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Early Care Professionals' Perspective of Sociodramatic Play

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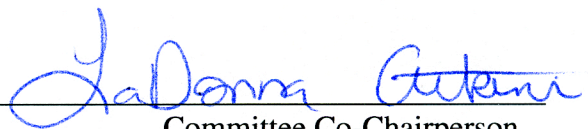
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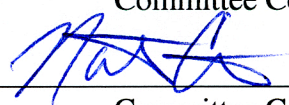
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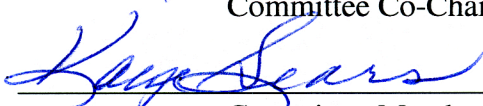
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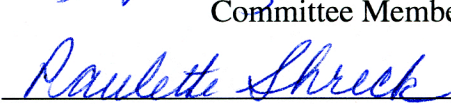
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By 
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Dedication

I dedicate this paper to my son, Casimir who has taught me the most important lessons of finding courage and strength; for my son, Blake who continues to watch and listen with sincere curiosity; to my sister, Jean Ann and brother, Amir who remind me that being a part of a family is important, good and the center of my life; to my Mom and Dad, for their unending love and support and to Dr. Maker who taught me that anything worth doing is only worth doing if it is with love.

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I want to thank the Early Care Professionals that made this work possible. Your willingness to ponder your daily experiences and observations shed new light on the day in the life of a child. Because of your sincere care and outstanding integrity the field of Early Childhood continues to expand and increase with your continued curiosity.

Abstract

This qualitative study was conducted to deepen the understanding of the Early Care Professional's perspective while implementing sociodramatic play. Data was gathered and categorized from two interviews of each of the five Early Care Professionals, field notes and observations. Four themes emerged: ECPs Chose Props and Themes, ECPs Use Reflective Practice, Stepping into Sociodramatic Play, and ECPs Inform Parents. Recommendations for further study are as follows: how the impact of props affect the child's choice of play themes, a need for peer idea sharing or mentoring, a need to raise the awareness of the importance of rough and tumble play for young children, and a need to create a classroom community which includes, respects and understands the needs of the child's family.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgment.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Nature of Problem.....	3
Purpose of the Study.....	3
Limitations.....	4
Definition of Terms.....	4
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	5
Role of the Early Care Professional.....	5
Play from the Child’s Perspective.....	6
Theories of Sociodramatic Play.....	7
Need for Sociodramatic Play.....	9
Setting Up the Sociodramatic Play Environment.....	10

Benefits of Sociodramatic Play.....	11
Perspective of the Early Care Professional on Sociodramatic Play.....	15
III. Methods.....	17
Introduction.....	17
Program.....	19
Procedure.....	19
Participants.....	20
Data Collection.....	22
Data Analysis.....	22
Quality Issues.....	23
IV. Findings.....	24
Introduction.....	24
Themes.....	24
Early Care Professionals Chose Props and Themes.....	24
Early Care Professionals Use Reflective Practice.....	26

Stepping Into Sociodramatic Play.....	28
Early Care Professionals Inform Parents.....	29
Discussion.....	32
Introduction.....	32
Discussion.....	33
Recommendations.....	37
Conclusion.....	39
REFERENCES.....	42
APPENDIXES.....	46
Appendix A.....	46
Appendix B.....	47
Appendix C.....	50

Chapter I

Introduction

*There was a child went forth every day;
And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became,
And that object became part of him for the day or a certain part of that day,
Or for many years or stretching cycles of years.*

-Walt Whitman (1819-1892)

As one reads the passage from Walt Whitman, one can imagine a tree to climb, a field to roam or a stream to cross during a day of exploration. Leong and Bodrova (2012) reflect on the changing environment of childhood “Massive changes in the culture of childhood- such as the disappearance of multiage play groups, the increase in the time children spend in adult-directed activities after school, and so on- mean that, for many young children, early childhood settings are the only place where they have the opportunity to learn how to play” (p. 31). Children’s toys and the growing influence of media are found to influence childhood play (Vickerius & Sandberg, 2006). “Large differences exist in the society today compared with one or two generations ago since today is characterized by technological, social and cultural changes” (Vickerius & Sandberg, p. 215).

Early care professionals (ECPs) have often lacked education and adequate training in the field of early childhood development (Cain, Rudd & Saxon, 2007). Bruce Perry (2006) stressed the importance of this time frame as “by the age of 4, a child’s

brain is 90% adult size” (p. 40). The child’s brain grows so quickly during early childhood and connections are formed early on responding to the many facets of their dynamic and changing environment. During these first years while the brain is malleable, 63% of young children are enrolled in child care facilities (Census Bureau, 2004). Many of those ECPs have little or no formal early childhood education about the importance of this critical period of the brain development- especially the role that sociodramatic play has in this development. ECPs who lack formal training may only gain knowledge from their experiences with young children as they reflect on the success and failures of their daily activities.

Higher quality child care facilities require greater levels of professional development and training for staff (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2001). One area in which many ECPs may lack training is the importance of sociodramatic play. Studies have shown that training and education of ECPs increase the quality of the early childhood care environment (Cain, Rudd, & Saxon, 2007). Hart and Risley (1995) found that by the age of three children acquired a larger vocabulary when raised in language rich environments. Given these findings, the time spent in an early child care environment should be a language rich environment encouraging sociodramatic play. The importance of child-initiated or child-centered learning and the child-teacher relationship is a cornerstone of developmentally appropriate practice endorsed by The National Association for the Education of Young Children (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). During uninterrupted sociodramatic play, children may explore relationship dynamics and how others perceive the world. Through their interactions with their peers they problem solve working out their stories through role plays. Paley (1990) values the

importance of play stating, “Play itself is the practice of problems” (p. 81). ECPs grounded in the best practice for young children include the children during the planning process of play guiding them to develop important thinking skills. The importance of uninterrupted child-directed play is often overlooked by untrained ECPs (Heidemann & Hewitt, 2010).

Nature of the Problem

With limited early childhood education, ECPs may lack understanding regarding the importance of child-directed, sociodramatic play. Early childhood education classes offer developmentally age appropriate curriculum to guide the ECPs into best practice by examining the difference between research supported curriculum and their personal beliefs. Without this education or training, ECPs may lack the skills in planning, or implementing play, especially sociodramatic play. Sociodramatic play is defined as play in which children interact with one another as they pretend, imitate, or creatively act out real or hypothetical scenarios. Children may engage in sociodramatic play using curiosity and imagination by trying on a role of interest then acting out their understanding using props as they practice the scenario with a play partner (Smilansky & Shefatya, 1990). Supplied with props and play partners, the child care classroom can be an ideal setting for building social and cognitive skills through sociodramatic play (Bodrova & Leong, 2005).

Purpose of this Study

This study will investigate the ECPs’ perspective using in-depth interviews exploring their hands-on experience while implementing sociodramatic play. This study is directed toward identifying and understanding the foundational beliefs that drive the

ECPs' reflective practice as in valuing the richness of a childhood moment, acknowledging the child's competence, and valuing the child's perspective. The interviews are directed entirely at capturing the perspective of the ECPs, not the children. By developing an understanding of the ECP's perspective, the field will be better equipped to educate and support all ECPs. Developing an understanding of what it is like to be an ECP will contribute to understanding in this field.

Limitations

This study is limited to a small group of early childhood professionals in the central Mid-West. This group is not representative of ECPs nationwide. This study is useful for this small and contained group only and could be illustrative to other groups and open to further investigation.

Definition of Terms

Child-Directed Play- The child has chosen the play activity and time is allowed for the play.

Decentering- A child takes the perspective of another.

Dramatic Play- A child uses an object to represent something else and the child pretends to be someone or something other than self.

Early Childhood Professional (ECP) - An adult working in the early childhood profession.

Reflective Practice- Acknowledging the process of reflecting and observing ones thoughts, feelings, actions, and reactions.

Sociodramatic Play- Play in which children interact with one another as they pretend, imitate, or creatively act out real or hypothetical scenarios.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Role of the Early Care Professionals

ECPs may be challenged as they question how children learn during child-centered play. Wondering what the child's behavior means may inspire the ECP to include the children's perspective while choosing props in their sociodramatic play area. A fundamental shift may occur when the ECP explores how to apply their reflections to enhance the children's opportunity for problem solving. Child-centered sociodramatic play themes may challenge the belief system of the ECP (Baker-Sennett, Matusov & Rogoff, 2007).

The daily routine for young children in child care settings looks much different than the routine found in traditional school classrooms, where long blocks of time are dedicated to academic skills. Instead, young children build important social and cognitive knowledge by playing house, cooperatively building structures out of blocks or drawing pictures of their personal experiences (Gupta, 2009). As ECPs understand the importance of their timing and their involvement moving in and out of the children's play, the children may learn more important lifelong skills when allowed more autonomy from their ECPs. Canning (2007) states "To reaffirm that play is a natural process, the benefits of play, processes and significant experiences that can be explored through play need to be championed so that practitioners may also feel empowered to create space and time for adult-free play" (p. 228).

Caregivers often interact and respond to parents' various requests as they arrive and return for their child. The daily routine might not include time for children to develop

and practice new social skills unless the caregivers and parents acknowledge the importance of play as a learning activity for young children (Stanton-Chapman, Kaiser, Vijay, & Chapman, 2008). ECPs may need to show the parents how play is valuable to skill development.

Play from the Child's Perspective

Curtis and Carter (2000) observe “Children have the right to wrestle through the difficult moments of childhood with adult respect and support for the full expression of their strong feelings” (p. 99). Howard, Jenvey and Hill (2006) investigated what play looks like through the eyes of children. Children were asked to categorized pictures of children playing with peers, children playing alone, and children in classroom settings with adults. Children categorized the pictures of children with peers and playing alone as play; whereas pictures of children with adults were not categorized as play. This study identifies a problem that ECPs face. Children may feel interrupted, sensing play time is over if the children do not understand how to integrate adults into their play. With keen observation and flexibility the ECP nurtures the development of each child, a unique individual.

Vickerus and Sandberg (2007) found that children believe play was for making friends and interacting with friends. Studies support the children's need for play time. Canning (2007) states, “In play children have the opportunity to practice developing their unique self, increasing their awareness of the personal and social relationships they encounter and most importantly empowering them to develop as individuals” (p. 236). Taguchi (2007) identified the importance of children's thinking as Victor, a five year old boy said that, “someone might know what this gadget is, but no one knows what it can

become!” (p. 277). A *gadget* can take many forms during dramatic play. Children are empowered as unique individuals as they direct and work out their play scenarios.

Theories of Sociodramatic Play

Karen Gallas (2003) states, “I have always believed that play is a critical part of learning and wonder is the fuel that feeds our desire to understand the world” (p. 4). Gallas explored the process of the imagination through the system of comprehending the content in a book by saying “we are projecting ourselves into another space, another time, and another framework. To read a text with understanding and insight, we must move inside the text, pulling our life along with us and incorporating the text and our lives into a new understanding of the world” (p. 20). As children play house or other activities the imagination is sparked while simultaneously children have the opportunity to build social skills. During sociodramatic play a story is created, roles assigned, props chosen, rules are agreed upon and followed. Children learn decentering taking on the perspective of their friends as they learn how to make and keep friendships.

Sociodramatic play comes alive in Paley’s classroom using her story telling/story acting curriculum, documented in her book, *The Boy Who Would be a Helicopter* (1990). Paley reflected on her observation of sociodramatic play as “friendship and fantasy form the natural path that leads children into a new world of other voices, other views, and other ways of expressing ideas and feelings they recognize as similar to their own” (p. 34). Frequent practice in various types of settings allows children the opportunity to learn what works and what does not work in relationships (de Groot Kim, 2005).

Vygotsky , a leading theorist on play investigated how a child’s thoughts are stretched into new understanding:

In play a child is always above his average age, above his daily behavior; in play, it is as though he were a head taller than himself. As in the focus of a magnifying glass, play contains all developmental tendencies in a condensed form; in play, it is as though the child were trying to jump above the level of his normal behavior. (1933/1967, p. 16)

Vygotsky's play theory applies to children playing in the dramatic play area in group care. Children follow their own agreed upon rules. The dog must *bark* and the cat must *meow* as their story unfolds. This internal rule making and rule following builds the child's ability to take cues from within instead of looking outside for constant reinforcement. This becomes the practice of self-regulation by imposing and following the agreed upon rules the child has created. Vygotsky's rules of play become, "rules of self-constraint and self-determination" (1933/1967, p. 10).

Fosnot (2005) explores Piaget's ideas toward constructivism. As children imagine the story and bring the characters to life, they must use information they already know. New knowledge is compared to knowledge already known through the process of *assimilation* and *accommodation*. New information is assimilated by comparing what is already known to the new information and accommodated by bringing the new information into new knowledge. The uncomfortable step between the assimilation and accommodation takes the learner into the process of weighing whether the new information is accepted or rejected although there is another alternative for the new knowledge. The learner can choose to acknowledge the new information even though the new information is incongruent to the knowledge already learned and accepted like when choosing roles for playing house. One child may role play a kind gentle teacher while

their friend wants the teacher to use a harsh voice. Children make up stories from their experiences trying out new ideas with their friends during uninterrupted sociodramatic play. The natural curiosity of a child leads to endless possibilities to build new knowledge through acting out problems during sociodramatic play.

Need for Sociodramatic Play

Student success has been found to directly correlate with rich family emotional interactions. “Such family interactions would include those that lead youth to feel satisfied about being helped out in times of distress, feel loved and cared for, and feel that they were given plenty of parental time and attention” (Woolley & Grogan-Kaylor, 2006, p. 101). The ECPs at the child care center or child care home may become the young child’s extended family by building a secure and trusting relationship with the family. Sociodramatic play can be a powerful activity for young children as they explore new vocabulary, various conversation styles, and emotions. Children may feel different types of emotions during arguments, discussions, and resolutions which call for reasoning skills building resilience and high self-esteem (Gupta, 2009). As children create dramatic play scenarios they follow the rules they agree upon. For example, the mommy must act a certain way guided by the story teller. Children learn how to take on their friend’s perspective as they act out each other’s story as they monitor each other and themselves. Self-regulation may be developed in this type of social play (Bodrova, 2008). The ECP may glide in and out of the play story helping the child into a deeper understanding during their play scenario (de Groot Kim, 2005). It is important for ECPs however, to limit their involvement to facilitate and not the determination of the sociodramatic play.

Setting up the Sociodramatic Play Environment

Caregivers may provide space, time and supplies along with keen observation acknowledging each individual child's talents and interest (Boyle & Charles, 2010). As ECPs ponder how the play environment can be supported, reflective practice plays an important role in helping them alter ineffective routines or practices. Classroom dramatic play areas can be transitioned from routine free play to acting out the child's story through Vivian Paley's story telling/story acting (Gupta, 2009). Research inspired by Paley's storytelling/story-acting, highlighted sociodramatic play in a classroom with 4 and 5 year old children. The team observed the children playing in the dramatic play area and found several areas that were stifling the children's full use of dramatic play. The team found that the same children chose to play in the dramatic play each day that the teacher guided and chose the topic, that the children were distracted by the activities in the classroom, and that the children were not interested in watching as an audience. As a result, the research team transitioned the dramatic play area into child initiated and teacher directed story telling /story acting (Gupta).

As the transition progressed, the children were given the opportunity to act out their imagined stories becoming more interested in the development of their dramatic play scenario (Gupta, 2009). The children were transitioned into story telling/story acting first by learning how to act out the plot in a book as well as how to tell a story from their daily art projects and life experiences. As the children became comfortable with new this avenue for expression, the teacher began the story telling / story acting process. The child dictated their story to their classroom teacher as part of the daily routine. Then later

during story time the teacher told the story to the class. The paragraph below illustrates the storyteller's role:

Providing the story plot and the characters; choosing the actors from those children who volunteered for each role; determining costumes to suit the various characters and roles in the story; having the option to paint the scenery for the stage; and directing the actors in the delivery of dialogue, choice of words and suitable body movements. Some of the props that were used included easel paintings of trees to symbolize a forest described in a story; a piece of art work on easel paper that would go upon a 'wall' for the story in which 'there was a painting hung on a wall'; discarded cardboard boxes that were painted on a daily basis would become a truck, or a castle (p. 1044).

The child dictates their story to their classroom teacher; the story is read to the class by the teacher and acted out by chosen friends. The story is performed to the classroom audience and discussed (Gupta). The attitude of the children in the audience changed from lack of interest into an important part of the dramatic play. The children learned to offer suggestions and hold discussions. The teacher became the facilitator by writing the comments on the wall for reflection. The teacher is constantly observing and encouraging the children to express themselves without her interruption in their construction of new knowledge.

Benefits of Sociodramatic Play

Young children enrolled in child care centers and family child care homes have a great opportunity to learn how to make friends at an early age. A well planned and equipped sociodramatic play area may provide practice for young children learning how

to navigate in and out of strong feelings and emotions as they act out stories with their friends broadening their perspectives.

In a study by Smilansky (1968), sociodramatic play is applied as an intervention to a group of high risk children. The children were taken on field trips to broaden their experience. The props in the sociodramatic play area were set up for the children to act out the field trip. The children were observed during their sociodramatic play and support was provided for children that showed signs of difficulty. Teachers supported the children's attempts at self-directed play by gently stepping into the play scenario and taking on a role or asking questions to guide the children toward problem solving. Guidance during the treatment helped the children learn how to problem solve during self-directed play.

Like Smilansky but with a different focus, Roskos, Christie, and Richgels (2003) study the importance of the sociodramatic play. "The general benefits of play for children's literacy development are well documented, showing that a literacy enriched play environment exposes children to valuable print experiences and lets them practice narrative skills" (Christie & Roskos 2003). The Smilansky study and the study by Roskos, Christie, and Richgels the sociodramatic play area is set-up for children to pretend daily activities like grocery shopping or eat at a restaurant. Roskos, Christie and Richgels observe the opportunities for literacy development during sociodramatic play. The children playing restaurant order from a menu using pictures instead of words exposing the children to literacy, the waiter pretends to write the order on a pad and the children work out problems as they discuss the menu options. Both studies use props to create a purposeful sociodramatic play.

In a study by Gupta the sociodramatic play area is designed by the children to act out their story. Gupta (2009) reflects on the outcome of her sociodramatic play study:

This process began to generate profuse verbal interaction and exchange of ideas on several social issues that had emerged during the course of the story. Some of the issues that came up for discussion were the ethics of hunting and the killing of animals, gender differences and why certain roles had to be limited to either gender, the debate between costumes and props; choosing the actors; organizing the stage; handling the direction or the play and dealing with suggestions and advice (p.1045).

When the children are in charge of the themes, they were found to engage in spontaneous idea sharing more often than the groups guided by adults (Baker-Sennet, Matusov, & Rogoff, 2007). Children's theme choices may feel uncomfortable for ECPs, but remains very important. Logue and Detour (2011) conducted a *bad guy* sociodramatic play study in their classroom to inform their teaching practice. The *bad guy* theme is chosen daily. The teachers found that "(1) children's pretend play can become complex when teachers support but do not direct it, (2) teachers' discomfort with certain play themes might inhibit play that could be valuable to children, (3) children's pretending to act aggressively is not the same as acting aggressively, and (4) play has a rhythm and structure that can be better understood through documentation and reflection" (p. 1). Teachers often want to stop *bad guy* play for fear the children will become too rowdy and get hurt. The findings suggest that *bad guy* play is purposeful.

In a study of sociodramatic play as story telling/story-acting, Gupta (2009), found positive outcomes.

1. Children's language was seen to improve with regard to an enhanced vocabulary and increased complexity of syntax. This occurred due to their participation in story-telling as well as through the increased verbal interactions with peers during and after the story enactment.

2. Deep-rooted emotional needs were expressed in the course of story-telling as children played around with and confronted their own conflicts. Playing out their emotional conflicts led to increased levels of self-confidence and self-esteem.

3. There was an increased awareness and interest in social issues that dealt with gender roles, power and control, ethical and moral issues, and so forth. In a story about hunters, the issue of hunting down and killing animals was explored as the discussion centered on whether it was right to kill animals even if they were not harming us.

4. The activity offered opportunities for collaborative problem-solving, negotiating, organizational skills, leadership skills and decision-making. Choosing actors for the various roles, designing props that would be used in each story, having to justify choices, and more importantly, coming to an agreement of sorts resulted in the facilitation of conflict resolution in the classroom in general.

5. Children served as important facilitators of each other's cognitive development as they engaged in discussion with peers and this led to enhanced instances of moral reasoning as well.

6. There was an increase in the recognition of different perspectives, willingness to accept other possibilities, and a decentering from their own egocentric selves. This further led to the whole group becoming more aware of each other, knowing each other better and coming together as a stronger community (p.1052).

Perspective of the Early Childhood Professional on Sociodramatic Play

Nicolopoulou, Barbosa de Sa, and Brockmeyer (2010) discuss the importance of the teacher's influence and attitude in the classroom during sociodramatic play, "Their key contribution is to establish, maintain, and facilitate a child-driven and peer-oriented activity that develops its own autonomous dynamics, within which the children themselves can take an active role in their own socialization and development" (p. 46). Logue and Detour (2011) explored their concerns and opinions regarding *bad guy* actors in their dramatic play area. They observed the children acting like *bad guys* every day in the dramatic play area. The teachers decided to only make comments as they observed the play and only step in when invited and guided by the children, but they would not stop the play. The dramas were spontaneously acted out and the story line surfaced. Logue and Detour found the importance of the *bad guy* characters in order to act out bravery and helpfulness. By allowing the *bad guys* to act badly, the teachers came to a new understanding. Through reflective practice the teachers understood the children needed the *bad guy* characters to act out bravery. The dramatic play area can serve as a safe place to recognize feelings and act out emotions helping children understand how life works.

Harris (2007) interested in teaching child-centered play to ECPs conducted a workshop for the teachers to experience the feeling of being in charge of the design with limited guidance and criteria. Upon finishing the workshop the groups of teachers were asked what they had learned about play. One participant responded, "Early childhood teachers need to be playful teachers" (p. 151). One group noted, "Creative thinking improves with practice and experience" (p. 151). Another group commented, "Play is an

essential element of early childhood teaching and can be incorporated into all curriculum areas” (p. 151). Lastly, one group addresses a common concern of caregivers which is how to win parental support for child-directed play based curriculum, “We’ve learned ways to educate parents about play. Although before we would have used play, now we know we can use it to teach-it’s not just wasting time” (p. 151).

Story telling/ story acting is an example of child-centered sociodramatic play. The theme, props and scenario are chosen by the child and facilitated by the adult. The adult observes and supports the child’s story by providing supplies, organizing the process of dictation and choosing friends for the roles and helping the children understand how to act when they watch their friends act out their stories.

Chapter III

Methodology

Introduction

This study is of a qualitative nature. Creswell (2007) defines qualitative research as “an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (p. 15). Creswell’s definition of qualitative research offers a foundation for this study. Grounded theory is applied as an inductive process by identifying the categories most prevalent throughout the interviews. The primary researcher (PR) used interviews, field notes and observations to build the theory based on the five participants. The data analysis spiral described by Creswell allowed the PR to saturate the categories by reading and rereading data until the significant ideas that reoccur are identified and brought to light (p.151). Two interviews of each participant were conducted gathering data to deepen the understanding of the five teacher’s perspectives as they shared their experience when asked questions around the topic of implementing sociodramatic play for young children. Five ECPs were chosen for this study from five different child care facilities. Even though each facility is licensed and accredited the initial field notes illustrate a great difference between each facility.

The PR introduced the study during the initial visit. At the first child care center the ECPs walked down the sidewalk escorting a child in each hand. The ECP were happily walking from building to building supervising the Trick or Treat activity. The final stop was at the Senior Center where the staff came out dressed in doll costumes with

a bowl of candy. At the next stop the Leadership Team from a local high school had decorated the halls for Halloween. The child care facility enrolls typically developing children as well as special needs children. The children were playing quietly as they were dropped off for the day. At the next stop the ECP supervised the children dressed in Halloween costumes singing and shaking homemade instruments during their weekly music class conducted by a local music teacher. At the next facility, the ECP told the young children to sit on their carpet square during the initial visit. The last stop, the ECP kept the children in chairs and highchairs watching television. There are varying degrees of difference between these facilities. The perspective of the ECP is the focus of this study.

Built into the qualitative research method the PR is given the necessary time for relationship building. During the first meeting the interview process was discussed as a way to open the relationship. The PR explains the process in great detail allowing time for questions by explaining that the goal of the interviews is to understand what it is like to care for young children in group care with the main focus, the dramatic play area. The conversation took place to help the ECP feel confident that her answers were right and there is no wrong answer. It was explained that the questions are just a tool to unwrap the thought process of the ECP. During this discussion it is made clear that there are no consequences attached to this interview. Each participant agreed to engage in two one hour interviews. One interview took place, then a second interview two weeks later.

Five accredited facilities in the Mid-West were chosen for their high standard of care and stability in the community; two large child care centers and three child care homes. The lead teacher in the 3 year-old classroom was chosen by the director in one of

the child care centers and the 2 and 3 year-old classroom teacher was chosen by the director in the other child care center. Of the three family child care homes chosen for the study two of the participants were the owner and one of the participants was the owner's assistant. The focus of the study is the ECPs perspective while implementing sociodramatic play with young children.

The Program

Accredited child care facilities require an area designated for dramatic play. The dramatic play area looks different at each of the five participating facilities. The PR was seeking to deepen understanding by gathering data through interviews, field notes and observations focused on the perception of the ECPs' experience while implementing sociodramatic play in the child care facility. A script designed for this study approved through the IRB was used with probing open ended questions for inquiry into the daily dramatic play themes to understand how the ECP anticipates and provides props, time, and guidance. Two weeks later a follow-up interview was conducted for clarification and deeper understanding of the ECPs' perspective.

Procedure

Four visits were conducted to each of the five facilities. In order to set a friendly and comfortable tone for the interviews, introductions were made during the first visit. The PR clearly explained that the purpose of the interview is to deepen the understanding of what it is like for the ECP to implement sociodramatic play and that the scripted questions are merely a springboard to help initiate a reply to bring light to the ECP's perspective. The PR emphasized that there are no wrong answers and that the interviewee's honest response is important data. The ECPs were encouraged to answer

the questions from their perspective of how they experience the implementation of sociodramatic play. Time was spent answering questions and acknowledging the observed strengths of the program. The PR provided a contact phone number and a date was set for the first interview.

The first interview began by asking if children's drawings are used for story making to see if the ECP were familiar with Vivian Paley's story telling/ story acting program and how the themes for the dramatic play area are chosen. Next, the difference between Dramatic Play and Sociodramatic Play was defined to open a discussion around current play themes and what causes the ECP to step into the children's play. The discussion is guided toward the method the ECP uses to reflect on their daily experience implementing sociodramatic play. A return visit was scheduled in two weeks to continue discussing play themes and ECP interaction. A final visit was planned for the ECPs to review the transcript for their approval. Pseudonyms are used and the transcripts will remain anonymous.

Participants

The five ECPs were selected from accredited licensed child care facilities. Accredited child care facilities were chosen over non-accredited for stability and high quality. The consent agreement forms were signed on site. The PR explained that the interviews would be used to deepen the PR's understanding of their perspective, not searching for a correct answer. One of the ECPs teaches in the 3 year-old classroom in a large child care center and one of the ECPs teaches in the 2 year-old room and the 3 year-old room. Three of the ECPs operate family child care homes.

The ECPs caring for children in family child care homes are: Alice, Denise and Terrie's daughter, Tonya. Alice is a white female, age 47 and has cared for children in her home for 28 years. Alice will have her Associate's Degree in Early Childhood when she completes the last 3 of the fundamental requirements. Alice explains she may or may not complete her degree in the next few years. Terrie's daughter, Tonya is a black female, age 27. Tonya was raised in the family child care home and has cared for children since she was 16 years-old. Tonya has worked for her mother for a total of 8 years and has earned her Bachelor of Science Degree in Physical Education with several classes in Early Childhood. Tonya is currently pursuing a Master's Degree. Denise is a black female, 46 years-old and has cared for children in her family child care home for 36 years. Denise worked in her mother's child care center afterschool much like Tonya. Denise has taken some college classes in Early Childhood. Denise and Alice have focused on their children's education. Denise has a child in college and does not intend to return and Alice began a class in college during the study.

Two ECPs in child care centers were chosen to participate in this study. Ashley is the lead teacher in the 3 year-old classroom at a large center designed to accommodate typically developing children and children with special needs. There are 16 children enrolled in Ashley's classroom around the age of three with three teachers. Seven are normally developing or typical and 9 children with Special Needs. Ashley reports the children's needs for accommodations are due to: meningitis, downs syndrome, Junes syndrome, hydrophanous, cerebral palsy, and autism.

Ashley is a white 27 year-old female working as an ECP for 9 years and has been employed at this center for 3 1/2 years. Ashley has earned her Associate Degree in Early

Care and Administration and is currently enrolled at a nearby university finishing her Bachelor's Degree in Early Care.

Carol is the 2 and 3 year-old teacher at a Technology Center and laboratory school. Carol is a 43 year-old white female and has been working in child care for 15 years, 4 of these at the Technology Center. Carol has taken some college hours in early childhood education, but like Alice and Denise she is focusing on her children's education and does not intend to pursue a degree.

Data Collection

Four site visits were made to each facility. The interviewer spent time with each participant collecting in-depth data through two interviews and taking field notes and observations. During the first visit the study was explained and a date was set for the first interview. Next, the two interviews were conducted and typed. During the last visit, the participant reviewed the transcript of the interviews.

Data Analysis

This study is of a qualitative nature. A grounded theory is built using the Strauss and Corbin (1998) method of data analysis (Creswell, 2007, p.156-157). The data for this study is grounded by using the interviews as well as the field notes and observations. The data was organized using the open coding process to identify four common themes. Each interview was dissected and arranged into categories using the open coding process searching for the ECPs' perspective to understand how sociodramatic play is implemented. Four common themes emerged and dimensionalized on a continuum and explored for meaning (Glaser & Strauss, 1971; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1996).

Quality Issues

The program was not designed as a training session, yet the ECPs may glean valuable information by engaging during the interviews. Sociodramatic play and dramatic play were explored and defined to help the participants understand how to observe and support children as they build social and cognitive skills through sociodramatic play. Reflective practice is supported throughout this program by giving the ECPs time to reflect upon thoughtful open ended questions with a scheduled return visit for follow up to express their new understanding or for continued pondering. The participants were given time for clarification of their new understanding, which in turn broadened the data into a deeper understanding of the participant's perspective for analysis collection. From the discourse analysis unexpected topics emerged that are not directly related to sociodramatic play that are important from the ECPs' perspective and included in the analysis.

Open Coding: The following four common themes emerged: ECPs Chose Props and Themes, ECPs Use Reflective Practice, Stepping into Sociodramatic Play, and ECPs Inform Parents.

Chapter IV

Findings

Introduction

As I analyzed the interviews searching for the ECPs' perspectives, I found that the five ECPs interviewed had a keen eye for observation as well as years of experience. The answers to the questions were long and thoughtful touching topics that were important from their perspective, but not directly related to sociodramatic play. From a constant comparison of the in-depth interviews emerged the ECPs' perspective.

During the first interviews, three of the ECP just gave a shrug with no answer to the first two or three questions inquiring how the children are guided to choose themes in their dramatic play. Then answers to the concrete questions came easily by asking what type of props are available for the children in the dramatic play area and what types of themes the children like to act out. Searching the transcripts for a deeper understanding through these questions and answers the ECPs refer to play in their own unique perspective, "Play is life", "The whole room is set up for dramatic play", and "I love dramatic play." It was the intent of this study to probe into the ECPs' long uninterrupted answers to unwrap their perspective beyond the easy answer and into the ECPs' perspective of their implementation of sociodramatic play. The following four themes emerged.

Themes

ECPs Chose Props and Themes

One of the patterns that emerged throughout interviews was regarding the use of props during sociodramatic play. The need for constant flexible response is informed by

the observation of sociodramatic play and sometimes is expanded by additional props or a new theme. Reported in one of the interviews, “We were outside 2 hours this morning.” The ECP tells of her observation of sociodramatic play outside. During the first interview the ECP stated “they are getting married to each other.” The next interview she reported, “Today their pet was dying and I got the pet stuff out so they could take care of them.” The ECP observed and responded to the children’s developing play scenario by bringing them the toy medical bag from the supply cabinet when they decided they were not going to bury the dying pet and instead they became veterinarians in need of a medical bag. By careful observation of sociodramatic play the ECP extended the length of the play for the children to solve a new problem.

Sociodramatic play is described by an ECP as she learned about a child’s daily care routine at home when she observed the child during her beauty shop play. The ECP heard the child tell her doll, “be still, turn your head this way” as the child brushes the doll’s hair. The ECP’s understanding of the individual child’s home life deepened through her keen observation of the child’s choice of props and dialogue.

Another ECP caring for a broad age group, infants through school age children reflects on the school age children’s theme this week. The ECP explained that the school age children come to her when they need more supplies. The school age children have well developed social skills asking for more toy horses from the supply cabinet. She states “They have blocks out with the horses.” The school age children worked together to create a corral out of large homemade unit blocks with toy horses. The ECP supports their sociodramatic play by providing supplies and allowing time for the children to build all week in their playroom then tear it down and reload the block shelves every Friday.

An ECP talks about her recent sociodramatic play observation of her young group of two year-old children as they pretended to shop for groceries. On the day described the ECP added paper grocery sacks and toy food to the dramatic play area. The ECP states “The kids take the bags, pack them and unload them. They tell me, ‘We made it home.’ They sit in the corner of the play room and pretend to drive to their home. They say, ‘Come on let’s go to the house’ then they unload the groceries.” Careful observation guided the ECP to choose a theme for this young group. The theme gave the children an opportunity to work out the routine family trip to the grocery store.

During a return visit a few of the children began to wake up. They sat beside their cot and placed their baby doll where they had been lying and covered the baby with their blanket and began patting the baby doll’s back. The ECP explained that is how the teachers start naptime in the classroom and the children just started doing this on their own.

ECPs Use Reflective Practice

As the PR examined the interviews to understand how the ECPs make decisions the process of Reflective Practice surfaced as a platform for exploration of thoughts, feelings, actions, and reactions. The perspective of the ECP is held with self-awareness using careful observation and a constant flexible response. Each ECP interviewed described how changes are made by reflecting on the observation of the children during sociodramatic play.

During a first interview, the ECP expressed her concern regarding a grieving child in her care. The child had begun acting defiantly and was quickly becoming unmanageable. The ECP explained how she was thinking about asking the family to find

another child care. Her story was long as she continued without interruption. Very little was typed regarding her observation of sociodramatic play in that hour. The discussion instead was directed at how the grieving child's defiant behavior stops the children from sociodramatic play.

During the return interview the ECP told of how the first interview inspired her to make some changes regarding how she interacted with the grieving child and his family. She told the mother, "If you will become ok, he will become ok." She had retold her observations and feelings to her husband after our first interview and made some changes. By allowing her to express her concern she felt supported professionally and personally. She was able to support the family of the grieving child by making changes instead of asking the family to find another child care. The ECP reflected by stepping back and wondering what the child's behavior really meant. She thought about what the child's behavior was telling her and how she felt about her thoughts and feelings and identified what she needed to do for the child, the family and for herself. Self-awareness is a common theme throughout the ECPs perspective. Self-awareness is the foundation for reflective practice necessary for creating and recreating the opportunity for children to experience sociodramatic play.

During another interview one of the ECPs shared a long uninterrupted observation. The ECP explains that she learned about the child's home life when they played beauty shop together, then the observation changed to her view of the parent's perspective. She began by saying, "The kids say things and act out what they do at home." The ECP continues by explaining that

“one girl, at home she plays teacher. She tells everyone at home, ‘put your listening ears on’ I will hear them say things I said and it sounds different when they say it. They use a different tone than me. They really listen to what you say. I think sometimes things we say or do are acted out differently than how I meant it. It is not what I was trying to portray.”

In this case, the keen observation informs the ECP of the child’s home culture from the parent’s perspective. The ECP learned that the child’s perspective of the classroom teacher is acted out at home the same way that the ECP watches the child act home life in the classroom. The reflective practice brings self- awareness.

Stepping Into Sociodramatic Play

The interviews show a pattern of the ECPs constantly observing for the teachable moment to build social and cognitive knowledge by stepping into the play. During an interview one ECP that cares for 2 and 3 year-old children reflects on a recent experience stepping into a child’s sociodramatic play “Sometimes when they play ‘mommy’ they need a hug and they miss their mommy. I say, ‘Please come hug my baby. She misses her mommy.’ The ECP describes how she steps into the child’s pretend play modeling self-regulation skills by showing the child how to comfort her baby doll which helps the child comfort herself. In this scenario, the ECP values Sociodramatic Play as an important learning opportunity by gently meeting the child in her pretend play which helped the child practice an important self-care skill. In the next step of self-care the child that woke up and patted the baby doll’s back was practicing self-awareness by acting out their problem pretending to be the teacher as they pat the baby doll. In this scenario the teacher did not step in.

An ECP shared a recent story where two children engaged in sociodramatic play began an argument over the use of the toy microwave. When the ECP asked what was wrong the child told her, “I want to warm up my chicken, and he is cooking ice cream. You don’t even cook ice cream.” The ECP observed and stepped in to help when the two children were working out a conflict over different opinions in the house keeping area.

One ECP talks about her interaction with the toddlers as she facilitates sociodramatic play with constant supervision and steps in as a playmate. She speaks for the children as she describes what the children are doing during their pretend play in the toy kitchen “make me some spaghetti” and “Get me some oj and ice.” This intervention helps the toddlers build new vocabulary as they act out her directions. The children match the words to their movement.

In an interview one of the ECPs stated that when the children were pretending to make cupcakes they asked her, “Come help us stir.” Another interview illustrates how the ECPs step into sociodramatic play to help resolve conflicts. An ECP states that she steps in and says “Let her wear it first then you get your turn” and when redirection is needed “We have a baby over here that needs someone to hold her and love her.” The ECP steps into sociodramatic play to help the children work out their problems.

ECPs Inform Parents

In one of the interviews the ECP talks about her outdoor sociodramatic play theme last week. She said, one of the toddlers enjoyed sitting in the sandbox pinching a handful of sand and watched it fall to his arm then back into the sandbox. The ECP said the parent told her that “she found half a cup of sand on his body.” The ECP and the parent agreed play can be dirty. The ECP told another story of how she was challenged

by a parent asking about what curriculum she uses and explained that her environment was set up for children to *learn how to learn* she continued, “I have this set up for them to learn their social skills.” One ECP out of the five interviewed talked about how she informs the parents of the importance of play for building social skills needed for school.

The ECP tells of a recent interaction with a parent at pick-up time, “The boys like to dress up in the fairy tale tutus because it is prettier. Boys can wear the tutu. It is not specific for boy or girl. Mom was teasing him for playing with dolls, just teasing him. He had on a dress with high heels and showed it to mom. We were just teasing him, it is ok.” The ECP expressed her comfort with the parent and shared their affection for the boy in this dialogue. The ECPs share affection for the children with their parents, but they also have strong opinions. One ECP stated “The parents expect the teachers to do their job. These parents get off 3:30 and don’t get here until 5:30 when I close. The professionals are just as bad. She acts like she doesn’t even want her daughter.” Another ECP refers to a child that is carried by his family and stated “We can’t carry him, he is too heavy. He must stand up. It is 8 feet from the room to the gym. His grandmother picks him up for therapy on Thursdays. She struggles to get him. He raises his hands for his grandmother and mother to hold him. Sometimes he just doesn’t want to walk.”

The ECP talked about a conversation she had with a mother, “His environment must change. They have been using that as an excuse for his acting out. If you give a kid a crutch they will use it.” The ECP continued to by explaining “I would tell him, “Now go home and tell her what you did and then tell her what I did. Tell her you put dirt in her face, pushed her down the steps, and then you tell her about me. He has been put out of several daycares because of mom.” The ECP was explaining that the parent complained

that the ECP was too hard on her son because of what her son would tell her.

An ECP caring for an infant explains how she helped the parents understand the need for attention to their infant's weak neck muscles. The ECP said "Her parents pay more attention now. They ask, 'Was she leaning today?' I make her move her head."

Parents are a common theme throughout the interviews. One ECP speaks about what happens when parents enter the room, "more than 5 minutes and they (the children) would be running." This statement implies parents are not a part of the classroom community. "They get out stuff and do not put it up when I am talking with a parent. We must be focused with the kids all the moments. More than 5 minutes and they would be running. They pull everything out. I can stop it when I am without the parents." The ECP lost authority when the parents arrive.

Chapter V

Discussion

Introduction

After careful examination of the interviews, field notes and observations, four common themes emerged: ECPs chose props and themes, ECPs use reflective practice, step into sociodramatic play, and ECPs inform parents. The ECPs were asked questions directly related to sociodramatic play: props, play themes, how do you know when it is time to step into the children's play scene, how long does it take the children to set up their dramatic play area. The questions were designed to inspire discussion about sociodramatic play from the ECPs' perspective, not just for the answers, but to listen for the reasons why they do what they do. The use of constant comparative analysis resulted in four themes that lay the foundation of how the ECP perceives her role in the daily routine with the children.

During thoughtful exploration looking for patterns in the interviews it was found that three of the five ECPs interviewed in this study care for a child with social difficulty. Denise owns an accredited family child care home, Ashley is the teacher in the three year old room of a large accredited center enrolling typically developing children and children with special needs and Tonya is her mother's assist at their accredited family child care home. All three have a waiting list for new enrollment and all three shared stories of children with social difficulties. The ECPs told stories of a child in their care that did not play with the other children. Their stories are similar to the boy helicopter in Vivian Paley's (1990) *The Boy who would be Helicopter*. In Paley's book, a young boy is enrolled in group care without the social skills to make and keep friends. The boy

preferred to act like a helicopter which was in constant need of repair. Similar to Denise, Ashley and Tonya, Paley wonders aloud with the reader as her perspective is unwrapped struggling with the question, “How to understand the children as they learn how to become a friend with a boy helicopter?” Vivian Paley facilitates problem solving through child-directed story telling/ story acting. Vivian Paley’s story telling/ story acting could have been helpful in these situations demanding self-awareness and keen reflective observation skills. The four themes found in this study are woven in *The Boy who would be Helicopter*. The PR will use the work of Paley (1990) in analyzing how these ECPs could use sociodramatic play to assist these children with behavioral problems.

Discussion

Each of these identified themes could be used by the ECPs to guide children’s sociodramatic play in a way that could help them overcome some of the difficulties the way Vivian Paley (1990) employed in her book *The Boy who would be Helicopter*. In the following discussion, each of the themes will be discussed by first identifying each theme in working with a difficult child, providing some examples of how the ECPs approached their children, and recommendations from the PR based upon the work of Paley (1990).

ECPs Chose Props and Themes

The first of these identified themes was the choice of props and themes to guide play. One example of how the ECP may have used play to help with one of these difficulties comes from Denise.

During one of our interviews, Denise talks about a child in her care that pretends to be Spiderman and draws only spiders. Denise shows me a large sheet of paper from a

group drawing. I can see the colored spiders in the area where the child that likes spiders must have sat. Denise explains that the child likes to pretend he is Spiderman but runs into the corner and trembles when the children start playing too loud or it is too chaotic. When the group becomes too loud Denise reminds them to calm down.

According to Paley (1990), this ECP could have used story telling/ story acting, especially the selection of props. The ECP can use the child's Spiderman theme to apply the story telling/ story acting to help the group play together. Props can support the child's Spiderman theme like a cape, a wrist band to pretend making a spider web, and a cardboard box drawn to look like a building.

ECPs Use Reflective Practice

The second theme identified in this study was the use of Reflective Practice by the ECPs. Tonya provided an example of this practice. Tonya has been caring for a child with a severe physical disability. When the child first began care at her home, the child "could not crawl or walk." Tonya talks about how the child has developed from being immobile to walking and playing with the other children. "When we played *ring around the rosy* the kids could not hold her hand; she was too heavy." During the interviews Tonya reflected on how she felt a need to help the child build the desire to want to play with the other children. Self-reflection was a pattern found throughout the interviews. As Tonya reflected on the success and failure of each day she discovered that *ring around the rosy* was an effective activity toward building a classroom community.

Like in Tonya's story, the helicopter boy in Paley's book plays alone for months. He will not interact with the other children, even when they ask him to play. Paley observes and reflects acknowledging that the children do not try to make him act like a

boy. The children accept that Jason pretends to be a helicopter and think of ways to include him in their play.

“Joseph persists “I gotta idea, Jason. Your helicopter hasta rescue us, okay? Help, help! A monster alligator in the dark! Save me! Helicopter to the rescue! Save the day!”

Joseph glares at the silent boy bent over a helicopter. His best logic will not work, and he is puzzled (Paley, 1990, p. 31).

The helicopter boy began the story with no apparent desire to make friends, although the children in his classroom continued to try to engage him in their play.

Using these principles, Tonya could better include this student using Paley’s ideas by using the story telling/ story acting activity. The children take turns dictating their story to Tanya then each child is given time to act out their story. The activities include choosing and making props, choosing friends to play the roles and directing your story. The activity helps the children share a goal of building a community to play together.

Stepping Into Sociodramatic Play

The third theme which surfaced throughout the interviews was the ECP to stepping into sociodramatic play to help the children resolve a problem. During the interviews the ECPs were asked a question regarding their observation of sociodramatic play and what caused her to step in. One ECP answered the question explaining,

“I had this one little boy; he is a crier. We had one toy microwave with the noises and another toy microwave that doesn’t make noise. He needed to warm up his toy food. He started screaming bloody murder. I go in to see what the problem is; he is screaming. I tell him, “I can’t understand you so go have a seat.” He says, “I

want to warm up my chicken and he is cooking ice cream. You don't even cook ice cream." I tell him, "When it goes ding then you can move up in line and you can put your chick in the microwave."

The ECP steps into the play without the children learning how to solve the problem. In story telling/ story acting the children learn how to solve their problems through sociodramatic play. In Paley's book, "Play itself is the practice of problems, a fact demonstrated by even the most casual attention to the passing dialogue.

"The monster is coming! He's almost here!"

"Get the magic belt! When you put it on, he gets froze!"(p. 80).

The ECP could use Vivian Paley's story telling/ story acting in the pretend kitchen to extend the sociodramatic play and help the children solve their problem. Acknowledging the children's theme the ECP could supply the dramatic play area with toy kitchen supplies then become one of the family members in the kitchen and model how to cook in the kitchen with family members.

ECPs Inform Parents

A pattern that emerged during the interviews is a need for ECPs to understand how to bring the child's family into the community of the child care. There is no interview question asking information about the relationship the ECPs have with their children's families, but the subject came up frequently.

During an interview Ashley was talking about clean up time in the block area and she changed the subject to drop-off time, "If all the kids were awake and I talk to a parent, they start doing what they want. They know if you get out your puzzle you must put it up. They get out stuff and do not put it up when I am talking with a parent."

During the end of an interview Tonya is reflecting on how she enjoys talking with the young children as they learn how to make sentences, “I don’t understand how I understand them. I understand them better than their parents.”

This theme is not directly related to sociodramatic play, but it is prominent theme. The interview questions inspired the ECPs to tell stories and reflect on their daily routine with the children. During their long uninterrupted answers the ECP reflect on arrival and pick-up time which brings up stories that include parents and the ECPs’ perception of the child’s family.

Story telling/ story acting could be used to help bridge the gap between the ECP and the family. The family could become part of the activity during arrival time by bringing the child’s dictated story to the ECP or bringing props for their child to act out their story with the other children. During pick-up time the families could be invited to watch the story acting. Story telling/ story acting could provide a topic for discussion between the ECP and the family promoting a classroom community.

The discussion has shown how Vivian Paley’s story telling/ story acting can be applied to the classroom to help manage challenging behavior by solving problems found within the interviews. ECPs can use story telling/ story acting as a child directed activity empowering children by letting them choose the theme and props, gently stepping in and out the play. The ECPs can observe and reflect on how to extend the sociodramatic play by inviting the families into the classroom community.

Recommendations

As I step back and wonder what the ECPs were telling me I realize that play is dynamic and that one person’s perspective of play is different than another as is each

child is different from another. The props in the facilities guide the play themes. The prop list from each ECP directly reflected the play theme. A child wearing a princess dress becomes a princess and a child wearing a Batman suit becomes Batman. There is a difference as a child plays with a piece of fabric, ties and belts and a costume bought off the Halloween sale rack. Open ended props are recommended for a wider variation of play themes for extended imaginative sociodramatic play. Looking back at the study by Taguchi, I wonder what Vicktor's "gadget" looked like? Was it a wooden block used as a phone in one moment and a robot remote the next? Further study is recommended to explore the use of props and how sociodramatic play themes are affected by the items available in the dramatic play area.

A second recommendation recognized through this study is the need for adult support systems. Reflective practice and self-awareness is a minute by minute demand placed upon the ECPs. It was observed during this study that reflecting on the day's events with a peer or mentor helps the ECP recognize a new understanding. One ECP returned to finish her Early Childhood Associate degree after our second meeting. During the first meeting she said she had no plans to return to college anytime soon, then during the second meeting she talked about the Music Program at the library. She had taken the children on a music field trip for a homework assignment in her Early Childhood Education Music Class. Through the uninterrupted interviews another ECP was able to recognize how she felt about the child's defiance and then able to acknowledge the child's behavior and what it was telling her. As I reflect on the interviews another ECP made a change after our first interview. After talking about the situation she realized that not only did the child act out what she does in her classroom at home, but the child also

acts out what she does at home in the classroom. She came to a new understanding realizing that the child acted out the teacher's voice differently than her intent. This new understanding opened up a whole new idea to ponder; the child adds her own tone to the role play. ECPs may need mentoring or peer support to bring a deeper meaning on their daily reflection.

A third recommendation is to raise the awareness of the importance of rough and tumble play for young children. In the study by Logue and Detour (2011) the children repeatedly chose to play *bad guy*. The ECPs reported they do not like rough and tumble play and often feel they must stop the play, yet in the study by Logue and Detour they found that the *bad guy* play was purposeful finding a difference between pretending to act aggressively and acting aggressively. By stopping the play the ECP removes the child's play choice instead of acknowledging the need for rough and tumble and teaching the child how to play without becoming aggressive.

A fourth and final recommendation faces the need of the families of young children for building awareness acknowledging that families are an integrated part of young children by bringing the families into the classroom community. During the interviews many times the ECP refers to the parent lacking an understanding of the child's needs. The interviews reflect the need for honest communication between the ECPs focusing on shared goals and dreams for the growth of the individual young child and the child's unique development.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to deepen the understanding and the perspective of the ECPs' while implementing sociodramatic play. It is known that ECPs are keen

observers of young children as they share daily experiences through interactions and care routines. ECPs supply various types of play equipment allowing time for exploration as they observe and guide the young children acting out their problems as they bring forth new understanding.

Studies show the importance of early childhood by supporting an environment rich in language and interactions with a caring adult. Child-directed sociodramatic play supports the child as a unique individual by offering a variety props and play time with friends as they act out and solve problems. During extended sociodramatic play the children create rules and learn how to navigate relationships. In a study by Gupta (2009) language, emotions, social issues, collaboration, leadership, build community by understanding others perspectives are areas of development enriched by child-directed sociodramatic play.

Five ECPs agreed to participate in two, one hour interviews. During the interviews the ECPs answered the questions with long uninterrupted stories. Four common themes emerged: ECPs Chose Props and Themes, ECPs Use Reflective Practice, Stepping into Sociodramatic Play, ECPs Inform Parents. Four recommendations are presented for further study. The first recommendation is to explore the types of props found in the dramatic play area and how sociodramatic play themes are affected by the props available in the dramatic play area. A second recommendation recognized through this study is the need for adult support systems like peer support groups or mentoring. The ECPs in this study made changes after reflecting on their uninterrupted interviews. A third recommendation is to raise the awareness of the importance of rough and tumble play for young children. The ECPs stated they do not like rough and tumble play and end

the play due to fear of someone getting hurt. The children may benefit as the ECPs acknowledge the importance of rough and tumble play. A fourth and final recommendation faces the need of the families of young children for building awareness acknowledging that families are an integrated part of young children by bringing the families into the classroom community.

The data from the interviews, field notes and observations leads to the importance of a study by Harris (2007) where the teachers participated in building their own play scenario. The teachers learned by hands-on experience about child-directed sociodramatic play. “We’ve learned ways to educate parents about play. Although before we would have used play, now we know we can use it to teach-it’s not just wasting time” (p. 151). Harris gave the teachers an opportunity to learn how to talk to parents about the importance of play by giving each teacher time to explore the experience of sociodramatic play with their peers. The hands-on learning approach for teachers used in the study by Harris would also apply to this study possibly opening up the importance of prop availability, time for exploration, and cooperation. As ECPs reflect on how learning unfolded in their adult style sociodramatic play with their peers it may become easier to talk about their observations of the children and their learning through play building a stronger connection with the families. The ECPs in this study provided thoughtful insights grounding this theory and moving the understanding of how ECPs perceive their daily observation of sociodramatic play.

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Appendix A



January 18, 2012

Proposal Title: Early Care Professionals' Perspective on Sociodramatic Play

Type of Review: Initial-Expedited

Investigators:

Ms. Susan Bradley
Dr. Nate Cottle
Department of Human Environmental Sciences
College of Education and Professional Studies
Campus Box 118
University of Central Oklahoma
Edmond, OK 73034

Dear Ms. Bradley and Dr. Cottle:

Re: Application for IRB Review of Research Involving Human Subjects

We have received your revised materials for your application. The UCO IRB has determined that the above named application is APPROVED BY EXPEDITED REVIEW. The Board has provided expedited review under 45 CFR 46.110, for research involving no more than minimal risk and research category 7.

Date of Approval: 1/18/2012

Date of Approval Expiration: 1/17/2013

If applicable, informed consent (and HIPAA authorization) must be obtained from subjects or their legally authorized representatives and documented prior to research involvement. A stamped, approved copy of the informed consent form will be sent to you via campus mail. The IRB-approved consent form and process must be used. While this project is approved for the period noted above, any modification to the procedures and/or consent form must be approved prior to incorporation into the study. A written request is needed to initiate the amendment process. You will be contacted in writing prior to the approval expiration to determine if a continuing review is needed, which must be obtained before the anniversary date. Notification of the completion of the project must be sent to the IRB office in writing and all records must be retained and available for audit for at least 3 years after the research has ended.

It is the responsibility of the investigators to promptly report to the IRB any serious or unexpected adverse events or unanticipated problems that may be a risk to the subjects.

On behalf of the UCO IRB, I wish you the best of luck with your research project. If our office can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jill A. Devenport', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Jill A. Devenport, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board
Director of Research Compliance, Academic Affairs
Campus Box 159
University of Central Oklahoma
Edmond, OK 73034
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Appendix B

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL OKLAHOMA

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Research Project Title: Early Childhood Professionals' Perspective of sociodramatic Play

Researcher (s): Susan Bradley

A. Purpose of this research: This study will investigate the experiences of five early care professionals while implementing sociodramatic play, a common form of pretend play where young children act out a scenario which always includes social interactions. This study is directed towards identifying and understanding what it is like for early care professionals to implement sociodramatic play. Sociodramatic play can create a valuable learning process in group care by supporting the development of the important life skills of social and emotional development. Studies cited within this proposal support the advantages of sociodramatic play which is found to enhance school readiness. This study will embrace the advantages of sociodramatic play and move the focus to the perspective of the early care professional. In depth interviews will be conducted to deepen the understanding of how the early care professionals are guided by their use of reflective practice consisting of flexibility, observation and response to create an environment for sociodramatic play for young children in group care.

B. Procedures/treatments involved: The PI will conduct two, one hour interviews with each of the five participants. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed and pseudonyms have been used in the thesis proposal. The first interview will be guided into a discussion about sociodramatic play by defining the difference between dramatic play and sociodramatic play. Sociodramatic play themes will be explored by opening a discussion about children's pictures as possible themes followed by the importance of allowing extended time for play scenarios will be discussed. The longer the scenario is allowed to be played out the richer the learning experience becomes. The first one hour

interview will end by exploring the participant's need to step into the play for problem solving and how this affects the length of the play scenario. During the second one hour interview the participant will be asked to share her observations from the past two weeks regarding theme topics, setting up the play area, types of props, length of time allowed for the play scenario, and how often the participant stepped into the scenario to solve problems and what effect stepping in had on the length of the play scenario.

C. Expected length of participation: Two, one hour interviews will be conducted with each of the five participants over a two week period.

D. Potential benefits: The positive effects of sociodramatic play on early school readiness will be explored by the participants during the interviews by discussing the implementation of sociodramatic play by understanding and experiencing the importance of reflective practice for flexibility, observation and response.

E. Potential risks or discomforts: none

F. Medical/mental health contact information (if required): none

G. Contact information for researchers: 226-1768

H. Contact information for UCO IRB: Jill A. Devenport, Ph. D., 974-5497

I. Explanation of confidentiality and privacy: All records from this study will be stored on the UCO campus in a secure office file in the Human Environmental Sciences Building for 3 years overseen by Dr. Kaye Sears and Dr. Cottle. The data will be destroyed after the retention period. The PI will thoroughly explain to each participant they have the right to refuse any answer throughout the interviews with no consequence.

J. Assurance of voluntary participation: Participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate will cause no penalty or loss of benefits and discontinuation is allowed at any time.

AFFIRMATION BY RESEARCH SUBJECT

I hereby voluntarily agree to participate in the above listed research project and further understand the above listed explanations and descriptions of the research project. I also

understand that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty. I acknowledge that I am at least 18 years old. I have read and fully understand this Informed Consent Form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. I acknowledge that a copy of this Informed Consent Form has been given to me to keep. I understand that I am a participant in a study with a UCO student, not OKDHS licensing regulation.

Research Subject's Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date _____

APPROVED
JAN 18 2012
UCO IRB

APPROVAL
JAN 17 2013
EXPIRES

Appendix C

Interview Script

Interviewer: As I visit homes and centers I see children's drawings and paintings displayed. Sometimes the story is written in the corner by the caregiver. Do your children tell you the story in their drawings?

Interviewer: I have been learning about dramatic play. I have learned there is a difference between dramatic play and sociodramatic play. Dramatic play is where a child pretends to do something like baking a cake in the toy kitchen with toy dishes. Sociodramatic play is different. During sociodramatic play the child invites her friends to the party to eat the cake.

Interviewer: Have you noticed the difference?

Interviewer: Do they act out the themes from their drawings?

Interviewer: What themes do your children like to act out?

Interviewer: What will cause you to step into the play?

Interviewer: Could you give me a guess of an average amount of time a child spends in a role play scenario?

Interviewer: I will be back to 2 weeks. I would like to pick up where we left off.

Second interview

Interviewer: Let's pick up where we left off. Tell me about the dramatic play themes you have seen in the last two weeks?

Interviewer: I think the hard part is letting the children figure out the stage setting, props, actors, roles without me stepping in. It is so tempting to help. How did you handle that part?

Interviewer: I have seen children spend more time setting up the scenario than acting it out. What did you observe?

Interviewer: Did the children work things out ok? Were there many fights?

Interviewer: What changes do you plan to make as the season changes to winter?

Interviewer: Thank you for your time.