used to meet in the natural environment while tending their livestock. Under these circumstances they found creative means to make their days interesting and enjoyable. They often resorted to utilizing their livestock in certain games such as *Bullfight*. They sometimes also resorted to inter-village challenges to prove their 'superiority' in certain forms of activity.

The migration of people to the cities and towns and the changes in subsistence farming and a traditional way of life, not only changed the behaviour patterns of people, but also found expression in different content of games. This was the result of having been exposed to westernized education and sports, Christianity and westernized means of transport, value-systems and ideology.

Post 1994, due to the new political dispensation, there was a substantial migration of children from different population groups into English-medium schools, resulting in a racial mix in these English-medium schools. As children predominantly learn indigenous games from their peers and play these at schools, it created a new context for the development of indigenous games in the future. The creation of indigenous games is to a large extent in the hands of children who express themselves through the games, and who also add cultural heritage of their own accord to these games.

People are to a large extent, products of their environments and living conditions to which they react. This may explain the popularity of water games among children who have access to dams and/or swimming pools and the absence thereof among children who don't have these facilities. The majority of children who completed questionnaires indicated that they played games mainly at their respective homes (30%, n=1 889), at school (27%, n=1 752), in the

street (23%, 1 492) or in an open veld or park (16%, n=1 038). Only 4% (n=260) indicated 'other venues' as play areas. This corresponds to the most popular times of play, being either during break at school or during the afternoon or evenings at their respective homes. Living conditions of the more affluent children who have access to private gardens resulted in their playing in smaller groups within the confinement of this type of private space. In some urban areas children were prohibited from playing in open spaces due to safety reasons, whereas in townships, children often take to the street in relatively big numbers (young and old join together in playing).

Educational or recreational trips organized by schools or churches, provided opportunities for play and the learning of games such as *Stalk the Lantern* or *Lantern Bekruip*. Twenty percent (n=1 298) of the respondents indicated that they were introduced to games during such outings. Traditional games or games that carry specific cultural content and are suitable for larger groups, were often structured to be played at special events of meaning to certain groups. Twenty-one percent (n=1 363) respondents indicated that they were introduced to traditional games such as *Boeresport* at New Year celebrations or at National festive days. Informal social gatherings and parties were indicated by 22% (n=1 428) as favourite occasions for playing games. This result corresponds with the finding that children seemed to be predominantly responsible for creating, playing and teaching other children indigenous games. Fifty-nine percent of the respondents (n=3 829) indicated that they had learnt the games from 'older children' (24%, n=1 557) or their peers (35%, n=2 271) in comparison with significant others, namely parents or family elders (21%) and teachers (10%) who were identified as social agents for teaching and facilitating participation in indigenous games.

Acculturation resulted as games and modern sport forms were imported and adopted from other cultures. They were however assimilated and transformed to become a unique expression of local cultures and contexts. Although children developed sports-related skills, games such as *Kitchen*, *Dibeke*, and *Donkey* were locally created in a similar vein as many of the other indigenous games played by children from the different population and/or cultural groups.

The climate also impacts on the context in which games are played. The majority of games were played during summer (32%) and spring (26%) compared to slightly lesser participation during autumn (22%) and winter (20%). With the exception of water games being played mainly during summer, there was no other preference expressed for games being played during specific periods. Participants indicated that sport-related games are usually played during the season when the sport is practiced at the school (such as *Kitchen* being played during the 'soccer season'). Games are however mostly played as 'fads come and go'. Some children may start playing *Marbles*, and others will follow suit.

Gender patterns of play also emerged. Singing and rhythmic games are more popular among girls who perceive these as being appropriate for them. Although boys from the black and coloured population groups often join in the rhythmic jumping and singing of games, white boys mostly shy away from such games. Boys overall tend to display a liking for more aggressive and 'rough' type of games where physical strength and bravery play a dominant part. Bigger boys most often dominate the central play areas at schools with such physically challenging games such as *Stingers*. Girls and younger boys are seldom allowed to join in such games, or they would prefer to play elsewhere. As girls often sit and talk or eat a snack

in small circles, they frequently play clapping games such as *Vlieë Vlieg* or mind games such as *Broken Telephone*.

Age also impacts on game preferences and the majority of children indicated that they had mostly played imitating games when they were younger. Role-play and imitating adults or chasing games in which 'scary characters' such as monsters, wolves or 'mad people' are imitated, are played mainly by the younger generation, whereas 'chasing' and 'challenging' games in which co-operation and competition between team members exist, are mostly played by older (children from age 11 and upwards). This could be due to the fact that children are increasingly exposed to team games and are better equipped (physically, psychologically, socially and cognitively) to participate and compete in teams at a certain stage of their development. Different theoretical frameworks including the biological, psychological, social and didactical research paradigms support this conclusion (Calhoun, 1987; Cohen, 1993; Callois, 2001).

The children offered the following reasons for engaging in the play of indigenous games, namely to:

- keep occupied and entertained;
- improve mental alertness;
- have fun and enjoy playing;
- relax and 'take a break' from learning;
- be active, exercise, stay healthy and counter hyperactivity;
- be seen as children by adults;
- keep out of trouble ('naughty things');
- socialize with friends and make new friends;
- compete and get recognition when winning;
- 'tackle' and 'play rough' (boys);
- improve co-ordination and skills;
- sing and keep the rhythm when jumping or clapping – 'it's a challenge'.

It seems that children play firstly to entertain and amuse themselves with games that they find enjoyable, fun and challenging. This perception relates to the relaxation theory that postulates that play is in essence revitalizing and essential to serve as balance against the stress from survival and occupational activities. Kinesthetic experiences of 'rough play', complex and repetitive rhythmic movement patterns, applying motor skills and co-ordination challenges stimulate the seeking and enjoyment of excitement. Satisfaction derived from such motor challenges corresponds with the popularity of chasing, challenging and competitive games in which the experience of success and recognition is highly acclaimed. This finding is substantiated by psycho-biological and social theories. The latter also supports the notion of children to demonstrate acceptable social values ('behaving as children' and 'keeping out of trouble'), and engage in activities which contribute to social bonding and interaction with friends.

CONCLUSION

The SA Indigenous Games Research Project of 2001/2002 posed unique challenges for the discovery and documentation of the indigenous knowledge system relating to the physical and game culture of different ethnic groups within South Africa. In the view of developing a multi-faceted conceptual framework for classification and analysis, a historical and socio-cultural picture and mapping of indigenous games may emerge to form a basis for future research, documentation and implementation.

In essence, children still play and also create or adapt many games to satisfy a variety of physical, psychological, social and cultural needs. They are instrumental in perpetuating this facet of indigenous culture in which their lived realities find expression. Adults are peripheral, yet instrumental as guardians and facilitators of traditional cultural content and values that are passed on through the process of socialization in which children may acquire competencies and knowledge as cultural bearers within a specific and wider society. The dissemination of results should therefore focus on addressing manifested and latent needs of South Africans and relevant stakeholders who have an interest in the application, promotion and nurturing of indigenous games as a cultural resource.

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