UNDERSTANDING THE OCCUPATION OF PLAY: A MIDDLE EASTERN REVELATION
A PRELIMINARY EXPLORATION INTO ARAB PARENTAL VALUES AND
CHILDREN'S ENGAGEMENT IN PLAY
IN KUWAIT

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ABSTRACT

Feddah Musaed Ahmad: Understanding the Occupation of Play: A Middle Eastern Revelation
A Preliminary Exploration into Arab Parental Values and Children's Engagement in Play
in Kuwait
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The constructs and meanings of play in diverse cultures are insufficiently represented in research. As a result, researchers frequently misconstrue the cultural and ethnic differences observed in children's play, and therefore, misinterpret child behavior and trajectories for development. Individual development occurs within socio-cultural and historical contexts based on the experiences, beliefs, values, and expectations of a given cultural milieu. The purpose of this research study is to investigate parental expectations based on how they interpret and understand the effects of play on children in Arab regions. To provide this backdrop, this research study is based in a predominantly Muslim country influenced by its religious teaching (Maktabi, 2016; Wheeler, 2000). Making sense of how play is represented in this population will provide a foundation for further research into how play connects to child development. As an initial step, this study seeks to (a) understand Arab parents' conceptualization of their children's play based on their cultural values and expectations and (b) explore and observe Arab children's play, engagement, and interactions. Adopting multiple qualitative techniques—conducting interviews with parents, using photo-elicited methods, and naturalistically observing children in school environments—will enrich the understanding of play as an occupation. The research study might generalize to Arab (Gulf) populations due to the many cultural values derived from

Islam in this region. The findings revealed a variation in themes based on parental expectations and child observations. In both research phases it suggested that children are shaped by cultural practices, and play was regarded as a developmental process of coming to observe, interpret, and understand skills needed to improve adaptive functions in becoming a valuable adult in society.

الحمدالله... حمدا كثيرا

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

OTPF   Occupational therapy practice framework

OS   Occupational science

OT   Occupational therapy

ME   Middle East

APA   American Pediatric Association

GCC   Gulf Cooperation Council

UNESCO   United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

DC   District of Colombia

TP   Transactional perspective

HSERC   Health Sciences Centre Ethical Research Committee

OHRE   Office of Human Research Ethics

IRB   Institutional review board

KD   Kuwaiti Dinar

MOE   Ministry of Education

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The act of play may be one of the most important aspects of a developing child's life. Much of the current research about play revolves around play being universal for all children and reflects the idea that children have a right to play (Stagnitti, Unsworth, & Rodger, 2000). There is a plethora of research both within and outside occupational science and occupational therapy that is devoted to presenting the importance of play in child development. But there is an unfortunate lack of information pertaining to parental perceptions and expectations of play and how play is enacted by children in non-Western cultures, especially in Arab families. The impact of culture is often overlooked because we are unaware of how much culture influences our experiences. Researchers have slowly started to clarify that when measuring children's development, expectations should be relative to their culture. Adding a cultural dimension is necessary because in attempting to generalize what is typical of child behavior, researchers have frequently misinterpreted the cultural and ethnic differences observed in children's play as signs of deficiency rather than variation (Stagnitti, 2004).

Considering that play is identified as a major category of human occupation, it is essential to recognize the role of culture in childhood play (AOTA, 2017). Therefore, the purpose of this research study is to expand the understanding of the importance of culture on parental expectations and perceptions related to children's play. By focusing on the country of Kuwait, the insights gained from this research may contribute to challenging the Western conceptualization of play as a "one-size fits all" phenomena.

However, when using the word 'play,' the reader must understand that there is not a direct translation in Arabic. The term play is a verb in Arabic and conditional in reference to a child or individual performing the occupation. The term is used in past, present, and future tense, but as a research topic the relativity of its purpose, engagement, and interactions may differ in diverse cultures. Several scholars have conceptualized and identified play in different ways, but what they share are particular assumptions of play. In this work the researcher aimed to question those assumptions by presenting further illustrations and discussions on play, its underpinnings, and meanings in this Middle Eastern country.

CHAPTER 2: CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The following section provides demographic, cultural, and social information about Kuwait to support the aims and purpose of the study.

Kuwait's Demographics

While Kuwait may be a geographically small country (about 17,819 square kilometers) in the Middle East, it has a relatively recent wealthy economy (see Appendix A). It is a conservative constitutional state that stands out from the other Gulf monarchies for having an open political and economic system (Kuwait, 2016). It is the most socially progressive country in the Gulf region. Islam is the official religion in Kuwait, making a majority of the country's population Muslim. Kuwaiti citizens account for 40% of Kuwait's total population, while 60% are foreign nationals; of Kuwait's total population, 22% are of Arab nationality (Kuwait, 2016). Kuwait consists of six governorates and administrative districts (see Appendix A). Most Kuwaitis live in Hawalli, Al-Asimah, Mubarak Al-Kabeer, and Farwaniyah governorates, while the governorates of Al-Jahra and Al-Ahmadi are considered outlying areas with a vast growing population.

Prior to 1963, Kuwait was a commercial center for major trading routes. Now Kuwait is a constitutional, oil-rich state (Ali, 2003). Being home to the world's sixth-largest oil reserve means that the state also holds a unique position in the global economy (Ali, 2003). Today, Kuwait's elevated global and regional standing continues to evolve rapidly, driven by educational and socio-economic changes along with cross-generational community reform (Maktabi, 2016).

Identity

Kuwaiti identity is deeply influenced by the process of overcoming hardships. As a result, the state holds a strong sense of unity (Wheeler, 2000). However, the conflicting generational, political, and religious opinions about globalization has deterred at times the development of any local consensus about how Kuwait should advance as a country (Kanna, 2011; Maktabi, 2016). While the *presence* of globalization in Kuwait does not interrupt national consciousness, it does aid in openness for the purpose of developing national capabilities to their fullest (Wheeler, 2000). The guiding philosophy of the state is "to provide for the Kuwaiti people's needs," "to encourage their ambitions and aspirations," and to "develop, renew and exploit all available facilities to promote the well-being of the people" (Wheeler, 2000, p. 433). Adapting to a new cultural world, where local meanings and values are forcibly shifting, is not what Kuwaitis' anticipated as developmental growth; globalization complicates the mediation of culture (Wheeler, 2000).

Impact of Globalization

Globalization is an expression commonly used for the dominant factor driving social change in today's world (Singer, Samihaian, Holbrook, & Crisan, 2014). It also cultivates the interaction of people through the growth of the international flow of money and ideas involving goods, services, and economic capital. Globalization is subdivided into three major areas: economic globalization, political globalization, and cultural globalization (Singer et al., 2014). In this study, I focus on the aspects of cultural globalization. However, they are all interconnected, as fluctuating socio-economic statuses for individuals and the ability to recuse or stand by domestic policy are also expressed through culture. Cultural globalization furthers the processes of commodity exchange and colonization, which historically have carried cultural meaning around the globe (Singer et al., 2014).

4

Globalization establishes Western attitudes of neoliberalism, free trade capitalism, and private ownership as means of allowing for family trade monopolies to rise in Kuwait, which in turn influences cultural behavior in many areas of life. Western attitudes drive consumerism, and the exposure of materialistic values has Kuwaiti society's traditional values competing with the market-set standards for modern living (Maktabi, 2016). Market-set standards are the locally set trends based on international factors (e.g., the use of innovative technology, latest fashion trends, and medical/cosmetic advancement) that determine the conditions for a successful modern lifestyle. For example, these market standards may influence the use of certain toys, technologies, and games in daily life (Wheeler, 2000). Individualism and international educational reform are spread through these Western attitudes noted previously, which then further spread these values of consumerism and materialism.

Even within the general Middle Eastern region, globalization has influenced the education field through curriculum development and other educational development programs (Singer et al., 2014). Some teachers are using different ways of disseminating knowledge through interactive means as opposed to earlier ways of rote memorization. They have introduced these teaching methods through popular culture media (e.g., *Sesame Street* and *Thomas the Train)* and internet-based technology (e.g., smart boards and tablets). Some teachers in the Arab region are considering forms of technology to foster advanced learning methods. Meanwhile, this can be inconsistent with the society's exposure to and its familiarity due to the lack of and the improper usage of these technologies (e.g., ownership and the use of a computer and specific programs like Microsoft office, Blackboard, and Explorer, and in some cases the purchase of certain technologies, such as iPads and iPhones, is for status rather than necessity).

Drastic change has also been seen within family values, parental perceptions, and the practice of parenting (Kanna, 2011; Wilson & Hennon, 2008). Members of Kuwaiti society may acquire knowledge and decide on childcare based on Western childcare practices, which in turn may influence how children engage and interact in society. Even more so, they follow the guidelines of different associations (e.g., American Pediatric Association, APA) to shape their ways for childcare, family practices, parental interaction, and appropriate play methods. Along with other changes, all aspects of daily living—brushing teeth, washing clothes, and getting around town—have been altered.

Cultural Shifts

Kuwait, as a small country of four million people, is situated between two powerful opposing forces: its traditional, Islamic past and the pressures of globalization that are fueling a push for the adoption of Western values. In response, Kuwaiti lifestyle has drastically shifted to keep up with the trends that globalization sets forth (Maktabi, 2016).

As the country continues to advance in its economic growth, the beliefs about the effect of globalization on Kuwaiti society still lie on opposite ends of the spectrum (Wheeler, 2000). On one end, some believe that globalization is superficially affecting the country (e.g., the use of utensils for eating traditional food and dining at the table); while on the other end, some see it as relentlessly importing incompatible ideas and values that are deteriorating Kuwaiti culture. Nevertheless, regardless of these conflicting views on globalization, there is agreement that globalization has definitely changed the lifestyles of Kuwaiti families.

Globalization's effect on Kuwaiti society is seen as a representation of a new culture that is evolving (Maktabi, 2016). The young generation compromises between preserving the old-fashioned notions of tradition and family and the uptake of a more global, consumerist, individualistic, and entrepreneurial outlook. The attempt to balance traditional family values with

the new modern environment has manifested in a renewed culture that is incompatible with

Kuwaiti's past (Maktabi, 2016), disregarding older generations' idealization of family and the

interconnectedness of communities. Nevertheless, in spite of strong cultural shifts, Kuwaiti

cultural identity remains strong (Wheeler, 2000).

Children's Worlds

There is a generational gap between the way in which citizens of the transitional pre-oil

years (i.e., grandparents), transitional post-oil years (i.e., parents) and post-oil years (i.e.,

children) understand the cultural world (Kinninmont, 2015; Wheeler, 2000). Social and cultural

norms and values shifted in an uneven and contested fashion within these groups to conform

with existing lifestyle reforms (Kinninmont, 2015). Even though norms have changed, the

foundational values of family and community are what keep people connected in this society.

These elemental values are a form of educational conservativism, and they instill continuity

between generations of people. While it is evident that some traditions will not survive as older

generations pass away, Kuwaiti children are constantly reminded to never separate themselves

from the desert and history of the land (i.e., cultural roots; Wheeler, 2000).

Undoubtedly, Islamic and Western cultural views of children and their play are different.

In early Western literature, children are presented as a smaller version of adults with the same

wants and needs (Corsaro, 2015; Goncu, Jain, & Tuermer, 2006). The Western view perceives of

children, parents and caretakes, and communities as separate entities or independent elements;

this perception is incompatible with Kuwait's social standards. In Kuwait, children, parents, and

communities are understood to be one entity, and this concept is core to Kuwaiti identity.

The Arab community is mostly united by a shared religion (i.e., Islam) and culture

revolving around close links with family and friends. However, this community also exhibits a

rich diversity based primarily on national origin but also on ancestry, religious sectors, and

socio-economic status. Ethnic heritage—whether nationality, religion or kinship network—is a key element of self-concept for Arabs and a major focus of their networks of association. Religion is an important form of bonding—an avenue for community participation and social connection. Therefore, national identity itself is defined by being Muslim, being born Kuwaiti and undergoing major shared and life-changing events, such as the discovery of oil and the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait (Wheeler, 2000). More than anything else, the major aspect that defines Kuwaiti people is their religiously enriched culture (Wheeler, 2000). The primary religion in Kuwait is Islam, and its theological ideas relate to day-to-day decisions, outcomes, and all aspects of life for those who practice the religion.

Influence of Religious Beliefs and Cultural Practices

In early literature, Islamic theology stressed that childhood represents a unique period in an individual's life, separate from adulthood (Al-Aak, 2009). In Arab populations practicing Islam, the boundary between childhood and adulthood appears at puberty (Al-Aak, 2009; *Quran*); however, there are certain obligations set for parents regarding their children. The Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him [PBUH[1]) states:

> Each of you is a shepherd and responsible for his flock. The ruler is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock. A man is the shepherd of his family and responsible for his flock. A woman is the shepherd of her husband's household and responsible for her flock. (*Sunna Al Nabawiyah*, 2007)

This means that within the religion of Islam, parents are accountable for the actions and interactions of their children. The rights and responsibilities pertaining to children presented in the Hadeeth (teachings/actions) are obligatory and clear cut. Islam, through both the Holy Quran and Hadeeths of the Prophet (PBUH), influences public attitudes about play by providing

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[1] Muslims often follow mention of the Prophet Muhammad—whether in conversation or writing—with *Peace be upon Him* or PBUH as a show of respect, as instructed in the Quran.

positive lessons for childcare. According to one religious teaching, the Prophet (PBUH) was leading prayer in the stance of prostration, when his grandson climbed on his back and onto his neck. The Prophet prolonged his prostration. After prayer, many of his followers asked why he took so long in his stance, and he stated, "I did not want to disrupt my grandson's play, and rush him" (Al-Aak, 2009; *Sunna Al Nabawiyah, 2007*). With this statement, the Prophet clearly suggests the importance of play and the perception that children need to be given time and space to play at their own pace without interference.

In other Hadeeths, the Prophet engages playfully with his grandsons, reciprocating their displays of playfulness and signals to interact. Nowadays, many assume that Arab populations that practice Islam also impose strict parental control patterns over a child's experience. But Islam dictates the right for each child to benefit from parental wellbeing that is equally physical, emotional, and spiritual (Al-Aak, 2009). This indicates that all aspects of wellbeing are of equal importance to children's development.

Parental Figures, Family, and Community

All elders and individuals of authority are considered parental figures and are responsible for guiding children through their lived experiences. These figures are also considered the backbone of society, leading children to reach their full potential.

Educators in the Arab world use the following proverb to instill a common understanding for rearing a child: "Interact and play with your kids seven, and be their companions seven, and teach them seven, but leave the ropes tied to the boat" (Al- Aak, 2009). This proverb directs parental figures towards what is needed to reach all stages of child development, suggesting that a child needs seven years of play, which are considered to be the primary years of exploration (ages 0-7). In the next seven years, parental figures need to allocate their time in balancing parenting skills and companionship in guiding their children (ages 8-14). In the last seven years

children experiment, and due to children's impulsive urges they need consistent support and guidance by parental figures. They are also accountable for the consequence of their own actions at this stage (ages 15-21; Al- Aak, 2009). Many Arab educators vary in how they view the importance of play, despite the significance to children's development that Islamic teachings place on it. However, children still need to be given the freedom to learn from their own surroundings and experiences regardless of these guidelines.

In Kuwait, not only are communities vital, but the values of collective practices are the basis of being part of an Arab society (Bristol-Rhys, 2010). Each citizen's main purpose is to work for the common good of the country. Society in the Arab world is community-driven rather than individualistic. Family and community are diffused entities within the country's population. Kuwaiti families are a combination of several overlapping communities; for example, a teacher could be employed in a school where her cousin's sons attend. Due to its relatively small population, Kuwaitis are appointed to major positions under civil commission laws of the country that include ministers, doctors, teachers, military personal, members of parliament, police officers, and politicians. These groups of people are also the parents, uncles, grandparents, siblings, neighbors, and cousins in these communities. Family and community are engaged in the upbringing of children throughout their lives (Bristol-Rhys, 2010), and society in Kuwait is known for the strong ties between its members. These collective values are not only a part of religious practice but are reflected in traditions, customs, and day-to-day encounters (Bristol-Rhys, 2010). Large social events (e.g., weddings, funerals, and campaigns) bring people together and are foundational settings for the old and new generational narratives to collide with one another.

Schools

Kuwait provides its citizens with free education at all levels, including higher education, under the country's written constitution. Kindergarten schools register any child who resides near a neighboring school or is within residence of the governorate zone (see Appendix A). Free education is also provided to the children of families from countries that make up the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in the Middle East, while other Arab country nationals pay a small fee for schooling. Public school systems' kindergarten philosophy and kindergarten curriculum incorporate varying degrees of religious content, traditions, and the Gulf States' histories. All classes are given in Arabic except for a basic English class.

Kuwait offers an educational context that combines strong religious traditions, old fashioned ways of teaching, rich potentiality of resources, and a modern vision to reform education for a highly competitive society (Singer et al., 2014). The contemporary concept of school education emphasizes specific aims within the educational system at an early age (Singer et al., 2014). Most importantly, a child is to be a respectful individual who assumes the values of society and is devoted to positively contributing to community development (Singer et al., 2014). The Ministry of Education allocates a budget to improve educational standards at each state level.

The Kuwaiti government mandates all children, from the age of six, to be enrolled in school. Even though kindergarten programs are not integrated in the educational ladder, all curriculums are approved and provided for under the Ministry of Education's classroom guidelines (UNESCO International Bureau of Education, 2006). The programs strive to provide the appropriate conditions for development in accordance to the child's abilities and needs. A child's entrance into a kindergarten education program is usually at the age of four. Due to shifting attitudes and educational reform in the country, the increase in female employment

forces most mothers to enroll their children in childcare or in schooling prior to age four. Therefore, some children are enrolled into kindergartens early, adding an extra year to the program's approximate duration of two years. In 2004, about 73% of children between the ages of three and four were enrolled in some type of public-school kindergarten program or some type of kindergarten play based program (UNESCO International Bureau of Education, 2006).

For this study, the appreciation of children's societal, cultural, and religious experiences was crucial in understanding how they are socially and contextually positioned. Through the observation of parental perceptions and the examination of social change regarding play, the researcher built a more refined understanding about how cultural views shape play. Specifically, this was accomplished by gathering perspectives on the function of play in Kuwaiti children's development and how their play is used in everyday routines at home and when engaged in school environments.

The Term *Play*: Parents and School Administration

Play is an occupation that seems to be common in many cultures with different backgrounds, but the relative understanding of its purpose, engagement, and interactions can differ. When explaining *play*, there is no precise and direct translation in Arabic for this term. The term play is a verb in reference to an individual(s) performing (i.e., could be used in present, past or future tense) a social activity set to be structured to provide various play experiences on a continuum. When informing parents and school administration about the research topic and process, it was very important to utilize the Arabic language in collecting insightful information in the meanings connected to play, understanding the concept, and expectations of play for children in their everyday contexts and environments.

A further discussion on all raw data collected will be presented in chapters 4 and 5. The review in each section will provide the reader with insightful information into the cultural milieu influencing perceptions, values, and expectations with regard to children's patterns and behaviors in play in this region.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature Search Procedure

I conducted a search of available literature using terms such as *play, children, childhood, culture, childhood occupations, parenting perceptions,* and *parental expectations*. The search provided topics from many areas including cultural perceptions, childhood behaviors, development, parental and community roles, parenting skills, and family polices. The most-recently published articles about play, development, and occupation in both occupational therapy and occupational science literature date back to 2010. There have been no new publications of this kind in seven years due to similar findings in the Western regions. There were new publications in 2017, questioning the Eurocentric focus and findings throughout the research. Scholars have been continuously researching cultural aspects of play and comparisons of the role of culture to daily life in diverse cultural groups in other disciplines, for example Rogoff's, Goncu's, and Super and Harkness's publications dating back to 2007.

This study intends to add to existing research and expand on subjects of childhood occupations such as play, parental ethno-theories, and family policy across Middle Eastern regions. The study will also consider globalizing influences on Arab families. I continued to conduct a search of available literature using terms and phrases such as *Kuwait demographics, Kuwait and schooling, Kuwaiti children engaging in play, Kuwaiti identity, Kuwaiti culture, Islamic culture and play, Islamic practice and child rearing, Kuwaiti parental expectations, Kuwait media and technology,* and *Kuwait and globalization*. The search provided topics from

many disciplines in various forms (e.g., books, articles, local newspapers). The books, articles, and newspapers included in this literature review were published between 2003 and 2016.

Play

Importance of Play

While some cultures consider play to be non-essential, the following researchers proposed theoretical claims about the functions of children's play as a fundamental and vital dimension of childhood. They recognize play as integral in young children's development and learning. Though play is simplistic in appearance, it is actually complex in the many disparate functions it serves (Stagnitti, 2004). Parham (2008) indicated that play influences language, mastery of experience, and interaction with peers and the physical world. Furthermore, according to Corsaro (2015), development occurs principally through children's reproduction of adults' actions during play. Goncu and Gaskins (2006) stated that the act of play has various characteristics that separate it from other childhood activities. Meanwhile, Bryce (2008) perceived play as a process in cultivating identity, meaning, and the use of the surroundings to apprehend the unknown. He explained that children explore their environments and develop through play based on their own paced potential to experience those environments. As can be evidenced by these descriptions of play, scholars have not yet reached a consensus about the relationship between play and development.

Occupation and Development

Play is a category of occupation (AOTA, 2017). Play begins from a cultural basis and creates occupational behaviors, promoting children's capability in mastering occupational roles (Parham, 2008). Play provides children with the chance to identify opportunities for habitual occupations (Humphry, 2005). For example, children identify activities that are a part of day-to-day living, necessary for children's and families' survival, a factor above the purpose of teaching

or learning (Goncu, 1999). Children's variability in participation builds their ability to plan without explicit instruction. Case-Smith (2015) emphasized that children identify occupational opportunities by recognizing affordances in the environment, and at the same time, children learn how to belong and fit within that environment through their experiences. More so, Lawlor (2003) suggested that children's interactions are based on the occupational exposures, opportunities, and resources the context provides. She considered occupation as what changes when examining the experience of children engaging in their social worlds. More recently, Humphry (2016) stressed development as an inclination to the purposeful ways of being and doing things in a cultural manner (e.g., imitating the occupations of others).

Children, as individuals, do not develop in isolation. Rogoff (1995) insisted that children develop as social beings through relationships, cultural routines, experience, and various peer cultures in their environment. Similarly, Hammell (2014) has given attention to how children are seen as social and occupational beings continuously wanting to belong and be connected to the people and situations around them. Other researchers also consider development grounded in family, community, and culture (Gaskins et al., 2006; Super & Harkness, 2003; Wiseman, Davis, & Polatajko, 2005). Thinking along similar lines, Humphry (2005), Rogoff (2003), and Corsaro (2015) all consider children as agents of their community, promoting development and transformation. Thus, children are agentic and shaped through their opportunities of experience, but they rely on their guided cultural integration in society to master their own innate cultural traits (Humphry, 2016). Through all these influencers, children take a lead in creating and learning from what they have absorbed to interpret and reproduce in their own way.

Because children's participation in daily life and their freedom to decide on what to do based on cultural milieu are strong influences on development (Goncu, 1999), researchers can

question the assumption that childhood play behaviors have universal developmental trajectories and outcomes across cultures. And because play develops through social contexts and the interaction with more experienced partners, its outcomes are significant in the manifestation or expression of how children work—performing school activities or household chores. Exploring play as an occupation for development, researchers may be able to find something essential in the differences or commonalties embedded in cultural and historical contexts.

Relationships: Parents and Communities

Parents and communities are foundational, interdependent, and integral to the nature of children's upbringing and the formation of cultural scripts that influence children's participation. Moving from developmental psychology's view of a child and understanding it through a sociologist's view helps one see how children negotiate, share, and create culture with adults and each other (Corsaro, 2015). Children's play and social behavior can vary based on cultural scripts from everyday tasks, routines, and patterns of social interaction and their cultural norms of expression. Therefore, different cultural situations and contexts provide opportunities and resources in which children learn to participate through the relational interconnectedness within the culture.

Parental Role

Each culture has its own criteria to be a successful social being. Goncu, Tuermer, Jain, and Johnson (1999) emphasize that cultural expectations are based on family structure, parenting styles, relationships, and environment. Therefore, cultural norms configure parental involvement and their distinctive roles in cultivating occupations. Vygotsky's (1978a) research focuses on the adult as an important social mentor. Children are guided to participate in specific culturally appropriate activities in society by their mentors. This further supports Corsaro's (2015)

research, which indicates that children develop their individual selves through relationships and experiences with others.

In one distinctive study, researchers' findings claimed parents and family social niches influence play through restriction, initiation, encouragement, or acceptance (Gaskins, Haight, & Lancy, 2006). Gaskins et al. examined children in their everyday lives in societies with different social, economic, and religious backgrounds. They were able to collate and interpret the meanings parents attached to observed behaviors when children interacted with each other. For example, middle-class families in the United States and families from Taiwan encouraged and cultivated play, whereas groups from indigenous populations (e.g., the Kapelle Mayans who live in agricultural villages) accepted play as children's nature. The Yucatan Mayans, another indigenous group living in a thriving city, restricted play. They assigned importance to productive routine activities above play. Neither indigenous group spent much time reflecting on the meaning and character of play but instead spent time reproducing adult activities, molding children's skills to become productive members. According to Gaskins et al. (2006), the encouragement of certain types of play was culturally determined and provided the children with certain types of resources for their development.

As seen with the previous example, parents can either emphasize play by using it as an instructional medium to teach children skills or de-emphasize it by dismissing it as children's doings (Goncu & Gaskins, 2006). In some societies, parents, families, and communities have certain responsibilities and obligation towards children. In some cases, parents are to provide constant support, time, and space for children to absorb and perform beyond their level of competence. There is also little research on the generalizability in the level of support provided by parents through societies (Goncu, 1999). A large part of the literature presents an

understanding that adults perceive childhood as an inert identity within society based on adult models of socialization (Vygotsky, 1978a). However, children appropriate adult cultures and that appropriation not only means that children are a cultural system of their own, but that children enact their interpretation and what they learn from adult social cultures (Corsaro, 2015). Therefore, sociocultural contexts shape early children's social interaction and play behavior with different partners.

Community

Individuals develop as members of a community, and their development can only be fully understood by examining the practices and circumstances of their communities. Rogoff (2003) stresses Vygotsky's sociocultural take on children's collective activities with peers and others, regarding the sociocultural activity as the focus of participation. More so, she emphasizes that children take part in the activities of their community, engaging with other children and with adults explicitly collaborating in social events. And it is important to remember, as Goncu et al. (2006) claim, that communities vary in what they deem valuable for their children's development; not all communities value and provide comparable play opportunities for their children. However, children do direct themselves within environments that interest them (Corsaro, 2015; Wiseman et al., 2005).

It makes sense that considering a child's personal experience, tradition, culture, and generational influence will help in understanding what it means to be a member of a family or a community (Wildenger, McIntyre, Fiese, & Eckert, 2008). Therefore, "children should be studied and viewed in community, interpersonal, and individual contexts" (Rogoff, 1995, p. 141). Societal, cultural, and religious contexts exert influence on the next generations by providing set standards. Parents who demonstrate good deportment as societal leaders (political or religious) in various cultural situations explicitly prepare children to follow suit. Corsaro

(2015) stresses children's reciprocal reproduction and interpretation through how the community imprints the importance of collective and communal activity. Children transition into their social and contextual positions in society through their community experiences and roles. Thus, understanding play in distinct communities will provide for an opportunity to highlight the differences in how this occupation (i.e., play) contributes and is treated in diverse cultures.

Cultural tendencies involve the values, beliefs, and expectations sustained within families and communities. For instance, Humphry (2005) is certain that social trajectories encourage the development of certain culturally relevant and desired occupations and discourage the development of others. Spongala and Feise (2007) have observed families purposefully constructing activity settings that are compatible with their children's characteristics and consistent with family—and thereby community—goals. The families' routines and rituals purposefully provide a predictable structure that guides a behavioral and emotional climate to support early development along cultural lines. Both Goncu, Mistry, and Mosier (2000) and Fitzgerald (2004) perceive communities' cultural tendencies as frames of reference for how to interact and adapt in society.

Need for the Research

Purpose of Study

The interpretation of children's play and parental attitudes is different from culture to culture. When interpreting cultural attitudes and notions, the researcher recognized how societal social changes are intricately interwoven into children's everyday occupations. Observing how play was initiated and collecting the narratives associated with play provided insight into play's practice and expectations for learning in real life situations. Therefore, the nature (and changing nature) of play and parental beliefs and attitudes about the function of play were the focus of this examination relative to the Arab culture.

Supplemental to cross-cultural studies, this study signified a start in generating

information on the significance of play to development for Arab children and how parents in

Arab cultures construct the understanding of play. In addition, it initiates a conversation about

globalization and the development of occupations for children of Arab cultures. Engagement in

occupations (i.e., play) may be threatened by the complexities of today's fast-paced social,

political, and cultural diffusion. Increased understanding about the complexities of society will

provide ground for what is meaningful and relevant for Arabs' daily living.

The study used a conceptual lens to understand how culture shapes and organizes the

environments in which children's social interactions and play take place. Children are influenced

directly and indirectly by changes in cultural values, institutions, and social interactions that are

altered by processes associated with globalization. Further, this research is prefaced upon a belief

that globalization, through the dissemination of Western values, influences parental

interpretation of play behaviors. This invites further questions of how distinct patterns of

behavior emerge in particular societies or communities undergoing cultural evolution and what

contextual factors are responsible for variability in these patterns.

Using qualitative descriptive approaches to provide access to distinctive cultural notions,

the researcher investigated parental expectations and views about the importance of play to

children's development, as well as the effect of culture and acculturation on play in Kuwait. In

addition, the researcher observed children in the classroom, using an observation guide to

describe the forms and functions of play. Furthermore, socio-cultural aspects of play were

expected to be identified while children interacted with both peers and adults.

Due to the lack of research on play in Arab populations, descriptive research was used to

identify typical play behaviors as well as commonalties or differences of play for this population.

By conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the use of photo-elicited methods, information was generated on the importance of play and other child occupations based on parental attitudes, values, and expectations. Therefore, occupational scientists will broaden the understanding of meaningfulness, motivation, and participation in occupations such as play in Arab social contexts.

Research Aims

The specific research aims guiding this research study were to: (a) understand Arab parents' conceptualization of their children's play based on their cultural values, attitudes, and expectations and (b) explore and observe Arab children's play, engagement, and interactions within the context of the school environment. Due to the lack of research publications on play for this population the research aims are guided by multiple types of questions:

- What is the importance of play in contemporary Arab culture?

- What does play look like for this culture?

- What changes are obvious in contemporary Arab culture?

- How can you describe the interaction of your parents with you as a child and you to your children?

- How do factors such as acculturation influence the way children engage in play and engage in other (non-related) occupations?

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

Researcher Reflections: Understanding a Paradigm

My background, previous academic work, and clinical experience all helped shape my personal values, which are inherent in this research. My experiences while conducting this research study contributed to the further development of these values. My unavoidable juggling of both cultural worlds (Kuwait and the United States) started when I was enrolled in a Montessori school in 1986-87 in the US, which was the beginning of my journey to try and understand the expectations of two worlds. For example, growing up, I celebrated Halloween at school functions and participated in its American traditions. I dressed in costumes and had a pumpkin bucket to collect my candy when my siblings and I went trick-or-treating. My mother drove us from house to house, but never dressed up or took part in the festivities. My parents always chaperoned, never really embracing American traditions. Sometimes my parents would explain that these festivities and activities were not our tradition and to always remember where we came from. Another tradition celebrated was *Gergeean*, a folk tradition of trick-or-treating connected to the religious practice of fasting in Ramadan. These festivities took place within the Kuwaiti community in the District of Colombia (DC). As I remember it, the Kuwaiti Embassy had a *Gergeean* event for the diplomatic families residing in DC. Children dressed up in traditional dress and sang old songs in order to receive candy, presents, and money. But each of these traditions was practiced in separate worlds; I never assimilated or combined my worlds. The continuous struggle of the constant reintroductions of both worlds—relocation of father's employment during childhood (USA, 1986), resettling in Kuwait after the Gulf War (Kuwait,

1995), pursuing undergraduate and graduate education in Occupational Therapy (OT, USA, 2001), gaining clinical experience in OT (Kuwait, 2009), and starting my doctoral degree (USA, 2014)—have gradually shaped my ideas, knowledge, and accumulated culture.

The separate cultural lives I lived in the United States emerged as several identities—an American identity and a Kuwaiti identity, which eventually evolved into a unique mold of both identities as an adult. I have learned along the way that using my different points of view are always valuable in life situations. Learning how to use my cultural capital to overcome obstacles was a constant struggle in constructing meaning, identity, and position in the numerous contexts in which I found myself. Cultural capital consists of the skills, knowledge, experience, and networks of relationships between people who live and work in society (Bourdieu,1998). Bourdieu stated, "Cultural capital consists of familiarity with the dominant culture in a society, and the ability to understand and use cultural capital varies with social class." (Bourdieu,1998; as cited in Sullivan, 2002, p.145).

At a very young age, I was entangled in expectations in both Western and Eastern worlds. My parents sought an opportunity whereby their children could learn from a new culture and flourish into beings with greater opportunities, but as a child, I had to understand the rules of both cultures, societies, and interpersonal systems. Simultaneously, I had to balance those systems of the West with my parents' Eastern cultural expectations. The clashing cultural values, topics, and lived experiences created a tension that has guided and shaped my research interests about culture, development, childhood, and opportunity today. As a Kuwaiti researcher trained in the United States, my interests include cultural attitudes, play experiences, childhood behaviors, parental interaction, and family practice. I am intrigued with these topics within Arab populations due to the insufficient, and often hegemonic, comparisons and generalized findings

of earlier research. Researchers' application of a Western lens to make comparisons of other populations against their own norms creates this hegemonic perspective.

Living in both Western and Eastern cultures, I used my own experiences to understand the concept of globalization and concepts of implied universality. The cultural frictions I encountered have pushed me to search for ways to improve cultural diversity, cultural sensitivity and competence, and cultural relevance in research.

For this study, I was a researcher and a representative of this Arab population. So, I collected perspectives, attitudes, and expectations by reliving and retelling other people's tensions and understanding them through my own similar experiences. This helped me appreciate how diversity is significant in the Kuwaiti population. Because of its small population, researchers might assume Kuwait to be homogeneous, but through my lived experiences, I recognize it as heterogeneous due to Kuwaitis' many cultural influences and outlooks (e.g., religious and political). In terms of societal benefits, the importance of knowledge gained is to contribute to the understanding of parenting practices in diverse families. I also wanted to explore children's process of engagement and how issues of education impact their ability to utilize ways of play in their development process.

Theoretical Frameworks

In this study two theoretical approaches were woven together, and two models used to interpret the various aspects of *transactions* (i.e., individual, context, and occupation) to understand parents' views and children's actions in an reversed hierarchical trajectory (i.e., telescope). These theoretical frameworks inform the study's aims while considering the social change brought forth by globalization. First, I framed my exploration in describing negotiations between adults and children (e.g., parents, teachers, other assistants, and other children) through the transactional perspective's emphasis on the constant relationship of individual, occupation,

and contexts. Second, social constructivism of culture was a foundational contextual lens used to focus on the processes by which people created, negotiated, sustained, and modified meaning based on societal expectations and societal groups. Specifically, Corsaro's (2015) interpretive reproduction approach emphasizes the importance of children creating their own unique peer cultures constructed through the interaction with others. Unlike the social constructivist approach, interpretive reproduction was used to reveal children's participation in cultural routines and how they creatively appropriate information from the adult world, actively contributing to societal reproduction as well as change. Meanwhile, Super and Harkness's (2003) eco-cultural model provided an increased emphasis on the importance of parental values, beliefs, and family practice. More so, Weisner's (2002) stance on the eco- cultural model considers the specificity of varied sources of cultural influences on the individuals and the experience. In addition, a conceptual model (see Appendix G) illustrates the hierarchical trajectory and integration between theories, specifying each perspective's use in understanding the different values and meanings continually shaped in this region.

Transactional Perspective on Occupations: Relationship with the Social and Physical Worlds

The transactional perspective (TP) was an overarching umbrella for this research, based on Cutchin and Dickie's (2013) perceived notion of it being a meta-theory. The transactional perspective represents an individual's constant coordination of relationships among themselves, the environment, and the occupation, emphasizing their co-constitution of each other (Cutchin & Dickie, 2013). In this study, the transactional perspective was used to explain "the situation," which consists of the interrelation of both groups (adults and children), the social and physical worlds, occupations, and how relationships change over time, neither existing in isolation from the other. The situation included the human enterprise as a unit of study that is influenced by and influences the relationship within fluctuating experiences. Moreover, Humphry's (2005)

examination indicated certain communities' encouragement of culturally relevant and desired occupations over others at the societal (state) level (i.e. examples in differences at various levels e.g. individual level , extended family community level and societal (state) level). The socio-cultural aspect within communities indicates development as a collective process, which includes children's involvement in particular activities that occur in social contexts. Occupation in this research was used to understand how this region creates meaning and assigns importance to beliefs and values associated with daily activities and occupations. More so, it was vital to conclude that observing an individual (parent or child) or their engagement in an occupation alone is insufficient when examining the situation affected by major societal events.

Social Constructivist and Interpretive Reproduction Approaches

The social constructivist and interpretive reproductive point of view is based on knowledge and practice being socially situated and constructed through interaction with others. According to Gergen and Gergen (2007), "The constructionist dialogue is that which we take to be knowledge of the world and the self finds its origin in human relationships…[and] is brought into being through historically and culturally situated social processes" (p. 462). Social constructivism is about the reality agreed on by a community, reflecting social experiences, values, and relationships that are shared by the people. Gemignani and Pena (2007) state,

> Culture is embedded in the daily life of every person; everyone belongs to or is represented within cultural dynamics, an ongoing organization of material and social constructions that, within place, time and history(context), is locally experienced and represented through processes of identification and relationship (p. 276).

Furthermore, culture is not simply a theoretical conceptualization; it is how people's values and beliefs are formed and sustained within families and communities (Gemignani & Pena, 2007).

While social constructivism addresses made meanings and constructed norms at a community level, interpretative reproduction specifies children's process of construction through

peer cultures. Corsaro (2015) indicated that children's reciprocal participation in their socialization process is influenced by peers and adults, where they reproduce, interpret, and reinterpret through their own relationships. Therefore, Corsaro formed a bridge between the two approaches to examine how parents and children alike are shaped by societal expectations (e.g., historical, economic, and social forces) and how they assign importance to values and daily activities when interacting within cultural fields (e.g., political and social fields).

Eco-Cultural Model

The eco-cultural perspective allows for researchers to capture what people think and do in a cultural community. Society configures guidelines, providing specific norms to be followed when participating in everyday routines and activities, which are ultimately developmental pathways (Rogoff, 2003; Weisner, 2002). Harkness et al.'s (2005) presented the developmental niche as the relationship between ideas and goals for action tying parental ethno-theories (i.e., value-belief system) to custom of care and family practice and policy. In this study, these factors helped to clarify how parents in this region construct the ideas and goals by including varied sources of cultural influences such as "work cycles of the family and community; health and demographic characteristics; children's roles and work, including childcare and schoolwork; children and play groups; roles of fathers and siblings; and roles of women and girls in the community" (Weisner, 2001, p.277). Super and Harkness (2003) included culture as a precursor to identifying and shaping expectations for both children and adults. They also indicated that culture provides for foundational preconceived guidelines to follow in one's daily life formed and sustained within families and communities. This theory was used to examine parental cultural guidelines in shaping family practices, parenting methods, and parental cultural belief systems in their cultural worlds.

28

The integration of all four philosophical frameworks and models (i.e., transactional perspective, social constructivism, interpretive reproduction, and eco-cultural perspective) guided my exploration of the development of occupations, cultural attitudes, experiences, and values situated through the perspectives of Arabs in this region. Moreover, the focus on a population's different social, cultural, historical, and other ecological backgrounds helped me, as a researcher, understand aspects of certain phenomena and the development of one's own script from lived experiences within a situation or relationship.

Study Design

As a descriptive design using qualitative methodology, the study used forms of social inquiry that focused on the way people make sense of their world and experiences (Creswell, 2013) with the goal of gathering an inclusive summary of behaviors and practices based on everyday events (Sandelowski, 2000). Specifically, as the researcher, I used various qualitative methods to explore children's behaviors and parental perspectives, experiences, and feelings about the functions of play within a unique subgroup of the global population. "Although no description is free of interpretation" (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 335), the researcher pursued the data with as much objectivity as possible so as not to influence the participants involved. As a native of the same region, I was able to put aside my own assumptions of play reminding myself to have flexibility in my own analytical lens and not leading participants in their interviews. Furthermore, I discussed my data and used my mentor as a springboard to brainstorm how I could lessen any confirmatory bias and ignoring contrary information.

The study targeted families (i.e., parents and their young, school-aged children) from within Kuwait's general population across all governorate locations in the State of Kuwait (Appendix A). The process of reaching across the State was meant to maximize variation of exposure to Western values within the pool of participants. At the same time, the criteria used to

select and incentivize participants was key (see "Participants" and "Participants Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria" sections for more detail). The researcher obtained written approval to conduct research in Kuwait, as summarized in the "Ethical Approval" section of this chapter. The researcher summarized the photo elicitation procedures and policy (see "Ethical Considerations of Photo Elicitation Methods" section). The following descriptions further detail these approaches, leading to the description of each phase of the study followed by the data collection and analysis process. Last, I discuss trustworthiness and reflexivity to enhance credibility of research.

Ethical Approval: Kuwait University and University of North Carolina-CH

Through prior review of proposed study, research clearance was obtained from the Kuwaiti government through Kuwait University's Health Sciences Centre Ethical Research Committee (HSERC). A written ethical approval for study procedures was granted by HSERC, required to begin research in Kuwait. A similar process submitted through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Office of Human Research Ethics (OHRE) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill approved the study and was extended until dissertation was complete. Approval was obtained from the Ministry of Education in Kuwait to contact local schools. Then explanation of the study and approval for participation was then obtained through the school principal and administration to pass out envelopes consisting of the research flier along with demographic and consent forms. Information regarding the procedures of the study was provided in simple terminology that is easily understood. All data gathered from each method used (e.g. field notes, audio recordings, and photographs) was stored electronically and backed up on a password-protected external drive. All equipment and data were locked up at all times unless they were being used.

Ethical Considerations of Photo Elicitation Methods

All participant data and photographs were only shared in their original form. Parents were notified that they had a choice to remove photographs and that they could share those removed photographs without having them included in any research publications or public presentations/talks (Walker, 2014). Any photographs included in publications or presentations have been adapted (i.e., no direct pose or pixelated) with permission.

Participants

Participants in this study were selected from Kuwait's general population from all six governorates. Each governorate allowed me to have access to families with a variety of disparate perceptions and exposures to Western value systems. Based on the assumption that proximity to a Kuwait city increases exposure to Western values or following conservative traditional practices, the spread of variation from all governates allowed for me to make that distinction.

Participants were family units that include at least one parent and one child, aged three to six, recruited from among families of kindergarten attendees in one of the twelve selected public schools. The variation among Kuwaiti families was expected to provide me with a pool of unique potential research candidates. Each child in the kindergarten classroom was given a demographic form to take home with questions shaped to provide an idea of each family's degree of exposure to Western values; a research information flier and consent form were also sent home. About 65 panticipants filled out the demographic forms. They were later categorized into groups based on demographic characteristics. All child-parent dyads were sampled purposefully. The main goal of purposeful sampling is to obtain cases that could provide information-rich content for the study (Sandelowski, 2000). The same dyads were then put into a pool from which fifteen families were randomly chosen to participate in the study based on exclusion and inclusion criteria provided in the next section. This allowed the researcher to maximize variation.

Participant Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Child inclusion criteria. Child participant inclusion criteria in this study were as follows: (a) children must be attending a public school, enrolled in a kindergarten class, and (b) the students must be age three years to six years. Children of this age range were targeted due to their self-directed and spontaneous behaviors compared to older children who have experienced structured educational practice.

Parent inclusion criteria. Parent participant inclusion criteria in this study were as follows: (a) each adult participant needs to be a parent of a child attending a kindergarten; (b) parents and grandparents should be of Arab descent; (c) the primary language spoken at home should be Arabic; (d) parents must have resided in Kuwait or neighboring Arab countries through their childhood and adulthood. A goal of this research study was to limit direct or indirect exposure of Western values as much as possible. Therefore, language, generational exposure to Western values, and location of residence were some of the indicators monitored.

Exclusion criteria. Exclusion criteria for both adult participants and children were as follows: (a) children were excluded if the child had a history of any developmental disability or cognitive, auditory, or language impairments; all children needed to be reported as developing typically for this study by parents; (b) any immigrants or expatriates that were non-Arab were excluded from the study.

Recruitment Procedures

Two schools were chosen from each of six governorates based on qualified participants. School officials were informed about the study. Administrative letters and research fliers were sent out explaining the purpose and further information about the research study. The researcher attended public meetings and groups, including family open houses and meetings, and toured the

potential school communities. The researcher followed school rules at all times when conducting the research in the schools.

Recruitment procedures began by distributing a research process flier (Appendix B) containing research steps, and a consent form (Appendix C) along with a demographic form (Appendix D) in 12 kindergarten classroom locations. These forms were returned to the researcher within a week. The demographic form contained items concerning family make-up (i.e., number of children, gender of children, and ethnicity of family members), level of parental education, level of familial income, birthplace, employment, and non-related caregivers (e.g., nannies or housekeepers) and their educational level. The demographic form allowed the researcher to categorize families according to demographic characteristics. The researcher chose 15 parents and children from the pool of those who returned forms based on inclusion criteria (Appendix B). Ongoing recruitment procedures allowed the researcher to review forms, contact and consent parents until 15 participating families were qualified to take part in the research project. From these 15 families, seven children were selected and observed at school for Phase II of this research study. The participants were reminded at each stage that they were entitled to decline participation at any time.

Participant Incentives

The potential benefits for the participants were minimal. After the completion of both interview sessions, the participating parents received thank you letters with a $15 coupon to a local movie theater (15 dollars [US] = 5 dinar [KD]). Parents were informed of the research collection process if any interest was expressed. At the end of all observation sessions, the participating child received a coupon valid for Fantasy world/Kidzainia (30 dollars [US] = 10 dinar [KD]). Parents were informed that children participating would receive this compensation.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

Study Phases

There were three phases in this study consisting of the preliminary instrument development phase, Phase I, and Phase II. Phase I and Phase II have data collection and data analysis sections, including an overview to follow, reviewing the research procedures in detail and explaining how I generated information in each phase. I concurrently collected and analyzed data throughout the research process in an iterative manner. Flexibility and ongoing change were needed for this qualitative design and analysis process, in response to new information as it was collected (Bassett, 2010). The data analysis was completed in a systematic and recursive approach, where the researcher worked back and forth between the research phases (Bassett, 2010). In addition, collaborative feedback from the researcher's mentors led to further dialogue contributing to the iterative research process. Moreover, this allowed the researcher to share, refine and receive feedback from the mentor while collecting and analyzing data simultaneously.

Preliminary Instrument Development Phase (Credibility and Cognitive Interviewing)

The purpose of this stage was to determine the credibility of the questions used for the parent interview. The final research questions were contingent on the translation and back-translation of the initial Parental Play interview protocol (Appendix E). Research assistants translated the interview protocol from English to Arabic, then it was translated back by a certified translator from Arabic to English. The researcher determined if the intended question elicited the desired content in its translations. Based on the parents' feedback on these questions, this stage examined the thoughts influencing parental perceptions and attitudes. Conducting the cognitive interviewing (explained below) also allowed for a trial run to ensure the project's feasibility. The primary intent was to demonstrate the credibility of the Parental Play interview for eliciting the parents' thoughts, ideas, values, and expectations about play.

Five parents of kindergarten-aged children were a convenience sample presented with the interview questions to provide feedback on clarity. The five mock interviews were conducted using the process of cognitive interviewing. Cognitive interviewing entails the researcher asking, for example, "Earlier, I asked you to tell me how you promoted and encouraged play (Drennan, 2003). Why do you think I asked this question?" The goal of using cognitive interviewing was to determine if questions were effective and would provide detailed depictions of meaning relating to the topic of play (Drennan, 2003). In doing so, the researcher assessed whether the participants understood the questions and interpreted them in the expected way. If they interpreted them differently, the questions were adjusted accordingly. The researcher allowed participants to think aloud. The researcher notified participants that any information they provided during this interview would not be used in the project; this session was merely to confirm the effectiveness of the interview. A demographic form (Appendix D) was also distributed for participant feedback after explaining how it would be used in the study. The five participants were asked if there were any sensitive questions on the demographic form that could be asked a different way.

In addition, these mock interviews improved the researcher's confidence and established a strategy for interviewing parents. Once interview questions were in order, the researcher was able to contact all schools. All mock interviews, translation, and retranslation were completed in one month. The researcher's mentor reviewed the output of this effort to support any further refinement of the instrument, data techniques, and analyses.

Phase I

Data collection. In the first phase, a parent from each of the 15 child/parent dyads was interviewed face-to-face at a venue of their choice. As an initial step, families were contacted by phone to confirm their interest in participating in the interview process. This process continued until 15 families confirmed participation in the research study. The researcher reviewed informed

consent, confidentiality, photography ethics, data collection uses, and the nature of the interview

and observations with parents.

The interviews (Appendix E) were conducted in Arabic and audiotaped for the full

duration of approximately 30–45 minutes. In the interview, the researcher started with general

questions ranging from, "Tell me about (child's name)," to questions based on parental opinion

and the connected meaning, value, and expectations about the function of play. The interview

included questions (Appendix E) concerning beliefs and attitudes about the importance of play to

children's development in various domains. Some of the questions asked participants to disclose

past experiences. The parents interviewed were asked the same seven open-ended questions with

additional prompts permitted to allow researcher to probe in participants responses. There were

variations in approach created a less structured interview process for the appreciation of both the

parent's and child's personal experiences, traditions, culture, and generational influences. The

process helped in understanding what it means to be a member of a family or a community

(Fiese, Sameroff, Grotevant, Wamboldt, Dickstein, & Fravel, 2001). The interview questions

were self-developed, aiming to access parental attitudes, values, and expectations on the function

of play within the community. The interview questions were translated into Arabic by research

assistants and a certified translator. Translation took two weeks to complete.

Along with the interviews, in the second part of Phase I, the researcher's integration of

photo-elicitation methods offered an alternative form of representation to traditional written and

spoken language and provided for a comprehensive discussion. Photo elicitation is when

participants use a camera to take photographs as a tool to structure and elicit dialogue about the

people, symbols, and objects represented in the photos. Photographs offer to make the 'strange

familiar' to researchers, "necessitating the explanation of taken-for-granted aspects of their lives"

to a researcher from outside their own social context (Walker, 2014, p.4). The technique offers a way to gain complex understanding of human experiences. Another added value of photo-elicitation is that it can add credibility and trustworthiness to word-based survey and interview data that has also been collected (Walker, 2014). Based on published literature on photo elicitation methods, Walker (2014) indicated that participants disclose aspects researchers would not otherwise perceive as important to the participant. Some researchers who use photo elicitation methods can challenge traditional research roles, making the research process a collaborative endeavor between researchers and participants (Walker, 2014).

For this part of the study, the researcher provided parent participants with a disposable, Polaroid camera (with eight instant color/black-white film) to use over 7 days to photograph their own child in places of play and their child engaging in play with other people and objects of importance in their everyday lives. The researcher met with parent participants after a week's time for a second interview to discuss the chosen photographs (three to five scenario photos) by each participant. Parent participants' chosen pictures were discussed with each picture being a representation of their understanding of play and its functions. Within the interview it was very important to notice any narrative overtones when trying to understand the point of view and personal experiences of a participant (Mattingly & Lawlor, 2000). The researcher anticipated that parents might provide certain situations that occurred with their child that could generate memories about how they played while growing up. The researcher sometimes prompted the interviewee with a question, such as, "Does this remind you of your childhood or any specific incident with your child?" Personal stories illuminated the underling meaning of what content was being researched; in this case, *play.*

The short, debriefing interview provided a brief discussion about the photographs. The photographs encouraged the participants to express their meanings, values, and expectations about play through dialogue (Huot & Rudman, 2015). Due to the short time that was spent with the parents, the researcher scheduled a follow-up interview at the end of the initial interview in Phase I. Parents were also contacted two days in advance to confirm the follow-up interview. The 15-20-minute interview was audiotaped. Phase I (initial interviews and follow-up interviews) were completed in three months.

Data analysis. Qualitative interviews often help to build a relationship with participants and prepare the researcher to better summarize their in-depth responses (Hout & Rudman, 2015). Nevertheless, while interviews provide the material to base initial descriptions and help build relationships, alone they are insufficient. By using multiple qualitative methods, opportunities for complexity and depth in research were reflected. Moreover, the use of additional visual and observational methods provided for a deeper understanding of occupations in the exploration of literal and implicit meanings. Through an iterative process of data collection and analysis, the knowledge generated through one method informed the understanding of the other (Hout & Rudman, 2015). Ultimately, the researcher's choice of data analysis process was an important element in the study. The use of various methods led to various interpretations (i.e., with the use of photos) and provided a deeper collaborative engagement by both the participants and researcher.

The data analysis in Phase I started by transcribing interviews verbatim for content and common terms and descriptors. The data analysis was then translated from Arabic to English by the researcher and research assistants and corroborated by certified translators. A certified translator back translated the interview from English to Arabic, to indicate if parental ideas were

expressed accurately. The transcribed interviews in English were then coded using qualitative descriptive and content analyses. Conceptual ordering is a type of analysis used to organize data into discrete categories according to characteristic dimensions or demographics; the common themes and descriptors explain those categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The data was analyzed to identify common subject matter that surfaces both within an individual interview and within the data set (Muylaert, Sarubbi, Gallo, Neto, & Reis, 2014; Riessman, 2013). Participants' responses were compared (Riessman, 2013). The researcher's mentor offered input on comparisons in order to make better sense of the data collected and interpreted.

All interview transcripts were read, re-read, and reviewed for commonalities and differences. This process allowed the researcher to create descriptive and interpretive themes from the transcripts. The researcher's reflective side notations at the time of interview were re-read, and memos were developed based on the researcher's thought process. The researcher focused on cultural context connecting those themes (Riessman, 2013); utilized how the participants related actions across scenes to reveal their social situation, history, and identity (Muylaert et al., 2014); and delineated the context (describing expressed emotions, feelings, experiences, and actions within the context) so that meanings were clear (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This allowed for a flexible method for making connections among data, for revisiting codes and for making connections of analytical work (Drisko, 2013).

After both qualitative data sets were analyzed separately, comparisons were made using the same software. The researcher incorporated feedback from the photo-elicitation interview discussions and used photos as illustrations for meaning in addition to parent participants' use of terms to describe photographs. Analyzing the photographs supported and validated the relationships and linkages that appeared in and throughout all interview discussions and

supplemental materials to identify recurring themes. The researcher created interpretive

categories to represent the relationships among the recurring trends. To conclude the analysis,

researchers re-read and summarized each transcript.

      Researcher's analytical mapping. *(Understanding parental process of structuring &*

conforming expectations). Through the research interview process, parents' thought process

(e.g., reaction, familiarity of topic, responses to questions) in understanding play as a concept

was very significant. Parents went back and forth through what seemed to be a weaving of their

values on play, parenting styles, and community or societal expectations to provide intricate

responses. Parental expectations were quite apparent in the way they validated their child's

competency levels. Parents responded to questions by relating their own practices in play as

children, but they were able to describe their children's differences in play due to changes in

historical and social situations. They also based parental expectations on what they perceived as

the necessities for children's everyday life. The researcher followed each parent's forward and

backward processing techniques when answering interview questions as follows in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1. Researcher's Anticipation on Parents Processing of Interview Questions

```
┌─────────────┐
│    Play     │
└─────────────┘
      │
      ▼
   ┌──────────────────────┐
   │      Parental        │
   │  interpertation/     │
   │   understanding      │
   └──────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
        ┌─────────────────────┐
        │ Parental perceptions/│
        │       values        │
        └─────────────────────┘
                 │
                 ▼
            ┌──────────────────────┐
            │ Community/Society set │
            │       values         │
            └──────────────────────┘
                     │
                     ▼
                 ┌──────────────┐
                 │ Expectations │
                 └──────────────┘
```
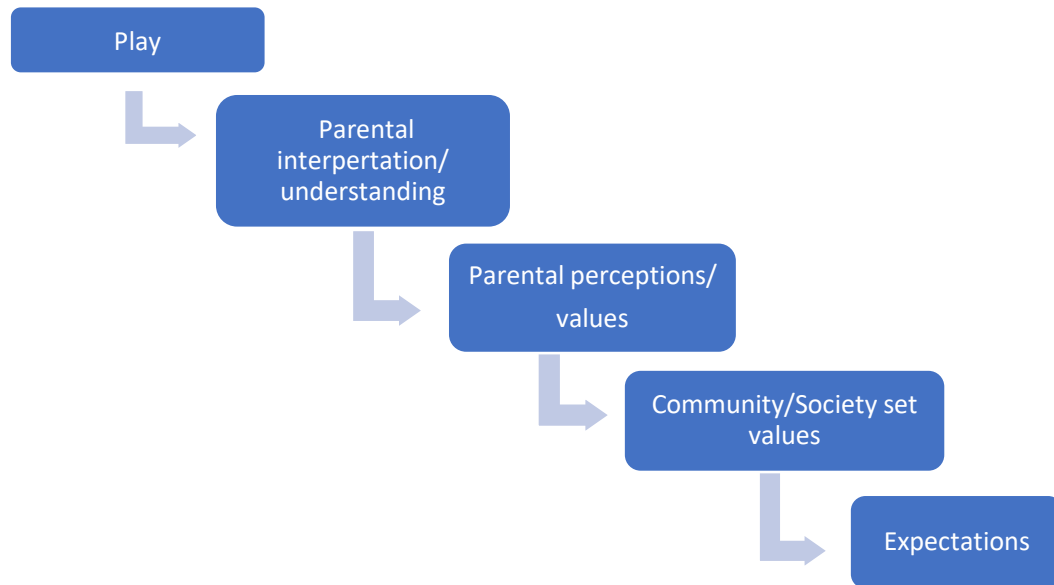
Coding process. In qualitative data analysis, codes are used to construct, symbolize or

translate data, thus attributing interpreted meaning to each individual experience in order to

reveal patterns and aid categorization, theory-building, and other analytic processes (Saldaña,

2016). The researcher followed these initial analytical steps so as to become familiar with the

data collected: (a) transcribing interviews as they are completed; (b) writing analytical

memos/recording audio notes; (c) re-reading transcriptions and analytical memos; (d) re-listening

to audio notes; (e) frequent re-translation of interviews in whole or segments; (f) talking to

mentor; and (g) debating with friends and siblings. These steps were fruitful in elucidating

parental understanding of a child's everyday occupation and then translating the information into

representative codes. Moreover, the codes captured and represented major content in the data set.

Thematic analysis. The process techniques employed summarized the data, but more

importantly, interpreted what parents expressed both individually and as a group. In order to

41

organize and arrange data faster and more effectively, the following steps were followed: (a) cluster/groups initial codes, (b) refine clusters/groups, and then (c) categorize clusters/groups.

Initially, ideas and patterns were vetted through conversation, debate, and self-incited discussions in challenging the researcher's assumptions in order to generate initial codes. The researcher recorded early impressions and information after each interview to later translate these ideas into clustered initial codes. Although coding each interview on its own was time consuming, the process was necessary to become familiar with the content being organized. After the initial process of transcription, translation, and re-translation, analysis of content data was managed in three levels (i.e., initial coding, refining codes cluster/groups into categories, and developing themes). The analytical process entailed detailed tasks such as marking, labeling, sorting and clustering, which aided in the clarification of data collected.

Eventually, coding interviews per response to questions and moments was more efficient when using an open coding method (i.e., developing and modifying to generate codes while working through the process; Saldaña, 2016). These methods provided an intricate way to organize, cluster, and arrange data content to produce initial cluster/groups codes. By following Saldaña's methods, three coding practices were used for working through the hardcopies of transcripts. In vivo coding was used to extract words or short phrases from the participant's own language to obtain research findings. The analytical techniques used participants' tone of voice and personal stated opinions to understand their perceptions of the underlying topic (Saldaña, 2016). Process coding was the second thematic method, using gerunds (i.e., -ing words) to represent observable and conceptual action intertwined with dynamics of time (i.e., emerge, change, and or occur in sequences) in the data (Saldaña, 2016). The last method, focused coding,

was used following in vivo and process coding in analysis. The researcher employed codes representative of the thematic or conceptual similarity in the data (Saldaña, 2016).

Despite the long manual process, categorizing in clusters/groups of codes embodied content patterns. It allowed the researcher to use words or short phrases that symbolically assigned a summative, essence-capturing, attribute of the data either found within or formed from the data. Even though the approach was an inductive process of movement through layers of interpretation, the analysis conducted relied on participant words in creating code names and identifying re-occurring key terms within and between interviews to develop themes and subcategories. Therefore, by revisiting, re-reading, and re-listening to each interview on its own, the researcher was able to narrow down selection and identify patterns of typical and non-typical category clusters/groupings providing leeway to search for preliminary themes.

The next steps were to identify appropriate preliminary themes within the search, review preliminary themes, refine those themes and then define them. Each theme is a pattern that needs to capture something significant or interesting about the data objectives in the research (Saldaña, 2016). The labeled preliminary themes had considerable overlap between the generated codes and questionable identified themes within the data collected. The initial themes were predominately descriptive, associated with more than one categorized cluster/group. The researcher modified and developed the preliminary themes that were identified (i.e., coherent and distinct from each other) in the context of the entire data set. And finally, in order to refine the themes, the researcher established connections back to parental expectations and identified roots in the overarching themes.

Phase II

Data collection. In Phase II, seven children were randomly chosen based on attendance from 12 different schools were chosen from the initial 15 parent-child dyads to be observed in

the classroom. Each child was considered as an individual case study to be observed both indoors and outdoors. Teachers were contacted to set up times for observing the children engaging in free play in both structured classroom stations and unstructured recess time (indoors or outdoors). This phase focused on the use of observational methods of data collection. Rich descriptions of children's behaviors while playing were recorded. A designed observational guide was used to evaluate play in children in this region. It assessed children's engagement and interaction with others in environments familiar to them. The researcher observed the child's free play in both indoor and outdoor settings. Terminology was developed to describe children's interactions as the researcher observed the child's quality of emotional engagement and unique play behaviors. The researcher used elements of descriptive observation as an observational guide (Appendix F). Observational data notes included descriptions about children's space, the actors around them, and activities. The notes also included the researcher's comments, thoughts, and observations not included on the observation guide.

During the observations of the children playing, the children were able to play with any and all materials available to them in the classroom.. The researcher observed a child's play behaviors during free playtime. If the researcher was approached by a child who asked the researcher to play with them, the researcher redirected the child with a statement like "I am just watching" or "show me what you are doing." Indoor observations were documented in the kindergarten classroom after circle time or free play situations. The outdoor observations occurred at recess time. A single child was observed at a time and within a week of each indoor/outdoor observational session. Each data collection process occurred on a separate day within a week's time.

Teachers received child participant names from the researcher after the completion of interviews scheduled with parents in Phase I. Naturalistic observations were scheduled on a weekly basis. Three children were observed in the first 7 weeks, then four children were observed in the following 7 weeks, each for the duration of an hour, twice a week, approximately 12+ times. In total, seven children were observed over about three and a half months.

Data analysis. Free play field notes were analyzed thematically to identify common play behaviors, emotions while playing, and any common subject matter that surfaced both within individual observations and within the data (Riessman, 2013). Notes were read, re-read, and analyzed continuously during data collection. Furthermore, continuous discussions with the research mentor enhanced the researcher's technique on targeting certain behaviors within observation sessions. This approach is meant to immerse a researcher in data analysis, providing direction and enabling one to redirect and revise observations and interpretation along the way (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The field notes were coded and classified into categories based on themes, sub-themes, and patterns that the researcher developed from all observations (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) wrote that data analysis in a qualitative case study entails organizing the data, reducing it into themes through coding and then condensing the codes. Accordingly, the researcher created representations of child demographics and common behavioral themes in the form of tables or figures.

Observation fieldnotes were put into Dedoose, a web-based application that identifies common words used throughout the study by overlapping different words into a visual map by font sizes to indicate the number of times the word appeared in the fieldnotes. By using the application, the same self-developed observation guide was used to categorize, and group words present in the direct observation in the classrooms. The words then guided the analysis by using

the categories and a descriptive coding method that was then done manually to generate and identify themes within them. The field notes written by the researcher included memos and diagrams throughout the data analysis process.

Memos and diagrams are visual representations of what the researcher is thinking when collecting and analyzing data. These visual representations facilitated an evolving analytical process and kept track of relationships between concepts. The process of using memos and diagrams helped the researcher retrace the final path of the descriptive analysis and how she came to a conclusion (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Final Analysis

Since many unknown variables need to be explored in this region and lack of research on the topic of play, further research is needed, and various methods should be used to provide a comprehensive big picture. Though people are always evolving, they are shaped by socio-cultural practices within their communities. Therefore, an analytical focus on the researcher's account of historically changing aspects of cultural practice when exploring the topic of play was expected to help distinguish any relevant variables needed to interpret data collected to plan on generating ideas of what needs to be explored further. The analysis of both interview and observational data was integrated at the completion of the research process, to determine any continuity or discontinuity between data sets. The proposed final analysis was considered a preliminary research exploration to establish the groundwork necessary to further the study. At the same time, the researcher's ongoing journaling process complimented this research study by exposing points of view from other sources as they relate to the topic of play and its specific aspects of cultural functioning. Input on the function of play from other parental and authority figures (e.g., school superintendents, principals, and teachers) uncovered additional, variables.

These views were expected to provide a researcher with different insights on cultural systems, practices, values and expectations in the region.

Researcher Credibility

Trustworthiness. Trustworthiness of data can be an issue when conducting qualitative research with parents for several reasons. Because interviews are a negotiated text and due to participants varied demographic characteristics, the researcher and the participants can create a reality in which answers are given that are grounded in and influenced by gender, race, class, and ethnicity (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005; Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). The interviews also had the potential of being influenced by the power differential between the participants and the researcher being a PhD student. This power differential could have created feelings of inferiority due to the level of education or the language used to express topic content. In order to manage this power differential, the researcher shared remarks that validated the importance of the parent's knowledge, such as, "I have not experienced or reached the level of motherhood, and those credentials are crucial to this study." The researcher also disclosed to each parent participant that a researcher collecting data alone could not provide for a definite conclusion. Further research was needed but parent participant would add rich information to providing a bigger picture in understanding play's importance in this region .

Trustworthiness of the data was maintained through using contextual completeness and participant information checking. Contextual completeness includes "contextual features such as the history, physical setting, specific activities, temporal order of events, routines, consequences of events, members' perceptions and meanings in reflective journaling" (Gall et al., 2005, p. 322). Information checking added rigor by allowing parents to recognize, reflect on, and reconfirm collected data after it has been described and interpreted. Trustworthiness may have also been increased by the use of audio recordings, following interviews directly with reflective

notes, spontaneous field-notes, following observations directly with audio-recorded notes to increase accurate recall, detailed descriptions of the data analysis process, and rich descriptions of participants and contextual factors (Gall et al., 2005). Trustworthiness was also maintained through continuous collaborations between the researcher and mentor through ongoing reflection and discussion sessions.

Reflexivity. Reflexivity means the "process of systematically attending to the context of knowledge," a process of reflecting on what one is doing, why one is doing it, and how one's philosophy and world view impact and interact with one's research (Gergen & Gergen, 2003, p. 579). Gergen and Gergen (2003) explain, "Researchers bring to their work ways in which they have avoided or suppressed certain points of view" (p. 579). Since it is impossible to remove the researcher from the research, this researcher focused on the researcher/participant narrative overtones, interactions, and relationships. The journaling helped the researcher avoid conflicts of interest by maintaining personal awareness and by developing clear and transparent participant information. The researcher also wrote reflexively about her experiences throughout the study and the evolution of her thinking.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS: PARENTAL SEMI- STRUCTURED AND PHOTO-ELICITED INTERVIEWS

Despite the strong commitment to the preservation of cultural traditions, customs, and values, the rapid social changes, globalization, modernization, urbanization, and the strong presence of outside cultures inevitably affect the family life process. This study provided an opportunity to generate research in a different region of the world about childhood, play occupations, and parental expectations in a diverse group of Kuwaiti nationals as variations in participants are included below in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1. Participants and their Demographics (See Appendix I)

Categories					
Gender	Male			Female	
Parent	4			10	
Child	8			6	
Age	25-30	30-35	35-40		40+
	3	6	3		2
Language	Arabic		English		Both
Parent	13		0		1
Child	7		0		7
Place of Birth	Kuwait			Other	
Parent	14			0	
Child	14			0	
Childbirth Order	First		Second		Third+
	9		2		3
# of Siblings	Only child		1-3		3+
	3		7		4
Marital Status	Married		Divorced		Other
	12		2		0
Monthly Income	0-1000 KD		1000-3000 KD		3000-5000 KD
	4		8		2
Educational level	Middle School	High School	Associates Degree	Bachelors Degree	Higher Education
Father	1	0	6	5	2
Mother	0	1	4	7	2
Living Situation	Rent		Family home		Own house
	7		6		1
	Yes			No	

Nanny	12			2	
Language spoken	English		Arabic		Both
	5		2		5
Child interaction	Never	Somewhat	Often	Frequently	Always
	0	2	1	5	4

The first interview challenged the majority of the participating parents. Many of the parents were surprised by the questions; they were unfamiliar with talking about themselves and, by extension, their children. Additionally, to some parents, the topic of play seemed unusual and different because play is viewed as the predominant social activity in which children engage. Being a researcher from the same region, I know it is not a typical cultural characteristic to speak about oneself and in first person (i.e. In Arabic "Ana" is considered a term of conceitedness or talking highly of oneself) as it relates to daily patterns of life or anything personal. Because of this, it seemed difficult for parents to recall memories, not because it was personal per se, but because memories of both their patterns of play as children and their children were off topic for most adults. In other words, play is not something parents usually monitor or perhaps even notice or think about daily; instead, play is considered a social activity usually run by children for children.

Parents responded to six open-ended questions during the interviews, and the prompts pushed them to provide more detailed responses. The six photo-elicited, open-ended questions interview were stimulating due to the photographs provided by parents. It proved to be a thought-provoking process providing a way into the discussion, making it easier for parents to provide detail about what was occurring in each picture, and relating it to the research topic. Also, when answering many of the questions, parents needed to remind themselves that the topic was about play and that it was their own opinion. Parents would ask for clarification, or use phrases like, "please provide an example," "regarding my family?" "about my children?" and "playing? You

mean my children?" Parents often needed to relate to each question by asking for further clarification about what I was looking for and referred to both their childhood memories and situations within their child's life.

Each theme in the research was found through exploring parents' conceptualization, the continuity of parental ethno-theories and schemes, and their rooted connection to the construction of parental expectations regarding play. Furthermore, each subtheme presents supporting information by explaining the evidence from the research informing parental play expectations.

Parental Interview Findings

The research findings revealed these overall themes:

a) management of daily routines and rituals,

b) parental investments,

c) parents' categorization and definition of play,

d) children's personality and temperament: tailoring play,

e) idiosyncratic social change (ideologies, environments, places, and spaces), and

f) play and future skills: growth and development.

Figure 5.2 illustrates the interweaving of themes and categories, which are not exclusive in any way but serve as a blueprint of movement between categories, an interpretative aspect of interconnected themes and categories having a bi-directional influence. The structure represents the aspects of how parents derived their expectations for play as the child grows and develops. Each theme is reviewed to introduce the parental process of inquisition and connection to constructing parental play expectations. The parental quotes, detailed scenarios, and photographs presented are supporting information explained through this research process. Furthermore, each theme includes how parents conceptualize play, the continuity of parental ethno-theories and

schemes, and the rooted connection to the construction of parental expectations regarding play. Parents were able to connect back to their ways of play, culture, and what they expect for their children through play and expectations into the future. Each subtheme covers information needed to support how these expectations were realistic within the contexts and environments children encountered and embodied in their daily play experiences (See Table 5.2.). Also, how parents constructed play expectations were based on the management of lifestyle in parental responses.

Figure 5.1. Model of Overarching Themes Informing Parental Expectations.
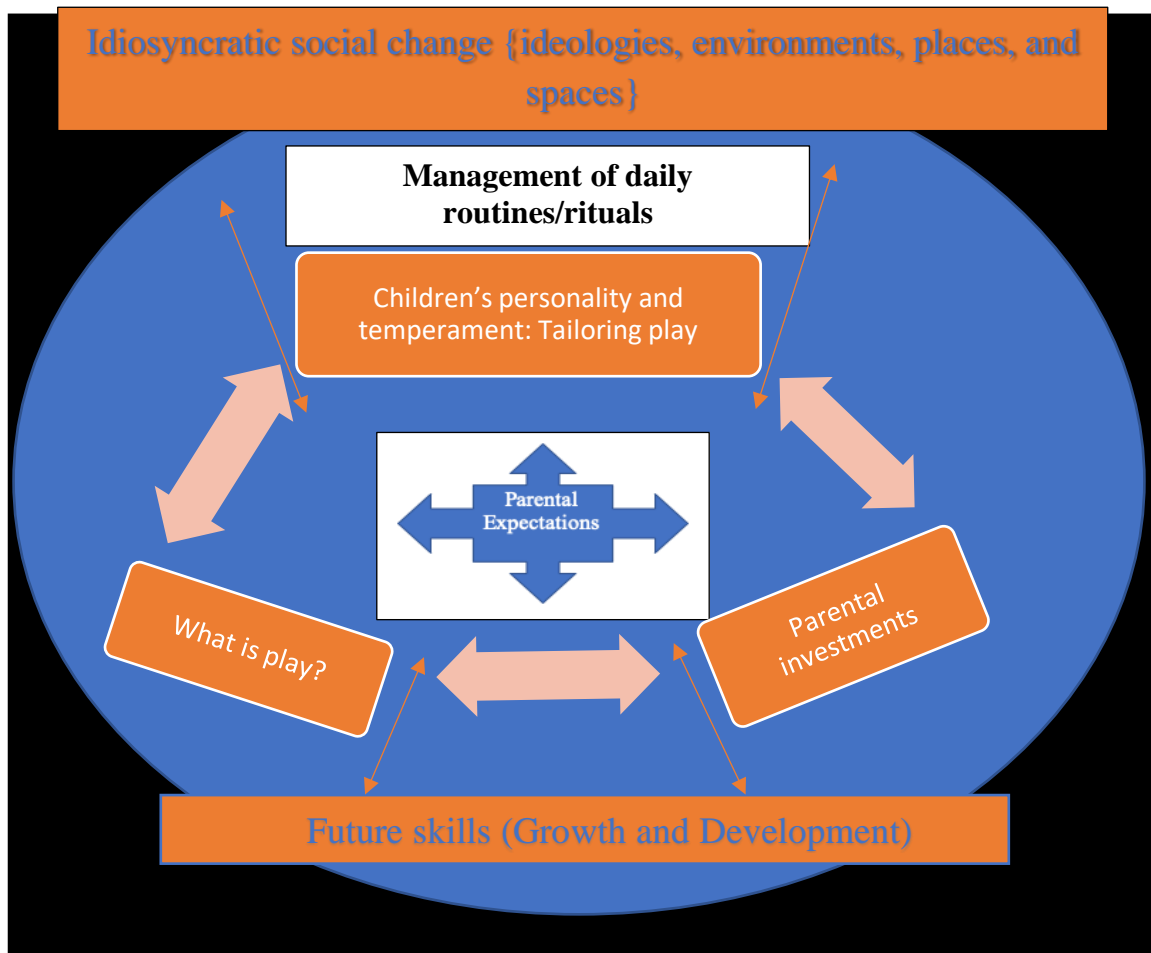
Table 5.2. Six Overarching Themes with their Sub-Categories

Major Theme	Sub-theme: Level 1	Sub-theme: Level 2	Sub-theme: Level 3
Management of cultural routines and rituals	Modeling and observational learning		
	Tradition, history, and religion		
Parental investments	Type of parent/role	Natural growth	
		Intensive parenting	
	Influences on play patterns	The extended family	
		Happiness and playfulness	
		Educational attainment	
		Gender differences	
What is play?	Definition, categorizing play, aims of play	Play methods and toys	
		Physical activity: Sports and arts	
		Energy release and play	
		Technology and entertainment: Beneficial and harmful	
Children's personality and temperament: Tailoring play			
idiosyncratic social change {ideologies, environments, places, and spaces}	Play: Changing ideas and modernized lifestyles	Play and interaction	
		Play spaces	Environmental changes and living situations
			Commercial vs. neighborhood
			Surveillance: Is it just safety?
		Influx of technology and social media	
Play and future skills: Growth and development	Leadership and citizenship: The individual vs. the collective	Social competence and creativity	

Management of Cultural Routines and Rituals

Across all participants, parents' routines and rituals performed in consistent settings organized children's experiences. These were regularly derived from customs and cultural beliefs. Throughout parents' responses to specific questions about routine and rituals, it was considered imperative that culturally specific practices structured and organized the environment in which their children's social upbringings were shaped. Parental management of daily cultural family routines was a backdrop for rooted daily expectations and grounding structure in explaining the overarching themes in this research. Routines and rituals were managed on a continuum from macro (e.g., societal) to micro (e.g., individually managed family routines) levels influencing patterns of play**.** Kuwaiti society dictates religious practices (e.g., prayer times, fasting, and pilgrimage seasons [Hajj]) through routines and rituals. Religious practices provided for daily structure in this predominantly Muslim country. The practices forged individual characteristics, daily routines, and overall lifestyles.

Religion (Quran and Sunnah) provided a symbolic blueprint through which certain guidelines were fundamentally rooted for development. By forging individual characteristics, parents used different daily routines and scenarios personalized to demonstrate how good choices were made. Parents regularly practiced Taqwa (i.e., the fear of God; religious consequences for actions) in daily life (e.g., sympathy, tolerance, humility, gentleness, patience, and truthfulness). One of the fathers (HA) expressed that it was important for children to play in order to understand balance in the activities they participate in now, which will later help them understand other complex situations that they encounter. He stated, " I give them time to play, in the same way I want them to give time to learn and sleep." He insisted that "the same importance" should be given to these essential activities. Religion orients the way parents in this society manage daily routines and provide observational learning opportunities for their children.

Children learn to keep in mind the Quran and Sunnah practices and use them to balance sleep, play, the way they eat, and how they perform the very mundane aspects of life. Culture and characteristics inform real-life experiences and are perpetuated through religion. Though it is not necessarily applicable to label families who practice religiosity (i.e. the extent to which religion influences daily life) as being religious, religion, in any case, changes the phenomenon of childhood in Kuwait.

An awareness of the importance of modeling and observational learning was evident in parents' responses. One of the most striking examples was some fathers' interest in creating learning opportunities through modeling organization. Another critical piece of evidence for observational learning as a subtheme came through in statements about encouraging children not only to join in activities but to watch them. The following subtheme explains how routines and rituals are modeled to integrate tradition, history, and religion; balance interdependent and independent characteristics; and nurture good behavior.

Modeling and Observational Learning

Parents stated that they needed to relate to or organize their thought processes around regular routines and practices. Every parent expressed different modeling and observational techniques in teaching their children about reality. A couple of the techniques used were social learning and observing the behavior of others. This process included watching others or modeling their behavior (Gaskins et al., 2006; Rogoff, 2003). Collectively, family members' voices assisted the researcher's interpretation of immediate social cultures and how routines were embedded in their children's environments. Surprisingly, throughout this research process, some fathers were interested in the topic, providing their explanations and understandings about play. In research, recruiting participants that meet research criteria is difficult for any research topic, but for this region, having fathers voluntarily participate and express their thoughts on play is

rare. The participating fathers not only voiced their opinions, but they also indicated that they were significant influencers in their children's growth process. Parental influence is an agent of socialization, as it serves as the foundation for play behaviors and preferences, which are influenced by the home environment. Fathers stated that a child could absorb a plethora of information through daily activities, and the best way to be a model is to promote positive practices with each other and have good relationships with your children.

One of the most important skills a parent emphasized early on was to teach their children organization. In one of the interviews, a father stated, "We must instill and teach organization." He then went on to say, "Organization in life means that we do not allow work or things to be at random." The parent continued by illustrating a scenario that occurred in the family living room, where most learning opportunities took place. The parent described a set daily routine or rule, followed when the children use a shared family space—the living room—must be organized or kept in the same condition as it was found before any of the children went to bed. He then gradually introduced the same concept for each child's belongings, such as using the skill by organizing their school bags. He also stated, "Many things can be presented through day-to-day situations as great opportunities for observed learning."

Figure 5.2. A Child Observing Others Engaging in Play

A mother (MM) stated, "I don't only guide him to participate (i.e., towards children playing). Letting him explore by watching other children may also develop his skills." Participation was one of many characteristics modeled. Parents pushed their children to later confidently interact and engage with others after their own observations . Many of the parents perceived the importance to a child's physical, social, and emotional development of daily routines and rituals, particularly play.

Tradition, History, and Religion

In their statements, parents situated play and learning within appropriate contexts and emphasized skills use, historical events, interventions, and language at home. One of the fathers (AJ), a retired military officer, said that demonstrating how to "leave places better than they are found" teaches cleanliness. He continued the conversation by describing cleanliness as a distinct religious trait of being a good Muslim and an important characteristic to develop. Parents specified that gaining such distinctive traits not only provided a foundation in supporting a child's development but trained the child to use those traits in various contexts. Cultural practices and circumstances of the community influence parents' expectations of play, and these

expectations highlight the benefits of tradition, history, and religion. Another father (AA), in his

interview, disclosed that one of his expectations was reciting from the Holy Quran as a daily

routine, similar to his son's play occupation of reading a book. He indicated that it was

important, but he was not strict in the time it occurs.

Parents felt obligated to pass down "the love for tradition and history" and introduced it

in weekly routines such as family gatherings, where different topics were brought up to engage

children and include them in discussions. A father (AJ) shared:

> As a member of the community, we are meticulous to teach our children how to play the
> traditional games. You see, games can vary from one family to another. We represent the
> family we belong to, our culture, history. The way we played games before, and what we
> are handing down to our children now, were taken from our parents before us. Our
> fathers' ways, little by little, are disappearing. It's a must to teach these games [and]
> activities because they vary from one family to another.

So, for participation to occur, children observe, listen, and learn through demonstration as a part

of cultural tradition. Parents did consider play an essential facet in their culture.
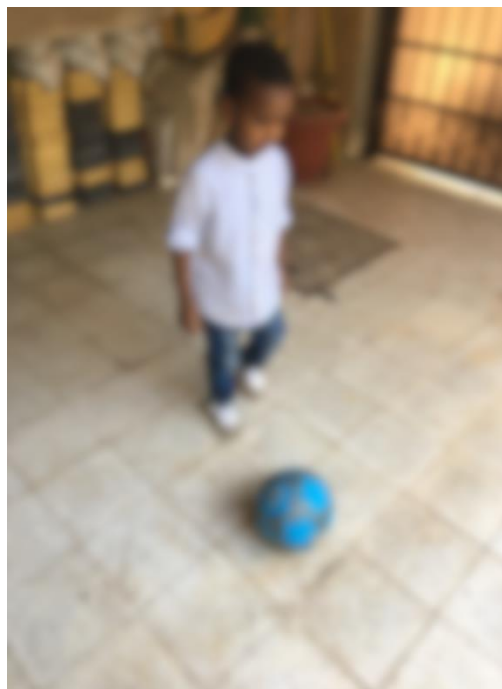
Figure 5.3. Learning How to Kick and Aim: A Cultural Initiation into the Most Popular Sport in the Middle-East

Figure 5.4. Practicing Position of Fingers and Form when Participating in an Old Traditional Game (Marbles; In Arabic: Ityal)

As AJ continued, "Many of the games (i.e., marbles, Maqsi [a version of cricket], Adhem Sari, and Lobeida [hide and seek]) are games of skill, intellect, concentration, mathematics, fitness, and strategy." Parents introduced activities involving physical and mental activity (e.g., creativity, construction, make-believe, and team play) to reach specific goals, including the acquisition of behaviors, strategies, and patience.

Figure 5.5. A Little Girl Reconstructing Grocery Boxes Into Supplies and Later Engage in a Grocery Shopping Activity

Parents like AJ inevitably pushed to develop children's sense of relatedness—where they come from, lineage—through "a cultural process of inheritance" in which these factors (i.e., history, tradition, and religion) were used in play methods. A reoccurring statement by parents was that "through play, there are many things I can introduce to them" and "what was inherited from our elders;" parents consistently provided a way to reproduce traditions in daily practices. These routines and rituals are representative of the integration of real-life experiences based on cultural aspects and characteristics (i.e., modeling and observational learning; tradition, history, and religion) of how parents establish play expectations.

Parental Investment

Parental investment refers to any parental expenditure (Schneider, Hastings, & LaBriola, 2018). For this demographically heterogeneous participant group, it varied, therefore, extending into the formation of expectations. The increase of variation in cultural, social, and other demographics due to globalization and urbanization has brought about changes in family culture, especially concerning types of parenting roles, parental play patterns, extended family, happiness, education attainment, and gender differences. From the research findings, three types

of parenting styles—natural growth, intensive, and a combination—enriched children in terms of exploring and understanding their environment.

Type of Parent and Role

Many of the mothers searched for the latest knowledge about child development by attending courses on parental education, reading various social media blogs, and searching for highly ranked market educational toys. A social worker, (FS), and a stay-at-home mother, (SW), both devoted a large portion of their time to actively enriching their children's lives. It seemed that the more educated the parents were, the more they challenged their ways of thinking in different ways to expand resources for their children's development. The varied professions provided a diversity of perspectives on how parents influence their children's play and its impact on their parenting behaviors. Moreover, due to the changes in family culture, parents employed a natural growth style, an intensive style, and a combined style to support children's play.

Natural growth parenting. Natural growth was described by one of the mothers, (HB), as being "childhood, it is about children exploring and developing what they love on their own." She believed that she ought to provide basic needs and support, such as food and shelter, as her parents provided for her. Even though HB has a degree in early childhood education, she stressed that "I don't have specific toys or games or push her to play in certain ways." She emphasized encouraging her child's self-expression and endorsed the importance of play by encouraging her to do what she loved without parental input or restriction. HB continued:

> Childhood is the time when kids have countless opportunities for play. A child is the happiest when she is engrossed in play that can happen in different forms, such as imitating family members, playing with toys, or playing outdoor games or just simply running.

Figure 5.6. A Child's Own Space is a Creative World of their Own

Another parent, a stay-at-home mother (SW), provided all avenues for play in supporting

her children's growth and had an open mindset towards it. SW paused in her answer, then

expressed with excitement,

> I love anything and everything, no preferences. I put no preferences on play! I don't have
> a favorite activity or specific activity or game that they have to engage in. Definitely not
> a specific play method! I also support parents taking their children out, but not all
> mothers can, some mothers work, some mothers have multiple children (delivered) back
> to back! They would say you are able to, that I can take them out at any time, I'm not an
> employee.

A participant father (HA) described how parenting is to "spend quality time and provide

some educational nuances through their day but catered to guide their natural growth." HA gave

an example of a specific play situation where his children encountered some difficulty; he added,

"What matters is that these things, these difficulties, are figured out amongst themselves." He

was conscientious to instruct his children how to be independent, stay determined, and be aware

of when help is needed.

Intensive parenting. There was an overall theme that parenting is demanding, and parents spend a tremendous amount of time and energy in raising their children (e.g., transportation, materials, expenses, supervision, accessibility, and timing). Most of the parents in this research study played with their children and took time to plan days that included outdoor activities, organized sports, art classes, and international language classes (e.g., Taekwondo, Jujitsu, ballet, horseback riding, gymnastics, and painting class). Parents enrolled their children in education classes such as mathematics, English, or a growing range of activities and classes that are becoming a dimension of this generation's lifestyle criteria. One of the fathers (AA), a high school history teacher, stated:

> I feel like it's useful to keep his day full of activities, and on a daily basis, almost every day I have him scheduled for after school classes/activities to take up two hours of his day. I signed him up for English, math, and martial arts classes. I also fill his day with an hour of home activity routine consisting of artistic activities like painting, coloring, and play.

Families' regular practices of thinking ahead and planning for activity options were considered the logistics of what might be needed to increase the likelihood for success. One of the mothers (LA) invested in her child's academic future by establishing "special spaces," divisions between study and play areas. The parent indicated that she wanted her child to be able to recognize that these areas are not compatible. LA insisted that she does not "like to put them in the same place; she needs to know studying is different than playing." The parent sets up each area congruent to the idea of what school should be like, "no external stimuli, desk space, a whiteboard," where she assumes a type of order and focus on specific tasks (e.g., reading and writing). The child's play area is a friendly, obstacle-free, playroom that includes a variety of toys, books, and a television with a different set of rules to be followed. Many parents considered play an important daily routine and talked about the need for children's growing range of activities and entertainment. Parents viewed play as an obligatory dimension of childhood.

Influences on Play Patterns

Whether parents adopted either a natural growth or an intensive parenting view, play was a prioritized daily routine. Parents reflected play pattern influencers by responding to questions about their thoughts on play, what affects play, and the aims and expectations of play. Many of the parents believed that their ability to affect their child's outcomes was directly linked to arranging educational, social, and athletic activities for the child. Parents wanted to impart to children opportunities and experiences necessary for a positive upbringing. Parents focused their form of parenting around not being the primary influencer in play pattern values, perceptions, and expectations.

Figure 5.7. Children Engaging in a Tabletop Activity While Waiting for their Swimming Class to Star; An Organized Sport (e.g., Martial Arts, Squash, and Soccer)

The extended family. The family unit is as diverse as the society they are brought up in due to experiences, independent lifestyles, and what they each represent. A key source for information and resources, extended family members include but are not limited to grandparents, uncles, and aunts. Therefore, learning starts at the family level, which most parents in this interview indicated to be the primary source of growth and support. More so, the extended

family was a channel for advancing traditionally accepted practices and beliefs associated with child-care practices, parenting values, and overall expectations.

Most parents reported that extended families interacted in children's lives daily, even living under the same roof in some situations. As one of the fathers (AA) said, he lived in the family home, and the extended family had a role in his children's lives. He continued, "The whole family is invested and participates in his son's story and playtime." These moments provided opportunities for quality time with his grandmother or aunts, in which they usually told old tales about Kuwait's history. Therefore, the extended family played a significant role in both economic and social levels. Most parents identified the extended family as a form of stability and continuity in children's lives. Another father (HA) expressed that the continuity extended families provided was regularly taken for granted.

> The best time for them to play is when they visit their grandfather every day after school. My father has a big yard, and they could go on for hours playing on end; I expect that. They do so much, ride their bikes, play hide and seek, and just jump from one place to another. They always find something to do!

Members of an extended family may have diverse roles. In Kuwait, grandmothers, aunts, and sisters provide information on how to care for children, the latest courses on child development, and the latest activities for children. Siblings and uncles serve as play partners, introducing different interests and fostering educational development. Another mother (AB) considered her extended family as a support system after her divorce. She described their role in nurturing her son's skills and interests when he went through difficulties that he could not handle by himself. AB recalled, "When my son was younger, football was difficult. He didn't know how to kick a ball or knew the dynamics of the game... So, his uncles mentored him, watching tournaments with him, and enrolling cousins into a football club together." Most importantly, AB's son was able to gain skills to play the game through this type of support.

Many members of the families lived interdependently, which reflected their complete support for one another. However, grandparents' leniency and aunts and uncles' strictness sometimes interfered with or discouraged childrens' forwardness and abilities to meet the play expectations of their parents. Parents also employed extended family norms, but direct replication did not always reflect family units' expectations. Extended family ideas and beliefs (e.g., strictness in gender differences, certain toys and technology use, and entertainment) in general may conflict with a parent's values and ideals about play and its aim. Due to the potential impact of the influence, it is essential to understand the extent to which extended family member's influence varies, especially concerning shaping happiness, well-being in family interaction, and preparing children for educational attainment

Happiness and playfulness. Many of the participating families expressed that they lived not only to provide the basics of food, shelter, and health, they were also deeply committed to providing a sense of security for their children. To Arab parents, preventing any stressful situation and providing a sense of security—both physical and emotional—were responsibilities of their parenting roles. Parents expected children to be playful and happy while engaging in play. Happiness was one of the elements that parents focused intensely on when they embedded play opportunities in raising a family. They provided everything for their children in order to increase their level of happiness, and they would work very hard to prevent their children from feeling like outcasts.

Figure 5.8. Smiles, Laughs, and Having Fun; Playfulness is a Parental Expectation in Play

Many expressed that as adults, their role was to provide the elements that allowed their families to function as a whole. Parents set reasonable limits for their children's behaviors in certain play areas. In the course of it all, they checked for signs of happiness through smiles and laughter. The happiness experienced by the children allowed the parents also to feel happiness. One mother (SW) enthusiastically stated:

> I have fun when I am with them, I see them happy, and I am happy to be around them… I try to provide the best that I can… everything, anything that they want to see, discover, or know even if it does not suit their age sometimes.

She continued to express that being a parent gave her a sense of purpose and meaning. Other parents reported that they created games in some situations to play and laugh together; this was especially the case if they noticed that their children were bored. HA articulated that both he and his spouse believed that through play and laughter, they were able to transform their children's play reality. When parents included themselves in the play, it allowed for the discovery of trust and a sense of community between all family members. HA also shared a photograph that attracted his attention. He described his son's face smiling with a full set of teeth, just having fun, as an indication of pure happiness. Many parents facilitated the balance of happiness and

playfulness in their children's everyday life in order to push for the importance of achievements and obtaining the highest levels of educational success**.**

Educational attainment and fostering characteristics. The knowledge children learn and skills they develop allow them to participate in cultural and societal activities, preparing them for greater educational attainment. Parents focused attention on their children, using praise to reinforce positive behavior and setting clear expectations. Parents voiced, in different ways, how play provided avenues for educational opportunities. Many parents used these various opportunities to guide their children in exploring their interests and identifying other distinct talents. These guiding steps are significant and extremely relevant in achieving higher levels of educational attainments. A single mother (AB) facilitated play as a way for exploration. She explained, "It's a way of exploration, children like to do it because they are children and that's what they do! But you need to let them know there are ways to play." She stressed that children need to be cautioned about the way they play (e.g., for safety) in the early years and then teach them to be cautious about what they are learning (e.g., the goal or aim of the play). Parents persistently build skill proficiency and cultivate those skills for lifelong learning.

Many of the parents described diverse play situations in the photos as opportunities for educational participation. Parents indicated that giving children skills for making lifelong social connections was an ongoing task, which they believed would contribute to future positive outcomes. One of the mothers (MM), with a marketing background, mentioned in both interviews the importance of participation. She indicated that her son needed to participate not only in play but in every aspect of life to overcome social and emotional barriers and to learn success. In other words, positive child development occurs with proper parental guidance in supporting a child's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical readiness.

A physical therapist (LA) said that the guidance children need in play should occur in different places to distinguish study from play areas. She continued, "I believe that for a child to grow properly, they need to know discipline, they need to know there is a time for play and a time for studying." She described her child as tough and competitive; the child likes to learn through competition, but LA determined that by facilitating non-competitive behaviors in different play methods, her child might model those behaviors. More so, some parents highlighted the importance of specific academic characteristics over others (e.g., non-competitive behaviors, behavioral adjustment, and social participation), which may shape the developmental trajectories for their children's educational future.

However, in this research study, there were values and attitude discrepancies about play not only for educational attainment but also based on a child's gender. The parents' perceptions, demographics, and cultural differences affected their uses of different toys (e.g., to be educational, social, or a means of entertainment) for reaching play expectations. Parents directed their play patterns based on their roles as parents and their child's preparedness for educational attainment, as well as through certain gendered differences in play (e.g., imposed or non-imposed social labels and the sorts of toys children were given [e.g., a model car vs. an iPad]).

Gender differences. Some of the parents expressed gendered expectations related to buying toys or suggesting games that build skills for other areas of life. The parents in the study organized and influenced what children chose regarding toys and what they chose to play. When children are between the ages of three and six, parental views on the function of gender and what is appropriate behavior were at extreme ends of a spectrum of ideas. Parental perceptions and experiences related to toys and play situations were mostly on a continuum. These responses suggested a change in perceptions of traditionally stereotyped toys, play activities, and the

newest form of play (e.g., technology). A stay-at-home mother (SW) introduced all types of play

regardless of gender, stating:

> Yes,...ballet, football, cycling, and gymnastics. I like all things. I do not have a specific favorite, no specific game or play methods! I want them to try everything. As a mother, I prefer everything. Maybe some mothers may prefer certain games. My children are learning, discovering, and help me with everything… I mean, even at the Co-op (supermarket). I either put them in the trolley, or they have their own mini trolley. They are aware of what is missing at home, and they let me know, and they collect the things we need. This is also a game to them because they explore the market.

Figure 5.9. A Girl Shows- Off Newly Manicured Nails.

Other parents specified the differences in toys and games for boys and girls. Some

parents in the group provided photos representing play situations set up based on the gender they

associated with their child. Many of the parents said they invested in toys that promoted

stereotypically gendered play: Girls had more dolls and domestic toys (e.g., cutlery, shopping

trolleys), and boys had more cars, military toys, and experiential play kits (e.g., science and

carpentry kits). Technology was a new category that was available for both genders, and parents

usually labeled it based on the games or activities used on the device. When boys played, they

spent most of their time with masculine toys, and some parents were strict about the type of play

(e.g., dancing). One of the fathers (AJ), with a military background, stated:

> Dancing is not playing. Music is not playing. Football and basketball are sports and are types of play … Music… he may listen to music maybe… dancing maybe. I am talking about a male child and not about a female one. I'm speaking about my son.

However, girls had greater flexibility in the categories of toys with which they played. Another

mother (AK) described her daughter's use of toys:

> Sometimes I, I mean she has a toy, a doll with a stroller, where she is a mother taking care of her child. She plays with toys like her… toys of kitchenware and cutlery. These are the type of toys; these are her toys. She sometimes plays with the iPad.

The function of gender, various appropriate behaviors, and toys used (i.e., gendered vs. non-

gendered) varied based on parenting experiences (i.e., parental perceptions on a continuum) and

societal and community values.

What is Play?

Most parents had a variety of conclusions about play, and many saw it as a way for

children to familiarize themselves with the world while exploring and testing their limits. At the

same time, parents emphasized that different activities or games provided them

enjoyment, amusement, or a way to release their energy. Many of the examples that parents

included in the interviews were about how their children learned to coordinate their body

movements, interact with unfamiliar children, create and apply their own rules, and more.

Parents described play as a way for children to "help them learn about things," "improve how

they interact with others," to "explore their surroundings," to "role play," and "learn about their

skills and abilities." At the same time, for a number of the parents, play was much broader.

Definition, Categories, and Aims of Play

In the research process to understand parental perception, expectations, and

categorization methods, parents looked for fundamental and beneficial aspects play provided for

their child. A mother (FS) defined play as having different factors and material uses, validating that every activity, game, toy, or technology has a specific classification. Parents acknowledged the varied uses of educational toys, creative play material, play activities, technology, and play environments. In this group of participants, there was an overlap when categorizing play. Parents insisted that there must be an aim, goal, and overall benefit to the child, whether boy or girl.

In the parents' responses, they mostly regarded play as a system for learning everything and a way for teaching the foundation for processing, remembering, and integrating new information in various ways of interaction. One father (HA) described the playing process as interchangeable with exploration. He explained further, "It's both! Exploring is actually the first step of playing." HA continued to define play as a " child's window," describing it as " a way out for a child to discover and explore oneself, in terms of developing his mental and physical skills and talents." Parents recalled it as a fundamental concept that helped children form a core for structuring and organizing their world.

Play provided a structure for participation in everyday life, especially in terms of enjoyment and pleasure. Many of the parents, including AB, said that "children learned by doing, exploring, and experiencing the world around them through their experimentation of new roles and ideas." HA remarked, "Playing is necessary, but it must be directed and shaped in order for the child to grow." This suggests that parental facilitation in this Arab population influenced children's learning process toward understanding, constructing selves, and then building their social position within the world. For this participant population, the balance in occupations (e.g., playing, sleeping, and eating) was needed in the structured and unstructured time for play exploration and its vitality for a child's development. Many parents reported that play was

essential, not only for the health and well-being of the child, they also attested that different play

methods or opportunities contributed to all aspects of learning.

Play methods and toys. Parents presented different attitudes towards types of play

methods and types of toys. Parenting experience and cultural schemas influenced the desirability

of certain toys used in play. Numerous parents talked about providing a variety of toys for

educational improvements or the introduction of history and culture. Parents presented

educational materials (e.g., puzzles, books, letters, numbers, and colors) and historical games and

folklore activities (e.g., marbles and board games) in play to children. One mother (SW)

reminisced about her childhood while watching the same animation and historical documentaries

with her children. SW expressed her memories as well as her children's reaction to how she

engaged as a child:

> They asked me, "Mumma, what is this?" with a tone insinuating you're so old, and you seriously watched this. I respond with the biggest smile! I used to love watching these types of anime cartoons. I also tried to introduce the same series... *Stories of Nations*... these are useful stories or documentaries, which now feature on Google sometimes. My children all sit on my bed and watch things from the past… such beautiful memories. I tell them, "Look at what we used to watch…" This *Stories of Nations* presents stories about different countries, and they show what every country has. Good Lord, things have changed.

Figure 5.10. Siblings Share Legos While Participating in Activities of Construction.

Other parents introduced play methods from their childhoods, remembered as nurturing and

encouraging while growing up, as a means to instill certain behaviors in their children as seen in

Figure 5.10. where interdependence (i.e. family first, sharing and taking turns) was the portrayed

behavior.

Physical activity, sports, and arts. Parents encouraged their children to engage and

participate in movement and physical activity because it included having fun, preparing for sport

participation, developing life skills, and promoting wellness. One mother (HE) voiced her

preferences in pushing her daughter to be more active. She said, "I like her to be more physical

in games and activities that increase her motor movement. I like her to be active, playing outdoor

games too." Two fathers (AJ) and (AA) specified that they considered sports to be the number

one form of play. They claimed this was because they both played soccer themselves. As parents,

they emphasized the importance of parental behaviors that modeled healthy choices, especially

physical activity and the maintenance of it as a lifestyle.

Children learn their habits and attitudes toward physical activity by observing and

imitating their parents. Some parents demonstrated and supported a healthy lifestyle by including

their interest in daily physical activity. A social worker (FA) spoke of her spouse's daily routine

of walking on the seashore and his parental support in encouraging their daughter's involvement.

Another mother (AB) specified that physical activity was a steppingstone to other forms of

participation. She said:

> Of course, but it differs from one activity or game to another… Physical play is useful…
> what I mean is through physical play he will learn to play organized sports, he will learn
> skills and improves on them. Whether it be football or tennis,...he uses his hands,
> coordinates with his legs, and he uses up the energy in his body.

Other parents mentioned play opportunities involving crafts. Parents agreed that through

creative art, children were able to communicate about experiences that they could not verbalize.

One social worker (FS) indicated that children might act or make art to help themselves express

their emotions, which provides an outlet for stress. A physical therapist (LA) described play to

be a child's use of anything around them, any material, "to enjoy [their] time and provide

pleasure!" So, through art, they may draw pictures out of proportion, exaggerating things that are

important to them using paint, and they may use other materials to entertain themselves.

Energy release and play. Playing is a basic need embedded in a child's way of being.

Children exert energy through different ways such as physical activity, sports, tumbling, and play

fighting. One mother (AB) explained how children use their energy daily. She stated:

> Excess energy exists…it exists in every child of his age! But the way they exert it differs
> from child to child. Meaning, there are children who like to play fight and use aggression
> while other children don't engage in that type of play.

One of the fathers (AA) expressed that his son would swing and run around on the playground

for hours if he could. He said:

> Swings, these physical activities let out a child's energy. The more a child interacts and
> participates in these activities, the more he lets out his energy. I mean, how can I explain
> it to you?! Almost every day, I take him out to the playground; he plays on the slide, the
> swings, etc.

Parents play an active role in shaping child physical activity behavior as illustrated in Figures 5.11. Within these interviews, several parents reiterated their influence on their child's physical activity through multiple ways, such as enjoyment of physical activity, importance of physical activity, expectation that their child participates in some sort of physical activity, and a sense of value or success.

A social worker (FS) stated that she encouraged her daughter to participate in physical activity while she was engaged in it herself. She said, "My daughter would either accompany me for a walk—to ride her bike or play on the playground—or take a walk along the beach with her father and play in the sand." Parents also stated that their support could influence the child's perception of competence, which in turn influences their physical activity behaviors.

Parents provided instrumental support for their child's physical activity by signing their child up for physical activity or sports classes, taking their child to the playground, and actively engaging in physical activity with their child. Meanwhile, other parents set up active play dates with the child's peers and taught their child how to play active games and sports. FS continued to voice that through play, a child released energy, but that was not the only positive outcome. She expressed:

> How would you cultivate your child's personality?... Through play! How would you know what he likes or dislikes, and what type of games and activities improve their skills?! I mean, through play, I know that my daughter is not a music type!

Throughout the interviews, parents made it clear that a child's perceptions of their parents' beliefs contributed to the construction of their perceptions. Therefore, parental play expectations stemmed from this theme of energy release. Encouraging parents provided opportunities for enjoyment of activities while providing support for their child's physical activities through observing, encouraging, participating, and facilitating opportunities to be active. All in all, play

is a basic need used to address and apply methods not only to release energy but to provide

further growth and development of future skills for children in this age range.

Figure 5.11. Children Engaging in Organized Sports where Parents expected Change in Behavior, Patience, and Participation Among many Characteristics for Play.

Education: is participation key? Education through participation continually appeared

as a theme parents drew on to construct and position their play expectations. Parents regarded

play as a means of achieving a goal – further education. Participation is when a child takes part

in something and actively engages with others, a task, or both. Participation was both a means

and a goal many parents had in mind as being a steppingstone in gaining a variety of skills.

Providing or supporting an environment that encouraged participation would later inform play,

learning, and developmental experiences in early learning and school environments. A mother

(MM) added:

> Participation is important…No!... Very important…but not only during play. I want him to always participate and engage even when dining. For example, He just started to share his food, so he allows people to come and join us and eat together, but with playing and sharing his toys, he is still learning.

Participation is essential for children. It is relevant for relationship development, overall positive outcomes, for everyday experiences, and an early learning source for meaning making. Some parents were observant of their children's interests and used them to describe and interpret their children's everyday experiences throughout this interview process. While education is continuous, parents understood participation to be learned by children through a process of exposure. Their play participation informed their interactions with other children and family, as well as connections to real-world experiences. Thus, this theme is relevant to parental organization of daily routines, learning spaces, and the selection of play methods and learning materials. Another significant issue parents believed to have a great influence on parental expectations was technology and the types of entertainment, which were influencing a change in play methods.

Technology and entertainment: beneficial or harmful? Technology has completely changed every aspect of society. Parents expressed technology's influence to be inevitable on the way their children socialize and even in the way they play. While parents viewed play as a means to achieve a goal, watching television and the use of other electronics (e.g., video games and iPad use) did not qualify as play but served, instead, as a means for entertainment and passing the time. One of the fathers (AJ) stated, "Although technology does provide many positive benefits for learning, depending on the activity, it also can have several negative effects on children's development and quality of life." He continued to say, "A whole new world of play emerged, and technology is center stage." Play empowers children, and some parents agreed that technology might enhance their natural abilities, giving them the potential to explore possibilities with confidence. One of the fathers (AJ) continued to voice:

> Technology is used in an activity or game. I see that playing has a goal, and it is possible that this goal is indirect at times, which means that it may not [have] a result or is

78

deliberate of the parents' actions. When provided, the iPad, the TV, the computer, the iPod, and all these things are all tools. Therefore, he is doing and utilizing and exploring something throughout him playing. We have reached a situation in which the television has become a computer, and he has taught himself to use the keyboard in order to reach the goal that he wants to achieve.

AJ insisted that parents incorporate technology in useful ways, as a means or tool used in an activity. He said that it provided many positive attributes and opportunities for learning, entertaining, and socializing, but it should be monitored and used appropriately. Two mothers also added that it depended on the type of technology being used and what the child was trying to achieve or learn. Both similarly stated that all games and methods were essential for children in supporting growth and experience. One of the mothers (HE) used YouTube as an example, explaining:

When my daughter watches YouTube videos, they are usually in English, and she tries to speak in English while she is playing. And sometimes, she would watch videos in formal Arabic, and she uses what she learns, imitating those conservations and expressions, both verbally and nonverbally, like mimicking facial and body language.

Another mother (AB) stated, " Electronic games may not be as beneficial. Too much of it may be harmful not necessarily useful.… The electronic games, he sits in one place, all the focus is on the brain, so there is no movement, you know!" Parents conveyed to me, that children saw every place as a play space and an open opportunity to play. But many parents reported that their children were not moving as much as they used to because of technology. Children sit while using computers, smartphones, and while watching television, thus falling into a sedentary lifestyle practice. Another mother (FY) reported that she favored playgrounds as places that were more social and multigenerational, but when that is not an option, she provides her children with a Nintendo Wii. She indicated that the Nintendo Wii is an excellent source for play even though it is indoors. "As long as they are moving while playing...it's an excellent way to get them up." FY continued:

They can also play with their cousins. However, their PlayStation and the iPad games are sedentary, and the child watches for hours without moving. It doesn't improve on his thinking process to a great degree, or his cognition, his coordination, or anything of that sort. He just sits their moving the joystick. I like them playing in ways or participating in activities that push them to move, so they put some physical effort into what they are doing.

Parents' perceived conceptions were evident as a theme in finding a balance for their children's growth and developmental support, indicating that, through children's refinement of activities they like, they not only master basic skills but other advanced skills.

Children's Personality and Temperament: Tailoring Play

The participants showed that they exercised considerable control over their children's behavior in order to maximize children's present well-being and foster future opportunities. However, parents reported that children did what they wanted to do, regardless of what had to be done. These reports support many parents' belief that differences in personality and temperament influence possible play opportunities for each child. Meanwhile, other parents modified their approaches to cultivating their children's skills to accommodate their own children's personalities.

The father of triplets, HA, described his role and how he stimulated and extended play according to each child's distinct personality. HA illustrated his role in processing how he supports each of his children's method for play:

In regard to my children in the aspect of what you are asking, each one has his own distinct personality. I mean, for example, I have a child who needs to play in a group. My first son does not know how to play on his own. While the second son has no problem playing on his own. I mean, he plays Superman or builds a model car. He sits and plays on his own, making certain voices and living in another imaginary and fantasy world. Therefore, they differ a lot among themselves, and each one differs from the other. And [the girl] is different too. We bought her a kitchen set. She gets involved with the game and has no problem engaging whether she plays with her little sister or on her own. Each one of them has their own distinct character.

As a father, he monitored each child's distinct personality and accommodated their play for

individual growth. He indicated his role in guidance and providing skill sets to push them to

work on some activities together. The father, AA, shares HA's type of parenting values. AA

explained:

> One of the reasons why I enrolled my son to attend martial arts classes is because he has
> an interest in fighting and kicking. He does not have the skills to run and kick a ball. He
> uses a different skill set when he is in his Jujitsu class. I believe that parents should
> discover the skills of their children. I, myself, as a parent, tried to enroll him in so many
> sports until I found that Jujitsu was what he was good at.

Another mother (HE) said she used her child's reactions around peers as a gauge to introduce

different activities to cultivate and maintain her daughter's confidence. HE reported that it helped

her provide appropriate play opportunities and determine her play expectations. HE described

how her daughter interacted with her peers:

> My daughter takes charge when she is playing with children less assertive than her or
> younger than her. But if she is playing with older children, she tends to follow along with
> others, shares, and accepts different opinions in how to play more so than not.

Another mother, AB, portrayed her son, while he played:

> He is calm by nature and carefree, but it really depends! It depends on a child's
> personality. If you're able to introduce different activities, you can influence and change
> them to be more active! He likes to play with his uncles, their ages are 20-25, but he calls
> them anyway, so they play with him.

AB also described play as the "lens through which children experience their world, and the world

of others." With the support of adults, adequate play space, and play materials, children will have

the best chance of becoming healthy, happy, and productive members of society. Parents, at this

point, expect the child to maintain these aspects through play. One mother, AB, offered this

support:

> Everything… everything to him is considered play! He plays non-stop, and he likes to
> explore and find different things to play with. I mean I can't say he's in middle school...
> and that he likes a particular thing to do or play… right now to him everything is play, as

long as he is entertained or entertaining himself doing something over and over… it is his way of just passing time.

She described how her son explored these activities in a self-absorbed way, choosing to repeat them over and over, not to achieve a result, but to joyfully engage in and master a process.

Another mother (AK) indicated that she saw play as involving imagination, such as pretending to act like adults to prepare and serve snacks to the dolls, using kitchen tools, sweeping floors or vacuuming, and going on imaginative journeys. She described play as influential to childhood development and that it assisted in the reproduction of culture-specific tasks and behaviors. She was beginning to see play as the cultivation of future skills, as an academic function, assisting in educational success. AK described her daughter in this scenario:

> When my daughter plays, she uses her hands to make shapes and figures. If she insisted on making a cake, she would make it in clay! This will show you her beginner skills towards making a real cake. She also demonstrates her ability to gather ingredients according to what is needed. So now, she has already mastered the first skill. She is ready to learn the next step or other things. If she starts to draw and continues to pursue it, it will benefit her in the long run. In any game, one skill will affect another.

Many parents considered children's play activities in the context of the replication of adult activities but described a noticeable change in play for children in the current generation.

Idiosyncratic Social Change (Ideologies, Environments, Places, and Spaces)

Play: Changing Ideas and Modernized Lifestyles

Throughout the interview process, parents said that generational change and its continuity in childhood fostered different expectations for children's everyday lives. This section shows parents reporting changing ideas from generation to generation to fit trends in modernizing lifestyles to the environment. Parents described a serious change in play for children in the current generation due to a more hurried lifestyle, changes in family size and structure, and increased attention to academics and enrichment activities at the expense of free play. For example, in previous generations, play dates meant going to a grandparents' house to play with

several cousins and other children while receiving minimal support for play from adults. However, in the present, play dates are scheduled due to a decrease in the number of cousins or same-aged play partners.

In the data, parents gave examples of generational variations as they understood their childhood in terms of social changes in Kuwait. In the continuity of parental investments of time and money in their children's development, nowadays both parents participate in play and interaction. As many parents indicated, certain aspects of engaging and interacting with children as they play have changed. Based on their own experiences, parents also described changes in children's play spaces (e.g., neighborhoods vs. commercial locations), an increase in parental surveillance, and the influx of technology and social media. Overall, many parents facilitated the balance for happiness and playfulness in their children's play methods and everyday life in order to push for the importance of achievements and obtaining the highest levels of educational success.

Play and interaction. Several parent participants observed a time difference between current and past parenting time devoted to playing with children and in terms of the areas used for play. They also said that their parents did not have as much interaction with them in this age range of three to six years old. Many parents said that children had autonomous worlds apart from adults. One of the mothers (LA) recalled:

> I don't have a memory of my parents playing with me, but I do remember playing outdoors with many children. Because I have an endless number of cousins my age, so our activities were usually outdoors. Parents didn't really interact with us. We [children] played with each other and created scenarios. I wanted the same for my daughter to play with her peers, but it didn't happen. I mean, there are not a lot of children her age, I must substitute or improvise in how to keep her engaged.

In the past, children developed relevant social competencies from each other and learned how to be members of peer groups, manage their time, and how to strategize and negotiate

83

conflict during play. In the present, parents use researched norms from various pediatric

associations (e.g. American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and American Pediatric Society

(APS); etc.) to compare their children's developmental skills. A father (HA) remembered this

type of play encounter growing up:

> When I was their age, of course, I did not have these games, electronics, video games, and these things. Most of our playing time was outdoors. In our days, every child on the street would gather and play together. So, when one went out, they would see groups of children playing as teams. Playing outdoors was fun even when we played football in the street. Anyone could play but showing your talent would likely put you on the better team. This is the thing that I have not seen here in Kuwait nowadays.

He reflected on the effects of his and his spouse's working hours on the time they devote to their

children. Parents of previous generations had more time to spend with children because often

only one parent worked throughout the week. Fathers usually did not engage in play in the same

way as mothers. As many mothers suggested, being a stay-at-home mother in the past—and

having other extended family members in the home—provided for more time spent with their

children. HA continued:

> Both my wife and I agreed that at least on the weekends we would take them to do an outdoor activity because both of us have to go to work and come back late on the weekdays. Of course, these things depend on the availability and time of day.

Father and mother participants reported similar amounts of time for play, and they all supported

spending significant time (i.e. one-on- one time) with their children.

In the past, parents, especially fathers, accepted their culturally informed, wage-earner

role. Many of the participants reported fathers were not as involved in family practices, domestic

work, and children's responsibilities at home but that this gradually changed due to changing

roles for women, such as from homemaking to full-time employment outside of the home. FY

commented on working mothers today, "If my children are at home, and I am not, they go to

their nanny." This practice was different from her own mothers' interactions with her as a child,

"When we were children, my mother had a designated area or a room where we played. We moved around constantly. And she would always interact and join in when we played." Family roles have changed, but both in the past and present, many families interacted, engaged, and also provided separate areas for academics and indoor play.

Many of the illustrated social changes are examples of generational changes and the source of difference and commonality in each experience. To follow are three scenarios where parents supported play as an essential part of a child's life by including it as a tool in challenging children's abilities, an indicator to monitor their own children's emotions, and to provide them with playful experiences. One father described his encounter with his father and how he instills the same skills in his offspring. A retired military officer (AJ) remembered:

> I used to play with my father. He used to play kickboxing with me, and I had to endure and tolerate pressure to keep up! Now in the present, when I play with my boys, I give them some experience of enduring pressure but of a different type. We live in different times, but I still challenge them, but differently.

A second scenario depicts a father's way of combatting boredom whilst fostering skills for creativity. HA illustrated his interaction with his children vividly:

> I saw them sitting, just bored… So, I decided to bring over a blanket and guided them through what I wanted them to do. "Let's play the fisherman and fish." So, I threw the blanket over them, spread it out in a way as if I were catching them like a fish. It was a lot of fun, and I could see that they all were enjoying themselves. From that day on, they kept asking me, "When are we going to play the fisherman and fish game?"

HA's tone of voice changed, and he shook his head as he reported that his father would not have engaged in play or would have dismissed them to play outdoors.

In the third scenario, a mother expressed that play interaction was not always about engaging but about proximity. The mother described the way and degree in which promoting play had changed from when she was growing up. The mother recalled that as she was growing

up, her parents would be in proximity, but they never attempted to engage because children

interacted and did what they needed to do themselves. MM said:

> Nowadays, I feel like I need to be fully present in my child's space and allow him to engage in his own way but consciously be present. I accompany him in his space… I try to introduce different things that he may benefit from. I try to engage with him and maybe even spread out other toys around him to engage in their use. He may want to engage with me, or it's just a matter of being around him while he plays. I sometimes feel he needs the structure, and sometimes I just let him be, he will engage in his own way.

Figure 5.12. Children Play Dentist at Kidzainia's; A Career Play Center for Various Child Experiences.

The diversifying (i.e., generational and social) changes and continuity of the socially

constructed character of childhood is an important factor in defining parental expectations and, in

turn, shaping children's everyday experiences. The bi-directional influence of parental

expectations on how children learn to interact with the world in order to manage their behavior

was a frequent and ongoing theme. Therefore, parental play expectations fluctuated due to

children's learned experiences and interactions through play.

Play spaces. Most parents showed awareness of play space and the shift in the variety of

play areas. Some of the common spaces that parents described as play spaces consisted of indoor

playgrounds, indoor arcades, and miniature amusement parks in major malls. One of the popular malls has built an area specifically for children's entertainment. "Discovery Mall" provides activities for kids with all types of cooking classes, martial arts classes, a Nintendo play hall, a trampoline gym, and a movie theater with child-sized seating. Many parents also reported the extent to which public places and spaces were difficult to label as usable for their children due to changes, such as urbanization, unsafe streets, indoor play technology, strangers, and the focus on educational accomplishments rather than play. Some parents agreed that changes in play spaces nowadays (i.e., commercial vs. neighborhood) influenced the shift in parental play expectations due to what children value and the profound repercussions these patterns may have on their children's development. However, for the most part, parents focused on factors within children's play environments and the diminishing factor of cultural influence in children's play experiences. Parents collectively noted the impact play spaces have on children's play methods and interactions and their expectations for play. One of the most striking examples was in some fathers' memories of how the spaces they played in as children (e.g., outdoor cultural bazaars, outdoor playgrounds, bike paths, neighborhood streets, and courtyards) had a powerful influence over the ways they engaged in play. The relationship between the individual, social, and physical environments that children engage in, in turn, influences parental perceptions. The introduction of commercial play spaces proved to be a structural basis for a new culture of diversified indoor environments for children's play.

Commercial vs. Neighborhood. Many of the parents reported trying to take their children out into the community—to playgrounds, parks, bike paths, and beaches—so they could interact with other children. Parents viewed the diverse locations as providing children with a different kind of play experience, one that combines physical movement with flexibility and

creativity. Parents said they were diligent to provide opportunities for physical and the use of challenging play equipment. As in figure 5.14, children try out an automated dance game to challenge their endurance and other play equipment (e.g., tunnels, jungle gyms, beach sports equipment, and bikes). However, parents said that it was difficult to incorporate different ways of play due to the shift away from playing out in the community like they did as children. Today's children play indoors or at mall amusement parks, indoor playgrounds, and arcades, unlike children of previous generations as shown below in Figure 5.13.

Figure 5.13. Commercialized Opportunities for Play

Parents claimed that their children valued relatively non-diversified spaces and places and had a propensity to repeat visits to places or repeat activities that gave them good experiences. A physical therapist (LA) described her daughter's play:

> She likes to play with her scooter. She enjoys coloring and playing with Legos. Those are the main things she plays. When we go out, she likes riding mechanical chairs with her sister in Magic World. So many bright lights. That is something I would consider aimless, but she enjoys it!

Parents claimed that commercial places attracted more children and were spaces that offered a new form of active play experiences for this generation. Parents spoke of the exposure

of their children to a different culture of commercial play. A father, HA, stated, "I have to sign

them up to do all these activities in clubs or in parks. This is the obstacle that I am facing now!

Normal weekdays are too busy, and they are trapped in the house." Many of the parents reported

reduced mobility as a key issue because residential streets were a barrier rather than a resource

for play like they had been when they were kids. Another father (AA) said that in the summer, he

would take his son to beach parks (e.g., Aqua Park or Messila Beach, commercial play spaces)

because of their gated areas, facilities, and adult supervision. Some continued to speak of the

influence specific environments and living situations had on their own childhoods.

Environmental changes and living situations. Some of the primary types of change

noted by parents were the environmental, social, and contextual changes. These included

changes to the living situation, such as urban, societal, and technological changes. Parents

described they were able to entertain and make do with the available play material self-

sufficiently. Two fathers described changes in urban and housing design, along with differences

in family size and living situation. As a result of these changes, it was increasingly uncommon to

see groups of children walking, running, or playing in outdoor environments without adult

supervision. One of the fathers (HA) exclaimed**:**

> This is one of the biggest issues! We used to walk around the neighborhood because
> people knew each other. And houses used to have large yards, or you could call them
> courtyards. That's where we usually played. Now they are non-existent. So, I can't leave
> [the kids] to go out on their own.

Parents said that while growing up, they had the freedom to explore and satisfy their

curiosity about the world while they were outdoors. HA also said that outdoor environments are

essential for the development of children's motor and cognitive skills, attitudes, and emotions.

Many of the parents believed that the differences, changes, and limitations in outdoor

environments (i.e., neighborhoods, parks, playgrounds, and school grounds) had changed today's

children's opportunities for stimulation. HA thought that outdoor environments and living situations offered unique opportunities for children to engage in active and creative play and were areas to interact with siblings, cousins, friends, and neighborhood children freely and without interference.

Figure 5.14. Smaller Living Spaces Accommodating for Play Space

Living situations for previous generations provided a familiar and nurturing realistic feel that parents thought was lacking today. One of the parents described as a child exploring and investigating spaces that captured their attention and how they provoked interactions within the space. Physical and social factors influenced their behaviors. One of the fathers (AA) reminisced about childhood memories:

> I'm the eldest of my siblings.... So, I didn't have anyone my age to play with. But while growing up, we used to live in the old family home. The old house was bigger, and many families were living in the family house. My uncles and aunts were living with us. They are from a different generation. I would play with uncles and aunts and their children. The youngest of them would be five years older than me. I feel that it improved my cognition and language, and I learned things due to my exposure and observation of the

older children. I was considered a bit brighter for my age because I was interacting with them.

He continued to explain how children had ways to investigate and be playful while developing their self-identity and role in their community.

Parents indicated that cartoons also influenced play. In the past, characters had realistic skillsets and relatable characteristics like any boy and girl (e.g., milking a cow or having excellent soccer skills). Today, characters fly, crush cars with their bare hands, and shoot thread from their wrists; in other words, they are make-believe characters. Parents described how they relied on their day-to-day observations to inspire their play. In contrast, children today learn to use their thinking and senses to move their play into more fantasy-like arenas, thus expanding their imaginations.

Surveillance: is it just safety? In this section, parents talked about changes in concepts of safety and the role of surveillance between their generation and their children's generation. Today the most significant change was the choices parents had due to the expansion in publicly designated areas for children to play. Due to different perceptions of safety and play spaces influencing the extent to which places were labeled usable by parents, parental surveillance restricted children's ways of play and shaped potential play expectations. Parents preferred environments that prevented injury as shown in Figure 5.15 below, where children could be monitored for good behavior, and there were ongoing measures taken to keep the spaces in good condition. Inside play, such as in shopping centers, which allowed for play to be more supervised, was a drastic generational shift from previous years of unsupervised outdoor play. Parents reported that they were more cautious with their children, a contrast to when they were growing up. Parents always monitored their children's play safety due to not knowing neighbors,

91

not being familiar with the neighborhoods, and not knowing the condition of outdoor public

playground equipment.

Figure 5.15. Riding a Bike Outdoors in a Safe Space

Parents now perceived indoor spaces as safe (i.e., conducive to preventing injury and

monitoring good behavior). In a sense, to be a child is to be under surveillance by a parent. One

father (AA) expressed how his spouse's constant worrying and reinforcement of safety rules and

discipline limited their son's play experiences:

> Especially his mother is so worried and is scared about what may happen to him! She
> worries about what is available for him. She… my wife is very critical about his behavior
> and tries to correct and monitor what he is doing.

AA elaborated on his spouses' actions and use of prevention practices, encompassing a range of

strategies to monitor him. "When we go to Trampo [a trampoline gym],...she doesn't let him

enter on his own.... His mother or I enter with him." Depending on their child's age, parents

reported safety and supervision to be critical in diverse play environments, a necessary condition for nurturing and educating children. In this participant pool, demographic factors such as age and gender were among the most common factors that influenced children's play preferences and parental choice of spaces or places. Another parent, a stay-at-home mother (SW), protested that her children "play with everything they see around them, some things I don't allow. I fear for their safety at their age." While many parents may have played in the streets as children, they were concerned about their children's safety and supervised their children to reduce the chance for injury within the home or on the playground. In previous years, children used the outdoor space of the street for many different activities requiring a high level of creativity (e.g., soccer, hide and seek [Lobedia], bike riding, and other games), while the private, interior spaces of the home were rarely used as spaces for play. Some parents indicated that they preferred playing outdoors to prevent their parents from asking them to help with household chores.

Although many parents considered safety and supervision to be important, at the same time, it was important for children to socialize and have a certain level of freedom to grow and develop independence. As one of the fathers (HA) said, "As long as they are safe to play freely, play is the thing they will do." There were a range of factors parents expressed for supervising their children: Teaching them strategies for reducing unforeseen circumstances by using explanations, giving examples, and instilling rules. Parents used these approaches to shape their ways of parental supervision and parental play expectations, but they still found it challenging to decide what strategy to use and when, given all these social and lifestyle changes.

Influx of technology and social media. Parents indicated that, in their day, they created their entertainment via the neighborhood, but the upsurge of technology and social media today were influencing children's interests and engagement in activities. Toys have always reflected

the latest developments in science and technology, from music boxes to electric trains to computer games and robots. As many of the parent participants voiced an increase in sedentary activities (i.e. watching television, playing video games, and using electronics). Today's toys contain embedded electronics that can adapt to the abilities or actions of the player.

One of the fathers (AJ) talked about comparing the games he played with what his children play:

> Now my children play differently. This is related to the different types of games and the availability of technology… has changed. I mean, we had some of the games before, but now they do not have Maqasy. Who knows Maqasy? Nowadays, they have iPads, iPods, and PlayStation. Of course, these things have an influence on our children. I consider it inevitable, but we don't want to create a feeling of inferiority and make our children feel that we are unable to afford it [the new electronic toys].

He also observed that the increased use of technology has changed the ways children play, while social media has put more importance on certain superficial aspects of life. He claimed, "Due to the introduction of video games and social media into children's lives, playing has become violent. Children try, of course, to bring their perceptions to life. My son wants to make what he plays reality with his siblings, cousins, and classmates."

Other parents tried to make use of the increase in technology by making it more interactive. One of the mothers (HE) considered some electronics helpful, depending on their use. She said her daughter interacted with "the iPad and TV. They are a means of entertainment, but it does stimulate play depending on the program. The computer, iPad, and TV lead a child to do different things and behaviors, but if what they are watching is interactive, then yes, but if not, then no!" Parents try to use these new technologies to their own benefits in making play interactive. Therefore, technological competence for most of these parents has become merely another domain to navigate in providing appropriate outlets for play. Play expectations have clearly shifted due to technology,

94

Play and Future Skills: Growth and Development

Many parents repeated throughout the interview process that play was essential to development because it contributed to the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of their children. Parents believed that the process of having something to do and explore nurtured patterns of growth. In the constant repetition of certain activities, parents saw their children's execution, focus, and mastery advance over time. One mother (AB) said, "The way he thinks, the way he thinks in his play methods has developed! As he gets older, I see how his way of playing changes. He focuses on certain things more now!" Other mothers could not pinpoint a specific connection to growth, but they understood growth-through-play to be a process in a child's life, especially when play was enjoyable. The mother, AK, described how presenting enjoyable patterns of play provided chances for growth:

> Yes, there is a chance for growth if there is play. Skills will develop faster because it is enjoyable. You are incorporating what is enjoyable or allowing the child to do things that he or she likes, of course, he or she will develop skills and grow. Something that any child likes, it will benefit them. When you want to develop a skill, you have to integrate play into it, especially if you want to increase growth and development because they enjoy playing, and they want and are excited to play. And sometimes, even when you want to teach a child, you take a playful approach to it to implement growth.

Another mother (FS), a social worker by profession, thought that providing hands-on activities, or using a hands-on approach in play, prepared her child for further cognitive functioning:

> She likes using her hands… She likes toys that are manual. I feel the more you use your hands, the more you use the brain intentionally. Glory be to God, I mean, this will develop her mentally, her thought process, problem-solving, and linguistics.

The competition for playtime and the increased importance of education for most parents stems from wanting to provide the best growth patterns for development for future skills and knowledge.

Leadership and Citizenship: The Individual and the Collective

In the interviews, many parents spoke of play as a way for a child to integrate into a collective, such as the family, a community, or the society at large. Play and education are embedded within an individual and cultivating both within a collective society serves specific characteristics and representative images of citizenship (e.g., social responsibility), while also balancing individuality. Parents believed children developed this best through early childhood play. Many of the families said that they participated with their children to stimulate the growth of leadership, independence, interdependence, and citizenship. The family has always been the foundation for child development and growth, but nowadays, parenting culture relies on expertise more than experience (i.e., what was always done in the past). Most parents expressed how they nurtured each child's play first through practicing relationships, appreciating family, engaging in social and cultural practices, and modeling social responsibility within a group to teach how to be a particular type of Kuwaiti citizen. A retired military father (AJ) extolled citizenship as a social responsibility:

> I also believe it is important because it helps us develop a unique perspective of looking at life. Educating and incorporating it into play has been one of the major roles for all individuals in the society. It has allowed the community to succeed both socially and economically by enabling it to be a part of the curriculum to develop common culture and values.

Yet despite the widespread belief that play is beneficial to children, opportunities and encouragement for play are increasingly limited, due to the intense play schedule that some parents introduce along with their play expectations. A father attested to his son trying to do things on his own and showing traits of independence:

> My son depends on himself a lot. Even when I try to instruct him and tell him to let me show you how to do this or let's try it this way… He would turn me down saying, "No! I know, I know how to do it." I mean, it's a good thing that he tries, and sometimes he does it in a different way but succeeds. It's nice to see that he has this trait to do things his own way and to never give up.

Many parents think that, through play, children discover the extent to which their voices influence the course of events in their lives. But in particular families, the extent to which a child's voice is heard depends on how it is co-constructed in early learning opportunities within the home and community.

Another aspect introduced in a child's life is the cultivation of collective traits (e.g., connection to others, having empathy, putting others first, and inclusion of family and others). FY extended her view on how she has seen a change in her son's play growth and development. As a participating parent's role in play, she stated, "I see how much I've encouraged them to play together. And how they have included their younger sister in their games." Here the mother described the collective behavior of including their sister as evidence that inclusion and learning from each other are clear expectations for play and understanding of play

Many parent's degree of leniency on their child's characteristics of independence and co-dependence influenced parental expectations about play. This influence varied according to the immediate-extended family culture and the unique type of child-parent bond. Balancing behaviors of family inclusion, an aspect of supporting and cultivating child social competence, is a major expectation for child play.

Social competence and creativity. Parents said that they introduced qualities of spontaneity, wonder, imagination, and trust in their contributions to play. Many of the parents' implemented creativity because they viewed it as beneficial to social competence, increasing compassion, sharing, and modeling relationships based on inclusion rather than exclusion. Creativity can serve the development of social competence in children because it provides children with a sense of possibility about what they are capable of and how they conform to societal and cultural expectations A child's personal experiences shape what they care about,

97

which is then displayed or reinforced by their creative choices.

A mother described how both her twins' sense of creativity was heightened and extended into other play skills when they were out in the community:

> I feel his behavior, or his sense of creativity, is heightened. Even within the community, I feel like he learns to interact with other kids and develops a certain skill set when interacting with people that he knows or doesn't know... I also feel that their construction skills have improved. I like the Legos a lot! These sorts of games make them more creative… Their creativity has improved in imagining through the shapes they build. They continuously create and produce and perfect it, and in return, it improves their imagination.

Parents voiced how children are creative in their own ways and how their children's learning process influences parents' behaviors.

When children have time for play, it is a building block for establishing confidence, coping abilities, flexibility, and positive interactions with others. Therefore, children feed off each other's experiences and learn from each other. More so, children's creative outcomes contribute to how parents' structure and manage their expectations for play. Many of the parents spoke of how children's abilities and development caused their expectations to fluctuate along different dimensions. Also, playtime encourages children to continue exploring their own interests and build skills they will use in the future.

Another mother (HE) described her daughter's talent in the reuse of materials to create toys and miniature towns. "My daughter reuses and recycles boxes and bottles.... She creates little houses, tunnels, and she glues, cuts, and sticks thing on boxes.... I consider that as play too. Just being creative!" Children are always creative and express it in different ways, but this also provided a sense of confidence that the child was able to build what she put her mind to. HE indicated that her child's reuse of material developed her thoughts, motor and visual processing, and artistic senses through the expansion and exploration of her imagination. Play helps build

strong learning foundations and may also help in learning emotions—their own or others—while building upon earlier ones.

Emotional coping and understanding. Most parents said that play also helped children manage stress and cope with change. One of the mothers (FS), with a social work background, indicated that play had emotional-behavioral benefits. She continued to describe play as a means to reduce fear, anxiety, stress, irritability, and, at times, to improve emotional flexibility and openness. FS described an incident with her daughter. Her daughter created different imaginative figures to express what she had in mind, which was perhaps an enactment of what was going on in her life. Emotionally she wanted to understand a situation through trial and error. FS said that play was a learning process, self-sustained because the natural love of learning was preserved and strengthened. Another mother described the love of learning as a way of understanding, signaled by a push to be included. While helping her older children with homework, AK's youngest child attempted to understand what her mother was doing. As an example, AK provided this scenario:

> My youngest would ask me to create worksheets in dot to dot format for her to follow, as if I'm instructing her to study, and teaching her as I do her siblings. She would request that I explain it to her, …like how to trace each letter. I feel like she is playing but wants to be like her siblings …

AK described it as a way for her youngest to include herself and enhance her self-esteem and interpersonal relationships with her siblings and peers. Across families, several parents' common practices (e.g., tailoring, adapting, modifying, planning, and improvising) promoted play that shaped expectations related to successful engagements in another child's activities by integrating opportunities, abilities, and interests.

Conclusion

Parents saw play's purpose to influence skills and affect future outcomes. Parental expectations were dynamic, not static. Parents set expectations based on ongoing accomplishments, where parents taught children to be able to negotiate and demonstrate the execution of various activities and tasks**.** Many of these emerging themes connected.

Parents may not have milestone-style expectations for their very young children, but they still have expectations for what children's play is or should be and may have an influence on in the future. For example, parents believed that a child should grow and develop while playing, but how that is accomplished is not fixed for this age group. Play patterns and expectations fluctuate and are identified based on a child's response in parent-child negotiations in considering how low or high expectations should be. As one parent shared, "There are no obligations for this age group. They don't have to face consequences as harshly based on our religion. It is a trial and error phase." Parents monitored children's current characteristics for future skills that did influence a trajectory that could include manners, socially accepted behaviors, competence, and a connection to history.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS: OBSERVATIONS OF CHILDREN'S PLAY PATTERNS IN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

Naturalistic Observation Findings: Evolving Childhoods and Play Patterns

Though people are always evolving, they are shaped by socio-cultural practices and experiences within their communities. Therefore, I ask the reader to set aside any preconceived assumptions about play based on a particular culture and use a transparent lens for understanding the value system that underpins play specifically for the Arab religio-cultural context of Kuwait. By using an analytical focus in exploring the topic while in educational settings the researcher considered the children's fluctuating dynamic of cultural practices indoors and outdoors to determine the continuity in this research process. The students' transitions from the classroom to other areas of the school environment highlight how they attempted to engage with each other while also providing a general depiction of how the students followed school social rules.

Definition of the Term Play

When using the word 'play' there is not a direct translation in Arabic. The term play is a verb (e.g., an action word that can be used in past, present, and future tense) that refers to an individual performing an activity, or occupation. Play is an occupation common in many cultures and backgrounds, but the relative understanding of its purpose, engagement, and interactions differ depending on the culture and context.

When informing school administration about the research project, I explained the interview phase I had already completed. I shared with them that in the field observations I hoped to gain information and perspectives about the questions asked regarding the meanings

connected to play, understanding of the concept, and expectations of play for children. In this study, children's play is defined as a nontraditional Western view of free play. In terms of the goal and essence of play, it was seen as education, recreation, as well as a combination for this age group. At times children engaged on their own, with adult influence and input existing on a continuum of structured and unstructured play. Teachers had a very broad understanding of what I, as a researcher, was looking for to understand how play is supported in this environment.

The phenomenon of play, the meaning of play, parent and teacher roles (i.e. their interaction), and the play/playfulness array is viewed differently in this Arab region. Teachers described the play phenomenon along a spectrum, where the degree of structured and unstructured opportunities lie within interchangeable concepts of play and learning. Teachers' interpretations of play allowed for different types of play, both indoors and outdoors, and as allowed for learning opportunities and improvements in gross motor skills, dramatic play, and construction. They invited me to observe children playing on the playground (i.e., unstructured play) along with other places, such as when raising the country's flag and saying the pledge, performances, music class, and school interactive events that served as structured opportunities for play.

As a researcher, observing children in their everyday contexts (i.e., school environments) provided insights into the specific cultural milieu that supported children's patterns and behaviors in play. The main aspects that sustained teachers in the definitions of play, learning, and teaching for this age group (three to six years of age) was more about rearing (e.g., a combined mother and teacher role) and cultivating children through patterns of religion and culture. More so, by using the data collected within the schools, the researcher fieldnotes

illustrated how each identified observational theme connects to how the educational setting

shapes play and play opportunities for the children.

By observing children in their everyday interactions, I saw different elements of play

within the school community. Children were able to negotiate and adjust in their exchanges.

They constructed their own understanding and knowledge of the school environment through

their experiences with and reflections on play. Based on my observations, children's

understanding of their realities within the school environments shaped their thoughts and

behaviors as they constructed meaning. In other words, their interactions forged the construction

of meaning in everyday exchanges.

Qualitative Observational Findings

I identified four major themes by reviewing the data. These major themes are:

a. State and community expectations

b. Fluctuating ecological environments

c. Self: Development through play

d. Challenging school and class rules

Table 6.2 provides a more detailed look at the overarching themes and the subthemes related to

how the school environment shaped children's play patterns.

Table 6.2. Four Overarching Themes with their Sub-Themes

Major theme	Sub-theme: Level 1	Sub-theme: Level 2
State and community expectations		
Fluctuating ecological environments {Structured vs. unstructured}	School layouts and classroom setup	
	School socio-cultural dynamics and class instruction	
	School social events and fluctuating class schedules	
Self: Development through play	Collaborative play and play initiation	Self and others: Developing play scenarios
		Creativity and imagination: Expanding spaces and integrating others' ideas
	Physical and social placement of identity	
Challenging school and class rules	Negotiating patterns for play	
	Non-Standard (outside the norm); patterns of play	

State and community expectations. Based on the Ministry of Education's (MOE)

2017/18 school year strategy and vision, the educational system is designed to contribute to both

a child's future economic and social progress. The goal is to further economic and social

progress in a manner where children are able to uphold the value of social responsibility while

meeting the demands of modern life and remaining committed to the cultural traditions of

society. Consequently, the MOE continuously intends:

> To improve on providing students with the opportunities to achieve holistic spiritual, mental, social, psychological, and physical development to the best of their potential. With the direction of early childhood educators, (i.e. instruction) every child is nurtured through foundational learning experiences within social, emotional, and cultural interaction/opportunities required for children to mature and develop socially. (Fieldnotes, ZT RHH, March 7, 2018)

الرؤية الاستراتيجية
لـوزارة التـربية

نظام تعليمي يساهم في الازدهار الاقتصادي والاجتماعي

رســالة وزارة التـربية

تهيئة الفرص المناسبة لمساعدة المتعلمين على النمو الشامل المتكامل
روحيا وعقليا واجتماعيا ونفسيا وجسميا الي اقصى ما تسمح به قدراتهم
وامكاناتهم بما يكفل التوازن بين تحفيزهم لزواتهم وحزمتهم للمجتمع وما
للاسلوب الزي يلبي متطلبات العصر وعملية التنمية الاجتماعية والاقتصادية
ويحفظ في الوقت ذاته
الخصوصية الثقافية للمجمع.

Figure 6.1. Picture of MOE Mission Statement in Arabic

In an evolving culture, educators strive to provide children with the basic skills that are crucial to success at all educational levels.

Moreover, the ministry favors the increased momentum in independent physical, social and mental problem solving and challenging potentials under adult guidance or in collaboration with peers. The MOE encourages teaching approaches that combine learning through instruction, unstructured and structured play, and academic and social events. However, play is based on a completely different model in supporting children in school environments. Teaching strategies favored by the MOE are the combination of instructional techniques that include movement during lessons, group activities, modeled activities, and fieldtrips.

Through the observation process, many teachers and principals approached me and added their insight about the topic. It was apparent the educators perceived learning and play as interchangeable: Children needed instruction and they needed to explore and test the waters. One principal, with a Ph.D. in early child development, stated that play "both allows the child to gain conceptual knowledge, participate in activities to grow skills, and to implement the skills in

putting them into practice of daily life." Teachers were inclined to share their observations in supporting children through their education and pushed for my input and observations about childcare as well as information about how the educator team could enrich their knowledge about how to support children.

       Fluctuating ecological environments (structured vs. unstructured play). Children needed diverse environments that addressed their needs, challenged them, provided choices, attracted their attention, and engaged them in different social activities. These changing environments elicited the freedom to explore and satisfy their curiosity in the world around them. The fluctuating environments in which children interacted were indoor or outdoor environments. The school educators provided structured and unstructured play opportunities and resources to allow for the development of children's motor and cognitive skills, interpersonal attitudes, and emotions.
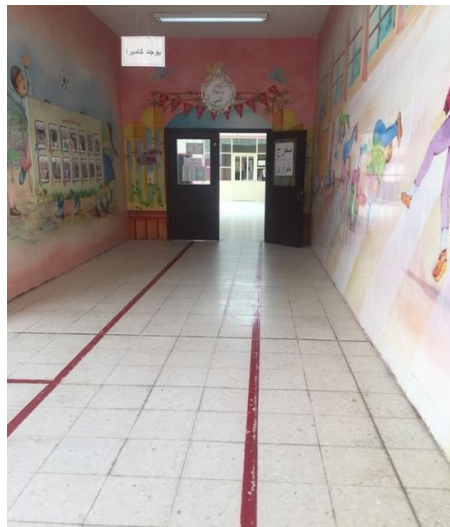
Figure 6.2. School Hallway

Figure 6.3. Image of School Classroom

It was surprising to see students' resilience in the fluctuating Arab school environments. Children were able to adapt their skill set from moment to moment by changing their patterns of play to understand the school community and societal expectations. Principals understood that children also gained skills in neighborhoods, parks, playgrounds, and natural environments. These areas were seen as rich sources of stimulation for children, but at school, children were nurtured, guided, and supported to reach their full potential.

School layouts and classroom set-up. All government schools have security guards, and all main gate entrances are locked. A visitor must ring the bell and sign-in to gain admittance. In all of the kindergarten schools visited (i.e. in the same school and other governates), the administration was set up one of two ways: (a) visitors needed to walk through the administrative offices (i.e., offices were on left and right of the entrance leading to an auditorium), or (b) the administration was placed as the central building or to the right of main entrances. Both placements were strategic allowing for personnel to view any visitors entering the schools. Each school had a courtyard and auditorium where the flagpole was placed. As observed in one of the visits:

The courtyards include an open space for all the classes to line up and a section for a gated playground area. As we walk towards the classrooms the students are already lined up for the morning pledge and activities of the day. There are two hallways with four classrooms on each end. Two Kindergarten I (KG I) classrooms and two Kindergarten II (KG II) classrooms along with a kitchen, a music room, a teacher's conference room, a lounge, a custodial lounge and closet. (Fieldnotes, ZT RHH, March 7, 2018)

While there were slight differences in each school, they typically held nine to 12 kindergarten classrooms (i.e., KG I and KG II classes) separated by corridors. Classrooms either had a corridor leading towards or opened up to a shared courtyard where all students of the same age group interacted. Each class had 15-20 students with two or three teachers sharing teaching responsibilities based on governate school zones, which the researcher visited for child observations. Observations made in each of a particular governate showed almost identical physical set-ups in each room but execution of activities and physical environment set-ups in each governate differed slightly. Set-ups were made similar for children transferring in and from different governate schools.

Figure 6.4. A Classroom Layout

The classroom environments were set up with chairs placed in rectangular form in the center of the room as an area where the whole group to gather, with each child having an

108

assigned seat (see Figures 6.4 and 6.5). Tables and learning centers were placed around the seating area. The learning centers consisted of eight or nine table or area groupings (i.e., kitchen, living room/bedroom, drawing/coloring, science, sand/water, reading, computer, theater/tent, blocks/pegs areas) with room for three to four children. Children sat in chairs for table-top activities and on carpet covered areas for theater, blocks, Legos and miniature action figure free play. Each room had a whiteboard, bookshelves, and toys neatly labeled in bins as well as a storage area in the back room with coat pegs or cubbies for each child. Every classroom had a restroom area with two miniature sized toilets.

Figure 6.5. One of the Many Stations Set Up for Play; A Bedroom Station

The school and classroom layouts had a clear impact on children's curiosity, arousal, and safety according to the physical elements in the settings and their relationship to each other. Educators set up each classroom to provide realistic, dramatic, and construction play. Classrooms were in proximity to different outdoor nooks (e.g., plant and nature areas, tent areas, recycling areas, independent reading spaces with seats, and playgrounds). These nooks were made for children to utilize the different forms, textures, and heights and to manipulate materials such as cardboard boxes, tires, toys, sand, soil, and water (see Figures 6.6 and 6.7). The setups

and materials in both classrooms and playgrounds obviously encouraged children to use their mobility and perceptions in stimulating their own senses and generating scripts for play in areas seen in the pictures.

With a variety of stimulating elements, children developed different play scenarios and various opportunities for creativity. I observed the use of imagination in all forms of play. The playground area allowed children to move around freely. They were able to explore, run, jump, and laugh with no restriction, except for screaming. Screaming was monitored due to the structures of outdoor playgrounds that often created an echo when children screamed. In some schools, the playground also served as an open space for relaxation as well as environmental conservation as evidenced by the green area and recycled seating area (see Figures 6.6 and 6.7).

Figure 6.6. Outdoor Quiet Play Area
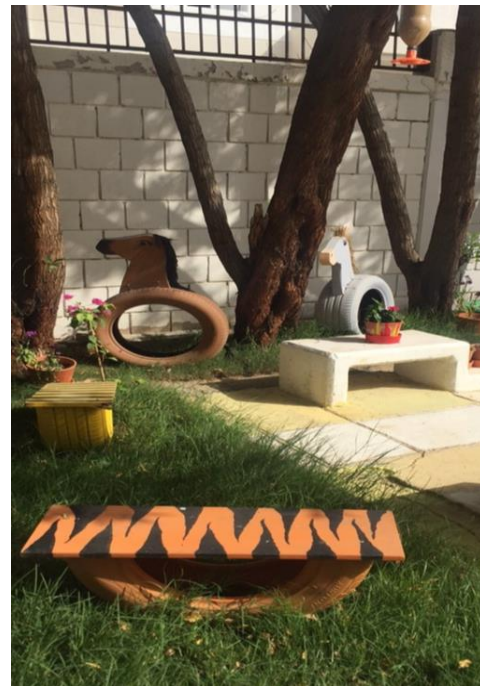
Figure 6.7. Outdoor Nook Made of Recycled Material

Under the scope of MOE's curriculum in increasing participation, children were encouraged to play on the playground without limiting their participation. The playground was purely a place that was child-led, aimed to enhance physical, mental, social, and coping skills towards the occupation of play. The playground environment contained a variety of play equipment (e.g., monkey bars, a variety of slides, caves, swings, merry-go-rounds, sea- saws ,jungle gyms, rocking boats, obstacle courses, and a big open courtyard), which teachers perceived as a place for children to learn about their environment, themselves, others, and grow in all areas of development. Playground refers to an open space equipped with playing facilities for children under adult supervision, allowing teachers the ability to provide input necessary to shape children's behaviors, acts, and learned experience.
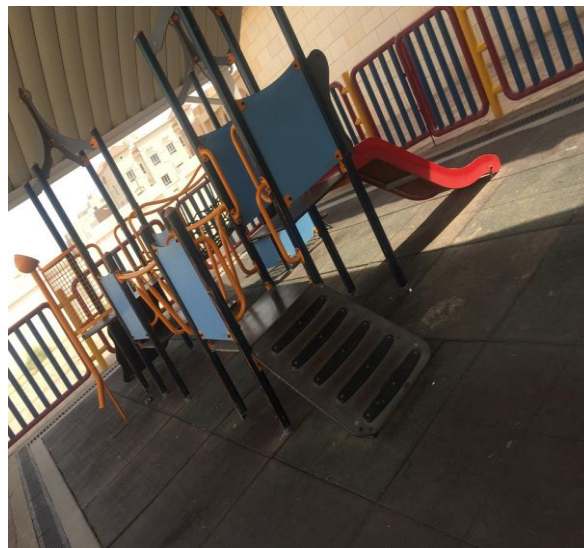
Figure 6.8. Outdoor Play Area

School socio-cultural dynamics and class instruction. The socio-cultural aspect of play and learning at school is important; school cultures have their own rules, and class environments and dynamics are based on school expectations. The day started with the national anthem and pledge, and each week a child is chosen from each KG II to lead the school in the morning

pledge. The following description is of one of the days when the children led each other in saying the pledge (see Figure 6.8):

> The ceremony starts. Each class is facing the stage in what looks like an indoor gym or auditorium. Three little boys come running up to the front of the classes lined up. One is handed the Kuwait flag… He holds it with all his strength. The other two boys stagger to keep up behind him at his pace and rush to stand behind him on each side. The boy with the flag raises his voice and calls out, " My country Kuwait." The boy to the right continues to say, " Praise the Emir" And the boy to the left says, "Praise the Arab nations." The whole auditorium repeats each phrase a total of three times, calling out behind each boy's statement. With serious faces, diligence, and no mistake the three children lead their classmates through pledging their country. (Fieldnotes, AS RAS, March 19, 2018)

Figure 6.9. Photographs in the Auditorium of the Emir of Kuwait and Crowned Prince

After the pledge every morning, each class got a morning snack. Children washed their hands in the classroom then lined up to walk to the cafeteria. Each child put on a sleeved bib and received a boxed meal. Before they started their meal, a child was chosen to lead them in Dua, which is a prayer said blessing every meal. "Bisimallah Al Rahman al Raheem, Alhouma barik lina feeh wa at'aamana khairon mina." Translated, the prayer means, "In the name of God most Gracious and Merciful, bless this food you provide us and never cease your abundance of its existence."

Instructions were always given by the teacher, but it was obvious, from observing the children in the classrooms, that instruction had been ingrained. Even as time schedules shifted,

they knew what had to occur before each class segment. Directions were followed at all times and children monitored their own behaviors if they were not very immersed in play. Before station playtime, circle time, or free play, children were reminded of rules through a song. The following scenario is a clear example of teacher-instructed but child-initiated and led opportunities to learn thinking skills, develop language and independence.

> The teacher asks, "Are we ready?" The class starts the stations song, "Walla Wanasa, Walla Wanasa," meaning "It's so much fun, it's so much fun." It continues, "We will head to library to read a book, to theater station to act, color and learn." The teacher asks the whole class, "show me how we fly." The children respond like little birds flying to their nests by choosing a play station where they want to be. (Fieldnotes, YA RHH, March 14, 2018)

Children utilized their time, space, and materials and learned from other peers every moment. Schools were made up of children from various backgrounds (e.g., ethnicities, religious backgrounds, SES, and educational levels) that influenced how they took lead in their patterns of play. The vice principals put it, "At this age, you are rearing more than teaching in kindergarten and first grade school levels." She continued to explain, "Under this roof, one must help shape, allow interaction, and then instruct! We should remind them at all times that we are all one [e.g., to respect differences and to understand interdependence] and build on it." Principals and school teachers saw play as a means for structured opportunities of support and training, where children were able to use their play patterns and behaviors in gaining skills for future use.

School social events and fluctuating class schedules. School events and class schedules emphasized the significance of how this environment situated learning within the appropriate social and cultural contexts. One of the principals expressed that a child's kindergarten experience should provide structure intertwined with opportunities for creativity and playful learning that responds to children's interests. She emphasized that advocating for children was her job. Having children interact with the environment while allowing them to experiment,

113

explore, and discover through their imaginations was a continuous goal of school activities (e.g.,

through trips to interesting places like museums, co-ops, and bringing in special guests like

police officers and fire fighters to talk to classrooms). Numerous cultural events in the country,

such as National day, Liberation day, and traffic week, contributed to social experiences that

took place during school and later on provided children with ideas to integrate into and through

play opportunities.

In traffic week, for example, schools invited members of the police force to visit and be

guests of an interactive assembly led by students to understand a police officer's purpose in

society. After the interactive assembly, each classroom was able to explore a police car and a

K9-unit car. The principal explained:

> The police officers will bring around the police cars and explain to the children how the cars work, used for and what purpose, and who is restrained and taken in these cars. She says, most importantly, explaining to them why these people are in the car to begin with. And both KG I and KG II classes all get a chance to learn about the sirens and other buttons in each car. (Fieldnotes, HA RAS, March19, 2018)

The principal continued to talk to me about experiential learning and how it should start

at an early age. These factors could clearly be seen when children had a chance to insert their

understandings while standing in line, playing in the playground, and creating their own play

scenarios using blocks. One observation of a female, four-year-old, KG II student stood out

because of how she incorporated her sassy personality through the use of exaggerated play

methods to make a point:

Figure 6.10. Police Car at School During Traffic Week

HA's class comes out and is led to the driver's seat and the guest explains different parts of the car. HA points her index finger and, shaking her head with a disapproved expression on her face, says to her classmate, "They are going to take you because you don't listen in class and are always talking." The police officer says, "Yes, sometimes we do." HA is surprised that the police officer heard her and with dismay jumps back in place. She hides behind her classmate without making any noise. The police officer continues and adds to what HA said. "Your teachers are like us. We take in bad men and women that break the law. Your teacher disciplines bad boys and girls." HA turns around slowly, sheepishly pointing towards her classmate, "I told you so!" but never giving the police officer any eye contact. The class continues to get in the back seat and asking question about everything they can see… and they explore every bit they can while they go in through one door and out the other (Fieldnotes, HA RAS March19, 2018).

This scenario shows how children incorporate and imprint their own personalities and unique patterns of play where they are able to and at any chance they get.

The many events, with varied aspects and sources for play, were structured by teachers (e.g., first observing and listening as a part of the cultural traditions) but children were given the reigns as a process to explore in real life experiences. Children were able to perform, dance, speak, and learn in ways that teachers described as children participating and taking control of their environment. An example of this occurred when HA created her own play world:

The courtyard is turned into a walkway with a stop sign in the center, with traffic lights at each end. Five children are chosen to move traffic, while other children are walking and riding bikes. HA has a chance to ride a bike. She rides and follows the lights. The kids that are moving traffic cover each light with a handheld poster board held up by a stick. All the kids are wearing military or police uniforms, but the ones moving traffic have a

115

bright yellow-green neon cord across their bodies [aiguillettes]. HA rides and stops at the red light. She laughs at her classmate who is moving traffic. "Come on, I'm late!" She starts cycling and moves around freely. (Fieldnotes, HA RAS, March19, 2018)

HA's play scenario continued when she imagined and played out a character of authority:

> The teacher calls on four girls, and they all take their positions. HA says, "Finally it's my turn!" She put on the yellow cord and runs to the stop sign. She waves her hands telling her class to walk through the cross zone… she concentrates and gives orders… "Guys you are not watching me. You're not going to be safe! Stop… Listen! You can't run! Follow what I tell you!" She waves them on. The whole class passes through, and the teacher waves over the four girls. She takes the cords and hands it to the next class. (Fieldnotes, HA RAS, March19, 2018).

As children continued to play, they used every chance they had to implement what they learned through play and in creating scenarios. In this following example, HA continues to use her imagination in understanding the role of a police officer:

> HA is asked to get at the end of the line, but as the teacher is still talking to the other teacher, she manages to run ahead of the class. She continues to wave them forward, 'Follow me class. I'm the head police officer.' (Fieldnotes HA RAS, March19, 2018)

Through these quality learning experiences many of the children acquired certain capabilities in taking initiative, exploring their emotions and sense of relatedness and belonging in a community.

Self: development through play. As a researcher, having a chance to work children from both Middle Eastern and Western cultural worlds, I have observed how play and its outcomes are perceived somewhat differently by adults and educators in each region. An administrative secretary and also a grandmother from Egypt expressed her view on play, stating, "Play is very important for the growth, development and life's process, but if you give them too much time to play they won't know what to do with it! They are indefinitely going to be scattered [i.e., distracted and disorganized] in their process." Perceptions and expectations on play are important because parents' or teachers' views influence their encouragement of and involvement towards play and may even contribute to how children learn through play. Through

the many observations made in the research process, it is reasonable to conclude that there was a close relationship between children's interests, their motivation and their desire to learn. In the following scenario, YA, a four-year-old male student who was taking after school martial arts classes twice week, acts out his motivations for play when using toy animals, blocks, and other materials to set his scene for play:

> The teacher turns around and tells them, "We have a guest, we are going to play but put on your best behavior." She tells the kids to have three students at each station. YA doesn't waste any time. He charges for the blocks badge, puts the tub of blocks in the center of the rug and gets the basket of action figures and animals. He has a smirk on his face and looks towards me. He quickly slides onto the rug. He drops all the blocks out of the tub and action figures from their container. He reaches for a tiger but has a puzzled look on his face. YA stares at the tiger in his hand and starts chuckling… "Look it has pink shoes on!" He leans over on boy and looks for the missing pink shoe. He finds it and puts the shoe on the tiger's foot. YA places the tiger on the ground and roars, he then has the tiger leap from one of the blocks. He looks for another animal and brings out a cow. He faces the cow to the tiger, and he moves them in a circle motion just like they are in a brawl. YA moos and roars, he places a girl on the tiger and makes a roaring sound. He brings the cow closer to the tiger and moos in order to scare the tiger. The teacher sends over two boys to play at the block station. They play alongside him; each build on their own and don't interact with each other. YA pouts that the blocks are being used up. One of his classmates is building a tower to show his building skills. YA knocks his structure down with the tiger. He starts laughing and goes back to playing with his animals. He collects all the tigers and lines them on top of the container, while the cow is on the carpet facing them. He looks around for other animals. YA acts crazy mad and uses the tigers to destroy everything in his way. He bangs the tiger on the floor and starts to twist its head. He reaches for the scorpion and twists his tail. He starts to make a shrieking noise. YA asks the teacher if he can get out the cars. The teacher says it's almost time to go. So, he takes it as a head start and starts putting the blocks and animals away. He tells his classmates who are building, "Come on, we are going on the fieldtrip, put the blocks away." (Fieldnotes, YA RHH, March 21, 2018)

Children planned out their play patterns using their own learned behaviors and experiences in other activities. Many children played on their own but learned to get along with others and be collaborative. They also learned to cooperate with each other and express their emotions, imagination, and creativity when trying to understand complex concepts through play.

Collaborative play and play initiation. The creative and imaginative scenarios observed when children played can be interpreted as children's own concepts or ideas. The variety of

materials, playground landscapes, and other various elements seemed to be beneficial to the

development of play. For example, many of the children learned about their own personalities

and emotions, imagined their performance through toy figures, and brought their own sports

techniques to life when collaborating with others through such activities as play fighting or being

fashionistas.

Self and others: developing play scenarios. Throughout observations I saw children

collaborating and using child-initiated skills (e.g., exploring, manipulating objects, experiencing,

sharing and engaging in social interactions). The following play scenario illustrated the strength

of diverse creative and playful patterns; it is also a typical scenario of play initiation and

collaboration, and children incorporated different opportunities to use their imagination and feed

off each other's ideas:

> AA heads over to the kitchen. She is on her own at this station. She heads to the fruit and vegetable baskets and collects what she needs. A boy joins her. The boy, Sager, asks her, "What are you making?" He hands her a knife and sets up the kitchen table with two chopping boards, placing a carrot on his and an onion on hers. He jumps up, and she is surprised, "We need tomatoes too." He sits down at the table with AA, and they start cutting plastic veggies. The vegetables come apart as they cut them. AA gets up and opens the cabinet behind her and tells Sager to look inside. They whisper to each other; he goes back and collects eggs from the fridge and pretends he is cracking them at the table. Their classmate playing in the living room peaks into the kitchen and asks, "What are you guys making?" She goes back to the stove top and turns the oven on. She runs to the fridge and back to the stove top with a loaf of bread. She cuts the bread, and Sager reaches for an oven mitt. Sager plays with the oven mitts, which each has a character on it. One has a chef on it, and the other has a cow on it. They both use the mitts as puppets. AA starts to laugh as she turns the stove off, puts the food on the plate and the pot in the sink. She stares at me and walks over to the teacher asking for a tissue. She runs back into the kitchen area. Sager has a basket on his head. AA finds a basket and puts one on her head too. They whisper to each other, "Let's start cleaning up!" AA starts to wash the dishes and puts the food in plastic ware. Both AA and Sager start putting the dishes in the cabinets and food in the fridge. The teacher sings the clean-up song in order for the children to clean up. Sager and AA try so hard to clean faster. (Fieldnotes, AA RAY, March 28, 2018)

During play, children behaved in ways typical of those beyond their ages, discovering

new ways of performing tasks, such as creatively using blocks of different shapes and building

118

them to new heights. Two four-year-old male kindergarteners, NS and Nasser, whom I observed

in play, demonstrated the elaborate expansion in each other's hands-on characteristic play

patterns of imagination when playing with giant Lego blocks:

> I continue to watch NS as he builds the walls of the house, He leaves openings on all four sides. He is concentrating with a serious facial expression on his face. NS turns around looks up at me and continues to address Nasser. "What do you think? Let's play this way!" NS continues to connect all the long pieces along the rug of the station, so both NS and Nasser have space to sit inside the walls of the structure. They add more Legos and continue to build the structure in the center as high as they can, but they are out of Legos. Nasser shrieks "We forgot the parking spaces!" NS says, "No we didn't, I have two there over here." NS pushes apart the walls of the Legos, "See, this is where we will park." Nasser lifts one block and puts it on the house. "See, this is my third parking space. Oh no, this is where we will come in and out!" NS agrees and looks over to look for cars. He hands Nasser a Lamborghini and a Ferrari for himself. NS points to the parking spaces and says, "You park here, and I'll park here." NS slants his car in a 45-degree angle and parks his car in the corner of the gate. NS continues, "See, they won't get scratched this way." He starts to laugh, and Nasser parallel parks his car in the back. (Fieldnotes, NS RAY, March 15, 2018)

Children also expressed collaborative, imaginative, and creative skills when climbing the

monkey bars, sliding down slides, exploring caves, and swinging on swings, all while they sang,

giggled, and tried again. Others played on the merry-go-round, jungle gym, rocking boat, and

obstacle courses, and played jail or ball in the courtyard. The following scenario clarifies how

children are able to play in small groups and take turns in play to include others in the activities:

> The girls run back to the same corner, behind the teachers sitting on chairs watching the children play. They start a game. I figure out that they all have to follow the lead, and the last person has to catch them all after they count to 10. Home base is the same corner they started out from. They all get there, and they start the game. They talk through who will be the first to catch them. They all run in a straight line then disperse. The last girl seems like she is counting and not for very long. She then runs. She is disoriented, not knowing where to look. I don't blame her. There are so many children on the playground. She finds two girls, and HA is one of them. She gets close to HA, and both girls start to scream. They both stop at the jungle gym, mirroring each other's moves. HA gets away, and all the girls follow her to hide under the platform of a slide. Here they decide that they will choose another girl to catch them. As they choose, HA and another girl get goodies out of their pockets and take a snack break. They both pass around pieces of chocolate. (Fieldnotes, RAS HA, April 9, 2018)

119

Not only have the children shown that they can play in small groups and include others, but they re-purposes accessible spaces into places to play (i.e. as a headquarter). In this space, the girls collaboratively made up rules for games, conversed, mimicked each other's actions, and shared their secrets.

Creativity and imagination: expanding spaces and integrating others' ideas. Children throughout play were able to include objects, places, and spaces, using them for entirely different purposes (e.g., platforms as houses to hide under, blocks as spray cans, a tub as a runway). They also spent considerable time discussing what they would be doing. In some cases, these were functional and realistic ideas, while at other times their ideas demonstrated a productive use of the imagination. During observations, the researcher did not see limitations to children's capabilities and considered that children may not have the same understanding of what play means. In the next three examples, four-year-old boys continue in free play to feed off each other's creativity and use of imagination in different ways:

> They both turn to the center where they have built a house. Nasser says it looks like a chair, NS continues and says, "No, it's a king's chair!" Then Nasser interrupts and pulls NS off. "No, look," he sits on it and says, "It's a motorcycle or anything." NS continues, "It can also be a robot." He is so excited and maneuvers the blocks in a robot fashion. The Legos tumble, and they laugh. Nasser says, "It's because I was sitting on them." They reconstruct the structure quickly and go back to driving the cars. Nasser comes close to me and beeps. (Fieldnotes, NS RAY, March 15, 2018)

In another scenario, I observed two other boys using blocks to build. They showed a different way of expanding spaces and integrating ideas in different scenarios:

> They all go back to playing quietly. HW and the boy pick up two blocks and create spray cans out of them. They choose a cylindrical block and square one. Each spray each other in the face and shriek. The teacher says, "I can't hear the music!" The class quiets down a bit. HW pretends to close his eyes as the boy sprays him. He sprays back. (Fieldnotes, HW RTAQ, March 13, 2018)

And sometimes children changed their scenarios often, and children chose whether or not to play along. In this case though, an integration of ideas did not occur. A play scenario with a

completely different idea presented as an opportunity to share ideas and agree on a new game for

both boys:

> HW wants to change stations and play with the blocks and his airplane. HW goes over on
> the rug with a tub of blocks and creates a bridge. He starts to make noises as if his
> airplane is taking off. He flies around the bridge and lands again right in front of it.
> Jassim goes over to get the other tub of blocks and dumps them on the rug. HW walks to
> where the blocks used to be to get the basket of action figures and different objects—cars,
> plants, soldiers, and dolls. He goes back to the rug area and flies his plane over the tub on
> the rug and bumps the bridge while making sound effects. HW joins Jassim by building a
> surface in order to put the plane on it and use it as a runway. Jassim changed his mind
> and says "It's not a runway! This is my house. This is the swimming pool and the garden
> is over here." He places two plants on each end. HW doesn't really look interested,
> giving his back to Jassim. He flips over a tub that's empty and drops the plane over the
> edge and continues to play on his own. Jassim says, "How about we play soccer with the
> ball and blocks?" They look at each other and agree… they start to play and the ball rolls
> away towards the teacher. They look at each other waiting to see what happens.
> (Fieldnotes, HW RTAQ, April 17, 2018)

Children's choice in material, toys, and activities featured underlying cultural relatedness

essential and in conjunction to their play methods, motivation, self-concept, and identity. They

showed it through the material they used, the spaces they utilized, in sharing tales and in using

diverse patterns to perform each play scenario. Children even tended to choose toys or brought

their own toys from home to play out their own creative scenarios.

    Physical and social placement of identity. While many children expressed themselves

openly and loudly, some shied away from showing off their abilities' and chose to be private and

play on their own. Others displayed great extremes in their abilities, such as when children

intervened in situations to include classmates in play scenarios and games. In this example, a

four-year-old girl demonstrates compassion and a willingness to include others:

> AA is almost done counting to 15, she turns around and scans the playground area. She
> looks everywhere, high and low. She runs to the opposite end of the playground. She
> finds one of the girls from afar. I don't know which one, but she speeds up and manages
> to comb through the other children playing. She is behind her playmate, but she gets
> away. AA continues to search for the other girls. She looks under the platform of the slide
> obstacle course. AA asks the girl, "What's wrong?" The girls that are playing hide and
> seek with AA join her and surround the girl under the platform. AA makes a face, looks

like she is disappointed and looks around determined to find someone. She looks over to the girl and says, "Come play with us." AA runs and waves her hand in a motion to tell them to come on. She runs back to the same wall and starts to count. (Fieldnotes, AA RAY, March 15, 2018)

In the following example the child, AS, a four-year-old girl is able to articulate her idea

of following societal rules and shares her knowledge about what is morally right portraying her

understanding of her parents' views about abiding the law:

> AS is chosen to tell the students where children are supposed to sit in the car. She runs up to front of the gym. She says, "We sit in the back with our seatbelts on." Another boy blurts out, "But my father says I'm a big boy, so I can sit up front." AS looks at the boy, frustrated, and corrects him, saying, "No! We have to act like big kids and behave, but we are still small. See!" She puts her hand to her head and points up to the police officer, pointing out the height difference. The police officer chuckles, "She is right. Once you become my height you can sit up front, but you are still growing so you need to be safe and sit in the back with your seatbelt on!" The questions come to an end, and each class sits down to watch a cartoon about the rules of traffic. (Fieldnotes, AS RAS, March 19, 2018)

In this next example a four-year-old girl, HA explains to peer group about what is real

and make-believe. Her explanation is governed by her own rules, confident in her knowledge

base. This all occurs while she goes back and forth, accompanied by one of her classmates, in a

private game of photo shoot. She continues to dance and chat as the teacher instructs the class

stating:

> "Who do you want to be?" She pulls out the clips in her hair and tries to take out her scrunchy. She swings her hair back and forth and pulls off the scrunchy. She struggles with taking it out. Fatima, the girl sitting next to her, does the same and lets her hair down. Both HA and Fatima run to the mirror at the bathroom door. They find a comb in the hygiene basket. HA tells Fatima to comb her hair. She flips her hair, "I'll do yours." She snaps the clips with strings back in her hair in the middle of her head. HA walks off after she's done and not combing Fatima's hair. She runs back to the middle of the room and calls the other Fatima, "Look it's like your hair." HA says, "No you need to fix your hair. It's all over the place [messy]" (Kisha). They both run back to the mirror and the other Fatima is still there. The teacher asks who is in the bathroom. "Back to your seats please!" All three girls run out of the side room….they are sent back to their seats by the teacher, and HA and Fatima sit next to each other and discuss what is happening in the play. Ali chimes in and says they are under the sea. HA says the whole play is under the sea! He says, "No they are on a stage, but this is really in the sea. Look at the fish!" She stands and swings her hair and says ,"Its pretend. Have an imagination" ["Lazim

itshakhal khayalik." Translation, "You have to turn on your imagination."] She pulls Fatima up and they go back to the long mirror. They start to dance in front of it, and this time HA combs Fatima's hair. They both laugh and the comb drops out of HAs hand, she drops it a second time and drops it on purpose the third time. They continue to laugh. (Fieldnotes, HA RAS, April 16, 2018)

Although many of the children observed were able to insert certain concepts learned through experiences in expressing their own beliefs and attitudes; play, to children, has no limits or restrictions about where it can occur. In this example, children distinguish between what was playful (i.e., fun) and what was not (i.e., boring) by imposing their own unique personality in their play patterns on to others. Specifically, a four-year-old female student who is bored in class invites her friend, who is sitting beside her, to play. The little girl points to her friend and says that she is Filipino. This is an opportunity for both to start singing when the teacher is occupied elsewhere:

HA points to Fatima and says you're a Filipino!... They both start to sing a song by Black Eyed Peas… "Filipino!, Filipino!" The boys and girls beside them also chime in and start to sing, "Filipino!, Filipino!… Bebot, Bebot, Bebot ,bebot…Be bebot bebot, Be bebot bebot be…Ikaw ang aking." (Fieldnotes, HA RAS, March 12, 2018)

Sometimes, the students and HA's classmates engaged in game play through singing and using hand clapping songs, spontaneous play, and competitive play. Prior understanding was not needed in order to participate in the 'game'; classmates usually inserted themselves. And all through play, singing was not the only popular form of expression children used. They also learned to develop and insert vocabulary in their play scenarios, whether it made sense or not in its place. Along with certain play patterns, came attitudes in how children were able to insert religious expressions into their play. The next example presents a four-year-old girl's encounter with her classmates. She took on an authoritative role in silencing them:

Students are gathered around each station. Each group converses while engaged in some sort of play. While others show off what they are doing. All of a sudden HA says, "Hudoooa!" [meaning "Silence!" in English]. "Be quiet, I want to color in silence." She puts her head down, then she looks up again at classmates with a fierce face. "Stop

making so much noise." The teacher starts to walk around to see what the children are up to. she also gives words of encouragement and reminds the class to keep it down. (Fieldnotes, HA RAS, March 26, 2018)

For example, HA was able to express her feelings associated with a previous personal experience. She then evaluated and imitated what her own teacher though needed to be done in this situation.

In this next scenario, a four-year-old boy engaged in play. He was so immersed in his world that he transitioned fluidly from one character to the next—from handy man to engineer/architect to scientist—in the science lab station:

> The children disperse to where they want to play. Each chooses a place on their own. HW walks over to the science table. He gets on his knees looking for something in the shelves. He gets out a case. He looks like he is determined to do something. It's a drill case with nut, bolts, a screwdriver, and a drill. He dissembles the kit and pretends to drill a screw into the table. He sees something in the shelves and scrambles to get it. He finds a hard-top hat and tries to put it on. He manages to place it on and gets the buckle around his chin. He then uses a ruler and a pencil to sketch something out. I guess he is an architect. He picks up a screwdriver and glances at me. He then uses a magnifying glass and points it towards me. I look at another area in the classroom, so he goes back to what he was doing. He turns and reaches for a walkie talkie and talks into it. He gives orders to do something. He has a tone of urgency and is commanding someone to complete a job. He continues to fidget with the same toys. He retrieves a paper and rolls it up. He is so immersed in his playing that he doesn't look up to see what is happening around the room. H leaves the case on the table, takes off the hard top, and puts on a lab coat. He looks at the goggles on the top cubby but doesn't put them on. He retrieves a plate with a hole in it. He retrieves a plastic egg, putting it on the dish and spins it on the plate without allowing it to drop. He takes his lab coat off and hangs it back on the hanger and stares around the room. (Fieldnotes, HW RTAQ, March 13, 2018)

Children were able to refer to their own ideas and thoughts and debated why it was right. In some sense it seemed that there was some imitation or past experiences influencing their expressions.

Children challenging school and class rules. Children gradually adapted to school learning and developed learning cultures but also ventured outside what was allowed. Despite their agency and their ability to manipulate their play situations, it was necessary to remind

myself as a researcher of their social position in society within this context. Children, when observed, usually approved and validated their own rules on a classmate's atypical behavior but did not recognize the rules to apply to oneself. They understood that school policies and classroom rules provided equal opportunities for sharing and inclusion. They also incorporated their own negotiated or deviant (i.e., non-standard) rules and guidelines, thus allowing them to manipulate situations to meet their own needs.

Negotiating patterns for play. The accounts below demonstrates the frequency and differences with which boys negotiated patterns of play with each other and with adults. Children have different ways when connecting with each other. Within the span of about two minutes, they moved from comparing structures to sharing blocks, to competing in how many structures they can build and then to finally asking for input from other students. The social interactions included verbal exchanges and activities shared between the peers, teachers and sometimes other members in the classroom.

> NS looks back to what he is building but it tumbles. He is frustrated and rebuild the structure. Nasser takes the blocks away from NS. "Not all of the blocks are yours," Nasser says to NS. NS builds another tower, and Nasser kick it down. NS says, "Stop, you're breaking the towers down." Nasser says, "Well who brought the block out!" Nasser continues to argue, "You need to share." They argue about the number of blocks each collects. Nasser's says, "I have 6." N says, "I have 10, 15, 17," and they continue on arguing. Nasser says, "I'm going to be better than you. I'm going to make a lot of houses." NS looks over at me but passed me, and I turn to see that there is a little girl sitting at the reading table I have stationed myself at. NS says, "Jenna will decide who is better!" Jenna replies with a shake of her head to signify no! She says no one is better than the other! NS continues to say when we are done she will judge. (Fieldnotes, NS RAY, March 15, 2018)

In the example below is another reflection relating to how children use different methods for negotiation in order to meet their needs in play. HW uses methods to set rules that he imposes on others. While observing him, he would not necessarily allow or approve of others to do the same when playing with him.

125

HW complains that all the blocks are gone. He starts to reach for others blocks, and he waves over the other children to come see what he's building. I felt he was rather intelligent to have the children hand him their blocks. They all build a big structure. He is working with Lulu and Shahen. HW is now pulling blocks out of the box. One of the boys put them back before going elsewhere to play. HW says to his classmate, "Ask nicely if you want more blocks." (Fieldnotes, HW RTAQ, March 13, 2018)

Another example below relates to findings on social interactions in patterns of negotiation between individual children and adults. Children construct a repertoire of moral standards when it comes to play based on previous experiences. Social norms amongst children were enforced in a different way than the social rules of the school itself, namely because they enforced these particular norms for each other. They use these incidents to their advantage to meet their play needs and try to demonstrate their own understanding of what "fairness" means to them.

HW stands there watching, while the rest of the group ran to call the teacher. As the teacher comes to them, one of the boys hits the other. The teacher scolds him, and says, "We never hit each other ever." The teacher tells the boy to apologize. HW and the others object to the teacher's decision and all say, "But he was wrong." The teacher explains to the whole group, "Even if someone is wrong, you do not raise your hand to anyone. If there is a problem, you either call a teacher or talk it out." The teacher takes the soccer ball from the group and places it in the sitting area next to me. HW still follows the teacher objecting to her decision and that it was not fair "punishing all of us." He changes the subject and continues to chat with the teacher, giving her an example about what happened with his brother. He states, "You see, he was punished alone and was taken out of the game." He then walks off to join two boys on the cross bridge made of net material. (Fieldnotes, HW RTAQ, March 27, 2019)

Non-standard (outside of the norm) patterns of play. On regular scheduled days children followed rules but typically on days where schedules were changed, children took chances in stretching classroom rules and at times not following them at all. Children usually did not sit in assigned seats and usually planned to sit with friends. They were essentially setting their own scene for conversation while the teacher set up for graduation practice. There were so many different conversations occurring between students at their seats and across children sitting near tables that the volume in the classroom frequently became very loud. Conversation topics varied greatly, children chatted about events or subjects outside of the school curriculum and or

joined in with students across the room. Students sometimes made up games as they waited and

went along playing the same songs and coordinated the rhythm of the song to the hand-clapping

pattern in the game. While consequently, knowledge of how to play certain games was important

or the student missed out on that interaction. Sometimes the students went out of their way to

overtly get the attention of peers. An illustration below sets the tone for not following classroom

rules:

> Both girls continued playing Rock, paper and scissors and then proceeded to start a
> clapping game. AA starts to count the claps and Al Zain follows suit. AA counts, "1, 5, 7,
> 11, 15…" They both turn in unison and look at me, smile, and wave. Al Zain puts her
> hand on AA's pocket and unclips the clip. AA quickly snatches the clip back and clips it
> on her shirt. They both go to the station with a table and get characters out from under the
> table to play with. They look back at the teacher, and she is setting up to start to practice
> for graduation. There is a loud ping, Al Zain jumps, AA jumps as well and looks at me
> smiling and laughing. She looks back to the table as Al Zain is leaning over behind her
> whispering to another girl. AA asks, "What did she say?" Al Zain hit her head in a silly
> way "No, no, nothing" rolling her eyes. The other girl also joins them, so four girls now
> continue to chat and smile. One girl whispers, "Let me show you my undershirt!" The
> girl unzips her dress in the front to show a Mickey mouse undershirt. Al Zain chimes in
> and says let me show you mine! She lift her dress and shows her belly. She says
> "Whoops." All of them start laughing hysterically. AA is distracted by the boys telling
> stories. She chimes in wanting to tell a story, she starts by, "My aunt also walked, and she
> jumped in the pool too." Al Zain at this point puts her hand in AA's pocket to get the
> bottle of nail polish she had. AA quickly zips around and snatches it back smiling. She
> hides it in both palms and shoves it back into her pocket. I'm guessing it is still forbidden
> to bring makeup to school. She slowly takes it out and waves it in front of the three girls.
> She blows up her cheeks and holds her breath. (Fieldnotes, AA RAY, April 19, 2018)

Many times girls tried to seek attention from their classmates, more often than boys (i.e.

counterparts in the same classroom). This is followed by my observation on how another student

sought out any type of attention, including behavior that resulted in negative reactions like

stealing clips from hair or pulling out a bottle of nail polish.

Conclusion

Throughout the data analysis, childrens social interaction and ways for developing their

physical and social self were appropriated in many forms. Many expressions and patterns of play

127

that occurred were conversing, playing games, exchanging food on the playground and in class, seeking attention from peer and teachers, and acting in ways outside that of school and classroom norms. When students challenged school and class rules, their goal appeared to be to receive at least some type of reaction, typically a positive reaction where it resulted in the other student smiling or laughing or genuinely trying to understand their emotions towards a situation or experience. Sometimes, some classmates attempted to elicit *any* reaction, including a negative reaction when they were more desperate for a social connection. Children engaged in multiple ways of connecting with each other. It seemed that majority of children observed and in the classroom alike attempted to connect with each other and tried to be accepted through various forms of social interaction, expression and initiation of play.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION

Overview

This study provided some interpretations, observations, and discussion about how Arab parents' knowledge, perceptions, and expectations influenced their children's development of play patterns, behaviors, and occupations. This discussion chapter brings together the data findings and themes with supporting literature about how historical, social, and cultural contexts heavily affect concepts of play and development. Descriptive studies may provide a specific knowledge base or a rational process for setting up future research studies. Therefore, closely studying occupations through individual needs and motivations provides value regarding childhood occupations, practices, and daily management. In the discussion chapter below, literature referenced brings awareness and supports the need of more occupational competency and sensitivity within research approaches, processes and analyses clear of any Eurocentric comparison. Furthermore, it addresses contributions, implications, and limitations in OS, OT, and methodology, along with future directions for research. Additionally, the information gathered could provide more focus on translational research, which is important for implementing effective practice methods.

First, I revisit my research aims for understanding and exploring Arab parents' conceptualization of children's play based on their cultural values and expectations along with the observations collected by watching Arab children's play, engagement, and interactions, based on school expectations. An implicit assumption is made in research that all children develop the same way; however, play in children's development varies widely, suggesting that the Western

emphasis on the importance of play is far from universal (Parmer, Harkness & Super, 2004). Sociocultural research helps highlight the limitations of various assumptions of research within and across diverse cultures, challenging Eurocentric perspectives in research (Gaskins, 1999; Goncu & Vadeboncoeur, 2017).

To address the research aims, a brief review of further literature relating to the meaning of play from different perspectives (e.g., theoretical, parental, and adolescent) will be discussed. The perceived notion in which children are seen as social beings within fluctuating contexts and environments is multidimensional. This study used the transactional perspective for looking at the ecological stance in exploring different cultural views on occupation (i.e., play). The merging of theoretical frameworks and approaches is useful in grasping the nuances and overlap of themes in the research study findings. In addition, I will link findings to literature based on how parents construct expectations and how children are supported to play, engage, and interact, based on school expectations. The research findings and contributions to OS, OT, and methodology (i.e., implications, limitations, and future direction) will be presented and discussed in three parts (i.e., Part I, Part II and Part III).

Second, I present the first set of findings (i.e., themes), the study's six themes define expectations of play and highlighting connections between major variables that may influence parental expectations and children's patterns for play. Four of the overall themes directly address how parents conceptualize and set day-to-day play expectations for their children. The other two themes indirectly present historical, social, and environmental indications of how occupations are acquired and transformed over the life-course and expectations for those occupations (Humphry & Womack, 2017).

The primary themes include: (a) management of daily routines and ritual; (b) parental investments; (c) parents' categorization and definition of play; and (d) children's personality and temperament: tailoring play. The secondary findings include: (e) idiosyncratic social change (geography, location/places, spaces); and (f) play and future skills: growth and development.

In addition, the study's observational research findings revealed five main overall themes. The themes include (a) state and community expectations; (b) fluctuating ecological environments; (c) self: development through play; (d) social expressions and emotions: changes in behavior, needs, and understanding; and (e) challenging school and class rules. The research will tie further relevant literature to the study findings indicating childhood, child development, and play as multi-constructs within regularities embedded in the context in which child social interactions and activities take place (Parmar et al., 2004; Rogoff, 2003).

Third, Part III will include a segment on how occupational science (OS) and occupational therapy (OT), as well as methodological implications and limitations, collectively offer an overview of the complexity of unpacking occupation (i.e., play) and evidence supporting methodological innovation. Fourth, the last section concludes the chapter by providing a retrospective summary and addressing further research directions within this topic.

Addressing Research Aims

Many social science disciplines examine play. Although a plethora of research has been devoted to the importance of play in child development, little research has addressed the benefits of play and its implication for children within Arab populations.

 The research aims of this study were to:

a) Understand and explore Arab parents' conceptualization of their children's play based on their cultural values and expectations (semi-structured and photo-elicited interviews).

131

b) Explore and observe Arab children's play, engagement, and interactions, based on school expectations, through the use of naturalistic observations in the classroom.

The research aims allowed for a multifaceted understanding of the experiences of parents and children, based on the complex situation and context (Dickie et al, 2006) that work together (i.e., culture specific settings) to shape children's occupations (e.g., play) and development (Bradley, 2002; Rogoff, 2003). More so, globalization is an underlying factor in the developmental growth process and mediation of cultures. Therefore, a continuing struggle and tension persists in balancing culturally specific expectations within a globalizing world.

Globalization establishes integrated attitudes (i.e. increase of western ideas) driving new meanings to existing standards, creating a tension, within the exposure of new values and traditional ones competing with market-set standards for modern living. There is a generational gap within cohorts of transitional phases (pre oil phase – post oil phase) and how cultural worlds are understood. The tension consists of socio- cultural norms and values shifting in an uneven and contested fashion within these groups to conform with existing lifestyle reforms. Not in comparison to the western world, but drastic change has been seen within family values, parental perceptions, and the practice of parenting directly and indirectly effecting play expectations and patterns for play. More so, Kuwait's adaptation in a continuously flourishing cultural world forcibly shifts values and local meanings. The struggle and attempt to balance traditional family values with the new modern environment is a manifestation of a renewed culture that is incompatible with Kuwaiti's past, where some grandparents and parents indicate the exclusion of older generations' values. Therefore, the study's research findings in the interview phase revealed six main themes with direct and indirect ways of influence to expectations discussed below in part I of the results/findings section.

Part I

Culture represents "local values, traditions, and activities, none of which can be understood without considering the contexts in which they are embedded" (Rothbaum, Pott, Azuma, Miyake, & Weisz, 2000, p.11122). Eurocentric /Anglo-Saxon ideology (i.e. Western assumption) are not universal towards behavior in this region. The study is to approach the region and gather results/finding's without comparison to any western assumptions or expectations.

Theme 1: Management of Cultural Routines and Rituals

In this theme, routines and rituals were managed on a continuum, where parenting is complex and a multitude of aspects impact children's experiences in becoming members of their society. Parents' varied ideologies inform their own experiences and expectations were demonstrated through modeled observation learning and instilling practices of tradition, history, and religion while influencing patterns for play (e.g., observed learning, religious practices, societal influence, and individual choice for managed routines).

Researchers such, as Gonco (1999), believe that the largest influence on children's play is their cultural heritage. Changes within family systems, toward greater individual choice and more independent decision-making, eventually may affect changes in expectations at the societal level (Fiese, 2007; Khaled & Zahran, 2011). Therefore, children develop based on their evolving culture's own criteria, and each culture has its own cultural expectations and beliefs about play. Knox (2010) emphasized that play reflects characteristics and expressions of culturally specific forms over developmental time, and that the demands of specific ecological contexts influence the use of play. The collective voices of family members assisted in my interpretation of the immediate social cultures and how routines were embedded in the children's environments.

Nevertheless, parental opinions specified management of daily routines and rituals as a major indicator for changes in findings of other embedded themes.

Sub-themes: modeled observed learning of traditions/religion. Parents expected children to learn through the processes of modeling and observation. The process included watching others and then imitating the same behavior, since they were believed to be good and important behaviors (Gaskins et al., 2006; Rogoff, 2003). Parents emphasized this expectation through their exchanges and transfer of knowledge, language, and interaction. Consequently, parental expectations fluctuated, while the role of peers and peer groups remained constant. Play activities are learned by observing and participating in adult life activities (e.g., helping). Patterns emerge as daily routines are planned and organized; however, there is uncertainty even in daily and repetitive routines at moments when problems arose.

Parental expectations were dynamic, not static. Expectations were based on ongoing accomplishments, where parents taught children to be able to negotiate and demonstrate execution of various activities and tasks**.** Many of these emerging themes were not initially explicit parental expectations for play. Indeed, expectations fluctuated and were identified based on a child's response in parent-child negotiations. These negotiations established how low or high expectations should be. Concrete expectations were not readily created, parents shaped expectations that included appropriate manners and gaining social skills set through observation of cultural routines and rituals throughout daily activities (i.e., usually the observation of traditions and or religious practices as seen below in Figure 7.1 where a child leads his toys in prayer).

Figure 7.1. A Child Leading His Toys in Prayer

Parents' perspectives have been elicited to understand where, what, and with whom children play, as well as identify the barriers to active play pursuits (Sigel & McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 2002; Singh & Gupta, 2012). All these factors fit within the category of styles of parenting. The parenting style and structure given shaped childhoods, and therefore, the occupation of play relies on parents' choices and decisions that are intertwined with tradition, history, religion, and past experiences. In turn, this group's ideologies affected and positioned expectations for play (i.e., for developing, looking for, and deciding on what is good) and were important for their family's and children's development (Fiese, 2007; Fiese, Sameroff, Grotevant, Wamboldt, Dickstein, & Fravel, 2001). Therefore, parents examined children's skill sets in all aspects of play. Examples of examination was when parents monitored skill progression, mastery and followed rules when managing their own time-use through supervision and safety.

Because people of Arab culture are more affected by the values related to and sense of community, rather than individualistic principles, parents want their children to understand the importance of being a part of a whole (i.e., child is gradually expected to balance their individual identity and advance the community). Researchers may want to remember that individuals,

135

families, education, economic resources, power, and information are not uniformly distributed (Goncu & Abel, 2009). Human development unavoidably builds on the historical belief that humans are born both as members of their species and as members of their communities (Rogoff, 2003). Parents invested time and resources in shaping children's behaviors to fit socially accepted norms and improve on social competencies through their connections to culture, religion, and history.

Theme 2: Parental Investments

Parental investment refers to any parental expenditure (e.g., time, energy, resources) that benefits children's livelihood, educational attainment, and overall development (Schneider, Hastings, & LaBriola, 2018). The reflections in parental investment coincided with social and cultural constructs to demonstrate knowledge and exchanges transferred through language and interactions. Parent-child conversations were one of the types of investment that encouraged children to contribute, create, and understand knowledge, experiences, and values during day-to-day activities. It also was an opportunity for parents to assess their children's emotional and social competence in the process of playing.

Parents rarely monitored behavior strictly during play. More often parents invested in opportunities for children to discover and rehearse new ways of performing tasks through play as shown below. A father in Figure 7.2., demonstrates investment of one on one time to connect with child and provide an opportunity for play (i.e. swinging) rehearsal/mastery. As stated by Sigel and McGillicuddy-De Lisi (2002), parental beliefs about a child's learning process are impacted by personal experiences unique to their culture. Parents' beliefs about child development and learning processes, as well as their own past experiences, are important because these beliefs and experiences influence the child's developmental outcomes (Sigel & McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 2002).

136
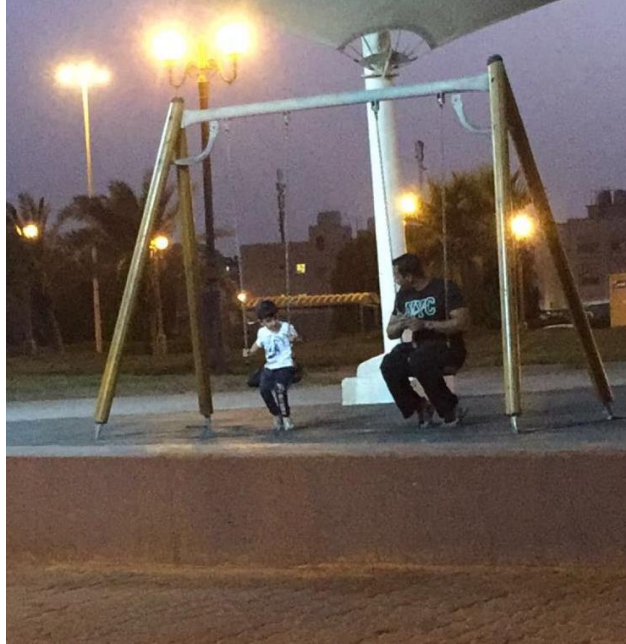
Figure 7.2. Father Using an Outdoor Activity to Connect and Converse with Son

Parents recognized the importance and appreciation of play, believing that it helps

children gain skills. The majority of parent participants indicated that engagement and

playfulness improved through their child's own levels of mastery in their ability to explore and

learn in diverse ways. Parents viewed play as the greatest expectation for learning and a display

of increased developmental outcomes. More so, playfulness was a universal language for

children, regardless of cultural background and socioeconomic status.

Theme 3: What is Play? Definition, Categorization, and Aims of Play

The words *play*, *necessary*, *expected*, *occupation* and *children* contain subtle variations in

meaning. Goncu and Vadeboncoeur (2017) argued that without attending to culture, much of the

research conducted regarding play to date narrowly reflects Eurocentric assumptions. Expanding

definitional criteria enables researchers to attend more comprehensively to the ways in which

culture shapes play.

Parents in this research study felt that the common expressions of happiness—smiles on

faces and full immersion in a chosen activity—were expected of children in this age group.

Nevertheless, when observed in play with one another or on their own, children continuously interacted and communicated verbally and non-verbally on their own terms. Parents in this region viewed play's purpose as spanning from reaching milestones to influencing skills affecting future outcomes.

Playfulness has a role in the origin of personality and early period developmental outcomes in several areas (Skard & Bundy, 2008). Parents for this region monitored a child's pleasure (i.e., happiness, positivity, sense of belonging, and lack of boredom) in the play experience and maintained the environment to encourage safe play. Parents described smiling children, spontaneous playing, and social belonging as clear indicators that they were immersed in their play, whether independently, with siblings and cousins, or with other peers. Gonco and Vadeboncoeur (2017) expressed that cultural notions of play as unrestrained activity and the opposite of work seem to reflect play as universally joyous occupation; however, as the researchers pointed out, these descriptions of play do not question the potential for play to elicit the full range of emotions, from joy to conflict to frustration that reflects the paradox between real and imagined worlds.

According to Skard and Bundy (2008), playfulness is children's approach to play and a necessary complement to the play activities in which they engage. The authors also operationally define and identify playfulness through four elements: internal locus of control, intrinsic motivation, suspension of reality, and framing. Participating parents observed play outcomes, while monitoring children's motives for playfulness, for signs of participation and engagement. A parent interpreted these factors as intrinsic motives through such evidence as a child's immersed behavior, playing for the process and not a reward, and the persistence in play while showing positive affect.

Overall, parents in this study did not directly interact with children. Parents thought it an obligation to provide children with the needed materials, space, and opportunities to be engaged in each experience for interpersonal interaction and engagement (Humphry & Wakeford, 2008). Veitch et al. (2006) found that active play was determined by the availability of social networks, facilities at parks and playgrounds, and the built environment. In the following section sub-themes address how children's play shifted from making hand-made toys to watching YouTube or other technology as a means for entertainment or education and physical activity.

Sub-themes: definition, categorizing play, aims of play. Children's play activities and toys are an important part of childhood. Parents expected children to utilize provided toys and materials, even though the changes in toys affected the development of children and their play cultures. Certain toys and play activities easily exemplified their evolution, especially dolls, balls, and toys related to means of transport and technology. The factors of change in toys are influenced by schooling, gender differentiation, adult interference, internet, television, tourism, and consumer society (Rossie, 2005). Changes have come about because of numerous reasons including environmental influences, learning how to do from others, shifting interest due to social and economic changes, the global marketing of toys, education, and technology.

Physical activity and education. Characteristics such as being mostly outdoors, engaging in collective activities, autonomous activities without adult interference, activities only slightly dependent on external resources such as toys and technology, and realistic play activities have shifted but are still linked to real life situations and not to fantasy worlds. The majority of parents believe that a play approach is the best method for imparting early childhood education (Qadiri & Manhas, 2009). Although the form and content of children's play activities have changed, several basic characteristics can still be expected. Parents expect for children in this occupation

not to just physically do things, but also to create meanings, show emotions, and use thought

processes to connect and understand traditions, history, religion, and culture in their unique ways

of appropriation (Corsaro, 2015; Goncu, & Gaskins, 2006; Rogoff, 1995, 2003). Public outdoor

playing and manipulating or making toys was an important activity for the children of these

regions as it evolved into more privatization of play.

Toys and technology: privatization. Malls transformed designated areas to be kid-

friendly and to include children's arcades, fun zones, miniature movie theaters, and kid's

cooking classes. In 1986, Sutton-Smith asserted, "Play throughout history has been an

overwhelming matter of playing with others, rather than playing with things" (p. 170). In Figure

7.3., a child plays in privatized area for Legos providing them with opportunity not only to play

with things but interact with others. Current technology has managed to combine aspects of play

where children are able to play with others and things at the same time in virtual video and

computer games (Rossie, 2005). Other technology forms, such as YouTube, have changed the

linguistic aspects of child rhymes and have undergone changes in play vocabulary, phrases, and

songs used for certain games. Together with other scholars, Rossie (2005) indicated that studying

the evolution of children's play, games and toys, and other major characteristics can adequately

illuminate a changing childhood.
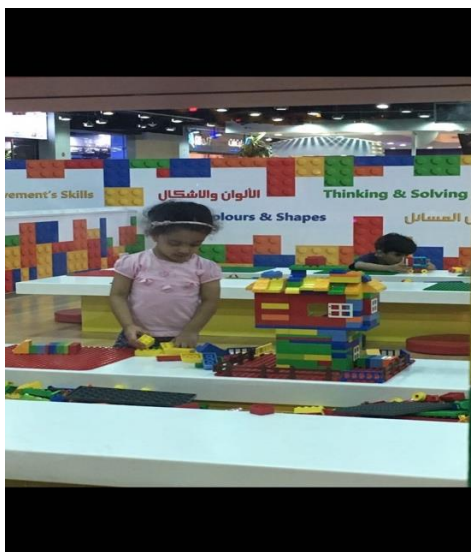
Figure 7.3. Privatized Spaces: Child Playing Independently with Other Same Aged Children

Theme 4: Children's Personality and Temperament: Tailoring Play

Research findings indicate family, school, peers, and media influence parental play expectations when children interact with other people and that a child's cultural system shape their developing personality (Halberstadt & Lozada 2011). Socialization is a lifelong, multi-directional process during which children learn about social expectations. They learn how to interact with other people and how to interpret what is occurring in the environment; it is in this process that children learn how to walk, talk, and practice behavioral norms (i.e., to adjust and fit into society). The authority of parents and extended family, although sometimes criticized in private, is seldom openly questioned. Parents admitted that children learned through play and rest following the guidelines of previous generations, but today, there is a preference for a balance between play-based and academic-based curriculum to provide the essential skills needed to enter first grade as shown below in Figure 7.4.

When children are given the opportunity, they will make up rules for new games using balls, bottle caps, boxes, or any available materials. Children are expected to be involved in games such as role-playing, solving simulated problems, or using specific skills and information.

141

These games are structured and non-structured to lead active learning indicated in Figure 7.5.

Parents tailor play based on a child's strengths to cultivate a certain skill such as painting.

Figure 7.4. Tailoring Activities: A Little Boy Enjoys Puzzles, Shapes and Letters

Figure 7.5. Tailoring Activities: A Little Girl Combines Different Colors While Painting

Theme 5: Idiosyncratic Social Changes (Ideologies, Environments, Places, and Spaces)

Parents indicated their expectations for play shift due to changes in social ideas from

generation to generation to fit trends and modern lifestyles. The rapid development at global,

societal, and individual levels merges different aspects of culture (e.g., ethno-theories, values,

expectations) into new ones along with spaces, places, and play material (Khaled & Zahran, 2011). Lynch (2011) emphasizes the importance of the physical, cultural, economic, and social aspects of environment. Non-Western perspectives on occupation, due to the increasing pervasiveness of globalization (e.g., migration, social media, and other features of the Internet; see Lee, 2019), have a great impact on play patterns, readily stating that the physical and sociocultural aspects influence parental expectations. Aligning with the research, parents in this study agreed that their expectations for play fluctuated due to a child's exposure to different opportunities, experiences, and situations.

The greatest factor associated with globalization is 'mixed culture,' which describes a newer culture (Khaled & Zahran, 2011). Culture is emergent: It has stable, broadly accepted norms and customs that are open to change at any time (Dickie, 2004). Khaled and Zahran (2011) refer to it as a metaphor, indicating the different elements "melting together" into a harmonious whole with a common culture. However, assimilation can hurt minority cultures by stripping away their distinctive features, values, habits and standards. When describing this Arab region, Kuwait is depicted as having multi-cultural ethnic ancestries, socio-economic statuses, different education levels, and hired help. However, it is a homogenous society when it comes to its shared common language, religion, heritage and identity as Kuwaiti people. The new culture merges different beliefs, values, parenting styles, and standards to adjust to new and changing expectations which adds to the ongoing tensions especially from changing ideas, technologies, and social media in this Arab region.

Khaled and Zahran's (2011) scholarship reflects many Arab countries, especially related to religio-cultural and social changes. This is true of Kuwait, where Kuwaiti citizens are a minority. Acculturation of diverse cultures have appeared to influence the collective Kuwaiti

culture, and when exposed to other values (e.g., individualistic), creates a new, unique type of

mixed culture. The greatest effects of globalization on non-Western cultures are the Western

ideology of power and technology, witnessed through changes within families, particularly the

value of individual freedom of choice (Khaled & Zahran, 2011). Globalization, modernization,

generational social shifts, and other phenomena associated with globalization are not constants in

the Arab world; rather, they reflect international phenomena bringing different cultures and

languages into greater interaction and variability. For this study social background matters in

parental expectations, opinions, involvement, and mediation in children's play.

Subthemes: modernizing lifestyles (changing ideas, play spaces, and technology).
Cultures change for varied reasons, and the degree of change is believed to affect socially

accepted conceptions of human nature (Cote & Bornstein, 2005). The Arab region, especially the

Gulf countries, witnessed some of the world's fastest economic and demographic changes

(Wheeler, 2000). Understanding the complexities of society provided a foundation for what is

meaningful and relevant for parents' daily living and management of their children. Parental

access to diverse educational levels and an unprecedented range of social, political, and cultural

transformations are some of the forces in the broader environment shaping children's

surroundings. Parental ethno-theories, along with parental play expectations, keep changing. The

complexities of today's fast-paced society affect parental expectations in all aspects of life,

including children's engagement in occupation (i.e., play). Patterns of change are evident to

varying degrees based on changes in technology, institutions, and social practices (Gauvain &

Munroe, 2012)

Using an occupational conceptual lens to understand how culture shapes and organizes

the environments in which children's social interactions and play take place indicates that

children are influenced directly and indirectly by changes in cultural values, perceptions, and social interactions. Further, globalization, through the dissemination of Western values, influences parental interpretation of play behaviors. There are also variables and distinct patterns of behaviors that undergo cultural evolution (e.g., spaces and places such as a geographical location). The following sub-themes provide deeper insight into how intergenerational changes as well as changes in geography, location, and spaces have affected patterns of play and expected ways of playing.

Children's spaces differ as generations progress in the ways they accommodate children's lives, therefore shifting parental play expectations. Childhood geographies, space-specific characteristics, and neighborhoods differ in regard to the possibilities for outdoor play (Karsten, 2005). In this study's findings parents made expressed dismay and strong opinions about the changing urban conditions. These changes shifted the relationship between indoor and outdoor spaces for play. Parents also noted the construction and design of the urban environment as well as societal and technological changes when comparing their childhood play spaces to their children's play spaces.

Kuwaiti economic development, in conjunction with improved employment opportunities, family car ownership, and an increase in technology use has also changed attitudes about parenting roles and, in turn, pushed against the boundaries that used to separate adulthood and childhood (Karsten, 2005). In the streets of Kuwait throughout the 1980-90's, children claimed them as common territory for play and the community had an implicit understanding for designated play time. Now, the streets are considered a place of danger. Therefore, the intergenerational change created a loss in outdoor space along with a decrease in freedom of movement.

Not only has space changed for children but the changing nature of living in urban contexts with diverse geographical and socio-spatial conditions has also shifted parental expectations for mastering certain skills through play. Historically, parent participants stated that 'playing' meant playing outside or in the courtyards. The dominant existence in these generations of outdoor playing included a large, mixed-age groups either for boys or girls engaging in a variety of outdoor activities (e.g., riding bikes, hop-scotch, playing soccer, hide and seek, or marbles). In the past, the streets represented a place for children to play safely in proximity to their homes and to be unobtrusively watched by other family members or neighbors. Supervision was not a problem for most parents growing up because neighboring families knew each other, older siblings and cousins were alongside them, and there were implicitly designated times when children would be playing outdoors.

Today children are classified as the indoor or backseat generation, which restricts independent spontaneous play behaviors (Karsten, 2005). Children are supervised and escorted to places (e.g., outdoor parks, mall amusement parks, indoor playgrounds, and waterparks) for optimal play experiences. As many of the parents reported, children were usually chaperoned, and their time, space, and behavior were dictated primarily by an adult. Organized children's activities included music classes, sports lessons, cooking classes, the cinema, or some sort of leisure outing. Along with spaces, the growing diversity of technology and different places influenced the shift in parental expectations for play due to the change in cultural, spatial, and social conditions. Not only have time, space, and behavior shifted, but the type of toys made, bought, and used have been influenced by these changes as well.

Theme 6: Play and Future Skills; Growth and Development (Social Competence)

Parents monitored children's current characteristics for future skills. In this region, making choices is informed and constrained by social bodies (i.e., institutions) and many of the

146

findings in this preliminary study are a product of the cultural dynamics and the society's

investments in childhood activities and cultural practice. The Kuwaiti region appreciates

individual achievement and recognizes people apart from the group. However, people are still

identified as individuals of a country interconnected in the community. The community is made

up of families with individuals, unique and apart from each other, but the themes in the findings

are derived from the fusion of different ideologies within these groups.

Figure 7.6. Use of Kitchen Set-Up in Playroom to Imitate Cooking Lunch

Khaled and Zahran (2011) described mixed cultures as collective cultures that, when

exposed to different factors of Western cultures later absorbed to create a new culture. In the

process of newly constructed meanings, new expectations are drawn with underlying shared

meanings. It is also in the social aspects of these shared meanings (e.g., interaction, activity, and

cultural symbols/language) where norms are expected to be met. In return, standards and values

change and can only be understood within the context they are embedded (Rothbaum at el.,

2000). Children, like adults, are guided by their experiences with cultural others in the past or in

their anticipation of engaging with others in the future as illustrated above in Figure 7.6. In the

figure, the child re-acts and rehearses fixing lunch for the family on her kitchen playset. All

understanding is constructed, negotiated, and somewhat agreed on. Therefore, societies do work

in pluralistic ways and produce relative forms and definitions of occupation.

Part II

In the next section, phase II provides a transition into the findings collected during school observations, when teachers implemented the Ministry of Education (MOE) values in supporting and providing structured and unstructured play opportunities for children in school environments. The researcher provides themes based on interpreted children's ways of doing within their shared environments.

Theme 1: State, Community, and School Expectations and Observed Development Through Play

A majority of educators themselves were parents. They perceived play as a way to build skills and were open to the introduction of new activities and opportunities. The main purposes that teachers gave in the definitions of play, learning, and teaching for this age group were about rearing and cultivating children through patterns of religion and culture. Based on the MOE's strategy and vision, the educational system is designed to contribute to both a child's future economic and social progress. One of the most interesting elements of play is actually what predetermines it, that is, what must be in place before play can evolve (Jones & Cooper, 2006). For example, experiences allowing children to explore and experiment in varied ways help to provide children a solid foundation for future schooling (Swartz, 2005, p. 100).

The MOE goals align with parents' expectations in that they provide daily organization for including culture, religion, education, and play in order to further economic and social progress in a manner where children are able to uphold the value of social responsibility. So, in the long run, they are able to meet the demands of modern life and remain committed to the cultural traditions of society. The affordances for development and the child's changing relations in play occur in children's changing levels in activity, motives, and competence within their environment (Fleer & Hedgaard, 2010). Play is a process that totally engages children, and the

classroom offers endless possibilities. Children's natural curiosity about the world around them keeps them involved. The longer children persist in an activity, the more they discover. Repeated experiences result in confidence of skill mastery, and play participants learn on many levels. Children thrive on play that is spontaneous and responsive instead of goal driven. Whether children are alone or socially engaged, their play evolves through exploration, connection, and sometimes stillness (Goncu & Vadeboncoeur, 2017).

Theme 2: Fluctuating Ecological Environments: Structure Vs. Unstructured Play

The MOE indicated that structured play was governed by rules and pre-existing objectives and was goal oriented, while unstructured play allowed for spontaneity and engaging in diverse activities with endless possibilities. Play experts Fisher et al. (2008) categorized play into two types: structured and unstructured. Societal conceptualization of these play types, experiences, and social class views are cultural contexts that shape and are shaped by children in a dynamic fashion (Fisher et. al, 2008). The school layout, classroom setup, socio-cultural dynamics of curriculum and instructions, and school social events provided opportunities for children structured and unstructured play.

As presented in Chapter 6, children's levels of diverse exposure (e.g., variability in routine), skill development, and academic successes are set on spectrums and overlap on a continuum for this age group. The beliefs, norms, values, attitudes, and practices of the parents and teachers constantly change and adapt due to the need for children to overcome new challenges. Resultingly, cultural routines for children's development become reshaped as new traditions of socialization emerge (Lancy, 1996).

Figures 7.7. Different Outdoor Equipment Illustrating the Effort of Educators to be Sure that All Schools in the System have Settings that Foster Free Play.

Teachers structured playtime to allow students to present their abilities and expand their imaginations in Figures 7.7 above when using different outdoor equipment. Structure allowed children to follow routines and be consistent, and predictability provided them the ability to conform to what was coming next. At the same time, children showed what they needed to engage in playful activities and have their own comparable playful moments. Children's changes in behaviors sometimes indicated a lack of interest or revealed that activities were too challenging. As they engaged in play, they gauged their abilities, explored in depth, and improved on their abilities to learn. Some students identified their own thresholds for noise and tended to shift their own behaviors to accommodate their needs.

Figure 7.8. Hands-On Stations (Cues on Table to Indicate Activity Options e.g., Connect-the-Dots, Tracing, Coloring, and Drawing)

The school environment and curriculum contributed to young children's changing experiences in participation. Teachers provided temporal organization and structure by following daily schedules and initiating the different routines at certain times and in particular locations, providing cues to students for what was coming next (i.e. different hands on stations with signs (i.e. cues on table) and material in the center of each table to be used in Figure 7.8).

But without consistency between different environments (e.g., home and school), routines can contradict types of play or intended lessons of the play. Therefore, rules do not translate between these environments (Mason, 2018). Structured play is on a continuum and even more so, school structured and unstructured play expectations may likely, but not always, overlap with certain expectations in the home environment.

Theme 3: Self: Development Through Play

Parents and teachers gradually wanted children to express their own sense of abilities and unique personalities in their play choices both at home and school. This was evidenced during a school observation when children were given a structured activity of storytelling. Each child had a turn to make up their own story and provide a moral to the ending. Each child inserted classmates as characters while the last child made it a goal to give each child in his class a part in his story. Regardless of whether play activities are constructed with pre-planning or are

emergent, play is shaped by the ongoing negotiation of shared goals (Goncu & Vadeboncoeur, 2017).

Several examples in Chapter 6 presented children's negotiated engagements and collaborations in which they played in such a way as to understand morality, privacy, and other topics within their scenarios. They were able to maintain flexibility and integrate facets of self in delineating how community characteristics interact with family and individual practices in navigating school identities in both worlds (Mistry & Wu, 2010). It was expected that children would transition from playing on their own to playing with others, and that sometimes, they might even exclude others. Among other things, they expressed their understanding and were resilient in their abilities to verbally or non-verbally show their changes in behavior and needs through play.

Theme 4: Challenging School and Class Rules

Children's behavioral changes are an important expectation of development. The shift is evidenced when their play methods move to more spontaneous patterns. Consequently, a child does not passively submit to preexisting frames, rules, and codes but reshapes and recreates the world around them in symbolic form in a potentially active creative process (Rogoff, 2003). Children usually step out of school rules and boundaries by monitoring when their teacher's focus is elsewhere, and at times play spontaneity and following class rules is in limbo. By practicing role-appropriate rules and surfacing inappropriate rules in play, children become able to adapt and transform the rules for later in life. Children reflect their own perceptions of adult domination and their responses to it in the form of play (e.g., teasing, insulting, mocking and imitating adult roles; Corsaro, 2015).

Children understand their own needs when they have the freedom to interpret their explored surroundings. While children were observed in their environments, they disassembled

adults' worlds through experimenting, inserting, and exploring their awareness of teachers' and peers' reactions and put them back together into their own understandings and worlds (Mason, 2018). Children were also able to frame their knowledge of situations in morality (e.g., what's right and wrong, rules, and judging), spirituality (e.g., what is monitored by God), and reality (e.g., what is real and what is not) by using what has been observed from adults and their peers' attitudes and reactions. Comparatively, they experience more nuanced, complex, and situationally based versions in their play experiences and child occupations. For occupational therapists, it suggests children's engagement in occupations could vary from the generalized description for play, but children reacted and behaved differently when situations varied.

Part III

Part III presents potential contributions to occupational science research. The section will also emphasize why this topic is important in reference to both occupational science and occupational therapy by providing implications in the translation for research into practice and different avenues for future research.

Contributions to Occupational Science

The interpretation of children's play and parental attitudes are different from culture to culture. In understanding occupations, this research study explored the intersection of culture and play. The notion that Western cultural values are embedded in occupational science and occupational therapy has received attention for over a decade (Lee, 2019). However, the extent to which non-Western perspectives on occupation have been represented remains unclear (Lee, 2019). In this research study, findings contributed to occupational science's dialogue on the range of variability in approaching form and function of play and how culture shapes it. Therefore, focusing on the nature (and changing nature) of play by observing how play was

153

initiated and how play was engaged in provided insight into play's practice and expectations for learning in real life situations along with parental beliefs and attitudes about the function of play.

This study and direction in research is consistent with Hocking's (2009) call for an increase in occupational science research related to thorough descriptions of human occupations and more research on occupations by providing their potential benefits. The research study's themes presented parental expectations and the variables that directly and indirectly influenced parental expectations on their child's play behavior. The themes also described how school environments support children's engagement through patterns of play, participation, and interaction. The presence of different communities and fluctuating environments (e.g., social, physical, spatial contexts) suggests strong influence on how play patterns occurred.

The findings have implications for occupational scientists focus on children's occupations and the navigation of play patterns and practices in each experience or situation. The discipline will combine knowledge about how particular populations might 'do,' 'become,' or 'belong' in a particular group and occupation in reference to family values, parental perspectives, parental expectations, childhood, and child interaction.

Occupational Science (OS) and Occupational Therapy (OT) Study Implications and Limitations

Occupational science implications.

Understanding occupation: definitions, norms, and concepts of doing. From its inception, occupational science has been tasked with developing a distinct knowledge base focused on the forms, functions, and meanings of occupation (Yerxa, 1993; Yerxa, Clark, Frank, Jackson, Parham, Pierce,... Zemke,1990). OS has been expanding beyond individual perspectives of individual occupations, shifting focus to address populations. As Dickie et al. (2006) asserted, "An understanding of individual experience is a necessary but insufficient condition for

understanding occupation that occurs through complex contexts" (p. 83). The discipline's movement towards occupation as a community experience is promising because it may provide future students with a sound cultural foundation as well as strengthen their professional identity by way of information they can relate to in terms of play, childhood, and development.

Within any culture, children are shaped by the physical and social settings within which they live: culturally regulated customs, childrearing practices, culturally based belief systems. Essentially, the "meaning" attributed to any given social construct, including behavior is, in large part, a function of the ecological niche within which it is produced. Given that meaning is contextual and socially constructed, it seems practical for the community of child development researchers to avoid generalizing their own culture-specific theories of normal and abnormal social development to other cultures (Gauvain & Munroe, 2012). Therefore, it is important to keep in mind what Lancy (1996) expressed:

> Childhood in a sense doesn't have to be regarded, simply and unproblematically, as the universal biological condition of immaturity which all children pass through. Instead, it must be critically depicted as embracing particular cultural perceptions and statements shaping the life experiences of members of the social category "children" through providing a culturally specific rendering of the early years of life. (p. 187)

Culturally based research on social development (i.e., social being, occupational engagement, and development) may provide an understanding that while behaviors exhibited across cultural settings may take the same *form*, the *function* of these behaviors varies from culture to culture (Gauvain & Munroe, 2012). Humphry and Wakeford (2006) stressed the need for occupational therapists to articulate their views of young children as developing occupational and social beings. More so, children's occupational engagement should be evaluated as the process for and the outcome of development.

Classifying activities as play has been based upon researchers' definitions representing theoretical and paradigmatic perspectives rather than therapists' use of the process in frameworks, models, definitions, and norms that underlie their understanding of transaction, occupation, and the evolving changes in conceptions of play and contemporary childhood issues. However, a commitment to studying non-Western perspectives without Eurocentric assumptions on everyday doing and clinical practice could productively contribute to the ongoing debate concerning the need for cultural humility (Hammell, 2013). The commitment will support in the success of occupational therapy efforts in international regions to easily decipher occupational concepts and terminologies.

Understanding parents and family beliefs. It is important to understand parents and families' beliefs and attitudes about play because a child's skill sets are typically influenced by their family's beliefs, experiences, and attitudes. Consequently, parental and family views affect the implementation of any therapy programs and life skills obtained for their children. Although researchers and scientists have reiterated that play is a vital component in early childhood development, literature that examines parents and families' attitudes and beliefs about play is limited (Qadiri & Manhas, 2009). Families serve as a useful bridge between individuals and larger communities and societies.

Understanding the elements of family interaction, including which individuals engage or abstain in interaction, may affect the implementation and follow through for therapy in this region. Corresponding with these findings, statements by Knox (2010) support how children learn skills and develop interests that later affect choices and success in work and leisure that are required in adulthood. This occurs by way of children enacting scenarios to learn to become productive members of society. Occupations reveal the social within the mundane, the collective

156

within the individual, and the individual within the collective, as well as the ongoing negotiation, change, and fluidity of these elements.

Occupational therapy implications.

Using a pluralistic approach in therapy (services and policy). Incorporating plural perspectives or approaches in therapy provides a therapist latitude in the use of occupation to enable everyday activities. As Hammell (2004) insisted, "The fundamental orientation of occupational therapy should be the contributions that occupation makes to people's lives and a new directions for theory that fully encompasses the concept of meaning" (p. 301). These approaches may also aid in the understanding of parental perceptions and expectations for play and occupation for children with disabilities (e.g., changes in a child's level of interaction and engagement in activities). Therefore, it is necessary to address products of the interdependent and collective influences of a community's investment in childhood activities, cultural practices of adults, interactions with others during activities, and activities expected of children (Humphry & Wakeford, 2008). Addressing products as parallel to understanding occupations in these regions may also reinforce therapy efforts.

The transactional, life-course, and occupation-based perspectives are presented in some of the disciplinary and professional areas of interest as the development of everyday activities rather than child development. A transactional perspective is critical for understanding the ways in which cultural context, self, occupation, and connections interact and how occupation mediates person, place, and interactions. Other aspects that are important for child development are geographical location and environments that lend or limit access for a diversity of experiences. The relation between place and occupation in children can be viewed from a variety of perspectives. Play evolution, like culture, is dynamic in nature, changing across generations,

geographical locations, influence of educational advancement, and exposure to outside cultures (Khaled & Zahran, 2011). Many scholars, including geographers, have started exploring childhood as a social construction within the environment of home, neighborhoods and school, with the aim of understanding children's experiences of place (e.g. Aziz & Said, 2012; Karsten, 2005; Karsten & Felde, 2015). When interpreting cultural attitudes and notions, the researchers recognized how societal and social changes were intricately woven into children's everyday occupations of play.

   Occupational therapists and intersubjective communication. Occupational therapists build rapport with children by emphasizing and seeking to understand the children's qualities as social beings and the cultural context they come from (i.e., society). The more that therapists comprehend about children's experiences, the more the techniques can be personalized, thus providing more effective therapy. This is another benefit and contribution of this research study. Through occupational activities such as play, a child is able to rehearse day-to-day encounters and understand situations unfolding around them. Goncu and Vadeboncoeur (2017) conveyed that researchers did not know for certain how children constructed imaginative narratives, but through examination, there appears to be movement between experience and imagination. Together they create change at various levels of human experience: in understanding as it emerges during an activity, or in individual development over the lifespan, or in the social group (Gauvain & Munroe, 2012; Saxe, 2008). As Vygotsky (1978b) stated, it is in this way that culture and mind, including the developing mind of the child, are mutually constituted. When children are observed in their social and cultural contexts, therapists can gain a clearer idea of why certain behaviors are preferred and exaggerated while other acts of play are limited (Goncu & Vadeboncoeur, 2017).

Children use play to learn and practice adaptive skills, which are consequently used to modify behavior and reenact social roles, norms, and values (Sturgess, 2003). The research findings presented for the Kuwait region supports play being an important vehicle for cultural learning and transmission (Parham, 2008). The reflection of parental structuring for play and children's individual experiences constructs the adaptive skills necessary for their adult lives (Stagnitti, 2004). Children will only act out what they know, experience, and interpret in the world around them.

Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy Study Limitations

Understanding play: diverse constructs, definitions, and perspectives. Participatory research methods and other methods where children's views and voices are elicited (Berinstein & Magalhaes, 2009) should be considered in the future. One limitation is that adults and children may have different opinions and priorities regarding play activities and time use as children age (Holt et al., 2008). There is not a universal comprehensive model for play. My literature review and research study indicate a culturally specific view of how play is understood, formed, and incorporated into daily life activities and children's play patterns. Play can be understood from a variety of perspectives, and theoretical definitions of play vary, often reflecting the discipline and theoretical outlooks from which they originate (Wood, 2009).

Furthermore, examining all parties' perspectives that influence children's play patterns in this region should be taken into consideration to ensure that policies developed from such research are fulfilling children's needs. Ideally, in future research, participants might include teachers, immediate and extended family, and hired help because the inclusion of these perspectives provides varied cultural representation and meaning of play, play therapy, other services, and policies.

159

Methodological Implications and Limitations

Methodological Implications

      Using pluralistic research methods: understanding occupation in diverse regions. In the vast qualitative methods literature, there is no comprehensive description of qualitative description as a distinctive method of equal standing with other qualitative methods, although it is one of the most frequently employed methodologic approaches in the practice disciplines (Sandelowski, 2000). The findings and Sandelowski's emphasis suggests how methodological flexibility, relational approaches, and social connectivity may benefit research endeavors. Childhood experiences can be explored and approached using many innovative methods to gain important insights into poorly understood areas. When emphasizing forms, function, and roles of the multiple variables (e.g., the closedness of parenting [accepting outsider opinion], and family management [the sense of belonging in a family as a member and non- members' participating in varies activities]) embedded within the complexity of occupation; qualitative approaches in research has shown to generate rich data. Future studies on the topic of play in the Middle East can provide information for producing theoretical approaches that guide other studies and broaden understanding and generalization of both parental expectations and contextual or environmental influences on children's opportunities for play.

      Groundwork for play in the Arab region: a qualitative cross-sectional and cross-cultural research study. Qualitative research is an important first step in the Arab region because it provides content that is useful for practical application. It may also use smaller sample sizes to then introduce into other research (e.g., quantitative, mixed methods) in developing and generalizing findings and developing specific insights. Qualitative research methods such as participant-observation, unstructured interviews, direct observation, and descriptive fieldnotes are most commonly used for collecting data (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). Therefore, it

can be an open-ended process to evaluate greater detail. The research frameworks used can be fluid, based on incoming or available data from human experiences and observations.

Flick (2004) explained, "Qualitative research is interested in analyzing subjective meaning or the social production of issues, events, or practices by collecting non-standardized data and analyzing texts and images rather than numbers and statistics" (p. 542). This definition stresses how people make sense of interpretive and multi-dimensional topics in the world. Moreover, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) described qualitative research as "multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter" (p. 2). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) situate qualitative research as an interdisciplinary approach that encompasses a wider range of epistemological viewpoints, research methods, and interpretive techniques for understanding human experiences. Qualitative research allows the researchers to discover the participants' inner experience and to figure out how meanings are shaped through and in culture (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

The literature attempting to empirically build such an understanding of occupation is growing, and scholars have successfully used a range of qualitative methods to tap into the problem and provide descriptive groundwork (Shank, 2013). By using qualitative descriptive approaches, multiple replications of the study in the same region would provide access to distinctive cultural notions. The researcher could investigate parental expectations and views about the importance of play to children's development, as well as the effect of culture and acculturation on play, via cross-sectional research in the Middle Eastern region and longitudinally within Kuwait. In addition, the researcher would also continue to observe children in the classroom to describe the forms and functions of play.

Furthermore, socio-cultural aspects of play could be identified while children interact with both peers and adults. Multiple viewpoints can provide better inferences than a singular approach. By using qualitative methods, researchers achieve deeper insight into designing, administering, and interpreting raw data even in child research designs.

Child research: focusing on their perspectives. It is important to discuss with children what motivates them to engage in play, to explore how their thoughts and emotions shape specific engagement in play to both build from and extend their lived experiences (Goncu & Vadeboncoeur, 2017)**.** Although many studies have taken important steps toward engaging with children in research, misrepresentations may arise because researchers and children may not have the same understanding of the word 'play' (Pellegrini, 2009). It is, therefore, essential to step back and consider what play means to children. This understanding may add context to current and future play-related research. More research is needed to build, understand, and elicit children's reflections when participating in research studies. It is also important to understand a child's perspectives of child-initiated patterns in their varied dynamic expressions (Hill, 2006) in relation to goals and skills adopted within their social and cultural context.

Methodological Limitations of Methods

Definition of play: the construct and meaning. One limitation in qualitative research is the creation of interview and observational guides to approach the topic with cultural sensitivity and competency. Parent participants in this culture were not able to elaborate freely because it is not a typical cultural characteristic to convey family information to a researcher. Such behavior is viewed as bragging about oneself. While play emerges and develops, it is continually negotiated as a cultural activity in relation to other cultural activities to shape the lives of children in different communities. Questions and prompts used to collect narrative experiences around which research is centered should be clear, focused, concise, nuanced, and arguable due

162

to the differences in complexity when defining the concept in English verses Arabic.
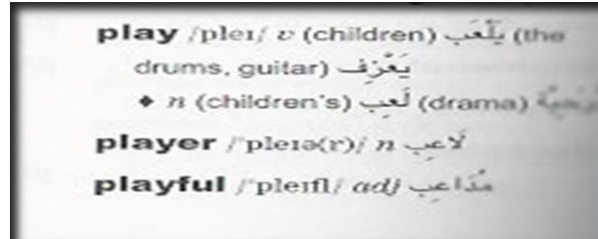
Figure 7.9. Definition of Play from an Oxford Arabic Dictionary Translated to English

Conducting nuanced research that explores how culture affects occupations is difficult to put into concise yet multifaceted questions (Lee, 2019); 'play,' like occupation and culture, cannot be easily and succinctly defined in the same way. The definitions of these words differ from one culture to another, sometimes in minor, yet important, ways. Moreover, humans develop as they adjust their sociocultural participation in an environment that changes (Rogoff, 2003). So definitions, concepts, and translations of questions and interpretations need to provide enough specifics so the participant can easily understand the purpose of research. This allows for richly contextualized and meaningful responses without additional explanation from the researcher.

Sometimes narrow questions are insufficient, such as when translated from English to Arabic for topics about play. Too narrow of a question would lose sight of the topic being questioned, but the researcher needs to evaluate and determine whether the questions will elicit deep responses. Participants provided and elaborated on responses with several examples; thus, the researcher's required synthesis and analysis of ideas and participants' responses were open to debate due to variation.

Qualitative research: a first step for preliminary research? Qualitative methods rely on different ontological assumptions leading to different epistemologies (Morgan, 2007). Morgan argued, while qualitative and quantitative approaches have tendencies toward certain

ways of asking questions and certain ways of collecting and analyzing data, the tendencies in real-world research are rarely distinct or rigid. He also identified a need to attend to studying the connection between methodology and epistemology and the connection between methodology and methods. Furthermore, it is the use of methodology that connects issues in epistemology with issues in research design, rather than separating and relying on thoughts or assumptions to guide the nature of knowledge in our efforts to produce it.

However, small sample sizes does not allow for results to be generalizable. Silverman (2006) warns that qualitative research approaches sometimes leave out contextual sensitivities and focus more on meanings and experiences. All qualitative data can be quantitatively coded in an almost infinite variety of ways. This does not detract from the qualitative information. Another limitation due to the lack of research in play for this population, a qualitative systematic ethnography could not be conducted and the small sample sizes in these type of studies make the results unreliable, ungeneralizable and under representative of total population.

Retrospect

One cannot understand human behavior without understanding the framework within which subjects interpret their thoughts, feelings, and actions. Researchers need to understand the framework, the coding and standardizing process, and how the researcher's worldview and position may affect participants. Guba and Lincoln (2005) proposed a compromise on this issue by accepting a degree of permeability across paradigms; they suggest that research should be about which questions are most important to study and which methods are most appropriate for conducting those studies.

Our personal worldviews affect the way we interpret human behavior. In order to achieve theories that can explain human behavior, the subjectivity of our interpretations must be acknowledged. If Western ideals of liberal individualism are used to analyze non-Western

164

societies, then the interpretation will be misguided by the differences in ideologies and perceptions. In some societies (e.g., Kuwait), social customs are far more valuable to the process of understanding individual and social behavior than supposed individual motives (Bishop, 2007; Lee, 2019). Promoting collaboration with others to show the multiple perspectives that can be brought to light on a particular issue is to realize the basis of other views. Because social and cultural constructs place a great emphasis on the processes of meaning making in our course of interaction, children interpret, learn to adapt, refine knowledge, and evolve through participation and experiences.

Future Directions and Implications for Research

Incorporating Mixed Methods Approaches: Qualitative and Quantitative

The term mixed methods has been defined in several ways and commonly connotes a mixing of qualitative and quantitative methods, data, and analyses within a research study. A value of mixed methods research is that it permits researchers to use diverse methods with complementary strengths to gain a better, more comprehensive, and reliable outcome (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Research entails viewing inquiry as a holistic endeavor that is situated in a particular context, where the emergent knowledge is provisional and unfolding (Dickie et. al, 2006). Mixed methods is a new approach in this region, an eclectic approach, blending the two traditions of quantitative and qualitative methods in an attempt to gain the advantages of each (Morgan, 2007).

To do good research, both the qualitative and the quantitative is needed. Both emphasize the real-world usefulness of tailoring a combination of methods for a particular research domain that has breadth, depth, and rigor. Social research is richer for the wider variety of views and methods that the analysis generates. This is an important step in moving from a theoretic valuing of occupation toward the actual work of studying the communal, social, and shared experiences

from which participation cannot be teased (Cutchin & Dickie, 2012). Mixed methods are one way of integrating diverse stances in research. Therefore, providing a holism in choosing the best way to acquire the ends in view that effectively increases understanding within a research topic.

Practice Translation and Implementation: Instruments, Contexts, and Roles

This section offers a discussion of the relevant issues and topics to which future research on play-based learning and therapy can be applied. Further research findings may provide information about parents' beliefs of play-based education, but they might insufficiently reveal the nature of the culture underlying learning through play. More in-depth research about occupations may inform occupational scientists and occupational therapists alike.

OTs' understandings of how some groups of people perceive and experience occupation can also inform occupational therapists' clinical knowledge and treatment methods. The nuances of occupations and the ways in which non-Western cultures influence people's views of "doing, being, becoming and belonging" has received less attention in occupation-focused research (Wilcock & Hocking, 2015, p. 134; see also Lee, 2019). Since occupation can be viewed as comprising dimensions of meaning, doing, belonging, and becoming (Hammell, 2004), research ought to consider the different aspects that connect to play (e.g., individual, context, and situations entailing factors such as family size, space specific characteristics of childhood, play and health, wellbeing and occupation, and disability).

Both occupational science and occupational therapy have a primary research and practice focus on occupation in terms of the things people do, thus capturing the essence of occupation in relation to health and well-being. OT and OS define and describe wide-ranging occupations in relation to health (Wilcock & Hocking, 2015). A couple challenges for non-Western OTs are translating ideas and adapting existing theoretical frameworks to support and guide an educational agenda for the next generation of occupational therapists. Clinical OTs rarely have

compatible occupational therapy frameworks and occupation-based research that culturally justifies clinical practice techniques.

Generating research will broaden the understanding of meaningfulness, motivation, and participation in occupations in connection to receiving OT services. Meaning is generated through subjective experiences constructed symbolically within a cultural scope (i.e., an occupation). A sequential mixed methods approach will start in the development of a survey, an instrument or modification of another instrument (i.e. a Likert scale or a {yes or no} rating scale to find the rate of agreeableness in themes)when including quantitative measures of larger samples of population. Therefore in future directions, a mixed methods approach will allow for themes to be valid, comprehensive and later generalizable within the research population.

More so, while generating research an integration of different frameworks will ensure the use of qualitative approaches in teaching new therapists to focus on differences in understanding occupations, cultural and historical attitudes, and experiences. These aspects indicate the complexity of occupations and health and also demonstrate the extensive range of valuable approaches that could be considered in future research.

Taking on a Life-Course Perspective

There is a clear lack of research contributing to understanding the meaning, symbolism, and value of play and any other constructs across many regions of the world. As Dewey pointed out, "Experience is situational and temporally continuous; any experience is integrated with the past, present, and future" (as cited in Nayar & Hoking, 2013, p. 91). Furthermore, occupation can be a valuable medium for learning about different cultural beliefs, values, expectations within patterns of daily life, environments, and social contexts. In reviewing the existing literature, Goncu and Gauvain (2011) concluded that despite some variations in their emphases,

167

sociocultural perspectives share the conviction that human development takes place through historically situated activities that are mediated by children's cultures.

The work that scholars have done with individuals has helped the discipline recognize and learn about the social; conversely, studying the social can help us learn about the individual in new and interesting ways. Therefore, it is obvious to include in research the nature to understand human life and the social production of daily existence relating to parental role and ideologies (e.g., maternal and paternal), families' make-up and levels of interaction (e.g., siblings and immediate and extended families), make-ups of communities, play values and children's stances for play within these societies. The research appeals to occupational therapists' advancements in developing, extending knowledge, and understanding the ongoing social changes that influence how play and the development of evolving occupations for children are situated in different cultures (e.g., phenomena of globalization).

Occupation-Based Frameworks Integrated into OT International Curriculums

The transactions of everyday life can be accessed through which occupations emerge and should not be pulled apart for inquiry (Shank, 2013). A transactional perspective on occupation suggests that occupation should be viewed as a holistic, emergent, contextual and meaning-rich human action (Dickie et al., 2006). Incorporating this perspective on occupation into practice may contribute to the efficacy of education and OT efforts in many non-Western and multicultural communities. Including OS in international curricula will provide students and future therapists with an underlying foundation for therapy.

For this reason, my research focuses on the differences in social, cultural, and ecological backgrounds as a foreground to bring forth the social being; when a child observes, engages or participate in occupation. It may be invaluable to have case studies and cross-cultural descriptive examples informing the theory and practice of occupational therapy. Furthermore, such

information may advance and integrate occupational science frameworks and perspectives into occupational therapy curriculums.

Conclusion

Transformations of all parental perspectives and expectations and children's play behaviors occur in the communities in which they live and is "understood only in light of the cultural practices and circumstances of their communities—which also change" (Rogoff, 2003, pp. 3-4). As Rogoff (2003) argued, development can be viewed as a transformation of participation in cultural activities. Due to the variation in findings pertaining to parental conceptualization, play expectations and knowledge, and children's patterns for play in this region, the findings are far from universal. However, the common threads shared by the participants allowed the researcher to recognize how a child was expected to learn and obtain skills through play. The expectations were to: (a) be engaged and happy (e.g., intrinsic expression or immersed enjoyment) with opportunities given (i.e., for future skills in chosen activities), (b) portray their own identity in promoting historical and cultural aspects, and (c) be, become, and belong when playing (e.g., with a group of peers). While it is true that most behaviors in humans are motivated by needs, and that many of those needs are similar, culture is still a critical influence.

Development is not a process *within* the child but rather takes place through the child's participation with the context they are exposed to and in. Occupational scientists and occupational therapy practitioners can answer the following questions, among others: Is occupational science understood and valued; is occupational therapy service delivery appropriate for or valued by families in this cultural environment; if not, how might they closely match the needs and values of this culture's parents and families; what are the values of this culture's parents. This study has made evident that parental roles change and developmental transitions in

communities affect all members (i.e., parents, children, and all entities involved). Individuals

participate in cultural activities using the "cultural tools" that are necessary for their current

functioning (Goncu & Vadeboncoeur, 2017). Evidence exists that individuals apply a wide

variety of cultural tools through their engagement, and these tools shape the development of

psychological functioning (Vygotsky, 1978). In addition, individuals transform through the use

of these same tools as they craft potential social futures.

Therefore, each culture presents its members with norms and expectations of

participation in cultural activity. Regardless of what type of exchanges occurred, the findings of

this study quite plainly demonstrated that appropriated social interactions influenced parental

expectations and inspired creativity and imagination in how children expanded on and integrated

others' ideas in play. With regard to actions and responses, the children monitored how they

interacted with each other based on the responses of adults and their peers, which was also

influenced by their own understanding of play. Overall for this age group, it was imperative to

have various opportunities for experiences, diverse spaces, materials, and a balance between

structured and unstructured ways to play. When needed, children at this age were able to create

their own means for play interdependently and independently.

APPENDIX A: KUWAIT ADMINISTRATIVE MAP/ GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES OF THE GOVERNATES

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH PROCESS GUIDE

The Recruitment of Target population Process

- 15 Parent/ Child dyad will be chosen from Kindergarten classrooms from 8–10 school locations to be interviewed
- 7 Children will be observed from the total of 15 as individual case studies.
- Distribution of a research flier/ consent form; containing purpose of research.
- Distribution of a demographic form; entails items concerning family make-up (i.e., number of children, gender of children, and ethnicity of family members), level of parental education, level of familial income, birthplace, employment, non-related caregivers (nannies or housekeepers) and their educational level.

The Interview Process

Interview 1
- Review Consent, Research purpose, interview, school observations and forms with parents.
- Parent interview (where possible) about play practices and routines
- Distribution of cameras to parent and guidance on how to use these

The Photo Elicitation Process

Interview 2
- Collect cameras and photographs
- Begin debriefing interview with the parent about photos taken
- Discussion of photos selected from all three cameras
- Closing discussion with parents and distribution of incentives to them.

Incentives: Participating parents will receive thank you letters with a 15 Dollar coupon to local movie theater (Value of 15 Dollars= 5 Kuwaiti Dinar) at the conclusion of the study interviews.

The Observation Process

Observation
- Teachers will be contacted after parental consent for child to be a part of research project
- Child will be observed in the classroom both indoors and outdoors for seven weeks
- After last observation child will be given an incentive for his/her participation

Incentives: The participating child will receive a coupon valid for Fantasy world/ Kidzainia (Value of 30 Dollars = 10KD) at the conclusion of the study observations.

HEALTH SCIENCES CENTRE ETHICAL COMMITTEE

Informed Consent (Adult)

Faculty: ……Allied Health Sciences……… **Department:** …Occupational Therapy…

Title of the Project:

Understanding the Occupation of Play: A Middle Eastern Revelation Based on Parental Values

and Expectations

What is the purpose of the Study?

The purpose of my research study is to investigate parental expectations and perceptions based

on how they interpret and understand the effects of play through interviews, and to explore and

observe Arab children's play, engagement, and interactions through utilizing observations of

children in the classroom.

Why have I been invited to participate?

Parents will help researchers understand Arab parents' conceptualization of their children's play

based on their cultural values, knowledge, and expectations through interviews conducted. The

intent of this study is to capture the experiences of people in their everyday contexts and provide

insight into cultural practices and behaviors through the eyes of both the participants and the

researcher.

What procedures will be performed on me?

The interview will be face-to-face with parents of children aged 3–6 for the duration of 30- 45

minutes. The interview will pertain to questions about what meanings are connected to play,

parental understanding of the concept, and expectations of play for children in kindergarten

classrooms; questions will also include demographic information**.** This will also include a short

15-minute follow-up interview that entails a comprehensive discussion and photo elicited

methods segment. The parent will be provided a camera after initial interview to take 3- 5

photographs to have ready for follow-up interview. The parent will discuss play picture scenarios

based on specific questions. Your child may be chosen to be observed in the classroom (indoor/outdoor).

What are the benefits to me for taking part in this study?

Your participation will give insight on how different cultures understand play as a concept. This is important because insufficient representation of diverse cultures in researchers' concepts of play can lead to misplaced concepts of interactive behaviors and development.

What will happen to the information I provide? (Confidentiality)

Information gathered for this research will only be accessed by researchers and research assistants. The information recorded or photographed will be saved on an external drive under lock at all times. Copies of any information related to the parent or child will be destroyed after completion of project.

How will information about you be protected?

The records from both interviews will be stored securely in a double locked cabinet. Electronic records will be encrypted and securely stored. Only the researcher and her mentor will have access to this data. Pseudonyms will be used for all data analysis and representation.   Audio recordings from these interviews will be transcribed into written format (using pseudonyms). Both the original audio files and the transcripts will be stored securely. The audio files will be destroyed after completion of the study. You may request that the audio recording device be turned off at any time during the interview.

   Check the line that best matches your choice:

_____ OK to record me during the study

_____ Not OK to record me during the study

Photographs taken for the purpose of this study will be used for analysis purposes, presentations and or publication.

Check the line that best matches your choice:

_____ OK to use photographs for ONLY the purpose of analysis

_____ OK to use photographs for analysis purposes, presentations and or publication.

_____ Not OK to use photographs for analysis purposes, presentations and or publication.

The researcher has parental permission to observe my child in the classroom, in both indoor and outdoor activities.

___ OK to observe child at school

___ Not OK to observe child at school

Who do I contact if I want further information?

Principal Investigator name: ………Feddah Al Ahmad……… Tel.: ……+96599876768………

Principal Investigator Email Address: alahmadf@med.unc.edu

KU Faculty Research Supervisor: Mohammad Nadar

UNC Faculty Advisor: Ruth Humphry

Invitation to participate:

………………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………………..

Date:

Agree   Participant Name: ………………………… **Signature:** …………………

Don't Agree Participant Name: ………………………… **Signature:** …………………

PI Name: ……………………………………………. **Signature:** ……………….

175

APPENDIX D: DEMOGRAPHICS FORM

Name of person completing form: ……………………………………………

Please indicate who is filling this form/Relationship to child: Mother ( ) ……Father ( )

Both ( )…………… Other …………………

Circle Parents Age group:

 24 and younger,   25- 30 years _____   31–35 years_____   36–40 years _____   41 and older

Cultural/Ethnic

Ethnic background: …………………………………………………….

Generation level: …………………………………………………….

Language:

Language first spoken by the child:

Language child uses most often:

Language parents use most often:

Child's Date of Birth:

Child's Gender: Male _____   Female_____

Where was your child born?

Number of Siblings: Brothers: _____   Sisters: _____   None:____

Child's Birth Order:

First Born   Second   Third   Fourth or more

Parental Education Level:

                High school graduate:

                Attended some college:
                Associate's degree (2 yrs):
                Bachelor's degree (4 yrs):

Graduate degree :

Other:

Mother's Occupation (if any):

Father's Occupation (if any):

Mother's Birth Place:

Father's Birth Place:

Have you lived anywhere else other than Kuwait? How long?

Names of other people living in the home and relationship: …………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………….

Any domestic staff in the home?: …………………………………………………………………

Domestic staffs' nationalities: ……………………………………………………………….

Domestic staffs' level of education: …………………………………………………………

Domestic staffs' spoken language: …………………………………………………………...

Domestic staffs' level of interaction: Never Somewhat Frequently Always

Data collection: Initial Parental Play Interview protocol

Interview #_____ Date_____/_____/_____

Thank you for your participation in this interview and allowing me to observe your child at school. My name is Feddah Al Ahmad and I am a graduate student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, under Kuwait University's supervision I am conducting my research to fulfill my requirements in receiving my doctoral degree in Occupational Science. This interview, will take about 45 minutes but can be stopped at any time. The interview aims to help researchers better understand how diverse populations conceptualize, construct and connect meaning, about certain topics such as play. If you are willing, I would like your permission to tape record this interview, in order to more accurately document the information, you provide. If at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview, please let me know. All your responses are confidential. The purpose of this study is to increase our understanding of how parents view play and what function it has to child behavior, development, other occupations in Arab populations. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If at any time you need to reschedule or withdraw your participation, please let me know.

At this time, I would like to remind you of your written consent to participate in this study. I am the principle investigator. You and I have both signed and dated each copy, agreeing to continue this interview. You will receive one copy and I will keep the other. Thank you for your participation. Do you have any questions before we begin?

To get us started, would you mind describing a typical day for your child? (Tell me a little bit about your child)

  Prompts: What does your child's day look like on a weekend or weekday?
                Are there specific times to do things through the day?
                Does your child participate in daily family routines?
                Does your child ask for help when needed from a non-familiar/familiar adult?
                Is there a specific time for someone to read to your child? (Indicate person)
                Are their self-chosen activities that need to be done on certain days?

Tell me more about when/ how your child/children play:
            Prompts: Does your child engage in free play? Where do they play?
                     Do you make rules about how/ when children can play?
                     How is your children's engagement in play? Is it different at school? Other places?

What do you consider activities of play?

> Prompts: Play groups
> organized sports
> dramatic activities, such as dance, arts and crafts, music
> Watching television/favorite TV shows?
> On the computer/tablet/smartphone?
> Other?

Tell me about how and when your child plays with others? Adults? Extended family?

> Prompts: Do you interact with your children in play? initiate play?
> Does the child prefer to be assisted/directed/instructed by you or others during activities?
> Does your child enjoy playing with other children his/her own age?
> Does your child enjoy playing alone?

Tell me about how you promote or encourage play/ play behaviors in your child? Do you enjoy playing with your child?

> Prompts: How important is play?
> Does play have a function or is it just to occupy, fun?
> Do you use play in other ways? Learning?
> What kind of play?
> Do you use play to relate to school subjects? How?
> Do you feel that obtaining good grades/behaviors is important than play?

Tell me about how you think about play and its importance?

> Prompts: Do you think there is a relationship between play and development?
> Is there any connection to play and your child's development in the following areas: Cognitive development: (thoughts, memory, solving problems); Physical development: (coordination, sitting, standing, picking up objects); Language development: (learning words, expressing thoughts); Emotional development: (form feelings, express feelings); Social development: (making friends, other relationships); Reading Skills; Behavior; Independence; Following Rules/Compliance; Enjoyment.

Can you tell me a bit about how you played at their age?

> Prompts: Has the way you played as a child influence how your child plays today?
> How is your child's playing different? How do you think this came about?
> How does your children's engagement in play differ at school or other places?

How would you define play now after this interview in a few words?

Second Interview protocol: Photo- elicited debriefing

Interview #_____ Date_____/_____/_____

Thank you for your participation in this interview. I am learning about how you connect what you conveyed to me in your initial interview with the photographs you have taken. If there is anything that you think of that you want to share, I would appreciate as much information as possible. To remind you these are the same questions I provided you, to think about while taking the photographs.

These questions will also start our discussion.

Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin?

a) Can you tell me what is happening in this photograph? (who, what, where and how this play came about)

b) Does play relate to learning things? How?

c) Can tell me what you see in this photograph? What is happening?

d) Why did you choose these pictures to represent your child's typical play?

This process will provide for a comprehensive discussion in our next interview. I will provide you with this disposable (polaroid) camera (with 8 instant color/black-white film) to use it over 7 days to photograph your own child in places of play, child engaging in play with other people and/or objects of importance to them in their everyday lives.

After a week, I will meet with you for a second interview to discuss the selected photos together. The three- five photographs selected will be discussed and chosen to represent what they understand of the phenomena of play.

Elements of descriptive observation: (Spradley, 1980; Angrosino and Mays de Pérezs, 2000; Gall, Gall, and Borg, 2005)

Element	Descriptive definition
Context	features as layout of space, physical setting, and social environment e.g. rooms, outdoor spaces, number of people in room etc.
Events	particular occasions, significant events and their origins and consequences
Time	the sequence of class events, time/temporal order of events/activities
Activities	the various tasks of the actors; social rules
Material	type, management, amount used
Participators	the names and relevant details of the people involved include patterns of interactions; their roles in the setting.
Acts	specific behavioral events; engagement with others, frequency of interactions, direction of communication patterns [including non-verbal communication]; routines and variations.
Objects	physical elements: furniture etc.
Goals	what actors are attempting to accomplish/accomplished
Feelings	emotions in particular contexts, members' perceptions and meanings

Other Guidelines for Writing Descriptive Content & Reflective Content
Describe the meaning of what I observed from the perspectives of the participants/ researcher.

Record exact quotes or close approximations of comments that relate directly to observations.

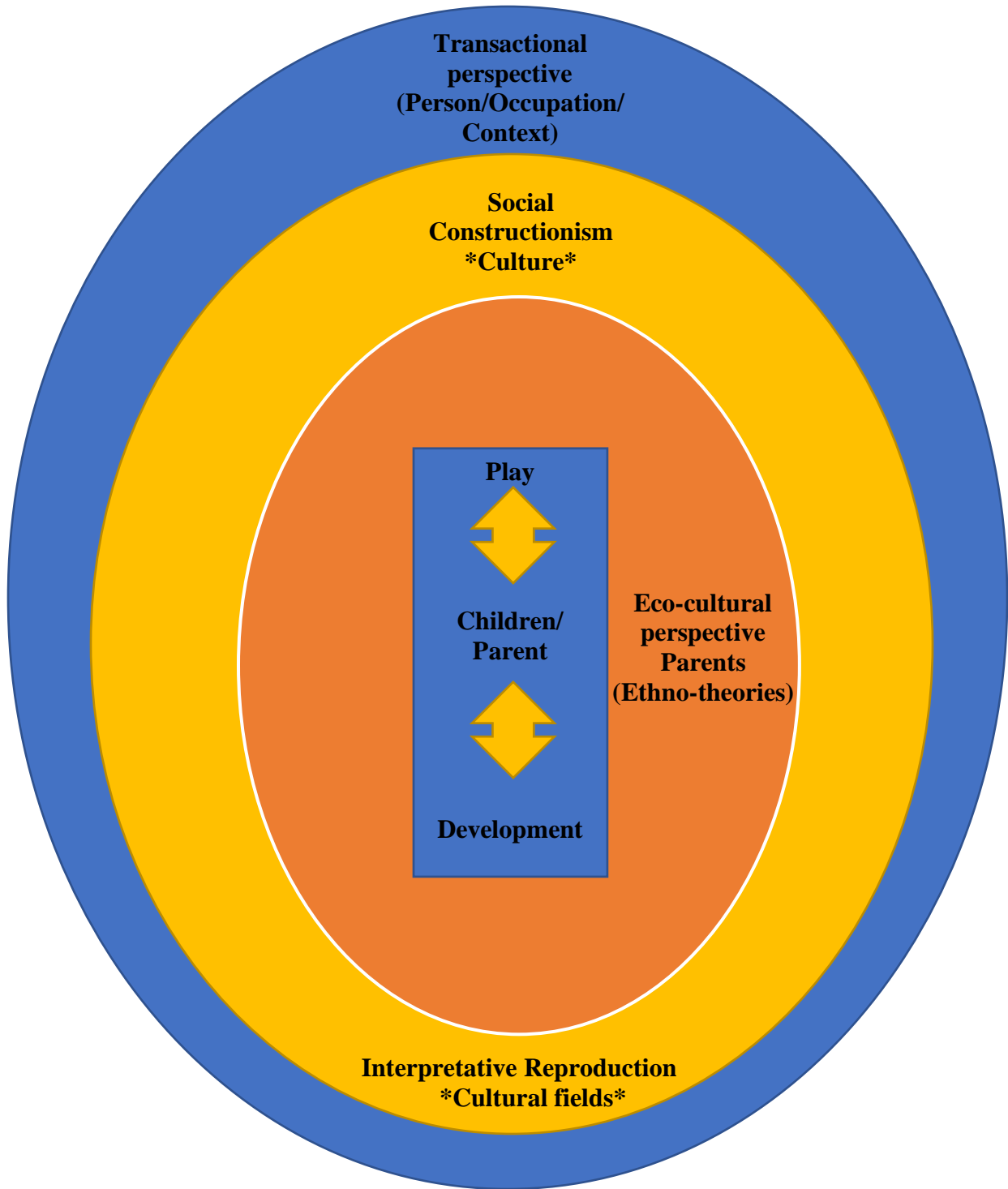Describe any impact I might have had on the situation observed.

Describe ideas, impressions, thoughts, insights and/or any criticisms I had towards observations.

Record any thoughts that I have regarding any future observations.

APPENDIX G: DATA COLLECTION & DATA ANALYSIS TIMETABLE

Task	Months					
	0-2 Dec-Jan 2018	3-4 Feb-March 2018	5-6 April-May 2018	7-8 June-July 2018	9-14 August-Dec 2018	15-20+ Jan- May 2019
Preliminary Instrument Development	1month (Jan) Translation/ Cognitive interview					
Phase I		3-4 (Jan-March) months Interview/ Data gathering				
Phase II		3-5 (Jan- May) months Observation Data gathering				
Data Analysis		3-11 months Continuous				
Writing					Writing continues	

APPENDIX H: THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Transactional perspective (Person/Occupation/Context)

Social Constructionism *Culture*

Play

Children/Parent

Eco-cultural perspective Parents (Ethno-theories)

Development

Interpretative Reproduction *Cultural fields*

APPENDIX I: PARTICIPANTS DEMOGRAPHICS

Fifteen Kuwaiti families participated in the interview process of the study. Eleven mothers and four fathers participated, while in one of the interviews, both parents participated in answering questions about the topic. Each family had a child attending a kindergarten. All family participants in the study are from governorate locations where most Kuwaitis live; they live in Hawalli, Al-Asimah, Mubarak Al-Kabeer, and Farwaniyah governorates. All families have parents and grandparents who are of Arab ancestry and who grew up in Kuwait or neighboring Arab countries. In the sections below a discussion of family demographics include family structure(i.e., parental age, birthplace, and language spoken), marital status, level of parental education, level of familial income, birthplace, employment, home living environments/ situations (i.e. rented or owned housing, number of extended family members living in the same household), children (i.e. number of children, gender of children), and other caregivers (nannies or housekeepers).

Age, nationality, primary language, and education. The age range of mothers participating in this study was from 26- 49 years, with a mean age of 33.8. While the age range of fathers participating in the study was 29-50, with a mean age of 38. All parents were born in Kuwait and spoke Arabic fluently at home. (This may be another influence that shapes parental experiences) One parent reported that he spoke both languages due to his employment position**. It is expected that Western exposure is not only preserved (maintained) through living abroad or following a certain lifestyle, but through watching media, structure of work place and requirements to uphold positions.** The educational level for both mothers and fathers in the household varied tremendously. The overall degrees mothers held were: one high school, eight

associates', four bachelors and two graduate-level degrees. Fathers' degrees comprised of one middle school, seven associates, four bachelors and three graduate-level degrees.

Household Income, marital status and occupations of mothers and fathers. The overall annual household income of the families involved in this study ranged from 12,000 Kuwaiti dinars (approximately $37,200 USD) to 60,000+ Kuwaiti Dinars (approximately $111,600+ USD). The overall average reported family income was a monthly amount between 1000-3000 (KD) approximately equivalent to $3,100- $9,300 USD. **Other family incomes were below a monthly amount of 1000 KD ($3,100 USD), or above a monthly amount of 5000 KD ($15,500). (state how many)** Degrees received and employment/professional positions influence the level of family income. Mothers and Fathers in this group are employed in a variety of professional/ employed positions. Mothers have backgrounds in business, finance, early childhood education, physical therapy and social work. Some mothers elect out of being in the workforce to stay at home or be housewives. The majority of fathers held positions in the military, police force or oil sectors. The families consisted of 12 married couples and 3 divorced mothers.

  Home environments and domestic employees. Participants indicated their home living situation as either owning their own home/house, renting an apartment/ flat in a residential area, or residing in their parents' house (family house). One participant reported to be living in a home she owned. Seven out of the fifteen participants rented apartments or a flat in residential areas, while the other seven lived in family homes. Living in a family home/ house would consist of sharing divided compartments/living spaces of the house. Participants reported to share spaces and live in the same house with 7 to 16 members of their extended family, usually consisting of grandparents, participants' siblings, and in some cases their spouses and children. Some

185

participants reported sharing spaces with all members of the extended family. Shared spaces would sometimes include the sharing of the main living rooms/basement, dining rooms, main kitchen, playrooms and yard. Some family homes required the sharing of certain areas, while others followed a common practice of remodeling the home to provide living space for married sons, while waiting for their own homes from the government (20+ years wait).

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