What is make-believe play?: preschool teachers' perspectives

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What is make-believe play? Preschool teachers' perspectives

by

Joanna Jennifer Cemore

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Human Development and Family Studies
(Child Development) and (Early Childhood Education)

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2005
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to explore preschool teachers’ understanding of make-believe play in order to aid understanding and enhance further use of teachers as informants in research on children’s play. Participants included preschool teachers (n = 10) and faculty members (n = 3) who teach early childhood educators. Their descriptions of play and make-believe play were examined through qualitative research methods, including individual interviews. In-depth analysis of the emergent themes used to describe play and make-believe play were conducted. Preschool teachers defined make-believe play as representational play that is intrinsically motivated. This report includes examination of definitions, comparisons between teachers’ and faculty members’ responses, and responses to video vignettes. Limitations of the current study as well as ideas for future research are discussed.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers are commonly used as informants for children's classroom behavior in research. Although this procedure is used often, how reliable is the information obtained from teachers? This question came up when I was analyzing data from my thesis, which examined the relationship between time spent in make-believe play and delay of gratification. One source of data was a questionnaire completed by the child's teacher for each child. In that study I defined make-believe play as "Only if the child gives to the activity 'as if' status then it is make-believe play" (Cemore, 2001). I included the definition on the teacher questionnaire and emphasized the definition by pointing at it with my finger and reading the definition out loud to each teacher when physically handing them the questionnaire. Included with the definition were examples of make-believe play: "A child is engaged in make-believe play when they are acting 'as if' something is something else (either themselves or inanimate objects such as blocks, Legos, dolls, a piece of paper)" (see Appendix A). One of the teachers in the study provided detailed information about the play of each child but when asked the percentage of available choice time at school spent in make-believe play, the teacher replied 100% for every child. When I asked the teacher about this she stated, "Well, that's what they do. They are always playing." Various forms of so-called "play" are put into practice in early childhood centers to different degrees. This non-consensus of how to define play may be behind the sometimes mixed results of previous play research on school outcomes (Christie & Johnsen, 1985).

In my thesis I discovered that time spent in make-believe play at home was related to delay of gratification but not time spent in make-believe play at school. There are several possible reasons for this. One possible reason, in conjunction with the experience of the
teacher mentioned above, is that maybe teachers have their own understanding of make-believe play that may supersede those definitions and examples given. So, how do teachers define make-believe play? Do their definitions match what classroom behaviors they classify as make-believe play? What place does make-believe play have in their classroom? Is this related to how they define make-believe play, what they deem to be the purpose of preschool, or how they think children learn?
CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There are many ways to address play theoretically, but how do practitioners think of play? Past research into teachers understanding of play has been qualitative in nature, as is the current study. Studies have examined how teachers use play in the classroom, what their practices are, their memories of play, or something else other than how they would define play or make-believe play (Sandberg & Samuelsson, 2003; Spielberger, 1999). A study that did look at teachers’ definitions (Rothlein & Brett, 1987) provided very limited analysis of the teachers’ definitions. The current study looks closely at the how teachers define play and make-believe play. Knowing this is important for two main reasons. First, teachers of young children are the ones who create and implement the activities and environments for them. Thus, their beliefs and attitudes about play and classroom practices affect greatly the children’s experiences, including their play. Second, teachers often are used as informants for research on children’s play. These findings will give us a better understanding of how to work with teachers based on their conceptual understanding of play and to strengthen and validate future research. This review includes information on the problems associated with trying to define play, play definitions, and theoretical views and research findings associated with play and make-believe play.

The Problem of Defining Play

Most people think they know what play is but when asked to define it they typically defer to a response such as “Well, I know it when I see it.” A concise definition of play has eluded play researchers and theorists as well. Play is so diverse and multidimensional that it seems to defy an easy explanation. Sutton-Smith (2003) concluded that “play might be summarized most simply as adaptive variability” (p. 3). While a precise definition has eluded
the field of play for years, that may be part of its purpose and its most unique contribution - continually to change and adapt.

**Play**

At a June 2005 conference on play at Yale University, an early childhood practitioner who was an audience member asked the panel of 11 play experts “Okay, we are all talking about play here but I am not sure that my definition of play is the same as yours.” She proceeded to ask each one of them to give his/her definition of play. While the many answers from the experts varied, they all fit into the categories described by Rubin, Fein, and Vandenberg (1983): a disposition (intrinsically motivated, attention to means, “What can I do with this object,” relation to instrumental behaviors, freedom from externally imposed rules, and actively engaged), as observable behavior, and/or as a context. Interestingly, the most often mentioned characteristic of play was its “attention to means,” which is play as a process, not an end. While Rubin et al.’s definition does not completely cover all that play is or is not, their definition offers the most complete and well-accepted definition to date. After a review of play throughout the years, the specifics of the most widely-held and current definition of play will be discussed.

Listed below are some descriptions of play throughout the years adapted from lists by Sluss (2005) and by Mitchell and Mason (1948) as seen in Saracho and Spodek (1998).

**Seashore:** Free self-expression for the pleasure of expression.

**Froebel:** Play is the purest, most spiritual activity of man at this stage, and at the same time, typical of human life as a whole – of the inner hidden natural life in man and all things.

**Hall:** The motor habits and spirit of the past persisting in the present.
Groos: Instinctive practice, without serious intent, of activities which will later be essential to life.

Dewey: Activities not consciously performed for the sake of any result beyond.

Schiller: The aimless expenditure of exuberant energy.

Spenser: Superfluous actions taking place instinctively in the absence of real actions...Activity performed for the immediate gratification derived without regard for ulterior benefits.

Lazarus: Activity in itself free, aimless, amusing, or diverting.

Shand: A type of play directed at the maintenance of joy.

Dulles: An instinctive form of self-expression and emotional escape value.

Curti: Highly motivated activity which, as free from conflicts, is usually though not always, pleasurable.

Freud: Children repeat everything that has made a great impression on them in real life, and that in so doing, they recreate the strength of the impressions and...make themselves masters of the situation.

Erikson: The growing child’s play...is the training ground for the experience of a leeway of imaginative choices within an existence governed and guided by roles and visions...this is where the child can learn what is acceptable in the social world and practice control of situations.

Vygotsky: Play is the leading source of development for young children. In play a child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behavior; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself.

Piaget: In every act of intelligence is an equilibrium between assimilation and accommodation, while imitation is a continuation of accommodation for its own sake, it may be said conversely that play is essentially assimilation, or the primacy of assimilation over accommodation.

Sutton-Smith: The definitions of play given by the child player themselves generally center on having fun, being outdoors, being with friends, choosing freely, not working, pretending, enacting fantasy, drama, and playing games. There is little or no emphasis on the kind of growth that adults have in mind with their progress rhetoric.
The highest form of research is essentially play.

Play enables children to progress along developmental cognitive sequences... play also serves important functions in children’s physical, emotional, and social development... Therefore, child -initiated, child directed, teacher-supported play is an essential component of developmentally appropriate practice.

Play is a major interactive process through which children learn about themselves, their environment, the other people in that environment, and the interrelationships among all of these. Play is intrinsic, self-selected, active, mind involving, and a focus for personal powers. It is intriguing and captivating and frequently involves practice of needed mental and / or physical skills. Play engages and fulfills the player. Authentic play involves choice on the part of the player and can be self-perpetuating.

A free-ranging voluntary activity that occurs within certain time and place limits, according to accepted rules. Play is accompanied by feelings of tension and joy and an awareness that it differs from ordinary life.

Play as a disposition

Thinking of play as a disposition serves to help identify what is and what is not play from many different viewpoints and theoretical conceptions. Play has six characteristics: intrinsically motivated, attention to means, “What can I do with this object,” relation to instrumental behaviors, freedom from external rules, and active engagement (Rubin et al., 1983).

Intrinsically motivated

A child plays because s/he wants to play. The desire and the persistence come from within. Even if a child is told to play, true play will not occur until the child is engaged and begins to play for its own sake. This is one way play differs from other sorts of enjoyable activities in which young children engage.
**Attention to means**

Play is process-oriented. Children are concerned only with what they are doing at the moment not a product toward which they are working. This is evident in watching a young child playing with Legos who began building a house and then became fascinated with the patterns he was making. He continued with the patterns bringing in colored crayons that matched and then looking around the room and grabbing other items that were blue and orange. The event was changing continually.

*"What can I do with this object?"*

Emphasis here is on the "I" not the object. This differs from exploratory behavior where a child may be thinking "What does this object do?" In play the child is thinking "What can I do with this object?" This seemingly subtle difference creates endless possibilities for the child. For example, a box holds things together but the things I can do with a box are infinite in number.

**Relation to instrumental behaviors**

This describes the non-literal type of play, which is often thought of as make-believe play. When a child gives themselves, someone, or something "as if" status he or she is pretending or playing make-believe.

**Freedom from externally imposed rules**

There are no established rules for play. This does not mean that the players themselves do not follow and/or establish rules within the context of their play. What it does mean is that someone outside of the situation does not set the rules.
Actively engaged

Children who are playing are actively engaged, whether with others or in solitary. They are focused and not easily distracted. This engagement almost self-propels the continued involvement in play and leads to greater and greater complexities and thought processes.

Play as observable behavior

When asked “What is play?” many people may respond “Well, I know it when I see it.” One way that play is defined is through observable behaviors of the child. These observable behaviors are often used by parents, students, and teachers to help track and explain developmental levels.

Parten (1932) developed social levels of play that are demonstrated by observable behaviors in the child to gage what level of sociability they have attained. Another very recognizable set of observable behaviors comes from Piaget’s (1962) stages of practice play, symbolic play, and games with rules, where we can see a child behaving in a certain way and link that to a developmental stage of his theory. There are numerous ways to differentiate types of play by the observable behaviors shown, whether it is acting as if an object is something else in pretend play or using imaginary discourse with a peer in dramatic play. These observable behaviors help us organize what we are seeing into information that makes sense to us, very Piagetian.

Another way to think of observable behaviors as play is to examine them as occurring before and/or after other behaviors. These antecedent or consequential behaviors can also lend definition to what occurred; or this could be thought of as a contextual way of defining play.
Play as context

Children’s play is universal. What is not universal is how it is defined. Context here refers to what the culture believes play to be. Many things such as culture, gender, age, environment, materials, and adult interactions affect the likelihood that children will engage in play. The idea that the environment can increase or decrease the possibility of play to occur is the idea of play as context.

Make-believe Play

Definitions of make-believe play

This section defining make-believe play is taken from previous research on make-believe play and delay of gratification (Cemore, 2001). In make-believe play “children pretend, acting out everyday and imaginary activities” (Berk, 1993, p. 212). Make-believe play is identified by various terms in the research literature: symbolic play, social pretend play, imaginative play, fantasy play, dramatic play, sociodramatic play, and pretense. While all of these types of play are considered aspects of the category of make-believe play, the terms vary in the specific type of play they describe.

Symbolic play is most often associated with Piaget, who coined this term. Piaget defined symbolic play as “egocentric thought in its pure state” (1962, p. 166) and stated that “play begins as soon as there is a predominance of assimilation” (p. 150). In Piaget’s sixth stage of play, the child moves from ritual into symbolic schemas. This is the first time make-believe play is seen as a conscious effort of the young child; objects are used to represent the real object. For example, a child holds a cup, puts it up to his mouth and pretends to drink from it. This cup is representing a cup with a drink in it. Symbolic play begins as a solitary activity and involves others as the child develops.
Social pretend play occurs when a child is engaged in play with one or more children where they “enact social roles, superimpose story lines or scripts on their activities” (Farver & Shin, 1997, p. 545) and “use metacommmunication to establish and maintain play sequences” (p. 545).

Imaginative play and/or fantasy play is seen as play that is of another place. Roles and events taking place are not of the child’s day to day life; they are fictional. While children are more likely during the preschool years to engage in “imitative, relational roles” (Johnson & Ershler, 1981; Johnson, Ershler, & Bell, 1980), fantasy play does occur at this age. Saltz et al. (1997) compared fantasy group play to sociodramatic play by saying that fantasy is a more mature form of group pretense than sociodramatic play because of the greater demands on the imagery process. Although this type of play is compared to sociodramatic play in a group situation, a child can engage in solitary fantasy play as well as group fantasy play.

In dramatic play, as defined by Smilansky and Shefatya (1990), “the child takes on a role; he pretends to be somebody else” (p. 21). Dramatic play can be a solitary activity or engaged in with peers. Where dramatic play turns into sociodramatic play is when the “theme is elaborated in cooperation with at least one other role-player; then the participants interact with each other in both action and speech” (p. 20).

Smilanksy and Shefatya (1990) defined sociodramatic play as “a form of voluntary social play activity in which children participate.” Their definition relies on a comparison to dramatic play for clarity. They assessed play using six criteria of evaluation: imitative role-play, make-believe with regards to object, verbal make-believe with regard to actions and situations, persistence in role-play, interaction, and verbal communication. The last two criteria - interaction and verbal communication - separate sociodramatic play from dramatic
play. They differentiated dramatic and sociodramatic play, as “Dramatic (symbolic) play focuses mainly on social roles and interaction” while sociodramatic play is a more mature form of dramatic play allowing “the child to be an actor, observer and interactor simultaneously, using his abilities in a common enterprise with other children” (p. 3).

Pretense, according to Rubin et al. (1983), is distinguished from other forms of play by “its relation to instrumental behaviors” (p. 699). Pretense occurs only if the “child gives to these activities ‘as if’ status ...”; otherwise “... the activity is not viewed as pretense” (p. 699).

Play Theorists

This section on play theorists is taken from Cemore (2001) on make-believe play and delay of gratification.

Piaget

Theorists differ in their interpretation of the role of play in the development of children. Piaget (1962), one of the most noted theorists in the area of play, argued that through play individuals take information from the outside world and either accept or adapt the information to what they already understand, commonly referred to respectively as assimilation and accommodation. In assimilation children interpret the world in terms of current schemas while in accommodation the child creates new schemas or changes old ones to take into account new aspects of the environment (Berk, 1993). This allows the child “to relive his past experiences and makes for the satisfaction of the ego rather than for its subordination to reality” (p. 167). This process represents the constructivist view of early development. This view incorporates the Freudian position that play is how children are able to work through or deal again with a painful or difficult situation from real life. Pretend play
allows children to communicate and to resolve their fears and anxieties by bringing them to the conscious level, thus articulating them by changing roles or changing the outcome to make a happy ending (DeVries & Kohlberg, 1987; Freud, 1965; Peller, 1954).

Piaget (1962) viewed that make-believe (or reflective) play develops during the second year of life after representational thought has emerged. Contrary to the psychoanalysts, Piaget argued that there cannot be symbolism and consciousness of make-believe until mental representation has developed. To show this Piaget gave the example of “a cat walking on a wall by a shell moved with the hand along a cardboard box.... First there is the shell representing the cat and the box representing the wall; then there is imitation through gesture, i.e., the movement of the hand representing the cat walking; finally there is presumably the mental image of the cat on the wall, an image which may be vague and undifferentiated since it is supported by motor imitation and the symbol-object” (p. 164). This example also illustrates the notion that the “relationship between assimilation and accommodation in play differs from that in cognitive or adapted representation because play is the predominance of assimilation” (p. 164). The processes in the example are predominantly assimilation while in cognitive representation there is a “permanent equilibrium” between assimilation and accommodation (pp. 164 -165).

Fein (1981) argued that Piaget’s theory is focused heavily on the individual at the emergence of solitary play and therefore does not explain much of the social interactions that take place in make-believe play as the child further develops. While Piaget’s theory does interpret play through the structure of the child’s thoughts, it does not preclude interaction with others. In fact, Piaget’s theory relies on interaction between the child and the environment for learning and development to occur. According to Piaget, the preschool child
is egocentric, meaning the child believes that others feel, think, and perceive things as she does. In make-believe play the child is able to decenter from his own perspective and rise above his egocentric state. Here the child is able to imagine things from the physical, cognitive, and emotional viewpoint of others (Piaget, 1962). This differs from Piaget’s theory of the cognitive abilities of preschool children, where egocentrism is seen as a limitation of preoperational thought. Piaget uses the three mountain task to demonstrate egocentrism. In this task the child looks at a three dimensional model of three mountains of varying heights. This child may walk around the model and view it from various standpoints. Next, the child stands on one side of the model and a doll is placed at another location. The child then is asked to choose a photograph that shows the mountains from the perspective of the doll. Piaget found that children below the age of 6 or 7 tend to choose their own perspective. Yet, Piaget states that in make-believe play it is possible to take the perspectives of others. This concept corresponds to Vygotsky’s idea that in play a child demonstrates more advanced behavior (Vygotsky, 1966).

Vygotsky

Vygotsky (1978) differentiated a child’s play from other activities by stating that “in play a child creates an imaginary situation” (p. 93). This imaginary situation “is impossible for a child under three; is a novel form of behavior in which the child is liberated from situational constraints …” (Vygotsky, 1966, p. 544). Even though in play a child is liberated from those constraints, he still adheres to rules. Vygotsky considers play without rules not to be play at all: “the imaginary situation of any form of play already contains rules of behavior” (p. 94).
The importance of play is highlighted by Vygotsky’s statement that play “is the leading source of development in pre-school years” (1966, p. 537). “Play is a transitional stage...at that critical moment when a stick – i.e., an object – becomes a pivot for severing the meaning of horse from a real horse” (p. 546). Here reality is altered for the child. The child must still have an object to orient himself to. “In play a child unconsciously and spontaneously makes use of the fact that he can separate meaning from an object without knowing he is doing it” (p. 548), for example, the previously mentioned stick as a horse or a finger to represent a person in the children’s song “Where is Thumbkin?” In this song the child uses each finger to represent a person in dialogue with a finger on the other hand.

Vygotsky also recognized make-believe play for its self-regulatory value. During imaginative play the child is met with contradictory motives - to act spontaneously and to follow the rules. The child has no externally imposed rules. During play he can do whatever he wants. On the other hand, the child is under continuous “demands...to act against immediate impulse” (p. 548). During play, it seems that to follow the rules of the role or game gives more pleasure to the child than acting on impulse. For example, John and Annie, two 4-year-old preschool children, are pretending to be a dog and its owner. John is down on his hands and knees panting and barking. Annie goes to John and says, “What do you want Doggy?” He continues to pant and bark, “What do you want Doggy?” Annie tries again. John the Doggy barks again and runs over (on hands and knees) to the play cupboard. Annie says excitedly, “Oh! Do you want something to eat?” “Ruff! Ruff!” he responds. Annie pretends to set out food for the dog and John pretends to eat it. She then pets the dog and refers to him as “Good Doggy.” In this example John could have become frustrated when Annie did not know what he wanted. Instead of breaking the rule of his role as dog by
speaking, John continued to try to communicate his needs to Annie in a way consistent with his knowledge of dogs. In this way John acts against his immediate impulse to be understood and instead continues to act as a dog would. Thus, the interaction with Annie as a dog was more pleasurable than being understood immediately by her.

Another concept in Vygotsky’s theory is that the child functions at a higher level during make-believe play than in other activities of childhood. According to Vygotsky (1966), a child is “always above his average age, above his daily behavior” in play (p. 552) and “play contains all developmental tendencies in a condensed form and is itself a major source of development” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 102). Imaginative play is “a means of developing abstract thought” (1966, p. 553). Whereas make-believe is an imaginary situation, the imaginary situation derives itself from “a real situation” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 103) in the child’s life. Early play is then seen as a “recollection of something that has actually happened … more memory than a novel imaginary situation” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 103). The way the child expands on the real situation during play is where the imagination component enters.

The most recognizable contribution of Vygotsky (1966, p. 552) to child development is the notion of the “zone of proximal development,” which he stated is created through play. The zone of proximal development is “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86). This zone is where learning takes place; it is akin to Piaget’s premise that learning occurs in the state between equilibrium and disequilibrium.
Piaget and Vygotsky have theories that offer similar ideas under very different guises. Vygotsky’s theory is based on social interactions, where make-believe play is predominantly a social activity; in contrast Piaget emphasizes a spontaneous emergence of play that incorporates social interactions. Today make-believe play is commonly seen as both a social activity and a solitary activity of preschool children.

**Psychoanalysts**

**Sigmund Freud**

Freud (1946) maintained that a child’s play represents his wishes, and there is “one wish, which is to be grown-up.” Children repeat those things that left indelible marks on them. Play is a way for the child to lessen anxieties and to rid himself of fears that occur in reality. In play children are able to communicate and bring their fears and anxieties to a conscious level and then deal with them in the play situation. The child can be like a grown up (i.e., I am big; I can do as big people are doing). Freud’s term repetition compulsion is the mechanism that allows this coping to take place. Freud contends that children are more prone to trauma because of the lack of organization of the ego structures and psychic defenses. As the individual develops the resistance to trauma builds.

**Lili Peller**

Peller (1954) asserted a similar purpose of play. Play is how a child grasps experiences that appear too big or too complicated. Children are active participants in play. Through play children are able to work through or deal again with a painful situation they experienced. The child may change roles or change the outcome to make a “happy ending.”
Anna Freud

Freud (1965) saw play as control more than a cathartic act. Play is where the child shifts from an internal to external focus, from a state of no control to a state of bodily control and where one gains independence and personal and social responsibility. Toys serve as a way to practice control over fantasy and reality (i.e., solitary role play and/or group play).

Erik Erikson

Erikson (1950), a Neo-Freudian, stated that, “Play is a function of the ego, an attempt to synchronize the bodily and the social processes with the self” (p. 211). In the social realm of play “we can be what in life we could not or would not be” (p. 213). Erikson gives us his notions of microspHERic and macroSPHERic play. Play in the microsphere gives the child a “harbor...to return to when he needs to overhaul his ego” (p. 221). Mastery in this sphere is associated with mastery over trauma and the child gaining prestige. The macrosphere is the “world shared with others” (p. 221). Here the child learns what kind of play belongs where, what to share with others and what to experience only in the safe harbor of the microsphere. The learning of what can be done where helps the child to develop normally through Erikson’s “initiative vs. guilt,” one of his eight stages of man.

Advantages of Play and Make-believe Play – Why is Play Important?

In make-believe play children make strides in physical development, language development, cognitive development, and social-emotional development. In make-believe play children are the owners of their learning. They make decisions and they act on those decisions. Kohlberg (1968), speaking of Rousseau in Kessen, states that “what is most important in the development of the child is that which comes from within him and that the pedagogical environment should be one which creates a climate to allow inner ‘goods’
(abilities and social virtues) to unfold and the inner ‘bad’ to come under control of the inner good, rather than to be fixated by adult cultures” (p. 1014). Make-believe play allows the child the opportunities both to develop those skills valued as a society and to inhibit those we do not value.

FLOW

The condition of FLOW is congruent with the state of a child engaged in play. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) describes the condition of FLOW as:

- a sense that one’s skills are adequate to cope with the challenges at hand...
- concentration is so intense that there is no attention left over to think about anything irrelevant, or to worry about problems. Self-consciousness disappears,
- and the sense of time becomes distorted. An activity that produces such experiences is so gratifying that people are willing to do it for its own sake, with little concern for what they will get out of it, even when it is difficult, or dangerous (p. 71).

It is my belief that it is because children are in this state during play that the immediate benefits and future outcomes for development can be so profound. This state is one of such freedom and total engagement, which may be why theorists such as Vygotsky (1966) and Piaget (1962) posited that children were able to perform above their normal daily abilities and skill level when engaged in make-believe play.

Theory of mind

Theory of mind refers to “children’s developing concepts of mental activity” (Bjorklund, 2000, p. 214). This area of research has grown substantially in the last two decades and the relationship of theory of mind to pretense has been an especially hot topic. There has been some evidence and discussion that there is a link between make-believe play
and the child’s developing theory of mind (Berguno & Bowler, 2004; Harris 1994; Lillard, 1993; Schwebel, Rosen, & Singer, 1999). The rationale for this link is evident in the essence of many play theories and was first identified with the actual terminology “theory of mind” by Leslie (1987) explaining that make-believe play affords children the opportunity to understand others’ thoughts, beliefs, and feelings, or at least play or experiment with these concepts.

**Physical development**

Through motor play children develop coordination in both large and fine motor tasks, and learn mastery of the body. Participation in this motor play helps children develop confidence and a sense of mastery and competence. There appears to be less research available on physical development and play than other areas of development. What we do know empirically about play and physical development seems to support the notion that physical play, motor competencies, and self-concept indeed are linked (Pellegrini & Smith, 1998). Trevlas, Matsouka, and Zachopoulou (2003) found that levels of play were linked to motor fluency and motor flexibility in young children. Even more, a study using virtual play for children with cerebral palsy showed that the use of this virtual play situation increased their self-efficacy; they felt stronger, and improved their balance and coordination (Miller & Reid, 2003).

**Cognitive development**

Play is thought to reflect the cognitive level of the child as well as contribute to development by providing the context for growth. According to Vygotsky (1966), play is the leading source of development in the pre-school years. When a child is deeply involved in play he is focused on the goal at hand and is able to sustain this focus for lengthy periods of
time. This ability to focus is what the child needs later in the elementary school grades, for reading, writing, and arithmetic (Slade, 1998). During child-initiated play, children show more cognitive competencies than in other types of activities (Gmitrova & Gmitrov, 2004). This type of play also encourages the development of divergent thinking (decentration) or the ability to entertain alternative possibilities and creativity (Christie, 1983; Holmes & Geiger, 2002; Howard-Jones, Taylor, & Sutton, 2002; Pepler & Ross, 1981; Russ & Grossman-McKee, 1990; Russ & Kaugars, 2001; Russ, Robins, & Christiano, 1999; Sutton-Smith, 1997; Wyver & Spence, 1999). In several studies children’s levels of dramatic play (one type of make-believe play) were found to correlate with perspective taking abilities (Cole & La Voie, 1985; Connolly & Doyle, 1984; Rubin & Maioni, 1975) and memory (Newman, 1990). Make-believe play has been found by others to exercise flexibility in thinking that allows one to solve problems from a fresh perspective or use a tool in a unique way (Adams, 1976; Hazen & Black, 1984; Rogers & Ross, 1986; Trawick-Smith, 1988). During play children experiment with and use competently their understanding of mathematical concepts, including numbers, time, space, distance, size, and direction. Rubin and Maioni (1975) found that scores on classification and spatial perspective-taking tasks correlated significantly with the frequency of observed preschool dramatic play.

**Language development**

Similarities in the development of language and play are widely recognized (Rogers & Sawyers, 1988). The relation is drawn between symbolic usage in play and language as well as the indications that during play children make their first attempts to read and write (Rogers & Sawyers). Therefore, opportunities for children to engage in make-believe play may provide more opportunities for advancement of language skills. Children in play
situations use and are exposed to more vocabulary, and the use of descriptive and colorful word choices is more prominent than in other types of activities; they also gain a greater understanding of logical sequences (Davidson, 1998). Studies have shown that children trained in sociodramatic play perform better than other children on various language arts skills, (i.e., story comprehension and recall) (Lim, 1998; Pellegrini & Galda, 1982; Saltz, Dixon, & Johnson; 1977; Saltz & Johnson, 1974). This use of language in play situations is related to current and/or later literacy skills, such as elaborated language, reading achievement, receptive vocabulary and word encoding (Fantuzzo, Sekino, & Cohen, 2004; Neuman & Roskos, 1990, 1993; Pellegrini, 1984; Roskos, 1990; Roskos & Neuman, 1993, 1998). Greater incidence of play is related to greater language development (Lyytenin, Laakso, & Poikkeus, 1999; Snyder & Schere, 2004; Yoshinga-Itano, Snyder, & Day, 1998).

Social-emotional development

Social skills can be defined as children's ability to manage their environment. Parten (1932), whose work identified the levels of social play, is author of one of the most classical works about social play. Her hierarchical levels of play are unoccupied, onlooker, solitary, parallel, associative, and cooperative. Awareness of these levels helps parents and teachers provide opportunities for children to advance their social skills in appropriate intervals. Children practice reciprocity, nurturance, and cooperation through make-believe play (Berger & Thompson, 1991). Also, they continue to develop cognitive skills that are crucial to positive social interactions, such as negotiation, compromise, and dispute resolution (Berk, 1993). Connolly (1980) and Connolly and Doyle (1984) found that social pretend play (one type of make-believe play) predicted scores on measures of social competence, popularity, and role-taking. Decentration is believed to be crucial to these emerging abilities, which
lends itself to the Piagetian belief that play reflects social competence. A view explained in depth by Creasey, Jarvis, and Berk (1998) is that play plays a role in development by promoting social competence. Creasey et al. supported their conclusion with findings that show “play training studies and systematic observations of children’s naturalistic play behaviors as predicators of short- and long-term markers of social competence” (p. 117).

Other studies have found that children who engage in more pretend play have greater conversational success, emotional understanding, creativity, and divergent problem solving and thinking (DeKroon, Kyte, & Johnson, 2002; Lloyd & Howe, 2003; Seja & Russ, 1999; Russ & Kaugers, 2001; Russ et al., 1999; Wyver & Spence, 1999). Several studies have found that when children are trained in sociodramatic and/or fantasy play their scores increase on such features as perspective-taking ability, group cooperation, social-communicative behaviors, descriptive and request utterances, social participation, and impulse control (Craig-Unkefer & Kaiser, 2002; Rogers & Sawyers, 1988).

Vygotsky (1966) asserted that children satisfy certain needs and incentives in play. This can be achieved through either solitary or social make-believe play. According to White (1958), individuals acquire personal satisfaction from feeling competent. The play of children is a way of being productive and play is its own reward. While many studies report positive social skills and social cognition benefits of play, additional studies have reported that play promotes healthy emotional functioning in the child (Rogers & Sawyers, 1988). The many benefits of make-believe play, according to Singer (1973), include contentment, self-awareness, imagery skills, verbal skills, emotional awareness and sensibility, teaches new roles, flexibility, and creativity. Research has demonstrated a consistent relationship between time spent in fantasy play and emotional understanding (Lindsey & Colwell, 2003; Seja &
Russ, 1999). Singer (1973) and Singer and Singer (1985) contend that there are many psychosocial benefits of make-believe play for children and that those who engage in more make-believe play are more likely to have flexibility in new situations and appear to be happier. Children who engaged in more make-believe play saw themselves as having greater peer acceptance than did children who played less (Flannery & Watson, 1993). A recent study by Galyer and Evans (2001) found that children who engaged in make-believe play daily had significantly higher ratings of emotional regulation than those who did not. In addition, those who played make-believe with their parents were rated as having higher emotional regulation that those who did not.

"An affect can only be overcome by a stronger affect" (Spinoza, 167, Ethics 4, Prop.7, cited in Vygotsky, 1966). Such is the case with delaying gratification, a part of emotional well-being. Delaying gratification is the ability to refrain from fulfilling immediate desires in exchange for fulfilling greater desires in the future. Several authors have stated that make-believe play is linked to delay of gratification, emotional regulation, self-regulation/self-restraint, self-determination and/or persistence in play (Cemore & Herwig, 2005; Elias & Berk, 2001; Fantuzzo et al., 2004; Krafft & Berk, 1998; Lindsey & Colwell, 2003; Meichenbaum & Goodman, 1971; Mischel & Baker, 1975; Singer 1955, 1961). Children who reported more make-believe play as part of their regular home activities and who reported more imaginary friends were more likely to perform well on measures of delay of gratification. Saltz et al. (1977) found that training children in make-believe play increases impulse control.
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Why Qualitative Research?

First I decided my research question and then I decided what was the best way to explore that question. Because of the exploratory element of the question I wanted to answer, I felt qualitative, naturalistic inquiry would fit this phenomenon best. Creswell (1998) defines qualitative research as “an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (p. 15). Some authors try to define qualitative research by comparing it to quantitative research (Creswell; Ragin, 1987). One simplified key difference is that “quantitative researchers work with a few variables and many cases, whereas qualitative researchers rely on a few cases and many variables” (Creswell, p.15).

All of my past experience with research has been of quantitative inquiry. It was especially important for me to recognize the key differences to highlight the tenets of qualitative research so I would not fall into the trap of trying to apply quantitative strategies to qualitative research. Qualitative research has its own rigors, terminology, and strengths. I have included below a table that compares the quantitative and qualitative methodologies (see Table 1).

Qualitative research is not for the faint of heart or person who wants a quick and clean research study. The qualitative researcher spends extensive time in the field gaining an insider perspective and collecting data, engages in complex, time-consuming process of data analysis by sorting through large amounts of data and reducing them to a few categories or themes (often a lonely, isolated process), writes long passages to substantiate claims and
show multiple perspectives, and participates in a form of social and human science that is evolving and changing, which can often complicate how one plans a study and how others judge it (Creswell, 1998).

Table 1. Comparison of Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods (table from Bryman, 1988, p. 94).

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<td>(2)</td>
<td>Relationship between researcher and subject</td>
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<td>Researcher’s stance in relation to subject</td>
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<td>Relationship between theory/concepts and research</td>
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<td>Scope of findings</td>
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<td>Image of social reality</td>
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**Phenomenology**

A phenomenological study is a type of qualitative, naturalistic inquiry that describes the lived experiences of several individuals (up to 10) about a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). The focus is “understanding the essence of experiences about a
phenomenon" (p. 65). This type of study is generally carried out in the fields of philosophy, sociology, and psychology.

In following a phenomenological perspective, data are collected in interviews, which allow the informant's experiences to be portrayed in her own words rather than a preconceived *a priori* category of the researcher. Through the naturalistic process many levels of an issue are brought to light and the complexity of the issue is displayed. How teachers understand make-believe play cannot be explored fully without the interviewing process. The idea of make-believe play is at once very simplistic but also very hard for people to define. Through this challenging task of attempting to define make-believe play, the most important issues within play come out. Loftland (1971) explained:

The fullest condition of participating in the mind of another human being is face-to-face interaction. Face-to-faceness has the irreplaceable character of non-reflectivity and immediacy that furnishes the fullest possibility of truly entering the life, mind, and definitions of the other (p. 2).

The steps of phenomenological data analysis in general terms include statements, meanings, meaning themes, and general description of the experience. Through this analysis it is required that the researcher bracket (epoche) her own preconceived ideas of the phenomenon to understand it through the voices of the informants (Field & Morse, 1985). This is why it is essential for the researcher to lay her cards on the table so to speak and announce her biases and values concerning the phenomenon under study.

**Researcher as Instrument**

All analysis goes through me. I am the designer, I am the data collector, I am the coder, I am the analyzer, and I am the interpreter. I have had and continue to influence the
outcome of this research. The naturalistic method relies heavily on the human being. The human being is the instrument. Guba and Lincoln (1981) make the distinction clear in the following example:

The scientifically oriented inquirer who wishes to differentiate personality on a scale for testing tendencies to schizophrenia attempts to create and perfect an instrument that is essentially free of human judgment. The phenomenologist, however, is not interested in dismissing human judgment but seeks to sharpen and refine the skills that go into the judgment process (p. 128).

Characteristics of a human instrument that lend themselves to enhancement of understanding in qualitative research are responsiveness, adaptability, having a holistic emphasis, ability to expand knowledge base, processual immediacy, opportunities for clarification and summarization, and opportunity to explore atypical or idiosyncratic responses. Part of what makes me a good instrument - my past experiences in the field and my prior research on the topic - also makes me biased. I come to this project with values, experiences, and biases. It is important for me to share my values and biases on the topic of make-believe play.

I grew up in a small town in central Iowa. I was a big player. Most pictures of me as child are of my pretending something. I was always interested in performing. All my siblings were involved in performing in some sense. I played the piano, acted, and sang. My siblings were in musicals, talent shows, and theater. My favorite thing to do was to sing show tunes and pretend I was on stage. As I aged I continued on this path, playing piano since the age of 5, singing and acting in shows from the age of 7, singing in rock bands from the age of 13, and I even went to college to study music as a vocal performer at one of the best music
schools in the nation. I was definitely encouraged to pursue these performance endeavors by my family. My brother has been a professional opera singer since he left graduate school in the early 1980s. I knew what it took to be a professional singer, I had the talent and the ability and that life was all I wanted (until I discovered Child Development!).

Being creative was also always encouraged in my family. My mother is an artist and my sister is a professional artist. While growing up I was always active in drawing, painting, printing, sculpting, just plain old creating. Anything imaginative was fun and I did it. I feel so blessed to have grown up in a home that not only appreciated art, music, and theater, but also encouraged my participation in it. I believe that these activities stem from an active make-believe play life as a young child. When I see a child who I would call a fantastic player I would see her/him singing, dancing, acting, and creating situations, conversations, and possibilities.

Although I was always a fan of art, music, and theater, I do not think I would have ever classified it as make-believe play. Not that it was not make-believe play, but that idea would not have crossed my mind. Make-believe play became important to me during my graduate school years at Florida State University. My advisor, Dr. Charles Wolfgang, is a play researcher, and I learned a great deal from him about the different types of play. While taking one of the graduate early childhood courses called “Play Theories” I fell in love with play. My goodness it is good for everything and it can help you explain everything, and gosh golly it can help solve anything!

Make-believe play is why I came back to graduate school to pursue my Ph.D. During that “Play Theories” course I learned about Vygotsky’s take on make-believe play (discussed at length in the literature review). When I read that he thought that make-believe play was
when children delayed gratification, my mind started spinning, and my research career was born. I had recently heard of the “marshmallow test,” an experimental situation that tested children’s ability to delay gratification. It was one of the sensational news items that got the public talking about emotional intelligence. I thought hmm….if people are interested in emotional intelligence and want their children to be able to delay gratification, then they should be playing pretend! Four years later I was in graduate school again to test my hypothesis.

I had to wait four long years, because I followed the invaluable advice of my advisor, Dr. Wolfgang, to go out into the field full-time for at least 3 years before going back to school. I am so happy that I did. But finally the 3 years were up and I could study my idea.

Since I arrived at Iowa State University in 1999 I have spent most of my time here thinking about make-believe play, either reading about it, watching it in my preschool classroom, writing about it in my thesis, presenting information about it at professional meetings, planning future research projects based on make-believe play, belonging to national societies devoted to play, or touting its virtues in the classroom to undergraduates.

I believe that make-believe play is the most important endeavor a young child can engage in besides meaningful communication with her/his parent (which in its most fun sense can also involve make-believe play). I believe that make-believe play is extremely important for development of the brain, divergent thought, problem solving, happiness, empathy, hope, love, contentment, language skills, communication cues, acquisition of life skills, emotional regulation, delay of gratification, impulse control, and social competencies.

I believe that make-believe play should be the most dominant and prominent activity of early childhood. I believe that most children do not get enough time to engage in make-
believe play and develop higher levels of playing abilities due to time restrictions and the low value play is given in this society.

I believe that make-believe play can be seen as very valuable and important to parents, teachers, and children. I believe that most people do not know the value of play; they view what the child does as “they are just playing.” I also feel devalued in my position. I had an early childhood professional remark on a research paper I wrote regarding play, “Well then why do we go to graduate school? We should just be playing.” I wanted to shout from the top of my lungs “I am talking about young children – I’m not referring to 25- year-olds!!!” So, not only have I chosen a little-valued profession, being an educator, I am an educator of educators. And not only educator of educators, I am an educator of early childhood educators, and then I have the audacity to actually think make-believe play would be valued in that group! It can be a frustrating position to be in. But luckily, I am strong enough in my experience and knowledge base to know it is important and I arm myself with others who feel the same way to make it my career goal to increase the attention given make-believe play, strengthen the value of it, increase the amount of it, do research that supports it, and help others to see and promote its value as well.

Interview Construction

Teachers are commonly used as informants for children’s classroom behavior in research. I wanted to know how preschool teachers defined make-believe play, to make future research that includes teacher input on make-believe play more valid. Initially I knew I would ask the question “What is make-believe play?,” but what else should I ask? I wanted to know what they thought but I also wanted to see if what they thought matched my definition of make-believe play. So, using the definition I used in conducting my thesis
research I created six vignettes that showed a child either playing make-believe or doing something else. These vignettes were shown to the informants and they would tell me if it was make-believe or not. In addition to the vignettes I used several open-ended questions and demographic questions to complete the interviews. Below is my reasoning for each question on the interview.

- If you could have one area/center in your room what would it be?

  I felt that teachers who value play would mention housekeeping or blocks here. These two areas of the room can incorporate all other “learning” activities within them. It also gave me a glimpse into what they value without asking them specifically “what do you value?” It also could give me a glimpse into their understanding of how children learn, what the different centers of a classroom can function as, and how teachers are using their centers in their classroom. Finally, this is a hypothetical question so I felt it was a non-threatening way to ease into the questioning.

- What is the primary goal of preschool?

  This was a very value-laden question. I feel that the value they put on play may be intertwined with how they see preschool functioning. This was also a good lead-in to the next question. I wanted to first see what the teacher believed before bringing up “learning.” I felt that often teachers may think the primary goal is socialization, but if I mentioned “learning” before asking this question I would bias the response towards “learning.”

- How do children learn?

  This question was a very open-ended way to see how teachers really think children learn. This answer could be intertwined with how they view play and make-believe play.
Once again, I chose to ask this question before asking about play so the teachers would not be influenced to respond “through play.” This question often did flow very well into the next question as many teachers remarked that children do in fact “learn through play.”

- What is play?

Play can be a big umbrella term that covers many types of play. I wanted to see how they viewed play before delving into the specific type (make-believe). Play is not reserved only for humans. I believed teachers would answer with regards to their classroom, however. Many, many, many things can be said about play. That is why this is an open question rather than specific.

- What is make-believe play?

Finally, I arrived at my grand tour question (the main research question in qualitative research). I purposely placed this question a few questions from the beginning in hopes that the informants would be relaxed and open by the time we arrived at the main question. Once again this question was purposely open ended and vague.

- Video Vignettes

Six vignettes were created that typified preschool classroom behaviors. I assumed that teachers would know fairly reliably that flashcards are not make-believe play, so I chose activities that are make-believe play or could be seen as make-believe play depending upon their definition of make-believe play. According to the definition “only if the child gives to the activity ‘as if’ status” then it is make-believe play” (Cemore, 2001), five of the vignettes were considered make-believe play and one was not. The one that was not make-believe play took a good deal of discussion with my coder during the analysis of videotapes from my thesis as to whether it was or was not make-believe play. Although, it could be thought of as
make-believe play because of its imaginative nature, drawing on the easel was seen as constructive play, according to play definitions used. The vignettes were as follows:

Vignette 1: Child with blocks and cars
Vignette 2: Child drawing at easel

Vignette 3: Child sitting and talking with prop
Vignette 4: Child sitting and talking without prop

Vignette 5: Child in housekeeping

Vignette 6: Child with puppets
Each vignette displayed a little different version of make-believe play. Often people consider make-believe play only when you dress-up, as in the housekeeping area (Vignette 5), or only macro-play when the child pretends to be something (Vignette 4). Some teachers may miss that when children are playing in blocks they are not just constructing, they are creating something to serve as something else, a building for the animals or an airport for the arriving plane (Vignette 1). I also showed a child playing alone with a small action figure (Vignette 3) that a child can engage in while waiting for an activity to stop or start, when arriving in the classroom in the morning, at snack, not just at “play time” in a “play center.” When a child is “writing” invitations to the puppet Bee’s birthday party, he is engaged in make-believe play (Vignette 6). The scribblings on paper represent something other than the scribbling; it is an invitation, and it is an integral part of the play scene (going to a birthday party). The controversial scene of the child at the easel (Vignette 2) is the one that would get the teachers talking the most. Is drawing make-believe play or constructive play? I classified it as constructive. But I knew this would get the teachers talking and explaining just what they really use to classify something as make-believe play or not make-believe play.

- How important is make-believe play in your classroom?

  I wanted them to tell me what place make-believe has compared to other things. I believe this is shown through actions, materials, time, and interactions. So I asked further questions on how make-believe is encouraged.

- Do you promote make-believe play?

  This is a yes or no question that flows into the next question.

- What types of make-believe play are encouraged?

  Often teachers promote make-believe play if it is with others but do not promote
solitary make-believe play. Other controversial areas of play they could address were
differing gender roles, dressing up as men and women, females playing in blocks, males
playing in dresses, only macro-play, or only micro-play.

- How?

Teachers can say they are promoting make-believe play simply because they have an
area in the room called “housekeeping.” But what do they actively do to promote make-
believe? I feel you can tell what a teacher values through observation of the classroom - the
time allotted for free play, the space provided for pretend activities, the flexibility of moving
materials from area to area, the use of “teachable moments” to expand on the make-believe
of the children, the materials provided for make-believe play, the teacher’s physical presence
in/or near the make-believe play areas, interactions that support and facilitate longer and
more advanced levels of make-believe play, and interest in what the children are involved in
while engaged in make-believe play.

- How much time?

If make-believe play is truly promoted and valued there will be extended periods of at
least 30 minutes twice a day when children are allowed to choose make-believe play
(Christie, Johnson, & Peckover, 1988).

- What kinds of material?

Does the center have housekeeping open daily and no other types of make-believe
play? Do they offer macro- and micro-play opportunities on a daily basis? Are materials
open-ended, such as boxes, blocks, scarves, or only one-use items such as a pretend blender?

- How do children know you do or do not value play?
I think this question really gets teachers thinking about what they do in the classroom and how children perceive what they do. This question caused them to pause and analyze their actions.

- McDonald’s Vignette

This question was added (as happens in quality qualitative studies) during the data collection phase. I used an example of something I witnessed in a classroom I was observing to illustrate someone not valuing play. I used this example to explain how actions can speak values to a child. After that interview I then used the example at all following interviews without telling the informant it was an example of not valuing play. I instead described the scene from the classroom and asked the teacher how they would handle the particular situation.

I was observing in a classroom during free-play time. Three children were in the corner of the room, which had a bookshelf, books, pillows, and beanbags. This was the library area of the room. The children were audible from the observation booth, where I was observing, which was situated across the room. The teacher went over to the children and told them “You need to be quiet. This is the quiet area of the room.’ One of the children replied “We’re at McDonald’s!” To which the teacher said sternly “Well, you’re not at McDonald’s right now. You’re at school and you have to be quiet.”

Informants

The informants included one 6-year-old child, ten preschool teachers from two local preschool centers, and three university educators from a local university. The 6-year-old child was a former student of the researcher who was recruited to help in the creation of
several vignettes that the teachers would view during their interviews (see Appendix B). The ten teachers were employed at two centers in a midwestern community. The teachers were from six different classrooms and varied in teaching experience from 2-14 years as lead or assisting teachers. All teachers had taught or were currently teaching preschool age children. One teacher was teaching 2 year olds and one was working as an administrator. Four teachers had completed a master’s degree, four teachers received a bachelor’s degree, and two teachers had completed some college. Those teachers with degrees had varying majors (Curriculum and Instruction, Child Development, Child and Family Services, Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, and Special Education) (see below). Teachers without degrees but who had attended college had not declared majors. The three university educators were from three different emphasis areas that might lead to teaching preschool children (elementary education, early childhood education, and special education) (see below).

**Teacher participant descriptions**

**Teacher Participant #1**: Sally received a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and has taught for eight years. Her experience is with 2-4 year olds. At the time of the study she worked for a community preschool as an administrative assistant.

**Teacher Participant #2**: Tina was attending college during the study and had not declared a major. She had ten years teaching experience with infants-kindergarten and at the time was teaching for a community preschool.

**Teacher Participant #3**: Lucy has a bachelor’s degree in consumer and family sciences. She has taught for thirteen years, including toddlers thru kindergarten-age children. During this study Lucy was teaching at a community preschool.

**Teacher Participant #4**: Meg has a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and has been teaching for five years. She has taught children 2 years of age thru sixth grade. At the time of this study Meg was teaching at a community preschool.

1 Names have been changed.
Teacher Participant #5: Krystle has taken some college courses and has been teaching for twenty years. Her experience is primarily with infants thru first grade. During this study she was teaching at a community preschool.

Teacher Participant #6: Dana has a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education and has been teaching preschool for nine years. At the time of this study she was teaching preschool at a university laboratory school.

Teacher Participant #7: Sara has a master’s in special education and has been teaching for fourteen years in preschool settings. During this study Sara was teaching preschool at a university laboratory school.

Teacher Participant #8: Ellen has a master’s degree in early childhood education and has been teaching preschool for eight years. At the time of this study Ellen was teaching preschool at a university laboratory school.

Teacher Participant #9: Emory has a master’s degree in child development and has taught preschool for two and a half years. During this study Emory was teaching preschool at a university laboratory school.

Teacher Participant #10: Anna has a master’s degree in curriculum and instruction and has been teaching preschool for seven years. At the time of this study Anna was teaching preschool at a university laboratory school.

Teacher participants 1-5 taught at a community preschool in a midwestern city that was licensed to serve 60 children (2-5 years) all day. The classrooms were grouped by age - 2-3 years, 3-4 years, and 4-5 years - and followed developmentally appropriate practice. Active discovery was fostered and an attempt was made to balance teacher-directed and child-initiated activities. The school did not follow a particular curriculum model but each teacher was free to build the curriculum around the needs of the children using her knowledge of several curriculum models and strategies. Each classroom had at least one head teacher and one assistant teacher and they often had many volunteer and practicum students from the local university.
Teacher participants 6-10 taught at a university laboratory school that served children 24 months through kindergarten. The preschool programs were all-day and multi-age. An age and gender balance was strived for in the classrooms which includes children with disabilities. This program is accredited by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs (from National Association for the Education of Young Children). Developmentally appropriate practice was followed in the classrooms. The school did not follow a certain curriculum model; rather each teacher was free to build the curriculum around the needs of the children using her knowledge of several curriculum models and strategies. Each classroom had at least one head teacher and one assistant teacher and they often had many volunteer and practicum students from the university.

Of the 10 teacher participants only 8 had full data from their interviews. Two of the teacher participants had portions of their interviews missing or inaudible. The 8 teachers with full interviews were used for all analysis while all 10 teacher interviews were used to analyze the video vignettes.

**Faculty participant descriptions**

**Faculty Participant #1**: Gwen has a doctoral degree in human development and family studies. She has six years experience as an elementary school psychologist, three years experience researching preschool children, and three years experience teaching at the college level. At the time of this study Gwen was an assistant professor of human development and family studies teaching special education. Her research interests included assessment and programming for young children with disabilities, early literacy skills, and intervention development for behavior issues. She was involved in professional organizations such as the Council for Exceptional Children and the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

**Faculty Participant #2**: Kayla has a doctoral degree in child and family studies and has been teaching at the college level for twenty-three years. Kayla has worked with preschool children for three and a half years, and holds an early childhood education teaching license. At the time of the study Kayla was a practicum placement coordinator and taught curriculum and assessment for early childhood educators. Her
research interests included parenting, early intervention, teacher development and supervision, and early childhood education. She belonged to the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

**Faculty Participant #3:** Caroline has a doctoral degree in curriculum and instruction. Caroline has fifteen years of college teaching experience. She has thirteen years experience teaching middle school children. During this study she was an associate professor of curriculum and instruction who taught primary literacy. Her area of research interest included literacy and teacher education.

Faculty participants 1-3 all worked at a land grant university in the Midwest. It is a Carnegie Doctoral/Research-Extensive university that serves more than 26,000 students. The university has nine colleges. These participants came from the College of Education and the College of Family and Consumer Sciences (both of which now constitute the College of Human Sciences).

**Procedures**

The Human Subjects Review Board at Iowa State University approved the project in February 2003 (see Appendix C), and I applied for and received a grant from the Graduate Student Senate to conduct this research. Data collection was attempted first in the summer of 2003. All preschool centers listed in the Ames phonebook were given an identification number. Each number was written on a piece of paper and drawn from a hat. Attempts were made to contact the director at each of the ten centers. After two weeks I still had not spoken directly with any directors. Based on my interactions with staff and answering machines at the chosen centers and discussions with ECE faculty members, I made the decision to delay data collection until the fall when directors would be more readily accessible.

After informal discussions later in the summer with two directors not on the "random" list, I decided to go ahead with the data collection at these two centers because of interest on the part of the directors and my familiarity with the programs. I met with each
director and discussed the process and time involved for each teacher. Each director presented the study to the teachers at staff meetings and gathered participant informed consent documents at that time.

The first center scheduled a time that I could meet with each teacher for 30-45 minutes in succession. I set up a television and videotape player in a private room at the center. Each teacher was greeted upon arrival, the informed consent form was discussed, the process of the interview that day was discussed (see Appendix D), and each teacher was asked if she had any questions before proceeding. The audio recorder was turned on and the interview began (see Appendix E). At the completion of each interview the teacher was given a $10.00 gift certificate to a local store. Interviews at the subsequent center were scheduled individually and were completed over a four-month period using the same procedure.

Per request of my dissertation committee I added three more participants who were college educators to gain the perspective of those who may be teaching future preschool teachers. I invited and received informed consent from three college educators (see Appendix F). I then changed the interview used with the preschool teachers to reflect this different perspective (see Appendix G). These interviews were conducted similarly to the teacher interviews. I contacted university educators who were in education and child development. The first three who were available for the interview became the participants.

**Analysis of Qualitative Data**

**Establishing trustworthiness and authenticity**

To establish the trustworthiness and authenticity of the study, several verification procedures had been used in the planning of the research, interview construction, and data collection, and data analysis. Creswell (1998) described eight procedures often discussed in
the literature: prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer reviewing, negative case analysis, clarifying researcher bias, member checks, rich thick description, and external audits. He recommends that “qualitative researchers engage in at least two of them in any given study” (p. 203). Six of the recommended procedures that were used in this study are prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer reviewing, clarifying researcher bias, member checking, and rich thick description.

Prolonged engagement includes building trust with informants, learning the culture, and checking for distortions introduced by researcher and/or informants (Creswell, 1998). Prolonged engagement was established by prior contacts with centers involved and my personal experience. Both centers in this study had been utilized for prior research I have conducted. I had working agency relationships with the directors of both centers and had many contacts with teachers at each site through prior research, university student placements arrangements, and/or as fellow university students. I had spent time in each center’s classrooms and even had taught previously in one of the centers. This experience as a preschool teacher in this center and others also brought trustworthiness to this study. I knew the culture of preschool teachers having been one for several years and as a university educator of future teachers.

Triangulation is when the researcher uses other sources to provide corroborating evidence (Creswell, 1998). In this study the preschool teacher’s perspective was being examined. Only a preschool teacher can share the preschool teacher’s perspective. However, since my committee suggested that some information from those who may influence the perspectives of preschool teachers (university professors) would be a valuable perspective, that perspective was used for triangulation.
Peer reviewing provides an external check of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) similar to interrater reliability in quantitative research (Creswell, 1998). It is suggested that peer reviewers be strictly peers so that a power issue does not evolve in discussion of the study. For this reason, a fellow doctoral student in human development and family studies served as my peer reviewer. She served as a constant check, or conscience. I utilized the reviewer to listen to me after interviews, verify transcriptions, check for possible influence on informants’ answers I may have made, and serve as a checker once horizontalization of the data occurred, meaning units developed, and a structural description was created.

Clarifying researcher bias is a full written statement by me concerning my past history, biases, prejudices, and orientations that most likely shaped the study. It is important in qualitative research that the researcher’s bias is up front and clear so that the reader of the findings understands the possible impact on the inquiry (Merriam, 1988). This was established in the section titled “Researcher as Instrument.”

Member checking is considered to be “the most critical for establishing credibility” (Guba, 1985, p. 314). It was used to verify that I correctly interrupted or summarized the informants’ statements. This was achieved by sending the informants who had a complete interview a summary of the main points of their interview after coding had been completed. I then asked them if what I had written accurately described what they said (see Appendix C).

Rich, thick description can be used to infer transferability. With very detailed descriptions about each center and teachers, readers can decide if the information is transferable to them because of shared characteristics (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen., 1993, p. 32). This description of participants and environments was given in the earlier section on “informants.”
Analysis


Data managing
I created and organized tapes, wrote reports from the interviews, and transcribed audiotapes.

Reading, memoing
I read through text, made margin notes, and formed initial codes.

Describing
I described in depth the meaning of the experience/the question for the researcher.

Classifying
I found and listed statements of experiences for individuals (horizontalization of the data) treating each statement as having equal worth. Then I grouped these statements into meaning units.

Interpreting
I developed a textural description, based on “what happened,” a structural description of “how the phenomenon was experienced,” and an overall description of the experience, the “essence.”

Representing, visualizing
I narrated the “essence” of the experience, including the use of tables or figures of statements and meaning units.
CHAPTER 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As an initial step in analysis I self-reflected on the topic of play and make-believe play as it related to my experiences as both a preschool teacher and as a university educator. I used the interview protocols from both the teacher interviews and the university educator interviews to write my personal thoughts on the topics. I then transcribed the interviews and had the transcriptions peer reviewed. After transcribing the teacher interviews and teacher educators’ interviews I read through each of them several times. I then read through each interview to pull out the meanings from each. I focused on all passages that referenced the participant’s opinion on play and make-believe play. I wrote the words that described the essence of each description of play or make-believe play in the passages. Then my peer reviewer read through all the interviews that had my notes written on each page. She checked for agreement with my analysis. Those things she differed on we discussed and came to agreement. Issues addressed were: she thought the word “unrealistic” would work better than my words “not real.” I agreed and the change was made. Also, some of the passages that had “intrinsic” or “freedom from external rules” or “free” seemed interchangeable or there was confusion as to which category each actually belonged in. I thought this was a very good observation and I went back to the literature to investigate further after finding that it was difficult to ascertain how these two ideas actually differed and on what lines. I found that while “freedom from external rules” can be used as a description of play it is not the best descriptor. This is true because rules very often dominate play but they are not “rules” in the general sense of the word but created by the child from their experiences and/or understanding of the world. In addition, much of what was discussed in the interviews regarding “freedom from external rules” actually speaks to the meanings under the category
“intrinsically motivated.” Thus, this left all of these passages to fall under the category “intrinsically motivated.”

These listings of words then left 24 words describing play (see Table 2, Column A) and 23 words describing make-believe play (see Table 3, Column A). To assist in analysis, I made note cards with each word on each card. I laid these out on the floor so that each had equal importance. I then collapsed the groups of words (play and make-believe play separately analyzed) into fewer groupings for play (see Table 2, Column B) and make-believe play (see Table 3, Column B) leaving 11 play themes (see Table 2, Column C) and ten make-believe play themes (see Table 3, Column C). As I was analyzing the different words and collapsing them into groups, I noticed that many of the themes emerging were categories from the literature on play. I then went to the literature and made note cards representing categories based on the literature. The categories are (a) play as a disposition: intrinsically motivated, attention to means, exploration is guided by the question “What can I do with this object?”, relation to instrumental behaviors, freedom from externally imposed rules, and actively engaged, (b) observable behavior, and (c) context. I then re-analyzed the original words from the interviews based on the categories from the literature. Many of the themes fit into the categories from the literature while some did not. It appeared that the items that did not fit were more examples of what play does (theory-wise) than the definition of what it is. All themes were kept and used for continued analysis regardless of whether or not they fit into a category from the literature.
Table 2. Initial Analysis of *Play* Words with All Participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Initial play words in interviews</th>
<th>B. Play word groupings</th>
<th>C. Final play themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Actively Engaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choices</td>
<td>Diverse – wide range</td>
<td>Diverse – wide range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse – wide range</td>
<td>Experiential(based on their)</td>
<td>Pretense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>What can I do with this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Interaction with materials</td>
<td>Fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal-minded/directed</td>
<td>Interaction with people</td>
<td>Intrinsically Motivated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagination</td>
<td>Socialization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incidental learning</td>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interacting with materials</td>
<td>Choices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interacting with people</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not real</td>
<td>Process oriented</td>
<td>Attention to means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>Purposeful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>Role-taking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process oriented</td>
<td>Socialization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process Oriented</td>
<td>Therapeutic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role-taking</td>
<td>Personality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialization</td>
<td>Therapeutic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therapeutic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. Initial Analysis of *Make-believe Play* Words with All Participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Initial make-believe play words in interviews</th>
<th>B. Make-believe play word groupings</th>
<th>C. Final make-believe play themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive enhancing</td>
<td>Cognitive enhancing</td>
<td>Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextual</td>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Skill practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional release</td>
<td>Learn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>Contextual</td>
<td>Contextual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Pretense – creative expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free choice</td>
<td>Imagination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Expression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagination</td>
<td>Self expression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imitative</td>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>What can I do with this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction w/others</td>
<td>Free choice</td>
<td>Intrinsically motivated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn</td>
<td>Unstructured</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of the ordinary</td>
<td>Fun</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretending</td>
<td>Imitative</td>
<td>Pretense – imitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>Pretending</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representational</td>
<td>Representational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role-taking</td>
<td>Role-taking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self expression</td>
<td>Interaction w/others</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill practice</td>
<td>Socialization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialization</td>
<td>Out of the ordinary</td>
<td>Pretense – fantasy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therapeutic</td>
<td>Unrealistic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrealistic</td>
<td>Therapeutic</td>
<td>Therapeutic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstructured</td>
<td>Emotional release</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To look further at the dynamics of the interview responses, I further analyzed the data, beginning with the teachers' play data. The teachers are listed with each of the words from her interview (see Table 4). I then listed each participant with the collapsed word lists-categories (see Table 4). I then made a table to illustrate in how many interviews each word/category was mentioned and gave percentage of participants in each group who mentioned each particular emerging theme (see Table 5). This same process was followed for analysis of make-believe play (see Tables 6 and 7).
Table 4. Play Words by Teachers and Collapsed into Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher 1</th>
<th>Teacher 2</th>
<th>Teacher 3</th>
<th>Teacher 4</th>
<th>Teacher 5</th>
<th>Teacher 8</th>
<th>Teacher 9</th>
<th>Teacher 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Play Words</td>
<td>Play Words</td>
<td>Play Words</td>
<td>Play Words</td>
<td>Play Words</td>
<td>Play Words</td>
<td>Play Words</td>
<td>Play Words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Personality</td>
<td>Active Problem solving</td>
<td>Imagination Socialization Active Learn</td>
<td>Learn Interaction w/objects</td>
<td>Learn Fun Diverse Imagination Experiential Ability Fun</td>
<td>Imitation Role-playing Therapeutic Fun</td>
<td>Not real Exploration Interacting w/environ</td>
<td>Free Learn Goal-minded Interaction w/ materials Choices Engaged Intrinsic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Teachers 6 and 7 were not included in this portion of analysis due to incomplete interview data.

Table 5. Distribution of Emerging Play Themes by Teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>%**</th>
<th>Teacher 1</th>
<th>Teacher 2</th>
<th>Teacher 3</th>
<th>Teacher 4</th>
<th>Teacher 5</th>
<th>Teacher 8</th>
<th>Teacher 9</th>
<th>Teacher 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actively engaged</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretense</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What can I do with this?</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsically motivated</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therapeutic</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Teachers 6 and 7 were not included in this portion of analysis due to incomplete interview data.** Percentage of teachers mentioning each particular theme.
Table 6. Make-believe Play Words by Teachers and Collapsed into Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher 1</th>
<th>Teacher 2</th>
<th>Teacher 3</th>
<th>Teacher 4</th>
<th>Teacher 5</th>
<th>Teacher 8</th>
<th>Teacher 9</th>
<th>Teacher 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make-believe Play Words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imaginative</td>
<td>Imitative</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Problem-solving</td>
<td>Emotional release</td>
<td>Free choice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-expression</td>
<td>Imitative</td>
<td>Pretending</td>
<td>Not real</td>
<td>Fantasy</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>Self-expression</td>
<td>Imitation</td>
<td>Out of ordinary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imaginative</td>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imaginative</td>
<td>Not real</td>
<td>Expression</td>
<td>Unstructured</td>
<td>Socialization</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialization</td>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>Role-play</td>
<td>Not real</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role taking</td>
<td>Not real</td>
<td>Interactive</td>
<td>Representation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representation</td>
<td>Imaginative</td>
<td>Therapeutic</td>
<td>Role-play</td>
<td>Socialization</td>
<td>Skill practice</td>
<td>Cognitively</td>
<td>enhancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretense-creative</td>
<td>Pretense-creative</td>
<td>What can I do?</td>
<td>Pretense-creative</td>
<td>Pretense-creative</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Pretense-imitative</td>
<td>Pretense-imitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitively</td>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>motivated</td>
<td>Cognitively</td>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>motived</td>
<td>Cognitively</td>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsically</td>
<td>motivated</td>
<td>Pretense-fantasy</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Intrinsically</td>
<td>motivated</td>
<td>Pretense-imitative</td>
<td>Pretense-fantasy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Teachers 6 and 7 were not included in this portion of analysis due to incomplete interview data.
Table 7. Distribution of Emerging Make-believe Play Themes by Teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>% **</th>
<th>Teacher 1</th>
<th>Teacher 2</th>
<th>Teacher 3</th>
<th>Teacher 4</th>
<th>Teacher 5</th>
<th>Teacher 8</th>
<th>Teacher 9</th>
<th>Teacher 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretense -</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative expression</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imitative</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantasy</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>What can I do with this?</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsically motivated</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Fun</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therapeutic</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Teachers 6 and 7 were not included in this portion of analysis due to incomplete interview data.

** Percentage of teachers mentioning each particular theme.
The faculty data then were analyzed in the same manner. First the faculty participants were listed with each of the play words from her interview (see Table 8). I then listed each participant with the collapsed word lists-categories (see Table 8). I then made a table to illustrate how many interviews each word/category was mentioned in and gave the percentage of participants in each group who mentioned each particular emerging theme (see Table 9). This same process was followed with the make-believe play analysis (see Tables 10 and 11).

Table 8. Play Words by Faculty and Collapsed into Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty 1</th>
<th>Faculty 2</th>
<th>Faculty 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Play Words</strong></td>
<td><strong>Play Words</strong></td>
<td><strong>Play Words</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn</td>
<td>Learn</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>Process oriented</td>
<td>Imagination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>Engaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposeful</td>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Role-taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Free from external constraints</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Play Words Collapsed into Themes</strong></th>
<th><strong>Play Words Collapsed into Themes</strong></th>
<th><strong>Play Words Collapsed into Themes</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Intrinsically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What can I do?</td>
<td>Attention to means</td>
<td>motivated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsically motivated</td>
<td>Intrinsically motivated</td>
<td>Pretense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively engaged</td>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Actively engaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Intrinsically motivated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. Distribution of Emerging Play Themes by Faculty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>%*</th>
<th>Faculty 1</th>
<th>Faculty 2</th>
<th>Faculty 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actively engaged</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretense</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What can I do with this?</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsically motivated</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention to means</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentage of faculty members mentioning each emerging theme.
Table 10. Make-believe Play Words by Faculty and Collapsed into Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty 1</th>
<th>Faculty 2</th>
<th>Faculty 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Representation</td>
<td>Imagination</td>
<td>Unstructured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role-taking</td>
<td>Role-taking</td>
<td>Role-taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not real</td>
<td>Not real</td>
<td>Imaginative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>Role-taking</td>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn</td>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Make-believe Play Words Collapsed into Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pretense-imitative</th>
<th>Pretense-creative</th>
<th>Pretense-creative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretense-fantasy</td>
<td>Pretense-imitative</td>
<td>Pretense-fantasy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What can I do?</td>
<td>Pretense-imitative</td>
<td>Pretense-fantasy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Intrinsically motivated</td>
<td>Intrinsically motivated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11. Distribution of Emerging Make-believe Play Themes by Faculty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>%*</th>
<th>Faculty 1</th>
<th>Faculty 2</th>
<th>Faculty 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative expression</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imitative</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantasy</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What can I do with this?</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsically motivated</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentage of faculty members mentioning each emerging theme.

Composite Description of the Phenomenon of Preschool Teachers’ Understanding of Play and Make-believe Play

Play

Preschool teachers think of play in diverse ways. When asked to define play the teachers were taken aback by how difficult it was for them to define.

(T3): I wouldn’t do a very good job explaining this I guess (laughter) I don’t know.

(T10): Oh good gravy, (laughter) I don’t know if I have ever been asked that question, honestly. You know you have that definition in your mind, it is blurry but you have that definition. Although mine is not concrete and it is definitely variable.
They could easily give examples but defining it was challenging. I reassured them that it is difficult and that even those who specialize in the study of play have a hard time. I hoped that this would ease their minds and help their thoughts flow. Most of them took a pause and then responded. Teachers and faculty described play in several ways such as that it was active, experiential, and fun. The full listing is provided in Table 2, Column A. I whittled their responses down into 11 themes: active engagement, practice, pretense, diverse, what can I do with this, fun, social, intrinsically motivated, learning, attention to means, and therapeutic.

When I split the respondents into teachers and faculty, only 10 themes remained for the teachers' responses (see Table 12) the difference being that teachers did not speak of play in terms of attention to means or being process oriented. The following is how the teachers described play with their ideas placed within the remaining 10 themes.

Table 12. Themes Outlining the Phenomenon of Play for a Preschool Teacher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1. Play is active engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2. Children use play to practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3. Play is diverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4. Play is pretense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 5. Play is exploration guided by the question “What can I do with this object?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 6. Play is fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 7. Play is social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 8. Play is intrinsically motivated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 9. Play is how children learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 10. Play is therapeutic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theme 1: Play is active engagement**

Play is active engagement means children are DOING when they are playing. This is a common theme of play as given in the play definition for this study: play as a disposition (intrinsically motivated, attention to means, “What can I do with this object,” relation to
instrumental behaviors, freedom from external rules, and active engagement), as observable behaviors, and as context. Four of the eight teacher participants described active engagement as part of play.

(T1): Uhm. I would say the definition of play is (long pause) something that a child does. (long pause) I think it is something that a child does in order to (pause) to just kind of figure things out.

(T3): It is hard. I would say it’s what children do throughout the day just to get along, using toys, their coloring, they’re running around on the playground – that’s all involved in play.

(T5): Uhm, that the children are learning thru their play so they’re taking in the things around them in the different centers, you know that is how they are gaining all their skills.

(T5): Pretty much like I said before through their play (is how they learn) and it is not a set thing where they sit down and they have to do specifics um but that you’re interacting with them through the dramatic play center whether it is they are pretending to cook a meal or um you know in bouncing a ball with them outside or just in the different projects that they are doing around the room if not they are getting a lot of their skills being, doing the things that they are interested in and going off their interests.

(T10): So I think there is a set idea that children are using, as they interact with materials, that’s it. A set idea as they interact with materials.

**Theme 2: Children use play to practice**

Play as practice fits with Piaget’s idea of assimilation and becoming proficient at a task or skill. Surprisingly, only one teacher out of eight mentioned this idea of practice being play.

(T10): I think you can pull in so many things with make believe play you know not just cognitively, he was writing, he is getting fine motor practice.

**Theme 3: Play is diverse**

Only one of the eight teachers mentioned diversity, but this is what researchers are so aware of and what can make it so hard to define.
(T5): I think actually in a lot of ways ya know what we do is a fun learning situation – playing the other day – going around the apple tree – picking their names off the tree – they were playing as far as they were concerned – it’s a game but they’re also learning – so ya know – and play reaches so wide (laughter) it’s really hard to – play is gonna go from structured this is what we are doing to total wild imagination.

**Theme 4: Play is pretense**

Five of the eight teachers described play as having something to do with pretense, meaning someone or something is other than who or what it really is. I expected this number to be higher as play and make-believe play sometimes are seen as synonymous. What this may speak to is that teachers acknowledge make-believe play as part of play but that there are other types of play as well.

(T3): What is play? (laughter) Play is, play is imagination and they, children using their imagination, making a block become a car or making another toy something other than what the toy was intended for – I guess that’s play – that’s a hard, I never thought about what play is – they just play.

(T8): It is all these things that children do it can be anything from becoming another character, another persona or just acting out things in real life.

(T8) That is the type of play that I see which children um, become another character or choose to play in the family center, mommy and daddy, you have two mommies, two daddies, and just the child kind a choosing to do something else. We right now have a lot of astronauts, they become the role of an astronaut and go off to space.

**Theme 5: Play is exploration guided by the question “What can I do with this object?”**

One half of the teachers described play as exploration or interaction with materials. This level of agreement may be due to the open-ended, child-initiated trend of developmentally appropriate practice that is known in early childhood education as being current best practice. This philosophy fits with the exploration and interaction with materials that these teachers were seeing as play.
(T4): Play is what’s the word – the interaction with objects either – with yourself, sometimes others, or other objects that you can – it seems hard.

(T5): Uhm, that the children are learning through their play so they’re taking in the things around them in the different centers, you know that is how they are gaining all their skills, um, that they are happy, and they feel secure that they can explore the different areas that they can um develop friendships and trust in relationships with the adults around them.

(T5): Pretty much like I said before through their play and it is not a set thing where they sit down and they have to do specifics um but that you’re interacting with them through the dramatic play center whether it is they are pretending to cook a meal or um you know in bouncing a ball with them outside or just in the different projects that they are doing around the room if not they are getting a lot of their skills being, doing the things that they are interested in and going off their interests.

(T9): Right, exactly, I think play is um, interacting I just said that, interacting with your environment. So play is maybe, it can be a lot of different things, it can be doing something with the materials around, you could be coming something else that you really aren’t. I would say the only time for preschool children when they aren’t playing is when um, they are sitting and eating or doing something that meets their basic needs. Does that make sense? Like when they are sleeping I wouldn’t say they are playing, when they are eating I wouldn’t say they are playing, when they are sitting quietly, I wouldn’t call that play necessarily but I would incorporate everything else that they are doing to interact with their environment in this age group, I would call that play. So yeah just exploring who they are and what they are doing and defining, yeah, who they are a person as they are growing.

(T10): So I think there is a set idea that children are using, as they interact with materials, that’s it. A set idea as they interact with materials-- in a meaningful way.

**Theme 6: Play is fun**

Three out of the eight participants mentioned enjoyment as part of play. I was surprised more teachers did not mention fun. If you see a child playing usually the most identifiable way to know they are playing is their affect. Maybe teachers do not see play as fun or it is possible that in a research interview situation the teachers assumed that the “fun” aspect is not “scientific” and therefore not what I was looking for in a response.

(T1): Play is fun, (laugh), and it’s also how kids learn and how they explore the world around them um you know it’s how they figure out how things work. You know by
traveling and sand box how mold works things like that, that’s what play is all about. It’s fun and they love it, and they’re learning while they’re doing it.

(T2): Uhm, a fun activity, I wouldn’t say play necessarily has to teach anything but usually it does. I guess that’s it.

(T5): I think actually in a lot of ways ya know what we do is a fun learning situation – playing the other day – going around the apple tree – picking their names off the tree – they were playing as far as they were concerned – it’s a game but they’re also learning – so ya know – and play reaches so wide (laughter) it’s really hard to – play is gonna go from structured this is what we are doing to total wild imagination.

(T5): That they are happy, and they feel secure that they can explore the different areas that they can um develop friendships and trust in relationships with the adults around them.

Theme 7: Play is social

Only one teacher described play as being social. I found this very interesting because teachers often cite the social benefits of play as one of the best reasons for play’s inclusion in the classroom curriculum yet it was only mentioned once as a descriptor of play. As in play as fun, social might have seemed too “common” and not scientific.

(T5): They feel secure that they can explore the different areas that they can um develop friendships and trust in relationships with the adults around them.

Theme 8: Play is intrinsically motivated

One teacher mentioned that play is intrinsically motivated. This is one of the more important distinctive characteristics of play from a theorist’s or researcher’s point of view.

(T10): Uhm, I think the primary way is through their play and um, I think that is a great place to start because they get to make so many choices when they are playing they get to choose where they play, who they play with, it’s not prescribed by anybody like when you go to large group, you know, the teacher has a set agenda of what they expect the outcomes of the group should be. Where in play you don’t have to have a set agenda for the children. You set up different ideas or things and have the children play with them is how they want to. So you can let the children build their own skills.

(T10): Well, they choose it on their own.
Theme 9: Play is how children learn

More teachers (six out of eight) mentioned this theme as being a descriptor of play than any other emerging theme. It is drilled into the heads of early childhood educators that children learn best through play. This level of teacher acknowledgement of play as the way children learn is promising. Teachers may know that children learn through play but may not know the specifics of why and how. This may be the reason lower consensus was achieved in many of the other emerging themes.

(T1): Uhm. I would say the definition of play is (long pause) something that a child does. (long pause) I think it is something that a child does in order to (pause) to just kind of figure things out.

(T1): I think play for 3- and 4-year-olds is just the best way that they know how to learn. It’s the way then can experience, uhm, it’s just the way they can try things out to see what works for them and their personalities...

(T2): Play is fun, (laugh), and it’s also how kids learn and how they explore the world around them um you know it’s how they figure out how things work. You know by traveling and sand box how mold works things like that, that’s what play is all about. It’s fun and they love it, and they’re learning while they’re doing it.

(T2): Uhm, a fun activity, I wouldn’t say play necessarily has to teach anything but usually it does. I guess that’s it.

(T3): I think they learn through playing and doing and seeing other things going on around them, so seeing teachers model behaviors or watching other kids and just being able to do it themselves is how they learn.

(T4): How do they learn? I think they learn lots of different ways – they learn through play, they learn through observing, through doing ...  

(T5): Lot of kids at this age learn through play, learn through play – I believe you learn through seeing, hearing, and doing – playing is part of doing.

(T5): I think actually in a lot of ways ya know what we do is a fun learning situation – playing the other day – going around the apple tree – picking their names off the tree – they were playing as far as they were concerned – it’s a game but they’re also
learning – so ya know – and play reaches so wide (laughter) it’s really hard to – play is gonna go from structured this is what we are doing to total wild imagination.

(T5): Uhm, that the children are learning through their play so their taking in the things around them in the different centers, you know that is how they are gaining all their skills, um, that they are happy, and they feel secure that they can explore the different areas that they can um develop friendships and trust in relationships with the adults around them.

(T5): Pretty much like I said before through their play and it is not a set thing where they sit down and they have to do specifics um but that you’re interacting with them through the dramatic play center whether it is they are pretending to cook a meal or um you know in bouncing a ball with them outside or just in the different projects that they are doing around the room if not they are getting a lot of their skills being, doing the things that they are interested in and going off their interests.

(T10): Uhm, I think the primary way is through their play and um, I think that is a great place to start because they get to make so many choices when they are playing they get to choose where they play, who they play with, it’s not prescribed by anybody like when you go to large group, you know, the teacher has a set agenda of what they expect the outcomes of the group should be. Where in play you don’t have to have a set agenda for the children. You set up different ideas or things and have the children play with them is how they want to. So you can let the children build their own skills.

**Theme 10: Play is therapeutic**

Two of the eight teachers mentioned something therapeutic in nature in relation to play. The idea of play as a cathartic experience or a way to deal with the emotional life is what drove much of play theory and research in the 1900s, once we moved away from the idea of play as a physical expenditure of energy. The therapeutic processes of play are widely held as one of the most valuable benefits that play offers to young children.

(T1): I think it can be. Uhm and I think it can also be uhm just for fun. But I think it can be used as an emotional release for the kids.

(T8) Therapeutical process involves play, it is a safe way for them to kind of deal with those feelings and those emotions, um I think play is such a simple word but it is so much.
Statement of play for teachers

The teachers described play in many different ways touching on several different themes. Play as pretense, play as exploration of what I can do with this object, and play as the way children learn were the predominant themes of what play is for the preschool teacher.

Make-believe play

Eight themes outline make-believe play for preschool teachers (see Table 13).

Table 13. Themes Outlining the Phenomenon of Make-believe Play for a Preschool Teacher

| Theme 1: Make-believe play is a mode of learning |
| Theme 2: Make-believe play is contextual |
| Theme 3: Make-believe play is pretense (creative expression, imitative, and fantasy) |
| Theme 4: Make-believe play is exploration guided by the question “what can I do with this object?” |
| Theme 5: Make-believe play is intrinsically motivated |
| Theme 6: Make-believe play is fun |
| Theme 7: Make-believe play is social |
| Theme 8: Make-believe play is therapeutic |

Theme 1: Make-believe play is a mode of learning

Teachers see play as how children learn, but fewer of them (three out of eight) mentioned make-believe play as a mode of learning.

(T2): Play is fun, (laugh) and it's also how kids learn and how they explore the world around them um you know it's how they figure out how things work. You know by traveling and sand box how mold works things like that, that's what play is all about. It's fun and they love it, and they're learning while they're doing it.

(T2): Uhm, a fun activity, I wouldn’t say play necessarily has to teach anything but usually it does. I guess that’s it.

(T5): Uhm yeah we have the areas, the different areas set up and try to interact sometimes – personally I like, as long as the kids are doing their thing to let them do
it and not – to get in there and say – okay you’re playing beauty shop, you are fixing my hair – but let them do what they are doing – I think it’s very important in the room – they’re developing – they’re actually in a learning situation with each other – they’re developing social skills, they’re expressing themselves, it’s not just something that people can control – this is how you play.

(T5): Pretty much like I said before through their play and it is not a set thing where they sit down and they have to do specifics um but that you’re interacting with them through the dramatic play center whether it is they are pretending to cook a meal or um you know in bouncing a ball with them outside or just in the different projects that they are doing around the room if not they are getting a lot of their skills being, doing the things that they are interested in and going off their interests.

(T10): Well, I think it is very important like what I was saying earlier that it is I think It is one of the highest cognitively enhancing, because you have to do you have to have that representative thinking but then you pull in other things too. You usually do it with a peer although he is not in this, but most of the time it is with a peer so you have that social relationship too. I think you can pull in so many things with make believe play you know not just cognitively, he was writing, he is getting fine motor practice, um, and then I think too emotionally kids can sort through a lot emotionally, say B didn’t invite him to his birthday party then how do I feel about that, and how do you feel about that you know, so there is so much you can do within make believe.

Theme 2: Make-believe play is contextual

One teacher mentioned the idea of context. Context can sometimes be what people say, such as “I know play when I see it,” meaning they assess the whole of the situation.

While I think context definitely contributes to correctly identifying play, it is often not articulated as such.

(T2): You know and I was thinking about this as I was watching it, and I don’t know if this will help you or not, but I think one of the things that…I have to try to figure out how to say this. When I think of make-believe or that kind of play I think about ya know the surroundings.

Theme 3: Make-believe play is pretense (creative expression, imitative, and fantasy)

All teachers saw make-believe play as pretense. They all described it as having that “as if” quality in many different words.
(T1): Uhm, I would say that fantasy play is they use really go above and beyond and use their imagination. Maybe dress-up clothes and acting out uhm different situations maybe things they’ve seen teachers do or parents or other kids.

(T1): Uhm, I think it’s very important. I think it’s a way that the kids can express their creativity and just kind of act out uhm maybe some problems or situations that their not maybe sure of but it’s a way for them to express themselves.

(T2): Because they express themselves a lot in that area um they learn a lot through what they see...you also learn a lot about what’s going on in their lives. Especially, at that age, if mom and dad had a fight the night before you’re going to know, (laugh), because they’re going to act that out.

(T2): Make believe play is pretending you’re something or someone else, doing something that you wouldn’t normally do...or um, I have a child that I...preschool and he would pretend he was objects you know, so that’s something that rarely happens, but it does so (laughs).

(T2): What I think about make-believe play is what I said before about you know pretending something that’s not real like a superhero, like Harry Potter. Pretend to me, what I think of when I think of pretend is imitating or pretending like we have a kitchen set in our dramatic play area you know, and they’re pretending that they are doing laundry or washing the dishes. That’s kind of my own definition.

(T3): Probably the dramatic play ‘cause they, I think that is where a lot of the kids spend most of their time in the dramatic play center – because we get something different out all the time and it’s just been there – the best play for them to explore and do their own thing with whatever we have out.

(T2): Yeah. But, see now was doing, he was pretending to be...Harry Potter see to me that is make-believe play to me in my own mind and I don’t know if anybody else does, but in my own mind I see myself referring to um playing things that wouldn’t happen. Like what I was talking about before with the superheroes you know and it doesn’t matter what size object. I think of that as make-believe I think of pretend as pretending to be something that you don’t, you know playing with baby dolls.

(T3): I see it as the children kind of mimicking their, things that happen in their day to day lives, they make it fit their own little world – so a lot of times I’ll hear them say things that I have said to them and they make it fit whatever they’re playing – uhm – they pretending to be the mom or pretending to be the baby or pretending to be the teacher, that’s a big one – pretending to group time and I hear “class, sit down” “let’s all listen, use our listening ears” – sometimes, in my room we pretend to be monsters a lot – so they...that they are monsters, or the tiger, or the spider crawling along the floor, whatever, so. At this age it’s really fun they’re starting to, I’ve been with the 2s
and so they don't have as much imagination – so these guys have more words and really coming up with some things make-believe.

(T4): Okay – I’d have to say – just using one’s imagination,… talk about how your imagination kind of depletes as you get older – but imagination should be when playing – using your mind – doing whatever you feel like doing.

(T5): Okay – that’s much more imaginative – uh, I think kids, I think we all do – not just kids – you do draw on experience but you carry it that step beyond with your – by pretending, imagining, making-up...

(T5): If he’s doing a free-will expression then it is usually make-believe.

(T6): I just think it gives them to give an opportunity to play out roles with other peers and then you can see how much they, um, are taking in of the world around them just by watching their moms and dads or other people in their environment.

(T8): I think all sorts of stuff. I think the children enjoy themselves a lot in the dramatic play area, they find children find a role that they might not become within themselves. Really act out and see and, or choose to dramatic play area and how it is set up to.

(T9): Uh, uh, I would say that is taking on, um, a role or something they aren’t or something that might not even has to be able to be true. Like for instance, a 3-year old, 4-year old girl cannot really be a mother at this age but she can pretend. I think there is make believe because at that moment she can’t truly be that person in real life. So I think that anything they can’t do as who they are can be make believe. It can be someone totally made up like being a fairy, a dragon or whatever to taking on another role that they can’t be at that moment because of where they are in life.

(T9): I would say anything outside of what is not real and what’s actually happening at the moment is.

(T10): Okay, so they are pretending and it can be with things that really look like, represent the materials or they can make up their own props within their head. But they or I think there has to be another, no I don’t think that. I think can be on their own individually coming up with all their own stuff. I don’t think play, usually you think of play as somewhat with peers, make believe so they you kinda do on your own, I think they have to do a lot of self talk, you know, if they are by themselves, you know what they’re thinking, okay

(T10): Okay so make believe play is using materials, props, the constructive play to... to do something, to represent ideas and to expand on them and go with them.
Well, all of it takes place in their mind. I think it uses a lot of cognitive skills to be able to pretend play or make believe play cause you’re doing some much within your mind and the children have to have some representation to be able to (can’t make out).

**Theme 4: Make-believe play is exploration guided by the question “What can I do with this object?”**

One teacher mentioned exploration of materials within a dramatic play center.

(T3): Probably the dramatic play ‘cause they, I think that is where a lot of the kids spend most of their time in the dramatic play center – because we get something different out all the time and it’s just been there – the best play for them to explore and do their own thing with whatever we have out.

**Theme 5: Make-believe play is intrinsically motivated**

Many more teachers felt make-believe play is intrinsically motivated (four out of eight) compared to play (one out of eight).

(T1): Free play time so they can choose uhm, whatever activities they choose to participate in.

(T4): Okay – I’d have to say – just using one’s imagination,… talk about how your imagination kind of depletes as you get older – but imagination should be when playing – using your mind – doing whatever you feel like doing.

(T5): Unstructured.

(T5): Uhm yeah we have the areas, the different areas set up and try to interact sometimes – personally I like, as long as the kids are doing their thing to let them do it and not – to get in there and say…it’s not just something that people can control – this is how you play.

(T8): I think they can become a lot of things and children can become, or guide themselves so that’s for me in this age I think it is a key area if I had to choose one.

**Theme 6: Make-believe play is fun**

Surprisingly only one teacher described make-believe play as fun.

(T8): I think all sorts of stuff - I think the children enjoy themselves a lot in the dramatic play area, they find children find a role that they might not become within
themselves. Really act out and see and, or choose to dramatic play area and how it is set up too.

**Theme 7: Make-believe play is social**

One half of the teachers described the social aspect of make-believe play.

(T5): Uhm yeah we have the areas, the different areas set up and try to interact sometimes – personally I like, as long as the kids are doing their thing to let them do it and not – to get in there and say – okay you’re playing beauty shop, you are fixing my hair – but let them do what they are doing – I think it’s very important in the room – they’re developing – they’re actually in a learning situation with each other – they’re developing social skills, they’re expressing themselves, it’s not just something that people can control – this is how you play.

(T5): They feel secure that they can explore the different areas that they can um develop friendships and trust in relationships with the adults around them.

(T8): I think um, I think the dramatic play lends itself to a lot of different types of play and in the early years I believe that the most important skills to work on are social skills and other areas do lend itself as well but I just think this is one that naturally children can become another persona, they can enjoy talking with one another, um, taking turns playing,(hard to understand—a lot of really soft talking).

(T9): I would say it is very important. I would say it is a lot, how a lot of them interact with one another, if that makes sense since there is a lot of practicing roles and taking on roles then learning side by side or in a group. Lot of times I see it more outside. They kinda take on one becomes the leader, and they are pretending different items represent different things blocks and shovels all the sudden take on a whole new form and they are being carried around. I think it is very important I think that is how they interact with one another and without that element I don’t know how they would yeah communicate yeah and interact I guess.

(T10): Well, I think it is very important like what I was saying earlier that it is I think it is one of the highest cognitively enhancing, because you have to do you have to have that representative thinking but then you pull in other things too. You usually do it with a peer although he is not in this, but most of the time it is with a peer so you have that social relationship too. I think you can pull in so many things with make believe play you know not just cognitively, he was writing, he is getting fine motor practice, um, and then I think too emotionally kids can sort through a lot emotionally, say B didn’t invite him to his birthday party then how do I feel about that, and how do you feel about that you know, so there is so much you can do within make believe.
Theme 8: Make-believe play is therapeutic

One of the eight participants described the emotional component of play. Included below is also the comment from one of the participants who was not included in all analyses because of missing data. She spoke of the therapeutic value of play.

(T1): I think play for 3- and 4-year-olds is just the best way that they know how to learn. It's the way then can experience, uhm, it's just the way they can try things out to see what works for them and their personalities...

(T1): I think it can be. Uhm and I think it can also be uhm just for fun. But I think it can be used as an emotional release for the kids.

(T6): I think it is pretty evident. I think it is important just for social and emotional health that they can play out in scenarios whether it is difficult day out with parents or feel what it is like to be the mom or the dad; it helps with cooperation (inaudible) It helps them make sense of the world, maybe this it the way it works or I kinda liked the way that worked so I am going to pretend that you know that everybody is gone or something like that.

Statement of make-believe play for teachers

The teachers described make-believe play in distinctive ways representing various perspectives spanning 11 themes. Make-believe play as pretense and the intrinsic motivation of play were the two predominant themes of what make-believe play is for the preschool teacher.

Composite Description of the Phenomenon of Faculty Members' Understanding of Play and Make-believe Play

Play

Faculty members described play in terms of seven themes: active engagement, pretense, what can I do with this object, fun, intrinsically motivated, learning, and attention to means. They reached consensus on only one theme: intrinsically motivated (see Table 14).
Table 14. Themes Outlining the Phenomenon of Play for a Faculty Member

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1. Play is active engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2. Play is pretense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3. Play is exploration guided by the question “what can I do with this object?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4. Play is fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 5. Play is intrinsically motivated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 6. Play is how children learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 7. Play is attention to means – process oriented</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theme 1: Play is active engagement**

Two of the three faculty members talked of play in terms of active engagement.

Being “engaged” or having “purpose” both speak to the theme of active engagement that often typifies play.

(F1): Well, I guess, okay, it’s an enjoyable activity that kids do and it always has a purpose even though it may not be the purpose that we the adults would like it to have. So, it’s a purposeful, enjoyable activity.

(F3): When I see the child totally engaged in whatever it is they’re doing. And it may not be with another child it might be individually because they play so much by themselves when they’re young. Kind of in a different role or talking to themselves, or using whatever they have, bowls or dishes or trucks or cars and making a story, being in a world of theirs.

**Theme 2: Play is pretense**

One faculty member described pretense when asked to define play. This was one of the ways she characterized play.

(F3): Playing outside on equipment that’s available, uhm playing with balls, playing inside the classroom pretend kinds of things, I have grandchildren that get on their bicycles and play they are warriors or they are ninja people or they’re cowboys or they’re farmers off to do their chores. And they’re just in a wonderful little imaginative world. So, but I think it’s also games ya know preschool children like to play some games together outside activities (inaudible) I’ve forgotten some of the games we used to play (laughter). So, activities that are both inside and outside. Some organized and some instructor.
(F3): When I see the child totally engaged in whatever it is they’re doing. And it may not be with another child it might be individually because they play so much by themselves when they’re young. Kind of in a different role or talking to themselves, or using whatever they have, bowls or dishes or trucks or cars and making a story, being in a world of theirs.

**Theme 3: Play is exploration - “What can I do with this object?”**

One faculty member used exploration of materials as a determining feature of play.

She described the problems she sometimes encounters with her students who may have difficulty implementing play to its full potential.

(F1): Well, I would like it to be so that a number of activities could happen in the play context. That kids could be allowed to play but you set the play up so that they can learn from it... rather than, you know, setting it up, ya know, so that only certain kinds of play can happen or that we don’t use play to let kids explore on their own. We use play only as a free time as opposed to when we’re over here learning.

(F1): I do think that teachers underutilize play. And I especially see that with students that I work with – it’s something “well kids do that for fun over here and then they come back to work – or I try to make these activities fun but I want to direct them too much – and so they’re not really play, play or I don’t see how they can learn through just play – I have to be directing them or showing them, they have to have a product that I want them to make in order for them to learn at the art table instead of just exploring art on their own (inaudible) they can’t do their own play.

**Theme 4: Play is fun**

Yes, play is fun, and two of the three faculty members point this out. Only three of the eight teachers mentioned this characteristic (see Tables 5 and 15). Once again I find this surprising. I would think that everyone would identify play as fun. Possibly, laypeople would more likely refer to play as fun, but maybe teachers and faculty members are more aware of the other factors and benefits of play that they see more than primarily the fun aspect – and maybe they view this response as too commonplace and lacking in scientific stature.

(F1): Well, I guess, okay, it’s an enjoyable activity that kids do and it always has a purpose even though it may not be the purpose that we the adults would like it to
have. So, it’s a purposeful, enjoyable activity. That’s as a generic as I can get it. Now if you want me to give specific examples I can but...

(F2): I think play is a process. It’s a voluntary activity. I think when you’re playing uhm you are choosing to do that. I also think that play doesn’t necessarily have the same kinds of consequences as other things do in life. You know you are doing because it is for the process and there isn’t really a product orientation so there isn’t really ya know a goal necessarily. There can be but there doesn’t have to be, because what it is, is the process of doing it and enjoying it, choosing it, doing it, and enjoying it, more so than a product orientation.

Table 15. Comparison of Play Themes by Teachers and Faculty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Play Themes</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Actively engaged</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Diverse</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Pretense</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>What can I do with this?</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Intrinsically motivated</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Attention to means</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Therapeutic</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theme 5: Play is intrinsically motivated**

All three faculty members were in agreement that play is intrinsically motivated. It is a choice and it is done for its own sake.

(F2): I think play is a process. It’s a voluntary activity. I think when you’re playing uhm you are choosing to do that. I also think that play doesn’t necessarily have the same kinds of consequences as other things do in life. You know you are doing because it is for the process and there isn’t really a product orientation so there isn’t really ya know a goal necessarily. There can be but there doesn’t have to be, because what it is, is the process of doing it and enjoying it, choosing it, doing it, and enjoying it, more so than a product orientation.

(F2): Uhm, somehow I have to get in there that it’s not a pressure situation, it’s like uhm ya know there’s not a right or wrong way to do it there’s a I guess maybe what
I'm saying is there's not a person who's going to say something (inaudible) that it's not going to be judged. Ya know that it's just what it is.

(F3): I don't think anything specifically other than it was wonderful to just (inaudible) world so naturally and take off with his ideas and follow a train of thought be able to the scenarios and the birthday party and getting everything ready and the other one playing house and needing batteries or band aids—ya know he had this little idea, this kind of story going.

**Theme 6: Play is how children learn**

Two of the three faculty members identified learning in their descriptions of play. Faculty members know young children learn through play but they also know more about the specifics of how children learn and the processes involved in play which may be why it was not mentioned outright by all three faculty members.

(F1): Well, I would like it to be so that a number of activities could happen in the play context. That kids could be allowed to play but you set the play up so that they can learn from it. They can learn not only pre-academic skills but how to get along with one another, and to develop in their own way through play. Rather than, you know, setting it up, ya know, so that only certain kinds of play can happen or that we don't use play to let kids explore on their own. We use play as a free time as opposed to when we're over here learning.

(F1): So that they don't assume that kids with disabilities don't play or play differently. Which sometimes they do but that doesn't mean that we then say well then they can't play like other kids do or we have to support everything they do. We can still let them play along with their peers. So, I tell them play, as they learn in their other classes, learning can happen through play and what they've learned for typically developing kids is the foundation. And then, what we're gonna talk about is how they can build on that or use that as a way to help the kids with disabilities learn some of their skills. And I talk about specific intervention techniques or ways people have devised to help kids with disabilities learn through typical activities.

(F2): I think play is the central part of a preschool. Uhm, I think it is the means by which children learn all kinds of things, cognitive, social. Uhm, so I think play is sort of the basis of the preschool experience.”
Theme 7: Play is attention to means – process-oriented

The most often-mentioned feature of play by play experts at a recent conference on play was mentioned by one of the three faculty members interviewed here. The process orientation of play fits together with the idea of intrinsic motivation which all three faculty members mentioned. The child wants to play, the urge comes from within, and it is the pleasure of being engaged that is the reward: play for its own sake.

(F2): I think play is a process. It’s a voluntary activity. I think when you’re playing uhm you are choosing to do that. I also think that play doesn’t necessarily have the same kinds of consequences as other things do in life. You know you are doing because it is for the process and there isn’t really a product orientation so there isn’t really ya know a goal necessarily. There can be but there doesn’t have to be, because what it is, is the process of doing it and enjoying it, choosing it, doing it, and enjoying it, more so than a product orientation.

(F2): Uhm, somehow I have to get in there that it’s not a pressure situation, it’s like uhm ya know there’s not a right or wrong way to do it there’s a I guess maybe what I’m saying is there’s not a person who’s going to say something (inaudible) that it’s not going to be judged. Ya know that it’s just what it is.

Statement of play for faculty members

The faculty members described play in many different ways specifying various themes. Play as active engagement, play being intrinsically motivated, and play as the way children learn were the predominant themes of what play is to the faculty member.

Make-believe play

Four themes outline make-believe play for faculty members (see Table 16).
Table 16. Themes Outlining the Phenomenon of Make-believe Play for a Faculty Member

Theme 1. Make-believe play is a mode of learning
Theme 2. Make-believe play is pretense (creative expression, imitative, and fantasy)
Theme 3. Make-believe play is exploration guided by the question “What can I do with this object?”
Theme 4. Make-believe play is intrinsically motivated

**Theme 1: Make-believe play is a mode of learning**

Similar to the teachers’ responses, one third of the faculty members associated learning with their definition of make-believe play (see Table 17).

(F1): Well, I’m just thinking you know play would be in the housekeeping areas pretending your making dinner, play would be building blocks to make a road to drive on, play would be squatting on the sidewalk for five minutes watching an ant walk by or ants building because your, your purposeful, your learning, the kids obviously enjoying it because their sitting there watching those ants for a long time, so it’s, it’s a number of different things and I want to stick with my generic answer.

Table 17. Comparison of Make-believe Play Themes by Teachers and Faculty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers %</th>
<th>Make-believe Play Themes</th>
<th>Faculty %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Contextual</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Pretense</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Creative expression</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Imitative</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Fantasy</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>What can I do with this?</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Intrinsically motivated</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Therapeutic</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Theme 2: Make-believe play is pretense (creative expression, imitative, and fantasy)

Just as all teachers identified make-believe play as pretense so did all of the faculty members.

(F1): Well, it includes elements of pretending objects are something other than what they initially appear to be, so a block could be a bowl of cereal, uhm. It involves role taking, ya know I’m the mommy you’re the baby; I’m going to put you to bed and sing a song. It involves (pause) your make believe object, you make believe that actions are happening that you’re taking on roles, so it’s beyond functional play, it’s pretend, I can’t get beyond the words (laughter).

(F1): Well – or you know you can have a little plastic cup, and it’s obviously a cup but you’re pretending that this is a real cup that you’re drinking tea out of with your friend Minnie Mouse – who’s drinking tea also. So, it’s pretending objects are more than what they initially appear to be, playing roles that ya know, you’re not a little three-year old girl just sitting there at this little plastic table, you know, you’re on a riverboat having tea with Minnie Mouse who’s talking to you.

(F2): Make-believe play is where there is an element of imagination on the part of the child that enters into the play, that transcends the actual objects or surroundings that are in front of the child. So a block can become a telephone, ya know it’s just that the child has the conception of what he or she wants to make out of the play that transcends the space and the objects and everything about the play that goes off into another level of creative imagination. So basically there can be something that maybe sparks make-believe or pretend play that’s an object that is there but the actual play goes beyond anything that is right in front of them.

(F3): Playing outside on equipment that’s available, uhm playing with balls, playing inside the classroom pretend kinds of things, I have grandchildren that get on their bicycles and play they are warriors or they are ninja people or they’re cowboys or they’re farmers off to do their chores. And they’re just in a wonderful little imaginative world. So, but I think it’s also games ya know preschool children like to play some games together outside activities (inaudible) I’ve forgotten some of the games we use to play (laughter). So, activities that are both inside and outside. Some organized and some instructor.

(F3): When I see the child totally engaged in whatever it is they’re doing. And it may not be with another child it might be individually because they play so much by themselves when they’re young. Kind of in a different role or talking to themselves, or using whatever they have, bowls or dishes or trucks or cars and making a story, being in a world of theirs.
(F3): That would fall under the unstructured and that would be a child being, being the character or the person in the little scenario that they’re playing. That they’re the truck driver driving this truck, that they’re a princess, or a prince charming. I have a five-year-old granddaughter who was pretending that she had all of her make-up on and she was going to a party and waiting for her boyfriend. And it blew me away because I didn’t think they thought about things like that when they were five. But it was so real. She was different from any one else’s little world at that time.

(F3): Sure, oh sure even if they’re drawing a picture that talks about butterflies or the birds that are in the picture, that’s imaginative play.

Theme 3: Make-believe play is exploration guided by the question “What can I do with this object?”

One of the faculty members described exploration of materials as part of her understanding of make-believe play.

(F1): Well, I would like it to be so that a number of activities could happen in the play context. That kids could be allowed to play but you set the play up so that they can learn from it. They can learn not only pre-academic skills but how to get along with one another, and to develop in their own way through play. Rather than, you know, setting it up, ya know, so that only certain kinds of play can happen or that we don’t use play to let kids explore on their own. We use play only as a free time as opposed to when we’re over here learning.

(F1): I do think that teachers underutilize play. And I especially see that with students that I work with – it’s something “well kids do that for fun over here and then they come back to work – or I try to make these activities are fun but I want to direct them too much – and so they’re not really play, play or I don’t see how play they can learn through just play – I have to be directing them or showing them, they have to have a product that I want them to make in order for them to learn at the art table instead of just exploring art on their own (inaudible) they can’t do their own play.

Theme 4: Make-believe play is intrinsically motivated

Two-thirds of the faculty members note the intrinsic motivation of make-believe play.

(F2): Uhm, somehow I have to get in there that it’s not a pressure situation, it’s like uhm ya know there’s not a right or wrong way to do it there’s a I guess maybe what I’m saying is there’s not a person who’s going to say something (inaudible) that it’s not going to be judged. Ya know that it’s just what it is.
(F2): Yes. I mean he was throwing a pretend party and invitation (inaudible) something’s going on there – I mean we didn’t see the beginning of it but it’s not like somebody asked him to write letters or you know it didn’t seem task directed.

(F3): I think a box, some type of arrangement that had hats, that had different kinds of clothing in it, some little props, I guess it would depend on other things I was doing in the classroom as far as what those props might be. But to encourage children to maybe make some connections from one area to another. Because then that box or that area would allow children to just pretend as much as they wanted to. It wouldn’t limit them, as if it were just a sandbox area, they still could play and they can pretend or build and make roads and that kind of thing but they’d be limited to a theme. Or if you had a box or couple of boxes in row of props and costumes and things like that. Pull a couple of those things out and go in different directions with it. But I’d sure be frustrated because I’d want a couple other areas too (laughter).

(F3): I don’t think anything specifically other than it was wonderful to just (inaudible) world so naturally and take off with his ideas and follow a train of thought be able to the scenarios and the birthday party and getting everything ready and the birthday one playing house and needing batteries or band aids—ya know he had this little idea, this kind of story going and it may have been tied to something else but just (inaudible).

Statement of make-believe play for faculty members

The faculty members described make-believe play in many different ways touching on several different themes. Make-believe play as pretense, play as exploration of what I can do with this object, and play as the way children learn were the predominant themes of what make-believe play is for the faculty members.

How are Play and Make-believe Play Differentiated – Analysis of Vignettes

I wanted to know how teachers defined make-believe play. Part of that was examining whether their thoughts matched my definition of make-believe play. So, using the definition I used in conducting my thesis research, I created six vignettes that showed a child either playing make-believe or doing something else. After watching each vignette the participants answered whether or not each was make-believe play. The teachers and faculty
members responded to each of the vignettes as follows. Their responses describe why they chose to call each situation make-believe play or not.

Table 18. Percentage Agreeing that Vignette Showed Child Engaged in Make-believe Play

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vignettes</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vignette 1: Child with blocks and cars</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vignette 2: Child drawing at easel</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vignette 3: Child sitting and talking with prop</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vignette 4: Child sitting and talking without prop</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vignette 5: Child in housekeeping</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vignette 6: Child with puppets</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vignette 1: Child with blocks and cars

All ten of the teachers and all three of the faculty members agreed that the vignette showing the child playing with blocks was make-believe play.

(T2): Well, I would say that he was, what I think about make-believe play is what I said before about you know pretending something that’s not real like a superhero, like Harry Potter. Pretend to me, what I think of when I think of pretend is imitating or pretending like we have a kitchen set in our dramatic play area you know, and they’re pretending that they are doing laundry or washing the dishes. That’s kind of my own definition.

(T2): Harry Potter see to me that is make-believe play to me in my own mind and I don’t know if anybody else does, but in my own mind I see myself referring to um playing things that wouldn’t happen. Like what I was talking about before with the superheros you know and it doesn’t matter what size object. I think of that as make-believe I think of pretend as pretending to be something that you don’t, you know playing with baby dolls.

(Interviewer Question): So you actually have a differentiation between the words pretend and make-believe?

(T2): Yeah

(Interviewer Question): So then if you have pretend and make-believe as two different things, where do you put in dramatic play? Cause I know you said dramatic play earlier.
(T2): I didn’t realize until you asked me that I think about make-believe differently. You know?

(T2): It usually doesn’t it’s not something that has ever come up. Now it’s like to me this is what make-believe means to me, and you know. How does dramatic play fit in there. I think you know that I could set up dramatic play areas for either. Like I said we have the play house but we also have dress up for Halloween type costumes where they’re doing you know, which they’re doing something that they couldn’t be you know you what I mean? Does that answer your question?

(T9): I think the part of it that was most make believe was when he incorporated the Harry Potter thing I think watching through the blocks is hard to see if he was make believe or creating in this way. But it was make believe when he brought in character, and he had some sort of scenario or scene that he created going on in his head and so that yeah.

(F1): Uhm it reminds me of another study that we’re doing and we’re trying to differentiate – there’s pretend play and then there’s role-taking and he was obviously pretending, doing some make-believe but I wouldn’t say he was the next step doing dramatic play with role-taking.

(F2): He was obviously taking roles he was obviously playing a role.

(F3) Yes – and whatever little story is going on in his head with Harry and whatever he built is certainly imaginative.

**Vignette 2: Child drawing at easel**

This was the most controversial of the six vignettes. Two of the ten teachers saw this as make-believe play and two of the three faculty members also did. This was a dilemma that caused much discussion and thought in a prior study when coding artistic behavior, so the controversy in the current study was expected.

(T2): The only thing I thought about afterwards ya know when he was drawing and I said that to me that doesn’t look like dramatic play – ya know I guess if he was pretending he was an artist.

(T3): (laughter) I don’t, I guess I don’t think of, I would think of that as art time not necessarily make-believe play.

(T4): Well – after I was watching the video – I know he was drawing at the dry-erase board and I said it wasn’t – and afterwards I was thinking to myself well yes that is
considered imaginative play because some are very creative and use their imagination—and so they draw—some are more structured where I’m gonna draw this and be done—but where he was just free-forming.

(T5): The art? That’s a little harder. I think a lot of art is make-believe play—then again sometimes it is the expression of feelings but there’s a certain degree of make-believe because you take it again that one step further a lot of times than—and with that quick it’s hard to tell if he was actually ok this is a spider the teacher says I have to draw a spider—that’s not too make-believe (laughter).

(T5): If he’s doing a free-will expression than it is usually make-believe in that.

(T5): Unstructured.

(T8): If he has developed a character, trying to act something out.

(T9): If somebody is drawing, is that make-believe play? Oh, wow, I am going to say in his case yes, I have no idea what he made, I would say yes to make believe play if you are drawing something that is not real and you are trying to recreate that. I would say it is not make believe if you’re drawing a picture of your family. And so that is why it is hard for me even to distinguish because he could have had something going on and he is trying to recreate that called make believe because he is trying to incorporate something from that situation. So I am guessing in his case yes, I couldn’t really tell what he was drawing. If he was drawing family if he was drawing himself then I don’t know if that is the necessarily make-believe play.

(F1): I was thinking while I watched—it didn’t look like it to me but he could have been standing there in his head saying ya know I’m making this map and I’m telling my friends how to get to my house. But I couldn’t see it so.

(F2): I would say yes.

(F2): Even though there wasn’t a lot of evidence, I feel like he was in a creative place, in a creative process and that probably is in his imagination.

(F2): The hardest one for me was when he was drawing because there was no verbal indication of what he was thinking so I just thought he was making decisions, and I thought he was playing and was creating in that way.

(Researcher): Okay if he was not doing make-believe play what would you call that—what he was doing?

(F2): I think I would call it artistic creation or exploration of some kind. Again we didn’t see what happened before he started doing it, did someone say “you need to go draw that” or to “draw a something” that’s a different thing altogether then. Than him
sort of having an idea and maybe sketching that (inaudible) There not being any teachers in any of these there wasn’t a cue for me to tell whether this was his choice.

(F3) Hmm...See I think I would say that that’s imaginative play too, because to me there wasn’t something in his head that he was seeing that he was transferring to that easel. So that would be my justification of why I think it is.

(F3) Well I don’t know how you separate the desire to just pick up a color and make some marks on a piece of paper and find that satisfying too because he could have been doing that too without getting in his head you don’t really know why he did that so then it might not have been imaginative in that there was a story or a thought or something but just that is was expressive. So is there such a thing as expressive play? I don’t know how you are gonna code this. But I mean it could be too. I could see a child just picking up colors and making splashes on a piece of paper and loving the effect without saying that that yellow splash is the sun, and then underneath is the house where I live. So those are my thoughts.

(F3) I’m gonna say it was.

Vignette 3: Child sitting and talking with prop

Nine of the ten teachers and all three of the faculty members felt this vignette showed the child engaged in make-believe play.

(T9): It is not make-believe play because he wasn’t interacting.

(F1): Just when I thought he was then he would flip out of character and in then he would sound like he wasn’t. So I think he was in and out. If I can give that as an answer? ‘Cause I was listening to Harry Potter when I was baking the other night and I know one of those things was a line straight from there. So, I don’t think he was pretending at that point I think he was reciting and enjoying himself.

(Researcher): Can I, can I ask you another question about that then?

(F1): Uhm hm.

(Researcher): Okay – so then uhm – what would you call that then if uhm if he was just reciting something he saw before that makes me think of somebody who is in a play or something, they’re doing the thing – so are they not pretending? Or is it something else? You’re classifying it as something else? I think.

(F1): Yeah – well it wasn’t just that, it was some of the other stuff – where he was playing with the microphone but when he was saying I am a news reporter –and all that - that sounds like well he’s pretending but then when he was reciting the lines
from the movie – it was more like singing a song that you’ve heard over and over again. You’re not necessarily playing. But it’s a line that you enjoy where you just kind of hum that song. More like that rather than play, play.

(F2): I would say yes. Uhm because of the obvious conversation between two people some sort of make-believe play going on there because there was definitely two different voices.

(F3): Or else I will kiss you? I love it! (laughter) I would, that’s imaginative play. He has a wonderful story going.

**Vignette 4: Child sitting and talking without prop**

All participants identified this vignette as an example of make-believe play. The clear identification of role-playing with make-believe is shown here. The participants saw the child acting like a cat and they responded confidently that this particular vignette was make-believe play.

(T3): I like how he’s licking his paw like cats do – that’s yeah, that’s definitely make-believe play.

(T10): Yes, ‘cause he is doing behaviors to show us that he is a cat.

(F3): He does a kitty very well. That’s imaginative play too getting right into the role of a kitty.

**Vignette 5: Child in housekeeping**

Nine out of the ten teachers believed playing house was in example of make-believe play and all the faculty members agreed. The teacher (T3) who did not think playing house was make-believe play felt that the child was just imitating real life kinds of situations and that it is the fanciful things that are make-believe play.

(T3): I don’t know if I’d necessarily call that make-believe, I guess when I think make-believe, I think of make-believe, like their making up something, where that, I don’t know if he has any brothers or sisters at home, but that looks like something that you know he’s seen someone else do, he’s just taking care of baby, or because that’s what you’re suppose to do – so I don’t know if I necessarily consider that make-believe play – I don’t know what else to call it though (laughter).
(F2): Yes he’s definitely taking a role, caregiver for a while.

(F3) That’s definitely imaginative play. What a wonderful job. There’s a lot of babies there to take care of.

While only one of the participants articulated this idea of imitation not being make-believe play here in this vignette, this view was expressed by two other participants throughout the interviews when asked to define make-believe play. Yet, when they were given the vignette they saw it as make-believe play. What happened in the vignette, the child taking care of the babies, could fit their given definitions below because the child is going beyond what he or she has seen and is implementing it in a non-real situation.

(T1): Uhm, I would say that fantasy play is they use really go above and beyond and use their imagination. Maybe dress-up clothes and acting out uhm different situations maybe things they’ve seen teachers do or parents or other kids.

(T5): Okay – that’s much more imaginative – uh, I think kids, I think we all do – not just kids – you do draw on experience but you carry it that step beyond with your – by pretending, imagining, making-up...

**Vignette 6: Child with puppets**

Every participant felt the child playing with puppets and preparing a birthday party was an example of make-believe play.

(F1): Yes. Ya know that last one I don’t think he was really taking a role as in I am Bee’s mother and I am helping Bee get ready for the party. He was pretending he was having a party and he was passing out invitations.

(F2): Yes. I mean he was throwing a pretend party and invitation (inaudible) something’s going on there – I mean we didn’t see the beginning of it but it’s not like somebody asked him to write letters or you know it didn’t seem task directed.

(F3): I think that is imaginative play too. Getting ready for a birthday party and I don’t think there actually is one.
Limitations of this Research

The very strength of qualitative inquiry is that it does not necessarily generalize to a large population, so that is a limitation of the current research. But its strength is that it richly describes those who have very similar experiences and attributes to those involved in this study. The researcher has already begun further research to look at a larger sample in a survey format with many of the same questions that were planned and/or used in the interviews for the current research. The newer sample is undergraduate early childhood education or child development majors; data collection began in the fall of 2004. Looking at the viewpoints of pre-service teachers will give us a fuller description of how practitioners understand play and make-believe play.

Conclusion

These findings may help when conducting research that uses teachers as informants. If the teachers are similar to this sample from a midwestern city, all-day programs that follow developmentally appropriate practice and create the classroom curriculum, these findings could be helpful. Based on this research, one could assume that preschool teachers define play as pretense, exploration of what can be done with an object, and as the way children learn. Make-believe play is pretense that is intrinsically motivated as defined by the preschool teachers.

Teachers stated play is the way children learn. But do they really believe that or is that something they've heard so often it just rolls off the tongue? Do they know why children learn through play? Make-believe play was seen as intrinsically motivated but not learning. While it is encouraging that teachers acknowledge the intrinsic motivation inherent in make-believe play, teachers are really missing something here. Motivation is central to learning.
It seems that in the age of accountability, motivation to learn would be a high priority. This could get teachers’ attention. Emphasizing the motivational aspect of play, which teachers already acknowledge, as central to learning could make play more palatable in an age of accountability and achievement, which could in turn provide play with the respect it so rightly deserves. This would also help teachers communicate with parents about the rigors and joys of play for their child’s school and personal success.

We are off to a good start in that preschool teachers know play is the way children learn. What we must do from these findings is acknowledge that the teachers’ understanding of this concept and ability to articulate it is limited. Teacher educators are called to address this issue. Play theories and play’s role in motivation and learning need to become a central part of the college curriculum in early childhood education. All of the strides evident in developmental domains are linked to child performance. Yet, when teachers want children to learn something they typically do not think “oh, I will set up an area of the room to facilitate the acquisition of that” instead they often “tell” the child what they want them to know.

Teacher educators often say that the students don’t seem to really get play and how central it is to learning or even how to implement it properly. Well, do we as teacher educators know how to do this? If the college students are not “getting it” then that is our problem to address. Play theories and their place in motivation and learning need to be emphasized at the graduate level also so that those who teach teachers fuller understand the issues involved in play.

Future research is needed to look at several aspects of this situation. First, we need to take a look at the pre-service teachers and their understanding of play, such as the research underway by the current author. Second, a survey of university programs and their
curriculum who serve possible future early childhood educators would be helpful in examining how play is addressed program-wide in early childhood programs in various universities. Third, let’s look at teacher educators more closely and look not only at their understandings of play and make-believe play but also their learning experiences. How was play addressed in their undergraduate and graduate programs? Lastly, we should examine the preparation of teacher educators to see what place play currently has in those programs so we can make future recommendations. The multifaceted values of play are not always obvious. Learning about these values and benefits cannot be done in the one-dimensional way – children learn through play. It is much bigger than that. Therefore, it will take examining, teaching, and advocating on several levels to make a difference.
APPENDIX A

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE FROM CEMORE THESIS (2001)
Teacher Play Questionnaire

Teacher Name __________________________
Center Name __________________________
Child Name __________________________
Child’s Date of Birth ____________________

Teacher Information
Education HS AA BA MS Ph.D Major __________________________
Years of Teaching Experience __________________________
Length of Program Day __________________________
Time make-believe play is available indoors ____________ outdoors ____________

A child is engaged in make-believe play when they are acting “as if” something is something else (either themselves or inanimate objects such as blocks, Legos, dolls, a piece of paper).

Is __________________________ a non-player, a seldom player, a regular player, or a constant player? (circle one) Describe ______________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

On a typical day, how much time does __________________________ spend playing make-believe?
__________________________

How would you describe __________________________’s daily make-believe play using the following:

- Engages in make-believe play alone (circle one)
  never  seldom  sometimes  often  usually

- Engages in make-believe play with peers (circle one)
  never  seldom  sometimes  often  usually

- Engages in make-believe play with adults (circle one)
  never  seldom  sometimes  often  usually
Assign percentages to these categories of make-believe play according to what percentage of time ________________ spends in each type of make-believe play.

______________% make-believe alone
______________% make-believe with peers
______________% make-believe with adults
______________=100% Total

What kinds of make-believe play are ________________’s favorite activities?

Additional Comments:
APPENDIX B

LETTERS OF INVITATION
INFORMED CONSENT FOR CHILD
INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Title of Study: What is make-believe play? : The preschool teachers’ perspective
Investigators: Joanna J. Cemore

This is a research study. Please take your time in deciding if you would like to participate. Please feel free to ask questions at any time.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to investigate preschool teachers understanding of preschoolers’ make-believe play. Your child is being invited to participate in this study because s/he is a young child who could well represent various typical classroom behaviors. Your child was also chosen because s/he has had previous contact with the researcher and will feel comfortable working with her.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this study, your participation will last for approximately 25-30 minutes. During the study you may expect the following study procedures to be followed. You will receive a phone call to set up a convenient meeting time. You will be asked to meet at the Palmer Building on Iowa State University Campus.

Your child will be asked to play with various classroom materials. The videotape will be edited to include small vignettes of 20 – 60 seconds. These vignettes will only be viewed by the researcher and the participants of the study (i.e., local preschool teachers). The vignettes will serve as discussion starters for an interview on preschool children’s make-believe play. The session will be video taped. Your child can refuse to participate at anytime.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks at this time from participating in this study.

BENEFITS

If you decide to participate in this study there will be no direct benefit to you. It is hoped that the information gained in this study will benefit society by providing needed information on teachers beliefs and lead to more precise early childhood study.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION

You will not have any costs from participating in this study. You will be compensated for participating in this study. At the time of the taping your child will be given a book in appreciation for their time and cooperation.
PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or leave the study at any time. If you decide to not participate in the study or leave the study early, it will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies) may inspect and/or copy your records for quality assurance and data analysis. These records may contain private information.

To ensure confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, the following measures will be taken. The names of the children will be known only by the investigator. The child and parent contact information will be kept locked in the investigators office for future mailings if you wish to receive a copy of the results of the study. Otherwise no identifying information will be recorded. While watching the video during the teacher interviewers, each child will be referred to as “the boy” or “the girl”.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study. For further information about the study contact Joanna J. Cemore at (515) 663-9335. If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the Human Subjects Research Office, 2810 Beardshear Hall, (515) 294-4566; meldrem@iastate.edu or the Research Compliance Officer, Office of Research Compliance, 2810 Beardshear Hall, (515) 294-3115; dament@iastate.edu

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* * *
SUBJECT SIGNATURE

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You will receive a copy of the signed and dated written informed consent prior to your participation in the study.

Subject’s Name (printed) ____________________________________________

________________________________________ (Signature of Parent/Guardian or Legally Authorized Representative)       (Date)

CONTACT INFORMATION

(Please give telephone number to set up the time to video tape.)

________________________________________

MAILING ADDRESS

(Please include your mailing address if you would like a copy of the results from this study).

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

INVESTIGATOR STATEMENT

I certify that the participant has been given adequate time to read and learn about the study and all of their questions have been answered. It is my opinion that the participant understands the purpose, risks, benefits and the procedures that will be followed in this study and has voluntarily agreed to participate.

________________________________________ (Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent)       (Date)
APPENDIX C

ORIGINAL AND AMENDED LETTERS OF APPROVAL FROM HUMAN SUBJECTS
TO: Joanna J. Cemore

FROM: Human Subjects Research Office

PROJECT TITLE: What is make-believe play?: The preschool teachers’ perspectives

RE: IRB ID No.: 03-346

APPROVAL DATE: February 17, 2003  REVIEW DATE: February 17, 2003
LENGTH OF APPROVAL: 1 year  CONTINUING REVIEW DATE: February 16, 2004

TYPE OF APPLICATION: ☑ New Project ☐ Continuing Review

Your human subjects research project application, as indicated above, has been approved by the Iowa State University IRB #1 for recruitment of subjects not to exceed the number indicated on the application form. All research for this study must be conducted according to the proposal that was approved by the IRB. If written informed consent is required, the IRB-stamped and dated Informed Consent Document(s), approved by the IRB for this project only, are attached. Please make copies from the attached “masters” for subjects to sign upon agreeing to participate. The original signed Informed Consent Document should be placed in your study files. A copy of the Informed Consent Document should be given to the subject.

If this study is sponsored by an external funding source, the original Assurance Certification/Identification form has been forwarded to the Office of Sponsored Programs Administration.

The IRB must conduct continuing review of research at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk, but not less than once per year. Renewal is the PI’s responsibility, but as a reminder, you will receive notices at least 60 days and 30 days prior to the next review. Please note the continuing review date for your study.

Any modification of this research project must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval, prior to implementation. Modifications include but are not limited to: changing the protocol or study procedures, changing investigators or sponsors (funding sources), including additional key personnel, changing the Informed Consent Document, an increase in the total number of subjects anticipated, or adding new materials (e.g., letters, advertisements, questionnaires). Any future correspondence should include the IRB identification number provided and the study title.

You must promptly report any of the following to the IRB: (1) all serious and/or unexpected adverse experiences involving risks to subjects or others; and (2) any other unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

HSRO/ORC 8/02
Your research records may be audited at any time during or after the implementation of your study. Federal and University policy require that all research records be maintained for a period of three (3) years following the close of the research protocol. If the principal investigator terminates association with the University before that time, the signed informed consent documents should be given to the Departmental Executive Officer to be maintained.

Research investigators are expected comply with the University’s Federal Wide Assurance, the Belmont Report, 45 CFR 46 and other applicable regulations prior to conducting the research. These documents are on the Human Subjects Research Office website or are available by calling (515) 294-4566.

Upon completion of the project, a Project Closure Form will need to be submitted to the Human Subjects Research Office to officially close the project.

Cc: Sedahlia Jasper Crase
    Human Development and Family Studies
TO: Joanna Cemore

FROM: Ginny Austin, IRB Administrator

PROJECT TITLE: "What is make-believe?: The preschool teachers' perspectives"

RE: IRB ID No.: 03-346

APPROVAL DATE: February 17, 2004 \hspace{1cm} REVIEW DATE: February 17, 2004

LENGTH OF APPROVAL: 1 Year \hspace{1cm} CONTINUING REVIEW DATE: February 16, 2005

TYPE OF APPLICATION: [ ] New Project \[ ] Continuing Review

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The IRB must conduct continuing review of research at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk, but not less than once per year. Renewal is the PI's responsibility, but as a reminder, you will receive notices at least 60 days and 30 days prior to the next review. Please note the continuing review date for your study.

Any modification of this research project must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval, prior to implementation. Modifications include but are not limited to: changing the protocol or study procedures, changing investigators or sponsors (funding sources), including additional key personnel, changing the Informed Consent Document, an increase in the total number of subjects anticipated, or adding new materials (e.g., letters, advertisements, questionnaires). Any future correspondence should include the IRB identification number provided and the study title.
You must promptly report any of the following to the IRB: (1) all serious and/or unexpected adverse experiences involving risks to subjects or others; and (2) any other unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

Your research records may be audited at any time during or after the implementation of your study. Federal and University policy require that all research records be maintained for a period of three (3) years following the close of the research protocol. If the principal investigator terminates association with the University before that time, the signed informed consent documents should be given to the Departmental Executive Officer to be maintained.

Research investigators are expected to comply with the University's Federal Wide Assurance, the Belmont Report, 45 CFR 46 and other applicable regulations prior to conducting the research. These documents are on the Human Subjects Research Office website or are available by calling (515) 294-4566.

Upon completion of the project, a Project Closure Form will need to be submitted to the Human Subjects Research Office to officially close the project.

C: HDFS
   Sedahlia Jasper Crase
TO: Joanna Cemore

FROM: Ginny Austin, IRB Administrator

PROJECT TITLE (s): "What is make-believe play?: The preschool teachers' perspective"

RE: IRB ID No.: 03-346

TYPE OF APPLICATION: Modification  APPROVAL DATE: April 28, 2004

REVIEW DATE:  April 28, 2004  CONTINUING REVIEW DATE: February 16, 2005

Your human subjects research project application, as indicated above, has been approved by the Iowa State University IRB #1 for recruitment of subjects not to exceed the number indicated on the application form. All research for this study must be conducted according to the proposal that was approved by the IRB. If written informed consent is required, the IRB-stamped and dated Informed Consent Document(s), approved by the IRB for this project only, are attached. Please make copies from the attached "masters" for subjects to sign upon agreeing to participate. The original signed Informed Consent Document should be placed in your study files. A copy of the Informed Consent Document should be given to the subject.

If this study is sponsored by an external funding source, the original Assurance Certification/Identification form has been forwarded to the Office of Sponsored Programs Administration.

The IRB must conduct continuing review of research at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk, but not less than once per year. Renewal is the PI's responsibility, but as a reminder, you will receive notices at least 60 days and 30 days prior to the next review. Please note the continuing review date for your study.

Any modification of this research project must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval, prior to implementation. Modifications include but are not limited to: changing the protocol or study procedures, changing investigators or sponsors (funding sources), including additional key personnel, changing the Informed Consent Document, an increase in the total number of subjects anticipated, or adding new materials (e.g., letters, advertisements, questionnaires). Any future correspondence should include the IRB identification number provided and the study title.

You must promptly report any of the following to the IRB: (1) all serious and/or unexpected adverse experiences involving risks to subjects or others; and (2) any other unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.
Your research records may be audited at any time during or after the implementation of your study. Federal and University policy require that all research records be maintained for a period of three (3) years following the close of the research protocol. If the principal investigator terminates association with the University before that time, the signed informed consent documents should be given to the Departmental Executive Officer to be maintained.

Research investigators are expected comply with the University's Federal Wide Assurance, the Belmont Report, 45 CFR 46 and other applicable regulations prior to conducting the research. These documents are on the Human Subjects Research Office website or are available by calling (515) 294-4566.

Upon completion of the project, a Project Closure Form will need to be submitted to the Human Subjects Research Office to officially close the project.

C: Sedahlia Jasper Crase
HDFS

HSRO/ORC 9/02
TO: Joanna Cemore

FROM: Human Subject Research Compliance Office

PROJECT TITLE: What is Make-Believe Play?: The Preschool Teachers' Perspectives

RE: IRB ID No.: 03-346
APPROVAL DATE: May 25, 2005  REVIEW DATE: May 25, 2005
LENGTH OF APPROVAL: One year  CONTINUING REVIEW DATE: May 24, 2006
TYPE OF APPLICATION: ☑ New Project  ☐ Continuing Review

Your human subjects research project application, as indicated above, has been approved by the Iowa State University IRB #1 for recruitment of subjects not to exceed the number indicated on the application form. All research for this study must be conducted according to the proposal that was approved by the IRB. If written informed consent is required, the IRB-stamped and dated Informed Consent Document(s), approved by the IRB for this project only are attached. Please make copies from the attached "masters" for subjects to sign upon agreeing to participate. The original signed Informed Consent Document should be placed in your study files. A copy of the Informed Consent Document should be given to the subject.

The IRB must conduct continuing review of research at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk, but not less than once per year. Renewal is the PI's responsibility, but as a reminder, you will receive notices at least 60 days and 30 days prior to the next review. Please note the continuing review date for your study.

Any modification of this research project must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval, prior to implementation. Modifications include but are not limited to: changing the protocol or study procedures, changing investigators or sponsors (funding sources), including additional key personnel, changing the Informed Consent Document, an increase in the total number of subjects anticipated, or adding new materials (e.g., letters, advertisements, questionnaires). Any future correspondence should include the IRB identification number provided and the study title.

HSRO/ORC 8/02
You must promptly report any of the following to the IRB: (1) all serious and/or unexpected adverse experiences involving risks to subjects or others; and (2) any other unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

Your research records may be audited at any time during or after the implementation of your study. Federal and University policy require that all research records be maintained for a period of three (3) years following the close of the research protocol. If the principal investigator terminates association with the University before that time, the signed informed consent documents should be given to the Departmental Executive Officer to be maintained.

Research investigators are expected to comply with the University's Federal Wide Assurance, the Belmont Report, 45 CFR 46 and other applicable regulations prior to conducting the research. These documents are on the Human Subjects Research Office website or are available by calling (515) 294-4566.

Upon completion of the project, a Project Closure Form will need to be submitted to the Human Subjects Research Office to officially close the project.

C: Sedahlia Crase
INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Title of Study: What is make-believe play? : The preschool teachers’ perspective
Investigators: Joanna J. Cemore

This is a research study. Please take your time in deciding if you would like to participate. Please feel free to ask questions at any time.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to investigate preschool teachers understanding of preschoolers’ make-believe play. You are being invited to participate in this study because you are a teacher of preschool age children.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this study, your participation will last for approximately 30-60 minutes. During the study you may expect the following study procedures to be followed. You will receive a phone call to set up a convenient meeting time. You will be asked to either meet at the Palmer Building on Iowa State University Campus or at a more convenient location for you that has an available television and video player. You will be asked questions about play and watch some video vignettes to stimulate discussion. The interview will be audio taped. Some of the responses during the interview will be recorded by hand by the interviewer. You may skip any question that you do not wish to answer or that makes you feel uncomfortable.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks at this time from participating in this study.

BENEFITS

If you decide to participate in this study there will be no direct benefit to you. It is hoped that the information gained in this study will benefit society by providing needed information on teachers’ beliefs and lead to more precise early childhood study.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION

You will not have any costs from participating in this study. You will be compensated for participating in this study. At the time of the interview you will be given a $10.00 gift certificate in appreciation for your time and cooperation.
PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or leave the study at any time. If you decide to not participate in the study or leave the study early, it will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies) may inspect and/or copy your records for quality assurance and data analysis. These records may contain private information.

To ensure confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, the following measures will be taken. Code numbers will be assigned to each teacher when consent forms are received. Assessment protocols (audiotapes and coding forms) will be numbered according to the assigned numbers. Assessment protocols will contain both the identification number and the first name of the teacher. The name will be removed after data collection has occurred. It is important for the interviewer to know the first name of the participant during the interview process, as the assessments require one-on-one interaction between the teacher and the administrator. A master list of numbers and names will be kept in the investigators office in a locked cabinet. The list will be destroyed after data collection is completed. If the results are published, your identity will remain confidential.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study. For further information about the study contact Joanna J. Cemore at (515) 663-9335. If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the Human Subjects Research Office, 2810 Beardshear Hall, (515) 294-4566; meldrem@iastate.edu or the Research Compliance Officer, Office of Research Compliance, 2810 Beardshear Hall, (515) 294-3115; dament@iastate.edu
SUBJECT SIGNATURE

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You will receive a copy of the signed and dated written informed consent prior to your participation in the study.

Subject’s Name (printed) ...........................................................................................................

(Subject’s Signature) ........................................... (Date)

CONTACT INFORMATION
(Please give telephone number to set up the time of the interview.)

________________________________________

MAILING ADDRESS
(Please include your mailing address if you would like a copy of the results from this study).

____________________________________

____________________________________

____________________________________

INVESTIGATOR STATEMENT

I certify that the participant has been given adequate time to read and learn about the study and all of their questions have been answered. It is my opinion that the participant understands the purpose, risks, benefits and the procedures that will be followed in this study and has voluntarily agreed to participate.

_________________________ ................................... (Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent) (Date)
MEMBER CHECK INSTRUCTIONS

Dear ____________,

Thank you for participating in an interview! I had fun getting to know more about you and your classroom. You provided me with some valuable information for my research on make-believe play.

I have enclosed a copy of a summary I wrote of the interview. I would like you to read it order to check its accuracy. This is an important process to ensure that I understood your thoughts and feelings correctly. Please write in the margins of the summary or on the enclosed blank paper in order to clarify or change anything I misunderstood. Feel free to add to, delete, and change any portion of the summary so that it will correctly and completely describe your view of make-believe play as a preschool teacher/college educator.

Please put your response in the enclosed stamped envelope and return it to me. Please try to drop this in the mail within 72 hours of receipt. I really appreciate your help with this project. Your insight and experiences with make-believe play will add important insight for future educators, researchers, and anyone who spends time with young children.

If you have any questions, please call me at home at my cell (417) 693-3886 or email me (joc787fi@smsu.edu). Thanks again for your help! I look forward to reading your response to the summary.

Sincerely,

Joanna J. Cemore, Ph.D. Candidate
Graduate Student

Sedahlia Jasper Crase, Ph.D.
Major Professor
APPENDIX E

TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL/QUESTIONS
TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL/QUESTIONS

Each teacher was greeted upon arrival, and the informed consent form was discussed. I explained that I am asking them questions about what they think.

I know that some centers have specific beliefs or missions but I am interested in what you think regardless of the centers’ orientation. I will start by asking you some questions about what you think. Then we will view some video vignettes and I will ask you questions about what you saw. Then I’ll ask a few more questions, concluding with some demographic type questions. I am audio taping the interview so hopefully you can speak more freely and let your thoughts flow better than if I were trying to write down everything you say. Do you have any questions before proceeding? Okay then.

I turned on the audio recorder and began the interview. At the completion of each interview I thanked the teacher for her involvement and gave her a $10.00 gift certificate to Target.

Each question below was asked of each participant. Additional questions were asked as the answers led.

1. If you could have one area/center in your room what would it be?

2. What is the primary goal of preschool?

3. How do children learn?

4. What is play?

5. What is make-believe play?
Okay, now we are going to view some vignettes. I want you to watch each snippet and tell me whether you think what the child is doing is make-believe play or not.

(View videotape vignettes.)

Vignette 1 (child with blocks and cars)
Vignette 2 (child drawing at easel)
Vignette 3 (child sitting and talking with prop)
Vignette 4 (child sitting and talking without prop)
Vignette 5 (child in housekeeping)
Vignette 6 (child with puppets)

Comments?

6. How important is make-believe play in your classroom?

7. Do you promote make-believe play?
   a. What types of make-believe play are encouraged?
   b. How?
   c. How much time?
   d. What kinds of materials?

8. How do children know you do or you do not value play?

9. McDonald’s classroom example (added during data collection).

Teacher Name

Center Name

Education

Major
Years of teaching experience

Length of the program day

Time make-believe play is available indoors and outdoors
APPENDIX F

LETTERS OF INVITATION
INFORMED CONSENT FOR FACULTY
MEMBER CHECK INSTRUCTIONS
INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Title of Study: What is make-believe play? : The preschool teachers’ perspective
Investigators: Joanna J. Cemore

This is a research study. Please take your time in deciding if you would like to participate. Please feel free to ask questions at any time.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to investigate preschool teachers understanding of preschoolers’ make-believe play. You are being invited to participate in this study because you are an instructor of possible future teachers of preschool age children.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this study, your participation will last for approximately 30-60 minutes. During the study you may expect the following study procedures to be followed. You will receive a phone call to set up a convenient meeting time. You will be asked to either meet at the Palmer Building on Iowa State University Campus or at a more convenient location for you that has an available television and video player. You will be asked questions about play and watch some video vignettes to stimulate discussion. The interview will be audio taped. Some of the responses during the interview will be recorded by hand by the interviewer. You may skip any question that you do not wish to answer or that makes you feel uncomfortable.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks at this time from participating in this study.

BENEFITS

If you decide to participate in this study there will be no direct benefit to you. It is hoped that the information gained in this study will benefit society by providing needed information on teachers’ beliefs and lead to more precise early childhood study.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION

You will not have any costs from participating in this study.
PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or leave the study at any time. If you decide to not participate in the study or leave the study early, it will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies) may inspect and/or copy your records for quality assurance and data analysis. These records may contain private information.

To ensure confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, the following measures will be taken. Code numbers will be assigned to each teacher when consent forms are received. Assessment protocols (audiotapes and coding forms) will be numbered according to the assigned numbers. Assessment protocols will contain both the identification number and the first name of the teacher. The name will be removed after data collection has occurred. It is important for the interviewer to know the first name of the participant during the interview process, as the assessments require one-on-one interaction between the teacher and the administrator. A master list of numbers and names will be kept in the investigators office in a locked cabinet. The list will be destroyed after data collection is completed. If the results are published, your identity will remain confidential.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study. For further information about the study contact Joanna J. Cemore at (515) 663-9335. If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the Human Subjects Research Office, 2810 Beardshear Hall, (515) 294-4566; meldrem@iastate.edu or the Research Compliance Officer, Office of Research Compliance, 2810 Beardshear Hall, (515) 294-3115; dament@iastate.edu
SUBJECT SIGNATURE

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You will receive a copy of the signed and dated written informed consent prior to your participation in the study.

Subject’s Name (printed) ____________________________________________

_________________________________________  ________________________
(Subject’s Signature)                      (Date)

CONTACT INFORMATION
(Please give telephone number to set up the time of the interview.)

__________________________________________

MAILING ADDRESS
(Please include your mailing address if you would like a copy of the results from this study).

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

INVESTIGATOR STATEMENT

I certify that the participant has been given adequate time to read and learn about the study and all of their questions have been answered. It is my opinion that the participant understands the purpose, risks, benefits and the procedures that will be followed in this study and has voluntarily agreed to participate.

__________________________________________  ________________________
(Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent)                      (Date)
MEMBER CHECK INSTRUCTIONS

Dear ____________,

Thank you for participating in an interview! I had fun getting to know more about you and your classroom. You provided me with some valuable information for my research on make-believe play.

I have enclosed a copy of a summary I wrote of the interview. I would like you to read it order to check its accuracy. This is an important process to ensure that I understood your thoughts and feelings correctly. Please write in the margins of the summary or on the enclosed blank paper in order to clarify or change anything I misunderstood. Feel free to add to, delete, and change any portion of the summary so that it will correctly and completely describe your view of make-believe play as a preschool teacher/college educator.

Please put your response in the enclosed stamped envelope and return it to me. Please try to drop this in the mail within 72 hours of receipt. I really appreciate your help with this project. Your insight and experiences with make-believe play will add important insight for future educators, researchers, and anyone who spends time with young children.

If you have any questions, please call me at home at my cell (417) 693-3886 or email me (joc787f@smsu.edu). Thanks again for your help! I look forward to reading your response to the summary.

Sincerely,

Joanna J. Cemore, Ph.D. Candidate
Graduate Student

Sedahlia Jasper Crase, Ph.D.
Major Professor
APPENDIX G

FACULTY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL/QUESTIONS
FACULTY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL/QUESTIONS

Each instructor will be greeted upon arrival, and the informed consent form will be discussed. I will explain that I will ask them some questions about what they think. Then we would view some video vignettes and I would ask them questions about what they saw and then I would ask some more questions, some being specifically about them, their education, etc. I told each teacher that I would be audio taping the interview and hopefully this would help them answer the questions more fully than if I only took notes. Each teacher was asked if they had any questions before proceeding. The audio recorder was turned on and the interview began.

Each question below will be asked of each participant. Additional questions will be asked as the answers lead.

1. What place does play have in preschool?
2. How do you address play with your students?
3. If you could have one area/center in a preschool room what would it be?
4. What is the primary goal of preschool?
5. What is play?
6. What is make-believe play?
7. Okay, now we are going to view some vignettes. I want you to watch each snippet and tell me whether you think what the child is doing is make-believe play or not. (View videotape vignettes.)

Vignette 1 (child with blocks and cars)
Vignette 2 (child drawing at easel)
Vignette 3 (child sitting and talking with prop)
Vignette 4 (child sitting and talking without prop)
Vignette 5 (child in housekeeping)
Vignette 6 (child with puppets)

Comments?

Instructor Name
Institution Name
Education
Major
Years of college/university teaching experience
Year of teaching experience with preschool children
REFERENCES


Gaithersburg, MD: Psychosocial & Educational Publications.


ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the women and the child who participated in this study. Their time and insight into make-believe play has been invaluable to me. Thank you!

Thank you to my committee members. Dr. Cathy Hockaday, Dr. Gayle Luze, and Dr. Mike Godfrey all offered support and feedback that was greatly needed and expertly given. You all had a little bit of a different perspective in your responses and suggestions – I really appreciated that! And special thanks to Dr. Mack Shelley who has been on all of my committees since I arrived at Iowa State. He is such a warm and helpful expert. I don’t think I could have gotten through Iowa State half as well without him.

Dr. Crase, words cannot describe how amazing this woman is. I thank her so much for her continued kindness, support, expertise, and caring. She is such a fantastic example of what a mentor should be. Thank you.

Thank you to all the faculty and staff at Iowa State University. I really felt like I had a home here at this university. Dr. Herwig really created a grand program for me. Besides being a great person to know, she really did prepare me to be a faculty member. I will be eternally grateful.

Thank you to my amazing friends who helped me make it through my doctoral program with some semblance of sanity. I’d especially like to thank Carolyn Clawson for helping with this particular study in addition to being a great friend – you are one of a kind!

I would like to thank the Graduate Student Body and the Graduate College of Human Sciences for funding to help make this study possible.
Thank you to my parents. I’ve learned so much from both of you. Your continued love and support is greatly valued and eternally appreciated. I literally and figuratively wouldn’t be here without you!

Thank you God for being my never-ending source of love and peace. I couldn’t make it one day without you.