Fieldwork Interview #1: Jack Gramza

**Who:** Jack Gramza is 18 years old, and he was born and raised in Naperville, IL. He is a current student at Indiana University, and he is involved in a social fraternity. His job in the summer is at a local pool in Naperville as a lifeguard. He said that mainly children play this game, though Jack said that he still plays this game at the age of 18. Jack would normally play this game with his coworkers at the pool, but he used to play more frequently with his childhood friends when they went to the neighborhood pool or the beach.

**What:** Stick in the mud is a game played in the pool where one person is on the edge and has to try to hit the people that jump over the “stick” that is in the pool. It is pretty much a game where the goal is to dodge the tagger in the water. If you lose and get tagged, you become a stick for the next round. There is no time limit to the game, so it can continue until the group is done playing for the day. The game is friendly for the most part, though Jack said that groups start to get more competitive about it as they continue to play.

**Where:** Stick in the mud can be played at any pool that has a long enough area for players to run across. Again, there is no set distance required to run across, just a group consensus. Jack said that he has played stick in the mud before at a beach from the end of a pier.

**When:** Jack plays stick in the mud during the summer months when the pools are open and it is hot outside. Jack did not mention trying to play the game at an indoor pool, that should be noted.

**Why:** Jack said that he plays stick in the mud because he thinks that playing the game isn’t about the action of the game, but the atmosphere around the game. He said that no matter how old you are, it can provide physical relief and it brings fun and spirit to the group. Jack said that it reminds the players of the child that still lives within themselves. Stick in the mud is a simple game to be taught and learned, so transferring the game is easy between groups. Jack said that lots of memories from his childhood are from stick in the mud and he has met people for brief periods of time from playing.

Both interviews conducted said this, but the actual game is not the primary reason for participating. The reason for the folk game is the atmosphere the game creates and the joy the participants gain from playing is why the continue to play and spread the game. Prior to talking about stick in the mud, Jack had a well rounded understanding of folklore in the educational sense, meaning that he understood that folklore exists because the purpose is to teach or provide some sort of knowledge. Jack also made a point the folklore is in our lives everyday
either directly or indirectly. By having this understanding, his thoughts he provided during the interview meant more to the subject and research.

Fieldwork Interview #2: Lee Vandermyde

Who: Lee Vandermyde, age 50, originally from Downer’s Grove, IL and currently lives in Naperville, IL. Lee works full time in private equity out of Naperville. He is a father to four children, who all attended or are attending Indiana University, except for his youngest who is in middle school. He first remembers playing cornhole, or “Bags” as he normally calls it, with friends, but he does not know when he first played or learned the game. Lee said that there isn’t really an age range to players of bags. The game is dynamic to the players participating.

What: The folk game of Cornhole, or “Bags”
Lee first said that he rarely calls the game by the formal and more popular name of cornhole. He said that his rules are different from some other players of bags, but he plays the most popular way in his community. His rules are one point for a bag on the board and three for a bag that goes in the hole, while the scoring is nulled, or “washed” if the players’ score the same exact points in the round. The term washed is changeable by folk groups, as common phrases are wash and push. His rules do not include playing “bounce on” bags, and he does not play games exactly to 21, as he said that others play the “bust” rule. These sets of rule vary between folk groups, as I have observed and participated in games where rules differ from Lee’s.

Where: Lee said that the most common place for him to play bags is at a sporting tailgate, such as a football tailgate. Though other places that he has played recently include graduation parties, that he most commonly referenced, or at a BBQ with family and friends. The game is played outside in a lawn normally.

When: Bags is mostly played in the warmer months, when such events like graduation parties, tailgates, or BBQs take place. When first asked about the time of his first interaction with bags, Lee had a long pause before answering, said that he doesn’t know exactly when but that it was at a graduation party most likely.

Why: He plays bags because it is a social event and it is a simple game to both teach and learn. Lee told me that bags is a game that doesn’t require much skill, so everyone can play it. He said that the game isn’t necessarily about the competitiveness of it, but rather the social atmosphere the individual game creates. He continues to play bags because he has consistently good memories playing bags.
Lee also said in an unscripted part of interview that he built his own bags set. His reasoning included that he knew he could build it for cheaper than the retail cost and that it was going to be fun to make the sets. He thought he could make a high quality set that was personalized to what he wanted the boards to look like. He found directions online for official dimensions, and he chose to make his two sets a Chicago Cubs and Chicago White Sox boards, and the second set being both Indiana University logos on the boards.\(^7\)

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1. Jack’s demographic is variety of analysis #1.
2. This is the meaning behind the game from variety of analysis #3.
3. This is the way of transmission from variety of analysis #4.
4. This demonstrated his knowledge of folklore in its most classical sense.
5. Lee’s demographic is variety of analysis #1.
6. The rules of cornhole played are incorporated in variety of analysis #2.
7. Lee creating his own game set is something I was unable to know until he told me about it.