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A STUDY OF DOLLS AMONG POLISH CHILDREN.

By MADAM ANNA GRUDZINSKA.

Edited by Theodate L. Smith, Ph. D.

Doll play may be compared with drawing: both teach the child and help develop his mind, eye, and heart. Drawing teaches the child to see and observe; dolls teach him to love, appreciate and take care of others. In the study of doll play the careful mother and educator may find a fertile field for the observation of children's minds, ways, wants and wishes. Several well known psychologists and students of childhood, *e. g.*, G. Stanley Hall, Sully, Queyrat and Paola Lombroso, have turned their attention to doll play and have published valuable studies. In this study, I have made use of a part of the questionnaire upon which the Study of Dolls by G. Stanley Hall and A. Caswell Ellis, published in 1896, was based.

Doll play is one of the oldest forms of child play and is known to have existed in antiquity. The early sarcophagi of the Egyptians, the catacombs of the Christians, the exhumed houses of Herculaneum and Pompeii and the ancient graves of Rome and Athens have preserved not only the bodies of children but also their dolls.

For the present study the following questionnaire was used:

1. Do you like dolls? Do you play with them? Does your doll have a name? Is she good? Do you punish her? How? Is your doll ill sometimes? Do you cure her yourself? What illnesses does she have?
2. Do you sew for your dolls? Do you wash for her? Do you bathe, comb and wash her? How many gowns and hats has your doll? Has she underclothes? Who made these?
3. What does your doll eat? Do you put your doll to bed, cover her up and have her say her prayers? Do you take her out or leave her at home while you are riding, visiting, taking a walk, etc.?
4. Do you prefer fair or dark haired dolls; china dolls or stuffed dolls; large or small dolls; pale or rosy dolls; moving, walking or speaking dolls? Do you like heirloom dolls?
5. Did you ever play with paper, rag, or stick dolls?
6. Is your doll alive? Can she hear and understand? Does she understand that you are angry with or good to her?
7. Do you grieve if your doll is spoiled? Can another take her place?
8. Do you like dolls more or less now than when you were younger? Do you like to have others play with your doll? Name all your different plays with your doll.
9. What do you do with your old and broken dolls? Why do you not continue your doll play?

To this questionnaire 182 answers were received from Warsaw, Kiev, Posen, Kalisch and country districts in various parts of Poland. None of these are from peasant children, though some are from very poor children in the elementary schools in Kalisch, near Warsaw. These children have never owned a bought doll, though they know about and appreciate the luxury of one. Their dolls are made with their own hands, and those who had baby sisters did not seem to care for anything additional in the form of a doll. Few have ever seen any but home-made dolls, and the doll play ceases by the age of ten, not, however, because of the dying out of the inclination, but from the pressure of circumstances, as the following answers show: "I cannot play with my doll, mother does not allow it." "Mother does not wish me to play with a doll. She says I am too old and ought to help her." Yet these and similar answers came from children of nine to eleven years old. The age distribution of the 182 answers is as follows:

Girls from 5 to 6 years,	12	Girls from 10 to 11 years,	25
" " 6 " 7 "	29	" " 11 " 12 "	19
" " 7 " 8 "	34	" " 12 " 13 "	2
" " 8 " 9 "	24	" " 13 " 14 "	8
" " 9 " 10 "	18	Boys " 10 " 11 "	2

The number of answers to each question and percentages are here tabulated:

Table showing number and per cent. of children answering each question.

	No.	%		No.	%
Fond of dolls,	180	100	Prefer large dolls,	80	44.4
Play with dolls,	150	83.3	Prefer small dolls,	20	11.1
Name their dolls,	180	100	Prefer china dolls,	30	16.6
Punish them,	60	33.3	Prefer cloth dolls,	4	2.2
Cure them when ill,	94	52.2	Prefer celluloid dolls,	8	4.4
Name illnesses,	39	21.6	Prefer pale dolls,	27	15.
Sew for dolls,	120	66.6	Prefer rosy dolls,	3	1.6
Bathe them and comb			Prefer heirloom dolls,	150	83.3
hair,	20	11.1	Play with paper dolls,	0	0
Wash underclothes,	97	53.8	Doll is alive,	17	9.3
Doll has frocks,	150	83.3	Regret spoiled doll,	75	41.6
Feed their dolls,	120	66.6	Replace spoiled doll,	120	66.6
Put them to bed,	150	83.3	Less fond of dolls,	94	52.2
Have doll say prayers,	6	3.3	Does not like to lend		
Take doll to walk,	17	9.3	doll,	134	74.4
Leave doll at home,	115	63.8	Tell what they do with		
Prefer fair haired dolls,	150	83.3	spoiled dolls,	49	27.2
Prefer dark haired dolls,	30	16.6			

Answers were received from but two boys (10 and 11 yrs.), of whom one attended the Real and the other the Classical gymnasium. Both of these were very fond of their dolls, named them and played with them. They did this secretly,

however, for fear the other boys would laugh at them, and both were less fond of dolls than when younger. Both preferred small china dolls, but one had a preference for light and the other for dark haired dolls. One had frocks for his doll, put it to bed and had it say its prayers. No conclusions can, of course, be drawn from these two cases, but it is quite possible that the fear of being laughed at and called girlish frequently inhibits in boys an instinctive desire to play with dolls.

All the children who answered the questions were fond of their dolls and named them, unusual and fancy names such as Hildebrande, Mimi, Lili, Pamela, Ophelia, etc., having the preference in most cases. One of the boys named his doll Alice, after the heroine of an English story which his mother read to him in translation. Polish children, in contrast to American children, rarely name their dolls after friends or acquaintances.

Twenty per cent. of the girls punish their dolls, but neither boy did so. The little mothers are often very severe and punish frequently; 41 whipped their dolls; others put them to bed, left them at home, put them in the corner, and deprived them of dinner, imitating in all probability their own punishments.

Many kinds of illness are mentioned which may be classified into two groups, (1) those known by experience, (2) those heard of or invented. The illnesses known by experience are treated imitatively by methods similar to those used for the original sufferers, *e. g.*, for sore eyes, bits of linen or wadding dipped in water, representing boracic acid, are used; for a cough, white medicine smelling of almonds; for a bruise, cold water, etc.

To the second group belong typhoid fever, inflammation of the lungs or brain, consumption, broken feet or neck, etc. For this class of illnesses, lying outside the experience, the children named no remedies.

My own child of four and a half often comes to me and asks what to do in case of severe illness, *i. e.*, typhus, small pox, scarlet fever, cancer. She listens attentively to the remedies prescribed, prepares powders, changes poultices, takes the temperature of the sick room and is very strict in regard to diet. She does not allow any one to enter the room or shut the door noisily, walks on tiptoe and is very careful about ventilating the room. She often makes a children's hospital by putting the dolls' beds in a corner of the room; she visits the sick and feeds them tea and broth, which she cooks herself on her own little stove. She enjoys this more than any other doll play.

Some of the children say in their papers: "My dolls are always well, they are never ill." The little mothers of these dolls are themselves healthy children.

An illness experienced or witnessed often causes the child to represent dramatically the hitherto unknown and strange circumstances which occur in the house of illness. Then, for the first time appears on the scene a strange man, the doctor, a person whom one meets with fear, whose name is spoken in a whisper. Such a case occurred with two little girls, the daughters of a neighbor. These children were very fond of doll plays, but had never played that their dolls were ill up to the time that the mother was seriously ill. When she had sufficiently recovered so that she was again able to sit in the children's room, she was astonished to hear the following conversation: "Is your baby ill, madam?" "O yes, doctor." "What is the matter?" "Inflammation of the lungs and typhoid fever." "Very well, you have put in the instrument?" "Yes, I did." "And how much?" "Five, six." "Dear me, so much? Maybe you put it in badly." "Very well indeed, so that it even bled." From this time on, the play of a sick baby, with many variations, was a favorite one with these children.

Most of the girls and one of the two boys sewed for their dolls, a fact which can be utilized in teaching needle work without rendering it drudgery. One hundred and fifty of the girls sewed on dresses for their dolls, but only ninety-seven on underclothing for them, and these latter were all from the country. City children become used to shabby underwear covered by fine gowns and mantles, a condition well expressed by the proverb "Oben fix und unten nix," which is only too true of the middle class represented in the answers here. A few typical answers are quoted.

Girl 9 (Posen). My doll has five frocks and one suit of underclothes.

Girl 12 (Posen). My doll has six frocks, two pairs of gloves, one hood, two pairs of drawers and one chemise.

Girl 14 (Warsaw). My doll always had lots of frocks, dresses, mantles, capes, etc., but very few underclothes, as nobody sees that.

Girl 10 (Kalisch). My doll has four dresses and one bonnet. She has no underclothes.

Girl 7 (Kalisch). My doll has eight frocks, one chemise and one pair of drawers.

Girl 11 (Kiev). My little daughters have several frocks each, hats, caps, gloves, furs, and one suit of underclothes each. When the washerwoman washes it, they go to bed.

Boy 10 (Kiev). My doll always has something on her back. I have made her a cap and mantle. She will go to school now.

While 150 girls mentioned dress and food, only 20, and those the youngest, spoke of washing, combing the hair and bathing their dolls. It is possible that the older children have been

often told that washing will spoil the doll's face and that the beautiful red of the cheeks will come off, yet the principle of imitation is very evident among children who are themselves carefully bathed and combed. Some of the little girls mention that they are fond only of such dolls as can be bathed. A comparison of the various studies shows that American, German and English children are far cleaner than ours.

The majority of the girls (150) and one of the boys put their dolls to bed, undressing and covering them, but only six say prayers with their dolls, reasons for not doing so being, "It would be a sin to say prayers with a doll," or "I never would think of praying with a doll, it is a profanation of holy things." These are not spontaneous answers of children, but reflections from their environment, for it would scarcely occur to a child who thinks of her doll as eating, feeling, being glad or unhappy, good or bad, that what she herself had been taught as a duty, would be wrong for the doll.

Only 17 (9.3%) children regularly take their dolls out to walk or drive, and here the clothes question is a factor. Some say that they take their dolls out when they are well dressed, or if they have new frocks, hats or mantles. In this regard for dress, country children differ from town children; the latter often say that their dolls need fresh air, and that they are taken out without hat or mantle and sometimes without even a frock.

In regard to size 80 (44.4%) children expressed a preference for large and 20 (11.1%) for small dolls, leaving, perhaps, the preference for medium sized dolls equal to that for large dolls, though the question as to medium sized dolls was not directly asked. Preference for light haired dolls is decided, since only 30 children say that they prefer dark haired dolls, while 150 prefer those with light hair. Pale dolls are preferred by 27 girls, chiefly the older ones, because "they look interesting," "refined" and "delicate." Such answers come chiefly from country children, who think their own complexions "too red."

Heirloom dolls, which have movable joints, can sit up or open and shut their eyes are favorites, but walking, boxing or talking dolls are not liked.

Only 17 girls (9.3%) say that they believe that their dolls are alive, and these belong to the youngest group. But there are many who say, "I know that my doll is only a doll, but I often think that she feels, hears, and sees," or "when I play I always think that my doll can hear what I say. I often think she is hungry or cold."

This dualism of feeling, which even though recognized by the child, makes her care for, feed, dress and bathe her dolls, and then forget them, leave them undressed daily and uncared

for. To an adult observer, this mingling of fact and fancy seems almost inexplicable. The child seems to believe and to doubt at the same time, and his world of make believe often receives rude shocks. Nurses, bonnes, elder brothers, and visitors often wreck a whole delightful structure of imaginative play with stupid remarks, and wound the child's sensibilities. To younger children the breaking of a favorite doll may be a tragedy, as it was in the case of my own child. She had had dolls from babyhood and often spoiled them without being affected by it. But when nearly three years old she was given a beautiful doll which became her beloved companion, slept with her, was taken to walk and fed. When she was three years and seven months old she fell, with doll in her arms, hopelessly crushing its face. For an instant she looked at the dreadful wreck, the holes where the eyes had been, and the shattered features. Then she shrieked and ran to me with the doll. "Mamma, do say she is not dead, do say she is not dead, do say she is well." She cried and shook convulsively. "She has her beautiful eyes and will go to bed with me. Oh, mamma, do say she is alive." She did not dare to look at the doll again, but put her in my arms. "Make her well; she will be well to-morrow." The shock resulted in a fever, and she often screamed for her doll at night, but no new doll could mitigate her grief. She would not look at them. It was only after months and a complete change of scene that she forgot. She is still very fond of dolls and a most devoted little mamma, yet now, if one of her dolls is broken, she at once says, "Never mind, she can be mended, or I can have another," yet there are moments when she seems to believe that her dolls eat, sleep, and feel heat or cold. In most cases, childish grief, though intense, is short lived, and 66.6% of the children say that they were soon consoled for untimely accidents to their favorites by another doll.

Polish children cease playing with dolls earlier than American, usually by nine or ten years, but there is a recrudescence of interest in dolls at about twelve, which is, perhaps, a cropping out of the maternal instinct.

Many children do not like to see their dolls in the arms of others, 74.4% expressing this feeling. This is, perhaps, instinctive, as mothers are nearly always jealous.

Forty-nine girls, or 27%, tell what they did with their spoiled dolls, 6 made a great funeral and buried them, 11 threw them away themselves, 17 ordered them to be thrown away, 5 gave them to a dolls' hospital, 1 burned the doll in the kitchen fire, 4 gave their broken dolls to servants, 2 made experiments with them, 2 sent them to an orphanage, and 1 to a poor sick child.

The doll plays mentioned by the children are hospital, school, funerals, weddings, visiting, dinner parties, dressing, and walks. All of these show the childish fondness for dramatic representations of things seen or of which they have heard. The variety and extent of these plays depends upon the mental content furnished to the child by its environment. The poor child, especially the city child, living in a dreary corner, without light, sun, flowers or trees, is dull and lacking in imagination, the child of well-to-do parents whose home surroundings are favorable, who has books and opportunities for seeing many things, has a far better developed imagination and his plays, even when rehearsals of actual experiences, are full of new combinations and possibilities. I have known some imaginative children who have in action and manner carried out some imaginary character for months or even years.

Careful observation of doll play offers to the psychologist a most fruitful field for the study of the imagination, as well as other childish traits.