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The dilemma of response among early childhood educators to rough-and tumble play in educational settings: Moving beyond expectations and rediscovering play

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**THE DILEMMA OF RESPONSE AMONG EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS
TO ROUGH-AND TUMBLE PLAY IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS:**

Moving Beyond Expectations and Rediscovering Play

BY

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Bachelor of Arts, Roger Williams University, 2003

THESIS

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Education
in
Early Childhood: Special Needs

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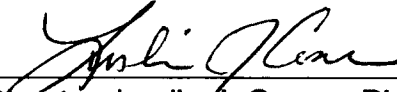
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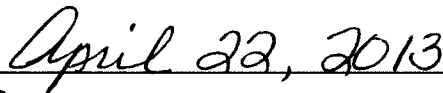
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
ABSTRACT	x

CHAPTER	PAGE
I: WHAT IS ROUGH AND TUMBLE PLAY?	1
Definitions of Rough-and-Tumble Play.....	2
II: ROUGH-AND-TUMBLE PLAY LITERATURE REVIEW	5
Biological Origins.....	5
Child Development.....	7
Social and Physical Environments.....	9
Teacher Roles and Expectations.....	10
Inclusive Education and Developmental Supports.....	12
III: RESEARCH METHODS	15
Purpose.....	15
Theoretical Framework.....	16
Data Collection Tools and Methods.....	17
Ethical Consideration for Human Participants.....	21
Context: A Description of the Environment.....	22
Community and School.....	22
Document Review.....	23
Overview of Preschool Environment and Routines.....	24
Participants' Stories.....	25
Mrs. Gray.....	26
Mrs. White.....	28
Data Analysis.....	29

IV: RESULTS	31
How do early childhood educators in inclusive classrooms make decisions about responding to rough-and-tumble play?.....	31
Findings.....	32
Frequency of Rough-and Tumble Play.....	32
Descriptive Analysis of Rough-and-Tumble Play.....	34
Descriptive Analysis of Themes.....	37
Teacher Beliefs and Values.....	38
Communication and Common Language.....	39
Children’s Independent and Interdependent Functioning.....	41
Respect for Play.....	42
Teacher Response: Discussion as a Tool.....	44
Boundaries and Rules for Children.....	44
Safety for Children and Adults.....	46
Adapting Environments.....	47
Physical and Social Contexts.....	49
Individual Ability.....	50
Gender.....	51
Age Groups.....	52
Physical Environment.....	53
Teacher Reflections and Self-Awareness.....	54
V: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	58
Discussion.....	58
A Funnel of Decision.....	61
Limitations.....	62
Implications.....	64
Future Research.....	65
Conclusions.....	66
BIBLIOGRAPHY	70
APPENDICES	75
APPENDIX A: LEAD TEACHER PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	76
APPENDIX B: ANECDOTAL OBSERVATIONS RECORDING SHEET ...	79
APPENDIX C: TEACHER RESPONSE OBSERVATIONAL FREQUENCY CHECKLIST	81

APPENDIX D: LEAD TEACHER POST-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	83
APPENDIX E: CONSENT AND INFORMATION FORMS.....	86
APPENDIX F: IRB APPROVAL.....	89

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1. Rough-and-Tumble Behaviors vs. Aggressive Behaviors.....	4
Table 3.1 Response Frequency Checklist Response Types.....	20
Table 3.2. Schedule of Observations.....	21
Table 4.1 Findings Framework for Results and Discussion.....	33

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1 Data Collection based in Ecological Framework..... 18

Figure 4.1. Mrs. White's and Mrs. Gray's Frequency Response
Graph of Indoor and Outdoor Rough-and-Tumble Play Occurrences..... 38

Figure 5.1. Rough-And-Tumble Play: Risk to Response
Funnel of Decision..... 61

ABSTRACT

THE DILEMMA OF RESPONSE AMONG EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS TO ROUGH-AND TUMBLE PLAY IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS:

Moving Beyond Expectations and Rediscovering Play

by:

Carrie L. Smart

University of New Hampshire, May 2013

Early childhood educators often may struggle to find appropriate responses to rough-and-tumble play due to its unpredictable and risky nature. This case study examines the challenge of how two early childhood special educators in two inclusive public preschool classrooms make decisions about rough-and-tumble play for 4-year-old children. The stories presented are descriptive and based in an ecological context. Through the triangulation of interview, anecdotal observations, and frequency counts, three major themes of Teacher Beliefs, Context, and Teacher Reflection and Awareness emerged, illustrating the complex phenomenon of teacher response to rough-and-tumble play in inclusive settings. Analysis of the data revealed that inclusive preschool teachers utilize methods that support language, peer interaction, physical growth and safety when guiding young children with special needs in rough-and-tumble play interactions.

CHAPTER I

WHAT IS ROUGH AND TUMBLE PLAY?

Educators provide diverse play opportunities for children to experience how their bodies and minds work in different social and environmental settings. Rough-and-tumble play allows for the intersection of physical, social and cognitive learning. Children of all abilities can benefit from this play, but teachers and parents find difficulty in developing responses to rough-and-tumble play. Parents have concerns for their children's safety, and thus teachers often guide their reactions to children's physical play based on these realities (Brussoni, et. al., 2012). In rough-and tumble-play children are often asked to "stop playing rough" or put in "time outs" because adults fear children being hurt emotionally or physically. Children are allowed to play rough during certain times or in certain areas indoors and outdoors, but how this play is guided and what this play looks like is inconsistent (Carlson, 2009). Children who experience disability could benefit from rough-and-tumble play, but concerns for safety and appropriateness within schools settings makes response and guidance difficult to develop without proper training and discussion. Children continue to engage in rough-and-tumble play with their peers naturally and intrinsically, so how can teachers guide this

play within inclusive settings where children have functional, physical and communication differences requiring extra supports and guidance?

Definitions of Rough-and-Tumble Play

Young mammals have initiated, participated, and enjoyed rough-and-tumble play throughout evolution. Human children are particularly adept at this type of play, for they utilize language and physical objects to advance their practice (Scott & Panskepp, 2003). Storytelling and communicating rules create emotional bonds with their peers (Jarvis, 2007). Supporting rough-and-tumble play as a natural and healthy part of development has created conflict concerning children's safety and appropriateness of the play among teachers in many public and private educational settings for young children. Researchers have conducted studies to better understand rough-and-tumble play and how adults can guide children's interactions. Creating social structures and appropriate physical environments scaffolds children's tendencies and embraces the intrinsic value of play. However, concerns for safety, institutional expectations, parent beliefs and individual value differences convolute finding a concise professional practice for guiding rough-and-tumble play.

Rough-and-tumble play is actively social, physical and cognitive. This type of activity among children is innate and can be misinterpreted as harmful or aggressive. Upon closer inspection there are clear rules, patterns and definitions of rough-and-tumble play. Pellegrini and Smith (1998) defined the parameters by identifying particular actions present in rough-and-tumble play such as: wrestling,

grappling, kicking, tackling, and falling. Interpretations of whether this type of play is necessary for children or harmful makes understanding rough-and-tumble play difficult. These sets of behaviors are observed across cultures and time and when compared to other juvenile mammals. Humans are unique in their use of language and fantasy to enhance their experiences during rough-and-tumble play (Jarvis, 2007). Tannock (2011) includes Reed and Brown's (2000) identification of a "play face," (p. 13). Children who smile and laugh during rough physical play, as opposed to displaying sadness, anger or determination to harm other players, signify the difference between aggressive play and rough-and-tumble play (Tannock, 2011).

Carlson (2009) simply distinguishes rough-and-tumble play behaviors as: laughing, running, jumping, open handed tag, wrestling, chasing and fleeing (p. 70). She further defines aggressive behaviors during play as: fixating, frowning, hitting, pushing, and grabbing for take down (Carlson, 2009, p. 70). With many definitions of rough-and-tumble play understanding the difference between play and aggression can be frustrating. The following table (Table 1.1) combines researched definitions comparing behaviors of rough-and-tumble play and aggressive behaviors (Tannock, 2011; Carlson, 2009; Reed and Brown, 2000, Jarvis, 2007). The distinction between rough-and-tumble play and aggressive behaviors are important to consider when responding to children and guiding their play.

Table 1.1. Rough-and-Tumble Behaviors vs. Aggressive Behaviors

<i>Behaviors of Rough and Tumble Play</i>	<i>Aggressive Behaviors</i>
Chasing	Hitting with intention of hurting
Carrying other children	Teasing to hurt feelings
Teasing and Yelling (with smiling from all children)	Unequal playing (bullying/picking on)
Sneaking up and surprise during game	Shortened time period
Laughing	Frowning, crying, anger
Hiding and pouncing on top of one another	Children depart from one another quickly
Crawling	No shared rules
Pulling at other's appendages	Gang up tactics
Mimicking fighting moves	Fixation on the attacks or hitting
Holding, grabbing, pinching, tripping, light pushing	Pushing to the ground and pinning while other child is crying "no" or "get off."
Tag and run	Push grab-and-take
Wrestling, tackling, pile up	Hitting with intention of hurting

Rough-and-tumble play is enjoyable to many children. Tannock (2011) remarked on the Sutton-Smith and Rosenberg 60-year examination of children's games from 1898 to 1959, where wrestling was labeled as a consistent interest of children, a hallmark of rough-and-tumble play. While rough-and-tumble play may be considered risky or aggressive behavior, it also includes positive attributes such as: establishing relationships with peers and gaining knowledge of physical boundaries. Time, space and guidance for physically active play should be integrated into young children's development in early childhood educational settings (Tannock, 2011). Reviewing research based in biological origins, child development, physical and social contexts, teacher response, and inclusive educational settings provides background for this research. It supports the investigation of the question: how do early childhood educators in inclusive classrooms make decisions about responding to rough-and-tumble play?

CHAPTER II

ROUGH-AND-TUMBLE PLAY LITERATURE REVIEW

Biological Origins

The birth of theories on why species initiate and participate in physical play with peers began during the late nineteenth century. Pellegrini (1987) remarked on the evolution theories of Karl Groos and Herbert Spencer. Groos and Spencer believed that children's rough-and-tumble play was instinctual and could be based in Darwinian principles of "survival of the fittest"(Pellegrini, 1987). These researchers were also two of the leading surplus energy theorists that posited: energy increases through the biological system of species and humans have a high amount of energy and play serves as a function of releasing this excess energy upon occurrence (Pellegrini, 1987). This theory was never fully proven.

Pellis and Pellis (2007) believe that rough play allows for critical brain pathways to develop "adaptive responses to dominance," and Byers sites that researchers believe there is a cognitive connection to rough play and "critical periods of brain development," (Carlson, 2011, p. 21). Pellis and Pellis (2007) argued that during physically rough play chemicals released in the various parts of the brain "including areas responsible for decision making and social

discrimination,” stimulate chemicals that positively affect brain development in the cortex, mid and lower brains (Carlson, 2011, p. 21). Carlson (2011) summarized Pellis, Field, and Whishaw’s (1999) research finding rough-and-tumble play develops learning which influences children’s ability to regulate and adapt their individual physical movements in relation to others and in relation to their environment (p. 21).

Children’s rough-and-tumble play can enable young mammals to develop stronger connections, whether it be physically, cognitively or socially. Pellis and Pellis (2007) studied rat play fighting and found some distinct parallels between aggressive initiations and play initiations among animals and children. Rats who played could socialize with other rats later on, whereas those denied opportunities for play were more defensive when approached by other rats (Pellis & Pellis, 2007).

Jarvis (2006) connected the biological and evolutionary theories to social and linguistic nuances of human interaction (p. 281). She acknowledged rough-and-tumble play as having “evolutionary roots in the non-verbal play of earlier species,” and there is a relationship between frequent rough play and male levels of testosterone (Jarvis, 2006, p. 273). However, in her research, Jarvis (2006) remarked on the unique ability of humans to create imaginary stories, or *Fabula*, and communicate through language and cultural symbols (p. 273, p. 281). Jarvis’ (2006) research also denoted distinctions regarding male and female children’s rough-and-tumble play behaviors. The actions observed during this style of play

can be analyzed as a solely biological theory of hormone composition (Jarvis, 2006). Studying the biological origins of rough-and-tumble play has invited further investigation into the interdependence of the naturalistic need for physical play and the relationship with child development.

Child Development

Children develop through play. Rule-based games create social and cultural frameworks for understanding the world as an individual or as part of a group. Buchanan and Johnson (2009) remarked that children “reflect an image of themselves as powerful, active and competent,” when playing (p.54). In play children discover their abilities to “direct their actions, to make sense of events and situations, and to understand how choices affect themselves and others,” (Buchanan and Johnson, 2009, p. 54). Vygotsky wrote, “play is an attempt for the child to gain mastery over his or her destiny and function within the culture,” (Reed & Brown, 2000, p. 104). Young children form strong relationships with peers and better functional control of their bodies through the use of large muscles during physical games and play.

Rough-and-tumble play bolsters the development of rule-making (or rule adherence), turn taking, social adaptability, recognition of social cues and reciprocity of roles within the intricately established, yet flexible, network of behavioral norms (Pellegrini, 1987). Piaget’s theory argues that organized patterns of behavior and thought (i.e. schema) as well as the creation of symbols through play, lay the foundations for children to understand their place in the

world (Reed & Brown, 2000, p. 104). Rough-and-tumble play includes these recognized elements of cognitive and social development. Children participating in physical play incorporate symbolism in their rigorous interactions. Tannock (2011) asserted that rough-and-tumble play behaviors develop in complexity over time. Piaget asserted, “during the preoperational stage of play, children are practicing skills that will become elements of their concrete operational play,” which evolves into creating games with rules, experimenting with social expectations and extending logical thinking to their own actions (Tannock, 2011, p. 14).

Pellegrini (1987) this asserted, “young children may develop their early physical prowess in R&T so that they can later participate in other forms of physical play,” (p. 36). Rough-and-tumble play may begin early at home in the form of bouncing infants on knees, raising toddlers or infants in the air or chasing toddlers indoors and outdoors. In preschool, children’s development has reached a pivotal point of including physical play with symbolic imagery and language. Preschool children display patterns of socially and physically interactive development in rough-and-tumble play including: chasing, tagging, fleeing, falling, toppling on others, climbing and wrestling (Carlson, 2011, p. 18). As children grow older, rough-and-tumble play is represented in sports and games with less focus on storytelling and dramatic role-playing. When children are afforded the time and space for free expressions in play, they exhibit complex

social interactions that include understanding physical boundaries, compromise, power and language.

Social and Physical Environments

The continuity of children's play depends on the social and physical environmental expectations constructed either by the children or configured by adults in the classroom. Indoor time, outdoor time, soft items, hard surfaces, intentional learning tools, open-ended objects all make up early childhood environments. These settings also include teacher-directed and child-led activities (Pellegrini, 1987). Block and Davis (1996) asserted that by providing times of inhibition in a variety of settings with diverse props, children of all abilities gain a greater sense of how to move in their environments, and they satisfy their inclinations by possessing license to adapt equipment and create play scenarios that suit their interests and developmental needs.

Open spaces for rough-and-tumble play allow children to exert energy and create stories that can only be told through highly physical behaviors and language (Jarvis, 2007; Carlson, 2009). Children need time and freedom to engage in imaginary play that erupts from within and can evolve and intensify with intricacy. A gap can emerge between knowing the importance for creating appropriate play space and actuating the space. Surveying outdoor spaces for dangerous obstacles or guiding children toward spaces with grass for tumbling and chasing allows for safe rough play (Carlson, 2009). Indoor spaces may be more difficult to configure; however, Carlson (2009) outlined six suggestions for

creating indoor space suitable for tumbling and rough housing: round or pad hard edges, incorporate skid-free surfaces, remove tripping hazards, provide ample space, invest in shock absorbing surfaces for falling.

Rough-and-tumble play exudes energy often viewed as inappropriate in educational settings. In support of child-directed play, Bruner (1976) asserted that school “provides no guide, only knowledge....These are the conditions for alienation and confusion,” (Jarvis, 2006, p. 281). The lack of time and regard for play unintentionally supports alienation and deteriorated elements of social interaction that are essential to children’s development (Jarvis, 2006). Creating social and physical environments that incorporate time and space for rough-and-tumble play enables children’s innate processes to explore, seek information, manage risk, take initiative, and experiment with emotional relationships (Perry & Branum, 2009, p. 196).

Teacher Roles and Expectations

Children’s play enables them to perceive consequence, understand sequences of events, cope with changing situations and navigate through the world socially and physically (Buchanan & Johnson, 2009). A discord in practice among early childhood education environments exists when discussing the acceptance and structure for rough-and tumble-play. In 1986, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) discouraged rough-and-tumble play, as it was seen as inappropriate for learning environments; however, currently NAEYC has changed their recommendations and

acknowledges rough play as a natural part of childhood that can be embraced in school (Tannock, 2007). However, NAEYC continues to wonder whether rough-and-tumble play is a “desirable” form of play that should be encouraged in caregiving or educational settings (Tannock, 2007). Educators who know that children in their preschool years are learning about their physical abilities and are often prone to falls, collisions and social conflicts are better able to scaffold children’s play safely and appropriately (Bredekamp & Copple, 2009).

The concern for appropriate and safe behavior has also been attributed to the high frequency of female educators in schools who label wrestling and chasing games as inappropriate or unsafe (Reed & Brown, 2000). Although it seems teachers often forbid or redirect rough-and-tumble play, Tannock (2007) observed children engaging and adults allowing rough-and-tumble even though they knew it was forbidden. Emotions, tolerance and response to rough-and-tumble play varies across educational settings making it difficult for teachers and students to follow mandated rules. Reed and Brown (2000), similarly to Carlson (2011), have invited teachers to create time and space for rough-and-tumble play and recognize it as an opportunity for self-expression, peer negotiation, and physical exertion. Strategies that extend beyond rule making need to be discussed and revisited over time within educational and care-giving communities in order to provide a process of decision making and evaluation for teachers to make decisions regarding the allowance of rough-and-tumble play (Reed & Brown, 2000).

Inclusive Education and Developmental Supports

Research and information directly relating to rough-and-tumble play among children with disability is lacking. Research supporting children with special needs engagement in activity-based interventions does exist and can be related to the need for supporting rough-and-tumble play. Buchannan and Johnson (2009) examined play among toddlers who experience disability in order to gain information about the patterns and importance of play among diverse populations. Activity-based intervention and embedded curriculum models are derived from social and constructivist theories in child development leaning on the work of Vygotsky and Dewey, among others (Buchannan and Johnson, 2009). Diane Bricker has led the way in activity-based intervention (ABI) and invited educators to promote play interactions with the environment through “child-initiated, naturalistic, transactional, or relationship-based approaches to intervention,” and she encouraged practitioners to allow for children with disabilities to actively engage in daily routines that included child-driven play activities (Buchanan & Johnson, 2009, p. 44).

Play of young children who experience disability has been discounted and neglected, intentionally or unintentionally through the focus of clinical therapies isolated from natural childhood environments (Buchanan and Johnson, 2009). Block and Davis (1996) invited educators of young children with special needs to use an activity-based approach to physical education (or play opportunities). Block and Davis (1996) indicated activity-based interventions would allow young

children with disability to have agency in their play, but they would also have direct support and guidance from an adult's planning of the environment and prompts to engage in particular types of play, including physically active play. The use of activity-based intervention strategies for responding to rough-and-tumble play could allow for the inclusion of children with special needs. Play-based approaches steer early childhood educators to create environments promoting physical peer interactions, which reinforce independent functioning in establishing and understanding physical and social boundaries for children of all abilities and backgrounds.

How do we embrace children's natural inclinations for this style of play while maintaining a safe space for all children? Managing children's rough play and safety creates a difficult balance for teachers. Educators working with children with special needs carefully and continuously assess safety and skills to incorporate appropriate social and physical development that meets the goals of children's learning. Rough-and-tumble play can be an important element in this scaffolded development. Through rough-and-tumble play, children can practice coping with social and physical challenges that include risk taking and confronting fear (Brussoni et. al., 2012). Individual children engage in different levels of rough-and-tumble play, but the desire for this play on some level appears universal (Jarvis, 2007, p. 173; Brussoni et. al., 2012). Wondering whether to intervene or continue observing can create a feeling of uncertainty for consistent practice among caregivers and educators. Teachers must consider a

number of factors when responding to rough-and-tumble play. Personal beliefs, responses and reflections can guide decision making.

Bronfenbrenner's (1976) ecological model supports investigating the interactions of systems and environments and helps elucidate the phenomenon of teacher response to rough-and-tumble play when working with children experiencing disability in inclusive classrooms. The ecological model represents these system exchanges and is utilized as a tool to understand the question of: how do early childhood educators in inclusive classrooms make decisions about responding to rough-and-tumble play? Guiding and scaffolding children's learning experiences requires educators to question their own beliefs and actions as they find consensus on how to provide the best possible care and learning opportunities for children. Therefore the following questions add greater depth to this investigation: what are teacher beliefs about rough-and-tumble play? How do teachers respond to the various forms of rough-and-tumble play? And how do teacher beliefs and responses to rough-and-tumble play align?

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

Purpose

The literature reviewed consists of practical and theoretical data exploring rough-and-tumble play definitions, environmental set up and child development. Incorporating teacher roles and special education adds greater depth to the complexity of belief and response choices early childhood educators face when responding to rough-and-tumble play among children who experience disability and their peers within inclusive classrooms. New research concerning teacher guidance and support for children's play and rough-and-tumble play is logical and desirable in early childhood settings and especially among children who receive support services at school. The dilemma among theory, belief and practice poses an interesting investigation and a myriad of questions to be answered.

Through qualitative data, this case study seeks to understand how teachers negotiate the social expectations and physical environments of schools, as well as, their own beliefs to make informed decisions when responding to rough-and-tumble play among a diverse grouping of children with and without special needs in an inclusive public preschool. The research questions that guide the investigation are: how do early childhood educators in inclusive classrooms

make decisions about responding to rough-and-tumble play? What are teacher beliefs about rough-and-tumble play? How do teachers respond to the various forms of rough-and-tumble play? And how do teacher beliefs and responses to rough-and-tumble play align?

Theoretical Framework

The framework for the case study is based in a phenomenological approach and ecological perspective. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) described phenomenology as believing there are numerous ways that individuals experience and interpret interactions and environments through time spent with others when forming a social reality. By using this approach the researcher can “gain entry into the conceptual world of their informants,” (Geertz, 1973; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 26). Phenomenology seeks to develop a socially constructed understanding of a specific social occurrence, here rough-and-tumble play, and the ecological model illustrates how multiple tiers of social and physical structures interact to form one encompassed system (Bogdan and Bilken, 2007; Bronfenbrenner, 1976). Including both models as a theoretical framework establishes a solid background structure to contain the fluid nature of the data and phenomenon being observed. Investigating and discussing belief, practice and reflection exemplify educator response to children’s rough-and-tumble play.

Bronfenbrenner’s model supports this qualitative approach to the research and allows for deeper social understanding of the meaning of educator’s responses to rough-and-tumble play for children in inclusive preschool settings.

The responses of two educators working with young children with special needs are based in social and physical environments created or encountered when working in early childhood education and in public schools. The study is grounded in data collected from the microsystem (educators), mesosystem (child-educator interaction) and exosystem (perceived parent expectations and school rules), which are enveloped in the macrosystem (child development and early childhood education).

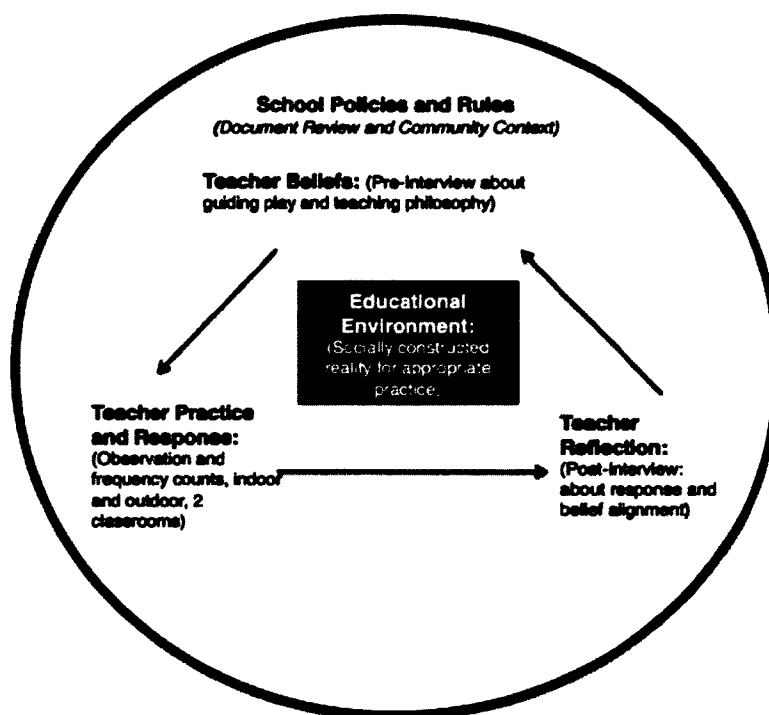
Bronfenbrenner (1976) reminds readers that the phenomena that seems easiest to recognize is the most difficult to understand, and the use of experiment to better understand phenomena allows for grounding and stability in qualitative research, for the relationship between learners and environments is not easy to discern. Teachers have different beliefs, values, and methods when responding to children's rough-and-tumble play. Some feel it is safe and appropriate. Others feel it could be harmful and cause injury. Developing a structure for understanding how teachers respond to rough-and-tumble play when working among children with special needs, requires investigation into multiple systems. Two lead teachers were observed and interviewed to clarify decision-making processes for responding to and guiding children's rough-and-tumble play in two inclusive classrooms.

Data Collection Tools and Methods

The preschool, where the research was conducted, was selected for its teachers, student population and philosophy on inclusive education. A description

of the school and community, as well as, the stories and experiences of the teachers, will be explained in greater detail in the context section. Four data collection methods, based on an ecological model, were used to triangulate teacher beliefs, practice and response as well as reflection, to understand the educational environment for rough-and-tumble play in each classroom (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 Data Collection based in Ecological Framework



Each teacher was interviewed two times and observed with children a total of 5 times. The initial interviews (i.e. pre-interview) consisted of a series of open-ended questions (Appendix A) about teacher beliefs concerning play and what they perceive as their practice in responding to children engaged in rough-and-tumble play indoors and outdoors. The teachers were asked about play in

general to preserve the authenticity of their answers. The purpose of these questions was to understand how they promote and think about rough-and-tumble play in their classrooms among children with intellectual, physical and developmental disabilities.

The initial interviews (Appendix A) were followed by indoor and outdoor play observations occurring 5 times, per teacher (Appendix B and C), across an 8-week period. Adjustments in scheduling were acknowledged and made throughout the project to accommodate the needs of the teachers in the setting. At the beginning of each observational session, the classroom environment was documented briefly with notes about the population of children (e.g. gender, children with and without an individual education plan, and number of children present). Observational data was recorded using anecdotal notes for later analysis and discussion (Appendix B). A response frequency checklist dedicated to particular types of teacher responses to rough-and-tumble play including: positive redirection, negation, supportive scaffolding for extended play, active, observation or ignoring, supportive scaffolding for the inclusion of others, and unaware of the occurrence, was used during four observational sessions. (Table 3.1, Appendix C).

Table 3.1 Response Frequency Checklist Response Types (Appendix C)

<p>Positive Redirection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Guidance to other play objects (i.e. equipment or toys, puzzles etc.) ◆ Providing prompts for play that does not include rough-and-tumble. ◆ Warning to avoid potential danger or to use care
<p>Negation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “No” Responses ◆ Moving child away from area. ◆ Denying the play (not safe).
<p>Supportive Scaffolding for Extended Play</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Story prompts for imaginative play ◆ Object additions or suggestions to enhance the play ◆ Adult participation in game
<p>Supportive Scaffolding for the Inclusion of Others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Invitation to child outside of the group to join into the play. ◆ Prompting other children to include a child not involved ◆ Adult joins in and invites non-involved child and supports the play
<p>Active Observation or Ignoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Any occurrence where the lead teacher watching rough-and-tumble play from a distance or close proximity to children without direct interaction, disciplining or scaffolding of behaviors. ◆ Occurrences responded to by other adults while Lead watches (i.e. assistant teachers)
<p>Unaware of the Occurrence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Any occurrence of rough-and-tumble play that goes un-noticed by lead teacher ◆ Occurrences responded to by other adults (i.e. assistant teachers)

These response types were used in both indoor and outdoor free play periods to gain understanding regarding teacher’s inclinations in supporting or negating rough-and-tumble play. (see Table 3.2 below for timing of the two methods).

Table 3.2. Schedule of Observations (Appendix B and C)

	Baseline (all day)	Indoor 1 (20-30min)	Indoor 2 (20-30min)	Outdoor 1 (20-30min)	Outdoor 2 (20-30min)
4 y.o. (approx. 11:40am- 2:30pm)	Anecdotal Notes	Anecdotal Notes	Response Frequency Checklist	Anecdotal Notes	Response Frequency Checklist

The concluding interviews (Appendix D) (i.e. post-interview) with both lead teachers also consisted of open-ended questions intending to promote reflections of their beliefs and responses concerning children's rough-and-tumble play within their inclusive preschool classrooms. The intention of these methods was to decipher patterns of socially constructed reality concerning educator responses to rough-and-tumble play of young children with and without special needs in an inclusive classroom. The discoveries made during data collection and analysis could then be used to help teachers make decisions on how to guide rough-and-tumble play within particular social and physical contexts. To place the research in a greater ecological context, information was gathered from document review of the preschool's and the larger school's student, parent and teacher handbooks as well as from census data for the town.

Ethical Consideration for Human Participants

The University of New Hampshire's Institutional Review Board for human subjects research approved this study (Appendix F). To protect the human participants being observed and interviewed, identifiable names (e.g. school, teachers, children, and town) were excluded from all documents. The description of the context and setting were taken from the school's website, handbooks and

2010 U.S. Census and was re-written to summarize and exclude any specifically identifiable information in efforts to protect the individuals involved. The two teachers observed and interviewed for the case study had provisions to cancel observational sessions or interviews and reschedule for more suitable times, if needed, throughout the project. Therefore, observations and interviews were set up during times advantageous to the educators, administrators, and staff involved in the classroom. The lead teachers were encouraged to answer only the questions they felt comfortable with and were assured that their practice was not being judged as negative or positive but being objectively observed and discussed as a method to better understand how early childhood teachers make decisions and guide children's play in their classroom.

Context: A Description of the Environment

Community and School

The research took place in a rural public inclusive preschool. According to the U.S. Census Bureau in 2010, the town consists of approximately 5,200 residents with approximately a 98% white population living in a household income bracket of \$30,000 to \$100,000. Many of the children who attend the public inclusive preschool are in the lower income bracket. Less than 5% of households reported having children less than 5 years of age making the number of preschool-aged children relatively low (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The town is amenable to a large tourist population during the warmer months, and the school benefits from seasonal lake residents' tax money for technology, materials

and equipment. The public school consists of students preschool through 8th grade. The school has a population estimated at 700 to 850 students.

Document Review

The school has two documents that guide staff, student and parent communication, expectations and behavior: a handbook for faculty and support staff, as well as, a student and parent handbook. These handbooks outline school rules, schedules and behavioral expectations in order to create a socially and academically positive environment for all members of the learning community. The themes of respectful communication, self-awareness and shared learning experiences are filtered throughout the rules, procedure and expectations for conduct.

Preschool students are selected for this inclusive program through a screening and assessment sequence, with given preference for those with special needs who are identified through a Child Find process each spring. Children are also admitted throughout the year if space is available. The inclusive preschool program was developed to meet the laws developed under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for Students With Disabilities under Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act (1973). Children without special needs are able to attend the preschool as well, gaining access through a lottery system. The classrooms have a 50/50 balance of children with special needs and children who do not receive services. An inclusive model promotes respect and social development

across abilities. The preschool handbook shares a philosophy promoting a community perspective where all families are accepted and included equally to form sustainable relationships. Children are invited to participate in all aspects of the program, and specialists work in and out of the classroom to provide supports and services.

Overview of Preschool Environment and Routines

Within the school building there are two inclusive preschool classrooms with no more than 15 children per class. Children within the preschool have a range of socio-economic statuses, which staff consider when attending to children's needs, family communication and school scheduling during the half-day program. The inclusive preschool classrooms are side-by-side at the end of a hallway with the library just outside their doors. The preschool schedule consists of a morning and an afternoon session. The morning session is for 3-year-old children, and the afternoon session is for 4 to 5-year-old children before they enter kindergarten. The afternoon session was where all the observations occurred. Children arrive via car or bus at 11:40am until 2:40pm each day. Each classroom focuses on balancing children's play, group activities, movement, story time and outside time during the 3 hours of learning.

Only the four-year-old classrooms were observed for this study, with particular focus on observing and interviewing the lead teacher. Both classrooms consisted of one lead teacher, one assistant teacher, and 7 or 8 children. 50% of the children had an Individual Education Plan (IEP), were in the process of

obtaining an IEP, showed at risk behavior or had a medical condition being monitored by the teachers and support services at the public school. Mrs. White has 4 boys and 4 girls in her classroom, and Mrs. Gray has 3 girls and 4 boys. The specifics of each child's developmental or behavioral needs will not be discussed in detail, as children are not the subjects of the study. In both classrooms children participated in group sessions with specialists who supported children's needs in speech, physical development and social interactions. These supports included an occupational therapist, a speech therapist, and a physical therapist. Each classroom also had one assistant teacher. The description of the school and individuals serve as a source of background information to illustrate the system and environment the lead teachers work in when making decisions about responding to rough-and-tumble play during the afternoon preschool sessions.

Participants' Stories

The stories of individuals' experiences, values and reflections are a foundation for belief and meaning behind behaviors observed during this study. Reifel (2007) states that schools serve as cultural institutions in which children and teachers act creating phenomena needing interpretation. Teachers' stories and behaviors within social and physical environments, including language, inclusion and respect, create a multi-tiered framework for classroom activities and culture. Listening to teachers' stories and observing teacher behavior, especially during rough-and-tumble play, generates meaning and perspective as

to why teachers respond to children in particular ways and what influences their decisions (Reifel, 2007).

The lead teachers were selected as the primary subjects of this project in order to understand how early childhood special educators make choices about responding to rough-and-tumble play with children who experience disability and their typically performing peers. The two teachers have had extensive training in special education and have worked in the field for over twenty years. Both have obtained their masters in early childhood education and engage in professional development beyond their degrees. The teachers represent the individual in the ecological systems model utilized to answer the question of how teacher's response to rough-and-tumble play in inclusive environments (i.e. social and physical) is aligned with belief and self-reflection (Bronfenbrenner, 1976). The names of the educators are disguised with pseudonyms that in no way represent their names in full or part.

Mrs. Gray

Mrs. Gray has worked in her current position as lead teacher at the inclusive public preschool for 12 years. During the pre-interview, she discussed how her experiences and education have shaped her philosophy, guidance and beliefs about children's development, play and learning. Mrs. Gray graduated from a large college in New England with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education and worked in Texas for a year before returning home to open a school with her sister for young children. The sisters worked together for 12 years

at the daycare. Mrs. Gray remembers being young, having a lot of energy and not making a lot of money; however, she feels they made an impact on the town and reflected upon how the school is still open to children and families.

After the initial experience of opening and operating a childcare, Mrs. Gray began working for the first Early Head Start in the state. Being the first teacher hired for the publically funded program, Mrs. Gray was mentored by 3 individuals from a local university. A group of professors and professional designed the program, and Mrs. Gray remembers working very hard at trainings and meeting their expectations for 5 years. These mentors, as Mrs. Gray reflects, “had certain expectations. They were in that classroom on a weekly basis...I had to prove to them that their ways could be done, and it was very interesting.” It was a different experience than leading and creating a school built on her own.

Mrs. Gray began her current position after Early Head Start. During her first years, she earned her masters in early childhood education with certifications in both early childhood and general special education as well as intellectual and developmental disability certifications. She continues to work with children and also mentors students at a local community college. Mrs. Gray loves children and has a passion for her career. In her interviews, she commented, “I am doing exactly what I want to be doing, so I guess in that way I am really happy, as long as my body holds out, I am good.” Mrs. Gray has concerns about her own physical abilities in relation to guiding children’s play. She realizes that experience and age have positives and negatives when working with children.

Mrs. White

Mrs. White began working with children after graduating with a bachelor's degree in family studies in 1993. She was able to obtain a teaching position at a preschool located at a university in New Hampshire taking care of children from infancy through kindergarten. She spent time in each classroom enjoying knowing all the children and families throughout the center. Mrs. White admitted during our discussions that she did not think she had the confidence to run a classroom in the beginning, but soon enough she was leading the toddler classroom for two years. Although, Mrs. White spent many years at this early learning center, she moved for one year to Rhode Island where she was a lead teacher for a 4 and 5-year-old classroom. Mrs. White taught a classroom of 25 children and found doing project work was a challenge, so she headed back to the university early learning center where she remained for approximately 15 years.

Mrs. White began her master's work in early childhood special education while working at the university. She was also able to study at the Reggio Emilia school in Italy. Mrs. White spent time mentoring college students at the school as well as presenting research and workshops about diversity and block play to her learning community and across New England. Upon completing her time at the university, she decided to bring her work to another environment. "I feel like this has been a really great challenge for me. I have more supports. It is much more inclusive," Mrs. White explained. Her dual role as early childhood lead teacher

and case manager has presented new challenges, and one of her goals is to welcome college students into her classroom to practice teaching. She enjoys the outdoors, running and hiking. Mrs. White is active and believes children should be outdoors everyday exploring and playing.

Data Analysis

Once the data was collected from the interviews and observations, analysis began. First, the interviews were transcribed word for word from audio recordings using transcription software. The observational notes and frequency counts were typed into organized documents. Once all notes and interviews were typed out and organized, each document was examined for themes with specific examples from the interview transcriptions and observational data. These initial themes were placed into spreadsheets to better decipher larger patterns while keeping track of which documents the themes and examples came from in order to quote later in the findings and discussion sections of this paper.

A preliminary list of broader patterns emerged after analyzing the data. This list was then discussed with a faculty advisor to gain a consensus perspective. The themes were arranged under three major categories: beliefs and values, response and discussion, and physical and social context. The three categories of themes represent the triangulation of data (Figure 3.1) encompassed in the greater school culture and administrative documents. The sub-themes below these categories serve as a rubric for the dissemination of results and discussion (Table 4.1) beyond specific observations and results of

rough-and-tumble. In the results chapter, examples of anecdotal notes and quotations from both interviews exemplify the themes and greater categories to understand each teacher's methods of decisions making. A better understanding of the research question: how do early childhood educators in inclusive classrooms make decisions about responding to rough-and-tumble play? can be realized by looking at patterns of behavior and belief outside of rough-and-tumble play.

Instances of rough-and-tumble play were collected from the observations and frequency counts. Frequency counts were organized into a bar graph (Figure 4.1) to show the differences in responses between outdoor and indoor environments and between teachers. Utilizing these graphs as well as the anecdotal instances of rough-and-tumble play and response by the teachers, supports answering the research questions: how do early childhood educators in inclusive classrooms make decisions about responding to rough-and-tumble play? Specifically, it answers: how do teachers respond to the various forms of rough-and-tumble play?

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

How do early childhood educators in inclusive classrooms make decisions about responding to rough-and-tumble play?

What are teacher beliefs about rough-and-tumble play? How do teachers respond to the various forms of rough-and-tumble play? And how do teacher beliefs and responses to rough-and-tumble play align? These questions function as guides for reporting the results and findings. Mrs. White and Mrs. Gray are both experienced early childhood special educators with advanced degrees and more than 20 years of experience. They each lead a classroom of four-year-old children with 50% special needs in the afternoons. While speaking with each educator it was clear that their beliefs and values framed their responses when guiding children in their play and rough-and-tumble play. After two interviews (Appendix A and D) with each lead teacher and 5 visits to their classrooms (Appendix B and C), and an analysis of the data, patterns developed from the interview texts and observational notes.

Findings

The findings for this research are divided into three sections. First, there is a report of the frequency counts (Appendix C) and observational data (Appendix B) regarding rough-and-tumble play. Next, results of the interviews and anecdotal observations are organized in themes and sub-themes (Table 4.1). These themes are illustrated by quotations and observational examples to guide in depth understanding of Mrs. Gray and Mrs. White's methods, language, and structure in responding to children's play. Table 4.1 guides the description of data and analysis. Finally, reflections of belief, response and self-awareness from Mrs. White's and Mrs. Gray's final interviews (Appendix D) regarding their responses to rough-and-tumble play concludes the chapter.

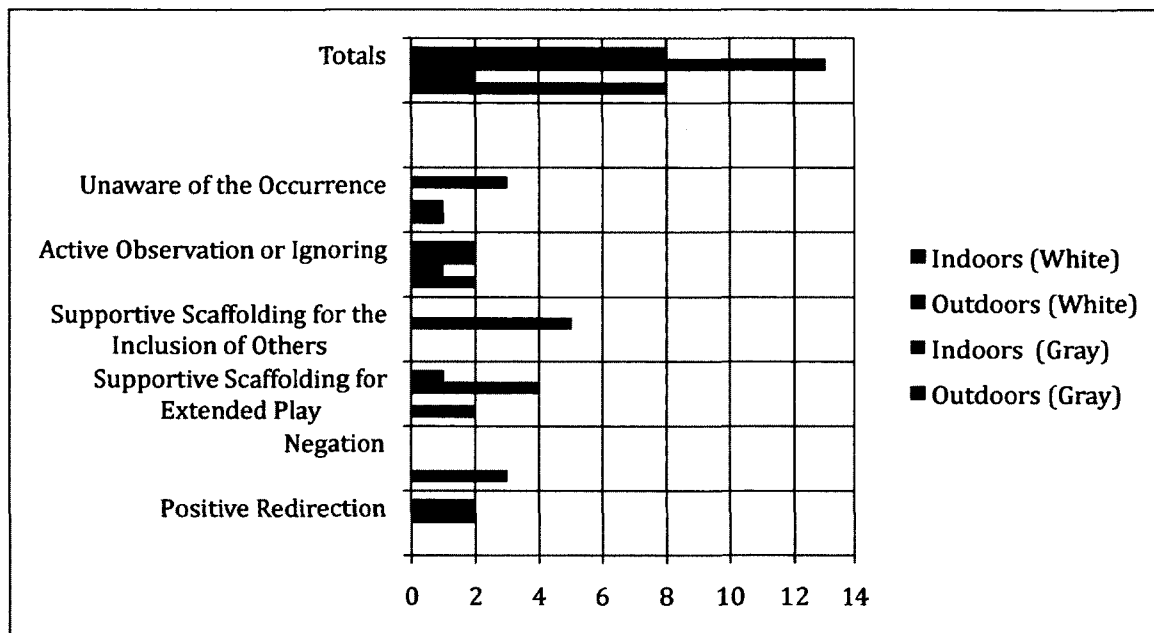
Frequency of Rough-and Tumble Play

A small number of rough-and-tumble play occurrences were observed during the frequency count observations. Overall, rough-and-tumble play was observed 32 times over the course of 10 visits to the two inclusive preschool classrooms (5 indoors and 5 outdoors). Each recording session lasted between 20-30 minutes for a total of approximately 300 minutes of observation. 21 occurrences of rough-and-tumble play were observed in Mrs. White's group, and 10 occurrences were observed in Mrs. Gray's. Most of the rough-and-tumble play was observed outdoors.

The graph below demonstrates the frequency of each type of response to children's rough-and-tumble play by each teacher (Figure 4.1). The response

types listed in the graphs are explained in Table 3.1 and Appendix C. In both classrooms rough-and-tumble play occurred more frequently outdoors than indoors.

Figure 4.1. Mrs. Gray and Mrs. White's Frequency Response Graph of Indoor and Outdoor Rough-and-Tumble Play Occurrences



It is difficult to make generalizations about each teacher's approach and response to rough-and-tumble play indoors and outdoors based on the frequency count graph (Figure 4.1). However, Mrs. White's class had 13 counts of outdoor rough-and-tumble play instances, and Mrs. Gray's class had only 8. This could be due to the fact that Mrs. White is more comfortable with the outdoors and children's rough outdoor play. Additionally, Mrs. White spent time with two children not engaged in play with peers. She scaffolded their play and included them in the stories of other children, which produced higher rough-and-tumble

play instances outdoors. Without this scaffolding the children needing additional supports in engaging in play would have remained on the fringe. The high counts of scaffolding for Mrs. White could also be attributed to her comfort with children's play and movement on the playground during the winter.

Mrs. Gray had strong concerns about children's safety and activity on the outdoor playground during winter. The ice and snow, bulky clothes and physical capabilities of her children and herself made her cautious and could account for the higher levels of negations depicted in her outdoor instances (Figure 4.1). Mrs. Gray supported and scaffolded children's play in running and telling stories on the playground, but she did not encourage active play through any initiations of her own. She has concerns about her own physical abilities and only allows children to play in environments where she feels she can provide the best learning experiences and safety. This belief could also attribute to low number of rough-and-tumble play occurrences. Both teachers acknowledged that they preferred rough-and-tumble play to occur outdoors, so this could account for the redirection and low numbers of occurrences indoors for both teachers. Although the graphs show particular inclinations of each teacher, the anecdotal examples provide greater perspective of both teachers' responses to children's rough-and-tumble play.

Descriptive Analysis of Rough-and-Tumble Play

Rough-and-tumble play was not observed frequently during indoor free play. However, group physical play and movement occurred in each classroom. I

asked Mrs. Gray about rough-and-tumble play that occurs during structured physical activities indoors, such as obstacle courses. She responded, "They are going to tumble on top of each other, and that's fine as long as they are all being careful." Mrs. Gray also spoke about using a bouncy house indoors. Children fall, tumble and jump upon one another, "And that's okay because that's an appropriate setting." Mrs. Gray thinks about setting, safety and appropriateness when creating physically active play for children that may result in rough-and-tumble actions such as wrestling, jumping, piling and falling.

On the larger outdoor climbing structure, Mrs. Gray stayed below the tallest part and observed children playing a dragon game. A boy ran by saying, "Mrs. Gray! We are dragons!" Mrs. Gray roared in acknowledgment of their game, and they hid behind a swirling slide waiting for her. As she joined the game, with a "fire proof shield," the four boys ran off smiling. Mrs. Gray resumed careful observation of the children running up and around the climber. Halfway through this outdoor period, the kindergarten classrooms emerged onto the playground increasing the number of children from 8 to 35.

During this outdoor time, a four-year-old girl in Mrs. Gray's class approached her, looking over at two kindergarten boys, "They scare me." Mrs. Gray put her arm around the girl, "You can say to them, 'Don't chase me!'" Another girl from the preschool classroom joined the discussion, and they ran off together to find another game. When the same problem occurred again, Mrs. Gray helped the girls find kindergarteners that better suited their play intentions.

Mrs. Gray, observes, supports and monitors safety of her preschoolers' play outdoors and indoors using verbal and non-verbal gestures and language to convey meaning.

Mrs. White also balances her beliefs, concerns for safety, use of language and inclusion of children. While using descriptive language, Mrs. White played with children and supported their efforts in story telling and games. Throughout an outdoor observation, Mrs. White stood close to 5 of her 8 children and walked around the playground. One little girl directed the group to put out a fire. The group ran from a snow pile, to the climber, and to the snow pile announcing the need for water and hoses. Mrs. White watched two other children play a game of penguins near the play structure. She reminded them, as they ran over patches of ice, "Careful. You were very close to the climber, I was afraid you would hit your face on it." One boy wandered near the climber in the middle of these two games. Mrs. White announced to the fire group, "G. needs help!" referring to the wandering boy, "Call 911!" G. responded, "Yes! I need help my house is on fire right here!" The group of firefighting children ran over to put out the flames. A penguin boy wanted Mrs. White to play with just him. She kindly explained that she was busy fighting fires, but would he like to join her? He joined the game and all the children engaged in the play for approximately 10 minutes. Mrs. White gathers and support outliers in the group through observation and scaffolds their inclusion and play.

Additionally, during the interview, Mrs. White spoke about an outdoor incident of two boys wrestling on the snowy ground. One little girl sat near them watching. Mrs. White observed the play carefully. She did not stop the play, but watched as she pushed another child on the swing. She spoke about the incident as follows during her final interview:

Did you see how M. (the girl), what M. did with that? They (the two boys) were rolling around in the snow and that was really...they were both happy. I was watching their faces. And then M. was interested in it, and she would come over and she'd sit on the edge of it and watch them and giggle. Then when they moved away, she would roll around in the snow on her own. Then she would kind of go over with them, but she never really entered that play.

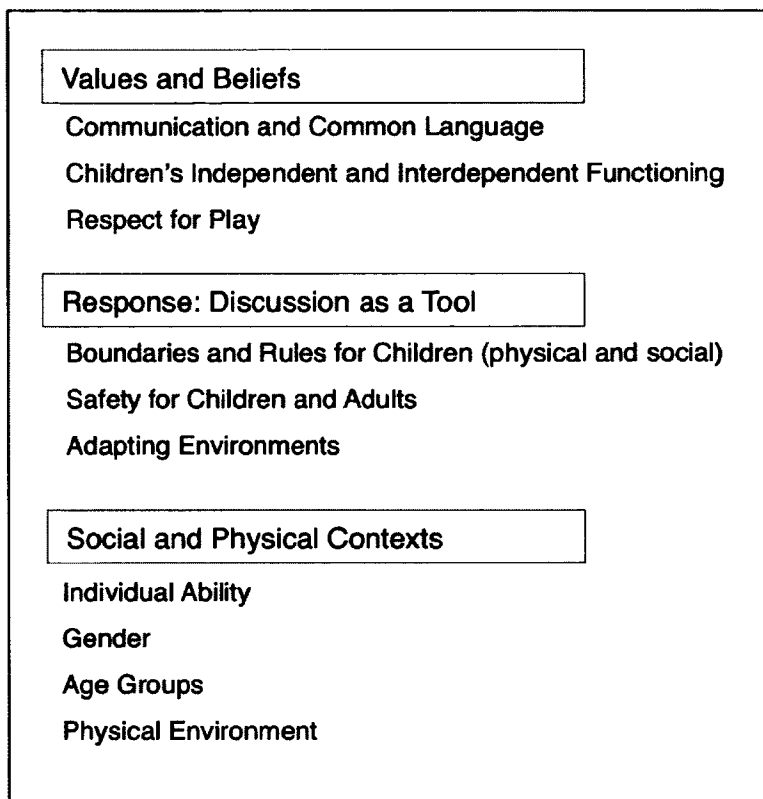
Although M. did not fully enter into play, Mrs. White acknowledged that it was, "a huge growth for her because when she would first come to school she would just stand on the edge and just watch with big eyes."

Descriptive Analysis of Themes

In addition to the results described from the frequency counts and anecdotal observations, a table of major themes and sub-themes was derived during the process of data analysis during this study. Table 4.1 denotes the themes developed from the data. The findings regarding these themes are discussed to further illustrate what influences the decisions of these two early

childhood special educators regarding including rough-and-tumble play in their classrooms.

Table 4.1 Findings Framework for Results and Discussion



Teacher Beliefs and Values

Each teacher's beliefs and values framed their responses and actions when guiding children in rough-and-tumble play. Themes of communication and common language, children's independent and interdependent functions and respect for play emerged from the interviews as foundations for teacher values and beliefs guiding response and decision. The themes do not act independently, but are woven together to form an understanding of how teacher beliefs and values are formed. Embedded in the theme of beliefs and values the sub-themes

most often reflected in the descriptive data were: communication and common language, children's independent and interdependent functioning, and respect for play (Table 4.1). These sub-themes will guide the results in the following three sections and expand upon how Mrs. Gray and Mrs. White make decisions and respond to children.

Communication and Common Language

Respect and communication were among the most important practices discussed throughout the conversations with Mrs. Gray and Mrs. White. Both teachers commented about the importance of communicating honestly with parents using the best means possible for each family (i.e. one-on-one, phone calls or email). Mrs. Gray spoke about visiting families' homes and speaking with parents about guiding children in play, being present, and establishing routines to manage children's behaviors for positive outcomes. Mrs. Gray often considers others' opinions, perspectives and rules with children. She believes that explaining how preschool children learn through child development is the most effective way to gain respect and understanding amongst other adults concerning her practice and decisions for children. Mrs. Gray acknowledged that she disagrees with the approaches of others at times. She believes respecting differences and modeling desired behavior for adults and children in and out of the classroom is an important tool in classroom teaching and culture setting.

The level of communication regarding injury and issues during the school day was influenced by teacher beliefs and values. Mrs. White commented, "I

think really for parents, they want their child to be safe at school. So when you have to tell a parent that their child is hurt, you see it all over their face.” Mrs. White realizes and honors parents’ desire to know their child has been taken care of and all precautions are being taken for their child’s safety (e.g. careful observation, limitations, weather, proper clothing). Mrs. White frames her discussion with other adults under the context of child development (e.g. language, physical, social and cognitive). She believes that when teachers disagree or parents have concerns, talking and being curious about their beliefs and reasoning can lead to better understanding of the situation. Mrs. White acknowledges that comments from others can feel judgmental. For this reason, when she disagrees with other teachers’ limits, Mrs. White develops an inquisitive demeanor to minimize defensiveness.

To better communicate with staff and administration about the preschool curriculum and inclusive model, Mrs. White and Mrs. Gray developed a presentation melding core curricular standards with early learning standards for their school administrators, elementary and middle school staff. The presentation served as linkage between elementary school curriculum and preschool inclusive curriculum based in play. Using photos and explaining children’s play in terms of math, literacy, social studies and science, began a connection and common language that can be used across age groups. The elementary school teachers use the common core standards to guide their curriculum. By translating the preschool’s curriculum language to match that of the elementary school teachers,

parents and staff at all levels can have a conversation about children's learning using the same words and descriptions (i.e. gross motor skills happen in gym class).

Children's Independent and Interdependent Functioning

Additionally, Mrs. White and Mrs. Gray spoke about promoting children's independence and interdependence with one another during play. Mrs. White believes in empowering the children in her classroom "to make choices, to use their words, communicate with each other." She commented further in this belief by saying, "I think from the very first day here, we modeled that and then we had high expectations for children to do that." Mrs. White continued saying, "The language that we use here really supports children to problem solve and negotiate and use their words with each other." These learning opportunities come from an environment of support and positive modeling. Mrs. White commented, "How much we support each other (teachers and children) is modeled every single day and when children feel safe, then they start to take risks, and they start to challenge themselves and take themselves out of that safety net and start moving on." Mrs. White expressed her belief that children need time to work with materials and with one another in a variety of ways with limited restrictions. Mrs. White believes each classroom regardless whether it is labeled as a special education classroom or a typical classroom should be a caring community, be welcoming, feel safe, guide risk, and support children's advocacy of each other and themselves.

With a continued belief of guiding children toward independence, Mrs. Gray sees play as a learned skill that is practiced within the early childhood classroom. Teachers use scaffolding and coach children's play to encourage children to work alone or with peers as part of their learning in play. Mrs. Gray reflects, "In the real world, they need to be able to get along with each other and play with each other and work with each other without too much direction." Mrs. Gray wants children to be more independent of adult direction and more collaborative with each other in play. Through modeling play and sitting on the floor with children, Mrs. Gray believes that you can support children's varying abilities in playing cooperatively, communicating with each other and functioning independently in play and in the classroom (indoors or outdoors).

Respect for Play

Both teachers believe in establishing a respectful and inclusive environment for children's participation and interaction in play. Mrs. Gray spoke:

Our goals are to help children learn how to work with other children, get along with other children, develop their social skills, negotiate problems and conflicts and come to some solution to be able to solve some of these problems in a way that is acceptable.

She acknowledges that solutions and modeling changes with the ages and abilities of children. Mrs. Gray stated, "I believe that kids learn through play. I believe that play is really important for them." She provides structure within their play and creates a balance of choice and limitations. Mrs. Gray establishes an

environment where children choose their interests and stories for play, but she sets limits and adapts the classroom to ensure safety.

This balance of choice and structure shows a respect and care for children and their growth through play. Mrs. Gray told a story about three boys who love to race cars around the room. She believed it was important for these boys to play and work together in the play. However, she did not believe it appropriate for them to race around the room amongst the other children. So Mrs. Gray set up an area of the classroom where the boys could crawl under tables use the car rug and brown rug, but the art area and blue rug were forbidden car areas because people walk around and create there.

Similarly, Mrs. White believes play is how children learn. Mrs. White is able to list skills and abilities that children practice in play: negotiation, creative thinking, perspective taking, divergent thinking, social and emotional development, mathematics, and literacy. She spoke about the need for children to play with materials, play with their peers. Mrs. White also emphasized, "I feel very strongly about children being outside. We take them out every single day unless it is too cold or rainy."

Mrs. White sets up her classroom for fluid play and sharing of materials. She spoke about the importance of children being able to transfer the use of play props and drawing tools to multiple areas of the room. Giving children time to explore in play is important. Mrs. White commented, "Yesterday in the block area there were five children, and they used blocks, wedgits, magnatiles, the people,

and they created this dynamic racetrack city that was all theirs.” This care for children’s play and respect for their creativity is clear when speaking with both teachers. Mrs. White continued in her story, “And they had time to do it. There was some negotiating. There was some angst, but they worked through it and that’s part of letting them be deeper thinkers.”

Teacher Response: Discussion as a Tool

Mrs. White and Mrs. Gray use clear language and discussion consistently and thoughtfully to solve problems, scaffold play and guide children in appropriate behaviors. The results of this section are reported using observational notes and portions of the transcribed interviews. Responses by the teachers incorporated discussion as a tool to set boundaries and rules, preserve child and adult safety and to adapt environments for children’s play (Table 4.1).

Boundaries and Rules for Children

Through the use of verbal and non-verbal cues, the teachers created boundaries and rules for children. In enforcing these boundaries discussion was the primary method of discipline. Both teachers use transition signals such as lights shutting off, warnings for cleanup and meeting at a designated spot for transitions inside and outside. Both teachers uphold the rule, “Hands are for helping not for hurting” in accordance with their beliefs and school policy. When playing on the floor or outside with children, Mrs. Gray and Mrs. White could be found talking to children about their building, their creations, or their stories.

Language was also used as a means for children to understand the routine, structure and expectations of particular activities or choice times throughout the afternoon session for 4-year-olds.

During the group physical therapy session in Mrs. White's room, the children worked on trapping, catching and batting a beach ball. She set boundaries and expectations for turn taking and care amongst the children. Mrs. White used calm language to guide a child throughout the activities, "That was your turn. Is it easier to stand? Let's try that again." Mrs. White supported the individual child with a positive voice while sitting amongst the group of children as each stood for a turn. Mrs. White welcomed the same child into her lap, where he plopped willingly. When the child hit the physical therapist (PT) and Mrs. White, she calmly said, "PT are you okay?" then modeled for the boy a gentle way of touching and interacting with people. "This is gentle," she said while softly patting his hand and arm." Vygotsky believed that modeling and including all children in group activities with adults and peers supports improves social interactions (Berk & Winsler, 1995).

On one snowy day, Mrs. Gray set boundaries for children playing in the snow. Mrs. Gray watched as a little girl rolled down a snow hill, and she commented, "You are doing some rolling. It is harder to roll up hill than down hill." When another little girl ran off to a snow pile far from the group, Mrs. Gray followed and retrieved her while calmly explaining the importance of staying with the group and the boundaries of snow pile play. Mrs. Gray summarized how she

sets boundaries for children when playing, “It has to be about the dynamics of the group, but within those dynamics of the whole group there might be individual relationships. Mrs. White echoed Mrs. Gray’s sentiments, “It’s knowing their personality, how to approach them, what they need help with.”

Safety for Children and Adults

Safety is important to both teachers. Mrs. White expressed her method of discussing rules based in safety, “It’s not just ‘no running.’” She engages in discussion and questioning with children to make a connection, “What happens when you run in the classroom? What could happen to you? A friend? The materials?” Setting up rules for children that are framed in discussion enables safe and positive play. During one outdoor observation, children asked Mrs. White if they could run in the field. Mrs. White was alone on the playground because her assistant teacher was inside with another child. She said there might be a possibility of going out to the field, but everyone would have to wait for the assistant teacher to come outside. While children waited, they inched closer to the field, and Mrs. White reminded them to wait and encouraged them to play on the playground. The children soon were engaged in play and forgot about the field.

Children have time to speak about their lives and thoughts. When children speak and play, Mrs. Gray makes sure that children’s needs and safety are at the core of her responses and decisions. She also values children’s time at school and wants to make sure that they have time to play and interact with one another.

Mrs. Gray displays her concerns about safety when expressing her views concerning outdoor play, winter weather and winter clothing. During the winter, Mrs. Gray plans for her children to go outside once per week. In making this decision she explained that children often do not have proper clothing. Although, they have many extras, she often finds that children are missing boots or another winter item. Mrs. Gray gives her children clear descriptions and boundaries regarding the climbing structures and icy patches on the playground.

One day outdoors, Mrs. Gray took her 4-year-olds to the larger play structure. Mrs. Gray had been taking children to the snow hill for rolling and running or to the fenced in play area previously. Carefully and thoughtfully, Mrs. Gray explained the areas that were off limits and patches of ice. She commented, "The slides are more slippery with snow pants. Everything is faster." Children were free to play once Mrs. Gray outlined precautions to the whole group. Mrs. Gray encouraged children in their play, "You are running super fast!" while also giving reminders to others for safety, "Be careful. It is tricky to climb with snow pants on."

Adapting Environments

Mrs. White and Mrs. Gray also adapt their indoor environments to imbed large movement and physical activity beyond song and dance into their classrooms. In addition to the movement and physical play outdoors, Mrs. White also believes in incorporating movement in the classroom routine in the form of yoga, calisthenics, and song. She commented, "I do feel the movement that we

do in here is really conducive for them to focus when we ask them to do more demanding kinds of activities at the table.” Mrs. White believes giving children multiple materials and allowing them, “to use the materials in different ways and not be so restricted,” is an essential part to children’s ownership in play.

Specifically, Mrs. White commented that her 4-year-old group loves dramatic play, and they will often bring the play food and dishware across the room into the book corner. She allows children to move materials throughout the room in play to support their ideas.

Mrs. Gray supplements her class’s lack of outdoor time during snowy, cold and icy days with opportunities to ride bikes around the school. She utilizes this time to guide children in turn taking, awareness of others and control. One day, Mrs. Gray invited groups of 3 to 4 children to climb on bikes for a ride through the hallways. Throughout the ride, Mrs. Gray commented:

You are on the road

There’s a person in the hallway so you need to be careful.

Stop for a minute.

We can’t go to the gym right now because people are using it.

We can switch in a minute when we turn around.

You are great sharers!

Okay. Stop right there.

Back to the parking lot!

Children slowly peddled down the hallway and moved among other students and adults walking through the school. They were in control of their cycles, swapped bikes without argument and listened to Mrs. Gray.

On another day, Mrs. Gray turned the classroom into an obstacle course that matched the song "The Bear Went Over the Mountain." She began setting up the activity by introducing the song, explaining the course, using language such as, "through, under, and over" while reminding children to refrain from crawling on top of one another. After setting up her expectations of turn taking and lining up, the children began. At the end of the activity, the children lay down on the rug with the lights dimmed to relax and regroup before moving to the next activity. The children seemed familiar with the routine of calming down, and they were able to quietly select books and find spaces for a quiet time with books.

Physical and Social Contexts

The teachers showed flexibility when creating space and allowing for children's play beyond the routine physical and social structures of their classrooms. Beliefs, values, discussion, safety, rules and respect have been discussed. The interviews and observations from the classrooms also produced themes nested in physical and social contexts, which included: ability, gender, age groups, materials and equipment. To add greater depth in understanding each classroom, the physical and social contexts among the children must be acknowledged, as they influence teacher decisions and response.

Individual Ability

Each child in the classroom has individual abilities. Mrs. Gray spoke about the population of children in her classroom regarding play and structure. She explained, "We have a lot of functional communication issues, and so I really work with the child and parent to get them to use their words to use pictures to describe how they are feeling." She goes further to comment, "We do a lot of things with facial expression and using words to talk about how you feel, and we do a lot of that kind of coaching." Coaching children to acknowledge and understand how facial expressions affect your social interactions is a key aspect of successful play and rough-and-tumble play. Mrs. Gray models this behavior and expectation with her actions and language. As she watches children she reflects upon supporting their individual play, "I am balancing.... It's sort of like you have to balance how much you can let them go with how much they can stand themselves. So it's really learning those balances and helping them learn how to play."

Furthermore, Mrs. White emphasizes the individual and their abilities in the framework of "100% inclusion all the time." She spoke about striving to ensure that every child feels they are a part of the classroom. Children's roles may be big or small, but they are all included and have ownership. Knowing the children is also an important aspect of being able to guide and understand the context of children's play. Mrs. White explained that at the beginning of the year they observe the children, "Who are they? What do they like to do? How do they

interact? What are their strengths? What areas do they need more practice with?" She expands: "Once I get that information, then I know how to best support them. In every classroom you have the leaders that develop the plot. They're the ones that carry out the story. They're the ones that delegate your role." Some children lead, and children may disregard them or say, "no."

Negotiating is part of play. Mrs. White acknowledged that some children in her class are not at that level of negotiating roles in play. She sees individuals' needs to practice role-playing and gradually guides them in those skills to scaffold their interactions with other children when they are ready.

Gender

Both classrooms acknowledge the strengths and abilities of children. Each classroom has almost an even split between genders. Mrs. White commented about the gender equality of play in her room. She felt that there was balance in choice and play among genders in her classroom. Mrs. White admitted that she finds herself using specific language with girls during physical activities. She said, "When I talk to girls and they're doing athletics, I do use the word strong a lot with them." Mrs. Gray commented that gender holds a large role in the play. She expressed, "Boys do love to run and jump on top of each other and roll around, and if it is safe for them to do so and there is enough space for them to do so, then I think that is absolutely great." She continued to speak about gender and outdoor play, "Girls don't tend to do that so much, but I have a few girls that really do like to do that." Through the comments and reflections of both lead teachers,

they clearly consider different contexts of children when developing experiences and presenting environments for their play and learning. Gender is part of those considerations.

Age Groups

After observing the two 4-year-old classrooms and speaking about the methods and beliefs of each lead teacher, it was clear that both teachers noticed differences in their morning 3-year-old group and their afternoon 4-year-old group. The teachers noted that in the morning classes of younger students there is more physical contact in play both indoors and outdoors. When speaking about classroom routines for both 3 and 4-year-olds, Mrs. Gray commented upon the increase of structure. She said:

When they first come in, I don't structure where they can play. I just let them explore whatever. Then gradually I teach my 3 year olds that they have to work in 3, 4 or 5 in an area depending on how they are interacting. If the children are getting along, then Mrs. Gray is flexible in these rules for both age groups.

Mrs. White commented upon the beginning of the year when she noted having to adjust her expectations with 3-year-old children. She admitted she had not taught the age group in the last five or more years and commented, "I just had to kind of be with them and help them play. Be on the floor with them and just help them work with the materials." Mrs. White also felt that guiding children

on how to use materials and explore with them in an open-ended manner before expecting particular processes or products was an important lesson to revisit.

Physical Environment

The boundaries of play outdoors are stricter than indoors, for there are two different areas where the children play. One playground, used by the whole school, has slides, monkey bars, swings, climbing structures and bridges. The other play area is separate, fenced in and consists of a child sized house, sandbox, tunnel and table. In addition to these areas there are two fields where the children run and roll in the snow. The perspectives of the two teachers differ when speaking about these areas.

Mrs. White takes her children outside everyday as part of their routine. She prefers taking her 4 and 5-year-olds to the larger playground or fields, for she feels the smaller fenced in playground does not offer enough challenge. Mrs. White wishes the school had "more exploratory places for them to go...like on a hiking trail." Mrs. White sets boundaries for children outdoors that include how far away they can play. When she sends a reminder to come back, and children do not listen, then she decides (as a last resort) to bring them to the fenced area or inside. She will remind them, "When we are out there and exploring you need to make sure you don't go too far. And if we go too far then we are going to have to back to where it is fenced so that you are safe." The physical play area of the field necessitates decisions regarding rules and boundaries.

Mrs. White also talked about her own positioning and observation as well as the rules for safety when children are outdoors on the large climbing playground. Specifically she explained, "When we're out there in the 4's. I definitely stand over by the blue-runged ladder. Or in the winter they don't use the climbing wall. Then the slides, the rule is 'feet first on their bums.' They swing on their bums. Safe play on the larger playground requires certain decisions about rules based on its physical components and layout.

Mrs. Gray has spent time thinking about the physical play structures in their outdoor space, and she has spoken with administrators and staff about the safety of the physical space. Mrs. Gray has children's safety as her highest priority and explains her reasoning utilizing past experiences, philosophy on play, and the conditions of the equipment. Mrs. Gray felt it was unsafe for her children to play on the structures in the winter. When I asked Mrs. Gray to describe outdoor play in spring or fall, she said her rules would be different, and she would have less concern about children falling off structures and getting hurt.

Teacher Reflections and Self-Awareness

Part of supporting children's risk taking and physical play that naturally occurs during rough-and-tumble play is reflecting upon one's practice, response and beliefs as an educator. Mrs. White and Mrs. Gray reflected upon their practice during their interviews. They acknowledge their beliefs, preferences and actions while speaking about guiding children in play during preschool. They are capable of seeing play and interactions among children from multiple

perspectives. They were also able to reflect upon their classroom structures and interactions with children.

Mrs. Gray has been part of the preschool for over a decade. Her history with the building, the playground, the administration and the process of teaching young children with special needs in an inclusive setting guide her reflections and perceptions of appropriate and safe play indoors and outdoors. Mrs. Gray spoke about the importance of being present with children in their play:

What we do in our classroom, it's important. It makes a difference. I mean you see it when you come into my classroom. You see their ownership and you they are functioning and they need very little guidance because they have learned to regulate themselves. They have learned to get along with others. They have learned to be cooperative. They have learned to be compliant in some ways. But it's not compliant to please us. And it's a two way street.

Mrs. Gray has concerns for children's safety in play. She acknowledged that she worries children will become stuck or hurt, and her ability to run quickly and move quickly has lessened in age. Mrs. Gray's response to children and her guidance of their play has changed with age and physical abilities.

Additionally, Mrs. Gray reflected upon her boundaries set up during winter outdoor play and why she may choose to keep them inside, "If there is not a lot for them to do they are going to start rolling on top of one another and doing things where I am going to have to keep saying, 'no, no, no!' That's not what I

want. So we go for walks.” The boundaries and acceptance of rough-and-tumble play varies for each teacher and varies during different times in the day and year.

During the final interview, teachers were asked to reflect upon the experience of being interviewed and observed. Mrs. Gray admitted, “I guess in some ways I was worried what you would see,” she continued, “It also helped me reaffirm what I do believe in and made me more aware of how I was talking to children.” In this comment she spoke about how once you have worked for a long time in a particular setting you “lose your edge.” Through reflection and discussion, affirmations of beliefs and response seemed to occur for Mrs. Gray that affected her practice or solidified her decisions.

Mrs. Gray has taught for many years in her current setting, and Mrs. White began in the fall. She is learning the idiosyncrasies of the environment. Mrs. White worked in a private preschool for many years, and working in a public elementary setting and in an inclusive setting has brought on challenges and changes in her practice as an early childhood educator. Although she guides children's play in a similar way and her core philosophy has remained the same, Mrs. White remarked that she is still learning about other teachers' philosophies and methods to better understand the culture of the school and her current position.

During the final interview, Mrs. White admitted that her comfort level with rough-and-tumble play is far greater outdoors than indoors. She spoke with firmness, “I think there is a balance of what type of rough-and-tumble play

happens and how to create it so the children are safe.” She worried that teachers are not engaged with children outdoors, “You can’t check out when they are doing it (rough-and-tumble play).” Furthermore, Mrs. White talked about checking in with children’s comfort level in play, watching their faces and monitoring when they are exhibiting stress. Mrs. White has comfort with the outdoors and reflected in regards to rough-and-tumble play, “I have a comfort level.” In her final reflection about her practice, based on the experience of being interviewed and observed, Mrs. White said, “I think just keep doing it.”

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Discussion

Children with special needs are able to engage in rough-and-tumble play more easily and safely when they are supported by teachers who can appropriately model and describe the play while carefully making decisions. Rough-and-tumble play among children in an inclusive classroom may be less spontaneous than that of children in typical preschool classrooms. However, children in inclusive classrooms can gain greater language supports in terms of modeling stories, turn taking and care for others that will further their play abilities amongst peers in rough-and-tumble games indoors and outdoors. These skills will also transfer to other spheres of social interaction, play and learning. The imbedded times for active play with the physical therapist, obstacle courses and bike riding allow for children to develop large muscle, social and cognitive skills that will promote their function and language development in the classroom. These activities and the calmer nature of the rough-and-tumble play observed during this study illustrated the care and intellectualized methods practiced by the two lead teachers. This allowed for explorative rough play while maintaining a

high degree of awareness, safety and respect for children's individual abilities within the group.

Using story prompts or inquiry from group or individual observations informs teachers about children's play patterns and offers hints on how to extend the duration and depth of play (Perry & Branum, 2009). Teacher and adult roles during rough-and-tumble play can easily become a position focused on negation of "unacceptable" behaviors. Carlson (2011) reminded practitioners to balance autonomy in play with close supervision, for children on the fringe of play may not know the internal rules of rough-and-tumble games (i.e. stopping play when someone is hurt and story continuation). This is particularly important for preschool teachers of children with special needs. Educators must model language, behavior, and negotiation skills that scaffold children's abilities to engage with others during play (Carlson, 2011). In order to be a successful guide in children's play and learning, the supervising, caring adult must understand phases of play, such as but not exclusively: initiation, enactment and negotiation (Perry & Branum, 2009).

The use of language to guide children in safe play and to remind children of hazards in outdoor and indoor settings is a skill utilized in rough-and-tumble play guidance. Each teacher supported individual children's inclinations toward risk taking and rough-and-tumble-play while observing and guiding for inclusion. Teachers' responses are integral in the support and guidance of that play. In rough-and-tumble play, modeling strategies supports learners who experience

communication and physical disabilities that may impede their initiations in play with materials and peers.

When children play in classrooms, and outdoors, the materials, clothing, and equipment change. Weather also plays a role in the types of play children are able to do outdoors. Children play in groups, individually and seek out teacher attention. Children view risk differently and have varying cognizance about their own abilities and limits. When teachers consider the individual contexts of children's age, gender and ability within physical and social learning environments, a dynamic process of observation, knowledge gathering, assessing and deciding ensues.

Establishing boundaries, describing children's actions and being present with children allows for appropriate responses to children's rough and-tumble play. Both teachers use description and narrative while describing boundaries and safe play on the playground. Allowing flexibility in play shows respect to children and respect for the play itself. The use of language during rough-and-tumble play and structured physical activities supports children's development and abilities in communicating with adults and peers. In an inclusive setting, peer modeling in conjunction with adult models offers strong supports for children experiencing language delays, and rough-and-tumble play expands communication while also attending to physical and social development.

Self-awareness and awareness of others is an important component of responding to young children, for authenticity with yourself leads to guiding

children with authenticity. Teachers who have different comfort levels with weather, safety, and different types of play teach children how to navigate the world in different ways. When teachers acknowledge their limitations, preferences and beliefs, their decision-making becomes more transparent. With transparency comes opportunity for open communication amongst children, parents, colleagues and administrators. These discussions help develop guidelines for educating young children safely, progressively and effectively within socially and physically constructed learning environments.

A Funnel of Decision

Figure 5.1. Rough-And-Tumble Play: Risk to Response Funnel of Decision

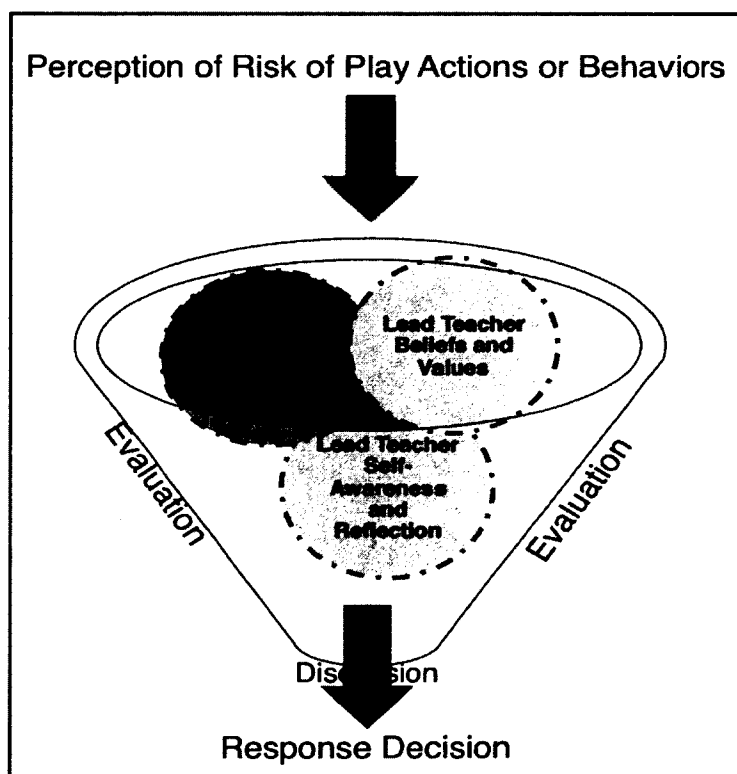


Figure 5.1 combines the three major themes discussed in Chapter IV, as well as, incorporates the elements of risk perception and evaluation. Developed beliefs and values support decisions and allow for one to act within diverse contexts. As described above, Mrs. White and Mrs. Gray closely evaluated the context (i.e the inclusive preschool classroom), their belief and values, and illustrated self-awareness about their teaching and response. The triangulation of these elements comes together to form opportunities for discussion among teachers to evaluate how to respond to instances of rough-and-tumble play. It is this discussion that is most important for teachers working with children who have special needs because it can scaffold their play and peer interactions which are essential to their positive growth and inclusion in the community.

Limitations

Through the analysis and interpretation of data, an effort was made to tell Mrs. White and Mrs. Gray's story of belief, response and reflection with the most authentic nature. The anecdotal observations and interviews regarding play were helpful in determining the teachers' beliefs, values and classroom structure. However, the use of frequency counts and anecdotal notes were far more effective in gathering information about rough-and-tumble play occurrences and response. The difficulty of marrying the descriptive methods of collection with the limited number of rough-and-tumble play occurrences created a challenge for disseminating the data clearly. Reifel (2007) warned, when interpreting descriptive texts gathered in the classroom, multiple interpretations can be

realized. The results and discussion was interpreted in multiple ways by colleagues and professionals reviewing the work. Further investigation and analysis would have provided a clearer interpretation of the results.

What remains is that while these teachers supported rough-and-tumble play and made decisions regarding each instance, few occurrences of rough-and-tumble play occurred during this study (See figure 4.1). This may be due to the structured nature of school, the winter weather or the length of the school day. Also, the low occurrence could be influenced by the inclusive nature of the special education classroom. The teachers have intentional methods of guidance and language that scaffold children's learning and support their individual education plan goals. Mrs. White and Mrs. Gray are trained special educators for young children, and their philosophies and strategies for developing skill and language among their students may have limited their allowance of rough-and-tumble play.

Weather caused problems in scheduling and observing outdoor play. Children spent shorter amounts of time outdoors, where most of their rough-and-tumble play occurred, because of winter cold and wind. Time was also a limitation. Data collection lasted about 8 weeks. A deeper understanding of Mrs. White's and Mrs. Gray's response and beliefs about rough-and-tumble play could be gathered over the course of the entire school year. Finally, the findings of this study are limited to the setting and teachers studied. They cannot be generalized beyond this sample.

Implications

Currently in many schools children spend much of their time in adult structured and directed activity. Mainella, Agate and Clarke (2011) remarked how many children today are scheduled for activities and have limited time for free, unstructured play, and although enrichment activities are positive, children become play deprived. A perceived call for children to have less “screen time”, more interaction with peers and more outdoor child-directed play was the impetus for this research study. Mrs. Gray and Mrs. White have similar concerns. Mrs. Gray expressed worry about the over-scrutinizing of children, and she believes that newly trained teachers will make a difference in bringing play and developmental appropriateness to the classroom. Mrs. White expressed her concerns about “helicopter parents” limiting children’s abilities to take risks and physically play in the outdoors. She feels, “Children are not outside as much as they should be. They’re plugged in constantly,” and the time for informal conversation and social interaction at home has been taken over by screens. This lack of social interaction and language development is particularly harmful for children who experience communication, intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Mrs. Gray travels to many preschools as part of her position as an early childhood special educator. She remarked in one interview that many preschool programs in public schools are academically focused. Reflecting upon her own classroom, she said, “I always say we are skills-based, but we learn our skills

through play.” Play is the core of children’s ability to explore their world and understand their identity in relation to others, the environment and themselves. For in play, children are the rule makers, the rule breakers, the negotiators, the storytellers, the moms, the dads, and many times the kittens. They should decide and have agency over time spent on a particular story or game.

Future Research

Research and practice in inclusive settings with diverse groups of children will transform the way early childhood educators support children with and without disability. When guiding rough-and-tumble play and risk taking for children in inclusive settings, teachers must remember that parent and adult attitudes play a significant role in influencing children’s engagement in risky play (Little, Wyler & Gibson, 2011). In an inclusive preschool acknowledging and carefully incorporating multiple adult perspectives is increasingly important. Interdisciplinary work is needed to guide children with specific support needs in positive and active play. Learning communities rely on decision-making models that support and acknowledge not only the ecological systems that affect children, but also those that affect adults working with children. Odom et. al. (2004) reminds us that as the number of children served in inclusive settings increases, teachers are being asked to, “assume new roles and to create new relationships. In some inclusive programs, the practitioners who once functioned independently are now co-teachers,” (p. 32).

Additionally, new research on risk and response will fuel discussions on

how to have dynamic responses to children's play. Each adult and child has an individual perception of risk, and each evaluates his or her surroundings and choices before entering into risk or rough-and-tumble play. Many times teachers speak about the negative aspects of risky, physical play, it is important to remember that risk taking can be used in fostering children's self-esteem, confidence and independence (Little, Wyler, & Gibson, 2011, p. 117). This is particularly important for children experiencing disability. Katz and Galbraith (2006) asserted that children who have opportunities to interact with adults and other children positively will be able to develop, " appropriate negotiating skills in times of conflict; have a sense of belonging and acceptance; and establish attitudes, values, and skills essential for a satisfying life," (Forest, 1990; Resnick, 1990; p. 6).

Conclusions

Mrs. Gray and Mrs. White spoke about their goals for children's independence and peer supports. Modeling a culture of peer support and acceptance extends beyond the preschool classroom and into homes and communities (Forest, 1990; Resnick, 1990; Katz & Galbraith, 2006). Mrs. White spoke about the hope that children will take what they learn about supporting children with special needs in preschool and extend it into their learning in upper grades. Early childhood educators need to be continually aware of children's biological and social needs within the context of child development (i.e. language, physical, social, cognitive). Educators need to find a balance of power, control

and freedom. This balance allows children to exude their instinctual abilities, and it remains at the forefront of progress for early childhood education. Working with other teachers to construct these environments is a continual challenge that demands awareness of self, others, and a clear model for decision making amongst individuals guiding young children. This can be in regards to rough-and-tumble play or play in general.

When children initiate rough-and-tumble play, they are forming social-emotional connections, a sense of place in the environment, cognitive knowledge and body awareness essential to being a productive and respected human being. Rough-and-tumble play appears to be an acknowledged, culturally universal occurrence across species. To varying degrees, the fear of children getting hurt or harmed outweighs many adults' memories of themselves rough playing in their youth. Tannock (2007) asserted that, "Educators need to facilitate opportunities to develop policies on how to interpret, guide, and manage rough-and-tumble play within their early childhood programs," (p. 360). When thinking about appropriate practice, educators can guide children's individual initiatives while maintaining safe and healthy development.

Rough-and-tumble play is fun. It is filled with intense moments where children are immersed in their stories, gaining deep relationships with peers and becoming aware of theirs' (and others') physical abilities. Children show care and companionship in many ways. Rough-and-tumble play is a dynamic and historic phenomenon that cannot be squelched by rules and control. Teachers can set up

thoughtful environments for young children to explore safely, and they can establish policies that support children's needs.

The teachers observed and interviewed during this case study have clear boundaries, concerns and levels of acceptance for rough-and-tumble play within their classrooms. Mrs. Gray had concerns about safety for children on the playground and for herself as she ages. Both teachers felt re-directing rough-and-tumble play inside the classroom was important. Mrs. Gray admitted she would allow more rough-and-tumble play in open grassy areas and when the weather was warmer. Mrs. White loves the outdoors and wants children to explore freely within the parameters of safety.

Beliefs, values, language, safety, and boundaries have been discussed as factors for decision making when it comes to guiding children's play in multiple social and physical learning contexts. Teacher responses change amongst outdoor and indoor settings. Teachers adapt boundaries and play according to the season, materials available and perceptions of safety and ability with each individual child and age group of children.

Successful inclusion of children and support of their play inclinations involves communication. Communication is particularly important during rough-and-tumble play. Teachers must look for verbal and non-verbal indications of safety and enjoyableness for children during the play. Promoting language and peer interaction among children with and without special needs creates a social

community where members seek to express and understand one another's experiences, wants and needs (Berk & Winsler, 1995).

Rough-and-tumble play may require, modeling, observation and preparation of outdoor and indoor settings, and it succeeds when boundaries and rules support safety (Carlson, 2011). The diversity of children's play in these inclusive public preschool classrooms showed an intricate system of decision-making. Describing teachers' overall beliefs and responses helps to demonstrate that teacher decision making about rough-and-tumble play in inclusive early childhood education is a complex process that combines teacher beliefs, self-awareness and reflection, within the greater social and physical contexts.

Focusing on children's strengths and what they can do is far more important than focusing on what they cannot do, as it allows for more accurate scaffolding when determining play opportunities and tasks for children within their learning environments (Berk & Winsler, 1995). Rough-and-tumble play for children who experience disability may be more risky because the physical nature may create the possibility of injury or confusion among participants. Supporting physically active play for children with special needs in naturalistic contexts (i.e. play) could bring greater discovery of hidden abilities missed during treatments and therapies. Training based in developmentally appropriate practice for all young children could expand our efforts to fully understand how to include everyone in the joy of childhood play.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LEAD TEACHER PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Teachers will be interviewed during a time and in a place that suits their needs and comfort. Each interview will last between 30-45 minutes and will be recorded with an iPad voice recording application. The files will be stored on the researcher's private, password-protected laptop. All recorded information will be destroyed after transcription and data analysis are complete.
- The Pre-Interview is intended to gather data on teacher beliefs relating to the existence of rough-and-tumble play in their classroom as well as their beliefs about this particular type of play in general. The term rough-and-tumble play is removed from the initial interview intentionally to allow the topic and authentic teacher beliefs to emerge naturally through discussing using guiding questions.
- Questions are intended to be open-ended to elicit authentic teacher response. Initial questions are to gather demographic data for additional context and analysis during the research process.

Pre-Interview Questions

Interviewer: Carrie Smart

Teacher: A or B

Date:

Time:

Introduction:

“Thank you for meeting with me today. I will be recording our interview using an iPad recording application and writing down notes to your responses. Is this ok with you? (upon confirmation continue with introduction and begin recording). I would like to begin by asking you some questions about your training, and then we will move into questions about your beliefs regarding play. Please answer only the questions you feel comfortable and feel free to be candid in your responses. Let’s begin.”

Questions:

Please describe your educational background and experience working with young children.

How long have you been teaching in an inclusive preschool setting? How long have you been teaching in your current position?

Please describe your beliefs about children’s play. What is its importance in children’s lives?

How do your beliefs about play change with different children? Or among different groupings of children? Environments? Ages?

Please describe what play looks like in your classroom. What does play look like outdoors? (what typical behaviors and interactions do you see?)

What rules do you have for children during free play periods indoors and outdoors? How were/are these rules formed?

How do children know what rules apply during structured times (group, teacher-directed, activities) and what rules apply to unstructured times (free play/choice)? Is there a difference?

How do you approach children when the rules established in the classroom are not followed or broken?

How do your indoor and outdoor environments support play? How might these environments inhibit play?

What is your approach to discipline? Does it change with different children? If so, why do you believe this is appropriate?

Do you believe play differs among age groups? How so? Between genders? How so?

How do you discuss children's behaviors with parents, administrators or colleagues when there is conflict concerning the play or the outcomes from the play? (i.e. A child falls down and scrapes their knee while running with a stick after another child).

What do you believe are the concerns or controversies surrounding play? How does our current culture play a role in these concerns?

APPENDIX B

ANECDOTAL OBSERVATIONS RECORDING SHEET

- The following form will be used for baseline observations which will occur with each lead teacher indoors and outdoors (approx. 20 min. per environment; total 40 minutes per teacher)
- This form will also be used to observe teachers following the baseline observation and pre-interview. Lead teachers will be observed 2 times each using anecdotal records, once in the classroom and once outdoors for a total of 4 observation periods. The duration of each session will be determined in conference with the teachers and classroom schedule (TBD; approximately 30-40min)
- Observations will focus on specific teacher-child interactions. The use of teacher quotes and narrative of teacher responses will enhance the qualitative nature of the research.
- The researcher (Carrie Smart) will act as a non-participant observer in the environment. Names of children will be omitted, and teachers will be referred to as A or B.

Schedule of Observations

	Baseline (all day)	Indoor 1 (20-30min)	Indoor 2 (20-30min)	Outdoor 1 (20-30min)	Outdoor 2 (20-30min)
4 y.o (approx. 11:40am- 2:30pm)	Anecdotal Notes	Anecdotal Notes	Response Frequency Checklist	Anecdotal Notes	Response Frequency Checklist

Anecdotal Observations Recording Sheet (adapted from McAfee & Leong, 2011)**Observer:** Carrie Smart**Date:****Times of Observation:****Duration of Observation:****Teacher Observed:** A or B**# of Children Present****(gender; absences):****Environment (briefly describe and sketch a picture):****Anecdotal Notes:**

APPENDIX C

TEACHER RESPONSE OBSERVATIONAL FREQUENCY CHECKLIST

Setting and Timing: Each teacher will be observed indoors once and outdoors once for a total of 4 sessions; each session's length will be determined in conference with each teacher (TBD; approx. 30-40min).

Data Collection: Teachers responses will be recorded with tallies in reference to the response types listed on the checklist. Qualitative notes will be used to exemplify tallies. The researcher will be a non-participant observer with no interaction with children and adults. The checklist is based on the following comparison chart on rough-and-tumble play vs. aggressive behaviors (Tannock, 2011; Carlson, 2009; Reed & Brown, 2000; and Jarvis, 2007).

Rough-and-Tumble Behaviors vs. Aggressive Behaviors

<i>Behaviors of Rough and Tumble Play</i>	<i>Aggressive Behaviors</i>
Chasing	Hitting with intention of hurting
Carrying other children	Teasing to hurt feelings
Teasing and Yelling (with smiling from all children)	Unequal playing (bullying/picking on)
Sneaking up and surprise during game	Shortened time period
Laughing	Frowning, crying, anger
Hiding and pouncing on top of one another	Children depart from one another quickly
Crawling	No shared rules
Pulling at other's appendages	Gang up tactics
Mimicking fighting moves	Fixation on the attacks or hitting
Holding, grabbing, pinching, tripping, light pushing	Pushing to the ground and pinning while other child is crying "no" or "get off."
Tag and run	Push grab-and-take
Wrestling, tackling, pile up	Hitting with intention of hurting

Schedule of Observations

	Baseline (all day)	Indoor 1 (20-30min)	Indoor 2 (20-30min)	Outdoor 1 (20-30min)	Outdoor 2 (20-30min)
4 y.o 11:40am- 2:30pm)	Anecdotal Notes	Anecdotal Notes	Response Frequency Checklist	Anecdotal Notes	Response Frequency Checklist

Lead Teacher Response Frequency Checklist and Jottings Sheet (adapted from McAfee & Leong, 2011)

Observer:

Date:

Teacher: A or B (circle one)

Environment (describe briefly):

Response Type	Tallies	Jottings
Positive Redirection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Guidance to other play objects (i.e. equipment or toys, puzzles etc.) ◆ Providing prompts for play that does not include rough-and-tumble. ◆ Warning to avoid potential danger or to use care 		
Negation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ "No" Responses ◆ Moving child away from area. ◆ Denying the play (not safe). 		
Supportive Scaffolding for Extended Play <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Story prompts for imaginative play ◆ Object additions or suggestions to enhance the play ◆ Adult participation in game 		
Supportive Scaffolding for the Inclusion of Others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Invitation to child outside of the group to join into the play. ◆ Prompting other children to include a child not involved ◆ Adult joins in and invites non-involved child and supports the play 		
Active Observation or Ignoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Any occurrence where the lead teacher watching rough-and-tumble play from a distance or close proximity to children without direct interaction, disciplining or scaffolding of behaviors. ◆ Occurrences responded to by other adults while Lead watches (i.e. assistant teachers) 		
Unaware of the Occurrence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Any occurrence of rough-and-tumble play that goes unnoticed by lead teacher ◆ Occurrences responded to by other adults (i.e. assistant teachers) 		

APPENDIX D

LEAD TEACHER POST-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Teachers will be interviewed during a time and in a place that suits their needs and comfort. Each interview will last between 30-45 minutes and will be recorded with an iPad voice recording application. The files will be stored on the researcher's private, password-protected laptop. All recorded information will be destroyed within 1 year after transcription and data analysis are complete.
- The Post-Interview is intended to gather data on teachers' reflections relating to their responses to rough-and-tumble play documented in their classroom through observations in relation to their beliefs about this particular type of play.
- Questions are intended to be open-ended to elicit authentic teacher response. ***Proposed questions may change based on pre-interview responses and observations.***

Post-Interview Questions

Interviewer: Carrie Smart

Teacher: A or B

Date:

Time:

Introduction:

"Thank you for meeting with me today. I will be recording our interview using an iPad recording application and writing down notes to your responses. Is this ok with you? (upon confirmation continue with introduction and begin recording). Since our first interview about your beliefs regarding rough-and-tumble play and how it occurs in your classroom. I would like to speak with you about some of the observations I made during instances of rough-and-tumble play in your classroom. Please answer only the questions you feel comfortable and feel free to be candid in your responses. Let's begin."

Questions:

I noticed that (insert observations about physical characteristics of indoor or outdoor environment relating to rough-and-tumble play). How does safety play a role in your response to children's play? In children's rough-and-tumble play?

When responding to children's play behaviors how do you take into account parent perspectives? Colleague and school community perspectives?

When working with diverse groups of children with differing abilities, how do your responses to play, particularly rough play change? Could you explain your reasoning and thoughts?

I noticed (*cite specific observation of support, then non-support*), tell me more about how you chose to respond? Why did you choose not to respond? How do your responses differ among children and what factors contribute to the different responses? (use this question for multiple observed examples)

How do you work with parents and teachers to build trusting relationships for supporting children's independent (or guided) rough-and-tumble play?

How do you do this with parents of children with disability? Does your approach change or stay the same? Explain.

Based on your own beliefs about play and reflecting upon your responses to children, how can you begin a conversation among teachers about creating a set of guidelines for appropriate rough-and-tumble play?

How do you think your beliefs and “rules” affect children in play and their development (physical, cognitive, language and social development)?

Based upon our conversation, have you discover anything that was new to your way of thinking? What thoughts occurred to you about how you might maintain or change your practice with children engaged in rough-and-tumble play?

APPENDIX E**CONSENT AND INFORMATION FORMS****UNIVERSITY of NEW HAMPSHIRE****EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR, LEAD TEACHER PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

Date: November 28, 2012

Dear Lead Teacher,

As, a graduate student at the University of New Hampshire studying Early Childhood Special Education, I am conducting a research project to find out how early childhood educators in an inclusive setting respond to play in indoor and outdoor environments. I invite you to participate in this project.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be observed a total of five times and participate in two interviews. The first observation will be a general observation where I will gather field notes to capture your classroom environment and teaching approach. During the four other observations I will gather notes of your responses to children's play both indoors and outdoors, during free play periods. Following the first observation, you will be asked to participate in an interview regarding your philosophy and beliefs about children's play. The second interview following all observations, will ask you to reflect upon your teaching practices and responses to children's play during the observations. The interviews will be audio recorded using an iPad. The recording will allow for ease of conversations during the interviews and aide the researcher in transcription.

You will not receive any compensation to participate in this project. Although you are not anticipated to receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, you may find benefits of the knowledge gained through reflecting upon your own practice in teaching as well as the practice of the early childhood special education field in general. In addition, a final summary paper of the research will be shared with you and the principal of your school upon completion.

The potential risks of participating in this study are minimal. The research is to observe your current practice in responding to play among preschool aged children, to engage in a discussion about your practices and your beliefs, and to reflect upon how your responses may be affected by school policy, beliefs and the environment. The children in your classroom will not be directly observed nor referred to in any identifying terms. Pseudonyms will be used for all participants, and the school to protect your identities and to avoid potential bias of readers who may be familiar with the school or subjects. The intent of this research is to gain incite into developing

positive approaches to teaching is not evaluative of teacher performance. Please note that a final report of the research findings will be shared with the school principal, which could present potential for job performance evaluation and employment risk, should the principal choose to use the findings in such a way.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary; your refusal to participate will involve no prejudice, penalty, or loss of benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled. If you agree to participate, you may refuse to answer any question and/or if you change your mind, you may withdraw at any time during the study without penalty.

I seek to maintain the confidentiality of all data and records associated with your participation in this research. There are, however, rare instances when I must share personally identifiable information (e.g. according to policy, contract or regulation). For example, in response to a complaint about the research, University of New Hampshire administrators or the Institutional Review Board (IRB) may access data. Since the research resides in a setting with children, I am also required by law to report certain information to government and law officials (e.g. child abuse, threatened violence against self or others, communicable diseases). Further, any communication via the Internet poses minimal risk of a breach of confidentiality. I will keep data saved on my personal, password protected computer at my private residence; only Dr. Leslie Couse, my advisor for this project, and I, will have access to the data . All audio recordings will be kept under password protection until transcription, data analysis and final reporting has been completed. Following this, the audio recordings will be deleted after 1 year. I will report the data using pseudonyms and general descriptions about the school setting. The results will be used in reports, presentations, and publications for professional and educational purposes only with the use of non-identifying descriptions of participants and location. The themes and findings will be shared with utmost protection of the individuals involved in the research.

If you have any questions about this research project or would like more information, you may contact Carrie Smart at [REDACTED]. Also you may contact Dr. Leslie Couse at [REDACTED]. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact Dr. Julie Simpson in UNH Research Integrity Services at 603-862-2003 or Julie.simpson@unh.edu to discuss them.

I have enclosed two copies of this letter. Please sign one indicating your choice and return in the enclosed envelope. The other copy is for your records. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Yes, I, _____ consent/agree to participate in this research project.

No, I, _____ do not consent/agree to participate in this research project.

Signature

Date



UNIVERSITY of NEW HAMPSHIRE

PARENT INFORMATIONAL LETTER

Date: November 28, 2012

Dear Parents,

My name is Carrie Smart, a graduate student at the University of New Hampshire studying Early Childhood Special Education. I am conducting a research project to learn how early childhood teachers in inclusive preschools respond to rough-and-tumble play both indoors and outdoors.. I am writing to inform you of my presence in the classroom during the months of December, January and February.

I will be spending time with [REDACTED] discussing their teaching methods and observing their practice. While your children are in the classroom, they will not be the focus of my observation and research. No data (including audio or video recordings) will be collected about children during the study. The focus of the research is the educators' practice and methods in teaching. As a teacher in training, I hope to learn how to better guide rough-and-tumble play in an inclusive classroom. This research helps my professional learning and fulfills a graduation requirement. I will share the results of my research with the [REDACTED] to promote discussion and learning.

If you have any questions about this research project or would like more information, you may contact me or my advisor at:

- Carrie Smart at [REDACTED]
- My advisor: Dr. Leslie Couse at ([REDACTED])

Sincerely,

Carrie Smart
Graduate Student
Early Childhood Special Education

APPENDIX F

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

University of New Hampshire

Research Integrity Services, Service Building
51 College Road, Durham, NH 03824-3585
Fax: 603-862-3564

17-Dec-2012

Smart, Carrie
Education, Morrill Hall
46 Fieldstone Drive
Dover, NH 03820

IRB #: 5614

Study: The Dilemma of Response Among Early Childhood Educators to Rough-and-Tumble Play in Educational Settings: Moving Beyond Expectations and Rediscovering Play
Approval Date: 14-Dec-2012

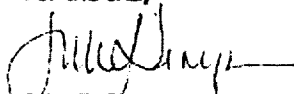
The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) has reviewed and approved the protocol for your study as Exempt as described in Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 46, Subsection 101(b). Approval is granted to conduct your study as described in your protocol.

Researchers who conduct studies involving human subjects have responsibilities as outlined in the attached document, *Responsibilities of Directors of Research Studies Involving Human Subjects*. (This document is also available at <http://unh.edu/research/irb-application-resources>.) Please read this document carefully before commencing your work involving human subjects.

Upon completion of your study, please complete the enclosed Exempt Study Final Report form and return it to this office along with a report of your findings.

If you have questions or concerns about your study or this approval, please feel free to contact me at 603-862-2003 or Julie.simpson@unh.edu. Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this study. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,



Julie F. Simpson
Director

cc: File
Couse, Leslie