



Veitch, Ruth (2020) *Early years practitioners' perceptions of risky play*. [MEd].

Copyright © 2020 The Author

Copyright and moral rights for this work are retained by the author(s)

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge

This work cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author(s)

The content must not be shared, changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, institution and date must be given

<http://endeavour.gla.ac.uk/501/>

Deposited: 16 December 2020

Enlighten Dissertations
<http://endeavour.gla.ac.uk/>
research-enlighten@glasgow.ac.uk



University
of Glasgow

Student Number:

Early Years Practitioners' Perceptions of Risky Play

Supervisor's Name: Dr Mary Wingrave

Submitted for M.Ed. in Childhood Practice

School of Education

University of Glasgow

2nd September 2020

Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is to gain an understanding of a group of early years practitioners' perceptions of risky play. Further to this, the dissertation will explore the definitions of play as well as categories of play and how these have influenced the risky play discourse. Discussion surrounding risky play has gained momentum with the view that an increasingly risk averse society and enhanced safety regulations within early years settings make it difficult for children to access risky play opportunities. My focus here will be to gain an understanding of how practitioners within the setting I work balance a child's safety with their fundamental right to play and thus allow them to explore challenging, exciting environments. Children naturally seek out challenging and stimulating experiences which allows them to learn new skills, build confidence, resilience, and a sense of understanding their capabilities. Allowing children the freedom to explore, make mistakes but try again and consequently take a risk occurs when children are playing. This dissertation is based on an understanding that risky play is beneficial to a child, however, safety rules, regulations and negative connotations of risk are perhaps impacting on a child's freedom to play and take the necessary risks which are crucial to their development. Themes apparent within the dissertation include the role of the practitioner, safety versus supervision and risk benefit. The research data was collected through the use of anonymous questionnaires sent out to practitioners who work within the early years setting where I am the manager. A total of eight questionnaires were collected and subsequently analyzed. The data collected illustrates that the practitioners' view their role to be vital in the delivery of risky play as there is an understanding of the benefits this play type has to a child's overall learning and wellbeing. A small number of participants indicate the holistic nature of risky play and consequently this may suggest that risky play does not require to be a separate category of play as it happens throughout learning. In addition, practitioners report barriers to the successful delivery of risky play such as parent attitudes and risk assessment procedures. The conclusions therefore propose that practice should be aimed at viewing risky play through the lens of a risk benefit model of delivery rather than risk assessment. Further to this I conclude by suggesting that risky play is predominantly viewed as physical play, which takes place predominantly outdoors. Research which considers risky play as occurring throughout learning is limited. As a result, areas of future research should consider viewing risky play more holistically from different viewpoints.

Contents

Abstract.....	1
Contents	2
Acknowledgments.....	4
List of Acronyms Used	5
1 Introduction and Rationale	6
1.1 A continuing discussion	6
1.2 Rationale for the project and justification in light of my professional context.....	7
2 Literature Review	9
2.1 Introduction.....	9
2.2 They are only playing	10
2.2.1 Romantic and developmental theories of play	10
2.3 Towards a definition of play.....	12
Table 2.1 Play types	13
2.3.1 It is all very hazy.....	16
2.4 The ambiguity of risk.....	16
2.4.1 A Risk Society	16
2.5 Risky play	18
2.5.1 Defining risky play.....	18
2.5.2 Common themes of risky play	18
Table 2.2 Categories of risky play	19
2.5.3 Adults’ perceptions of risky play	20
2.6 ‘Duty of Care’	21
2.6.1 A child’s right to play – participation vs. protection	23
2.7 Conclusion	24
3 Methodology and Methods	25
3.1 Introduction.....	25
3.2 Paradigms.....	25
3.2.1 The positivist paradigm.....	26
3.2.2 The interpretivist paradigm.....	26
3.2.3 Positioning the research	28
3.3 Methods.....	28
3.3.1 Questionnaires.....	29
3.3.2 Planning for a focus group.....	29
3.3.3 Planning for an information session.....	30
3.4 Data Analysis	31

3.5. Ethics approval - compliance.....	32
3.5.1 ‘Goodness’	32
3.6 Presenting the data	33
4 Data Analysis.....	34
4.1 Introduction.....	34
Table 4.1 Thematic analysis from practitioner questionnaires	35
4.2 Role of the practitioner	35
4.2.1 Safety and Supervision.....	36
4.2.2 Staff knowledge and understanding	38
4.3 Risk Benefit	39
4.3.1 Child development	40
4.3.2 Holistic approach to learning	41
4.4 Conclusion	42
5 Conclusions.....	43
5.1 Introduction.....	43
5.2 The dissertation	43
5.3. Findings of research.....	44
5.3.1 Building a holistic curriculum.....	45
5.4 Towards a holistic view of risk taking – implications of my findings.....	45
5.5 Recommendations.....	46
5.6 Limitations of this project and problems arising.....	47
5.7 Towards a ‘new normal’	48
Appendix 1: Early Years Practitioners’ Perceptions of Risky Play Questionnaire.....	49
Appendix 2: Plain Language Statement.....	55
Appendix 3: Consent Form.....	58
Reference List	61

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Mary Wingrave for her support, feedback and invaluable knowledge and assistance throughout my research. I would also like to thank my fellow students for their positivity, encouragement and laughter which helped to keep me motivated through what has been a challenging time for everyone.

I would like to acknowledge and thank my work colleagues as I not have been able to complete the project without their time and contributions.

Finally, I would like to thank my family who have encouraged me throughout my studies, particularly to John for his unconditional support and patience.

List of Acronyms Used

BERA – British Educational Research Association

PLS – Plain Language Statement

SSSC – Scottish Social Services Council

UNCRC – UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

1 Introduction and Rationale

1.1 A continuing discussion

There continues to be a vast amount of literature and research within the field of play-based learning with exhaustive attempts towards defining play ensuring it is viewed as a multi-dimensional and fluid concept (Aras, 2106:1173). Philosophical and scientific discussions about how children learn can be traced back to the work of Froebel during the Enlightenment period (LeBlanc, online) with developmental theories of play (Bruce, 2012; Barrouillet, 2015) also continuing to be debated and used in early years practice today (Scottish Government, 2010). Relevant contributions of discussions concerned with play have a central position in early childhood education and now span a full range of academic disciplines making it an extremely broad topic (Eberle, 2014). As explained by Pyle et al. (2017), an expanding body of literature points to the importance of play-based pedagogies with their effectiveness on learning providing discussion at both a national and international level. In Scotland, early years education has been the focus of significant change with the planned increase in funded hours for children aged three to five (Scottish Government, 2017). A number of settings have piloted various models of the increased delivery and a large number of children and families have already benefited from the extended hours. With the planned increase in funded hours (Scottish Government, 2017) providing a clear focus on high quality learning experiences (Scottish Government, 2020a), I reflected on the opportunities for meaningful play experiences that staff, including myself as an early years practitioner, provide for the children in my setting.

Practitioners' perceptions of risk and the implementation of risk experiences within the setting will be the main focus of the dissertation. Furthermore, I propose to add to the already existing discussions about play, with a focus specifically on the benefits of risky play which has a necessary role in a child's development (Sandseter, 2007; Sandseter, 2010). However, with an increased focus on children's safety (Sandseter and Sando, 2016), debates which examine the need to find a balance between protective responses from practitioners whilst allowing children to experience challenge and excitement within their learning (McFarland and Laird, 2018) will also be discussed within this dissertation.

1.2 Rationale for the project and justification in light of my professional context

Within my practice I had been considering the benefits of risky play and the importance of risky play opportunities to a child's development (Brussoni et al., 2015). Over the last few years, I began to acknowledge that some children in the setting had minor accidents which led parents to question what risk assessments had taken place and how we manage our risk assessment procedures. The risk assessments were questioned further when practitioners were taking the children outside to explore during the cold weather. A couple of parents did not understand the benefits of this type of play, which will be discussed in Chapter 2, and raised concerns to me, as manager, about their children being too cold as well as slipping on the ice. Little (2010:33) describes 'well-managed risks in the context of stimulating and challenging outdoor play provision.' Being fully compliant with the correct adult to child ratios alongside practitioners' engagement with the children I am confident that the outdoor play provision facilitates for well-managed risks (Little, 2010:33) to take place.

Using the My World Outdoors document (Care Inspectorate, 2016:2) as guidance to support practice, it states that '.....we recognise that the benefits far outweigh the risks.' With explicit reference to risk, regulatory bodies in Scotland promote the benefits of risky play in early years settings. Paradoxically, there are many concerns raised in terms of health and safety which could result in children being over protected due to concerns relating to the risks attached to some physical activities (Little and Wyver, 2008) which will be discussed further in Chapter 2. An awareness of relevant frameworks and legislation in this field is something I have explored throughout the enquiry, specifically looking to find out if there is sufficient guidance to support practitioners in their understanding and implementation of risky play in order to provide the children in our care with stimulating and challenging play experiences.

By providing practitioners the opportunity to take part in my dissertation it allowed them to engage in thoughtful reflection as they re-considered the benefits, barriers and limitations of risky play in the setting. Consequently, I hoped to enhance professional competency through discussion and the sharing of my findings with them (Altrichter et al., 2008) thus leading to more rewarding activities for the

children in our care. Risk can and should be framed positively as it plays a necessary role in a child's development (Niehues et al., 2013; McFarland and Laird, 2018). However, if restrictions are put in place this leads me to question how and when do children access the opportunities to take part in beneficial risky play experiences. In order to reflect fully on this issue, I examined relevant literature and policies which help to inform and guide practice in order for me to understand the extensive debate surrounding the topic of risky play. In my next chapter I will go on to discuss the definitions of play which have emerged and how these definitions have influenced the risky play discourse.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The discussion within this chapter is primarily related to the literature concerned with risk and risky play. A consideration of the theories of play will provide further focus where I will chronologically look at different types of play which have emerged over the centuries, discussing why play is important to a child's development. My objective does not lie in providing the reader with a full account of child development, rather I will focus on theories of play, attempted definitions of play and how these have influenced the risky play discourse. As stated by Hughes (2012:4) the 1970s saw a shift from practitioners thinking their role was merely supervisory or 'domestic'. Rather, practitioners turned to scientific, academic, and political literature to underpin what they were doing and why (Hughes, 2012), with research therefore guiding practice. Consequently, research concerned with risky play has gained momentum. Within the risky play discourse up until the 1990s risk in play was associated with danger (Lupton and Tulloch, 2002), however, over the last ten years there has been advances in thinking that risky play is beneficial to a child with research such as that carried out by Niehues et al., (2013) attempting to reframe perceptions of this play type. Contemporary ideas of play therefore continue to emerge and can be traced as far back as the Enlightenment period of the 17th century with current literature referring to pedagogues from that time such as Froebel (Ailwood, 2003; Bruce 2012) whose work I will refer to within the chapter. Furthermore, looking at the word 'risk' and defining what it means in society today (Beck, 1992; Adams, online; 2000; Sorensen and Christiansen, 2014) will also provide focus. Sandseter (2007; 2009; 2010); Little (2010); Niehues et al., (2013); Brussoni et al., (2015); Sandseter and Sando (2016) and Coates and Pimlott-Wilson (2019) are at the forefront of the relatively recent debates surrounding the delivery of risky play opportunities, their research will therefore be discussed particularly from Section 2.4 of this chapter. With the feelings or connotations that 'risk' has for practitioners who provide play experiences being the main issue I am considering; I will also reflect on the relationship between policy and practice and how this effects the delivery of risky play.

2.2 They are only playing

The discussion about play and its function has been one that has existed for many centuries (LeBlanc, online). Consequently, there have been many attempts to define play which have resulted in a historical evolution of ideas about how children learn and develop (Lambert, 2006). Coates and Pimlott-Wilson (2019) discuss play pedagogy which refers to the practice of facilitating children's learning through play. Play pedagogy has resulted in play and learning being mutually beneficial which will be discussed in the next section. Looking at the nature of risky play within the wider context of play has been put forward by Sandseter (2010). In order to define the characteristics of risky play (Sandseter, 2007; Stephenson, 2010; Pyle et al., 2017) the theories and definitions of play in general needs to be considered.

2.2.1 Romantic and developmental theories of play

Contemporary understandings of play emerged during the Enlightenment period with Froebel, born in 1782, who believed that play was central to a child's development (LeBlanc, online). Froebel viewed play as the highest form of learning, thus allowing children to construct their understanding of the world through direct contact with it (Bruce, 2012). In contemporary literature, Froebel was the first person to articulate a comprehensive theory on how children learn which was founded on the importance of the growing and nurturing of children, where children should enjoy the things that children enjoy without having to be concerned about what comes next i.e. adulthood (Bruce, 2012). As explained by Ryan (2008) the idea of the socialization of children for adulthood posits that children are conditioned by adults who prepare them for their future, a concept of childhood known as the conditioned child. This concept emerged through the work of John Locke in the 17th century (Ryan, 2008; Gianoutsos, 2006). Locke proposed that children are born with minds as blank as slates and through education an adult would mould and instruct a child's mind (Gianoutsos, 2006:2). This contrasts with Froebel's discourse of play which is linked to notions of nature, where childhood is a time of innocence (Ailwood, 2003). This has been described by Ailwood (2003) as the romantic and nostalgic discourse of play with a child being recognised as an individual, making sense of their own world through the process of play.

Further to this, Ailwood (2003) explains psychological and developmental theories of play which were advanced by theorists such as Piaget and Vygotsky. Similar to Froebel, Piaget observed the process of children making sense of the world around them and developed a model of how the mind processes new information it encounters (Barrouillet, 2015). With a strong emphasis on stages of development, Piaget believed that all children progress through these stages and do so at the same age (McLeod, 2018a). In contrast, Vygotsky later developed a sociocultural approach to cognitive development, where he believed that a child's development varies over time and space with an adult's interaction and involvement in play being crucial to enhance learning (Aras, 2016). However, Vygotsky's theories have also been criticized (Lambert, 2006:27). Vygotsky believed that spontaneous play was the lowest form of thinking with the development of more advanced thinking only occurring under an organised system of structure during a child's school years (Lambert, 2006:27). For Vygotsky it is the social interactions between a child and skilled adult that guides a child's learning and development (McLeod, 2018b). The role of the adult in child's play is a complex issue and will be discussed further in Section 2.4.3 of this chapter.

It has been argued that the developmental theories of play described have had the most dominant influence on current discussions surrounding play (Ailwood, 2003; Aras, 2016; Coates and Pimlott-Wilson, 2019) with developmentally appropriate programmes of play being used within early years settings today (Eberle, 2014; Aras, 2016; Coates and Pimlott-Wilson, 2019). Piaget's theories of cognitive development still impact on practice (Barrouillet, 2015) with stage models of development providing practitioners and parents with assurance of what is 'normal' in terms of their child's development through the use of developmental milestones (Scottish Government, 2010). However, reaction against Piaget's theories suggest that his research was limited, using only his three children which presents judgement with the sample size whilst he also neglected the role of social factors which could impact upon a child's development (Lourenco and Machado, 1996; Lambert, 2006) such as culture, religion and family circumstances.

Despite criticism the pedagogues described have influenced contemporary literature concerning play (Ailwood, 2003; Aras, 2016) advocating that children learn through play, with there being clear links between play, learning and development (Coates

and Pimlott-Wilson, 2019). Across a number of countries, play based learning is the mandated pedagogy in early years curricula (Pyle et al, 2017:311). However, there continues to be ongoing deliberations surrounding the importance of play, the role of the adult as children play and more importantly the definitions of play which continue to emerge and will now be discussed. In order to provide clarity to the discussion, I have provided a table in Section 2.3 which outlines a description of a small number of the types of play which have emerged (Pellegrini, 1989; Sheridan, 1999; Hughes, 2012; Jarvis, 2006; Smith and Pellegrini, 2013), this will enhance the discussion, allowing for comparison of the play types I have selected as well as consideration of the benefits they have to a child's development.

2.3 Towards a definition of play....

Eberle (2014:214) defines play in general as being 'evolution based and developmentally beneficial.' Eberle (2014) also suggests that play is hard to define as it is a complex and ambiguous concept, it differs over time and space and is not always predominantly the pursuit of a child. Sutton-Smith (1997) is also of the opinion that play is a lifelong enterprise that ensues in different forms throughout all ages. Therefore, play can be described as a human experience which is rich and various. As such, play can take many forms from a pursuit as simple as peek a boo (Eberle, 2014:214), which serves many purposes from amusement to a child learning that things do not disappear because they have been hidden. Games such as football (Eberle, 2014:214), the rules of which are often changed depending on age and the objectives of the game. Finally, play can be the gratification of solitary activities 'as enjoyed by a woodcarver at his bench or a quilter during her bee' (Eberle, 2014:214). Taking these examples into consideration, play has been described as purposeful (Bruce, 2012) with the motivation to play coming from within the player (Aras, 2016). Furthermore, Sheridan (1999:4) explains 'playing is an end in itself and to an observer there may not be any obvious goal or conclusion.' However, this opinion contrasts with Eberle (2014) who defines play as being both active and passive, meaning that play is recognised in both the spectator and the actor. Eberle's (2014:213) discussions suggest a plurality of play, continually proposing that play cannot easily be defined but is a concept which offers contrasts.

Play, therefore, can be looked at through a multitude of lenses and as previously explained, is motivationally based (Smith and Pellegrini, 2013; Aras, 2016) being characterised by the process as opposed to being product orientated. As such, categories of children’s play have emerged which have further added to definitions of play (Pellegrini, 1989; Sheridan, 1999; Jarvis, 2006; Smith and Pellegrini, 2013; Aras, 2016; Coates and Pimlott-Wilson, 2019). Having now read extensively and considered many of the different play theories and labels, I have constructed a table below which outlines different play types as well as their benefits thus allowing me to enhance the discussion.

Table 2.1 Play types

Play Type	What it looks like	Play led by the Adult or Child?	Benefits	Theorist
Symbolic	Props given specific symbolic meaning e.g. boxes to represent a spaceship.	Child and Adult (facilitating the learning environment).	Encourages problem solving skills; language development; creativity; development of social skills.	Hughes (2012)
Rough and Tumble	Physical contact games; wrestling; playful pushing.	Child	Foundations for physical, personal, and interpersonal relationships; learning about judgement and boundaries.	Pellegrini (1989) Jarvis (2006) Sandseter (2007)
Locomotor	Climbing; jumping; ball games; skipping; running.	Child and Adult (facilitating the learning environment).	Physical training for muscles; strength; endurance and skill; aiding concentration.	Smith and Pellegrini (2013)
Exploratory	Play to access information; physically exploring an environment; involves sensory exploration.	Child and Adult (facilitating the learning environment).	Development of thinking and reasoning skills; assessing risk; creativity acquisition.	Sheridan (1999) Hughes (2012)

Play Type	What it looks like	Play led by the Adult or Child?	Benefits	Theorist
Role-Play	Play which explores ways of being; imitating a community person e.g. police.	Adult (facilitating the learning environment).	Encourages creativity and imagination; fosters social and emotional development; develops communication.	Hughes (2012) Smith and Pellegrini (2013)
Creative	Using imagination with materials; painting; manipulating materials; expression of ideas and emotions; play with 'loose parts'.	Child and Adult (facilitating the learning environment).	Development of thinking skills; appreciation of the senses; enhancing fine motor skills and hand-eye co-ordination.	Sheridan (1999)
Communication	Play using words, nuances or gestures e.g. rhyming, singing and non-verbal communication through body language.	Child and Adult	Expansion of vocabulary; oral language development; developing social skills.	Hughes (2012)
Social	Any social or interactive experience; engagement with social dynamics.	Child and Adult	Fosters language development; communication skills; social and emotional development.	Hughes (2012)
Socio-dramatic	Dramatization of everyday events e.g. going to the supermarket; play recognized by a child's 'real life' contexts.	Child	Promotes language development; understanding of the world; expression and creative skills.	Smith and Pellegrini (2013)

With reference to the play types outlined in Table 2.1, Smith and Pellegrini (2013:1) indicate further benefits of play whereby children often ‘smile, laugh and say they enjoy it.’ This effect of play is also discussed by Eberle (2014:222) who, in contrast to Table 2.1, has moved definitions of play away from categorizing it to suggesting that there are six basic elements of play which all work together, those being anticipation, surprise, pleasure, understanding, strength, and poise. Therefore, it is also possible to look at the play types outlined in Table 2.1 through this lens, again looking at play through a multitude of different perspectives.

Hughes (2012:4) in his considerations about play types suggests that playing is essential with supervised and organised places for children to play having been around for many years. I have included child and adult initiated play within Table 2.1 as the role of the practitioner in early years settings is complex and requires many responsibilities, including the facilitating of children’s play experiences (Rose and Rogers, 2012). However, Hughes (2012) also explains that overly supervised environments can stifle a child’s learning, which leads his discussion onto risk taking opportunities whereby children should be encouraged to take more rather than less risks. In my opinion, this places risky play as having a different role to the play types outlined in Table 2.1 as risky play encourages children to lead their own learning, allowing for more creativity and exploration of boundaries (Care Inspectorate, 2016), which will be outlined further in Section 2.4. Looking at the play types described and considering practice within my setting, we are encouraging children to reproduce and ‘act out’ set societal narratives in prescribed environments, for example role play games such as ‘mummies and daddies’ in the home corner. Risky play as I understand, allows for children to adopt different roles and lead their own learning, therefore it can be free from judgement about society. Hughes (2012:6) describes children as not being a static or social preconception but rather a developing continuum. As such, adults must be careful not to place their own agendas on a child’s play, which places further importance on the considerations of how risky play is encouraged within early years settings. Further discussion about the definitions of risky play will take place in Section 2.4 of this chapter.

2.3.1 It is all very hazy

Vital contributions to the theorizing of play could be considered exhaustive. However, there is the continued understanding that play is developmentally beneficial providing children with the opportunity to learn (Coates and Pimlott-Wilson, 2019). Risky play is an element within the wider concept of play, however, with definitions and categories of play resulting in continued deliberations, Sandseter (2007; 2010) has posited that ambiguous definitions of play in general have hindered attempts to define risky play. It has been noted by Hughes (2012) that an increasingly risk averse society is making it difficult for children to take part in risky play. However, as outlined in Table 2.1, the benefits of play are great, allowing children to learn vital skills for life and it could be argued that risky play perhaps shares the characteristics of the categories of play which have been touched upon in this chapter. Before establishing an understanding of risky play, I think that it is important to consider the word ‘risk’ and its meaning in society today.

2.4 The ambiguity of risk

As explained by Lupton and Tulloch (2002:113) a large majority of the narratives of risk written in contemporary Western society depict risk as negative, with risk being synonymous with danger. However, Ball et al., (2013:4) challenge this by arguing that risk is positive and something which should be encouraged, but at the same time well managed. Considering both viewpoints, I am of the opinion that a child’s risk taking within early years settings should encompass both freedom and structure with a mix of adult and child-initiated activity (Coates and Pimlott-Wilson, 2019). I will go on to discuss this within Section 2.5.3 as the current focus is centred around the definitions of ‘risk’ and what risk means in society today (Beck, 1992; Adams, online;2000; Sorensen and Christiansen, 2014).

2.4.1 A Risk Society

Risk society is the way in which contemporary society identifies and responds to risk and is a term associated with influential writers in this field, Adams (online;2000) and Beck (1992). Beck (1992:2) identifies risk as being a systematic way of dealing with the hazards and insecurities which have been induced by modernization such as scientific and technological advances which have changed societal characteristics

whilst both advances have also had an influence on changes in lifestyle and political landscapes (Beck, 1992:50). In writing about the emergence of the risk society, Beck (1992) proposes that people are both highly aware of and worried about risks with individuals taking action to reduce their exposure to risk.

With an emphasis on Western society, Lupton and Tulloch (2002:113) describe the avoidance of risk as being associated with ‘an increasing desire to take control over one’s life.’ Consequently, risk perceptions can be formed and shaped by social and cultural norms. Risk, therefore, can be viewed as subjective, with perceptions of risk varying between individuals (Adams, 2000; Sandseter, 2010) who evaluate the possibility of something dangerous happening and how imminent the danger is perceived to be. It could be argued, therefore, that there are differing definitions of risk with it having particular associations for individuals in varying situations (Adams, 2000).

Adams (online) has developed the risk “thermostat”, a model of risk which further exemplifies definitions as being subjective. The model shows how the interlinking of an individual’s tendency to take risks, the anticipated dangers in a situation with the outcome of possible rewards versus possible accidents as a result of the situation, all work together and influence an individual’s risk-taking behaviour. Sandseter (2009; 2010) has used this model of risk as a framework for understanding the risk involved in children’s play focusing primarily on the subjective level of how children perceive risk. However, it has also been noted in the work of Niehues et al., (2013) that an adult’s perception of risk may interfere with this type of play, with them having a greater awareness of potential dangers. This point will be discussed in Section 2.5.3 and should be considered when defining risk in society today (Lupton and Tulloch, 2002).

Having so far explored definitions of play as well as the definitions of risk in a broader sense, I will now go on to describe attempts which have been made to characterise risky play in literature and research. I will then discuss how risky play is perceived in society today, particularly contemporary Western society.

2.5 Risky play

The importance of play to a child's development has been debated over time and continues to be a topic of discussion with the view that there are different types of play which children engage with (Table 2.1) that are developmentally beneficial (Ailwood, 2003; Sandseter, 2007; Smith and Pellegrini, 2013; Aras, 2016; Pyle et al., 2017; McFarland and Laird, 2018; Coates and Pimlott-Wilson, 2019). Play based learning is the mandated pedagogy in early years curricula across a number of countries, including Scotland, with the proposed benefits of play tending to be viewed through the lens of developmental learning (Pyle et al., 2017). Looking at where risky play sits within the discourse of play and how practitioners view risky play will now be discussed. I am of the opinion that risky play is a natural part of learning, whether that risk is attempting something that has never been done before or a risk of making a mistake which builds resilience, provides challenge and tests limits (McFarland and Laird, 2018).

2.5.1 Defining risky play

Sandseter (2007; 2009; 2010) has been leading the research into children's risk-taking behaviours in early years settings. Based in Norway, Sandseter (2010:22) has attempted to define risky play and with hesitance, due to ambiguous definitions of play in general, she explains that it 'involves thrilling and exciting forms of physical play that involves uncertainty and a risk of physical injury'. More recently, McFarland and Laird (2018:159) have added to the definition, describing risky play as allowing children to 'challenge themselves.....and learn to make decisions.' Ball (2002:51) has previously described how children seek out risk taking opportunities, explaining that it, and play in general, fosters independence, self-esteem, encourages social interaction, promotes creativity and the capacity to learn.

2.5.2 Common themes of risky play

Sandseter (2007) is of the opinion that risky play can be categorized and through her research she has defined experiences which constitute this type of play. I have created a table below which outlines the six broad categories of risky play as defined by Sandseter (2007:241) and continue to be referred to in recent conversations

concerned with risky play (Saunders, 2016). I have also outlined the benefits each of the categories has to a child's development.

Table 2.2 Categories of risky play

Category of risky play	What it looks like	Benefits	Theorist
Play with great heights	Climbing trees; playground climbers; climbing steep hills; jumping down from high places.	Building balance and coordination skills; awareness and capabilities of own body; problem solving; ability to risk assess; developing confidence and independence.	Sandseter (2007)
Play with high speed	Riding a bike; sliding down hills and slides.	Building balance and coordination skills; awareness and capabilities of own body; ability to risk assess; building resilience.	Sandseter (2007)
Play with dangerous tools	Saws for cutting branches; hammer and nails for carpentering.	Handling tools safely; problem solving; ability to risk assess; resourcefulness.	Sandseter (2007)
Play near dangerous elements	Play near steep cliffs; play near deep water; play near a fire pit	Curiosity and wonder; ability to risk assess; understanding consequence to actions.	Sandseter (2007)
Rough and tumble play	Physical contact games; wrestling; playful pushing.	Foundations for physical, personal, and interpersonal relationships; learning about judgement and boundaries.	Pellegrini (1989) Jarvis (2006) Sandseter (2007)
Play where the child can get lost	The opportunity for a child to explore on their own in an unknown area	Curiosity and wonder; building resilience; developing confidence and independence.	Sandseter (2007)

Risky play, as defined by Sandseter's (2007) categories, is related to the chance of getting hurt and feelings of fear with it taking place predominantly outdoors (Sandseter, 2007:248). With a vast amount of research and literature placing risky play in an outdoor environment (Sandseter, 2007; Little and Wyver, 2008; Little, 2010; Little et al., 2011; Niehues et al, 2013; McFarland and Laird, 2018; Coates and Pimlott-Wilson, 2019), it could be argued that the lens through which children's risk-taking tendencies is looked through is limited. McFarland and Laird (2018:160) describe the benefits of risky play to include the development of decision making skills, learning about success and failure, developing a sense of motivation to accomplish goals and master new challenges, as well as including feelings of fun, excitement, pride and achievement. These benefits lead me to question why risky play needs to be thought of as activities which occur in outdoor environments and considerations should to be broadened to include risk occurring within all aspects of children's play and learning.

2.5.3 Adults' perceptions of risky play

Throughout my literacy searches I have noted that the recommended role of the early years practitioner continues to be debated with practitioners reporting barriers to implementing play based learning despite recording the importance of providing high quality learning opportunities within their settings (Pyle et al., 2017; McFarland and Laird, 2018). To refer back to the definitions of risk, where Adams (2000) defined views of what constitutes risk as being subjective, literature related to risky play emphasises this point and recognises that practitioners' and children's evaluations of what is risky is not always the same (Sandseter, 2007; Little, 2010; Wyver et al., 2010; Little et al., 2011, 2012; Brussoni et al., 2012; Sandseter and Sando, 2016; McFarland and Laird, 2018).

Despite the benefits risky play has to a child's development Little et al., (2012) have put forward a mounting concern that these developmentally beneficial activities are now deemed as dangerous and something to be avoided, with risk aversion evident particularly in developed Western societies. Niehues et al., (2013) highlight the need to alter adult's perceptions of risk in order to increase innovative outdoor play opportunities. Wyver et al., (2010:264) argue that excessive controls are put in place by adults to discourage a child's access to risky play opportunities in order to prevent

injury to a child from occurring, no matter how minor the injury may be. However, Brussoni et al., (2012:3134) propose that there has been a shift in thinking and suggest that there is now investigation into ‘keeping children “as safe as necessary” not “as safe as possible”.’ This view takes into consideration both the fostering of a child’s development whilst also maintaining and having an awareness of children’s safety. McFarland and Laird (2018) have recognised that early years settings play an important role in facilitating children’s risky play but must do so in a supportive and supervised environment. In order to successfully implement play-pedagogy there needs to be a mix of adult and child-initiated activity where the role of the adult is crucial in supporting and facilitating a child’s play experiences (Rose and Rogers, 2012) which has been highlighted in Table 2.1. The practitioner should be able to provide appropriate support and encouragement to enhance a child’s learning but at the same time allow children to act autonomously and make their own choices. As suggested by Wingrave (2011:95) taking risks with positive feedback helps to promote the development of self-esteem. In contrast, children who are not eager to seek challenge within their learning often have lower self-esteem as they will not risk failure (Wingrave, 2011:95). McFarland and Laird (2018:159) explain this point further by suggesting that failure to provide children with opportunities to take risks in their learning could have adverse effects of inactivity and diminished psychological wellbeing.

Appropriate adult supervision presents a vital role in ensuring children are accessing the high-quality experiences recommended by play based curriculums (Rose and Rogers, 2012; Aras 2016). I will now go on to discuss whether the policy and legislation in Scotland promotes or hinders the effective delivery of risk taking within early learning and childcare.

2.6 ‘Duty of Care’

Literature I have read discusses adult interference in children’s risk taking versus a child’s right to play (Malone, 2007; Sandseter, 2007; Bae, 2009; Wyver et al., 2012; Sandseter and Sando, 2016; Kleppe, 2018). Discussion also centres around the balance between risk and the benefits this has to a child versus their safety within early years settings (Sandseter and Sando 2016; Kleppe, 2018) which I will now go on to outline whilst taking into consideration relevant policy and legislation.

Early years settings, particularly in Scotland, are required to provide children who use their service with high quality experiences and interactions (Scottish Government, 2020a) yet the characteristics of staff-child interactions, particularly in relation to risky play are often met with ambiguity and often discouraged because of concerns over safety (Kleppe, 2018). Practitioners in Little and Wyver's (2008:38) research found 'duty of care' procedures to be increasingly restrictive resulting in the feeling that they are no longer able to provide children with rich and challenging play environments. However, Sandseter and Sando (2016:182) have noted that whilst formal risk managing policies have emerged, studies have shown that in early years settings where adult supervision is rigorous, children in fact experience fewer injuries with the most common of injuries being minor scrapes and bruises. Despite this, Sandseter and Sando (2016:191) found that practitioners felt pressure to make children's safety the focus of play activities with their study showing that restrictions to children's play were commonplace. For example, a frequent response to children climbing was to limit how high they were allowed to climb and staying indoors if the outdoor play area was deemed to be too icy or wet (Sandseter and Sando, 2016:190). As explained by Little and Wyver (2008:34) a growing culture of litigation has resulted in an increasing fear amongst early years educators that they will be held liable for any injury, however minor it may be. Sandseter and Sando (2016:191) noted that practitioners referred to pressure from parents as a reason to restrain children's play with 'safety hysteria' resulting in a lack of challenging opportunities. As such, Sandseter and Sando (2016) have recommended a need for more effective strategies which find a balance between ensuring a child's safety whilst also providing challenging experiences.

Within my setting, we have clear health and safety policies in place which include procedures for identifying and reporting accidents, hazards, and faulty equipment. Risk assessment policies are also in place whereby risk assessments identify aspects of the environment which must be checked on a regular basis. This involves deciding what should be done to prevent harm whilst ensuring that staff are aware of their responsibilities and have appropriate training. The Care Inspectorate (2016) encourage a positive approach to risk assessment and as such we have developed a holistic risk assessment model whereby the children are encouraged to risk assess alongside practitioners. This ensures that the risk assessments in place are embracing

the risk-benefit model promoted by the Care Inspectorate (2016) whilst encouraging practitioners to take a proportionate approach. Including children in the risk assessment process allows them to be involved in decisions about the environments in which they play. Bae (2009) has looked into the extent to which children are able to express themselves in everyday interactions within early years settings, finding that a child's right to participate (United Nations, 1989) is often threatened if risk-averse approaches to play are put in place, which will now be discussed.

2.6.1 A child's right to play – participation vs. protection

The concept of child's rights (United Nations, 1989) and a concern to create spaces for children's voices to be heard (Moran-Ellis 2010:188) have gained momentum not only within national government policy (Scottish Government, 2014) but also on the international arena. In 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, United Nations, 1989) was developed and is described by Wyness (2012:94) as 'a legal and political response to the perceived problems facing children....' With a child's right to play being referred to under Article 31 of the UNCRC (UNICEF, online), there is a need for practitioners to consider children's rights and how these rights inform and influence practice (Giamminutti and See, 2017:24). By limiting a child's play, Bae (2009) suggests a violation of Article 31 (UNICEF, online) as a child's opportunity to express themselves freely through play, recreation, leisure and rest is being taken away.

The UNCRC (United Nations, 1989) is reflected on in Scottish legislation and documentation placing children's rights at the forefront of society. Through creating the Children and Young People Act (Scottish Government, 2014), the Scottish Government is attempting to strengthen the rights of children and recognises the importance of doing so. A child being viewed as vulnerable and requiring protection is an underlying theme within the children's rights discourse (Wyness, 2012) and there is a view that documentation concerned with children's rights are instruments with which to regulate the protection of children (Giamminutti and See, 2017). Restricting children of their right to enriching and developmentally enhancing opportunities such as those experienced through risky play needs to be addressed. The notion of risk benefit (Ball, 2002; Play Scotland, 2008; Care Inspectorate, 2016)

and maximizing a shift in the thinking towards fostering children's risk-taking behaviours whilst having an awareness of safety requires further exploration. In Scotland, there is a growing amount of guidance to help support practitioners deliver high quality experiences for children (Scottish Government, 2020a). My World Outdoors (Care Inspectorate, 2016:2) refers to the benefits of children playing in a natural setting with the resource seeking to 'support a move away from a risk averse approach to one where proportionate risk assessment supports children to enjoy potentially hazardous activities safely.' With the planned increase in funded childcare hours, moving from 600 per year to 1140 per year for children age three to five (Scottish Government, 2017), a continued movement by the Scottish Government towards more innovative models of provision is being encouraged, meaning a rise in the number of outdoor settings. By promoting outdoor play experiences, the fostering of risk taking and risk benefit (Ball, 2002; Play Scotland, 2008; Care Inspectorate, 2016) is apparent. Further research, such as that carried out by Sandseter and Sando (2016) needs to be considered whilst encouraging practitioners to use guidance in order to develop confidence in practice is important.

2.7 Conclusion

Vital contributions to the literature and research of risk and risky play in contemporary society could be considered ambiguous and open to interpretation with opinion suggesting that risk could in fact vary over time and space with social and political factors also resulting in multiple definitions (Beck, 1992). What is apparent is that there is an ever-changing climate where an adult's perception of risk is often negative, and activities associated with risky play are deemed to be dangerous (Little et al., 2012). Finding a balance between concerns over safety whilst providing high quality experiences is being addressed, particularly in Scotland, through guidance provided by the Scottish Government (2020a) and the Care Inspectorate (2016). Practitioners' perceptions of risky play is where my interest lies, referring back to literature throughout the dissertation I will now go on to select an appropriate paradigm, position my enquiry as well as design and justify the appropriate methodology and methods which fall into the paradigm congruent with my research.

3 Methodology and Methods

3.1 Introduction

Selecting the appropriate research paradigm for the project required an understanding of the different characteristics of research philosophies. As suggested by Holloway and Galvin (2017), the chosen paradigm guides the study and defines the methods selected to collect data and the subsequent analysis of the data. The paradigm congruent with my research, therefore provided me with direction towards how to conduct my enquiry into practitioners' perceptions of risky play. With a great diversity of research philosophies and paradigms within empirical research (Saunders et al., 2009), I will highlight the key attributes of the positivist and interpretivist paradigms. Furthermore, during this chapter I will position my research as well as design and justify the appropriate methodology and methods which fall into the selected paradigm.

3.2 Paradigms

Paradigms are sets of beliefs and practices shared by communities of researchers which regulate enquiry within different disciplines (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Hairston (1982) argues that no one paradigm is better than another, rather contrasting paradigms accomplish different but nonetheless valid outcomes. Research paradigms are therefore determined by the question or issue which has been posed by the researcher (Saunders et al., 2009). Positivism and interpretivism are two key paradigms within empirical research (Guba and Lincoln 1994). Positivists often use quantitative methods of data collection, while interpretivists use more qualitative methods, although it should be noted that qualitative and quantitative methods should not be assigned to one particular paradigm (Driscoll et al., 2007). Both paradigms are characterised by the research philosophies of ontology, axiology, and epistemology (Saunders et al., 2009). Guba and Lincoln (1994:108) explain ontology as the study of being, where theorists question what reality is. Epistemology questions the relationship between the inquirer and what is known, while axiology stems towards the ethics in research (Saunders et al., 2009). As explained by Saunders et al., (2009:128) these underpinnings help to distinguish between individual research philosophies, describing them as 'the types of assumptions that

research philosophies make.’ Having briefly introduced the positivist and interpretivist paradigms, I will now go on to discuss them in greater detail, taking into consideration the philosophical assumptions which underpin each paradigm (Saunders et al., 2009:128).

3.2.1 The positivist paradigm

Positivism is often a scientific approach to research and has also been described in terms of realism as ontologically, positivists believe there is one reality which can be proved through quantifiable methods (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:108). It is a fact-based form of research with the researcher being the facilitator, using objectivity to ensure that their values and beliefs are not an influence during the research process (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:110). Saunders et al., (2009:135) suggest that positivism ‘entails working with an observable social reality to produce law-like generalisations.’ As a result, the positivist framework requires the use of hypotheses which are stated and then subjected to empirical testing to verify them (Kvale, 1995). Positivist researchers attempt to prove or disprove their hypothesis promising accurate insights into what is being researched (Kvale, 1995:20). In terms of epistemology, the positivist researcher focuses on the observation of facts only reporting what has been found (Burton et al., 2014). Consequently, the methodology used is experimental with the aim to verify or falsify the hypothesis stated using primarily quantitative methods of data collection (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:109). These methods include mathematical or numerical analysis of data collected through surveys, polls and questionnaires. The positivist researcher seeks measurable data of statistical and numerical significance (Burton et al., 2014) which can be presented in tables, charts or as figures. Taking this into consideration, positivism contrasts with the interpretivist approach. As suggested by Saunders et al., (2009:140) the interpretivist researcher seeks to explore experiences and opinions therefore arguing that there are no universal laws that apply to everyone. I will now go on to discuss this further and position my research under one of the described paradigms.

3.2.2 The interpretivist paradigm

Interpretivist researchers suggest that human beings and their social worlds cannot be studied in the same way as physical phenomena (Chowdhury, 2014). Therefore, one of the main purposes of the interpretivist approach is to create new, richer, and more

meaningful understandings of different social realities (Saunders et al., 2009). It relies on the continual construction of knowledge through a democratic process involving both the researcher and research participants (Chowdhury, 2014). Where a positivist approach seeks to generalise concepts more widely, an interpretivist approach demands that the chosen enquiry starts with an assessment of existing knowledge in order to find gaps and add to an ongoing debate (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). In terms of ontology, interpretivists view reality as a social construct, exploring what has already happened within their field of research and therefore theory is an important aspect to this paradigm (Kvale, 1995). One of the key aims of this type of research is to determine the meanings and purposes that people assign to their actions (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:109) and this can be accomplished through qualitative techniques of data collection such as questionnaires, focus groups and interviews. Consequently, what is discovered through the research process is not always rigorously measured in terms of quantity but is instead interpreted through qualitative approaches which are incredibly diverse and complex (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In contrast, as explained by Driscoll et al., (2007:22) there are several strategies by which qualitative data can then be quantified. For example, software programmes which are able to count the number of times a qualitative code occurs with results showing the frequencies of particularly significant codes (Driscoll et al., 2007:22). However, Saunders et al., (2009) explain that interpretivist methods are designed in a manner which helps to understand how an individual or group of participants perceive their reality with reference to a particular topic. Interpretivism from an epistemological perspective suggests that the world is dependent on many subjective experiences (Thorne, 2000). This contrasts with positivist researchers who accept that their goal is to discover a universal and objective reality, believing in the validity and reliability of their methods of research (Kvale, 1995:24). However, as stated by Kvale (1995:19) ‘the concept of an objective reality to validate knowledge against has been discarded.’ Rather, the concept of validation of qualitative research rests on the researcher checking, questioning, and understanding findings (Kvale, 1995:21). The interpretivist researcher sets out to uncover knowledge about how people think and feel, thus are required to recognise that to validate their research is to check, verify and find further meaning (Kvale, 1995:27). The implications of this in terms of axiology is that interpretivists acknowledge that their perceptions of research materials and data play a role in the research process and as a result, ethical

integrity becomes essential (Kvale, 1995:26). As explained by Tobin and Begley (2004) the researcher who uses this framework must value the opinions of others free of judgement which means showing ethical ‘goodness’ to the participants. I will discuss ethical ‘goodness’ (Tobin and Begley, 2004) in Section 3.5.1 as now, having considered both the interpretivist and positivist paradigm, I will go on to position my research.

3.2.3 Positioning the research

Having outlined both paradigms and their philosophies, my enquiry is congruent with the interpretivist paradigm as I am examining a social phenomenon which considers the opinions, experiences, and concerns of practitioners who work within the service. Due to the nature of the enquiry which required dialogue between myself and the participants, the research involved the use of open-ended questionnaires (Appendix 1) to elicit practitioners’ perceptions of risky play. Consequently, I will now go on to describe the methods used for my research which correspond with the interpretivist paradigm.

3.3 Methods

Ausband (2006) provides insightful advice for novice researchers in terms of the research process, the collection and analysis of data and how to report on findings when participating specifically in qualitative research. I found Ausband’s (2006) approach useful in setting out a clear process ahead of undertaking my research. I had initially hoped to adopt a mixed method approach (Tobin and Begley, 2004) through the use of open-ended questionnaires, followed by a focus group with an information session completing the three phases of the data collection process. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic my research was limited, I was not able to safely meet with participants as social distancing guidelines were in place (Scottish Government, 2020b) and as a result data was collected through the questionnaires (Appendix 1). Despite this, within the next sections of this chapter I will discuss how I would have made use of the focus group and information session as both these methods were initially outlined in my ethics form submitted to the University of Glasgow. As the first phase of my project had taken place prior to the national lockdown (Scottish

Government, 2020b) I will now go on to explain how the questionnaires were utilised as part of the research project.

3.3.1 Questionnaires

In order to elicit practitioners' perceptions of risky play I made use of questionnaires as a research tool (Appendix 1). Cohen et al., (2017) urge that care should be given when constructing questions so that they are not deemed intrusive to the participants, this could lead to withdrawal from the process or being influenced in the way in which they respond. Therefore, in utilising this method it was important to ensure that questions asked were open-ended. This allowed the participants a greater freedom of expression which has meant useful and valuable data has been collected (Burton et al., 2014). A plain language statement (PLS) (Appendix 2) was put up in the staff area which outlined the purpose of the research whilst also explaining that it was a voluntary process. As well as this, the PLS (Appendix 2) stated that the questionnaires were anonymous and the completion of it was their consent to taking part in this phase of the research. It was also important to note that once the questionnaire was submitted they could not then withdraw from this phase of the research. Following Braun and Clarke (2006) I looked for themes which were within the data, with the process by which the data was analyzed being discussed further in Section 3.4. These themes would have then provided a platform for discussion during the focus group which would have been the second phase of this project. However, as previously highlighted the focus group was not able to take place and therefore, the data analyzed from the questionnaires generated the themes for the research topic which will be presented in Chapter 4. Despite this I will now go on to explain how I would have utilised the focus group and information session as further phases of the project.

3.3.2 Planning for a focus group

As explained by Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2007), focus groups can be used during a study to provide participants with the opportunity to add to their discussions and opinions thus allowing the researcher to capture participants' ideas further. I would have used the data analyzed from the questionnaires to create the themes of

discussion for the focus group with the intention to gain further information about participants' views and experiences of risky play. Working collaboratively with colleagues can be empowering, however, not everyone may experience this benefit of focus groups, which have the potential to be intimidating to those who are not confident in articulating their ideas (Gibbs, 1997:3). As a consequence, Gibbs (1997:4) suggests the organisation of a focus group is crucial so that the members feel at ease and encouraged to participate. Therefore, the meeting would have taken place in the workplace setting which is familiar and known to all the participants. As indicated on the consent form (Appendix 3), participants' permission to record the session would have been required. The recording of the session would have allowed me to transcribe the discussion and form the basis of further analysis. Participants, as required by the University of Glasgow ethics process, would have been reminded that they could have withdrawn from this part of the process at any time and would have been reassured of their anonymity with names being coded in line with ethical guidance.

3.3.3 Planning for an information session

If I had been able to host the second phase of the research project, the themes and issues identified from both the questionnaire and focus group would have formed the foundations of the final phase of the research process which was going to be a PowerPoint information session. The PowerPoint would have been presented to all participants from the focus group. This follows the work of Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2007) who indicate that data collected should be shared and be of benefit to those who engage in the process. This session would have lasted for an hour and would have taken place within the workplace setting, similarly to the focus group it would also have been recorded for further analysis.

Having not been able to host either the focus group or the information session, I was only able to analyze data from the questionnaire with theory underpinning the themes and categories which are presented in Chapter 4. I will now go on to describe how this was achieved following Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis process. This proved to be unquestionably complex, requiring several phases to look for the similarities and differences within the questionnaires, whilst referring back to

previous theory (Kvale, 1995) and research within the discussions surrounding risky play to find themes and developing categories.

3.4 Data Analysis

As explained by Thorne (2000:68) what makes a study qualitative is that it usually relies on inductive reasoning processes to interpret the meanings that can be derived from data. Inductive reasoning uses the data collected to generate ideas with the analyzing process being flexible as well as complex (Thorne, 2000; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Saunders et al., 2009). Thorne (2000:68) notes that the qualitative researcher must engage in both active and demanding analytic processes in order to generate findings that turn data into new knowledge. Taking this into consideration and following the work of Braun and Clarke (2006), I used a thematic analysis process which is a method of identifying themes or patterns within data and can be done manually. Having collected eight questionnaires before changes to my project were imposed, I was required to approach the analysis from a theoretical lens, using previous theory and research in the discourse of risky play to guide the process (Thorne, 2000).

Braun and Clarke (2006:78) explain that thematic analysis provides the researcher with flexibility as the process is not limited or restricted by succinct guidelines. However, Braun and Clarke (2006) further suggest that one of the criticisms in the field of qualitative research is the perception that it is unclear and perhaps too flexible. Thorne (2000:68) indicates that it is difficult to know exactly what a researcher did during this phase and consequently it can be difficult to understand exactly how conclusions evolved out of the data collected. What I have noted through the chosen strategy of finding themes within the data is that it is a recursive process rather than linear which required time and patience. Immersing myself in the data and ensuring that I did not select comments I liked based on my project ensured that I was being honest to the participants involved (Kvale, 1995). As a result, I will go on to consider how I valued the opinions of participants ensuring that I showed ethical 'goodness' throughout the research process (Tobin and Begley, 2004).

3.5. Ethics approval - compliance

Engaging with a research project at Masters Level required the approval of an ethics form which was submitted to the University of Glasgow Ethics Committee.

Following their guidelines, the ethics form allowed me to explain the purpose of the research as well as the opportunity to explain how I was going to ensure the wellbeing of participants and the steps that had been put in place to guarantee best practice at all times. An overarching ethical principle, as outlined in the British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidance is ‘minimising harm’ (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012:2). This ensures that researchers take into consideration any factors which could call into question the autonomy, privacy and equitability of research participants prior to embarking on the research project (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012). In order for research to result in benefit and minimise the risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:112; Hammersley and Traianou, 2012:2).

Following this process and obtaining ethical approval allowed me to consider and demonstrate an understanding of the ethical guidelines of the University of Glasgow. However, as previously described, ethics also relates to ‘goodness’ (Tobin and Begley, 2004) and should not be limited specifically to the ethical approval process. Particularly within the interpretivist paradigm, ethics needs to be evident and considered throughout the whole project (Groundwater-Smith and Mockler, 2007) which I will now go onto discuss.

3.5.1 ‘Goodness’

Decisions regarding research ethics are often difficult, particularly in the field of educational research and practitioner enquiry which is often conducted in the professional work setting (Brooks et al., 2014; McGinn et al., 2004). Unlike the positivist paradigm where research may yield to laboratory conditions with strict and carefully constructed controls, the field of the interpretivist study is far more complex in terms of ethics as it involves the participation of people in their everyday environments (Orb et al., 2000; Groundwater-Smith and Mockler, 2007). Having an awareness of the ethical issues which derive from such interactions is presented through the concept of ‘goodness’ (Tobin and Begley, 2004:391) which ensures that ‘the good’ in an interpretivist study is maximised in all situations and for all those

concerned. Working collaboratively and honestly with participants was crucial during my enquiry particularly due to my position as manager within the setting. I had to consider the quality of interactions with those participating in the process at all times. This included ensuring the protocols I put in place as stated in my ethics form were adhered to. For example, the PLS (Appendix 2) clearly stated that participation would not have any impact on the participants' employment conditions or my working relationship with them. Ensuring that staff did not feel pressurized into participating, which could have affected the validity (Kvale, 1995) and meaningfulness of the data collected was also crucial. The understanding that they were able to withdraw from the process at any time without penalty (Orb et al., 2000) was integral and showed my commitment to their participatory rights. As well as fulfilling University guidance, this project aimed to comply with the values of 'goodness' in terms of ensuring participants were valued, it was a collaborative process and the analysis of the data stayed true to participant responses (Tobin and Begley 2004:391). However, as participants were not able to take part in either the focus group or information session, they did not have the opportunity to validate their contributions which would have provided them with the opportunity to refute and question my findings (Kitzinger, 1995). This is an area where a possible limitation of the research may exist. I will discuss the limitations of the research project in greater detail during Chapter 5 where I reflect on the project as a whole.

3.6 Presenting the data

Over the next chapter the data will be presented and discussed which will allow for conclusions to be drawn. Learning to live in the middle of the research whilst working through the interplay between data and theory as described by Mellor (2001:468) required patience and continuous adjustment. Thus, ensuring I remained true to the interpretivist paradigm whilst making links to theory (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988; Kvale, 1995) was an essential part of the process so that conclusions reached were useful and related back to previous findings and literature within the discourse of risky play.

4 Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

During this chapter I will analyse and present the data collected from the questionnaires I received from practitioners, thus allowing me to discuss the research topic: *Early Years Practitioners' Perceptions of Risky Play*. The data collected will be examined and conclusions drawn tentatively. Within the interpretivist paradigm results are not generalizable meaning that the results of a study may not be universally applicable to general populations but are nonetheless rich in meaning to the particular context of which the study is focused (Leung, 2015:326). A total of eight questionnaires were collected from participants and these have been analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The data collected allowed for the generation of themes outlined in Table 4.1 with each theme being presented within this chapter. In order to support this enquiry, I have made links to literature and research previously carried out within the discourse of risky play with my conclusions relating back to the discussions from Chapter 2 to make connections and add to existing conversations. Quotes from the questionnaires illustrate and clarify themes. Due to the anonymous nature of the questionnaires it has not been necessary to protect the identity of the participants, however I have applied a code as I refer to different questionnaire responses throughout the chapter. I will now present the themes that have emerged from participants' responses in the table below.

Table 4.1 Thematic analysis from practitioner questionnaires

Themes	Major Categories	Minor Categories
Role of the practitioner	Safety and Supervision	Ratios
		Risk assessment
		Parent understanding
	Staff knowledge and understanding	Confidence in role
		Awareness of documents
		CPD
Risk Benefit	Holistic approach to learning	Enabling environment
		Co-operation
		Social and emotional wellbeing
	Child development	Gross motor development
		Confidence and independence
		Resilience

4.2 Role of the practitioner

I often join in with the children’s play and pose new ideas or offer advice only when I feel necessary. This way they can see that I support their rights to explore, whilst also knowing that I am there to help avert any situations that can become too unsafe. (EYP6)

Open-ended questionnaire (Appendix 1) allowed participants time to record their feelings, attitudes and understanding of the subject under discussion (Burton et al., 2014). All participants were qualified practitioners with over five years’ experience working throughout a variety of age groups from birth to 5. The first major theme to emerge from the data collected, as highlighted in the quote above, was the role of the practitioner, with all of the participants perceiving their role to be vital in the delivery of risky play, whilst also reporting barriers to their practice such as parent attitudes. With major discussion emerging about the role of the practitioner during risky play, the responses provided by participants perhaps reflect previous research which

acknowledges the significant role practitioners have in providing high quality experiences, whilst also reporting restrictions to implementing play based learning such as risk assessment procedures and parent attitudes (Brussoni et al, 2012; Hughes, 2012; Aras, 2016; Pyle et al, 2017; McFarland and Laird, 2018). Little et al., (2012) explain that risky play is extremely beneficial to a child's development, yet due to risk avoidance (Lupton and Tulloch, 2002:113), opportunities for children to take risks within their learning are often restricted (Sandseter and Sando, 2016). Furthermore, Brussoni et al., (2012), Sandseter and Sando (2016) and Kleppe (2018) explain there is a balance between risk and the benefits this has to a child versus their safety. This discussion was apparent in the questionnaires with the major category of safety and supervision emerging which will now be discussed.

4.2.1 Safety and Supervision

There has to be an element of my own judgement, but some guidance is needed, as we often try to stop children from taking risk. Most parents/staff stop children from risky play and find it difficult to take a step back. (EYP7)

The safety and supervision element of previous research undertaken in the field of risky play (Brussoni et al., 2012; Sandseter and Sando, 2016; Kleppe, 2018) has also been indicated through my research with all of the participants noting the need to supervise, risk assess and intervene in play if necessary. Brussoni et al., (2012:3134) have suggested that a shift in thinking is required towards keeping children "as safe as necessary" not as "safe as possible" with McFarland and Laird (2018) acknowledging that early years settings are required to facilitate a child's risky play opportunities but must do so in a supportive, supervised environment. Referring to the previously discussed developmental theories of play in Section 2.2.1 it is possible to suggest that all of the participants in this research are aware of the importance of the social interactions between a child and skilled adult (Aras, 2016) and use these theories to guide their practice so as to ensure the children are encouraged to take risks whilst also being observant of their safety as highlighted in a questionnaire response below.

I think my role is to supervise and risk assess the area and then let them explore what they are capable of. (EYP3)

Further to this, Hughes (2012:4) described a major shift in the role of the early years practitioner since the 1970s with practitioners now using academic literature to

support their practice. This will continue to be discussed in Section 4.2.2 where I bring added attention to the role of the practitioner in the delivery of risky play. Upon analyzing the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006) a small number of subcategories which relate to the role of the practitioner became apparent, those being risk assessment, ratios and parent understanding. Little and Wyver (2008), Pyle et al., (2017) and McFarland and Laird (2018) have previously reported barriers to the successful implementation of play-based learning within the early years curriculum. Out of the eight questionnaires I received, five practitioners noted that parents understanding of risky play hindered its implementation within the setting, with one participant suggesting

An obstacle is the attitude of some parents, who do not understand the benefits of risky play and may see our efforts as putting their children in harm's way. (EYP7)

Sandseter and Sando (2016) discuss parent attitudes as a reason why practitioners are overly cautious and as a result place restriction on children's play. It could be suggested that more effective strategies need to be put in place within the setting whereby more time is allowed to discuss risky play with the parents, explaining the developmental benefits it has to their child. O'Sullivan (2009:100) discusses the importance of parental involvement to enhance practice and to highlight trust, respect and a mutual understanding. Allowing time to share knowledge with parents is an issue for practice and I will discuss this further in the final chapter.

Moreover, as explained in Section 2.5, extensive health and safety procedures are in place with formal risk assessments implemented into practice which provide parents with reassurance that their child is in a safe environment. Despite this, one participant wrote

managing the health and wellbeing of those in our care often outweighs the ability to support higher level risk taking. (EYP8)

Tentatively, it could be suggested that the health and safety policies and procedures which are in place in many settings are restricting practice with the 'duty of care' culture described by Little and Wyver (2008:38) providing challenges for practitioners. I would like to note that despite attempts to move towards a risk benefit approach to risk assessment procedures (Care Inspectorate, 2016) only one participant made reference to this and perhaps in a bigger sample this would have been more representative. Tentative conclusions can be drawn and future

improvements within the setting could focus on a more successful implementation of the risk benefit model (Care Inspectorate, 2016) which will be discussed further in the final chapter. Despite a lack of acknowledgment of the risk benefit procedures, six participants recognized the importance of their professional knowledge, perceiving this, alongside confidence within their role as being important in the successful implementation of risky play which will be considered in the next section.

4.2.2 Staff knowledge and understanding

When asked what would support the delivery of risky play, six of the eight participants suggested further staff training, with one participant proposing that it would be helpful to improve their knowledge of risk benefit in order to gain confidence within their role. This resonates with the work of Ball (2002), Play Scotland (2008) and the Care Inspectorate (2016). Cherrington and Thornton (2013) note that attention on practitioners pursuing professional development has gained momentum at both a local and national level. Practitioners are actively encouraged by governing bodies such as the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) to engage in continued professional development and are required to not only undertake 40 hours of professional development, but this must be logged onto their personal online SSSC portal as part of their registration requirements. It could be recognised that practitioners taking part in this research have an awareness of the importance of professional development, making links between a more knowledgeable workforce which in turn improves outcomes for children (Wingrave and McMahon, 2016). Practitioners cited documents which help to support the implementation of risky play, those being the Scottish Government (online); Ball et al., (2013); Care Inspectorate (2016) and Casey and Robertson (2019). Despite having an awareness of relevant documentation and knowing where to find literature to support practice, only one participant in the study made reference to the national curriculums (Scottish Government, 2010; Education Scotland, online) which are used daily for implementing play based learning (Pyle et al., 2017). This could perhaps suggest that further examination into how these curriculums (Scottish Government, 2010; Education Scotland, online) help support the effective delivery of risky play is required, consequently curriculum change will be explored in the final chapter.

Within the nature of the topic under discussion, the participants perceive their role to be integral in implementing risky play opportunities. Through analyzing the data collected (Braun and Clarke, 2006), the participants were aware of the benefits this type of play has to a child's development. As such, risk benefit has developed as a theme of the research and will now be discussed within the next section of this chapter.

4.3 Risk Benefit

Participants who took part in the research were asked to reflect on some of the activities which they would acknowledge as risky play and subsequently consider the benefits risk taking has to a child's development. Activities the participants suggested included

- Climbing e.g. on logs; over fences; up hills and trees; using a climbing frame
- Play with or near water
- Jumping from high places
- Using real tools
- Den building

These activities refer to Sandseter's (2007) categories of risky play (Table 2.2), with this type of play taking place predominantly in an outdoor environment. One participant noted that

Risky play is any sort of play that could result in harm. (EYP4)

Again, Sandseter (2010) suggests that risky play is related to the chance of getting hurt. Subsequently, four of the participants explained that risk taking builds a child's resilience whilst also explaining that it allows them to make their own judgements and develop an awareness of their own capabilities. Further to this, in their considerations about which activities they perceive to be risky, one participant noted a child using scissors, with another suggesting that a baby who is learning to walk is taking a risk. This is significant as although there are dangers involved in both activities, they do not necessarily have to take place in an outdoor environment and as a result, considerations into the definitions of risky play could be broadened. It can be noted, therefore that practitioners taking part in the research have considered the benefits risk taking has to a child's overall development, as such two major

categories of child development and a holistic approach to learning have emerged which I will now go on to discuss.

4.3.1 Child development

As explained by Ball (2002) risky play is developmentally beneficial to a child as it promotes independence, self-esteem, encourages social interactions as well as developing creativity and imagination. Practitioners who took part in this project were aware of the importance that taking risks has to a child's development in terms of their gross motor skills, confidence, independence and resilience, which all emerged as minor categories.

Risky play can develop their gross and fine motors skills, by lifting and placing various sized objects, their balance and hand-eye co-ordination. Cognitively the children are using their imagination to enact ideas.... using problem solving skills.....and often social skills. (EYP6)

It could be suggested that practitioners who noted the benefits risky play has to a child's development, as exemplified in the quote above, are aware of the links between play, learning and development which is outlined by Coates and Pimlott-Wilson (2019). In their considerations about play-based learning, Pyle et al., (2017) could perhaps be considering the concept of play through the lens of developmental learning. Despite the majority of participants not explicitly referring to the national curriculums to support the delivery of risky play (Scottish Government, 2010; Education Scotland, online), it could cautiously be proposed that reference was made implicitly with participants being aware of the high quality experiences outlined in the documents in order for children to develop. With the curriculum such as that provided by the Scottish Government (2010) expressly discussing development, it can be suggested that the document views development as a process with age and stage models providing both practitioners and parents with the reassurance of the 'normality' of their children. The concept of the conditioned child (Ryan, 2008) has been discussed in Section 2.2.1 and draws upon socialization theory whereby a child's purpose and an adult's intention towards them is dedicated to creating conformity and a certain way of how the present child should behave within societal norms. Jenks (1996:3) describes a foundational belief of a universal desire towards the successful integration of children into adult society as well as societal norms for each stage of life. In my opinion, the developmental model of learning can be seen as

restrictive. Children having more autonomy in constructing their own childhood (Ryan, 2008) needs to be considered. I will now discuss the contrasts which have been drawn in participants' responses in that they are aware of children leading their own learning, perceiving risky play as a natural part of a child's development which allows children to explore independently.

4.3.2 Holistic approach to learning

The benefits of risky play are hugely impacted on a child's holistic development. (EYP8)

A holistic approach to learning is an integrated approach which challenges traditional developmental milestones of achievement as it focuses more on the complete physical, emotional, and psychological wellbeing of a child (Varun, 2015). This integrated view of learning means engaging and developing the whole child whilst placing importance on viewing each child as an individual who is at their own unique stage of development. This approach to learning places emphasis on the importance of opportunities for open ended exploration as well as experiences which are meaningful to the individual child (Varun, 2015). I have placed a holistic approach to learning as a category as participants noted that risky play allows for children to lead their own learning whilst also making reference to the cognitive, social, physical and emotional dimensions of human development being interwoven. A holistic approach to learning also places emphasis on warm, nurturing relationships between the child and practitioner who provide enabling environments for children to learn (Rose and Rogers, 2012; Varun, 2015). The role of the practitioner in facilitating children's play opportunities has been discussed in Section 2.5.3 (Rose and Rogers, 2012; Aras, 2016; McFarland and Laird, 2018) and is viewed as a highly skilled and complex role particularly when ensuring there is appropriate support to enhance a child's learning but at the same time allows children to act autonomously to make their own choices. With reference to risky play, one participant noted that

Risky play gives children back some control of their actions instead of always being expected to be told how to act and what to do. (EYP6)

As explained by Aras (2016:1174), the complex role of the practitioner includes ensuring the environment is planned and well-resourced to enhance a child's opportunities. The enabling environment has emerged as a minor category as five

participants also made reference to providing appropriate activities in a supportive and well managed environment. From this set of data it is possible to suggest that participants view risky play to be play which takes place predominantly outdoors and perhaps with a larger subset of data risky play could be viewed through a wider lens as taking place throughout a child's learning. Despite including children in their learning, through for example responsive planning, I would like to look further into developing a holistic curriculum within the setting which would mean careful observation of the individual needs and interests of each child to guide the curriculum. This will be discussed further in the final chapter.

4.4 Conclusion

Eberle (2014) has looked at play through a number of lenses and as such has described a plurality of play, proposing that play is a concept which offers contrasts which has been highlighted through my research. On one hand, participants were aware of the benefits risk taking has to a child's development yet reported barriers to its successful implementation such as 'duty of care' policies as well parent attitudes (Sandseter and Sando, 2016). Furthermore, the debate surrounding the practitioners role has also been considered whereby participants noted the importance of allowing children the freedom to explore and act autonomously (Ryan, 2008) but also noted the importance of safety and supervision (Brussoni et al., 2012; Sandseter and Sando, 2016; Kleppe, 2018). This research project has been guided by current research and discussion concerned with the play and risky play discourse with participants' responses reflecting and concurring with previous studies. Thus, I am assured that the issues highlighted are grounded in such academic studies but also suggest that practice still needs to move on to encourage a wider variety of play approaches. I will now conclude the project in the next chapter considering the areas highlighted whilst also considering improvements which can be made to practice and children's risky play experiences within my setting.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

The research topic, *Early Years Practitioners' Perceptions of Risky Play*, which has been presented will now be summarized and concluded within this final chapter. I will take into consideration the project's relationship with previous research which will also be discussed as well as outlining the limitations to my study. Finally, I will reflect upon the issues which arose and how these impacted my enquiry, whilst also reflecting on areas for improvement within practice and future possibilities for research within the play and risky play discourse.

5.2 The dissertation

The focus of this project was to gain insight into early years practitioners' perceptions of risky play within my setting. I also set out to add to existing discussions which suggest that risky play is a major component in the early years provision and has a necessary role within a child's development (Ball, 2002). With a plethora of previous research concerned with play-based learning, for example Hughes (2012); Smith and Pellegrini (2013); Pyle et al., (2017) and Coates and Pimlott-Wilson (2019), and with categories of play emerging (Table 2.1) it has been discussed in Section 2.3.1 that risky play is an element within the wider concept of play. As research evidence continues to mount regarding risky play (McFarland and Laird, 2018) emphasis is often placed on risky play being physical and active (Sandseter, 2007; Brussoni et al., 2012). Through my research, I would suggest that viewing risky play through this lens is limiting and there are perhaps wider forms of risk-taking during play which are not entirely physical or take place predominantly outdoors with this being discussed further in Section 5.4. My findings, however, are tentative and are part of a larger discussion about risky play. As explained by Leung (2015:326) qualitative research studies a specific issue within a certain population within a particular context, therefore generalizability is not an expected characteristic of qualitative research findings. My research was congruent with the interpretivist paradigm and qualitative data has been collected. Although my findings are not generalizable, they can be added to continuing discussions and are meaningful to my

practice. I will now go onto discuss how the findings have informed my practice as I reflect on my project and make recommendations for future research in Section 5.6.

5.3. Findings of research

This research project made use of anonymous questionnaires to elicit practitioners' understandings of risky play (Appendix 1). Using open ended questions allowed for greater freedom of expression which meant that useful and valuable data was collected. As mentioned throughout the dissertation, the data collected was smaller than I had initially outlined in my ethics form due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent restrictions placed on my research by the University of Glasgow. Nevertheless, this small-scale project has provided me an opportunity to compare my findings to other research which explores theory related to risk and risky play, thus allowing me to draw my own conclusions. Within this section I will now go on to summarise the data collected, whilst making connections to previous research (Thorne, 2000).

The participants' perceptions of risky play, as outlined in Chapter 4, suggest that the discussion surrounding the significant and highly skilled role of the practitioner in the effective delivery of risky play is paramount. Significant theory and research such as that carried out by Brussoni et al., (2012) Hughes (2012) and Aras (2016) can be related to these opinions offered. Further to this, the safety versus supervision element of Sandseter and Sando's (2016) research has also been highlighted. Whilst practitioners acknowledged that risky play is developmentally beneficial to a child they also reported barriers to its delivery, for example parent attitudes and stringent health and safety workplace procedures. These understandings can be related to research such as that carried out by Wyver et al., (2013) who suggest that an adult's own fearfulness can interfere in the offering of risky play.

As explained in Section 5.2, the risky play discourse predominantly places this type of play outdoors, with definitions emphasising physical play which could have the potential to cause injury or harm (Sandseter 2007; 2010). Similarly, participants' opinions can be related to these theories (Section 4.3). However, as outlined in Section 4.3.2, some participants noted a holistic approach to learning through risky play making reference to the cognitive, social, physical, and emotional dimensions of human development. This has proved to be significant to my research because these

opinions have allowed me to consider that risky play could be placed within other categories of play, moving towards a view that risk taking happens throughout the learning process.

5.3.1 Building a holistic curriculum

As a result of these findings, I would like to look into curriculum change within my setting, whereby a more holistic approach is taken and emphasis is placed on a child's overall physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing rather than traditional academic milestones of development (Mcilroy, online; Scottish Government, 2010). Further to this, as explained by Mcilroy (online) holistic development considers the whole child, therefore building links with a child's home environment and interests out with the nursery setting is important. Consequently, sharing knowledge and understanding with parents could be encouraged through a holistic curriculum and more regular opportunities and means by which to communicate with parents is an area of practice I need to consider. O'Sullivan (2009) describes the importance of parental involvement but considers the impact of social and economic backgrounds whereby finding time to participate may be dependent on work, childcare and lifestyle commitments. Therefore, I would like to encourage greater communication with parents through technological means such as regular newsletters sent by email, nursery apps and online learning journals. This would not only support a holistic curriculum and build links with a child's home environment, it would also allow practitioners to share their knowledge whereby they would have further opportunity to share the experiences we provide for their children and the developmental benefits these experiences have.

Participants' responses to the questionnaires have allowed me to consider risky play as taking place throughout a child's learning. This has proved significant to my research and I will now go on to discuss further the implications of my findings.

5.4 Towards a holistic view of risk taking – implications of my findings

As I have discussed, my conclusions found that some practitioners viewed risk taking to be an integral part to a child's overall development. This reflects previous research such as that carried out by Ball (2002); Pyle et al., (2017) and McFarland and Laird (2018). However, it has also led me to consider that risky play should not

only be viewed solely through the lens of outdoor physical learning. My tentative conclusions point to the possibility that risky play can and does take place throughout all areas of learning and as risk is subjective (Adams, 2000), which means that how one practitioner views risk will differ from another and what one child may find to be risky another may not. An example from my practice may be that a child frequently chooses to play with the cars in the sand tray but one day decides to complete a puzzle. It could be argued that this child has taken a risk in their learning by doing something different, sorting and matching the pieces correctly whilst developing early numeracy skills. As previously explained in Section 2.4.3 the practitioner is key in recognizing and facilitating these experiences (Rose and Rogers, 2012) so that children are encouraged and supported to try new things and therefore, challenge themselves to take a risk and develop a positive sense of self-esteem (Wingrave, 2011). This concept of promoting positive risk taking throughout all areas of learning leads me to question whether risky play should perhaps be considered as a fluid concept, fitting into all the categories of play which have emerged (Table 2.1) and therefore does not require its own separate category.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the national lockdown (Scottish Government, 2020b) there has been a required shift in children spending more time indoors. Saunders (2016) suggests that there is extremely limited literature which considers risky play as an indoor phenomenon with the categories of risky play identified through Sandseter's research (2007) (Table 2.2) being recognized as restrictive when related to an indoor environment. Exploring the facilitation of risky play indoors is an area of research which requires further consideration. I will now go on to make recommendations for both future research and policy and practice, taking into consideration the timing of my research and how Covid-19 may impact any recommendations made.

5.5 Recommendations

The majority of early years settings in Scotland were closed at the time of writing therefore, the impact that Covid-19 has and will have on play-based learning is not yet known. I will not be able to make changes to policy and practice in relation to my research for some time yet as the focus will be on the safe reopening of the setting. However, I will now outline changes I would like to make to future policy and

practice in relation to risky play as well as make recommendations for future research.

As I was not able to validate participants' questionnaire answers through a discussion group, I would like to present my findings to staff to give them the opportunity to have an open discussion, meaning that any changes to future policy would be collaborative (Fullan, 2014). This would be beneficial particularly in terms of developing the holistic curriculum proposed in Section 5.3.1 whilst embedding a risk benefit approach to risk assessment more solidly into practice (Care Inspectorate, 2016). Further, this resonates with Groundwater-Smith and Mockler's (2007) suggestions that research should be shared with communities of practice in order that practice is improved. This will allow staff to move towards encouraging risk taking which will be maximized through a greater, shared understanding of a risk benefit model. Participants suggested that further training is required within the field of risky play to feel more confident within their practice. I would consider sharing my research with stakeholders and the local authority for training, particularly with the purpose of looking at risk through a multitude of lenses and 'normalizing' risk as taking place throughout all areas of learning. However, I believe further consideration of risky play indoors (Saunders, 2016) is required and research which views risky play holistically is currently limited. I therefore recommend further research within this field which uses previous theory and discussion to consider risky play from different viewpoints, particularly risk taking within the indoor learning environment.

As explained, conclusions drawn are tentative and are part of the ongoing discussion into practitioners' perceptions of risky play. The interpretivist paradigm allows for the continual construction of knowledge with the aim to add to existing knowledge within the chosen field of research (Saunders et al., 2009). I will now go onto outline the possible limitations of my research under the chosen paradigm.

5.6 Limitations of this project and problems arising

The qualitative data collected means that I cannot be certain that conclusions I have drawn are truly reflective of participants' opinions. However, I have tried to remain true to participants' responses and believe that I have been reflective of their views (Kvale, 1995). Once I had collected the questionnaires and analyzed the data from

these, I had hoped to follow up with a discussion group which would have allowed participants the opportunity to supplement, refute and question my findings (Kitzinger, 1995). However, as highlighted throughout the project, I was unable to safely meet with participants. Therefore, an area where a possible limitation may exist is the verification of data. Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2007) explain a greater authenticity of participants' accounts when they are involved in the verification of data. As a result, the nature of my data may not be a complete representation of participants' voices and a discussion group perhaps could have allowed them to clarify their positions further. Being aware of ethical requirements (Tobin and Begley, 2004) I have strived for transparency when presenting the findings in Chapter 4, with theory underpinning participants' explanations and conclusions being drawn with caution as outlined under the chosen interpretivist paradigm (Section 3.2.3). Despite the considered limitation, the findings are worth noting as they will have impact on my practice and can be added to existing discussions surrounding risky play.

5.7 Towards a 'new normal'

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic there will undoubtedly be changes to practice within early years settings for some time to come, and focus will be ensuring children and staff's health and wellbeing. I set out on my first research project with the aim of gaining a better understanding of early years practitioners' perceptions of risky play within my setting never imagining that I would find myself in the middle of a global pandemic. Despite implications and problems arising during this research I can still conclude and suggest that risky play should be 'normalized' throughout all areas of a child's learning and future focus should take into consideration that risky play does not need to be defined as its own play category. Rather an acceptance by practitioners that risk taking promotes a child's holistic development. The implementation of a holistic curriculum, risk benefit policy as well as further training will lead to more informed practice and ultimately more challenging experiences where children are encouraged to take risks throughout all areas of their learning.

Appendix 1: Early Years Practitioners' Perceptions of Risky Play Questionnaire

Early Years Practitioners' Perceptions of Risky Play Questionnaire

I have read the Plain Language statement attached.

I understand that I do not need to complete this questionnaire.

If I have any questions I can direct them to the researcher at the email stated below:

0206896V@student.gla.ac.uk.

Please complete as many of the following questions as you can.

The questionnaire should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete and is completely anonymous.

Once completed, please return it to the box located in the cupboard behind the front desk by Friday 31st January 2020. The first 15-20 questionnaires to be collected will be selected for data analysis.

I consent to taking part in this research project

Thank you for your time.



1. In what capacity do you work with the children?

- Early years practitioner
- Early years apprentice
- Nursery assistant
- ASL support staff
- Other

Please provide age range of children you mostly work with e.g. 0-3/3-5 etc. If it is a variety then please also state this.

2. How long have you worked in early years?

- 1-2 years
- 2-5 years
- 5-8 years
- 8+ years

3. How would you define risky play?

4. Please describe some of the activities you provide for the children which you could be consider as 'risky play'

5. What would you consider to be the benefits of risk taking to a child's development?

6. Do you think risky play is important to a child's development? Please provide reason for your answer.

7. Would you consider any activities as being 'too risky' while a child is in your care? If yes, please provide examples. If no, please state your reasons.

8. Are there any barriers to you providing risky play opportunities for the children in your care? If yes, please describe what they are.

9. Are you confident when providing children with risky play opportunities?

10. What do you think could help support your delivery of risky play?

11. Are there currently any documents or legislation which support your understanding and implementation of risky play? Please state what these are.

12. What do you think your role is when child/children are participating in risky play?

Is this defined by what you SHOULD be doing rather than trusting your own judgement?

13. Have you ever received training about different kinds of play? If yes, please state what this training was and how beneficial you found it.

14. What are your priorities when a child is participating in risky play opportunities?

15. Do you have any other comments about risky play that you would like to share?

Thank you for completing the above questionnaire.

I am also looking for 5-8 participants who are interested in taking part in a focus group to discuss the data collected from this questionnaire. This will be followed by a PowerPoint feedback session when I will present my analysis of the questionnaire and the focus group. This feedback session will allow you to add your comments or challenge some of my findings so that I have a more complete picture of the issues related to risky play.

If you would like to participate in these sessions of the research then please email me at the address below for further information:

0206896V@student.gla.ac.uk

I will then send you a participant information sheet and consent form.

Appendix 2: Plain Language Statement



School of
Education

Plain Language Statement

Questionnaire

Research Title: Practitioners' perceptions of risky play

Researcher: 0206896

Supervisor: Dr Mary Wingrave

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide if you would like to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. You can contact me at any time at the following email address:

0206896V@student.gla.ac.uk.

Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the study?

I am engaging in a practitioner enquiry which investigates the influences and perceptions of risky play from a practitioners' point of view. I hope to gain insight into some of the influences which can affect children's participation in various types of play. It is my hope that through this project I will broaden both my own and staffs' knowledge and understanding of the types of play that can be adopted with young children and how it is possible to promote safe risky play in the nursery. Consequently, I hope to enhance professional competency thus leading to more rewarding activities for the children in our care.

Why have I been chosen?

As part of my research I am aiming to recruit participants who work with children in a nursery environment where play is the main tool for development and learning. As

you work within the nursery your thoughts and ideas about risky play will be of relevant to my project.

Do I have to take part?

No, participation is voluntary, but you must be aged 18 or over to participate. Participation in this project will not have any impact on your appraisals or my working relationship with you. You can withdraw from completing the questionnaire up until you submit it. Once submitted you cannot withdraw your questionnaire as it will not be possible to identify it.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to respond to the questionnaire then I will analyse your feedback and use the data collected to gain insights into risky play. At the end of the questionnaire you will see an invitation to a focus group and feedback session where I hope to discuss in more depth the findings from the questionnaire. You are not obliged to attend the focus group but if you would like to, then please follow the guidance inviting you to take part at the end of the questionnaire.

Returning the completed questionnaires

If you are willing to complete and return the questionnaire attached, please tick the consent box at the top.

Questionnaires should be returned to the box located in the cupboard behind the front desk by Friday 31st January 2020.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrong doing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies. Questionnaires will remain anonymous and you are not required to write your name on it. If you decide not to complete the questionnaire you do not have to give a reason for this. Furthermore, if at any point questions/topics discussed within the questionnaire cause you any distress then please arrange a meeting with the directors of the company to discuss the concerns you have.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results will be presented within my M.Ed in Childhood Practice dissertation. I may also consider sharing the findings with other professionals and submit them to a journal for publication.

Who has reviewed the study? Dr Mary Wingrave (mary.wingrave@glasgow.ac.uk)

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project, you can contact:

The School of Education ethics officer: Dr Barbara Read
(Barbara.Read@glasgow.ac.uk).

The College of Social Science ethics officer: Dr Muir Houston
(muir.houston@glasgow.ac.uk)

Appendix 3: Consent Form



School of
Education

Consent Form

Focus group and feedback sessions participation

Title of Project: Early Years Practitioners' Perceptions of Risky Play

Name of Researcher: ...(0206896V@student.gla.ac.uk)

Name of Supervisor: Dr Mary Wingrave (mary.wingrave@glasgow.ac.uk)

I confirm that I have read and understood the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

I acknowledge that:

- Participants will be referred to by pseudonym.
- There will be a feedback session where I can add to or clarify any responses during the focus group.
- Confidentiality may be impossible to guarantee due to the participant group size or in the event that information is disclosed that poses harm or danger to the participant or others.

- The material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.
- The data may be shared/archived or re-used in accordance with Data Sharing Guidance provided on Participant Information Sheet.
- The material may be used in future presentation to other professionals or in publications, both print and online.
- The material will be destroyed once the project is complete.

Consent on method clause

I consent / do not consent (delete as applicable) to the focus group and PowerPoint feedback session being audio-recorded.

Where dependent relationship exists

I acknowledge that there will be no effect on my employment and working relationship with the researcher arising from my participation or non-participation in this research.

Once you have read all of the statement above then please tick either box below:

I agree to take part in these stages of the research study

I do not agree to take part in these stages of the research study

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

Reference List

- Adams, J. (online) *Risk, freedom and responsibility* @ <http://john-adams.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2006/risk,%20freedom%20&%20responsibility.pdf> (last accessed 31/8/20).
- Adams, J. (2000) *Risk*, 5th ed. London, UK: Routledge.
- Ailwood, J. (2003) 'Governing early childhood education through play', *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 4:3, Pp. 286-299.
- Altrichter, H., Feldman, A., Posch, P., Somekh, B. (2008), *Teachers investigate their work: An introduction to action research across the professions*, 2nd ed. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Aras, S. (2016) 'Free play in early childhood education: a phenomenological study', *Early Child Development and Care*, 186:7, Pp. 1173-1184.
- Ausband, L. (2006) 'Qualitative research and quilting: advice for novice researchers', *The Qualitative Report*, 11:4, Pp. 764-770.
- Barrouillet, P. (2015) 'Theories of cognitive development: from Piaget to today', *Developmental Review*, 38, Pp. 1-12.
- Ball, D.J. (2002) *Playgrounds – risks, benefits and choices* @ https://www.hse.gov.uk/research/crr_pdf/2002/crr02426.pdf (last accessed 31/8/20).
- Ball, D.J., Gill, T. and Spiegel, B. (2013) *Managing risk in a play provision: implementation guide*, @ <file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/Managing-Risk-in-Play-Provision-implementation-guide-2nd-edition-3.pdf> (last accessed 7/8/20).
- Beck, U. (1992) *Risk Society; towards a new modernity*, London, UK: SAGE Publications Inc.
- Bae, B. (2009) 'Children's right to participate – challenges in everyday interactions', *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 17:3, Pp. 391-406.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3:2, Pp.77-101.
- Brooks, R., te Riele, K. and Maguire M. (2014) *Ethics and education research*, London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Bruce, T. (2012) *Early childhood practice: Froebel today*, London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Brussoni, M., Olsen, L.L., Pike, I. and Sleet, D.A. (2012) 'Risky play and children's safety: balancing priorities for optimal child development', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 9:9, Pp. 3134-3148.
- Brussoni, M., Gibbons, R., Gray, C., Ishikawa, T., Sandseter, E.B.H., Bienenstock, A., Chabot, G., Fuselli, P., Herrington, S., Janssen, I., Pickett, W., Power, M., Stanger, N., Sampson, M. and Tremblay, M.S. (2015) 'What is the relationship between risky outdoor play and health in children: a systematic review', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 12:6, Pp. 6423-6454.

- Burton, N., Brundrett, M. and Jones, M. (2014) *Doing your education research project*, 2nd ed. London, UK: SAGE publications Ltd.
- Care Inspectorate (2016) *My world outdoors* @ <https://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/1557/my-world-outdoors-sharing-good-practice-in-how-early-years-services-can.pdf> (last accessed 31/8/20).
- Casey, T and Robertson, J. (2019) *Loose parts play: a toolkit* @ <https://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Loose-Parts-Play-Toolkit-2019-web.pdf> (last accessed 20/6/20).
- Cherrington, S. Thornton, K (2013) 'Continuing professional development in early childhood education in New Zealand', *Early Years An International Research Journal*, 33:2, Pp 119-132.
- Chowdhury, M.F. (2014) 'Interpretivism in aiding our understanding of the contemporary social world', *Open Journal of Philosophy*, 4:1, Pp. 432-438.
- Coates, J.K. and Pimlott-Wilson, H. (2019) 'Learning while playing: children's forest school experiences in the UK', *British Educational Research Journal*, 45:1, Pp. 21-40.
- Cohen, C., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2017) *Research methods in education*, 8th ed. London, UK: Routledge.
- Driscoll, D., Appiah-Yeboah, A., Salib, P. and Rupert, D.J. (2007) *Merging qualitative and quantitative data in mixed methods research: how to and why not* @ <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1012&context=icwdmeea> (last accessed 31/8/20).
- Eberle, S.G. (2014) 'The elements of play: towards a philosophy and definition of play', *Journal of Play*, 6:2, Pp. 214-232.
- Education Scotland (online) *What is curriculum for excellence?* @ [https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-\(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5\)/What%20is%20Curriculum%20for%20Excellence?](https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5)/What%20is%20Curriculum%20for%20Excellence?) (last accessed 31/8/20).
- Fullan, M. (2014) *Leadership in a culture of change personal action guide and handbook*, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.
- Giamminuti, S. and See.D. (2017) 'Early childhood educators' perspectives on children's rights: the relationships between images of childhood and pedagogical practice', *The international journal of children's rights*, 25:1, Pp.24-49.
- Gianoutsos, J. (2006) 'Locke and Rousseau: early childhood education', *The pulse*, 4:1, Pp. 1-23.
- Gibbs, A. (1997) *Focus Groups* @ <http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU19.html> (last accessed 31/8/20).
- Groundwater-Smith, S. and Mockler, N. (2007) 'Ethics in practitioner research: an issue of quality', *Research papers in education*, 22:2, Pp. 199-211.
- Guba, E.G. and Lincoln, Y.S. (1994) 'Competing paradigms in qualitative research', in Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (eds) *Handbook of qualitative research*, California, USA: SAGE Publications Inc. Pp. 105-117.
- Hairston, M. (1982) 'The winds of change: Thomas Kuhn and the revolution in the teaching of writing', *College Composition and Communication*, 33:1, Pp. 76-88.

- Hammersley, M. and Traianou, A. (2012) *Ethics and educational research* @ [file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/Ethics-and-Educational-Research%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/Ethics-and-Educational-Research%20(1).pdf) (last accessed 31/8/20).
- Holloway, I. and Galvin, K. (2017) *Qualitative research in nursing and healthcare*, 4th ed. Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons, Limited.
- Hudson, L.A. and Ozanne, J.L. (1988) 'Alternative ways of seeking knowledge in consumer research', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14:4, Pp. 508-521.
- Hughes, B. (2012) *Evolutionary playwork reflective analytical practice*, 2nd ed. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Jarvis, P. (2006) "'Rough and Tumble" play: lessons in life', *Evolutionary Psychology*, 4:1, Pp. 330-346.
- Jenks, C. (1996) *Childhood*, 2nd ed. London: Routledge.
- Kitzinger, J. (1995) *Qualitative research: introducing focus groups* @ <https://www.bmj.com/content/311/7000/299> (last accessed 31/8/20).
- Kleppe, R. (2018) 'Characteristics of staff-child interaction in 1-3 year olds' risky play in early childhood education and care', *Early Childhood Development and Care*, 188:10, Pp. 1487-1501.
- Kvale, S. (1995) 'The social construction of validity', *Qualitative Enquiry*, 1:1, Pp. 19-40.
- Lambert, B.E. (2006) 'Questioning Vygotsky's 'theory' of play', *Early Child Development and Care*, 160:1, Pp. 25-31.
- LeBlanc, M. (online) *Friedrich Froebel: his life and influence on education* @ <https://www.communityplaythings.co.uk/learning-library/articles/friedrich-froebel> (last accessed 31/8/20).
- Leung, T. (2015) 'Validity, reliability and generalizability in qualitative research', *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care*, 4:3, Pp. 324-327.
- Little, H. and Wyver, S. (2008) 'Outdoor play does avoiding the risks reduce the benefits?', *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, 33:2, Pp. 33-40.
- Little, H. (2010) 'Relationship between parents' beliefs and their responses to children's risk-taking behavior during outdoor play', *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 8:3, Pp. 315-330.
- Little, H., Wyver, S., and Gibson, F. (2011) 'The influence of play context and adult attitudes on young children's physical risk-taking during outdoor play', *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 19:1, Pp.113-131.
- Little, H., Sandseter, E.B.H. and Wyver, S. (2012) 'Early childhood teachers' beliefs about children's risky play in Australia and Norway', *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 13:4, Pp. 300-316.
- Lourenco, O. and Machado, A. (1996) 'In defence of Piaget's theory: a reply to 10 common criticisms', *Psychological Review*, 103:1, Pp. 143-164.
- Lupton, D. and Tulloch, J. (2002) "'Life would be pretty dull without risk': voluntary risk-taking and its pleasures', *Health, Risk and Society*, 4:2, Pp. 113-124.
- Malone, K. (2007) 'The bubble wrap generation: children growing up in walled gardens', *Environmental Education Research*, 13:4. Pp. 513-527.

- McFarland, L. and Laird, S.G. (2018) 'Parents and early years educators attitudes and practices in relation to children's outdoor risky play', *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 46:2, Pp. 159-168.
- McGinn, M.K. and Bosacki, S.L. (2004) *Research ethics and practitioners: concerns and strategies for novice researchers engaged in graduate education* @ <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/615> (last accessed 31/8/20).
- Mcilroy, T. (online) *The holistic development of a child during the early years* @ <https://empoweredparents.co/holistic-development/> (last accessed 22/8/20).
- McLeod, S. (2018a) *John Piaget's theory and stages of cognitive development* @ <https://www.simplypsychology.org/piaget.html> (last accessed 30/7/20).
- McLeod, S. (2018b) *Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory* @ <https://www.simplypsychology.org/vygotsky.html> last accessed 30/7/20).
- Mellor, N. (2001) 'Messy method: the unfolding story', *Educational Action Research*, 9:3, Pp.465-484.
- Moran-Ellis, J. (2010) 'Reflections on the sociology of childhood in the UK', *Current Sociology*, 58:2 Pp.186-205.
- Niehues, A.N., Bundy, A., Broom, A., Tranter, P., Ragen, J. and Engelen, L. (2013) 'Everyday uncertainties: reframing perceptions of risk in outdoor free play', *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 13:3, Pp. 223-237.
- Orb, A., Eisenhauer, L. and Wynaden, D. (2000) 'Ethics in qualitative research', *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 33:1, Pp. 93-96.
- O'Sullivan, J (2009) 'Leading to involve parents' in J. O'Sullivan (ed) *Leadership skills in the early years making a difference*, London, UK: Continuum International Publishing Group. Pp. 90-108.
- Play Scotland (2008) *Play Scotland risky play* @ <file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/Risky-Play-Leaflet.pdf> (last accessed 31/8/20).
- Pyle, A., DeLuca, C. and Danniels, E. (2017) 'A scoping review of research on play-based pedagogies in kindergarten education', *An International Journal of Major Studies in Education*, 5:3, Pp 311-351.
- Pellegrini, A. (1989) 'Elementary school children's rough and tumble play', *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 4:2, Pp 245-260.
- Rose, J. and Rogers, S. (2012) *The role of the adult in early years settings*, Berkshire, England: Open University Press.
- Ryan, P.J. (2008) 'How new is the "new" social study of childhood? The myth of a paradigm shift', *Journal of interdisciplinary history*, 38:4, Pp.553-576.
- Sandseter, E.B.H. (2007) 'Categorising risky play – how can we identify risk-taking in children's play?', *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 15:2, Pp. 237-252.
- Sandseter, E.B.H. (2009) *Risky play and risk management in Norwegian schools – a qualitative observational study* @ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236986865_Risky_play_and_risk_management_in_Norwegian_preschools_-_a_qualitative_observational_study (last accessed 31/8/20).

- Sandseter, E.B.H. (2010) *Scaryfunny – a qualitative study of risky play among preschool children* @ https://ntnuopen.ntnu.no/ntnu-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/270413/322544_FULLTEXT02.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (last accessed 31/8/20).
- Sandseter, E.B.H. and Sando, O.J. (2016) ‘We don’t allow children to climb trees: how a focus on safety affects Norwegian children’s play in early-childhood education and care settings’, *American Journal of Play*, 8:2, Pp. 178-200.
- Saunders, C. (2016) ‘An exploration into the facilitation of risky play indoors’, *Reinvention: an International Journal of Undergraduate Research*, 9:2, @ https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/iatl/reinvention/archive/volume9issue2/saunders (last accessed 31/8/20).
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2009) *Understanding research philosophies and approaches* @ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309102603_Understanding_research_philosophies_and_approaches (last accessed 31/8/20).
- Scottish Government (2010) *Pre-Birth to three: Positive outcomes for Scotland’s children and families* @ https://stramash.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/elc2_prebirthtothreebooklet.pdf (last accessed 31/8/20).
- Scottish Government (2014) *Children and young people* @ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2014/8/contents/enacted> (last accessed 31/8/20).
- Scottish Government (online) *Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC)* @ <https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/> (last accessed 18/7/20).
- Scottish Government (2017) *A blueprint for 2020: the expansion of early learning and childcare in Scotland quality action plan* @ <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2017/10/blueprint-2020-expansion-early-learning-childcare-scotland-quality-action-plan/documents/00526782-pdf/00526782-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00526782.pdf> (last accessed 31/8/20).
- Scottish Government (2020a) *Realising the ambition* @ <https://education.gov.scot/media/3bjpr3wa/realisingtheambition.pdf> (last accessed 31/8/20).
- Scottish Government (2020b) *Effective ‘lockdown’ to be introduced* @ <https://www.gov.scot/news/effective-lockdown-to-be-introduced/> (last accessed 30/6/20).
- Sheridan, M. (1999) *Play in early childhood from birth to six years*, 2nd ed. London, UK: Routledge.
- Smith, P.K. and Pellegrini, A. (2013) *Learning through play* @ <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.608.6539&rep=rep1&type=pdf> (last accessed 31/8/20).
- Sorensen, M.P. and Christiansen, A. (2014) ‘Ulrich Beck: an introduction to the theory of second modernity and the risk society’ in U. Beck (ed) *Ulrich Beck; Pioneer in cosmopolitan sociology and risk society*. Heidelberg, Germany: Springer. Pp. 7-13.
- Stephenson, A. (2010) ‘Physical risk taking: dangerous or endangered?’, *Early Years An International Research Journal*, 23:1, Pp. 35-43.
- Sutton-Smith, B. (1997) *The ambiguity of play*, 2nd ed. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

- Thorne, S.E. (2000) 'Data analysis in qualitative research', *Evidence-Based Nursing*, 3:3, Pp. 68-70.
- Tobin, G.A. and Begley, C.M. (2004) 'Methodological rigour within a qualitative framework', *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 48:4, Pp. 388-396.
- UNICEF (online) *Fact sheet: a summary of the rights under the convention of the rights of the child* @ https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf (last accessed 31/8/20).
- United Nations (1989) *Convention on the rights of the child* @ https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC_united_nations_convention_on_the_rights_of_the_child.pdf (last accessed 31/8/20).
- Varun, A. (2015) *Holistic approach for early childhood education* @ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/297714485_Holistic_Approach_for_Early_Childhood_Education (last accessed 7/8/20).
- Wingrave, M. (2011) 'Nurture groups and inclusion' in M. McMahon, C. Forde and M. Martin (eds) *Contemporary issues in learning and teaching*. London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd. Pp. 90-101.
- Wingrave, M. & McMahon, M. (2016) 'Professionalisation through academicisation: valuing and developing the early years sector in Scotland', *Professional Development in Education*, 42:5 pp710-731.
- Wyness, M. (2012) *Children and society: An introduction to the sociology of childhood*, 2nd ed. London: Palgrave.
- Wyver, S., Tranter, P., Naughton, G., Little, H., Sandseter, E.B.H. and Bundy, A. (2010) 'Ten ways to restrict children's freedom to play: the problem of surplus safety', *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 11:3. Pp. 263-277.