

**CHILD PLAY AND TOY IN TWO GENERATIONS:
“UPON A CHILDHOOD HISTORY”**

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to define historical evolution of child play and toy within two generations in context of socio-economic and political conditions in Turkey. Due to this aim, two periods of time were determined. These time periods consist of 1950-1960: Government of Democrat Party and 1990-2000: Post 1980 period. The reason of deciding on these periods is that they were political, economic and cultural turning points in Republican Period. The period between 1950 and 1960 is young Republic's passing to multiparty system from one-party state, meanwhile departing from its basic ideology; getting acquainted with American assistance and Marshall Plans and moreover, choosing its political side in the international area. 1950s also witnessed a mass migration from rural to urban areas and as a result, population growth and emergence of indigenous bourgeoisie in big cities. This period is also considered as changing perception in childhood.

Between period 1990 and 2000, a new middle class emerged with free market economy and liberal values, state's responsibility over public life decreased and the understanding of welfare state weakened. After the breakdown of USSR, United States turned into the biggest power in all areas and globalization was accepted without questioning. In communication field, one-channel broadcast left its place to multi-channel broadcast; new technologies such as computer, internet, and mobile phone came into our lives. This short ten-year period changed the understanding of child, childhood and child play by means of human conception. In this study, oral history was used as methodology as oral history based on memory and testimony to gain a more complete or different understanding of a past experienced both individually and collectively (Bornat, 2004:35). Interviews were conducted in order to determine forms, types and structures of child plays and toys within specified periods and to analyze changes in the course of time. The sample of this study consisted of 20 narrators from two generations. Semi-structured interviews with the people between 60-65 and 20-25 ages were conducted in this study. The draft of semi-structured interview form was developed by researchers and then presented to expert view, necessary corrections were made. Video camera was used during the interviews and photographs were taken. On the other hand, after getting individual permission, narrators' childhood photographs

were taken and examined. Interview recordings were coded by the researchers individually to strengthen reliability of the research. The categories were ultimately generated after all data was analysed, and relevant categories were organized under the research questions.

Key Words: childhood history, history of child play, child play, toy.

INTRODUCTION

Childhood is a critical period when a person starts reading the words, symbols and life, building up meaningful patterns about the world. This is why internal and external narrations on childhood –our own stories that we build up ourselves and the others’ stories about us- never lose their importance in adulthood and even in old age, and they are often repeated.

With its most basic framework, “plays” which have an important place in the history of our childhood stand in front of us as a common activity of both the mankind and also the animals all along. Stating that human civilization as a play, has emerged and developed from out of the plays; Huizinga (2000) has brought forward the notion “Homo Ludens” –man playing - to define man. He has emphasized that the substance of plays depends on none of the stages of civilization, or on neither of the ways of comprehending the universe; even if the language of every thinking being does not have a common term to define the play, it can design the play and the reality of play as an independent thing. With his statements “it is quite likely to deny almost all the abstract concepts –justice, beauty, reality, intellect, god-. Solemnity can also be denied but plays never” Huizinga (2000) drew attention to the fact that the subsistence of plays is undeniable. Sutton-Smith (1999), underlining that besides their formal features, plays also are of an informal nature, has defined plays as “a vague concept; and a family of variable concepts including dreams, daydreams, fantasy, imagination, individual play, play of rules, sports, festivals, virtual reality, etc.”.

Playing is an important and a serious activity for a child. While running around on a horse made of a broom; preparing lunch for her doll; making a speech thinking himself as a minister; or getting ready for a picnic, the child is in a very important work in a deep solemnity. Milar (1968, cited from Moyles, 1996) highlights that playing has a fundamental role in the development and maturing of a child. Stating that plays are effective means supporting the creativity, emotional and intellectual development, Piers and Landau (1980) assert that plays make the children acquire the “habit of happiness”.

Play is a concept which varies from society to society, culture to culture; is directly influenced by ethnic traditions, technological changes, gender and social classes; and which can be interpreted in economical, social and cultural contexts. İnal (2005) also indicates that to what extend the concepts of child, play and toy telescope with the historical or conjunctive identities of the period can be traced easily at every stage of history; pointing out that concepts of toy and play evolve throughout history.

“Toys” the consequential outcome of the concept play are the tools which have the characteristics of activating the imagination of the child and his joy of playing, as well as his discovery of life and having pleasure out of it. Although seen in different shapes in every culture, and though its history is as long and variable as the history of mankind and even though the formal designs change; Mynheer (1988, cited from İnal,

2005) highlights the function of the toy as contribution to the child's building harmony with the adult life through pleasure and enjoyment.

In short, what kind of plays and with which toys the children play is directly related to the structure of the society and the economical conditions they live in. The research made by Göncü (2001) reveal out the determinative nature of the socio-economic structure and values of the society on play, and how children construct their own worlds in the plays they play. Also the findings of the research show that there are significant generation differences in play activities between. The generation gaps even in the same culture display how the societal context affects the plays and toys. These differences are the outcome of technological changes and means of communication (Artar et al, 2004). Statements "Plays are the mirrors of society; reflect the values of the society and convey them to the child", "toys, as the micro cosmoses of the society on all directions, are the tools enabling comparison between life styles and values" (Onur et al, 2004) also support this approach.

Childhood in Turkey: Adventure of Child Play and Toys

In spite of the modernist approach defending that the childhood has a far too different world than adulthood and thus the lives of the children and the adults must be separate, there are many evidences showing that there is no conception of a separate childhood in Turkey. In the Ottoman period, the adults always took the children together when they were going to the baths, neighbor visits, shopping, cafes, or to places where music plays and alcoholic beverages are served (Onur, 2005). This understanding of seeing the child as an adult has, to a large extent, continued also in the Republican period.

An important characteristic of the Republican period's childhood perception is the distant communication that the fathers build with the children. The main reason for building up this "wall" is to protect the authority established on the child, in other words, to prevent the child from getting "spoiled". In accordance with this perception, the child can never ask a question to his father, cannot express his thoughts, even cannot look into the eyes of his father. In order not to harm the sense of obedience of the child, the father kisses his child when he is asleep, shows his affection "from a distance". Onur (2005) claims that the source of this obedience culture comes mostly from religion. As a matter of fact, not only the child but the whole society is shaped and evolved through a system of thinking mould by religion. To visit a mausoleum for having a child, to whisper the azan (call for prayer) in the child's ear while denominating him, to give the child pencil, rubber, etc. on which prayers are spoken before taking an important exam can be counted among the concrete indicators of this understanding. All these cause an obstacle against the society's modernization and show its failure in secularization in the proper sense.

During the first years of the Republic, most of the population in Anatolia was living in villages, and thus, the societal structure was determined through relations based on agriculture. When considering the place of the children in this structure, they are seen as obliged to help their parents in agricultural and house works. In consequence, the children which are supposed to work starting from a very early age have no time to play. The fact that old-young everybody in the village has to work also causes the plays to be imposed negativity. Besides, economical insufficiencies have

been an important reason why the children do not have toys. Through below statements, Ortaylı (2000) also highlights that the society's poverty leads to deprivation of toys:

The old society was poor, the children used to play with nondurable toys made of simple wood or terracotta like Eyüb toys. Most of the children did not even know this; through their own creativity they used to build up their worlds making towers of soil, ovens, houses and dolls of mud, cars and horses carved of wood (Ortaylı, 2000).

Looking through the traditional play culture in Anatolia, the large number of forbidden plays and toys attracts attention. As per the memories he examined, Onur (2005) has stated that many toys and plays were forbidden in Anatolia due to reasons based on either religion or sexuality. In addition, the two sexes were allowed to play together neither in the city nor in the village.

Onur (2005) claims that an important reason of these inhibitions on plays and toys was educational. Parents were restricted the plays played especially outside thinking that the "good manners of the child would be spoiled", he would keep company with strangers outside and would become a "street boy".

Urbanization, foundation of schools, economical developments and progress in mass media gradually abrogates the traditional childhood also in Turkey. These circumstances prevent the traditional plays from being transferred to the young generations, and cause different plays to become prevalent instead. The development in toy industry conveys new toys also to the rural areas, and thus the traditional plays and toys happen to abate (Artar et al, 2004). In the research made by Çok and friends (1997), the findings on the deep effect of the mass media on play culture show that the child culture is not independent and is a part of the adult culture.

Another outcome of modernization is the change in the playgrounds. Playing on the streets, in vacant lots which are the main characteristic of traditional play culture supersede by special places and the playgrounds become blocked intra muros (Onur, 2005). While consumption, individualization and isolation rather than creation is experienced in the play culture in Turkey as a result of modernization; traditional factors are also adhered to strictly on the other hand. Besides that almost all the plays Çok and friends (2004) have observed in the result of their research comply with the definition of traditional plays due to having been played by several generations, their coming across with untraditional elements in the plays can be considered as a concrete indicator of the traditional and modern telescoping in the culture of child play.

To sum up, it is possible to say that the history of mankind has the same meaning with the history of child play and toys; and that, to set light to the adventure of child play and toys within its historical and cultural context will contribute to understanding and interpreting history in social terms. The basic aim of this study is to examine the historical evolution of child play and toys in two generations in Turkey, within its socio-cultural, economic and political context. In this research it was aimed to examine child plays and the toys of the childhood of the second and fourth generations comparatively within the context of the lived period and the environment, which is quite important in terms of Turkey's political, economic and social history.

METHOD

In this research, childhoods of the two separate periods of the Republic were aimed to be examined having set off from the own experiences of the people who have lived under different social, political and economic conditions. In this context, oral history as a qualitative research method records the spoken memories and stories of people in the interview situation. The most important reason for using the methodology of oral history in this study is the thought that the information to be obtained from the living witnesses would be a much richer source of data compared to the other printed or archive sources, and also the belief in the importance of the witnesses' own perceptions.

Sample of Study

In this research, two periods of time were taken in hand in order to analyze thesecond and forth generation of The Republic of Turkey. These time periods are consisted of 1950-1960: Government of Democrat Party and 1990-2000: Post 1980 period. The reason of deciding on these periods is they were political, economic and cultural turning points in Republican Period. The period between 1950 and 1960 is young Republic's passing to multiparty system from one-party state and moreover, choosing its political side in the international area. Between the periods 1990 and 2000, a new middle class was emerged with free market economy and liberal values, state's responsibility over public life was decreased and the understanding of welfare state was weakened. In communication field, one-channel broadcast left its place to multi-channel broadcast; new technologies such as computer, internet, and mobile phone came into our lives. These developments caused rapid transformations in economic, social, cultural and ideological fields. Therefore, we argue in this article that those two time periods have changed the understanding of child, childhood and child play by means of human conception.

The sample of this study consisted of 18 narrators from two generations living in Aydın, İzmit and Ankara. Ten people were between 56-65 ages and eight were between 21-26 ages. The narrators were chosen, taking into consideration the regions where they lived their childhood, and the socio-economical status of their parents. The personal information of the narrators can be seen in Table 1:

Table 1. Personal Information of the Narrators

	Name-Family Name	Birth Year	Birth Place	Affiliation
2nd Generation	Nurten Akarsu	1950	Artvin-Ardanuç	Retired teacher
	Metin Tosun	1951	Kilis	Retired teacher
	Peruze Tosun	1951	Kars-Posof	Retired teacher
	Nazım Balcı	1942	Artvin-Ardanuç	Graduated from Grind School
	Suna Balcı	1946	Artvin-Murgul	Illiterate
	Cemefer Turan	1943	Artvin-Ardanuç	Graduated from primary school
	Ünal Erdal	1946	Yozgat	Retired from military
	Gülistan Kırılı	1942	Afyon-Evciler	Graduated from primary school
	Yıldız Yay	1944	Aydın-İncirliova	Graduated from primary school
	Sabahat Mat	1944	Denizli-Atça	Graduated from School of vocational education.
4th Generation	Abdülkerim Kurt	1981	İstanbul-Beykoz	Kocaeli Univ. Faculty of Communication 4th Grade Student
	Aslı Bezirci	1986	Elazığ	Adnan Menderes Univ. Faculty of Education 4th Grade Student
	Hanife Uslu	1983	Muğla	METU Univ. Dept. of History 1st Grade Student
	Hüseyin Edemir	1981	Ardahan	METU Univ. Dept. of History 4th Grade Student
	Mustafa Uludağ	1981	Diyarbakır-Silvan	METU Univ. Dept. of History 2nd Grade Student
	Rabia Mandal	1982	Ankara	METU Univ. Dept. of History 4th Grade Student
	Volkan Altınok	1982	Zonguldak	METU Univ. Dept. of Philosophy 4th Grade Student
	Sinem Irmak	1985	İzmir-Buca	Adnan Menderes Univ. Faculty of Education 4th Grade Student

Data Collection Tools and Process

In this study, semi-structured interview form was used during the oral history interviews. At the same time, other questions that arised during the interviews were asked and probing questions were asked for getting sufficient answers during the interviwes. Interviews were conducted in order to determine forms, types and structures of child plays and toys within specified periods and to analyze changes in the course of time. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in this study. The draft of semi-structured interview form was developed in accordance with the literature by researchers and then presented to expert view, necessary corrections were done. A portable video camera was used during the interviews and photographs were taken. Video camera was used at the time of interviews in order to capture the facial expressions and bodily mannerisms of the narrator.

Data Analysis Process

Before the oral history interviews, arranged the appointments for interview, confirmed for interviews and keep the interviews. Deed of gifts –a permission form– was given to narrators before the interviews.

In data analysis process, after getting individual permission, narrators' childhood photographs were taken and examined. Verbatim manuscripts were composed through interview recordings and then manuscripts were coded by the researchers individually to strengthen reliability of the research. The categories will be ultimately generated after all data analysis, and relevant categories were organized under the research questions. Literature was reviewed at the all stages of the research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Two Generations, Two Childhoods

In this research, how childhood lived in two different generations of the Republic and how this reflected on the plays and toys was analyzed. Setting off from this general framework, people who have lived under different social and economical conditions were asked questions like, in what kind of a family and social environment their childhoods passed, mostly with whom and where, what kind of plays they preferred and with what sort of toys they played.

The narrators whose childhood passed in the 1950s, that is, who are of the second generation of the Republic mostly lived their childhoods in the rural parts. In the times of their childhood, the houses were generally small, double flat homes with gardens. Newspaper readers were from only a few families living in the cities. No acquaintance was yet made with television; the most valuable property of the house was the radio which was the sole source of contact with the outside world. Such that, some of the villages in the east were to be supplied electricity and water after the 1990's. To a large extent, hardship of livelihood made its mark on the childhoods lived both in the rural and urban regions. All children who lived in villages contribute to the livelihood of their families, working at home or at the plantations. When the relations is considered, it is seen that the father is generally very authoritarian, being the symbol of discipline. The mother is a housewife responsible for the housekeeping; nursing and breeding of the children; gardening and plantations works, as well as the maintenance of the animals. Children's speaking in front of the elders of the family is never approved and

is considered shameful. Additionally, education of the daughters is not preferred due to moral concerns, and many married at very young ages. While the sons could be bought imitation guns as toys when they reached the ages 11-12, and they were given permission for watching the father cleaning his gun considering it as an “initiation ritual”; the daughters were often debarred from the play because that she has grown up. Especially her playing in the open was never shown clemency.

“We were very poor then, there was poverty, there was indigence. Everyone was minding his own worries, not the cost of the bread, people were providing their food from crops, from the soil. We used to go to the plantations after our father, to help him, to plough the animals, oxes- pardon me, people were then plowing.” (2nd generation, Nazım Balcı)

In time, the memory has erased the difficulties, and the memories of that generation remained generally with pleasant memoirs. In spite of this, the negativities still keep their vitality in the memories of the 61 year old Ünal Erdal, while his talking about the family and other social relationships of his childhood:

“I do not remember loud laughs, or, how can I say, any humour. Even there was much seriousness. I do not know why was this seriousness, but we were always told that we should be very serious. Was that in order to be prudent? Even if so, I think to some extent prudence relates to anxiety and fear. (...) To be prudent against life. They were scraping a living, they had worries for the next day, that is, or, in case they had health problems, they had serious anxieties about compensating for difficulties, most probably this anxiety was the dominating factor, and thus they were living very fearfully.”

When coming to the 1990s, the fast socio-economical transformation in the country has changed the living standards of the families and this has influenced many relationship patterns. Looking at the answers of the 4th generation interviewees, many of them was seen to have spent their childhoods in the cities. Small houses with gardens were gradually superseded by multiplex apartment houses in the cities. Now almost all homes had television and the agenda was followed closely. This transformation also had an influence on the traditional relationship patterns. The 25 year old Volkan Altınok has defined the period of his childhood with the following words:

“We grew up in places called neighborhood. Single flat, double flat, triple flat detached houses, apartment houses, gardens. I also had experienced climbing a plum tree in the garden and fallen off it, but it was such a transformation period that, Commodore 64's, computers, battery-operated remote-control toys brought by the relatives from Germany.”

When the statements of the narrators were examined, it was seen that the most common plays of the second generation of the Republic were observed to be open area plays such as hide and seek, running, ball games, rope jumping, stone plays, making toys from clay and mud. Besides these, there were also dramatic plays like impersonating the teacher and the student, or the parents and the children of a family. It is surprising that the children mostly make their own toys; or at times, parents or the other elders make the toys. During the fourth generation of the Republic, running-chasing, ball games, rope jumping and stone plays were played as well as the dramatic plays. At this point, these plays also played during the second generation are observed to maintain their subsistence still at the fourth generation. However, the narrators of the

fourth generation who grew up in the city were seen to incline towards ready made toys and toy sets, computer games, or digital games like atari. In the fourth generation of the Republic, it is remarkable that the barbie dolls were shown big interest by the girls especially, and they were placed in the center of the plays. Below are the statements of some of the narrators;

“We had ready-made tea sets, house maquettes, with which we used to play the mother and the daughter, drink imaginary teas, eat imaginary cakes. Our house maquettes never lacked barbie dolls. Their male versions were also produced. We used to marry them, and play with them.” (4th generation, Aslı Bezirci).

“We used to make musical instruments from the branches of the poplar tree or the walnut. We made use of the leaf of a tree as a harmonica. We had no plastic balls, our elders were making balls from the hair of the animals after grooming, this was what we played with. We used to play a game which is similar to the golf game of today.” (2nd generation, Nurten Akarsu).

The effect of the childhood period and environment on the choice of plays and toys

Considering the findings obtained from the narrators, it is seen that the social environment has an important effect on the plays and toys. In other words, the choices of plays and toys of the children who are grown in rural areas and who are raised in cities differ a lot. Looking at the data obtained from 18 narrators of different socio-demographic characteristics, it is observed that the plays and the toys played with show diversity generally according to the *social class* fact.

Some of the narrators have indicated that their families had purchasing power but there were no ready made toys sold in their villages, and thus, they could own no ready made toys. On the other hand, some of the narrators who had lived in the cities have stated that the ready made toy market was quite developed, but in spite of this, due to insufficient purchasing power, they could not own any ready made toys. The following statement of Hanife Uslu who lived her childhood in the city can be shown as an example of this: *“I was bought only a single ready made toy. I wish I had many dolls. The children in the neighborhood had. My parents could not afford it”*.

In line with the statements of the narrators, it is seen that the city life offered more play and toy alternatives compared to the village life. However, there were also narrators who lived in the city but had very limited toys or even none. And this can be said to have direct relation with the income levels of these families.

Below are several supportive statements of some of the narrators;

“My father had bought me a doll from the city when I developed measles. This was the only ready made toy I had. There were no toys then, even if you had money you were not bought any” (2nd generation, Sabahat Mat).

“I had no toys, toys were expensive anyway. That is, parents could not afford to buy. The mothers in our neighborhood used to go to other houses for cleaning, they used to bring toys for their children from these houses, these toys passed from hand to hand in the group. Because everyone used to steal it from eachother.” (4th generation, Abdülkerim Kurt).

“I had toys made of wood, plastic and even electrical. I had battery-operated remote-control toys. I had ones which came out from Kinder surprise eggs. I had a Commodore 64 computer and Lego toys.” (4th generation, Volkan Altınok).

Focusing on the second and fourth generations of the Republic, the economical circumstances of the period lived in is observed to have considerable effect on the child plays and toys. With the technological and economical developments and the increase in the interaction between nations, the emerge of a change in the culture of plays and toys is also visible.

The opinions of the narrators generally meet in the direction that the second generation of the Republic was more far from the ready made toy market and thus had very few toys which were usually made by themselves anyhow or by their parents if difficult. In addition to this, the children of this generation are seen to have composed and directed their plays by themselves. They were determinant in the process of playing, whereas the toys were only a medium. In the fourth generation however, especially in the big cities, it is observed that the rapidly developing and cheapening toy sector had affected childhood to a great extent. But in the rural areas, this big transformation was not experienced; instead, the characteristics of the play and toy culture of the second generation continued.

“We used to make our own toys. We used to make dolls, sew them cloths from fabrics, hair from corn tassel.” (2nd generation, Nurten Akarsu).

“We played with sand and things alike. When we went to the uplands, there was very good clay at the uplands. There was black soil on top, and a chewy clay underneath. We used to go and take these clay in the waterfront eventually. Cars, or an animal figure, a horse for example, we made such things.” (4th generation, rural, Hüseyin Edemir)

“I had no interest in making toys. We used to buy ready made ones. There were battery-operated dolls, dancing dolls, walking dolls.” (4th generation, urban, Aslı Bezirci).

Another point arising from the statements of the narrators is that the childhood of the fourth generation has been a period of transition. Examining the places where the children played, although indoor locations like houses, Atari cafes started coming up, but the streets still maintained their priority. Besides this, more than individual games, group plays were preferred. Two narrators from the fourth generation have highlighted this with the following statements; “You become isolated from outside during playing, the ones who had Atari at home were never going out”, “Computer was also our toy, but we still did not play with it alone. We used to be 6-7 friends and played successively.”

In the statements of the narrators, it attracts notice that although the people from the second generation had very few toys, they were very happy with what they had in hand, they contented themselves with these. These people have even stated that the children of today were insatiate, even if they were bought ten toys instead of one, they still could not be happy. The statement of Sabahat Mat from the second generation can be shown as an example of such situation:

“I had measles when I was a child, I remember, my father, the deceased, had bought me a plastic doll, it was creaky, but I was so happy to have it (...) We were bought new shoes for our religious holidays, only for these holidays. In other times, even if we had money, no shoes were bought. We used to be so happy that we would even go to bed with those new shoes. It was never easy to buy a new pair of shoes, we were not always bought new shoes, only for the religious holidays.”

Besides this, the plays and toys were observed to telescope with the social realities of the region lived in. Hüseyin Edemir, whose childhood passed in a village, emphasizes that there was a continuous rural exodus to big cities. On the other hand, he has stated that they used to make emigration coaches, ox-carts from wood as toys, and played mukhtar-member plays. In the Mukhtar-Memner game, the children were getting together in a large area and choosing one of them as the mukhtar; when the mukhtar shouted out saying “*emigration starts!*” all the children were dispersing. As far the daily life, the same narrator indicates that the villagers concerned with animal husbandry suffered mainly from wolves plunging into the herd. In addition, he states that they used to play the dog-wolf game in which one of the children played the dog, another the wolf, and the rest the herd; when the wolf plunged in the herd, the dog chased the wolf and the sheep started dispersing.

Another narrator from the second generation Cemefer Turan, while talking about her childhood passed in a village at the Georgia border, states that their elders when coming together in the evening used to tell stories in which it is highlighted that the Russian came over Ardahan and the Georgian people escaped. While talking about their plays, the narrator refers to their play of “taking captives”.

In addition to this, three narrators from the second generation of the Republic, two of whom were from rural allocation units and one from urban, have stated that they have suffered a lot of hardship of livelihood and have never played; the toys they owned were only one or two made by their parents; and that they even had no time to play as they always had to work and help their parents with gardening and plantations. This situation attracts attention to the “adult child” image. The responsibilities which the children were saddled with have caused childhood to remain in the backseat. Some statements of the narrators are as such:

“I never had toys, my childhood was not a happy one, I could never live my childhood. We were very poor then, there was poverty. We used to go at the plantations after our fathers, handle the animals, plough with the oxes, learn the Koran.” (2nd generation, Nazım Balcı).

“In the day, or throughout the month? I do not remember saving time to play during the day. Because in principle, we were not allowed to go out in the da-, leave aside the night; because there was dust and danger out there all the time (...) Besides, I always started working right after coming home from school. The only thing I heard was “take a breath, your father will be coming soon, within half an hour, just take a pause at the door, do not ever go far, do not also get your cloths dirty, come quick” that was all.” (2nd generation, Ünal Erdal).

In contrary, the narrators from the fourth generation have stated that the responsibilities of the children started decreasing, the parents tried to invest more on the children and their childhoods, the purchasing power throughout Türkiye started to increase, and it became easier to find toys at every price.

CONCLUSION

When considering in terms of the concepts play and toy the environment, the social and economical circumstances under which the childhood passed are seen to be determining factors. It is especially observed that the children living in the rural, that is, in villages, played with the toys they had made themselves, constructed plays, and thus

the *subject* of the fact play became the “playing” –child-. This can be explained with the economical formations of that period of Türkiye, or the living practices in the rural areas, etc.; as might have been explained with a village’s being an insufficient market in terms of toys, and the change’s, the transformation’s being so slow. In the childhoods spent in the cities, it is observed that the *subject* of the plays constructed with ready made toys was not the player but the “toy” instead. Considering in terms of childhood, the findings of the research require to draw a distinction between the two concepts “*created childhood*” which is based on the creativity of the children who construct their own plays with the toys they make themselves; and the “*given childhood*” concept which imposes on the children the already constructed ready plays with ready made toy and which therefore renders the children passive.

Looking through the findings of the research, the barbie dolls are observed to start becoming idols especially among the daughters of the middle class families of the fourth generation. This fact, when comparing the Türkiye of the 1950-60s with the 1990-2000s Türkiye, indicates a rapid change not only in terms of economy, but also in technological terms. The unchanging fact on the other hand is the attempt to reinforce the social roles of gender through toys. The increase in the production and consumption of barbie dolls explains how the apprehension of being a girl is articulated on the apprehension of being a maiden. Consequently, it is also be seen that toys appear to be the conveyors of ideological hegemony practices teaching the social gender roles.

The data obtained from the narrators prove that plays are not discrete from either the social context or the daily life, but telescope with each other. The children who lived in villages emulate the work of their parents and imitate them in their plays. In the dramatic plays, they take the teacher and the doctor as social role models. The children in the cities are on the other hand observed to impersonate the models related to the city life. In this context, the findings of the research display how the political, historical and socio-cultural climates of the period shape the child plays. The events/probabilities in the daily life which leave a mark on the period and which came out mostly to be a source of fear are soothed in the format of a play.

Another important result obtained from the findings of the research is the shifting of the children playgrounds from outdoors to indoors. The fact of playing in the garden, at the plantations, or in the mountains with the toys they made themselves, seen especially in the narrations of the second generation is quite seldom seen with in the narrations of the fourth generation. This fact shows parallelism with Karsten’s results reached through oral history in Amsterdam. In her study which she based on the years 1950s and 1960s, Karsten (2005) pointed out that the streets which were known as the public playgrounds of the children gradually turned into the places of the adults; whereas the houses known as the private places contrarily turned out to be the playgrounds of the children. This situation directs the children towards playing more individual plays especially with technological tools like computer and atari. This also has many reflections. First of all, the oral communication of the children both with the friends and the family members reduce. In Addition, the content of the games played stand out to be predominantly violent. Especially with war games, the children starting from quite an early age, are moulded with messages of destruction.

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