

Perceptions and Practical
Implications of Play at School

by

Nicole Michelle Coots

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Nicole Michelle Coots

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Dr. George Freeman, Jr., Member of the Faculty

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PREFACE

I would like to thank my Master in Teaching cohort members and faculty for all that they have taught me, their dedication, humor and spirit. Especially, George Freeman Jr. and Sandra Smith for the editing expertise. And of course, most importantly, I want to thank my family who have stood by and supported me in continuing my education, much love.

ABSTRACT

This paper is a representation of the perspectives and practical implications of play at school. Current trends point to a lack of play both at home and at school. Children's busy lifestyles and a national push for higher test scores have contributed to the decline in play. This paper evaluates these perceptions as well as the perspectives of children, parents and teachers regarding play. It further explores the practical application and necessity of play in young children. Overwhelmingly the research points to play fostering social skills essential to the healthy development of children. Without proper amounts of play children run the risk of improper socialization, leading to low peer-acceptance, ultimately putting children at-risk of school failure.

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CHAPTER ONE: PERCEPTIONS & PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF PLAY

Introduction

“Without play, learning and evolution are impossible” (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 42). How does Nachmanovitch come to this conclusion? We must look at his definition of play to rationalize this sentiment he has drawn from an old Sanskrit word *Lîla*, for play with a much more complex intention. *Lîla* meant divine play. It represented creation, destruction, enjoyment of the moment, love, the play of God and spontaneous connection to self. *Lîla* represented re-creation, from the simplest development of life to hard-won endeavors (Nachmanovitch, 1990). Play is an elusive entity present in all cultures and people. It is the basis for this research inquiry.

This paper is a review of the current research, articles and books published about play during young childhood. Many perspectives and practical implications have emerged from this endeavor. This chapter presents Pellegrini, Dupuis, Smith (2007) and Ashiabi (2005) who have extrapolated on theoretical and practical implications of play during young childhood. Although they both advocate for play their perspective are quite diverse. Next, Ginsberg (2007) and Jacobson (2007) provide the rationale for this inquiry through exploration of the controversies surrounding the reduction of play at school. Additionally, the theoretical ideology and practical curricular frameworks for young children will be explored. Finally, the chapter concludes with the definition of terms.

Researchers Pellegrini, Dupuis, Smith (2007) considered how play can be used in childhood to aid both evolution and development. Pellegrini et al. (2007) through careful dissection of research have posited that an extended period of immaturity and access to play supports the development of phylogenetic changes in organisms. Environment affects genetic expression and the young have a surplus of unexpressed genetic

variability. Play aids in innovative behaviors. These behaviors can be displayed in the long or short term and may have little to do with genetic inheritance.

Pellegrini et al. (2007) concluded that monkeys that are placed with a foster mother inherit behaviors atypical of their genetic inheritance. The orphan monkey with aggressive tendencies participated in non-aggressive behaviors in a play situation with the foster mother. This behavior was thought to benefit the orphan monkey in the short term developmentally. Further, the newly acquired less aggressive behavior was more desired by females and aided in the evolution of the species. Play is often dismissed as an unimportant entity among the masses but both psychology and educational researchers and theorists have been intrigued by it. What are other perceptions and practical implications of play in early education?

Play also has many practical implications. Ashiabi (2005) through a literature review evaluated the value of play in regards to its ability to foster socio-emotional developmental progress. He claimed play to be the perfect venue for the development of socio-emotional readiness and overall success in school and life. Play enhanced the children's ability to role-play, reflect before acting, the ability to show empathy, and their emotional understanding and self-regulation. Cooperation, negotiation, problem solving, group work and getting along are also stimulated in children's play even without adult intervention. Both student-initiated and teacher-guided play are important to children's development. Ashiabi (2005) stated early childhood educators have a role in making play a developmental and learning experience for young children.

What are the various perspectives and practical implications of play at school? How do these perspectives change from parent to child to educator? What are the

practical implications of play in young children? This paper will evaluate the perspectives and practical implications of play at school. It will review the research and literature base for this inquiry. Readers should be informed about play, its various shareholders and pedagogical and environmental recommendations.

Rationale

Many critics are worried there is a lack of play in early educational classrooms. In fact, they are worried children are not getting an adequate amount of time to play. Is there a lack of play? Ginsberg (2007) and Jacobson (2007) considered the legitimacy of these claims. In a medical publication for pediatricians Ginsberg detailed the importance of play, especially free play in the healthy development of children. Play because of its contribution to cognitive, physical, social and emotional development cannot be underestimated nor ignored in the development of healthy children.

Due to the rise in single-family homes and the push for constant enrichment of children's lifestyles more parents opt for structured child care and organized activities after school to suit their children's needs. This leaves many children constantly over stimulated with little time for unscheduled activities such as free play. Ginsberg (2007) claimed play is a time for children to be creative, reflect and decompress. Of further complication, current national trends have limited play during the school day. Ginsberg (2007) cited No Child Left Behind legislation of 2001 as factor in the reduction of play. Ginsberg (2007) claimed physical education, art enrichment and recess have been cut to accommodate academic learning with an aim of higher test scores. Further, electronic media, particularly television and games, limit free play activities. This also includes toys so advanced they limit creative expression and the use of imagination.

This new hurried lifestyle accommodates some children adequately but some children may experience stress and anxiety which may even contribute to depression. The pressure to achieve academically may be related to the avoidance of school by some children. These issues have flourished in the college campus where health services are unable to keep pace with the increased mental health services associated with anxiety and depression.

Further, the authors worried that unique parent-child bonds may be lacking due to the decrease in play. The report concluded that pediatricians should promote free play with their clients. Parents who participate in play with their children are being supportive, nurturing and productive. True toys that encourage imagination should also be encouraged such as blocks and dolls. Passive entertainment such as television should be minimized. Jacobson (2007) agreed that play is not as prevalent as in previous generations.

Jacobson (2007) drew attention to the lack of play in early childhood as a culprit in the rise in children's mental health issues. The article cited traffic in residential areas, too much television time and parents' anxiety towards their children playing outside as factors related to the decline. Jacobson (2007) also noted a trend towards "formal learning" and lack of play in the preschool classroom. Jacobson (2007) called on research from both the United States and the United Kingdom that claimed that children's mental health is being compromised. Normal, healthy development requires "time to play with friends, develop creativity and become self-reliant" (p. 1). The study went on to cite the National Association for the Education of Young Children as a major player in the push for more play in the classroom.

What are the benefits or risks associated with a lack of play opportunities for young children? How are mental-health issues related to lack of play? Is the push for more accountability academically bankrupting our children's playtime? These questions alone have rationalized the need to investigate play in the early education classrooms.

Statement of Purpose

Jensen (2005) warned that adults need to look at how we spend time with children. Of the 16,000 hours each student will spend in the classroom, how many will be allocated to play? What are the benefits associated with academic learning replacing play? Do teachers who view play as essential to healthy development implement it in their teaching regardless of the national push? These questions and many more will be evaluated in subsequent text.

Theoretical Frameworks

This section introduces child theorists that have supported play. Next, curricular frameworks surrounding early childhood education will be evaluated. Finally, the meaning behind the terms found in this paper will be discussed.

Theory surrounding play is of a constructivist nature. Constructivist learning theory means learners must actively construct their own knowledge using their previous experiences. This theory of learning challenged the accepted belief in behaviorist theory, which focused more often on rote memorization and retrieval of facts (Marek & Cavallo, 1997).

The theory of cognitive development became accessible to the general public with the help of Piaget (2002). Piaget claimed that adaptation is the way in which human beings adjust to their environments. He used adaptation to explain cognition. Adaptation

is composed of two mental processes in which he termed assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation is the process of fitting new environmental stimulus into previously constructed schema. Schema is “the mental framework which a person uses to interpret stimulus of his/her senses. A schema organizes perceptions or behaviors and enables a person to understand his environment. Information we have gathered is stored in the form of organizational structures rather than isolated bits and pieces” (Singer, 1997, P. 130). “Accommodation is the modification of new information and actions to form a new mental plan or schema” (Singer, 1997, p. 127). Piaget published books that concerned developmental psychology in Europe from 1928 to 2000. He was mainly concerned with developmental psychology as showcased in his work with the stages of development.

Both Vygotsky and Piaget saw the need for play in young children (Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1967). Each lived to study how knowledge is formed, drawing from their research and interactions with children. Each wrote volumes of literature and at least one book on play. They both understood the importance of social learning, constructing knowledge and children’s innate ability to play. Piaget and Vygotsky contributed the theory behind much research to follow on play in the elementary classroom (Christie, 1991; Fromberg, 2002; Kammii, 1981; Van Hoorn, 1993).

The 1960s brought three researchers who believed the young years were essential to influencing intellectual development. Benjamin Bloom, Jerome Bruner and J. McVicker Hunt all suggested the young years should be used for academic learning. This brought about the “earlier is better” philosophy and school curriculum became more rigorous (Isenberg, 1997).

Still many adults believe school is a time for work, not play. Other adults believe that children should work first and then play, as a reward for working (Fromberg, 2002). Bloom, Bruner and Hunt would certainly fall into one of these categories (Isenberg, 1997). Another educational philosopher, Dewey, extrapolated these points of view in his fooling-play-work-drudgery continuum. Dewey believed in a balance of work and play (1933). These are the major theorists and authors that created the theoretical frameworks and limitations of the research inquiry. Next, terms used in this paper will be discussed.

Definition of Terms

Scholarly publications have sought to define play on a variety of levels. The common themes are presented in this section. Further, the terminology and concepts essential to the paper are presented.

Play requires finding our true, authentic voice, the inner sources of our spontaneous creation, embracing a holistic approach to art. Also our inescapable ability to use improvisation to unite our task with ourselves to create meaning where only work was found before (Nachmanowitch, 1990). This definition is used because it is broad enough to include various means of play at school. Play is pleasurable and can be defined as an activity requiring no end or goal only participation and fun (Fromberg, 2002). To further explore play let us consider the types of play.

Functional play is considered the simple, repeated, pleasurable movements with objects and/or people observed in children (Isenberg, 1997; Van Hoorn, 1993). The terms functional or practice play were first introduced by Piaget (1962). He went on to call this a characteristic of the stage of sensorimotor intelligence (Piaget, 1962).

Symbolic play or fantasy play is observed when children pretend an object stands for something else. Symbolic or fantasy play can also be represented by a child taking on a make-believe role. Piaget broke symbolic play into three categories: constructive, dramatic and games with rules (Van Hoorn, 1993). Each will be discussed.

Constructive play is closely linked to functional play. Children develop from their mere observations of reality to creating simulations of reality. This kind of play might be thought of as copying. Some children draw house after house to perfect the technique (Paley, 2000). This kind of play soon leads to children's more advanced, collaborative or dramatic play.

Sociodramatic, dramatic, fantasy play, collective monologue, or role-play involve two or more children taking part in dramatic play involving a verbal dialogue. It is considered a higher level of play behavior because it is person-oriented rather than object-oriented (Isenberg, 1997). Paley (2004) referred to sociodramatic play as fantasy play and stated that by the end of kindergarten a student's fantasy play themes have lengthened and deepened and the conversations have become more complex and analytical.

Competitive play or games with rules can be defined by two or more children with common rules competing against each other (Kamii, 1980). Both Vygotsky and Piaget proclaimed that problem solving and conflict resolution are essential to development. They supported competitive play for these reasons. Vygotsky asserted that all play used rules (Van Hoorne, 1993). Fromberg (2002) agreed all play is rule governed.

Other types of play, inspired by the stage, included reader's theatre, role-play and pantomime. Reader's theater involved scripting a book to be read aloud as a play (Mitchell, 2003). Role-play required assuming a persona or character and acting out a situation (Foley, 1981). Finally, pantomime is to act out a situation without words. A narrative could accompany a pantomime (Foley, 1981). Foley (1981) concluded that these types of dramatic play enhanced curriculum and brought enjoyment to students. These types of advanced play can be used when teaching any curricular content (Foley, 1981).

Development can be thought of as a process of self-discovery. Children construct a view of themselves in the context of the web of people that surround them. This is why development must be studied "within a social, cognitive and emotional context" (Barnes, 1995, p. 224). The word development occurs frequently in the paper and needs a holistic definition to encompass the entire person.

Language development is how children construct and utilize oral sounds to form meaning. Daily activities for children should require the use of language to construct meaning, comprehension and retention. Communication, forms and functions, purposeful verbal interaction and playing with language are considered to be how language develops in children. Language development is so important "by learning a new language, a person acquires a new way of knowing reality and of passing that knowledge on to others" (Boal, 1979, p. 121).

"Play is a creative process," (Fromberg, 2002, p. 27). Creative development can be thought of as divergent, analytical or critical thinking utilizing the ability to problem solve. Play is perfect for creative development because it is a risk-free environment

(Isenberg, 1997). Creative drama will cement new concepts in the student's minds (Foley, 1981). Creativity enabled in children the ability to make the familiar, strange and similarly the strange, familiar. This allows children to learn new concepts quickly when play is utilized (Dewey, 1933).

Social development allows young children to see the point of view of other children. This also fosters multicultural education and empathy (Fromberg, 2002). Social development in young children can be evaluated by their ability to construct functional, symbolic and role-play situations (Van Hoorn, 1993).

Summary

This chapter provided the vocabulary and rationale for a play-based inquiry. It addressed the theoretical frameworks and the purpose behind the paper.

Chapter two is the historical chapter. It outlines the historical basis for such an investigation. The evolution of thought and public opinion surrounding play and childhood will be discussed. The social, cultural and political underpinnings, driving theory, and practice will be evaluated. Chapter two also presents an important historical account of the establishment of public schools in the United States.

Chapter three will be an integrated review of the studies on the subject of play. Child, parent and teacher perceptions of play will be investigated followed by rough-and-tumble play, social competency in peer interactions and recess.

Chapter four will include the practical and pedagogical recommendations associated with play in the elementary classroom. The research will be reviewed and analyzed. Suggestions for future research will be given. Conclusive findings will cumulate the research provided in this paper.

CHAPTER TWO: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

Childhood and creation of American schools will be discussed in a historical context. Each has relevance to the paper and needs to be critically evaluated to understand the perspectives and practical implications of play. Finally, historical and current practices and practical frameworks will be discussed to bring the reader up to speed with current trends and theory. Section one outlines childhood from a historical perspective. Section two reviews historical implications and ideas surrounding public school. Finally, section three summarizes past and present perceptions and practical implications of play in young children.

History of Childhood

This section evaluates the history of childhood utilizing children's literature that developed in the American colonies. It will attend to the shift from an immoral child to an innocent child inspired by Rousseau (1762). Finally, children working in the colonies and the development of playgrounds conclude the section.

Mitchell (2003) concluded that the evolution of the theory of childhood is evidenced in children's literature. The early literature found in the American colonies, influenced by Puritan beliefs, dictated the need for children to learn the bible and obey laws. Literacy was an essential tool used to study the bible and obey laws (Braun, 1976; Spring, 2000; Ornstein, 2006). The early 1800's introduced more stories with moralistic values but moved away from overtly religious children's literature. After the Civil War childhood began to evolve into a separate entity, not just a preparation for adulthood, a group worthy of entertainment and enlightenment. The eighteenth-century doctrine of

original sin turned in to the nineteenth-century desire to protect childhood innocence (Mitchell, 2003).

It must be noted that the sudden shift from study of the scripture to childhood innocence can most likely be traced to a book written by French philosopher Rousseau (1762), which depicted children as corrupted by societal influence, not born evil. He concluded that children should be removed from society until moral reason can be developed from experience.

This shift from an immoral child, to an innocent child, happened along side an important shift in the work of children. The expansion of industry and the creation of the cotton gin in the United States from the end of the 18th century into the very beginning of the 20th century exploited child labor (Rogoff, 2003). Cotton manufacturing became a profitable industry and soon half the workforce of Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut was children (Rogoff, 2003). By 1833, two out of five persons employed by New England factories were between seven and sixteen years old. A Rhode Island factory reported half of their workers were children (Braun, 1972). Between the 1880's and 1930's, child labor laws began to emerge in response to unhealthy conditions and labor unions' interest in protecting adult jobs (Rogoff, 2003).

Due to the intense competition for jobs and the amount of children turning to the streets and committing crime, by the 19th century, the play movement surfaced. Adults sought to establish more schools and playgrounds where children could spend their time. Many of these schools favored the factory model including bells, clocks and rigorous schedules. Legislation and worker's unions continued to regulate children's play efforts,

promote healthy living, reduce juvenile crime and aid in the creation of responsible workers (Spring, 2008)

Historical ideologies of childhood have greatly influenced the work and play of children. Next, the history of the elementary classroom will discuss the establishment of schools. This is essential to the perspectives and practical implications of play because schools were designed with specific ideals and shareholders in mind.

History of the Elementary Classroom

The creation of public schools began in the colonies. In the 17th century schooling was influenced by the three regional dynamics of the colonies. The New England colonies, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Hampshire influenced the enactment of public education most readily. The Massachusetts Bay colony, led by John Winthrop, believed in strong Puritan values. Puritans valued schooling as a tool to teach children to read the bible and obey laws. As early as 1642 the public, of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, began speaking out for a third party to educate children in the care of masters. The “Old Deluder Satan Law” of 1647 commissioned communities of 50 households or more to appoint a teacher of reading and writing and communities of 100 households to establish a grammar school. This was the first formal educational law enacted in Massachusetts. Often rote memorization and corporal punishment were used as teaching pedagogy (Spring, 2000; Braun, 1972; Ornstein, 2006). By 1689, Massachusetts had 23 reading and writing schools compared to Virginia with only six (Spring, 2000).

Middle Atlantic colonies New York, New Jersey, Delaware and Pennsylvania were settled by a more diverse population in comparison to the New England colonies

that shared a common language and religion (Spring, 2000; Ortstein, 2006). For this reason private, for-profit schools emerged to accommodate the diverse cultures of the Swedes in Delaware, Dutch in New York and Germans in Pennsylvania. Of further interest, the Quakers in Pennsylvania established schools that were open to all children including African and Native populations (Ortstein, 2006).

The Southern colonies of Maryland, Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia had limited resources and little need for the creation of schools in the South. The population densities were different in the south and communities had a hard time bringing children together in a central location due to the rural nature of settlement. Further hampering the development of public schools in the south were rich plantation owners choosing to educate their children in their homes with private tutors (Orstein, 2006). Many other poor children worked in the field or on the farm in the plantation system. Their families needed them to work, school was not an option (Spring, 2000).

The creation of schooling in the United States excluded the education of children of African and Mexican ethnicity living in the forming colonies, as slaves or free citizens. Laws were made to exclude slaves from becoming literate in the south (Spring, 2000). Plessy v. Ferguson an 1896 Supreme Court decision upheld separate but equal accommodations in public facilities, namely schools, segregating Black and Mexican students from White students (Ortstein, 2006). This proliferated racism and injustice in schooling practices experienced by African American and Mexican American students that continues to present day (Spring, 2000).

Schooling was used as means of assimilation of Native American children into the newly formed American culture (Spring, 2000; Rogoff, 2003). By 1900, nearly 85% of

Native American children were attending boarding schools where they were not allowed to see their parents, practice native religion or speak their language. The United States Government and other shareholders continue in efforts to change the lives of Native Americans often failing to take into account the cultural perspectives of Native Americans being impacted by these efforts (Rogoff, 2003). Schools were not meant to support diverse cultures, in fact many people of color living in the forming United States were harmed by the developing school systems.

Past and Present Perceptions and Practical Implications Surrounding Play

The first theorists to publish regarding play were Soviet and Swiss child theorists and educational reformers Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. This section will review their work and then report on modern perceptions and practical implications. Further it will offer childhood curriculum frameworks found in early childhood educational centers for the prevalence of play.

Educational researchers and philosophers Piaget and Vygotsky both wrote about play in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Both Piaget and Vygotsky have influenced educational pedagogy immensely (Van Hoorn, 1993; Fromberg, 2002).

Piaget is responsible for childhood cognitive-developmental theory (Isenberg, 1997). He did most of his research on children's development using physical reality (Wertch, 1985). He reasoned that children develop schema that can be changed when confronted with new experiences to form knowledge. Schema is what Piaget theorized happened in the brain when humans formed knowledge (Piaget, Trans. 2002).

Interestingly enough, brain research has identified dendrites in the brain that form new growth when knowledge is acquired (Smilkstein, 2003). This process Piaget termed

adaptation, the way in which human beings adjust to their environments. He used adaptation to explain cognition. Adaptation is composed of two mental processes in which he termed assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation is the process of fitting new environmental stimulus into previously constructed schema (Singer, 1997).

“Accommodation is the modification of new information and actions to form a new mental plan or schema” (Singer, 1997, p. 127). Play created new experiences and a safe venue for expression. Of further importance Piaget attributed the ability to move from the egocentric stage to one collaborating points of view to play (Kammii & DeVries, 1980; Fromberg, 2002).

Vygotsky introduced the sociocultural theory of development (Isenberg, 1997). “It is not nature, but society that above all else must be considered to be the determining factor in human behavior” (Vygotsky, 1960, p. 118). He believed every function in development happened first at a social level and then at the individual level (Vygotsky, 1978). He studied higher mental function and the use of internalization to understand cognition. Internalization is the process of using language as an external stimulus to foster new mental structures. Taking the external and making it internal will change the structure and function of the information, to meet relevant use, by the recipient (Wertsch, 1985). External data broadcasted through the use of semiotically mediated social processes or rational argument between two parties, each party, beholding the ability to internalize the other’s sentiments, to form new knowledge (Wertsch, 1985).

Vygotsky also introduced two important terms: more capable peer and zone of proximal development (Wertsch, 1985), both of which gave peer interaction and children’s play deeper meaning. More capable peer referred to an adult or peer with a

certain knowledge or skill that can be useful to another trying to acquire this knowledge or skill. The zone of proximal development referred to the area, a child can see his or her own future advanced self, through challenge, in play, with an adult or more competent peer (Vygotsky, 1967). “Play creates a zone of proximal development” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 102). These ideas were revolutionary in that children’s play was unsurpassed in its ability to foster learning. Many early childhood educators have been inspired by the practical significance of Piaget and Vygotsky’s work surrounding play. Both have influenced play in early childhood education immensely with their theory. Next, we look at modern ideologies about effective early childhood learning.

How is play currently practiced in early childhood centers? What are the experts saying about young children’s curriculum? What are the practical implications of play in the classroom? Next, early childhood curriculum frameworks provide the reader with developmentally appropriate curriculum found in early childhood educational centers.

Dodge and Bickart (2000) explored curricular frameworks for preschool and kindergarten-aged children. In this time span children learn about independence and self-control. It is a time when they learn to express themselves “in socially acceptable ways” (p. 35). Language acquisition is paramount. Children learn to talk about their environments and experiences. Children are also physically developing rapidly. Due to the nature of preschool and kindergarten learning, educators should create an environment where children can “interact, explore, and make choices” (p. 36). The more varied, rich and interesting the environment, the more opportunities the children have to learn. “Blocks, house corner, table toys, art, sand & water, library music & movement, cooking, computers and outdoors” (p. 36) are recommended. As children investigate,

construct and share their learning “they learn concepts in literacy, math, science, social studies, the arts and technology” (Dodge and Bickart, 2000, p. 38). Teacher’s tasks included the selection and arrangement of materials, educative interactions with students, finding interesting and challenging materials and planning an environment that encouraged individual student growth. Parents need to extend learning at home by being involved with their child’s school.

As children progress they need to be provided with “appropriate challenges so they can feel successful” (Dodge & Bickart, 2000, p. 38). Knowledge-centered environments should be created utilizing frameworks which include “language and literacy, mathematical thinking, social studies, scientific thinking, technology and the arts” (p. 39). Curriculum should reflect the interest of the students. The teacher is charged with building a classroom community.

Dodge & Bickart (2000) stated that self-reliant learners benefit from class meetings and participating in the creation of structure and community life. Daily routines, schedules, clear expectations and student responsibilities are encouraged. Student charts can detail tasks such as keeping areas orderly and dispensing or collecting materials so everyone has an invested interest in the classroom. Meaningful learning that is both interesting and relevant to the students is essential. Next, Cassidy & Garrett (2002) extrapolate on the benefits of curriculum with drama.

Cassidy & Garrett (2002) reported on an integrated drama based curriculum created at the A & M University. Young children learn easily when movement is encouraged. The framework allowed dance, improvisational storytelling, dramatic play, and music to be used as teaching tools. The first year the curriculum integration was

performed with four year olds. However, it was so popular that in subsequent years three-year-olds through third graders enjoyed the drama integration at the Early Childhood Development Center on the A & M University campus.

Cassidy & Garrett (2002) cited many advantages to learning that incorporates drama and movement. The article reported that comprehension and social skills are often enhanced when children move. In fact, children often displayed understanding by expressing themselves with movement, in play situations. Multicultural curriculum could include dance, almost all cultures have some form of movement in the arts.

According to Cassidy & Garrett (2002) movement, drama and play activities also provided a break from memory-based learning allowing children's hippocampus' to catch up while other areas of the brain are used. Physical movement releases chemicals in our brain, noradrenaline and dopamine increase children's energy and improve mood. Further, if children enjoy these learning activities they will often acquire a pleasant disposition towards school.

A similarly themed book accompanied each drama-based curricular framework studied by Cassidy & Garrett (2002). The children were asked to remember the story. Then, each child chose an animal and acted out that animal's characteristics in relation to the story as an improvisational story re-tell. Other similar stories were used and children sang, acted and presented.

In another study, teachers turned on music and asked the students to act out the rain cycle (Deasy, 2002). The children pretended to be a body of water, the sun, and then they linked hands in groups or pairs to form clouds. Lastly they crashed to the ground as raindrops. These activities are great examples that play can easily be manipulated -

“translating physical movement, songs, and games into more complex learning” (p. 10). Deasy (2002) researched art in the curriculum. The compendium incorporated older students and more diverse methods.

Deasy (2002) edited a large compendium of research articles with support provided by the Arts Education Partnership, National Endowment for the Arts and the Department of Education. For the purpose of this paper we will explore the effectiveness of drama and music provided by this compendium. The research linked high school art exposure to school success, especially for students with lower socio-economic status. It concluded that schools with art-enriched programs showed no decrease in academic achievement.

Deasy (2002) recommended early childhood classrooms should encourage students to create dramatizations of the stories being read in class. This helps young readers identify main ideas, characters and character motivation. Research suggested that children understand new stories more readily after they have participated in classrooms that utilize dramatization of stories.

Deasy (2002) found that using creative drama to build social skills was effective with students with developmental disabilities. The learning of the piano was linked to increased spatial reasoning skills for fourth graders. Further, middle school aged children responded favorably to music as a reward for math achievement and the use of creating math jingles. Writing proficiency was increased in treatment groups receiving drama or drawing tasks that correlated with their writing assignments. The drama group used improvisation, pantomime, games and movement to compliment their writing endeavors. High school students showed increased attendance and overall achievement after

participating in a student created play and performance. Finally, high school sophomores benefited socially and academically from the opportunity to present dramatic poetry of their creation. “There are positive findings collected here with implications for curriculum, professional development, partnership and learning. Administrators and policy-makers can be secure in supporting strong art programs based upon the evidence presented” (Deasy, 2002, p. 110).

These curricular frameworks, theoretical implications and controversies surrounding play are but a few of the perspectives and practical applications of play at school. They set the stage for the analysis of the literature presented in chapter three.

Summary

Puritan and Protestant beliefs influenced the pedagogy and purpose of children and education in the British colonies in North America. The purpose of learning to read the bible and obey laws diminished the value of play, self-expression and creative learning. This also began the deculturalization and Americanization of people of color living in North America. African, Native, and Mexican Americans were asked to abandon their rich, cultural traditions for more conservative, Anglo-American ways (Spring, 2000). This historical review of children, public school and modern curricular frameworks drew connections among the multiple perspectives and the practical implications associated with play at school.

CHAPTER THREE: SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Chapter three presents the body of scientific research available on the topic of play in early childhood. How is play perceived and practiced in the elementary classroom? How can play be used effectively in the classroom to foster learning and development?

This chapter summarizes journal articles that investigate the perceptions and practices surrounding play. It consists of six sections. The first investigates play from the child's point of view. The second looks at play through the eyes of the parents. Teacher's perceptions of play, is the subsequent section of research evaluating both the environment and the pedagogy surrounding play in public schools. After the review of the perceptions, practical research implications will follow. Behaviors exhibited during rough-and-tumble play will introduce socio-metric status and the need to relate to peers. The next section elaborates on the benefits of positive peer relations and socialization. Finally, the research surrounding recess will be presented.

Children's Perceptions of Play

Howard (2002) researched children's beliefs about what characteristics define work/play and learning/not learning, in South Wales. A study published by Liu-Yan, Pan-Yuejuan, & Sun-Hongfen (2005) inquired into kindergartener's ideas about play in Mainland China. Finally, Liang (2003) evaluated gender dynamics in early childhood educational classrooms; many studies of children's play utilized gender as a grouping methodology. What are children's ideas about play?

Howard (2002) elicited children's perceptions of play in early educational settings. The study included children from various socio-economic backgrounds in rural and urban, pre-school and primary educational facilities in South Wales (n = 111). Howard adapted their method from Jones' (1995) School Apperception Story Procedure, deemed Activity Apperception Story Procedure (AASP) a two-part procedure. Participants were shown photographs and asked to classify them as work/play or learning/not learning. The second-part asked the children to justify why they classified the picture in the pertaining category.

Howard (2002) found that the children could distinguish play from work in ninety-two percent of the photographs. Learning could clearly be separated from not learning in seventy-five percent of the photographs. These results concluded that children in both pre-school and kindergarten could identify and differentiate between play, work and learning consistently. Children attended most frequently to pictorial characteristics: teacher presence, positive affect, space and constraint and the nature of the activity when classifying play. "Children described play as a self-chosen activity that took place following completion of work" (Howard, 2002, p. 499).

Howard (2002) aimed to validate young children's ideas about the work/play relationship. This glimpse into the perceptions our children hold about play is quite valuable to educators. Educators should suggest to students the value of play in developing social skills and communication strategies, because play was not considered by children to be a learning activity. The research noted that children classified play as not learning, "suggesting that play is not perceived as a valuable activity" (Howard, 2002, p. 499).

Liu-Yan, Pan-Yuejuan, & Sun-Hongfen (2005) used similar methods to investigate kindergarten children's perceptions of play in the classroom in Mainland China. The authors connected children's ideas about play to their life experiences in kindergarten. In this way, Liu-Yan et al. examined the effects of national education reforms on children's experiences and perceptions of play and group lessons. The authors explained that reforms prompted by the 1989 government publication of *Regulations on kindergarten education practice* advocated the use of play, rather than group lessons, as a primary focus in kindergarten classrooms.

Liu-Yan et al. (2005) selected 5 and 6-year-old children (n=150) from 15 different kindergarten classrooms in Beijing. The researchers used a stratified random sampling technique to identify five classrooms in each of three quality levels accredited by the local government and then randomly selected ten children from each classroom. The authors elicited children's perceptions of play with a photo classification activity in which children told researchers what was happening in the pictures, whether or not it was play, and why they answered as they did. Photos shown to children depicted children engaged in a variety of activities, indoors and outdoors, with and without toys, alone, with peers, and with a teacher. Liu-Yan et al. also conducted semi-structured interviews with their kindergarten subjects in which the researchers asked whether a recent activity was play, and why, whether the child like play or group lessons, when children were allowed to play, and whether the teacher played with the children.

Liu-Yan et al. (2005) found that the two most important factors for a child identifying a photo as "play" or "not play" were the presence or absence of a toy or toys in the picture and the amount of freedom shown by the child or children in the photo.

The researchers found that 75% of photos depicting children with toys were classified as “play” and 76% of photos without toys were classified as “not play,” with a standard deviation of 8.433 and –8.842, respectively ($p < 0.001$). Though the presence or absence of toys had the largest measurable influence on children’s assessment of the activity, the amount of freedom was also an important element.

Interestingly enough, children in Wales and children in China defined play similarly: to “do freely” or “do what you want to do” (Liu-Yan et al., 2005, p. 106). Also, both articles mentioned toys as a single indicator. This indicates that perhaps educators ought to provide choice and manipulatives in the classroom.

Through ethnographic research, Liang (2003) concluded that gender dynamics during play are complex in the preschool and kindergarten year. The goal of the study was to investigate male and female relationships during play. Liang’s small study followed students ($n= 16$) through a Taiwanese private school during the equivalent of preschool and kindergarten in the United States. This study provided numerous examples of the elasticity of thought and behavior present during play inside of school. Liang (2003) concluded that during official playtime there were two distinct groups that consisted of males in one and females in the other. The females participated in make-believe play with props and toys. The all male group played only with a special kind of block, similar to Legos. There were other smaller playgroups that consisted of both males and females. Also individuals engaged in play with puzzles and games were present. During official playtime boys policed themselves from interacting with girls on occasion, this was less obvious during non-official playtime and deskwork. The children

on occasion acted out male/female relationships and had pretend boyfriends or girlfriends. Cross-gender roles were often hidden or minimized during official playtime. Liang (2005) reported gender dynamics are constantly at work inside and outside of play both at school and home. These articles have offered children's perspective of play in the early years. Of further significance, the parent's view of play will be investigated.

Parent's Perceptions of Play

Young children's perspectives of play are incredibly important, but of equal importance are the attitudes and practices of parents regarding play. This section examines parents' perceptions and practical applications including intervention and play-styles. Fogle, Livey & Mendez (2006) discussed African American mothers' perception of play in early childhood development. Colwell, Mize, Pettit & Laird (2002) discussed mothers' intervention strategies during play situations. Finally, Russell & Saebel (1997) explored parents' play styles in relation to the social competency in peer situations exhibited by their child.

Fogle, Livey & Mendez (2006) studied African American mothers' views of play in their preschool children's development. The study included 259 self-selected participants. The researchers collected survey data throughout the study. A pilot survey was used to assess the Parent Play Beliefs Scale (PPBS). Two waves of surveys were completed. The first wave consisted of two centers and 136 participants from 226 families. The second wave, six months later, consisted of an additional site and some of the parents that did not participate in the first round of surveys from the other schools. The second wave yielded 123 participants, including 90 new families. This resulted in a total sample size of 259 participants including both waves of data collection. Every

parent received the demographics questionnaire: PPBS and Penn Interactive Peer Play Scale (PIPPS) surveys. Of the participants 96% were Mothers and 4% were aunts or grandmothers. A majority, 96%, of the mothers considered their children to be African American and 4% concluded their child was biracial. Their children ranged from 3-5 years old with a mean age of 4.6 years. The mean number of adults in residence was 1.6. The average number of children was 2.5. Mothers' ages ranged from 19 to 53 years old, average age of 28.4 years, 61% were single, 26% were married, 47% employed full-time, 18% part-time, 26% were unemployed, the remaining were in job training, on disability pay or in school. A sampling of jobs confirmed a higher representation of lower status jobs.

Fogle et al. (2006) correlated the data reported in the Parent Play Belief Scale (PPBS) and the Penn Interactive Peer Play Scale (PIPPS). The authors concluded that parents' positive attitudes towards play were related to children's social competence. The researchers found a correlation between the PPBS and children's positive peer play behavior. Fogle et al. concluded that children whose parents had a greater knowledge of the need for play also had high levels of social competence. Parents' beliefs about play appeared to be worthy of consideration. Some parents may not be aware of the importance of play in building social competence. Parents with high academic focus scores on their PPBS showed a negative correlation to their reported level of educational achievement. This indicated that parents with less education valued academics highly for their children.

Fogle et al. (2006) found a correlation between parents' positive beliefs about play and their children's social competence. Both parents and early childhood educators

can feel confident that important social skills are being learned through play. This study delivered quantitative evidence correlating positive parent views of play with their children's social competence.

Colwell, Mize, Pettit & Laird (2002) studied mothers with pre-school and kindergarten aged children (n = 71). The participants were from three separate sites with differing racial and socio-economic demographics and were self-selected. Colwell et al. conducted research to find out more about the intervention strategies and emotional responses of mothers in relation to their child's social interactions. The mothers separately watched a series of video clips involving children's play situations. Each mother was assigned a focal child and was asked to pretend this was her child in the play situation. The researchers then asked the mothers to describe how they would intervene, if at all, in the situation. The mothers' responses were audio recorded.

Colwell et al's (2002) data showed that mothers were twenty-one percent more likely to intervene in a play situation if their child was the aggressor. In aggressive situations mothers were twenty-six percent more likely to intervene than when a child is denied entry into a group of peers. The study further evaluated the intervention strategy used by the mother rather discussion, encouragement and power assertion based actions. The mother's level of encouragement was related to situations when their children were denying another child entry into a group and positively correlated with the gender of the child. Mothers were also significantly more likely to intervene on female children.

Many of the results of this study are important. The study concluded that mothers did respond to play situations with a variety of strategies. Discussion was used more often in aggressive situations and encouragement was used most often when a child was

being denied entry into a group. Finally, this study echoed many previous studies when it identified that mothers intervene more often on daughters than sons during an exclusion of a peer situation.

Colwell et al. (2002) evaluated the intervention strategies used by mothers during play situations. Play was used as a learning experience to teach children to include others. Mothers also responded in aggressive situations. This intervention helped children resolve conflict with others.

Russell & Saebel (1997) examined the parent's ideas about the importance of play in building social skills, observed parent-child play-styles and evaluated the children's social competence. This study conducted in Australia sampled families with toddler-aged children (n=51). Both mothers and fathers were included and their children's mean age was 2.2 years. The parents were middle income, working class. The fathers were all employed with an average age of 35.3. Most of the mothers were employed part-time with an average age of 32.

Russell & Saebel (1997) trained graduate students to observe, record and code the findings of the play strategies in the homes of the families studied. The study had three separate methods for gathering data. Parents were observed in play with their children, parents filled out surveys about the importance of social skills for their toddlers and the children were observed in a "play group" with peers to be coded for behaviors exhibited during play. The study looked for three separate play styles present in the parents during their play with objects and physical play with a ball. The study determined if the play with toddler and parent was director style play (parent centered), child-centered play (parent as facilitator) or enhanced play (co-constructed). Parents could use one, two or

all three strategies during their play segments. The parents did not know what the observers were coding.

Russell & Saebel's (1997) results showed the facilitator style to be the most prominent. The director style of play was the second most used style. Many parents used both of these strategies. Interestingly, mothers and fathers, as separate groups, appeared to use the same strategies at the same rates. Neither mothers nor fathers showed significance as a stand-alone group.

Russell & Saebel (1997) found that the director style was more prevalent during physical play as compared to play with objects. When the parent or parents used the director style the child initiated play approximately half as often. Finally, conflict between parent and child was significantly more present in play when parent or parents used the director style. Parents who did not use the director style showed significantly more responsiveness and respect for the child's autonomy. Of interest, the parents who used the director style thought social skills were more important to their children than parents who used the other styles as documented in their surveys. The parents who used the director style scored social skills, on a 5-point, with a mean of 4.32. Parents who used the facilitator style gave social skills a mean of 3.99 on the 5-point scale.

The study went on to relate the facilitator style with social competence. Parents who used the facilitator style had children who exhibited enthusiasm and self-esteem, as well as playfulness, assertiveness, and cheerfulness during peer play situations.

Russell & Saebel's (1997) evaluated the effectiveness of parent play styles with the level of social competency of their children. The study showed facilitator play between parents and child as the most effective play style in teaching social skills to

toddlers. Although parents using the director style of play with their toddlers rated social skills as more important than parents who used facilitator style, their children did not exhibit as many pro-social behaviors during peer play situations. Next, teachers' perceptions of play will be evaluated to see the attitudes, environment and access to play in the elementary classroom.

Teachers' Perceptions of Play

Teachers' perceptions of play are important because teachers play an essential role in creating and managing classroom culture, environment, content and practices. First, Ranz-Smith (2007) conducted a small qualitative study of first grade teachers meant to uncover the opinions and prevalence of play in the first grade classroom. Next, Parks, Solmon & Lee (2008) concluded that teachers report physical activity is nearly nonexistent in the elementary classroom. Teachers are simply not prepared to teach movement; all their training has been aimed at academic achievement. The Center for Education Policy (2008) has reported on how *No Child Left Behind* (2001) has impacted the allocation of time dedicated to subjects in the early educational classroom. Is the academic push really diminishing the amount of time allocated to play and movement at school? Next, Rogers & Evans (2007) reported on students' access to play. McMullen et al. (2006) examined the self-reported beliefs and practices of preschool teachers.

Ranz-Smith (2007) explored teacher perceptions of the role of play in learning and the implications for practice. A qualitative method of phenomenological research utilized interviews with open-ended survey instruments guiding the work. Each subject participated in four interviews, one day of observation, and a three-week process of data collection saving all notes, plans, student work, and copies. Four first grade teachers

from two different schools were chosen for the study. The ages and experience of the teachers varied. First grade teachers were chosen because little research has been done with grade-school teachers and play.

Ranz-Smith (2007) investigated the dramatic difference in learning environments and pedagogy of kindergarten compared to first grade. All four teachers saw curricular expectations inhibiting their view of play as a stronghold in the learning process. Notably, the first grade objectives formally adopted by the school board allowed flexibility for teachers to use play as a means for meeting curricular needs. Only one teacher perceived play as good for her classroom management and her personal learning goals. This was the one teacher who made room for play and free choice. Numerous quotes support each theme identified by researchers. The article addressed the need for further research to be conducted on teachers' ability to use play to teach standards.

Ranz-Smith (2007) uncovered the misfit between administrators' desire to meet standards through play and teachers' ability to use play while still meeting academic standards. Although school administrators believed high standards could be met using play, teachers were feeling more pressure to have students meeting standards and did not feel they had time to incorporate play. Next, a larger population will be researched to see if physical movement is present in the classroom. Parks, Solmon & Lee (2008) inquired into teachers' and principals' perceptions of physical activity inside the classroom with a much larger population size.

Parks, Solmon & Lee (2008) reported that the majority of children in the United States are not getting the recommended amount of physical activity. This study considered teachers' views of physical activity in the classroom, how active teachers are

and if teachers incorporate physical activity in their classroom. School principals from public, private, charter and Montessori schools were asked to participate. The sample consisted of 314 elementary teachers, 38 elementary principals and 44 schools. Teachers were aged 22 to 66 years with a mean of 41.53 and an average of 13.55 years teaching. Principals were aged 34 to 67 years with a mean of 51.33 and an average of 7.28 years serving as a principal.

Each subject completed a survey and ranked their physical efficacy, collective efficacy and their use of physical activity in the classroom on a likert scale. Parks, Solmon, and Lee (2008) concluded that teachers used little or no physical movement in their classrooms. Teachers felt their personal fitness levels were fair to good but as a group they did not view themselves as highly fit or active. Teachers valued the integration of physical movement in the classroom for physical, mental and possibly academic development, but believed they needed support in implementing this in their classrooms. The results suggested the teachers did not feel well prepared to integrate movement.

Little or no movement was present in the classroom, especially considering the large population studied. Ranz-Smith (2007) and Parks, Solmon & Lee (2008) concluded that teachers are not prepared to use play or movement in their classrooms, one possible factor being the push for more academic accountability from teachers. The Center for Education Policy (2008) will provide evidence about the allocation of time in schools since the implementation of *No Child Left Behind* legislation.

The Center for Education Policy (2008) reported the findings of schools nationwide, who reported changes to their instructional time allocation. Forty-four percent of

the schools nation-wide reported an increase in the amount of time allocated to language-arts and/or math with a decrease in science, social studies, art, recess and lunch. More than fifty percent of the schools that increased language arts time did so by at least 30 minutes per day. This research concluded that in fact *No Child Left Behind* legislation has changed the way educators implement school. It has appeared that both break-time and play-based curriculum has been reduced to accommodate skill-based, core-subject learning.

The Center for Education Policy found that, on average, art and music programs were reduced by 57 minutes per week. Physical education saw an average reduction of 40 minutes per week. The average American school since *No Child Left Behind* legislation been in practice has reduced its recess schedule by at least 50 minutes per week. Without question, *No Child Left Behind* (2001) legislation has reduced art/musical expression, physical education programs and recess breaks for children at school. Rogers & Evans (2007) demonstrated that even with the inclusion of recess, physical restraints can still hamper the quality of the play experience.

Rogers & Evans (2007) asserted that boys were most disadvantaged by the poverty of space found in young children's classrooms. Adult intervention and lack of space disrupted the quality of play. The researchers suggested that longer periods of free play should be provided, outdoors if weather permitted.

Rogers & Evans (2007) offered an alternative explanation to the lack of play found in the elementary classroom. Many other publications attributed the lack of play to the focus on academic learning. It is important to look at other factors influencing educators ability to provide a quality play experience, including, space and resources.

McMullen et al. (2006) compared the reliability of teacher self-reporting to their actual classroom practice.

Finally, McMullen et al. (2006) evaluated mid-western, pre-school teachers' (n= 57) beliefs and philosophies of play to compare to their observed classroom practices. A mixed-methodology approach was used to gather comprehensive data. Survey, observation, and curriculum collection methods indicated variables variable were teacher's philosophy of practice, activities present, nature of activity (teacher or student-directed) and relationship between beliefs and practical application. Results indicated a clear dichotomy between teachers whose beliefs indicated supporting a developmentally appropriate practice as compared with adhering to traditional teaching methods. They measured these beliefs and compared observations of child-centered to teacher-centered instructional time. The results indicated that teachers who believed in developmentally appropriate practice also used teacher-directed methods at certain times. Teachers that adhered to traditional beliefs often had art and expression-based constructivist approaches.

McMullen et al. (2006) concluded that the high volume of data confounded the research. Smaller, more concentrated efforts may indicate beliefs to correlate more clearly with classroom practice. This article was included because perspectives are subjective and belief systems do not necessarily dictate practice. Next, the paper reviews a particular form of play, rough-and-tumble. Rough-and-tumble will provide the avenue to evaluate play on a micro-level. Although teacher, student and parent perspectives are interesting actual practices offer even greater insight into play at school.

Rough-and-Tumble Play

The practical implications of rough-and-tumble play will be evaluated through three articles. First, Tannock (2007) investigated young children and educators' perceptions of rough-and-tumble play. Next, Howe (2003) evaluated behaviors exhibited during oppositional play. Finally, Pellegrini (1994) measured socio-metric status and behaviors displayed during rough-and-tumble play at school.

Tannock (2007) studied educators (n= 11) and young children (n= 17) at two early childhood education centers in Canada. The educators' years of experience ranged from 2 to 24 years (m= 11.86). Interviews were conducted with teachers and children. The children were interviewed in groups for maximum comfort. Researchers recorded all of these interviews for later coding. The researchers asked, "What do the program guidelines say about rough-and-tumble play? Do you actively encourage rough-and-tumble play? Do children learn while engaging in rough-and-tumble play? Do children engage in rough-and tumble play?" The children's questions were similar but developmentally appropriate.

Tannock's (2007) data was reviewed for common themes, patterns and relationships. Both child and educator claimed that rough-and-tumble play was not an acceptable behavior for school. Interestingly enough only forty-six percent of educators (n= 11) knew the guidelines for rough-and tumble play. Additionally, 27% thought their learning center had guidelines but did not know them; the remaining 27% were unaware of any guidelines.

Tannock (2007) found that, although the centers did not encourage rough-and-tumble play, students indeed participated in rough-and-tumble play. This may indicate

that this type of play is acceptable in various forms and degrees. Teachers concluded that cheerful faces were the number one distinguishing feature indicating that play was non-aggressive. They also reported that rough-and-tumble play was good for physical awareness and coordination. The research concluded that early education centers need to establish clear expectations for rough-and-tumble play. Next, Howe (2003) investigated oppositional play.

Howe (2003) documented cognitive, social development and aggressive behavior associated with oppositional play. The two variables of interest were the gender and temperament of each child studied. Parents responded to questionnaires to measure the anger/frustration levels and the impulsivity, with smiling/laughing as the control for each child. Fifty-seven percent (n=233) children returned the parent questionnaires. To measure socio-metric status the children were shown pictures of their classmates and asked to pick five they would like to play with and five they would not like to play with. Prior research methods were used to classify the children into 'popular', 'average' and 'rejected' categories. The children were broken into triads, 7 boy groups, 17 girl groups and 25 mixed-sex triads. The triads spent 20 minutes being videotaped while engaged in 4 different types of play. The four play arrangements included free play with numerous objects, limited toy (only 2 toys for 3 kids), together they created a robot head and together they arranged 5 out of 7 pictures to create a story.

Howe (2003) made the significant finding that single gender groups were more likely to produce transactive dialogue. Age, socio-metric status, impulsivity, and boy groups compared to girl groups had no significance in the amount of transactive dialogue present. Non-transactive or aggressive behavior was more evident in males as compared

to females. Further, children with more inhibitory control produced less aggressive behavior in both groups. Rejected students showed significantly more aggression, in the 7-year-old group, than did the average or popular students.

Howe's (2003) study provided conclusive evidence that both transactive and aggressive behaviors are evident in oppositional play. It further clarified that to maximize transactive dialogue, in 5 and 7 year olds, single-sex groups are most beneficial. Aggression was more evident in males. In the 7-year-old group students who were classified as rejected produced significantly more aggression. Next, Pellegrini (1994) will move away from young children to investigate rough-and-tumble play in middle school children.

Pellegrini (1994) studied rough-and-tumble play on the schoolyard. The study drew the population consisted of white children (n= 294) in northern Georgia. Pellegrini (1994) researched dominance and aggression in regard to socio-metric status. He measured each subjects' socio-metric status with a similar method as Howe (2003). Each subject selected 3 of their favorite peers and 3 of their least favorite peers, the scores were standardized into a social preference score [z (likes most) – z (likes least)] which identified the children as 'popular', 'average' or 'rejected'.

Pellegrini (1994) considered the occurrence of rough-and-tumble/chase and rough-and-tumble/rough relative to the socio-metric status. No significant results arose from the study of rough-and-tumble chase in regard to dominance or aggression. However, rough-and-tumble/rough was displayed at twice the frequency in rejected boys as in average and popular boys combined.

Pelligrini (1994) evaluated the behaviors middle-school children exhibited in regards to rough-and-tumble play. Aggressive behavior was associated with children in the 'rejected' group. This measure of socio-metric status is of importance because many articles to follow used similar methods to evaluate socio-metric status. Due to the seriousness of aggressive behavior at school, socio-metric status was essential to positive peer relations and ultimately school success.

These articles affirmed the need for positive social relations and some of the attributes of productive play. Next, we look closer at socialization. How important is social and emotional learning? How can play be used to measure of social competence?

Communication and Social Competence

Overwhelmingly, the research published regarding play in young children regarded play as a means of expression and socialization process. The articles presented in this section suggested a need for social and emotional skills. These skills, easily acquired during play, are necessary for the creation and retention of friendships. Social competence was linked to academic success and positive relations into adulthood. The following articles will evaluate the practical implications of play as a tool to inform social competence. Block play, literacy play-centers and art-based play have all concluded play is essential to the development of early communication strategies displayed by young children. Denham et al. (2001) explored social and emotional competence during play situations. Fantuzzo, Sekino & Cohen (2004) re-confirmed the importance of social competence during play situation, adding that these play interaction were the best indicator of school success in young children. Cohen & Uhry (2007) studied children involved in block play to evaluate their communication styles. Bhroin

(2007) investigated how children make meaning of their play and art tasks. Pickett (2002) evaluated literacy learning in play situations. Next, two articles, Choi (2000) and Campbell-Miller, Cooke, Test & White (2003) researched the effects of social-cognitive intervention strategies. Choi (2000) involved 4-and-5 year-olds in social skills training. Campbell-Miller et al. (2003) created friendship circles for fifth graders with mild disabilities. Choi (2000) and Campbell-Miller et al. (2003) both concluded these basic socialization skills and socio-metric status can be taught. Finally, Reio, Maciolek & Weiss (2002) evaluated the pedagogy pre-schools utilize in facilitating social and emotional growth. Are there schools that excel in the early socialization process? Denham et al. (2001) observed three-to-four year old white students (n= 145) and administered questionnaires to parents and teachers to determine socio-metric status.

Denham, et al. (2001) questioned social competence and status being determined and sustained at this early age. Researchers determined each child's socio-metric status by showing the children pictures of their classmates and having them classify each student as "like-a-lot" "kinda like" and "do not like." Cluster analysis was performed to define two groups: "happy/positive" and "angry/negativity." To determine the stability of these distinct groupings, exact methods were employed a year later for comparable data. For boys, the two playgroups remained stable. The girl cluster groups changed over the year period. Of significance children with low socio-metric status reported by peers also were reported to have a lack of social skills by parents and teachers alike.

Fantuzzo, Sekino & Cohen (2004) studied two groups of children in urban Head Start programs. The authors investigated peer play interactions as well as language, self-direction, and emotional-regulation skills. Fantuzzo et al. (2004) found that children who

interacted successfully with their classmates early in the year showed a range of benefits later in the year. Conversely, children who struggled with peer play early on were more likely to show aggressive or shy behaviors, and disconnectedness from peers was correlated with negative emotional outcomes.

Twenty-four Head Start classrooms were selected to be representative of the city's six geographical school district areas. The Head Start program served about 5,000 students in over 250 classrooms; 73% of students were African American, 5% were Asian American, 14% were Hispanic, and 8% Caucasian. Fantuzzo et al. (2004) sampled children (n=241) over two years. The children ranged in age from 3 to 5 years old; 63% were 4 years old. Demographics of samples closely matched demographics of the program as a whole.

To measure interactive peer play, Fantuzzo et al. (2004) administered the teacher version of the Penn Interactive Peer Play Scale (PIPPS-T). It contained 32 items to assess the success of peer interactions; the PIPPS-T sorted behaviors into three categories: Play Interaction, Play Disruption, and Play Disconnection. Classroom self-regulation was measured utilizing the California Child Q-Sort (CCQ), which has 100 items to assess Autonomy and Emotional Regulation.

Fantuzzo et al. (2004) administered the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-III) to measure receptive vocabulary. The authors measured learning competencies with the Child Observation Record (COR), an observation-based instrument used to assess children from 2 years 6 months to 6 years 0 months; it measured competencies in 30 areas in the classroom environment. The 3 dimensions mentioned in this paper are Cognitive, Social Engagement, and Movement and Coordination.

The first year teachers who participated in Fantuzzo et al's (2004) study completed PIPPS-T in the fall, after at least 45 days of class; data were also gathered by independent observers; PPVT-III and CCQ tests were conducted by graduate students who were blinded to the hypotheses of the study. The second year teachers collected PIPPS-T data in November 2004. COR and ASPI data were collected in May and June of the same school year. Researchers analyzed the complex relationships among the data collected through these assessments, in search of significant connections among the variables studied. Fantuzzo et al. (2004) used mainly canonical variance analysis, but they also used other methods, such as linear multiple regression analysis to further explore the relationships between PIPPS-T findings and school readiness outcomes.

Fantuzzo et al. (2004) found a positive relationship between Play Interaction and Receptive vocabulary and a negative relationship between Play Disconnection and Receptive Vocabulary. The authors also found a significant relationship between play behaviors and self-regulation. Fantuzzo et al. reported a positive relationship between Play Interaction and Autonomy as well as a negative relationship between Play Disruption and Emotion Regulation.

Fantuzzo et al. (2004) reported strong, multifaceted relationships between the peer play behaviors measured at the beginning of Year 2 and the social and academic competencies measured at the end of Year 2. In particular, the authors noted a robust connection between the Play Interaction measure of the PIPPS-T and all three dimensions of the COR, most notably the Social Engagement and Cognitive measures. They concluded that, of the measures they employed, the Play Interaction element of the

PIPPS-T instrument administered in the fall was the strongest predictor of Cognitive competence in the spring.

Fantuzzo et al. (2004) confirmed the importance of social skill building in play situations in young children. In fact, play interactions were the best indicator of cognitive competence. Play observations are excellent indicators of cognitive ability and school success.

Block play is one practical venue for social skill development investigated by Cohen & Uhry (2007). The authors reviewed 53 play episodes for data analysis. Subjects were chosen from a culturally diverse preschool that represented middle-to-upper income households. The subjects were drawn from the suburbs of Long Island, NY (n =19) 10 boys and 9 girls with an average age of 5.2. The study included four bilingual students. Languages spoken at home included English, Hebrew, Korean, Telugu, and Punjabi. Cohen & Uhry (2007) questioned what communication strategies children use to make themselves understood and to appropriate meaning in block play. This was a mixed methods study that drew from Bakhtin's ideas of voicing and appropriating words for others, Vygotsky's (1978) notion of appropriation and zone of proximal development and Sawyer's (1996) different types of verbalization.

Cohen and Uhry (2007) observed and collected videotapes of children in the block area. The study examined three groupings: individuals, dyads and groups of three or more. Children were observed and videotaped in the natural setting of their preschool classroom for three weeks in the final month of their preschool experience in June. Cohen & Uhry (2007) concluded 5-year-olds use communication strategies and appropriate shared meaning in block play. The study observed the communication

strategies children used. Chi-square analysis was used to observe the frequency of communication styles. Out of the fifty-one recorded episodes of block play there were 1,250 observed communication styles. The study concluded that descriptions of actions and call for attention were the most present communication style. A leader was often present in the group and gave permission for others to join the play, change the game and make decisions. Blocks require language to establish common meaning and appear quite appropriate for the home or classroom. Blocks are a wonderful resource that encourages language development and social competence.

Bhroin (2007) studied four-and-five year old students (n= 21) in Ireland to determine interrelationships between art, play and real life experiences. Researchers collected artwork, field notes and video recordings of children creating and manipulating their art. All of the subjects studied showed evidence of incorporating reality and imagination into their endeavors. Both children in the symbolic and pre-symbolic stages exhibited the ability to connect real life experiences to their art and play.

Bhroin (2007) presented artwork and pictures of play with dialogue from participants, reporting its significance to current life experiences. One of the more interesting examples of this was a child who continued to draw pictures of her family. In each picture her father was depicted in a box. The child in question retorted that her father is in a “work-jail” (p. 8). After further inquiry with mother confirmed that the child’s father was indeed in prison and the box represented his state of being to the child. The research stated that children at this age rarely understand the meaning of ‘symbol’ but had an amazing ability to understand symbols through their play. Another use of ‘symbol’ was often found in fantasy play when children played with cloth or fabrics. The

children were pictured with a cloth around them and claimed to be a many-headed monster one of the children saw in a parade. The research further identified art to be linked to play in many instances. A child that wanted her navel pierced but whose mother refused exhibited this play link. In the self-portrait done by the child she displays her pierced navel. Another reoccurring theme was the children becoming absorbed in their play. Many instances occurred where children wanted their time extended or returned to their play structure or game day after day. Many children expressed the same ideas in many venues and play episodes. Certain ground rules were established organically to keep play flowing between children. Imagination and creativity was also quite prevalent in all children.

Bhroin (2007) concluded that children express experiences, thoughts, fears, ideas and desires in a meaningful way during art-based play. Self-expression and communication strategies were being learned. “The magical world of art and play draws on the child’s intelligence, imagination, creativity and social skills in a worthwhile and enjoyable learning experience” (p. 19).

Pickett (2002) discussed literacy learning through play in the first grade classroom. She used qualitative research utilizing observation and video recording of children participating in free-play. The research concluded that children used literacy material in meaningful ways during play. Pickett (2002) further concluded that reading and writing behaviors were enjoyable additions to socio-dramatic play. Many students who exhibited reluctance during structured literacy activities readily embraced literacy development in play.

Pickett (2002) reviewed a diverse school serving 17 Hispanic students with variable cultural backgrounds, two African American students, one Native American student and two bi-racial students from working class backgrounds. Language acquisition was in variable stages from concepts about print to emergent stages. The literacy activities were discussed in length. Phonemic awareness and phonics were taught during block activities including guided, shared, independent, and buddy reading, as well as during selection intervals. Self-selection choices included dramatic play, reading, writing, listening center, puzzles and games, block building, computer, art and science and math explorations. In these play areas many enriching materials were provided. In the office center books and magazines, telephone book, index cards, checkout cards, posters, stamps, envelopes, assorted paper, stapler, pens/pencils, crayons/markers, a calendar and tape were provided to enhance literacy development through play. In the house center many similar essentials existed, in addition to cookbooks, coupons, play money, stickers, tablets, and date books. The library center additionally had stationary, notebooks, clipboards, folders, signs, paper clips, and computers, typewriter, scissors and tape.

As Pickett (2002) reviewed observations and video footage, she documented play themes, literacy use and connections to structured knowledge-based information during class time. One reoccurring theme was the use of literacy as a social endeavor. Literacy concepts were practiced and became social events. Many play episodes of school represented and confirmed skill-based learning in the classroom. The children participating in literacy-based play exhibited engagement and enjoyment. Social interactions were prevalent in play utilizing literacy development. Students were

developing literate identities. Many children used literacy resources while engaged in dramatic play. At times the children would act out the entire lesson with a child serving as the teacher.

Pickett (2002) asserted that play should be part of a quality literacy program. Play provided students with a low-risk environment to practice their literacy skills and see themselves as literate. Play further gave opportunities for students to “internalize information and construct personal meaning” (p. 20). Play also gave teachers time to observe, assess and understand children’s abilities. Pickett (2002) affirmed, “that learning does, indeed, occur during play” (p. 21).

Choi (2000) examined the link between social skills training and social behavior. A pre-kindergarten, Head Start school, serving economically disadvantaged African American students was chosen for the sample. Student’s socio-metric status was measured by asking each student to name three students they liked, and three they do not like. These scores were analyzed. Additionally, teachers filled out a questionnaire rating their student’s social competence. From this data a group of students, with low peer acceptance, was selected for the research (n= 34).

Each of Choi’s (2000) subjects also completed an interview to determine which social strategies students employed. After this initial in-take, five social skills training class were administered. Each thirty-minute lesson confronted practical ideas for positive peer relations utilizing short stories and discussion. The sample (n= 34) contributed half of the subjects to the training and the other half were allowed to free play without specific rules for their behavior in another room. At the end of the training the exact observations and interviews were again administered. Results identified the group receiving training

to have increased in maintaining positive play relations. This research concluded social skills training enhanced social competence in a play situation.

Campbell-Miller, Cooke, Test & White (2003) aimed their research at uncovering the effectiveness of friendship circles on fifth grade students with mild disabilities. Three students that lacked social acceptance were chosen as the target students for this qualitative study. Friendship circles were formed from a worksheet that had different sized circles. In the smallest circle students wrote their closest family, then included extended family and friends in the next circle. In the outside circle, the students were instructed to write the names of students they may someday want in their circles. These responses were used to select two boys and two girls for each of the three-target student's friendship circles.

Friendship circles met once each week and participated in authentic tasks involving sharing, problem-solving and social skill building. Campbell-Miller et al. (2003) observed the behaviors of the friendship circle for a fifteen-minute lunch period in which the circle sat together. The behaviors were coded as appropriate, inappropriate and no social interactions as the dependent variable. A baseline was recorded for each of the three target students for each of the three behaviors. If any part of the interaction was inappropriate the whole of the conversation was coded inappropriate.

Campbell-Miller et al. (2003) used a multiple probe design to interpret the effects of friendship circles on behaviors exhibited at lunch and recess. As soon as the first subject began to show positive results from the friendship circle the next subject began the process. The third child to be introduced to the friendship circle process appeared to

have the least success with the intervention although all three delivered positive behaviors in relation to their baseline measures.

The first child received baseline data as follows: appropriate interactions elicited 26.7% of interactions, inappropriate interactions 23.5%, and no interactions 48.8%. This child made substantial progress as the process phased out percentages indicated: appropriate interactions increased to a solid 74.3% and inappropriate interactions were marginalized to a mere 3.8%. Furthermore, data collected at recess for the baseline, three recesses were observed and behavior was recorded as isolated. After the friendship circle was created all eight periods of recess observed the target student exhibited behavior that was friendly. Finally, all of the students who were involved in the friendship circle showed a steady increase of social appropriate interactions and a diminishing of inappropriate interactions. Campbell-Miller et al (2003) concluded all students benefited from social skill development and the implementation of friendship circles.

The authors concluded that social skill builders such as friendship circles improved the social competence of both normally developing and mildly disabled fifth-grade students. Campbell-Miller et al. (2003) concluded that social skills are transferable to fifth grade students. With proper programs in place, social skills and socio-metric status can be improved in pre-school children, as well as fifth graders.

Reio, Maciolek & Weiss (2002) defined a quality preschool as one that enhances cognitive, social and physical development. They chose to compare child-center preschools to basic skills preschools to find the presence of anxiety and pro-social behaviors. The rationale behind the inquiry can be attributed to research that stated, “children educated in these child-centered programs are more likely to exhibit increased

self-confidence, self worth, social responsibility, and pro-social behavior, including working and playing cooperatively with others and forming and maintaining friendships” (p. 3).

Reio, Macioleck, & Weiss (2002) included an equal number of boys and girls in their study, from both a child-centered and a basic skills preschool program (n= 40). They used three observation charts to record anxiety behaviors (avoiding new situations and negative affects) and pro-social behaviors as frequency measures during free play periods and academic work time. Pro-social behavior was recorded during the free play observation. Anxiety behavior was observed during the academic activity.

There was significantly less frowning at the child-centered school. Of the pro-social behaviors observed two categories delivered significance. The children at the child-centered pre-school *invited others to play* and *praised* significantly more than the children at the basic skills preschool. Reio, Maciolek & Weiss (2002) concluded that the amount of frowning exhibited at the basic skills program could be attributed to the children’s dislike for the task, the task may be too hard or the child might feel they have a lack of control over the event. Further, Reio et al. (2002) claimed that child-centered programs encouraged social and emotional growth.

This research has offered an important curricular framework for working with preschool age children. Child-centered programs appear to encourage pro-social behavior. Basic skills programs are linked to increased frowning, which may have a detrimental effect on socio-metric status as the child grows.

Recess

Recess is essential to the study of play in schools because it is often the only free-play time children have during the school day. Like play in the classroom, many researchers believe recess may be diminishing as well. Both national and international scholarly journals take interest in recess and children's time to play.

Grugeon (2005) reported on playground literacy. Holmes, Pellegrini, & Schmidt (2005) evaluated the length of recess on attentive behavior. Additionally, Jarrett et al. (2001) reviewed the relation of attentive behavior and recess. Parsad & Lewis (2006) further evaluated recess duration. Blatchford & Sumpner (1998) considered break-time in the United Kingdom. Beighele, Morgan, Le Masurier, & Pangrazi (2006) reported on physical activity at recess and after school. Lopes, Vasques, Pereira, Maia, & Malina (2006) considered levels of vigorous activity at recess in Portugal. Finally, Pellegrini, Kato, Blatchford, & Baines (2002) evaluated games first graders play at recess.

Grugeon (2005), with the assistance of student teachers from a university in England, conducted a small ethnographic study aimed at evaluating children's emerging literacy while engaged in socio-dramatic play on the playground. The university has used student teachers for a number of years and stated "the most rewarding results have come from interviews with a child or a group of children, about what they are doing, when the student simply seeks the children's perspective" (Grugeon, 2005, p. 4). Research and analysis of data concluded that there was "a rich and dynamic oral culture" utilized by the children" (Grugeon, 2005, p. 5). Many references were made to current popular culture media including books, movies and television. The most prevalent playground game was 'pretend.' Many children could give extensive narratives describing their pretend games.

Many referenced popular culture and others were student created. Often, extensive knowledge of characters and plot were needed to join the play situation even in extremely young children.

Grugeon (2005) concluded that adults do not know the extent of children's thinking or language unless we make careful observations and really listen to them. This author recommended educators listen especially during free-play times inside and outside of the classroom for meaning-making and children's representations of future self. Next, Holmes, Pellegrini, & Schmidt (2005) have examined the relation of various recess regimens to the attentive behavior of pre-school students.

Holmes, Pellegrini, & Schmidt (2005) conducted an observational study that examined the effects of different break-time schedules on preschoolers' attention in the classroom. The study completed in the northeastern United States sampled children (n=27) aged 50 to 63 months, with a mean age 55.56 months (18 boys and 9 girls).

Holmes et al. (2006) observed children sixteen times each, over six weeks. Each observation recorded the student at recess and after recess while students listened to a story read by the teacher. Additionally, the duration of recess was used as a variable to compare with student behavior post-recess. Recess had three lengths studied: 10 minutes, 20 minutes, and 30 minutes. Attentive behavior was coded as 'attentive' if the child looked at the teacher, it was deemed 'inattentive' if the child was not looking at the teacher. Researchers concluded that the preschoolers' attentive behavior was greatest after the 20-minute recess. The study further concluded girls were more attentive after recess, as compared with boys.

Jarrett et al. (2001) utilized experimental methods to decide if recess effects classroom behavior. The sample (n= 43) came from two fourth grade classrooms, in middle to upper class socioeconomic neighborhoods. The racial demographics revealed 70% White and 30% African American students (18 boys and 25 girls). The school district had adopted an uninterrupted instructional time policy conversely students did not receive recess, except for purposes of the study.

Data collection began in mid-November and each class was observed at recess six times. After recess Jarrett et al. (2001) coded the following classroom behaviors: W (work) - On-task behavior; F (fidgety)-Excessive movement; L (listless)-Head on desk. Jarrett et al. (2001) found the effect of recess highly significant to positive classroom behavior. Subsequent analysis showed that the children worked more and were less fidgety when they had recess.

Jarrett et al. (2001) linked attentive classroom behavior with recess breaks. It is included here because quantitative data has suggested that lack of recess may correlate with inattentive behavior. Next, Parsad & Lewis (2006) used surveying to determine the length of recess in current public schools.

Parsad & Lewis (2006) conducted a survey of public, elementary schools in the United States (n= 1,198) to find the duration of recess students received. Fifty states participated in the study utilizing mail. Returned surveys determined that ninety-three percent (n= 1,198) of schools scheduled recess for first and second grade students. Eighty-seven percent of third thru sixth grade students received recess. Consequently, between 7% and 13% of elementary schools surveyed did not have scheduled recess. Parsad & Lewis (2006) reported that schools representing lower socio-economic status

among students were less likely to have recess. Upper and middle-class schools had a higher rate of recess comparatively.

Blatchford & Sumpner (1998) utilized similar methods in the United Kingdom to look for a reduction in recess. Primary schools (n= 1,245) responded questionnaires to determining the amount and break-time given and look for trends between schools. Among the rural and urban schools reporting the average amount of break-time given was 83 minutes. Fifty-six percent of schools reported a reduction in recess in the last five years.

Beighele, Morgan, Le Masurier, & Pangrazi (2006) analyzed students during recess and after school, to determine the amount of physical activity young children are getting. The population was drawn from third through eighth grade students (n= 372) in the Southwest United States. The school was economically disadvantaged with forty-one percent on free or reduced lunch. The racial demographics included 62% Hispanic, 12% White, 11% Asian, 8% African American, and 6% Filipino students.

The participants wore sealed pedometers for four consecutive school days during their fifteen-minute recess and outside of school in the afternoon. Results indicated that boys spent seventy-eight percent of their recess time engaged in physical activity. Girls only spent sixty-three percent of the time being physically active. After school considerable less time was spent being physically active. Girls spent 20% and boys spent 23% of their time engaged in physical activity. Beighele et al (2006) concluded that boys are more physically active both at recess and after school. Additionally, the study found recess to be an essential time for physical activity.

Lopes, Vasques, Pereira, Maia, & Malina (2006) studied the activity levels of students at recess in Portugal. The study consisted of six to ten years-old students, (n= 271) 140 boys and 131 girls, from five randomly selected schools. Twenty children were selected to wear actigraph technology during their thirty-minute recess periods. Spectrums of intensity were measured for each child, every ten seconds. Researchers used software to convert the actigraph calculations into units of relative energy expenditure. Findings indicated a higher number of very vigorous physical activity recorded for boys when compared to the girls results.

Pellegrini, Kato, Blatchford, & Baines (2002) sampled two urban schools in the Midwest, first graders were chosen randomly from the racially diverse schools. This longitudinal study sought to examine the games played during recess. Observations, peer-ratings, and teacher checklists were used to gather data. The data concluded that boys participate more often in play than girls. Boys are more likely to play chase or with a ball. Girls played more verbal games and were observed alone more often than boys. In conclusion, diminishing recess continued to worry researchers regarding the lack of physical activity and the need for breaks between learning periods. Gender and socio-metric status continue to be the leading determinate of play behavior.

Summary

Chapter one introduced the rationale and purpose for the inquiry of perceptions and practical implications of play at school. The strengths, limitations and theoretical frameworks behind the paper were evaluated. This chapter dealt extensively with defining play and other terms associated with play during young childhood. Chapter one

further elaborated on controversies and current curriculum setting the stage for the research findings to come.

Chapter two evaluated play, childhood and the evolution of public school from a historical perspective. The history of play and childhood is explored. The creation of schools promoted Protestant values, which included study of the bible and the need to obey laws. The creation of public schools discounted other local cultural groups. This chapter examined the perceptions young children and their parents and teachers have surrounding play. Young children have substantial knowledge of play, work and learning. This section also offered insight into parent's perception and role in young children's play. Teachers' implementation of play and physical activity, in the classroom was sparse. Factors considered to hamper play in the curriculum included the current academic focus and lack of quality space to play. Finally, rough-and-tumble play and intervention strategies were evaluated to determine student's levels of social competence and the behaviors they exhibit during play.

Chapter four will summarize the research findings detailed in this chapter. Further, it will organize common themes found in the various research articles. The benefits associated with play will be reviewed and recommendations for future research will be noted.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

Introduction

Overwhelmingly, the base of educational literature surrounding play in the elementary classroom concluded play is essential to the development of children. Further, play enhanced social competence, cognitive development and language development (Fromberg, 2002; Paley, 2000; Van Hoorn, 1993; Kamii & DeVries, 1980; Isenberg, 1997; Christie, 1991).

What are the various perspectives and practical implications of play at school? How do these perspectives change from parent to child to educator? What are the practical implications of play in young children? This chapter will review the summary of research presented in chapter three.

Summary of the Findings

The first section evaluated children's beliefs about play. Howard (2002) researched children's beliefs about what characteristics define work/play and learning/not learning, in South Wales. Another article, Liu-Yan, Pan-Yuejuan, & Sun-Hongfen (2005) inquired into kindergartener's ideas about play in Mainland China. Finally, Liang (2003) considered gender dynamics present in young children's free-play in early childhood education classrooms. Results of this section indicated that children have dynamic ideas about the work/play relation and can easily decide if an activity is work or play. Children in Mainland China and South Wales determined teacher-directed activities are educative and essentially more important than student-driven play experiences. These results indicated that educators might place a higher value on skill-based learning approaches that marginalize play, influencing children's reports. Finally,

Liang (2003) reported on gender dynamics. Pre-school age children already had ideas about gender relations and regulated the peers they interacted with based on gender.

The second section focused on parent's perspectives and practical implications of play. Fogle, Livey & Mendez (2006) discussed African American mothers' perceptions of play in early childhood development. Next, Colwell, Mize, Pettit & Laird (2002) evaluated mothers' intervention strategies during play situations. Finally, Russell & Saebel (1997) explored parents' play styles in relation to the social competency in peer situations exhibited by their child. Results indicated that parents often intervene in play situations for learning experiences. Peers exclusion and aggressive behaviors warranted the most interventions. Female children were imposed upon more often than their male peers, especially when parents or educators sought to teach social skills. It was further concluded that children with the most social competency had parents that implemented child-centered play at home.

The third section reviewed the beliefs and practices of teachers surrounding play at school. Ranz-Smith (2007) conducted a small qualitative study of first grade teachers to uncover the opinions and prevalence of play in the first grade classroom. Next, Parks, Solmon & Lee (2008) concluded that teachers report physical activity is nearly nonexistent in the elementary classroom. Teachers are simply not prepared to teach movement, all their training has been aimed at academic achievement. To further evaluate lack of play at school The Center for Education Policy (2008) reported on how *No Child Left Behind* (2001) has impacted the allocation of subjects in the early educational classroom. Next, Rogers & Evans (2007) reported on London's reception classrooms to evaluate student's access to play. Finally, McMullen et al. (2006)

examined the self-reported beliefs and practices of preschool teachers. The research concluded that *No Child Left Behind* (2001) legislation has in fact decreased the amount of time allocated to play at school. Lack of space and teacher training were other factors that hampered play in the early educational classroom.

The fourth section investigated the rough-and-tumble play. The practical implications of rough-and-tumble play were evaluated utilizing three articles. First, Tannock (2007) investigated young children and educators' perceptions of rough-and-tumble play. Next, Howe (2003) evaluated behaviors exhibited during oppositional play. Finally, Pellegrini (1994) measured socio-metric status and behaviors displayed during rough-and-tumble play at school. This section concluded that children with low socio-metric status measured by peers, parents and teachers were more likely to show aggressive behavior during rough-and-tumble play. It further indicated that lack of social skills might indeed hamper future play and success at school.

The fifth section supplied articles related to socio-emotional learning, socio-metric status and play as a form of early communication in children. Denham et al. (2001) explored social and emotional competence during play situations. Fantuzzo, Sekino & Cohen (2004) re-confirmed the importance of social competence during play situations, adding that these play interaction were the best indicator of school success in young children. Cohen & Uhry (2007) studied children involved in block play to evaluate their communication styles. Bhroin (2007) investigated how children make meaning of their play and art tasks. Pickett (2002) evaluated literacy learning in play situations. Choi (2000) involved 4-and-5 year-olds in social skills training. Campbell-Miller et al (2003) created friendship circles for fifth graders with mild disabilities.

Finally, Reio, Maciolek & Weiss (2002) evaluated the pedagogy pre-schools utilize in facilitating social and emotional growth.

Results indicated that play is essential to building social competency. Block play, literacy play-centers and art-based play are specific examples of how young children use play to enhance their communication strategies. Choi (2000) and Campbell-Miller et al. (2003) both concluded these basic socialization skills can be taught resulting in higher socio-metric status and overall success in school.

Chapter three concluded with a review of literature focused on recess. Grugeon (2005) reported on playground literacy. Holmes, Pellegrini & Schmidt (2005) evaluated the length of recess on attentive behavior. Additionally, Jarrett et al. (2001) reviewed the relation of attentive behavior and recess. Parsad & Lewis (2006) further evaluated recess duration. Blatchford & Sumpner (1998) considered break-time in the United Kingdom. Beighele, Morgan, Le Masurier, & Pangrazi (2006) reported on physical activity at recess and after school. Lopes, Vassques, Pereira, Maia, & Malina (2006) reported levels of vigorous activity at recess in Portugal. Pellegrini, Kato, Blatchford & Baines (2002) evaluated games first graders play at recess. The research available concluded that recess is being threatened by a more academically rigorous school day even for young children. The benefits associated with recess were increased attention from all students. Additionally, students who participated in dramatic-play demonstrated effective and elaborate communication patterns showing evidence of literacy understanding in children as young as four. This marked increase in literacy understanding contributed to their understanding of popular media allowing students to converse about more elaborate plot lines and character development of shared movies or books.

Classroom Implications

Current trends point to a lack of free play in young children both at school and at home. Sources cite unsafe neighborhoods, fearful parents, television, electronic games and lack of space for the lack of play at home (Parks, Solomon & Lee, 2008; Ginsberg, 2007; Ranz-Smith, 2007; Johnson, 2007; Johnson 2006; Pellegrini & Bohn, 2005; Deasy, 2002; Jarrett, 2002; Pickett, 2002;). The lack of play during the school day has been many times attributed to the No Child Left Behind legislation of 2002. This rather new legislation has called for nationalized standardized tests, school accountability to student's scores and federal monies allocated for skill-based reading curricula (Ginsburg, 2007; Ranz-Smith 2007; Jacobson, 2007; Solley, 2007; Johnson, 2006).

As play has become an expendable resource in the push for better test scores many advocates still believe learning does not have to be dictated by tests. In fact, many of the expectations set up by No Child Left Behind disregard prior research on teacher best practices (Ranz-Smith, 2007; Solley, 2007; Johnson, 2006). This paper has included many curricular frameworks that embrace creativity, imagination and a love of learning utilizing play-based philosophies. Specific examples offered include the child-centered approach, time for free play, time for recess; block play, literacy development through play, developmental curricular frameworks, learning through drama and art-enriched curriculum (Bhroin, 2007; Cohen & Uhry, 2007; Honig, 2007; Deasy, 2002; Pickett, 2002; Reio, Maciolek & Weiss, 2002; Deasy, 2001; Dodge & Bickart, 2000).

Play is also associated with children's mental and physical health. Play and physical movement are essential times where children can take a break, reflect and decompress between lessons (Parks, Solomn & Lee, 2008; Bhroin, 2007; Cohen & Uhry,

2007; Ginburg, 2007; Jacobson, 2007; Rogers & Evans, 2007; Pellegrini & Bohn, 2005; Jarrett, 2002; The National Association for Sport and Physical Education, 2002). Brain research has concluded that play is an essential component of learning for young children (Bhoin, 2007; Honig, 2007; Bergen, 2000; Dodge & Bickart, 2000).

Many of the articles suggested environmental and pedagogical strategies shown to enhance play-based learning. Play in young children is often enhanced through rich and varied learning environments. The more variables children have to act on and interact with the more learning will occur spontaneously (Dempsey & Strickland, 2007; Bergen, 2000). Many researchers concluded that children need toys that require imagination such as blocks and removable parts. This means toys with clear purposes do not foster imaginative, creative, or collaborative learning (Cohan & Uhry, 2008; Dempsey & Strickland, 2007; Ginsberg, 2007; Bergen, 2000). Further, children need space and time to play. Lack of space was considered the most restrictive factor associated with play in the kindergarten classroom (Roger & Evans, 2007).

Finally, many of the articles considered the role caregivers play in socio-emotional growth. Creation of strong parent-child relationships formed through play are essential to proper development (Ginsberg, 2007; Fogle, Livey, Mendez, 2006; Reio, Maciolek, Weiss, 2002; Dodge, Bickart, 2000).

Implications for Further Research

Teachers and administrators have little practical guidance when it comes to the implementation of play. Research showed that teachers feel unprepared to teach cognitive skills through play (Howe, 2007). Further, teachers neither use nor understand how to incorporate physical movement into the classroom (Parks, Solmon & Lee, 2008).

Play can be an essential component of learning that has been marginalized as skill-based curriculum becomes even more prevalent in public schools. However, teachers in both cases seem prepared to embrace play-based learning if professional training opportunities were available (Howe, 2007; Parks, Solmon & Lee, 2008). For these reasons the study of the effectiveness of these training efforts be studied.

Conclusion

The benefits correlated with play in young children are immense. The most monumental attribute associated with play is its unprecedented ability to foster essential social skills in young children (Pellegrini, Dupuis & Smith, 2007; Cohen & Uhry, 2007; Ashiabi, 2005; Pellegrini & Bohn, 2005; Reio, Maciolek & Weiss, 2002; Dodge & Bickart, 2000; Pickett, 2002). Research has suggested that student's social competence is a good indicator of student's success in school (Ashiabi, 2005; Pelligrini & Bohn, 2005; Reio, Maciolek & Weiss, 2002; Pellegrini, 1994;). Students that are rejected by their peers are significantly more likely to exhibit behavior assumed to be associated with dominance assertion and aggression (Howe, 2003; Pellegrini, 1994). Given the role of play in fostering social skills, play should be of paramount importance to early childhood educators and parents alike.

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